
Gurvashtakam with meaning

ಸಾರ್ಥ ಗುರ್ವಾಷ್ಟಕಂ

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Commentary by N. Balasubramanian

This work consisting of eight verses and one more known as ಫಲಶ್ರುತಿಃ or a verse that gives the benefit of reciting the poem is attributed to Sri Sankaracharya. These verses are couched in simple language and are easy to read and understand. In these verses the poet stresses the need for devotion to one's guru or spiritual preceptor. He states repeatedly that all the wealth, fame, knowledge etc., one might have acquired will be of no avail if one does not have total devotion to his guru . Let us find out the raison d'être for making such a statement.

Strange as it may sound, our shastras and the saints who have realised the truth stated therein tell that most of us do not know what is happiness, what is sorrow, what is good for us and what is not good for us. Had we known all this we should all be living a life of utter bliss without a vestige of sorrow. But what do we find? Our lives are full of trials and tribulations. In between we come across spots of joy. This joy may be followed by grief or still worse may leave us hankering for more of the same thing, thus leading to avarice or frustration in case the desire is not fulfilled. This is anything but joy. But the scriptures aver that our true nature is totally different. They stress that we are divine in nature and free from all forms of sorrow. But as of now we are not be able to digest such a statement. Why is this so? If happiness be our true nature we should be only too willing to go to any extent to find it. What prevents us from doing so? These are vital questions that have been bugging people for a long time. These and related questions have been

answered by our scriptures and also explained again and again by saints like Sri Sankaracharya in many of their works. Let us briefly review what our scriptures have to say on this important subject. The following abbreviations are used in the commentary:

(1) BG: Bhagavad Gita with Sri Sankara's commentary. (2) BH: Srīmad Bhagavatham. (3) KU: Kathopanishad. (4) MU: Mundakopanishad. (5) VC: Vivekachudamani.

When we say "I" they ask us what do we mean by "I". This may startle us a bit, but then we will point to our body and say "I" means the body and includes the mind etc., that are at our disposal for use.

The scriptures say this is a fundamental mistake and is the root cause for all our problems and misery. When we talk of the "body" as usual, they point out that it includes not only the physical body but there is an unseen entity called Self (or atma or jivatma as it is called). This is what lends sentience to the body. Krishna says that He is the Self seated in the heart of all beings. ಅಹಮಾತ್ಮಾ ಗುಡಾಕೇಶ ಸರ್ವಭೂತಾಶಯಸ್ಥಿತಃ . BG (10-20). This Self is behind our speech, actions, thinking etc. But because it is behind all these activities it itself is unseen and unknown. That means the eyes, for example, cannot see what enables them to see; the ears cannot hear what enables them to hear and so on. In other words, atma is beyond the reach of our senses. This is an important fact that requires to be chewed and digested.

ಶ್ರೋತ್ರಸ್ಯ ಶ್ರೋತ್ರಂ ಮನಸೋ ಮನೋ ಯದ್ವಾಚೋ ಹ ವಾಚಃ ಸ ಉ ಪ್ರಾಣಸ್ಯ ಪ್ರಾಣಃ .

ಚಕ್ಷುಷಶ್ಚಕ್ಷುರತಿಮುಚ್ಯ ಧೀರಾಃ ಪ್ರೇತ್ಯಾಸ್ಮಾಲ್ಲೋಕಾದಮೃತಾಭವಂತಿ .. (Kena Upanishad. 1-2).

That who is the mind of the mind (cause); the vital essence of vital forces, speech of the speech; ear of the ears and eye of the eyes; (it is) He by knowing whom the wise ones become liberated, depart from the world and become immortal.

ನ ತತ್ರ ಚಕ್ಷುರ್ಗಚ್ಯತಿ ನ ವಾಗ್ಗಚ್ಯತಿ ನೋ ಮನೋ(ibid 1-3).

There neither the eye approaches nor the speech (includes other organs of action and perception) nor does the mind.

Sage Yagnavalkya, while teaching this subject to his wife Maitreyi asks: ಯೇನೇದ ಸರ್ವಂ ವಿಜಾನಾತಿ ತಂ ಕೇನ ವಿಜಾನೀಯಾತ್, ವಿಜ್ಞಾತಾರಮರೇ ಕೇನ ವಿಜಾನೀಯಾತ್ (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. 2-4-14) “By what can one know that by which all this comes to be known? By what you can know the knower?”

Thus we have two entities, the body that by itself is inert and the atma that animates it. The body by its very nature is subject to growth, decay and finally death. But the atma who resides in the body is eternal and not subject to any change. Krishna points this out to

Arjuna:

ನ ಜಾಯತೇ ಪ್ರಿಯತೇ ವಾ ಕದಾಚಿನ್ನಾಯಂ ಭೂತ್ವಾ ಭವಿತಾ ವಾ ನ ಭೂಯಃ .
ಅಜೋ ನಿತ್ಯಃ ಶಾಶ್ವತೋಽಯಂ ಪುರಾಣೋ ನ ಹನ್ಯತೇ ಹನ್ಯಮಾನೇ ಶರೀರೇ ..
BG (2-20).

It is same as the Supreme Being itself. Krishna says this in Gita :
ಮಮೈವಾಂಶೋ ಜೀವಲೋಕೇ ಜೀವಭೂತಃ ಸನಾತನಃ . BG(15-7)

The atma being same as the Supreme Being has the same attributes like the Supreme Being - it is eternal, of the form of bliss and wisdom. ಸತ್ಯಂ ಜ್ಞಾನಮನಂತಂ ಬ್ರಹ್ಮ . (Taittiriyaopanishad.2-1). Vedanta clearly states that we are that atma and not the body. Being atma we are eternal and the embodiment of bliss. But as pointed out earlier everyone identifies himself with the body and consequently suffers. Thus when the body is sick one says he is sick, when it grows old he says he has become old and when it dies people say that particular person is dead. In addition one looks out for happiness and security. He gathers around him people (in the form of friends and relatives) to gain happiness and security. He imports their happinesses and sorrows also on to himself. Thus if a close relative is sick, he is worried. If a close friend dies he is very upset. All of us will be happy to have a fat bank balance as we know that a lot of money at our disposal gives a feeling of comfort and security.

But vedanta thinks otherwise. What we think is good and contributory to our happiness and security may not be so at all times. On close examination we find that these things seem to give joy and security but not in the long run. In fact it may yield the contrary results. Too much money is a source of anxiety. A son or daughter may turn out to be a source of worry or disappointment in one's old age. Wealth, health, familial bonds are all fragile. Our own body that we cherish, becomes a source of worry when it grows old and decrepit. We all know this only too well. Still we tend to hold on to them. Why is this so? This is caused by wrong understanding of the truth, say our scriptures. The truth is that these things viz., our body, wealth, family etc., are themselves not long lasting. They will go sooner or later. They are not secure themselves. How can they confer security on others? Such being the case it is sheer folly to look to them for happiness and security. Attachment to them can only result in sorrow and misery. Recognising this fact - that is, that every thing in this universe is impermanent and Self alone is permanent is known as discrimination or ವಿವೇಕಃ -viveka. As we ponder over this fact again and again in our mind, the truth of the scriptural statements sinks in our mind. We realise that things we hang on to are finite and limited by time and so cannot give us lasting peace and security. Our mind starts turning away from these things and towards God who has no such limitations. This is the second stage in spiritual growth. This detachment from ephemeral things of this world is called vairagyam ವೈರಾಗ್ಯಂ. Next as the detachment takes root our search for God also becomes intense. Our mind wants to get away from things that are in the real sense a bondage and yearns to be liberated from them. This yearning for liberation is called ಮುಮುಕ್ಷುತ್ವಂ. Coming up to this stage is a rare phenomenon says Krishna. ಮನುಷ್ಯಾಣಾಂ ಸಹಸ್ರೇಷು ಕಶ್ಚಿದ್ಭಕ್ತತಃ ಸಿದ್ಧಯೇ . BG(7-3). Yama the god of death, says that people are very much attracted by wealth and such mundane pleasures that they are unwilling to give this up and look

beyond it. Such people are blinded by ignorance and come within his grip repeatedly.

