
Narayana Hridayam or Narayana Hridaya Stotram

ನಾರಾಯಣಹೃದಯಂ

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ನಾರಾಯಣಹೃದಯಂ



.. ಶ್ರೀಯೈ ನಮಃ ..
.. ಶ್ರೀಮತೇ ನಾರಾಯಣಾಯ ನಮಃ ..
ಅಧರ್ವಣರಹಸ್ಯೇ ಉತ್ತರ ಖಂಡೇ
.. ಶ್ರೀನಾರಾಯಣ ಹೃದಯಂ ..
.. Shri Narayana Hridayam ..

INTRODUCTION:- The following abbreviations are used in the comments that follow. (1) Narayana Hridayam - NH. (2) Laxmi Hridayam - LH (3) Vishnu Sahasranama with the commentary of Shri Shankaracharya - VS. (4) Bhagavad Gita - BG. (5) Shrimad Bhagavatham - BH (6) Lalitha Sahasranamam - LS. (7) Vivekachudamani of Shri Shankaracharya - VC. (8) Katha Upanishad - KU. (9) Mundaka Upanishad - MU.

Narayana Hridayam stotram is unique in that it is coupled with another stotram Laxmi Hridayam to form a pair. They are found in the Atharvana Rahasyam. They were given out by sage Bhargava. (Some manuscripts attribute it to brahmA RiShiH).

They belong to the category of stotram ಸ್ತೋತ್ರಂ .

The appellation stotram, stuti and stavam all describe a hymn only. ಸ್ತವಃ ಸ್ತೋತ್ರಂ ನುತಿಃ ಸ್ತುತಿಃ . says Amara, the Sanskrit lexicon. They all narrate the qualities of a deity. ಗುಣಸಂಕೀರ್ತನಂ is stotram, says Shri Shankaracharya in his commentary to Vishnu Sahasranama. The Lord in His true form is described in the scriptures as having no attributes or qualities such as name, form or qualities.

ಯತ್ತದದ್ರೇಶ್ಯ-ಮಗ್ರಾಹ್ಯ-ಮಗೋತ್ರ-ಮವರ್ಣಮಚಕ್ಷುಃಶ್ರೋತ್ರಂ ತದಪಾಣಿ-ಪಾದಂ .

ನಿತ್ಯಂ ವಿಭುಂ ಸರ್ವಗತಂ ಸುಸೂಕ್ಷ್ಮಂ ತದವ್ಯಯಂ ಯದ್ಭೂತಯೋನಿಂ ಪರಿಪಶ್ಯಂತಿ ಧೀರಾಃ .. MU(1-1-5.)

But since such a God will be impossible for a devotee to comprehend and relate with, the scriptures say that the Lord is also available with names and forms. This makes it easy for a devotee to worship Him. The kindly Lord accepts this kind of worship also.

STOTRAM:- Customarily a stotram describes a hymn that is ancient. It is generally found in vedas, puranas or itihasas such as the Ramayana or Mahabharatha. Thus we call Vishnu Sahasranama and the Lalitha Sahasranama as stotras. So also we call Aditya Hridayam as stotram. They were narrated by some sage, but the sage himself is not the author. He had heard it or got it from some one. Thus the origin is not known and is lost in antiquity. Generally the sage who narrates it says something about its glory in the beginning. He also appends a list of benefits one will get by reciting it or using it in some specific manner as in a sacrifice or homa. This is known as phalashruti (ಫಲಶ್ರುತಿಃ .).

Thus, we find these parts or components in these two stotras (NH) and (LH). But some hymns composed by great acharyas or saints later on that were outpourings of intense devotion also carry the appellation stotram. The popular Kanakadhara Stotram by Shri Shankaracharya and Hayagriva Stotram by Shri Vedanta Desika are examples of this kind. But the borderline has become grey with the result that nowadays any hymn is being called a stotram.

WHY RECITE STOTRAM? :- Let us briefly discuss as to why should one listen to and recite stotras. Our scriptures repeatedly state that the birth as a human being is very rare and so immensely valuable. Rarer still are the desire for liberation and association of noble souls. They urge us to appreciate the fact and make best use of our birth as humans .

ದುರ್ಲಭಂ ತ್ರಯಮೇವೈತದ್ವೇವಾನುಗ್ರಹ-ಹೇತುಕಂ .

ಮನುಷ್ಯತ್ವಂ ಮುಮುಕ್ಷುತ್ವಂ ಮಹಾಪುರುಷಸಂಶ್ರಯಃ .. VC(No.3)

The reason for saying that a human

birth is great should be obvious. Animals may be stronger, faster and have capabilities such as very acute hearing, keen eye sight etc., which we do not possess. Still we claim to be superior to them because

we humans are endowed with the power of reasoning and common sense.

With these gifts we can plan our future intelligently, set goals and do all that is needed to attain the goals. Our scriptures say that if, after being born as a human being, one fails to exploit these gifts properly and achieve the goals, then that person is no different from an animal.

ಆಹಾರ-ನಿದ್ರಾ-ಭಯ-ಮುಖ್ಯಕಾನಿ ಸಾಮಾನ್ಯಮೇತತ್ ಪಶುಭಿರ್ನರಾಣಾಂ .
ಬುದ್ಧಿರ್ಹಿ ತೇಷಾಮಧಿಕೋ ವಿಶೇಷೋ ಬುದ್ಧ್ಯಾ ವಿಹೀನಃ ಪಶುಭಿಃ ಸಮಾನಃ .

GOALS - The goals may vary from one person to the other and so can be numerous. But our sages have analysed these numerous goals and divided them into four categories. They are (1) dharma, (2) artha or material acquisitions like wealth, house, family etc., (3) kama or sense pleasures that wealth and other material acquisitions mentioned earlier can provide and finally (4) mokSha or liberation. These are known as ಪುರುಷಾರ್ಥಾಃ since they are sought after by people. ಅರ್ಥಃ = goal.

