
Gurvashtakam with meaning

ஸார்த² கு³ர்வஷ்டகம்

Document Information



Text title : gurvaShTakaM with meaning 2

File name : guru8mean.itx

Category : aShTaka, deities_misc, gurudev

Location : doc_deities_misc

Transliterated by : N.Balasubramanian bbalu at satyam.net.in

Proofread by : N.Balasubramanian bbalu at satyam.net.in

Translated by : N.Balasubramanian bbalu@satyam.net.in

Latest update : February 4, 2005

Send corrections to : sanskrit@cheerful.com

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January 7, 2022

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ஸார்த² கு³ர்வஷ்டகம்



Commentary by N. Balasubramanian

This work consisting of eight verses and one more known as ப²லஸ்ருதி: 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: Srimad 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. அஹமாத்மா கு³டா³கேஸ ஸர்வபூ⁴தாஸயஸ்தி²த: | 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.

ஸ்ரோத்ரஸ்ய ஸ்ரோத்ரம் மநஸோ மநோ யத்³வாசோ ஹ வாச: ஸ உ ப்ராணஸ்ய ப்ராண: |

சக்ஷுஷ்சக்ஷுரதிமுச்ய தீ⁴ரா: ப்ரேத்யாஸ்மால்லோகாத்³ம்ரு³தாப⁴வந்தி || (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.

ந தத்ர சக்ஷுர்க³ச்ச²தி ந வாக்³க³ச்ச²தி நோ மநோ(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: யேநேத³: ஸர்வம் விஜாநாதி தம் கேந விஜாநீயாத், விஜ்ஞாதாரமரே கேந விஜாநீயாத் (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:

ந ஜாயதே ம்ரியதே வா கதா³சிந்நாயம் பூ⁴த்வா ப⁴விதா வா ந பூ⁴ய: | அஜோ நித்ய: ஸாஸ்வதோ⁵யம் புராணே ந ஹந்யதே ஹந்யமாநே ஸர்ரே || BG (2-20).

It is same as the Supreme Being itself. Krishna says this in Gita :

மமைவாம்ஸோ ஜீவலோகே ஜீவபூ⁴த: ஸநாதந: | 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.

ஸத்யம் ஜ்ஞாநமநந்தம் ப்³ரஹ்ம | (Taittiriyanopanishad.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 விவேக: -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 வைராக்³யம். 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 முமுக்துத்வம். Coming up to this stage is a rare phenomenon says Krishna.மநுஷ்யாணம்

ஸஹஸ்ரேஷு கஸ்சித்³யததி எஸித்³த⁴யே | 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.

ந ஸாம்பராய: ப்ரதிபா⁴தி பா³லம் ப்ரமாத்த³யந்தம் வித்தமோஹேந மூட⁴ம் |
அயம் லோகோ நாஸ்தி பர இதி மாநீ புந: புநர்வஸமாபத்³யதே மே || KU(1-2-6)

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

ஆவ்ரு³தம் ஜ்ஞாநமேதேந ஜ்ஞாநிநோ நித்யவையிண |
காமரூபேண கௌந்தேய து³ஷ்பூரேணநலேந ச || 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.

ஏதஸ்யைவாநந்த³ஸ்ய அந்யாநி பூ⁴தாநி மாத்ராமுபஜீவந்தி |.(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

ராஜவித்³யா. He says ராஜ வித்³யா ராஜ கு³ஹ்யம் பவித்ரமித்³முத்தமம் |
ப்ரத்யக்ஷாவக³மம் த⁴ர்மயம் ஸுஸுக²ம் கர்த்ருமவ்யயம் || 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.

