

ONENESS

Self created awareness shook It from quiescence
Sending a shudder rippling through the nascent thought
Creating space expanding to timelessness
Perfect in rhythm, in harmony and balance.
From Itself It arose in majestic grandeur
Surveying the clear, shimmering, vibrant vastness.
Spark of desire to know its power, boundless love
Flashed, shattering into elemental multitude.
The elements combined in illusory moulds
Awareness dimmed, consciousness cloaked,
desires enhanced;
Moving fast in space and time many times over-
Experimenting, experiencing, realizing.
Strictures and restrictions leading to frustration;
Troubles and turmoil creating awareness
Reduced to nothingness through relentless testing
Redeemed by love, realization dawns – I am I.

FOREWORD

My humble salutations at the lotus feet of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the Preceptor and the Master who shows us the way to salvation. Sri Sai Srinivas, we could surmise, as the foremost among those, who relentlessly and incessantly pursue Bhagawan Sri Satya Sai Baba's pathways to enlightenment. The goal is to attain Bhagawan and the path is Marga Darshanam. Sri Sai Srinivas delightfully delineates the study of guidance (Marga Darshanam) to attain the state of oneness (Brahma Padam) in a stream of free flowing ideas and thoughts meandering through the rough terrain of our intellectual trail and in the process to make the course of the river alluvial so that the soil is ready for good and plentiful harvest.

Sri Sai Srinivas captivates our imagination with some astounding explanations in terms of non-entity, entity, object, subject, concept, conception, convention and methodology of the preliminary self enquiry, meaningfully associating it with the three schools of thought. To underscore the point of the journey the soul undertakes, to trace its origin (Purusha or Cosmic person), Karmic theory as propounded in the Vedic literature (the four Vedas and their Upangas) with its innate connection with Dharma and its sub divisions have to be understood. How the four Vedas espouse the principles of Karma in the soul's (read the man's) sojourn is a kind of different but distinct revelation. The scientific temperament of the Upanishads and Vedas make them practicable so that an empirical study of life is possible.

Sri Sai Srinivas takes us through the core of our existence "Karma" and opines that the origin of Karma is attributed to the breath of the Supreme (which is interpreted as thought). So Karma started with the Supreme – experience and experiment – from Nirguna, Nirakara to Aparam Saguna. Here Sri Sai Srinivas delivers a master stroke to drive home this point by presenting us with a stunning epic of incarnation of avatar embellished with quotes from the Bhagavad Gita. This also, at the same time elicits the inner meaning of Bhagawan's sacred sermon on the battlefield, particularly the esoteric meaning of adhishtaya/avashtabhya and the secret behind the appearance of avatar in this world emphasizing the core purpose of Divine Sankalpam and His mission on

this earth. Sri Sai Srinivas exposes the distinction in karmic action of the Divine and the human. In order to reach the level of the divine, certain Samskaras are prescribed to uplift the soul to the eternal spirit. Here he gives answer to the conundrum 'hen or the egg' and throws further light on the meaning of Upanayanam and Gayatri mantra. One interesting observation probably is the relevance and importance given to women in this context. Sri Sai Srinivas compels our attention to the central point of discussion i.e. the Bhakthi Marga and its unique relevance in this Kali Age. He expounds the efficacy of devotional service with a detailed analysis of Sage Narada's Bhakthi Sutra delectably interspersed with quotes from Bhagawad Gita, anecdotes from Bhagavatam and superb rendition of Navavidha Bhakthi. He categorically avers that devotional service transcends even self-realization and that it is absolute and unconditional. It works on the platform of pure love and achieves the goal through the gateway of the path of surrender. To quote from his work, "To attain the love of God, completeness is required in Bhakthi – loving entity is the eternally subordinate, servitor of the Supreme Lord." In this context he enumerates the three levels of transcendentalists.

Sri Sai Srinivas's firm conviction is that man (entity) as a servitor of the Supreme Lord is immortal since he has realized his constitutional position of immortality. Even after realization, with this pure devotional service the misconception that the living entity and the Supreme Entity are equal in all respects both qualitatively and quantitatively is annihilated and the entity attains immortality immediately, if not, his devotional service alone, even when not exactly perfect, will give yet another opportunity to gain immortality. Thus, pursuing devotional service is not at all futile. In fact it is another opportunity for evolution and finally immortality. Sri Sai Srinivas defines what is pure devotional service, its features and the methods of engaging oneself in that service, specifically with the nine modes of practice to reach the standard of pure devotional service in the background of real Sadhana. And finally comes to the conclusion that the path of pure devotional service is superior to "Jnana" at self realization level and Karma, sans pure love in devotional service. In the practice of the nine stages of Bhakthi, he elaborates with generous references to a great devotee like Karna. We should notice that even after passing through these modes one should be prepared for the three tests of God to be a complete and pure devotee. He clarifies that only a liberated entity is qualified for pure devotional service leading to immortality. Sri Sai Srinivas beautifully connects Bhagawan's declaration in the 18th chapter of the Bhagawad Gita wherein He commends everyone to abandon everything else (shelters) and take refuge in Him alone and exhorts us to eschew the usage of "shelters", instead prefer only pure devotional service and thereby benefit by such a devotional service, which can be traced from the past to posterity.

Material existence is a revolt against the Supreme Personality of godhead and He instructs us to prepare ourselves to reach the level of pure devotional service devoid of all sinful actions and reactions with the help of the six signs of surrender understanding that the underlying principle as enshrined in the scriptural injunction, especially with the 40 samskaras and 63 regulative principles as well as the guidance of the enlightened master through this Bhakthi Marga. This path surely traces the aspirant to the origin by Sadhana as ordained by our beloved Master Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Sri Sai Srinivas who has undergone these processes and blessed by Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba is eminently qualified to show us the path to immortality and will surely succeed in this venture.

With pranams at the
Lotus Feet of Bhagawan,

K.S.RamaPrasad

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

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The Will and grace of Bhagawan Baba has seen to the completion of this logical sequel to the first book, Brahma Padam.

In the last tumultuous two years, Bhagawan Baba has been my only solace and guide. All through the stormy days and dark nights, Bhagawan's words alone kept me steady and awake. If I have weathered the storm well and with equanimity, it is once again thanks to the abundant grace of Bhagawan.

The first book, Brahma Padam explains the concept of god and godhood through the views of the Upanishads, the seemingly contradictory views of different schools of Hindu philosophy and the personal realization of the author. In this book, the paths leading to that Supreme God have been discussed – paths diverse – ranging from the misleading, attractive shortcuts which lead to dead ends, fun filled distracting alleys, tortuous, wearisome tracks, to paths that keep the goal within sight always.

I have tried to present the necessary matter as succinctly and briefly as possible so as not to weary the readers, but if I have succeeded in making the readers pause, take a second look at the kind of life they are leading, review their progress and resolve to take the right path, the purpose in writing this book will have been achieved. I thank all my well-wishers and I pray for Bhagawan Baba's abundant grace and blessings to those who helped and worked to bring out this book.

Again and again, my salutations at the lotus feet of our beloved Bhagawan Sri Sri Sri Sathya Sai Baba, without Whose constant guidance, advice and encouragement this book would not have been possible.

Jai Sairam

A.V.Srinivasan

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CHAPTER 1 - MARGADARSHANAM

Marga Darshanam, a comprehensive, timeless pathway of right living is committed to the subject of learning, experiencing and realizing the state of oneness of everything i.e. Brahma Padam. Before analyzing the term Marga Darshanam one must understand why it is necessary to realize the state of oneness. When in the world we find dualities, how can there be a vision of oneness?

Oneness is the output of Nonentity. Much before the appearance of this cosmic universe only the nonentity existed. It might be puzzling to think how a nonentity can exist. It is not merely a play of words but it is a fact that something must exist in the beginning for it to be later identified as nonentity or non existence (here, nonentity or non existence is referred to as non physical existence or invisible entity). Such an identity of the nonentity or non existence is named cosmic energy.

Cosmic energy can also be referred to as "Thought", "Consciousness", "Vital Air", "Space", "Bhram" (Illusion/imagination) and "Brahmam". The names which are referred to here have no physical existence but exist in invisible form and that some thing visible or invisible will be considered an object. The visible or invisible object is always associated with subject. When there is an object there will be a subject. The permutation and combination of the object and subject becomes a concept.

When that nonentity separated self from itself to understand the true nature of its visibility from invisibility and vice versa, such a process is recognized as subject and its conclusion as the concept. Now the question is how can an invisible entity or an object understand its true nature?

Since that nonentity has also been recognized as a thought, that thought process makes a study about its invisibility and its power to be visible. It is evident that thought is like consciousness and with its power of imagination can take a form or can create any such illusion which will be sustained till its imagination comes to an end. Hence the output of the nonentity's imagination is the state of visibility.

For instance if a person imagines something dreadful that makes the person fear, it comes to an end when the person comes out of such a thought. In this process of thought the dreadful scene experienced by the person seems to be real as long as the imagination lasts and when the imagination ends, that results in illusion.

Similarly, the invisible nonentity is also capable of creating imagination through its thought process and can appear in some form and disappear when the imagination ends. By this process of imagination the creation and its creatures appeared.

Unless a detailed study is made to conclude about an object, that object is considered unworthy. As it is said in the preceding paragraph, with the imagination of nonentity all creation has appeared, such creation without creatures and features will appear unworthy. Bhagawan Baba said in Summer Showers 19, 1973 "Let us take a cycle or a car tyre. If a small pin is pierced in that tyre, all the air inside it will be released. While all the air that is in the tyre goes out under such conditions, your body, which has nine big holes in it, can always hold life in it without leaking out. Everything is held together by God's strength. God is present everywhere. You are only a means through which God is seeing everyone in this world. You are imagining that you are seeing with your eyes, but you are, in fact, seeing with God's eyes. This world is full of God and everything that you see is God". To have some meaning for such creation; to have some essence to realize the creation and to understand the beauty of such imagination of nonentity, the subjects like creatures and features are essential. Creation here means, sub-object of the main object that is nonentity's imagination. Creatures and features are its subject. The object and subject are interdependent. The mixture of these three aspects (creation, creature and feature) becomes the concept.

What is concept?

Concept means a general notion about a class of objects or a thing conceived by the mind. Mind also refers to

thought or imagination. But here it refers to the essence of imagination. The notion or the perception of the mind related to the object or class of objects speaks about the life force of such objects. A notion or perception of mind is of two kinds. First, "The perception by the nonentity, about self and its creation" and the second, "the perception by the creatures about the creation and self". As it is said in one of the preceding paragraphs, for the nonentity to understand its true nature, (it) attempts a study of its span from invisibility to visibility and vice versa and similarly the creatures also perceive through their mind aspects of their appearance on this universe and their role. In the first case the study by the nonentity can be called as manifestation of thought by imagination where, each of its thought results in perfect creation, whereas in the latter case the thought by the creatures leads to variation. Such output of the perception is named as the essence or the concept in both cases. If we study this concept a little in detail, we can find that, nonentity's imagination brings perfection while the imagination of the creatures leads to variation. Generally when there is variation in perception it leads to destruction. Here by variation of thought of the creatures we refer to those of humans and animals. Because animals and humans are individually different entities, their perception will always vary, whereas for the nonentity, the imagination of thought results in manifestation and never varies as it is the thought of a sole entity. For instance, if a person's perception is not to his/her expectation he will reconcile his mind and will not have any adverse effect on his idea, whereas, different entities bring forth different concepts according to their perception resulting in chaos unless there is a notion of oneness. Hence, the concept has to produce the essence of the object in general, without any deviation and variation.

Conception: means forming an idea or act of conceiving. This is something different from the concept. It also results in the essence from the perception about the object but with a little variation. Different entities will form ideas differently according to their taste and to their set of standards; the imagination of different entities may be based on general concepts but their purview of vision of the concept will bring multifarious results due to which each entity has its own concept. The ultimate result of these different concepts leads to difference in opinion and the purpose of one's existence and his/her existence and his/her role in this cosmic creation turns futile. It is for these reasons that nonentity has framed some rules and regulations for the creatures to abide by, which in other terms are known as conventions.

Convention: means a recognized social custom. The nonentity made this in order to have control over its thought (being an entity) as well as over its creations and creatures. It may be amazing why a nonentity has to frame convention for self and its creations, when its manifestation is perfect. Here the evolution of cosmic play begins. It is known and evident to the nonentity that its manifestation is perfect in creation, but at the time of evolution of its living creatures, their perceptions may disagree with the views or manifestation of nonentity and moreover if the creatures are not organized properly it can disrupt the originality of the creation. Therefore, the convention is framed by the nonentity to stipulate and regulate the structure of its thought in the best manner within the boundary of the convention. (From being nonentity when it becomes an entity it is also subject to conceptions followed by conventions, because it will not only be an entity it becomes one of the entities. Being an entity its manifestation of thought will be perfect, whereas, being one among the entities different conceptions will rise leading to differences in opinion and knowing this consequence of opinion that nonentity has framed convention so that other entities may not comment on its creation and similarly nonentity should also not reject its own manifestation after creation).

As of now we have studied about the object, subject, the concept, conception and conventions and how the nonentity has become an entity and how HE manifested this cosmic universe. Let us discuss the conventions in detail, how they show people the direction to lead a disciplined life to attain the state of salvation.

In this Kali age, people needed a right path to travel on their journey, right from the day of birth till the last breath. In this sojourn one may face ups and downs, cross ways; storms, winds etc; one cannot bypass such situations but one can overcome them by passing through the phases with self confidence and for this guidance is essential, for due to lack of experience there are chances of meeting with failure in life; and that guidance can be received only from a master. Such guidance is called as "Marga Darshanam".

A Marga Darshanam can enlighten a person who has fallen into life's vicious trap and for those aspiring to be enlightened. This study of guidance (Marga Darshanam) will elevate one to the state of oneness called "Brahma-Padam". Brahma-Padam in short, means, "When the road ends, and the goal is gained, the pilgrim finds that he has traveled only from himself to himself" – Baba.

That in order to realize the state of oneness, a preliminary self enquiry is made by a person. The first is to realize the self by questioning who am I? And the next is witnessing and understanding the supreme existence. Further, the preliminary question of self realization enables one to witness and to understand the existence of the supreme.

The preliminary question "Who am I" denotes "who is this body; who is this mind; who is this intellect; who is this conscious one; consciousness and who is this soul?"

The answer is apparently visible in these queries. One can understand that the body is perishable. As long as the body is in existence its organs like mind and intellect can function. The mind reminds the body, and the intellect reminds the consciousness (awareness). When the existence of a body comes to an end, the function of mind and intellect will also be over. At last what is remaining is the soul that merges with the supreme. As an ordinary soul (Consciousness) it may be difficult to realize its function as long as it is in body from where it originated and where it will merge but after self realization (Consciousness), the soul consciousness is able to understand that it cannot function without HIS will and the instrument like body and its organs are merely HIS instruments to make the soul enact and open the chapter of Karmic theory.

In other terms if one analyzes "who am I" – Who denotes the supreme; am denotes the soul and I denotes the body and its organs. How is it that the term "Who", represents the supreme? Whatever is witnessed (the cosmic functions) by the "I" is created by someone and that someone is "Who".

Is it the "I" that can recognize the functions of cosmic theory or "Who"? Unless that "am" is present that "I" (body & its component) is a mere dead instrument. "Am" also means the energy (Pranaa) which is dependent (Parathantra) on the supreme (Svathantra) that is "Who".

When the term "Am" is analyzed on the basis of the study of three schools of philosophical thought, Sri Madhva's philosophy interprets the term "am" as completely dependent and subservient to the Lord; but Sri Ramanuja's philosophy accepts it as a ray or spark of the divine, which however can function subservient to the Lord whereas Sri Adi Shankara sees the soul as the same as the Supreme with no distinction.

Here the analysis is not made for the sake of argument but to understand the concept very clearly. Sri Madhva and Sri Ramanuja, the Acharyas, brought out, clarified and beautifully presented the functions of the cosmic theory as a complement for the realized soul to serve the Master. Being realized will anyone surrender? Never, the realized will always work with the thought to command but not with the thought of humility to serve. So these masters taught the path of service to the Lord, that is no doubt, a complement to the human society.

As explained in the preceding paragraph the term "I" (Body & its organs) is a mere instrument and ceases when the soul departs. In this connection Sri Adi Shankara referred to the soul as one and the same like the supreme. Why did he compare the soul to the Supreme? Because, the mind (Conscious) refers to the body, intellect refers to the (Conscience) (awareness) and the soul (Consciousness) is subjected {bound} to these two (Conscious & Conscience) as long as it exists in the body, and when it departs from the body, the soul merges with the divine

consciousness.

Before clarifying the term "AM" (Soul) one must be clear with the concept of Karmic theory and Bhakthi, as Bhakthi is also a part of Karma. Karmic theory can be understood well with the theory of Vedas. As for the formless Supreme (Nirguna) the Veda is the breath, similarly for the form (Aparam Saguna) the action (Karma/Deed) is the breath. Moreover Vedas detail about Samskaras (the rituals).

Vedic Literature: Speaks about Karma Kanda and Jnana Kanda. Vedic literature deals with Rituals and Rites. This has four Samhitas – (Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Saama Veda, and Atharva Veda).

CHAPTER 2 - THE VEDAS

By the term Vedas one refers to principle, the law or the convention. Vedas can even be named as the representative organizing the divine cosmic play. In this connection the first and foremost element which is used is religion (righteousness).

Religion means Dharma. Dharma is righteousness. In other words it is called as principle of Nature's Law, which if one follows, in the state of being an entity (Aparam Saguna), will make one contented and happy. Dharma can also be named as "Vow" (Pramaanam).

Dharma is classified into 14 parts, the first part being the four main Vedas which are further subdivided into six organs (Anga). The organs are further classified as four sub-organs (Upaangas). These Upaangas are General Science of Dharmic practice.

The 14 Dharma-Pramaanas are included in the 4 Vedas which are Rig, Yajur, Saama and Atharva.

Rig Veda:

The term "Rig" means hymns & praise and "Veda" means knowledge; the hymns in praise of that Supreme. Each Rik is a Mantra. A number of Riks constitute a "Sukta". Rig Veda contains 10,170 Riks, out of the total 20,500. It is divided into 10 Mandalas and 8 Ashtakas.

Here Agni means Light (Aatma Chaitanyam). The last Sukta contains verses of universal appeal. "Let all men meet and think as with one mind. Let all hearts unite in love. Let the God be common. May all live in Happiness with a common purpose".

Rig Veda contains hymns in praise of all Devatas. It describes the ways of social living better than the others. Marriage rites have been created on the pattern of the marriage of Soorya's daughter. Dialogue between Purooravas and Urvashi also find a place. The portions dealing with "Ushas" (Goddess of Dawn) is a masterpiece of poetic composition. How this Veda explains about the Supreme and cosmic creation can be studied with the following:

Of the several Vedic texts, the Rig Veda is most fundamental to Indian thought, the others dealing with more particular matters such as the sacrificial formulas, melodies, and magic.

Creation Hymn

A time is envisioned when the world was not only a watery chaos (the dark, "indistinguishable sea") and a warm cosmic breath, which could give an impetus to life. Notice how thought gives rise to desire (when something is thought of, it can then be desired) and desire links non-being to being (we desire what is not but then try to bring it about that it is). Yet the whole process is covered with mystery.

Where do the gods fit in this scheme of creation?

The nonexistent was not; the existent was not, at that time. The atmosphere was not nor the heavens which are beyond. What was concealed? Where? Under whose protection? Was it water? An unfathomable abyss?

There was neither death nor immortality then. There was no distinction of day or night. That alone breathed windless, by its power. Other than that there was not anything else.

Darkness was hidden by darkness in the beginning. All this was an indistinguishable sea. That which becomes that which was enveloped by the void that alone was born through the power of heat.

Upon that, desire arose in the beginning. This was the first discharge of thought. Sages discovered this link of the existent to the nonexistent, having searched in the heart with wisdom.

Their line [of vision] was extended across; what was below, what was above? There were impregnators, there were powers: inherent power below, impulses above.

Who know truly? Who here will declare whence it arose, whence this creation? The gods are subsequent to the creation of this. Who, then, knows whence it has come into being?

Whence this creation has come into being; whether it was made or not; he in the highest heaven is its surveyor. Surely he knows, or perhaps he knows not.

To Agni (Fire):

Agni, the god of fire, whose name is the common word for fire, is a terrestrial deity. He is most often compared to animals, with wood for his food and melted butter (Ghee) for his drink. He is the mouth by which the gods consume those items during the sacrifice. He is born from wood (as two sticks are rubbed together), but then devours his parents. As "Lord of the House", he is a guest in human dwellings in the form of the domestic fire. How is Agni supposed to "bring the gods here"?

I call upon Agni, the one placed in front, the divine priest of the sacrifice, the invoker, the best bestower of gifts.

Agni is worthy of being called upon by seers past and present: may he bring the gods here!

Through Agni may one obtain wealth and prosperity day by day, splendid and abounding in heroic sons.

O Agni, the sacrifice and work of the sacrifice, which you encompass on all sides – that alone goes to the gods.

May Agni, the invoker who has the powers of a sage, true and most brilliant in glory, come here, a god with the gods!

Whatsoever favor you wish to do for a worshipper, Agni, that favor surely may come true of yours, O Angiras [member of a priestly family].

O Agni, you who gleam in the darkness, to you we come day by day, with devotion and bearing homage;

To you, ruler of the sacrifices, keeper of the cosmic law, brightly shining, growing in your abode.

So, be of easy access to us, Agni, as a father to his son. Abide with us for our well-being.

To Indra

Indra is a sky god and a war god who holds the earth and the heavens apart, on occasion making the earth tremble. He is the god of the thunderstorm, who vanquishes drought and darkness. He is the most frequently mentioned god in the Veda, the most nationalistic, and the most anthropomorphic. The serpent which he slew was a demon of drought, who had bottled up the streams; but Indra shattered the mountain, releasing the streams like pent up cows.

What is Indra supposed to do for the weary, the weak, the needy priest (a Brahman, of course) and the singer?

The one who is first and possessed of wisdom when born; the god who strove to protect the gods with strength; the one before whose force the two worlds were afraid because of the greatness of this virility: he, O people, is Indra.

The one who made firm the quaking earth; the one who made fast the shaken mountains; the one who measured out wide the atmosphere; the one who propped up heaven: he, O people, is Indra.

The one who, having killed the serpent, released the seven rivers; the one who drove out the cows by undoing Vala, (meaning "enclosure" in Vedic Sanskrit, is an Asura of the Rigveda and the Atharvaveda, the brother of Vrtra) the one who generates fire between two rocks, victor in battles: he, O people, is Indra.

The one by whom all things here were made moving; the one who put in hiding the lowly Dasa color; the one who, like a gambler who has won the stake, has taken the enemy's possessions: he, O people, is Indra.

The one who is the terrible one, about whom they ask "Where is he?" And they say of him, "He is not!" He diminished the enemy's possessions like stakes [at a game]. Put your faith in him: he, O people, is Indra.

The one who is the impeller of the weary, of the weak, of the Brahman seeking aid, the singer; the one with goodly moustaches who is the helper of him who works the stones, who has pressed the Soma : He, O people, is Indra.

The one in whose control are horses, cows, villages, all chariots; the one who has caused to be born the sun, the dawn; the one who is the waters' leader: he, O people, is Indra.

The one whom the two lines of battle, coming together, call upon separately, the nearer and the farther, both foes; even the two who have mounted the same chariot call upon him individually: he, O people, is Indra.

The one without whom people do not conquer, the one to whom, when fighting, they call for help; the one who is a match for everyone; the one who shakes the unshakable: he, O people, is Indra.