(1) Dharma - Performing actions as prescribed by our scriptures is called dharma. One who wants to move up the spiritual path is enjoined to follow the injunctions, though they may superficially appear to be illogical or inconvenient. Going against them is termed as a sinful act and will lead to one's downfall. Krishna states this clearly in BG (16-23,24).

ಯಃ ಶಾಸ್ತ್ರವಿಧಿಮುತ್ಸೃಜ್ಯ ವರ್ತತೇ ಕಾಮಕಾರತಃ .

ನ ಸ ಸಿದ್ಧಿಮಾಪ್ನೋತಿ ನ ಸುಖಂ ಪರಾಂ ಗತಿಂ .. 23..

ತಸ್ಮಾ-ಚ್ಛಾಸ್ತ್ರಂ ಪ್ರಮಾಣಂ ತೇ ಕಾರ್ಯಾಕಾರ್ಯ-ವ್ಯವಸ್ಥಿತೌ .

ಜ್ಞಾತ್ವಾ ಶಾಸ್ತ್ರವಿಧಾನೋಕ್ತಂ ಕರ್ಮ ಕರ್ತುಮಿಹಾರ್ಹಸಿ .. 24..

(2) Artha - We need wealth and other

material comforts to enable us to lead a worry-free life. Besides, money is required to perform religious duties like, going on pilgrimages, pujas, charity etc. So, seeking wealth, per se is not evil. Kalidasa, in his famous poem Raghuvamsam says (1-7) that the kings of the dynasty of Raghu amassed wealth for giving away to the needy and worthy and not for enriching themselves. ತ್ಯಾಗಾಯ ಸಂಭೃತಾರ್ಥಾನಾಂ . Working to acquire wealth and saving for a rainy day are recommended. It is not decried as long the means by which the wealth is obtained is legal and

does not involve injury or harm to others. (3) Kama - Our scriptures allows one to enjoy the benefits of artha (i.e) wealth earned. They include house, family, friends etc. But, as said in the case of artha above, the enjoyments sought and indulged in should not be illegal or against the dictates of the shahstras. They should not be such that will lead to attachments and moral degradation. Having desire is natural and allowed. In fact, Krishna says that He is behind such "proper" desires in all beings. ಧರ್ಮಾವಿರುದ್ಧ ಭೂತೇಷು ಕಾಮೋಽಸ್ಮಿ ಭರತರ್ಷಭ. BG(7-11). Our scriptures talk of special prayers and rituals by which one can obtain immense riches and pleasures including life among gods in the heavens and even the highest world - that of the creator Brahma. This shows that they allow us to entertain desires as long as they are "proper" as said above. But attachment binds and so is dangerous. Our scriptures warn us to be wary of developing attachment to money, property, relations, people etc. (4) MokSha or liberation - means liberation from rebirth. REAL GOAL - It is to be noted that our scriptures do not consider the first three goals as real goals at all. The logic is this. All actions produce results. If one does actions that are dharmic he gets the fruits of the actions in the form of merit or punyam. If one acts contrary to dharma, he gets the results in the form of sins or papam. One enjoys these results in this birth or one may have to be born again once or many times for the purpose. The fruits of punyam may be a better and more comfortable birth in this world or higher worlds. The results of adharmic actions may be inferior births as animals and plants or a human birth full of sufferings and misery in the form of sickness etc. Thus one gets entangled in the cycle of repeated births and deaths. Krishna points out that even if one gets a place in the heavens, he should remember that that place is got as the reward for his good deeds. As soon as the stock of punyam is exhausted he will necessarily have to come down to this world and rejoin the cycle of birth and death. BG(9-21)

ತೇ ತಂ ಭುಕ್ತ್ವಾ ಸ್ವರ್ಗ-ಲೋಕಂ ವಿಶಾಲಂ
ಕ್ಷೀಣೇ ಪುಣ್ಯೇ ಮರ್ತ್ಯ-ಲೋಕಂ ವಿಶಂತಿ .

ಏವಂ ತ್ರಯೀಧರ್ಮ-ಮನುಷ್ಯಪನ್ನಾ
ಗತಾಗತಂ ಕಾಮಕಾಮಾ ಲಭಂತೇ ..

This is awful. So, our scriptures do not consider the three goals as commonly understood as real goals. Only liberation or mokSha is said to be the real goal since after attaining mokSha one escapes the agony of samsara. Therefore it is known as the supreme goal or ಪರಮಪುರುಷಾರ್ಥಃ . Samsara implies being born, growing up, going through the ups and downs of life, growing old and dying only to be born again. Liberation is freedom for ever. So it becomes the duty of every intelligent person to work for liberation and not keep on wallowing in samsara. Keeping the above facts in mind, the scriptures define the purpose of the goals in a very different manner. They ask us to use these three goals for achieving spiritual progress in order to escape samsara. One should do dharma to earn wealth which should be used to earn religious merit and not for enjoying sensuous pleasures. The goal of dharma should be kept as spiritual progress. The aim of kama should not be taken as enjoying sense pleasures but should just be keeping the body and soul together. The aim of keeping the body and soul together should be to strive and learn about the way to liberation and not strive to attain transient pleasures like the enjoyment in heaven etc.

