

DEDICATION

The primeval sound heralding

Explosive emergence

Of the unborn; new beginning

Proclaiming its presence.

The creation most intricate,

Bewitching tapestry

Sense benumbing and mind boggling

Of illusory strands.

The warps and wefts interwoven

In distracting patterns

Through yards of the primeval matter

Enmeshed in life's clichés.

A lifeline woven through, unsevered;

An urge to unravel;

The armour of immunity;

The strength of fervent hope;

The very meaning of existence,

Creation's sustenance

Soul and essence of the unborn,

Basis of subsistence.

The immutable, boundless love,

The Truth and the Oneness,

Cohesive force of the Being

The Prema Amrutha -

Nectarine Love Immortal.

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Many people have contributed in various ways to give the book this final shape. I acknowledge with deep gratitude their cheerful contributions and encouragement, not just in the editing and reviewing of this book but also in the several challenges of my life, that kept me going without loss of morale during the traumatic periods of tribulation in my life.

Bhagawan, in His infinite compassion, provides innumerable opportunities to each of us to redeem ourselves by functioning as effective instruments in His service. I am indebted in particular, to a family of selfless devotees of Bhagawan, which has made this possible under fortuitous circumstances, has stood by me and supported me during difficult times.

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Prostrating at the Divine Feet of Bhagawan, I remain eternally grateful.

Bhooyo Bhooyo Namaamyaham

A.V. SRINIVASAN

January 18th, 2010

My humble salutations at the lotus feet of Bhagawan Sri Sri Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Ever impelled by the indweller, the irrepressible Sri Sai Srinivas has successfully completed the great trilogy of spiritual sojourn of man, in his inimitable style. That the three great pearls of wisdom - BrahmaPadam, MargaDarshanam and Premaamrutam - would pass into posterity as another 'Prasthanatraya' of our era and thereafter, would be the inevitable Bhagawat Sankalpam. I have the singular fortune to be a minuscule part of the triumvirate, the 'Maha Vishwa Grantham'. This is the immeasurable magnanimity of our beloved Bhagawan.

There is a correlation to the Creation and the purpose of our lives - they converge on Thought. The origin of creation emanates from the thought of the Supreme and our purpose of life is regaining the thinking process to retrace the Origin. Sri Sai Srinivas takes us through a really thought provoking concatenation with the Ceaseless Breath, journeying from Shrishti (creation) to Paripoornasanathana in a truly evolutionary path to know about Itself. In this progression of 'make happen' we learn that the path is the path of love and the result is Divine Nectar. Thus, the title of the opus is delightfully unfolded as we are subsumed in ekam (oneness) which according to the author is even beyond Advaita! Therefore, the proper study of the origin begins with 'make happen' and would culminate in ekatvam with the underlying principle of Premaamrutam.

In the explanation of the true meaning of Advaita, expansion of the term Narayana commencing and continuing the creation continuum, scientific approach of spiritualism intertwining the major schools of Vedanta, the seamless superimposition of science with spiritualism, expertise of extraordinary explanation, delectable delineation of characters to drive home the divine principles of creation, elaborate exploration of the nine-fold devotion, expanded meaning of karma with a very interesting interlude of anger management, emphatic manner of sculpting myriad personalities in new light to juxtapose the creation chain and its pivotal purport, Sri Sai Srinivas has scaled the summit of spiritual spontaneity in a copious shower of unique, profound and pure thoughts.

Thus Sri Sai Srinivas views behind the curtain of mystery of creation, the logical sequence of creation and the fundamental essence of the entire creation enveloped in the immortal love principle. The exposition and explanation of the sequence of the creation chain interlinking the scientific texture to spiritualism and the comparative study of science and spiritualism in the light of the three major schools of thought is a revelation in itself.

We can analyse the process of creation thus:

Shrishti, Prapancha, Jagat - form the first tier of process,

Maya, Moha, Karma - encompass the second tier of process,

Jnanam, Karma phalitam, Bhagawantam - form the third tier,

Ekagratham, Poornasanathanam, Paripoornasanathanam - form the final tier, which leads to real oneness.

The four Purusharthas: artha - acquisition, kama - desire, dharma - sustenance and moksha - liberation, represented by the above tiers of process respectively are reflected in the primal creative process itself. God Himself is the evolutionary example for the creation, growth, sustenance and end.

This thought process is never ending, ananta - no beginning, no end. The indubitable point of interest in our lives is

to refocus our outlook to the self to know the self. Our journey may be unending, our life may be limited, but the basic substratum of our existence is the immortal love - Premaamrutam, which is everlasting. It is never complete without the genuine effort to experiment and then to experience the ubiquitous love principle and be aware of our constitutional position of immortality.

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With the grace of our Beloved Bhagawan, I am able to share the Divine Love through this Grantham named "Premaamrutham". The all-knowing Bhagawan works through different forms to experience every form of HIS and to experience through each form. The Divine experiences are gained physically and intuitively by every sadhaka and in that respect, this instrument of Sai is most fortunate to bring forth HIS Divine Love in a series of books to the readers.

Completing the earlier books "Brahma-Padam" and "Marga Darshanam", I decided to write this third Grantham "Premaamrutham" in simple terms so that the readers may find the essence of the Vedanta, as taught by our Beloved Bhagawan, easy to understand.

For writing books on Pure Love, complete experience of the Divine is essential. Great scholars, philosophers and writers have written many books on the subject, but in their personal lives, some may have failed to practice such pure love. Pure love is not the love which a person develops for the parents, siblings, spouse, children, relatives and friends, but it is that unsullied love which springs from deep within him, infuses totally and flows out to others. Right from the day of creation such Pure Love has not been found in any human except Divine Incarnations.

The love that develops in creatures is born out of attachment and bondage, whereas pure love flows out without any discrimination, to cover the entire cosmos, and such Incarnations of Love are very few. Among the incarnations in the Kali age are Jesus, Shirdi Sai, and Mother Teresa. Presently we are in the abundant love of Bhagawan Sri Sri Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Who, like a mother, cares for each of HIS devotees, showering HIS Pure Love, sowing, and cultivating in every heart the seeds of Love and Bhakti.

I have been most fortunate to get many opportunities to be at the Divine Feet of Bhagawan, to be transformed by His Divine guidance and directions; so much so that the seeds of Divine Love sown in me by Bhagawan have given me the experience to pen this Grantham. As I did not have Darshan of our Beloved Lord for almost three and a half years, I was suffering from feelings of duality and deep inner anguish. I got a break in this period of life and Bhagawan called me for an interview on October 13, 2009 during the evening Darshan. It was an unexpected call when loving consolation and Divine Grace were showered on me.

Bhagawan asked, "How is your business going?" I replied, "Swami, I am not running any business and my only 'business' is with Bhagawan and Bhagawan's commands; and with the guidance of Bhagawan I write books on Vedanta." Bhagawan said, "Oh book writing! Sometimes you write and other times you put them away almost immediately."

Swami said, "Brahma-Padam - it is very difficult to understand and most difficult to follow in life. The words that formed in your heart are not mere words, but they are Swami. Your thoughts, words and actions are of Swami. Continue to write the books daily; that is the procedure and the conduct. The three books together will come to be known as Maha-Vishwa Grantham."

I responded to Bhagawan, "Without having Swami's Darshan, how can I continue writing the books? Swami please let me always have Your Darshan." Swami said, "You have accepted everything from Bhagawan as prasadam,

which is why I have granted you prasadam." I replied, "Yes Swami, all these years I have accepted everything as prasadam of Bhagawan." In the course of this discussion I had put my head on Bhagawan's lap and Swami's divine hand stroked my head, my neck and back and with this the migraine and back pain that I had been suffering from since I was 13 years old, miraculously vanished!

Such is the compassion and boundless love of the Divine Mother Sai!

This shower of Divine love helped me to complete this Grantham and to experience intuitively the meaning of Pure Love. Spreading the nectar of love to all - irrespective of one's caste, colour, creed and gender - and without malice to any one, is the nature of pure love; and I am indeed fortunate to be among those in whom Bhagawan cultivates this love.

The seed of love is sown in each one of us before birth. However failing to understand this Prema tatwa, we search in vain for love in mundane pleasures. We let our egos clash in order to establish our superiority. For these reasons, our Beloved Bhagawan often would say, in HIS discourses, that He (Swami) is still in search of a true devotee.

We should, therefore, make the most of this opportunity of having the Incarnate God as our Sadguru and work together harmoniously in the united cause of Bhagawan's Mission, following Bhagawan's directions and instructions.

I happily share with all Sai brothers and sisters through this Prema Grantham the divine love, divine directions and instructions that I have received from Bhagawan.

I dedicate all my thoughts, words, deeds to the Divine Feet of our Beloved Bhagawan as Pure Love, and conclude with feelings of gratitude to all the readers.

Jai Sai Ram.

With Reverence

A.V. Srinivasan

(Author)

Chapter 1 - PURPOSE OF LIFE

A thought may arise in every mind in the present world, when people on their sojourn of life find it to be meaningless: What is the purpose of this life? Is life meant only to earn, live and die? Are all those that one witnesses in the physical state true? What is that which prevents success in this journey?

This thought process will not be limited to this point but will proceed further - "Is the progress in life halted because of lack of effort or because of lack of knowledge? Where is the origin of this journey and where does it end? Does the journey end in its origin and how long will it continue? Where from to book the ticket and up to where is the reservation to be made? What luggage does one carry for a safe and comfortable journey? In this journey, will one reach the destination comfortably and in lesser time? In this journey, will there be halts in between for resting or does one travel to the final destination before resting?

After reaching the destination, is it necessary to start the journey once again or can it be terminated forever?

When life turns out to be meaningless, a person searches within and without for the solution to calm the mind and find solace. The journey of life is initiated in the physical state, to know its origin and is ended by terminating the state of physical, mental, intellectual elements to remain ever in its origin, the state of tranquillity.

The term 'origin' can also be understood as "To Make Happen". That energy or the power, which exists in the state of tranquillity, has arrayed to 'make happen'. We know that energy or power cannot remain static for long and has to circulate.

In the earlier book, Brahma Padam, the evolution of the cosmic universe is explained briefly in the chapter titled Advaita. If we study this elaborately, we learn that our journey progresses on the path of love (Prema) and that it will end in the Divine Nectar (Amrutham), which is believed to be the true state of origin.

Advaita, as understood from the Advaita chapter of Brahma Padam, means the ONE with Ceaseless Breath has become TWO within its Space-Time. That Ceaseless Breath is known as Veda.

Prior to this, nothing was known and remained a puzzle - what is that which was in the beginning? What is or was the beginning? What will be the end? The 'happened' (Past Birth) and 'yet to happen' are not known (Present and Future). However, the term "Advaita" would imply that the 'Unknown One' with its Ceaseless Breath has become two.

It is interesting to note here that the One Unknown existing within its space-time was existent in a tranquil state and that from such a state its movement started.

The question arises, "How did that happen?"

When the Unknown is assumed to exist, it means that space and time too must exist. The space is Veda (Ceaseless Breath) and Time is the potential energy Lakshmi - co-eternal of that Unknown. Through its potential state, the Unknown has come to be known as Veda.

The Ceaseless Breath in the form of Veda has come first into our perception as an emergent need to study. The Veda, which has no identity or form in the beginning, has been named for the purpose of identification as "NA", meaning without form. But It was or is found as vital air as "RA"- meaning "Roopam", that is, body (body for Jivas - Nara - and thought for the Supreme) and its motion is recognized as "YA" - meaning Yaksha or Brahman, in another sense Gati - movement in the space and in every atom, so it is termed as "ANU" - atom. Hence, Veda is recognized as Narayana. When such vital air is in the body (thought of the Supreme) in the form of Narayana, it will have some function and that function through the body (thought) becomes Deed (Karma). Deeds can be either with attachment or without. The deed without attachment is named as "Happening", as happenings will have no reactions even though the action will take place. Such deeds of the Narayana (which find a parallel in Jivas' lives) resulted as:

1. Srishti

Meaning creation, which is the first deed of Narayana. Here Srishti refers to the universal Space-Time that is Brahma and Vayu. Brahma is the creator and Vayu the 'sustainer' of the Cosmic Creation. Both Brahma and Vayu are known to be the sons of Lakshmi, the potential energy of Narayana according to certain philosophies. With this Narayana's invisible creations stop, but HIS sons Brahma and Vayu are assigned the rest of the visible creations along with their mother Lakshmi.

2. Prapancha (World or Universe)

Pra-Pancha means the Supreme in the form of five elements. At the time of Srishti by the Supreme and HIS coeternal (Lakshmi), two more elements namely, Space and Time emerged. The "Time" that is, "Vayu", with its movement on the space, created the "Fire" and the movement of the fire (because of the presence of air in fire) in the space divided it [the space] into earth and sky. The burnt space turned into ash and remained below as earth and the remaining space became sky. From the combination of air and fire emerged water; some of which fell on earth over the ashes and converted them to stones, rocks and mountains; and some coursed down to become rivers which started flowing out of the mountains. Since the mountains as well as the earth are also the result of air-fire combination, they produced waters and these waters became rivers like the Ganges. Some of the water, which had emerged out of heat [fire] as vapour, turned into clouds due to circulation of air and remained in the sky.

The fire, which caused explosion in space due to the circulation of air (which is also known as gas), has resulted in stars, galaxies, planets and so on. In the universe, a group of several million stars become galaxies; and our sun is just one among the billions of stars in the sky.

How will the universe widen? Will the universe change?

As these galaxies are hastening away from each other at a terrific pace, it appears that the universe is incessantly expanding or altering. The age of stars is counted in billions of years and these stars are born, live, grow old and finally die and for this reason the universe is considered to be infinite in terms of time and space and it is the aggregate of all matter, energy, galaxies and space. Thereafter the solar systems developed in the universe.

In a way the inherent power Lakshmi and her sons created the Universe and all the thirty three crore deities. One deity heads each group of stars, each galaxy and each planet and the nine planetary deities are considered as the

prime deities. The Master of these thirty three crore deities is Indra, who is directly under the control of the Supreme [Who is] in Trinity form. The World is [now] in the visible state and these deeds of Lakshmi through her sons will also be considered as happenings [for them] up to this stage; and within the creation of the Prakruti (manifested universe), it further develops the attributes like Satwa, Rajas and Tamo (Gunas).

3. Jagat (Animate & Inanimate)

The sequence of these happenings (creation) further developed and resulted (created) as living and non-living creatures when the Supreme Narayana's thought was processed by HIS inherent energy, Lakshmi, and brought into the state of reality. The state of appearance can be called the imagination form of Lakshmi. However, this co-eternal (Lakshmi) and that THOUGHT (Narayana) are not subject to the consequences because the consequences are the ultimate result of the nature of Lakshmi, who just undergoes the consequences of such imagination in a state of equanimity. Narayana and HIS co-eternal have limited their actions to the stage of creation of Jagat in order to enjoy the cosmic drama. The rest of the cosmic play is transferred to the heads of the three attributes of Prakruti. From this stage, the three attributes of Prakruti start functioning in full motion.

Lakshmi can be with or without form; hence, she is not subject to the consequences of the attributes of the Prakruti. HER attributes are in the form of energy in the cosmos and in the Jivas playing various roles; hence Jivas are more affected by these attributes than the inanimate world.

Before heading to the stage of Maya (illusion), let us refresh ourselves with the description of the cosmic creation and the similarities seen in science and Vedanta (as given in the Aitareya Upanishad) in this respect.

Chapter 2 - SCIENCE AND SPIRITUALISM

Physics is derived from the Greek word physis - meaning "nature". Let us explain physics in very simple and basic terms: physics is the study of an object and its state/motion through space-time and everything derived from these, such as energy and force for example. It is the general analysis of nature done in order to understand how the world and universe operate.

Different forms of energy include:

(a) Kinetic energy (the kinetic energy of an object is the extra energy, which it derives due to its motion. It is defined as the energy needed to accelerate a body of a given mass from rest to its current velocity. Having gained this energy during its movement, the body maintains this kinetic energy unless its speed changes. Negative work of the same magnitude would be required to return the body to a state of rest from that velocity)

(b) Potential energy (potential energy can be explained as energy stored within a physical system. It is called potential energy because it has the potential to be converted into other forms of energy, such as kinetic energy, and to do work in the process)

(c) Thermal energy (thermal energy is a form of energy that manifests itself as an increase in temperature. It is also the sum of tangible heat and latent heat)

(d) Gravitational energy, sound energy, light energy, elastic energy and so on. The forms of energy are often named after a related force or source.

Any form of energy can be transformed into another form, however, the total energy always remains the same. For example, a seated passenger in a moving airplane has zero kinetic energy relative to the airplane, but non-zero kinetic energy relative to the earth (earth is assumed to be relatively stationary).

In physics, the capacity to do work is called energy; the term energy describes the amount of work, which may potentially be done by forces within a system. Changes perceived in energy in systems may be attributed to the addition or subtraction of energy from them, since energy is a quantity, which is conserved. (In general, changes in the energy of systems also correspond with the changes in the system's structure).

Energy in a system may be transformed so that it remains in a different state. Energy in many states may be used in many types of physical work.

Let us now analyse the comparison between science and spiritualism. physics also includes the study of an object in motion or otherwise and the analysis of the study of natural science based on available knowledge. It is confirmed that some energy or power is existing and it is the cause for the movement of the universe in total.

The object-like energy or the power, which is present everywhere is recognized as the 'eternal soul' in spiritual terminology. That eternal soul is also named as Supreme. In science, it is difficult to explain the origin of the energy or object in the state of tranquillity; similarly, in spirituality the origin of that same energy cannot be explained. In science, it is accepted that energy is invisible unless it takes some form. The same reasoning is applicable in

spiritualism [Vedanta]. This invisible state of energy which is present everywhere can only be felt but this visibility cannot be properly explained by the scientist or by the spiritual aspirant unless the invisible state of energy makes itself visible or felt in some form through its motion. Let us analyse this further.

The physicist studies nature with the help of an object and its position in space and time. From the physicist's point of view, nature is the first point of reference, the object in it is the second point of reference and its position in space and time is the third point of reference. With the help of these three points of reference, a physicist studies how the world and the universe operate. The scientist, in the course of several attempts to deduce from the above references how the universe could have emerged, has been coming up with varying answers which still fall short of the truth. So it is only a study of the effect of the change or motion and not the study of the origin itself.

Spirituality is the study or analysis of the cause and effect of the universe and entities, including their origin. It also covers Vedanta (spiritual enquiry, the Upanishads). The aspirant who pursues Vedanta believes that before the appearance of this universe and world there was the 'non-existent' energy (The Supreme) - here non-existent refers to the invisible state of energy in "Its Space and Time". The aspirant considers the non-existent energy as the prime element, which is within its space and time. The motion of the non-existent within its space and time is believed by the aspirant to be vital air. In physics, the motion/state of an object through space-time occurs due to energy and force; similarly, the vital air of the non-existent would be the consciousness. The 'non-existent' energy in the form of consciousness has a course of action which can be called thought (thought is like happening, in other sense a measurement) - like a scalar in physics. There is a subtle difference in this aspect, between science and spirituality. A scalar is considered to be a physical quantity in physics, whereas the same scalar is considered as a thought in spirituality (which cannot be measured, but the imagination which falls in the category of a thought could be expressed in terms of good and bad); thought cannot be changed by a harmonious system of conversion (thought continues as good or bad). In physics, the objects and environmental systems are affected by natural law; similarly, an object and its system in spiritual science are equated to imagination and are similarly affected.

To illustrate the comparative study of science and spiritualism, let us analyse the impact of the 'Three Schools of thought':

Science reveals the nature of energy with its potential to be converted into other forms of energy (In spirituality the potential state in tranquillity is the Supreme and the potential energy [Lakshmi] is co-eternal but still dependent on the Paramapurusha). In Vedanta, energy is considered as consciousness within its space and time (space and time are recognized here as potential energy). Here, space is compared to thought and time to imagination.

