
Matripanchakam of Shankaracharya

ಮಾತೃಪಂಚಕಂ

Document Information



Text title : matrupanchakam 1

File name : mAtripanchakam.itx

Category : panchaka, shankarAchArya

Location : doc_z_misc_shankara

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Latest update : October 30, 2009, September 5, 2011

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October 24, 2020

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INTRODUCTION:- The short poem consisting of five verses (hence called panchakam) is attributed to Shri Shankaracharya. The following abbreviations are used in the comments. 1) BG Bhagavat Gita. (2) BH-Shrimad Bhagavatam. (3) VR-Valmiki Ramayanam. (4) MB-Maha Bharata.

ON DEVOTION TO MOTHER

JOY AND SORROW:- We all desire happiness and only happiness and that too we want it to last all the time. But we find that such a state of unalloyed bliss eludes us. It is punctuated with periods of unhappiness. In fact, Krishna (in BG 8-15) calls life as ದುಃಖಾಲಯಂ ಅಶಾಶ್ವತಂ. the repository of sorrow and impermanent. Even the brief spells of joy we experience are followed by periods of sorrow or pain. It is, then, clear that what we term as happiness is not true happiness. Hunger and thirst stalk every one right from birth. Further as one advances in age, infirmity creeps in and so do many diseases and on the top of every thing looms the fear of impending death. Because of these reasons Krishna stresses the fact that life is the repository of sorrow and impermanent. We also find that some people appear to be blessed with greater quota of happiness than some others. Some are born in rich families and are surrounded with all the comforts of life while some are born in destitution. Such situations are intriguing. We would like to know the reasons behind these variations so that we can avoid those things that beget unhappiness and do whatever is needed to get happiness. It seems that we, with our limited intellect, are not able to unravel the mystery. If it were not so, we should have found the secret key to happiness and living on cloud nine. But unfortunately it is not so. We seem to be caught in a hopeless situation.

THE REMEDY:- But we need not despair. This is where our scriptures come to our aid. They give the formula for a happy life. They say that if one does the right deeds he gets merit or punya and if he does wrong deeds he gets sin or pApam. Punya yields happiness and pApam unhappiness. ಶುಭಕೃಚ್ಛುಭಮಾಪ್ನೋತಿ ಪಾಪಕೃತ್ವಾಪಮಶ್ನುತೇ.

VR(VI-114.24.5) Our unhappiness is attributable only to our failure to do the right deeds and doing the wrong deeds.

ವಿಹಿತಸ್ಯಾನನುಷ್ಠಾನಾತ್ ನಿಂದಿತಸ್ಯ ಚ ಸೇವನಾತ್ .
ಅನಿಗ್ರಹಾಚ್ಛೇಂದ್ರಿಯಾಣಾಂ ನರಃ ಪತನಮೃಚ್ಛತಿ ..

says Yagnavalkya Smriti. The deeds include

actions done by the body, words and also thoughts.

ಕಾಯೇನ ಕುರುತೇ ಪಾಪಂ ಮನಸಾ ಸಂಪ್ರಧಾರ್ಯ ಚ .
ಅನ್ಯತಂ ಜಿಹ್ವಯಾ ಚಾಹ ತ್ರಿವಿಧಂ ಕರ್ಮ ಪಾತಕಂ .. VR-II-109-21.

DHARMA:- The question, then is, how

to know which deed is right and which is not right and who is to decide this? What appears to be the right deed for one may not be so for some

one else. Also, in similar situations, but at different circumstances,

one may have to act differently. So, there may not be one answer for

this question. Such questions have been asked by people all the time

and answered by our acharyas. Right conduct is called dharma. Leading

a life in dharmic way, then, is the formula for happiness. Dharma has

the ability to destroy pApam or sins. Mahanarayanopanishad (79-7)

says this. ಧರ್ಮೇಣ ಪಾಪಮಪನುದತಿ. Once sins are removed, the way

is cleared for happiness. Sage Vyasa bewails saying that I keep on

saying this, but sadly no one listens to me.

ಉರ್ಧ್ವಬಾಹುವಿರಾಮ್ಯೇಷ ನ ಚ ಕಶ್ಚಿಚ್ಛೇನೋತಿ ಮಾಂ .

ಧರ್ಮಾದರ್ಥಶ್ಚ ಕಾಮಶ್ಚ ಸಃ ಕಿಮರ್ಥಂ ನ ಸೇವ್ಯತೇ ..

Manu -the author of Manusmriti - says that

by doing deeds in the right way (that is following the dharmic path)

one can get all he wants (happiness) here and in the life hereafter

also.

ತೇಷು ಸಮ್ಯಗ್ವರ್ತಮಾನಃ ಗಚ್ಛತ್ಯಮರಲೋಕತಾಂ .