ಧರ್ಮಸ್ಯ ಹ್ಯಾಪವರ್ಗಸ್ಯ ನಾರ್ಥೋಽರ್ಥಾಯೋಪಕಲ್ಪತೇ .
ನಾರ್ಥಸ್ಯ ಧರ್ಮೈಕಾಂತಸ್ಯ ಕಾಮೋ ಲಾಭಾಯ ಹಿ ಸ್ಮೃತಃ ..
ಕಾಮಸ್ಯ ನೇಂದ್ರಿಯಪ್ರೀತಿರ್ಲಾಭೋ ಜೀವೇತ ಯಾವತಾ .
ಜೀವಸ್ಯ ತತ್ತ್ವಜಿಜ್ಞಾಸಾ ನಾರ್ಥೋ ಯಶ್ಚೇಹ ಕರ್ಮಭಿಃ .. (BH - 1-3-9,10).

The devotees of the Lord were very clear about the above facts. For example, Kulasekhara declares that he is not interested in the three goals - dharma, artha and kama. He says that let events, good or bad, happen according to karmas he had done. He prays to the Lord to grant him unwavering devotion to His lotus like feet in this and in future births. (Mukundamala).

ನಾನ್ಯಾ ಧರ್ಮೇ ನ ವಸುನಿಚಯೇ ನೈವ ಕಾಮೋಪಭೋಗೇ
ಯದ್ಯದ್ಭವ್ಯಂ ಭವತು ಭಗವನ್ ಪೂರ್ವಕರ್ಮಾನುರೂಪಂ .

ಏತತ್ಪಾರ್ಥ್ಯಂ ಮಮ ಬಹುಮತಂ ಜನ್ಮಜನ್ಮಾಂತರೇಽಪಿ
ತ್ವತ್ಪಾದಾಂಭೋರುಹಯುಗಗತಾ ನಿಶ್ಚಾ ಭಕ್ತಿರಸ್ತು ..

LIBERATION:- Liberation, as said earlier, means liberation from cyclic birth. It is spoken as attaining the lotus feet of the Lord in the puranas. According to upanishads liberation means dropping one's identification with the body/mind complex and realising his/her divine nature. The scriptures assert that one is distinct from the body/mind complex and is indeed divine in nature and so is not subject to sorrows and rebirth. The wrong identification with the body/mind complex is due to wrong knowledge or nescience known as ajnanam (ಅಜ್ಞಾನಂ). Thus, liberation implies settling down in our true or real nature which is divine and thus be free from problems for ever afterwards. ತರತಿ ಶೋಕಮಾತ್ಮವಿತ್. says the upanishad. Because of this reason, Krishna says there is no gain greater than this. BG(6-22).

ಯಂ ಲಬ್ಧ್ವಾ ಚಾಪರಂ ಲಾಭಂ ಮನ್ಯತೇ ನಾದಿಕಂ ತತಃ .
ಯಸ್ಮಿನ್ಮಿಥೋ ನ ದುಃಖೇನ ಗುರುಣಾಽಪಿ ವಿಚಾಲ್ಯತೇ ..

DESIRE FOR LIBERATION:- For this reason, liberation does indeed sound immensely attractive. But the sad truth is that it has very few takers. Only a minuscule minority is interested in seeking liberation. Krishna ruefully says this in Gita. ಮನುಷ್ಯಾಣಾಂ ಸಹಸ್ರೇಷು ಕಶ್ಚಿದ್ಭೃತತಿ ಸಿದ್ಧಯೇ. BG(7-3). Yama, the Lord of death, also bemoans the fact, and says that the dullards are attracted by sense pleasures and so choose the path of mundane prosperity, but the wise choose the path of liberation. KU (1-2-2).

ಶ್ರೇಯಶ್ಚ ಪ್ರೇಯಶ್ಚ ಮನುಷ್ಯಮೇತಸ್ಮೌ ಸಂಪರೀತ್ಯ ವಿವಿನಕ್ತಿ ಧೀರಃ .
ಶ್ರೇಯೋ ಹಿ ಧೀರೋಽಭಿ ಪ್ರೇಯಸೇ ವೃಣೇತೇ ಪ್ರೇಯೋ ಮಂದೋ
ಯೋಗಕ್ಷೇಮಾತ್ ವೃಣೇತೇ ..

Wrong knowledge can be righted only by right knowledge called jnanam (ಜ್ಞಾನಂ.) just like darkness can be removed only by bringing in light. The way to gain jnanam is described in a very systematic manner in our scriptures. However, our scriptures never tire of warning that the path to gain wisdom is extremely difficult.

"The wise men say it is as difficult as walking on the razor's edge"

said Yama to his disciple Nachiketas. ಕ್ಷೂರಸ್ಯ ಧಾರಾ ನಿಶಿತಾ ದುರತ್ಯಯಾ
ದುರ್ಗಂ ಪಥಸ್ತತ್ಕವಯೋ ವದಂತಿ. KU (1-3-14). Krishna too says this.

ಅವ್ಯಕ್ತಾ ಹಿ ಗತಿರ್ದುಃಖಂ ದೇಹವದ್ಭಿ-ರವಾಪ್ಯತೇ. BG(12-5) The reason
that this path is very difficult for most people is that their minds are
sullied by negative qualities like desires, anger, attachments, jealousy
etc. These qualities cloud the intellect and often distort judgement.

Impelled by anger or greed one may turn selfish and indulge in illegal or
immoral acts. Our scriptures declare that people who have such weaknesses,
will always be distracted and so cannot comprehend the subtle spiritual
wisdom. Even after hearing about liberation repeatedly, their minds
will not be excited enough to take a step in that direction. This

is very unfortunate. ನಾವಿರತೋ ದುಶ್ಚರಿತಾನ್ನಾಶಾಂತೋ ನಾಸಮಾಹಿತಃ
. ನಾಶಾಂತಮಾನಸೋ ವಾಸಪಿ ಪ್ರಜ್ಞಾನೇನೈನಮಾಪ್ನುಯಾತ್ .. KU(1-2-24). So it is
said that one with the desire for liberation, known as ಮುಮುಕ್ಷುತ್ವಂ is a
rare phenomenon.

