

॥ काशीपञ्चकम् ॥
.. kAshIpa nchakam ..

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मनोनिवृत्तिः परमोपशान्तिः
सा तीर्थवर्या मणिकर्णिका च ।
ज्ञानप्रवाहा विमलादिगङ्गा
सा काशिकाहं निजबोधरूपा ॥ १ ॥

यस्यामिदं कल्पितमिन्द्रजालं
चराचरं भाति मनोविलासम् ।
सच्चित्सुखैका परमात्मरूपा
सा काशिकाहं निजबोधरूपा ॥ २ ॥

कोशेषु पञ्चस्वधिराजमाना
बुद्धिर्भवानी प्रतिदेहगेहम् ।
साक्षी शिवः सर्वगतोऽन्तरात्मा
सा काशिकाहं निजबोधरूपा ॥ ३ ॥

काश्यां हि काश्यते काशी काशी सर्वप्रकाशिका ।
सा काशी विदिता येन तेन प्राप्ता हि काशिका ॥ ४ ॥

काशीक्षेत्रं शरीरं त्रिभुवन-जननी व्यापिनी ज्ञानगङ्गा ।
भक्तिः श्रद्धा गयेयं निजगुरु-चरणध्यानयोगः प्रयागः ।
विश्वेशोऽयं तुरीयः सकलजन-मनःसाक्षिभूतोऽन्तरात्मा
देहे सर्वं मदीये यदि वसति पुनस्तीर्थमन्यत्किमस्ति ॥ ५ ॥

– शङ्कराचार्य

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Tirtha

We pass through three states every day of our life. These are the waking,
dream and deep sleep states. These are called the jagrat, swapna and sushupti

avasthas. In the waking state we are active and carry on transactions with the

world that is outside us. In this state the other two states do not exist for us. Similarly, while in the the dream state, the dreamer is active and carries on transactions with the world that is outside him. While in this state also the other two states do not exist for the dreamer. Now, let us pause for a moment and find out where does the dream world as we would like to call the

world one sees in a dream exist. He sees a procession with elephants, people etc., in his dream. Is it outside of the dreamer? The dreamer thinks so. But it is not seen by other dreamers and also disappears when he wakes up. So the

dream world is not real but is a mental projection only. It exists within the dreamer's mind only, but he sees it as though it is outside him. It has all the characteristics of the real world we find in our waking state. It has the dimensions of space, time etc. It may produce tangible effects in his body and mind. One may dream that he is falling from a precipice or chased by

a tiger, and wake up but will continue to have palpitation and profuse sweating. The dream world is real, as far as the dreamer is concerned.

Do not what we said above apply to the real world we see in our waking state? Is there any difference at all between these two worlds? Not really.

but we think the dream world is not substantial, but the other world is. Our

philosophy questions this assumption and asserts that the so called real world is also not substantial but is a mental projection only like the dream world is. We may find it hard to digest this assertion but it is hard to

refute it also. This is because of the fact that it does not exist in the other two states. In the deep sleep state, the sense organs and the mind are withdrawn. So, no world exists. We are ourselves in the form of bliss. This bliss is superior to any pleasure one may get through one's sense organs.

That

is why even an emperor who may have all the wealth and power at his command

will not be willing to remain awake and enjoy the pleasures that are at his command all the time. He would like to fall asleep and enjoy the higher bliss

which is his true nature. But this state is temporary as our mind continues to be covered by ignorance. That is why when we wake up we are back where we were, into this world of ours with all its problems.

Mark, in the waking state the mind and the sense organs are active. In the dream state only the mind is active and the dreamer creates the dream world, transacts with it and withdraws it within himself at the end of the dream. Similarly, when one goes to sleep and slips into a dream, the real world goes. That is why one may go to sleep with a jar of water by his bed side. He may feel thirsty in his dream, but the real water by his side cannot come to his aid. Only dream water can quench the thirst. Similarly, one may come across a windfall in his dream, but all that piles of dream money will not help him out of the financial crunch he may face on waking up.

