

Bhaja Govindam

Divine Discourses by Pujya Sri Prema Siddhartha

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Teaching – Preaching

Good evening ladies and gentlemen. My hearty welcome to you all to the Satsang. I would rather call it a combined study class rather than Satsang since I would like to chant Bhaja Govindam with you rather than give one sided lecture.

Normally spiritual programmes can be classified under two headings - Preaching and Teaching. In preaching programmes one man delivers a lecture to hundreds of people! How many grasped the essence of teaching - God only knows! Our culture is opposed to other cultures. When most of the cultures give preference to preaching, we believe in teaching.

Preaching means spreading my knowledge to the vast gathering. Teaching means touching the hearts of listeners through my method of explanation. If preaching converts the people, teaching convinces the people.

Our sastras adhere to teaching methodology. The lines seen in Upanishads are the best proof for this. 'Adheehi Bhagavo Brahmeti' - 'Oh Guru! please explain to me the concept of Brahman' is the prayer of a disciple.

A guru shouldn't just lecture on what he is adept at. He becomes tired at the end of his lecture, but that doesn't drive his student any further. That's why the word 'Adheehi' is used. In Sanskrit 'Vadathu' means tell me. 'Adheehi' means tell me in such a way that it is retained in my brain.

A seeker of truth can be inspired by teaching but not by preaching.

A guru should come down to the level of his sishya and explain any thing in a detailed manner. He should delve deep into the concepts and analyse the facts well. This is our sanatana dharma! Instead of following this, there is no point in delivering meaningless lecturers.

Once one Mr. Kripanandam attended a spiritual meeting. The prophet delivered a long lecture in Telugu and concluded it in English in two lines. When this Kripanandam came back home his friends enquired about the meeting. He said, 'Gadida guddu, Kankara peesu' in Telugu (the egg of a donkey, and a piece stone). His friends were shocked and wanted to find out what exactly happened.

They questioned the learned man, 'Is it wise on your part to talk about donkey's egg and a piece of stone?' The surprised man answered, 'Oh my God! I never referred to a donkey. All I said was 'God the good and conquer the peace!' This sounded like those Telugu words and he lost the true meaning.

If we just preach and don't teach, we may not be surprised at such an end result. That's why our dharma insists on teaching. The Bhaja Govindam we are going to learn is a very special teaching.

The importance of prayer

Our Arsha dharma believes in enkindling any programme with a prayer. We too will start our 9 days! Yagna with a prayer. Why should we pray in the first place? It is because it enables us to complete our task undisturbedly. Here undisturbedly means what is written on paper should be written eternally on your minds. It is not just a mere turning of paper or glancing through the lines.

However great we assume ourselves to be, we have a few limitations. We are helpless in many aspects. Our abilities are not boundless. To surpass our abilities we need the grace of God, Lord Siva.

Lord Siva is not confined to the sky far above. He is Omnipotent and Omnipresent. He is present in every minute particle. We may not be able to grasp the essence of our sastras and to drink the nectar hidden in them sometimes, nay many times, To overcome this problem, our great rishis start their teaching with prayer unto the Lord. Let us also seek the blessings of Lord Siva for an undisturbed learning of our Bhajagovindam.

Moodamate!

Our dharma is Arsha dharma. 'Rishe idam arsham' a dharma given by rishis is arsha dharma. Are the rishis wise men ? A wise man is only worldly wise. Rishis are not merely worldly wise. 'Rishati janati itirishihi - one who knows is a rushi. Can we be termed rishis since we know many things ? No! 'To know' here means 'to know what is to be known.' So, in

addition to the materialistic knowledge one who has acquired the true knowledge of Brahman is said to be a rishi.

Most of the cultures in the world are framed by wise people and are followed by wise people! Whereas our culture is framed by rishis. So it challenges the intellect of wise people and ultimately wins their applause.

A handsome salary, a closely knit family, a large kith and kin, a number of bosom friends are what one should possess in life-is the general opinion of the wiseacres. This is an underlying current of thought in most of the cultures. Our Arsha Sanskriti too believes in that but unfortunately it is not properly understood by both Indians and foreigners. They have a misconception that the Indian culture doesn't encourage materialistic progress and social status.

Our culture doesn't criticize such a progress. In fact our sastras give many tit bits to come up in life materialistically. Taittiriyanopanishad lays stress on intellect required for growth in the mundane world through the lines 'Kusalaanna pramaditavyam ! bhutvai na pramaditavyam.' Vedanta proclaims that you should not idle your time. You should earn money enough and to spare for the needy!

Man is a social animal. He needs a social life, a family life and physical comforts to lead a comfortable life. Our learned rishis too accepted such a life, but they proclaimed that, it is not the be all and end all of our life. Such a mundane life may give us all comfortable life but it cannot drive out the misery of the soul.

Ignorance – knowledge

There may be any number of reasons outwardly for our suffering in life, but the root cause of it is our ignorance. Here, the ignorance is the ignorance of ourselves 'Know thyself' says Vedanta. But we do not know what we are. We do use the word 'I' but 'What am I'? We don't know the exact meaning. We misinterpret it. As long as we do so, however much we are surrounded by riches, we cannot lead a happy life.

The suffering that arises out of our ignorance can be driven only if we drive out our ignorance. How do we drive out our ignorance? - By getting to know things. 'Ya Vimuktaye Sa Vidya' - Whatever liberates you is knowledge. The knowledge that doesn't provide liberation is sheer information but not true knowledge. That way our education centres are mere information centres. The knowledge of the physical world is ignorance. That's why our education is taxing our brain instead of liberating it.

A desire for liberation - commitment to Moksha

Every human being longs for freedom from sorrow. One may be an atheist with no thought of God or religion but he too longs for a freedom from suffering. We may come across people who proudly boast about 'I don't believe in God' but do we ever come across one who proudly boasts, 'I don't want freedom from sorrow '? No! Every individual longs for freedom. If this freedom is converted to liberation of soul, a greater amount of suffering can be relieved. Many people treat desire for liberation commitment to Moksha as synonyms, but in fact, there is a vast difference between the two.

We get this desire for liberation at the threshold of forty. By then we would have faced many upheavals in life and we are tired of this rat race. We long for rest. This desire is like the rest of the desires we have had earlier. A commitment for liberation is different. It comes from maturity of mind. We get this maturity when we look at life from an experienced eye.

This Bhaja Govindam provides us such a maturity. It converts our desire for liberation into commitment for liberation. It eases our task.

Liberation through Gnana

Our sorrow, our ties are caused due to our ignorance of ourselves. We require knowledge to come out of it to attain moksha. We cannot attain Moksha, liberation - through actions. We can attain something other than ourselves through our actions. Here we are suffering from the ignorance of ourselves. That can be driven out only by the knowledge of ourselves. Nothing but Gnana can save us! 'Gnanadevathu kaivalyam' is the saying. Only Gnana provides liberation. So we don't require anything else! They are for other benefits.

Should we perform yagnas, yagas, yoga samadhis, meditations, prayers and vratas in such a case? Can't they provide liberation?

Sankaracharya answered this query well in his 'Viveka Chudamani'.

Patantu sastrani yajanthu devaan
kurvantu karmani bhajantu devatha
Aatmaikya bodhena vina vimukthihi
Na sidhyati brahma satantarepi

Patantu sastrani - however much you read sastras, you cannot attain moksha. Some people read Upanishads superfluously. They can neither

understand its inner meaning nor make an attempt to do so. They use these Upanishads for karma (actions) instead of attaining knowledge. The same way they use the 'Sri Rudram' which can provide moksha for Abhishekham.

Yajantu devaan - Yajanthu means yagnam Kurvanthu' It means doing many yogas to please Indra and other devatas to attain many boons from them.

Kurvantu Karmani - To put into practice the routine karmas faithfully.

Bhajantu devatha - To pray to the deities like Siva, Vishnu and others.

Even if we follow the above mentioned rituals meticulously, we will not attain moksha. why? Aatmaikya bodhena vina vimukhti na sidhyati brahma satantarepi.

Unless we attain the knowledge of Atma embedded in the words 'Tat-twam-asi' we cannot get rid of our suffering. The knowledge of Atma should be understood properly.

It means the knowledge 'that art thou' - you are Brahma.

Does the statement 'You are Brahma' sound odd? You can accept Jeevathma joins Paramathma but you cannot appreciate Jeevatma is Brahma Himself! Try to think logically. We accept that God is omnipotent and infinite. In the 'sahasranama' of any God we chant 'Om Anantayanamaha'.

Anantam means one that doesn't have an end. One which doesn't have a beginning doesn't have an end too. One which has neither beginning nor end is omnipresent. When God is all pervading, how do you stand out separate? If you argue that you are other than God, it disproves the previous statement that God is Omnipresent! Isn't it so?

Let us see this way now. If God is not all pervading, He becomes confined, confined to some boundaries and time period. It means he becomes visible - Drisyam. Drisyam means nasyam. 'Yadrisyam tannasyam' According to that even Paramathma will perish one fine morning! How can one who perishes become Paramathma?

Vedas have proclaimed Paramathma as an imperishable personality, as an incarnation of truth. When you realize that God is infinite it goes without saying, you are also God. The knowledge of the soul is nothing but the realization of this truth.

This knowledge liberates our soul. The other yogas help us to attain 'punya' but not Gnana. Brahma satantarepi - Even if hundred Brahmas come and go our fate doesn't change. One 'Kalpa' is one day for Brahma. Such Kalpas put together give him hundred years. Even if such Brahman come and go, we remain the same old stupid people.

Our life purpose is to put an end to our ignorance. Leaving aside the main task, if we do quite a number of things, the purpose is defeated. The same way, leaving aside the acquisition of Gnana, even if we do any number of good deeds, our life purpose is defeated.

Man alone is blessed with mind and intelligence. The animals are not lucky that way. That's why the saying -'Jantoonam narajanma durlabham.' It is meaningless to limit our life to sensuous pleasures. To lead in the righteous path, we need a goal.

I know your doubts ! You wonder if you have to give up your domestic life and lead a life of sansyasi in your quest for knowledge.

Your ignorance can be driven away only by acquiring knowledge. There is no point in staying in an ashram if you ignore this aspect. Instead you can remain as a married man and still desire for knowledge.

Now, your next question - when gnana provides moksha, why should we do good deeds? The answer is - we should do good deeds keeping in view the attainment of knowledge.

'Chitthasya suddaye karma natu vastupalabdaye
Vastu siddir, Vicharena na kinchit karma kotibihi.'

Good deeds on their own cannot directly fetch you gnana, but indeed they are helpful in providing you dedication in providing you a clean heart, in providing you good manners. 'Yastu siddi vicharena' - To attain purity of soul, a mere thought will do. It is because 'soul' is already there within. All that you require is, you need to know it. The ignorance of it automatically leads to confusion. You don't have to search for it outside. You keep saying 'I am here' 'I see' 'I hear' 'I read'. If I list out such 'I's it is endless. What does it convey? It means you are acquainted with this, 'I'. You are acquainted with it means it is here only.

Should we search for something which is very much before us? If it is in proximity with us, but still we don't know about it, indicates that we do not know its identity. If we probe into the matter why we are ignorant when it is very much before us, we will get a clear cut answer to it.

'Na kinchit karma kotibihi' - Even if you do one crore of actions without inquisitiveness, you may be blessed, but you will not acquire gnana. This is Indian philosophy!

Advaitham

The teaching which helps you to know thyself which leads you to moksha can be defined 'Advaitham'. Many misinterpret it as philosophy. Advaitham is not one man's thought or feeling or opinion. It helps us visualise the infinity of God by laying before us the base facts. The modern science sometimes behaves like Advaitam.

The famous scientist Einstein's philosophy of 'Quantum Field' and Isenberg's 'Law of Uncertainty' can be quoted as examples to the above statements. Our ignorance can be driven out only by Advaitam.

Sri Sankaracharya is a blessed soul. He propagated this Advaita philosophy throughout the world. He dealt with the toughest philosophy of Advaitam through his various other books. By doing thus, he enriched our philosophy and also made it simpler. Whoever wants to be committed to the cause of his life is blessed with his poesy! In Sri Sankaracharya's realm of poetry, 'Bhaja Govindam' touches, inspires and blesses the heart of even a common man.

Some Pandits feel that 'Bhaja Govindam' is not written by Adi Sankaracharya. But whoever writes this, they will definitely belong to the class of Sri Sankaracharya. So nothing is wrong if we deem it as the spontaneous work of Sri Sankaracharya.

The origin of Bhajagovindam

Once when Sri Sankaracharya was returning from his holy bath in the Ganges, he came across a ripe old man trying to learn by rote grammatical rules. That scene gave rise to varied emotions in the saint. He pitied the ageing man who was still lost in the mundane world; he smiled to himself at his foolish act. A wave of sympathy to save this old man from sinking in 'samsara dukha sagara' gave rise to fresh waves of slokas, embedded with gems of knowledge.

The spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings of guruji sankaracharya inspired his disciples to contribute some more to his classic work. The total came up to 31 slokas. This compilation is called 'Moha Mudgaram'!

'Moha Mudgaram' means one which roots out 'Moha'. Moha means Hypnosis. A hypnotist hypnotizes the other person.

Hypnosis means to be carried away by the outward appearance of things. The unreal appears to be real, the truth appears to be falsehood and falsehood appears to be the truth. Vedanta calls it 'Sobhanadhyaa.'

To root out 'Moha' means to root out the assumption or the ignorance of things. We cannot drive out darkness by fighting with it. We have to enkindle a light to drive it out. The same way, we should drive out the darkness of our agnana, through the light of knowledge. So Moha Mudgaram means the light of knowledge.

This 'Moha Mudgara' is popularly known as 'Bhaja Govindam' since it begins with that word - 'Bhaja Govindam, Bhaja Govindam' This is customary with most of our classics. For instance the Upanishad starting with 'Eesavasyam idam sarvam' is entitled 'Eesavasyopanishad' and the upanishad, starting with 'Keneshitam patati' is entitled 'kenopanishad'.

Every word of 'Bhaja Govindam' leads to the path of gnana. This is the greatness of Sri Sankaracharya. I am quite often faced with the question, 'What's the difference between a gnani and an agnani?' There are many differences but I normally I give this simple but lucid difference.

There is no purpose in the conversation of agnani. Even in the words of and, but of a gnani you will find some special importance given to them. Gnanis believe in 'Silence is Gold'. They don't waste their time in idle gossip. Every word of theirs drives out the darkness in us from one angle or the other and leads us in the right direction.

We are at the threshold of a beautiful garden filled with saintly words of powers to derive the nectar of their sayings. Unless we are blessed by the Lord Siva, we cannot even dream of such a garden. Hence we are lucky enough to wander freely in the garden of nectar.

In theory I am your teacher and you are my students. But let's sing together, 'Bhaja Gvindam' and derive together the nectar of gnana. Let's prostrate together before the sacred feet of Sri Sankara charya.

Bhaja govindam Bhaja govindam
Govindam bhaja moodamathe !
Samprapte sannihite kale
Nahi Nahi rakshati dukrunkarane ! Bhaja Govindam

'Oh fool ! pray to Govinda ! serve Govinda ! When you reach your death bed, the grammatical rules like 'dukrun karane' cannot save you.'

This is the key sloka. It is repeated after every sloka.

Sri Sankaracharya addressed the old man as a fool. He added the lines 'dukrunkarene' – the rules you are reciting cannot save you. Your time is coming to a fag end.

We should understand one aspect very clearly here. Once a student raised this question to me- 'Sankaracharya may be a great man. He may be the prophet of the great Advaita philosophy! But is it not unmannerly on his part to call somebody 'you fool'! The other man is more than double his age and he is well versed in Sanskrit Grammar. Doesn't he have common sense?'

This is a very sensible question. It's true! Our culture teaches us to respect an elderly man however great we may be! When this is our custom, why then didn't our preacher, our guru follow it? I know that this is not the doubt of just one student who asked me, but is the doubt of one and all.

We should in the first place dissect the word 'mudamathe'. Otherwise there is every possibility of our misunderstanding the great sage! So follow me carefully! Try to understand the logical thinking behind it. For instance if somebody lets out his anger against you this way - 'Something is wrong with your eyesight. Something is blocking your vision (perception)' you get very angry. In the same place if an ophthalmologist examines your eyes and says 'something is wrong with your eyesight. You have cataract!' Do you fight with him? Do you say, 'I don't have cataract, you have cataract!' Definitely not!

If an ignorant man calls you names out of his anger or ignorance that is 'abuse'. But if a saint, realizing the sorry state of affairs in which you are in, calls you names to raise you out of that situation, it is not abuse but it is a word of blessing to you.

You answer me this question! If a doctor tells you, 'you have this disease' you call it a blessing or a curse? If you call it a curse he will never tell you, your problem. Then you can never get it cured. Then you have to suffer a lot sometimes. You may have to give up your very life. So it is definitely a blessing whether you accept it or not!

Now, with this understanding let's come back to the present situation again. Sri Sankaracharya and the learned man had no past differences between them. Nor were they neighbours! In fact, Sankaracharya was looking at the old man for the first time. Like love at first sight

Sankaracharya understood at first sight the problem of the pandit and analyzed his situation.

To be acquainted with Sanskrit is a blessing. To be able to understand the scriptures through the knowledge of Sanskrit is a greater blessing. To be acquainted with Sanskrit grammar is the greatest blessing. But the old man who was 'ready to end this eventful drama' of life, was not yet ready to put his knowledge of Sanskrit to its rightful use. The knowledge of life purpose is to be acquired through the knowledge of Sanskrit. Being dissatisfied with the ignorance of the old man's foolishness, Sankaracharya addressed him 'oh fool! 'It is only an eye opener but not a word of curse!

Ignorance – Foolishness

Ignorance is different from Foolishness. According to dictionary, there is not much of a difference between the two but we should not understand sastras with the dictionary meaning. Dictionary meaning is different from that of sastra. So we should approach a guru to understand sastras properly. Unless the guru explains them analytically, we cannot understand them.

Ignorant man is one who doesn't know anything. A fool is one who has half knowledge. He appears to know something outwardly, but inwardly he is empty. A fool is the opposite of Wiseman. A fool is referred to as 'Moodadihi'. Between the two - an ignorant man and a foolish man, the ignorant man is a lesser evil. Since he doesn't know anything, and since he accepts that he doesn't know anything, atleast he remains humble, whereas a fool is a nuisance. That's why the maxim 'Half knowledge is dangerous!'

If we don't use our life for the acquaintance of knowledge, it is a sheer waste. We are indeed fools! Many of us repeat 'Brahma Satyam. Jagan midya!' Do we know the meaning of these words? Do we follow them? 'Don't ask that question! It is the fashion of the day! Who cares for its true meaning?' Pat comes the reply! This is nothing but foolishness and we are all fools.

A fool's knowledge is akin to Karna's knowledge of archery. It couldn't help him in the battlefield, in the right field. Which ever knowledge cannot prove itself in the right opportune, which ever knowledge cannot stand to our support, it is null and void.

Artificial gold may shine better than pure gold but how long? As long as it doesn't have to face a test! Once the goldsmith examines it, its true colours come out! The same way, our knowledge is helpful on

unnecessary matters! When others are facing any trouble in life we rise to the occasion and give them valuable suggestions! We rise to the level of Sankaracharya, Dakshinamurthy or Vivekananda, but when we are faced with any misery, all our knowledge or wisdom vanishes into thin air. We sit and brood over it.

The knowledge which is not helpful to us is called useless knowledge. There is a false notion that the real cause of man's misery is his agnana. In fact those who entertain such misconceptions are agnanis. Who said man is agnani? Man is definitely aware of many things ! Then what is the cause?

Man is aware of many things no doubt, but they are not useful to him in any way. So he is suffering from not lack of knowledge, but from not having proper knowledge in the right field. Did you ever see the ignorant animals crying over anything? Do they go around for movies, picnics and parties? They are happy in their own way. I wonder if we are ever happy like them.

We have some sort of happiness in our ignorance. As long as we are ignorant we may be bound by things or we may feel misery. Even if we are ignorant, as long as we are not aware of it, we remain happy. Try to understand this point through this example. A man who is ignorant of T.V. mechanism is happy by watching T.V. Once he tries to repair it, his troubles shoot up.

As long as ignorance is hidden inside, there is no misery. The moment it comes to the surface level, we face many problems. The ignorance remains deep inside an animal, but it shoots out in man due to his intelligent brain. The awareness that he is ignorant causes suffering, misery and confusion. We may appear to be well versed in things, but we are in fact ignorant.

Useless knowledge means the unnecessary information. 'Men who know most are most gloomy!' is the saying. We should add- 'Men who know most unnecessary things are most gloomy.' We have filled our brain with so much of such waste knowledge, that our poor brain has no space left for the actual, useful information.

Once upon a time, a king had three sons. The king was ageing. So he decided to crown one of his sons. Not every Tom, Dick and Harry could be a king. A king needs many talents. In addition to archery, sword fight he also needs a subtle knowledge to differentiate between good and bad. Given any situation he should rise up to the occasion. So the king decided to test his sons regarding the subtleties of their mind.

He sent for all the three sons, gave them 1000 gold coins and said, 'Look my dear sons! With the 1000 gold coins I have given you, you fill your palace. Don't add a single coin of your own. I don't insist on what you buy or where you buy! I will come and check your palaces respectively after four days.'

Any son in his middle age thinks that his father is a fool. These princes were no exception to the rule. They wondered how we can even fill a big palatial house, with a purchase of mere 1000 gold coins. He must be mad due to his old age. But all the same they fulfilled his condition in their own way since they had a feeling that their father must be having some hidden purpose behind the foolish act.

The king proceeded on his visit on the fourth day. He went first to his eldest son. My God! What a foul smell! He couldn't bear it even as he approached the building. You know what he did? He said 'Respected father! I ransacked my brain to buy something solid for my entire building. Then I hit upon a wonderful plan. Meticulously I went round 15 neighbouring villages, bought the waste from municipalities and filled my palace! How is the idea?'

Father silently proceeded to second son's house. There was a different sorrowful picture there. Hundred of flies were seen enjoying all over the palace! Some of them greeted the king by sitting all over his body! If the eldest son bought waste, did he buy flies by any chance? Of course not, but what he bought became a brooding place for them. He went round the entire kingdom and purchased flowers in the market. Within a day, they withered giving a stinking smell which attracted the flies and mosquitoes.

When the king entered the third son's house, the king was surprised at the scene there. His palace was brilliantly illuminated. The father asked, 'When your brothers filled their palaces with something, useful or not useful, why haven't you filled it up with anything?'

The son smiled and answered! 'Yes father, I have tried to fill it up with something, but I felt that something should be useful. So I bought oil, lamps, wicks and match box with the money you have given. I illuminated my palace with these. The king realized that his son filled his palace with lights. His action was symbolic of the light of knowledge he had. The father was delighted at his action and made him his successor.

God blessed us with thousand rupees in the form of our life span and directed us to fulfill our life purpose. Some people are filling their life with material comforts like palatial house, gold car etc. This life style

pollutes this life with Kama, Krodha, Lobha etc the six evils. They cannot be happy and they cannot make others happy.

The second category of people uses their brain only to a little extent. They maintain good inter personal relationships with their kith and kin. The flowers give a fragrant smell as long as they shine, but the minute they wither away, their fragrance is gone. These relationships are no better. The minute some misunderstanding crops up, they too wither away and their warmth is gone. Only a handful of people use their intelligence to acquire knowledge and to fill their lives with the light of knowledge. Such people drive out the darkness of ignorance in others.

The house that is filled with waste and dirt is not empty whereas the house that is filled with light is also empty! As long as you think only material comforts or social obligations are prime matters, you don't have any comfort or any scope for proper relationships. Anyone can develop relationship with a gnani. Since a person gets freedom with a gnani, every one is keen on maintaining relationship with him. Just as people are attracted, so are material comforts allured to them!

The fulfillment of our life purpose is directly proportionate to the way we fill it. Filling part is undoubtedly fulfilled by anyone, but how is the question. You can fill it with waste and spoil your life. You can convert it into gnana jyothi with your intelligence and can become enlightened. Instead of lighting up gnana jyothi, throwing away thousand rupees on waste is sheer foolishness. Whoever does it is a big fool! No doubt about it.

Once I invited somebody to satsang. He duly replied, 'No, thanks I am very happy with my wife and children. I find no need for such satsangs'. You mean to say all those who participate in satsangs are unhappy with their family and are brooding souls!

The family, the society, each one of these have their own priorities but they also have their own limitations. They are not the be all and end all of everything. It means we are ignorant of something and we are only vaguely aware of some other things. O.K. We are not well versed in material life but are we clear in our spiritual life? No (The knowledge of the soul alone can liberate our soul but there is no clarity there also). We go round temples, go on pilgrimages, attend many satsangs but we have no clear picture.

Somebody said, 'Going to Vaikhuntam is mukti.' If you ask my sincere opinion, I tell you It is better to sit here instead going to Vaikhuntam.' If you are here atleast you have bhakti on God, but if you go there you lose

even that. Do I sound odd? Don't get angry, try to understand me. Listen to me totally!

The strangest thing in life is the mood of our mind. What appears to be of great interest to us loses its value after sometime. We all go to Tirumala to have Lord Venkateswara's Darsan. The volunteers there drive us out and we curse them for their ruthlessness, but that only prompts us to have His darshan once again. Imagine we are allowed to stand in the presence of God for a longer time. We see Him at the most for half an hour and then start looking around us. We lose the interest of going again to Tirumala. This is the limitation of our mind and thought!

Now let's imagine we went to Vaikhuntam being blessed by our prayer or meditation. Oh! From the earth we are transported to Heaven. There our Lord is in his 'Yoganidra' on Adishesu. The attenders of Swami advise us to have His Darshan to our heart's content. Yes such a sight is a feast to our eyes. We stare at him being thrilled, but how long? An hour, two hours, at the most one whole day. After that? We get bored. We start looking around. It is because we are still in our physical body. We are still different from Paramathma. So we still differentiate that I am Jeevathma, He is Paramathma. Since we are in our physical body, we continue to retain our foolish thoughts which rose out of our ignorance.

We get a series of thoughts like, 'We saw God from the front! How does he look behind? When does he open his eyes?' We feel like seeing him from back or we feel like doing pradakshinas but let us imagine God's attenders didn't allow us to do so. We get disappointed. Disappointment, sorrow, jealousy, all these are still accompanying us.

Since we don't feel hungry or thirsty we don't have anything else to do there. Bore..bore.. bore... finally, one fine morning, Lord Vishnu opens his eyes and showering His blessings on us, asks us lovingly, 'Oh my son ! What do you want? Then we ask 'Swami! I am terribly bored here. Why don't you provide me some old newspapers, weeklies etc for time pass?' Then God answers 'My dear, you should have read those papers there on earth itself. In fact you should have studied and digested Geetha and Upanishads there itself!'

Did you understand the farce of our liberation - closeness to God with our physical body and its earthly feelings? Please don't misunderstand my intentions. What benefits do I get by criticizing you? It is neither my nature nor my job to criticize people. You try to analyze the situation.

Why are we facing this sorrow? Is it not because we are different from and away from God? Even if we reach Vaikhuntam how do we get rid of our sorrow if we are different from Him? It cannot be a unified Mukti.

You know why I told you all this? When you enter the path of spirituality but you are still entangled in such practices, it is not a useful gnana. Its purpose is not fulfilled. Of course it is one step better than being lost in earthly pleasures.

Chanting the prayer develops concentration. It is good no doubt to pray, but to assume that you will attain liberation through prayer alone, is foolishness. A bridge is provided across a river to enable you to cross it, but not to build houses there and to live in them! The same way through prayer, meditation, bhajans, songs, we should ultimately, attain the purposeful gnana- 'Sarvam Vishnumayam Jagath!' This purposeful gnana liberates our soul.