த³வே வித³யே வேதி³தவ்யே இதி ஹ ஸ்ம யத்³ப்³ரஹ்மவிதோ³ வத³ந்தி பரா சைவாபரா
ச | தத்ராபர ரு³க்³வேதோ³ யஜுர்வேத:³ ஸாமவேதோ³ Sத²ர்வவேத:³ ஸிக்ஷா கல்போ
வ்யாகரணம் நிருக்தம் ச²ந்தோ³ ஜ்யோதிஷமிதி | அத² பரா யயா
தத³க்ஷரமதி⁴க³ம்யதே || 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:

அபரா ஹி அவித³யா ஸா நிராகர்தவ்யா |
தத³விஷயே ஹி விதி³தே ந கிஞ்சித்தத்தவதோ விதி³தம் ஸ்யாதி³தி |

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.

யம் லப்³த்⁴வா சாபரம் லாப⁴ம் மந்யதே நாதி⁴கம் தத: |
யஸ்மிந்ஸதி²தோ ந து:³கே²ந கு³ருணாபி விசால்யதே || 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.

அத்⁴யாத்மவித³யா வித³யாநாம் | BG(10-32). It is the chief among all knowledges, because it leads to mokSha says Sri Sankaracharya in his commentary. அத்⁴யாத்மவித³யா வித³யாநாம் மோக்ஷார்த²வாத் ப்ரதா⁴நம் அஸ்மி |
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. ஆசார்யாதே³வ விதி³யா விதி³தா ஸாதி⁴ஷ்ட²ம்
ப்ராபயதி | (Chandogyopanishad). Then only the learning will be
fruitful. தத³விஜ்ஞாநாந்த²ம் ஸ கு³ருமேவாபி⁴க³ச்சே²த் | 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:

ஸாஸ்த்ரஜ்ஞோ⁵பி ஸ்வாதந்தர்யேண ப்³ரஹ்மஜ்ஞாநாந்வேஷணம் ந கு³ர்யதி³த்யேதத்
கு³ருமேவேத்யவதா⁴ரணப²லம் |

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:

ப⁴க³வந் கிமுபாதே³யம்? கு³ருவசநம் |

Question: sir, what is to be accepted?

Answer: guru's teachings.

கோ கு³ரு: அதி⁴க³ததத்த்வ:, ஸிஷ்யஹிதாயோத்³யத: ஸததம் ||

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.

ஸ்ரோத்ரியம் ப்³ரஹ்மநிஷ்ட²ம் | 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.

ந நரேணாவரேண ப்ரோக்த ஏஷ ஸுவிஜ்ஞேயோ ப³ஹுதா⁴ சிந்த்யமந: |
அநந்யப்ரோக்தே க³திரத்ர நாஸ்தி அணீயாந ஹ்யதர்க்யமணுப்ரமாணாத் || 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 ஸந்தம் மஹாந்தம் ஸமுபேத்ய தே³ஸிகம் |

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

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

மஹாந்தஸ்தே ஸமசித்தா: ப்ரஸாந்தா விமந்யவ: ஸுஹ்ரு³:³ ஸாத⁴வோ யே |
யே வா மயீஸே க்ரு³:³ ஸௌஹ்ரு³:³ தா³:³ தா² ஜநேஷு தே³ஹம்ப⁴ரவார்திகேஷு |
க்³ரு³:³ ஹேஷு ஜாயாத்மஜராதிமத்ஸு ந ப்ரீதியுக்கதா யாவத³:³ தா²:³ ஸ³ லோகே ||
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 ஸாத⁴வ: or pious or saintly persons. Lord Kapila gives in detail the qualities of a sadhu in His advice to His mother Devahuti.

திதிக்ஷவ: காருணிகா: ஸுஹ்ரு³:³ ஸர்வதே³ஹிநாம் |
அஜாதஸத்ரவ: ஸாந்தா: ஸாத⁴வ: ஸாத⁴பூ⁴ஷணை: ||

மய்யநந்யேந பா⁴வேந ப⁴க்திம் குர்வந்தி யே த்³ரு³:³ டா⁴:³ |

மத்க்ரு¹தே த்யக்தகர்மாணஸ்த்யக்தஸ்வஜநபா³ந்த⁴வா: ||

மதா³ஸ்ரயா: கதா² ம்ரு¹ஷ்டா: ஸ்ரு¹ண்வந்தி கத²யந்தி ச |

தபந்தி விவிதா⁴ஸ்தாபா நைதாந்மத்³க³தசேதஸ: ||

த ஏதே ஸாத⁴வ: ஸாத⁴வி ஸர்வஸங்க³விவர்ஜிதா: |

ஸங்க³ஸ்தேஷ்வத² தே ப்ரார்த²ய: ஸங்க³தோ³ஷஹரா ஹி தே ||

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.