ನ ಸಾಂಪರಾಯಃ ಪ್ರತಿಭಾತಿ ಬಾಲಂ ಪ್ರಮಾದ್ಯಂತಂ ವಿತ್ತಮೋಹೇನ ಮೂಢಂ .
ಅಯಂ ಲೋಕೋ ನಾಸ್ತಿ ಪರ ಇತಿ ಮಾನೀ ಪುನಃ ಪುನರ್ವಶಮಾಪದ್ಯತೇ ಮೇ ..
KU(1-2-6)

The misplaced infatuation for wealth, health etc., is caused by ignorance that veils wisdom that is our true nature.

ಆವೃತಂ ಜ್ಞಾನಮೇತೇನ ಜ್ಞಾನಿನೋ ನಿತ್ಯವೈರಿಣಾ .
ಕಾಮರೂಪೇಣ ಕೌಂತೇಯ ದುಷ್ಟುರೇಣಾನಲೇನ ಚ .. BG(3-39).

WISDOM. The question then is how to gain the wisdom. Scriptures say that since wisdom is inherent in us as our very nature we need not do anything to gain it. We only have to get rid of the ignorance that is covering the wisdom. The source of happiness and security, thus, does not lie outside in worldly things that are not permanent. The only permanent thing is within ourselves as atma or Self. Its very nature is supreme bliss. Any joy experienced by any being is just a droplet derived from this bliss that is Brahman, says Brihadaranyakopanishad.
ಏತಸ್ಯೈವಾನಂದಸ್ಯ ಅನ್ಯಾನಿ ಭೂತಾನಿ ಮಾತ್ರಾಮುಪಜೀವಂತಿ ..(4-3-32). So
if we want peace, security and happiness we should shift our focus from the body-mind complex to the Self that is inside us.

This knowledge is known as brahma vidya, atma vidya and adhyatma vidya. Krishna calls it as sovereign science or raja vidya

ರಾಜವಿದ್ಯಾ. He says ರಾಜ ವಿದ್ಯಾ ರಾಜ ಗುಹ್ಯಂ ಪವಿತ್ರಮಿದಮುತ್ತಮಂ .
ಪ್ರತ್ಯಕ್ಷಾವಗಮಂ ಧರ್ಮ್ಯಂ ಸುಸುಖಂ ಕರ್ತುಮವ್ಯಯಂ .. BG(9-2).

It is the Sovereign Science, the Sovereign Secret, the Supreme Purifier. It is called Sovereign Science because it talks about the brahman. So also it is the king of secrets. Of all the purifiers, the knowledge is the best purifier. The Mundaka Upanishad calls it as the higher vidya. It says that all other knowledge is inferior.

ದ್ವೇ ವಿದ್ಯೇ ವೇದಿತವ್ಯೇ ಇತಿ ಹ ಸ್ಮ ಯದ್ಭುಕ್ತವಿದೋ ವದಂತಿ ಪರಾ ಚೈವಾಪರಾ
ಚ . ತತ್ರಾಪರ ಋಗ್ವೇದೋ ಯಜುರ್ವೇದಃ ಸಾಮವೇದೋಽಧರ್ವವೇದಃ ಶಿಕ್ಷಾ
ಕಲ್ಪೋ

ವ್ಯಾಕರಣಂ ನಿರುಕ್ತಂ ಭಂದೋ ಜ್ಯೋತಿಷಮಿತಿ . ಅಥ ಪರಾ ಯಯಾ
ತದಕ್ಷರಮಧಿಗಮ್ಯತೇ .. MU(1-5).

“The knowers of Brahma say with a sense of certainty that there are two vidyas worth knowing: Para and Aparā. Out of these two; the four vedas - Rik, Yajus, Sama and Atharva, the science of pronunciation, Kalpa, grammar, Nirukta, Chanda and Jyotisha - all these are Aparā Vidya; Para is that through which the imperishable Brahma is known.” Sri Sankaracharya in his commentary says:

ಅಪರಾ ಹಿ ಅವಿದ್ಯಾ ಸಾ ನಿರಾಕರ್ತವ್ಯಾ .

ತದ್ವಿಷಯೇ ಹಿ ವಿದಿತೇ ನ ಕಿಂಚಿತ್ತತ್ತ್ವತೋ ವಿದಿತಂ ಸ್ಯಾದಿತಿ .

The Aparā vidya constitutes only ignorance and so

is to be rejected. By knowing it the truth does not become known.

Krishna says that there is no gain that is equal to or superior to this wisdom. Once established in the Self one is not moved by even by greatest of the sorrow.

ಯಂ ಲಬ್ಧ್ವಾ ಚಾಪರಂ ಲಾಭಂ ಮನ್ಯತೇ ನಾಧಿಕಂ ತತಃ .

ಯಸ್ಮಿನ್ನಿತ್ಥತೋ ನ ದುಃಖೇನ ಗುರುಣಾಪಿ ವಿಚಾಲ್ಯತೇ .. BG(6-22).

Such is the glory of the wisdom about the Self that Krishna says He is this knowledge of the Self among all knowledges.

ಅಧ್ಯಾತ್ಮವಿದ್ಯಾ ವಿದ್ಯಾನಾಂ . BG(10-32). It is the chief among all knowledges, because it leads to moksha says Sri Sankaracharya in his

commentary. ಅಧ್ಯಾತ್ಮವಿದ್ಯಾ ವಿದ್ಯಾನಾಂ ಮೋಕ್ಷಾರ್ಥತ್ವಾತ್ ಪ್ರಧಾನಂ ಅಸ್ಮಿ .

Because of its exalted nature it is identified with Goddesses. Thus one of the names of Sri Lakshmi and Lalitha is Vidya.

It has been said that one cannot gain the wisdom by one's own effort by studying the books. It can create doubts or worse still

misunderstanding. Our tradition says that one has to learn about it at the feet of a guru. ಆಚಾರ್ಯಾದೇವ ವಿದ್ಯಾ ವಿದಿತಾ ಸಾಧಿಷ್ಠಂ

ಪ್ರಾಪ್ರಯತಿ . (Chandogyopanishad). Then only the learning will be

fruitful. ತದ್ವಿಜ್ಞಾನಾರ್ಥಂ ಸ ಗುರುಮೇವಾಭಿಗಚ್ಛೇತ್ . MU (2-12).

The striver should approach a guru. Sri Sankaracharya in explaining this statement says that the implication is that even one proficient

in scriptural studies should not try to do the inquiry by himself:

ಶಾಸ್ತ್ರಜ್ಞೋಽಪಿ ಸ್ವಾತಂತ್ರ್ಯೇಣ ಬ್ರಹ್ಮಜ್ಞಾನಾನ್ವೇಷಣಂ ನ ಕುರ್ಯದಿತ್ಯೇತತ್
ಗುರುಮೇವೇತ್ಯವಧಾರಣಫಲಂ .

THE GURU. The next question that arises as a corollary is who is a guru? What are his qualifications? Is it enough if he is a veritable scholar in scriptures? These questions have been answered in detail in the scriptures. These are important questions requiring an answer by an anxious seeker as if he falls in the wrong hands he may be mislead and would waste his time, effort and perhaps money also. Let us see a few descriptions of a guru as given in the scriptures and by our acharyas. The Prashnottararatnamalika of Sri Sankaracharya says:

ಭಗವನ್ ಕಿಮುಪಾದೇಯಂ? ಗುರುವಚನಂ .

Question: sir, what is to be accepted?

Answer: guru's teachings.