'Sarvam Vishnumayam' means even we are a part of the total entity ! Our ignorance makes us seek our single entity, but God is Omnipotent. 'Sarvam Vishnumayam'-This teaching liberates us from our limited knowledge.

Some people proclaim we attend satsang, we do many rituals and sadhanas, so we are not fools. But whatever they do, if it doesn't give them a clear perception or knowledge of moksha., it is foolishness. However great he may be, he is a fool.

Guru Sankaracharya is clarifying this point. He is indirectly aiming at a knowledge which helps in fulfilling his life purpose. Hence his word 'Moodamathe' is not at all a word of abuse. He is highlighting a point.

'Samprapte Sinnihite kale' your time is approaching. Instead of acquiring useful gnana, you are wasting your time on unnecessary aspects. You have become ignorant. Better late than never. Atleast now, come on, wake up, lead your life properly, said Sankaracharya.

What should we do to attain good benefit?

Bhajagovindam, Bhaja Govindam
Govindam, Bhaja Moodhamate'

Pray to Govinda, pray to Govinda oh fool! Pray to Govinda.

If the Hare Krishna society uses the word Bhaja Govindam, Bhaja Govindam, they definitely mean take the drums and do Bhajans. They neither tell you beyond that nor do they allow you to use your brain! But if a gnani like Sankaracharya used the word Bhaja Govindam definitely the word has a deeper meaning than its surface value. So we should analyse the message 'Bhaja Govindam, Bhaja Govindam,' properly.

Who is Govinda? What does he mean by pray to Govinda? We should think in these terms, we will try to probe into these words of the first sloka in the ensuing chapters.

Pray to Govinda Means...

We have analysed who a moodamathi means - whoever has an ignorant mind or whoever has a wrong intelligence can be termed moodamathi. Acharya is teaching Bhaja Govindam to convert this moodamathi into 'Muktamathi' (a wise person)

Many books explain this sloka as 'Oh fool, worship Govinda', both in Telugu and English, but I have a feeling this is not a true translation or interpretation of this line. It is because a fool has neither the capacity nor the eligibility to worship God. It is because we require a power to worship Govinda. That should be an Adhikrutasya Adhikaram. Try to follow me carefully.

To worship Govinda in the first place we should know who this Govinda is! Without knowing him how can we ever pray to Him? So to learn about Him, we basically require two things-capability and eligibility. That's why the words Adhikrutasya Adhikaram. Adhikari means - to study Intermediate, I should have passed tenth class in good marks. To pass thus is eligibility. That eligibility gives me a power to study Intermediate. If I don't pass, I am not entitled to go for higher studies. Similarly to worship Govinda we require some eligibility.

A fool, who doesnot have any eligibility cannot pray unto the Lord. Whatever a fool does become only a foolish act. You cannot term it bhajan. The ocean tastes salty wherever you taste it. The same way a fool's action turns out to be stupid in whatever field he puts his hands. There is nothing like a foolish act. Whatever a fool does becomes a foolish act. Sri Sankaracharya is teaching to an ignorant man but not to one who is totally a fool.

Three qualities of a moodamathi

We should understand one more aspect here. Can we identify a moodamathi? We attend many satsangs, bhajans and lectures on Gita etc. So we assume ourselves to be wise people. But are we really knowledgeable or are we ignorant? We can dissect ourselves with these three qualities. Sri Krishna highlighted these three qualities of a fool in Bhagavad Gita thus.

'Moghasa Mogha Karmani Moghagnana paranthapa'

{ *Mogha* = wasted desires [*amogham* = utilised or not wasted] Sri Rama's arrows are called *amogham*, as they were never wasted and every arrow did its assignment without fail.}

'Moghasa' all of us have desires.

Our desires may be fulfilled or not fulfilled. Fulfilled or unfulfilled, when the desire doesn't provide us happiness and when it doesn't do us good, it is moghasa - it means it is a useless desire. In one word whichever desire gives us sorrow when unfulfilled and disappointment when fulfilled, it is moghasa.

Mogha Karmani - where there is moghasa, there follows mogha karma. It is impossible to have a useless thought and a purposeful act clubbed together. An act which doesn't lead you to greater heights in spiritual path is called magha karmani by Sri Krishna. Such useless acts will neither benefit the society nor us.

Mogha gnana - useless gnana. A fool has lots of knowledge but all that is sheer waste.

Whoever has plentiful of all these - moghasa, mogha karma, mogha gnana - he is an ignorant man. Such a man makes his life miserable.

We have many reasons for our suffering in life. We blame God sometimes and we blame Saturn sometimes. Poor Saturn! Which Saturn caught this Saturn God only knows! But he has become the butt of ridicule. Here the victim of victims - poor - Saturn is not a sadist. He doesn't have any grudge against you. He gives you fruits of your actions. He is an agent to give us reward or punishment for our acts or misdeeds. That is his portfolio in the court of God. That's all. He has no intentions of evil deeds against you.

We search many reasons in the outer world for our sorrow leaving out our inner world. We don't try to think for a minute 'May be our own ignorant actions are the root cause of our suffering.' We only feel that we lack God's Grace.

Self Grace

We are suffering not because we are not blessed with God's grace. It is because we don't shower our Grace on ourselves. Just as we are blessed with the rays of the sun unasked, so do we get the grace of the Lord

unasked! So we have bountiful of God's grace. Whose blessings do we want? Some people say, 'I need the blessings of Mahatmas to get rid of my suffering! They are humble no doubt but even this is ignorance. We don't have to seek their blessings. It is their duty to bless us!

Santa mahantho nivasanti santaha
Vasanthavallokahitam charanthaha.

Like the spring season, they fill our hearts with happiness through their blessings. Is it not ignorance on our part to think that we don't have their blessings? When we have excess of God's blessings and saints blessings, why are we still suffering? It is because we don't bless ourselves! As long as we don't bless ourselves whatever blessings we have are a sheer waste.

If I tell you, bless yourself, it doesn't mean you should literally keep your hand over your head like Bhasmasur! You should continuously analyse yourself and walk on the righteous path step by step. This is the blessings you can give yourself. If you can't, it becomes foolishness.

Just as a blind man has not light in his eye, an ignorant man has no happiness in his life. Without driving out his blindness, whatever upasanas he follows, he cannot be benefited. He can only believe the existence of sun and his brightness but he cannot see the brightness of the sun with his eyes. The same way a fool also believes in the existence of God but he can never experience the blessings of God.

People tell you, 'Believe in God.' It is not necessary to believe in God. We should be able to know about God. A blind man too believes in Sun, but does it make any special difference in his life? No! In the early stages you have to believe in God, it is because you need some support to enter into spiritual path. But you should not limit yourself there. You should begin with belief and end with knowing God - knowing God is nothing but knowing you! You will understand the word know thyself better as we go deep into the topic. If we do not know thyself it becomes moghagnanam.

Tarana Vidya

Once upon a time, there lived a pandit. His drawback was he always over praised himself, belittling others. Once he had to cross a river in a boat. Knowing him fully well, nobody ever dared to travel with him. He had another weakness too. He talked non-stop. Since there was no other soul there, he picked up his conversation with the boatman himself.

'Look here! Do you know astrology?' He asked. The boatman replied, we can predict the onset of rain but we know nothing of astrology. Then the

pandit pitied him' If you don't know a great subject like astrology, one fourth of your life is a waste. The boatman ignored his comment.

After some time, the Pandit again enquired, 'Look young man, do you know grammatical rules atleast? The boatman humbly replied, 'I can only talk but I don't know the rules behind it.' Then the pandit said 'Grammar is the life behind language. If you don't know grammar half your life is a waste. The boatman pleaded, 'Sir I am tired in the course of my action. Don't add to my tiresomeness by your silly talk.'

'O.K. one last question Do you know Mathematics atleast? You require calculations when you save the money you earn.' 'But what we earn throughout the day, we spend by the evening. What does Mathematics have to do with us? I don't know Mathematics and I am not inclined to learn it' replied the boatman. Impatiently. 'My God, you don't know even Mathematics! Three fourths of your life is waste insulted the pandit as per his habit.

Within no time, there was a hole in the boat and any number of attempts made by the boatmen could not prevent water from entering the boat. The water was gushing itself in.

The boatman asked, 'Sir, do you know tarana vidya? 'The pandit coolly answered, putting beetle leaf in his mouth, 'I learnt many things but only this tarana vidya is left out.'

'Swami only three fourths of my life is a waste where as your life is gong to be a total waste. I know swimming whereas you don't. So you are going to die. Hats off to your knowledge.' So saying the boatman dived into the water and reached safely ashore.

Now tell me what does a boatman require - swimming or mathematics, astronomy etc? There is no harm even if he is not learned in these fields, but he should definitely know tarana vidya (swimming). Other branches are good no doubt, but for him purposeful knowledge is the art of swimming. For that matter, nowadays we all should know tarana vidya. It is because the trains and buses we travel in are ultimately landing in water.

To lead our life to its full and in a justifiable way, we should require a proper knowledge. Other branches of knowledge are not waste but we should give greater preference to the right branch.

Study, study and why die
Study a study that offers no death

Studied and crores died
Viswadabhi Rama Vinura Vema!

Many people acquired many branches of knowledge and ultimately died. How much ever you learn you cannot drive out misery. So you should seek spiritual knowledge which can fulfil your life purpose.

Foolishness - a signal

If we analyse thus, we can visualize our foolishness. It is not a great crime or a sin to be a fool. Is it a sin or crime to fall sick? No! It is only a signal to you. It signals to you that some part of your body has a problem. That signal is helpful to you since through that you can get rid of your disease.

Of course your ego may be offended if you realize you are a fool, but it is a good signal. It tells you wisely that you are not wise, that you are covered by Maya.

You should realize this signal and should come out of your Maya. Wrong outlook, but you should not feel insulted.

Sri Sankaracharya who addressed us Moodamathe also gave us an explanation for it. You should not interpret Sastra as you like it. You should give a logical answer to it That is the greatness of our Sanatana Dharma. Of all the dharmas, Arsha Dharma is more logical you find more of non-verifiable beliefs in other dharmas.

One great man says 'I am the last God sent prophet. My words are the ultimate dictum.' Some else says you get liberation only through God's son! How do we accept them as truth? In case we wish to probe into them, those dharmas don't encourage us to do so. They tell us, it's God's verdict. We have no right to question it. It becomes criticizing God. We have to keep our mouth shut. Arsha Dharma is not like that. It gives a logical reasoning for every statement. It gives us scope to analyse for ourself and then to accept it. Sri Sankaracharya, who spreads our Sanathana Dharma explains to Moodamati.

'Samprapte Sannihite kale, nahi, nahi, rakshati dukrunkarane'

'Kale means Yama. When we receive Yama's call, when we reach death bed, this dukrunkarane will not help us. Our family life is compared to ocean. It is samsara sagaram. It is in the form of death-mrutyurupa. To cross this 'mrutyurupa sansarasagaram' these grammatical rules will not help us. But we think these are the ultimate. Our car or scooter can take us to the threshold of Satsang but can they take us inside? Materialistic education has certain limitations.

Nothing else, except Bhaja Govindam can save us. It doesn't mean materialistic life or things are waste and that we should give them up totally. Such an extreme thought also is foolishness. Every thing has its own use. Nobody can deny it. If you keep this use in mind and act accordingly, there is no problem. Instead if you proclaim 'I will give up this world' it becomes foolishness. Is the world clinging to you? When it is not clinging to you, how do you say I will give it up? What you have to give up is your agnana and not the world.

Jatasya maranam dhruvam. Death is inevitable to every man. 'At death's door dukrunkarane will not help you. So pray to Govinda!' It means what? It means dukrumkarane does not give you immortality.

Immortality means knowledge of thyself. This line doesn't tell you if you do Bhaja Govindam you will not die. Life is not complete without death. When old people are looked down upon these days, deathlessness is a greater curse to them. Death is irrevocable in Nature. Whether you are a gnani or agnani, Nature continues to do its duty unperturbedly.

What Sri Sankaracharya tried to convey to us is - this life of us, as a human being, alone can help us to attain the knowledge of the self. This benefit dies with our death. Instead of realizing this truth if we idle our time away in other aspects, they cannot save us. So we should find a way out of this life cycle before we reach our death.

'Nahi nahi rakshati dukrunkarane' - 'dukrunkarane' actually means a lesson in Panini grammar. He says this grammatical lesson doesn't save you. Grammar never promised to save you anywhere. So you should not take the literal meaning here. We should see the symbolic meaning behind it. It means whatever aspects we are deeply involved in, ignoring self realization, those pleasures may please us but in the last minute they ditch us.

Can we deceive Death

We can deceive anybody but can never deceive Lord Yama, Lord of Death. Yama must have seen millions of clever people like us. Yama is problematic in another way too. He doesn't differentiate between gnani - agnani, rich-poor, king-peasant etc. In fact I strongly feel that He is the best example of a true communist who treats everyone equally.

'Samprapte Sannihite Kale' - when we reach deathbed doesn't mean it applies only to old people. Death is not limited to old people alone. It pervades all of us. Yama is at close proximity with us in the form of buses, lorries and auto rikshaws. Buffalo alone is not the vehicle of Lord

yama. It was in bygone days. Now every mode of transport is his mode of transport too ! So death toll is not limited to old people alone. If we think so, it is merely stupidity. We can never predict when death puts his icy hands on us.

Actually, if you ask me the truth, it is wrong to think that we will die some where in future. Along with birth, death is closely knit. Death follows us closely like our own shadow. Then how do we cheat him? If we desire to cheat death it will only boomerang on us!

Once a great pandit spoke elaborately on Garuda Puranam. Being impressed by it, an intelligent asked him in private; 'Swami' is there any means to avoid death? Then the swami explained that the knowledge of Vedantha alone is the best means.

'I can't learn all that! Teach me an easiest and quickest way out of it', said the wise man. Swami answered that our gimmicks or techniques cannot fool God of death. But the man insisted,' No swami, there will definitely be a way out. Please teach me that technique.' He pestered him like the untiring Vikramarka.

Being tired of his nagging, the saint said 'Listen my son! Yama is proclaimed to be an incarnation of dharma. He has one 'pasam' (a sort of a chain). He throws it on a man only once. If you can escape that attempt by any clever chance, He will not attack you again. It is very much against His rules to repeat His performance! So how best you can escape Him is left to your intelligence.

As a first step this intelligent man sent word for the world's best astrologers and made them decipher his last minute. That was at midnight of Jan 5th, 2005 at 1-45! The next step, he planned very meticulously. He collided with Tusads Museum in London and made them create 100 statues of himself in lying posture.

Then he constructed a palacial hall in his house and arranged these sleeping statues there. Every night he slept among these 100 statues. Exactly similar mattresses, pillows and bedsheets! Total 101 beds! It's difficult to differentiate between him and his true replicas. His own wife was utterly confused. Many a time she woke up a statue mistaking it to be her husband! When his own wife who has lived with him for many years couldn't identity him, can Lord Yama who sees him, for the first time identity him? 'No, He can't,' thought the intelligent man.

Days rolled by. The much dreaded moment had at last arrived.Yama arrived exactly dot on time, as per the calculations of the astrologers. Even Yama was taken aghast! Is it dream or reality! He couldn't apply his

pasam, but He also did not feel like going back empty handed. Then He struck upon a wonderful plan. He spoke aloud, 'What a pity! This gentleman has taken all pains to avoid death, but he has committed a silly mistake!' Immediately the man sat up and asked, 'what mistake?' 'This is the mistake, come on' He said and took him with him.

Is it possible to cheat Yama? Just think! Nothing but the knowledge of the soul can save us. That's why Sri Sankaracharya said, 'Nahi Nahi rakshati dukrunkarane' dukrunkarane actually means grammatical lesson, but here we should understand a micro meaning in it.

The letter 'kru' indicates the act of doing something. Some people feel that doing our action alone leads us to liberation but Sri Sankaracharya opposes this principle. 'Na karmanaa Na prajaya' also supports this statement. Our actions (good deeds) may bring us blessings but not liberation. Both the Karmas- good and bad are binding and the minute the impact of good deed vanishes, kshine punye martyalokam visanti' - We are born again into this world,' said Lord Krishna too.

To attain something which is other than you, you require karma (actions). To learn about others also, you require 'Karma'. One who seeks knowledge is defined as 'Karta (the doer). This kartha, through the karma of learning about others, knows about others. Then when he should learn about himself, what should he do? How should a karta know about karta (himself). Since he is not different from himself, to learn about himself, to acquire self-realization, he doesnot have to do any karma. Since 'know you' it leads to liberation, since liberation doesn't need karma, karma can never provide liberation.

Karma reaps the consequences of its actions. 'Karta' who has followed good or bad visible deeds, has to bear the fruits of suffering or pleasure. So he has to be, bhokta for those feelings. We require an outerbody to bear the fruits of consequences and we require an inner body to help us do 'bhoga sadhana' we acquire body as we are born. 'Jaatasya maranam dhruvam.' All that is born has to die. Now tell me, how can karma liberate us from the life cycle? How can it put an end to our limitations?

When we analyse in a proper way (through Vedanta) we arrive at the knowledge of the self. This knowledge helps us to reason out 'I am a witness to all the karmas.' We get rid of the false belief, 'I am kartha,' When I am not karta, how can I be a bhokta? Only karta turns into bhokta.

When we realize, 'I am a witness to kartutva bhoktutvas' why do we bother, about body, life and death? Think wisely.

The teachings of 'know thyself' alone can liberate us. A boat can help us cross a river but it cannot help us travel on road. The same way, karma can provide you a pure heart but it cannot provide us moksha.

I know your question. When karma cannot provide moksha, why did Sri Sankaracharya utter the words Bhaja Govindam - worship the Lord Govinda, worship the Lord Govinda, worship the Lord Govinda. He could have said attain gnana, attain gnana, attain gnana, isn't worshipping the Lord also a sign of Karma?

Here, we should understand the word Bhaja Govindam very carefully.

Bhaja Sevayam

Bhaja means to serve. Bhaja Govindam means serve Govinda. First of all. We should get the answer to the question who is Govinda? Once one Vaishnavite told me, 'Look your guru Adi Sankaracharya said 'Bhaja Govindam' instead of saying 'Bhaja Sankaram' or 'Bhaja Eeswaram.' What does it connote? Doesn't it convey that our Vaishnavite cult is greater than your Saivaite?

I explained to him 'Please don't dissect our dharma as your cult or our cult. Our Arsha dharma is special since it prays to the same God in different names. First of all you understand the true meaning of Govinda.

The letter 'Go' itself has many connotations 'Go' means the earth, the five senses, the Veda etc.

Govinda means :

a) 'Gavam patihī - Indriyanam patihī' (boss to the indriyas - senses) since our body is a combination of Indriyas he is boss to all the dehas. Since this world (jagat) is a combination of all dehas he is boss to the world (jagatpati).

This is a meaning. Now we will go deep into it.

b) 'Gobhīrvakyenaiva Vidyate Labhyate iti govinda' - If we take the meaning of 'go' here as Veda one who is described by the sentences of Vedas alone, one who is attained by Vedas alone is Govinda.

Who is described or attained by Veda alone? 'Brahma!' 'Satyam Gnanam anantham Brahma! Since Brahma is Satyam, gnanam, anantham, Brahma is not restricted to caste, quality or action. Only when there is a second element does the distinction of caste, quality action arise.

The undivided Brahma doesnot have these differences. We can learn about the caste, quality, and action of the things which contain them through the outwardly seen dimentions. How do we acquire Brahma who is devoid of these? Since, one who learns about him also is Brahma; he cannot learn it through measurements. When no other measurement helps 'Sabda (Veda) pramanam alone is the possible source.

Since we attain or understand Brahman through Veda Pramanam. Govinda means Parabrahma. So 'Govinduni bhajinchu' worship Govinda means attain 'Brahma Gnana!' 'Swaroop Gnana'.

Your next question is - bhajinchu means 'sevinchu'-serve. Then how do you use the word attain gnana? The words in the Sastras have to be understood carefully from their contextual meaning. Otherwise we land up in total confusion. Now listen to me carefully.

If God is other than us-fine, we can serve him with fruits, flowers, pooja and bhajans - both physically and emotionally, But God is Omnipotent, Omnipresent Omniscient, and All Pervading. How can we serve Him physically or emotionally?

'Hruddserjuna tistathi' - If we accept this Geeta vakya as a measurement for the statement 'God is in our hearts', realizing the presence of God in our heart is to serve Him. So if he tells you to attain Brahma Gnana to fulfil your life purpose, it means serve the Paramatma.

'Bhaja Govindam' this word itself is a kind of message. In other words it is also a proclamation. It proclaims attain 'atma gnana' before you reach death bed. Whoever ignores this message or dictum, whoever doesn't look inside, is definitely a fool.

If he says, Oh moodamati Govinduni bhajinchu' oh fool pray to God, it simply means one who doesn't pray is a fool. Do we tell a person while eating 'you eat'? The same way, if a person has Purushardha Vivekam and determination, we don't have to tell him 'Govindam bhaja'. Sri Sankaracharya is teaching 'Govindam Bhaja' to a fool, who doesn't have these good qualities.

Purushardha Vivekam

Let's see carefully what this purushardha vivekam means - 'Sarvaihi purushaihi ardhya' - whatever everybody longs for is purushardham. There are four purushardhas - dharma, ardha, Kama and moksha. But if we carefully study the essential purushardha is moksha. That's why moksha is called parama purushardha.

'Dharma' - Here dharma means acquiring blessings through good deeds. We follow the Vedic rituals like yagna or yaga to attain a place in heaven. Why do we long for heaven?

It is because we assume it is better there than here!

In case any member of the Heaven comes down and tells us 'Your earth is heaven on earth. This is better than Heaven' do we long for Heaven? Then what are we longing for in Heaven? A liberation from the existing state! What does it mean? The existing state is not as good as we expect it to be! The sum and substance of it is we long for liberation from the existing state in the form of Heaven.

'Ardha' - The normal meaning of ardha is money. When we refer to the ardha in purushardhas it means security. We long for a security in our life. If any body asks what do you want? You want security or liberation from insecurity? We do say security but we really mean liberation from insecurity.

'Kamam' - Kamam means a desire for happiness. If we have a desire for happiness it means we are now in sorrow. So, what are we longing for? Happiness or liberation from sorrow? If somebody tells us! 'By the happiness you seek. You will not be rid of your misery' do we seek happiness?

To sum it up - through dharma, ardha, Kama - we are longing for liberation - liberation from the existing state, liberation from insecurity, liberation from sorrow! This liberation is called Moksha. Since we seek moksha through all the other purushardhas, moksha is treated. 'Parama Purushardha. To arrive at the knowledge moksha is parama purushardha is purushardha vivekam. Since we don't have this discriminating knowledge we are spoiling our life.

In case a fool devoid of this discriminating knowledge prays to God, he prays for money and happiness, he prays out of ego, he prays for personal gains. Such a prayer doesn't minimize his foolishness. That's why Sri Sankaracharya says 'Nahi nahi rakshati!' So let's use our reasoning power and divert our dharmardha kamamokshas for attaining moksha.

Before we give this physical body as a man we should attain parama purushardha. Man is younger brother of God and elder brother of animals. The angels above him and the animals below him have no right to do the karma. Only man's body is entitled to do the karma (Body here includes not only the body but also his brain and heart). Animals too eat

and move around. Are these actions not karma? Eating and moving are only actions related to Nature but they are not karmas. It is because the sastras advocate that karma is one which arises out of the feeling 'I am kartha.'

Animals don't have a free will! Nature has designed them in such a way. The animals have no choice whereas man has choice. We have a free will to decide whether to eat vegetarian or non-vegetarian food. But does a tiger or a cow have a free will to decide what to eat?

Karma is something which is done with a feeling of 'I am kartha'. So only man has a right to do karma. Having got this unattainable janma if we can't attain Atma gnana isn't it foolishness?

We begin our life as a fool and we should leave this body as a liberated soul! A wonderful incident took place in Sri Ramana Maharshi's life. A family came to visit Ramana Maharshi in his ashram. There was a small kid with them. Looking at him the baby called him 'thaatha' (grand father). The parents corrected her, 'No don't call him thaatha, call him Bhagavan. But the Maharshi smiled and said, 'What the baby said is correct. I am thaatha! 'One who knows about himself is thaatha. The message of Ramana Maharshi is that every one should know about himself before he becomes a grandfather!

So we should be committed to moksha – should be 'Mumukshuvu'-with a proper knowledge of purushardhas and make our life worth loving.' If I am committed to moksha how can I lead my family life? 'is the first question that arises in us? We also have a mistaken identity that such a seeker should live in Ashramas alone! These are our assumptions only. We can go in search of truth and still be in midst of commotion. For instance if a man is an irritable soul he plays all his roles accordingly. He leads the life of an angry husband, angry father, angry friend, angry officer etc. The same way one who is committed to liberation leads his life as a husband, father, and officer in those terms only.

Instead of leading the life of a samsari in an ashram, it is better to lead the life of free soul amidst a crowd.

If we don't turn out to be 'mumukshuvu' it means we are not using our mind. Whatever the mind can give us we should reach out for them. If we use it only for outwardly things it is as good as not using it! Using our mind for simple things is like using a diamond as a paper weight. Not using the mind in a proper way is called Moodathvam'. Sri Sankaracharya advocates this point to us. This teaching drives out our age old lethargy totally.

In the ensuing slokas, Sri Sankaracharya drives out our confusion and unnecessary interests through his good teaching and takes us to the path of liberation.

Bhaja Govindam bhaja Govindam
Govindam bhaja moodamaate!

Pray unto the Lord for Moksha

'Samprapte sannihite kale' - The saints proclaim that we should fulfil our life purpose before we die. 'Man is born not to be born again.' When we understand through 'know thyself' that we are not the doers and that we are not responsible for the consequences, we automatically give up the ego 'I' So, there is no need for yet another janma. Even if there is rebirth, there is no problem. For that matter, I don't mind being born again a crore times! When we learn God is truth, life is temporary, how many ever times we are born, there is no scope for misery in our life. So, we are born as human beings only to 'know thyself'.

Sooner the better. We should seek this knowledge as early as possible. Most of us postpone this most important thing to our last days. It is height of foolishness since this knowledge teaches us our life purpose.

If this requisition of knowledge hinders our daily chores, there is some reason in postponing it till our old age. A true spiritual practice never comes in the ways of our regular practice. If you feel your practice is hindering your normal routine, it either means you are not doing it properly or you don't have a proper understanding of spiritual path. It is because the spiritual knowledge. Sadhana, instead of hindering your normal course of life, helps a great deal to follow it better. Sri Sankaracharya explained this aspect very clearly in his book 'Vyavahara Panchakam'.

You have a wonderful plan of your future - 'I will work for another five years and will take up voluntary retirement. I will give away a share of my property to my children. I will deposit some amount in bank for my future and multiply some amount by giving it for interest. The interests will suffice for my monthly expenditure. Then I can spend the whole time on spiritual path alone.'

I sincerely hope your plans should work wonderfully well. God forbid such a thing, but something might happen before that. Don't ignore the buses, lorries, auto rickshaws round you! If everything goes on strictly according to plan, it's fine, but don't forget Lord Yama is following you like your shadow.

Those who wish to walk in the spiritual path, should not think of God, but should think of death ! The deeper the thought of death, the greater the progress in spiritual path. It is foolishness to ignore the most inevitable.

The money you deposit in chit fund company - you may or may not get, children - you may or may not beget, job - you may or may not get, diseases - you may or may not get, death - you may or... no you will definitely get it !

Many things come and go in our life. For everything there is a negation. It may or may not happen. But there is no negation for death. If anything is certain in life, it is only death! How do we deem ourselves intelligent when we ignore the most inevitable thing in our life?

Our elders bless us with the words 'Satamanam Bhavati'. It doesn't mean we die after 100 years. Nobody can predict when death lays its icy cold hands on our physical body. The time may be unpredictable but its attack is most inevitable.