உபஸீதே³த்³கு³ரும் ப்ராஜ்ஞம் யஸ்மாத்³ப³ந்த⁴விமோக்ஷணம் |

ஸ்ரோதரியோ⁵ஷ்வ்ரு¹ஜினோ⁵காமஹதோ யோ ப்³ரஹ்மவித்தம: |

ப்³ரஹ்மண்யுபரத: ஸாந்த: நிரிந்த⁴ந இவாநல: |

அஹேதுகத³யாஸிந்து⁴ர்³ப³ந்து⁴ராநமதாம் ஸதாம் || 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:

ஸித்³த⁴ம் ஸத்ஸம்ப்ரதா³யே ஸ்தி²ரதி⁴யமநக⁴ம் ஸ்ரோத்ரியம் ப்³ரஹ்மநிஷ்ட²ம்
 ஸத்த்வஸ்த²ம் ஸத்யவாசம் ஸமயநியதயா ஸாது⁴வ்ரு³த்த்யா ஸமேதம் |
 த³ம்பா⁴ஸூயாதி³முத்தம் ஜிதவிஷயக³ணம் தீ³ர்க³ப³ந்நு⁴ம் த³யாலும்
 ஸ்கா²வித்யே ஸாஸிதாரம் ஸ்வ-பர-ஹிதபரம் தே³ஸிகம் பூ⁴ஷ்ணுமீப்ஸேத் ||

“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 the 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.

நாயம் தே³ஹோ தே³ஹபா⁴ஜாம் ந்ரு³லோகே கஷ்டாந் கமாநர்ஹதே விட்³பு⁴ஜாம் யே |
தபோ தி³வ்யம் புத்ரகா யேந ஸத்வம் ஸூத்³த⁴யேத் யஸ்மாத் ப்³ரஹ்மஸௌக்²யம்
த்வநந்தம் ||

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).

து³ர்ஸப⁴ம் த்ரயமேதத்³தே³வநுக்³ரஹ்ஹேதுகம் |

மநுஷ்யத்வம் முமுகூஷுத்வம் மஹாபுருஷஸம்ஸ்ரய: ||

Yama, the god of death tells the same thing to his disciple Nachiketa.KU(1-2-7).

ஸ்ரவணயாபி ப³ஹூபி⁴ர்யோ ந லப⁴ய: ஸ்ரு³ண்வந்தோ⁵பி ப³ஹ்வோ யம் ந வித்³யு: |

ஆஸ்சர்யோ வக்தா குஸலோ⁵ஸ்ய லப³தா⁴SSஸ்சர்யோ ஜ்ஞாதா குஸலாநுஸிஷ்ட: ||

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).

ந்ரு³தே³ஹுமா³த³யம் ஸுலப⁴ம் ஸுது³ர்லப⁴ம் ப்லவம் ஸுகல்பம் கு³ருகர்ணதா⁴ரம் |
மயாநுகூலேந நப⁴ஸ்வதேரிதம் புமாந்ப⁴வாப்³தி⁴ம் ந தரேத்ஸ ஆத்மஹா ||

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:

கு³காரய்சாந்த⁴காரோ ஹி ருகாரஸ்தேஜ உச்யதே | அஜ்ருநக்³ராஸகம் ப்³ரஹ்ம
கு³ருரேவ ந ஸம்ஸய: || (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.