ಯಥಾ ಸಂಕಲ್ಪಿತಾಂಶ್ಚೇಹ ಸರ್ವನ್ಯಾಮಾನ್ಸಮಶ್ನುತೇ ..

SOURCES TO KNOW ABOUT DHARMA:-Manu clarifies his statement and says that all vedas are the basis to define dharma. What the vedas say is further elaborated by texts like smritis written by scholars well versed in the vedas, the conduct of the noble men or sadhus and finally what contributes to self-satisfaction.

ವೇದೋಽಖಿಲೋ ಧರ್ಮಮೂಲಂ ಸ್ಮೃತಿಶೀಲೇ ಚ ತದ್ವಿದಾಂ .

ಆಚಾರಶ್ಚೈವ ಸಾಧೂನಾಂ ಆತ್ಮನ್ತುಷ್ಟಿರೇವ ಚ ..

Sage Vyasa said the same, but in different words in Mahabharata. (Anusasana Parva. 141-65)

ವೇದೋಕ್ತಃ ಪರಮೋ ಧರ್ಮಃ ಸ್ಮೃತಿಶಾಸ್ತ್ರಗತೋಽಪರಃ .

ಶಿಷ್ಟಾಚೀರ್ಣೋಽಪರಃ ಪ್ರೋಕ್ತಸ್ತಯೋ ಧರ್ಮಃ ಸನಾತನಾಃ ..

Krishna told this to Arjuna in Bhagavad Gita. He said that scriptures are to be taken as the guide for deciding what is right and what is not right. If one chooses to ignore the scriptural injunctions and acts according to his sweet will he will be doing so at his own peril and will not find happiness.

ಯಃ ಶಾಸ್ತ್ರವಿಧಿ-ಮುತ್ಸೃಜ್ಯ ವರ್ತತೇ ಕಾಮಕಾರತಃ .

ನ ಸ ಸಿದ್ಧಿ-ಮಾಪ್ನೋತಿ ನ ಸುಖಂ ನ ಪರಾಂ ಗತಿಂ ..

ತಸ್ಮಾಚ್ಛಾಸ್ತ್ರಂ ಪ್ರಮಾಣಂ ತೇ ಕಾರ್ಯಾ-ಕಾರ್ಯ-ವ್ಯವಸ್ಥಿತೌ .

ಜ್ಞಾತ್ವಾ ಶಾಸ್ತ್ರವಿಧಾನೋಕ್ತಂ ಕರ್ಮ ಕರ್ತುಮಿಹಾರ್ಹಸಿ .. BG(16-23 and 24).

The scriptures are taken to mean the vedas and the secondary texts like the Manu Smriti, the puranas like Shrimad Bhagavatam and (itihasas) works like the Ramayana and Mahabharata. The secondary texts are also accepted as authoritative because they faithfully reflect the ideas contained in the vedas. Thus the Mahabharata is considered as the fifth veda. Of

Ramayana it is said that when the Supreme Being chose to be born as the son of Dasaratha, the vedas too took birth as Ramayana through the sage Valmiki.

ವೇದವೇದ್ಯೇ ಪರೇಪುಂಸಿ ಜಾತೇ ದಶರಥಾತ್ಮಜೇ .

ವೇದಃ ಪ್ರಾಚೀದಸಾದಾಸೀತ್ ಸಾಕ್ಷದ್ರಾಮಾಯಣಾತ್ಮನಾ ..

Similarly Shrimad Bhagavatam is said to be the quintessence of the vedas and

the secondary texts. ಸರ್ವ ವೇದೇತಿಹಾಸಾನಾಂ ಸಾರಂ ಸಾರಂ ಸಮುದ್ಧೃತಂ. (1-3-42).

Because they all carry the essence of the vedas we can take them as a guide to our conduct without any reservation. By reading them or listening to their expositions by scholars we may learn the rules of conduct.

To sum up, there are four sources for knowing about dharma. Firstly, one can read about them from the vedas which are the primary source. We have to remember that the vedas which prescribe dharma are not of human origin. They were given out by the Lord Himself at the time of creation for the good of the people. Purusha Suktam says this as: ಋಚಃ ಸಮಾನಿ ಜಜ್ಞಿರೇ . ಛಂದಾಸಿ ಜಜ್ಞಿರೇ ತಸ್ಮಾತ್ . ಯಜುಸ್ತಸ್ಮಾದಜಾಯತ. The Lord withdraws everything (including the vedas) into Himself at the time of dissolution (pralaya) and releases them again at the time of creation.