This is explained in our upanishads. The DakShinamurthy Stotram of Sri Sankaracharya explains this with many examples. A magician conjures up objects

out of thin air. These objects appear as real to the observer. But the magician knows they are unreal. Similarly, the world appears real to us. When the person gets jnanam and wakes up he realises that what he sees is God appearing as the world. It is his own self also. So, there is no world other than himself. It is born, exists and withdrawn by his mind; just as a dream is born, exists and withdrawn by a dreamer's mind. This is said in the Kaivalyopanishad. mayyeva sakalam jAtam mayi sarvam pratishtitam, mayi sarvam layam yAti.

Coming to Sankaracharya's Kasi Panchakam, he, being an awakened person or

jnani, sees no world outside of him. So, where will he go for a pilgrimage? By

whatever name you may call the place, Kasi, Prayaga etc., it exists within him

only. So, where will he go? There is an incident connected with Sri Ramana maharshi of Tiruvannamalai that vividly illustrates this fact. Once someone

asked him why he is staying all the time at Tiruvannamalai only and not go on any pilgrimage. Ramana promptly asked the person "Where can I go?" But, Sankaracharya retained his ego for carrying out his mission as a teacher. Most of us believe in a god with form and name. We believe in the efficacy of puja, pilgrimage etc. Gita says that a man of wisdom should not confuse such people with talks about formless god etc., till they are mentally mature and are able to swallow such teachings of the upanishads. But, instead he should strengthen their faith by himself joining them in their method of worship. The Lord says in Gita that such devotees will gradually progress to higher form of devotion. So, the Acharya, like us, went to different places, worshipped the deities there, and composed hymns in their praise. All these are for the benefit of lay people only. But he had also composed works like DakShina-murthy stotram that disseminate advaitic philosophy. Trust this answers the question.

Above commentary by N.Balasubramanian. bbalu at satyam.net.in

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तीर्थ

तीर्थ is a word which occurs in most sanskrit literature from the times of ऋग्वेद, however in ऋग्वेद the word is used to mean a way, a path, flow of water or a part of river where one can safely bathe e.g. १.१६९.०६ ई.

प्रति प्र याहीन्द्र मील्हषो नृन् महः पार्थिवे सद्ने यतस्व ।

अथ यद् एषाम पृथबन्धास एतास तीर्थे नार्यः पौस्यानि तस्थः ॥

at times it is (though rarely in ऋग्वेद) it is used to mean as a sacred place(पवित्र) e.g. १० ३१.०३

अध्यायि धीतर् अससृग्रम् अंशास तीर्थे न दस्मम उप यन्त्य ऊमाः ।

अभ्य आनश्म सः वितस्य शूषं नवेदसो अमृतानाम् अभूम ॥

it can therefore be concluded that certain parts or provinces of the sub-continent were considered to be sacred in quality and volumes of sanskrit literature post vedic period advises that these places be visited for spiritual enhancement. It will be shocking but matsyapurANaमत्स्यपुराण puts the figure at 30.5 Million places in entire universe as tirthas (तीर्थ) However Vedas mostly acknowledge the places near major rivers like sindhU , sarasvati , gangA and sarayuसिन्धू, सरस्वति, गङ्गा, सरयु as tirthas. In vedas particularly sindhU, sarasvati and sarayu rivers are treated as mothers.

This is not a difficult to understand. The whole aryan civilization was considered advanced because of their knowledge about techniques of cultivation of land. The cultivation of land offered man , vis-a-vis any other living organism on the earth, control over his food. It also reduced the risk of death which is associated with a hunter-gatherer. (that we were). It was also recognised early in the civilisation that certain diseases which affect the animals also affect the humans, increasing mortality. However diseases affecting plants are different from than those which affect human beings. These things together probably laid the foundation of vegetarianism.

In the light of the above terming the places near the rivers or the fertile deltas as .sacred. or as god.s gift to humanity appears justified and insistence on visiting such places is also understandable. (e.g the meaning of the word kurukhetra कुरुक्षेत्र is land brought under cultivation by kuru dynasty.)