கு³காரய்சாந்த⁴காரஸ்து ருகாரஸ்தந்நிரோத⁴க்ரு³த் |
அந்த⁴காரவிநாஸித்வாத் கு³ருரித்யபி⁴தீ⁴யதே || (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. ஆசார்ய தே³வோ ப⁴வ | The popular verse given below confirms this notion.

கு³ரு³ர்ப்³ரஹ்மா கு³ரு³ர்விஷ்ணு: கு³ரு³ர்தே³வோ மஹேஸ்வர: |

கு³ருரேவ பரம் ப்³ரஹ்ம தஸ்மை ஸ்ரீ கு³ரவே நம: ||

“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. கு³ரு: -

ஸர்வவித்³யாநாம் உபதே³ஷ்ட்ரு³த்வாத் கு³ரு: | 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.

தே³ஸிகரூபேண த்³ர்ஸிதாப்⁴யுத்³யாம் | One of Sri Lalitha's names is கு³ருமர்தி: | கு³ருரேவ மர்தி: ஸரீரம் யஸ்யா: |

தாமிச்சா²விக்³ரஹாம் தே³வீம் கு³ருரூபாம் விபா⁴வயே தி³தி நித்யாஹ்ரு³த்யேபி | 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 Taittiriyanopanishad we saw the teacher admonishing the student ஆசர்யதே³வோ ப⁴வ | Venerate your acharya as a deity. Krishna teaches this to His disciple Uddhava in His last message.

ஆசர்யம் மாம் விஜாநீயாந்நாவமந்யேத கர்ஹிசித் |

ந மர்த்யபு³த்³யாஸூயேத ஸர்வதே³வமயோ கு³ரு: || 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).

தத்³வித்³தி⁴ ப்ரணிபாதேந பரிப்ரஸ்நேந ஸேவயா |

உபதே³க்ஷயந்தி தே ஜ்ஞாநம் ஜ்ஞாநிநஸ்தத்த்வத்³ர்ஸிந: ||

“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.

ஸுஸ்ரூஷமாண ஆசார்யம் ஸதோ³பாஸீத நீசுவத் | 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). கு³ருசரணம்பு³ஜ்-நிர்⁴ப⁴க்த: ஸம்ஸார-த³சிரா³ப⁴வ முக்த: |

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:

ஸ்ரவணம் கீர்தநம் விஷ்ணோ: ஸ்மரணம் பா³தீஸேவநம் |

அர்சநம் வந்தி³நம் தா³ஸ்யம் ஸக்²யமாத்மநிவேத³நம் || 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.

த³ரு'ஷ்டாந்தோ நைவ த³ரு'ஷ்டஸ்த்ரிபு⁴வநஜட²ரே ஸத³கு³ரோர்ஜ்ஞாநதா³து:
ஸ்பர்ஸஸ்சேத்தத்ர கல்ப்ய: ஸ நயதி யத³ஹோ ஸ்வர்ணதாமஸ்மஸாரம் |
ந ஸ்பர்ஸத்வம் ததா²பி ஸ்ரிதசரணயுகே³ ஸத³கு³ரோஸ்ஸவீயஸரிஷ்யே

ஸ்வீயம் ஸாம்யம் வித⁴த்தே ப⁴வதி நிருபமஸ்தேந வா லௌகிகோ⁵பி ||
(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: ப்ரவர்திதோ தீ³ப இவ ப்ரதீ³பாத். (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. ஹரதி

ச ஸகலம் அதிமலிநமப்யந்த⁴காரமிவ தோ³ஷஜாதம்

ப்ரதோ³ஷஸமயநிஸாகர இவ | கு³ரூபதே³ஸ: ப்ரஸமஹேதுர்வய: பரிணம
இவ பவிதரூபேண சரிஸிஜஜாலமமலீகுர்வந்

கு³ணரூபேண ததே³வ

பரிணமயதி | கு³ரூபதே³ஸஸ்ச நாம

புருஷாண-மகி²ல-மலப்ரக்ஷாலநக்ஷம-மஜலம் ஸ்நாநம்,

அநுபஜாத-பவிதாதி³வைரூப்யமஜரம் வ்ரு³த³த⁴வம்,

அநாரோபித-மேதோ³தோ³ஷம் கு³ரூகரணம், அஸுவர்ணவிரசநமக்³ராம்யம்

கர்ணாப⁴ரணம், அதீதஜ்யோதிராலோக:, நோத்³வேக³கர: ப்ரஜாக³ர: |

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.