Purusha, the Cosmic Person

This is one of the latest compositions in the Rig Veda, as it suggests a sort of pantheistic philosophy. Purusha is a cosmic giant, of whom the gods and the cosmos itself are composed; yet he is also the object of the sacrifice to the gods. From him then are derived the gods in the heaven and, from the remainder, all the rest of what is, both the living and nonliving.

The top four castes are supposed to have been derived from Purusha: the Brahmins, the Rajanya (or Ksatriya), the Vaisya, and the Sudra. Which body parts are associated with each group, and what seems to be the significance of those parts?

Thousand-headed is Purusha, thousand-eyed, thousand-footed. Having covered the earth on all sides, HE stood above it the width of ten fingers.

Only Purusha is all this, that which has been and that which is to be. He is the Lord of the immortals, who grows by means of [ritual] food.

Such is his greatness, yet more than this is Purusha. One-quarter of him is all beings; three-quarters of HIM is the immortal in heaven.

Three-quarters of Purusha went upward; one-quarter of HIM remained here. From this [one-quarter] he spread in all directions into what eats and what does not eat.

From HIM the shining one was born, from the shining one was born Purusha. When born HE extended beyond the earth, behind as well as in front.

When the gods performed a sacrifice with the offering Purusha, spring was its clarified butter, summer the kindling, autumn the oblation.

It was Purusha, born in the beginning, which they sprinkled on the sacred grass as a sacrifice. With him the gods sacrificed, the demigods, and the seers.

From that sacrifice completely offered, the clotted butter was brought together. It made the beasts of the air, the forest and the village.

From that sacrifice completely offered, the mantras [Rig Veda] and the songs [Samaveda] were born. The meters were born from it. The sacrificial formulae [Yajurveda] were born from it.

From it the horses were born and all that have cutting teeth in both jaws. The cows were born from it, also. From it were born goats and sheep.

When they divided Purusha, how many ways did they apportion him? What was his mouth? What were his arms? What were his thighs, his feet declared to be?

His mouth was the Brahmin [caste], his arms were the Rajanya [Ksatriya caste], his thighs the Vaisya [caste]; from his feet the Sudra [caste] was born.

The moon was born from his mind; from his eye the sun was born; from his mouth both Indra and Agni [fire]; from his breath Vayu [wind] was born.

From his navel arose the air; from his head the heaven evolved; from his feet the earth; the [four] directions from his ear. Thus, they fashioned the worlds.

Seven were his altar sticks, three times seven were the kindling bundles, when the gods, performing the sacrifice, bound the beast Purusha.

The gods sacrificed with the sacrifice to the sacrifice. These were the first rites. These powers reached the firmament, where the ancient demigods and the gods are.

Yajur veda:

The Yajurveda (means a Tatpurusha compound of Yajus "sacrificial formula", + Veda, "knowledge" or "Yajus" spells ritualistic procedure of Yajna) is one of the four canonical texts, of Hinduism, the Vedas. The Yajurveda 'Samhita', or 'compilation', contains the liturgy (mantras) needed to perform the sacrifices of the religion of the Vedic period.

Yajur Veda deals with all Yajnas –Darsa Poornamasa, Somayaga, Vaajapeya, Raajasooya, Ashwamedha etc. There are two primary versions or Samhitas of the Yajurveda: Shukla (white) and Krishna (black). Taittiriya Samhita is in Krishna Yajur Veda. Brihadaraanyaka Samhita is in Shukla Yajur Veda. Yajur Veda is of special significance to Advaitins.

Both contain the verses necessary for rituals, but the Krishna Yajurveda includes the Brahmana prose discussions within the Samhita, while the Shukla Yajurveda has separately a Brahmana text, the Shatapatha Brahmana.

There are two (nearly identical) Shakhas or branches of the Shukla (White) Yajurveda, both known as Vajasaneyi-Samhita.

- Vajasaneyi Madhyandiniya
- Vajasaneyi Kanva

Any 'Sidhaanta' should contain the following – Sootra (Aphorism), Bhaashya (Commentary) and Vaartika (Explanatory Note). In Advaita Sidhaanta, the word 'Vaartikakaara' refers only to Sureshwaraachaarya, and he was one of the four main disciples of Jagadguru Adi Shankara, and is said to have followed the Kanva Shakha. The Guru himself followed the Taittiriya Shakha with the Apastamba Kalpasutra. The White Yajurveda has two Upanishads associated with it: the Isha Vasya and the Brihadaraanyaka Upanishads. The Brihadaraanyaka Upanishad is the most voluminous of all Upanishads.

The Vajasaneyi-Samhita has forty chapters or Adhyayas, containing the formulas used with the following rituals:

1-2 : New and Full Moon sacrifices

3 : Agnihotra

4-8 : Somayajna

9-10 : Vajapeya and Rajasuya, two modifications of the Soma sacrifice

11-18 : Construction of altars and hearths, especially the Agnicayana

19-21 : Sautramani, a ritual originally counteracting the effects of excessive Soma-drinking

22-25 : Ashvamedha

26-29 : Supplementary formulas for various rituals

30-31 : Purushamedha

32-34 : Sarvamedha

35 : Pitriyajna

36-39 : Pravargya

40 : The final Adhyaya is the famous Isha Upanishad

These forty chapters are identified as forty samskaras which will be explained later in detail.

There are four branches of the Krishna ("black") Yajurveda:

- Taittiriya samhita originally of Panchala
- Maitrayani samhita originally of the area south of Kurukshetra
- Caraka-Katha samhita originally of Mathura and Kurukshetra
- Kapisthala-Katha samhita of the southern Punjab, Bahika

Each of the branches has or had a Brahmana associated with it, and most of them also have associated Shrautasutras, Grhyasutras, Aranyakas, Upanishads and Pratishakhyas.

The Taittiriya Shakha:

The best known and best preserved of these branches is the Taittiriya Shakha, named after Tittiri, a pupil of Yaska. It consists of 7 books or Kandas, subdivided into chapters or Prapathakas, further subdivided into individual sections (Anuvakas). Some individual hymns in this Samhita have gained particular importance in Hinduism; e.g. Taittiriya Shakha 4.5 and 4.7 constitute the Rudram Chamakam, while 1.8.6. is the Shaivaite Tryambakam mantra. The formula Bhûr Bhuvah Suvah prefixed to the (Rigvedic) mantra is also from the Yajurveda. The Taittiriya recension of the Black Yajurveda is the shakha now most prevalent in southern India.

Among the followers of this Shakha, the Apastamba Sutras are the common. The Taittiriya Shakha consists of Taittiriya Samhita (having seven kandas), Taittiriya Brahmana (having three kandas), Taittiriya Aranyaka (having seven Prashnas) (See Aranyaka Literature), Taittiriya Upanishad (having three prashnas or Vallis – Shiksha Valli, Ananda valli and Bhrigu valli) and the Mahanarayana Upanishad. The Taittiriya Upanishad and Mahanarayana Upanishad are considered to be the seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth prashnas of the Aranyaka. The words Prapathaka and Kanda (meaning sections) are interchangeably used in Vedic literature. Prashna and valli refer to sections of the Aranyaka.

Saama Veda

Saama means to bring [Shanti] (Peace) to the minds – or to make the mind find happiness in peace. Among the prescribed 4 methods (Saama, Daana, Bheda, Danda), Saama is first – i.e. to conquer the enemy by love and conciliatory words. Here the Riks are set to music in melodious hymns. Mantras are same as in Rig Veda. Saama Gaana can be said to be the basis and source of “Sapta Swaram”, fundamental to Indian music system.

The Samaveda is derived from Sāman “melody” + Veda “knowledge”, is third (in the usual order) of the four Vedas. It consists of a collection (samhita) of hymns, portions of hymns, and detached verses, all but 75 taken from the Rigveda, to be sung, using specifically indicated melodies called Samagana, by Udgatar priests at sacrifices in which the juice of the Soma plant, clarified and mixed with milk and other ingredients, is offered in libation to various deities.

The verses have been transposed and rearranged, without reference to their original order, to suit the rituals in which they were to be employed. There are frequent variations from the text of the Rigveda that are in some cases glosses but in others offer an older pronunciation than that of the Rigveda (such as [ai] for common [e]). When sung the verses are further altered by prolongation, repetition and insertion of stray syllables (Stobha), as well as various modulations, rests and other modifications prescribed in the song-books (Ganas).

Atharva Veda

Atharva means ‘Purohit’. There was a Rishi by that name. According to tradition, the Atharvaveda was mainly composed by two groups of Rishis known as the Aatharvanas and the Aangirasas; hence its oldest name is Aatharvaangirasa. In the Late Vedic Gopatha Brahmana, it is attributed to Bhrigu and Angirasa. Additionally, tradition ascribes parts to other rishis, such as Kaushika, Vasistha and Kashyapa. There are two surviving branches (Shaakhaas), known as Shaunakeeya and Paippalaada.

Mantras which pertain to Devatas not mentioned in the other Vedas are found in Atharva Veda. There are many types of Mantras to ward off evil and hardship and to destroy enemies. The hymn which extols the wonder of creation called the “Prithvi Suktam” appears in this Veda.

The pride of this Veda is that Brahma, who supervises the conduct of Yajnas, is representative of Atharva Veda. Prashna, Mundaka and Maandookya Upanishads are part of this Veda. For a ‘Mumukshu’ or seeker after Truth, Mandookya Upanishad alone can ensure Moksha. The importance of Atharva Veda can be judged from this.

Gaayatri, the greatest of all mantras, is said to be the essence of the three Vedas – Rig, Yajur and Saama. Has three Paadas to represent the three Vedas. Atharva has a separate mantra. A special initiation of the mantra is required to learn the Atharva Veda. Atharva Vedins are very few in number.

The Atharvaveda Parishishtas (appendices) state that priests of the Mauda and Jalada schools of the Atharvaveda should be avoided, or strict discipline should be followed as per the rules and regulations set by the Atharva Veda. It is even stated that pregnant women associated with Atharvan may suffer from abortions if they remain while the chants for warfare are pronounced.

None of the Vedas say ‘this is the only way’. No other religion advocates pursuit of diverse paths. This is the

greatness of Vedas. The Atharvaveda, while undoubtedly belonging to the core Vedic corpus, in some ways represents an independent parallel tradition to that of Rigveda and Yajurveda. It incorporates much of early traditions of healing and magic.

The Atharva Veda is less predominant than other Vedas as it is not regularly used but used only in solemn (Shrauta) ritual. The Brahmin priest, for the most part, silently observes the procedures of the ritual and 'heals' it with two mantras and some pouring of ghee when a mistake occurs. Though an early text, its status has been ambiguous, due to its inherent mystical character.

The Aaranyaka portion of the Vedas are meant to explain the inner meaning (the doctrine of philosophy), contained in the Samhitas as Mantras and in the Braahmanas as Karmas. Aaranyakas explain the reasons why Yajnas are performed.

The Atharvaveda is considered by many to be consisting of dark and secret knowledge, pertaining to the spirits and the afterlife. In the Mahabharata, when the Pandavas are exiled to the forests for thirteen years, Bhima, being frustrated, suggests to Yudhisthira that they consult the Atharvaveda, and "shrink time, and hereby compress thirteen years to thirteen days..."

These four Vedas contain six types of Anga:

1. Siksha (euphony/pronunciation),
2. Vyaakarana (Grammar),
3. Chandas (Metre),
4. Nirukta (Etymology),
5. Jyotisha (Astronomy),
6. Kalpa (Procedure).

These Angas consist of four Upaangas. Those are:

1. Meemaamsa (Interpretation),
2. Nyaaya (Logic),
3. Puraana (Mythology),
4. Dharma Shaastras (Codes of conduct).

These Upaangas are further classified into four:

1. Aayurveda (Science of Life),
2. Artha Shaastra (Science of wealth/Economics),
3. Dhanur Veda (Weaponry/Warfare),
4. Gaandharva Veda (Fine Arts - music, dance, drama etc.)

By this way the four Vedas are classified into Angas and Upaangas which in total are fourteen. These fourteen are known as Vidhyaa Sthaanas. Hence, Knowledge and wisdom are enshrined in these. The four Vedas form the core of our Hindu Religion.

Vedas are called 'Anaadi' – without a beginning in terms of time. This means it has existed at all times.

The Vedas are discovered by Rishis. Rishis are only Drishtas (Discoverers), not Kartas (Creators). They have only discovered (the Vedas). Vedas contain many 'Suktas' (Words of Wisdom) attributed to several sages.

Ishwara (God) and the Vedas have coexisted. Even Ishwara has not made Vedas.

Brihad-aaranyaka Upanishad says that the four Vedas are Ishwara's breath.

Vedas are called 'Shruti' – meaning Sound, Ear is called 'Shrotra'. A system of complicated recitations was devised to preserve the purity of the word, sound, intonation, pronunciation, accent and sound combinations of the Vedas. 'Pada Paaddam' is essential (Pada Paaddam stands for steps or procedures which are more

important for learning).

Vedas are without end (Anantam). Mantras are revelations to the Rishis, who performed deep penance (Tapas). Veda Mantras, properly recited, produce the necessary emotions in the mind, which ensure the well-being of the person reciting as well as of the world. It is the duty of a Brahmin to chant the mantras. There is a prescribed method for chanting. One must possess intellect with humility.

The features of the Vedas:

1. They are without a beginning.
2. They are without end.
3. They have no human authorship.
4. They are at the root of all creations.
5. The sound (of the Vedas) activates the nerve centres and atmosphere, resulting in individual and collective well being.
6. Collective well being is not limited to humanity. It extends to animals and plants also. (Sham no astu dvipade sham chatushpade).
7. No other religious text emphasizes the well being of animals and plants as much as the Vedas.
8. It emphasizes well being of shrubs, trees, mountains and rivers – in fact all creation.

Yajnas (Rituals)

Of the various aspects contained in the Vedas, Yajna or performance of Vedic rites is an important aspect. Such rituals are not found in other faiths. Since it is based on Vedas, ours is called 'Vaideeka Matham'. Yajna is mainly 'Homam'. Yajnas are to please all Devatas, so that they will bestow blessings. Yajna is sacrifice, with a spirit of selflessness.

Benefits of Yajna

1. To ensure well being of self and those around us in the world.
2. To live happily after death in the Deva Lokam.
3. To lead the self to Jeevan Mukti (Realised Soul).

Adi Shankara, in his Maneesha Panchakam, says – "Happiness of Indra is not even a small fraction of the real Ananda of the realised soul". He emphasizes the study of the Vedas constantly and to perform the rituals prescribed therein. (Vedo nityam adheeyataam, thaduditam karma swanushteeyataam).

Commentaries of Mantras, called Braahmanas, also referred to as Poorva Meemaamsa, speaks about the Knowledge, both spiritual and philosophical, which consists of Aranyakas and Upanishads. It is also referred to as Uttara Meemaamsa.

Upanishads.

If the Samhita is the tree, Braahmanas are its flowers, Aaranyakas are its fruits – Upanishads are the 'Ripe Fruits'. Only Upanishads help to attain Moksha.

The following Mahaavaakyas are contained in the Upanishads as shown against each:

Upanishad Mahaavaakyas:

Aitareya Upanishad: Prajnaanam Brahma. (Supreme Knowledge is Brahman)

Brihadaraanyaka Upanishad says Aham Brahmasmi, (I am Brahma/God).

Taittiriya Upanishad tells "Aham Asmi/Brahma Aham Asmi".

Chaandogya Upanishad says "Tat Tvam Asi". (You are "That"/Brahman).

Maandukya Upanishad tells "Ayam Aatma Brahma" (This indwelling Self is Brahma).

Acharya Shankara prescribes 5 Shlokas for spiritual aspirants in his "Sopaana Panchakam".

1. Study and recite the Vedas.
2. Perform various rituals.
3. Be guided by the Mahaavaakyas.
4. Meditate on them constantly.
5. Reach the state of Brahman.

Thus Upanishads contain the ultimate message and purpose of the Vedas. They are, therefore, called 'Vedaanta' – the end of Vedas.

Upanishad has the same conclusion as modern science: Causality is the result of the play of time and space. Science presents this as a postulate based on experiment. On the other hand, the Upanishad says that this realization can be achieved by self experience. This is the final message of the Upanishad, which is the crown jewel of the Vedas.

From the explanation of Vedas, it may be concluded that it emphasizes the study of Karmic theory only through which the aparam saguna can attain salvation. With this one can understand why the Vedas speak very clearly about exercise, experiment and to have experience by practicing Vedas. Following Vedas itself is following the actions based on righteousness.

What is action? The term "Karma" is derived from the word "Kara" + "Marga". Kara – means arm/hand and in other words the rays of the sun; its function is action. Marga – means the path. The path is subject to two terms: a) the action of a person which creates the path; b) the path chosen by a person.

In the first case, the person ignorantly performs the actions which result in Karmic deeds for the present birth or carried over to the next birth – that is creation of path. In the second case, however, a person is made to be attracted to choose the path intentionally or willfully influenced by worldly attractions. These paths are named as: i) Prarabdha Karma; ii) Sanchita Karma; iii) Agami Karma.

Prarabdha and Sanchita Karmas seem to have the same meaning but minute differences exist. Prarabdha means accumulated in previous births, to be experienced in future; accumulation relates to both positive and negative deeds as considered in the nature of law, whereas, Sanchita accumulates only noble thought/deed to be experienced in life after life.

Agami Karma relates to the future deeds which one has to perform.

The Sanchita Karma is further classified as: a) Kamy Karma; b) NishKamy Karma.

Kamy Karma is related to the actions performed on a day-to-day basis. This Karma consists of mundane actions as well as certain spiritual practices done with expectation.

Nishkamy karma is related to the actions carried out without expectation of the final results.

These karmas are merely means to bring the soul, the body and its organs to perfect shape and control to experience the divine law.

How this action (karma) is derived or has originated?

Veda is considered to be breath of the Supreme; this Veda/breath is also named as Vital Air or Thought. The thought itself is an action. The Supreme is also having two kinds of thought: 1. Nishkamy Karma/thought of the Supreme says "I exist". Since the Supreme is recognized as Nirakara, then what does "I exist" stand for? It has been explained in the preceding paragraphs that "I" denotes the body, whereas the Supreme has no physical existence, being Nirguna/Niraakara. The term "I" is referred to here as the consciousness. Supreme can realize and can understand that HIS consciousness (Soul) exists, whereas for the Jivas "I" refers to the body. This state of consciousness of the Supreme is named as Nish Kamy Karma.

2. The second state of thought of HIS is Kamy Karma, from which the Karmic action has resulted. Does the Supreme have Kamy Karma? – Of course yes, it is because of HIS will, HIS thought; action manifested and resulted as HIS creations. The creation consists of the five elements (Pancha-Bhootha); the world and its organs and sub-organs like mountains; plant and trees, animals and finally the Jivas, but to organize and to properly

govern HIS creation, the Supreme stipulated the norms which have to be followed to bring out the expected results as per HIS Kamya Karma thought.

The Karma theory speaks always about experiment and experience. So, the manifested thought of the Supreme also refers to the same. One thought of HIS, speaks about consciousness that exists and the second thought analyses the conscious (body) state of HIS manifested thought. For instance, HE wants to learn about HIMSELF through HIS manifested thought that is being manifested as many from ONE with different forms and features. In case of "I exist" HE cannot experience, whereas when HE manifests HIMSELF as many, with different characters and features HE can experiment and experience the two aspects of HIS power - meaning the dual nature of the Supreme. One is being in the state of Nirguna and the second is being in the state of Aparam Saguna.

Why this dual role of the Supreme?

It is just to measure It and to understand where It stands. Being Nirguna, It cannot achieve anything because of being complete, which sometimes makes the omniscient analyze what that "CONSCIOUSNESS" is, or that "I exist". Due to this reason, HE manifested HIMSELF in many forms (Aparam Saguna) with certain norms, which are to be followed and practiced to learn about the dual nature and finally liberating from the clutches of such manifested thoughts and to be restored to that Supreme self of existence.

But the Supreme always plays the dual role of Self existence and the manifested one, to maintain and to control the balance of any adverse situation.

Why should a nonexistent exist with form?

It can be for some of the following reasons:

1. Under the purview of the living creatures who just believe in Karma theory of day to day life, the nonexistent has come into existent form to know Its power and features;
2. The nonexistent Supreme, being complete, need not learn Its power but its appearance in some form is to make Its creation practice the framed conventions, so that Its manifestation of thought may sustain for a certain period.

The second reason is most appropriate for the epic of incarnation of avatar i.e., nonexistent into existent form.

CHAPTER 3 - EPIC OF INCARNATION

There was a time, when the position of Vedic religion in the universe was completely devastated. There were some communities, who wholly neglected the Vedas, Vedanta and the Paramaathma. A group which called itself the followers of Vedic religion and another belonging to the magic community projected themselves as true followers of Paramaathma and as having been directed by Paramaathma. So, in this way about 72 Avidic (anti-Veda Religion) communities were formed.

With the awkward situation which developed in our Vedic religion, the people were unable to improve their position and as a result, an opportunity had arisen for the Supreme to incarnate.

The nonexistent Supreme has come in different forms to preach and to ensure practice of HIS thought. Out of those forms, the teachings and practices of HIS avatar as Sri Krishna have had universal and everlasting appeal and have been effectively imbibed. Till day HIS teachings are delivered as lectures by modern philosophers, yogis, saints and renunciates.

In the beginning, Lord Krishna delivered a sermon to the first deity of Navagraha (the Lords of the Nine Planets), the Sun, about Sanathana Dharma (eternal righteousness). That Dharma was followed by the children and by their children in the first causal act. But in the later stages Sanathana Dharma lost its importance. It was again preached by Lord Krishna to Arjuna, since Krishna stood in the form of Nar (human) and played His part in Mahabharata. He brought Arjuna under the influence of hallucination and as such Arjuna failed to know the truth behind the existing form of Lord Krishna (Nar). Doubts started to crop up in the mind of Arjuna and he asked Krishna:

“Aparam Bhavato Janma, Param Janma Vivasvatah
Katham Etat Vijaaniyaam Tvam Aadow Proktavaan Iti”
(Gita – Chapter IV, Verse 4)

Aparam (junior) Bhavatah (your) Janma (birth) Vivasvatah (of the Sun – God) Katham (how) Etat (this) Vijaaniyaam (shall I understand) Tvam (you) Aadow (in the beginning) Proktavaan (instructed) Iti (thus).

Hey, Krishna! You are born in Dwapara Yuga, whereas the Lord Sun was born much earlier, even before Kritha Yuga; then how can you teach Sanathana Dharma to the deity who was born much before you? – Hey Krishna! Reveal the secrets of Janma-Marana.

“Bahuni Mey Vyathithaani Janmaani Thava Cha Arjuna!

Thaanyaham Veda Sarvaani Na Thvam Veththa Paranthapa!” —Chapter IV, Verse 5

Bahuni (many) Mey (of Mine) Vyathithaani (have passed) Janmaani (births) Thava (of yours) Cha (and also) Arjuna (Oh! Arjuna) Thaaani (all those) Aham (I) Veda (do know) Sarvaani (all) Na (not) Thvam (yourself) Veththa (know) Paranthapa (Oh! Subduer of the enemy).

Krishna says: “Arjuna, not only me, but you too, have had many births before this birth. I remember all my births, but you do not.”