To think of the most inevitable death lays a foundation stone for your spiritual path. A thought of death doesn't mean keep chanting. 'I will die, I will die'. It only means we should have an intellectual awareness that Yama may put an end to our life at any point of time.

There is a beautiful story in Katopanishad. It seems a small boy named Nachiketa spoke to Lord Yama and attained knowledge of soul! What does it imply? Nachiketa visualised (through thought) death and attained immortality. The visualization of death transformed an ordinary boy called Venkataraman into Ramana Maharishi.

Our elders made many attempts to make us realize this impending death. Wearing Vibhuti on the forehead is one such attempt! 'Dahana Yogyaha dehaha' keeping the vibhudi on the forehead makes us implant a thought in our head that this life is temporary. While applying it we chant the sloka 'Om Trayambakam Yajamahe' the sloka on Parameswara. This mantra means - just as a ripe fruit gets separated from its stalk and falls down, let us who pray to you be separated from death. Even this is a thought of death.

A flower attains beauty when it opens out on its own but not when we force it to open out. The latter method only destroys the flower. So is the case with us. Giving up useless things forcefully is like opening a flower forcefully! The acceptance of Death automatically promotes a desire for

immortality. It also enables us to ruthlessly give up unnecessary things and to lead on the righteous path.

Our foolish thought that death is far away is making us postpone the attainment of righteous things. We are filling up our life with most useless things. 'Nahi nahi rakshati' - These unnecessary things cannot save us from the cycle of life and death.

This is a wonderful book on converting an ignorant man into a sage. We have already analysed that a foolishman doesn't long for the actual purushardha. In this sloka Sri Sankaracharya analyses the other purushardhas like artha and Kama

Mooda! Jahehe dhanagama trushnam
Kuru sadbhudhim manasi vitrushnaam!
Yallabhase nija karmopaththam
Vittam tena vinodaya chittam - "Bhaja Govindam".

Oh ignorant man! Leave the craving for wealth. Develop a good habit of non-desirous attitude. Whatever you attain lawfully due to the effort you put in, accept it and be contented with that.

'Dhanagama trushnam jahehe' - Sri Sankaracharya proclaims-leave the craving to earn more and more of money. Mind you, he asked you to leave the desire for money, but not money itself. Asking us to give up money is an impractical advice. Some people don't have a proper understanding of things and so say 'Money is maya.' Immediately if you tell them, 'O.K. if money is maya, come on give away all your money to me', they become dumbfounded.

Money is maya no doubt, but still it has many purposes. To lead a happy, comfortable life, you need money, According to our Hindu culture God's power is 'money'. The Goddess of wealth, Lakshmi Devi is the better half of our God Srimannarayana. So there is no point in advocating to giving up money. What we have to give up is agnana, but not money!

If we get knowledge of the soul by giving up money, don't you think all the poor people who suffer in poverty should have already attained the said knowledge? Why didn't they attain it? So, what we have to give up is agnana!

Money is something which helps us buy many material things. It is a buying power. This buying power is a must! It is a must not only for an ordinary man but even for the Head of a religious order. If you wish to do philanthropic service also, you require money. So we should give up the

foolish thought that by giving up money we can attain peace. What lands us in trouble is not money, but a desire for money.

Money – Craving

A craving for money means a foolish desire to amass more and more of wealth. A wise man longs for money for his necessities. A stupid man creates necessities for money's sake. Now, we should analyse carefully why man has this craze for money. Everyone knows theoretically that it's enough if he has sufficient money for his basic needs. Why then is this mad rush for money?

Nobody ever desires money for money's sake. Nobody ever thinks or says that he acquires the knowledge of the self through money! In fact money cannot give you that knowledge! We require money for security. You ask anybody why do you long for more money? Pat comes the reply, 'to have a sense of security. In case I fall into troubles, the money I save for a rainy day comes to my rescue!'

So, we have learnt that what man longs for, in the name of security is liberation from a feeling of insecurity! So a strong desire to come out of the insecurity leads to a strong desire for more and more money. But the irony is a greater wealth leads to a greater insecurity.

For instance, one man thinks he can lead a secured life if he earns one lakh of rupees. But does he stop there? No! He falls a prey to the foolish thought that if he earns more, he will have a greater security. The result? It turns to be a craving for money - a craving for ten lakhs, one crore... he has to spend many sleepless nights in planning and in acquiring the huge amount. However much he earns, his desire remains a desire. There is no liberation from his feeling of insecurity. Not only that! The money which gave him some comforts when he had in its limits turns out to be a cause of discomfort. He has to plan ways and means of safeguarding it. He is for ever scared of problems from every nook and corner. That's the reason why Sri Sankaracharya is asking us to give up the craze for money.

If earning money is important, to utilize it in the proper way for a proper cause is much more important. Most of the rich people may be rich in matters of earning money, but they are the poorest of the poor in matters of enjoying it! They know only to earn, but not to spend. Even if they spend, they spend in a wrong way. They throw away money on playing cards; in race courses-all means to bring their own downfall and to procure problems. A craving for money lands anyone into such a trouble ultimately.

Let me tell you one more aspect - A man who has a craving for money, invariably turns out to be an immoral man. It is because you cannot earn easy money through fair means! So you develop the habit of taking bribes from under the table. It becomes such a bad habit that even if you are offered food on the table, you put your hand under the table automatically, instead of putting it on the table!

The man made government may not punish this immoral or unlawful behaviour since the heads of the government may be true replicas of these people. Or the immoral people may devise ways and means of escaping punishment. But in God's creation there is an irrevocable law! You cannot escape from it or cheat it. You must have heard the saying 'Itarulerugakunna Eeswaruderugadaa! It means if others don't know, doesn't God know? Don't assume God to be settled in Mount Kailash or Vaikuntam far away from us! It's a wrong notion. They are not limited to these two places alone.

Eeswara is the protector of the law of Dharma and Karma. He is Karma! He gives you the fruits of Karma! The fruits of karma are given in the form of Dharma. That form of Dharma is Eeswara again. So the government of Eeswara definitely punishes the unlawful character. He may be an aristocrat, but constantly he faces some problems or miseries throughout. There is no doubt about it.

Isn't the craving for money making us do unlawful karmas to attain miserable fruits of those actions? So, we have no other choice except to give up this craving. What 'sadhana' should we do to give it up? We should give up the misconception that money alone gives us comfort and a feeling of security. We should root out this feeling through our wise, reasoning ability. This is the 'Sadhana' required.

There is no harm in earning the money required for our basic needs. But when it is acquired beyond our means, it leads to misery. There is a wonderful saying in Hindi - sona (gold) agar jyada hojatha hai, tho sona (sleep) kam hojathi hai. If money is in excess, it drives away a sound sleep is the meaning. How true!

What a good day!

Once a student asked me 'What is a good day according to you?' I answered 'The day I can sleep peacefully, calmly, happily without any disturbance, I deem it as a good day. When we spend the whole day on unnecessary things, we cannot sleep peacefully that night. If we have a sound sleep it means we led a good life in the morning. So which ever day gives us a 'good night' can also be a good day'.

If we have the required quantity of money to keep our day a 'good day' it will suffice. Money should be like the slippers we wear. We can walk properly only if the slippers are of the right size. If it is smaller it bites us and if it is larger it makes us fall! The same way if the money is less it bites us (makes us suffer) if it is more it makes us fall (into miseries) If it is of the right quantity, our life runs smooth.

Vedas proclaimed that we should earn sufficient money in the righteous path and lead a comfortable life. There is 'Sri Suktam' in Veda. That starts thus 'Hiranya Varnam Harineem... This is in praise of Goddess Lakshmi. The word harineem used for her conveys two meanings.

Her nature is akin to deer -

Deer is supposed to be restless. 'Lakshmi stotarangabhanga chapalaa' - Sri Sankaracharya defined Goddess Lakshmi Devi's appearance and nature thus in 'Sri Sivaaparadha kshama strotram! Whoever runs madly after money, who ever craves for showers of Goddess Lakshmi instead of God Vishnu, Goddess Lakshmi instead of showering her blessings on him, troubles him with her restless nature.

2. Brings you closer to Hari - On the contrary who ever prays to her only for their needs, whoever spends their excess money wisely for a good cause, is blessed by Goddess Lakshmi. She acts like a mother and takes them closer to Hari.

In simpler words money can drive out our peace or can drive us close to Hari. Harinchu- destroys, Harisannidhanam - proximity to Hari. Harineem means both these, based on our actions. So we should act very wisely in matters of money. We should control our craving for money. Many people are very much interested in spiritual path but if you ask them to shell down a single pie they cannot be seen again. An acquaintance of mine once said to me, 'Our Hindu culture is being neglected. Conversion is rapidly increasing. Man is losing peace. You should advocate our Hindu dharma and bring awareness in our people. Then I asked anxiously 'O.K. fine! I don't mind propagating, but first tell me how much you will contribute to propagate our religion. To conduct this dharma yagna, to arrange religious meetings, I need money. To go round from one village to another, to stop the conversions, I need money. So please tell me how much you are ready to share!'

'Oh! Don't let that bother you! God is there to help us. Money automatically flows in for such righteous cause...' he consoled me. Still I didn't leave him. I strongly asked him, 'Oh! That's nice! But when God showers me with money thus, I will return your money to you. Presently you give me a meagre share. That's all'. He and I have become strangers!

This is just an example. I have seen umpteen number of such Dharma lovers in my life. Sri Vivekananda said that we can't pray simultaneously to both the devil of Money and God. As long as we are caught in the net of money there is no scope for any godly feeling in us. So we should give up a craving and a craze for money.

We can buy books with money but not wisdom. We can buy good mattress with money but not sound sleep. We can increase the number of our kith and kin with money but not love and affection. We can get comforts but not happiness. Of course we do require a comfortable life, but if we long only for comforts and for money to provide them, liberation becomes a mirage. If we have a little comfort we can allocate some time for spiritual development. Because we have a reasonable amount of money and comfort, we are able to spend two hours in satsang.

When we acquire money with good goal and in a righteous way, its purpose is served. If we long for more of wealth, we don't achieve any progress. 'Dachina Dhana mantayu dharani palu, tudaku dayadula palu.' However carefully we handle the money we amass, either goes into the land or to the relatives. So we should give up the binding craving for money. But how?

'Kuru sadbuddhim manasi vitrushnaam' - our mind is craving. It has an unquenchable thirst for unlimited money. Sri Sankaracharya says 'come on liberate your mind from this unquenchable thirst.'

The minute they listen to the message, 'Leave the thirst for money, 'some people go to another extreme. They would have spent all their life in amassing wealth, but at once they give up their money and go to Kasi or Hrishikesh with the slogan 'chalo kasi, bano sanyasi.' Their body will be on the banks of the holy river Ganges, but their mind is locked in money. Though they turn out to be sanyasi, though they change their style of dressing, their nature doesn't change. Instead of leaving money in the native place and brooding over it at the banks of the river, it is better to lead a normal life and to acquire knowledge of the self.

If one who runs for money is an ignorant man, one who runs away from money too is equally an ignorant man (nay, a little more). It is because the root cause of their running is money. When money is at the centre, there is no end to their rat race. Then how is the liberation from the craving for money possible? Do we get knowledge by merely giving up material comforts or by money? No! The mind will not understand the detachment on its own. So we should sit with it and explain clearly. 'Look here my dear mind! Money makes many things, but there are many things without money...' When the mind is impressed by such a

teaching, it helps us to come out of the lust for money and makes our journey on spiritual path smooth and easy.

Within our heart if we chant money, money but without we chant 'Ram, Ram' there is no use. Even if we call Rama Oh God come and sit in my heart' where is the place for Rama? Already the lust for money has settled in our heart on a big throne. These outward attempts increase our thirst but they can't minimize it. We need a good intellect to get rid of it.

'Sadbhuddim manasi vitrushnam kuru' - with good intellect, we should drive out the craving for money. Mind means 'mischayatmi kantahkarana vrutti'. When this mind is used for attaining a good cause, it can be termed good intellect. If we can wake up this good intellect it will take care of our mind. It will guide it in the proper direction, but we are not providing such an opportunity. We are failing miserably by controlling our mind with the mind.

In a hierarchy government if a subordinate does any wrong, you should complain to his boss. Then he can take any action. Instead if you complain to his peer, there is no use! Since they are equals, they try to defend each other! The same way the purpose will be defeated if you apply mind to your mind. You should apply its boss - the intellect. That's the idea of Sri Sankaracharya.

Intellect - a true intellect

A young man quite often did petty thefts and was taken to court many times. Even the judge was sick of seeing his face repeatedly. Though he wanted to punish him severely, his thefts were silly items like doormats, flower pots, clothes hanged outside etc. They don't demand a severe punishment.

One day the judge hit upon a wonderful plan and sent word for his father. Pointing to his son, he said, 'Look here! Your son is stealing many things. He is caught again and again. I am sick of looking at his face. You counsel him properly and tell him to avoid being punished. The father replied 'Yes your honour! I have time and again told him so. I am sick of repeating it but he has not changed. I told him if you do a crime; see that you are not caught by the police. I even told him to learn from my example. When I can escape, he is not able to! He is so stupid.' When the father himself is bad, how can the son walk on the righteous path? Such a teaching is more horrible than mindlessness.

What we require is good intellect but never such an attitude. How do we

attain this good intellect? By understanding aptly elder's sayings and the teachings of the sastras and by following the teaching we learn.

We should not think that since we are living, we know all about life or we will know all about life automatically. It is ignorance to assume that our intellect blossoms forth with our age! When you put on the switch, the bulb glows. The minute you switch it off, it stops. You mean to say you know all about electricity! Isn't it ignorance to say I have 60 years of experience with the switches and bulbs, so I know everything about electricity?

You can learn about electricity by studying carefully books on electricity but not by the practice of playing with the switches. The same way, you cannot learn about life by merely growing old.

To learn about life you should study the sastras. Whatever we cannot learn on our own, we can attain by studying sastras. That knowledge sharpens our intellect and the sharpened intellect guides our mind in the right path.

Our sastras and dharmas are not just meaningless talk of one single man. Our dharma is the dharma of our life. Our sastras teach how to lead our life in the path of dharma. Our sastras are based on the truths arrived by great rishis after their continuous efforts in the quest for truth. If our sastras are appreciated even today by the wiseacres of the universe it is because of the fact they are not based on one man's opinion!

If one man gives a write up of his opinions, there is every chance of mis-interpretations in it. But our sastras are devoid of it. It is because they are based on the age old truths but not on an individual's opinion. So as long as the truths remain in the world, our sastras have their hold on people. They have their weightage. There is no doubt about it.

Somebody suggested to me, 'One sect of religious people are distributing their religious books freely. Why don't you also do it? That is the only way of retaining our sastras'. I answered this way 'Those people are distributing books because they have a fear that their religion will be totally forgotten. But we don't have to entertain such fears. It is because our religion is based on facts. As long as the age old (sanathana) facts are there, this dharma remains. That's why our dharma remains still and will remain still in spite of non-prapaganda. Because it has lots of weightage it is still guiding us without any effort on our part. How do we expect to get good intellect or darshan of God without studying such a standard sastra?

You should liberate your mind from the craving for money through the good intellect. You attain by studying the sastras. Instead of doing this, if you outwardly give up material comforts like money or house as a result of your hasty decision, but if you keep on brooding over them even as you meditate, there is no use! 'One who controls his indriyas outwardly without a proper gnana is 'midhya charaha saha uchyaate - midhyachari' proclaimed Krishna in the 3rd chapter of Gita. Midhyachari is one who has half knowledge. Half knowledge is more dangerous than ignorance. So Sri Sankaracharya suggests that we should have a control over the longing of the mind by developing a good intellect! He further added - 'Nija Karma Upatham Vittam' - whatever money you earned through your sincere effort, 'tena vinodaya chittam' lead a happy life with that by controlling your mind. Work hard, earn as much as you require for your necessities and lead a happy life without brooding over it.

First of all we should give up false notion that we can be happy only if we have surplus money. The reality is (of course those who entertain a foolish notion may not agree with me) there is no connection between money and happiness.

If we get happiness only through money, we should feel miserable in deep sleep which is devoid of thoughts of money. But we are all very happy in deep sleep. This is the experience of not one but all! Did you ever watch the bubbling happiness of an innocent boy who runs over a butterfly? Happiness is writ all over his face. Can we experience that peace or that happiness even if we wear a Kohinoor Diamond? Think calmly! If money is the source of happiness, elders should be happier than children. But the reverse is true! So, this is proof positive that there is no connection between money and happiness.

It is foolishness to assume that the money which gives you comfort also gives you happiness. This foolishness hinders our progress. Money may provide your riches but not richness of the mind, mind you!

Jesus proclaimed in the Bible, 'A camel may get into the hole of the needle but a rich man can never step into Heaven.' Who is termed richman here? We should understand this word properly. One who leads his life totally attached to money - one who thinks money is his life, money is his atma, money is his sole objective such a man is the rich man. His mind is polluted with money! He doesn't think of anything else! So, he is not entitled to step into Heaven. (Every rule has an exception. There are some rich people who spend their money wisely with philanthropic attitude. This statement is not applicable to them).

Leave alone an entry to Heaven, such a kind of richman cannot live in peace on Earth too. He can't live happily with his family too. I have seen quite a number of such people. They are destroying their own families through their own hands.

'My husband is good no doubt, but he hardly spends any time with me. The whole day, his every thought is centred round money but not round our family. I have borne enough of his madness. Now it is beyond my capacity. I want to get divorced from him. I would like to bring up my children in a proper way so that they can come up in life. Please bless me!' told me a woman with a heavy heart. What should I answer her?

Should I say 'No madam! Taking divorce is against Hindu tradition! Husband is an incarnation of God. Whatever problems you face with him, bear with him patiently!' But will she be happy with such a man? Whoever thinks money alone is his ultimate target has to face such a situation ultimately!

I know the answer of such men, 'Why are we after money? Is it for our personal comfort? I am slogging day and night to keep my wife and children in comfort, to provide them luxuries.' But my answer is only this. 'Please remember that your family doesn't require your money alone, it requires you also!' If your family has to live in happiness, it requires your love and affection more than your money and wealth. Can you deny it?

You cannot be deemed great parents if you merely handover excess of property to your children. You should train them in the right path. You should provide them the efficiency to earn money and to spend it for a right cause. Otherwise the money you give them goes down the drain. Moreover they become lazy and they face defeat after defeat in life.

If earning money is important, spending your valuable time with your family is more important! If you ignore this law of life, leave alone attaining the knowledge of the soul, you will fail miserably in maintaining inter personal relations. So you have to be doubly careful in matters of money.

Put your hands into your work; fill your heart with thoughts of God. 'Haath me kaam, man me Ram!' We should also keep in mind another aspect regarding money. Since we don't have the knowledge that we will die one fine morning, our mad desire for money is shooting up day by day. It is making us forget Paramathma!

Money minded man - A great sacrificer

Once a great saint was walking past a market place in Mumbai. Seeing this saint, a rich sethji stepped out of his shop and prostrated before the saint. The swamiji pretty well knew that the sethji fell on his feet not for blessings but for publicity stunt. The sethji was a true businessman.

All the same, the saint, asked the business man innocently, 'Sethji, why did you touch my feet?' The sethji with all the pretence of great bhakta answered with folded hands 'Oh Swami! You are a great renouncer - you have renounced your craving for money. That's why!'

Then the swamiji retorted, 'Sethji! I gave up the unwanted craving for money to seek knowledge of the self. But you have given up the most essential desire for knowledge because of your craving for money. So you are a greater sacrificer than me. So I should prostrate before you.' This statement was an eye-opener for the Sethji.

This statement should be an eye-opener for us too since we are no less than him. We are doing so because we are unaware of the impending death. That's why Sri Sankaracharya who started with the lines 'Samprapte Sannihite kale nahi nahi rakshati dukrunkarane' advises us to give up this madness for money.

Nobody would have explained so much for this sloka. I discuss a few things in this context, though some of them may be out of context, simply because you should have clarity regarding money. Otherwise our journey on the spiritual path will not continue smoothly.

Life won't run smoothly if we give up money. If we give undue importance to money, life goes in haphazard way. To give up money is foolishness; to cling to it is ignorance. So I had to deal with this topic elaborately.

Now that you have understood all about ardha, let's see what Bhaja Govindam has to say about Kama.

Naari stana bhara nabhidesam
Drustya maagaa mohaavesam
Etanmansa vasaadi vikaaram
Manasi vichintaya vaaram vaaram-"Bhaja Govindam".

Don't be enchanted by the chest or by the naval beauty. That is only created by a composition of fat, flesh and blood. You should repeatedly send signals to your mind in this fashion.

For heaven's sake, please don't misunderstand Sri Sankaracharya. There is every danger of women's protection cell to conduct a dharna against

Sri Sankaracharya since he describes women as a composition of mere flesh and blood. They may feel it as height of insult! But Sri Sankaracharya, has neither grudge against women nor has he insulted women! Since the audience he had then were men, he described women then. Had he addressed women, he would have described man thus. 'It is a composition of flesh and body' is a description of the body but definitely not a description of man or woman.

Many commentators don't dwell upon this sloka much. Some of them purposely ignore it too! They do so since they assume it to be a description of the marital life! But the teachings of a great saint like Sri Sankaracharya are not so superfluous, they have a deeper meaning. So if we take the surface meaning of the sloka, it only displays our ignorance and a lack of proper understanding of Sri Adisankaracharya.

There is a great teaching in this sloka. Here Sri Sankaracharya is not talking merely about the body or matters relating to body. Though he uses some words to describe the body, he conveys a greater meaning behind it. He takes the sexual life as a pretext.

Since he is analysing Ardha and Kama here, Kama is treated as the subject matter. Kama doesn't mean only a physical lust. Any desire can be deemed 'kama'! But since sexual urge is described as Kama Sri Sankaracharya could have referred to such a Kama.

Jagad Guru says, 'Don't be lured by a very beautiful lady with good physical dimensions.' When ladies read this, they should change the word lady to a man.

Once when I was interpreting this sloka one man raised an objection. 'If you continue teaching thus, one fine morning the world will be filled with bachelors. That hits at the very system of our life. Not only that. Such teachings are only impractical...' I know that the opinion he voiced out is the opinion of many more! But please try to understand one aspect very clearly. Our dharma never advocates brahmacharya outwardly. You can't find it even if you search it with magnifying glasses.

Gruhastu Dharma is a blessed dharma. After following his teachings carefully, I can't assume and I won't assume that Sri Sankaracharya is teaching against Gruhastu Dharma. He will never advocate husband and wife to treat each other as sister and brother. He will not make such ignorant teaching. I can vouchsafe that!

This theory of brother-sister (Annayya - Akkayya) is only a perversion! Without understanding the dharma properly, if we propagate such meaningless principles, the suppression of desire leads to mental

disorders, but not to gnana. Suppression is the mother of all psychic problems is the statement of psychology. If you don't trust me, you are free to verify from any psychiatrist.

Our Sanathana Dharma advocates you to understand and overcome but not to suppress anything. So Sri Sankaracharya is never against guruhastu dharma. This sloka of his enables a better understanding of married life but doesn't advocate outward bramacharya.

Unification is Happiness

What is kama? To assume that real happiness lies in possessing a thing. It is only our foolishness that makes us think that the possession or loss of a thing gives us happiness. The real truth is - things cannot give us happiness.

'No sir, the other day I needed one lakh of rupees. I did not have that amount and so I was feeling miserable. Seeing my grief, a friend came to my rescue. He adjusted that amount. My grief vanished and I was happy. How did I get my happiness? Is it not because I got money? Then how can you say that things like money can't give you happiness is the question raised by somebody. I know most of you will support him. But try to understand what I am going to tell you now and think deeply.

When we need anything it disturbs the totality in us. A difference between wanting and wanted crops up. This wanting wanted difference causes misery to us. The intensity of our misery is directly proportionate to the intensity of the wanting wanted difference.

The minute we acquire what we wanted the wanting stage is over. So the difference comes to an end. So we become a unified person again. We assume that as happiness. If your happiness lies in a thing, why were you happy before you wanted that thing? You were miserable only after you felt the need for it. It means you were happy before! Paripurnathe sukham, vibhajane dukham?' Unification is happiness, division is sadness. So we don't get happiness or misery due to things. They are based on our attitude. If we have a proper understanding, we are happy, if we don't have we are miserable. One who doesn't have this awareness thinks that his true happiness lies in the objects outside.

In a garland of flowers there is a thin thread. You ask a young boy 'What is in this garland?' He answers promptly, flowers and leaves. He can't mention thread because it is hidden behind the flowers and it is not visible. But you put the same question to the grown ups, they add the word thread to the boy's answer.

They too can't see the thread hidden but they mention it because they have matured minds. Though they can't see the thread with their naked eye they can realise its presence and its importance. Whereas if you explain this aspect to a small child, he cannot agree with your statement and he will not understand it. It is because he is not matured enough to have an insight into objects.

Some people grow in age but not in mind. They have minds of school children! Their actions are like, those of children. Katopanishad treats those who don't have mental maturity as children or fools. Those who don't have mental maturity assume that their happiness lies in external objects. Even if we try to argue with them they cannot understand. Whether they understand or not the truth is nothing but the truth!

Kama means

We can never attain happiness by the acquisition of external objects. Without realizing this truth, hoping to get happiness through things is 'Kama' one who feels I am happy if I get what I want and I am sad if I lose what I want is a fool.

This fool assumes that he is unhappy if he doesn't possess what he wants. It is not at all a reality. For instance he is not unhappy when he forgets the things he wants in the midst of some busy work, he is not unhappy in his deep sleep. That means he can still be happy even without possessing that object! But he refuses to be happy without the said object, being carried away by his false notion.

This refusal is leading him to misery. Think carefully! 'I refuse to become happy in the absence of the desired object! 'This mental status is called kama. Such an altitude is called Kama drusti.

In this backdrop let us try to understand the sloka-

The general belief is that the sexual relationship between man and woman is a matter of happiness. This feeling creates a great urge for such a relationship and leads to mistaken identity. Though we are actually happy this very minute, we refuse to be happy being carried away by our false notions. To come out of this sexual urge we should have a deep understanding.

Body is an inanimate object. An inanimate object cannot give you comfort or happiness. It is ignorance to treat this as a source of comfort. You may argue, 'No sir, I disagree with you. My body is a source of happiness to me. 'You might have had many moments of happiness

through this body of yours. But actually the happiness you acquired (through the body) is your happiness. Your natural feeling of happiness is reflected on the external object. Such happiness is described as reflected happiness or mirror image happiness.

Since we don't have a proper understanding of ourselves, we deem this reflected happiness as the happiness derived out of the body. We can acquire true spiritual knowledge when we learn who am I and when we give up this reflected happiness.

The image reflected in a mirror is our own image but not that of the mirror! Similarly our happiness is reflected on the mirror like objects or body. Without realizing this, we are carried away by our misconception. The animals too get this reflected happiness. They feel so because they don't have intellect. But we have intellect as opposed to them, but we are behaving like them. Is it justifiable on our part? We think that the body gives us happiness but did we try to understand the state of the body?

Let us say you were going somewhere on some urgent work. Suddenly there was a heavy down pour of rain and the path had become muddy. To add to your troubles, one of your slippers lost its strap. You were not able to walk on the muddy road with the torn slipper. You came across an acquaintance's house. You go there and request him, 'Sir, can I leave my slippers here and collect them tomorrow morning?' The owner happily agrees and even adds, 'Should you plead so much, what is so great about it?'

Now imagine that at the same time a procession of the dead was going that way. Somebody walked in and pleaded the same man. 'Sir, it's raining heavily. We are unable to carry on our procession. If you don't mind we'll keep the dead body here and collect it tomorrow. I don't have to explain what the owner would have said!