The first thing to do for one who desires liberation

is to purge the mind of such distracting traits and steady it. This

is achieved by regular performance of prescribed karma or duties. However
we saw earlier that karmas produce results and lead to rebirth. The way to
escape the results is to blend karma with devotion or bhakti. One continues
to engage himself in all regular activities, but escapes the results by offering
the results to the Lord. The results having been offered to God will not attach
to the performer of the action. Krishna says this in BG(9-27, 28).

ಯತ್ಕರೋಷಿ ಯದಶ್ನಾಸಿ ಯಜ್ಞಹೋಷಿ ಕ್ಷದಾಸಿ ಯತ್ .

ಯತ್ತಪಸ್ಯಸಿ ಕೌಂತೇಯ ತತ್ಕುರುಷ್ವ ಮದರ್ಪಣಂ .. 27..

ಶುಭಾಶುಭ-ಫಲೈರೇವಂ ಮೋಕ್ಷಸ್ಯ ಕರ್ಮಬಂಧನೈಃ . 28.

He tells Arjuna: " whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever sacrifices you
perform, whatever you give by way of charity, whatever austerities you
engage yourself in do it as as offering to Me. By doing so, you will be
liberated from the bonds of action that result in good or evil results."

In this way, actions done, but without any desire for results, lead to

purification of the mind. ಚಿತ್ತಸ್ಯ ಶುದ್ಧಯೇ ಕರ್ಮ. VC(11). and
ಯೋಗಿನಃ ಕರ್ಮ ಕುರ್ವಂತಿ ಸಂಗಂ ತ್ಯಕ್ತ್ವಾ ತ್ಯಶುದ್ಧಯೇ .. BG(5-11).
ASSOCIATION OF SAINTS:- As the mind sheds its impurities and gets pure,
God's grace slowly reveals itself like the full moon emerging from behind the
clouds. The kindly Lord arranges for him to come into contact with noble
souls, like sadhus or saints. Our shastras describe them as the messengers
of God. They move around the world telling people about the weaknesses
of the life one normally leads and explaining the need for treading the
spiritual path. They do this without any expectations. They have found
the source of happiness. They have the noble desire that others too
should take to the spiritual path and find everlasting happiness. Shri
Shankaracharya says this.

ಶಾಂತಾ ಮಹಾಂತೋ ನಿವಸಂತಿ ಸಂತಃ ವಸಂತವಲ್ಲೋಕಹಿತಂ ಚರಂತಃ .
ತೀರ್ಣಾ ಸ್ವಯಂ ಭೀಮಭವಾರ್ಣವಂ ಜನಾ- ನಹೇತುನಾನ್ಯಾನಪಿ ತಾರಯಂತಃ ..
VC (37).

We, normally will not be able to identify a saint, because he will look
like anyone else and will shun publicity and crowds. It is only God's
grace that can lead to a meeting with a mahatma and make us listen to
his words. Thus, a human birth is a rarity in the first place and rarer
still is the meeting with a saintly person. King Nimi says this when he
gets a chance to meet the nine yogis. BH(11-2-29).

ದುರ್ಲಭೋ ಮಾನುಷೋ ದೇಹೋ ದೇಹಿನಾಂ ಕ್ಷಣಭಂಗುರಃ .
ತಥಾಪಿ ದುರ್ಲಭಂ ಮನ್ಯೇ ವೈಕುಂಠಪ್ರಿಯದರ್ಶನಂ ..

As the minds of saints are imbued with devotion, they take delight
in talking about the Lord - who is none other than their inner self -
and not about mundane matters.

ಮಜ್ಜಿತ್ತಾ ಮದ್ಗತ-ಪ್ರಾಣಾ ಬೋಧಯಂತಃ ಪರಸ್ಪರಂ .
ಕಥಯಂತಶ್ಚ ಮಾಂ ನಿತ್ಯಂ ತುಷ್ಯಂತಿ ಚ ರಮಂತಿ ಚ ..BG(10-9).

The words of such God intoxicated devotees have great power. They go to
the heart and so can work wonders. As one comes into contact with them
and listen to their nectar like words, they strengthen the devotion.
The mind slowly turns away from the world and towards the Lord. The

worldly attractions and worries gradually lose their hold. Mind becomes calm and peaceful. It acquires qualities required to for spiritual progress. These qualities are said to be four in number and are known in the vedantic parlance as ಸಾಧನ ಚತುಷ್ಟಯಂ or four means of attainment. They are described in texts like Viveka Chudamani and Tattva Bodha. They are more elaborately described by Krishna in chapter 16 of Bhagavat Gita. He calls them as ದೈವೀ ಸಂಪತ್ or divine qualities. They are necessarily to be acquired by one stepping on to the path of liberation. ದೈವೀ ಸಂಪದ್ವಿಮೋಕ್ಷಾಯ. says Krishna. BG(16-5). It is difficult to acquire these virtues by practice. But one need not despair and refrain from making any attempt in this direction. Our shastras are aware of this problem and provide an attractive solution to the seemingly difficult problem. They say that one who worships the Lord regularly and practises devotion to Him gets over the difficulties with His grace and acquires the qualifications as by-products. He will, therefore progress without much effort on the spiritual path. Krishna makes this assurance. BG(18-55).

ಭಕ್ತ್ಯಾ ಮಾಮಭಿಜಾನಾತಿ ಯಾವಾನ್ ಯಶ್ಚಾಸ್ಮಿ ತತ್ತ್ವತಃ .

ತತೋ ಮಾಂ ತತ್ತ್ವತೋ ಜ್ಞಾತ್ವಾ ವಿಶತೇ ತದನಂತರಂ ..

and again in BG(18-58) ಮಚ್ಛಿತ್ತಃ ಸರ್ವದುರ್ಗಾಣಿ ಮತ್ಪ್ರಸಾದಾತ್ತರಿಷ್ಯತಿ.