ಅವ್ಯಕ್ತಾದ್ಯುಕ್ತಯಃ ಸರ್ವಾಃ ಪ್ರಭವಂತ್ಯಹರಾಗಮೇ .

ರಾತ್ರಾಗಮೇ ಪ್ರಲೀಯಂತೇ ತತ್ತ್ವವಾವ್ಯಕ್ತ- ಸಂಜ್ಞಕೇ .. BG(8-18).

Thus they are eternal. Since they were given out by Bhagavan they are known as Bhagavata dharma (ಭಾಗವತ ಧರ್ಮಾಃ:).

If one is unable to access or read and understand the vedas, he can next go to the smritis and other secondary texts. If one is unable to do that also, he can observe the conduct of noble people or sadhus and follow in their footsteps. Since they are great devotees and enshrine the Lord in their hearts, one can be certain that they will not stray from the path of dharma.

One cannot call himself a devotee of the Lord if he does not, in the first place, obey His commands contained in the vedas faithfully. Shrimad Bhagavata says that, even under force of circumstances, such a devotee commits an act that appears to be improper or adharmic to the bystanders, the good Lord will condone it. (Book11-5-42).

ಸ್ವಪಾದಮೂಲಂ ಭಜತಃ ಪ್ರಿಯಸ್ಯ ತ್ಯಕ್ತಾನ್ಯಭಾವಸ್ಯ ಹರಿಃ ಪರೇಶಃ .

ವಿಕರ್ಮ ಯಚ್ಛೋತ್ಪತ್ತಿತಂ ಕಥಂಚಿತ್ ಧುನೋತಿ ಸರ್ವಂ ಹೃದಿ ಸನ್ನಿವಿಷ್ಟಃ ..

This, then, is the third alternative. What happens if the sadhu himself gets a doubt about how he should act in a particular situation and he cannot find the proper guidance in the scriptures? In such a tight situation he

goes by the dictate of his conscience. Here again, we should remember that the devotee who has enshrined the Lord in his heart cannot take a step in the wrong direction. The poet Kalidasa says this in his work Abhijnana Sakuntalam: ಸತಾಂ ಹಿ ಸಂದೇಹಪದೇಷು ವಸ್ತುಷು ಪ್ರಮಾಣಮಂತಃಕರಣಪ್ರವೃತ್ತಯಃ. Dharma is classified as ಸಾಮಾನ್ಯ ಧರ್ಮಃ or general dharma and ವಿಶೇಷ ಧರ್ಮಃ or special dharma.

The former includes those rules of conduct that apply to all, irrespective of caste, sex or any other division. They include rules such as one should not steal or covet another man's property, should not spit or urinate in the water etc. The latter apply to people of a particular class like a house holder or a sanyasi or on special occasions like birth, death, travel etc.

GENERAL DHARMA:-One of the basic rules of conduct

(general dharma) belonging to the first category given in the Vedas is:

ಮಾತೃ ದೇವೋ ಭವ. ಪಿತೃ ದೇವೋ ಭವ. (Taittiriya Upanishad.I-9-2).

These ask us to venerate our mother and father like God. They are commandments. No conditions are attached to them. They are, thus, to be obeyed implicitly. Not obeying them amounts to dereliction of duties and results in sin or pApam which in turn causes sorrow or suffering.

Our puranas are secondary texts. They act like the magnifying glass. They elaborate the cryptic statements contained in the Vedas through the vehicle of stories and advices by wise people like the sages. Some references from puranas and other secondary texts are given in support of the above vedic dictum.

DHARMA VYADHA:- First is the popular story

of Dharma Vyadha. This appears in the Mahabharata-Vana Parva. A brahmin by the name Kaushika decided to go to the forest and perform penance for his own development. But, in the process he left behind his aged parents to fend for themselves. This is a serious lapse of dharma. As he performed penance, he gained some supernatural powers. One day, as he was sitting in meditation under a tree, he felt some bird droppings fall on his head. He was disturbed by this incident. He looked up in