What does this convey? Our body doesn't have the weightage of a mere slipper! If body alone should give us happiness, then shouldn't the people honour our dead body? This very example drives out our false notion 'body gives us happiness'. Body is an inanimate thing. To assume that it gives us happiness is sheer foolishness.

You should not stretch things too far! Carried away by this explanation you should not look down upon the body as a dirty thing. This explanation is given only to make you understand that body alone is not important. This body of ours is a boon. We should utilize it in a proper way, you should not say on the other hand, 'Since this body has not even the value of slipper. I will not take care of it, I will ignore it or I will make it suffer.' That is madness again. Keep your body smart. To cut a long

story short, what I mean is - Don't have a craze for your body. Just treat it as a mode of conveyance.

Since people are lured by lust they assume the sexual happiness is the greatest happiness, the physical body is the source of happiness etc. Since they have this conception they don't accept any other happiness. Such people are attracted to physical beauty and this attraction increases their lust. So Sri Sankaracharya advises them not to be lured to the physical body.

We can get rid of this attraction by a proper reasoning. So we should utilize our reasoning power to understand the true state of our body. What exactly is this body which appears to give us happiness?

'Etanmansa vasaadi Vikaaram - Body is a blend of flesh, blood, veins and arteries. Thankfully nature has covered this internal body with a beautiful skin. Otherwise it would have been a prey to eagles and crows! Our duty would have been to drive them away! Flesh and blood are made out of five elements. So our body too is made of five elements. It is inanimate. How then can it give us happiness?

We are prone to happiness. Our happiness is reflected in this body. We should know this through our intellect. Otherwise this misconception grows day by day and makes us search for happiness outside. This misconception strengthens our ignorance and thereby increases our misery.

'Manasi Vichintaya varam varam' - here 'varam varam' doesn't mean every weak, in Sanskrit 'varam, varam' means again and again. We should analyse in our mind again and again. Analyse properly! The lust for physical body is deep rooted. To root out this lust, we should constantly think over; reflect over, the true nature of the body. Ardha and Kama can't drive out the greatest misery in us. They can't liberate us.

Sri Sankaracharya has beautifully analysed Artha and Kama through these two slokas and has condemned 'kama'. He has highlighted the path to moksha. Since we know by now that Ardha and Kama have 'no ardha', no meaning, let us pray to Govinda for moksha - 'Mokshardham Govindam bhaja' proclaims Sri Sankaracharya.

To see sun you need sun's light. The same way to attain knowledge of the self (to get rid of ignorance) we require the glow of the soul. It is because the soul is nothing but Govinda.

Limitations - Maturity

We have learnt by now that however much we long for Ardha and Kama they cannot give us true happiness. So there is no point in spoiling our life for them. Life is a bubble. It can be blown any time 'Kalo Jagadbhakshakaha' proclaimed our elders. To run any vehicle you need petrol. Then what petrol runs the ever moving time? The very world! Time destroys the world! Don't be stupid to say 'What do I care if time destroys this world? Mind you, your life, my life, our life; everybody's life is in the world! Any minute time can finish us! Lord Yama doesn't wait for our appointment. He can land at quite an unexpected moment.

If we waste this short span of our life on unnecessary things, when we wake up to reality, we may not be left with time to do useful things. We may have a strong desire to do good things but we will not be left with our life to fulfil it. Then that good intention goes down the drain.

Read this small story - Once a notorious thief was ordered to be beheaded. The custom of that country was the king would personally come and fulfil the dying wish of the criminal. Accordingly the king came. The prisoner said, 'Oh maharaj' I don't have any dying wish as such but I have written a poem. I would like you to listen to it. The king agreed. The sloka ran thus -

Bhattirnashtaha Bhaaravishtadhaapi
Bhikshurnasto Bhimasenopi tadhaa
Bhukkundoham Bhoopativam
Bhabhavalyaam Antaka Sannivistaha

'Bhatti - A very wise man and minister of Vikramaditya, Bharavi - a great pandit, Bhikshu - a great mathematician, Bhimasena a great astrologer - all these passed away. Bha-Bhatti, Bhaa - Bhaaravi, Bhi - Bhikshu, Bhii-Bhimasenu. Lord Yama is after the names starting with 'B' in the Guninthaas of B. After bha, bhaa, bhi, bhii come bhu, bhuu! My name is Bhukkundudu. I am going to die now. Your name is Bhuupati. After 'bhu' comes 'bhuu' which means your turn is the next.' The thief retorted funnily that way!

He is correct! If not today, tomorrow may be our turn! We can't predict when it is but definite it is! So whatever we wish to do, we must do before we face death! Even if we develop a good interest in the last minute, cannot put it into practice easily. Lord Yama is a perfect communist. He believes in equality. However much you plead, 'I have wasted my life. Please give me just an hour's time; I will pray to God, He will not yield to

you. A great king like Parikshit couldn't gain one minute extra! He died just on the time he had to die! After all who are we?

Spiritual Practice...

It's really great to wake up before it is too late. Spiritual practice doesn't mean leave your family and run away somewhere. It means you should do your work with interest, with proper understanding, on the rightful path; you should do every practice required for that and attain knowledge. That is a true spiritual life. So it is not right on your part to postpone spiritual path for your retired life.

The true reason for our misery is our misunderstanding! It means we should have a proper understanding. As simple as that! You don't have to go any where to acquire it. You don't require a change of place, but a change of heart. Remain where you are and develop a proper understanding of life. You tune every experience of yours to help you promote and develop a proper understanding of life.

Those who don't have a proper understanding of spirituality, postpone this practice for a good day. We do have a good intention, but where is the time? 'After we finish all our responsibilities, we will devote our full time to spiritual thinking' this is the common slogan of the day. Postponing unnecessarily what you should do is equally harmful. Postponing is as good as not doing! Modern management describes this postponing tendency as a negative element for success. You can name this bad habit as procrastination. It is deep rooted in us. We are already blamed for our laziness! 'Aarambha suraa, Khalu Bharatiyaa'. We Indians begin a thing, but we don't complete it.

If this quality of 'procrastination' is more, it leads to problems. For example let's take the case of a student. If a student learns his lessons everyday and understands them properly, he can remain cool even during the exams. Instead if he whiles away the time on unnecessary things and postpones his learning, he will suffer a lot during exams. In the last minute he cannot concentrate properly and so cannot understand what he learns.

The same law applies for spiritual knowledge. Whiling away our time on unnecessary things and ignoring the acquisition of true knowledge, makes us suffer in life. If we wish to avoid it, we should wake up before it is too late. We should prepare a wonderful plan for it, but we are not doing so. It is because we don't have a proper understanding - we can't differentiate between the useful and the useless things. So we are wasting our time on silly pleasures. When we really desire to do something useful, nothing comes to our rescue.

Those who wish to lead a spiritual life and a happy life should not miss this understanding of life. The thing we wish to do, we should definitely do in the right way and at the right time. Then only our life will be tensionless.

Whatever we do, our actions are centred round - 'Artha' and 'Kama'. This desire doesn't allow our intellect to open up. We don't have ample time left with us to analyse and see how far these two Artha and Kama can save us! We are not able to devote our time for satsang or knowledge of the self - for useful things. All the wakeful hours are spent in amassing wealth.

We should fulfil our household chores, we should amass wealth for our basic needs, we should do our duty as a husband or as an employee, but all the same we should devote some time for knowledge of the self. Without devoting time for this, if we assume God will save us, God too cannot save us. God has proclaimed long back in Geetha - 'Uddaaret aatmanatmaanam'- you save yourself! So along with our other commitments, we should allocate some time for our internal self. To attain the knowledge of know thyself we should pray to Govinda, one who seeks Artha or Kama prays to God for those two. I know your question. When you should give up the desire for these two why should we pray to Govinda? The answer is 'Mokshardham Govindam Bhaja' - Pray to God for knowledge of the self and for Moksha is the message of Sri Sankaracharya.

We are leading a haphazard life due to our misunderstanding and laziness. This sloka explains to us the true aspect of life.

Nalinidalagatha Jalamathi Taralam
Tadvajeevithamatisaya Chapalam.
Viddi Vyadyabhimaana Grastham
Lokam Sokahatam Cha Samastam

The water drop on the lotus leaf is restless. The same way the life is restless. The life is full of diseases, miseries and sorrow. The men cling to their body and so have no happiness in life.

Nalanidala means lotus leaf. This example is used in our sastras in many ways in many slokas.

In Bhagavad Gita -

Brahmanyaadaaya Karmaani Sangham tyaktvaa karothi yaha
Lipyate Na sa papebhyo padma patra mivaambhasaa

Krishna referred to the lotus leaf. The summary of the sloka is - just as lotus leaf is very much in water but is not attached to it, whoever works incessantly but is not attached to the work, is a true karma yogi. He will not suffer from sins. Here in Bhaja Govindam also, Sri Sankaracharya takes this example.

'Nalinidalagata jalamati taralam' - The water drops on lotus leaf shine like pearls. The ordinary water drops don't have such a beauty. But when they are seen on lotus leaf they turn out to be beautiful. But that beauty is transient.

Since lotus leaf is water proof, the dew drops on it are restless. They keep moving. The slightest blow of air, the feeblest touch of the wing of a fish will drive out the dew drops from the leaf.

'Tadva jeevithamatisaya chapalam' - Our life on earth is like the bubble on the lotus leaf.

Just as the bubble can be blown off any moment, our life can be blown off any moment. We never know what is in store for us. To understand my statement, just go to any hospital and interview the patients in orthopaedic wards. Ask them how they met with an accident and whether they could guess it. You get the stereotyped answer, 'I can't understand how I met with an accident. It just happened accidentally (unknowingly)'

What is in store?

Why do things take an unexpected turn? It is because life is dictated by the actions we do. When, why, where and how we get the fruits of our actions - no body can define! So we term it luck. Luck is something that is unseen. An unseen 'karmaphala' dictates our life. So we cannot predict what is going to happen the very next minute. The Telugu film song 'Ee nimishaniki emi jaruguno evaruuhinchedaru' conveys the meaning clearly. We never know when we will fall sick, when we will lose money, when we will face any danger or when we will die. There is no predictability to life. There is no logic in life. You may argue, 'I have lots of money and lots of relatives to help me. So there is no question of any problem in my life. That is your logic but life has no logic. It doesn't follow your logic. It follows the law of Karma. Your money and your kith and kin may disappear to God knows where! We can never predict what

is in store for us. In other words we do not know what will be the fruits of our actions.

We are mortals, prone to die any moment. Isn't it foolishness on our part to treat ourselves as immortals? Isn't it foolishness on our part to lose the opportunity in hand and to wait for an opportune moment? Haven't you heard of the proverb a bird in hand is worth two in the bush? Can you guarantee you will be alive tomorrow?

Once somebody came to Dharma Raja asking for alms. Dharma Raja asked him to come the next day for it. Bhima who was listening to the conversation clapped his hands! Dharma Raja was surprised and asked him the reason for it. Bhima answered, 'Dear brother! Life is so temporary. Any moment it will be put to an end. That's why no Mahatma ever thinks he will survive for a day more. But you asked that gentleman to come tomorrow for alms. What does it connote? That you are sure of living tomorrow too! So I was delighted to hear you will survive the next day too and so I clapped hands. These words of Bhima were like an eye opener to Dharma Raja and so he fulfilled his task immediately.

I don't know whether this really happened or whether it is a concocted story. But I like it because of the message in it. Is there any guarantee that we will see tomorrow morning? Even if we see, is there any guarantee that we will be perfectly healthy? If you think in these terms you will know how transient life is and how unpredictable life is! Not only this, it is also Vyaadhyabhimaana grastham! You understand, viddhi, this thing says sankaracharya Viddhi Vyaadhyabhi maana grastam!'

It offers two meanings –

1. We are suffering from ties and bondages
2. Our life is filled with diseases physically and with ties and bondages mentally.

In the life of diseases and 'Lokam Sokahatam cha samstam' - bondages only sokah (sorrow) dominates at every step. Bhaja Govindam proclaims 'This loka is being killed by sokha.'

You ask anybody, each one has a sad story to narrate. While writing a letter we normally begin with 'Safe and hope the same with you'. One boy while writing to his father wrote by mistake, I am well and I hope you are in the same well. He is partly correct. Everyone is in a well of miseries all created by himself. He lives like a frog in a well and so thinks that the whole world around him is happy except him. When everyone thinks that way, is there any happy man in the world? NO! 'Lokam Sokahatham

cha Samastham!' Without any exception the whole world is carried away by the misconception that life on earth is permanent and acts accordingly. They don't know that life is temporary and disease prone. So they are being drowned in a sea of misery.

There are some extremists who stretch things too far. They misunderstand every good point. If you tell them, you should not be miserable; they think that putting an end to their miserable life alone is the solution. They cultivate such harmful ideas. Unfortunately some religions encourage such harmful ideas, but even this is foolishness. When Sri Sankaracharya explained life is temporary, life is full of miseries, life is full of sorrow, he only meant to detail upon life and to educate us regarding life structure but definitely not to promote a negative attitude in us. In case somebody develops a negative attitude after he masters sastras, it only means he hasn't understood sastras.

Escapism will never help. You should stand and face harsh reality of life but should never try to run away from it. If lotus flower had ever felt, Oh! my god! How dirty is my base, it wouldn't have survived. The lotus flower blossomed forth from such dirt alone. The same way, in our life there are many aspects which help us to attain knowledge. So there is no point in running away from life calling it full of sorrow.

Just as a lotus flower is very much in mud but blossoms forth without being attached to it, the same way we should lead very much the sorrowful life, but should attain knowledge without being dejected by it. The greater care we take to lead our life the easier the task becomes. Otherwise we die a miserable life without achieving whatever we can achieve. So Sri Sankaracharya says 'Bhaja Govindam Moodamathe'.

Temporary – Permanent

Our life is temporary! Seek the permanent one in the temporary life! Govinda alone is the permanent aspect in life! We have already seen that Govinda means atma, our soul! Whatever changes, atma doesn't change. That is the centre of our transcendent nature. Except Govinda everything else is transient. We can learn about all other temporary things but we are not able to learn about Govinda however much we try. You know why? We require a special eye to see or to understand God.

'Divyam dadaamite chakshuhu pasyame yogamaiswaryam' - 'your natural eyes will not suffice to visualize me. So I am providing you with 'divya chakshuvulu' special eyes' said Sri Krishna to Arjuna in Gita! To see Govinda we require special eyes. A special eye means the mind's eye - the intellect! For want of this mind's eye we are not able to recognise the Omnipresent Govinda.

As long as we don't visualize Govinda, our life is filled with disappointment and pessimistic feeling. 'Life is a story told by an idiot, full of fury and noise, signifying nothing.' A western philosopher explained that life is like a meaningless story. He made such a statement after a thorough examination of life. There is no doubt about it! But what's the use? Such an observation of life couldn't provide a life purpose to humanity. On the other hand it only promoted pessimistic approach to life. As a result life became insipid. This led to the Epicurean motto of life. 'Eat, drink and be merry and die one day.'

Even our ancient rishis proclaimed that life is temporary and life is insipid. But their attitude was different. A moving thing depends on a stable one and a visible thing depends on an invisible thing. For example a visible cinema depends on an invisible screen. Whatever gives support is greater than what are supports. The blades of a fan move but the rod supporting these blades don't move. The picture on the screen moves, but the supportive screen doesn't move at all. If the screen moves, we can't see the picture clearly. If we wish to see the moving picture clearly, the supportive screen should remain stable! There is no doubt about it! The same way there should be some supporting permanent element to support the temporary aspect! Otherwise there is no possibility of a temporary aspect.

The rishis probed into this matter - what is the supportive element behind the temporary element? They found the answer - the ever present, Omniscient God! 'Sarvam Vishnumayam Jagat.' So this transient world is dependent on the Omnipresent Govinda. So the rishis told us to worship Govinda to attain life purpose.

If we seek the blessing of the Omnipresent God, this temporary life will not trouble us. We can liberate ourselves easily from its influence. This is our duty. That's why Jagat guru Sri Sankaracharya repeatedly proclaims 'Govindam Bhaja - learn about Govinda. To worship Govinda, we should digest the fact that we are temporary. Without understanding this temporary aspect of life, however much we pray to Govinda, it becomes mere surface level of prayer. So we should understand life properly and then whole heartedly pray unto the lord and be blessed by him.

Yaavad vithoparjana Saktaha
Stava Nija Parivaro Raktaha
Pasctha Jeevathi Jarjhara Dehe
Vaarthaam Kopina Prucchati Gehe "Bhaja Govindam"

Your kith and kin show affection on you, only as long as you earn the

money. When you become old and crippled, you will be left with no-body to take care of you.

Some people keep saying, 'I am very much inclined towards spiritual life, but I am bound by my family ties. I hardly have time for this life'.

It is a misconception that our family comes in our way of spiritual progress. If you think leading spiritual life means leaving the family and going into thick forests, yes you are right But our dharma is never against family life or social life!

Acharyaaya priyam dhanamaahrutya prajaatantum maa
vyavachcheteehi
satyaanna pramaditavyam! dharmanna pramaditavyam!...'
Matrudevobhava! Pitrudevobhava! Acharya devobhava! Athidhi
devobhave!

Are the teachings of Vedanta. After the student finishes his training in Gurukul, the Guru blesses him thus 'My dear son? Your education is completed. Now you enter the society, get married and beget good children... You treat mother, father, guru and guests as personifications of God... This is the meaning of the above Sanskrit message. What does this convey? Doesn't it mean lead a life amidst society? This system of life is proposed by the Upanishads. So our family never comes in the way of our spiritual path.

Your family members should be a part of your life but they should not be the whole! If they pervade your whole life, it becomes a trouble shooter. Every aspect has a limitation. As long as you know these limitations, you don't face any problem. The minute you cross this limitation, you are bound to suffer.

You are mad after your family, but do you know the true nature of your family? Do you know how long it will be with you?

'Yavadvitha parjana saktaha, tava nija parivaro raktaha' - As long as you have the strong desire and great energy to earn money so long does your family has love on you. Whether you believe it or not, this is the harsh reality of life. You will personally experience it the minute you become old.

A communist writer commented that inter personal relations are centered round currency notes. If we look at this statement from a particular angle, I do agree he is correct.

In the modern culture where human values are going down the drain the wealth position decides a person's position in the family. If the husband is amassing wealth, the wife adores him. If the father has a long store of wealth behind, the children bend before him. Sometimes we are forced to accept that the love and affection of our family for us is centred round the money behind us.

Once two lovers were exchanging their love notes. Suddenly the lady love had a doubt. She asked, 'Raju, how much do you love me?' Raju promptly answered 'I can't describe it in words' But his lover wasn't satisfied. She needed a further clarification. So she asked what is the proof that you love me so much?' 'Proof? Your parents are millionaires and you are their only lovely daughter. What other proof do you want?' It is a proper proof! In another corner a lover was proudly boasting 'My uncle is very rich. I will inherit his property when he dies', 'where does he live! The lover innocently gave his address and his lady love became his aunt! Do you call this love? As long as we have currency notes with us, we are an important person. The relatives are bound to us.

Once a man suddenly acquired few crores of rupees through a lottery ticket. The news spread like wild fire. People swarmed like flies around jaggery and showered him with bouquets. He did not know till then that he had a train of relatives. They were introducing themselves. One of them said, 'Sir, I am your close relative, though you can't probably recognise me - I am your father-in-law's father's grandfather's grandson's son-in-law's wife's brother's son's father-in-law. We are closely related thus, if we can connect to a person in Anakapally on oneside and to African tribe on the other side.

As long as money grows stage by stage, relatives grow step by step. The strength of our kith and kin boosts up our ego. 'Paschat jeevathi jarghara dehe' - one fine morning the handsome body sags. However much you take precautions, you cannot prevent becoming old. When you reach old age, you lose your physical stamina; you reach second but pitiable childhood. You cannot slog day in and day out to amass wealth. 'Vartham Kopina Vruchchati gehe'-leave alone outsiders, even the inmates of your family care a foot for you.

'Why the hell should we care for this old hag', will be the attitude of some people, whereas some people say, 'My God, if you just say hello to him he goes non-stop like a doll which is operated with a key. He repeatedly narrates his childhood glory. He is a big bore. 'So they avoid the very sight of old people. Everybody has his or her own reason against an old man but the end result is the same. They ultimately avoid him. This is the law of life. Any family does the same thing. You and I are no

exception to the rule. We behave the same way and we get the kickbacks the same way in our last days.

I constantly hear this complaint - 'We brought up our children the hardway. We sacrificed many things for them, but today they hardly care for us.' My stock answer to them is as follows.

'You looked after your children well. You brought them up well. You paved a good way for them. Fine! Looking after your children is your prime responsibility. You fulfilled your responsibility well. But why do you now complain that your children don't care for you in your old age? Don't you know that one day you will become old? Did you take care of yourself? Don't you know that you have to lead a life of loneliness in old age? Why didn't you realize in your youth that, to avoid this pitiable state, you have to inculcate the feeling of vairagya then itself? Why didn't you try in those lines? When you had a chance to help yourself, you didn't care. Now you blame your children for not caring you. What rights have you to do? Better late than never. Wake up before it is too late. Learn about the limitation of your family.'

When you were overflowing in money some people whiled away many useful hours in idle talk with you. But now, the moment they learn you are penniless, they take a circuitous route but they don't touch your house. Why? For the simple reason they have to shell down the money you loaned to them. 'A friend in need is a friend indeed' is the old saying. 'A friend in need is no friend of mine' is the modern version. Every word of it is true. These are the true colours of your kith and kin.

Isn't it foolishness on your part to devote your entire time and energy for such opportunists? Spend minimum time for the opportunists but work out the opportune time for your betterment - betterment of knowledge. If you still want to cling to your people, fine, cling to them but be prepared for its consequences i.e., be prepared for a secluded, uncared for, unwanted life. Can you tell me how long does anybody bother about your welfare?

Yavatpavano Nivasathi Dehe
Tavatprucchhati Kusalam Gehe!
Gatavathi Vayau Dehepaaye
Bharyaabibhyati Tasmin Kaaye "Bhaja Govindam"

As long as we have life in us, our people show interest in us. The minute we breathe the last, even our wife is scared to approach our dead body.

As long as there is pranic energy in your life so long does everybody care for you. The minute you breathe your last, that is the last minute with

your darling wife (here wife is the surface meaning. You can extend it to children, relatives, and friends and so on). All these are scared even to look at the body.

In case somebody advises, 'What a pity! This poor body of his slogged all his life for your welfare. Don't ruthlessly burn him away. Please preserve him carefully in one corner of your house, 'pat comes the reply, 'Sir, if you so desire, we will conduct his funeral on a large scale and burn him on sandal wood sticks, but for heaven's sake don't ask us to keep the dead body with us. We are scared to look at it even.

'Yavatpavano nivasati dehe' - as long as there is air in your body. There is poetic beauty in these lines. A careful selection of a word conveys the meaning better than any other word. Sri Sankaracharya could have said, 'as long as you have life in you' but he is conveying a subtle meaning through the word. 'Vayuvu' Vayuvu is moving or temporary. Our life which is filled with this Vayuvu is as temporary as the Vayuvu itself.

Actually the substance of air in us is a miracle. You can call it the wonder of wonders. For example you take a foot ball or a volley ball filled with air and just gives it a pinprick! The whole air goes out! Whereas though our body has nine holes - 'nava randhras' - it sustains air! How amazing! But how long will this restless air rest in our body, no great astrologer can predict. The minute the air leaves you, your relatives leave you! Whichever body you have gloated as your own is burnt down to ashes in the grave yard. Which ever relatives you boast about as your own burn down their memories of you in the grave yard itself! This is the darker side of life which we refuse to visualize. But how long can we shun the darker side? If we do so, it is real madness!

As I keep telling you, don't stretch the meaning 'Bharya bibhyati tasmin Kaye' too far. If you start singing everyday philosophical songs like Bharya biddalu todurarura jeeva (wife and children don't accompany you to grave yard) or Okanatiki vallakaadiki (one day we should die) they will desert you this very minute! These teachings are to bring awareness in you but not for external exhibitions. The sum and substance of this line is - you should realise their limitations and you should love them as much as they require but you should not insult them or suspect their love with your misunderstanding of Vedanta.

Limitations –Maturity

If we have a proper understanding of the limitations of the family or society, we will not deprive them of their freedom. We will lead an adorable life. On the contrary, if we don't realize our limitations, we start

dictating terms to our family members, relatives and even friends. This desire for power becomes an obsession and disturbs our mind initially and disturbs the others around us.

The true love blossoms forth in freedom. Our love is not true love. It is because we are trying to command others in terms of love. Our love is enslaving them to us instead of binding them to us. We do emotional blackmail. We utter words like, 'If you love me you should do this, you should do that.' Emotioned blackmail is as good as a crime. How can such a man become a spiritual person?

Some of you assume that if you listen to spiritual lectures, your love and attachment for your family dies down! I can strongly oppose this misconception. Vedanta promotes your love but never curtails it. If you know where to draw a line, you can work within the boundaries. Then doesn't it fill your life with happiness? Definitely! So this sloka or theory of Bhaja Govindam strengthens your love for the family or your human relations, but it will never bring your downfall. True love dawns with the dawn of knowledge.

One who attains knowledge leads even his family in the right path. As a result his marriage and his family become a great bliss. In such a family there will be freedom. It suits the description 'Home is heaven on earth'.

On the contrary, one who is not inclined towards acquisition of gnana doesn't know the limitations of his family. He seeks at a wrong pace, the fulfilment of his desire for permanent happiness. He depends on his family for everything and disturbs them time and again. This results in a rupture among the family members and unrest at home. Such a great teaching is not aimed at an escapist. You must have guessed it by now. So, for heaven's sake, don't arrive at 'negative meanings' after reading these slokas. Use your simple logical thinking. Will a great man like Sri Sankaracharya who is a repository of spiritual knowledge, invoke such negative thoughts in you?

When the body itself has its own limitations, doesn't the system which is centred round the body have its own limitations? If we cross the limitations it leads to many problems.

So, don't put the blame on the family for your inaction. It is only passing the buck. Family is not hindering your way; it is your ignorance that is putting a break to your spiritual progress. If you have an inclination in the spiritual path, every step becomes yoga.

Many people are of the opinion 'jindagi lamba hai' what the great hurry is. As we grow old we get spiritual thinking automatically.

Spiritual thinking has nothing to do with age. If you have maturity, you get the inclination. Maturity doesn't automatically come with age. We should gain maturity through sastra, lectures of gurus etc. so it is a misconception that we get spiritual thinking as we grow old and that it blossoms forth on its own. This idea is described by Sri Sankaracharya in this sloka.

Balastaava Kridaasakta
Starunastaava tarunee saktaha
Vruddha staavat chintaasaktha
Pare brahmani kopi Na saktaha

The childhood is wasted in playful mood. When we enter youth, our youthful desires enhance themselves. In old age, we are depressed. Being lost thus in every stage nobody is ever making an attempt to attain Brahma gnana is the wonder of Sri Sankaracharya. Sri Sankaracharya is analysing life here. Vedanta teaches us how to think. That's why Vedanta is described as the greatest teaching. Only Vedanta can guide us to the path of thinking!

Somebody says 'Chant the name of Hari all the 24 hours. Then the attendants of Vishnu will come and take you to Heaven.' Where is the scope for you to think?

'I am born to liberate you! Why fear when I am here' says another great man. What else can you think of? Even if you wish to think, they don't let you do so. Except Vedanta nothing else can make you reason out things!

The wiseacres tell you that the minute the thinking ability dies; man is as good as being dead. It is because man is distinct from all other creatues only by virtue of his thinking power or reasoning ability. All other aspects supply the thoughts to you. They even dump thoughts on you. Vedanta alone explains to you anything logically with examples and leaves the final decision to you. Vedanta doesn't believe in thrusting somebody's opinion on you. It doesn't threaten you with the words like, 'If you don't follow me you will go to hell!'