As far as KAshiकाशी is concerned, it was a place where most of the knowledge during the time of writing of most brahman-granthas (ब्राह्मणग्रंथ) was born. During Mahabharata period kAshi was a kingdom and Varanasi was the capital city of Kashi. In the first or second century AD most literature refers to .kAshi. as a .nagari. (city).

Insistence on visiting such places where nature and human together worked in synergy to generate prosperity is natural. It is the advise that any civilised society should give to its members.

Therefore the importance of visiting tirthas made sense during the time when most of the Sanskrit literature was scripted. The story of these places during the modern ages has changed dramatically and the appropriate changes which should have been rightfully made in the granthas have not been made during the Middle Ages. The main reason for this appears to be, as appropriately noted by the great Indologist Dr D. D. Kossambi, .Brahmins who were traditionally the keepers of knowledge, in Middle Ages, engaged themselves in the meaningless activities to preserve orthodoxy and ignored progress.

One more point is important and needs to be emphasised: one of the most important aspects of Vedic philosophy is the importance that it gives to the .doer. कर्ता than to the .method. arguing that an accurate aetiology does not exist in nature. Vedic .vidhi.विधी (to be translated as .command.) has three parts 1. doerकर्ता 2. mantra (methodology)मंत्र and 3. deityदेवता . Out of these deity is always used to denote a set of qualities or set of adjectives and, contrary to the common belief, is the least important. (eg. the word vasudevवसुदेव means one who possesses all of the following qualities simultaneously : 1. Greatness (श्री)2. Success (यश) 3. Bravery(वीर्य) 4. Wealth (ऐश्वर्य) and, 5. Detachment from the material world (वैराग्य). (ref: viShNupurANa).)

Therefore by merely performing the rite according to the methodology does not obtain the desired result unless an individual performing the rite is .eligible. (the word used in vedic literature is adhikAraअधिकार). One must first acquire the eligibility and then perform the rite. One who is not knowledgeable or has behaved in a fashion detrimental to the Manav SamAja (Human Society) cannot perform aShTiShToma yaGYa . When the Vedas ordain that .one who wants to go to heaven must perform aShTiShToma yaGYa., it is automatically assumed that you have the eligibility to perform the rite. Unfortunately, this is being totally ignored and the large portion of the society indulges in meaningless rites and rituals.

The concept can be very easily elucidated: there are hundred of

recipe books about French cuisine. Try the recipe yourself and then visit a reputed place in Paris to taste the same product. Will the taste be same? The chef has more eligible therefore the same methodology produces a different result or in other words .there is no accurate aetiology..

Vyasa in Van-parva or araNyaparva (वनपर्व orअरण्यपर्व)
i.e. chapter III of mahabharata) (sec 82) says:

I will tell thee of the merit which is attached to tirthas and which constitutes the refuge of the Rishis. .He, whose hands and feet and mind and knowledge and asceticism and acts are under wholesome control, enjoys the fruits of tirthas. He who has ceased to accept gifts, he that is contented, he that is free from pride enjoys the fruits of tirthas. He that is without sin, he that acts without purpose, he that eats light, he that has his senses under control, he that is free from every sin, enjoys the fruits of tirthas. O king, he that is free from anger, he that adheres to truth, he that is firm in vows, he that regards all creatures as his own self, enjoys the fruits of tirthas.. (translation by Kisari Mahan Ganguly 1893-96)

Similarly skandakAshi purAN (6.1) and padya pauraN uttarArdha 3.237 states that control over the senses, adherence to truth and purity of mind to be the highest tIrtas.

Against this background if you read the sha.nkarAchArya and near complete translation that Nandu has offered I think the latent meaning would be apparent to you.

Also you may be interested that the meaning of the word tIrtakara तीर्थकर् is .one who makes path through life by his own prowess . generally referred as shiva.

If you are keen I would suggest that you go through vanparva of Mahabharata section 82 carefully . That would give you Vyasas interpretation of .sacrifice. by the kings etc. Please understand that the name of a deity is used at many places mean only a set of adjectives. In sanskrit literaterature it is called prasha.nsa.nka svarUpa प्रशंसकं स्वरूप.

(Researched and written by Surin Usgonkar. Mumbai , India)



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