॥ கு³ர்வஷ்டகம் ॥

ஸாரீரம் ஸுருபம் ததா² வா கலத்ரம் யஸஸ்சாரு சித்ரம் த⁴நம் மேருதுல்யம் |
மநஸ்சேந்ந லக்³நம் கு³ரோரங்க⁴ரிபத்³மே தத: கிம் தத: கிம் தத: கிம் தத: கிம் ॥ 1 ॥

ஸாரீரம் = the body. ஸுருபம் = handsome. ததா² வா = as also. கலத்ரம் = the wife (beautiful). யஸ: = fame.
சாரு சித்ரம் = agreeable and pleasing. த⁴நம் = wealth. மேருதுல்யம் comparable to Meru the golden mountain .
கு³ரோ: = guru's. அங்க³ரிபத்³மே = lotus like foot. மந: = the mind. ந லக்³நம் சேத்³ = if not attached. தத: கிம்? = then what is the use? தத: கிம்? = then what is the use?
தத: கிம்? = then what is the use? தத: கிம்? = 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.

கலத்ரம் த⁴நம் புத்ரபௌத்ராதி³ ஸர்வம் க்³ரு'ஹம் பா³ந்த⁴வா: ஸர்வமேதத்³தி⁴ ஜாதம்
|

மநஸ்சேந்ந லக்³நம் கு³ரோரங்க்⁴ரிபத்³மே தத: கிம் தத: கிம் தத: கிம் தத: கிம் || 2 ||

கலத்ரம் = wife. த⁴நம் = wealth. புத்ரபௌத்ராதி³ ஸர்வம் =
son, grandson and all that. க்³ரு'ஹம் = house.

பா³ந்த⁴வா: = relatives. ஸர்வம் ஏதத்³தி⁴ ஜாதம் 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).

கோ க்³ரு'ஹேஷு புமாந் ஸக்தமாத்மாநமஜிதேந்த்³ரிய: |
ஸ்நேஹபாஸர்த்³ரு'டை⁴ர்ப்³த்³த⁴முத்ஸஹேத விமோசிதும் ||

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.

கோ ந்வர்த²த்ரு³ஷ்ணம் விஸ்ரு³ஜேத் ப்ராணைப்⁴யோ⁵பி ய ஈப்ஸிதி: | யம்
ப்ரீ⁴னாத்யஸுபி:4 ப்ரேஷ்டை²ஸ்தஸ்கர: ஸேவகோ வணிக் || 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.

ஷட³ங்கா³தி³வேதோ³ முகே² ஸாஸ்த்ரவித்³யா கவித்வாதி³ க³த்³யம் ஸுபத்³யம்
கரோதி |

மநஸ்சேந்ந லக்³நம் கு³ரோரங்க்⁴ரிபத்³மே தத: கிம் தத: கிம் தத: கிம் தத: கிம் || 3 ||

ஷட³ங்கா³தி³வேத: ³ = veda with its six limbs. முகே² = in the
mouth. ஸாஸ்த்ரவித்³யா as also the scriptural learning.

கவித்வாதி³ = intelligence and other qualittite. க³த்³யம் = prose
composition. ஸுபத்³யம் well structured. கரோதி = 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: ஸிக்ஷா = the science of proper articulation and pronunciation; ச²ந்த³ஸ் = the science of prosody; வ்யாகரணம் = grammar; நிருக்தம் = etymological explanation of difficult vedic words; ஜ்யோதிஷம் = astronomy and; கல்பம் = ritual or ceremonial.