The schools of Dvaita and Vishista Advaita consider the consciousness to be the Supreme and space and time which are co-eternal and latent in that Supreme, as Lakshmi. (According to the author, space is not only the thought of that Supreme but also the Adi-antha Rahitha i.e, beginningless and endless Adishesha and time is Moola Prakruti or Lakshmi Who is co-eternal and can be with or without form). The space and time which are referred to here with

the Supreme, are always co-eternal and the space and time which are existing with Moola Prakruti or Lakshmi are subsumed during Kalpa Pralaya. (Here space refers to Brahma and Time refers to Vayu.)

According to the school of Advaita, the Supreme in the form of energy is the absolute, and space and time of Prakruti, which are related to the body, mind and senses, are illusory. According to the Advaitic school of thought, the term illusory refers to the kinetic energy, which is accumulated through the motion of the energy and manifested as thermal energy due to increase in temperature, as tangible heat and latent heat and other energies like gravitation, sound, light and so on. As these energies are manifested ones, they appear and disappear when the energies move and cease to move. Due to this flux, (of appearing and disappearing), they are considered as illusory by the school of Advaita.

Dvaita and Vishishta Advaita classify souls as Nitya - the eternal (Lakshmi), Mukta - the liberated (Gods, Men, Rishis, Sages and Manes) and Baddha - the bound ones. In natural science, the energy with its potential can be called Nitya (eternal), the kinetic energy, Mukta (liberated) and the excess of energy thus generated because of the movement of the object can be stopped at some level so that the kinetic energy will become liberated. The thermal energy can be named Baddha (Bound ones) to kinetic energy. Since thermal energy is manifested from kinetic energy, it ceases only when the kinetic energy becomes inactive.

Madhvacharya of Dvaita School added two more categories of souls that are eligible and not eligible for Moksha:

a. The completely surrendered ones, even though Baddha, i.e., thermal energy like gravitational, sound, light, elastic and so on are eligible for liberation.

b. Those who are not eligible for salvation:

(i) Nitya-Sansarins i.e., bound by the cycle of Samsara are the electromagnetic energy. This energy is an omnipresent phenomenon that takes the form of self-propagating waves in a vacuum or in matter viz. radio waves, microwaves, infrared radiation and so on in the invisible spectrum. This energy is traceable and could be reconverted or redirected with great effort.

(ii) Those whose destiny is hell - the region of blinding darkness (Tamoyogya). The electromagnetic energy can be considered as the quality of Tamoyogya because the forms of this energy will be in the visible spectrum and are termed as relative force. This refers to the loss of energy, which is not traceable for re-conversion i.e., transmission loss.

Physics states that any form of energy can be transformed into any other form, but the total energy will always remain the same. Still the difference exists in the process of conversion, re-conversion and loss of energy.

Let us see how the three Schools of thought mentioned above postulate their views on this statement and analyse further.

School of Madhva: The School of Madhva followed the School of Vishishtadvaita and two more categories of souls as mentioned previously, were added. According to this School of thought, a distinct entity becomes a plurality of souls, but [going by the above classification of souls] no two souls [energies] are alike in character. As soul (Jiva) is different from God and matter (Prakriti), it depends on God for guidance. Similarly, in the study of physics it is assumed, as in Madhva's philosophy, that manifested energies like thermal energy are not alike in their characters and are different from the main energy and potential (Moola Prakriti or Lakshmi) energy. Therefore, the thermal energy is dependent since it is generated from the main energy. What it means is that even in similar classes of thermal energy there is a subtle difference in enunciation.

School of Vishishtadvaita: Sri Ramanujacharya accepted that God is omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient; He is the only Truth (Sathya), Knowledge (Jnana) and Bliss (Ananda). Moreover, the Acharya opines that the Lord is immanent, transcendent and unchanging. Unchanging here means that the essence of the Lord remains unchanged.

Similarities can be seen in the studies of physics and the School of Vishishtadvaita: the main energy (Lord) can be transformed or manifested into another or many forms but the main source of energy is always the same (without any change). As explained in physics, energy in a system may be transformed (as many souls in spiritual science) so that it resides in a different state but the total energy will be the same. One finds in physics that different energies are useful in natural processes or by way of automation in the form of heat, light or motion in the service of society. Similarly, the Acharya of this philosophy classified energy as Prakriti, consisting of soul (Jiva or energy) and matter (animate and inanimate c.f., in physics, kinetic and thermal energies) as its modes i.e., Chit-Achit and Visishtadvaita (Truth-world-importance or Viseshya) and in physics the potential energy consists of energy (Truth) - kinetic energy (World) - thermal energy (of importance to the society). In Visishtadvaita the Lord takes five fold forms viz. Para (The Transcendent), Vyuha (Group), Vibhava (the Incarnation), Archa (the Image) and Antaryamin (the Immanent). In physics the transcendent can be recognized as kinetic energy, Group can be recognized as thermal energy (as it is the sum of tangible heat and latent heat). The Incarnation can be recognized as sound, light, elastic and electromagnetic energies; the Image can be recognized as any one of the energies and the Immanent can be seen as potential energy in the jivas. In order to realise the immanent energy in the inanimate, the Jivas take recourse to kinetic energy. This may be likened to kindling fire from two twigs.

Therefore, this philosophy considers the different forms of the Supreme in the animate and inanimate as part of nature. The non-conscious substance (Achit) undergoes a real evolution (Parinama) during dissolution (Pralaya) and exists in a subtle state as Prakara (Supreme deed) of God. Similarly, when the kinetic energy comes to the state of tranquillity the thermal energy attains the state of the main energy.

The internal difference is shown between the school of Sri Ramanuja and Sri Adi Shankara. Sri Shankara treats the world as Mitya (illusion) whereas Sri Ramanuja terms it the Supreme's attributes.

According to physics, the total energy always remains the same, but the transformed energies are the forms of the total energy so we can assume the forms of energy to be the attributes of that total energy.

School of Advaita: Sri Shankara considered the Brahman (in physics the object with its energy and force) as real, the world (in physics, the kinetic energy) as unreal and the Jiva or the individual soul (in physics, the different thermal energies) as not different from the Brahman. Sri Shankara explains the Brahman (energy) as the One without a second. The Atman is self-evident (Svatha-Siddha), whereas in physics, it is considered as an object with energy and force. According to Shankara, the Atman (self) is witnessing, experiencing all kinds of knowledge being not an object - object here refers to body, mind and senses. Even though physics speaks about an object, but not referring to body, mind and senses, some of its energy can be recognized as mind and senses of the object. Here, according to physics the energy, which can be transformed into different states of energy, has been named transducer. The transducer is of 3 types: one is the tachometer, which can be named as sense organ of the object. The second one, the actuator (thought), is used for the transformation of energy as an output action in which it converts electrical signal into generally non-electrical energy (in spiritual science it is considered the Supreme consciousness manifested into individual souls i.e., Jivas). And the third kind of transducer having both functions switching back and forth many times a second, functioning as an actuator to produce ultrasonic waves and as a tachometer (Mind) to detect ultrasonic waves.

Therefore, the school of Advaita speaks of the Supreme energy as that without bodily experiences and which witnesses its knowledge with the Neti-Neti principle meaning not this or not that. It means the Supreme energy is not the body, the sense, the mind or the intellect. When body, senses, mind and intellect cease to exist, what remains is the Supreme energy. Hence, it is changeless (Self) existence, knowledge, delight and bliss. It is the essence (Svarupa), the Seer (Drashta), the Transcendent (Turiya) and the Silent (Sakshi - witness). Similarly, physics also emphasizes the same theory of Advaita that an object with energy and force, its potential and kinetic energy (extra energy due to its motion), maintains its kinetic energy unless its speed changes. Therefore, for the object to come back with energy and force to the same state, negative work of the same magnitude is required. Hence, the object with energy and force witnesses and experiences the transformation which is taking place around it and which is equivalent to that of the pattern of energy discussed under Advaita.

Advaita says Brahman is without a second because it is indescribable as description implies distinction. Similarly, the study of physics which is based largely on the same principle since the object with energy and force is indescribable and that which is described here in the study of physics is the limited one. One can witness and experience, but cannot understand the origin of the object and its energy. Hence, the spiritual aspirants consider the paths of natural science and spiritual science to be one and the same.

It is also clear from an analysis or study of chemistry that it is about matter and it is as hard to define as spiritual science. No one can define the Supreme Consciousness, however, a study can be made on assumptions and perceptions to create a concept. Some of these concepts are generally followed and accepted by many, but some are only partially accepted.

Chemistry postulates that matter may be anything that has mass and occupies space - to put in simple and general terms. For instance, air is considered to be matter having mass and occupying space. Air is considered as vital air

(Supreme Consciousness) in spiritual science and the mass here refers to circulation (thought process), occupying space. According to science a mass circulation of air in space converts energy into other non-material forms like heat, cold, dreams, hopes, ideas etc. and matter like iron, air, wool, gold etc., due to its properties like tangible and latent heat. Similarly, the thought of the Supreme Consciousness is processed and manifested as nature, and its by products as animate and inanimate.

A sample of matter can be either a pure substance or a mixture. A pure substance has a fixed, characteristic composition and a fixed, definite set of properties. A pure substance may be a single element, such as copper or oxygen, or a compound of two or more elements in a fixed ratio, such as salt (sodium and chlorine) or table sugar (carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen).

The philosophy of Madhva avers that Vishnu (the Supreme Energy in atoms) is the efficient cause and Moola Prakruti is the material cause of the world. But as a pure substance the Supreme Energy exists immanently in the five elements like air, water, fire, ether and the earth and also as a mixture (combination of these elements), It energises Prakruti, through Lakshmi (the co-eternal) and also exists as a compound of two or more elements like space-time.

A mixture is a collection of pure substances simply mixed together. Its composition is variable, as are its properties. Generally a pure substance can be a solid, a liquid, or a gas - three states of matter. A solid maintains its volume and shape; a liquid, its volume only; and a gas, neither. Solids tend to be hard and unyielding; liquids maintain their volumes and flow to adopt the shapes of their containers. The ability to flow is called fluidity, and so gases and liquids are called fluids.

In the Vishishtadvaita philosophy of Sri Ramanuja, it is said that Prakruti consists of certain attributes. A pure substance has three natural states according to science, similarly Prakruti consists of three attributes viz. Satwa (Solid) - The Supreme Being attached with HIS body [even though formless, Who, when with form] is detached of the bodily actions, which is why HIS state is called "Shuddha Tatwa" (feature of purity) i.e., having only Satwa (the truth). In science, we call it solid, that which maintains volume and shape. Hence, that Satwa is the very Truth and its essence is unalterable. Rajas (mode of passion) is the second characteristic of Prakruti (Liquid). As liquid maintains its volume, similarly, the characteristic of Rajas is to maintain its status (movement). As gas loses capacity to maintain its state (original state) it is in a free state; similarly the Tamas (ignorance) maintains nothing i.e., it is all pervasive.

One of the goals of chemistry is to describe the properties of matter in terms of its internal structure, the arrangement and interrelationship of its parts. This word, structure, sometimes refers to the physical arrangement of particles, such as atoms or molecules in space. At other times, it is used to indicate some other arrangement, such as the arrangement of energy levels of an electron in an atom. The structure of matter determines its properties. Properties can be classified as either physical or chemical. A physical property of a substance can be characterized without

specific reference to any other substance and usually describes the response of the substance to some external influence, such as heat, light, force, electricity, etc.

A chemical property, on the other hand, describes a chemical change: the interaction of one substance with another or the change of one substance into another. During chemical changes, substances are actually changed into other substances. The simultaneous disappearance of some substances (called the reactants) and appearance of others (the products) are characteristic of chemical change (chemical reaction). Chemical changes are generally characterized by pronounced internal structural rearrangements.

Physical changes are not characterized by the transformation of one substance into another, but rather by the impact of external or internal forces on a given substance. The bending of a piece of copper wire fails to change the basic property of copper or change it into another substance; crushing a block of ice leaves only crushed ice; melting an iron nail yields a substance still called iron; these are normally accepted as physical changes.

Similarly this is well explained in Advaitic philosophy with the familiar example of 'the space and the pot': that the space in a pot and the space in the cosmos are the same since the pot occupies space; nevertheless, the nature of the space does not change. This is the quality of Satwa (Truth) where physical changes in the body take place, but the control over senses is intact.

The interaction of one substance with another is a chemical change. Similarly, changes in a Jiva occur when the attributes like Rajas and Tamas (modes of passion and darkness) intervene. A Jiva, even though being the very Eternal, loses its identity and changes due to the influence of attributes like Rajas and Tamas. Such changes are like internal structural, chemical rearrangements. The effect of the Gunas (Rajas and Tamas) is like a chemical process entailing the changing of a substance into another form. When a Jiva undergoes such a process, there is a reaction. When the Jiva understands its true nature by negating the chemical process in its character, it appears to be the same as it was in the origin. The changes that developed are similar to that of a physical change of a substance like bending a copper piece and trying to get back to the original true nature. Hence, the similarity to a chemical process is the fluctuation or the appearance and disappearance of the three attributes and their manifold variations.

Chapter 3 - COSMIC PLAY

The Upanishads state that in the beginning the Supreme formless Self-alone existed. This formless Supreme is identified in science as "Air" and in the Vedanta as "Vital Air", "Thought", "Energy" etc. The Vital Air through its thought created "Controllers". The Vital Air consists of two hidden elements viz., fire and water. The Upanishad declares that water emerged from fire. Water may be defined as life (energy), awareness (intellect) and consciousness (ethereal). The controller is also known as the primeval man or Purusha, Who controls HIS Supreme manifestation through water, i.e., energy, and was assigned a shape. Since the Vital Air consists of two elements, which can further manifest by their permutations and combinations, the Purusha thus, can assume any shape. As mentioned earlier, the combination of Na + Ra has become Saguna, that is, with form. Similarly, the Purusha started HIS work with HIS form. Through HIS energy, HE meditated upon HIS mouth, which developed speech and the output was "Fire" (visible element). HE next meditated upon nostrils and "breath" came out as awareness; the eyes were separated into "sight" and the Sun appeared; the ears were separated as hearing and the eight directions of space appeared; through hair, the plants and trees were formed, which emerged from HIS skin. Then, HE meditated and separated heart, which is also named mind, and this appeared as Moon. The Purusha meditated and separated the navel and from that has come "Out Breath" that results in death. Finally, reproductive organs were separated resulting in "Semen" and visible water appeared. Therefore, in the creation process "Purusha" was the first to be created and then the Divinities, who were meditated upon and separated by HIM as thirty three crore deities followed by the animate and the inanimate beings.

4. Maya (illusion)

To enjoy the cosmic play and to have some meaning for HIS co-eternal's creation, Narayana influenced HIS Yoga Maya over Jagat. As Lakshmi is not subjected to the consequences of the three attributes of Prakruti, Narayana, being in the form of thought, will be unaffected by the corollary of HIS Yoga Maya. Maya, also known as Mohini, takes the form of the animate and the inanimate beings. Maya Mohini knows that her form as animate and inanimate beings is mere illusion and as such she too will not be affected by the consequences of her actions.

The world consists of this Maya as beautiful nature and in it are the mountains, oceans, rivers, plants and trees, animals, birds and human beings. All these animate and inanimate beings are interdependent; however, the animate beings depend more on the inanimate beings. Every appearance has its specific universal space-time and has to end with its space-time. The function of Maya is initiated through Moha. The Supreme knows that Maya (illusion) is merely an element in the cosmic play whereas this fact is unknown to the animate and the inanimate beings. In order to set in motion the play of the Jagat, the Supreme introduced another element called Moha, i.e., attraction.

5. Moha (Desire or Attachment):

The entire cosmic drama starts from here. Through Moha, the animate beings are trained about Maya. Moha is defined in two ways: the literal meaning of the term is desire and when the desire deeply touches the heart, it becomes "attachment". These two qualities involve the beings in Karma (action).

The Aitareya Upanishad gives further explanation for the divinities to include the elements of Maya and Moha as 'Hunger and Thirst'. The five elements (Divinities) made an appeal to Lakshmi and her sons to find an abode where they could satisfy their hunger and thirst. The trio caused the divinities to fall into the great ocean called life.

The trio brought to the divinities a cow and a horse and asked the divinities to function with the sense organs; but with those creations, the divinities failed to function properly. Then was brought forth the human creation and with that the divinities were satisfied and the evolution of Man began, from the four footed beings to the Human form.

Why is this distinction between the four footed and the human form mentioned in Aitareya Upanishad?

The reason is no doubt that while both the classes of beings, animal and human, have desire, it is the human class which gets thoroughly involved by attachment. The animals have sensations, feelings, temptations, hunger and thirst like humans. Once their hunger and thirst are satisfied, their desire will cease until the time when they feel hungry or thirsty again; but they will not be subject to attachment. Whereas, the humans' hunger and thirst will continue even after their needs are satisfied, by developing one more form of desire, called attachment.

Both the classes, according to the Upanishad, will undergo death; the animals will be liberated to a higher stage after cessation of their bodies since they are not involved by attachment to this mundane plane; on the other hand we observe that the humans are completely involved by attachment to this mundane life considering it as their belonging. Because of such attachment, the humans are bound by the cycle of births and deaths till the time of their self-realization. The boundaries of ignorance of the humans engage them completely in Kamyā (Attachment) Karma (Deeds) and that of animals in Nish-Kamyā (Detachment) Karma.

The illusion and desire can be studied further, in detail, in Karmic theory.

Chapter 4 – KARMA

6. Karma

Karma means Deed. Karma can be Kamya or Nish-Kamya, that is with or without attachment. The deeds can be in the form of thoughts, words or actions. The Nish-Kamya Karma is also recognized as "happenings". Why is it said to be a "happening"?

The Supreme - with form or formless, animate or inanimate - is not restricted by Its thought and action. It may not utter a word, yet there is Karma, for the thought and the action are also part of Its deeds. Hence, such deeds in thought and in action (action here refers to movement and not implementation) are said to be "happenings". These happenings are viewed in a detached manner and without being affected by the outcome. Hence, these kinds of detached deeds are named "happenings".

Kamya-Karma (deed with attachment) is subject to "upadhi" meaning limitation. The limitation here is the binding force that engages the humans in illusions and attractions. Such hallucinations lead to attachment. How this attachment results in grief can be understood from the stories of Dasaratha and Yashoda (mother of Krishna).

Dasaratha was a great king (during the Treta Yuga as depicted in the Indian epic Ramayana). Dasaratha was the father of Rama (an avatara of Lord Vishnu and the hero of the epic). Dasaratha was the scion of Raghuvamsa and the King of Ayodhya. He had three wives, namely, Kausalya, Kaikeyi and Sumitra. The son of Kausalya was Rama, the son of Kaikeyi was Bharata and the sons of Sumitra were Lakshmana and Shatrughna. Dasaratha and Kausalya had one daughter, named Shanta, who was married to Ekashringa.

Three key events of the Ramayana depict the tragedy of King Dasaratha's life. The first story is about Dasaratha and Ravana:

Hearing of Dasaratha's fame, Ravana felt jealous and sent messengers to the king's court threatening war unless he was given due homage and respect. In reply, Dasaratha shot off arrows and told the messengers that when they returned to Lanka they would find the main gates of Lanka closed by the arrows. Ravana felt humiliated at this defeat and took it as an insult. He also realized that King Dasaratha was superior to him. Then Ravana undertook a severe penance to please Lord Brahma. When Brahma appeared before Ravana, he asked him not to bless Dasaratha with the gift of progeny.

Dasaratha was famous for his special ability to hunt blind and shoot arrows by hearing the sound alone. Once during one of his hunting expeditions, Dasaratha heard a noise that sounded like that of an elephant drinking water and shot an arrow in that direction in quest of his prey. However, to his dismay, Dasaratha noticed that he had instead shot a young boy named Sravana Kumara who was collecting water in a pitcher for his blind parents. Sravana Kumara was the only child of his parents and they were totally dependent on him. Sravana Kumara used to carry his parents everywhere in two pans of a balance supported on his shoulder and would collect water to quench their

thirst.