By saying so, Krishna did not complete his clarification. Had he clarified then, Arjuna would have treated the “Avatar” (incarnation) as a normal human being and would not have questioned Him further. Rather Arjuna would have thought that as he had many births, likewise Krishna too had his earlier births. Instead of asking Krishna – How did You have so many births, Arjuna would have asked – How were You aware of Your earlier births? The Avatar cannot hide Himself by calling Himself a human being. So, the question of awareness about the earlier births of the Avatar, would not have struck anyone. Instead, some other question would have come to our mind. Arjuna, by birth, was a human, so the theory of Karma of birth and death was applicable to him, whereas this would not apply to the Avatar. Then why did the Avatar undergo the cyclic process of births and deaths? As Krishna took the human form to play the role in Mahabharata, similarly He would have taken earlier births for one or the other reasons – such type of reasonings may come up. God surely knows that questions would be raised. Would He not know that whatever He spoke to Arjuna in the Mahabharata,

and subsequently written by Maharshi Veda Vyasa, would be read by us? Even if Arjuna had not asked any question to Krishna, the Sarveshwara would know that the question would emerge from the coming generations and therefore, He started answering:

“Ajah Apee – Sann Avyayaatmaa Bhoothaanaam

Eswaro Apee-San!

Prakruthim Swaam Adhishtaaya Sambhavaami – Aathma Maayayaa!”

—Chapter IV, Verse 6

Ajah (unborn) Apee (although) San (being so) Avyaya (without deterioration) Athma (soul) Bhoothaanaam (all those who are born) Easwarah (the Supreme Lord) Apee (although) San (being so) Prakruthim (transcendental form) Swaam (of Myself) Adhishtaaya (being situated/possessed of) Sambhavaami (I do incarnate) Aathma Maayayaa (by My internal energy).

My birth is never comparable with human births. I am the eternal being and Lord of the Universe. I control all elements and manifest Myself with My “Yoga Maya” (the power of illusion) in the universe.

I am not born out of Karma. Karma theory is not applicable to Me. I am eternal. I am undisturbed by changes in nature and environment and by fickleness of mind. I am the indestructible Soul. I am the Lord of the five elements. Hence I manifest Myself by capturing the nature (by bringing it under my control) which is the basic factor for the appearance of the universe. I incarnate Myself by engineering My “Yoga Sakthi” (Power/Thought). As the universe has been made visible by the power of Yoga Maya, similarly, the Lord incarnates Himself with the same power. All living beings are His incarnations. There is none other than Him. All living beings are influenced by the characteristic nature of Sathva, Rajas and Thamas: they are following different types of Karma and to set off their Karma they take many births. The birth of the Lord, who comes in a human form and who controls the characteristics of nature, is called “Incarnation”.

(i) Birth of Avatar

Now, He gives the reasons why He takes birth, in the following Slokas:

“Yadaa Yadaahi Dharmasya Glaanir Bhavathi Bhaaratha!

Abhyuth-thaanam Adharmasya Thad-Aathmaanam Srujaamyaham!

Parithraanaaya Saadhunaam Vinaashaaya Cha Dushkrithaam!

Dharma Samsthaapanaarthaaya Sambhavaami Yuge-Yuge.”

(Bhagavad Gita, Chapter IV, Verse 7 and 8)

“Yadaa (whenever) Yadaa (wherever) hi (certainly) Dharmasya (of religion) Glaanir (discrepancies) Bhavathi (manifested, becomes) Bhaaratha (Oh! Descendant of Bharatha) Abhyuth-thaanam (predominance) Adharmasya (of irreligion) Thada (at that time) Athmaanam (self) Srujaami (manifest) Aham (I).

Parithraanaaya (for deliverance) Saadhunaam (of devotees) Vinaashaaya (for the annihilation) Cha (also) Dushkrithaam (of the miscreants) Dharma (principles of religion) Samsthaapana-arthaaya (to re-establish) Sambhavaami (I do appear) Yuge (millennium) Yuge (after millennium).”

In the earlier statement of Lord Krishna about His and Arjuna’s earlier births, He said, Arjuna did not remember his past births, whereas Krishna knew and remembered about all His births. Later, Krishna started describing not only how He took birth, about His past births as well as about His future, i.e., why and for what He has to take birth.

“Yadaa Yadaahi Dharmasya Glaanir Bhavathi Bhaaratha!” (Whenever and wherever there is an interruption and decline in the established Dharma (Righteousness), what would be the consequence? Injustice (Adharma) will prevail and spread all over the universe (Abyuth-thaanaam Adharmasya).

“Thada” – Whenever there is a victory of injustice over righteousness – (In such circumstances) “Aathmanaam Srujaamyaham” – I incarnate.

“Parithraanaaya Saadhunaam Vinaashaaya Cha Dushkrithaam” – When Dharma is ruined what will be the consequence? Sacred people will suffer without protection; demons will rule over saints. Therefore, in order to

protect the saints from evil, God will plan to destroy the evil by protecting the saints and establish Righteousness. The Act to establish the righteousness should not be a temporary injunction and should continue for a certain period of time in the world, so that the wicked may not be in a position to rule over the saints and enjoy. The establishment of righteousness should not be construed as being meant for that period alone. Further, Dharma should continue for a certain longer period to ensure protection to the good and godly persons. It is impossible that Dharma be established once and for all. Dharma will have impact only when the pair of opposites rules one over the other. Since more power is assigned to evil (Adharma), the state of Dharma becomes weak. Under such circumstances, God incarnates to set right the situation. And God surely knows the fact that even after the completion of His role, by punishing the evil, protecting the saints and establishing Dharma, it cannot last for a longer period. The evil will again make their efforts to destroy the saints. It means, Adharmic Sakthi will have a speedy recovery. Since He (God) had made an effort that justice should not end in a short period and should continue for a certain period – which was why He thought and said Dharma Samsthaapanaarthaaya. “Sam” means the best and “Sthaapanaaya” – Establishment, i.e., the best establishment of Dharma (Righteousness).

Despite Samsthaapana, when Dharma cannot stand long after a certain period, again Adharma will rise – Is it not so?

Therefore, whenever Adharmic forces arise, “I incarnate” – as said by Krishna “Sambhavaami Yuge-Yuge.” Here “Yuge-Yuge” means in “Each Period”. By this, we should not conclude that God will have only one birth in one period. What He said is – Hereafter, whatever be the number of periods that may follow, to establish Dharma, “I” incarnate to protect as a saviour without feeling any fatigue or pain. So He has not prescribed any time limit. He disclosed as “Yadaa-Yadaa” in the first stanza of the Sloka. Therefore, we should not treat that He will have only one birth in one period. Whenever the evil forces dominate in a period, He takes birth as a saviour to protect the saints.

“Parithraanaaya Saadhunaam” – As Krishna said: To protect the saints from the hands of evil forces, He incarnates. From His statement it is clear that the followers of Dharma will remain a few in numbers.

Therefore, He makes us realize that He has not been influenced by nature or the Karma theory, but instead He took His birth by controlling nature with His power of illusion – whenever He felt it essential.

(ii) Reason for Incarnation

With His power of illusion, He influences nature – “Prakruthim Swaam Adhishtaaya”. Why has it been said so by Krishna? In fact, in Chapter IX, Verse 8, Krishna said – “Prakruthim Swaam Avashtabhya”. Is there any difference between “Adhishtaaya” and “Avashtabhya”? Certainly not. Both the words have the same meaning. In Chapter IV, Verse 6, Lord Krishna declares about His births, whereas, in Chapter IX, Verse 8, He declares about the births of others given by Him during the time of “Pralaya Kaala” by influencing nature with His power.

“Prakruthim Swaam Avashtabhya, Visrujhaami Punaha Punaha!

Bhutha – Gramam Imam Kruthsanam Avasam Prakruther Vasaath!”

(Chapter IX, Verse 8)

“Prakruthim (material nature) Swaam (of My personal self) Avashtabhya (enter in) Visrujhaami (create) Punaha Punaha (again, again) Bhutha – Gramam (all these Cosmic manifestations) Imam (this) Kruthsanam (total) Avasam (automatically) Prakruther (by the force of nature) Vasaath (under obligation).

As per sloka of Chapter IV, Verse 6, He can get away without any more words, whether by saying that “He is born to establish Dharma”; or otherwise, as per the sloka of Chapter IX, Verse 8, He can say, “That those who died during the time of Kalpa Pralaya, to discharge their deeds, have been given rebirth.” Instead, in both the slokas He said, He influenced nature by His power. Why did He have to say so?

Here the curtain of secrecy behind incarnation rises. He describes the basic reason of incarnation. To make it

known, He has used the words “Adishtaaya/Avashtabhya”.

To come to the conclusion, our lingering mind raises doubts and questions thus: is it true that Dharma is subjugated? To have stability and to continue it, the Merciful God might have thought: Is it not sufficient to Will (what He thought) and to let His Sankalpam fulfill automatically? Where is the necessity of taking birth for one, who has no form, and who has to come in human form, behave like a human, enter the battlefield to destroy the enemies in which He too gets Himself injured? Like us, the Sat-Chit-Ananda Swaroopaa too faces problems when He takes form. He too dresses like us; He gets annoyed and angry and sheds tears (during incarnation). What for? Is it necessary at all for the Sat-Chit-Ananda Swaroopaa? Let Him do Dharma Samsthaapana. He can do so from His highest place of Vaikunta/Kailasa, with His Divine Sankalpam. Where is the need for Him to take birth? Such questions will always arise.

Needless to say, with His Divine Sankalpam, He can perform any miracle. But, on deep thinking, that if He has to merely will, to accomplish a task, what sort of Sankalpam He has to take finally, we may wonder? He has to close the Chapter saying “No Universe” with His Divine Sankalpam and He has to sit back as pure Sat-Chit-Ananda. He does not want that to be so. That is the reason He was interested in creating the cosmos. In the beginning as Sat-Chit-Ananda Para Brahma, He was alone in the entire cosmos. He had no joy while sitting quietly. To play the game, He created us as tools with His illusory power in the universe. Those who died at the time of Kalpa Pralayam, He ignored them for a period of more than thousand Chatur Yugas; but later He brought them back into the vicious circle of life and death, by giving them birth to wipe out their deeds. What for? We can not fathom or judge His mind and behaviour. There may be no end to our thought processes, which prove to be futile even if we question the reason for creation of the Cosmos or that He might have created it for some reason. Is it not so? But there is nothing one can do about it. The Puranas refer to it as “imagination”, “illusion”. If so, then why should there be such a concept of illusion and imagination? That is why this creation is termed as “His Leela/Mahima?” (His divine sport).

No one can understand the nature of Bhagawan. One may even wonder why He appears to lose His cool. Nevertheless, He enjoys the bliss as Prasanthi Atmaraama. Being in that state whatever is the type of entertainment, He is amused”.

He neither cares about the harmony, nor would He like to close the show. Because of His wish, He began and has been running the show in full swing. Under such circumstances, the “Pralaya” is only a part of the show, which will never put an end to the show.

Be that as it may, if it is asked, why cannot He establish Dharma with His Divine Sankalpam, without incarnating? In reply to that, instead of His Sankalpam, He might as well end the creation. Then, of what use is His incarnation?

(iii) What it actually means!

Let us accept that Bhagawan’s Sankalpam is for Dharma Samsthaapanam, when Dharmic forces win over the Adharmic forces. Would it be possible for the Lord to will to establish Dharma on a permanent basis? No, because, if the entire cosmos follows the principle of Dharma, then the purpose for which He has created different tastes of substances and for which He has created different creatures in the universe, will not last long. Leela (Divine Miracle) entails – the game between the two groups, the tug of war between those who pull and push the ball from one end to the other, where one wins over the other, and one who defeats the other – loss, fortune, anger, joy, weeping, ecstasy etc; under such differing situations the life has to move on, and only then it will be fun to play. “Leela” (Supernatural play) means, all “Nava Rasa” (nine types of elements) should be present in the play. If all become true followers of Dharma forever, then what would be the taste of the play? How will it be called a miraculous play? Under such circumstances, Bhagawan may be bored. He planned and created this universe as “Misra Lokam”, where both bad and good deeds are performed. To get away from boredom, He has created different planes, namely – Asura Lokam (where only bad deeds are followed), Deva-Gandharva Lokam

(where there is only enjoyment), Thapo Lokam (where peace prevails), and Satya Lokam (wherein Dharma Anushtaana – Truth prevails). The place where we live is called “Misra Lokam”. This Loka has been created and the creation given certain freedom by Him to do their actions. If independence had not been assigned to this Lokam and if every one followed “Satya/Dharma”, the image would be monotonous in the eyes of the Lord. Instead of Misra Lokam, the Lokam will become Amisra Lokam/Dharma Lokam. Hence, there will be no enjoyment or taste in continuing such a Lokam.

If every one follows the track of Dharma, there will not be any new deeds. People will stay in the Misra Lokam till all old dues are paid off. Thereafter, they are freed from creation. Instead of the people taking the opportunity of shutting down the creation, the One who created it has to think about closing the scene. That would be natural. He might think, what rights do the people (the creation) have to close the show, which was directed by Him and which should be ended only by Him?

The Divine Leela, that He wants, will not be for permanent Dharma Samsthaapana. If He has to Will that the cosmos has to be put on the right track permanently, then He has to close the scene once for all. Hence, you find the necessity for Him to play the Divine Sport.

All right, if that is so, He need not Will for a permanent solution. When the situation worsens during a certain period, the Paramaathma can make Sankalpam to deal with the said situation. Why then He has to take birth as an “Avatar”?

Despite repeated Sankalpam, Adharmic forces will arise making it necessary to establish Dharma again and again for which He has to take a vow (sankalpam). Why should He take birth? Why should He take the trouble? That is why it has been said; by HIS mere Sankalpam “anything can be done or can be achieved”. In the case of His Sankalpam without incarnation, He cannot enjoy the peace for which “He needs us.” Even if He took temporary Sankalpam, He has to oversee His creation constantly and has to bear the burden of making a sankalpam repeatedly.

He does not want the type of peace we know of. For that reason He took the job of creation, feeding His children, preparing their accounts, making payments to their accounts – such a role He has chosen to don. Even if we try to reduce His burden, it seems that the Mission for which He takes Sankalpam will not stop and it is a continuing process. Instead of taking the word “Sankalpam” literally – let us assume that He likes to play the Drama (Leela Nataka Sai) – we may describe Him in a different way - that He is the story writer, actor, director, all in one, in essence, Sutradhara. Being a Director, He would have thought: “What is the fun in merely making a sankalpam.” Instead, He assumes a role to play His Leela to establish Dharma as an Avatar.

Whatever may be His Divine Sankalpam, when needed He sends an instrument (Mahatma or enlightened souls) for the sake of others. Under such circumstances, if Adharma rises, that too is His Sankalpam. Have we ever read in any text that Bhagawan is sitting somewhere and took the Sankalpam and in reaction to that the entire cosmos is influenced by Adharmic forces? Demons and devils, reckless kings, persons who preach wrong principles as their religion, the dacoits, impostors – when they all indulge in the wrong acts, then that leads to Adharma. In this Kali Yuga, people’s thoughts are fast moving in the direction of wrong paths. Even if the physical body may not be subject to the action of their deeds (hands, legs, etc.), the perception which supports their ideas and thoughts is their mind. It is the mind, which develops the negative thoughts and in order to reap the results, it takes the support of body and puts the same into action and practice.

There is an instrument behind each assignment in His scheme of things. He assigns an instrument for each of these whether it is right or wrong. It is all His Divine Sankalpam, but He never explicitly ascribes His Sankalpam to be behind all the actions. Under such circumstances, for each wrong action there is a reason behind that cause. Then how could we expect that establishment of Dharma be achieved with His mere Sankalpam? If He has not shown the reasons and instruments for the establishment of Dharma, they will appear to be an illogical play and stupefying from our point of view.

Hence, when Dharma perishes, to resurrect Dharma, He sends a Mahatma (Saint) as an instrument or as His

Messenger. Only when it proves to be futile, then He Himself takes birth as an Avatar.

(iv) Human & Divine Qualities

With the aim to lift Dharma He takes birth, behind which there are many objectives and reasons which are not known to us. Preaching Dharma itself will not suffice; it should be put into practice. The knowledge of Dharma will not yield success, unless it is adopted in day-to-day life. When Aadarsha Purusha (Follower of Dharma) practices Dharma in his personal life, the right thought will strike the minds of the people: "How great he is who follows Dharma with sanctity, tranquility; who is not only in the state of Ananda, but also spreads the vibrations of that Ananda in the universe!" Hence, the people will try to cultivate and implement the same procedure in their lives. To exhibit the divine qualities (Aadarsha Purusha) as a role model, it is important for Him to incarnate.

Would it behove the Divine Incarnation to pronounce that He is incomparable and places Himself at the highest podium? Would it be right, if He says that He does not have the qualities of emotions and desires that are present in a human being and stand at the highest position? He should not. If He separates Himself from His creation, He cannot take the position of a patron. How could He be an Aadarsha Purusha, if He separates Himself from the people who are at the lowest level? For instance, if a person pulls a plane with the power of his teeth, we will enjoy the scene by clapping our hands, we will be struck with wonder, but will we try to imitate him? "No". Our opinion will be: "It may be possible for him, but will it be possible for us?" If the divine incarnation separates Himself from the fragrance of the cosmos and stands at the top of the world discharging the divine duties, our opinion of Him will be high but we will keep Him at a distance. Our feelings will be: "He does not belong to our category. He is not having social sentiments which are present in a human being." Hence we will bow our heads before Him, but the inspiration/intention to follow Him or His principles will never develop in our heart.

Therefore, He comes in a human form projecting Himself as a self-controlled person to some extent and when there is tug of war between the right and the wrong, without stepping in the wrong direction, He will walk on the right path and will present that, Dharma alone can give permanent peace of mind and Satya can rest with confidence on Dharma. He may seem to be like us, but where we fail, He will succeed on that path. By observing Him, we too develop confidence that we can also lead our lives like Him by following Dharma. Confidence will develop in our mind that we too can succeed by the pursuit of the lessons contained in "Sastras".

If He leads the life of a normal person, we will never pay attention to His actions – whether He is indulging in right or wrong actions. Even today there may be numerous persons following Dharma across the country. But, how far it would be an inspirational tool for the world? Is Gandhi the only person who tried to follow truth and conscience in recent years? There may also be other persons like him. Gandhi presented his work at one level in the country; that is why it is described as "Gandhian". He made a path for others to follow and during his time, people made their best efforts to follow and to support his mission. But the purpose for which he was born had come to an end upon his death.

Bhagawan incarnated in human form in order to continue his influence in the coming years and bring people closer to Him. He reveals His divine qualities and powers to some degree or extent. He chooses His role which is sagacious, incomparable and beyond limits of a normal person: for instance, even as a small boy (in one of His previous incarnations), He destroyed demons like Thaataka and Subaahu. He was ready to accept without any hesitation/vacillation when He was asked to depart to the forest on the day of Pattaabhishekam (coronation). By doing so, He could draw us near Him without creating the feeling that He was a divine incarnation and that He was different from us. So, He behaved as a normal person with sentiments. He plays the dual role of the human and divine, and encourages us to lead a truly divine life.

Compared to the Divine, man is less powerful. Humans are not making any attempt to realize themselves. By controlling the five senses, if they walk on the right track in their life, they can also exercise divine power in achieving success. If they become yogic like the Devathas, they can acquire even more power than them. To encourage and favour people, who are unaware of their Atmic power, Bhagawan comes in a human form to establish Dharma, so that people can imbibe the Aadhyatmic principle. To establish Dharma, mere Sankalpa will

not yield the result, which is why He takes birth in human form.

Bhagawan also has the desire to play with and enjoy the company of His children (creations). He is the one who is the mother-father for the living creatures. Parents would always prefer to be with their children, whatever may be the circumstance. Likewise, He too has such a desire. He being formless, how can we realize Him. How can one build a relationship with the formless? Or if He comes in the form of Lord Vishnu with a gigantic figure, will it be possible for us to move close to Him? It is most likely that we would place our desires with bowing heads before Him or otherwise we might breathe our last on the spot having had such a formidable vision. That is why He takes the human form to mingle with human beings. Whatever may be His form, viz., as a hunter, monkey or cowherd - He mixes with a hunter as a hunter, with a monkey as a monkey and among cowherds as a cowherd. He creates the feeling of oneness among them. Interpersonal relationship will form only when they are of the same nature. So, Bhagawan comes in human form with qualities like anger, desire, showing emotions by shedding tears etc to His highest satisfaction, He mingles in the society and plays a leading role in the entire drama with Satya, Jnana, Shanthi and Prema, as His tools, He thus establishes Dharma.

Not only to fulfill His desires, but also to give better shape to human life, He plans and creates situations and waits for the opportune time, when both His desires as well as the welfare (well aware) of humans will meet.

When Dharma perishes, He concludes that the time has come for His incarnation.

To make our mind clear about the divinity in human form, He says: "Even though I seem like one among you, I too, lead the life of normal routine, but with some difference in My attitude as compared to others. Others are encircled by illusion, whereas I am not. I bring illusion under My influence – "Prakruthim swaam Adishthaaya" – "Avashtabhya". Being Paramaathma, Parabrahma Swarupa, Maya cannot touch Me. Being the Lord, for performing the drama (leela), I use the tool of Maya for the creation of cosmos (Prakruthi). In this way, I bring illusion under My control and with that, those who merged with Ekathvam at the time of Pralaya, I send them back to play their role to make the theme successful. In the divine play, "When Dharma completely perishes, I drag Maya (illusion) towards Me and I display the three qualities of Maya resting in Me (i.e., Generation, Organisation and Destruction) and as a result I also maintain the uniformity of human with incarnation in human form."

When He speaks about Boothakrama (human beings), He says "Avasam Prakruther Vasaath" – it means, because of influence of illusion over the human beings, they are leading their lives without divine sensation, in contrast to what He tells about His incarnation that "Prakruthim swaam Adishthaaya". With this statement, He makes us understand about His divinity in human form. He makes it clear about His incarnation in human form, so "that we should not think that He has been under the influence of illusion." That is why He repeats the word "swaam Adishthaaya, Avashtabhya". swaam means "mine" and Swami means the holder. He says: "Maya belongs to Me. I can retain that power with Me and I can command it to go or to come as I wish. I am Athmaraama; I am the Lord of My soul. There is no greater power than Me."

Thus Swami has clarified several aspects of the incarnation of the Avatar. He has revealed the reasons for the Avatar to assume the human form, and to undergo the cyclic process of births and deaths despite being the Eternal Being and the Lord of the Universe.

He incarnates again and again to protect the godly persons when forces of Adharma rise. He reveals the reason for creating the cosmos when He was alone; His purpose in running the show in full swing; His interest in not closing the show. All these situations could be materialized through Divine Sankalpam, or through an instrument sent by Him and in the event of failure thereof He reincarnates for reestablishment of Dharma. He does this through precept and practice. His Life thus becomes a Message and He an Aadarsha Purusha (Ideal/Inspirational Person). He also clearly brings out the nature of qualities identical and divergent as between the human being and the Divine Being to overcome Maya or surrender to Maya.

In addition to this, a point is to be noted when the Supreme states that "either through HIS Divine Sankalpam or through HIS instrument", there is not much difference between the Self and the instrument. Such instruments

appear in saintly form and their role is described below:

God in saintly form:

So far we have discussed the purpose of incarnation, incarnation with divine human quality. Now how does god speak in saintly form and what should be the qualities of a saint?

Bhagawan Uvaacha: "Anaasritha: karma-phalam Karyam karma Karoti Yah

Sa Sannyaasi cha yogi cha na niragnir na Chaakriya."

Anaasritha: means without shelter. Karma-Phalam – the result of work. Kaaryam – obligatory. Karma karoti yah – one who performs the work. Sah – he. Sannyaasi – in the renounced order. Cha – also. Yogi – mystic. Na – not. Nir – without. Agnih – fire. Na – nor. Akriyah – without duty.

Bhagawan said that one who performs duty without expectation of result and who discharges his duty with the feeling of obligation is in the saintly life and is the true mystic and not the person without lighting the fire or without duty.

Therefore, everyone is bound by deeds, whether human or divine. The difference is on the ground that a human does the job for recognition and reward whereas, the divine does the Karma for the well being of others.