After speaking elaborately for 18 chapters, Krishna left the final choice to Arjuna. He said' Yadhecchasi tadha kuru! It means you reason out to yourself on whatever you have heard and do whatever you want. He did not force Arjuna to follow his line of action.

Whatever others tell you ultimately your life is your own! Vedanta can

guide you when you are at a loss to decide but it doesn't force you to take a particular step. It is because, even if you hear any number of good things, unless your heart responds to it, you cannot put one step forward. That's why Vedanta helps you as a friend, but doesn't control you as a dictator.

There is no point in listening to a few stories in Bhagavatham or in singing a few bhajana songs. They are surface level prayers. They can be called entertainment but they do not give you enlightenment. Spiritual teaching is to provide you enlightenment but not entertainment. External prayer doesn't lead you anywhere!

Once a passerby was passing through a forest. He saw a hunter getting ready with his net to catch the parrots. He was moved with pity for them. So he went to the parrot's leader and said, 'Look Mr. Leader, the hunter is getting ready to catch hold of you. Presently I can save you from him, but I cannot be with you forever. So I will teach you one mantra which will help you to save yourselves.' So saying, he taught the mantra 'Hunter is there, be ready' to him. He added you practice this mantra and you also teach to it to the other parrots. As soon as anyone sees the hunter, he can alert the rest.'

He was surprised to see on his way back the parrots were totally caught in the net. They were blindly repeating, 'Hunter is there, be ready!' If you are carried away by superfluous teachings, even your life will be like the parrots' life. Day by day we get entangled in the net of ignorance but like the parrots we keep repeating 'Brahma Satyam, Jaganmidya.'

Vedanta shows you the right path but never gives you superfluous information. Sri Sankaracharya is highlighting this aspect.

Open your eyes and see for yourself. You yourself will learn that spiritual knowledge just doesn't come and fall in your lap.

Kaumaram, Yavvanam, Jara - childhood, youth, and old age are the three stages of our life. Sri Sankaracharya is analysing these three stages in this sloka.

'Balastavat Kreedasaktaha' - You will be in a playful mood in childhood. You will not have the maturity normally to probe into serious matters. Dhruva, Prahlad, Sachiketa and Sankaracharya were exceptions to the rule. Other than these, nobody ever attained Brahma gnana in that age. It is spent in games. So the playful mood dominates in childhood.

Then how is youth?

'Tarunastava tarunisaktaha' - As we step into youth from childhood we gain more of energy. So our body and heart long for many desires and they become uncontrollable. When desires dominate, where is the place for God or self realization? That's why students think of God only during exams. They treat spiritual learning as a sheer waste of time. So they look down upon those who teach good things or those who seek to learn good things. This stage is a wanting stage but not a knowing stage.

'Ayurnasyati pratidinam, yaati kshayam yavanam' - gradually we are nearing our last days. We lose our youthful energy. Do we open our eyes when we reach our old age atleast?

'Vrudhastava Chintasaktaha' - In old age man is prone to sorrow'. Oh Swamiji! How I wish, I was acquainted with you thirty years ago. I would have led my path in the rightful way, but what can I do now? It's all my bad luck! 'This is the standard dialogue of most of the old people whom I come across.

Actually if you understand Vedanta properly, you can lead your way in the right direction even in old age. There is no doubt about it. But the tragedy is old people are constantly reminded of the past. They live in past ignoring the present. They brood over the past glory. When they are disturbed thus, they cannot gain any knowledge. Teaching them is a sheer waste.

So all the three stages - childhood, youth and old age - are being wasted thus. Now tell me, when they are wasted thus, how will spiritual thinking come automatically ?

If your argument is correct, all old people should become gnani. In fact, in old age instead of becoming a gnani, a man is losing what little knowledge he has. Children have a greater clarity of mind than the old people. So there is no possibility for acquiring knowledge until you open your eyes. You can acquire gnana only by understanding life but not by just living it.

So try to understand life properly and begin this very minute an attempt to 'know thyself'. Put an end to the procrastination 'Jindagi lamba hai!'

Very little time at hand

We have a life span of 100 years but nearly 40 years time goes in our sleep. In the remaining 60 years, we spend some 15 years in childhood pleasures, another 15 in acquiring education, another 15 in family and

yet another 15 in diseases. So we either enjoy or suffer in life. If we give a discount to all these we are left with a minimum of five or ten years! So it is real foolishness to assume that there is plenty of time to acquire knowledge of the self.

Does the food in your plate go into your mouth automatically? No, you have to eat it! Then how can you expect knowledge to enter your brain all by itself? It needs a great effort on your part. That's why our rishis proclaimed 'Uttistata!' Beware! Prapyavarannibodhata! - Get up! Open your eyes! Seek the footsteps of blessed souls and attain knowledge!

We should seek the blessed souls and we should be inspired by them, but we should never sit idle hoping it will land on us all by itself.

Life gives us ageing but not maturity. What is the difference between the two? Ageing is growing old physically. Maturity is growing wise mentally. Life's quantitative aspect is ageing, qualitative aspect is maturity

It is not wise on your part to sit idle without making any effort leaving the matter to God. God helps you no doubt but how? He enables you to meet good people. He takes you to the footsteps of a great saint. He paves the way, but you have to walk on the path. When you are acquainted with such satsangs and great saints you should try to derive knowledge out of them. But are we probing into the matter at any of the three stages of childhood, youth and old age? 'Pare brahmani kopi na saktah' -Nobody is learning about the ever truthful brahmatatva! 'Nobody is showing an interest to learn about brahma tatva' says Sri Sankaracharya with an element of surprise. As long as you don't seek to learn about God and self realization, you cannot get rid of your sorrow. So, for that reason pray to Govinda says Sri Sankaracharya.

We are blind to the truth and we are in a sort of a dazed state 'Govinda Bhajan' is the only way out of this dazed state. Whichever wakes you up to the truth, whichever brings you an awareness of 'Brahma' that is the true bhajan 'Uttishtata!' Beware!

'Satsang' – A Stepping Stone

The irony of life is - where we don't have to think we brood a lot over that! What we should give a serious thinking, we totally ignore. 'How come nobody is interested in the serious matter of life which serves his life purpose?' This is the wonder of Sri Sankaracharya. He is taken aback at our foolish actions. He rules out the foolish thought that we get 'Brahma tatva' automatically as we grow old.

If you want to put three steps forward, there are many people that pull you back six steps. So some body with a fake intelligence argues 'No other work! These pundits teach you unnecessary things. These philosophers mislead you thus. If you keep philosophizing thus, your time is wasted. So, you just call God in a high pitch. He will liberate your soul. Did he not come running to the call of Gajaraj? Won't he answer your call in the same manner?

Whether God answers your call or not leave aside that argument. You should analyze whether you are greater than an animal or equal to an animal. If you have just the intelligence of an elephant, O.K. fine, you just shout for God. If you accept the fact that you are superior to God because you have reasoning ability, come on use your reason. Ato Vicharaha Karthavyaha. It means you should analyze deeply, 'who am I? Why am I born into this world? How am I related to the people and nature around me? If you try for answers to these, you will walk on the spiritual path.

An analysis gives you knowledge of the self and knowledge of the self, liberates your soul. So liberation lies in your hands, not in any God's hand. You may wonder why! It is because we are bound to the material world by our mere ignorance. Ignorance of the self can only be driven out by knowledge of the self. This knowledge is only attained by analytical brain.

We should keep analyzing the truths though we are deeply involved in our mundane activities. Whatever situation we face, we should gain an experience from it and learn a lesson from it.

Examine the course of the river Ganges. It is born in Gomukh in Himalayas, crosses many hills, valleys and hard paths but ultimately it reaches its goal, the ocean. If there is a hurdle in its path, it takes a circuitous route. We should be inspired by this of the river. Come what may we should never lose track of our path. If one door is closed, there is definitely another door open. Only thing is we have to search for it. People keep complaining, 'My life is full of hurdles' but it is only a lame excuse. Even a hurdle race has a goal and the participants reach the winning pole. So life is not merely full of hurdles, but it is also full of opportunities. The only differences is, we have to make an attempt.

So Sri Sankaracharya is preaching us to analyse deeply to gain the 'knowledge of the self'.

Kate kanta kaste putraha
samsaroya mateeva vichitraha

kasyatvam va kuta ayaathaha
Tatvam chintaya tadiha brathahe

Dear brother, who is your wife? Who is your son? How are you related to them? Who are you? Wherefrom have you come? This samsara is a mystery. Go deep into this questions and arrive at a proper answer.

The very first reaction to this poem is this saint is a sanyasi. he doesn't have wife or children. So he is repeatedly attacking them. Please don't misunderstand him. Sri Sankaracharya is a great gnani. He will not entertain such low thoughts on family. If you think so, you are insulting a great man!

The great guru asked you to probe into these questions, but he didn't ask you to run away from family.

Kate kanta kaste putraha - who is wife, who is your son? We must direct these words first. Because he referred to the words wife and children, you should not belittle the word 'samsara' to these people alone. If you do so, it is sheer foolishness!

Samsara means...

Samsara means ignorance! As long as you have an entry and an exit, it is samsara. Brahmaloaka and Swargaloka too are parts of samsara because you have an entry into and an exit from them! So the definition of Samsara means entry and exit, but definitely not wife and children or kith and kin.

As long as we are in the samsara we are bound by actions and the fruits of actions. We have a cycle of births and deaths. So Sri Sankaracharya advised us to get rid of this cycle of birth through an attainment of knowledge.

Actually, if you analyse properly, the family, which you consider as an hindrance to your progress, appears to be an incarnation of God. This is the bliss of knowledge. We are carried away by external resources out, actually, what is supporting the external resources, is the all pervading Paramatma.

'Samsaroyam atteya vichitraha. This samsara is very strange. What exists in fact is Paramathma. But this samsara is superseding the all pervading paramathma so much that it makes the real look unreal and the unreal real. Ultimately it leads us to utter confusion.

We cannot come out of this illusionary world, by simple questions like

who is your wife, who is your child? We have wife and children because we are there! So we should go to the root cause 'Who am I'?

'Kasya tvam va kuta ayaataha - Who are you? Wherefrom are you here? Tatvam chintaya tadiha bratah - probe into these questions here and now itself my dear brother's says, Sri Sankaracharya so affectionately.

Isn't it strange that the Guru who began his address with Moodamathe is addressing now affectionately 'brathe'? What does it connote? If we listen to philosophical discussion keenly, our ignorance vanishes into thin air and we too can attain the stage of a gnani like sankaracharya himself. We are like younger brother to him. He will guide us like an elder brother.

Doubt the doubter

Whatever we see in the material world, we are curious to know about its details or its functioning but never once do we bother to find out 'Who am I'. Once a man, who boasted himself as a logical man argued, 'Maharshi, I am a reasoned man. I don't accept anything unless I get the answer' Hence proved'. So I doubt the very existence of God...' He elaborated on this point for quite sometime. After listening to him patiently, Ramana Maharshi raised a very simple question. So you doubt everything in the world. You need a clarification, but did you doubt yourself anytime? You used the word 'I' so many times! Do you know who you are?' So first doubt the doubter himself.

We never raise the doubt, 'who am I'? It is because we have a stock reply 'I am the body and I am the mind' we have no doubt about it. When there is a strong base for that feeling, where is the question of a doubt? So let's understand this properly.

Koham?

Outwardly we say 'My body, my heart, my mind' but no fool ever says 'I am body. I am mind. We may not utter in such clear terms, but this thought has been digested into our every nerve and muscle. Can't believe me? Just try to answer this question. You say this body is mine' next minute somebody asks you, 'sir, may I know your weight? You promptly reply. 'Oh sure, my weight is 60 kgs.' If you feel your body is different from you, shouldn't you say, 'my body's weight is 60 kgs?' but you don't. It is because unknowingly you accept the fact that you are the body. The same way when your mind is restless you don't say, my mind is restless. 'You simply say, I am irritated.' Why? For the simple reason you feel you are the mind.

Actually you know about the weight of the body and about the irritable mood of the mind. One who learns something is different from what he learns. Since you can learn about them you are neither the body nor the mind. But due to the involvement with them you are carried away by your wrong notion and you have come to accept it as the truth. It has overwhelmed you so much that you accept your body as the reality and doubt the very existence of the creator of your body. Isn't it strange?

We should know about ourselves. Before we die, we should arrive at the right answer. A letter which has no proper from address and to address can neither reach the receiver nor the sender. So it goes to the dead letter office. The same is the case with us if we don't know our birth place or our death address. There is no point in discussing many other points without thinking of this first.

The value of Sastras

We are in a total chaos that we are the body and the mind. We cannot come out of this confusion all by ourselves. We need an external force and that is our 'Sastras'. We cannot analyse without the help of the sastras.

In the modern days, some gurus are trying to do away with Sastras I can find only two reasons for this propaganda of theirs. Either they haven't bothered to read them thoroughly or they haven't understood them properly. So they mislead the people. They say 'Why follow sastras which were framed some thousands of years ago. How will they help us in the present scenerio? I have created a new doctrine. Follow me and that will save you.

Take this simple truth thousands of years ago, or now, or in future when you feel thirsty you drink water. In all the tenses water is water. It doesn't change its colours or taste. Only that can quench our thirst. It is the reality of life. In due course of life many things change, but reality never changes. When reality doesn't change, how will truth change? Truth is truth. It is not pertained to olden days or to modern era. 'Katrayepi tistali satyam' - whatever remains true for all the three times, that is the truth. For example if you say, Honey is sweet. honey is sweet now, it was sweet in the past, it will be sweet in the future, for you for me for everyone. Sastras prove it true with reasoning, So it is not a meaningless talk of some unknown person.

Sastras alone give clarity to our troubled mind. Sastras pose questions which even we cannot raise and answer them from so many angles that we are bound to arrive at the truth.

To explain and to prove that we are not the body and the mind, the Vedanta sastra teaches us panchakosa prakriya- a five point formula. Our confusion regarding body, life, heart, mind and ignorance are analysed through Annamaya, Pranamaya, Manomaya, Vignanamaya and Anandamaya angles in Sastras. In every angle it rules out confusion and proves to us logically that we are only a witness to our body and mind.

Most of the gurus hardly know this five point formula but they preach 'tat-tvam-asi' (that art thou). It is real foolishness to proclaim that we can do away with sastras.

Some people don't understand the teachings of Ramana Maharshi properly. They say, Maharshi asked us not to bother about sastras. He asked us to merely raise, 'Who am I' that's enough. Maharshi said ask the question. 'Who am I?' He didn't ask you to chant the questions 'Naan yaar?' 'who am I?' Even if you chant 'who am I' the all persuading atma doesn't whisper in your ears, 'You are the soul!' You have to know it by yourself! You cannot do it without the assistance of sastras.

If you ask 'who am I' your mind gives you some of these answers.

Who am I - I am subbayya.....

Who am I - I am a son to my parents.....

Who am I - I am a husband, a father , a friend... you can add any number to this list. In case you get the answer, 'I am sat-chit-ananda Brahma', It is only hearsay answer of the mind. It has not experienced it.

Just as we cannot see an object without an eye, the same way the mind cannot accept Brahma without proof. That's why Sri Ramana Maharshi explained how to probe into the matter in his 'Upadesa Saram'. Sri Sankaracharya also advises - 'Kasya tvam va kuta ayaathe tatvam chintaya tadiha brathaha.'

A seed that falls on a stone may grow into a sapling during rainy season. But that is only a passing phase ! It dies out at the slightest heat of the sun. The same rule applies to our quest for knowledge of the self. Even if we have the desire, if it is not nurtured properly, it fades away. The slight ray of fire becomes the Agni of yaga when you nurture it properly. The same way the slightest desire or the enthusiasm, we have should be nurtured properly. To nurture it properly, we need satsang.

The following sloka gives us the impact of satsang.

Satsangatve nissangatvam
Nissangatve nirmohatvam
Nirmohatve Nischala tatvam
Nischala tatve - jeevanmukti

We are freed from the shackles of samsara by our intimacy with saintly people. When we are freed we get rid of the ignorant desires. When desires are destroyed, we arrive at the knowledge of self. When we arrive at the knowledge of the self, we are liberated from the life cycles.

'Satpuruşeshu sahasaha' - satsang means acquaintance with good people. It is not all that easy. So you have to pray to God, 'Oh God! Please provide me the acquaintance of saints. It is because this satsang only guides you in the right path!

Satsang means.....

'Sat' means one which cannot be destroyed. That is Paramatma. To be with 'sat' is satsang. Friendship with good people, reading good books, listening to good things.... all these are closely knit with sat. So they all come under satsang.

'Satsangatve nissangatvam' - satsang automatically detaches us from the materialistic world. Nissangatvam doesn't mean you pick up a row with your family and lead a secluded life. Such a man even if he goes to many ashrams comes back to his family. If his ego comes in his way, he keeps roaming all over the country. It is ignorance to think that you can get nissangatvam without satsangam. A true nissangatvam can be arrived at only through satsangatvam. Some people develop some sort of detachment either through their ignorance or through their ego. Such people don't mix with anyone, but that is not true nissangatvam.

When we are climbing steps, when we put one foot above, we remove the second foot from the lower step unknowingly. The same way when we start mingling ourselves in satsang, we get detached from the earthly pleasures unknowingly. Please understand this properly. It doesn't detach us from people or from our society. It makes us live very much in the society, but makes us realize our limitations and makes us use our reasoning power.

A great actor is not carried away by the roles he enacts. He lives in a particular role as long as it is required but the moment it is over, he steps out of it. The same way, a true nissangi (detached person) should live in the roles he has to enact in life only as much as required, but

should not be carried away by them. This is the true definition of nissangatvam. It doesn't demand of you to give up your responsibilities. How do we know whether our detachment is true or false? For that matter how good is this detachment?

'Nissangatve nirmohatvam' - Nissangatvam puts an end to 'moha' (desires). Whatever we are attached to, whether it gives us happiness or not, we live in an illusion that it gives us happiness. This is called moha.

There is not a single soul who has led a happy life in the materialistic world. The Great conqueror Alexander was no exception. He could not carry an inch of land or power with him. If he was sent empty handed what can we carry with us? We know that even all things put together they cannot keep us in good humour. We know all this but we say 'It may be true with others but not with me. I am someone special. I will be happy, that is a big hypnotic suggestion given to ourselves by ourselves. It is because the reality is something else. No body can derive happiness with the earthly comforts. As simple as that!

The inevitable is inevitable to anyone and everyone. Every rule has an exception is a rule but this rule has no exception. That's why we see in Bhagvat Geetha, the word 'yaha' repeatedly. Yaha means whoever! It means it is inevitable to whoever it may be!

If you fall down from a ten storeyed building you will get hurt. It is a simple truth. Can you argue regarding this fact that only Hindus get hurt, only Musalmans get hurt, or only an atleist gets hurt. If you put your hand in fire, it will burn. It will burn to anyone. These are common applications of life. So is the rule 'Material comforts cannot give you permanent happiness' If you think so it is 'sammohanam' It has arrived out of ignorance.

Whatever we are attached to-we have a strong feeling, nay a strong illusion, that that thng brings us tons of happiness. Because we are carried away by the illusion it given us happiness. We deem it as our own. Whatever object doesn't give us happiness, according to us, doesn't belong to us. We never claim an useless object as our own. Suppose we come across a hundred rupee bunch and we raise the question 'whose money is this?' a hundred people come forward to claim it. Instead of that if we show a dust bin and ask the question whose dust bin is it 'no body comes forward, not even the true owner of the object.

When happiness is linked with the object, we claim it as our own. This attachment is called 'mohan'. Why are we calling it my possession? The word possession speaks for itself. There are four's's in it to show how

madly we are interested in it. Why are we attached to it thus? The answer is simple. We assume it gives us happiness.

'Anityam asukham lokam asavatam is the statement of Geetha? Anything in this world is not permanent. Kare rajulu, rajyamul, galugave, garvannatim bondare, vareri? Sri Moota gattuku povan jalare? Bhoomi pai perainan galade? is a famous sloka in Bhagavatam. It means kingdom, kings, their name fame, vast treasure all these fade out in course of time. The temporary materialistic comforte cannot give us the happiness we require. That's why they said this world is not place of happiness. Without realizing this transient state of life we run after materialistic things with a false assumption. It is mine, it is mine!

Desire the cause of sorrow

Whatever reason appears to be the cause of our sorrow, ultimately the true reason is our desire. Try to understand this scene. A factory was once on fire. Everybody gathered there. They were making all possible attempts to put out the fire. In the meanwhile the factory owner also landed there. He saw the devastating fire and started weeping like a child. Everybody tried to console him but in vain. Then his bosom friend arrived on the scene and consoled him thus. 'Are you mad? Why are you crying?' The owner retorted 'Are you mad? Can't you see my factory is burning down? It is turning to ashes in few minutes'.

The friend coolly whispered in his ears, 'Don't you know something? Your eldest son sold out this factory to somebody only two days back. God knows where his sorrow disappeared. He wiped out his tears at once, rose from his place and started philosophising on life. 'Oh life is so uncertain. Nothing lies in our hands. We cannot escape destiny. Money is not permanent.

Just then his eldest son rushed to the scene. The owner was shocked to see his son crying bitterly. He couldn't understand why! He asked 'My son! I heard you were clever enough to have sold it to some one just twodays ago. Why then are you crying?' The boy answered 'Yes dad. I got hold of a sound party. I only made proposals to them but terms and conditions were not agreed upon and so deal was not settled'. All the philosophy of the owner had vanished into thin air and he joined his son in his crying.

Now if we discuss this scene here, if the reason for sorrow is the burning down of the factory, all the people assembled there should be crying! The owner should be crying incessantly but his crying was clubbed with a sense of belonging. He cried when he thought it was his, he overcame the grief when he learnt it was not his and he burst out again when he knew

it was his own. Isn't it crystal clear that his misery is directly linked with attachment to his factory! However much you try to reason out, ultimately the root cause of sorrow is nothing but attachment. You cannot destroy a big tree by just cutting down its top most branches. The same way, you can not destroy your desire by external change. You should search for the root cause. If you sit with your eyes closed you can't drive out the moha.

Moha is caused due to attachment. So our first requisite is detachment. We get this detachment through satsang. Detachment drives out our desires.

'Nirmohatve nischalatatvam' - Desire causes restlessness. Desirelessness drives out our restlessness. It makes our mind stable. (This line is written as Nirmohatve nischala chittam in some books)

The actual problem is unstable mind.

As long as we are in unstable mind, we cannot accept anything. Even if God comes down to bless us, we cannot believe him. Don't argue, 'No, we will believe him. If that is the case, why should Krishna teach Bhagavad Geetha to Arjuna in the midst of war field? He could have simply dictated terms to Arjuna with an arm stretched over Arjuna's head, he could have said, 'Come on Arjuna, and be prepared to fight!' But we very patiently explained every doubt of Arjuna and pacified his doubting mind. The doubting mind will not yield to superficial words. It cannot become stable in so simple manner.

As long as you entertain doubts, you cannot achieve success in spiritual path. For that matter, you cannot achieve success even in your normal life.

Once a gentleman arranged a crazy competition. You should thread the needle. The prize amount was one lakh and the entry fee was thousand. All the tailors in the city came as contestants since threading the needle is a child's play for them. So each one was confident that he would be the winner.

The competition started. The organizer brought a big needle and thread to the stage. That needle is not the small needle used to stitch clothes. It is as big as the needle used for preparing a garland of flowers. Even a blind man can pass the thread through the hole of the needle. The hole is so big. The tailors were all the more enthusiastic.

The first contestant stepped on to the stage. Just as he was passing the thread through the needle, the organizer started shaking the needle. The

contestant shouted, what's this? Please hold the needle straight. 'The organizer argued', I asked you to thread the needle. Did I promise you that I will hold it straight? Not only the first participant, could nobody win. They had to shell down the thousand rupees for participation.

Just as we can't thread the needle when it is shaky, we can't arrive at self-realization when our mind is shaky. So first thing is-we should shatter our doubts. Moha desire causes an illusion and so we see reality as unreal and unreal as real. Such an illusionary vision creates an unstable mind. So if we get rid of this unstable mind then our thoughts become stable.

'Nischala tatve jeevanmukti.' We should not misunderstand the word 'Nischala tatve' It is not a frozen state of mind. If we assume the frozen state is the means to moksha, we can arrive at this state through drugs or alcoholic drinks ! Our mind and body become inactive through these. But have you ever heard of an alcoholic attaining moksha? No, it is impossible! He cannot understand the mundane things in his dazed state, how then do you expect him to attain Brahmagnana? So for heaven's sake don't think that you should inactivate body and mind to be stable.

To control your emotions like anger, desire etc. is stability. This emotional balance prepares you for the attainment of knowledge.

Stability is a true friend

Where there is stability there is clarity. To study the sastras and to attain knowledge. We require stability. The attainment of knowledge is not based on the quantity of our reading but on the quality of reading. Some people are well read in vedas and puranas but there is no clarity of mind or readiness to accept them. So all their reading goes waste.

'Yadha kharaschandana bhaana vaahi bhaarasya vetta natu
chandanasya.'

You make a donkey carry a heap of sandal wood on its back. It knows only its weight but cannot get the wonderful fragrance of it. The same way you cannot get the essence of these Vedas if you read them for the sake of reading.

Moksha means the knowledge of the Advaita Philosophy. To attain this knowledge we invariably require clarity and for clarity we require stability.

Mokha is called liberation in English. The root of the word liberation is

'libra'. Libra means a balance. When the needle of the balance is stable in the centre, the weighing will be perfect. The same way when our mind stops wavering from one point to another, and when it remains stable, then we attain liberation.

The foundation for liberation is satsang. Wherever you attain nissangatvam that is satsang. Now a days we have many satsangs. The number of true satsangs can be counted on fingers. Some people hear the words 'satsangatve missangatvam' and they jump at the words. They think that if they attend satsangs they will achieve detachment and attend all types of satsang. Instead of attaining detachment, they only enhance their foolishness.

For some people attending a satsang becomes a habit. The day they can't attend it, they become very restless and irritated. Even that is not a right method. We cannot attain gnana through habitual action. Without attaining gnana we cannot achieve peace and happiness. When I say this, somebody argues 'No sir, when I attend our satsang I attain peace and happiness. 'But how long? As long as he is in the satsang. The minute he comes out, they are gone! Are they real peace and happiness? Real, peace and happiness can be experienced wherever you are. This is possible only when you are detached.

If we attend satsang, you should attain missangatvam - detachment. Our ignorance should gradually be rooted out. If that is not possible what we are attending is not satsang but dissang.

Even if we go to a true satsang, but if we don't take part in it properly, the purpose is defeated. If we seek name and fame instead of knowledge and liberation, there is no point in attending it. We should enjoy the fruits of such good company.

How does the attainment of gnana bless us? Read the following sloka.

Vayasi gathe kaha kama vikaara
suske neere kaha kaasaaraha
ksheene viththe kaha parivaro
Gnathe tatve ka samsaraha

How will an old man have a desire for sex? Can you call something a lake if it becomes dry? How will people gather round you if you lose your property? Once you experience knowledge, why will you be attached to the samsara?

Our saints advocate us to give up the samsara. I have already detailed

upon samsara. Samsara means living in agnana. How to get rid of this agnana is one million dollar question.

But Sri Sankaracharya is showing us a very simple but clear solution for this problem.

With apt examples he explains how we can come out of this samsara just as we lose sexual urge after we become old, just as we don't find a lake when water is dried up, just as people desert us the moment money deserts us so do we lose the attachment to the samsara, the moment we attain knowledge. So the actual meaning of get rid of samsara is-attain Brahma gnana.

'Gnathe tatve ka samsaraha' - wherever we saw samsara due to our ignorance, there itself can we see Paramathma through our gnana. This is the meaning of 'Asathoma Sadgamaya'. The prayer 'Oh Paramathma, lead me from the state of asaththu to the state of sath' doesn't mean lead me somewhere else. It doesn't mean asath is here and sat is elsewhere. Sat appears as asath due to our ignorance, that's all!