ಕೋ ಗುರುಃ? ಅಧಿಗತತತ್ತ್ವೈಃ ಶಿಷ್ಯಹಿತಾಯೋದ್ಯತಃ ಸತತಂ ..

Question: who is guru?

Answer: one who has learned the truth. One who constantly strives for the upliftment of the disciples who have approached him.

The Mundaka Upanishad says briefly that the guru should be well versed in the secrets of vedas and established in Brahman.

ಶ್ರೋತ್ರಿಯಂ ಬ್ರಹ್ಮನಿಷ್ಠಂ . The teacher should have learned at the feet of his guru in the traditional way and had all his doubts cleared and then got firmly established in Brahman. His knowledge is not shaky and so he can convey it with the same clarity to his disciple. Yama says that any one who is not so qualified is inferior and his teaching will not be effective.

ನ ನರೇಣಾವರೇಣ ಪ್ರೋಕ್ತ ಏಷ ಸುವಿಜ್ಞೇಯೋ ಬಹುಧಾ ಚಿಂತ್ಯಮನಃ .

ಅನನ್ಯಪ್ರೋಕ್ಷೇ ಗತಿರತ್ರ ನಾಸ್ತಿ ಅಣೀಯಾನ್ ಹೃತರ್ಕ್ಯಮಣುಪ್ರಮಾಣಾತ್ ..
KU(1-2-8).

The knowledge is very subtle. It has to be taught by a wise person who is established in Brahman. Sri Sankaracharya talks about the

qualifications of a guru in two places in his Vivekachudamani. First he briefly says ಸಂತಂ ಮಹಾಂತಂ ಸಮುಪೇತ್ಯ ದೇಸಿಕಂ.

The guru should be "established in Brahman and exalted". VC (8).

What is meant by ಮಹಾನ್ or "exalted"? Lord Rishabha Deva defines an exalted soul or ಮಹಾನ್ in the advice He gave to His sons before He renounced and left the kingdom.

ಮಹಾಂತಸ್ತೇ ಸಮಚಿತ್ತಾಃ ಪ್ರಶಾಂತಾ ವಿಮನ್ಯವಃ ಸುಹೃದಃ ಸಾಧವೋ ಯೇ .
ಯೇ ವಾ ಮಯೀಶೇ ಕೃತ ಸೌಹೃದಾರ್ಥಾ ಜನೇಷು ದೇಹಂಭರವಾರ್ತಿಕೇಷು .
ಗೃಹೇಷು ಜಾಯಾತ್ಮಜರಾತಿಮತ್ಸು ನ ಪ್ರೀತಿಯುಕ್ತಾ ಯಾವದರ್ಥಾಶ್ಚ ಲೋಕೇ ..
BH(5-5-3).

They alone are great who are even minded, exceptionally calm and composed, (and as a result) are free from anger, (and so are) kind-hearted and pious or again they who regard love offered to Me as the (only) object of human pursuit, who take no delight in (the company of) men (solely) engaged in pursuits (merely) calculated to nourish their body.

In the above He used the word ಸಾಧವಃ or pious or saintly persons. Lord Kapila gives in detail the qualities of a sadhu in His advice to His mother Devahuti.

ತಿತಿಕ್ಷವಃ ಕಾರುಣಿಕಾಃ ಸುಹೃದಃ ಸರ್ವದೇಹಿನಾಂ .
ಅಜಾತಶತ್ರವಃ ಶಾಂತಾಃ ಸಾಧವಃ ಸಾಧುಭೂಷಣಾಃ ..
ಮಯ್ಯನನ್ಯೇನ ಭಾವೇನ ಭಕ್ತಿಂ ಕುರ್ವಂತಿ ಯೇ ದೃಢಾಂ .
ಮತ್ಕೃತೇ ತ್ಯಕ್ತಕರ್ಮಾಣಸ್ತತ್ಪಜನಬಾಂಧವಾಃ ..
ಮದಾಶ್ರಯಾಃ ಕಥಾ ಮೃಷ್ಟಾಃ ಶೃಣ್ವಂತಿ ಕಥಯಂತಿ ಚ .
ತಪಂತಿ ವಿವಿಧಾಸ್ತಾಪಾ ನೈತಾನ್ಮದ್ಗತಚೇತಸಃ ..
ತ ಏತೇ ಸಾಧವಃ ಸಾಧ್ವಿ ಸರ್ವಸಂಗವಿವರ್ಜಿತಾಃ .
ಸಂಗಸ್ತೇಷ್ವಥ ತೇ ಪ್ರಾರ್ಥ್ಯಃ ಸಂಗದೋಷಹರಾ ಹಿ ತೇ ..
BH(3-25-21 to 24).

"Saints are forbearing, compassionate and composed: they are friendly to all living beings and inimical to none and follow the injunctions of the scriptures. Their good disposition itself serves as an ornament to them.(21) With an undivided heart they practise

unflinching devotion to Me; and for My sake they abandon even their obligatory duties and forsake their kinsmen and relatives. (22) They listen to and narrate delightful stories relating to Me, their minds ever set on Me. Afflictions of various kinds, therefore, never torment such people. (23) Such are holy men, free from all attachments, O virtuous lady! Attachment to such holy men must be sought for by you, for they destroy the pernicious effects of attachment.”

Then later, Sri Sankaracharya gives in greater detail the qualities of the guru.

ಉಪಸೀದೇದ್ಗುರುಂ ಪ್ರಾಜ್ಞಂ ಯಸ್ಮಾದ್ಬಂಧವಿಮೋಕ್ಷಣಂ .
ಶ್ರೋತ್ರಿಯೋಽವೃಜಿನೋಽಕಾಮಹತೋ ಯೋ ಬ್ರಹ್ಮವಿತ್ತಮಃ .
ಬ್ರಹ್ಮಣ್ಯಪರತಃ ಶಾಂತಃ ನಿರಿಂಧನ ಇವಾನಲಃ .
ಅಹೇತುಕದಯಾಸಿಂಧುಬಂಧುರಾನಮತಾಂ ಸತಾಂ .. VC (32, 33).

The inquirer of truth should approach a wise preceptor, who confers emancipation from bondage; one who is versed in the Vedas, sinless, unsmitten by desire and a knower of brahman par excellence, who has withdrawn himself into brahman; who is calm, like the fire that has consumed its fuel, who is a boundless reservoir of mercy that knows no reason, and a friend of all good people who prostrate themselves before him.

Sri Vedanta Desika similarly gives a detailed description of the qualities of a guru in his Nyasa Vimsati. He says:

ಸಿದ್ಧಂ ಸತ್ಸಂಪ್ರದಾಯೇ ಸ್ಥಿರಧಿಯಮನಘಂ ಶ್ರೋತ್ರಿಯಂ ಬ್ರಹ್ಮನಿಷ್ಠಂ
ಸತ್ತ್ವಸ್ಥಂ ಸತ್ಯವಾಚಂ ಸಮಯನಿಯತಯಾ ಸಾಧುವೃತ್ತಾ ಸಮೇತಂ .
ದಂಭಾಸೂಯಾದಿಮುಕ್ತಂ ಜಿತವಿಷಯಗಣಂ ದೀರ್ಘಬಂಧುಂ ದಯಾಲುಂ
ಸ್ವಾಲಿತ್ಯೇ ಶಾಸಿತಾರಂ ಸ್ವ-ಪರ-ಹಿತಪರಂ ದೇಶಿಕಂ ಭೂಷ್ಣಮೀಪ್ಸೇತ್ ..

“One who desires to attain liberation should strive to have a spiritual teacher possessing the following qualities. He must be well versed in established tradition, should have a strong mind, flawless, well versed in the vedas, full of devotion to the Lord and full of sattva guna. He must be truthful, conduct himself in accordance with

the prescribed codes of the given system, should be free from arrogance and jealousy, should have control over his senses and should be one of enduring relationship. He must be full of compassion, should correct the errors, and should be a well-wisher of himself and others.”