At his impending death, Sravana Kumara was inconsolable at the thought that his parents would be without any support or protection. As his dying wish, Sravana Kumara asked the king to carry water to his thirsty parents. Dasaratha carried the water to the old couple and they drank the water without knowing that it was not their son who was offering it. The king then hesitantly narrated the tragic incident to Sravana's parents. The old couple was so distressed at the pathetic news of the death of their son that Sravana's father cursed King Dasaratha that one day he too would suffer from Putrasoka (grief of separation from one's son). The old couple then sacrificed their lives, as they did not want to live anymore after consuming water offered by their son's killer.

Dasaratha had also fought for the gods in the battle against Asuras, and Kaikeyi had then assisted him as his charioteer. Kaikeyi had saved Dasaratha's life during the battle. Dasaratha was so pleased with Kaikeyi that he had promised her two boons, for which Kaikeyi had said that she would ask when she wished to avail of them.

These three incidents played a significant role in shaping Dasaratha's fate. Because of Ravana's wish, he had no sons; but he was able to overcome this by performing the "Putrakaameshti Yaaga" - Sacrifice for obtaining progeny. Dasaratha was blessed with four sons. When the boys came of age, Dasaratha decided to retire and appoint his eldest son Rama as Crown Prince. Before the anointing ceremony took place, Kaikeyi asked Dasaratha to grant her the boons that he had earlier promised. For her first boon, she asked for her son Bharata's enthronement instead of Rama's and as her second boon, she asked for Rama's exile to the forest for fourteen years.

Dasaratha was helpless but he had to grant the boons to keep his word, as, such was the 'Kshatriya dharma'. After Rama left Ayodhya, Dasaratha could not bear the pain of separation from his most beloved son. Unable to withstand the anguish, the dispirited King Dasaratha died of grief and pain and thus the curse of Sravana Kumara's blind parents took effect.

Dasaratha, knowing well that Rama was a divine personality, considered Rama as his son and was more attached to Rama's human personality rather than to HIS divinity and because of such overwhelming vatsalya (paternal attachment) Dasaratha died without having a final glimpse of his son Rama.

There was a similar incident in the life of Yashoda maa, concerning her Vatsalya Prema for her son Krishna: Yashoda, the mother, was looking after the Lord when He was a baby, dressing him and cajoling him. Although Krishna was born to Devaki, Yashoda looked after Krishna as if He were her own son and she developed 'Vatsalya Bhakti' for Krishna. In spite of the fact that the Gopikas used to complain to her about Krishna, Yashoda loved him and she never worried about the complaints. On one occasion, the complaints were more than she could bear and she asked Krishna to tell her why he would not eat what she gave him and why he had to go and steal from other houses as if they had not enough curds or milk in their own home. She was cajoling him and asking him about this in a very endearing manner, when Balarama and Satyaki came and complained to Yashoda that Krishna was eating mud. She was very confused and asked Krishna to open his mouth. When Krishna opened his mouth, she found that it smelt of butter instead of mud. She was in confusion and did not know what the truth was. Although Krishna was a

tiny little boy, his greatness was being seen in his own mouth. He asked, "Am I a child? Or am I so foolish to eat mud?"

In spite of being told about the greatness and the Divinity of Krishna by Krishna himself, Mother Yashoda always wanted to see the young boy in Krishna and in that Vatsalya Prema of a mother to a son, she got immense pleasure and emancipation.

If you attach yourself to the Lord through a chosen path like Prema, it would be possible to realize Him. Yashoda was such that she was filled with Prema (love) at all times. She never spent one moment separated from Krishna or without thinking of Krishna. She used to ask if there was any bliss greater than being near the child Krishna with his tender rosy cheeks. Regarding this baby form of Krishna as the form of the Lord, she expressed prema to that form and realized God. This has been called 'Vatsalya Prema' in the Bhagavata.

A mother shows great affection to her son. This aspect is similar to friendship. When Krishna was away, Divine Mother Yashoda's thoughts were always on Krishna. The mother sang the following words: "You have always blessed us by playing your Murali (flute). Why are you not showing your face now? Have you forgotten the prema of your mother? I have been waiting all these days in the hope that You will return. I cannot wait any longer. Please come soon." Such a feeling, which comes from the bottom of the heart, leads one to true friendship.

Yashoda was not interested in any appellation for Krishna other than 'Gopala'. That name alone was sweet and dear to her.

Though she had experienced numerous instances of Krishna's Divinity, Yashoda could not realize the oneness of Godhood. Because of attachment to the body, she complained about the worry caused to her by Krishna, who refused to eat the butter given by her, but went out stealing butter from other Gopikas' houses. She tied Krishna to a tree to prevent him from going to their houses. Episodes such as these are intended to teach lessons to devotees about the ways of God.

From the above illustrations from the Bhagavata, one can understand that deeds which are performed only through the body and its organs lead to grief. Such Kamyas are further classified as Prarabdha-Karma (past deeds), Sanchita-Karma (present or good deeds) and Aagami-Karma (future deeds).

If one undertakes actions through thought, word and deed with attachment to the physical body (body also refers to the world), these will take the person through the cycle of birth and death. Even though one may be very much devoted to god, if the actions are not surrendered to god, then that person has to take birth to carry out Sanchita-Karma to set off the Prarabdha-Karma.

Sanchita-Karma is also known as Nish-Kamyas. At one point of time (birth) in his life, man will realize that because of his past deeds he takes birth, and in that situation he will be prompted to perform Sanchita-Karma. The character and role of Lakshmana in the Ramayana is the best example of Nishkamyas.

Nish-Kamyas: Lakshmana, the Prince of Ayodhya was a brother, closest friend and companion of Rama, the great hero of the famous Indian epic, Ramayana. In some Hindu scriptures, Lakshmana is considered to be an

'avatara' (divine incarnation), a part as well as a secondary form of Rama's main appearance. According to some other Hindu traditions, Lakshmana is worshipped as an avatara of Sesha. Lakshmana was the son of King Dasaratha and Queen Sumitra.

Lakshmana was the twin brother of Shatrughna. He was born in Ayodhya. Rama was the eldest son of Dasaratha, Bharata was the second, Lakshmana was the third and Shatrughna was the youngest of the four brothers. Although Lakshmana was the twin of Shatrughna, he was more attached to Rama. The duo, Rama and Lakshmana were inseparable. When Rama was married to Sita, the daughter of King Janaka of Mithila, Lakshmana was married to Sita's younger sister Urmila.

In the Puranic scriptures, Lakshmana is described as the incarnation of Ananta Sesha, the thousand-headed Naga. Lord Vishnu reclines on the Ananta Sesha in the primordial ocean of milk (Kshirasagara). Seshanaga is the Lord of Serpents, who incarnated on the earth in Treta Yuga in the form of Lakshmana. In Dwapara Yuga, Seshanaga incarnated as Balarama. Seshanaga is considered an eternal companion, often incarnating to give company to Lord Vishnu in HIS avataras.

Lakshmana was also considered a perfect man (Maryada Purushottama - a description normally ascribed to and epitomized by Rama). He was a symbol of loyalty, love and commitment to his elder brother and shared all the moments of HIS joy and sorrow equally with him. Lakshmana was an invincible warrior committed to virtue and service to his elder brother. He never thought twice about joining his brother Rama in exile though he was not asked to do so, nor did he covet the throne of Ayodhya.

In the earlier period of exile when Bharata entered the forest with a large entourage to persuade Rama to return to Ayodhya, Lakshmana had mistakenly jumped to the conclusion that Bharata had some malafide intention. However, Rama knew Bharata's feelings and HE pacified Lakshmana by saying that Bharata would never harm them.

Lakshmana served Rama and Sita during their exile with great reverence and devotion. Lakshmana built a hermitage for Rama and Sita, guarded them at night, brought food for them and accompanied them on long tiring journeys and in the lonely life of the forest. All these and more he did without complaining or any care for himself.

An episode regarding the construction of a hut is worthy of mention:

Lakshmana once asked Rama where he should construct the hut.

Rama told Lakshmana to build the hut wherever he desired. Spontaneously Lakshmana lost control over his feelings and felt depressed reflecting over his plight.

Sita asked, "What happened Lakshmana? Why are you so sad?"

Lakshmana replied, "Maa, how can brother Rama ask me to follow my desire?"

Sita said, "What is wrong with that? You have been given your choice, why do you feel sad about this?"

Lakshmana replied, "Maa, I never had any choice or desire of my own; I have completely surrendered to Rama; what He decides for me is the right choice and I carry out His wish. Then where is the question of my individual will or

taste? Is it right on my brother's part to ask me to act according to my will?"

This episode reveals the selflessness and selfless deeds (Nish-Kamyā) of Lakshmana. One has to abide by the words of the Master without a second thought and that is Nish-Kamyā Karma.

The king of demons, Ravana, had planned to kidnap Sita. He sent a demon Maricha in the form of a magical golden deer to her. Its sole aim was to distract Rama and Lakshmana away from the hut so that Ravana could kidnap Sita without any hindrance. Rama went after the golden deer but sensed bad omens, danger and evil, so He asked Lakshmana to guard Sita at their hut.

When Rama killed the deer, the mysterious demon Maricha cried out imitating Rama's voice and called out to Sita and Lakshmana for help. Although Lakshmana knew that Rama was invincible and beyond any danger, he was forced to go as Sita was in a panic and repeatedly urged Lakshmana to go to Rama's help immediately. Lakshmana was unable to prevail over the frightened Sita and went in search of Rama, leaving behind Sita. Lakshmana however used his mystical power to draw the Lakshmana Rekha or Lakshmana's limit, a boundary line around the hut and asked Sita not to cross it. Any invader who crossed it would be killed instantly and thus the Lakshmana Rekha would serve as Sita's protection.

When Lakshmana was gone, Ravana came in the guise of a Brahmin mendicant and asked for alms. Sita crossed the Lakshmana Rekha out of compassion to give alms to the mendicant and Ravana was able to seize Sita safely.

Rama and Lakshmana came back to the empty hut. They went in search of Sita. Rama and Lakshmana found Sita's jewellery cast out by Sita from the Pushpakavimana, the aerial chariot of Ravana. Rama asked Lakshmana if he could recognize Sita's jewellery; but Lakshmana could only recognize her feet-adornment, as he never looked at the face of Sita. Rama and Lakshmana were finally able to find out who had abducted Sita. They befriended Sugriva and Hanuman and set out towards Lanka. Sugriva's Vanara Sena (monkey army) assisted Rama.

Rama and Lakshmana had a great fight with Ravana and his demon battalion. Lakshmana was a powerful warrior and he slew thousands of Rakshasas including Atikaya and Prahasta, Ravana's chief commanders and his son Indrajit. Lakshmana aided Rama in killing the great giant Kumbhakarna.

During the great battle to rescue Sita, a mystical weapon fired by Ravana's son Indrajit grievously injured Lakshmana. Lakshmana fell unconscious. The vanara (monkey) physician explained that only a special herb called Sanjivini could save Lakshmana's life. Hanuman set out on a journey to Dronagiri Mountain, where Sanjivini was said to be found. However, after reaching there he was unable to identify the herb and instead brought the entire mountain to the battlefield. The restorative herb was finally located and Lakshmana was revived.

Later in the battle, Lakshmana fought and killed Indrajit. Lakshmana used an unorthodox means to kill Indrajit, which was considered as a turning point of the battle. Indrajit was considered unbeatable, as the king of gods, Indra, supported him.

Lakshmana disobeyed Rama only once during their lifetime. Rudra, the God of Time came to meet Rama. Before they started their conversation, Rudra asked for uninterrupted privacy. Rama was in deep agony on being separated from Sita, for he had forgotten His true identity and the purpose of His descent on the earth. Rudra wanted to make Rama realise His true identity and the reason for His incarnation. Rudra also made the condition that anyone who

listened to their conversation had to be killed by Rama. Rama realized that it would be difficult to prevent anybody from entering the room and so he asked Lakshmana to guard the door of the room. When Lakshmana was standing guard, the sage Durvasa, known for his quick temper came to meet Rama. Lakshmana politely asked him to wait until the conversation ended. However, Durvasa felt humiliated and was about to utter a curse that would destroy Rama, Lakshmana and the city of Ayodhya all at once. Realising the seriousness of the situation, Lakshmana thought it more prudent to enter the room than to receive the sage's curse. Rama was aghast at the sight of Lakshmana entering the room and wondered how he could kill his beloved brother Lakshmana who had always obeyed and worked for his mission without having any self-interest. Rama, having no other option declared that he was parting with Lakshmana at that moment itself; and Lakshmana hearing these words from Rama drew his last breath instantly. Thus, only once he had disobeyed Rama's order for the well-being of others.

Lakshmana is revered for his absolute devotion and surrender to Rama. As a younger brother, he always served his elder brother Rama with great sacrifice and in all adverse conditions. The life of Lakshmana is an example of self-sacrifice, duty of man to his elders and superiors and teaches the value of selflessness. Sanchita Karma (Nish-Kamyā) will liberate a person from the cycle of birth and death. Such liberated souls can have birth at their will.

Karma is not the only path to liberation, there is the path of Bhakti too.

Chapter 5 - BHAKTI AND PRAPATTI



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Chapter 5 - BHAKTI AND PRAPATTI

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Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba says that the followers of the nine-fold path of Bhakti are of two kinds:

- (1) The followers of the hard path
- (2) The followers of the safe and easy path.

These are sometimes referred to as (1) Bhakti and (2) Prapatti. Bhakti is said to be like the practice of the Markatakishora or the young of the monkey; and Prapatti is likened to the practice of the Marjalakishora or the young of the cat.

Devotion has to be non-intermittent, continuous, like the flow of oil from one vessel to another. Though the two kinds are the same, the practices are different. One cannot acquire anything in this world without prema. It is only when there is prema, anuraga or attachment, in its turn, produces the desire to protect and guard. In both the above kinds, prema is no doubt equal, but in actual manifestation, there is a difference. In the Markatakishora Marga, the child has to rely on its own strength to protect itself; wherever the mother monkey might jump, it has to attach itself fast to the mother's belly and not release its hold, even if it is pulled apart. So too, the bhakta has to stand the test at the hands of the Lord and hold on to the Lord's name at all times and under all conditions, tirelessly, without the slightest

trace of dislike or disgust, bearing the ridicule and the criticism of the world and conquering the feelings of shame and defeat. The example for this type of Bhakti is Prahlada, the first among devotees.

The Prapatti Marga is not of this type; it is like the way of the kitten, the Marjalakishora, 'Sarvabhaara Samarpitha' attitude. As the kitten simply continues mewling in one place, placing all its burdens on the mother cat, so too the devotee puts complete trust in the Lord. The mother-cat holds the kitten in its mouth and takes it to more elevated places, or transports it safely through even very narrow passages. So too the devotee places his entire burden on the Lord and surrenders fully to His Will. Lakshmana is the best example of this path.

The discipline of Prapatti is superior to the discipline of Bhakti. The characteristic of Prapatti is complete surrender, in all aspects. To serve Sri Rama, Lakshmana renounced all obstacles in his path, like wealth, wife, mother, home and even sleep and food - not for a day, month, or year but for fourteen years. He felt that Sri Rama was his all, his happiness and joy, that He would grant him everything that he needed and that the purpose of his life was only to follow Him and serve Him and surrender his will to Him. "So, if all burdens are placed on Him and if He is followed ceaselessly and remembered constantly, He will certainly provide everything. This is the nature of the Prapatti type of devotion."

- Bhagwan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Agami-Karma (Future Deeds): Based on Kamya and Sanchita, the Agami Karma evolves. As discussed before with regard to Kamya Karma, the Prarabdha Karma that will take place in future is said to be Agami. Similarly, the Sanchita of the past or the present can also have the future (Agami).

The Agami is the future birth and deed, which arises in the present birth. A person should select the path of Sanchita Karma (with detachment), so that he may not proceed further to the stage of Agami (Future) and thus avoid the cycle of birth and death.

When and how can a man avoid the cycle of Agami?

The soul, when it takes birth, does not know these three terms - Prarabdha, Sanchita and Agami. It is because of Kamya actions that a soul undertakes the journey (of life) and learns the lessons of Prarabdha as pain and suffering.

What leads to Kamya Deeds?

As explained earlier, there are two aspects of Kamya Karma - the one is the desire and the other is the attachment. So far, we have seen the illustration for attachment through stories from the Ramayana and Krishna Leela. Now let us study the cause for desire in man.

Desire arises in creatures because of the sensory organs in the body. As explained in one of the preceding paragraphs, animals have desires but not attachment. They hunt to quench hunger and thirst and once satiated they do not bother until they feel hungry again. Human beings, in addition to desires also have attachment. Their expectations are endless. They develop a strong desire to possess whatever they sense through the sensory organs. For example, in these modern times, man in general is lacking in moral values; the reason could be the non-fulfilment of ambition and tough competition. Due to these two reasons, moral values like patience, tolerance,

integrity, steadfastness, faith and confidence are lacking in him. In the absence of these values, shortcomings like fear, failure and frustration are found in man. These shortcomings can also be grouped together under a common heading as the cause of anger. Before explaining this word in terms of spirituality, let us study it from the viewpoint of modern science of psychology and understand how to overcome anger through anger management. Attachment, it is said, is the cause of anger.

ANGER MANAGEMENT:

We observe that people have been conditioned (to the point of obsession) to set and attain a specified target (status) in their lives. Achievement and success bring pleasure in life. Achieving the goal depends on the person's calibre, effort and capacity to produce the results fixed for the target. When a person achieves his life's goal, he feels happy and proud; and when he fails to achieve the goal or underachieves, it leads to frustration, then loss of temper, finally resulting in anger.

Anger may manifest as a swift irritation or a violent agitation, or even deliberate repression (cold fury) which we have all felt at some point of time or the other in our lives. It is an outburst of human emotion. When the emotions go out of control, the quality of life - whether private or public (at work place) - is ruined.

Anger is an emotional state entailing a lot of energy. The amount of energy spent varies, depending on the intensity of the emotion felt, ranging from mild irritation to violent agitation. Emotion is influenced by physiological and biological changes. Similarly, the heart rate and blood pressure go up when one gets angry, as do the levels of energy, hormones, adrenaline and noradrenaline. The trigger for anger may be external or internal conditions. Expression of a certain amount of displeasure is necessary for self-defence. Anger is a natural response (subject to adjustments) to threats; it induces powerful, often quarrelsome feelings and behaviours, which enable us to fight and defend. On the other hand, it is not prudent to clash with every person or object that agitates or annoys us; laws, social norms and common sense also set limits on how far our disposition can take us.

The expression of anger as a release and not for self-assertion, is the healthiest way to express anger. In order to manage anger, one must learn what one's need are and how to achieve the target without harming others.

Expression of anger should not mean being pushy or demanding; it requires being respectful of yourself and others. Changing the direction of mind can contain anger but harbouring intense displeasure may lead to hypertension, high blood pressure, or depression, which turn inward to affect one's health and self.

Suppression of anger can lead to pathological expression of anger such as passive or indirect aggressive behaviour (retaliating indirectly without stating the reasons, rather than confronting directly). However, it is possible to bring under control the reaction to external stimuli such as annoying people or things, situations beyond one's control or other emotional factors.

Some people are by nature irritable, quick to take offence and easily angered. The other reason for irritation could be the effect of socio-cultural factors. We have been taught that it is proper to express our emotions, anxiety and depression. Since we have not been taught to control or channel our anger constructively, it is considered negative.

How can one control anger?

For any problem related to emotion the best remedy is to relax through meditation. This practice solves the problem from the root, gives peace of mind, and keeps the emotion, anxiety and depression under control.