One staunch devotee of Lord Siva got gold carvings of entire Siva's family. The image of Siva was made out of 25 tulas of gold, of Parvathi out of 20 tulas, of Ganapathi and Kumaraswami with 10 tulas each, trisul with five, sarpa bhushan gold flowers for archana with yet another five tulas of gold. He prayed to God very devoutly with these flowers.

Suddenly he faced a heavy loss in business. He became almost penniless. Though he prayed to God sincerely everyday, he was forced to sell Siva's family to scrape through. With agony writ all over his face, he took Siva's family to a goldsmith.

The goldsmith weighed the images. He offered five thousand rupees per Tula. According to that offer, Siva costed one lack twenty thousand rupees, Parvathi one lakh, their son's fifty thousand each, and Nandi seventy five thousand, trishul, sarpabhushan, and golden flowers costed twenty five thousand each. This was the calculation of the business man but the devotee was totally offended.

'Oh Sir! How heartless you are! Siva and Parvathi are equally powerful. How can you differentiate them? Regarding their children Ganapathi is elder than kumara, Swami How can you equal them? How can you evaluate Nandi as more important than Lord's own sons? The other objects like trisul, snake and flowers-how do you rate them as equal?' attacked the devotee.

'No sir, I am not differentiating or equalling Siva's kith and kin. You see

them as different entities. I am seeing the gold in all these images. These rates are for the gold and not for your Siva's family. If you feel I am not doing justice to your God, you do this. You take back your Siva, Parvathi, Ganapathi etc and give me only the gold,' replied the shop keeper.

Any object has three aspects in it. For example take the golden Siva's image. The three aspects in it are - 1. Gold 2. Appearance or shape 3. Name. Since the image is made out of Gold there is gold in it. Since it has a definable shape of Lord Siva, you call it Siva. One which has a shape automatically has a name!

The name and shape remain as long as there is gold in it. The moment gold is melted, these two also vanish. If you remove the gold in the golden image can Siva remain in that? The minute gold is gone the name and shape do not remain. But even if name and shape do not remain, gold remains. The same is the case with the absolute truth. The goldsmith has knowledge of gold. So he sees the gold beyond the external appearance of shape and name. One who doesn't have this knowledge is carried away by the other two.

When you think of these two names and appearance - you believe in Dvaita philosophy. That is 'samsara'. When you learn the 'Brahma tatvam' you realize that the external appearance too is paramathma. This knowledge changes you from following Dvaita philosophy to Advaita philosophy. That's why a gnani doesn't have samsara 'Gnathe tatve ka samsaraha.'

Just as the goldsmith could see only God in the images of Siva, Parvathi etc. a gnani sees Brahma in everything. He doesn't have any illusion regarding this. When his illusions are driven out, the sorrow created out of these illusions is driven out. If we mistake a rubber snake for a real snake, we face many fears and sorrows based on the misconception. The minute we realize our mistake and learn that it is not a real snake but only our illusion, we laugh at our own fears and sorrows related to it. When our mind has fully crossed the mire of delusion, we will then grow indifferent to the enjoyments of the world.

The rubber snake continues to appear as snake even after we attain gnana but since our understanding has changed it doesn't cause us any more fears. The gnani and agnani both look at the same world but there is a lot of difference in their understanding. That's why the gnani is devoid of the sorrow or confusion an agnani faces. Gnani learns sarvam brahma mayam (everything is God) , so he is not bound by the life, so he doesn't have samsara.

How to attain the knowledge 'Sarvam Brahmamaya' is explained in the following sloka.

Ma kuru dhana jana yavvanagarvam
Harathi nimeshaat kaalaha sarvam
Maayaamaya mida makhilam hitvaa
Brahmapadam tvam pravisa viditvaa

Don't gloat over your possessions like wealth, relatives and youth. Time will put an end to all these three. Realize that they are delusions; maya and temporary attain Brahma gna and be realized soul.

We have already seen that in a gold ornament, there are three aspects viz 'Gold, appearance or shape, name'. In fact appearance and name are not a reality! It is because they disappear with the gold when it disappears. But, all the same, we can't totally deny the existence of appearance because we are identifying an object based on its appearance. We name it a chain, a ring, a bracelet etc as per its shape. So we can't totally rule out appearance of a thing. Now we have a big problem. In that case, does the aspect called appearance exist or not?

Take 'gold'. Does it exist or not yes, it does exist. Now take appearance and name. Do they exist or not? The answer is both 'yes' and 'no'! Is it confusing? No see carefully! Take a gold ring for example it has gold, shape and name-all the three. Now melt the ring. The shape is lost, automatically the name is lost, but the gold is still there! So, in superficial level all the three are there. In a deeper level only gold is there. So I repeat gold exists, but shape and name exist and do not exist. It means they exist but they have no identity of their own. They are dependant on the third aspect 'gold' this is what is called 'maya' (delusion) in Vedanta.

'Yaa maa saa maya'- what doesn't exist is maya. What does it mean ? What appears to exist externally, but what actually does not exist is 'maya' Vedanta defines this 'maya' thus. 'Satva rajasthamo gunatmikaa Brahmaasraya maya asti'.

This maya clings to Brahma. This maya doesn't cling as a child to a mother but it clings as a necklace to gold. You take mother and child. They come under dvaita philosophy. The child remains even if mother is no more. In the case of necklace and gold there is no dvaita. There is no necklace in the absence of gold. So when we use the word 'Brahmasrayamaya' we have to understand that maya is not different from 'Brahma'.

This maya makes us assume that Brahma means the people on earth. The attachment of Brahmagnana puts an end to our maya. We should understand two aspects clearly here. The delusions are of two types. 1. Personal projection 2. Universal projection. Mistaking a rope to a snake 'rajju sarpa bhranthi' is the first type. This delusion disappears as soon as we focus light on it.

The second delusion is different. All of us witness the sun rising in the east and setting in the west. But the sun rise and sun set are also delusions! It is because the sun doesn't rise or set! It appears so because the earth revolves round the sun. It appears so not only for us but for any one on earth. We treat the statements like the sun rises in the east'. The sun sets in the west as universal truths. But actually they are universal projections. We attain the knowledge that the sun rise and sun set are caused due to the movement of the earth but not due to the movement of the sun, but still there is no difference in scene. We continue to see sun rises and sun sets.

Our gnana changes our attitude to the creation of life (mistaking a rope for a snake) but it doesn't change the creation of the Lord. Even if the creation of the Lord does not change, we will not encounter any sorrow since what grieves us is personal projection but not universal projection.

When we get rid of the personal projection we experience the universal projection as a dharma. When we attain knowledge of the self we realize that God and human beings are not two different objects. So a gnani doesn't differentiate himself from Eeswara because he understands the principle 'Sarvam Eeswara mayam! He sees himself in everybody. When everything is one and the same, where is the question of a second element? When there is no second element where is the question of 'I' or the ego centred round 'I'?

We can clearly visualize the absence of ego in every nerve of a Brahma gnani. We cannot attain Brahma gnani through giving up ego, but we give up ego when we attain Brahma gnana. If we can attain Brahma gnana by giving up ego, we give up our identity crisis in our deep sleep. So, if it is so simple, we should attain it every night. So don't assume you can attain Brahma gnana by an absence of ego or selfness. Without trying to attain gnana, if we try to reduce our ego by superficial actions, leave alone reducing it, we nurture it all the more. A person may speak humbly without being egoistic, but within him ego is predominant. Did you ever stare into the eyes of a man who humbly speaks before you thus, 'where do I stand before you?' If you stare at him then you will see an exactly opposite feeling in him. Similarly, if we pretend to be humble, we are only nurturing our ego.

This ego is very dangerous but you should not make any attempts to reduce it. It is because a wrong treatment only aggravates the problem. Not only that, it gives a big blow on our desire to learn. It gives rise to many negative tendencies. The ego dies down only with an attachment of knowledge of the self. So we should make an attempt to attain gnana.

I know your question. 'If we can drive out our ego only through the attainment of knowledge, can I exhibit my ego now, since I am an agnani?' Vedanta has an answer for your doubt.

As long as you cannot attain an internal control 'samam' over yourself, so long you should exercise external control 'damam'. If you think you have every right to exercise your ego, the people around you too have their own right to exercise their own ego. Then the world around will be a total chaos and the little peace prevalent will vanish. So, even if we can't get rid of our ego, we should exercise a control over it. If we try it without proper understanding it is harmful, but if we make a proper attempt it is very helpful.

Sri Sankaracharya is explaining the same aspect.

'Maa kuru dhana Jana yavvana garvam' - Our ego is basically centred round three aspects money, relatives and youth. If one boasts about his wealth, another boasts about a big following he has and yet another boasts about his charming personality or heroic valour. When he is blended thus by his possession he is least bothered about the attainment of gnana. After he loses these, he loses his ego and then goes in search of satsangs to pray unto the Lord. But it will be too late. So we should control ourselves and to do so should control ourselves and to do so should understand its nature properly.

Some people assume 'dhana jana yavvanas' are reasons for our ego. So I will give them up. You may be able to give up 'dhana' and Jana, but how can you give up yavvana? Is it in your hands? For that matter even money and a throng of people cling to you based on your fate. Even if you run to Himalayas, you cannot escape your fate. So to give up something is a meaningless thought.

Dhana, jana, yavvanas - are common to all human beings. So if we have a little more we should not treat ourselves superior to others and we should not foster our ego on them. It is because harathi nimeshaat kalaha sarvam' - time destroys all the three in a split second. 'Nimesham' is the time taken to close and open our eye lids. Anything can happen in a split second. Is it not ignorance to gloat on things? Which are at the mercy of time and which can be destroyed any moment? We should never centre our love on things which in the end have no lasting value.

Our confidence needs to come from within, not from without, from the quality of our hearts not from the quantity of the things we own.

Maaya mayam idam akhila hitvaa - Greater smaller, richer - poorer, such differences are outward exhibition of things. Just as gold is seen in different shapes and names, the world is seen with different shapes and names. Just as the shapes and names of gold are not the actual reality, the external objects of the world are not the actual reality. Everything is maya. From the smallest creation to the vast space everything is maya. If we can't arrive at this truth, we have to suffer in the dual world. Our sorrow enhances itself. When we are depressed is there a scope for our gnana?

We should come out of this foolishness. We should learn that this world is but maya. Then we will attain a balance of mind. This equanimity leads us forward.

It is existent already

Brahma padam tvam pravisa viditva. Sri Sankaracharya tells us to realize that this world is filled with maya and is asking us to reach Brahma gnana. OK fine but how do we reach? It is very simple. To see the raw material gold behind a necklace. Where are we going? We can see that if we just change our attitude. If we analyse with a matured mind we learn that shape and name are artificial and gold is real. The same way, our reasoning ability tells us that this world is maya. If we learn it is maya, we understand Brahma gnana. That's why Sri Sankaracharya proclaimed Viditva. Viditva means having learnt. If we attain Brahma gnana we learn the world is maya. If we learn the world is maya we don't give importance to the objects of the world, we attain Brahma Padam.

To attain this Brahma Padam we should pray to Govinda. 'Sreyansi bahu vignani santi.' There are many obstacles in the path of success. We should overcome these obstacles and attain Brahma Padam, through sastras. 'To attain that we should pray to Govinda', says Sri Sankaracharya. Till now we prayed to God for material comforts. Now let's pray for intelligence and tenacity to attain the required gnana. I have already explained that 'bhaja' means to pray. Now 'bhaja' has yet another meaning. It means attain. Bhaja Govindam means attain Govinda, gain Govinda. In other words you should become Govinda. So come on why further delay?

The Pangs of Desire are the Pangs of Death

Sri Sankaracharya is highlighting the blocks of our progress. Most of us treat 'Bhaja Govindam' as an ordinary book, but this is a great guide for

teaching or understanding Vedanta. It explains to us in detail the qualifications required to attain gnana. If we don't have the desired qualifications, we cannot understand Vedanta however much we try. Vairagya is the main requisite. Without that, any number of qualifications are mere waste!

Vairagya doesn't mean - give up all your desires and hopes and lead a sorrowful life. Our desires and our hopes have a place in our life and we should have them, but they have their own limitations too! So a true 'vairagya' is one that gives you the importance and the limitations of desires in your life. Driving out things and pessimistic attitude to life is not vairagya. Now we are going to understand Sri Sankaracharya's teaching on desire.

The pangs of desire

Our foolishness is nurtured by many and this element of desire plays an important role. The mad race to possess more is desire! There is no end to this race. There are many miserable souls who have wasted their lives in the mad race. One innocent man had a wonderful doubt. He questioned straightaway Lord Yama Himself 'Oh Lord! You drag each soul with one pang. Where do you get so many pangs from? Yama laughed at his doubt and answered. 'I don't tie him up with any pangs. A human being ties himself up with pangs of many desires. I just hold that pang and take him away. That's all! So the pangs of desire are the pangs of death.

One who earns to fulfill the necessities will live happily. One who earns to fulfill his desires can never rest in peace. Need rests in present. Desire rests in future. Now come on, don't argue 'Should not I long for a rosy future? Shouldn't I crave for things which keep me happy? You should long for a happy life. You should plan your future. There is no doubt about it and there is no problem in it. In fact, man has achieved a great progress due to his thinking ability. But please keep one thing in mind. You should live in present and plan for the future, but you should not live in future and ignore the present. But many people do this, thinking that they are planning well.

The mind wandering in future is desire! The desire to have more pulls us down to the pangs of desire. One, who is tied down to the pangs of desire, cannot enjoy what he has earned. There is no full stop to I want more. The first line in Economics is Wants are unlimited. So all our time is spent in fulfilling these wants. The prime time of our life is gone in fulfilling these wants.

How bad is the desire? Read this sloka of Sri Sankaracharya.

Dina yaaminyau saayam praata
Sisira vasanthou punaraa yataha
Kaalaha Kridathi gachchatyaayu
Stadapi na munchatyaasaa vaayuhu

The days rolls by giving place to nights. The seasons are changing, years are slipping by, our life span is decreasing, but the pangs of desire are still not leaving us.

Time and tide wait for none. Time does its work silently, unmindful of our moods. Morning slips into evening. Evening gives place to morning. Days roll by, weeks step by and just as we keep staring at them, even months move on! In no time, spring season changes into summer and so on.

'If winter comes can spring be far behind?' The leaves fall in autumn but they are born again in spring and the nature attains its lost beauty once again. But it is not so with us human beings. The spring like youth is gone is gone for ever. We step into the autumn of life. Just as leaves fall, we lose our eye sight, our voice etc and we cannot gain them back. Many wasted hours step into days, weeks, months and even seasons. This is the sport of time but time once lost is lost for ever. It is not like money deposited in bank. We can't get back the lost time. 'Kaalaha Kridathi gachchatyaayu'- As time rolls on our life span reduces.

We don't bother to observe carefully when we celebrate our birthday. As one year is added to our age, we are closer to our graveyard by one year. That is the reason behind putting off the candles on our birthday cake. We put as many candles as the years completed and blow them off to indicate that we have spent so many years. The word wasted would be apt instead of the word spent. If you ask my sincere opinion, I strongly feel, we have no right to celebrate our birthday. Only a gain can blow off the candles because he has filled so many years of his life with gnana. We should grow, not physically, but mentally with every year, and then only are we entitled to celebrate our birthday.

Our life span is decreasing, but our desires are not decreasing, we never say 'enough'. We continue to say give me more!

Once a butterfly landed on a lotus to suck its nectar. It drank nectar to its stomachful but its desire was unfulfilled. It mused to itself. I will feel hungry again within no time. Why fly unnecessarily and come back again. I will relax here itself. When it was thus lost in its lust it became

dark and the flower closed its petals with the butterfly in it. Initially the insect did not notice it, but it did not bother since it hoped it would come out the next morning when it blossoms again. Till then it would sleep on a flowery bed provided by God. But insect proposes, God disposes. This feeling is beautifully portrayed by a poet thus.

Ratringamishyati bhavishyati suprabhatam
Bhaswanudeshyati hasishyati pankajasrihi
Ittam vichintayathi kosagathe dwirephe
Ha ! Hantha ! hantha ! Nalini gaja Ujjahara

The butterfly was lost in its own sweet dreams. But a stretch of a trumpet, a pull and a gulp put at an end to its life itself. An elephant came there unexpectedly, pulled the lotus with the butterfly in it and gulped it.

If it so desired, the butterfly could have pushed its way out of the delicate petals of the lotus, but the weight of its desires weighed it down. We are no less than the butterfly. We are not satisfied with whatever we have. We want more and more. We plan very meticulously. Planning part is O.K., but do we survive to implement it ? I doubt it. Yama follows us as our shadow. Though we have the power to escape him, the pangs of our desire pull us down.

The Air of Desire

'Stadapi na munjati asa vayuhu' says Sankaracharya. He compares desire with vayuvu air. We can't see air with our naked eye. We can only feel its presence. Accordingly, we can't see desire but it is a silent killer. We can kill it with the help of knowledge of Sastras. Superficial attempts are futile.

In the next sloka, Sri Sankaracharya explains the features of Asha.

Kate kaantaa dhana gata chintaa
vaatula kim tava naasti niyantaa
Trijagathi sajjana sajjati rekaa
Bhavati Bhavaarnava tarane nauka !

'Oh! greedy man! who is your wife ? Don't you have any other thought except money ? Is there no one who can lead you in the righteous path ? Please remember this before you search in all the 3 lokas. The only one who can make you cross the ocean of life properly is the boat of wise man.

We have desire and we support it with silly reasons. In fact the reasons

we give are fake reasons. Some body says ' I am not mad after money. I am earning so much to keep my wife and children in comfort.' We appreciate him for his concern for his family. But actually with such statements he is fooling not only the others but even himself. Let us say, his family tells him, 'If that is the case, what you have earned is enough and to spare. Why don't you stop earning and sit idle ?' Will he jump at the concern and sit idle ? Definitely not ! He snubs them and says 'No, you don't know the modern world. This will not suffice!'

'Kate kanta dhana gata chintao' - you are giving some lame excuses but you are not analyzing properly. 'Who is your wife ? Doesn't she have a say in your desirous life ? Is there any sense in leading a mercenary life ? Please think over wisely' says Sri Sankaracharya.

'Vatula kim tava nasti niyantao' - vatula means mad man! who ever whiles away his time in the mad thought of money is definitely a mad man ! Sri Sankaracharya is questioning us. 'Oh Madman ! Don't you have a dictator to your life?' We think that we are the centre of our life but we have a dictator, who dictates our life! Lord Eeswara dictates our 'karma' action and provides its fruits. But we totally ignore him and take the strings of life into our own hands.

However much we slog, we acquire as much as we are ordained to. It means we acquire only as much as Eeswara has designed for us. In case we acquire more also, we cannot enjoy it. Even a multi millionaire has to go without food if God doesn't want him to eat that day. If he goes to the hotel it will be closed for some reason. If he goes to his friend's house, that day his friend would have gone out on some urgent errand and there is a Hindi saying, 'Dane Dane pe Khane wala ka naam likha hai.' On every grain of rice, the name of one who consumes it will be written. Not only in matters of food, every aspect of our life, is already planned and designed by God. We are just implementing his plans.

There is a dictator who controls the dharma and karma of the world. We should not ignore his presence when we slog. It doesn't mean, stop doing your duty and leave everything to God. You should fulfill your responsibilities with a thought of God.

Sri Ramana Maharishi also explained the same aspect thus-God makes people puppets in his hands and blesses them or makes them suffer as per their fate. What has to happen happens however much you try to stop it. What should not happen will never happen however much you try it. So the best method is to keep quiet. Again the words 'keep quiet' doesn't mean keep your mouth shut and sit idle. It means do your duty as per your fate but don't brood over or gloat over its consequences. Accept the fruits of your actions as Eeswara Prasadam. If you

understand this, your mind will not undergo a tumult and you can live in peace.

Since Eeswara is there above us to take care of all of us, all that we have to do is to work incessantly but leave the fruits unto the Lord. We should try to come out of the shackles of desire. Since desire is like air, coming out of it is not all that easy.

In the sorrowful sea of life this air like desire creates whirlpools. It binds us all the more to the sea of life. What should we do to come out of this bondage ?

'Trijagathi sajjana sadgati reka, a bhavatihavaarnava tarane nauka' - The sea of life is really a surprising deal. We can neither immerse ourselves totally in it nor can we reach ashore properly ! If we reach the shore, nothing like that! We are saved. If we are immersed in it, suffocated in it and breathe our last, we don't mind ! But if we are torn between devil or deep sea, we lead no where ! It is hell ! In the life of samsara we are caught between the two. Unless we find a way out, we cannot live in peace.

Good company

Even if we search in three lokas to come out of the samsara sagara successfully, we have only one boat - the boat of good company. Sastras praise this good company time and again. Life is not a smooth sail on a calm river in a good boat. Life is like a mighty ocean threatened by gale of desire, to be submerged any time in the whirlpool of fate. We can withstand the heavy tossing of life only if we sail in a strong boat. That strong boat is the company of good people.

The company of good people arouses the quest for knowledge in us. It helps us develop a maturity of thought. Noble thoughts are enkindled in our mind without our knowledge. When such manifold advantages are in store for us, we should pray to Govinda to help in meeting them.

'Sajjana sangati, parinati' - (good company, maturity) without possessing these , there is no point in renouncing life hastily. When you board a train , there is some sense if you know what your destination is . There is no point in getting into a train that you come across ! If you assume you get gnana by merely changing your robes, a camouflage should have acquired great gnana by now. Changing your nature is not as easy as changing your clothes ! Renouncing your life with a true detached thought is real renunciation. A hasty renunciation is harmful. See what Sri Sankaracharya says regarding this -

Jatilo mundi lunchita kesaa
kashaayaambara bahukrute veshaha
Pasyannapi cha na pasyati moodho
Udara nimitham bahukruta veshaha

The hermits wear matted locks in their hair, give up their hair totally, and wear saffron robes. They pretend to be sanyasis to support themselves, but they are not making any effort to attain gnana!

There are many hermits who wear saffron robes and have matted hair. If one hermit gets his hair matted with locks, another hermit gives away his hair totally. However they dress, they give utmost importance to their external appearance, ignoring the much needed knowledge. Isn't it foolishness? Sri Sankaracharya ranged these superfluous swamijis as 'moodamathes' fools. But, please don't misunderstand him. He is not attacking all swamijis.

Even a gnani can wear saffron robes. He can lead the life of a sanyasi. So he doesn't classify all swamijis as fools. What Sri Sankaracharya intends to convey is - you don't attain gnana by simply donning saffron robes and carrying a sanyasi's bowl. You can see many such fake sanyasis, on the banks of the river Ganges.

They may be fake sanyasis, but the pilgrims don't ignore them. Through out the banks they kneel down before all of them. Their pranams are not for their external pomp and show. Who knows, they may be real atma gnanis too! So they do so by benefit of doubt.

'Pasyannapi pichana pasyati moodho' - 'poor pilgrims mistake me for a gnani, I should attain knowledge for their sake atleast' should be their thought, but unfortunately they don't do so. Such fools are open eyed fools.

Sri Sankaracharya's preaching is - we attain gnana by internal change of heart, but not by external change of dress.

'Udara nimitham bahu kruta veshaha. There are hundred and one ways of earning livelihood. Whatever is the way, the purpose is the same to survive.

Beware!

This sloka gives us yet another message. We constantly hear these words - In the present scenario all the swamijis are fake sanyasis. They appear to be so for their selfish ends. But this sloka disproves this statement.

Fake Swamijis are not a recent development. They were there even in Sankaracharya's times. The thought of befooling others is not a recent development. It is an age old problem. Sri Sankaracharya himself expressed it. So there is no doubt about it.

Actually if somebody has cheated you, you should not blame the other person totally. The fault is with you also. Please understand a point clearly. Nobody can fool you without your role in it. So don't blame the swamiji's totally. Don't say, 'This swami cheated me, that swami looted me..'

You approach a swami with a desire 'my neighbour should face a heavy loss, I should supersede my senior and I should get a promotion, only I should win in my court case.' If that swamiji happens to be a genuine case, you are saved. If he happens to be a wolf in sheep's clothing, he finishes you first before you can finish your opponent! He forces you to do many poojas and forces you to shell down lots of money. Ultimately he brings your downfall. How will all this happen? Your vicious thoughts enable another man to exercise his vicious actions on you. In one word it boomerangs on you.

You give a big paper statement that the swamiji is a big cheat after you are totally fooled by him. No swami can ever be a cheat. Swami is not a cheat, a cheat has donned the dress of a swami. Can he change his attitude simply by wearing saffron robes? Can an actor change his attitude because he enacts a different role? No ! The dress is different and the nature is different.

As long as we are selfish we keep being fooled by big cheats. There is no doubt about it. If you have a thirst for knowledge instead of a craving for money, nobody can cheat you. But unfortunately, instead, of seeking gnana, we are seeking personal desires. So the Swamijis, babas, matajis we approach cheat us in their own polished way.

There is a good quotation in English. If you are fooled by a fellow, the fault lies with him. If you are fooled for the second time by the same fellow, then the fault really lies in you. We can be fooled only once by one person. We become wise the second time. If we are fooled again by the same person, it means we are fools. So wherever you go, go for knowledge. Ask them philosophical questions. Then nobody can fool you since there is no scope there.

'Yadbhavam tatbhavati' getting fooled or getting elevated lies in our hands, rather in our thoughts. So wake up before it is too late. Sastra proclaims, no doubt, that only seekers of knowledge, sanyasis, detached people are eligible to wear saffron robes but today even beggars wear

them. So don't be carried away by their external appearance. See their true wisdom.

An ordinary man who leads his normal life, but seeks knowledge is far better than a sanyasi who wears saffron robes and matted locks of hair, but never bothers to seek knowledge.

'For whatever purpose you have donned the saffron robes don't forget that purpose' is the message of Sri Sankaracharya to them and the way of acquiring knowledge is not a mere external pomp and show is the message to us.

The desires don't die down by a change of dress. Many people assume that the desires automatically die down as they grow old.

Angam galitham phalitham mundam
Dasana vihinam jaatam tundam
Vruddoyaati gruheetvaa dandam
Tadapi na munchatyasa pindam

The body may decay forming wrinkles all over, the hair may become gray, the teeth may be lost, we may have to walk with the help of a walking stick but still our desires won't desert us.

The hair may lose its charm, but our desires won't lose their charm. Our desires die down by maturity of mind, but not by maturity of years. In fact, if you ask me, I feel the desires increase as we are ageing. We have desires for personal comforts. The farther the object of our desire is, the greater our desire for that try to follow me carefully.

Our general opinion is if we can't attain what we desire, our desire for it dies down. That is our logic, but our desires logic doesn't match with our logic. If what we seek for doesn't give us happiness we think something is wrong somewhere, but we are not prepared to accept the fact that the object cannot give us happiness.

There is no problem if you believe you get comfort with money. The real problem starts when you assume you get happiness with money. A man thinks he will be happy if he earns one crore of rupees. He will get one crore, but happiness doesn't automatically come with it, as he assumes. He doesn't then learn the lesson 'Money can't fetch me happiness.' He thinks he did not get happiness with one crore, he longs for ten crores or even hundred crores. Any number of crores cannot get him happiness.

So he never puts a full stop to his desires. Desires won't subside till selfishness doesn't subside !

The desire dies down only with clarity of thought regarding the purushardhas. Desire is growing day by day. There is no stunted growth for it. We reach old age but we don't leave our age old desire ! We can't realize it is a waste.