The easiest methods of worship are listening to His glories as described in stotras, puranas etc., or chanting stotras or repeating His names by way of doing japa. That is why in the introduction to Vishnu Sahasranama we find Yudhistira asking Bhishma for a simple method that will give one freedom from samsara. ಕಿಂ ಜಪನ್ಮುಚ್ಯತೇ ಜಂತುಃ ಜನ್ಮಸಂಸಾರ-ಬಂಧನಾತ್. Bhishma answers that the best and also the simplest method to tide over all kinds of sorrows, including samsara, is reciting the hymns that sing the praise of the Lord. ಲೋಕಾಧ್ಯಕ್ಷಂ ಸ್ತುವನ್ನಿತ್ಯಂ ಸರ್ವದುಃಖಾತಿಗೋ ಭವೇತ್. and

ಏಷ ಮೇ ಸರ್ವಧರ್ಮಾಣಾಂ ಧರ್ಮೋಽಧಿಕತಮೋ ಮತಃ .

ಯದ್ಭಕ್ತ್ಯಾ ಪುಂಡರೀಕಾಕ್ಷಂ ಸ್ತವೈರರ್ಚೀನ್ನರಃ ಸದಾ ..

Shri Shankaracharya, in his commentary to the above line,

explains why Bhishma said this is the "best method". He says

ಹಿಂಸಾದಿ-ಪುರುಷಾಂತರ-ದ್ರವ್ಯಾಂತರ-ದೇಶಕಾಲಾದಿ-ನಿಯಮಾನಪೇಕ್ಷತ್ವಂ

ಆಧಿಕ್ಯೇ ಕಾರಣಂ . That is, this method does not involve causing injury

to other beings as in animal sacrifices, does not require help from

another person, or money, or depend on a particular time as Ekadasi or

Amavasya or travel to holy places such as Kasi or Rameshvaram. It can

be practised by any one irrespective of age, sex, status in society etc.

The sage Naradha emphasises the importance when he told Shri Vyasa that

recitng the hymns which enumerate the virtues of the Lord is the abiding

purpose of doing austere penances, rituals, recitation of vedas etc.

ಇದಂ ಹಿ ಪುಂಸಸ್ತಪಸಃ ಶ್ರುತಸ್ಯ ವಾ ಸ್ವಿಷ್ಟಸ್ಯ ಸೂಕ್ತಸ್ಯ ಚ ಬುದ್ಧಿದತ್ತಯೋಃ .

ಅವಿಚ್ಯುತೋರ್ಥಃ ಕವಿಭಿರ್ನಿರೂಪಿತೋ ಯದುತ್ತಮಶ್ಲೋಕಗುಣಾನುವರ್ಣನಂ ..

BH(1-8-22).

The reason is, that by practising devotion to God one gets the four

qualifications necessary to progress on the spiritual path that culminates

in wisdom or jnanam as by-products. Shri Shankaracharya says this in

his Aparokshanubhuti thus.

ಸ್ವ-ವರ್ಣಾಶ್ರಮಧರ್ಮೇಣ ತಪಸಾ ಹರಿ-ತೋಷಣಾತ್ .

ಸಾಧನಂ ಪ್ರಭವೇತ್ ಪುಂಸಾಂ ವೈರಾಗ್ಯಾದಿ-ಚತುಷ್ಟಯಂ ..

Shri Bhagavatam also says this. BH(1-2-8).

ವಾಸುದೇವೇ ಭಗವತಿ ಭಕ್ತಿಯೋಗಃ ಪ್ರಯೋಜಿತಃ .

ಜನಯತ್ಯಾಶು ವೈರಾಗ್ಯಂ ಜ್ಞಾನಂ ಚ ಯದಹೈತುಕಂ ..

Thus, it is necessary to perform our prescribed duties and in

addition, make listening to and reciting stotras an essential part of our daily routine

to intensify the devotion. The scriptures contain hymns that narrate the qualities of

God with name and form. Shri Rudram is a well known example of a vedic

hymn. The Kaivalyopanishad says that recitng Shri Rudram will purify

one of all sins. ಯಃ ಶತರುದ್ರೀಯಮಧೀತೇ, ಸೋಽಗ್ನಿಪೂತೋ ಭವತಿ,

ಸುರಾಪಾನಾತ್ಪೂತೋ ಭವತಿ, ಬ್ರಹ್ಮಹತ್ಯಾತ್ಪೂತೋ ಭವತಿ, ಕೃತ್ಯಾಕೃತ್ಯಾತ್ಪೂತೋ

ಭವತಿ, ತಸ್ಮಾದವಿಮುಕ್ತಮಾಶ್ರಿತೋ ಭವತಿ. In addition, we have

hymns in puranas. Our acharyas and other devotees have also contributed

many hymns. The recital of such hymns is the easiest and best method of

worshipping Him and acquire purity of mind by purging it of sins. Because of these reasons, the Lord has the name ಪುಣ್ಯಃ ಏವಂ ಸ್ಮರಣಾದಿ ಕುರ್ವತಾಂ ಸರ್ವೇಷಾಂ ಪುಣ್ಯಂ ಕರೋತೀತಿ ಪುಣ್ಯಃ . VS(925) Thus reciting hymns or just listening to them is eminently suitable for people in this modern age as they are pressed for time.

SUMMARY: To summarise the above,

we should first realise that the human birth is an invaluable asset.