As we come to the Karmic cycle of the Divine and human, it is clear that the Divine does the Karma for the well being of others whereas humans play the Karmic role to achieve recognition or reward. But one who works as per the directions of the Supreme to realize the true nature will always abide by the conventions framed by the Supreme, in order to merge into the Supreme after the completion of the assigned responsibility. There are some Samskaras (principles/guidelines) manifested and supported by the Supreme thought, those which the nonexistent has given to the existents to follow; practice and to preach to others and to run the cosmic show well. These Samskaras help those who believe in Karmic theory and limited to Kamyas Karma (with faith in God) and those who follow the Kamyas and Nish Kamyas karma to attain and merge in God.

CHAPTER 4 - CONVENTIONS

Conventions (Samskaaram): The conventions framed by the supreme are meant to refine the performer. Every individual is subjected to the hallucinations manifested by the Supreme. When the illusions attract the person, the mind loses the strength to control the senses. Since this is known to the Supreme, HE has framed forty conventions to satisfy and purify the mind.

To uplift the soul (Jivaatmaa) to the eternal spirit (Paramaathmaa) the forty Samskaaras are prescribed by Smritis based on Vedas for purification of mind and these deeds have to be performed sincerely to attain liberation from body consciousness (Moksha) and to fix the mind over the consciousness (Aatma Vichaaram). The nonentity's thought manifested into creation, existence, sustenance and destruction as has been reiterated right from the beginning of this book "Marga Darshanam" In this connection everyone raises a doubt whether hen has come first or the egg? Many found it difficult to answer because without egg, hen cannot appear and without hen, egg cannot be produced.

The answer is simple, to carry an egg in the womb, a hen is a must; egg may or may not produce chick and therefore, it cannot be considered as the answer. The hen may be likened to the nonexistent, egg is the thought of the nonexistent and the manifested chick is the creation or existent. The reason why hen and egg are discussed here is because the first and foremost convention brought out by the nonexistent Supreme is:

1. Garbha Aadhaanam: in general terms it is called as physical union of a married couple and is consecrated through prayer. This is done prior to "Shaanti Muhurtam" (to fulfill the desire for physical union) so that the desire may find fulfillment. In case of the nonexistent Supreme, Garbhaadhaanam refers to manifestation of thought.
2. Pumsavanam: is a prayer to assure that the infant is not miscarried. This is done during the 3rd month of pregnancy and it is also named as "Garbharakshanam". In case of nonexistent Supreme Pumsavanam refers to concentration over the manifested thought so that the manifested thought remains constant and without miscarriage.
3. Seemantham: is a social festival in nature to keep the pregnant woman in good spirit and this festival is celebrated during the 6th or 8th month of pregnancy. The nonexistent is always in good spirit and such festivities are not required.
4. Jaata Karmam: is also like celebration immediately after the birth of baby. Sweets and gifts are offered to people. In case of nonexistent Supreme the creation is the output of HIS manifested thought, like the so called chick.
5. Naama Karanam: Naming ceremony of the newborn is celebrated on the 11th day of its birth. Similarly the nonexistent Supreme also named the output of HIS thought as "Cosmic Universe" (Cosmic Universe consists of nature and creatures).

Some differences have been mentioned between the nonexistent manifested thought and those of HIS cosmic universe up till now. Hereafter are detailed the conventions that HE has framed for the creatures to follow and to perfectly hold together "Self" (i.e. creatures) and the cosmic nature, finally merging with the nonexistent.

6. Anna Praasanam: The first feeding of solid food to the baby during its 6th month. The creatures of the cosmic universe consume food through cosmic nature.
7. Chaulam: Special hair dressing done along with Mantras in the case of the creatures of cosmic universe, which is done in preparation of undertaking studies about the existence of self (i.e. creatures) and cosmic nature.
8. Upanayanam: In order to develop the boy and to take him on the right path Upanayana Samskaaram is undertaken. By Samskaaraa, Prakruthi can be converted into Samskruthi but not its opposite Vikruthi (deformed or useless). This ceremony initiates the child in its intellectual and spiritual journey. Moreover it indicates that the child is qualified to perform all traditional Vedic rites including the parental rites.

Upanayanam consists of two words – "Upa" + "Nayanam". The term "Upa" means nearer and "Nayanam" means eye. Nearer here refers to knowledge or Brahman. And why is Nayanam (i.e. eye) referred to here? It is not an

ordinary eye; it is that third eye which is also called as the intellectual eye for seeking knowledge. It also means the beginning of formal education. Upanayana Samskara should be completed before the age of 8, 12 and 16 years. This Samskara is completed during the years mentioned with a view that sexual feelings start entering the mind from 16th year onwards. This Samskara is performed by three Sects of people- Brahmin, Kshatriya and Vysya. Brahmin is the Guru for all the Varnas (Community) and Agni Deva is the Guru for Brahmin.

Upanayanam is a good initiation for the Brahmachari where the Guru blesses and guides the boy. Under the directions of Guru, the boy stands over a granite stone and says 'Asma Aarohanam' meaning, "grant me good health in all respects". Then the Guru blesses the boy "to be firm and with determination like a rock"; physical body and health should be similar to a rock – robust and hard; if any illusion/atraction is preventing the practice of one's actions one should fight against that and should drive it away.

Upanayam imparts certain regulations such as the boy should not sleep during day hours; should not use cosmetics and perfumes; should not mingle closely with ladies; should not watch any such things which may develop negative qualities and should not show interest in gossip and worldly pleasures. The mind should be made firm with positive thoughts; to be calm and quiet, giving up laziness.

After completion of Upanaya Samskaara the boy is qualified to learn the Vedas. In this Samskaara the knowledge is imparted by a Guru to the Brahmachari as a Mantra. The meaning of the Mantra is as under:

"Om" – the primeval sound that represents Brahma;

"Bhur" - the physical world that embodies the vital spiritual energy or "Pran";

"Bhuvah" – the mental world and destroyer of all sufferings;

"Swaha" – the celestial and spiritual world that embodies happiness;

"Tat" – That or God, referring to transcendental Paramaatmaa (Eternal Spirit);

"Savithur" – the bright Sun or the Creator and Preserver of World;

"Varenyam" – best or most adorable;

"Bhargo" – destroyer of all sins;

"Devasya" – Supreme;

"Dheemahi" – we meditate upon and take in;

"Dhiyo" – the intellect;

"Yo" – the light;

"Nah" – our;

"Prachodayath" – inspire or enlighten.

We meditate on the glory of the Creator; Who has created the Universe;

Who is worthy of Worship; Who is the embodiment of Knowledge and Light;

Who is the remover of Sin and Ignorance; May He enlighten our Intellect.

The essence of the Mantra can be stated as follows - 'Oh God! Thou art the Giver of Life, Remover of pain and sorrow, Bestower of happiness! Oh! Creator of the Universe, May we receive thy supreme sin-destroying light, May Thou guide our intellect in the right direction.'

Gayatri Mantra is classified into three parts viz. (a) Praise; (b) Meditation; and (c) Prayer.

While chanting the mantra, we first praise the God or the Divine Cosmic energy, meditate upon it with all reverence and then finally pray or make an appeal to God to awaken and strengthen the intellectual powers of a person. The Mantra is said to be the embodiment of all deities and is certainly not associated with any particular religion or sect, time, place or person. While Om, Bhuh, Bhuvah, Swaha, Thath, Savithur, Varenyam, Bhargo and Devasya are said to be its nine colors or praise of the

Divine, Dheemahi is related to meditation and Dhiyo, Yo, Nah and Prachodayaath are said to be the parts of the prayer aspects of the mantra.

'Gayatri' is recognized as a mother of the Vedas. She has two more forms as Savitri and Saraswathi and these

three are present in everyone, where – Gayatri controls the senses of a person, Savitri controls the Prana or the Life Force and Saraswathi controls Speech of a person. Thus, the three together represent the purity in thought, word, and deed. Recitation of the mantra Gayatri is said to enhance one's intelligence and intuition.

The deity Gayatri is with five faces 'Panchamukhi' and these faces represent the guarding of the five senses; as Savitri, protecting the five 'Pranas' or the life forces. The significance of the deity Savitri is taken from the story of Savitri – Satyavan. At the end of Satyavan's life span, Yama, the God of Death took away his life and the devoted wife Savitri, who was renowned for her chastity, succeeded in bringing back the life (Prana) of her husband from the God of Death.

This Gayatri Mantra also known as Savitri Mantra was revealed to sage Vishvamitra first, in the Vedic metre known as Gayatri. Before being initiated with this Mantra, the boy is given a thread with three strands and the three strands are bound by a knot that symbolizes Pranavam. The strands represent three forms i.e. Aatman (Soul with body); Antaratman (consciousness) and Paramaatman (The cosmic energy/vital air or the Supreme). After completion of Upanayana Samskaaram, the Guru takes the boy to Gurukulam for detailed study of Vedas. (Samskaaram No.9-12 studied and practiced at Gurukulam)

9. Praajaapatyam;

10. Saumyam;

11. Aagneyam;

12. Vaishvadevam. These four are Kandas belonging to Yajur Veda which are named after those rishis through whom the Veda Mantras were revealed. These rishis are known as Kanda rishis. A Brahmachari has to offer his salutations to these rishis who have revealed the knowledge through these Kandas. That salutation is referred to here in the form of Upakarma (meaning beginning), the study of Vedas.

Those belonging to Yajur Veda observe the Upakarma in the month of Sravana during the month of August – September on the day of full moon. The full moon day during the said month is considered to be auspicious when Lord Narayana incarnated as Lord Hayagriva to restore the Vedas to Brahma, who is recognized as the Lord of Knowledge.

To study this Yajur Veda, the Upakarma time was fixed every year from mid of August to mid of January and the rest of the months i.e. from mid January to mid August would be devoted to learn other branches of our Shastras. To completely learn one Veda it would take 12 years. Gradually the methodologies of teaching became impractical and Vedic studies continued throughout the year. Therefore, atonement (Praayaschitta) is undertaken before initiating the Upakarma function, for having learned Vedas during the prohibited period. For Utsarjanam (giving up) of the study of Vedas in the mid month of January and for not concentrating on other Shastras (literatures connected to Vedas) atonement is performed by chanting a mantra called KaamoKaarshit 1008 times. KaamoKaarshit means done out of desire and Manyurakaarshit, out of anger.

This KaamoKaarshit ManyuraKaarshit Japam is done with a sense of contrition. Except the Supreme who else can bear the burden of our acts of omissions and commissions with regard to Shastras? So we pray to the compassionate Lord to light the lamps of Shastras so that the Jiva can find its way to its home in the Absolute. After KaamoKaarshith japam, Upakarma (Kanda rishi Tarpanam) will be done after Maadhyaahnikam (after noon prayer of) and Bhagavad-Aaraadhanam (Ijyaa).

13. Samaavartanam (Snaanam): means completion of Brahmacharyam i.e. Gurukulavaasam. Now the Brahmachari is considered as a qualified man to get married to discharge his responsibilities towards his parents.

14. Vivaaham (marriage): Entering into Gruhasthashram. Right from the day of marriage till the last breath of a person different conventional rites are mentioned to please the Devas, Brahma, Pitru, Bhoota and Nara and they have to be performed by way of Yajna.

Yajna is a ritual of sacrifice prevalent right from the Vedic times. Lord Agni witnesses the oblations poured in it to please the Devas for fulfillment of certain desires of the performer, and the performer believes that the oblations poured will be delivered to Devas by Agni.

Yajna has a much wider and deeper meaning. It has three folds (a) worship of deities; (b) unity (Sangatikarana); (c) charity (Daana). The philosophy of Yajna teaches a way of living in the society in harmony and a life-style which promotes and protects higher human values in the society, which is indeed the basis of an ideal human culture.

There are four hundred Yajnas described in the Vedas and of these twenty one, known as Nitya Karmas are compulsory and are to be performed over a lifetime. The other Yajnas are optional as they are related to Kamya Karma i.e. to fulfill one's wishes. Nitya here does not mean that it is to be performed on a daily basis, with the exception of Agnihotram, which is to be performed twice daily, at sunrise and sunset.

Apart from Pancha MahaYajna, the PakaYajnas, Havir Yajnas and Soma Yajnas contain seven Yajnas each.

Pancha Maha Yajnas

Pancha MahaYajnas are from Taittiriya Aranyaka.

15. Deva Yajnam: Consists of offering Aahutis (oblation) to Devas.

16. Pitru Yajnam: consists of offering libations to parents and ancestors.

17. Nara Yajnam: offerings to the guests.

18. Bhoota Yajnam: consists of offering food to all creatures viz. animals, plants, birds etc and to the departed ones.

19. Brahma Yajnam: consists of recitation of Brahmanas, the stanzas from all the four Vedas.

Paka Yajnas:

This group consists of 7 types of Yajnas which are:

20. Ashtakai: It is Pitru Karma (parental rites) to be done once in a year on the day (Thithi) of their departure.

21. Sthaaleepakam: "Sthali" is the pot in which rice is cooked; it must be placed on the Oupaasana fire and the rice called "Charu" cooked in it must be offered to the same fire. It is performed on the first day of the lunar fortnight.

22. Paarvanam: this too is parental rite done once in every month.

23. Shraavani: to be done only once in a year during the month of Shraavana and also called as Sarpa Bali.

24. Aagrahaayani: To be done only once in a year during mid December.

25. Chaitri: To be done only once in a year during the month of Chaitra (Chithirai) and also called Eashaana Bali.

25. Aashvayuji: To be done only once in a year during the month of Aashvayuja (Thulam).

Havir Yajnas:

This Yajna is performed on every Prathama day (every fifteen days) is "Darsa-Purna-Isti", "darsa" meaning the new moon and "purna" the full moon. The two rituals are also referred to merely as "isti". The Darsapurnamasa isti is the Prakruti (archetype) for the Havir Yajnas. The first four Havir Yajnas - Agniaadaanam, Agnihotram, Darshapurnamaasam and Aagrayanam are performed at home and the last three Yajnas in a Yajnasala.

27. Agniaadaanam: To be done once in a year or once in a lifetime. The Agni after the marriage is divided into two as Grihyaagni- for doing Oupaasanam and Shroutaagni- for doing Agnihotram and other Yajnas.

28. Agnihotram: To be done daily using milk. Akshatai or ghee can also be used.

29. Darshapurnamaasam: To be done once in a 'Paksham' - on every Prathamai Tithi.

30. Aagrayanam: To be done once in a year or once in a lifetime during Aashvayuja Poornima.

31. Chaaturmaasyam: To be done once in a year or once in a lifetime during the rainy season.

32. Niruda Pashubandham: To be done once in a year or once in a lifetime. Animal sacrifice starts from this Yajna. (Godhanam : gifting of cow).

33. Saudraamani: To be done once in a year or once in a lifetime. Only in this yajna 'Sura' (Liquor) is used on one occasion to please the "Kshudra Devatas".

Soma Yajnas:

This Yajna is named after the juice of the Soma Plant, said to be relished by the Devas and which is offered as an oblation. The Agnishtomam is the first of the seven Yajnas and is the Prakruti (archetype) for the other six that are its Vikruthi. Vaajapeyam is often regarded as important as its Yajamana (Sacrificer) comes after the ritual bath at the conclusion of the sacrifice, the king himself holds up a white umbrella for him. "Vaaja" means price of rice but nowadays it is also taken as rice, food and "Peya" means a drink, "Drink of victory". This sacrifice consists of the offerings of Somarasa (Juice), Pasu-Homa (offering of 23 animals as a gift) and Anna or Vaaja Homa. The sacrificer is bathed in rice.

34. Agnishtomam: To be done once in a year or once in a lifetime

35. Atyagnishtomam: To be done once in a year or once in a lifetime

36. Uktyam: To be done once in a year or once in a lifetime

37. Shodashi: To be done once in a year or once in a lifetime

38. Vaajapeyam: To be done once in a year or once in a lifetime. This Yajna is done with 'Vaaja' (Annam).

39. Athiraatram: To be done once in a year or once in a lifetime.

40. Aptoryaamam: To be done once in a year or once in a lifetime.

Oupaasanam:

Oupaasanam has to be performed daily. This comes under the Paaka Yajnas, though not mentioned above. This is a Fire-yajna that starts from the day of one's marriage and continues till his death. This fire is lit from the father's fire at the time of wedding and will be preserved during his lifetime and the cremation is done with this fire and then the individual fire will be extinguished. This homam has to be performed by the husband and wife together daily. Since it is connected with 'Upaasana', it is called Oupaasanam. 'Akshatai' (Rice) is used for doing this homam. If the husband is out of station, his wife has got the full right and duty for doing this homam. This homam will prevent evil spirits from entering the house. It is however compulsory though not a part of the 21 compulsory fire sacrifices and is to be performed in addition to those.

When a person undertakes all the above mentioned conventions framed by the Supreme, the mind become pure and he can then undertake Aatma Vicharanam to attain Moksha. Here the 40 Samskaaras are not only prescribed for men but also for women. Apart from these Narada Muni explains to Yudishtir about the principles that are to be followed by women.

In Bhagavata Puranam Seventh Kandam, chapter 11 verses 25 to 29 are about the principles to be observed by women:

25th Verse: Following him in his vows, being regular, favorably disposed to her husband as well as to his friends and relatives and readiness one finds in a woman in divine respect to her husband. 26-27th Verse: She cleans, mops and decorates the house as a housewife and is personally finely dressed in her clothes and has her household articles always clean; to the small and great desires of her husband she is a chaste and modest woman of controlled senses as well as of controlled speech and she is veritable, pleasing, loving and with respect for her husband when it is called for. 28th Verse: Of contentment, not greedy, expert in serving, knowing what dharma, kindness is, speaking the truth, attentive, pure and affectionate; she worships the husband as long as he is straight with her. 29th Verse: Any woman who accepts her husband as the Supreme Personality is of service exactly like the Goddess of Fortune; devoted is she to the spirit of Hari with her husband in the spiritual world of Vaikuntha just like Lakshmi enjoying the eternal herself.

The question raised by modern Satis is why the Supreme shows partiality among the humans? Why should a woman always follow men? Why should a woman not have equal rights?

Woman is known for patience, tolerance and forbearance and her concentration, devotion and dedication (means service) to her husband make her a powerful woman by nature and chaste by character. She may even be equated or ranked more than a renunciates, sage and rishi. Moreover, the trinities also show their respect for such chaste women. In this connection one example has already been cited about Sati Savitri who brought back

the life of her husband from Yama the God of Death. Similarly another Sati, Anasuya is also renowned for her chastity. The story about her is as follows:

Sage Atri is one of the Saptarishis in the current Manvantara and a son of Brahma. He is one of the Sages who propounded the sacred thread ceremony (Poonal). Sage Atri's wife was Anasuya, an embodiment of chastity. Atri is considered to be one of the great discoverers of sacred mantras. Atri Samhita and Atri Smriti are two works of the great sage.

Atri Anasuya and the Trinity

Sage Atri performed intense tapas on the Kula Mountains. This caused the whole world to start burning. Brahma-Vishnu-Maheswara were pleased and appeared before the Sage and sought to know what he desired. Sage Atri asked them to be their son. Hence they were born as Dattatreya, Chandrartri and Krishnantri.

Once, the Trinity decided to test the chastity of Anasuya. They came to her house as Brahmins and requested that food be served to them imposing a condition that she should be undressed while serving. Anasuya agreed to that without any hesitation. In a split second, she converted the Brahmins into children and offered food to them undressed. The Trinity regained their original form on requesting Anasuya. Such was the power of Anasuya's chastity. Since she gave food to the children, she was bound to become their mother. There are many such stories of satis who are incomparable for their chastity and devotion. Hence no more principles are laid especially for women in the framed conventions of the Supreme. For further details on these forty Samskaaras refer to Vaajasaneeyi Samhita.

In this Kali age it is really doubtful if it would be possible to follow all the mentioned conventions daily. Then how will one have the opportunity to learn, to realize and acquire the Knowledge and merge unto the Infinite? Is there any other way to purify the mind and control the senses?

Vedas are imperishable but according to the Age, even though the regulations and stipulations prescribed to be followed are diminishing, the creatures are finding ways to follow the conventions to the extent possible, so as to uplift themselves. Yuga Dharma has given some relaxations on those conventions through Bhakthi Marga.

CHAPTER 5 - BHAKTHI MARGA - I

Bhakthi Marga

What is Bhakthi? It is not mere devotion; Bhakthi should have control over the mind and senses and with contemplation on the Supreme Divine within. In order to demonstrate the attention on the Lord, the path of service is chosen and that is the reason it is named as devotional service. Sage Narada was a noted Bhakta of Sriman Narayana In Satya Yuga and Kruta Yuga. Being a Bramachari and the direct son of Brahma, Narada was well versed with the knowledge of Veda. Some of the sutras about Bhakthi from Narada Bhakthi Sutra are mentioned here.

Narada Bhakthi Sutra Verse 1

Atah - now; Atah — therefore; Bhakthim — devotional service; Vyakhyasyamah — shall try to explain.

TRANSLATION: Now, therefore, I will try to explain the forward movement of devotional service.

PURPORT: Bhagavad-Gita explains how to render devotional service to the Supreme Master. The Lord says that only a self-realized person always remains in the state of being supremely excellent known as Brahma-Bhuta, the state of bliss. Such a person is free and away from the impurity or corruption, expression of sorrow, complaint and hankering. A self-realized person lives in the state of equanimity, seeing no distinction among the higher and lower class of life. A realized person will always look into the soul and not the external body. Bhakthi can be understood only by a realized soul and it is he who can render devotional service to the Lord.

Devotional service is clarified in the Bhagavad-Gita in the 18th chapter and 55th verse: Bhaktya Mam Abhijanaati. "One can know the Supreme only through devotional service, without recourse to a second path." In Gita, we have Karma, Jnana and Dhyana Yoga. And these Yogas enlighten about the absolute truth but the truth can be realized and can be attained only through Bhakthi Yoga or devotional service. Chapter 4 verse 3 of Gita explains:

Sa Vayam Mayaa Te Adya Yogah Proktah Puraatanah |

Bhaktho Asi Me Sakhaa Ceti Rahasyam Hi Etad Uttamam ||

"The ancient science of the relationship of yours with the Supreme is told to you by ME as you are MY devotee as well as MY friend and hence you can understand the secrecy of this transcendental science" - As told by Krishna to Arjuna.

Why the mystery of transcendental science is revealed to Arjuna by Krishna and not to Duryodhana? In this world there are two groups - the one which follows the path of Dharma (Righteousness) and the other which follows Adharma (Unrighteousness). Arjuna was on the path of righteousness and that was the reason the secrecy of the transcendental science was revealed. A person who is in the right direction would never travel on the wrong path and would never harm others. Such a person alone can be the friend and devotee of god.

To understand the Supreme, Lord says in the 15th verse of the 15th chapter of Gita:

Sarvasya Chaaham Hrdi Sannivistho Mattah Smrtir Jannam Apohanam Cha |

Vedais Cha Sarvair Aham Eva Vedyo Vedanta Krd Veda Vid eva Chaaham ||

I dwell in everyone's heart and from ME come remembrance, knowledge and forgetfulness. I am to be known by all the Vedas, I am the compiler and knower of the Vedas.

The Vedas are the eternal and the accepted truth. The followers of four different Vedas are many. Some follow the Rig and some others follow any one of the other three Vedas. But none has followed properly the essence of these Vedas. To attain material benefits, some are strictly following a portion of karma kanda Vedas by sacrificing to different demigods, while, there are some Sadhakas (aspirants) who would like to know the absolute truth of the Supreme and are engaged in such practices. These are known as Jnanis. The completeness or the total perfection lies in attaining the stage of Brahma-bhuta, or self-realization for a Jnani. Bhakthi or devotional service begins only after attaining the state of self realization. One who is limited in the bodily concept of existence cannot understand the progress of devotional service.