annoyance. The two cranes who were responsible for the misdemeanour were reduced to ashes by his gaze. The brahmin did not expect this to happen, but was pleased at the happening. He became puffed up by his achievements. One day he went to a nearby village to beg for alms. He was made to wait at a house. He became annoyed at this. Soon he heard a lady's voice from inside the house asking him to wait and not to take her to be the cranes. The brahmin was taken aback at the statement. How did the lady of the house know the incident that happened in the remote forest? The brahmin decided to wait and meet the lady of the house who could read his innermost thoughts. After some time the lady came out and offered him alms. She offered her apologies for making him wait, but said it was because she was serving her husband which was her primary duty. This strict adherence to dharma was the cause of her eminence. She advised the brahmin to go to a particular village and meet a butcher and learn more about dharma. Kaushika was amazed to hear that he -a brahmin- was asked to meet a butcher and learn about dharma. Anyway, he felt small by now, since his ego had been pricked by the lady. He went to the village mentioned by the lady and after some enquiry found the butcher who was attending to his customers. He stood at a distance. When he found some respite, the butcher, washed his hands and hurried to Kaushika. He apologised for making him wait and said he had a duty to perform. It may be inferior and unglamorous. But that is what he had inherited and carried on with devotion. He said he can talk to him in detail in his house. He took the brahmin to his house. But he said that he had to wait till he had ministered to his parents. The butcher came to Kaushika after attending to his parents. He said that he knew that Kaushika was sent by that particular woman to learn about dharma from him. He said that doing one's duty is the highest form of dharma and this included serving the parents with devotion. In the following verses he narrated how well he looked after his parents. He added that this took precedence over other duties such as receiving guests. That is why he made Kausika wait till he finished serving his

parents. He advised Kaushika to correct his mistake, go home and look after his parents. Kaushika was full of remorse. He hastened to his home.and started serving his parents with devotion.

ವ್ಯಾಧ ಉವಾಚ:-

ಪಿತಾ ಮಾತಾ ಚ ಭಗವನ್ನೇತೌ ಮದ್ವೈವತಂ ಪರಂ .
ಯದ್ ದೈವತೇಭ್ಯಃ ಕರ್ತವ್ಯಂ ತದೇತಾಭ್ಯಾಂ ಕರೋಮ್ಯಹಂ ..
ತ್ರಯಸ್ತಿಂಶದ್ ಯಥಾ ದೇವಾಃ ಸರ್ವೇ ಶಕ್ರಪುರೋಗಮಾಃ .
ಸಂಪೂಜ್ಯಾಃ ಸರ್ವಲೋಕಸ್ಯ ತಥಾ ವೃದ್ಧಾವಿಮೌ ಮಮ ..
ಉಪಹಾರಾನಾಹರಂತೋ ದೇವತಾನಾಂ ಯಥಾ ದ್ವಿಜಾಃ .
ಕುರ್ವಂತಿ ತದ್ವದೇತಾಭ್ಯಾಂ ಕರೋಮ್ಯಹಮತಂದ್ರಿತಃ ..
ಏತೌ ಮೇ ಪರಮಂ ಬ್ರಹ್ಮನ್ ಪಿತಾ ಮಾತಾ ಚ ದೈವತಂ .
ಏತೌ ಪುಷ್ಪೈಃ ಫಲೈಃ ರತ್ನೈಸ್ತೋಷಯಾಮಿ ಸದಾ ದ್ವಿಜ ..
ಏತಾವೇವಾಗ್ನಯೋ ಮಹ್ಯಂ ಯಾನ್ ವದಂತಿ ಮನೀಷಿಣಃ .
ಯಜ್ಞಾ ವೇದಾಶ್ಚ ಚತ್ವಾರಃ ಸರ್ವಮೇತೌ ಮಮ ದ್ವಿಜ ..
ಏತದರ್ಥಂ ಮಮ ಪ್ರಾಣಾ ಭಾರ್ಯಾ ಪುತ್ರಃ ಸುಹೃಜ್ಜನಃ .
ಸಪುತ್ರದಾರಃ ಶುಶ್ರೂಷಾಂ ನಿತ್ಯಮೇವ ಕರೋಮ್ಯಹಂ ..
ಸ್ವಯಂ ಚ ಸ್ನಾಪಯಾಮ್ಯೇತೌ ತಥಾ ಪಾದೌ ಪ್ರಧಾವಯೇ .
ಆಹಾರಂ ಚ ಪ್ರಯಚ್ಛಾಮಿ ಸ್ವಯಂ ಚ ದ್ವಿಜಸತ್ತಮ ..
ಅನುಕೂಲಂ ತಥಾ ವಚ್ಛಿ ವಿಪ್ರಿಯಂ ಪರಿವರ್ಜಯೇ .
ಅಧರ್ಮೇಣಾಪಿ ಸಂಯುಕ್ತಂ ಪ್ರಿಯಮಾಭ್ಯಾಂ ಕರೋಮ್ಯಹಂ ..
ಧರ್ಮಮೇವ ಗುರುಂ ಜ್ಞಾತ್ವ ಕರೋಮಿ ದ್ವಿಜಸತ್ತಮ .
ಅತಂದ್ರಿತಃ ಸದಾ ವಿಪ್ರ ಶುಶ್ರೂಷಾಂ ವೈ ಕರೋಮ್ಯಹಂ ..
ಪಂಚೈವ ಗುರವೋ ಬ್ರಹ್ಮನ್ ಪುರುಷಸ್ಯ ಬುಭೂಷತಃ .
ಪಿತಾ ಮಾತಾಗ್ನಿರಾತ್ಮಾ ಚ ಗುರುಶ್ಚ ದ್ವಿಜಸತ್ತಮ ..
ಏತೇಷು ಯಸ್ತು ವರ್ತೇತ ಸಮ್ಯಗೇವ ದ್ವಿಜೋತ್ತಮ .
ಭವೇಯುರಗ್ನಯಸ್ತಸ್ಯ ಪರಿಚೇರ್ಣಾಸ್ತು ನಿತ್ಯಶಃ .
ಗಾರ್ಹಸ್ಥ್ಯೇ ವರ್ತಮಾನಸ್ಯ ಏಷ ಧರ್ಮಃ ಸನಾತನಃ ..