Once a man was on his deathbed. All his sons were beside him. The ladies of the house were crying. The old man has been making an attempt to convey something to his sons but he was not able to speak up. His sons noticed that the father wanted to convey some important message and so they listened more keenly. Finally the father was given a piece of paper and a pen. Guess what he wrote ! He wrote there are two wicks in that lamp. Put off one wick. It is unnecessary waste of oil. Look at the materialistic bent of mind of the old man even at death's door. Did you lose his desire even an inch ? We think it is reduced but no, it has not reduced.

Some old people constantly repeat these slogans. 'How I wish Yama takes me away! You may argue doesn't it convey the fact that their desire has died down? No, the desires haven't died down. They have plenty of them but their body is not co-operating. So they wish to put an end to their life. You must have heard of the good old joke. If you ask an old man, 'Grandfather, will you marry now', he promptly answers, 'who will offer me a girl?' Doesn't it mean that if somebody offers a girl, he is ready to marry?

Just try this on old people. Go and tell them, 'A saint has come from Himalayas. He will give you some herbs which bring back your youth and energy', they will be the first ones to go there. If their desires have subsided, why then should they go ? They wish to become young and physically fit, so that they can enjoy the fruits of earthly comforts easily. So, to assume old age puts an end to desires is foolishness.

Sadism – Massochism

As long as we look at the world with our eyes, our desires won't subside. So we should not look at it is the mad thought of a fool and he pricked his very eyes. If that is true, king Dhrutharastra, born blind, how detached should he be ? But has he not won the name he was blinded by his love for his son.

Desires have no connection with the sense organs. Making the sense organs suffer in the names of spiritual sadhana is called Massochism. You must have heard of sadism. This is a term used mostly by

psychologists. Causing trouble to somebody and enjoying at his expense is sadism and such a person is termed sadist. Causing trouble not to others, but to himself and enjoying at his own expense is called masochism and such a person is called masochist. Like sadism, masochism too is a mental disorder ! As soon as they learn that desire is the root cause of all their sorrow, these masochists harass themselves with meaningless fasts and very difficult practices. Such extreme practices may suppress their desires but they can't drive them out.

The world never binds us to desire. The external world never hinders our progress in any field. We don't realize this simple truth and so we plan to renounce the world. That is not the right step and that cannot liberate us from our desires' says Sri Sankaracharya in the following sloka.

Agre vahnihi pruste bhanuu
Ratrau chubuka samarpitha jaanuhu
Karathala bhiksha starutala vaasa
Stadapi na munchatyaasaapaasaha

Desires won't leave you even if you leave your family aside and live under the trees, or sleep in the cold weather with folded feet, or depend on sun's heat in the morning and fire at night or eat the food you attain by begging alms.

Once a man developed suddenly a detachment from his family and wanted to meditate upon God in a lonely place. He said to himself, "Chalo Kasi, Bano Sanyasi" and reached the banks of the holy river in Kasi. He did not even possess a begging bowl for seeking alms. The bowl may be small but it demands lot of attention. It needs to be cleaned everyday, it needs a bag to be kept in, a nail to hang the bag, a wall to hit the nail, a house to provide the wall. What a series of liabilities ! Why face all this he thought and used his own sweet little hands as his begging bowl.

This sanyasi found a big stone beside the river Ganges and used it as his dining table. His simple life style, way of begging and way of eating - glorified him. People regarded him as a great rushi.

Days rolled by and as history repeats itself, there followed another man akin to him. He had exactly the same ideas; he used his hands as begging bowl. His feet took him unknowingly to the rock memorial of the great saint, since he had similar feelings. So, he started eating there. The senior sadhu just entered the right place at the wrong time. He was irritated at somebody enjoying his dining table. He threw his food down and he did not allow the junior sadhu to eat in peace. He dragged him up by his neck from his seat and yelled at him, 'you sinner! How dare you

occupy my place of privacy? This has been my eating joint for quite a few years. You go in search of some other stone. He left everything behind but a ray of desire was still clinging to him which made him fight for a mere stone as if it was his birth right. So, it is crystal clear that we cannot defeat desire by external methods.

You should repair the tap where there is a leak. There is no point in repairing it elsewhere. You should take the right medicine for your disease. Instead if you take some wrong medicine without diagnosing it properly, it may become fatal too. You should follow the same principle with regards to desire. You should acquire the true knowledge required to drive out desire, instead of doing any other practice.

'Agre vahnihi pruste bhanuu' - Normally people went to Himalayas in those days in search of knowledge. In the modern days you find Madras coffee, Hyderabadi tea, mirchi bajji etc. many mouth watering dishes and cozy, comfortable resorts and guest houses for stay. But in Sankaracharya's times, the scene was different. They were exposed to the sun's rays all through the day. They had to protect themselves from the severe cold by a small fire. Agni before and sun behind means they made use of one after the other.

'Ratrau chubuka samarpita jaanuhu '- As night falls the cold breeze in Himalayas becomes so unbearable that the poor sanyasis had to sleep with their bent knees. They bent their knees so much that they almost touched their chin. They slept thus beside their fire place.

They may live in Himalayas, they may do many penances, 'tadapi na muncha atyasa pasa, they may trouble their body a lot, but they cannot come out of the pangs of desire easily.

Our approach to anything is based on our understanding of that thing. Understanding and approach never vary. Since you have formed an opinion of me as a spiritual guru, as a saint, you approach me with great respect and honour. In case you treat me in some other way, your approach to me will be totally different. As the understanding, so the approach.

Without having a proper understanding, if we try to change outwardly, it will end us nowhere.

We have an understanding that if we wish to acquire knowledge we should renounce the society and lead a different life altogether. Our approach to it is not changing. So to change our approach, we must change our understanding first. Whenever I say, you can attain gnana, even from home, 'people stare at me. They argue, 'How is it possible?

How many penances should we do ? How much practice should we do?' To understand what I try to convey to you, you should initially come out of your misconception that you get rid of your desires and acquire knowledge when you renounce the world. That's why Sri Sankaracharya highlighted so much on desire.

Without aiming at the acquisition of knowledge, any number of good deeds we do won't liberate us. Only when we have a clear understanding of this aspect, can we make a progress in our path to spiritual life.

Kurute Ganga sagara gamanam
Vrata paripalana madhavaa daanam !
Gnana vihiinaha sarvamathena
Muktim na bhajati janma sathena

Bathing in the confluence of river and ocean, doing many vratas, and pujas , donating a huge amount to the needy will not suffice. Even if a man does all these , but cannot derive knowledge, he cannot liberate himself though he is born a hundred times. All the sastras proclaim the same principle.

The river Ganges is born in Gomukh and traverses through many hills and valleys and finally reaches the ocean. Even if we start from the starting place of Ganges and do 'pada yatra' (go on foot) all along its course of travel, visiting holy places enroute, or even if we do various vratas in a systematic way, or give away our property to the poor and needy, we cannot attain moksha. Muktim na bhajathi janma satena - we cannot attain moksha even if we do such good deeds in hundreds of janmas. It is because, liberation is not one which can be attained from outside it has to be realized from within. As I have already detailed upon, the knowledge of the self alone can liberate you.

Why do good deeds?

Gnana vihinaha sarvamathena - Ranging from the Upanishads all the sastras unanimously proclaim that we cannot attain moksha without acquiring knowledge. In such a case should we do good deeds ? Is it a waste ? Doing good deeds is never a waste. Our good deeds fetch us punya. This punya leads us towards the desire for moksha one of the four purushardhas, when we have already reasoning power and determination. Sri Sankaracharya has very clearly highlighted in his book 'Viveka Choodamani' that the desire for moksha or advaita philosophy doesn't arise in a person unless he has many janmas of punya.

There is a wonderful episode in the life of Sri Rama Krishna Parama Hamsa. A great gnani called Totapuri once came to Sri Rama Krishna and told him, 'My son! you should attain the knowledge of Advaita philosophy. Only then can you attain Moksha.' Sri Rama Krishna smiled and said, 'Swami ! The Goddess Shakti answers my humble prayer. When I have a darshan of the beautiful Goddess, I am filled with happiness. I don't require any more teaching'. He rejected the proposal softly.

Sri Totapuri suggested affectionately, 'You are happy when the Goddess appears before you. Does that happiness remain even after she disappears ? How can you call it true happiness when it is derived out of an external object ? Did you attain knowledge of the self ? Think for yourself. If you don't trust me, when you are so close to the Goddess Shakti, go ask her directly whether you require Gnana for you are not! I hope you accept Her words!'

Sri Rama Krishna agreed for the proposal and went to the temple of Kali Mata and called Mata Bhavatarini. The Goddess answered his call. She appeared before him with a sweet smile. Sri Rama Krishna detailed upon the argument between him and the saint Totapuri and finally left the decision to her. He asked her humbly 'Ma! what do you expect me to do?'

'My son! How lucky you are A Brahma Gnani is going to be your guru. Only Gnana can give you Moksha', spoke the Goddess Sri Rama Krishna was taken aback, 'Ma! Am I not someone special ? Should I serve a Guru like any other ordinary man and attain gnana ? What are the fruits of my sincere services to you ?' The Goddess answered sweetly, "My Son! To get a Brahma Gnani as a guru, a person has to work hard. He has to wait for hundreds of years to learn lessons of gnana from him. But in your case, it has become a cake walk. Instead of your going in search of the guru, the guru came in search of you. This is the golden fruit of your sincere services to me !

Thus to get a chance to attain gnana itself is the real fruit of our good deeds or practices. Some people say, 'The guru spoke wonderfully in the satsang. You ask them, Is that so ? Then explain what you understood.' Then they say, 'Frankly speaking I didn't understand anything. But his speech was captivating, inspiring and wonderful. The audience were spell bound' If we don't have a balance of good deeds, even if we attend satsangs or read sastras they will be of no use.

To attain satsang or to read sastras and to grasp the essence of it is - a result of our good deeds. The result of the sins we do cause many hurdles in our path to success. The fruits of our good actions make us

put a few steps forward. It encourages us come up in life. So, it goes without saying we should do good deeds.'

We can't sit idle ! If we don't do good deeds, we do bad deeds unknowingly. If we don't do what we should do, we do what we should not do. By doing thus, we increase our balance of sins. To avoid that, we must do good deeds, but should give up the false notion that these good deeds give us moksha. The sastras or elders proclaimed - Do good deeds only to attain punya! No sastra ever proclaimed 'You attain gnana through good deeds.'

Nothing else, except gnana, can give you moksha. Try to follow this example carefully. For example let's say you have agnana regarding a ghatam (a pot). Let's say you don't know what a ghatam means. Can you get rid of your agnana by having a bath in the holy rivers ? Even if you are immersed in the water, you cannot get the knowledge. Then if you try other means and you try out all types of yogasanas including Sirshaasana, a wee bit of your agnana has not disappeared.

Then how does it disappear ? Only by learning about the ghatam. There is no other alternative. Accordingly, the ignorance of the self can be driven out only by the knowledge of the self.

A man by name Rama Rao rang up one day inviting me to conduct Gnana yagna in his place. I agreed and decided to go to his place. Before speaking to him, I was totally ignorant of this Rama Rao. After I spoke to him, my ignorance of Rama Rao disappeared. I only spoke to him, but did not meet him in person. So my agnana still persists regarding his physical appearance. Now tell me, how can I get rid of my agnana regarding this? By going to his place and seeing him personally or by going to Kasi and by having a dip in the holy river?

We are not totally ignorant of our atma. We keep saying 'I" Even a fool refers to himself as 'I'. So we know about an atma called 'I'. But we don't know its appearance. When we don't know how an object looks, even if that object is before our very eyes, we cannot recognize it. Since we don't know the appearance of atma, we have 'atma swarupa agnana' (ignorance of the appearance of atma). In other words we have ignorance of the self - swa swarupa agnana (because we are the atma). This ignorance is called 'Avidya!. We can drive out this ignorance of the self only by the knowledge of the self. Without making an attempt to attain it, there is no point in doing merely good deeds. Our avidya cannot be driven out. Sri Sankaracharya is explaining the same aspect.

We make use of a mirror to look at ourselves. We should make use of a clear scale to look into ourselves. 'Pramakaranam pramanam' - prama

means gnana, pramanam is one that provides gnana by driving out agnana. So we can't attain the knowledge of the self without the help of this pramanam. So we should drive out our ignorance regarding Atma, by a proper understanding of Sastras.

Going on pilgrimages, performing vratas, giving away in charities - These were advocated not by ordinary men, but by rishis who were well versed in Vedas ! So there is no harm in doing these with great interest. These cleanse our heart. To understand the Sastras, we do require a clean chit. When the glasses of our spectacles are dirty, we can't see through them clearly and so can't differentiate things properly. The same way if our heart is not clear, we can't attain the knowledge of Sastras. It becomes confusion versus confounded. So I repeat the deeds advocated to clean our heart can't provide moksha. If we think so, our foolishness is nurtured all the more.

The following sloka explains how a realized soul behaves -

Sura mandira tarumoola nivaasa
Sayyaa bhuutala majinam vaasaha
Sarva parigraha bhoga tyaagaha
Kasya sukham na karothi viragaha

One who lives under the trees beside temples, sleeps on the floor, wears the animal's skin as his clothes, gives up all material comforts and develops vairagya is bound to be happy.

Sri Sankaracharya did not mean to say we become like that when we attain gnana. There is a purpose behind such a description. It is because we entertain foolish notion that our happiness lies in the material objects we possess, in the situation we are in and in the people we are acquainted with.

Living under roadside trees, sleeping on the floor, wearing whatever is available... in case we are faced with such a situation, we will definitely commit suicide. But a sanyasi who gives up totally comforts and desires will be happy even in such circumstances.

Since we feel our happiness lies in things, people and circumstances all the time we are worried that they might slip off our hands. This leads to constant stress. Our life is spent in safeguarding these things. The happiness that depends on material objects disappears the moment those things disappear. So, misery increases. So we are more worried about what is in store for us in future. On the contrary, a gnani is devoid of such miseries. When he has no miseries, there is no dearth for his happiness.

A true vairagi is not bothered about God too. There is an illustration for this principle in the life of Bharthru Hari. One day Lord Parameswara told Parvathi Devi , 'Oh Devi ! Bharthuhari's vairagya is really praiseworthy. That's why he lives eternally in the sea of happiness. Parvathi was eager to see such a saint. She came down to the earth to see him along with Lord Siva.

Bharthruhari's at that time was preparing rotis for himself from the flour he attained in his alms. Lord Parameswar said 'Bikshaam dehi.' Bharthru hari didn't bother to raise his head and see who had come for alms. He gave away the hot roti he had prepared just then for himself. Then Parvathi spoke thus, 'Oh Bharthruhari! You know who came to your door step to seek alms ? It is the great Almighty. Adi Bikshuvu! Lift your head and see Him. Be blessed to have his Darshan unasked for! 'Bharthruhari casually said, without even raising his head 'Oh! I see! very glad.' He didn't look at the Lord! Parvathi Devi was shocked!

He was asked to seek something in return for his kind gesture, but he turned it down with a simple smile. 'No, thank you!' Parvathi Devi did not want to leave him thus. She insisted on her kind reciprocation. Then Bharthruhari pleaded "Mother! you do me a favour then! You please leave me alone. That is the only desire.

This is not spoken out of his ego. Please understand that ! Chidananda Rupa Sivoham, Sivoham is the state in which he is in. Where will he have a desire, an interest, a longing to see Siva ? No other happiness can excel the happiness of the self.

However critical the outside world is one who attains knowledge of the self will not feel miserable. This sloka conveys this meaning. This state is wonderful but how do we reach this state ? What should we do to attain it ? People say ! 'Oh my God ! to attain the state of renunciation and to derive happiness out of it needs lots of penances on our part. We should give up many things. We should do deep meditation. We should follow a special life style. But let us see what Sri Sankaracharya has to say about attaining Vairagya.

Yogarathovaa Bhogarathovaa
Sangarathovaa Sangha Vihinaha
Yasya Brahmani ramathe chittam
Nandadi Nandahi Nandati Eva

One may be interested in Yoga or in Bhoga, may lead a secluded life or be in the midst of joyous company but if he concentrates his mind on

Parabrahma always and derives pleasure out of that, can be deemed to be happy always.

Our gnana or happiness is not based on how we lead our life. Yogarathaha means a Sanyasi, bhogaratha va means a grihasta (a married man). Our life is based on the karmas (actions) we have performed. So if one likes to lead a secluded life another likes to be in the midst of his kith and kin. However he is outwardly, the main essential thing is one and the same - Yasya Brahmani ramathe chittam - whose mind is centered round Brahma only he is a gnani.

The life of true brahmachari is one whose mind is centered round Brahma. But our mind is centered round material possessions like money, gold, objects and vehicles. That's why we are seen to be lost in dhana gatha chinta (worried over money) If our chittam-mind-is centred round Brahma whatever we see, we see Brahmam only.

Gnani – Agnani

You add water to milk, water blends in milk and you can't differentiate them. You remove the yogurt from milk and add it in water, the yogurt sails in water. It doesn't mix with water. It is unattached to water. Gnani and Aganani also behave the same way.

Gnani is unattached wherever he is, but agnani gets himself mixed up in the situation and broods over as per the occasion. 'Yogaratho nandati, bhogaratho nandati, sangarato va, sangha vihinaapi navidodi eva! a gnani may be a yogi or a bhogi, may be in society or all alone, he continues to remain happy.

Where you are is immaterial. How you are is important. So please don't feel bad that you cannot attain gnana because you are leading a gruhastu's life. Even if you leave your family and go to an ashram you can't attain gnana unless you change your approach.

I will conclude the session with an interesting episode from the life of Janaka Maharaj. All the Maharishis used to praise Janaka Maharaj as a great saint. Naturally, some followers of the rishis did not like their words of appreciation. Out of them, two people dared to raise their doubts to their guru, 'Swami ! You praise Janaka as 'mumukshuvu, as Raja rishi, but how can he be praised thus, if he leads a very luxurious and comfortable life ? How can he be a gnani?'

Their guru did not try to explain. He merely said, 'Dear, sishyas! You please go to Janaka and find out for yourselves.' He gave introductory

letters to them and sent them to the palace of Janaka. There they were given a warm welcome.

The king himself came down to them, and escorted them personally to his mandir. As soon as they were seated they showered a number of questions. 'Oh king ! you live in many comforts. Then how can you be deemed a Brahma Gnani ? We are not able to understand...' The king was not offended, but spoke pleasantly. 'Dear friends ! you are tired after a long, tedious journey . So you have your bath and relax for some time. I will join at lunch time and we can discuss all things at leisure.'

They were taken to bathroom. You call it a bathroom ? It was filled with many fragrant scents. Water in golden vessels and many more luxuries.. They were thrilled at it and thought they would not long for anything else in life. But the guest room they were offered was heaven on earth. That was the softest bed they ever had and the sweetest sleep they ever slept. So they relaxed wonderfully well and went to the dining room at lunch time.

It was a feast to the eyes. Food was served in golden plates. It was a veritable food of the Gods. They sat down to have their food. King Janaka was serving them personally. As they were about to eat, Janaka gestured to them to look up Behold ! They saw two sharp edged knives hanging over their heads vertically from the roof. They looked like incarnation of Lord Yama himself. They were tied to so thin a thread that they might fall on them any moment. They were torn between their culture and their fear of death. As per the sastras, getting up half way through a meal was insulting God Himself ! But going through the ordeal of meal was not safe enough ! In such a breathless state, they quickly finished their food, God knew how! When they stepped out of their places, they heaved a deep sigh of relief and thanked their stars.

Janaka approached them and asked, 'Dear friends, I got laddus prepared especially for you. How were they ? 'Where did they see the laddus ? All their vision was lost at the knives above, but not at the plates below. But courtesy demanded an answer like this 'Oh Maharaj! they are delicious.'

The king did not leave them there. He continued asking about each and every item that was being served. They tried to escape with 'Oh Maharaj! we ate everything. One item topped the other. 'But the king insisted, 'You tell me which item you liked more ! Then they were forced to blurt out the truth. With folded hands they pleaded, 'Oh Maharaj ! You served us personally and we ate them. So far good. But don't ask us what we ate or how we relished them! So, please don't trouble us with any more questions.'

But the king troubled them with a last question. 'How come ! How can you ever say you don't know what you ate ? Can you be so careless regarding food ?' Then they spoke out freely 'No Swami! it is not carelessness ! Let's explain what exactly happened - our body was eating but our mind was lost in thought over the knives hanging overhead. So we could not relish the food. So we can only say the food was being eaten by us, but we did not eat the food.'

The king smiled at their answer and explained. 'Dear friends ! Just as you could not relish the food you ate, being lost in thought over the knives, I cannot enjoy the comforts I live in being lost in knowledge of Brahman incessantly. The body is present in these, but the mind is absent. 'He explained thus, through their own example and enlightened them.

So, we need not give up our family and happiness in search of quest for knowledge. We need not go to forests or ashrams. If our mind is in the forest even if we are in the midst of society, it's enough. One who is lost in the attainment of Brahma Gnana is happy forever.

Once Ramana Maharshi was explaining that the knowledge of the self can be attained wherever you are. One doubt master raised a doubt. 'Swami if that is the case, why are you here in Arunachal ? You could have sought knowledge from your house itself ! So, shall I also go elsewhere ?' Sri Ramana Maharshi smiled and answered , You need not go anywhere. You can continue to remain where you are. To your question why did I come here my fate brought me here. I did not ask any one whether I should go anywhere.'

Wherever you are destined to live, lead a happy life there and seek knowledge. Even if you go against your fate, it won't help you in anyway. Even a gnani cannot escape what is in store for him. He can destroy samchita agami karma, doing bad deeds in future Prarabdham bhogena nastam bhavathi. Prarabdham what we are destined to face goes away after we face it. So there is no escape. We have to face it. But wherever 'Prarabdham' puts our mind in 'Brahman' you have this liberty and plenty of it.

Sri Sankaracharya is asking us to pray to God to make use of the opportunity given to us. We can see sun only through sun's rays. We can learn about Govinda only through Govinda's rays, Govinda's blessings. So to liberate ourselves let us pray to Govinda.

No Discussions with Lord Yama

Yasya Brahmani ramate chittam, nandati, nandati, nandati eva - you cannot define the term Gnani in simple terms. You cannot say one who renounces his life is a Gnani; one who is born in India is a Gnani etc. Gnani means one whose mind is centered round 'Brahmam' He doesn't have sorrow. Let's go deep into this subject now.

Troubles – sorrow

Troubles are created by God, but sorrow is not created by Him. For that matter, even if God takes up the Janma of man, He is bound to face troubles. Rama and Krishna are examples for this statement. The irony is we pray to these Gods saying 'Oh God! See that my life is free from troubles! In fact, if we face at least one trouble they have experienced we will commit suicide!

As long as we are alive, we cannot do away with troubles. Can you jump into water and come out of it without being wet? Jumping into water and being wet are not two different entities. Jumping itself is getting wet. So, there is no way of getting out of troubles. If that is the case, why then should we pray to Rama or Krishna? I am coming to that question. It is because we require their tenacity and determination to face our troubles as they faced their troubles. Ignoring this aspect, asking Him. 'Oh God! See that all my troubles vanish into thin air is sheer foolishness!

A life devoid of troubles makes you lazy and drowsy. Imagine you are driving a car or a scooter on a highway. You drive it mechanically on a clear road. Imagine suddenly a lorry comes in your way. Then what do you? You become alert in a split second and save your skin. You observe your surroundings keenly then. Life is no exception to this rule.

We lead our life very monotonously! Did you notice something about the word monotonously? The spelling itself is monotonous. mo-no-to-no-usly. Four 'O' s in it. Our life is so monotonous, so mechanical, so dull, that we lead a dazed state of life. Suddenly a troubleshooter crops up; we are awake to the value of life. The troubles make us open our eyes. So life devoid of troubles is as good as a dead life!

O.K. leave alone troubles, where from do we get sorrow? Trouble is God's creation, sorrow is our creation. We are the producers of sorrow! How we receive a thing is based on our own attitude. Follow this incident for example. Once a master was teaching very keenly but he happened to notice two mischievous boys talking. He chided them softly. One student thought, 'Hmm! This master is very bad. He hates me like hell. He has insulted me before every one in class.'

The second student reacted differently. 'How good the master is! When

we were talking in the midst of his teaching, he didn't leave us to our fate! He wanted me to change for the better, he wanted me to be benefited by his teachings and so he scolded me for my own good.' The first student felt insulted and so was grieved at the scene, whereas the second student was thrilled and so his love and respect for the teacher grew. The situation was the same, but the reactions were different. The reactions came out of the reactors! So we are creators of our joy or our sorrow! We nurture them with great care!

If our change in our attitude in so small an affair brings us happiness how much more happiness do we derive if we attain the knowledge of the self? If we become such a saint, we can never experience grief. For ever we live in happiness.

Sri Sankaracharya wants to reform us in many angles. So he is advocating some practices in the following sloka. This helps those who wish to come out of the fear of death.

Bhagavat Gita Kinchitadheetaa
Gangaa jala Iava Kanikaa Peethaa
Sakrudapi Yena Murari Samarchaa
Kriyathe Tasya Yamopi Na Charchaam

One who studies a little of Bhagavad-Gita, one who drinks a drop of Ganges, one who prays to God sincerely at least once, need not be scared of the pangs of Death.

Sri Sankaracharya says one who studies a little of Bhagavat-Gita, one who drinks atleast a drop of Ganger water one who prays to God need not face Yama or need not be a convict in the court of Yama.

Bhagavat Gita, Kinchid adheethaa - Even if you study a little of Gita, you attain Moksha. Of course, a little doesn't mean, reading just the first word 'Dharma Kshetre.' 'Kinchit adheetha' doesn't mean reading a few words or lines or slokas. It means study one chapter atleast, out of the 18 chapters. Again, don't take the superficial meaning of this line. Read the chapter doesn't mean read it carelessly as you read through a newspaper. If you read a shastra which gives you moksha as a newspaper you cannot attain any benefit out of it.

My experience

Many people read Gita, but they read it as they read the famous Telugu weekly 'Swathi', I will share with you my first and last experience of 'Gita Parayan.' Once I was invited to a village to partake in the Gita Parayan.

All the people assembled there, had 'Gita' with them. They asked me to open the session with a few introductory words on Gita. Accordingly, I highlighted on the importance of Gita. They jumped to action the very next minute of my speech. They broke into two long lines and sat facing each other in two rows as Devas and rakshas sat for 'Amrutham'. I was made to sit in their midst at the head of the lines. To tell you the truth, I was a little curious to see how their recital would go on. The recital started with prayer to Ganapathi and Lord Krishna.

One group read aloud. 'Dhrtarastra Uvaacha - Dharma Kshetre Kuru Kshetre Samavetha Yuyustavaha' immediately the second group read aloud, 'Maamakaha Pandavaschaiva Kima Kurvatha Sanjaya.' They were reciting thus in a competitive sprit. They didn't know the meaning of what they were reading. They weren't keen on learning too. As they were engrossed in their chanting it became more of cacophony. I could not appreciate their style of reading.

By the time they came to the sixth chapter, some of the devotees were making gestures to the organizer for tea. The organizer was more bothered about serving tea, coffee and snacks rather than listening to this. Thankfully they came to an end of their mad race and they looked at each other approvingly as if they had completed a Herculean task. I reserve my comments on such a recital of Gita. I leave it to your imagination.

Study of Gita is not an outward reading of it. Knowing this tendency of people, Sri Sankaracharya uses a correct prescription. He proclaims, 'Bhagavat Gita Kinchit Adheetha'

Adheetha' means a type of study which makes you retain it in your brain. We by heart 700 slokas, but we are not retaining their message in our heart. Such a meaningless recitation ultimately brings a sore throat but nothing else!

Gitamrutam

The value of Gita is explained in the words - 'Dugdham Gitamrutam Mahat' Gitamrutam is compared to milk. You gain strength only by drinking milk but not by merely chanting the words 'milk, milk' or by praying to milk. There is no point in crying over spoilt milk. Some people argue that a mere reading of Bhagavat Gita also gives them 'Punya'. It may be true. Since they are influenced by some element of Gita they may attain some 'Punya', and thereby Moksha but when it can provide us Gnana, is there any meaning in belittling its benefit to just Punya?