From the above discussion it will be clear why Narada-Bhakti-sutra begins, "Now, therefore, I shall try to explain the forward movement of devotional service." The word "therefore" indicates that this process of devotional service is for the self-realized soul. The Vedanta-sutra also begins with "Athato Brahma Jijnasa". The word Brahma-jijnasa refers to inquiry into the Supreme Absolute Truth. Those who have been elevated from the lower stage of the karma-kanda portion of the Vedas and have realized themselves to be of spirit soul and not just a body can alone develop Bhakti or devotional service.

It is clear from the 1st verse of Narada-Bhakti-sutra that devotional service can be developed or rendered only by a realized soul. But many doubts regarding this verse arise. For, if Bhakti is the only source through which a person can attain realization then why is it said that only a self realized soul can perform devotional service?

One aspect of Bhakti would be for self realization through the nine paths of devotion (explained in detail further). This is a lower level of Bhakti, which leads to completeness through the process of purification and total surrender. The other is a higher level of realization. When he immerses himself unconditionally in devotional service to the Lord with love and with an attitude of servitude, he reaches the highest level leading to immortality. Bhakti is not the action which one performs through Karma Kanda. Bhakti should be that devotional service where a person offers self absolutely and unconditionally. Unconditional and absolute service can only be given by a self realized soul.

How to attain self realization?

Two paths are mentioned for self realization in spiritual institution. One is the path of wisdom and the second is the path of surrender.

Path of Wisdom: The path of wisdom highlights self realization. Here, the path of wisdom does not mean liberty to seek and do any work for material benefit. Wisdom is defined from the word "Wise" meaning sagacious, judicious and skilled or experienced. Hence, wisdom means sound judgment with discrimination.

What is sound judgment?

Judgment should not be based on material benefits. A sound judgment is based on self enquiry. Instead of concentrating on the worldly plane if one contemplates on self enquiry (inwardly) it results in sound judgment.

Initially for any person it is difficult to contemplate inwardly and every one will seek material comforts. But in the long run a person learns that whatever is achieved materially may grant happiness for a short period of time but will soon come to an end with the sustaining body. At that stage a person seeks eternal bliss to overcome the pains and sorrows of life that have been experienced. Such experiences make a person skilled and sagacious enough to make sound judgment, to look inwardly and to seek the absolute truth which exists in everyone.

In an enquiry of self a person undergoes various tests, and experiences both the bitterness and sweetness of life and tries to control the sensory objects of the body and mind to maintain equanimity and to overcome body consciousness. Such power of control over the mind and body enlightens a person and grants wisdom.

Once after attaining wisdom and self realization, a person should not have a feeling of achievement of success. It is only a first step on the board of spiritual path. A self realized person does not mean attaining godhood or god; such a realized soul may still wander with pride and ego. No doubt, a sensory object of the body is under control but it is better to be noted that any achievement in life may further make a person excel or deteriorate on the spiritual journey. For instance, a realized soul may have control over Kama, Krodha, Lobha and Moha but may fail to have control over pride which results out of achievement and success in realization. Such pride may further result in ego. In order to overcome pride and ego one more process of study is needed and that is the path of surrender.

Path of Surrender: This section speaks about how a realized soul can develop devotional service to god through Bhakti. It is the only path that crushes pride and ego completely and makes one merge in god with absolute and unconditional surrender. It is the path that brings oneness of divinity in humanity. The path of surrender can be studied well through Narada-Bhakti-sutra in the 2nd verse.

Verse 2:

Sa Tu Asmin Parama-Prema-Rupa

Sa — it; Tu — and; Asmin — for Him (the Supreme Lord); Parama — highest; Prema — pure love; Rupa — having as its form.

Devotional service is considered as the most dignified, chaste love for God.

After attaining the state of self-realization, one is positioned with respect in devotional service to the Lord. To attain love of God completeness is required in Bhakthi. Love of God involves the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the devotee, and the process of devotional service. In the path of wisdom as stated in the preceding paragraphs, a self realized soul or the Brahma Bhuta stage is the initial stage of spiritual life; it is not the stage of completeness or the ultimate stage of immortality. Why has it been said that realized state is the initial stage? It is because a soul learns that it is not associated either with its body or with this material world as it is free from material entrapment. This stage of realization is not the complete stage. The perfect stage begins with activity in the self-realized position, and that activity is based on the understanding that a living entity is eternally the subordinate servitor of the Supreme Lord. Otherwise, there is no meaning to self-realization. With a small blast of wind if one is possessed with the idea that he is the Supreme Brahman, or that he has become one with Narayana, or that he has merged with the Brahma Jyoti, the great brightness, then the person has not comprehended the perfection of life.

According to the Bhagavatam there are three levels of transcendentalists: the one, self-realized knower of the Nirguna state of the Absolute Truth; the second, knower of the Paramatma, by detecting the place of the Supreme, through the process of mystic yoga; and the third are the Bhaktas, who engage themselves in devotional service to the master. One who gives up the body consciousness treating it as an illusion and look inwardly to the spirit soul and desire to merge into the Supreme Soul is in the lowest transcendental position. The mystic yogi is above such a person, who through contemplation sees within the hearts, the Vishnu form of the Paramatma, or Super soul. Among all these transcendentalists the person who actually associates (with full wisdom and understanding in a position of servitude and complete surrender) with the Supreme Bhagawan and HIS teaching is the highest among all transcendentalists.

In the Sixth Chapter of the Bhagavad Gita the Lord confirms this:

Yoginam Api Sarvesham mad-Gatenantar-Atmana

Sraddhavan Bhajate Yo Mam Sa Me Yukta-Tamo Matah

“And of all yogis, the one with great faith who always abides in Me, thinks of Me within himself, and renders transcendental loving service to Me — he is the most intimately united with Me in yoga and is the highest of all. That is My opinion.” This is the highest perfect stage, known as prema, or love of God.

Verse 3: “Amrita-Svarupa Cha”. Amrita means immortality; svarupa means having as its essence; Cha means and. This pure love for God is eternal.

A person becomes liberated even in his present body when he attains the perfect stage of love of Godhead and realizes thereby his constitutional position of immortality.

In the Bhagavad-Gita the Lord says,

Janma Karma Cha me Divyam Evam yo Vetti Tattvatah

Tyaktva Deham Punar Janma Naiti Mam Eti So Arjuna

It is explained by the Lord that any person who understands His transcendental activities and His appearance and disappearance in this material world becomes liberated and that after quitting his present body he at once reaches His abode. Therefore it is to be understood that one who has attained the stage of love of God has perfect knowledge, and even if he may fall short of perfect knowledge, he has the preliminary (prerequisite) perfection of life that a living entity can attain.

In self realization process one should not have misconception of oneself as being one with the Supreme and such a misconception prevents one from attaining the highest stage of love of god. Why is there a mention here of the misconception of oneself as being one with the Supreme?

Self realization tells about the transcendental journey from self to Supreme and vice versa; it tells that this self is the spark of that Supreme and its position is subordinate. Being subservient to the Supreme one can realize the stage of loving service to the Lord. In this stage of self realization one realizes the position of his limitation and the power of Supreme Who is unlimited. This is explained in Visishta advaita that beings are limited and the Supreme is unlimited. This concept is not contrary to that of Advaita and is considered as complementary because at the time of dual existence, one has to advance from the state of self to reach the highest stage of Supreme, as servant of the Lord to enjoy the bliss. This realization known as amrita-svarupa makes one eligible for being eternally connected to the Supreme. It is because one has to follow the cosmic play of the Supreme (Maya) and must be influenced by the so called Maya to enjoy amrita svarupa and HIS game of duality.

One who is convinced that he is eternally a servitor of the Supreme Lord is called immortal because he has realized his constitutional position of immortality. Unless one understands his position as a living entity and an eternal servitor of the Lord, there is no question of immortality. But one who accepts these facts becomes immortal. In other words, those who are under the misconception that the living entity and the Supreme Lord are equal in all respects, both qualitatively and quantitatively, are mistaken, and they are still bound to remain in the material world. They cannot rise to the position of immortality.

Upon attaining love of God, a person immediately becomes immortal and no longer has to change his material body. But even if a devotee of the Lord has not yet reached the perfect stage of love of Godhead, his devotional service is considered immortal. Any action in the stage of karma or Jnana will be finished with the change of body, but devotional service, even if not executed perfectly, will continue into the next life, and the living entity will be allowed to make further progress. One more point is to be considered – the theory that karma or Jnana will be finished with the change of body is applicable for those who follow the path of karma based on the conventions but without attaining the love of God; this means having understood the concept about the convention he may live with pride or ego and similar is the case with the followers who attained Jnana and will nullify their karma and knowledge attained out of that; whereas the person who has not even executed the devotional service perfectly because of ignorance will have the opportunity to progress further because of devotional service rendered to the best of his capacity.

The constitutional position of the living entity as a fragment of the Supreme Lord is confirmed in the Srimad-Bhagavatam and the Upanishads. The Svetasvatara Upanishad states,

Balagra-Sata-Bhagasya Satadha Kalpitasya Cha

Bhago Jivah Sa Vijneyah sa Chanantyaaya Kalpate

“If the tip of a hair were divided into one hundred parts and if one of those parts were again divided into a hundred parts, that one ten-thousandth part of the tip of the hair would be the dimension of the living entity.” As already mentioned, this position of the living entity as a fragment of the Supreme Lord is declared in the Bhagavad Gita to be eternal; it cannot be changed. A person who understands his constitutional position as a fragment of the Supreme Lord and engages himself in devotional service with all seriousness at once becomes immortal.

The 4th verse of Narada Bhakthi Sutra states, “Upon achieving that stage of transcendental devotional service in pure love of God, a person becomes perfect, immortal, and peaceful”. It means the living entities (who are part-and-parcel of the Supreme) who are entangled in the conditioned life of material existence because of their diverse activities are wandering all over the universe, transmigrating from one body to another and undergoing various miseries. But when a living entity fortunately comes in contact with a pure devotee of the Lord and engages in devotional service, he enters upon the path of perfection. If someone engages in devotional service in all seriousness, the Lord instructs him in two ways — through the pure devotee and from within — so that he can advance in devotional service. By cultivating such devotional service, he becomes perfect.

In the 8th chapter and 15th verse of Bhagavad Gita, Krishna tells that the great souls who have attained the highest perfection and who engage themselves in HIS devotional service will attain HIM and need not come back

to this miserable material life while living in the material body and after leaving the body. One who attains the highest perfection goes back to Godhead after leaving his present body. Once there, he does not have to come back to this material world and transmigrate from one body to another. That transfer to the spiritual world is the highest perfection of life. In other words, the devotee achieves his constitutional position of immortality and thus becomes completely peaceful.

Until a person achieves this perfection, he cannot be peaceful. He may artificially think he is one with the Supreme, but actually he is not; therefore, he has no peace. Similarly, someone may aspire for one of the eight yogic perfections in the mystic yoga process, such as to become the smallest, to become the heaviest, or to acquire anything he desires, but these achievements are material; they are not perfection. Perfection means to regain one's original spiritual form and engage in the loving service of the Lord. The living entity is a part and parcel of the Supreme Lord, and if he performs the prescribed duties, without proudly thinking that he is one in all respects with the Supreme Lord, he attains real perfection and becomes peaceful.

In the 7th verse Narada explains "One who is engaged in devotional service will not have lust because all material activities are renounced". Lust here refers to sense gratification. Some people mistook the divine relations of Krishna and Gopikas. The Gopikas never had lust for anything material, they could understand the divinity and purity of Krishna and they stood by that pure love. "As there is difference between iron and gold, so there is difference between material lust and Krishna's love for the Gopis". Although such love may sometimes resemble material lust, the difference is: "The desire to satisfy one's own senses is called lust, while the desire to satisfy the senses of Krishna is called prema, love of/for God".

Lust leads to activity for sense gratification. Each person has undertaken some duties such as political obligations, performance of Vedic rituals, obligations for maintaining the body, social formalities and conventions etc. But all such activities are to satisfy one's own senses. The Gopis, however, simply wanted to satisfy Krishna's senses, and thus they completely gave up the conventional path of social restriction, not caring for their relatives or the chastisement of their husbands. They gave up everything for the satisfaction of their Lord, showing their strong attachment to the Supreme to be as spotless as washed white cloth.

The 8th verse talks about renunciation. Such renunciation in devotional service means to give up all kinds of social customs and religious rituals governed by Vedic injunction.

In other words, by discharging pure devotional service one attains the highest stage of love of Godhead and is freed from all other obligations, such as those mentioned in the Karma, Jnana and Yoga Kanda sections of the Vedas. One who engages in pure devotional service has no desire to improve himself — except in the service of the Lord. In such devotional service there cannot be any worship of the impersonal or localized features of the Supreme Lord. The devotee simply performs activities that satisfy the Supreme Personality of Godhead and thus attains pure love for the Lord.

Only by the combined mercy of the pure devotee — the bona fide spiritual master — and the Supreme Lord Himself can one attain pure devotional service to the Lord. If someone is fortunate enough to find a pure devotee and accept him as his spiritual master, then this spiritual master, out of his boundless mercy, will impart the knowledge of pure devotional service. And it is the Lord, out of His boundless mercy, who sends His most confidential servitor to this world to instruct pure devotional service.

By the divine grace of the spiritual master, the seed of pure devotional service, which is completely different from the seed of fruitful actions and speculative knowledge, is sown in the heart of the devotee. Then, when the devotee satisfies the spiritual master and Krishna, this seed of devotional service grows into a plant that gradually reaches up to the spiritual world. An ordinary plant requires shelter for growing. Similarly, the devotional plant grows and grows until it takes shelter in the spiritual world, without taking shelter on any planet in the material world. In other words, those who are captivated by pure devotional service have no desire to elevate themselves to any material planet. The highest planet in the spiritual world is Krishna-loka, or Goloka Vrindavana, and there the devotional plant takes shelter.

The Narada Pancaratra defines pure devotional service as follows:

Sarvopadhi-Vinirmuktam Tat-Paratvena Nirmalam

Hrishikena Hrishikesa-Sevanam Bhakthir Ucyate

“Devotional service to the Supreme Lord means engagement of all the senses in His service. In such service there are two important features: First, one must be purified of all designations, and second, the senses should be engaged only in the service of the Supreme Lord, the master of the senses. That is pure devotional service”. Everyone is now corrupted by various divisive designations and denominations in relation to the body. Everyone is thinking, “I belong to such-and-such country; I belong to a certain society; I belong to a certain family.” But when a person attains the stage of pure devotional service, he knows that he does not belong to anything except the service of the Lord.

The symptom of unflinching faith in pure devotional service is that one has overcome the many disruptive desires that impede pure devotional service, such as (1) the desire to worship the demigods, (2) the desire to serve someone other than the Supreme, (3) the desire to work for sense gratification, without understanding one's relationship with the Supreme (4) the desire to cultivate impersonal knowledge and thereby forget the Supreme Lord, and (5) the desire to establish oneself as the Supreme, in which endeavor there is no trace of the bliss of devotional service. One should give up all these desires and engage exclusively in the loving devotional service of the Lord. Except for the service of the Lord, anything done is in the service of illusion.

One should try to get out of illusion and be engaged in the factual service of the Supreme. Service to the Supreme utilizes and occupies all the senses, and when the senses are thus engaged in the service of the Lord, they become purified. There are ten senses — five active senses and five knowledge-acquiring senses. The active senses are the power of talking, the hands, the legs, the evacuating outlet, and the generating organ. The knowledge-acquiring senses are the eyes, the ears, the nose, the tongue, and the sense of touch. The mind, the center of all the senses, is sometimes considered the eleventh sense.

Narada Bhakthi Sutra in its 9th verse states “Renunciation also means being exclusively dedicated to the Lord and indifferent to what stands in the way of His service”.

To be indifferent to what stands in the way means except serving the Lord and satisfying HIS desires one should not have any second thought i.e. the knowledge obtained by monistic (not Advaita) but bookish knowledge, philosophy and fruitful action. Devotional service must lead the person with no expectation of reward or any kind of liberation even though it may be offered by the Supreme. In connection with this, the person should not develop a mixed Bhakthi (Prakrita Bhakthi) which is associated with material desires.

There are different devotional practices such as Sravanam (Hearing); Kirthanam (Bhajans); Smaranam (Chanting); Pada Sevanam (Serving Lotus feet); Archanam (Worshipping); Vandanam (Salutation); Daasyam (subservient); Sneham (Friendship); Aatmanivedhanam (Surrender). All these modes of devotion can be practiced with ignorance, passion and goodness. There is hearing in the mode of passion, in the mode of ignorance, and in the mode of goodness. Similarly, there is chanting in the mode of ignorance, passion, and goodness, etc.... One has to transcend all such mixed materialistic devotional service in order to reach the standard of pure devotional service.

The empiric knowledge results out of the influence of illusion or ignorance. Initially such influence of illusion or the ignorant may not have either knowledge or devotion but when a person is a little advanced he will be called as Jnani and when such Jnani advances even more, such a person will be considered in the category of a Jnana-Misra-Bhaktha or whose love is mixed with empiric knowledge.

Since it is said that devotional services can be rendered only by a self-realized soul, what are the means to attain self-realization?

Self-realization means liberation from body consciousness. Even a tinge of personal interest is developed in ones devotion mixed with the three modes of material nature viz., ignorance, passion and goodness.

CHAPTER 6 - BHAKTHI MARGA - II

Liberation: - What it actually means:

Is To surrender to God? Is it to attain God? Or is to merge with God, or otherwise treating self as God?

So to attain liberation such questions comes to the mind. Different writers have described liberation considering these points. Some writers, have written books about Liberation, which do not speak of their experience, rather they speak about their theoretical knowledge. Reading different text books and collecting/drawing the data of different authors, compiling and modifying to give it a new shape does not indicate their experience. No doubt collecting data from different books will improve knowledge but it does not mean that a person has attained experience. Experience does not relate to age, gender or caste. Experience is the output of Sadhana (Meditation). Through Sadhana one can attain either knowledge or wisdom. It is not necessary that the person possessing knowledge has attained wisdom. The person who has attained wisdom is filled with complete knowledge. For instance, a person who has graduated from the engineering college will have mostly theoretical and little practical knowledge. On the other hand, a person who works on a real time project without having any degree will have more experience. So, experience reveals the wisdom of a person and not knowledge.

Therefore, it is clear from the above, that bookish knowledge is of not much use as compared to real time experience. Hence, one should prefer Sadhana to understand Life. What is the objective? What should one do to achieve the experience and ultimately to attain Liberation? It does not mean that bookish knowledge is worthless. It just helps to understand the fundamentals. For example, in a class room some students are taught basics of a subject. It depends on the candidates how well they equip themselves and progress with the knowledge of the subject. It may vary from student to student. Anyone can experiment on an object but the experience will differ from person to person. Only a few will achieve the same result. Some experiment on the available data whereas some experience and make the data available for further experiment. So this experiment may be called trial and error experiment. One who continues to experiment and experience on the same object will finally obtain full marks as a result. Some people may view the experiment as futile due to initial set backs. But no experiment will be futile because at least the results (successful or inconclusive) of the experiments are useful in gaining some experience since whatever has been created by the Lord will yield some good result.

If one realizes the cause or reason behind the object, he, no doubt will obtain the knowledge. On the other hand if one fails to do so, he should not conclude that the object is useless. There is no such thing in the creation of God, which may be called useless or less in use. If God has created an object there definitely should be some logic and meaning behind that creation. If one is unaware of the object he should not throw it away saying that it is useless. Instead of rejecting it would be better to give it to someone who can throw more light on the object. Whatever has been created by God, will definitely have some distinction by its nature, character, function and so on. One cannot profess to be good in all fields. Talents and traits vary from person to person. Keeping this in mind, one should give up ego, hatred and jealousy. Only then one succeeds. Instead of preaching to others, one should always practice. There is no end to the practice process. The cycle of preaching will come to end at one point of time. This practice has been called Sadhana. Reading a book is no doubt a Sadhana where as, what you read and experiment, further implementing the same, is the real Sadhana.

Till here, experiment and experience have been classified. Let us come back to the point. A few treat surrender to God as Liberation. Is it so? Let us analyse the subject further.

Surrender to God - Simply folding hands and standing before God will not be called Surrender. Likewise, discharging daily karma towards God will also not be called Surrender. After attaining the highest level of Bhakthi for his Lord, following the footsteps of the master is surrender. Taking a vow before the Lord to wipe out the sins and to enter into a new cycle for the upliftment of their spirituality to the level of divinity is not surrender. To reach the stage of surrender one has to go through the followings modes, by which through their experience they will reach the stage of surrender.

1. Shravanam.

One should be a good listener, not an ordinary listener. It is also called 'Sruthi'. In olden days Vedas were passed on from generation to generation through 'sruthi'. They were never written down on paper. Students would listen to their masters and learn their teachings by heart (Smriti – remembering). In this way they learned the Vedas.

The first mode of Bhakthi, preaches the person to be a good listener. For those who have Zero knowledge about spirituality, this would be the right stage to learn something about the Lord and put it into practice. This practice is equivalent to pre-nursery class. This session will make clear the concept of the fundamental/elementary subjects.

2. Keerthanam.

It means to sing the glory of God (Bliss). Unless one listens to the glory of the Lord preached by the master, one cannot sing well or appreciate singing. So the first mode of Bhakthi takes you to the second stage, i.e.

Keerthanam. For instance, one enjoys a game only when he understands the rules and regulations of that game. Once the concept is clear, the person enjoys the game till the end. Likewise, once something has been heard, and absorbed, one tries to give expression to it. A person who has heard about God tries to sing the glory of that Lord. This will be the second stage of Sadhana in the path of Bhakthi.

3. Vishnusmaranam.

Bhakthi helps to sing the glory of God. Constant singing lends clarity to pronunciation and expression and thereby he learns the way of chanting mantras. It can also be said that the first stage, Sravanam, helps to identify the letters. The second stage Keerthanam helps to build the letters into words. The third stage, which is called "Smaranam", helps to recite or read out the sentences made of words. Smaranam means constant chanting with full understanding and concentration. Chanting the name of God brings purity in the mind. This purity leads one to the fourth stage.

This stage is called Vedic stage. In the second stage one was vibrating with music. In this stage one will be vibrating with the Vedas. This continuous recitation of mantra takes one closer to God.

The second type of Bhakthi makes one sing for a period but will, at one point loses its efficacy. In the third stage of Bhakthi it is possible to recite mantras without the movement of lips. Therefore, body energy is preserved during this process of recitation, which indicates that you are closer to God. The more you chant in this manner the closer you get to God.

4. Padasevanam.

The first three stages help us in the worship of the Lord by ritual washing of the Lord's feet and offering petals at the Lotus Feet. In this stage, the body consciousness merges with the divine consciousness. By touching the feet of the Lord, one's third eye opens. With the 'Karmendriyas', the fifth element, body consciousness, you are rising above 'jnanendriyas' by touching the feet of the Lord.

5. Archanam.

It is dedication with chanting, offering petals not only at the Lotus Feet, but also from top to toe. Each name of the Lord has significant reference in His body. So chanting the name, you are offering petals to each element of His body. This is a kind of service to the Lord. For example if a text book carries only sentences and paragraphs carrying black and white letters, they will not give joy in reading. Whereas, if it carries the script with appropriate pictures, the book will not only be read with curiosity but the matter will register in the mind. This Sadhana helps to review the complete scene and actuate, even if the textbook is closed. Similarly, offering petals at the Lord's feet not only helps one to feel the sensation of touch, but also retains it in mind for further action.