Our scriptures say that one gets it after many births as other beings as birds, beasts, plants etc., depending on our karma stock. So, we should grab the opportunity with both hands and work assiduously for liberation. If we fail to do so, then the loss is immense since we do not know what our next and subsequent births will be and when we will get another birth as a human being again and will be able to work our way up. At this point there may be an argument. One may say that he will do lot of good karmas, earn plenty of merit or punyam and as a result gain birth in higher worlds. This may be in the world of gods such as Indra and may be even in that of Lord Brahma the creator. There one can have a great time, full of enjoyment and also work for liberation in such a wonderful environment. This is not a wise argument, say our acharyas. The upanishad says that the vision of the Self can be had clearly in the mind, as in a mirror, only in this world. It cannot be had clearly in the world of Gandarvas, manes and gods like Indra. These worlds are meant for enjoyment of pleasures got as a result of many good karmas. The mind that is behind the senses will, therefore, be pulled in many directions. The image of the Self will consequently be scattered like the reflection on the surface of water that is agitated by the wind and so not clear. One will be unable to concentrate on the spiritual progress. KU(II-III-5)

ಯಥಾದರ್ಶೇ ತಥಾಸ್ತತ್ಮನಿ ಯಥಾ ಸ್ವಪ್ನೇ ತಥಾ ಪಿತ್ಯಲೋಕೇ .

ಯಥಾಸ್ವಪ್ನ ಪರಿವ ದೃಶ್ಯೇ ತಥಾ ಗಂಧರ್ವಲೋಕೇ ಛಾಯಾತಪಯೋರಿವ ಬ್ರಹ್ಮಲೋಕೇ ..

If one misses the chance to attain liberation in this world, then he can get a chance to get vision of the Self clearly only in the

Brahma Loka. But that world is the highest one and very difficult to attain. It can be reached only by numerous special kinds of rites and meditation. Therefore one should leave no stone unturned to attain liberation in this world itself. Krishna tells Uddhava that, sense-enjoyments can be had in any body, but realisation can be had only with the human body. So, keeping in the mind the fact that the human body is fragile, one should make haste and strive for liberation here itself. BH(11-9-26).

ಲಬ್ಧ್ವಾ ಸುದುರ್ಲಭಮಿದಂ ಬಹುಸಂಸ್ಥವಾಂತೇ
ಮಾನುಷ್ಯಮರ್ಥದಮನಿತ್ಯಮಪೀಹ ಧೀರಃ .
ತೂರ್ಣಂ ಯತೇತ ನ ಪತೇದನುಮೃತ್ಯು ಯಾವ-
ನ್ನಿಶ್ರೇಯಸಾಯ ವಿಷಯಃ ಖಲು ಸರ್ವತಃ ಸ್ಯಾತ್ ..

Shri Shankaracharya, in his commentary to the above verse quoted from the KU (II-III-5) makes a subtle observation. The upanishad says that the vision of the Self may be had distinctly, as in a mirror, in our intellect in this world. The idea, he says, is that the reflecton will be distinct in a mirror, only when it is spotlessly clear. Similarly, the mind, in order to be able to reflect the Self clearly, should first be made absolutely clear by the performance of prescribed duties, prayers, meditation etc. ಸ್ವಬುದ್ಧೌ ಆದರ್ಶವನ್ನಿರ್ಮಲ-ಭೂತಾನಾಂ ವಿವಿಕ್ತಮಾತ್ಮನೋ ದರ್ಶನಂ ಭವತೀತ್ಯರ್ಥಃ . Then, with the guidance of a guru and following his instructions one can progress towards liberation.

NARAYANA HRIDAYAM AND LAXMI HRIDAYAM (or HRIDYASTOTRAM):-
Narayana Hridayam (NH) and

Laxmi Hridayam (LH) form a pair of very valuable and sacred hymns. NH is the shorter one. It consists of only 37 verses. LH is longer and consists of 108 verses. The word (ಹೃದಯಂ) hridayam is popularly taken to mean the heart. The word also is used to mean secret, true or divine knowledge.

Being hymns found in the Veda the Narayana Hridayam and Laxmi Hridayam Stotras are highly efficacious. They are sanctifying as was said of Shri Rudram earlier. They also contain recondite vedantic truths which may be found in the upanishads, puranas, Bhagavad Gita etc. These

truths are also to be seen in other stotras and in the hymns of later acharyas. ಲಕ್ಷ್ಮೀಹೃದಯಕೇ ಸ್ತೋತ್ರೇ ಸರ್ವಮನ್ಯತ್ ಪ್ರಕಾಶಿತಂ . (NH - 33).

So, to describe them as hridayam is very apt. They are, therefore, very precious. For these reasons they are considered very sacred and therefore secret - not to be easily given out. ಗೋಪ್ಯಮೇತತ್ಸದಾ ಕುರ್ಯಾತ್ ನ ಸರ್ವತ್ರ ಪ್ರಕಾಶಯೇತ್ . says Narayana Hridayam (34) in its later part. Because of this restriction these stotras were handed down from a worthy guru to deserving disciples only. They were not freely available like Vishnu Sahasranamam.

Only some noteworthy features of this stotram (NH) could be mentioned in this brief introduction. The reader is requested to read the comments given to the LH also (available in this site under the heading Laxmi in the category DEVI) as these two stotras are linked.

The Narayana Hridayam stotram contains sixteen verses in the beginning that narrate the glory of the Lord. Verses No. 1 and 2 describe the Lord with form. This is suitable for meditation. This form is to be retained in the mind when reciting the NH.

But there is another form of the Lord which needs to be known. This is the form that Krishna discusses in Chapter 7 of BG.

The Lord says He has two aspects. The "superior" one has no attributes. It is the very soul of all beings and sustains the universe. The other, namely, the "inferior" aspect is divided into eight categories and from that the universe of names and forms evolves. This is said to be "inferior" aspect since people get snared in names and forms and overlook the Lord behind them who sustains the universe.