It is clear that a person possessing such exceptional qualifications will indeed be a rare phenomenon.

IMPORTANCE OF THE GURU. The summum bonum of human life is liberation.

This is got by removal of wrong understanding about ourselves (known as ajnanam). When tha ajnanam is removed our Self shines in all its glory. The knower goes beyond sorrow, repeated birth and death cycle.

We saw that a guru's guidance is required in this learning process.

Thus the role of the guru is important and cannot be described adequately in words. Our scriptures say that one is not easily blessed with a guru in his life time. They say that the human birth is rare and very valuable as only humans are endowed with discrimination to set their goals and the intelligence to work towards achieving them. Animals are driven by instinct. They cannot set any goal for themselves. Thus only a human being can understand the value of his life and work to reach the ultimate goal. It will indeed the height of folly if this important point is not understood, but the life is allowed to drift or spent simply in pursuit of material pleasures (which we saw earlier are only ephemeral). Such pleasures that gratify the senses are sought by even animals. So if one keeps himself busy working for them he degrades himself and wastes his precious life. Lord Rishabha Deva stresses this point in His advice to His sons.

ನಾಯಂ ದೇಹೋ ದೇಹಭಾಜಾಂ ನೃಲೋಕೇ ಕಷ್ಟಾನ್ ಕಮಾನರ್ಹತೇ ವಿಡ್ಭಜಾಂ ಯೇ .

ತಪೋ ದಿವ್ಯಂ ಪುತ್ರಕಾ ಯೇನ ಸತ್ವಂ ಶುದ್ಧೇತ್ ಯಸ್ಮಾತ್ ಬ್ರಹ್ಮನೌಖ್ಯಂ ತ್ವನಂತಂ ..

BH (5-5-1).

This human body does not deserve to be given up to (the pursuit of) sensuous pleasures, which are (really) a source of misery and are enjoyed even by swine, dogs and other animals (that feed on ordure). It is worthy of being devoted to sublime austerities (pursuit of knowledge) whereby the mind is purified; and from the purity of mind follows the unending bliss of absorption into the Absolute. Thus getting a human birth is difficult, thereto yearning for liberation and most difficult is getting a qualified guru to guide one. These are got by divine grace only. Sri Sankaracharya points this out. VC(3).

ದುರ್ಲಭಂ ತ್ರಯಮೇತದ್ಧೇವನುಗ್ರಹಹೇತುಕಂ .

ಮನುಷ್ಯತ್ವಂ ಮುಮುಕ್ಷುತ್ವಂ ಮಹಾಪುರುಷಸಂಶ್ರಯಃ ..

Yama, the god of death tells the same thing to his disciple

Nachiketa.KU(1-2-7).

ಶ್ರವಣಾಯಾಪಿ ಬಹುಭಿಯೋ ನ ಲಭ್ಯಃ ಶೃಣ್ವಂತೋಽಪಿ ಬಹವೋ ಯಂ ನ ವಿದ್ಯುಃ .

ಆಶ್ಚರ್ಯೋ ವಕ್ತಾ ಕುಶಲೋಽಸ್ಯ ಲಬ್ಧಾಽಶ್ಚರ್ಯೋ ಜ್ಞಾತಾ ಕುಶಲಾನುಶಿಷ್ಟಃ ..

That which many people do not have the opportunity to hear; that which many people do not understand even after hearing; the teacher of such a subject is indeed rare; the gainer of this is rare; and well versed; that who is taught by a realised great soul and thus the knower of this subject is also very rare.

Therefore, if anyone, who has got all the three gifts of god, fails to take full advantage of them, such a one is indeed the most ignorant and unfortunate. Krishna states this clearly in His advice to Uddhava. BH(11-20-17).

ನೃದೇಹಮಾದ್ಯಂ ಸುಲಭಂ ಸುದುರ್ಲಭಂ ಪ್ಲವಂ ಸುಕಲ್ಪಂ ಗುರುಕರ್ಣಧಾರಂ .
ಮಯಾನುಕೂಲೇನ ನಭಸ್ವತೇರಿತಂ ಪುಮಾನ್ಭವಾಭಿಂ ನ ತರೇತ್ಸ ಆತ್ಮಹಾ ..

Getting the first and foremost requisite, a human body which is like a strong boat - so difficult to secure, with the guru as the helmsman, and propelled by Me as a favourable wind - with such means as these, the man who does not strive to cross the ocean of samsara,

is verily a suicide. It is the guru who has to help the disciple to get rid of his ignorance. The Guru Gita defines the word guru thus:

ಗುಕಾರಶ್ಚಾಂಧಕಾರೋ ಹಿ ರುಕಾರಸ್ತೇಜ ಉಚ್ಯತೇ . ಅಜ್ಞಾನಗ್ರಾಸಕಂ ಬ್ರಹ್ಮ
ಗುರುರೇವ ನ ಸಂಶಯಃ ..(1-32)

The letter “gu” denotes darkness. The letter “ru” denotes light.

There is no doubt that guru is the very same brahman that dispels ignorance.

ಗುಕಾರಶ್ಚಾಂಧಕಾರಸ್ತು ರುಕಾರಸ್ತನ್ನಿರೋಧಕೃತ್ .
ಅಂಧಕಾರವಿನಾಶಿತ್ವಾತ್ ಗುರುರಿತ್ಯಭಿಧೀಯತೇ .. (1-33)

The letter “gu” denotes darkness. The letter “ru” dispels it. Since the guru dispels darkness (ignorance) he got the name.

Our scriptures accord a very high place to the guru and emphatically state he is Brahman Itself. The Taittiriya Upanishad commands that one should venrate the teacher as God. ಆಚಾರ್ಯ ದೇವೋ ಭವ . The popular verse given below confirms this notion.

ಗುರುರ್ಬ್ರಹ್ಮಾ ಗುರುವಿಷ್ಣುಃ ಗುರುರ್ದೇವೋ ಮಹೇಶ್ವರಃ .
ಗುರುರೇವ ಪರಂ ಬ್ರಹ್ಮ ತಸ್ಮೈ ಶ್ರೀ ಗುರವೇ ನಮಃ ..

“My guru is Brahma, my guru is Vishnu, my guru is Maheswara - the god of gods. My guru is verily the Supreme Brahman. Salutations to that guru.”

The guru invests the disciple with knowledge about himself: thus creates a new person out of him and in this process he is like Brahma the creator. The guru holds the disciple’s hand during the learning process and watches over his progress and nurtures him with tender care like a mother bird would its chicks. In this way he takes on the role of Vishnu the sustainer. The guru destroys the disciple’s ignorance and along with it his imagined limitations and misery. In this way the guru is like Siva. By taking on all the three roles the guru is verily the Brahman itself.

In fact “guru” is one of the names of the Lord. ಗುರುಃ -

ಸರ್ವವಿದ್ಯಾನಾಂ ಉಪದೇಷ್ಠೃತ್ವಾತ್ ಗುರುಃ . Vishnu Sahasranama.(209). It is also one of the names of Siva. Navaratnamala says that Devi

Herself appears as the guru and shows the way to attain the goal.

ದೇಶಿಕರೂಪೇಣ ದರ್ಶಿತಾಭ್ಯುದಯಾಂ . One of Sri Lalitha's names is

ಗುರುಮೂರ್ತಿಃ . ಗುರುರೇವ ಮೂರ್ತಿಃ ಶರೀರಂ ಯಸ್ಯಾಃ .

ತಾಮಿಚ್ಛಾವಿಗ್ರಹಾಂ ದೇವೀಂ ಗುರುರೂಪಾಂ ವಿಭಾವಯೇ ದಿತಿ ನಿತ್ಯಾಹೃದಯೇಪಿ

Lalitha Sahasranama (603).