6. Vandanam. (Salutation):

It is surrender of body, not of Athma to the Lord,. Once the body is surrendered nothing is yours. Being 'Dehi', you become 'Deha' (which means 'atmic' consciousness). Your 'atmic' consciousness starts functioning. Then you go to the next stage. Human body is similar to that of a computer. It boots up, writes and saves the text and graphic files and when necessary the existing files can be reviewed. Similarly, even during the state of sleep the devotion which is offered at the feet of God (remembered by the sensation of touch) may be recalled. Similarly

the activity done during the day will appear in our dream at night. Hence one should engage in the Sadhana of the five stages in order that at the sixth stage one remembers to pay salutations to the Lord at any time.

Therefore, Vadanam helps to connect the chain (types of devotion) round the clock.

7. Dasyam.

Your atomic consciousness will teach you about 'dasyam'. Dasyam preaches the fact that whatever belongs to us is for and of the Lord. This stage promotes one to a higher plane. It helps to find out if the duty (whatever) discharged towards God is up to the mark and satisfactory. During Dwapara Yuga the friendship between Krishna and the Pandavas was considered to be the best. This was because the Pandavas were able to realize the purity, divinity of Krishna's love for them and moreover their constant prayers to Krishna and the guidance of Krishna made them believe in Him and serve HIM. Even in difficult situations Krishna made them realize His real concern for them. One example elucidates this point: A Rishi along with his disciples visited the Pandavas when they were in Vanaprastham (Forest life). They asked for food to be served, and went to take bath. Draupadi found that there was no food to serve the Athithis (guests) and she prayed to Krishna Who appeared instantly and asked for some food. Draupadi told Krishna that they had consumed everything by then, but Krishna persisted and asked her to bring the vessel. He then playfully asked Draupadi why she hid the food from Him. Krishna said that He had found some and HE took one grain of cooked rice that had been overlooked while washing and swallowed it. With that the Rishis who had finished their bath felt full and went their way without visiting the Pandavas. This instance strengthened the faith of the Pandavas and they followed Krishna even during great adversities.

8. Sneham.

This is the stage when one opens himself to the Lord. Whatever be the actions of the person, he confides them to the Supreme without holding anything back. The Supreme never reveals the shortcomings of his devotees to others but corrects and guides the person to follow the right path; HE is considered to be one's best friend. This act of disclosure by the person leads to friendship between the Supreme and the servant where there is no expectation of reward or recognition. He entrusts all his efforts and also himself into the hands of the Lord.

9. Atma Nivedanam

This is the final stage of the nava Vidha Bhakthi where the servant surrenders absolutely and unconditionally to the Supreme. This is the highest stage of realization of the Supreme. After this the Supreme prepares him to become a master in all respects and for that HE tests the person in three ways, to ensure that one has completely and unconditionally surrendered to HIM.

Three Ways of Test: Bhakthi is different from perfection and completeness. Bhakthi is the foundation to reach the completeness and for that the values of three zeros are taught by the Supreme. The first among the three is criticism from society; the second is criticism from family and finally the criticism from God.

Criticism from the Society, family and Supreme Krishna: This is illustrated by the story of Karna.

CHAPTER 7 - BHAKTHI MARGA - III

Karna

The Ganga was flowing full to the brim. An old man stood on the bank. He made obeisance with folded hands to the sun that was just rising. He prayed as usual "Oh Sun God! You give light to the whole world. I have no children and my life is miserable. Have mercy on me. Grant me a child. Bestow light on my life".

A Treasure on the Waves

As the prayer ended, Athiratha's eyes were filled with tears. This was not the first time all this had happened. Every day he would pray like this, He was already becoming old. He thought perhaps God had not heard his prayer at all. Athiratha was about to leave. Then he saw something floating. Athiratha stood still. The object was floating towards him. When it came near him Athiratha bent down. Lo, it was a large basket! Inside, lying on a soft cushion, there was a child. adorned with Shining armor and a glowing ear ornament. The Child was lovely; it shone like a miniature sun.

Athiratha was overwhelmed with surprise, pity and joy. At once he picked up the child from the basket. Tears of joy flowed from his eyes profusely. How strange! He had found a child just where he had stood in prayer! Did it mean that God had heard his prayer? Poor child, to whom did it belong? What did it matter! In future it would be his, and only his. Athiratha joyfully took the child in his arms and went home. Radha was Athiratha's wife. Like her husband she was also pining for a child. When she saw the child she could not contain her joy. They brought up the child lovingly. They named the child Vasushena. But the name Karna given by Acharya Drona was the one that stuck to the child.

"I Must Become His Disciple"

Karna grew up to be a boy. He was brighter than his friends, stronger and more determined. Even as a boy he liked bows and arrows. He was far ahead of others in archery and in marksmanship. Those who watched him were surprised. "He is so young, but already so intelligent and so sure of his aim!" They said. Karna wished to improve his mastery of archery. He longed to become an outstanding archer and a great warrior. But he needed a teacher to train him, didn't he? He was looking for such a teacher.

Once when he was talking to somebody, the great Parashurama's name was mentioned. Karna asked:

"Who is Parashurama?"

"He is the son of the sage Jamadagni. Although a sage, he is an outstanding warrior.

"Who is Parashurama?" "How is that?"

"He has gone round the whole country twenty-one times. No Kshatriya could vanquish him. When he lifts his bow the whole world trembles. He knows the intricacies of archery. Do you know what people say about him?"

"What do they say?"

"He is the very embodiment of the art of archery. He is God born on this earth to wipe out injustice." When Karna heard this, admiration and respect for Parashurama grew in him. He wished to become the disciple of such a great man and learn archery only from him. But there was one nagging doubt: would Parashurama accept him as his disciple?

Parashurama's Disciple

Karna made bold and went to the hermitage of Parashurama. He prostrated before him. Parashurama asked:

Who are you, Child?

"They call me Karna."

Why did you come to me?

"You are regarded as a matchless and outstanding warrior. You know the intricacies of archery. I wish to become your pupil. Do not reject me."

When he observed Karna's humility and love of learning, Parashurama took pity on him. As Parashurama desired Karna gladly demonstrated his skill. Parashurama was surprised at his dexterity and concentration. He felt Karna's skill was beyond his years. He also felt that Karna deserved to be his pupil. He agreed to teach Karna the art of archery. Karna was overjoyed. In those days only Kshatriyas and Brahmins were allowed to stay with and learn archery from a teacher. Parashurama hated Kshatriyas. Therefore he had decided to teach archery only to Brahmins. He thought that Karna was a Brahmin. And Karna refrained from telling him that he was not a Brahmin.

Karna's training proceeded without any hindrance. He would grasp his teacher's instructions instantly. He would carry them out perfectly, at the first attempt. Thus Karna grasped the technique of archery from the teacher. And he served his teacher with affection. Quite some time passed.

The Curse of Parashurama

One afternoon Parashurama was somewhat tired. He rested with his head in Karna's lap. He fell asleep. At that time a bee flew in from somewhere. Flying hither and thither it settled on Karna's thigh. Within a few minutes it began to bore Karna's thigh. Karna could not attempt to drive it away. Even a slight movement of his thigh would disturb his master. So in spite of the increasing pain Karna sat still. He thought that his suffering did not matter if the teacher's sleep was not to be disturbed. The bee continued to bore Karna's thigh. Blood began to ooze from the thigh. The blood touched Parashurama's cheek. He woke up. He was taken aback and said:

What is this, child? Where did so much blood come from?

Karna explained what had happened.

Asked Parashurama: Did you put up with so much pain without a murmur?

"The pain did not seem unbearable to me."

Parashurama was surprised. He looked at Karna from head to foot. He had all along assumed that Karna was a Brahmin boy. But a soft-bodied Brahmin could not have endured so much pain. Karna was not a Brahmin.

Parashurama suspected strongly that Karna was a Kshatriyas. Angrily he spoke to Karna in a harsh voice:

"You, Karna!"

"Yes, master?"

"Tell me the truth, who are you? Have you not hidden something from me?"

"What have I hidden? I do not know"

"Are you a Brahmin boy? Tell me the truth."

Karna did not reply. He stood silent, with his head bowed. He had assumed that he was really the son of Athiratha who brought him up, Athiratha was a charioteer and he, Karna, was a charioteer's son; neither a Brahmin nor a Kshatriya. What answer could he give to his teacher? He was miserable and filled with fear. Karna's silence convinced Parashurama that his suspicion was confirmed. Karna's modesty, courage, reverences for the teacher and love of learning he forgot all in his wrath. "You, boy! Have you not deceived your teacher and received training? I have taught you the use of mighty weapons; but when you most need this knowledge may you forget it all!" So Parashurama cruelly cursed Karna.

Karna felt as if the ground on which he stood gave way. He had hurt his teacher's feelings. Besides he had acquired the curse by which he would forget all that he had learnt when he needed them most. He left Parashurama's hermitage.

In Hastinavati

The education of the princes, the Pandavas and the Kauravas, in archery had just concluded. A display of their skill had been arranged. This news reached Karna. He went there, curious to see the exhibition of the skill of

archery by the princes.

There was a large field outside the capital city of Hastinavati. A stadium had been constructed there. In the center there was a huge arena. The rest of the stadium was for the spectators. There was a huge gathering of people to witness the display. Members of the royal family were also there.

The display began. The princes gave an exhibition of riding swift horses. They performed strange feats of horse riding. They drove chariots in breathtaking ways. They sat on elephants and fought. They swung and brandished swords in various ways and showed a variety of tricks. Arjuna all by himself gave an effortless display of archery. He showed the use of mighty arrows, which amazed the audience. Everybody began to praise him: "There is nobody to equal Arjuna. He is supreme in archery."

"Partha, Do not be proud"

At that time there was a sound of thunder near the door. The people turned to look. A youth was striking his arms as if in challenge and advancing. His radiance, his well-built body, his tall stature, his bright armor and ear-ornament-all dumbfounded the people. A murmur rose on all sides:

The youth who had stepped forward was none other than Karna. When he came to the arena he turned towards Arjuna and said:

"You, Partha, do not think that there is no better archer than you and be puffed up with vanity. I shall display far greater mastery than you." So saying, Karna demonstrated his skill. He shot the Parjanya weapon into the sky and brought down rain; with the Vayavya weapon he checked the rain. By Agneya weapon he kindled fire, and with the Varuna weapon he put it out. Into the mouth of a swiftly turning metallic figure of a boar he drove five arrows. He shot an Antardhana weapon, which made him disappear; swiftly he appeared in another part of the arena. After their display of weapons he took a mace and showed in how many ways he could wield it. People were astounded at this superb mastery. There was uproar on every side. The Pandavas rejected and insulted him by calling him SuthaPutra (Charioteer's son) who was not eligible to participate and could not be accepted for that convocation function. He was insulted by the society.

The King of Anga

Hardly was the display over when Duryodhana raced to the arena, embraced Karna and said, "You matchless warrior, your Valor and knowledge of arms have overwhelmed me. Here, my kingdom and I are all yours. Tell me what you desire. I want to fulfill your wish at once."

In reply said Karna: "Maharaja, I do not want anything else. Your friendship and a bout of archery with Arjuna: These are my only two wishes." Duryodhana said, "If so, your wishes are as good as fulfilled. From today you are my bosom friend; you are my equal. Need I fear anybody in future?"

All this talk provoked Arjuna who was nearby. He said, "You Karna! We did not invite you but still you came. We did not ask you to speak, still you are talking too much, and you have disturbed a quiet assembly. I will kill you at once. Be armed and get ready to fight."

Karna flared up at this and said:

"You Arjuna! This arena is not reserved for you. This is a public place. Whoever knows archery may exhibit it here. What is your objection? You are insulting me. Does a true warrior blabber? Come, fight. I will kill you with my arrow here and now."

Both of them got ready to fight. Dronacharya, who had trained the princes, had to agree to this. There was utter confusion in the assembly. Kunti, the mother of the Pandavas, fainted when she heard that Karna and Arjuna were to fight. Kripacharya walked up to the arena. He knew well the rules of a duel. He said to Karna:

"Look, Karna. This person who is ready to fight against you is Arjuna. He is a prince of the race of the Moon, son of King Pandu. The person to oppose him should be his equal in all these respects. Whose son are you? To what race do you belong? Whose pupil? Tell it to the assembly."

Karna bowed his head overcome by a sense of shame and sorrow. 'I am the son of a charioteer. Therefore, it seems I belong to a low race. These people are making it a big issue. What does it matter who I am? Is not courage important for a man? So thought Karna. But that was the practice of the time. What could be done? Karna stood silent. When Duryodhana saw what had happened he was furious. You Kripacharya, what are you talking about? You think that Arjuna is a prince and Karna is not, don't you?

Well, then, here and now I make Karna a king. He can then challenge Arjuna, cannot he? So saying, he then and there crowned Karna, King of Anga State. The people shouted in approval. Karna was overwhelmed with gratitude. "Maharaja, how can I repay you for this favor?" he asked. Duryodhana said, "Karna, I value your friendship more than anything else. Let it always be mine" and embraced him.

Arjuna and Karna were about to fight. At that moment Athiratha came there. He had just heard that his son had become a king. Karna went to him and saluted. Athiratha lovingly embraced his son and blessed him thus: "Oh Child! may your fame increase." Bhima who observed this understood that Karna was the son of Athiratha. He said in a slighting voice: "You, Karna, are you not the son of Athiratha, the charioteer? How can you be the equal of Arjuna born in the lunar race? Because he stands by the side of the sacred fire, does a dog get the right to eat the sacred offering? You are unworthy of the Anga kingdom; you are not even fit to be killed by Arjuna in a battle" so insulted Bhima. When Duryodhana heard this he became furious. He turned to Bhima and shouted: "Your words are not worthy of a Kshatriya. For a Kshatriya, valor is most important. How does Karna's caste matter? Indra's mighty weapon, Vajraayudha, was forged out of sage Dadhichi's bone; Dronacharya was born in a sacred pot; they say that Kripacharya was born in a handful of sacred grass. Why should birth matter? Karna was born with sacred ear ornament and armor. He shines like the sun. How is such a person unworthy of the kingdom of Anga? If there be anyone who does not approve of the coronation of Karna, let him fight against Karna and win." There was commotion in the assembly. As it was getting dark, the assembly ended. People went home, praising Karna's prowess.

Duryodhana's Bosom Friend

The friendship between Duryodhana and Karna grew day by day. Not for a moment did Duryodhana think that he was the emperor and Karna was his inferior. He was always in the company of Karna, He would tell him everything. When the officials employed for the purpose began to sing his titles he would stop them and make them sing Karna's titles, and feel happy. Every day he would give precious gifts to Karna. He valued greatly Karna's character, strength, honesty and generosity.

And Karna reciprocated. Duryodhana was dear to him as his own life. For his sake Karna was prepared to offer his life. When others insulted by calling him the son of a charioteer, Duryodhana alone had treated him as his equal; so Karna had great regard and friendship for Duryodhana.

Karna was matchless in charity. So was he in carrying out his promise. Hundreds of poor people used to come to him. With a smile Karna would give them money or clothes. He was called "Danashoora" (outstanding in generosity).

The Kauravas and the Pandavas were sons of brothers. For the sake of the kingdom they were always at loggerheads. Whenever there was a quarrel Karna was on the side of Duryodhana, the eldest of the Kauravas. For him I must fight; in the future war I must kill his enemies, the Pandavas; in particular I must destroy the most powerful among them, Arjuna. That will please Duryodhana. Such were his thoughts. He had confidence in his ability to protect Duryodhana even if Bhishma, Drona and others let him down. Whenever Duryodhana was worried about the stronger of the Pandavas, Karna would assure him. "Please do not worry. Only, let there be a war between us and the Pandavas, then you will see. I am going to crush them." Such words gave Duryodhana comfort and confidence.

"Come, Karna, Be the Emperor"

The Kauravas and the Pandavas decided to wage a war for the kingdom. Krishna went to Hastinavati to prevent the war and bring about an agreement between the two. In the King's court HE advised Duryodhana not to wage a war. Duryodhana did not heed the advice. When HE left Hastinavati Krishna took Karna a little distance with HIM. He made him sit by HIS side in the chariot. Karna was diffident and uneasy. He thought: Krishna is a great man. Compared to HIM who am I, a low caste man! Why does HE make me sit next to HIM? Krishna realised this. HE said with a smile: -

"Karna, you need not be embarrassed. You think that you are the son of a charioteer, don't you? But no, it is not true. Athiratha is your foster-father; not the real father.

You are Kunti's son. Kunti gave birth to you when she was not yet married. Fearing that people would blame her, she put you in a basket and sent you floating on the river Ganga. Athiratha found you. Karna, you were born by the grace of the Sun God; you are a Kshatriya, and the eldest of the Pandavas. As you are my aunt Kunti's son, you are related to me also. Come with me. I will take you to the Pandavas. Because you are the eldest among both the Kauravas and Pandavas, you will be the emperor of the Kaurava Empire. The Pandavas will also be very happy when they come to know that you are their eldest brother. Both Duryodhana and Dharmaraja will accept you as the emperor. There will be no war and thousands of people will escape death. You belong to a great family, but all these days you have been regarded as the son of a charioteer. Enough of such humiliation! You should live as the emperor obeyed by the Kauravas, the Pandavas and the Yadavas, but you have been begging alms from Duryodhana!"

"Duryodhana Is Everything to Me"

On hearing Krishna, surprise, happiness and sorrow at once overcame Karna and his voice was choked. It was difficult to speak. He said: "Krishna, you say that Kunti was the mother who gave birth to, me. That may be. However, she abandoned me at the instant from my birth. But as soon as he saw me Athiratha lovingly carried me home.

Mother Radha has fed me with her milk. Athiratha has treated me as his own son. He has brought me up lovingly and celebrated my marriage. No matter what YOU offer me, how can I leave the parents who have lavished such love on me? Duryodhana and I, we are two bodies but one soul. When the whole world was mocking me as lowborn, he honored me. I went to him as nobody, but he bestowed a kingdom on me. He has given boundless friendship. How can I repay his debt? In declaring war on the Pandavas he has mainly relied on me. Shall I join the Pandavas and betray him? No, Krishna. Duryodhana is the master who gave me succor. He is my master, my all. I will stand by him and fight the Pandavas. If I win I shall have the satisfaction of having done my master's work; if I die I shall have glory. So I am resolved. Now let us part."

On hearing Karna, Krishna was inwardly full of admiration. "Bravo Karna! You are the very embodiment of loyalty to the master" thought HE. But HE took leave of Karna without showing his feelings.

"Be the Mother of Five Children"

Next morning Karna was offering prayer to the sun on the bank of the river. At that time Kunti came there. Krishna himself had sent her there. HE had asked her to get a promise from Karna that he would not kill the Pandavas. The moment he saw Kunti, Karna respectfully touched her feet and saluted her. Said Kunti, "Child, you are my son. The Pandavas are your younger brothers. You have been thinking of your brothers as your enemies. You have vowed to kill them. Please do not do so. Leave the camp of the Kauravas. Join your younger brothers. Am I not your mother? Hear my words, Karna. Is it not the duty of children to carry out the wishes of their parents?"

Replied Karna: "Mother dear, you are my mother, true. But till now people have been ignorant of this fact. Those who looked after me and brought me up are also my parents. How can I give them up? This is the time of war, a time when all those who have eaten Duryodhana's salt must fight for him, not fearing death. For the last thirteen

years I have enjoyed all princely privileges with him. It was his friendship that brought me everything. All these days I haven't once said a word about my brothers.

Suppose now, when war is imminent, I talk about them and go over to the Pandavas. The whole world will call me a traitor. Therefore my joining the Pandavas is unthinkable. But mother, I will comply with one of your requests. You desire that I should not kill the Pandavas. I agree; I will not kill any of the Pandavas except Arjuna. Whether I kill Arjuna or Arjuna kills me, it won't matter. In either case you will be definitely left with five children. Now let us part." With these words Karna saluted his mother and wished her good-bye.

"I Will Not Fight Now"

The armies of the Kauravas and the Pandavas got ready for war. Bhishma became the Supreme Commander of the Kaurava army. He was listing the names of the important generals on his side and on the side of the Pandavas. In those days the mighty warriors used to be ranked as Atirathas (Super most Powerful) and Maharathas (Most Powerful) according to their prowess.

Bhishma said of Karna: "This Karna is not an Atiratha ; he is not even a Purnaratha (Not belonging to Super most or Most Powerful clan). Even the teacher who taught him has cursed him. Also the natural armor and ear ornament he had at birth, he has presented to others. So he is not as strong as he used to be. Therefore, he is an Ardharatha (Waste)." So Bhishma ranked him disparagingly, far below the renowned generals. Dronacharya who was nearby also said: "Yes, he is very vain. Truly he is an ardharatha."

Karna who heard all this was very much pained. He was also enraged. He said: "Bhishma, why do you hate me so much? I am innocent. Still you always prick me with such fierce words. You are the Supreme Commander. Is it right to sow conflict in the army? Who can say that you know your responsibility as the Supreme Commander? You are extremely old; you are senile. That is why you talk like this. "He turned to Duryodhana and said: "Friend, this man thinks he is the only warrior in the world. Single-handed, I can destroy the Pandavas and their army. But when he derides me in this fashion, why should I fight? Even if I kill the enemies, this Supreme Commander will get the credit. I do not like it. In any case, he will be defeated in the war. After that I will fight and kill the enemies". So saying, Karna renounced the war and walked away.

"Grandfather, Forgive Me"

The war began. As Supreme Commander, Bhishma fought against the Pandava army for ten days. He killed thousands of soldiers in the Pandava army. Even the mighty Arjuna found it difficult to stop him. Having fought like this for ten days, Bhishma fell, with arrows sticking all over his body.

True, Karna was angry with Bhishma because he had insulted him. But when he saw Bhishma's valor his entire wrath evaporated. Such was his magnanimous nature. He would recognize and admire whatever was good and noble even in enemies. Bhishma's prowess won his admiration. He went to see Bhishma who was lying in a bed of arrows. "Bhishma, I am Karna; I have come to pay my respects to You," so saying he touched Bhishma's feet and saluted.

A flood of tears gushed out of Bhishma's eyes. He embraced Karna as a father would embrace a son. "Karna, you think that I hate you, don't you? No child, truly I do not have the slightest feeling of enmity towards you. I know you are a mighty warrior. You are like a god. In valor and munificence there is nobody to excel you. In the art of war you are the equal of Krishna and Arjuna. But you are very vain about your strength. I used to speak to you harshly to check your vanity, that's all", said Bhishma.

When Karna heard his voice was choked with affection. "Grandfather, if I have spoken to you harshly in anger or ignorance, please forgives me," said Karna.

Bhishma told him that Karna was Kunti's son and said: "Karna, it is not possible for the Kauravas to win this war. Join the Pandavas. Advise Duryodhana to stop the war. And may all of you live peacefully".

"It is impossible for me to join the Pandavas. Success or failure, God Will be done. I shall fight to the end on the

side of Duryodhana; he trusts me and relies on me." So saying, Karna again saluted Bhishma and returned. After Bhishma, Drona became the Supreme Commander of the Kaurava army. On the fourth day the battle Bhima's son Ghatotkacha fought fiercely that night. He was the son of the she-demon Hidimba. He was very valiant and also a wizard.

The Kaurava army reeled under Ghatotkacha's magic. Seeing this, Karna faced him. He had a formidable weapon called Vijayanti, which he had kept by to kill Arjuna. But now he used it against Ghatotkacha and cut him into two. The Kaurava army was overjoyed at the valor of Karna. On, hearing that Karna had used up the Vijayanti weapon Krishna and Arjuna heaved a sigh of relief.

Karna the Supreme Commander

Drona fought for five days and died. Thereafter Karna became the Supreme Commander. On the very first day he beleaguered in battle Nakula, one of the Pandavas. He could easily have killed Nakula. But remembering his promise to Kunti he spared Nakula.

Karna was eager to kill Arjuna. In every respect he had excelled Arjuna. But there was one big handicap. He did not have as brilliant a charioteer as Arjuna had in Krishna.