Reorganizing one's thoughts and thinking, in accordance with one's personal experience or knowledge helps to shape the mind of a person and to correct himself.

One should not expect whatever one desires in life to come true or come up to one's expectations. Expectation may prove to be unsatisfactory because of inability to utilise faculties and resources of ourselves and non-cooperation from others, lack of coordination with respect to one's basic nature and various other factors, which lead to frustration. Under such stressful situations, instead of being angry one should think calmly and reflect, "What was the omission or mistake committed the outcome was not in accordance with the expectation? Were my expectations realistic?"

This exercise is not harmful to others. Analyzing all aspects will help one to arrive at some conclusion, which will keep anger under control. By thinking always realistically and without having any expectations in life, one can feel the completeness. Expectations may be high, but what one actually deserves, is of prime concern. A practical approach to problems leads one to gain the knowledge and experience to think and approach the situation and overcome the problem as opposed to getting angry and tense, which result in a state of confusion.

Solution: No doubt, anger is often healthy and natural in response to some problems. Certain problems may lead to agitation or frustration, but they are however, real and unavoidable in life. For any kind of disease, there is a possible remedy. Likewise, for every problem there is a solution. When one is unable to find a solution to a problem, it also leads one to frustration. Therefore, under such circumstances, one must face and handle the situation with a cool mind. Proper planning, keeping track of the progress and keeping one's temperament in perfect control even when the results are not satisfactory or according to plan are some of the ways and means that help one to be in control of the situation.

Each one of us has certain amount of freedom with respect to thought, speech and action. One may not readily accept the finger pointed at him. This is because of self-esteem, which does not allow one to accept another's opinion. One should not burst out even during the most critical situation; it is natural to get defensive, but at the same time, one should not feel the need to take revenge. One must calmly think over the whole story or episode, which had provoked one to anger. One should take into consideration the viewpoint of the opposite side and analyse the reason for their ill will or animosity towards us. One may ask oneself, "What was my fault?" and conclude that he had probably hurt them in the first place evoking the retaliatory response, which ultimately irritated him and made him lose his temper.

Even when we had not hurt anyone through our conduct, if someone annoys us, we should keep our anger at bay and should not react. Adopting the principles of patience and tolerance helps to build knowledge and power of concentration to discharge one's duty to the best of one's capability by managing anger and frustration and thereby

controlling potentially disastrous situations.

Therefore, for any kind of psychological problem, the best tonic would be a mix of patience and tolerance achieved by objective reasoning. Patience creates a better atmosphere or situation and tolerance helps to develop concentration. Good atmosphere and concentration yield wealth of health; "Health is wealth." Health promotes joy and happiness keeping anger at bay. Secure better wealth, that is, health.

The cause for anger is desire and its consequences – fulfilment and non-fulfilment of desire, desire being subjective. In such situations how does one negate anger completely and consequently how does one bring about the effect of the desire and in what mode?

Vedanta and Hindu philosophy throw some light on Karma. The Creator performs action to create this universe and creatures. Some of these actions are based on desire; some are based on attachment and the rest on detachment. An action done without any desire may result in a reaction but it cannot produce the effect. The challenge and the game of life rest on desire and for this reason, the Creator introduced the elements of Maya and Moha. If the actions are merely done without desire then such actions are no more actions, but just happenings. Desire by another way of expression is interest. This interest helps a man achieve the target, that is the effect, but it does not force him to attachment which causes endless longing.

What is interest?

The word 'interest' can have situational meanings like attention, notice, thought and concentration. A man should focus attentively - with a fixed thought and with perfect concentration - on the object of his interest in order to notice the movement of such an object.

Interest might mean concern, significance and consequence. With perfect concentration on the object of his interest, a man should develop concern and this concern could be in the form of anxiety or fear. Such anxiety reveals the significance and value of the object. His interest in the object reveals his expectation from it.

Interest also means hobby. A man should not develop the interest to study an object as just a hobby, but with a serious intent so that the consequence of such a study may bring about revolution among other men.

Interest in another sense means appeal. The study of an object by a man should be appealing so that the outcome of interest such as thought, concentration, significance and the enthrallment is attractive enough to other fellow men to bring about a complete transformation in them. Thus interest has to be employed in different ways. For instance, in order to avoid anger and to be of utmost benefit to the society, any work undertaken by a man must be viewed and studied with an intention to help others but not with any motive of clashing of egos. We have looked at some of the aspects of channelling desire in another way as interest. Before elaborating the term interest further by way of illustrations, let us understand the consequences of such actions performed with a notion of desire (attachment) and not as interest.

Chapter 6 - INTEREST AND ATTACHMENT

According to the theories on anger management, the cause of anger is failure of expected outcome or reaction of that. Perceived failure and underachievement in life result as frustrations and lead to further development of the six vice qualities. A man in search of peace tries to attain peace by satisfying his sensory organs and mind, through any of the six vice qualities. These six qualities can so blind a man that he even forgets his companions and himself. Such was the case of Vali and Sugriva, the kings of Kishkinda (Hampi), in the famous epic Ramayana. This story is narrated in the discourse of Bhagawan on 21st May, 2002 during the Summer Course at Brindavan.

Hampi, traditionally known as Pampa kshetra, Kishkindha kshetra or Bhaskara kshetra, has an unbroken tradition of sanctity since ancient days and it continues to be an important pilgrimage centre. Pampa is the ancient name of the river Tungabhadra. The word Hampi is generally held to be a later Kannada version of the term Pampa. The ancient Kishkindha of the Ramayana is believed to have been situated close to the present day Hampi.

RAMA - THE IDEAL HERO

The one whose heart is laden with compassion,

The one whose words are marked by truth,

The one whose time is spent in performing beneficial deeds for the welfare of others,

Such ones are not affected by influence of the age of Kali.

Embodiments of love!

Today, the power of Kali affects everybody without any distinction. "Realizing (then), that Ravana was going to die in a few minutes, many sages, scholars and noble men came to Ravana and asked him, "O Ravana! You performed many good deeds as well as evil deeds. What is the most memorable thing that you have discovered in your life?" To this Ravana replied, "Sirs! Do not delay the noble acts you want to perform at any time. Put into action whatever noble thoughts and feelings that arise in your heart instantaneously. Procrastination is the thief of time. It is dangerous to delay. At one time, I thought of connecting the earth and heaven with a ladder. I wished to turn the saline water surrounding Lanka into sweet water. I wished to bring comfort and solace to the residents of Hell. Though I decided to do these things, I delayed acting. Thereafter, I could never succeed in doing them. Translate into action whatever good resolve emanates in your minds. We waste our time in postponing the good deeds. We should be ever ready to put into action all the good thoughts that arise in the mind." This is the noble advice that Ravana gave to the people who came to him at the end of his life. Since he delayed the performance of good deeds, it brought disaster to him."

While Rama and Lakshmana were moving in the forest in search of Sita, they accosted a strange person who had his face in his stomach. Seeing his form, they concluded that the person was a demon. Rama and Lakshmana went to the demon and asked him, "Who are you? You do not have any head. How do you live? How is it that you don't have a neck as other people have?" The strange creature answered, "O Sir! My name is Kabandha. I have hands that can extend to ten miles. They can grasp any prey that I desire to eat. I fill my stomach without moving much.

Who are you? Why have you entered this dense and terrible forest? You seem to be tender beings. You look like princes. To which kingdom do you belong?" Rama who always spoke the truth replied, "We have come here in obedience to the command of our father. I suffer from the pangs of separation from my wife. Someone has kidnapped her. Please tell us where she is and what has happened to her." Then Kabandha told Rama, "O Sir! Burn me to ashes first! I will then give you all the information you need." They killed him and burned his body. A handsome being arose from the ashes and told them, "I was forced to assume this ugly form due to the curses of sages. I was told that whoever burns me to ashes is verily God himself." Lakshmana informed Kabandha, "He is Rama, my elder brother." Kabandha then answered, "O Rama! Your Sita is in Lanka. She is a woman of great chastity. Whoever dares to touch her will be burned to ashes. Very soon, you will see Sita in Lanka and will go back to Ayodhya. My words never fail. May you enjoy comfort and solace immediately"! After uttering these words, Kabandha vanished.

Vali and Sugreeva are characters in the Hindu epic Ramayana. They were brothers who ruled over their kingdoms; they were individuals of great valour and courage; Vali was the monkey-King of Kishkindha, a son of Indra and the elder brother of Sugriva. Rama, an Avatar of Vishnu, killed him.

Vali was famous for the boon that he had received by which anyone who came to fight with him lost half his strength (to Vali), thereby making Vali invulnerable to any enemy.

Vali was a very strong and powerful Vanara king; but he was wicked and indulged in evil deeds. Once, Vali fought against a powerful demon Dundhubi. He killed him in the fight and hurled his dead body, which fell on the Rishyamukha Mountain where the sage Matanga was doing penance. The blood that dripped from the body of the demon fell on sage Matanga and disturbed him. Enraged, he cursed that whoever had done this thoughtless deed would have his head shattered into a thousand pieces if ever he set foot on that mountain.

Vali picked up a quarrel with Sugreeva, his own brother, and banished him from the kingdom. Sugreeva started living on the Rishyamukha Mountain for he knew that Vali would not be able to touch him if he went to Rishyamukha (due to sage Matanga's curse). Hence, Sugreeva, accompanied by Hanuman and other well-wishers, settled on the Rishyamukha Mountain. He contemplated the ways and means of defeating Vali.

One day Sugreeva and Hanuman noticed two handsome persons walking at a distance in the forest. He wondered who they could be. He thought that they might be hunters. He sent Hanuman to find out about the two brothers. Hanuman disguised himself like a Brahmin and met Rama and Lakshmana. Hanuman's speech was soft and gentle. He introduced himself as a Minister of Sugreeva and volunteered to carry them on his shoulders and take them to Sugreeva. A beautiful conversation ensued between Rama and Sugreeva. Rama understood from the conversation that Vali was unjust towards Sugreeva. Vali had appropriated the kingdom of Sugreeva and driven him out of the kingdom. He accused Sugreeva of criminal conduct. Sugreeva had never indulged in any such crime. Sugreeva was in need of a friend who was stronger than Vali. He wanted to test whether Rama was stronger than Vali.

He wanted to enlist the help of Rama only if he proved himself stronger than Vali. Sugreeva said to Rama, "Rama, my brother has great power and strength. He has also many virtues. I want to find out whether you are stronger than my brother." When Rama nodded his assent, he added further, "Once my brother shot an arrow through the Sal trees. It pierced five Sal trees in a row and emerged out of them. It is very difficult to charge an arrow through a Sal tree because it is made of hardwood. Shoot an arrow and let it pierce through at least four trees." Rama smiled and discharged the arrow. The arrow pierced a number of trees. Sugreeva was deeply impressed with the strength of Rama. He sought the help of Rama to defeat Vali. He also promised to help Rama in searching for Sita. Rama asked Sugreeva to call his brother for a fight, but cautioned him that the fight should take place ten miles away from Kishkindha.

Rama requested Sugreeva to do this because the rules of exile prohibited him from entering cities and villages. These rules compelled him to confine himself only to the forests. Hence, he wanted Sugreeva to call Vali out of his kingdom so that he would be able to help Sugreeva.

As advised by Rama, Sugreeva roared and called Vali for a fight. Tara was the faithful wife of Vali. She wanted to restrain him from entering into a fight with Sugreeva. She pleaded with him by holding his hands; "You should not go for a fight now. I have heard that Sugreeva befriended some powerful princes to help him. Do not be in haste. It is dangerous to be hasty. The wise ones pause and ponder before doing any work. Haste can make waste. It can be dangerous too." Tara spoke these words to Vali and took him back. She was a chaste wife who had many virtues. She was highly intelligent and virtuous. However, when Sugreeva persisted in his challenge, Vali came out running to fight. Sugreeva fought valiantly, but slowly Vali gained an upper hand. He then beat Sugreeva black and blue. Sugreeva felt disappointed that Rama had not come to his rescue. He expressed his disappointment to Sri Rama. Sri Rama explained to him that he could not distinguish between the two brothers, as they looked alike. Rama talked to him softly and consoled him. He also infused courage in him and assured him that he would kill Vali in the next fight. However, he asked Sugreeva that he should have a garland around his neck so that He would be able to distinguish him from Vali. He asked Lakshmana to gather flowers in the forest and string them into a garland. Sugreeva wore the garland and challenged Vali for a fight for the second time.

A fierce fight ensued between the two brothers. Rama, hiding behind a tree shot an arrow at Vali and brought him down. Though Vali fell down, there was still life left in him. Sri Rama went to Vali and said to him, "You have sinned against your brother Sugreeva; you have appropriated his wife. That is a sin because a brother's wife is like one's mother. You appropriated his kingdom, and banished him. You blamed him for crimes that he had not committed. Since he surrendered to me, I promised him that I would help him". Then Vali said to him, "O Rama! You have come into the forest to keep the word of your father. However, you have interfered between my brother and me. It is unjust on your part to kill a person while hiding behind a tree". Then Sri Rama replied, "O Vali! What you have said is correct. I no longer live in Ayodhya. I am like a hunter moving in the forest. I am in exile and you belong to the race of animals. A hunter kills an animal while hiding behind a tree. He never goes face to face with an animal to kill it. So I had to kill you hiding behind a tree". Vali listened to him and further said, "Rama, you are of great power and strength, you could have come face to face to fight with me." Sri Rama replied to him, "Vali, I know the boon that was

bestowed on you. You have a boon that whoever fights you face to face will lose half his strength to you. I know this secret." Vali entered into a long argument with Rama but Rama convinced him of his folly. Finally, Vali called out to Rama and said, "O Rama! My life is ebbing away. Make a promise to me that you will make my son Angada, the crown-prince of Kishkinda". Rama agreed to this and fulfilled the promise that He gave to Vali. He crowned Sugreeva as the king and Angada as the crown prince.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Three clashes between brothers are mentioned in the Ramayana. These clashes can also be interpreted to denote the gunas (attributes) involved. They are:

- (1) The clash between Vali and Sugreeva
- (2) The clash between Ravana and Vibheeshana
- (3) The clash between Rama and Bharatha

Sugreeva sought the help of Rama to kill Vali; he then became the King of Kishkinda. This was a physical clash arising out of ignorance; therefore, this clash may be classified as tamasic.

Vibheeshana protested against the evil actions of his brother Ravana and incurred his anger. Here, the clash between the brothers is at an intellectual level, involving principles and values; therefore, this clash is classified as rajasic. When Ravana banished Vibheeshana, the latter sought refuge at the feet of Rama. He helped Rama to fight Ravana. Rama crowned Vibheeshana King of Lanka after killing Ravana.

In the first two cases, one brother became the King by standing against his own brother. However, the 'clash' between Rama and Bharatha was of a different kind! Neither brother wanted to become King of Ayodhya! Bharatha told Rama, "Rama, you are the eldest and you alone have the right to become the king." However, Rama protested, "I shall not step into Ayodhya as I respect the promise given to my father. You have to rule the kingdom, as it is mother's wish." Thus Rama refused to yield to the request of Bharatha and rule the kingdom. The brothers wanted to convince the other to rule Ayodhya. At last, Sage Vashishta came up with the solution that Bharatha should take care of Ayodhya by keeping Rama's sandals on the throne, until Rama came back to Ayodhya after fourteen years of exile. The brothers accepted the solution given by Vashishta. This 'clash' is satwic as both the brothers wanted to sacrifice (tyaga) for the sake of the other.

Rama adhered to truth at all times "Sathyaath Naasti Parodharmah". For him observance of truth was the highest Dharma. He clung to Dharma tenaciously and believed that truth would be triumphant at the end. Rama was steadfast in his observance of Sathya and Dharma.

At last the battle between Rama and Ravana began. Rama had respect for Ravana even though he was his enemy. He even praised the virtues of Ravana. He knew that Ravana was under the effect of his curse to Jaya and Vijaya. Although Rama killed Ravana, he forgave him.

In deference to public opinion also and in order to put to rest the doubts that some people had about the chastity of Sita, Sita was made to undergo the ordeal of fire. The fire god proclaimed that Sita was pure and flawless.

Rama's actions were just and fair at each and every step. The Ramayana is a drama in which Sri Rama was the sutradhari (director) as well as a patradhari (actor). Other people also had their roles to play in the drama. Rama performed his role to perfection. Thus we can see that the Ramayana has survived the test of time. Sri Rama was dear to everyone. He is an ideal that humanity needs to emulate.

The people of Mithila were fascinated by the appearance of Rama. They went into ecstasy watching the conduct and beauty of Rama. They thought that Rama and Sita were an excellent match. They sang songs inviting people to witness the marriage of Rama and Sita. One such song goes like this:

Come all of you to see Rama's marriage
Let all of us go together to see Rama's marriage.
Many a people have come to see Rama's marriage.
The ladies have rich jewellery; they have put on
Garlands of pearls and diamonds.
They are beautified with ornaments studded
with precious stones.
Rama will tie the sacred Mangalya to Sita today.
They make a fine match! It appears as
though they are made for each other
Dasaratha has made grand arrangements for marriage.
He has called Sage Vashishta and other Sages.
People have come in great numbers, to rejoice at the marriage of Rama and Sita.
We will earn merit if we see their marriage
Ramachandra is shining splendidly and Sita is resplendent.
Rama is a noble prince who enquires on the
welfare of one and all
Come! Let us go to see Rama and Sita's marriage.

People sang songs like this, rejoicing at the marriage of Rama and Sita. The people of Ayodhya as well as Mithila were greatly delighted. They rejoiced immensely.

The Ramayana is the history of Rama. It is HIS-story. The Ramayana is full of noble characters. The four brothers and their wives stand out as great ideals for mankind. The mothers, Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi were also great women. They were embodiments of virtue and good conduct. People blame Kaikeyi saying that she was responsible for the suffering of Rama and Sita. She was actually a divine instrument in the mission of Rama. She was not the kind of person who would be swayed by the words of Manthra. She was instrumental in sending Rama to the forest

so that He could punish the wicked and protect the good. There are great subtleties and secrets in the Ramayana.

We will try to know them in the days to come.

- Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai.

Thus, one can understand how anger results from desire how the six vice qualities make a person forget his own kith and kin while seeking to satisfy the pleasures of mind and how self-centeredness takes him to his end. Let us again go back to the discussion on interest and take the example of Dhruva to know that interest results as an effect (meaning, to understand the life principles and get liberated) and makes the person merge with the Supreme.

The Vedic name for the Pole Star is Dhruva Nakshatra, named after Dhruva, the son of King Uttanapada. At a very young age, Dhruva demonstrated such steadfast commitment to Lord Vishnu that he was blessed by Vishnu to take the position of the steadfast Pole star.

Let us turn to the story of Dhruva, which is taken from the Bhagawata Purana. Dhruva's father, King Uttanapada, was a great ruler of ancient India. He had two queens. The elder one, Queen Suniti, was Dhruva's mother. Queen Suruchi, the younger one, did not like her stepson, Dhruva, and wanted her own son, Uttama, to become king. Unfortunately, King Uttanapada liked Queen Suruchi more than Queen Suniti and did not want to disagree with her even though Dhruva was older and was the rightful heir to the throne.

One day, little Dhruva went to sit on his father's lap along with his stepbrother, Uttama. However, he was stopped by Queen Suruchi's cruel words, "You are not allowed to sit on your father's lap. Only my son is allowed to sit on the King's lap. Pray to Lord Vishnu that you should die and be reborn as my son if you want to sit on your father's lap!" Deeply hurt, Dhruva went crying to his mother. However, Queen Suniti was helpless. "Pray to Lord Vishnu," she said. "He will surely help you if you can pray long and hard enough."