Because of these reasons our tradition insists that one should show utmost respect to his guru; treat him on a par with God Himself and never show disrespect to him. In the Taittiriyaopanishad we saw the teacher admonishing the student ಆಚಾರ್ಯದೇವೋ ಭವ . Venerate your acharya as a deity. Krishna teaches this to His disciple Uddhava in His last message.

ಆಚಾರ್ಯಂ ಮಾಂ ವಿಜಾನೀಯಾನ್ನಾವಮನ್ಯೇತ ಕರ್ಹಿಚಿತ್ .

ನ ಮರ್ತ್ಯಬುದ್ಧ್ಯಾಸೂಯೇತ ಸರ್ವದೇವಮಯೋ ಗುರುಃ .. BH (11-17-27).

One should know the teacher to

be My own self and never disregard or look down upon him as a man; for the teacher is the personification of all gods. He advises Arjuna also the same thing. BG(4-34).

ತದ್ವಿದ್ಧಿ ಪ್ರಣಿಪಾತೇನ ಪರಿಪ್ರಶ್ನೇನ ಸೇವಯಾ .

ಉಪದೇಕ್ಷ್ಯಂತಿ ತೇ ಜ್ಞಾನಂ ಜ್ಞಾನಿನಸ್ತತ್ತ್ವದರ್ಶಿನಃ ..

“Know it (superior wisdom) by means of obeisance, exhaustive questionings and service to the teacher. Knowers who have realised the truth will impart to you that knowledge.”

One can never repay the debt one owes to the guru. The kindly guru also does not expect anything from the disciple. The only way in which the latter can show his gratitude to his guru is by serving him with dedication. Krishna says this in His advice to Uddhava.

ಶುಶ್ರೂಷಮಾಣ ಆಚಾರ್ಯಂ ಸದೋಪಾಸೀತ ನೀಚವತ್ . BH (11-17-29).The

disciple should always worship the teacher and serve him as a dedicated servant. The guru is won over by his humility and teaches the supreme vidya. Sri Sankaracharya advises us to have devotion to the guru and free ourselves from the grip of this world. (Bhaja

Govindam). (18). ಗುರುಚರಣಾಂಬುಜ-ನಿರ್ಭರಭಕ್ತಃ
ಸಂಸಾರ-ದಚಿರಾದ್ಭವ ಮುಕ್ತಃ .

One can also think of another reason for offering worship and service to the guru. Prahlada talks of nine features that mark devotion to the Lord. These are:

ಶ್ರವಣಂ ಕೀರ್ತನಂ ವಿಷ್ಣೋಃ ಸ್ಮರಣಂ ಪಾದಸೇವನಂ .
ಅರ್ಚನಂ ವಂದನಂ ದಾಸ್ಯಂ ಸಖ್ಯಮಾತ್ಮನಿವೇದನಂ .. BH(7-5-23).

- (1) To hear the names, praises and stories of the Lord,
- (2) chanting them,
- (3) to remember Him as well as His names and stories,
- (4) to wait upon Him,
- (5) to offer worship,
- (6) offering service to Him,
- (7) to dedicate one's actions to Him,
- (8) to cultivate friendship with Him, and
- (9) total surrender (of body and belongings) to Him.

It is clear that till one gains knowledge of Self and as a result the term “worship” takes on a different colour, one has to continue the worship of the Lord using some representation like an icon or a picture as most of the people do. In such a case how can one practise some of the forms listed above such as (1) waiting upon Him, (2) offering service to Him, (3) to cultivate friendship with Him and (4) total surrender to Him? The answer is, that with one's guru being there as the personification of the Lord one can meaningfully wait upon him, offer service to him, cultivate friendship and also totally surrender to him. Arjuna was lucky in that he could have friendship with Krishna and also surrender to Him at the time of the KurukShetra war. But one need not consider oneself less lucky as he has his guru whom he can serve and worship. It is, in all respects same as serving the Lord Himself.

Sri Sankaracharya says that there is nothing in the three worlds that can be compared with the guru.

Can one compare one's guru with the fabled philosopher's stone that is said to be capable of converting base metals into gold? No, says he; because a piece of gold thus obtained by conversion cannot convert another piece of iron into gold. But the guru blesses the disciple who had taken refuge in his feet with his own natural state. In other words the guru not only transforms his disciple into a knower but also confers on him the capability to transform another into a knower.

ದೃಷ್ಟಾಂತೋ ನೈವ ದೃಷ್ಟಸ್ತ್ರಿಭುವನಜರರೇ ಸದ್ಗುರೋರ್ಜ್ಞಾನದಾತುಃ
ಸ್ವರ್ಶಶ್ಚೇತ್ತತ್ರ ಕಲ್ಯಾಣಃ ಸ ನಯತಿ ಯದಹೋ ಸ್ವರ್ಣತಾಮಶ್ಮಸಾರಂ .
ನ ಸ್ವರ್ಶತ್ವಂ ತಥಾಪಿ ಶ್ರಿತಚರಣಯುಗೇ ಸದ್ಗುರೋಸ್ತ್ವೀಯಶಿಷ್ಯೇ
ಸ್ವೀಯಂ ಸಾಮ್ಯಂ ವಿಧತ್ತೇ ಭವತಿ ನಿರುಪಮಸ್ತೇನ ವಾ ಲೌಕಿಕೋಽಪಿ ..
(Shatashloki)

It is like the case of a lamp lit from another lamp. What would be the difference between the two? The second lamp also can light other lamps; thus there is no difference at all between them. Kalidasa says this: ಪ್ರವರ್ತಿತೋ ದೀಪ ಇವ ಪ್ರದೀಪಾತ್. (Raghuvamsam, 5-37).

From the above facts we derive that if one is blessed with the guru's grace, then ipso facto the Lord's grace follows. Great acharyas like Sri Vedanta Desika and Sri Sankaracharya who knew this truth have said that it is enough that they have got their guru's grace and so do not worry about getting the Lord's grace. Tamil saints like Tirumular have spoken at length on the greatness of the guru and the need to worship him. Let us see an example of what wise men have to say about the glory of the teachings of the guru. The sage minister Shukanasa said this in his advice to the prince Chandrapida.

(Kadambari). There is delightful punning on words in this passage which one with knowledge of sanskrit will be able to enjoy. ಹರತಿ

ಚ ಸಕಲಂ ಅತಿಮಲಿನಮಪ್ಯಂಧಕಾರಮಿವ ದೋಷಜಾತಂ
ಪ್ರದೋಷಸಮಯನಿಶಾಕರ ಇವ . ಗುರೂಪದೇಶಃ ಪ್ರಶಮಹೇತುರ್ವಯಃ
ಪರಿಣಾಮ

ಇವ ಪತಿತರೂಪೇಣ ಶಿರಸಿಜಜಾಲಮಮಲೀಕುರ್ವನ್

ಗುಣರೂಪೇಣ ತದೇವ

ಪರಿಣಮಯತಿ . ಗುರೂಪದೇಶಶ್ಚ ನಾಮ

ಪುರುಷಾಣ-ಮಖಿಲ-ಮಲಪ್ರಕ್ಷಾಲನಕ್ಷಮ-ಮಜಲಂ ಸ್ನಾನಂ,

ಅನುಪಜಾತ-ಪಲಿತಾದಿವೈರೂಪ್ಯಮಜರಂ ವೃದ್ಧತ್ವಂ,

ಅನಾರೋಪಿತ-ಮೇದೋದೋಷಂ ಗುರುಕರಣಂ, ಅಸುವರ್ಣವಿರಚನಮಗ್ರಾಮ್ಯಂ

ಕರ್ಣಾಭರಣಂ, ಅತೀತಜ್ಯೋತಿರಾಲೋಕಃ, ನೋದ್ವೇಗಕರಃ ಪ್ರಜಾಗರಃ .