He sent word through Duryodhana and persuaded the valiant Shalya to become his charioteer. But this only harmed Karna. Shalya was the uncle of the Pandavas.

Although he had joined the Kauravas he loved the Pandavas. And the Pandavas had made a secret prayer to Shalya: "if ever you become Karna's charioteer, speak to him in such a way that he loses heart."

Shalya did so. He began to praise Arjuna highly before Karna. He spoke so as to imply that Arjuna was mightier than Karna. This threw cold water on Karna's enthusiasm.

Poor man! That was his misfortune. The charioteer who should have helped him was himself inviting defeat.

Besides, that very day he had lost two sons in the battle.

Death in the Service of the Master

But Karna did not lose heart. That day there was a fierce battle between him and Arjuna. Karna fought in such a way that both armies were thrilled and full of admiration.

Krishna, Bhima and others were exhorting Arjuna: "What is this Arjuna, Your fighting is so lifeless? Karna is subduing all your weapons. Put more fire into your fighting,"

Do what he may; Arjuna could not gain the upper hand in the fight. So he used the Brahma arrow. At the very sight of it, the Kaurava soldiers were terrified and began to run helter skelter. But Karna was unmoved.

Laughingly he used a mighty weapon and stopped it. Not content with that, he aimed the Snake Arrow, which he had kept by to use against Arjuna. Its blazing light lit up the whole battlefield. The Serpent Arrow which raced like a leaping flame would have surely killed Arjuna. But in the nick of the moment Krishna pressed the chariot with his foot and depressed it by five inches. The Snake Arrow which should have hit Arjuna's head struck his crown.

The crown tumbled down.

Thus the Snake Arrow was wasted. Karna thought of shooting another mighty arrow. But on account of Parashurama's curse he could not recollect its use. Besides, the left wheel of his chariot got stuck in the ground.

The chariot tilted. The horses stumbled. All dangers crowded on Karna as if there was no end to his misfortunes.

Karna turned to Arjuna and said: "Arjuna, the wheel of my chariot is stuck in the ground. Give me but a moment's respite. I will lift it and set right the chariot. Thereafter we may resume the fight. When I have got down from the chariot and I do not have the bow, do not shoot an arrow. That would not be worthy of a warrior like you.

Probably Arjuna would have agreed. But Krishna came in the way. "Arjuna, this is the right moment. If you hesitate now you cannot kill him later. Shoot your arrow without scruple," said he. Karna jumped down from the chariot and tried to lift the wheel with all his might. But he was unfortunate. He was a very strong man and he did his very best, but the wheel would not move. And even as he strove, obeying Krishna's advice Arjuna shot the Anjalika Arrow at Karna. The radiant Karna's head rolled down as if the sun tumbled from the sky.

Thus Karna sacrificed his life for the sake of his friend and master Duryodhana. He became the model of truthfulness and loyalty. Karna was a great warrior but the insult which he suffered from society, brothers and mother made him miserable. Even after such criticism from society and from the kingdom of Hastinapur, his siblings (the Pandavas who were unaware of their relationship with Karna) and mother he continued his devotion for the Supreme Master Krishna and at last, Sri Krishna bestowed on him the vision of Vishwa Roopa. Thus we find the highest state of liberation when one has surrendered totally, completely and unconditionally to the Lord after qualifying in all three tests. Only then he becomes eligible to do devotional service.

CHAPTER 8 - BHAKTHI MARGA - IV

Narada's definition of Bhakthi, being "exclusively dedicated to the Lord," refers to pure devotional service in the liberated stage.

A pure devotee is Akama, i.e., free of material desire. He is conscious of his actual position and derives satisfaction from serving the Supreme Lord only.

In the present sutra Narada Muni states that a pure devotee is "indifferent towards anything that stands in the way of [the Lord's] service." If a devotee encounters some hindrance in his service to the Lord, he fervently prays to the Lord to remove it.

The tenth verse of Bhakthi Sutram says "Anyasrayanam Tyago 'Nanyata" means "Exclusive dedication to the Lord means giving up all shelters other than Him".

Bhagawan says to give up all processes of self-realization and surrender unto Him only. Knowledge of the self, knowledge of the localized Super soul, knowledge of executing the work prescribed for the four divisions of human society, knowledge of renunciation, knowledge of detachment, knowledge of controlling the senses and the mind, knowledge of meditation, and knowledge of how to acquire material power by mystic perfection — all these are different kinds of "shelters" leading to various degrees of spiritual perfection. Bhagawan instructs that one should give up all these different shelters and simply take to His loving devotional service, and this surrender to the Lord will save one from all kinds of sinful reaction. In other words, direct attachment to the Supreme Personality of Godhead and engagement in His transcendental service are the topmost priorities of spiritual life. The 11th verse of Bhakthi Sutra directs us to accept only those activities of social custom and Vedic injunction that are favourable to devotional service.

Material existence is a life of revolt against the Supreme Personality of Godhead. There are many ways in which the living entities manifest this spirit of revolt, such as engaging in fruitful activities, mental speculation, or mystic yoga to achieve material perfections. Generally, all souls are conditioned with a desire to lord over material nature. Everyone wants to become a demigod, by social or political activities or by Scriptural rituals. Everyone wants to be elevated to a higher state of existence or, out of frustration, become one with the Supreme. All these desires are different types of materialism; they are not favorable for devotional service.

A pure devotee rejects worship of demigod and worships only the Supreme. Until a person is completely free of material desires, he might want to worship God in the hope of fulfilling his material desires. But even if a person has material desires, if he scrupulously worships the Supreme Lord he will very soon become purified and free of all such desires. On the other hand, persons whose actions are dictated by material desires and who are also addicted to worshipping the demigods cannot become pure devotees at any stage of their lives. The Lord, residing in everyone's heart, also fulfills the desires of the demigod-worshippers — but in the Bhagavad-Gita the Lord says that such demigod-worshippers are of small intelligence (Alpa-Medhasah). In other words, as long as one is controlled by the modes of nature, one will be prone to worship the demigods for material purposes, but one who curbs this tendency and worships the Supreme exclusively can rise above the modes and attain pure devotional service.

One cannot find a place on the platform of pure devotional service unless one is freed from all kinds of sinful reactions. To counteract various sinful reactions, there are prescribed duties in the ritualistic section of the Vedas, and those in the lower stage of life can become free from all sinful reactions by strictly following the Vedic ritualistic processes. Then they become qualified in pure devotional service. Thus it should be understood that a person who is situated in pure devotional service must have in his past life already executed all the Vedic rituals with great determination. In other words, after reaching the stage of devotional service, a person does not have to execute any process of atonement mentioned in the ritualistic section of the Vedas. He is already sinless.

The 12th Verse of the Sutra tells "One must continue to follow scriptural injunctions even after one is fixed up in determined certainty that devotional service is the only means for reaching the perfection of life."

When a person becomes firmly convinced about the importance of devotional service, he surrenders unto the Supreme Lord. There are six symptoms of surrender: (1) One should perform only those actions favorable for devotional service to Bhagawan. (2) One should give up everything unfavorable for discharging devotional service. (3) One should firmly believe that Bhagawan is the only protector in all circumstances and one is always protected by Him. (4) One should have the conviction that Bhagawan is one's guardian, and one should not take the shelter of any demigod for maintenance. (5) One should always remember that one's activities and desires are not independent. In other words, the devotee should feel completely dependent on the Supreme and he should act and think as Bhagawan desires. (6) One should always think of himself as the poorest of the poor and feel totally dependent on the mercy of Bhagawan.

A devotee who follows these six principles of surrender always thinks, "O Lord, I am YOURS in every respect; I am YOUR eternal servant".

Bhagawan says "A person who gives up all fruitful activities and offers himself entirely to Me, earnestly desiring to render service to Me, achieves liberation from birth and death and is promoted to the status of sharing My own opulence". To be elevated to such a point in devotional life, one has to execute/follow the directions of the scriptures. But even after becoming elevated in devotional life, one should not think, "Oh, I am already elevated to the highest stage; therefore I may violate the scriptural regulations for executing devotional service".

Devotional service is dormant in every living being, for by nature every living being is a part and parcel of the Supreme Lord and it is the healthy condition of the part to serve the whole. It is just like the situation of the parts of the body. The hands and the legs serve the body; similarly, as part and parcel of the Supreme Lord, every living entity is bound to serve the Supreme Lord in his healthy condition. When he is not thus engaged, he is in a diseased condition, but as soon as he engages all his senses in the transcendental loving service of the Lord, he is restored to his normal, healthy condition.

The devotee should engage his senses in the Lord's service according to the directions of the authoritative scriptures and under the guidance of a bona fide spiritual master. Devotional service executed under the guidance of the spiritual master and according to scriptural injunctions is called Vaidhi Bhakthi part of Sadhana Bhakthi or devotional service in practice. The other division of Sadhana Bhakthi is Raganuga Bhakthi, spontaneous devotional service.

One who wishes to advance to the platform of Raganuga Bhakthi must follow the injunctions of the authoritative scriptures under the direction of the spiritual master.

As mentioned above, a devotee may strictly practice regulative devotional service, or Vaidhi Bhakthi. The prime principle of Vaidhi Bhakthi is "A person serious about making progress in devotional service must always think of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, must always chant His glories, and must always hear about His activities". These are the preliminary principles of following the scriptural rules and regulations.

Every person, whoever he may be, emanates from some part of the universal form of the Supreme Lord, the Virat Purusha. The Brahmanas (intelligentsia) emanate from the face, the Kshatriyas (warriors and administrators) emanate from the arms, the Vaisyas (farmers and merchants) emanate from the thighs, and the Sudras (laborers) emanate from the feet. But wherever we may be situated and whatever be our identity, we have a particular function to execute in the service of the Supreme Whole, the Personality of Godhead. If we do not, thus, engage our particular propensities in the service of the Lord, then we are fallen, just like a useless limb amputated from the body.

As the forty Samskaaras are prescribed for a Karma yogi, similarly one must follow sixty-three regulative principles in order to be elevated to the highest platform of devotional service. And, as stressed here in Sutra 12, even after being elevated to the highest platform of devotional service, one must continue following the scriptural injunctions for devotional life. The sixty-three regulative principles are given below.

CHAPTER 9 - REGULATIVE PRINCIPLES

Regulative principles

- (1) To accept a bona fide spiritual master.
- (2) To become initiated by the spiritual master.
- (3) To engage oneself in the service of the spiritual master.
- (4) To receive instructions from the spiritual master and inquire about advancing on the path of devotional service.
- (5) To follow in the footsteps of previous Acharyas and follow the directions given by the spiritual master.
- (6) To give up anything for the satisfaction of Supreme, and to accept anything for the satisfaction of Supreme.
- (7) To minimize one's means of living as much as one can, while living comfortably to execute devotional service.
- (8) To observe fasting (fasting in the sense not to imbibe any negativity by thought word or deed).
- (9) To worship cows, Brahmanas, Vaishnavas, and sacred trees like the banyan.

These are the first nine principles of devotional service. Additional principles are as follows:

- (10) One should avoid committing offences against the holy name, the Deities etc.
- (11) One should avoid associating with non devotees.
- (12) One should not aspire to have many disciples.
- (13) One should not unnecessarily divert one's attention by partially studying many books so as to appear very learned. For devotional service, it is sufficient to study books like the Bhagavad-Gita, the Srimad-Bhagavatam etc
- (14) One should not be disturbed in either loss or gain.
- (15) One should not allow oneself to be overwhelmed by grief for any reason.
- (16) One should not blaspheme the demigods, although one should not worship them. Similarly, one should not criticize other scriptures, although one should not follow the principles therein.
- (17) One should not engage in blasphemy of the Supreme Lord or His devotees.
- (18) One should not indulge in idle talks, such as those about relationships between men and women.
- (19) One should not unnecessarily disturb any living being, whatever that may be. The above-mentioned nineteen items are the doorway to devotional service. And among them, the first three — namely, acceptance of the spiritual master, initiation by the spiritual master, and service to the spiritual master — are the most important.

Then come the following items:

- (20) To hear about the Lord.
- (21) To chant His glories.
- (22) To remember Him.
- (23) To serve and meditate upon the lotus feet of the Lord and His devotees.
- (24) To worship Him.
- (25) To pray to Him.
- (26) To think of oneself as the Lord's eternal servant.
- (27) To become the Lord's friend.
- (28) To offer everything to the Lord.
- (29) To dance before the Deity.
- (30) To sing before the Deity.
- (31) To inform the Lord about everything of one's life.
- (32) To bow down to the Lord.
- (33) To offer respect to the spiritual master and the Supreme Lord by standing up for them at the appropriate time.
- (34) To follow the spiritual master or the Supreme Lord in procession.
- (35) To visit places of pilgrimage and temples of the Supreme Lord.

- (36) To circumambulate the temple.
- (37) To recite prayers.
- (38) To chant the Lord's name softly to oneself.
- (39) To chant the Lord's name loudly in congregation.
- (40) To smell incense and flowers offered to the Deity.
- (41) To eat the remnants of food offered to the Deity.
- (42) To regularly attend the Aarati offered to the Deity, as well as special festivals.
- (43) To regularly look after the Deity.
- (44) To offer one's dearest possessions to the Supreme Lord.
- (45) To meditate on the Lord's name, form - thus pastime
- (46) To water the Tulasi plant.
- (47) To serve the Lord's devotees.
- (48) To try to live in a sacred place.
- (49) To relish the topics of the Srimad-Bhagavatam.
- (50) To take all kinds of risks for Bhagawan.
- (51) To always expect the mercy of Bhagawan.
- (52) To observe ceremonies like Janma Nakshatra (the appearance day of Bhagawan) with devotees.
- (53) To fully surrender to Bhagawan.
- (54) To observe special regulations like those followed during the month of Kartika (Oct.-Nov.).
- (55) To mark the body with Tilaka (clay markings).
- (56) To mark the body with the holy names of God.
- (57) To accept the remnants of garlands which have been offered to the Supreme Lord.
- (58) To drink Charanamrita, the water that has washed the lotus feet of the Deity.

Among these fifty-Eight items, five are considered so important that they are mentioned again separately, thus completing the sixty-three items of devotional service. These five are

- (59) associating with devotees,
- (60) chanting the holy name of the Lord,
- (61) hearing the Srimad-Bhagavatam,
- (62) residing at a place of pilgrimage, and
- (63) worshipping the Deity with faith and veneration.

These sixty three devotional principles lead a person to the state of immortality.

Bhagawan Baba Says

"For treading the Bhakthi Marga (Path of Devotion), one needs no scholarship, nor wealth, nor riches, nor ascetic rigors. The Grace of the Lord is as vast as the ocean, it is limitless. By your Sadhana (spiritual practice), your Japam (repetition of Lord's Name), your Dhyanam (meditation) and systematic cultivation of virtue, this Grace is converted into clouds of truth, and they rain on the humanity as showers of joy, which collectively flow back into the ocean of the Lord's Grace".

"You might wonder and even doubt how it is possible for the Lord to dwell in every being. Have you not seen a single mango seed grow into a tree which gives thousands of fruits? In each of the fruit, there is found a seed, very identical to the one which was first planted. So too, the One Lord, can be found in every being created by His Will" and that is AM (Consciousness).

"The first step in aatma Vichara (Self-Enquiry) is the practice of the truth that whatever gives you pain, gives pain to others and whatever gives you joy, gives joy to others. Desist from any act in relation to others, which, if done to them will give you pain. Thus, a kind of reciprocal relationship will grow between you and others, and gradually you reach the stage when your heart thrills with joy when others are joyful and shudders in pain when others are sad. This is not the kind of affection towards only those who are dear to you or to your kith and kin. This sharing

of joy and grief with everyone will be automatic, immediate and universal. This is a sign of great spiritual advancement”.

Finally this book concludes with the words of bliss - “Follow the Master (Supreme), face the devil (Obstacles), fight till end (till one finds the solution) and finish the game (Merge unto HIM (i.e. completeness or no existence or identity of self))”.

Bliss Bliss Bliss

Jai Sai Ram

GLOSSARY

Glossary of some Sanskrit Terms

Agneyam – a ritual dedicated to and meant for the Fire god (Agni)

Aagrahaayani – this is a sacrifice which is to be done only once in a year on the full moon day in the Margashirsha (November-December) month closer to mid- December.

Aahutis – accomplishment of a libation with the sacrificial oil (ghee) for the god – one serving of the oblation

Aashvayuji – means harnessed with the horses. This is the sacrifice is to be done only once in a year during the month of Aashvayuja (Thulam) (corresponds to the September-October).

A(a)tma chaitanyam - Light of the Atma, referred to as Agni in Rik-samhita. Chaitanya is the special description to refer to this radiance, whereas the description Agni also means the sacrificial fire, the messenger to the Devas and the domestic/ or other kind of fire.

Adhishtaya - possessing, keeping under control, as used by Bhagavan in Bhagavad Gita IV, 6 adhishtaanam is an establishment.

Adhyaayas- chapters of Shakhas, for instance the famous forty adhyayas of Vajasaneyi-Samhita containing the formulas used with the following rituals:

1-2 : New and Full Moon sacrifices- see Haviryajnas, also darsa-pournamaasa ishti. These sacrifices are known together as Darsa-pournamaasa ishti/yajna. Darsa means the New moon. Pournamaasa means the full moon from purna, full. This combined yajna is the archetype for all haviryajnas and is carried out on all prathamaa days, namely the day following the new moon and the one following the full moon.

3 : Agnihotram- see Agni-hotram

4-8 : Somayajna – see Somayajna

9-10 : Vajapeya and Rajasuya, two modifications of the Soma sacrifice- see Somayajna, Rajasuya and Vajapeya

11-18 : Construction of altars and hearths- see Agnichayanam

19-21 : Shaudramani – see Shaudramani

22-25 : Ashvamedha- see Ashwamedha

26-29 : Supplementary formulas for various rituals

30-31 : Purushamedha- see Purusha

32-34 : Sarvamedha- see sarvamedha

35 : Pitruyajna- see pitruyajna

36-39 : Pravargya - see pravarga

40 : The final Adhyaya is the famous Isha Upanishad – see Upanishad

Acharya – the teacher who practice what he preaches

Agni chayanam- also agni chaya and agni chitya. Altars and hearths in which the arrangement of fires, agni aadaanam can be done.

Agni-hotram – Obligatory sacrifices by all householders made every morning and evening through the eternal witness and messenger Fire god (Agni), to Devas, with milk, Akshata (uncooked rice) or ghee

Agnishtomam – a protracted sacrifice extending over several days in vasanta or the spring season and forming the essential major part of a ritual known as jyotishtomam. Agnishtomam is to be done once in a year or at least once in a lifetime

Agnyaadaanam (or Agni aadaanam) – “agni and aadaanam” means setting on the sacrificial fire. It should be done once in a year or once in a life time. The Fire (Agni) after the marriage is divided into two as Grihyaagni – for doing Aupasana, and Shroutaagni – for doing Agnihotram and other Yajnas.

Agraayanam – A special derivation of the name of this ritual is given from “agra” meaning the first, “aaya” meaning profit and “annam” meaning food. Since ayana means passage or journey, this agraayana sacrifice could also directly signify a journey of prime importance. This ritual is to be done once in a year or once in a lifetime during Ashvayuja Poornima (full moon day in the Ashvayuja month – September-October)

Aahuti – performance of libation with sacrificial oil for Deity

Akshata(i) – means the whole or intact rice.

Alpa-Medhasah – “alpa” means small or limited, “medhas” means reasonable; so? This is one with a limited intelligence.

Anga - The four Vedas contain six types of Anga:

- i. Siksha (euphony/pronunciation),
- ii. Vyaakarana (Grammar),
- iii. Chandas (Metre),
- iv. Nirukta (Etymology),
- v. Jyotisha (Astronomy),
- vi. Kalpa (Procedure).

Anna Praasanam - “anna” means rice, food “praasa” means eater. 1) For a person, this is the first feeding of solid food to the baby during its sixth month. 2) For the Supreme: consuming food through cosmic nature by the creatures of the cosmic universe.

Aparam Saguna - the form of param Brahma when it dons qualities to enact its Leela.

Aptoryaamam - The last or the seventh part of the jyotishtoma sacrifice, of which agnishtoma is the major part. It is closed with a special saama verse which is also called aptoryaamam

Ashtaka(i) – A special derivation of the name of this ritual is as follows: “astha” means care for some one, “kai” means what relates to god or soul. These are parental rites (Pitru Karma), care for departed parents. It is to be done once in a year on the prescribed day (according to the moon calendar) of their departure. Shraaddha prescriptions also recommend carrying out ashtaka shraaddhas on three days of krishna (waning) saptami, ashtami and navami (seventh, eighth and ninth days after full moon) in three months considered sacred for Pitrus.

Ashwamedha – The ritual sacrifice of a horse carried out by a king, after having victoriously guiding it in the charge of some brave guards through the length and breadth of the kingdoms under his control and others whom he wishes to control. The guards have to fight with and conquer all forces opposing the ahswa-trip.

Atharva – purohit; the name also of the fourth Veda, also called atharvana aangirasa, because the sage Angiras was an important Atharva exponent. The famous cosmological sukta named Prithvi Suktam occurs in Atharva Veda. Apart from Angiras, Brahma, the creator himself, Bhrgu, Kaushika, Vasishtha and Kaashyapa are associated with this Veda brimming with special mantras, sciences of life and other exotic knowledge. Prashna, Mundaka and Maandookya Upanishads are part of this Veda.

Atiraatram - It is the name of the dead late hour of the night, also given to an optional part of the jyotishtoma sacrifice, whose performance is optionally left to the final period of the jyotishtoma.

Atyagnishtoma – The second part of the jyotishtoma sacrifice, also considered optional. In fact, agnishtoma alone occupies considerable significance in the jyotishtoma requirement.

Aupaasanam – (alternate English spelling Oupaasanam) This is like a pakayajna (a home yajna), not formally included in that list, because it has to be done daily by both husband and wife in a household from the day they are wedded, throughout the husband's lifetime. It uses uncooked rice, akshata as the homam offering.

Avashtabhya - wielding, possessing, as used by Bhagavan in Bhagavad Gita, IX, 8
Stambha is a pillar and avastambhana is leaning as on a pillar.

Avataara- mostly human (or other earthly) embodiment of Bhagavan to enact His leela according to His sankalpa; the word implies descent.

Bhagavad-Aaraadhanam (Ijyaa)–“Bhagavad(th)” means god, the creator and protector of the universe, “Aaraadha” means the worship, “Ijyaa” means donation or offering or sacrifice to the Lord. This is the worship to god with some offering.

Bhagavad Gita – the essence of the Vedas conveyed by Bhagavan in His Sri Krishna avatara, to Arjuna, to comfort him and remind him of his duty during the battle at Kurukshetra. It is available in the form of slokas in 18 chapters as a part of the epic Mahabharata.

Bhagavan – any manifest form of param Brahma, either in His nitya vibhuti or during His avatara.

Bhagavata Puranam – One of the better known of the 18 puranas, which sanatanic followers of the Vedic path love to listen to, especially towards the evenings of their lives. Apart from giving graphic accounts of the evolution of the Universe and of Bhagavan Vishnu's vibhavas, it has several sargas devoted to teaching men and women how to lead their lives.

Bhakti, navavidha – the nine modes of devotion, prescribed by Sage Narada in his Bhakti Sutra, namely shraavanam, kirtanam, Vishnusmaranam, paadasevanam, archanam, vandanam, daasyam, sneham and aatmanivedanam.

Bhakti Sutra – Sage Narada's great work on Vishnubhakti, which beautifully summarises the pathway from self-realization through devotion and self surrender to liberation.

Bhoota Yajnam – “bhoota” means what is past and also reality, everything what exist. This is offering food to all creatures’ viz. animals, plants, birds etc and to the departed ones.