Dhruva made up his mind to go deep into the jungle to meditate on Lord Vishnu and would not return to the kingdom until the Lord had answered his prayers. On his way to the jungle he met the eternal sage, Narada. Narada was concerned that Dhruva was too young to be in the jungle alone. He tried to dissuade Dhruva, warning him that wild animals would devour him if he stayed on. However, Dhruva was steadfast in his resolve. Satisfied that Dhruva had the mental strength to remain in the jungle, Narada taught Dhruva the art of meditation. Little Dhruva meditated for many months, giving up all worldly comforts. He even stopped eating. Lord Vishnu was amazed at the little boy's determination and finally appeared before him. He blessed the boy and told him to return to his kingdom.

In the meantime, King Uttanapada repented for the injustice done to Dhruva. He was heartbroken at the thought of little Dhruva being devoured by wild beasts. Narada consoled him, telling him that Dhruva's resolve was firm and that he would receive Lord Vishnu's blessings. Narada was sure that Lord Vishnu would protect the boy from the wild animals. When Dhruva finally returned home safely after receiving Lord Vishnu's blessings, King Uttanapada went personally to receive him. Queen Suniti was overjoyed at her son's safe return. In course of time, when King Uttanapada became old, Dhruva was crowned king and he ruled wisely for many years.

This illustrative story of Dhruva can help us all by transforming our desire of attachment to desire as an interest.

Interest is to be developed as attention on God; with thoughts of God always, concern for God, knowing the

significance of God and an appeal to god to be always with us as the body, sensory organs, mind, intellect and consciousness. Such interest brings forth the effect as explained in the story of Dhruva, which is a lesson for us all. We do not have to wait until we are old to pursue spirituality. Sincere, steadfast, meditation on God helped even a young child to overcome the obstacles encountered in its way.

Chapter 7 – WISDOM

7. Jnanam (Wisdom):

This stage helps a person to advance further from the state of Kamyā-Karma and enables him to comprehend the influence of Maya and Moha in dual state, as good and bad. This wisdom throws light on the pathway to Godhood. At this point, the person seeks to know, "Who am I?" Karma that a man undertakes and carries on, helps him to make a sound judgment: "What was the reason for my failures and the resultant feelings of disappointment? Why has the disappointment led to frustration? Why has the frustration led to anger? Why has the anger sought solutions and whom do they satisfy? Is this satisfaction to be achieved through the six vice qualities or by some other means? What subjected me to those vice qualities? Did I subject myself to the situation or did something provoke me to act? What makes the situation engulf me?"

The last question makes the man realize 'That', and to know about 'That' man starts the journey by asking and seeking, "Who is That? Why is this 'Who' invisible and where do I find It? Am I undertaking actions or am I prompted by 'It'?"

This sound reasoning by a man makes him realize that he cannot perform action on his own or for long, as one day he too has to discard his mortal coil and find no trace of it. Due to this reason, he has concluded that he is not one but three. One, the self-existent man, two, nature (creatures and their features around him) and three, is that 'Who' which generates, organizes and destructs the first and the second.

Man has realized the 'Who', but is still confused with the term 'AM' and 'I'. He realized (but not understood), "It is the 'Who' that makes me function and what is referred to here about me could be either the term 'AM' or 'I'. He searches within and finds that energy and its nature makes him function. He then analyses, "How do I address this energy within? What should its external form be named?"

The process of analysis helped the man to know that his external form (body) is to be addressed as 'I'. The appearance of the person is like the symbol 'I' when he stands upright. Similarly, when the man sought to identify his energy, he realised that it was 'AM' - meaning 'A' for awareness and 'M' for mortality. This mortality is also named "Humanity and Transience". The awareness and the transience have thus become 'AM', the energy within the body.

This awareness of the energy that it has to transcend its body (Death), helped to understand the mystery of the attributes of the Prakṛiti. This understanding arose from experiencing that the three modes of Prakṛiti viz. Satwa, Rajas and Tamo gunas were responsible for man to function. This experience helped him to know about his body and its transience and as a result, he initiated his journey to find the 'Who' in the pathways to Godhood. This stage of realizing wisdom is known as liberation from body consciousness and the man starts doing actions as Nish-Kamyā (without expectation of the result).

8. Effects of the Deeds (Karma phalitham):

The consequences of the deeds may arise by Kamyā, Prarabdha and Prarabdha-Sanchita Karma as Agami Karma -

which could manifest in the present birth or may be carried forward to the next birth. Previous birth bad deeds and previous birth good deeds could manifest as future deeds – Agami karma – due to desire and attachment. Man has to undergo the consequences of his action, either good or bad, in the past or the present birth and has to nullify the balances in the account until the soul gets salvation. Sanchita Karma, that is Karma without interest or attachment, does the nullifying act.

There are two stories to illustrate this: one is about Jaya and Vijaya, whose actions necessitated them to take birth three times to nullify their deeds and the other story is of Markandeya who was born to nullify the Nish-Kamya actions of his previous birth and to attain immortality in mortality.

Jaya and Vijaya were the gatekeepers at the heavenly abode of Lord Vishnu. Wanting to spend some undisturbed moments with his consort Lakshmi, Vishnu once instructed Jaya and Vijaya not to allow any visitors. It so happened that the four Sanakas dropped in to meet Vishnu. They were the sons of Brahma created from his mental powers. Though they were eternally young, they were very learned and highly respected. When Jaya and Vijaya refused to let them in, the Sanakas promptly let loose a curse on the gatekeepers: Jaya and Vijaya would have to take birth twelve times on earth as mortals. Jaya and Vijaya protested stating that they were only following their master's instructions and a commotion ensued. Vishnu was forced to leave an enraged Lakshmi and come to the gate. He reprimanded the gatekeepers for letting the situation get out of hand, but also ignored the visitors indicating His displeasure at their hasty action. Realizing that Jaya and Vijaya were not at fault, he offered them a partial reprieve. They would have to take birth only three times instead of twelve but there was a string attached - in these births they would be evil demons. Vishnu himself would appear on earth and kill them. Jaya and Vijaya accepted their master's proposal.

Jaya and Vijaya first took birth as twin demon brothers, Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakashipu. Vishnu killed Hiranyaksha in his Varaha (Boar) incarnation. This incensed Hiranyakashipu, who banned all forms of prayers and worship. However, his own son Prahlada became an ardent devotee of Vishnu. Hiranyakashipu went to the extent of attempting to kill Prahlada and Vishnu had to intervene as Narasimha (Lion-Man). He killed Hiranyakashipu with his claws.

Jaya and Vijaya then took birth as Ravana, the evil king of Lanka, and Kumbhakarna, his younger brother. During this period, Vishnu took birth as Rama, the prince of Ayodhya. Ravana abducted Sita, Rama's wife and in the battle that ensued Rama killed both Ravana and Kumbhakarna.

Finally, Jaya and Vijaya took birth as Shishupala and Dantavakra during Vishnu's incarnation as Krishna. They played relatively minor characters. One theory is the effect of the curse was wearing off and they were born as successively less evil characters. Both were first cousins of Krishna, born to two sisters of Krishna's father. When Shishupala was born, he had horns and four arms. His mother Shrutushravaa was horrified and wanted to kill him, but there was a prophecy that the extra appendages would fall off when a certain person took Shishupala in his lap. However, that person would eventually slay Shishupala. When Krishna went to see his young cousin and took the baby Shishupala on his lap the extra appendages fell off. Shrutushravaa was aghast that her nephew would kill her

son. She pleaded with Krishna. Krishna said that he was powerless against destiny, but would forgive a hundred offences before letting the prophecy take effect.

Dantavakra was born with protruding and jagged teeth. Dantavakra literally means "crooked teeth". His mother Shrutudevaa too was aghast at his ugliness but was hopeful that his deformity would be rectified in due course.

Both Shishupala and Dantavakra grew up together. Shishupala's father Damaghosha was the king of Chedi and Dantavakra's father Vriddhasaman was the king of Karusha. Both were under the sovereignty of Jarasandha, emperor of Magadha. Shishupala and Dantavakra grew up under Jarasandha's tutelage. Jarasandha's attempt to subjugate all around him had been thwarted by Krishna and hence he hated Krishna. Shishupala and Dantavakra naturally shared this hatred.

During Yudhishtira's coronation, Shishupala objected to Krishna presiding over the ceremony. He argued that a cowherd could not be given such an exalted position when so many kings and sages were present. He then began to insult and abuse Krishna in front of the august assembly. Shishupala had then transgressed the count of hundred offences and Krishna released his Sudarshana Chakra and beheaded Shishupala.

Salva was a minor king, a friend of Shishupala and Dantavakra. His bride-to-be had eloped with Krishna. Salva attacked Dwaraka, Krishna's kingdom, but was killed on the battlefield by Krishna. Dantavakra decided to avenge Salva's death. Proud and overconfident he fought without armour. On the battlefield, he engaged Krishna in a duel with maces. Like Shishupala before him, he heaped abuses on Krishna. Krishna easily bore the brunt of Dantavakra's attack and ultimately He tore open Dantavakra's heart with His mace, Kaumodaki.

It is said that after the deaths of Shishupala and Dantavakra, those present could see the souls of the deceased, merging in Krishna. This signified the end of the ordeal of Jaya and Vijaya. They were now free from the curse and would reside with Vishnu forever.

The second story is about Markandeya (Prarabdha-Sanchita Karma resulting in Nishkama Karma).

Mrikandu was a great Rishi. Marudvati was his wife. For a long period they had no children.

The Rishi prayed to Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva appeared before him, and said, "I am pleased with you, Mrikandu. Tell me, do you want a hundred sons who will live for a long time, but will all be foolish, or do you want one very intelligent son, who will live for only sixteen years?"

The Rishi at once said, "Lord, give me that one intelligent son." Lord Shiva said, "Good! You shall have him."

Soon the Rishi got a son. He named him Markandeya. The boy grew up to be very intelligent and handsome. The Rishi invested him with the sacred thread. Markandeya learnt the Vedas and the Sastras, easily. Everyone liked him. As the boy was nearing the age of sixteen years, Rishi Mrikandu became despondent. One day Markandeya asked his father, "Father, why do you look so sad?"

The Rishi said, "Son! What shall I say? When Lord Shiva gave you to me, He said that you would live for sixteen years only. You are now about to reach that age. How

can your mother and I bear to lose you as we surely shall at the end of this year?"

Markandeya said, "Father! Is that the reason? Lord Shiva is very kind to His devotees. You yourself told me that. He

has saved many from death before. I have read about it in the Puranas. I shall therefore worship Lord Shiva day and night from today. I am sure He will save me too!"

Rishi Mrikandu was very happy to hear his son say this. He blessed his son.

Markandeya built a Shiva-Linga at a spot on the seashore. He worshipped Lord Shiva morning, noon and night. He sang bhajans and often danced in joy.

On the day of his impending death when Markandeya was about to sing hymns to Lord Shiva, Yama, the Lord of Death, came to him riding a buffalo and holding a noose in his hand. He spoke to Markandeya, "Stop your hymns! You, boy! Your life in this world is over. Be prepared to die!"

Markandeya was not afraid. He clung to the Shiva-Linga as one clings to one's mother. Yama threw his noose round the boy's neck and pulled him along with the Shiva-Linga. The Shiva-Linga burst open and Lord Shiva came out of it, kicked Yama in the chest, and said, "Yama, be gone! Do not touch this boy! He is my beloved devotee. He will live forever!"

Yama went away crest-fallen. Markandeya then prayed to Lord Shiva more fervently than ever with a prayer that has a refrain at the end of each line, "What can Death do to me?" Many people recite this prayer even now. Markandeya came home, and fell at the feet of his parents. They embraced him, and wept with joy. Markandeya was unaware of his past births and deeds due to which he and his parents had to go through a bad phase, but because of the Prarabdha Sanchita Karma, Markandeya became a great Rishi, and lived very long, as a mortal in immortality (without body consciousness).

The karmic effect of Prarabdha-Sanchita Karma makes man search for God and develops his faith in Him. Such faith evolves as devotion and physical surrender to God.

9. Godhood (Bhagawan):

The consequence of one's action makes one think of God. Hence, the theists who are limited only to their Karmic deeds, but not much involved in spiritualism and the atheists who completely ignore God and are totally attached to the mundane world due to the consequences of their past actions, try to search for God (at some point in time). In such a situation, some (theists and atheists) follow the preachings of certain philosophical scholars, some develop interest in sacred texts and some follow a Guru to attain the Supreme and the rest surrender to the Supreme directly. However, all these followers are still limited to bookish knowledge, acquired knowledge, service to the Guru and surrender to the Supreme. All these practices by the followers are merely to free themselves from the consequences of their actions, particularly from bad actions of the past. Let us analyse different spiritual practices to learn how far these practices help a person.

The ones who follow the scholars and their preachings will gain some knowledge, but not complete knowledge (the knowledge of the highest, i.e., Supreme). One cannot achieve completeness through acquired knowledge. The followers definitely will have some knowledge of the Puranas and the Shastras, but this knowledge is very limited and is the first stage in Bhakti Marga (Sravanam).

Those who read the sacred texts may understand the essence of the text literally. That may help to gain minuscule knowledge of different scriptures and with that the followers should not be under the misconception that they have realized the pathway to Godhood. In the pathway of devotion, these are the second and third stages: Keerthanam and Smaranam.

This is followed by the three stages comprising three types of service in the path of devotion: Pada Sevanam, Vandanam and Archanam. The service and salutation to the feet of a Guru or God and image worship will be undertaken in these stages. These processes enable one to eliminate unwanted thoughts and deeds and put the aspirant in the frame of devotion. The devotion towards the Guru, God or the image worship brings the senses under control and widens the vista of knowledge to experience.

In many of the discourses of Bhagawan we have heard, "You are not one but three" - "The one who you think you are, the one the others think you are and the one who you really are". Thus, one has three forms. However, Vedanta indicates that Advaita is the highest plane. When it is said that the oneness is the highest plane then why is it termed Advaita and not Ekam?

Advaita is clearly defined in the beginning of the book that it is not the one but three. The one is the 'Energy' also named Vital Air, Thought and Consciousness and the second is 'Space' - since some energy is existing it means that some space must exist - and the third is 'Time', as energy will be in the sequence of vibration in space and the count of energy vibration is recognized as time. In this manner, the Supreme has forms and similarly, humans have three forms. The Supreme's forms are unblemished and human forms are blemished. The reason is the energy in the state of Tranquillity is the true nature called Satwa; energy in the state of vibration is of the nature of passion called Rajas and energy in the state of movement sustained after vibration will be of the nature of ignorance, called Tamas. Being in the state of tranquillity, one can easily understand that loss of self-identity and the knowledge that something exists even when missing, will be known as Truth. The vibrating mode leads to production of something, for example, sound, and this we call passion. For instance, the term production is like curiosity because, when there is production there will be some output. That output is the cause of attraction. When the output attracts the vision, that attraction turns into darkness, also known as illusion (Tamo Guna). These three natures of Prakruti are different for God and humans. The Supreme starts Its journey from the state of tranquillity, passing via vibration and movement ends in Its origin, where it is known through Its nature of appearance, vibration, movement and disappearance that It is unaffected. However, the creatures, especially humans even though they have the quality and capacity to observe wisely around them, start their journey from vibration to disappearance and limit their knowledge to that. For these reasons, the three modes (natures) influence and very much affect the human society.

In order to overcome such a situation, the human seeks God. Three terms appear in this context too. The one is the seeker, the second is the seeking and the third is the sought. The seeker here refers to the individual (bhakta), the seeking - devotion (bhakti), and the sought - God (Bhagawanta). The bhakta starts his journey to experiment and to experience in order to come out of the Tamo Guna, develops devotion through learning and ends by experiencing God (Bhagawanta).

The first three stages of the nine types of devotion (Shravanam to Smaranam) are to know about God; the next three stages (Pada sevanam to Archanam) are for experimenting and experiencing; and the last three stages (Dasyam to Atma Nivedanam) lead to surrender to God as per Nava-vidha Bhakti. Six stages have been covered so far. Now we shall discuss the last three stages and the most significant stage of how to surrender to God.

Dasyam means service to the Guru or God. Serving the Guru or God is most difficult. One can serve the parents, the society, and the nation with less difficulty, but serving a Guru or God is an utmost difficult task. Parents may not demand service from the child; rather they will serve the child. Similarly, serving the society and the nation is based on some expectation of the person. The expectation is like a trigger, igniting desire and the other vice qualities whereas, service to the Guru or God is for removing the vice qualities and to develop the wise nature called Bhakti, en route to liberation, from there to immortality by devotional service.

How does one develop a wise nature?

One achieves bhakti by giving up sense indulgence and mundane association. This sense enjoyment is named in Sanskrit, Vishaya and one who indulges in sense pleasure is called a Vishayi. A Vishayi cannot succeed in devotional service and for that, the Guru sets down conventions for eating, companionship and so on. A Guru teaches not only to give up the practices of sense fulfilment but also to stop thinking of sense gratification.

Bhagawan explained in HIS discourses the meaning of "Sat-sangatve Nis-sangatvam, Nis-sangatve Nir-Mohatvam, Nir-Mohatve Nish-chalatatwam, Nish-chalatatve Jivan-Mukti".

"Sat-Sangatve" means "good company or having companionship with God"; "Nis-Sangatvam" means "Nis" – renounce, and Sanga - sense objects, that is, the worldly attraction, which will be removed by the company of good people. The mundane attraction once refuted, will take one to Nir-Mohatvam, meaning restraining of desires. This furthers the progress to the stage called Nish-chalatatwam meaning Nish - without expectation, and chala - passion. In this stage, there will not be any passion or expectation and ultimately renouncing all bodily concepts, one is enlightened and elevated to the state called Jivan-Mukti, that is to say, salvation.

Therefore, Sanga-tyaga means to refrain from associating with sense objects even within the mind and heart, which is not easy. The practice of renouncing or refraining completely is difficult and for that, one surrenders to the Guru or God. The stage of absolute and unconditional surrender to the Guru or God is the last stage but prior to that is the Dasyam - service to Guru or God. In order to refrain completely one has to serve and service requires absolute devotion and dedication to the Lord.

In order to pin down the mind and the senses, the positive method for beguiling the mind and senses is to immerse them in the Supreme consciousness. This could be compared to placing an iron rod in fire. As the rod stays steadily within the flames, it becomes progressively hot, until in due course, it becomes blazing. Similarly, the aspirant who steadily engages his mind and senses in Supreme consciousness gradually becomes transformed, until finally he becomes fully Supreme conscious. If one is completely absorbed in service of the Supreme, there is no scope for the activities of Maya.

One may say it is difficult to be absorbed completely in service of the Supreme. How can an active person perform double duty, work and chant at the same time?

It is possible, through love. Let us take an example of a man who goes to work to an office while his son is very ill at home. Out of natural affection, the father is always thinking, "How is the boy?" Two thoughts are carried by the father as a worker in the office and as a father to his son. In the same way, one should always remember the Supreme lover, even while meticulously discharging his material duties. Bhagawan said, "I dwell wherever the devotees sing My glory". Dasyam is not merely service to the Lord, or following the command of the Lord, but the service activity is to be undertaken while chanting and singing His glory, so that the thought may not be diverted to negative paths. If, one stops chanting His name even for a second while carrying out His command as a service, there is a chance that his ego will develop. Hence, one has to work with one's thoughts on Him always.

Is it enough to chant the name and carry the thought of the Supreme while rendering service to the master?

Chanting, singing and rendering service is like devotion, determination and dedication of a person to his master. However, devotion, determination and dedication on the part of a servant are not enough; the grace of that Supreme on the aspirant is of immense value. The grace of the Lord can be both direct and indirect.

