

बालबोध सङ्ग्रहः - १

BALABODHA SANGRAHA - 1

A Non-detailed Text book for Vedic Students

Compiled with blessings and under instructions and guidance of

Paramahansa Parivrajakacharya Jagadguru

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69th Peethadhipathi and

Paramahansa Parivrajakacharya Jagadguru

Sri Sri Sri Sankara Vijayendra Saraswathi Sri Sankaracharya

Swamiji 70th Peethadhipathi of

Moolamnaya Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham

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Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham

॥ श्रीमहागणपतये नमः ॥

॥ श्री गुरुभ्यो नमः ॥

INTRODUCTION

जगत्कामकलाकारं नाभिस्थानं भुवः परम् ।

पदपद्मस्य कामाक्ष्याः महापीठमुपास्महे ॥

सदाशिवसमारम्भां शंकराचार्यमध्यमाम् ।

अस्मदाचार्यपर्यन्तां वन्दे गुरुपरम्पराम् ॥

We worship the Mahapitha of Devi Kamakshi's lotus feet, the originator of 'Kamakala' in the world, the supreme navel-spot of the earth.

We worship the Guru tradition, starting from Sadasiva, having Sankaracharya in the middle and coming down upto our present Acharya.

This book is being published for use of students who join Veda Pathasala for the first year of Vedic studies and specially for those students who are between 7 and 12 years of age. This book is similar to the Non-detailed text books taught in school curriculum. We wish that Veda teachers should teach this book to their Veda students on Anadhyayana days (days on which Vedic teaching is prohibited) or according to their convenience and motivate the students.

If students gain basic knowledge of Vedas, the root of Sanatana Dharma, they will develop interest and keenness in learning Vedas. It will help them to adopt this knowledge in their lives and attain the fruit of human birth in due course. The Pathasala managements should also take the necessary steps in this regard and reap the fruit.

Published by

Jagadguru Sri Sankaracharya Swamigal

Moolamnaya Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham

Kanchipuram

गोविन्ददेशिकमुपास्य चिराय भक्त्या
तस्मिन्स्थिते निजमहिम्नि विदेहमुक्त्या ।
अद्वैतभाष्यमुपकल्प्य दिशो विजित्य
काञ्चीपुरे स्थितिमवाप स शङ्करार्यः ॥

Adoring Guru Sri Govinda Bhagavatpada for long, and after he attained Videhamukti through his own power, Sri Sankaracharya wrote commentaries to establish Advaita philosophy, won over opponents in all directions and finally rested in Kanchipuram, where his Avatara period concluded.
(From 'Patanjali Charitram' of Sri Ramabhadra Dikshitar)

अपारकरुणामूर्तिं ज्ञानदं शान्तरूपिणम् ।
श्रीचन्द्रशेखरगुरुं प्रणतोऽस्मि मुदान्वहम् ॥

I pay obeisance every day with great cheer to Sri Chandrasekhara Guru, who is the embodiment of unlimited compassion, the bestower of Gnana, the very form of peace.
(From 'Guru Stuti' of Jagadguru Sri Jayendra Saraswathi Swamiji)

Period of Sri Adi Sankara Bhagavatpadacharya
Kaliyuga 2593 – 2625 (B.C.509 – 477)

Contents
Prasadam 1

	Page
1. Sri Kanchi Matham- Swasti Vachanam- with English meaning	5
2. Vinayaka	7
3. Foundation texts of our Sanatana Dharma	11
4. Greatness of Veda	14
5. Sri Veda Vyasa	17
6. Forty Samskaras	19
7. Importance of birth as Brahmana	23
8. Greatness of Sandhyavandanam and Gayatri Mahamantra	26
9. Kannadiga's Canal	28
10. Sixty Tamil Years	30