A familiar example is that we go to a theatre and watch a movie. We get absorbed in the movie and forget to notice the screen. It is the screen that is behind the movie and sustains it, but this fact is overlooked. Similarly we are absorbed in the world of names and forms and fail to notice the Lord who bears all the names and forms.

They, thus get caught in samsara. This aspect is known as Prakriti or maya. Krishna says that His maya is very powerful and difficult to

cross over without His grace. BG(7-14) ದೈವೀ ಹೈಷಾ ಗುಣಮಯೀ ಮಮ ಮಾಯಾ ದುರತ್ಯಯಾ ..ಮಾಮೇವ ಯೇ ಪ್ರಪದ್ಯಂತೇ ಮಾಯಾಮೇಷಾಂ ತರಂತಿ ತೇ ..

The supreme Being, known as Brahman, when associated with maya is known as Ishvara or Maheshvara and becomes the cause of the universe through the agency of Maya. ಮಾಯಾಂ ತು ಪ್ರಕೃತಿಂ ವಿದ್ಯಾನ್ಮಾಯಿನಂ ಚ ಮಹೇಶ್ವರಂ . says the Svetasvataropanisad (4-10). Everything is born of Prakriti. Maya, in Sanskrit, is of feminine gender. So, it is spoken of as the consort of the Lord, Mother Goddess or Lalitha, LakShmi etc. Thus, though they are spoken as two items, they are indeed one indivisible Brahman only.

Shri Shankaracharya says this in his Saundaryalahari (sloka No.97).

ಗಿರಾಮಾಹುರ್ಧೇವೀಂ ದ್ರುಹಿಣಗೃಹಿಣೀಮಾಗಮವಿದೋ ಹರೇಃ ಪತ್ನೀಂ ಪದ್ಮಾಂ ಹರಸಹಚರೀಮದ್ರಿತನಯಾಂ . ತುರಿಯಾ ಕಾಪಿ ತ್ವಂ ದುರಧಿಗಮ-ನಿಸ್ಸೀಮ-ಮಹಿಮಾ ಮಹಾಮಾಯಾ ವಿಶ್ವಂ ಭ್ರಮಯಸಿ ಪರಬ್ರಹ್ಮ-ಮಹಿಷಿ ..

He says that wise people who are well read in the scriptures say that You are Sarasvati the consort of Brahma the creator; again they say You are Laxmi the consort of Hari and also You are Parvati the consort of Siva. You are beyond the three and are the limitless One who is very difficult to reach. You are the Maya who makes the entire universe go round and round.

Thus, Ishvar and Maya are inseparable and are known as the parents of the universe. This concept is depicted in our shastras as Ardhanariswara in whom both Siva and Parvati share half of one body.

The poet Kalidasa says this in the invocatory verse to

his immortal classic Raghuvamsam as follows. ವಾಗರ್ಥಾವಿವ ಸಂಪೃಕ್ತೌ ವಾಗರ್ಥಪ್ರತಿಪತ್ತಯೇ ಜಗತಃ ಪಿತೌ ವಂದೇ ಪಾರ್ವತೀಪರಮೇಶ್ವರೌ .. He salutes Parvati and Parameswara who are the parents of the Universe and who are (inseparably) united like the speech and its sense. Prakriti or maya named variouly as Parvati or Laxmi is the creative power of the Lord. He indeed is the causeless cause of everything that are the products or effect. It is to be noted that the properties of the cause will be there in the products. Thus, ornaments made of gold will have the properties of gold. Gold has no form but the ornaments are many and have different forms

and names. Same is the case with vessels made of clay and so on. In the same way, Lord is the cause of everything. The visible universe contains numerous items, right from Brahma the creator to insignificant insects and inanimate things. But they are all manifestations of the Lord only, but they all bear different forms and names. This is brought out in verse No. 3 to 18. These verse say that there is nothing apart from Him and all were His manifestations only. For this reason these verses are very significant. The words used herein will sound familiar since they are same as the verses in the Narayana Suktam said along with the Purusha Suktam.

The verses are:

ವಿಶ್ವಂ ನಾರಾಯಣಂ ದೇವಮಕ್ಷರಂ ಪರಮಂ ಪದಂ .
 ವಿಶ್ವತಃ ಪರಮಾನ್ನಿತ್ಯಂ ವಿಶ್ವಂ ನಾರಾಯಣ ಹರಿಂ .
 ವಿಶ್ವಮೇವೇದಂ ಪುರುಷಸ್ತದ್ವಿಶ್ವಮುಪಜೀವತಿ .
 ಪತಿಂ ವಿಶ್ವಸ್ಯಾತ್ಮೇಶ್ವರ ಶಾಶ್ವತ ಶಿವಮಚ್ಯುತಂ .
 ನಾರಾಯಣಂ ಮಹಾಜ್ಞೇಯಂ ವಿಶ್ವಾತ್ಮಾನಂ ಪರಾಯಣಂ ..
 ನಾರಾಯಣಪರೋ ಜ್ಯೋತಿರಾತ್ಮಾ ನಾರಾಯಣಃ ಪರಃ .
 ನಾರಾಯಣಪರಂ ಬ್ರಹ್ಮ ತತ್ತ್ವಂ ನಾರಾಯಣಃ ಪರಃ .
 ನಾರಾಯಣಪರೋ ಧ್ಯಾತಾ ಧ್ಯಾನಂ ನಾರಾಯಣಃ ಪರಃ .
 ಯಜ್ಞ ಕಿಂಚಿಜ್ಜಗತ್ಸರ್ವಂ ದೃಶ್ಯತೇ ಶ್ರೋತ್ರತೇಽಪಿ ವಾ .
 ಅಂತರ್ಬಹಿಶ್ಚ ತತ್ಸರ್ವಂ ವ್ಯಾಪ್ಯ ನಾರಾಯಣಃ ಸ್ಥಿತಃ .