Man develops devotion for the Lord through someone. It is impossible to have the direct grace of God. Even though the grace of Lord Vishnu on Prahlada was direct, the initiation to devotion was given to him by his mother Leelawati and sage Narada. The story of Prahlada can be taken for illustration. Prahlada was a seeker; if he were just seeking devotion without any cause, that devotion would not be called completeness, because completeness means the intuitive experience of the seeker. The intuitive experience can be obtained through some cause that is the reason and experiment. Where there is experiment, there must be some expression. Therefore, the experiment, expression and the final experience lead to completeness. Between the seeker and the sought (similarly between the experiment and the experience), the seeking or the expression of seeking is mandatory. That seeking or expression can be because of some cause, like pain. In the case of Prahlada, his father Hiranyakashipu was the cause for Prahlada's expression of seeking the Supreme. Initiation itself is not sufficient: for progress, the cause is more important. To attain God, one has to undergo evils (hurdles, pains and sufferings), know them thoroughly and wipe out such evil qualities from one's life; only then, the completeness can be achieved through initiation. The initiated, with the support and guidance of the initiator (the one who knows what is bad and good), can give up the vice qualities and hold on to the wise qualities by contemplating on the Supreme.

Why should there be an initiator and who is that initiator?

As we studied previously about Sat-Sanga, without good company or a good guide it would be difficult for the aspirant to control the senses. The good company or guide alone can take the person to the service of the Supreme and that guide or company is named in Sanskrit Sadhu. The term Sadhu is derived from 'Sadhaka'. Sadhaka means the aspirant who is under training and Sadhu means one who has completed his training. Such a Sadhu out of his experience and devotion for the Lord can uplift the aspirant with his guidance. Therefore, the mercy of that Supreme

through a Guru, Sadhu, good company or directly through the Lord can develop the Bhakti of a seeker.

The devotee cannot succeed simply on the strength of his own endeavour. He requires the mercy of the Supreme's representative or a drop of the Lord's direct mercy. Now, one may ask why a representative or a mediator is required when one can have direct, heart to heart connection with the Supreme.

There is a sutra in the scriptures to the effect that mother is the first deity, father is the second, the Guru is the third and the Lord is the fourth. What is the implication of such an order?

Man is affected by the three attributes of Prakriti. He might possess a Satwic nature but when the Rajasic and Tamasic gunas are more predominant, with such a combination of natures, man develops the complexes of fear and failure and attempts to safeguard himself. He does this by expressing his nature of Rajas, that is ego consciousness, and the quality of Tamas, influenced or enveloped by illusion. In order to remove the qualities of ego, greed, lust, hatred, envy and anger - the scriptures, as given by the Sadhus - reveal the pathway to surrender. This is the reason that, before knowing the path of devotion and the Supreme, when one serves and follows the path of a mediator (in the form of parents and Guru); the aspirant can overcome the six animal qualities under the guidance and directions of such a mediator or Sadhu (Guru). In such a situation (of Dasyam), one develops Sneham, Friendship. Friendship cannot be developed with a stranger; it is only possible with the close ones and such close ones can be the parents or the person directed by the parents. With the close ones, the aspirant can seek openly that which he is seeking. Moreover, that conditioned soul seeks "Atma-Nivedanam", that is, absolute and unconditional surrender, which cannot be sought from a stranger. Hence, Dasyam, Sneham and Atma-Nivedanam can only be within the closest circles, to learn, experiment and to experience the divinity without any fear or complex. And for this reason the Supreme created the relationship of parents, siblings, friends, society, the nation and the world; not to develop the so-called attractions out of these relations, but only an interest (In-Trust and entrust) in Atma-Nivedanam.

Chapter 8 - CONTROL OF SENSES

How can the aspirant, who has failed to cooperate and coordinate with good company, follow and surrender to that ultimate Supreme?

It is for this reason that Bhagawan quoted "Sat-Sangatve Nis-Sangatvam".

The acceptance of a person by a spiritual master is essential for advancement in devotional service. Without the attentive service of its parents, a child cannot grow to adulthood. Similarly, without the care of the spiritual master one cannot rise to the plane of transcendental service. Conditioned souls (God-fearing, fearing sin) are brought to the path of Bhakti with the help of the mediators and by the direct guidance of the Supreme Lord. Without the blessings of the Supreme Lord, one cannot break the continuous chain of birth and death, as the Super Soul within everyone's heart directly gives guidance. When a soul cries out for spiritual guidance, the Lord as a spiritual master in the heart gives direct inspiration.

Bhagawan Baba says, "I am the indweller; I am in every heart; that is the temple where I dwell."

The purport of this saying of Bhagawan is that a person may have a bona fide spiritual master and may be attached to a spiritual organization, but still, if he is not intelligent enough to make progress, then the indwelling Supreme gives him the instructions so that he may ultimately come to Him without difficulty. So, the mercy of the Lord is very much required to have proper guidance and direction on the path of devotion to know that Bhagawanta.

The Lord's mercy is therefore available both in the form of the instructing spiritual masters and the Super Soul within the heart. The appearance of the spiritual master in the life of the conditioned soul is the direct mercy of the Lord. It is truly a sign of the Lord's mercy when one meets His pure representative, the bona fide spiritual master.

Nevertheless, how effective this mercy is depends on one's sincerity. As soon as the Lord finds that a soul has developed eagerness to go back to Godhead, the Lord sends a spiritual master, and if one takes full advantage of the instructions of such a Guru, one is guaranteed success and liberation. "The conclusion is that to get the help of such a Guru means to receive the direct help of the Lord Himself".

10. Control of Senses (Ekagratham):

In addition to the techniques discussed in the chapter on anger management, a few more techniques to control the senses and the mind can be studied in detail in this session.

Anger management speaks about the control of the senses and the mind, but the technique discussed is only a temporary solution. A person can manage to control the mind and senses for a short period, but because of undesirable situation, the person might fail to control the senses and the mind. Managing anger and eliminating anger are two different aspects. Managing anger can ease the situation for the person when he engages himself in another activity to forget the unpleasant situation. On the contrary, the path of Bhakti and surrender to God can annihilate anger and the detrimental situation and can bring the mind and the senses under complete control.

The life story of Bhakta Mira could be the best example of this. Her story best illustrates how the pathways to God, which, by annihilating anger, make it possible to be serene even in an unpleasant circumstance or condition and help to transform a person.

Before reading the life story of Bhakta Mira let us discuss certain discrepancies found in the ninth point - 9th stage, called Bhagawanta, wherein the nine types of devotion are elucidated as well as the last three stages of devotion explaining the perfection of senses.

If one can attain perfection of senses through the last three stages, where is the necessity to discuss Ekagratham (control of senses) separately as the tenth stage?

The control of senses is like a chain reaction. Sense control is of two types. One type of sense control is temporary in nature, meaning that it is under control for the time being but can ebb and flow at any point of time. Another type of sense control is the complete control or steadiness, which can never vary at any point in time.

Hence, the reference to control of senses in the nine types of devotion is about the temporary control of senses, whereas under 'Ekagratham' complete control of senses shall be explained and this stage of control itself is Ekagratham.

The nine types of devotion are like a ladder for the aspirant to climb up from the basic stage (ground level) to the stage of completeness. On this ladder, one can control his or her senses and mind even at the level of mundane activity. The daily routine occupies the mind of a person and pulls it in different directions, making the person vexed with a situation. To relax oneself, even if the mind is diverted to some other, worldly entertainment, the person gets bored in the long run and this puts one back in the same situation of stress. Such stressful situations become the cause for the six vicious qualities.

The solution is as follows: the nine types of devotion and pursuing bhakti marga are prescribed to overcome each vice quality. These nine types of devotion as explained in the Bhagawanta stage, keep the vice qualities at bay and relax the aspirant with the satisfaction of learning the 'Self' to be a ray of the 'Supreme Self'.

The last three stages of Bhakti, Dasyam-Sneham-Atmanivedanam, bring the aspirant physically closer to a Guru or God. Such close proximity to the Guru or God can bring openness in the relationship between the aspirant and his Master. As explained before, the last stage of Bhakti called Atma-Nivedanam is absolute and unconditional surrender to God. Even if the aspirant thinks that he or she has surrendered to the Guru, it is the Guru or God who tests the aspirant to see whether he has surrendered absolutely and unconditionally.

The absolute and unconditional surrender here does not mean the simple act of surrendering in terms of service or action. Knowing the constitutional position of self, if the aspirant surrenders absolutely and unconditionally it can then be called Atma-Nivedanam.

Chapter 9 - COMPLETE SURRENDER

How does one achieve complete surrender?

It is important for the aspirant to follow the last two stages of Bhakti - Dasyam and Sneham even when there is mercy of the Lord. These two stages would take the aspirant to the final stage of Atma-Nivedanam.

Knowledge of the constitutional position refers to the following:

- a. Knowing Self as the ray of Supreme
- b. Knowing this truth, being in the state of Samkya, maintaining equanimity with three characteristics of Prakruti (equilibrium)
- c. Being in Samkya, serving the Supreme
- d. Being in the service of the Supreme renouncing the outcome of such service
- e. Having renounced the results (Parinama) attaining the Sakshatkara (Oneness as One without a second)

Aspirants who are following the nine types of devotion learn their constitutional position when they start worshipping the image [of God]. Worship of the image (Archanam) helps the aspirant to understand that his Self is a ray of that Supreme. The aspirant sees his image in the image that he worships. He superimposes the human form on it and performs daily rituals to the image of the deity that he is worshipping and involves himself wholeheartedly in providing such loving service to the Lord. Therefore, the image worship consists of bathing, clothing and dressing, feeding and lulling the Supreme to sleep, as in the case of a human who starts and ends his day with such a routine.

Visishta-Advaita describes man as a spark of the divine. When a person worships God in his own image and offers devotional service like he would serve himself, over a period of time he realises himself to be a spark of the divine.

The differences between man and the Supreme are:

(a) Man bathes, clothes and dresses to keep the body in perfect shape; man does the same rituals to the image of God in order to purify his senses, for the Supreme does not require any such service.

Man intakes food, works and rests to keep the mind, heart and soul active whereas the same service is offered by him to the Supreme to remove the ignorance of his mind, to focus the mind on the feet of God for ever so that the mind and heart are not distracted. Man retires to bed after long hours of work to rest and regain strength and solace for the body and the soul. Similarly, he retires the idol of the God at the end of the day so that he may have eternal bliss, being at the feet of the Divine.

God never seeks any service from man, but for the perfection of his mind, man takes the privileges of Bhakti rasa, which is granted as a boon by God as a form of convention to be followed by offering service to God so as to be ever in bliss.

(b) To be ever in bliss the aspirant must maintain Samkya (enumeration) of the three natures of Prakruti. The Vedanta says that Prakruti has three attributes viz., Satwa, Rajas and Tamas as discussed earlier in this book. We had discussed the trigunas individually as three different natures, but if the same is looked at from the aspect of inter-relation and interdependence, the trigunas will result as one.

We have studied the nature of passion and darkness as bad elements that hide the quality of the truth, and the consequences of these two 'bad' elements leading to deterioration of mankind. Because of the trigunas not being in unison, one perceives the state of oneness as multiplicity, but this has to be studied as minutiae in order to bring the assortment into oneness.

Satwa, the true nature, is multiple because of the nature of passion and has sustained its energy through the darkness. What does this mean?

The multiplicity that we see is not among the trigunas but between Prakruti and the Purusha. There may be many gunas due to permutation and combination of the trigunas, but the trigunas themselves are not affected. In the non-living entities it is in the form of Satwa; any activity or movement is attributed to the trigger of passion (rajo guna) but the non-living entities are still in the state of greater ignorance or greater darkness since they are untouched by their own movement (Passion). For instance during an earthquake there is perceivable movement of the earth, but it is perceived by the Purusha or man alone and he is affected by it. However, this movement or upheaval does not affect the non-living entity. It continues to be in a state of greater ignorance or darkness. Hence, it is said that the state of true nature of non-living entities remains in greater ignorance without being affected even when undergoing the modes of passion, i.e., mere happening.

In the case of Prakruti and Purusha the enumeration of the trigunas can be analyzed well. The Purusha, to quench his thirst and hunger sought the natures of Prakruti and divulged his power through the Prakruti. When Purusha is in the state of tranquillity he is not influenced by the natures of Prakruti but when he sought fulfilment he was subjected to the influence of the trigunas and because of this nature of Purusha, he became many.

Today, the cause of pain in man is his or her subjection by the trigunas. In spite of knowing the constitutional position of humankind, a man becomes a violent victim. Since man sees the trigunas as three different natures, he is forced to indulge in activities under the influence of the vice qualities, claiming 'thine' and 'mine'. This possessiveness and attachment - 'mine and yours'- are the reasons for the development of passion in man; and to sustain that, the passion drops into the ocean called ignorance or darkness.

Man, while remaining in his constitutional position of humankind, transforms the passion of ignorance into the passion of Satwa (Truth) and sustains the greater ignorance by removing the qualities and modes like passion (Rajas) and darkness (Tamas). Hence, knowing the truth, a man can maintain the equanimity of the trigunas considering the events as happenings. For instance, any action will be followed by a reaction. While performing action, the consequences and effects of his action are known to him. If he has done a good act, good results will be the effect, consequently, bad deeds result in bad consequences. Knowing this fact, it would not be right, if he feels pain or pleasure caused by the seeds sown by him and develops the characteristics like passion and darkness, which are a sort of attachment to his actions and may lead to devastation. Rather, if he accepts the outcome of his action as happenings and converts the features of passion and darkness to knowledge and experience, it will help him to develop, to evolve and attain immortality.

(c) Samkya - the numerous can also be named knowledge. Knowledge is subtler than the subtlest as well as bigger than the biggest. Being in Samkya, a man should hold the position of servitor. Knowledge of Brahman and the Knowledge of Samkya are different. A person with Brahman's knowledge will not act anymore and ceases his or her identity to remain as 'One' without a second, whereas a person with Samkya knowledge lives in the state of bliss called "Sat-chit-ananda".

What is the state of Sachidananda (Sat-chit-ananda)?

The term 'Sat' – Truth, is the sign of the positive. The term 'Chit' – awareness, is the sign of the negative and when both the signs connect, 'Ananda' - bliss, is experienced. With the sign of the positive alone or with the sign of the negative alone, the aspirant cannot attain the bliss. To experience the bliss both signs are essential. If the aspirant remains ever in the state of reality, he will see everything as reality. Similarly, the aspirant who remains in falsehood will always disseminate falsehood. In both cases, bliss cannot be experienced. When both the signs combine to function in the aspirant's life then he or she can understand the nature of the signs and the consequences of such signs prompting high and low feelings. By overcoming the situation of the signs, he experiences the bliss. The positive sign is like 'Water', in other terms, energy or life and the negative sign is like 'Sugar', also called 'Maya'. When water and sugar are mixed, they become syrup.

One can live without food, but one cannot live without water as water contains oxygen. When sugar is added to water, it is like adding richness to life. Water is also known to be vast like the ocean. Sugar can be likened to pebbles; when sugar is poured on water, the grains of sugar seem like pebbles and when the same dissolve completely in water, they combine to form syrup. Sugar can also be termed awareness. When the aspirant intakes the syrup, he is in a position to comprehend the taste of syrup. The comprehension gives the decision and an experience to the aspirant of the syrup in terms of water and in terms of sugar, both separately and collectively.

This comprehension of the product is named Maya (also chit). 'Ma' means 'no' or 'not' and 'Ya' means 'who'. The term Maya means the invisible one, which studies the subject through the intellect distinctly and comprehensively. This 'invisible', when it studies both the positive and negative signs makes the aspirant realize the reality and sustain the state of bliss. Since the aspirant realized the high and low and the difficulties of life as reality (Sat) by undergoing the experience of Maya (Chit) and sustaining with the experience (by overcoming the bad situation and understanding the reality of the nature), he remains in the state of bliss (Ananda). Considering both the signs with equanimity, the aspirant serves the Supreme with the knowledge of Samkya, that what is going on around him is His will and will continue to happen.

(d) The aspirant, being now in the state of Sachidananda, will not expect any results for his actions and continues to serve the Supreme and renounce the expectations one after the other. Finally, renouncing all the Parinaamas - consequences and outcomes - the aspirant attains the Brahma-jnanam. With that, the aspirant completely renounces himself to become one, without leaving any identification of self, when neither knowledge nor ignorance can be found. Such a state is named greater darkness - the state of immortality.

Bhakta Mira: Mira is regarded as an incarnation of Radha. She was born in 1499 A.D. in the village Kurkhi, near Merta, a small state in Marwar, Rajasthan. Mira was the daughter of Ratan Singh Ranthor and the granddaughter of Dudaji of Merta. The Ranthors of Merta were great devotees of Vishnu. Mira Bai was brought up amidst Vaishnava influence, which sculpted her life in the path of devotion towards Lord Krishna. She learnt to worship Sri Krishna from her childhood. When she was four years of age, she manifested spiritual tendencies. Once there was a marriage procession in front of her residence. The bridegroom was finely dressed. Mira, who was only a child then, saw the bridegroom and asked her mother innocently, "Dear mother, who is my bridegroom?" Mira's mother smiled, and half in jest and half in earnest, pointed towards the image of Sri Krishna and said, "My dear Mira, this beautiful idol of Lord Krishna is your bridegroom."

Child Mira began to love the idol of Krishna very much. She spent much of her time in bathing and dressing the idol. She worshipped the idol. She slept with the idol. She danced around the idol in ecstasy. She sang beautiful songs in front of the idol. She even used to talk to the idol.

Mira's father arranged for her marriage with Rana Kumbha of Chitore, in Mewar. Mira was a very dutiful wife. She obeyed her husband's commands implicitly. After finishing her household duties, Mira would go to the temple of Lord Krishna, worship, sing and dance before the idol daily. The little idol would get up, embrace Mira, play on the flute and talk to her. Rana's mother and other women of the house did not like the ways of Mira, as they were worldly and jealous. They were all annoyed with her. Mira's mother-in-law forced her to worship Durga and admonished her often. However, Mira stood adamant. She said, "I have already given my life to my beloved Lord Krishna." Mira's sister-in-law Udabai plotted a conspiracy and began to defame the innocent Mira. She informed Rana Kumbha that Mira was secretly in love with others, that she, with her own eyes had witnessed Mira in the temple with her lovers, and that she would show him the persons if he would accompany her one night. She further added that Mira, by her conduct, had brought a great slur on the reputation of the Rana family of Chitore. Rana Kumbha was very much enraged. He straightaway ran with sword in hand towards the inner apartments of Mira. Fortunately, Mira was not in her room. A kind relative of the Rana checked him and said, "Look here Rana! Do not be in haste. You will repent later on. Consider well. Enquire into the matter very carefully. Find out the truth. Mira is a great, devotional person. What you have heard now may be a wild rumour only. Out of sheer jealousy, some women might have concocted a cock-and-bull story against Mira to ruin her. Be cool now." Rana Kumbha agreed to the wise counsel of his relative. The Rana's sister took him to the temple at the dead of night. Rana Kumbha broke open the door, rushed inside and found Mira alone in her ecstatic mood talking to the idol.

The Rana said to Mira, "Mira, with whom are you talking now? Show me this lover of yours." Mira replied, "There sits He, my Lord, the Hrudaya chora, who has stolen my heart." She fainted. There was a wild rumour that Mira was moving very freely with Sadhus. She, no doubt, had great regard for Sadhus and mixed freely with them. Mira never cared a bit for the meaningless rumours. She stood unruffled.

The Rana and his relatives persecuted Mira in various ways. She got the same treatment that Prahlada got from his father Hiranyakashipu. Shri Hari shielded Prahlada. Here, Sri Krishna always stood by the side of Mira. Once the

Rana sent a cobra in a basket to Mira with the message that it contained a garland of flowers. Mira took her bath and sat for worship. After finishing her meditation, she opened the basket and found inside a lovely idol of Sri Krishna and a garland of flowers. Then the Rana sent her a cup of poison with the message that it was nectar. Mira offered it to Lord Krishna and took it as His 'Prasada'. It was real nectar to her. Then the Rana sent a bed of nails for Mira to sleep on. Mira finished her worship and slept on the bed of nails. Lo! The bed of nails was transformed into a bed of roses.