ஸிக்ஷாகல்போ வ்யாகரணம் நிருக்தம் ச².ந்த³ஸாம் சய: |
ஜ்யோதிஷாமயநம் சைவ வேதா³ங்கா³நி ஷடே³வ து ||

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.

நாயமாத்மா ப்ரவசநேந லப்⁴யோ ந மேத⁴யா ந ப³ஹுநா ஸ்ருதேந | 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.

வாக்³வைக²ரீ ஸப்³த³ப⁴ரீ ஸாஸ்த்ரவ்யாக்²யாநகௌஸலம் |
வைது³ஷ்யம் விது³ஷாம் தத்³வத்³பு⁴க்தயே ந து முக்தயே ||

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.

கிம் வேதை:³ ஸம்ரு³திபி:⁴ புராணபட²நை: ஸாஸ்த்ரஈர்மஹாவிஸ்தரை:
ஸ்வர்க³க்³ராமகுடநிவாஸப²லதை:³ கர்மக்ரியாவிப்⁴ரமை: |
முக்த்யைகம் ப⁴வது:³கபா⁴ரசநாவித்⁴வம்ஸகாலாநலம்
ஸ்வாத்மாநந்த³பத்³ப்ரவேஸகலநம் ஸேஷைர்வணிக்³வ்ரு³த்திபி:⁴ ||

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?

விதே³ஸேஷு மாந்ய: ஸ்வதே³ஸேஷு த⁴ந்ய: ஸதா³சாரவ்ரு³த்தேஷு மத்தோ ந சாந்ய:
|

மநஸ்சேந்ந லக்³நம் கு³ரோரங்க்⁴ரிபத்³மே தத: கிம் தத: கிம் தத: கிம் தத: கிம் || 4 ||

விதே³ஸேஷு = in the foreign countries. மாந்ய: = respected. ஸ்வதே³ஸேஷு = in his own country. த⁴ந்ய: = wealthy, fortunate. ஸதா³சாரவ்ரு³த்தேஷு = in the virtual or moral conducts or in observing traditional observances. மத்த: = proud or arrogant. ந ச அந்ய: = 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)

சித்தஸ்ய ஸுத்³த⁴யே கர்ம ந வஸ்தூபலப்³த⁴யே |
வஸ்துஸித்³தி⁴ர்விசாரேண ந கிஞ்சித்கர்மகோடி: ⁴ ||

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?

க்ஷமாமண்ட³லே பூ⁴பபூ⁴பாலவ்ரு³ந்தை: ³ ஸதா³ ஸேவிதம் யஸ்ய பாதா³ரவிந்த³ம் |
மநஸ்சேந்ந லக்³நம் கு³ரோரங்க்⁴ரிபத்³மே தத: கிம் தத: கிம் தத: கிம் தத: கிம் || 5 ||

க்ஷமாமண்ட³லே = in this great globe/earth. பூ⁴பபூ⁴பாலவ்ரு³ந்தை: ³ = by many kings and rulers. ஸதா³ ஸேவிதம் = always served, attended. யஸ்ய பாதா³ரவிந்த³ம் = 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.

கோணீகோணஸதாம்ஸ-பாலந-கலாது³ர்வாரக³ர்வாநல-
க்ஷு⁴யத்க்ஷு³ரநரேந்த³ர சா³டுரசநா த⁴ந்யாந் ந மந்யாமஹே |
தே³வம் ஸேவிதுமேவ நிஸ்³சிநுமஹே யோ³ஸௌ த³யாலு: புரா
தா³நாமுஷ்டிமுசே குசேலமுநயே த³த்தே ஸ்ம வித்தேஸதாம் ||

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 aquired at the feet of his preceptor.

த்வம் ராஜா வயமப்யுபாஸிதகு³ருப்ரஜ்ஞாபி⁴மானோநந்தா:
க்²யாதஸ்த்வம் விப⁴வைர்யஸாம்ஸி கவயோ தி³க்ஷு³ ப்ரதந்வந்தி ந: |
இத்த²ம் மாநத⁴நாதிது³ரமுப⁴யோரப்யாவயோரந்தரம்
யத்³யஸ்மாஸு பராங்கு²ஸி வயமப்யேகாந்ததோ நி:ஸ்ப்ரு³ஹா: ||

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?