Brahma Bhuta – initial stage of spiritual life or self-realization

Brahma Padam – The oneness with param Brahma reached by a Jiva during mukti, after which the Jive has no separate identity and no distinct knowledge.

Brahma Yajnam - “brahma” means priest. This is recitation of Braahmanas, the ritual oriented stanzas from all the four Vedas, especially during upaakarma.

Brahmam – the same as param Brahma, the infinite principle without origin and end.

Brahmanas – the name of the treatises, which are the appendixes to the Vedas and which describe the different rituals and the ceremonies of the sacrifices. These happen to be prose discussions within the krisna-yajus-samhita, while the shukla yajurveda has separately a Brahmana text, the Shatapatha Brahmana.

Chaaturmaasyam – “chatur” means one fourth, “maasyam” means monthly. This ritual is to be done once in a year or once in a lifetime during the (roughly one quarter year of) rain season.

Chaitri – a sacrifice which is to be done only once in a year during the month of Chaitra (corresponds to the March-April) and also called Eshaana Bali.

Charanamrita – “charana” means feet, “amrita” means nectar of immortality, the water after ablution of the Lotus Feet of Deity

Chaulam – (Derivation-Chhaaloman – “chhaa” means to cut, “loman” means hair.) Special hair dressing done along with Mantras in the case of children in preparation of their undertaking vedic studies.

Daana – charity

Dattatreya – means “one, who embodied (data) as three (treya): Brahma (the Creator), Vishnu (the Sustainer) and Maheshvara (the Destroyer)”.

Deva Yajnam – “deva” means god, “yajnam” means sacrifice: sacrifices to the gods

Darsha-pournamasa ishti – the sacrifices is to be done once in a two weeks (Paksham) on every first day according to the lunar calendar (Prathamai Tithi) during a new and full moon.

Dharma-Pramaana – All fourteen parts of veda, the four samhitas, six angas and four upangas.

Eshaana Bali – another name of a sacrificial rite Chaitri. “Eshaana” means a master or god, “bali” means sacrifice. So this is spring rite of the sacrifices to the Lord

Garbha Aadhaanam – 1) for a person: physical union of a married couple consecrated through prayer usually done prior to “Shaanti Muhurtam” so that the desire of proper union may find fulfillment. 2) For the Unmanifested Supreme: manifestation of His thoughts

Gayatri mantra – A divine mantra taught to a Brahmachari during his Upanayanam, consisting of praise of the Creator, meditating on Him and praying to Him for enlightenment. The creator is visualized as present in the core of the mandala of Savita, the Sun.

Godaana- Giving away a cow to a deserving person. Animal sacrifices were replaced by animal gifts, quite early in our yajna procedures.

Grihyaagni – “grihya” means domestic, “agni” means a fire. This is a domestic fire for doing Aupasana.

Gruhastaashrama – “the one who is in the house”, a householder or married Brahman

Gurukulam - Acharya’s residence to which the student (vidyarthi) is sent for lodging and simultaneous detailed study of Vedas. The four samskaarams, Praajaapatyam, Saumyam, Aagneyam and Vaishvadevam are taught him there. These four samskaara texts are kandas of Yajurvedasamhita and the respective authors, known as kandarishis are honoured through tarpanam by brahmacharis and other vaidikas

Gurukula-vasam – “guru-kula” means house of the teacher, “vasa” means a resident. This is staying at the house of the teacher or a period spent as a disciple.

Harati – “har” means 1) to take away (an evil eye of someone from deity, god and so on), 2) waving of the light.

Havir Yajnas – sacrifices with the ghee or “havis and yajna” became haviryajna: sacrifices of havis viz., everything what can be sacrificed to the gods by offering into the fire; usually these are different kinds of seeds of the fruits and grains (raw or cooked), soma (juice of the plant soma), milk, ghee Four of these yajnas required to be done at home, namely Agniaadaanam, Agnihotram, Darshapurnamaasam and Agrayanam and three more called Chaaturmaasyam, Niruda Pashubandham and Saudraamani, all required to be performed in yajnasalas, constitute Haviryajnas. Of the seven, the Darshapurnamaasam ishti is called prakruti or archetype and the others vikruti.

Jaata Karmam – Jata Karman – “jaata” means a birth, “karman” means a ritual. 1) For a person this is sacred ritual carried out immediately after the birth of baby.

2) For Nonexistent Supreme: output of His manifested thought is the creation.

Jnana – Knowledge of the divine acquired through yogic practices of enquiry with guidance from a Guru.

Jnana Kanda – chapters in Veda relating to Jnana

Jnana-Misra-Bhakta – “jnana” means wisdom, “misra” means achieved due to freedom of action, “bhaktha” means a devotee; this is a devotee of the Lord whose love is mixed with empiric knowledge

Jyotishtoma – “jyotis” means light or fire, “Stoma” or “stotra” means praising hymn and this is praising hymn for the fire.

Kali – the last of the four yugas, respectively known as krita (also satya), treta, dvaapara and kali, when it is believed that men’s inclination to follow the Dharmic path will be at very low ebb.

Kama – Desire.

Kama Karmas – “kama” means desire, “karmas can be homas, vratas and other spiritual or dharmic activities.

Karma – deed or action performed by the Jiva in his several births. It is usually classified into three types, praarabdha karma, sanchita karma and aagaami karma. Sanchita karma is further divided into kaamyas and nishkaamyas karma.

Karma Kanda – chapters in Veda relating to Karma.

Krishna and Shukla – names of two variations of yajurveda.

Krodha – anger

Lobha - greed

Maadhyaahnikam – “maadhyaah” means middle or afternoon, “nikam” means aspiration. Or simply ritual prescribed for madhyaahna, which is noon. This is afternoon prayer to bhagavan.

Mandala - The Samhita of the Rigveda is generally presented in one of two classification schemes

1. Mandal, Anuvak, and Sukta (known as the Mandala-Sukta scheme)
2. Ashtak, Adhyaya, and Sukta (known as the Ashtaka-Adhyaya scheme)

Of these two schemes, the Mandala-Sukta scheme is most popular. According to it, the Rigveda consist of 10 Mandalas. There are Suktas that comprise the Mandalas. In every Sukta there are mantras or Richas. The quantity of Suktas is 1017 and the other additional Suktas account to 11. In this way, the total number is unequal. There seem to be maximum Suktas in the 1st and 10th Mandala and there are very few Suktas in the 2nd Mandala.

The following tables show the no. of Suktas and mantras in every Mandala

Mandala Sukta Number of Mantras

M1 191 2006

M2 43 429

M3 62 617

M4 58 589

M5 87 727

M6 75 765

M7 104 841

M8 103 1716

M9 114 1108

M10 191 1754

Total 1028 10,552

Inclusively in 10 Mandalas there are 1028 Suktas which in turn comprise of 10,552 mantras.

Maneesha Panchakam – a small but famous poetic work of Adi Sankara in which he dwells upon and enjoys his enlightenment, by the grace of Sri Parameshwara, in regard to the total absence of difference between any two Jivas and also between any Jiva and Parama.

Marga Darshanam – directions to the path for a Jiva to merge with param Brahma.

Misra Lokam – Our world, created by Bhagavan, where because of his having vouchsafed a certain level of freedom, both asuric and daivik tendencies prevail side by side.

Moha – attachment or blind passion

Naama Karanam - “naama” means a name, “karman” means a ritual. 1) For a person: naming ceremony for a new born. This is celebrated on the 11th day of its birth.

2) For the Supreme: naming the output of His thought as “Cosmic Universe”.

Narada Pancharatra - The great sage Narada's mission is to broadcast the devotional service of the Lord. For this purpose he has compiled the Narada-pancharatra, a directory of devotional service, so that devotees can always take information about how to execute devotional service and thus engage twenty-four hours a day in performing sacrifices for the pleasure of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Nara Yajnam – “nara” means a man or primordial spirit. This is offering to the guest (man), who is a personification of the primordial spirit which visited house and should be treated as god. “Ideal hospitality to an athithi” or in other words, “athithi samskaaram”.

Nava Vidha Bhakti – nine stages of devotion

Niraakara – formless

Nirguna – without any attributes/qualities

Nirudha Pashubandham – “nirudha” means to lock, to hold in; “pashu” means sacrificial animal; “bandham” means to achieve or receive. This rite is to be done once in a year or once in a lifetime. Animal sacrifice starts from this rite.

Nitya karmas – “nityam” means stable, also therefore compulsory, daily, permanent “karmas” means actions

Pada Paaddam – see Vedas

Paka Yajnas – “paka” means simple, this is the simple sacrifices conducted at home. These are 7 yajnas, involving ceremonial cooking, namely i) Ashtakas, which are Pitru Karma (parental rites) to be done once in a year on the day (Thithi) of their departure, ii) Sthaaleepakam, namely cooking charu (rice) over the oupaasana fire in a Sthaali (pot) and offering it to the same fire on the first day of the lunar fortnight. iii) Paarvanam, also a parental rite done once every month, iv) Shraavani, to be done only once in a year in the Shraavana month, also called as Sarpa Bali, v) Aagrahaayani, to be done once a year during mid December, vi) Chaitri, to be done once a year during the month of Chaitra, also called Eashaana Bali and vii) Aashvayuji, to be done once a year during the month of Aashvayuja (Thulam).

Pancha MahaYajnas - Pancha Maha Yajnas – five great sacrifices

The procedures for these yajnas are available in Taittiriya Aranyaka. They are i) Deva Yajnam consisting of offering aahutis (oblation) to Devas, ii) Pitru Yajnam consisting of offering libations to parents and ancestors, iii) Nara Yajnam being offerings to the guests, iv) Bhoota Yajnam: consisting of offering food to all creatures viz. animals, plants, birds etc apart from departed ones and finally v) Brahma Yajnam, which is the recitation of Brahmanas, chosen stanzas from all the four Vedas.

Panchamukhi – the Devata, Gayatri, of the mantra of the same name. Her five faces are believed to protect our five indriyas (senses).

Paarvanam – This is the parental rite of sacrifice for the ancestry done once in every month at the full moon day.

Pitru Karma – “pitru” means the departed ancestry, “karma” means actions, here care of the departed ancestry

Pitru Yajnam - “pitru” means the departed ancestry which are worshiped as deities, “Yajnam” means sacrifice. This is offering libations to parents and ancestors, yearly, monthly and according to other periodicities as prescribed. The procedures of such shraardha-homa rituals are available in Taittireeya Aranyaka.

Pramaanam – Dharmic vow.

Pranavam, the strands of - The three strands of the well known form of pranava represent three Atma forms i.e. Aatman (Soul with body); Antaratman (consciousness) and Paramaatman (The cosmic energy/vital air or the Supreme).

Prasanthi Atmaraama – Bhagavan in any of his avataras, seen to be always poised, never losing his cool.

Prashna – see Valli

Prathama day – means the first day: the first day of a new moon and a first day of full moon, actually every fifteenth day.

Pravarga – is the name for the sacrificial or yajna fire. The preliminary ritual to consecrate the pravarga fire is known as pravargya.

Praayaschitta – Prayer of atonement is undertaken before initiating the Upakarma for having learned Vedas during the prohibited period. Both recitation in banned periods and (akarana) missing out on prescribed days have to be atoned for.

Pumsavanam - a prayer made during the 3rd month of pregnancy also named as Garbharakshanam. Pumsavanam or Garbharakshanam – 1) for a person: a prayer made during the 3rd month of pregnancy to assure that the infant is not miscarried. 2) For the Supreme: concentration over the manifested thought so that the manifested thought remains constant and without miscarriage.

Purusha – the primordial, macrocosmic being, out of whom He himself created, through sacrifice, all of creation. This act of creation of all creations through His self sacrifice with the aid of Devas who were a part of His own creation is called purushmedha and is described in purusha-sukta, the sacred 90th hymn of the 10th mandala of Rigveda.

The term purushamedha has also been used for narabali or human sacrifice, which has been occasionally practised by some tantriks and vaamaacharins in the country.

Raagaanuga Bhakti – spontaneous devotional service

Rajanya – Kshatriya, a person of the warring caste or community or tendency.

Rajasuya- A samrat of the world or of Bharatavarsha, conducts this great sacrifice, inviting all tributary princes, during his coronation, to emphasize his undisputed sovereignty. The satapatha brahmana says, raja vai rajasuyeneshtva bhavati, the king becomes samraat, through rajasuya.

Rik – a mantra or hymn, the basic unit of several suktas which compose the Rik-samhita, which consists of 10,170 riks (out of a total of 20,500 riks in all Vedas). The Rik samhita or Rigveda has 10 mandalas and 8 ashtakas in it.

Sadhana – Engaging continuously in spiritual practice, as for instance in devotional service, till a highest level is reached.

Samhita – One of four parts of Veda, the four named respectively Rigveda, Yajurveda, Saamaveda and Atharva Veda.

Saama – peace, as in the four methods of persuasion, saama, daana, bheda and danda. Also melody or musical swara. Saamaveda is sung in the form of saamagaana by the special ritviks called udgaatas.

Samaavartanam (Snaanam) - means completion of Brahmacharyam i.e. Gurukulavaasam. Samaavartanam (Snaanam) – “Samavart” means to return, “snaanam” means the bath. This is the return of the brahmachari to home after taking a bath, which meant the completion of the teaching course as a disciple of the Brahman (Brahmacharyam)

Samskaara – Vedic rituals required to be carried out by people in various contexts. The forty well known samskaaras required of a follower, formulae for which are available from the forty chapters of Vajasaneyi-Samhita, are treated, some individually and others in groups, in this glossary.

Sanaatana Dharma – Name of the ageless thought of Bhagavan believed to have been revealed first to Surya. It was revealed again as the Vedas to several Rishis and as the Bhagavad Gita to Arjuna.

Sanghateekarana – unification; sanghatanaa means union, and the implication here is union with divinity, “karana” means causative action

Sankalpa – the intention preceding a divine leela. The word is also used to denote intentions by humans to perform various nitya, naimittika and other actions as required by shastras.

Sarpa Bali – another name of the Shrivani. “Sarpa” means a category of demigods or snake, “bali” means sacrifice. So, this is sacrifice to the demigods, which are represented as snakes.

Sarvamedha – A sacrifice such as vishvajit, in which the performer is expected to give away all his wealth and symbolically offer several things also to the sacrificial fire.

Saumyam – a ritual, which is dedicated to the Moon god, the magnificent Soma, which possesses life-giving power.

Savitri – another name for the Devata, Gayatri. In this form, she is known to protect our five praanas.

Seemantham - “a border”, the time which is bordering between bearing a child and coming childbirth”. 1) for a person: this is a social function to keep the pregnant woman in good spirit and usually celebrated during the sixth to eighth month of pregnancy.

2) for the Supreme: it is not required. He is always in good spirit.

Shaakhas – branches of Veda,

for instance of the Shukla (White) Yajurveda, both known as Vajasaneyi-Samhita.

- Vajasaneyi Madhyandiniya
- Vajasaneyi Kanva

Other examples of Shakha can be cited. Sureshwaraachaarya, one of Shankara’s four main disciples, who provided explanatory notes for advaita, is said to have followed the Kanva Shakha. The Guru himself followed the Taittiriya Shakha with the Apastamba Kalpasutra.

There are four shakhas of the Krishna (“black”) Yajurveda:

- Taittiriya samhita originally of Panchala
- Maitrayani samhita originally of the area south of Kurukshetra
- Caraka-Katha samhita originally of Mathura and Kurukshetra
- Kapisthala-Katha samhita of the southern Punjab, Bahika

Each of the branches has or had a Brahmana associated with it, and most of them also have associated Shrautasutras, Grhyasutras, Aranyakas, Upanishads and Pratishakhyas.

Shanti Muhurtam – the time of a physical union of a married couple or the time of conception

Shaudraamani – Only in this sacrifice the liquor suraa is used, presumably to please the base gods (Kshudra Devas). This was originally meant to counteract excessive use of soma juice.

Shodashi - This modified agnishtoma sacrifice may be done in place of agnishtoma, once in a year or once in a lifetime.

Shraavani – This sacrifice is to be done only once in a year during the month of Shraavana, which is fifth month of the Indian calendar and corresponds to the July-August.

Shrautagni – “shrauta” means based on the shruti or vedas, “agni” means a fire. So, this is the fire for the performance of different vedic rites.

Siddhaanta – vedantic concept, such as advaita, which should contain the following – Sootra (Aphorism), Bhaashya (Commentary) and Vaartika (Explanatory Note).

Soma Yajnas - Soma Yajnas – the sacrifices of a drink (juice of the soma plant)

Soma juice is believed to be greatly relished by the Devas and it is offered as an oblation in Soma yajnas. These seven yajnas are required to be done either once a year or even just once in a lifetime. They are named, i)Agnishtomam, ii)Atyagnishtomam,iii)Uktyam, iv)Shodashi, v)Vaajapeyam (This Yajna is done with ‘Vaaja’ (Annam), with which the sacrificer is bathed so to say.),vi)Athiraatram and vii)Aptoryaamam

Sthaaleepakam - |”sthali” means an eminence; also a vessel, whose function gives it a high position, “lee” means to be somewhere, “paaka” means to prepare food. “Charu” is the name of sacrificial rice itself and of the pot in

which it is cooked. So, this is the one of the simple sacrifices when the rice in the pot must be placed on the sacrificial (Oupasana) fire and after offered to the same fire. It is performed on the first day of the lunar fortnight

Sukta – The mandalas of a vedic samhita contain many suktas (good sayings), which themselves contain many mantras or riks.

Taittiriya Shaakha - The best known of Shaakhas. Named after Tittiri, a pupil of Yaska. It consists of 7 books or Kandas, subdivided into chapters or Prapathakas, further subdivided into individual sections (Anuvakas). Some individual hymns in this Samhita have gained particular importance in Hinduism; e.g. Taittiriya Shaakha 4.5 and 4.7 constitute the Rudram Chamakam, while 1.8.6. is the Maha Mrityunjaya mantra. The formula Bhûr Bhuvah Suvah prefixed to the (Rigvedic) mantra is also from the Yajurveda. Among the followers of this Shaakha, the Apastamba Sutras are the common. The Taittiriya Shaakha consists of Taittiriya Samhita (having seven kandas), Taittiriya Brahmana (having three kandas), Taittiriya Aranyaka (having seven Prashnas), Taittiriya Upanishad (having three prashnas or Vallis – Shiksha Valli, Ananda valli and Bhrigu valli) and the Mahanarayana Upanishad. The Taittiriya Upanishad and Mahanarayana Upanishad are considered to be the seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth prashnas of the Aranyaka.

Tatpurusha –samaasa or compound noun formation in Sanskrit, when two nouns are combined in such a way that the second is qualified by suitable case modification of the first. Also a description of parama purusha.

Tithi – (any) day of the moon calendar

Ukthyam – means worthy of praise. This is one of the somayajnas.

Upaakarma (Kanda rishi Tarpanam) – means beginning. These are salutations of the brahmachari when he starts study the Vedas to the Kanda rishis through whom the Veda Mantras were revealed. “Kanda rishi (name of sages) Tarpanam (satisfaction which they will have due to salutations of the brahmachari at the beginning of his study”. It should be done during the full moon in the month Shravana (August-September)

Upanayanam – initiation of spiritual and vedantic education for boys (usually in the age group 8 to 12) of Brahmana, Kshatriya and Vysya families, symbolized by making them wear the sacred thread yajnopavitam, on an auspicious occasion, with mantras and special rites. They are given the Gayatri mantra Upadesa at the time. There have been instances of female initiates also in our tradition.

Upanga – the sub-section of a section (anga) of Veda

The angas consist of four Upaangas. These are:

- i. Meemaamsa (Interpretation),
- ii. Nyaaya (Logic),
- iii. Puraana (Mythology),
- iv. Dharma Shaastras (Codes of conduct).

By a different classification, we have the following sciences or fields of knowledge also considered upangas:

- i. Aayurveda (Science of Life),
- ii. Artha Shaastra (Science of wealth/Economics),
- iii. Dhanur Veda (Weaponry/Warfare),
- iv. Gaandharva Veda (Fine Arts - music, dance, drama etc.)

Upanishads – associated texts of Vedasamhitas, containing mahavakyas and other vedic information of great relevance to seekers of liberation. Shukla Yajurveda, for example has two Upanishads associated with it: the Isha Vasya and the Brihadaranyaka Upanishads. The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad is the most voluminous of all Upanishads.

There are more than one hundred Upanishads, out of which, a little under twenty are widely read. Upanishads are properly called Vedaanta, the end or purpose of knowledge.

They are also called, along with Aranyakas, as Uttara Mimamsa, the latter interpretation, as against the vedasuktas themselves and the Brahmanas which constitute Purva Mimamsa

Urvashi – One of the four apsaras in Indra's court, whose conversation with the earthly King Purooravas is featured in the Rigveda.

Ushas – the Devata of Dawn.

Utsarjanam – giving up the study of the Vedas in the mid month of January

Vaishvadevam – a ritual, which is dedicated to all gods. visvedevaah means the gods in all the Universe.

Vajapeyam - "vaaja" means sacrificial food, "peya" means drink, "drink of victory". This sacrifice consists of the offerings of Somarasa (juice of soma plant), Pasu homa (offering of 23 animals as a gift to the sacrificer) and Anna or Vaaja Homa. The sacrificer (yajamana) is bathed in rice. The King himself holds up a white umbrella for him.

Vala – brother of Vrtrasura. Indra is praised in Rigveda and Atharvaveda for having vanquished him.

Valli, prashna – interchangeable names of enquiries along with stagewise explanations present in larger portions of shaakhas, called aaranyakas.

Vedas- divine knowledge revealed to ancient Bharatiya Rishis in several forms in and several instalments, over large periods of time. Vedas are called 'Anaadi' – without a beginning in terms of time. Rishis are only Drishtas (Discoverers), not Kartas (Creators). Vedas contain many 'Suktas' (Words of Wisdom) attributed to several sages. Ishwara (God) and the Vedas have coexisted. Brihad-aaranyaka Upanishad says that the four Vedas are Ishwara's breath. Vedas are called 'Shruti' – meaning sound falling on the ear. A system of complicated recitations was devised to preserve the purity of the word, sound, intonation, pronunciation, accent and sound combinations of the Vedas. 'Pada Paaddam' is essential (Pada Paaddam stands for steps or procedures which are important for learning shruti).

Vaidhi Bhakti – devotional service executed under the guidance of the spiritual master

Vikruthi- little variations of the main ritual.

Virat Purusha - From Him (the Adipurusha or original Supreme Being) was born the Virat (or Virat Purusha, the immense universal form). Making this Virat as the substratum (another) purusha (or being, Brahma) (was born). As soon as he was born, he multiplied himself. Later, he created this earth and then, the bodies (of the living beings).

Vivaaham – The religious and social ceremonies enabling a brahmachari and a kanyaa to enter into Gruhasthashram. Right from the day of marriage till the last breath of a person, different rites are mentioned in the Vedas enabling the householder to please the Devas, Brahma, Pitru, Bhoota and Nara and most of these have to be performed by way of Yajna.

Vrata – a ritual

Yajnas – sacrificial rituals prescribed in Yajurveda, such as Darsa Poornamasa, Somayaga, Vaajapeya, Raajasooya, and Ashwamedha etc. The ritual offering through Agni is also known as homa.

Yajur Upaakarma - Those belonging to Yajur Veda observe the Upakarma in the month of Sravana during the month of August – September on the day of full moon. The full moon day during the said month is considered to be auspicious when Lord Narayana incarnated as Lord Hayagriva to restore the Vedas to Brahma, who is recognized as the Lord of Knowledge.

Yajus – sacrificial formula, recipe for yajna

Yoga Maaya - The universe has been made visible only by Bhagavan's power, called Leela or Yoga Maaya.