WHAT THE PURANAS SAY:- Kurma Purana says that one should look after his parents with total dedication.

ಯಾವತ್ತಿತಾ ಚ ಮಾತಾ ಚ ದ್ವಾವೇತೌ ನಿರ್ವಿಕಾರಿಣೌ .

ತಾವತ್ ಸರ್ವಂ ಪರಿತ್ಯಜ್ಯ ಪುತ್ರಃ ಸ್ವಾತ್ತತ್ಪರಾಯಣಃ ..

Brahmanda Purana says that one gets the results of performing sacrifices. austerities, offering gifts etc., by being devoted to the parents.

ಯಜ್ಞಾನ್ ವೇದಾಂಸ್ತಥಾ ಕಾಮಾಂಸ್ತಪಾಂಸಿ ವಿವಿಧಾನಿ ಚ .

ಪ್ರಾಪ್ನೋತ್ಯಾಯುಃ ಪ್ರಜಾಶ್ಚೈವ ಪಿತೃಭಕ್ತ್ಯಾ ನ ಸಂಶಯಃ ..

But if one chooses to neglect them, then all the good deeds done by him will go waste says Mahabharata (Anushasana Parva).

ಯೇನ ಪ್ರೀಣಾತಿ ಪಿತರಂ ತೇನ ಪ್ರೀತಃ ಪ್ರಜಾಪತಿಃ .

ಪ್ರೀಣಾತಿ ಮಾತರಂ ಯೇನ ಪೃಥಿವೀ ತೇನ ಪೂಜಿತಾ.

ಯೇನ ಪ್ರೀಣಾತ್ಯುಪಾಧ್ಯಾಯಂ ತೇನ ಸ್ಯಾದ್ ಬ್ರಹ್ಮ ಪೂಜಿತಂ .

ಸರ್ವೇ ತಸ್ಯಾದೃತಾ ಧರ್ಮಾ ಯಸ್ಯೈತೇ ತ್ರಯ ಆದೃತಾಃ ..

ಅನಾದೃತಾಸ್ತು ಯಸ್ಯೈತೇ ಸರ್ವಾಸ್ತಸ್ಯಾಫಲಾಃ ಕ್ರಿಯಾಃ ..

The Padma Purana says that blessed is the one who has

his parents with him and makes them happy by his services and good behaviour.

Because he need not go on a pilgrimage and take bath in Ganges to earn merit or punyam. He gets the same result daily in his house itself.

ಪಿತರೋ ಯಸ್ಯ ತೃಪ್ಯಂತಿ ಸೇವಯಾ ಚ ಗುಣೇನ ಚ .

ತಸ್ಯ ಭಾಗೀರಥೀಸ್ನಾನಮಹನ್ಯಹನಿ ವರ್ತತೇ ..

It is said that one gets the result of going round the world six times,

going on pilgrimages to Kashi ten thousand times and taking bath in

Ramasetu hundreds of times by sincerely saluting one's mother.

ಭೂಪ್ರದಕ್ಷಿಣಷಟ್ಕೀನ ಕಾಶೀಯಾತ್ರಾಯುತೇನ ಚ .

ಸೇತುಸ್ನಾನಶತೈರ್ಯಜ್ಞ ತತ್ಫಲಂ ಮಾತೃವಂದನೇ ..

Another purana goes one step further and says that the wretch who ignores his

parents living with him and goes visiting holy places seeking to harvest

merit or punyam will, instead, garner only pApam or sin at those places

and return home with a big load of sin. So, these injunctions are

meant to tell us that one can easily earn all the merit or punyam one

looks for easily, staying right in his house, by serving his parents

sincerely and with devotion. They also alert us of the consequences of

not obeying them. To neglect the parents, particularly in their old age,

when they become weak and dependant and to cause anguish is a heinous act for which there is no atonement available says Brahmanda Purana.