When her husband's relatives thus tortured Mira, she sent a letter to Tulsidasji and asked the advice of the saint. She wrote thus, "All my relatives trouble me, because I move amongst Sadhus. I cannot carry on my devotional practices in the house. I have made Giridhar Gopal my friend from my very childhood. I am strongly attached to Him. I cannot break that attachment now."

Tulsidasji sent a reply: "Abandon those who do not worship Rama and Sita, considering them as your enemies, even though they are your dearest relatives. Prahlada abandoned his father; Vibhishana left his brother Ravana; Bharata deserted his mother; Bali forsook even his Guru; the Gopis, the women of Vraja, disowned their husbands in order to attain the Lord. Their lives were all the happier for having done so. The opinion of holy saints is that the relation with God and love of God alone is true and eternal; all other relationships are unreal and temporary."

Once Akbar and his court musician Tansen came in disguise to Chitore to hear Mira's devotional and inspirational songs. They entered the temple and listened to Mira's soul-stirring songs to their heart's content. Akbar was really moved. Before he departed, he touched the holy feet of Mira and placed a necklace of emeralds in front of the idol as a present. Somehow, the news reached the Rana that Akbar had entered the temple in disguise, had touched the feet of Mira and had even presented her a necklace. The Rana became furious. He told Mira, "Drown yourself in the river and never show your face to the world in future. You have brought great disgrace to my family."

Mira obeyed the words of her husband. She proceeded to the river to drown herself. The names of the Lord - Govinda, Giridhari, and Gopala - were always on her lips. She sang and danced in ecstasy on her way to the river. When she raised her feet from the ground, a hand from behind grasped her. She turned behind and saw her beloved Krishna. She fainted. After a while, she opened her eyes. Lord Krishna smiled and spoke to her: "My dear Mira, your life with the mortal husband is over now, you are absolutely free, be cheerful, you are 'Mine'. Proceed immediately to the bowers of Vraja and the avenues of Brindavan. Seek 'Me' there, my child, be quick." He then disappeared.

Mira obeyed the divine call immediately. She walked barefoot on the hot, sandy beds of Rajasthan. On her way, many women, children and devotees received her with great hospitality. She reached Brindavan. She found her Flute-bearer there. She went about Brindavan, begging for her food and worshipped in the Govinda Mandir, which has since become famous and is now a place of pilgrimage. Her devotees of Chitore came to Brindavan to see Mira. Rana Kumbha came to Mira in the disguise of a mendicant, revealed himself and repented for his previous wrongs and cruel deeds. Mira at once prostrated before her husband.

Jiva Gosain was the head of the Vaishnavites in Brindavan. Mira wanted to have Darshan of Jiva Gosain. He declined to see her. He sent word to Mira that he would not allow any woman in his presence. Mira Bai retorted,

"Everybody in Brindavan is a woman. Giridhar Gopala is the only Purusha. Today I have come to know that there is another Purusha besides Krishna in Brindavan." Jiva Gosain was put to shame. He thought that Mira was a person of great devotion. He at once went to see Mira and paid his respects.

Mira's fame spread everywhere. So many princesses and queens have come and gone. So many Ranis, Kumaris and Maharanis have appeared on the stage of this world and vanished. How is it that the Queen of Chitore alone is still remembered? Is this because of her beauty? Is this because of her poetic skill? No. It is because of her renunciation, one-pointed devotion to Lord Krishna and God-realization. She came face to face with Krishna. She conversed with Krishna. She ate with Krishna, her Beloved. She drank the Krishna-prema-rasa. She has sung from the core of her heart the music of her soul, the music of her Beloved, her unique spiritual experiences. In addition, she has sung songs of surrender and Prema.

Mira had the beautiful cosmic vision. She saw Krishna in the tree, in the stone, in the creeper, in the flower, in the bird, in all beings - in everything. As long as the name of Krishna exists, so will be the name of Mira.

It is extremely difficult to find a parallel to this wonderful personality Mira, a saint, a philosopher, a poet and a sage. She was a versatile genius and a magnanimous soul. Her life has a singular charm, with extraordinary beauty and marvel. She was a princess, but she abandoned the pleasures and luxuries incident to her high station, and chose instead, a life of poverty, austerity, Tyaga, Titiksha and Vairagya (sacrifice, strict adherence to austerities, detachment). Though she was a delicate young woman, she entered the perilous journey on the spiritual path amidst various difficulties. She underwent many ordeals with undaunted courage and intrepidity. She stood steadfast in her resolve. She had a gigantic will.

Mira's songs infuse faith, courage, devotion and love of God in the minds of the readers. They inspire the aspirants to take to the path of devotion and they produce in them a marvellous thrill and a melting of the heart.

Mira's earthly life was full of troubles and difficulties. She was persecuted. She was tormented and yet she kept up an undaunted spirit and a balanced mind all through, by the strength of her devotion and the grace of her beloved Krishna. Though she was a princess she begged for alms and lived at times on water alone. She led a life of perfect renunciation and surrender.

Mira had Ragaanuraga or Ragaatmika Bhakti. She never cared for public criticism and the injunctions of the Shastras. She danced on the streets. She did not do any ritualistic worship. She had spontaneous love for Lord Krishna. She did not practice Sadhana-bhakti. From her very childhood she poured forth her love on Lord Krishna. Krishna was her husband, father, mother, friend, relative and Guru. Krishna was her Pranath (Lord of life). Mira had finished the preliminary modes of worship in her previous birth.

Mira was fearless by nature, simple in her habits, joyous in her disposition, amiable in her deportment, graceful in her behaviour and elegant in her demeanour. She immersed herself in the love of Giridhar Gopala. The name of Giridhar Gopala was always on her lips. Even in her dreams, she lived and immersed her being in Sri Krishna.

In her divine intoxication, Mira danced in public. Her exalted state cannot be adequately described in words. She was sunk in the ocean of Prema. She had no consciousness of her body and surroundings. Who can gauge the depth of her devotion? Who can understand her internal Premamaya (full of love) state of Maha-bhava (great expression)? Who can measure the capacity of her large heart?

Mira wafted the fragrance of devotion everywhere. Those who encountered her were affected by her strong current of Prema. Mira was like Lord Gauranga. She was an embodiment of love and innocence. Her heart was the temple of devotion. Her face was the lotus-flower of Prema. There was kindness in her look, love in her talk, joy in her discourses, power in her speech and fervour in her songs. What a marvellous person! What a wonderful personality! What a charming figure!

Mira's mystic songs act as a soothing balm to the wounded hearts and tired nerves of those who toil in this world with the heavy burden of life. The sweet music of her songs exerts a benign influence on the listeners, removes discord and disharmony, and lulls them to sleep. Mira's language of love is so powerful that her devotional songs will move even a staunch atheist.

Mira acted her part well on the stage of the world. She taught the world the way to love God. She rowed her boat dexterously in a stormy sea of family troubles and difficulties and reached the other shore of supreme peace and absolute fearlessness - the kingdom of supreme love. She was undaunted in spirit and courageous. Though she was young, she bore the persecutions silently. She endured the piercing taunts and sarcastic criticisms of the world bravely. She has left an indelible impression on the world and her name will be handed down to posterity.

From Brindavan, Mira proceeded to Dwaraka. There she merged in the image of Lord Krishna at the temple of Ranchod.

The Pathways to Godhood can completely annihilate the lingering (whatever is remaining) mind and the senses and can make the person to be absorbed totally in the spirit of oneness. This stage of Raganuraga Bhakti shapes a person to the state of salvation.

11. Salvation (Poornasanathana):

The Raganuraga Bhakti can make a person progress to the state of salvation by cultivating the love for God and others. Such Bhaktas will never distinguish between the creations of the Supreme, and they will treat the hurdles that come in the way of their devotion as Prasadam (munificence) of Bhagawan. When something is considered to be Prasadam, it turns to love and negation of the same turns it to abhorrence. Hence, it is love that leads to completeness or the state of tranquillity.

What is love or the state of love?

The state of love is explained in the following chapter named "Prema-amrutham".

Chapter 10 – PREMAAMRUTAM

The definition and the meaning of PREMA have been derived from the word Ananta.

The word Ananta is of Sanskrit origin meaning the Infinite or Infinity:

An + Anta = ananta or endless

In this context the word may also mean 'Union of the individual Consciousness with The Eternal Infinite Consciousness' which exists beyond existence, which transcends both Time and Space, hence, does not have an end.

Prema is named after Ananta, and it is a kind of practice to cultivate divine love. Such a practice brings about the merging of the individual consciousness with the Infinite and is named Ananta Yoga.

Ananta Yoga is the Yoga of the Consciousness performed by the Consciousness residing in itself. It is not different from meditation upon the Self as Itself. The Shanti Mantra clarifies this phrase 'Self as Itself':

AUM POORNAMADAH POORNAMIDAM

POORNAAT POORNAMUDACHYATE

"POORNASYA POORNAMAADAAYA POORNAMEVA AVASHISHYATE"

Aum poornamadah poornamidam means "That (Brahman) is whole; this (Creation) is also whole."

Purport: The creator is complete and His creation is also complete. The aspirants believe that creation is incomplete as the creatures in it have some shortcomings. Such shortcomings are believed to be the perception of the aspirant. What is assumed to be a shortcoming is nothing but HIS leela vibhuti (Cosmic play) that ends in Him with the subsiding of His thought.

'poornaat poornamudachyate' - meaning from that whole (i.e., Brahman only), this whole has come out (Creation).

Purport: From the Supreme, Creation has emerged in the form of imagination. Hence, the Supreme and HIS imagination are complete, because the Supreme's action can never be imperfect. This apparent imperfection is one side of the coin and the other side substantiates the perfection. Therefore, the so-called imperfect creatures in Creation have to be perfect at some point, that point is the turning point and that is the convention made by the Supreme.

"poornasya poornamaadaaya poornameva avashishyate"

"The Whole which has emerged from the Whole, yet remains as Whole."

The Supreme remains complete and unaffected. His creation in the form of imagination emerges as the state of imperfection, i.e., the state of duality and abides by the conventions prescribed by the Supreme going from the state of imperfection to the state of perfection and crossing the oceans of ups and downs merges into that completeness.

The essence of this Shanti Mantra is that the complexities of the mind (imagination) see the duality (failure and success or as conventions), but when all such dualities are put together (as two sides of a coin) they become One and that One in another form is Prema or love.

The Sanskrit term Prema may be defined as "Pa" meaning distant or invisible; "Re or Ri" meaning truth. The terms 'pa' + 're' combine to become 'pre' meaning 'invisible truth'.

The term "em" or "M" in Sanskrit means 'yes' or can be taken to mean 'acceptance'. Hence, the invisible truth is accepted and it abides in the form of Love, i.e., Prema.

Who accepts the invisible truth?

The 'Self' has accepted 'Itself' by contemplating on the Consciousness by Consciousness in itself. The conclusion of this theme is existence in the subtle state of energy, experimenting by contemplation and experiencing its completeness through love. Without the one who is expressing and the expression, the intuitive experience of completeness will be missing. Let us analyse the term Premaamrutam:

The 'pre' as in 'Prema' refers to melodious pranava (Aum); the One Who was nameless and formless and at a distance can now be perceived as 'ra' ('Ra' means Ramyam) but melodiously as 're'. One wonders and searches for that melodious sound that is heard. If one can understand the sound and then search for it, one hears it as 'ma' meaning 'me' (mama means mine). He then realizes that the sound is within him and he also realizes that it is love or prema.

Parama - Supreme; from parama - Prema has come; from Supreme it has come in the form of love (Prema).

Prema manifests as patience, tolerance and forbearance.

For example, when one blows air into a bag, the air occupies every inch of that bag. Similarly sound envelops and pervades every inch of space. When one searches for this all-pervading sound or love, he realizes that it is within him.

Amrutam -

'a' sound is present in almost all syllables

'Ah' is also a sound expression of surprise

Mruta - corpse or lifeless body

Mru - prana or body

Ta - gone/expired/dead (e.g., datta - one who has given away)

Mruta - object that is gone or lost

Prema + mruta = when love is lost there can only be destruction or annihilation or pralaya.

Prema, which is also the melodious pranava sound, should therefore always be present in one. It should be present eternally even if it cannot be heard. For if it ceases to exist, it cannot withstand its own power and will burst or explode. This means that the Pranava that is omnipresent, should be channelised properly if it should not explode.

To prevent such an untoward catastrophe, the Creator has added the life giving syllable 'a' (meaning, 'a' - akara - giving form; when you deny or negate something you are acknowledging the existence of that which you are

denying) to all sounds including the pranava.

Ma + ru = 'mru' means prana, but because it is a soft syllable it can confer peace to the prana or body at the time of death.

When you remove 'ta' from 'mru' or prana - it means prana in the body (ta) ceases peacefully. Therefore in amruta when that mru is thus removed what remains is atah which means 'then what' or 'followed by'.

When you say Prema + atah, it means: "When one has love, what then?" The answer is: "He has immortality!" This immortality is amruta.

Am - in me

Prema + amruta + am = that eternal, everlasting love in me.

The question now is whether prema was present before creation or did it come after creation?

Prema is eternal; it was present before creation; it is life or life force - it is one's body, life, consciousness, self....

How then does one realize its presence or perceive it?

We do not know what creation is, but we know about it. After creation, we differentiate between you and me - 'you' here is love or thought or creation, 'I' is mind or feelings.

The quest for every individual soul is that 'Prema amrutam' - that love which is eternal and inside one (individual soul).

The next question is whether sound came first or the syllable; whether Prema was first in the form of sound or syllable or whether that sound was existing or the syllable was existing in the beginning, if so, who perceived it and how?

All these reveal the existing duality because there are two entities - the seeker and the sought.

These remain unresolved questions up to the time of oneness, but duality still exists in the form of sound and syllable.

How can duality exist until oneness?

The non-existent confirmed that everything is within Him (according to scriptures) - the sound, prema; He perceived the pranava, heard the Omkara.

For our understanding let us analyse the sequence:

He (for our explanation and understanding the Divine is referred to in the masculine gender) is in oneness in the form of subtle energy. When there is a change in the state of this energy, a thought emanates from it; when the thought develops, duality arises. He wonders as to which has come first - sound or syllable. Scientific analysis may reveal that sound is first, followed by the syllable; but for God and humans it can be either way.

A note is required for pronunciation, whereas to figure out a syllable, sound or note is not necessary; it can even be visualized or imagined and realized as integral awareness. Therefore, this too remains an unresolved question.

From the viewpoint of creation or creatures, if they perceive that the syllable or sound in the form of Supreme is first

then that Supreme becomes limited from the point of view of the creatures, whereas the Vedas describe Him as unlimited.

The question now is whether Prema is limited or unlimited.

This cannot be described, but from the point of view of the creatures, He is limited because he is beyond understanding. We are not in a position to explain in what way He is limited because we have not seen Him.

It is not possible to know God through experience or experimentation. When one experiments and if that Supreme exhibits His Virat Swaroopam which can be measured by the creatures from top to bottom, then in another sense it means that It is limited and within the knowledge of the created beings. It can also be understood to mean that the creatures are more qualified than Him if they are able to measure Him. Then what is Vishwaroopa darshanam (cosmic vision)?

Unless the Supreme explains or clarifies, it will remain an unresolved question. Therefore, one would not know the Supreme by experience or by experimentation.

Then who is He? What is He? Can we understand Him? How can we realize Him when we are in this limited form? Is He limited or unlimited? Is He in advaitic, dvaitic or vishishtadvaitic state? All these are with reference to our limited understanding. The answer to all these is that He may be beyond all these three or deep within the boundary of these three. Therefore, these are still unresolved.

If we say He is non-existent, devoid of any thought and only as subtle energy, then He is advaitic. Then, this too is the perception of the creature. So what is He? It is still an unresolved question.

Let us now try to find answers.

What is unknowable, unlimited and indefinable is 'Premaamrutam'. Love cannot be limited; if it has become limited it is duality and selfishness; if we love one and not another, it is not love. Love should be like nectar (raso vai sah) because it is divine. Therefore, prema was existent before creation but became limited after creation because it was perceived as pranava or syllable. The scope of prema has become limited for the sake of our understanding. This is applicable even to the divine - when He desires to know It, It becomes limited and there is duality - this is also from our point of view. However, we can never know It. All these questions arise only when one is in duality. This can be explained thus:

The three states of existence can be defined in the following manner:

1. What others think you are - the dvaitic state when you have feelings. You are greatly influenced by manas with feelings of high and low. You try to follow different philosophies or paths to attain Him or know Him.
2. What you think you are - this is the vishishtadvaitic state when there are feelings, because of thought, and mind is merely a processor. He understands that mind is the cause or reason and the thought is that everything is the nature of creation. The intellect analyses this. This understanding is the speciality or visesha. "I am a spark of the divine. All that I experience, happiness and unhappiness, joy and sorrow, success and failure and such dualities that one experiences in one's life are the nature of creation. Mind and thought co-exist and are the products of this Prakruti

and being advaitic i.e., 'what I really am', I have to undergo this, being a product of creation, for I cannot change this (is the attribute of Moola Prakruti). The consequences of thought and mind are already known to me." The awareness that one has to go through all these is the speciality or visesha. All these affect one, but knowingly one enters maya and faces the consequences. In this state, through the path of surrender the individual soul attains wisdom.

3. The one you really are - this is the advaitic state when you do not have any thought or feeling. In this state, the soul comes to the path of surrender through wisdom. This state comes after realising "Aham Brahmaasmi" - I am Brahman. Brahman not only indicates to the person the Supreme reality in him, but it also plays the role of Guru. ('GU' meaning darkness and 'RU' meaning brightness). The person who guards you from darkness and guides you to brightness is Guru. Except God none can guard and guide and it is for this reason the Upanishad states: "Guru Brahma; Guru Vishnu; Guru Devo Maheshwara." Why is the trinity recognised as Guru?

As discussed earlier under Visishta Advaitam the Moola Prakruti (Lakshmi) is the attribute of God. Here Brahma (with Vayu) has created the cosmos and its dependents, so Brahma could be named Prakruti. The creatures are learning much through Prakruti. Prakruti teaches non-duality, punctuality and sacrifice. Non-duality of Prakruti refers to inanimate objects and partially animate objects like Sun, Moon, plants, trees etc. As mountains, rivers, Monsoon, the partially animate objects even though different in their forms have no sense of discrimination among themselves. They live in the state of Oneness and carry out their assigned work with punctuality. Sun, Moon and seasons maintain their time, and work accordingly. Plants and trees sacrifice themselves for the dependent animate. The animate beings will have duality and tardiness. The signs of sacrifice in most cases of the animate may not be found. Hence, we learn from Prakruti (Lord Brahma in HIS Rajasic State) the three qualities - non-duality, punctuality and sacrifice.

Guru Vishnu is symbolic of nectarine love. HE is found in all the atoms of the universe in the form of nectar. HE teaches the animate beings to cultivate the nectar called love. This nectar of love will not be limited to one but will flow to all the animate and inanimate beings through the animate beings living in the universe, without any distinction. Lord Vishnu in HIS form of Prema (Satwa) indicates this oneness to HIS creations.

Brahmajnanam is that knowledge which manifests along with Him [the Supreme], is known by Him alone, is meant for the understanding of Jivas to experiment about that knowledge and for His enjoyment of the cosmic play. This knowledge of Brahman will exist as long as the Supreme is in the state of saguna and ceases along with Him when He ceases the form of saguna; the knowledge will become latent in Him in the state of tranquillity. Knowledge here refers to the constituents of creations, which consist of the cosmos and the creatures and their actions of their past, present and future. The state of Brahmajnanam is known as omniscience and the state known to the Non-existent when He manifested in the state of saguna through His inherent power called potential, is known as Omnipotence. The knowledge, which manifested along with Him, prevails over the cosmos or each atom of the cosmos, is known only to Him (i.e., its origin, movement and destruction) and is known as Omnipresence. Since the Jivas cannot measure the creation, its movements and features, none of these three qualities will be present in the Jivas.