Is it wise on our part to desire for coffee when we are blessed with a 'Kalpavruksham' which can fulfil the most wonderful desires? Is it wise on our part to demand small desires from the 'Gita Kalpa Vruksham' when it can drive out the very desires that cause sorrow? Arjuna who has patiently listened and clearly followed the message imbibed in the Gita said, 'Nastomohaha Smrutirlabhda.' Are we in a position to declare thus though we have read it more than once?

Are we going into the depths of Gita or are we reading it carelessly? Every chapter of Gita is titled 'Yoga' - 'Arjuna Vishada Yoga', 'Sankhya Yoga', 'Karma Yoga' etc! Many people don't know what exactly this term 'Yoga' means. Some learned people, who give discourses on Gita, proclaim 'There are 18Yogas in Gita, Whatever yoga you read, you can become a Gnani. Yoga also means an aspect or a topic. So Arjuna Vishada Yoga doesn't mean 'Vishada also is a yoga (sorrow too is yoga). It only means this chapter deals with the aspect of Arjuna's sorrow. Sankhya yoga is the chapter which deals with the topic Sankhya, karma yoga deals with the topic karma etc. When we don't know this simple element how can we boast about our mastery over Gita?

Sri Acharyulu has studied our pulse already. He knows if he asks us to master all the eighteen chapters of Gita, we will not be within the range of ear shot. He is cleverer in two ways than us. He asks us to master at least one chapter of Gita. By prescribing thus, he is not compromising with us. He has an upper hand over us. You cannot just read one chapter and ignore the rest. To have a thorough understanding of one chapter of Gita you should follow the rest of Gita. To understand first chapter well, you should proceed to the second, to understand the second, to the third and so on and so forth till you come to the end of Gita! There is a saying 'Take care of the [paise, the rupees will take care of themselves. If he forces you to read with shradda one chapter, that shradda will take care of itself and makes you read the rest of the chapters.

Gita contains many messages to every walk of our life. Gita is not just a religious book. It is a classical guide to develop our personality. Gita has solution to the manifold problems we face in life. I highlighted this angle of Gita in my series of articles in the daily Vartha, under the title, 'Maro konam lo Bhagavad Gita' (Gita in another angle). Sarvopanishado gaavo dogdha Gopala nandana

Pardhovasta sudhirBhokta dugdham gitamrutam mahat

Gita is the essence of all the Upanishads put together. Krishna has handed down this essence to us through Arjuna. 'SudhirBhokta' means

one who has a good mind is the owner of this Gita. So we should utilise our brain in the mastery over Gita. Gitamata did not limit herself to save Arjuna. She is more than willing to lift us up too! 'Ganga jala lava Kanikaapeetha' - Even if we accept a little of Ganga water or drink even a drop of Ganga water, we need not meet face to face with Yama, says Acharya.

The Indians believe the Ganges to be very holy. That's why we don't treat it as a river, but as a goddess. Once a foreign tourist came to the Royal court of Akbar. He raised a question to all the courtiers seated there, 'What is the holiest river in your country?' 'The River Ganga' - promptly came, the answer from the crowd. But Birbal alone answered 'Yamuna'. The surprised audience wanted a clarification. Then Birbal explained 'This man wanted to know the name of the holiest river. According to our Hindu opinion Ganges is not a mere river. It is a goddess! It is Gnana. So the next place goes to Yamuna!'

He is right. Ganga is not just a flow of water from Himalayas. It is a knowledge, which evolved from Lord Siva's Head. Ganga means a flow of Gnana! Hindus have accepted Ganga as a symbol of Gnana. We should serve the river Ganga in such a faith and Devotion. There is no point in having a holy dip in the river without devotion towards her. If we get liberation just by a dip in the river, the fish in the river could have been liberated by now.

Death at the banks of the river

The word 'Devotion' reminds me of a story - Pandit Sri Madan Mohan Malavya is the founder of Benares Hindu University. He was on death bed in Kasi. All his well wishers, friends and relatives gathered round him. Malavya told them, 'Please take me away from the holy river. I don't want to die on the banks of the river.' People were taken aback. Somebody questioned 'What a strange desire! Many devotees long to die at the banks of the river. But you want to miss purposefully the golden opportunity in your hands. His answer was captivating. He said, 'I want to be born again and again to render my services to Mother India. If I die here I will not have rebirth. I will be freed from the cycles of birth and death and will attain Moksha. So I don't want to die here!' See his devotion to Ganga. Ganga will definitely liberate such faithful devotees. For others it is after all water!

We shouldn't miss another point here. If you have followed carefully 'Bhaja Govindam', Sankaracharya has mentioned earlier you will not get Moksha even if you follow track of Ganga from its birthplace to its union with the ocean. The same guru now says even if you drink a drop of

Ganga water you will be liberated. Doesn't he look contradicting himself? No, he is not! He has a hidden deeper meaning in it.

The mention of the word Ganga does not refer to the river alone. Through the flow of the river, he is hinting at the flow of the Gnana! We have already seen how Ganga stands for Gnana! Whenever there is an untoward incident in the house, we purify it by sprinkling holy water all over the house. Why? It is because we believe the river has such a holiness that it can drive out any impurity. To the question which is the holiest thing in the world, Bhagavat Gita answered very clearly - Nahi Gnanena Sadrusam Pavithram ihamidyate' Gnana is the holiest thing. It is second to none. Ganga stands for Gnana. So here we have to take the applied meaning, rather than the real meaning.

'Gangi govu palu garitadaina chalu' A spoonful of milk of the best cow will suffice. The useful Gnana, even if it is a spoonful will suffice. Whoever makes a sincere effort to attain it, whoever has attained a wee bit of Gnana can be rest assured of his path to liberation! 'Sakrudapi yena murari samarchaa' - 'sankrudapi yena' applies to the first two lines of the sloka sakrudapi yena means whoever follows these two!

If we pray to Murari, we don't have to meet Yama face to face. Krishna is called Murari because he killed a demon called Mura. 'Murari Samartha' one who prays to Murari. We have to extend the meaning to God. One who prays to God attains knowledge.

Aren't we praying every day to God strictly adhering to all the rituals? But still we are not devoid of the fear of Death! Does it imply that the pooja we do is different from the pooja advocated in Bhaja Govindam?

The true prayer

We pray to God 'Oh God save me. But God is cleverer than us. He proclaimed long ago, Uddaret atma atmanaam, atmaanamava saadayeth', You liberate yourself. Avasadayeth - Till the end you are responsible for your own fate' He got rid of us thus. We human beings have the tendency to blame somebody else for our mistakes. It is called passing the buck. We like to transfer here not the blame, but our worries to God and sit relaxed, but God hasn't left us with the opportunity. Why then should we pray to him?'

The pooja mentioned here is not the one, which makes us long for something. It is one, which makes us yield something. We should surrender our ego and pride before God and seek the blessed knowledge.

That is real pooja! If we do such a prayer atleast once, or even make an effort our life purpose is fulfilled.

Our pooja doesn't involve surrender. In fact we are only exhibiting our ego in the form of pooja. Every flower we offer, every ritual we follow is to nurture our ego but not to increase our faith! As long as we delve in this pooja, we cannot perform the pooja in its true sense. To be more specific pooja is taking place, but we are not performing. Every step that crops up out of selflessness is a pooja to the Paramathma!

Once when a Brahmin was performing pooja in Kasi Viswanath temple a golden bowl fell at the feet of the Lord from Heavens! The scripture, 'this is a gift to whoever prays to Me wholeheartedly' is engraved upon it.

The Brahmin took it for granted that he fulfilled that condition since all through his wakeful hours he was praying to God in the holy presence of God. Surprisingly when he took it into his hands, it turned out to be a mud vessel. When he kept it on the floor, it turned into golden bowl again. Unable to believe his own eyes, he took it again into his hands but it was earthenware again. Then he realized, 'May be I am doing pooja outwardly but that may not be true and sincere devotion to God.' He spread the news, 'God has sent a gift to His staunch devotee. Whoever is one such, can come and collect it.'

People thronged over the temple - they came, they saw, they touched but they were defeated. With humiliation writ over their face, they left the place meekly. Finally a pilgrim who was unaware of all this farce going on in temple landed there. He was a great devotee though he did not know various slokas of Siva like Namakam, Chamakam, Stotras and Bhajans etc. He was chanting only 'Om Namaha Sivaya.' After he had his holy Darsan of Kasi Visweswara, the Poojari explained the whole story and asked him to touch the golden bowl. The devotee put one step backward as if he was asked to do a crime, 'My God! I am an ordinary soul. I know only to chant the name of Lord Siva. That bowl should be handed over to a great devotee, but not to people like me. I am able to pray to him with a handful of flowers in this Janma probably because I have done some good deeds in the previous Janma. So please don't take it for granted I am a Bhakta. I am nothing special.

The Brahmin was impressed by his humble nature and so insisted, 'Look, my dear! God has designed me to hand it over to his beloved devotee. It is my utmost duty to fulfil his orders. It is your duty to co-operate with me.' The Bhakta was forced to touch, but he did so in a very humble manner. Behold. It did not change into earthen ware. Including the main priest, all the people present there, prostrated before him.

They were eager to know what's so special about him. He answered innocently, I believe sincerely in heart, soul and mind that God is all pervading. I salute to God with love everyday, but never could I do extravagant pooja to Him. 'I came all the way to Kasi to offer him many savories but on my way to Kasi, a leprosy patient was starving without food. I gave them away to that patient. This is my Siva pooja.'

Since the devotee believed strongly that God is everywhere, whatever he did, turned out to be a Pooja. A Pooja without surrender is an external show of pomp. However grand the pooja may be it becomes a waste without this aspect of surrender.

Suppose you say 'the marriage was performed on a grand scale, but just before tying the Mangalsutra was missing, can you treat it as a completion of marriage? The marriage can go on without the splendor and pomp but with the ritual of tying the Mangalsutra but not vice versa.

Total surrender to God is what is expected in any devotee. If that is there, whatever you do, becomes a grand pooja. 'Yadyat karma karomi tattat akilam Sambho tava araadhanam! 'One who prays to God thus need not have to encounter Lord Yama. It is because 'bhaktya Inanam prajayathe' Gnanam arises out of Bhakti. The surrender gives the preparedness for the attainment of Gnana. The devotion drives out the fears or doubts and brings stability of mind. Bhakti brings concentration, soft nature etc. These qualities are the master qualities of a seeker of Gnana. Just as we can see the world around as soon as we open our eyes, so also can we attain Gnana as soon as we acquire these qualities. To attain Gnana, we should pray to Govinda.

If we don't attain Gnana, we have to face Yama again and again. Sri Sankaracharya is highlighting this point in the following sloka...

Punarapi Jananam, Punarapi Maranam
Punarapi Janani Jatare Sayanam
Iha Samsare Bahu Dustare
Krupaya Paare Pahi Murare

Oh Murari ! please liberate me from the cycles of birth and death, from the task of being moulded in mother's womb, from the miseries that crop up out of the sorrowful sea of Samsara !

I have repeatedly explained to you Samsara doesnot refer to wife, children, relatives or friends. Avidya - ignorance is Samsara. As long as we are involved in the life cycle we are in Samsara only!

'Punarapi jananam, punarapi maranam, punarapi janani jatara sayanam' - we are born to die, we die to be born again into mother's womb, there seems to be no end to this life cycle! This is Samsara. To come out of it successfully is not an easy task- 'Iha samsara bahu dustara!' We cannot cross this sea of Samsara without the help of the boat of Gnana.

No essence in Samsara

Our cycle of birth is inevitable, but at least is there any happiness in it? A big No! We are faced with a sea of sorrow, touched by a fresh wave of happiness once in a blue moon. Before we try to analyze whether it is a happy moment or nonchalant attitude experienced out of saturated state of sorrow, the wave recedes. A man carrying a pot of water on his shoulder keeps changing it from one shoulder to another. When he changes it from left shoulder he feels relieved temporarily, but within few minutes, the other shoulder starts aching. He is forced to bring it back to the left shoulder again.

I feel the happiness we experience is akin to the temporary relief the man gets in his hazardous task. Don't you think so?

We are facing lots of sorrow being tossed up and down by the turbulent waves, of miserable Samsara. 'Krupaya pare pahi murare !' 'Oh Lord! please liberate me' should be our prayer proclaims, Sri Sankaracharya. Don't be torn between the seemingly contradictory statements! When the Lord says, you liberate yourself, how can we pray to Him? Don't entertain such fears. Sri Sankaracharya says since attainment of Gnana is the only means of liberation, pray unto the Lord to seek Gnana and to provide us a Sadguru who can teach us effectively. He is not promising us that if we pray to God; God will liberate us without any effort on our part.

To whom did God say 'Uddaret atma atmaanam' To Arjuna, His very close friend and relative! Will such God come to our rescue? We should liberate ourselves. If that is the case why then do we require God or Guru? I know you get this doubt. You have to help yourself out, no doubt, but Guru helps you out through his spiritual lectures!

The grass is greener on the other side. When our religion or dharma advocates you to liberate yourself, you are attracted to another religion which promises to liberate you. You hear that the other religion prays on behalf of you, there you can wash out any number of sins you do by just confessing them before God, that the son of God helps you out.

Naturally, you are lured to that. But before being attracted by such promises please analyze the following situation wisely.

There are two categories of parents. 1. The parents train the children to do whatever they want on their own. 2. The parents who do everything for their children without allowing them to do any work on their own. Now tell me which parents are the better of the two! Undoubtedly the first category! Your love should not make your children misfits in the competitive world. If they do so, how can they save them? If you tell somebody, I will save you, it is not help to him but it is weakening his spirits. Good parents beat their children, so that they will not be beaten by the society. Our dharma is akin to good parents.

Our dharma helps us to liberate ourselves. It shows us a way out when we are lost in a dilemma. It leads us to our destination. Guiding a man to the right path when he has lost his way is the greatest help one can render. A Guru and God can guide us thus. Asking them to do more than that shows our weakness or our ignorance, but it does not show our Bhakti or surrender.

'Oh God! All along I have prayed to you to fulfil my material comforts like money, gold, vehicles etc and you have been blessing me all through! Now I have realized what I want! Provide me knowledge which helps me to liberate myself from the cycles of life, reach me to a Sadguru, bless me with the maturity to understand and implement what I learn!' Our prayer to God should be refashioned thus. If we can attain these on our own without the help of God we could have attained them through Bhakti or through our clever nature. But we are only growing old but not wise. That's why we require the blessings of the Lord. The true way of surrender is to seek. His blessings on us to walk on the righteous path.

'Krupaya Pare Pahimurare' is not a prayer chanted out of helplessness but out of true devotion. This prayer is not meant to weaken our spirits but to seek knowledge of the self. We can come out of the cycles of life, Punarapi Jananam, Punarapi Maranam only through that knowledge.

We are attached to the body, mind and soul. So we think, 'I am doing this, I am doing that' which makes us gloat over ourselves. We feel we are the Kartha - the doer and this fosters our pride - On the contrary we realize through the knowledge of the self that we are only a witness to the body mind and soul. When we feel we are only a witness the attachment to them dies. When the attachment dies, the feeling I am Kartha and the ego fostered on it automatically disappears. The minute we lose the feeling 'I am Kartha' we also lose the feeling 'I am Bhokta - I am the sufferer. To be a Kartha or a Bhokta we need attachment. If we learn, I am neither Kartha nor Bhokta, I am only a witness to the actions or

suffering, we will not have rebirth again. When we wish to receive we need a body to receive. 'Sukha dukhaadi bhoga Sadhanam / bhogayatanam sareeram - The body exists to receive the pleasures and sorrows. If we are not the Kartha, we cannot be deemed to be the Bhokta. Understand this aspect clearly.

We act as a Kartha to turn ourselves into a Bhokta. A man once went to the Himalayas. He wanted to climb one of the peaks of the Himalayas. He climbed it with great effort and determination. This is Karma - action. After he completed his task successfully he looked around. He was happy he could achieve it and he was also delighted at the scenic beauty of Nature around the peak. This is Bhogam - fruits of action. He took so much pains to enjoy such fruits of his action ! We enjoy the fruits of action after we do something. We do something to get the fruits of that action. If there is no end result, there is no point in doing it !

When we realize we are not the doer we also realize we are not the receiver too.. To a Brahma Gnani the life, the body, the experience etc which are means of actions or receiving are immaterial. When he is not bothered about them, why will he have 'punarapi jananam, punarapi maranam?'

One who is caught in the cycles of life and makes it all the more complicated, requires a readiness to learn and the minimum qualification to acquire the knowledge. 'To get these, we should pray to God' says Sri Sankaracharya.

'Prardhana Chodo, Sadhana Pakado' is the slogan of the day for some people. What is Sadhana ? 'Sadhyam Anena iti sadanam' - Sadhana is one which makes something possible. If we have a determination to achieve our goal, our very life becomes a 'Sadhana' 'Sadhana' doesn't mean some special Karmas.

A true Sadhaka is one who makes his life a 'Sadhana' . Prayer gives such a preparedness to 'Sadhana' Prayer is not one which seeks favours. Prayer is one which offers total surrender. When the mind is disturbed, it cannot digest advaita philosophy It needs equanimity and we should pray to God to provide this equanimity. Prayer enables the calmness.

If we give our clothes for dyeing he will first wash our clothes in hot water. Why is he washing them when he is supposed to dye them? It is a preliminary step. If the cloth is dirty, it cannot accept the colours properly.

A person gets a reeling sensation while going in the giant wheel. He also gets a vomiting sensation. What should he do then? Can he get down on

his own? No! He has to appeal to the operator of the giant wheel to stop it.

He can step out of it only after he stops it. He can do anything to stop his uneasiness only after he steps out of it. Accordingly we are in the giant wheel of cycles of life. We should appeal to the operator of this giant wheel - Lord Siva. The lord will show us a way out of this situation. When we attain the basic qualification with prayer, we can proceed to attain Gnana.

How does a Gnani look? The following sloka analyses that -

Radhya Karpata Virachita Kanthaha
Punyaa punya visarjitha panthaha
Yogi Yoga Niyojitha Chitto
Ramate balonmathava deva

A yogi wears the rags of clothes available in the streets, he is freed from the difference between good and bad deeds, his mind is always based on 'Brahmam' and like a child or a mad man he is happy for ever.

'Radhya Karpata Virachita Kantha' - please don't mis interpret this line. It doesn't mean one who wears ragged clothes is a Gnani or Gnani should wear ragged clothes. Sri Sankaracharya only means a Gnanis happiness does not lie in external objects. As far as we know, our happiness lies in objects, people around or on situations. Gnani is different from us. So he will be happy in whatever state he is in in rugged clothes also.

'Punya punya visarjitha Kandhaha' - A Gnani's path is devoid of fruits of good or bad deeds. Whatever we do we cannot avoid the fruits of our actions. Some people think that the only way to be detached from karma is to give up karmas -both good and bad. But how can we give up Karmas? If we can't give up Karma how can we give up the fruits of Karma?

The fruits of karma are not actually related to the karma (action) but they are related to the 'Kantha' (doer) A karma turns out to be good or bad based on our feeling! For example, killing people is a sin.

Then how great a sinner should the executioner in the jail be - he hangs those murderers. How great a sinner a soldier should be - he kills so many people on the enemy side. Does the government punish the executioner or the soldier?

So 'Karma' has nothing to do with its consequences. The fruits of karma

are derived as per our feelings. When we give up the feelings, I am the doer, I am the receiver' we are freed from the impact of sin or good deed. 'Gunaha Guneshu varthante' - 'The gunas are mixing with the other gunas. I am only an eye witness to them. To know such a thing is to come out of sin or good deed.

Since we are attached to our body, mind and soul we assume that their karmas are our karmas. As a result we are attached to 'karmas' and we entertain the notion. 'Aham Kartha' (I am the doer). We are actually a witness to the actions being done by the body, mind and soul. When we are a witness, how can we see? How are we the body and mind? The day we come out of the attachment to these, with a proper understanding that day we are freed from the fruits of karma. Our body works according to our fate.

A person who thinks he is neither the Kartha nor the Bhokta doesn't bother about his fate. Such a great man appears to be free from actions though he does actions. One who learns 'Brahmai vaha midam jagachcha sakalam' There is Brahma in the whole world is freed from 'Punya punya'.

'Yogi Yoga niyojitha chittaha' - we can define the term yogi in many ways. One who does unattached karmas is karma yogi, one who prays to God with selfless love is Bhakta. Yogi, one who practices Raja yoga is Raja yogi, one who seeks knowledge is Gnana yogi. Which yogi does he refer to here? Since the ego that arises out of the feeling, 'I am Kartha' is discussed in the previous line, we should take it for granted Gnana yogi is referred to here. To understand the Sastras properly, we should take the context into consideration and should derive the contextual meaning.

Yogi has attuned his mind in yoga. Many people think of Sri Pathanjali yoga whenever they hear the word yoga. Of course we can derive that meaning too. But there is a deeper meaning implied here. Sri Krishna proclaimed in Bhagavat Gita. 'Tam vidya dukhasamyoga viyogam yoga sangitham. A true yoga is detachment from the attachment with sorrow. Sorrow here is with the world. Sorrow here is a superficial worried. It refers to the world which is filled with sorrow - 'dukhalaya masaswatam.

We develop an attachment to the world through our ignorance. Yoga is detachment from the attachment with the world. Yoga means a union, an attainment. But here we arrive at the meaning a separation. To attain myself I should be detached from the world around. This is yoga. Yogi yoga niyojitha chittaha means the yogi prepares his mind for the unattachment.

'Ramathe balonmathana deva' - A yogi who has reached the state of

unattachment derives happiness forever. His incessant happiness surprises even the Gods and Goddesses, says Sri Sankaracharya. The word Ramathe is derived from the root Rama. Rama too is derived from Ram Ram means enjoyment.

Everything looks filled with Brahma for a yogi since he is prepared to learn. 'Drustim Gnana Mayam Krutva, Pasyeth Brahma Mayam Jagat.' If the vision is filled with Gnana, the world appears to be filled with Brahma. One who enjoys Brahma is a yogi. How? 'Balonmathavat like a child, like a madman, a yogi derives pleasures.

Some people are carried away by the superficial meaning and think that those who roam around the places madly are Avadhoothas. The equanimity a Gnani possesses, nobody can possess. How will a mentally matured man behave like a madman? To assume a madman as a Gnani is sheer madness. Then what does this word 'balonmathavat mean?

Let's see-

A child doesn't have the feelings of jealousy or sorrow we have . That's why they are happy forever while we are sad forever.

The children long for what is useful for them at that particular moment. For them, a chocolate appears to be more appealing than a Kohinoor diamond. Gnani also feels contented with what he needs. He doesn't long for anything. He is devoid of petty jealousies. So he is compared to balaha - a child. Then how he is a unmattavat?'

Our happiness has a cause, a reason. Somebody cracks a joke, we laugh - 'nimmitham bhavathi.' Don't search for a reason for the happiness of a madman because he doesn't have a reason. Don't we ask the question, sometimes, why do you laugh unnecessarily like a madman? Our happiness is cause-oriented - nimitha sukham' A madman's happiness is no cause oriented nirni - mitha sukham (Actually he too has a cause, but even he doesn't know the cause)

A Gnani has happiness on his own. He doesn't require a cause. Water poured in a vessel and kept on a stove gets heated up by the fire below. Where does the Agni the fire get its heat? There is a cause for the water to get heated up, but there is no cause for the Agni to be hot. Nirnimitham bhavati - It is it's dharma. If we ask Agni - 'Oh Agni, why are you hot? What answer can it give?

The same way there is no cause for a Gnani's happiness. It is his nature. It is 'Swarupa Sukham.' We derive pleasure out of things outside. A Gnani derives pleasure out of his nature. Balonmattavat Ramathe means

this

Sri Sankaracharya says in the following sloka do the most essential analysis to attain Gnana.

Kastvam Koham Kuta Ayaataha
Kaame Janani Kome Taataha
Iti Paribhavitha Nija Samsaraha
Sarvam Tyaktva Swapna Vicharaha

Who are you? Who am I? Where did I come from? Who is my mother? Who is my father? Probe into these questions and realize that the world is meaningless and that it is equivalent to a dream. Having realized it, leave everything and chant the name of God. Gnana marg also leads us to the prayer of God! Sri Acharya wants us to raise to ourselves questions like, who are you? Who am I? Where did I come from? Who are my parents?

'I am Yellayya or Pullayya.... may be true, but what is my actual form? Yellayya or Pullayya are names given to me, but I am not yellayya. The body keeps changing, I am learning about the changing body. Who am I and what is my form? This is how our analysis should be.

'Kame janani kome tataha' - who are my parents? They were born to their parents! Then who are their parents? Who exactly are my, original parents? We should go back to the original parents thus. Original comes from the word origin. So we should know the origin. Mind you, this sloka doesn't give you a chance to drive out your old parents with questions like, 'who is father? Who is mother? How are we related?' That is distorting truth. It also means you are trying to avoid the duties you are ordained to do. It is called 'Vihita Karmaacharana'.

You are my mother, you are my father

I came from my mother's womb; she came from her mother, her mother from her mother so on... But what is the origin of the generation of people? We should probe into these and arrive at the right cause of our birth. 'Kuta Ayataha' means why was I born? What's the reason? Where did the pot come from? Of course from the potter's house! It is true it is created by the potter, but what is it created from? From clay! Potter and clay imagery is used in poetry to make us understand God's creation. If we compare ourselves thus, we are created by God from dust. 'Dust thou art and to dust thou shalt return!'

The pot is the action, the clay is the reason. When the pot understands the action, it automatically attains the 'Advaita Gnana' 'I am clay'. It is

because, 'Karyam karana Ananyat' - Action will not be different from reason. Is the pot different from the clay? It appears to be so, but its actual appearance is clay only.

Just as we see the pot but not its raw material clay, we see only the human beings but not their creator God. It is because of our 'Avidya' - ignorance. We can understand this through our reasoning power. When we learn, Aham Brahmasmi - 'I am Brahma'. 'Koham' becomes 'Soham'.

The raw material and the creator for the world - both are 'Brahma' Himself. The parents are Brahma too. The father is the creator and the mother is the raw material in our birth ! 'Kame janani, Kome tataha' explains this aspect.

Having realized this truth, we should give up the family - Samsara. 'Samsara' is already explained as 'Avidya'! So by seeking knowledge, we can drive out our ignorance.

'Sarvam tyakta swapni vicharaha' - As soon as we wake up from sleep, our dream vanishes. Accordingly, as soon as we acquire knowledge, our Samsara vanishes. Don't misinterpret words. Tyaktva doesn't mean leave everything. The real renunciation lies in leaving out the ignorance of objects and to learn the true soul - satyaatma.

The pot entertains inferiority complex over the bigger pots and a superiority complex over the small pots. But how long? As long as it feels itself a pot! When it comes to know that all pots are made out of the same raw material clay, it realizes, 'Big or small, they are all external manifestations of myself I am reflected in so many things. This is my magnificence,' and attains a perceptiveness of treating others equally.

Wherever we are placed due to our fate, this feeling of oneness keeps us happy. Instead of realizing it we are moving around with begging bowls in search of happiness. As long as the begging bowl is in our hands, so long do we become beggars. The knowledge of the self makes us throw away the begging bowl.

Seeking the knowledge of the self is Govinda Bhajana. Since Govinda is all pervading, 'What I am is nothing but God.'. The answer to the question, 'Who am I' gives you an answer to the question 'Who is God'! When the pot learns about itself, what does it learn? It learns about the clay! So, learning about God is a true prayer to God.

Bhaja Govindam, Bhaja Govindam Govindam Bhaja Moodamathe!