ಪಾತಕಾನಾಂ ಕಿಲಾನ್ಯೇಷಾಂ ಪ್ರಾಯಶ್ಚಿತ್ತಾನಿ ಸಂತೃಪಿ .
ಮಾತೃದ್ರುಹ್ಯಮವೇಹಿ ತ್ವಂ ನ ಕಿಂಚಿತ್ ಕಿಲ ನಿಷ್ಕೃತಿಃ ..

Though the above verses talk of service to mother, we should take the word to imply parents.

CONDUCT OF GREAT PEOPLE:- The puranas and other scriptures contain many statements by great people who served their parents devotedly. Here we should remember Manu's words quoted earlier - that the conduct of noble people should be taken as the guideline and followed by us also.

Manu-the author of Manu Smriti - points out that people cannot requite in full for the suffering undergone by the parents in giving birth and bringing them up.

ಯಂ ಮಾತಾಪಿತರೌ ಕ್ಲೇಶಂ ಸಹೇತೇ ಸಂಭವೇ ನೃಣಾಂ .
ನ ತಸ್ಯ ನಿಷ್ಕೃತಿಃ ಸಕ್ಯಾ ಕರ್ತುಂ ವರ್ಷಶತ್ಕೈರಪಿ .. (II-227).

RAMA AND KRISHNA:- It is said that Lord's human incarnations are intended to teach dharma to humans. They are not merely for the purpose of killing the

demons. BH(5-19-5) ಮರ್ತ್ಯಾವತಾರಸ್ತಿಹ ಮರ್ತ್ಯಶಿಕ್ಷಣಂ ರಕ್ಷೋವಧಾಯೈವ

ನ ಕೇವಲಂ ವಿಭೋ . The Lord in His incarnations as Shri Krishna and Shri Rama and Shri Shankaracharya scrupulously followed the dharmic path and set examples to others. Sages considered Krishna to be the embodiment of dharma.

ಯೇ ಚ ವೇದವಿದೋ ವಿಪ್ರಾಃ ಯೇ ಚಾಧ್ಯಾತ್ಮವಿದೋ ಜನಾಃ .

ತೇ ವದಂತಿ ಮಹಾತ್ಮಾನಂ ಕೃಷ್ಣಂ ಧರ್ಮಂ ಸನಾತನಂ .. MB.Vanaparva.

Rama was also the personification of dharma - ರಾಮೋ ವಿಗ್ರಹವಾನ್ ಧರ್ಮಃ.said

Maricha, an enemy of Rama. So, we may study their lives and follow their footsteps, as advised by Manu. We find that they exemplified the role of good sons by the love and respect they showed to their parents.

We know that Krishna fought with the evil Kamsa and killed him. Then Krishna hastened to the prison where His parents were incarcerated. He released them and repeated what Manu said above. " Even if one were to live for a hundred years, one cannot pay back his parents who gave birth and nourished his body in which he can realise all the four

goals of life."

ಸರ್ವಾರ್ಥ-ಸಂಭವೋ ದೇಹೋ ಜನಿತಃ ಪೋಷಿತೋ ಯತಃ .

ನ ತಯೋರ್ಯಾತಿ ನಿರ್ವೇಶಂ ಪಿತ್ರೋರ್ಮರ್ತ್ಯಃ ಶತಾಯುಷಾ .. Shrimad Bhagavatam (10-45-5).

The Ramayana has many instances where Rama talks about this subject. One example is wherein he talks to sage Vashishta - his guru. The sage, along with Bharatha, tries to persuade Rama to return to Ayodhya from the forest. He felt that Rama will obey his words as he happened to be Rama's guru. But Rama did not take the advice, and in the course of his reply, said what Manu had said and what He had said earlier as Krishna (viz.) that one cannot adequately repay his debt to his parents for all the love and attention they have showered on him when he was a child.

ಯನ್ಮಾತಾಽಪಿತೌ ವೃತ್ತಂ ತನಯೇ ಕುರುತಃ ಸದಾ .

ನ ಸುಪ್ರತಿಕರಂ ತತ್ತು ಮಾತ್ರಾ ಪಿತ್ರಾ ಚ ಯತ್ಕೃತಂ .. VR(II-119.9).

HIGHER PLACE FOR MOTHER:- Though our scriptures

advise us to treat the parents like God, they give a higher place to one's mother. Manu says that the mother is thousand times worthier than the father. ಸಹಸ್ರಂ ತು ಪಿತ್ರನ್ಮಾತಾ ಗೌರವೇಣಾತಿರಿಚ್ಛತೇ .