The Supreme, Omniscient Entity is perceived or experienced through Its power in the potential state. This Supreme power devolves through the Co-eternal i.e., the potential energy to create and sustain the creation and It is present immanently in all Its creations as a witness - a 'Sakshibhoota'.

These three qualities of Omniscience, Omnipotence and Omnipresence cannot be found in the Jivas. As much as he would like to, the Jiva, due to lack of knowledge (Brahman) and powers of creation and sustenance, cannot have the quality of omnipresence too.

However, the Supreme, all-knowing Entity has provided the means by which the Jiva can attain these three qualities and this is through the medium of love.

The Jiva can, in the first place, acquire the quality of omniscience by cultivating unconditional, boundless love within him. He recognises this love in the whole of creation, through omnipotence and he finally witnesses everything as love or embodiment of love through omnipresence. He is beyond the state of Dvaita when he realises that love is God and God is love. This is 'Brahmajnanam'.

Guru Devo Maheshwara - in HIS Tamasic state or the state of destruction of illusion teaches the animate beings. Prakriti has three characteristics and Rajas is the cause for the dualistic nature of humans. Through the teachings of Maheshwara, one can overcome the state of duality by diminishing his Rajasic qualities. That is why Maheshwara is also named 'Rudra' - one who sustains by destroying the inbuilt trigger of passion. "Ru meaning brightness (i.e., Satwa) and Dra consisting of two syllables Da + Ra = Dara meaning worn (He is wearing the brightness to destroy blinding darkness). Maheshwara, by destroying the qualities of passion in humans brings the brightness in them. The Upanishad refers to Maheshwara as "Isa vasyam idam jagat": 'Isa' - the lord, 'vasyam' - residing, 'idam' - in this, 'jagat' - universe. Idam in other words is the entire cosmos; it is the Isa who is pervading the entire cosmos (in the form of greater darkness - tamas).

Hence, if we contemplate on these Gurus, who have created, sustained and destroyed passion and ignorance we realise that what is left is the immortal, nectarine love. In this context, it is apt to refer to prema as 'Raso vai sah' as explained by Bhagawan in the following discourse:

Raso vai sah

It is a great pity that in the land which discovered the divinity of man and the means by which he can regain that divinity and has a continuous stream of saints and sages who remind man of his grand role as a pilgrim, men have allowed the teaching to decline and the practice to fade! Hearts saturated with this honeyed wisdom have become chalices of poison! Hate has hardened them, greed has sharpened them and pride has polluted them. Once again, man has to be made aware of the spring of joy within him, so that he may be happy and unagitated by anxiety. Human ideals have degenerated so much that man has become incapable of appreciating the beauty, wisdom and power of Avatars (divine advents)! They do not yearn for the intuitive experience of the glory and majesty of which they are themselves a part. They do not lose themselves in the stream of joy that flows from the contemplation of the limitless, beginningless power that is God. Universe, God's creation, cannot but be sweet.

The word 'Krishna' has three different meanings:

(1) Karsh is one root from which the name is derived. It means, "That which attracts"; Krishna attracts hearts to Himself, by His sportive pastimes, miraculous victories over the forces of evil, his charming conversation, His wisdom, His personal beauty.

(2) The word is also related to the root Krish, to cultivate, as a field for growing crops. The word means he who removes the weeds from the heart of man, and sows seeds of faith, courage and joy.

(3) It is related to the root Krish, meaning something beyond the three attributes and the three eras, and 'na' means, Sat-chit-ananda. The leelas (divine plays) and mahimas (miraculous powers) of Krishna, through which He attracts the love of mankind, cultivate and harvest joy in the hearts of His devotees and makes them aware of His being Existence-Knowledge-Bliss, are described in the Bhagavatham.

Raso vai sah---"He is sweetness". So, the jagat (the Universe), which is His creation cannot but be sweet for those who recognise it as His handiwork. The jagat has to be used to instruct you on the glory and the power of God, so that you may seek Him and reach Him. There are four stages in the journey towards this goal; each one is called a loka, a region that you reach:

i) The first is A-vidya loka (the region of ignorance and delusion) from which you start, prompted by the chain of grief and pain it inflicts on you.

ii) The second is the Vidyaloka, where you penetrate into the Vijnanamayakosha (the intellectual plane) and are able to distinguish between the true and false, the kernel and the husk.

iii) The third is the Anandaloka, where you are immersed in bliss at the glimpse of the eternal source of power and peace.

iv) The last is the Go-loka, where the Go-paala reigns, and all the 'gos' (jeevas, sparks of the Divine, waves of the Premasaagara - the ocean of love) are one in ecstasy and enlightenment!

Soak your emotions in compassion to attain God.

Unless you have love, you cannot claim kinship with the votaries of God; mere ritualistic exactitude or pompous adoration, or loud acclamation will not entitle you to enter the portals of Go-loka! They are as tin and trash before the treasure-chest of love. Love is the bridge which helps passage from birth to death to deathlessness, from death to birthlessness. When you rise from the jeeva-sense to the Deva-sense (human-ness to Godliness), then there is no more birth or death. Liberation happens when you love every being so intensely that you are aware of only ONE. Soak your heart in love, soak your acts in righteousness, soak your emotions in compassion; then you attain God at the earliest.

Krishna was the servant of even cows and calves!

Nowadays, most people who are near a temple are farthest from God. For, there is no genuineness in the

manipulations of the limbs or emotions, impulses or activities during worship. You say, Krishnaarpana (dedication to Krishna), but really the dedication which the mind does is to trishna (desire)! On the other hand, it may be dedication to wife or children! It is seldom done to Krishna! God is everywhere at all times; he accomplishes everything. He accomplishes the minor feat of assuming the human form and growing up among men as one of them right in their midst, in order to win them over to the path of truth. He gives man the chance to savour His sweetness and glimpse His glory. He acts despite the absence of any compulsion, so that man may be led to do likewise.

The Sage Vyasa once happened to pass by when Krishna was washing the horses of Arjuna's chariot in the waters of the Yamuna; he shed a tear, contemplating on the duty that the Lord had imposed on Himself in order to guide man right. Krishna played the role of servant to Arjuna, so that man may know how to serve and thereby rise to sovereignty!

Krishna was the servant of even cows and calves! When as a boy, His mother proposed to get shoes for His tiny feet, lest the hard thorny ground of the pasture injure His lotus feet. Krishna would have none of it; He replied, "I go daily behind the cows and calves to the distant pasture in order to tend them; I am their servant. How can the servant go shod before his masters when they are not shod?"

Krishna's breath was Love, His behaviour compassion:

The cattle were so loyal and loving towards Krishna because of this intimate bond. Krishna was invited by Kamsa to Mathura. When Akrura, the messenger from Mathura, took him in his chariot to that City, the cows and the frisking calves too shed tears at the separation! The beasts had such sincere Krishna-trishna! Only man has strayed into the wilderness of ego-infested evils. Every other animal is still treading its allotted path! God takes human form, in order to fill man with gratitude and joy; man sees the power, the wisdom and the beauty of God - the Satyam, Shivam and Sundaram - and the vision gives him a tormenting thirst for truth, goodness and beauty.

Krishna dealt with the world as with a sitar, pulling its heartstrings to elicit the melody of comradeship, heroism, love, affection, compassion and conviction. However, of these, the two emotions of love and compassion were characteristically His and His alone. His breath was love, His behaviour, compassion! Adore Him, placing a garland of tears around His neck, washing His feet with tears springing from joy at the contemplation of His love! That very worship will endow you with the Wisdom that sages seek, the Bliss that the books extol. Grow in love, meditating on the embodiment of love, called Krishna. When the heart has not melted and softened to the cry of distress, the spasm of pain, the groan of the hungry; when the fountain of love therein is blocked with the tinsels of pride, Krishna will not play the flute in your ear. You may be a master in the service of Krishna, however, without the key of love you cannot gain entrance to the Go-loka where He resides! You may be in Prashanthi Nilayam for many years, claiming to be with Swami and near Him, but without cultivating love expressed in service, you cannot know Swami. The world is the splendour of God, His reflection.

There was once a pupil, who prided himself on his ancestors and his master; they were great Pandits (scholars), renowned over the entire realm. His preceptor asked him one day, whether he could answer any question he might

ask. The pupil was stung to the quick! He said, "Why this hesitation? Ask, and it will be answered! I come from a Somayaji family; my father is a celebrated savant. I have been learning at your feet for years! Don't I know the answers to all questions?"

"What is the meaning of the word, Lavana?", the Guru asked. The pupil laughed and said, "O, you surprise me, with this absurdly simple question! Don't I know? Lavana means cowdung!"

Well, lavana is a word that is in daily currency in every household and everyone knows that it means 'common salt'! Even this, the conceited disciple had not learnt.

This is very much like what some long-standing 'devotees' know about Me! Unless you brighten your vision with love, you cannot see the Truth. Love helps you to see God in everyone and everyone as Divine. The Jagat is not false, it is not a trap; it is the splendour of God, His reflection. He reflected and the Jagat happened! It is His substance, manifesting as multiplicity, as latent or potent energy or matter. When activity is in accordance with awareness and awareness is befogged or belittled, dried up or deluded, then Dharma is in decline and the Avatar (divine incarnation) appears among men! People tell Me that mankind is on the brink of destruction, that the forces of hypocrisy and hate are prevailing fast in all the continents, and that anxiety and fear are stalking the streets of every city and village of the world; there is no need to tell Me this, for I have come precisely for this very reason. When the world is on the verge of chaos, the Avatar comes to still the storm raging in the hearts of men. Prashanthi (the higher peace, the calming of perturbations) will be stabilised soon; the demonic deviations from the straight Divine Path will be corrected. Dharma will be revived and re-vitalised, in every human community.

Infect yourselves with madness for Krishna

You celebrate the Birthday of Krishna, of Rama and of Sai; but they have no birth, they do not age; they appear and disappear, like the Sun rising and setting; because you roll and rotate, they are steady and ever-present! They appear so that you might realise the Unlimited and forget in that ecstasy the limited to which you are shackled! Do not derive contentment simply adoring pictures and images, and reading or reciting hymns or songs of praise. Move on to the higher stage of Seva activity, and then, to the highest stage of Ananda, which is Go-loka! Know your reality and the reality of all beings as revealed to you; that very instant you become Radha and since Radha is Krishna and Krishna is Radha, you enter and merge in the Krishnatatwa (the Krishna Principle), the Divine Truth. Whoever adores Krishna unintermittently, without any other thought or feeling to perturb him, is Radha. See with the eyes of love; hear with the ears of love; work with the hands of love; think thoughts of love; feel Love in every nerve. The God of love, Krishna, will come to you on the wave of love and fill your hearts with Himself!

Do not cage Him in a picture-frame; do not confine Him in an idol. He is all forms. His are all names. He is the Reality of all beings. Infect yourselves with madness for Him, instead of for the world. Some one has written a song about Me, saying that I cure madness and confer madness, that I wipe tears and cause tears to flow! Yes, madness for visualising God is any way preferable to the madness after riches and reputation.

Power of love can bind the world.

Shed tears of ananda (divine happiness), not tears of grief. Yearn for the love that will bring you the love of God,

Prema. I have no power mightier than that. I might change earth into sky or sky into earth, but that power is nothing before the power of love that can bind the world and rule the world. Love, do not hate or harm! Even mosquitoes can pride themselves on the capacity to injure and harm, and cause disease! Bugs can do likewise; so, if you feel proud of the skill to harm, you are only demeaning yourselves. Love and serve; that is the Sadhana (spiritual striving), that will reward you best.

The sages have prescribed celebrating festivals like this one, since they encourage you to ponder over the fundamentals of spiritual progress. A young tree grows better and faster, when the soil around the roots is raked up now and then, so that air and solar rays can penetrate the source of its strength and vitalise it. I bless that you will have the constant contemplation of the Lord and that your minds will taste the sweetness of the Divine without intermission.

- Prashanthi Nilayam, 13-8-1971

You sit in meditation for ten minutes, after the evening Bhajan (devotional chanting) sessions; so far, so good.

But, let Me ask, when you rise after the ten minutes and move about, do you see every one in a clearer light, as endowed with Divinity? If not Dhyana is a waste of time.

Do you love more, do you talk less, do you serve others more earnestly? These are the signs of success in Dhyana.

Your progress must be authenticated by your character and behaviour. Dhyana must transmute your attitude towards beings and things; else it is a hoax.

- Sri Sathya Sai

The term Prema can be experienced as Amrutham from the 'HIS-STORY' of Rama and Ramdas.

Ramdas was born in a Brahmin family to Linganna Murthy and Kamamba in Nelakondapalli village of Khammamett Taluk of northern Andhra Pradesh.

Akkanna, his uncle and the administrative head in the court of Qutub Shahi Sultan Abul Hassan Tana Shah, appointed Ramdas as the Tahsildar (revenue collector) of 'Palvoncha Paragana'. He discharged his official duties earnestly and collected revenues due to the Sultan - while continuing his unswerving service to Lord Rama by chanting his name and feeding the poor.

One day, he visited Bhadrachalam for a Jatra (fair) and was disturbed by the bad state of the temple there.

Bhadrachalam was and is significant to devotees of Rama for many reasons. Lord Rama is said to have stayed near the Parnasala there with Sita and Lakshmana during his exile and to have visited Sabari near Bhadrachalam.

Pothana is believed to have been given direction by Sri Rama to translate the Bhagavata Purana into Telugu here.

Inspite of its significance, the temple was utterly neglected. Therefore, Ramdas started to raise funds for the

renovation and reconstruction of the temple. After he emptied his coffers and could raise no more money, the villagers appealed to him to spend his revenue collections for the reconstruction and promised to repay the amount after harvesting crops. Allowing himself to be persuaded, Ramdas finished the reconstruction of the temple with six hundred thousand rupees collected from land revenues, without the permission of Abul Hasan Qutb Shah.

As the temple was nearing completion, he was perplexed one night about fixing the Sudarshana Chakra at the crest of the main temple. On the same night, it is believed that he saw Rama in his dream asking him to have a holy dip in the Godavari River. When Gopanna (Ramdas) did accordingly the next day, he found the holy Sudarshana Chakra in the river.

Soon after the reconstruction though, his miseries started. He was dismissed from his job for misusing the Sultan Abul Hasan Qutb Shah's revenues and was imprisoned in the Golconda Fort (near Hyderabad) with orders that he be released only after the exchequer received all the taxes in full. Unable to withstand his miseries, Ramdas implored Rama to relieve him of his miseries through many emotional songs, expressing his love for Rama. These were later popularized as the stanzas of 'Dasaradhi Sathakam' and 'Keertanas' of Bhakta Ramdas and they praise the Lord for all His mysterious ways in testing His devotees. Ramdas regularly pleaded with the Lord to ease his suffering. When that did not work, he pleaded with Mother Sita to recommend to her husband to ease his devotee's pain; all else failing to invoke a response, Ramdas resorted to accusing God of being indifferent to his suffering. Of course, the songs quickly end with an apology for the harsh language used and end in a state of total and unconditional surrender to the will of the Almighty.

After 11-12 years of imprisonment, it is said that Lord Rama decided that his devotee's suffering had reached its preordained end. Rama and Lakshmana, disguised as two young warriors, entered the bedchambers of the Sultan Tana Shah in the middle of the night. They gave the king the money (spent for temple renovation) in gold coins imprinted with Rama's own seal. The king was bewildered at the presence of these charming but strange youngsters in his inner quarters. They demanded and obtained on the spot a written receipt for the money. The receipt was shown to the jailor who released Gopanna the same night. The next day, both Gopanna and the Sultan realized what had happened. Gopanna did not care much for his release, but was inconsolable at his not having seen his Lord, even with all his devotion, while the Lord visited the Sultan. The Lord then appeared to Gopanna in a dream, explained to him the real reasons for his actions, and promised him salvation at the end of his natural life. The king was convinced that what had happened was a miracle of Allah. He returned the entire money to the Bhadrachalam temple.

The reason for this drama was to extract nectarine (Amrutha) songs of divine love (for Lord Rama) from Ramdas. This pure Prema Amrutha could be extracted only after Ramdas underwent all the trouble, torture and agony of body, mind and soul and when he pined for and despaired of ever getting the darshan of his beloved Rama. Lord Rama then consoles him, makes him realise his constitutional position of Poornasanathana (a spark of the divine) and accepts his Prema. This may even be called Mukti.

Mukti is of four kinds:

Worship, with fixity of consciousness and purity of feeling and freedom from all extraneous thought, becomes Bhaavasamadhi. Because of this Bhaavasamadhi, the Lord appears before the inner eye of the devotee in the form which he has chosen for worship. The vision is not a matter of imagination; it is a 'face' (real) experience. Without difference of location, he can abide in the presence of the Lord, in the self-same place. This is called Saalokyamukti. Besides being always with the Lord, as in Saalokyamukti, bhaktas realise all that they see as the glory of the Lord. The experience is referred to as Saamipyamukti. Existing ever with the Lord, witnessing always the glory of the Lord, and becoming suffused with God-consciousness is Saarupyamukti. This is the final fruit of Bhakti Sastra. However, at this stage, there is yet a trace of differential feeling, so the Advaita Siddhanta will not admit it as the highest. Simply because the bhakta has Saarupya or the same Rupa as the Lord, we cannot take it to mean that he has powers of creation, preservation and destruction, which the Lord possesses. It is only when all traces of difference disappear and unity is attained that the highest stage is reached. This is what is called Saayujya. This comes of divine Grace, won by the essence of the Sadhana of each; it cannot be claimed as the fruit of effort. The bhakta will aspire for this merging or 'Aikyam'. He wishes to serve the Lord as he pleases and to experience the joy of the form, which he has attributed to the Lord. However, the Lord out of His Grace gives him not only Saalokya, Saamipya and Saarupya but also, Saayujya! Bhaktimarga results also in the attainment of Brahmajnana. Even if the Bhakta does not crave for it, the Lord Himself vouchsafes it to him. The Saayujyamukti is also referred to as Ekaanthamukti

- Bhagwan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

12. Paripoornasanathana (Oneness):

The Ekaantamukti is the Paripoornam, meaning it is beyond completeness. Beyond completeness is referred to also as "Whole" without a second. When the Advaita state ends the state of Dvaita will also end and both will become "Ekam" i.e., "One" without a second. To attain the state of this Ekam will be possible only with His grace, as His grace works like conventions prescribed by Him; and the creatures, when they follow those prescribed paths, without doubt they are blessed in abundance to attain the Ekaanta Mukti. Those who have attained this state of Ekam can be recognized by other souls living with flesh and blood only, as the person who has attained will have no recognition of self after attaining that. Hence, this process of Ekam will continue for other Jivas until their merging with HIM and with HIS Sankalpa, and then this drama will end.

"AUM ISHAA VAASYAMIDAM SARVAM YAT KINCHA JAGATYAAM JAGAT; TENA TYAKTENA BHUNJEETHA
MAA GRIDHAH KASYASVID DHANAM."

If all the Upanishads and other scriptures happened all of a sudden to be reduced to ashes and if only this Shloka were left in the memory of Jivas, Jivas would live forever.

"God pervades all, all that we see in the Universe. Therefore, we must give up the idea of 'Thine' and 'Mine', accept gratefully whatever is given to us by God and use it, sharing it with our fellow beings. Eschew all feelings of greed and selfishness. Remember that everything actually belongs to God alone."

The shlokas of the Upanishad teach us that we should cultivate a sense of constant awareness of the Omnipresence of the Lord and His presence in all beings. We should have love for all beings and have a spirit of surrender to God who is the all-pervading truth and the reality immanent in all beings and things.

"Aum Shanti, Shanti Shantihi"

Let there be no discord anywhere in the world. Let peace prevail.