The teachings of the guru dispel even the densest of darkness

(ignorance) just as the rising moon. Just like the onset of old age

(maturity) converts the darkness of the hair white (whiteness stands

for purity), so also the teachings make the turbulent sense organs

pure by making them calm. They constitute a bath sans water that

washes away all the (internal) impurities; they confer maturity

(respectfulness) without the grey hair and other such disfigurements

that mark onset of the old age; they make one weighty without the

defect of obesity; they are adornments to the ears not made of

artificial golden ornaments; they illumine without light; they awaken

without disturbing or upsetting one.

Now let us study the verses proper.

.. ಗುರ್ವಷ್ಟಕಂ ..

ಶರೀರಂ ಸುರೂಪಂ ತಥಾ ವಾ ಕಲತ್ರಂ ಯಶಶ್ಚಾರು ಚಿತ್ರಂ ಧನಂ ಮೇರುತುಲ್ಯಂ .

ಮನಶ್ಚೇನ್ನ ಲಗ್ನಂ ಗುರೋರಂಘ್ರಪದ್ಮೇ ತತಃ ಕಿಂ ತತಃ ಕಿಂ ತತಃ ಕಿಂ ತತಃ ಕಿಂ .. 1..

ಶರೀರಂ = the body. ಸುರೂಪಂ = handsome. ತಥಾ ವಾ = as

also. ಕಲತ್ರಂ = the wife (beautiful). ಯಶಃ = fame.

ಚಾರು ಚಿತ್ರಂ = agreeable and pleasing. ಧನಂ =

wealth. ಮೇರುತುಲ್ಯಂ comparable to Meru the golden mountain .

ಗುರೋಃ = guru's. ಅಂಗ್ರಿಪದ್ಮೇ = lotus like foot. ಮನಃ =

the mind. ನ ಲಗ್ನಂ ಚೇದ್ = if not attached. ತತಃ ಕಿಂ? =

then what is the use? ತತಃ ಕಿಂ? = then what is the use?

ತತಃ ಕಿಂ? = then what is the use? ತತಃ ಕಿಂ? = then what

is the use?

Meaning of the verse. One may be blessed with a handsome body,

beautiful wife, great fame and immense wealth. But what is the use of these things if one's mind is not attached to the lotus like foot of the guru?

The implication is that they are of no use. The repetition of the question "what is the use?" four times stresses the point. The second line is the same in all the eight verses.

ಕಲತ್ರಂ ಧನಂ ಪುತ್ರಪೌತ್ರಾದಿ ಸರ್ವಂ ಗೃಹಂ ಬಾಂಧವಾಃ ಸರ್ವಮೇತದ್ಧಿ ಜಾತಂ .
ಮನಶ್ಚೇನ್ನ ಲಗ್ನಂ ಗುರೋರಂಘ್ರಪದ್ಮೇ ತತಃ ಕಿಂ ತತಃ ಕಿಂ ತತಃ ಕಿಂ ತತಃ ಕಿಂ .. 2..
ಕಲತ್ರಂ = wife. ಧನಂ = wealth. ಪುತ್ರಪೌತ್ರಾದಿ ಸರ್ವಂ =

son, grandson and all that. ಗೃಹಂ = house.

ಬಾಂಧವಾಃ = relatives. ಸರ್ವಂ ಏತದ್ಧಿ ಜಾತಂ all these that are available. Second line is same as in verse No. 1.

Meaning of the verse. One may be having wife, wealth, son, grandson, relatives etc. But what is the use of these things if one's mind is not attached to the lotus like foot of the guru?

In the above two verses wife (husband included), children and money have been mentioned twice. This is because one is strongly attached to them. Attachment follows desire. Desire is for something one does not have. One desires to have something because one feels that thing will give happiness, comfort or security. Such things include wealth, family, friends, house etc. Having got them one holds on to them. This is called attachment. The utmost attachment is, of course for one's body. Every one wants the body to remain ever young and to last for ever - knowing very well that this wish is unnatural and so can never be had. Scriptures talk of three attachments; one towards the husband/wife, one towards the children and lastly the one towards wealth. The attachment, when it grows strong and becomes intense clouds one's judgement and makes one to act in unpredictable ways. Prahlada had talked about attachment. He said that it is impossible for a person who has not got control over his senses to free himself from the attachment to his home. BH(7-6-9).

ಕೋ ಗೃಹೇಷು ಪುಮಾನ್ ಸಕ್ತಮಾತ್ಮಾನಮಜಿತೇಂದ್ರಿಯಃ .

ನೇಹಪಾಶೈರ್ಧೃಢೈರ್ಬದ್ಧಮುತ್ಸಹೇತ ವಿಮೋಚಿತುಂ ..

The attachment to money, for example, can make one to sacrifice even one's life for it. He had given three examples - of a thief, a soldier and a merchant.

ಕೋ ನ್ವರ್ಧತೃಷ್ಣಾಂ ವಿಸೃಜೇತ್ ಪ್ರಾಣೇಭ್ಯೋಽಪಿ ಯ ಈಪ್ಸಿತಃ . ಯಂ ಪ್ರೀಣಾತ್ಯಸುಭಿಃ ಪ್ರೇಷ್ಯೈಸ್ತಸ್ಯರಃ ಸೇವಕೋ ವಣಿಕ್ .. BH(7-6 10).

A thief will not hesitate to commit a murder or risk his own life to get at money. He may try to snatch a gold chain from the neck of a child and if necessary be ready to strangle the child to take the chain. For him a golden chain is more valuable than the life of a child. Next, a soldier goes to the battle and stakes his life - only to earn some money in return. Lastly, a merchant will take many risks and go to strange and far off places to earn money.

ಷಡಂಗಾದಿವೇದೋ ಮುಖೇ ಶಾಸ್ತ್ರವಿದ್ಯಾ ಕವಿತ್ವಾದಿ ಗದ್ಯಂ ಸುಪದ್ಯಂ ಕರೋತಿ . ಮನಶ್ಚೇನ್ನ ಲಗ್ನಂ ಗುರೋರಂಘ್ರಪದ್ಮೇ ತತಃ ಕಿಂ ತತಃ ಕಿಂ ತತಃ ಕಿಂ ತತಃ ಕಿಂ .. 3..

ಷಡಂಗಾದಿವೇದಃ = veda with its six limbs. ಮುಖೇ = in the mouth. ಶಾಸ್ತ್ರವಿದ್ಯಾ as also the scriptural learning.

ಕವಿತ್ವಾದಿ = intelligence and other qualitate. ಗದ್ಯಂ = prose composition. ಸುಪದ್ಯಂ well structured. ಕರೋತಿ = makes.

Second line is same as in verse No. 1.

The vedas have six members.that help in the correct pronunciation and interpretation of the text. They are: ಶಿಕ್ಷಾ = the science of proper articulation and pronunciation; ಛಂದಸ್ = the science of prosody; ವ್ಯಾಕರಣಂ = grammar; ನಿರುಕ್ತಂ = etymological explanation of difficult vedic words; ಜ್ಯೋತಿಷಂ = astronomy and; ಕಲ್ಪಂ = ritual or ceremonial.

ಶಿಕ್ಷಾಕಲ್ಪೋ ವ್ಯಾಕರಣಂ ನಿರುಕ್ತಂ ಛಂದಸ್ಸಾಂ ಚಯಃ . ಜ್ಯೋತಿಷಾಮಯನಂ ಚೈವ ವೇದಾಂಗಾನಿ ಷಡೇವ ತು ..

One may have thoroughly studied the vedas and its six branches; be able to reel off words of learned length and thundering sound from them and quote from the scriptures extensively. This may greatly impress an innocent audience and earn him accolades besides money.

Similarly one may be able to compose great literary pieces - prose or poetry. But these achievements will not help in gaining knowledge about the Self. The upanishads very emphatic about this.