யஸோ மே க³தம் தி³க்ஷு³ தா³ந்ப்ரதாபாஜ்ஜக³த்³வஸ்து ஸர்வம் கரே யத்³ப்ரஸாதா³த் |
மநஸ்சேந்ந லக்³நம் கு³ரோரங்க⁴ரிபத்³மே தத: கிம் தத: கிம் தத: கிம் தத: கிம் || 6 ||

மே யஸ: = my fame. தா³ந்ப்ரதாபாத் = by the glory of the gifts. தி³க்ஷு³ = in all directions. க³தம் = gone or is spread.

யத் ப்ரஸாதா³த் = by whose favour or condescension.ஸர்வம்

ஜக³த்வஸ்து = all the things in this world.கரே = 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.

ந போ⁴கே³ ந யோகே³ ந வா வாஜிராஜௌ ந காந்தாமுகே² நைவ வித்தேஷு சித்தம் |
மநஸ்சேநந லக்³நம் கு³ரோரங்க்⁴ரிபத்³மே தத: கிம் தத: கிம் தத: கிம் தத: கிம் || 7 ||

சித்தம் = (my) mind (is) ந போ⁴கே³ = is not in enjoying

sensuory pleasures.ந வா வாஜிராஜௌ =not in either horses or in

being a king. ந காந்தாமுகே² = not in (looking at) my wife's face;

(ie)., not having attachment to wife, child, and other members of the

family. நைவ வித்தேஷு = 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?

அரண்யே ந வா ஸ்வஸ்ய கே³ஹே ந கார்யே ந தே³ஹே மநோ வர்ததே மே த்வநர்க்⁴யே
|

மநஸ்சேநந லக்³நம் கு³ரோரங்க்⁴ரிபத்³மே தத: கிம் தத: கிம் தத: கிம் தத: கிம் || 8 ||

மே மந: = my mind. ந வர்ததே = does not dwell on.

அரண்யே = (living in the) forest or வா ஸ்வஸ்ய கே³ஹே = (living

in) my own house. ந கார்யே = not in indulging in prescribed

activities. ந தே³ஹே = or my body. து அநர்க்⁴யே = 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 ப²லஸ்ருதி: 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.

கு³ரோரஷ்டகம் ய: ப²டே²த்புண்யதே³ஹீ யதி³ர்பூ⁴பதி³ரஹ்மசா³ ச கே³ஹீ |
லபே⁴த்³வாஞ்சிதார்த²ம் பத³ம் ப்³ரஹ்மஸம்ஜ்ஞம் கு³ரோருக்தவாக்யே மநோ யஸ்ய
லக்³நம் || 9 ||

கு³ரோ: அஷ்டகம் = the composition consisting of eight verses on the guru. புண்யதே³ஹீ = one who has done meritorious deeds. ய: ப²டே²த் = if he reads. யதி: be he a sanyasi (ascetic). பூ⁴பதி: = a king. ப்³ரஹ்மசா³ = a student studying under a teacher. ச கே³ஹீ = or a householder. He will லபே⁴த் = get. வாஞ்சிதார்த²ம் = desired goal. ப்³ரஹ்மஸம்ஜ்ஞம் பத³ம் = the status known as brahman. கு³ருருக்தவாக்யே = in the teachings of the guru. யஸ்ய = whose. மந: = mind. லக்³நம் = 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.

இஹ சேத³வேத³த³த² ஸத்யமஸ்தி ந சேதி³ஹாவேத³நமஹதீ விநஷ்டி: ।
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.

॥ ஓ தத்ஸத் ॥

Written and encoded by N. Balasubramanian bbalu at satyam.net.in

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Gurvashtakam with meaning

pdf was typeset on January 7, 2022

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Please send corrections to sanskrit@cheerful.com