The popular saying that there is no god equal to one's mother. ನ ಮಾತುರ್ದೈವತಂ ಪರಂ . is probably based on this. We find that the puranas and other texts also echo this sentiment. Mahabharata (Shanti Parva) says that the father deserves more respect than tens of acharyas and the mother more than tens of father. She is weightier than the earth itself.

ಉಪಾಧ್ಯಾಯಾನ್ ಪಿತಾ ದಶ . ಪಿತ್ಯಾನ್ ದಶ ತು ಮಾತೈಕಾ ಸರ್ವಾ ವಾ ಪೃತಿವೀಮಪಿ .

ಗುರುತ್ವೇನಾಭಿಭವತಿ ನಾಸ್ತಿ ಮಾತೃಸಮೋ ಗುರುಃ ..

In another place MB says that there is no shade (to offer solace) like one's mother and no protection equal to her. She is known as dhatri because she carries the child within her, as janani because she gives birth to the child, as amba since she helps to develop its

limbs, as virasu since she got a bold son and as shushru since she nurses him. In effect she is one's alter ego.

ನಾಸ್ತಿ ಮಾತೃಸಮೋ ಭಾಯಾ ನಾಸ್ತಿ ಮಾತೃ ಸಮಾ ಗತಿಃ .
ನಾಸ್ತಿ ಮಾತೃಸಮಂ ತ್ರಾಣಂ ನಾಸ್ತಿ ಮಾತೃಸಮಾ ಪ್ರಿಯಾ ..
ಕುಕ್ಷಿಸಂಧಾರಣಾತ್ ಧಾತ್ರೀ ಜನನಾಜ್ಞನನೀ ಸ್ಮೃತಾ .

ಅಂಗಾನಾಂ ವರ್ಧನಾದಂಬಾ ವೀರಸೂತ್ರೇನ ವೀರಸೂ ..

ಶಿಶೋಃ ಶುಶ್ರುಷಣಾಚ್ಛೂರ್ಮಾತಾ ದೇಹಮನಂತರಂ .. MB (Shanti Parva)

The "YakSha Prasna" episode appears in the Aranyaka Parva of the Mahabharata.

It is in the form of questions by an YakSha and answers by Yudhishtira, the

son of Dharma. The answers illustrate various aspects of dharma. One of

the questions posed by the YakSha is: "Which is weightier than the

earth itself?" ಕಿಂಸ್ವಿದ್-ಗುರುತರಂ ಭೂಮೇಃ?. The answer given by

Yudhishtira is : The mother is weightier than the earth. ಮಾತಾ ಗುರುತರಾ

ಭೂಮೇಃ. Rama also says to LakShmana that the mother and the motherland are

more precious than the heavens. ಜನನೀ ಜನ್ಮಭೂಮಿಶ್ಚ ಸ್ವರ್ಗಾದಪಿ ಗರೀಯಸಿ.

The reason may be that right from the time of conception,

the child becomes a part of the mother's body and grows drawing sustenance

from her food. Even after birth, the child is taken care of by her and

spends more time with her. She is the one who introduces others, including

the father, to the child. She, in effect, becomes the first guru. Krishna

said this to his friend Kuchela when they met in Dwaraka.

ಸ ವೈ ಸತ್ಕರ್ಮಣಾಂ ಸಾಕ್ಷಾದ್ ದ್ವಿಜಾತೇ-ರಿಹ ಸಂಭವಃ .

ಆದ್ಯೋಗಂ ಯತ್ರಾಶ್ರಮಿಣಾಂ ಯಥಾಹಂ ಜ್ಞಾನದೋ ಗುರುಃ .. BH(10-80-32).

Thus the bondage with the mother is stronger than with others.

In view of this one finds that

at Gaya, where a Hindu is expected to offer oblations to his departed

parents, the custom prescribes offering of one pindam or ball of rice

to the father but sixteen to the mother. During the ceremony one says

verses that recall the hardship the mother had to endure when carrying

him in her womb for ten long months and later on also for several years

when he was a child unable to take care of himself. The content of the verses are moving in their appeal.

EXAMPLE OF SHRI SHANKARACHARYA:-

The Skanda Purana says that even an ascetic who is adored by all should worship his mother. ಸರ್ವ ವಂದ್ಯೇನ ಯತಿನಾ ಪ್ರಸೂರ್ವಂದ್ಯಾ ಪ್ರಯತ್ನತಃ. He may sever his attachment with everyone but not with his mother. The bondage continues. He has to attend to her during her final moments and perform the last rites. Shri Shankaracharya was a great ascetic. He was a realised person and so not bound by any rules and conventions. Still, he wanted to set an example to other people. So, he bore the scriptural injunctions in mind and was with his mother during her last moments. He performed the customary rites after her death. At that time his feelings got the better of him. He poured them out in five verses in which he describes the pain and sufferings his mother had undergone for his sake and the great love she had for him. The verses are given below with the meaning. The translation is not exact, but general enough to convey the contents.