ನಾಯಮಾತ್ಮಾ ಪ್ರವಚನೇನ ಲಭ್ಯೋ ನ ಮೇಧಯಾ ನ ಬಹುನಾ ಶ್ರುತೇನ . MU (3-2-3).

The knowledge about the Self can be had only at the feet of the guru.

Till it is got all the learning one carries in his head can only be termed a burden. Sri Sankaracharya says this clearly.

ವಾಗ್ವೈಖರೀ ಶಬ್ದಭರೀ ಶಾಸ್ತ್ರವ್ಯಾಖ್ಯಾನಕೌಶಲಂ .

ವೈದುಷ್ಯಂ ವಿದುಷಾಂ ತದ್ವದ್ಭುಕ್ತಯೇ ನ ತು ಮುಕ್ತಯೇ ..

Loud speech consisting of a shower of words, the skill in expounding the scriptures, and likewise erudition - these may bring in some money or fame and as a result some joy to the scholar; but they are of no use in gaining liberation. VC(69).

Bhartruhari also says this in his Vairagaya Satakam. He asks what is the use of studying vedas, smritis, puranas, extensive shastras or the maze of ceremonials? They may take us to heaven. One may stay there for a long time ; but the stay is not permanent . As soon as one's stock of merit that has taken him to the place is exhausted he is flung back to earth to take birth again. MokSha or liberation is the only thing that will guarantee escape from rebirth.

ಕಿಂ ವೇದೈಃ ಸ್ಮೃತಿಭಿಃ ಪುರಾಣಪಠನೈಃ ಶಾಸ್ತ್ರಕರ್ಮಹಾವಿಸ್ತರೈಃ

ಸ್ವರ್ಗಗ್ರಾಮಕುಟೀನಿವಾಸಫಲದೈಃ ಕರ್ಮಕ್ರಿಯಾವಿಭ್ರಮೈಃ .

ಮುಕ್ತ್ಯೈಕಂ ಭವದುಃಕಭಾರರಚನಾವಿದ್ವಂಸಕಾಲಾನಲಂ

ಸ್ವಾತ್ಮಾನಂದಪದಪ್ರವೇಶಕಲನಂ ಶೇಷೈರ್ವಣಿಗ್ವೃತ್ತಿಭಿಃ ..

Meaning of the verse. One might have thoroughly studied the vedas with its six limbs, mastered the scriptures and be able to compose wonderful poetry and prose pieces. But what is the use of these things if one's mind is not attached to the lotus like foot of the guru?

ವಿದೇಶೇಷು ಮಾನ್ಯಃ ಸ್ವದೇಶೇಷು ಧನ್ಯಃ ಸದಾಚಾರವೃತ್ತೇಷು ಮತ್ತೋ ನ ಚಾನ್ಯಃ .
ಮನಶ್ಚೇನ್ನ ಲಗ್ನಂ ಗುರೋರಂಘ್ರಪದ್ಮೇ ತತಃ ಕಿಂ ತತಃ ಕಿಂ ತತಃ ಕಿಂ ತತಃ ಕಿಂ .. 4..

ವಿದೇಶೇಷು = in the foreign countries. ಮಾನ್ಯಃ = respected. ಸ್ವದೇಶೇಷು = in his own country. ಧನ್ಯಃ = wealthy, fortunate. ಸದಾಚಾರವೃತ್ತೇಷು = in the virtual or moral conducts or in observing traditional observances. ಮತ್ತಃ = proud or arrogant. ನ ಚ ಅನ್ಯಃ = none like him. Second line is same as in verse No. 1.

One may be honoured in other countries and also be respected in his own country. He may be virtuous and follow the prescribed duties as per custom. But they cannot help in gaining the knowledge of the Self. Works prescribed by the scriptures when properly done lead to the purification of the mind. Knowledge can be had only by enquiry under the guidance of the guru. Sri Sankaracharya says: VC(11)

ಚಿತ್ತಸ್ಯ ಶುದ್ಧಯೇ ಕರ್ಮ ನ ವಸ್ತೂಪಲಬ್ಧಯೇ .
ವಸ್ತುಸಿದ್ಧಿರ್ವಿಚಾರೇಣ ನ ಕಿಂಚಿತ್ಕರ್ಮಕೋಟಿಭಿಃ ..

Meaning of the verse. One may be respected in his own country as well as in other countries. He may also be known to be a follower of duties as prescribed by tradition. But what is the use of these things if one's mind is not attached to the lotus like foot of the guru?

ಕ್ಷಮಾಮಂಡಲೇ ಭೂಪಭೂಪಾಲವೃಂದೈಃ ಸದಾ ಸೇವಿತಂ ಯಸ್ಯ ಪಾದಾರವಿಂದಂ

ಮನಶ್ಚೇನ್ನ ಲಗ್ನಂ ಗುರೋರಂಘ್ರಪದ್ಮೇ ತತಃ ಕಿಂ ತತಃ ಕಿಂ ತತಃ ಕಿಂ ತತಃ ಕಿಂ .. 5..

ಕ್ಷಮಾಮಂಡಲೇ = in this great globe/earth. ಭೂಪಭೂಪಾಲವೃಂದೈಃ = by many kings and rulers. ಸದಾ ಸೇವಿತಂ = always served, attended. ಯಸ್ಯ ಪಾದಾರವಿಂದಂ = whose lotus like foot. Second line same as in verse No.1.

One may be very great and exalted. Kings may wait at his feet. But wise men do not attach any importance to such a person if he carries only a crown and not knowledge of Self on his head. Sri Vedanta Desika refers to kings who are puffed up with pride with contempt in his Vairagya panchakam. He says a king never rules over the entire world but only a small portion of it. But even this is enough to make

him proud. Sri Desika says he does not care for them but is determined to worship the Lord who, in return for a handful of pounded rice, made Kuchela rich as Kubera himself.

ಕ್ಷೋಣೀಕೋಣಶತಾಂಶ-ಪಾಲನ-ಕಲಾದುವಾರಗವಾನಲ-
ಕ್ಷುಭ್ಯತ್ಪ್ಪ ದ್ರನರೇಂದ್ರ ಚಾಟುರಚನಾ ಧನ್ಯಾನ್ ನ ಮನ್ಯಾಮಹೇ .
ದೇವಂ ಸೇವಿತುಮೇವ ನಿಶ್ಚಿನುಮಹೇ ಯೋಸೌ ದಯಾಲುಃ ಪುರಾ
ದಾನಾಮುಷ್ಟಿಮುಚೇ ಕುಚೇಲಮುನಯೇ ದತ್ತೇ ಸ್ಮ ವಿತ್ತೇಶತಾಂ ..

Bhartruhari says the same thing in his Vairagya Satakam. This verse is addressed by a yati or sanyasi (one who has renounced the world) to a king. The yati speaks of the vanity of the king's possessions, and declares that a yati is greater than a king. The reason is that a king may be rich in wealth but the yati is rich in wisdom acquired at the feet of his preceptor.

ತ್ವಂ ರಾಜಾ ವಯಮಪ್ಯಪಾಸಿತಗುರುಪ್ರಜ್ಞಾಭಿಮಾನೋನ್ನತಾಃ
ಖ್ಯಾತಸ್ತ್ವಂ ವಿಭವೈರ್ಯಶಾಂಸಿ ಕವಯೋ ದಿಕ್ಷು ಪ್ರತನ್ವಂತಿ ನಃ .
ಇತ್ಥಂ ಮಾನಧನಾದಿರೂರಮುಭಯೋರಪ್ಯಾವಯೋರಂತರಂ
ಯದ್ಯಸ್ಮಾಸು ಪರಾಜುಹೋಸಿ ವಯಮಪ್ಯೇಕಾಂತತೋ ನಿಃಸ್ಪೃಹಾಃ ..