These verse are eminently suitable for meditating on the Lord who is described as being the cause of the universe. From Him only even the creator Brahma and other gods were born. HE is every thing. There is none greater than Him. He is the goal and He is the one who can confer the supreme goal of mokSha and other goals spoken of earlier. So, He is the one to be meditated upon. These verse are followed by ten verses by which one surrenders to the Lord and seeks His grace.

The final part says that this stotram is to be recited first, to be followed by the recital of Laxmi Hridayam and again the recital of this stotram. This is not to be recited separately as a single piece.

This is to stress the fact that Lord Narayana and Laxmi are indeed one

though spoken of as two different deities.

CONCLUSION. It will be evident from what is said here that both the NH and LH are valuable hymns and like veritable mines of precious gems.

An interested reader will be able to find more gems if he digs deep into them.

The greater benefit will be, that by reciting them regularly, one will develop devotion to Divine Couple, Lord Narayana and Goddess Laksmi, and reap their abundant grace.

Now follows the NARAYANA HRIDAYAM or NARAYANA HRIDAYA stotram.

.. ಓಂ ತತ್ಸತ್ ..

ನಾರಾಯಣಹೃದಯಂ

ಅಥ ಸ್ತೋತ್ರಂ .



ಹರಿಃ ಓಂ .

ಅಸ್ಯ ಶ್ರೀನಾರಾಯಣಹೃದಯಸ್ತೋತ್ರಮಹಾಮಂತ್ರಸ್ಯ ಭಾರ್ಗವ ಋಷಿಃ, (ಬ್ರಹ್ಮಾ ಋಷಿಃ)

ಅನುಷ್ಟುಪ್ಪಂದಃ, ಲಕ್ಷ್ಮೀನಾರಾಯಣೋ ದೇವತಾ, ನಾರಾಯಣಪ್ರೀತ್ಯರ್ಥೇ ಜಪೇ
ವಿನಿಯೋಗಃ ..

.. ಕರನ್ಯಾಸಃ ..

ನಾರಾಯಣಃ ಪರಂ ಜ್ಯೋತಿರಿತಿ ಅಂಗುಷ್ಠಾಭ್ಯಾಂ ನಮಃ,
ನಾರಾಯಣಃ ಪರಂ ಬ್ರಹ್ಮೇತಿ ತರ್ಜನೀಭ್ಯಾಂ ನಮಃ,
ನಾರಾಯಣಃ ಪರೋ ದೇವ ಇತಿ ಮಧ್ಯಮಾಭ್ಯಾಂ ನಮಃ,
ನಾರಾಯಣಃ ಪರಂ ಧಾಮೇತಿ ಅನಾಮಿಕಾಭ್ಯಾಂ ನಮಃ,
ನಾರಾಯಣಃ ಪರೋ ಧರ್ಮ ಇತಿ ಕನಿಷ್ಠಿಕಾಭ್ಯಾಂ ನಮಃ,
ವಿಶ್ವಂ ನಾರಾಯಣ ಇತಿ ಕರತಲಕರಪುಷ್ಪಾಭ್ಯಾಂ ನಮಃ ..

.. ಅಂಗನ್ಯಾಸಃ ..

ನಾರಾಯಣಃ ಪರಂ ಜ್ಯೋತಿರಿತಿ ಹೃದಯಾಯ ನಮಃ,
ನಾರಾಯಣಃ ಪರಂ ಬ್ರಹ್ಮೇತಿ ಶಿರಸೇ ಸ್ವಾಹಾ,
ನಾರಾಯಣಃ ಪರೋ ದೇವ ಇತಿ ಶಿಖಾಯೈ ವೌಷಟ್,
ನಾರಾಯಣಃ ಪರಂ ಧಾಮೇತಿ ಕವಚಾಯ ಹುಂ,
ನಾರಾಯಣಃ ಪರೋ ಧರ್ಮ ಇತಿ ನೇತ್ರಾಭ್ಯಾಂ ವೌಷಟ್,
ವಿಶ್ವಂ ನಾರಾಯಣ ಇತಿ ಅಸ್ತ್ರಾಯ ಫಟ್,
ಭೂರ್ಭುವಸ್ಸುವರೋಮಿತಿ ದಿಗ್ಬಂಧಃ ..

.. ಅಥ ಧ್ಯಾನಂ ..

ಉದ್ಯದಾದಿತ್ಯಸಂಕಾಶಂ ಪೀತವಾಸಂ ಚತುರ್ಭುಜಂ .

ಶಂಖಚಕ್ರಗದಾಪಾಣಿಂ ಧ್ಯಾಯೇಲ್ಲಕ್ಷ್ಮೀಪತಿಂ ಹರಿಂ .. 1..

ತೈಲೋಕ್ಯಾಧಾರಚಕ್ರಂ ತದುಪರಿ ಕಮಲಂ ತತ್ರ ಚಾನಂತಭೋಗೀ
ತನ್ಮಧ್ಯೇ ಭೂಮಿಪದ್ಮಾಂಕುಶಶಿಖರದಳಂ ಕರ್ಣಿಕಾಭೂತಮೇರುಂ .

ತತ್ರತ್ಯಂ ಶಾಂತಮೂರ್ತಿಂ ಮಣಿಮಯಮಕುಟಂ ಕುಂಡಲೋದ್ಭಾಸಿತಾಂಗಂ
ಲಕ್ಷ್ಮೀನಾರಾಯಣಾಖ್ಯಂ ಸರಸಿಜನಯನಂ ಸಂತತಂ ಚಿಂತಯಾಮಃ .. 2..
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This should be chanted with the complementary Laxmihridayam Sanskrit text.

Stotra encoded by Anuradha, Commentary by N.Balasubramanian

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