..ಅಥ ಶ್ರೀ ಮಾತೃಪಂಚಕಂ ..
ಮುಕ್ತಾಮಣಿ ತ್ವಂ ನಯನಂ ಮಮೇತಿ
ರಾಜೇತಿ ಜೀವೇತಿ ಚಿರ ಸುತ ತ್ವಂ .
ಇತ್ಯುಕ್ತವತ್ಯಾಸ್ತವ ವಾಚಿ ಮಾತಃ
ದದಾಮ್ಯಹಂ ತಂಠುಲಮೇವ ಶುಷ್ಕಂ .. 1..

Into your mouth, that said: You are the pearl of my eyes, my prince, may you live long, son!, O Mother! I now offer only dry grains of rice. (1)

ಅಂಬೇತಿ ತಾತೇತಿ ಶಿವೇತಿ ತಸ್ಮಿನ್
ಪ್ರಸೂತಿಕಾಲೇ ಯದವೋಚ ಉಚ್ಚೈಃ .
ಕೃಷ್ಣೇತಿ ಗೋವಿಂದ ಹರೇ ಮುಕುಂದ
ಇತಿ ಜನನ್ಯೈ ಅಹೋ ರಚಿತೋಽಯಮಂಜಲಿಃ .. 2..

At the time of child birth you cried out loudly -

"Mother!! Father!! Shiva!! Krishna! Govinda! Hare! Mukunda!". To

that mother I now bow with folded hands. (2)

ಆಸ್ತಾಂ ತಾವದಿಯಂ ಪ್ರಸೂತಿಸಮಯೇ ದುರ್ವಾರಶೂಲವ್ಯಥಾ
ನೈರುಚ್ಯಂ ತನುಶೋಷಣಂ ಮಲಮಯೀ ಶಯ್ಯಾ ಚ ಸಾಂವತ್ಸರೀ .
ಏಕಸ್ಯಾಪಿ ನ ಗರ್ಭಭಾರಭರಣಕ್ಲೇಶಸ್ಯ ಯಸ್ಯಾಕ್ಷಮಃ
ದಾತುಂ ನಿಷ್ಕೃತಿಮುನ್ನತೋಽಪಿ ತನಯಸ್ತಸ್ಯೈ ಜನನ್ಯೈ ನಮಃ .. 3..

At the time of giving birth to me, O mother! you suffered from
unbearable pain. You did not speak about the suffering of your body nor
of the painful condition while lying in the bed for almost an year. For
even one of the sufferings that you underwent during pregnancy, O mother!,
a son is unable to offer atonement. To that mother I offer my salutations! (3)

ಗುರುಕುಲಮುಪಸೃತ್ಯ ಸ್ವಪ್ನಕಾಲೇ ತು ದೃಷ್ಟ್ವಾ
ಯತಿಸಮುಚಿತವೇಶಂ ಪ್ರಾರುದೋ ಮಾಂ ತ್ವಮುಚ್ಚೈಃ .

ಗುರುಕುಲಮಥ ಸರ್ವಂ ಪ್ರಾರುದತ್ತೇ ಸಮಕ್ಷಂ
ಸಪದಿ ಚರಣಯೋಸ್ತೇ ಮಾತರಸ್ತು ಪ್ರಣಾಮಃ .. 4..


When in a dream, you saw me dressed like an ascetic. You cried aloud and came
running to the school (to see me). The whole school then immediately cried
before you. At your feet, O mother! I offer my salutation! (4)

ನ ದತ್ತಂ ಮಾತಸ್ತೇ ಮರಣಸಮಯೇ ತೋಯಮಪಿವಾ
ಸ್ವಧಾ ವಾ ನೋ ದತ್ತಾ ಮರಣದಿವಸೇ ಶ್ರಾದ್ಧವಿಧಿನಾ .
ನ ಜಪ್ತ್ವಾ ಮಾತಸ್ತೇ ಮರಣಸಮಯೇ ತಾರಕಮನು-
ರಕಾಲೇ ಸಂಪ್ರಾಪ್ತೇ ಮಯಿ ಕುರು ದಯಾಂ ಮಾತುರತುಲಾಂ .. 5..


I did not offer you water at the time of your death, Oh mother! I
did not even offer the oblations as per funerary rites on the day of
your death. Nor did I repeat the mantra that delivers one across the
ocean of this world. Alas! I have come at an inappropriate time! O
mother! Bestow upon me your unequalled compassion. (5)

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Matripanchakam of Shankaracharya

pdf was typeset on October 24, 2020

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