The yati says that if the king chooses to be cold towards him, he too is perfectly indifferent towards the king!

Meaning of the verse. One may be very powerful and kings may wait at his feet. But what is the use of these things if one's mind is not attached to the lotus like foot of the guru?

ಯಶೋ ಮೇ ಗತಂ ದಿಕ್ಷು ದಾನಪ್ರತಾಪಾಜ್ಜಗದ್ವಸ್ತು ಸರ್ವಂ ಕರೇ ಯತ್ಪ್ರಸಾದಾತ್

ಮನಶ್ಚೇನ್ನ ಲಗ್ನಂ ಗುರೋರಂಘ್ರಿಪದ್ಮೇ ತತಃ ಕಿಂ ತತಃ ಕಿಂ ತತಃ ಕಿಂ ತತಃ ಕಿಂ .. 6..

ಮೇ ಯಶಃ = my fame. ದಾನಪ್ರತಾಪಾತ್ = by the glory of the gifts. ದಿಕ್ಷು = in all directions. ಗತಂ = gone or is spread.

ಯತ್ ಪ್ರಸಾದಾತ್ = by whose favour or condescension. ಸರ್ವಂ

ಜಗತ್ವಸ್ತು = all the things in this world. ಕರೇ = in hand.

Second line as in verse No. 1.

The same idea as in the previous couple of verses is restated for emphasis.

Meaning of the verse. One may claim that by his charities and gifts

his fame has spread in all directions and nothing in this world is not obtainable by him. But what is the use of these things if one's mind is not attached to the lotus like foot of the guru?

So far the poet has been talking of a person who has attachment to wealth, home, family, fame etc. In the next two verses he says that what is said is equally applicable to one who claims to have shed such attachments.

ನ ಭೋಗೇ ನ ಯೋಗೇ ನ ವಾ ವಾಜಿರಾಜೌ ನ ಕಾಂತಾಮುಖೇ ನೈವ ವಿತ್ತೇಷು ಚಿತ್ತಂ .

ಮನಶ್ಚೇನ್ನ ಲಗ್ನಂ ಗುರೋರಂಘ್ರಪದ್ಮೇ ತತಃ ಕಿಂ ತತಃ ಕಿಂ ತತಃ ಕಿಂ ತತಃ ಕಿಂ .. 7..

ಚಿತ್ತಂ = (my) mind (is) ನ ಭೋಗೇ = is not in enjoying

sensuory pleasures. ನ ವಾ ವಾಜಿರಾಜೌ = not in either horses or in being a king. ನ ಕಾಂತಾಮುಖೇ = not in (looking at) my wife's face;

(ie)., not having attachment to wife, child, and other members of the family. ನೈವ ವಿತ್ತೇಷು = never in wealth. Even if one makes such a claim; which implies that he has got detachment, what is the use of this if one's mind is not attached to the lotus like foot of the guru?

Meaning of the verse. Even if one has developed intense aversion to worldly possessions and relations, such a detachment is of no use if one's mind is not attached to the lotus like foot of the guru?

ಅರಣ್ಯೇ ನ ವಾ ಸ್ವಸ್ಯ ಗೇಹೇ ನ ಕಾರ್ಯೇ ನ ದೇಹೇ ಮನೋ ವರ್ತತೇ ಮೇ ತ್ವನರ್ಘ್ಯೇ .

ಮನಶ್ಚೇನ್ನ ಲಗ್ನಂ ಗುರೋರಂಘ್ರಪದ್ಮೇ ತತಃ ಕಿಂ ತತಃ ಕಿಂ ತತಃ ಕಿಂ ತತಃ ಕಿಂ .. 8..

ಮೇ ಮನಃ = my mind. ನ ವರ್ತತೇ = does not dwell on.

ಅರಣ್ಯೇ = (living in the) forest or ವಾ ಸ್ವಸ್ಯ ಗೇಹೇ = (living in) my own house. ನ ಕಾರ್ಯೇ = not in indulging in prescribed activities. ನ ದೇಹೇ = or my body. ತು ಅನರ್ಘ್ಯೇ = not to invaluable or priceless things. Second line as in verse No.1.

Meaning of the verse. Even if one claims that his mind is not attached to forests, or house, or his own body or even wealth such a detachment is of no use if one's mind is not attached to the lotus like foot of the guru?

Now the poet concludes after mentioning the ಫಲಶ್ರುತಿಃ or benefit of reciting the poem. They are stated so that one will develop deep interest in studying the poem, mull over the contents and in due course accept and act on them (ie.) develop devotion to his guru. This devotion will, in due course bear fruit.

ಗುರೋರಷ್ಟಕಂ ಯಃ ಪಠೇತ್ಪುಣ್ಯದೇಹೀ ಯತಿರ್ಭೂಪತಿರ್ಬ್ರಹ್ಮಚಾರೀ ಚ ಗೇಹೀ .
ಲಭೇದ್ವಾಂಚಿತಾರ್ಥಂ ಪದಂ ಬ್ರಹ್ಮಸಂಜ್ಞಂ ಗುರೋರುಕ್ತವಾಕ್ಯೈ ಮನೋ ಯಸ್ಯ
ಲಗ್ನಂ .. 9..

ಗುರೋಃ ಅಷ್ಟಕಂ = the composition consisting of eight verses on the guru. ಪುಣ್ಯದೇಹೀ = one who has done meritorious deeds. ಯಃ ಪಠೇತ್ = if he reads. ಯತಿಃ = be he a sanyasi (ascetic). ಭೂಪತಿಃ = a king. ಬ್ರಹ್ಮಚಾರೀ = a student studying under a teacher. ಚ ಗೇಹೀ = or a householder. He will ಲಭೇತ್ = get. ವಾಂಚಿತಾರ್ಥಂ = desired goal. ಬ್ರಹ್ಮಸಂಜ್ಞಂ ಪದಂ = the status known as brahman. ಗುರುರುಕ್ತವಾಕ್ಯೈ = in the teachings of the guru. ಯಸ್ಯ = whose. ಮನಃ = mind. ಲಗ್ನಂ = is attached.

Meaning of the verse. Any one whose mind dwells on the teaching's of his guru, be he a king or an ascetic or a bachelor who is studying or a householder reads these verses regularly he will, by the grace of his guru, get his wishes fulfilled in this world and also attain the highest goal known as mokSha.

CONCLUSION. The human birth is rare. One gets it after many inferior births as birds, animals, insects etc. Such inferior births are meant solely for reaping the consequence of their past deeds. One who has got such a birth cannot make any conscious effort to gain spiritual progress. Only the one who has been blessed with a human birth has the discrimination to distinguish between what is good for him and what is not; what is temporary and what is permanent. Having found this, he alone (not the animals, insects or birds) can set his goal and make efforts to get at it. In this the Lord has been very kind to give us scriptures that discuss about the goals. He has also sent us


many acharyas who, out of immense mercy, talked at great length on this subject and answered every possible question one may have. It is up to us to study them and make the best of the precious human life. If we were to miss the chance we cannot say with certainty what our next birth will be. The Kenopanishad (2-5) says that if one fails to make a sincere attempt to attain the goal of life he makes a grave error. The loss is inestimable.

ಇಹ ಚೇದವೇದೀದಧ ಸತ್ಯಮಸ್ತಿ ನ ಚೇದಿಹಾವೇದೀನ್ಮಹತೀ ವಿನಷ್ಟಿಃ .


Thus the only way to make our life meaningful (that is to avoid sorrow and miseries) is to pursue the spiritual path in this life itself with the guidance of a guru. One has to hold on to his teachings with absolute faith and serve him sincerely knowing he is the very personification of the Lord.

.. ಓಂ ತತ್ಸತ್ ..

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Gurvashtakam with meaning

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Please send corrections to sanskrit@cheerful.com