Lesson 1

स्वस्तिवाचनम् - गुरुवन्दनम्

श्रीकाञ्चीकामकोटि पीठाधिपति
जगद्गुरु श्री शङ्कराचार्य श्रीचरणयोः प्रणामाः ।

श्री गुरुभ्यो नमः ।
श्री महात्रिपुरसुन्दरीसमेत श्री चन्द्रमौलीश्वराय नमः ।

स्वस्ति श्रीमद्-अखिल-भूमण्डलालङ्कार- त्रयस्त्रिंशत्कोटि-देवतासेवित- श्रीकामाक्षीदेवीसनाथ- श्रीमद्-
एकाम्रनाथ- श्रीमहादेवीसनाथ- श्रीहस्तिगिरिनाथ- साक्षात्कार- परमाधिष्ठान- सत्यव्रतनामाङ्कित-
काञ्चीदिव्यक्षेत्रे शारदामठ-सुस्थितानां अतुलित सुधारस-माधुर्य- कमलासन कामिनी- धम्मिल्ल संपुल्ल-
मल्लिका मालिका निष्यन्द मकरन्दझरी- सौवस्तिक- वाङ् निगुंफ विजृम्भणानन्द- तुन्दिलित मनीषि-
मण्डलानां अनवरताद्वैत- विद्या-विनोद-रसिकानां निरन्तरालङ्कृतीकृत शान्ति-दान्ति-भूम्नां सकल
भुवनचक्र प्रतिष्ठापक श्रीचक्रप्रतिष्ठा विख्यात यशोऽलङ्कृतानां निखिल पाषण्ड षण्ड कण्टकोद्धटनेन
विशदीकृत वेद वेदान्तमार्ग षण्मत प्रतिष्ठापकाचार्याणां श्रीमत्-परमहंस-परिव्राजकाचार्यवर्य श्रीजगद्गुरु
श्रीमत्-शङ्कर भगवत्-पादाचार्याणां अधिष्ठाने सिंहासनाभिषिक्त श्रीमत्-चन्द्रशेखरेन्द्रसरस्वती
संयमीन्द्राणां अन्तेवासिवर्य श्रीमत्-जयेन्द्रसरस्वती श्रीपादानां तदन्तेवासिवर्य श्रीमत्-
शङ्करविजयेन्द्रसरस्वती श्रीपादानांच चरणनलिनयोः सप्रश्रयं साञ्जलिबद्धं च नमस्कुर्मः ।

Swasti Vachanam – Guru Vandanam

Obeisance at the holy feet of Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peethadhipati

Jagadguru Sri Sankaracharya

Obeisance to Gurus

Obeisance to Sri Chandramouliswara and Sri Maha Tripurasundari

The divine town of Kanchipuram is an ornament to all the auspicious worlds; it is adored by the thirtythree crores of Devatas; the visible abode of Sri Kamakshi Devi and Sri Ekamranatha, also of Sri Mahadevi and Sri Hastigirinatha; and named as Satyavrata. Here in Sarada Matham are seated Srimad Paramahansa Parivrajakacharyavarya Sri Jagadguru Srimad Sankara Bhagavatpadacharya, who is surrounded by wise persons immersed in the bliss of garlands of words like streams of nectar, of unparalleled sweetness, dripping from garland of blooming jasmine at the crown of Devi seated in Kamalāsana; who is ever in the bliss of the realisation of Advaita; who is ever high, with the ornaments of the virtues of self-control of body and mind; who is decorated with the fame from installation of Srichakra, which bestows stability to all the chakras of worlds; who established Shanmatha (six philosophies of six Devatas for worship) on the path laid down by Veda and Vedanta, thus clearing the path free of the thorns of non-believers of Vedas; coronated in his throne are Jagadguru Srimad Chandrasekharendra Saraswathi Sripada; his disciple Srimad Jayendra Saraswathi Sripada; his successive disciple Srimad Sankara Vijayendra Saraswathi Sripada. At the lotus feet of these Gurus we prostrate with all humility, with folded hands.

Lesson 2

Vinayaka (Pillaiyar in Tamil)

A unique feature in Tamil Nadu is the presence of Vinayaka temples everywhere. At the foot of peepul trees, on many streets, on river banks and nowadays at the entrances of residential tower buildings – Vinayaka occupies a unique place and blesses all. We call him ‘Pillaiyar’ with love. (Pillai in Tamil means son; Pillaiyar is respected son; here it means respected son of Siva and Parvathi).

Vinayaka is the elder son of the universal parents, Parvathi and Parameswara. We never feel satiated on seeing certain objects – moon, sea, elephant etc. Irrespective of the number of times we keep seeing them or the time spent in seeing them every time, we feel continuous insatiate happiness. We therefore pray to him by tapping our forehead with the fist and with ‘Thoppukkaranam’. Whatever we undertake to do, our effort will bear fruit without obstacles, only if we pray to Vinayaka and obtain his blessing.

‘Dorbhik karanam’ is holding the two ears with the opposite hands and bending down such that the knee touches the ground. ‘Dorbhik karanam’ in Samskrit means holding ears with hands; this term got corrupted to ‘Thoppukkaranam’ (in Tamil) over time. This ‘Thoppukkaranam’ was originally taught to us by Sri Mahavishnu. Once Vinayaka snatched the Chakra of Mahavishnu from his hands in jest and put it in his mouth. As Vinayaka is very strong, it is not possible to force the Chakra out of him, nor is it possible to frighten him into submission. So Mahavishnu thought that by making him laugh loudly, the Chakra would drop down from his mouth and that he could then take it. He caught hold of his own ears with his four hands and danced. Vinayaka laughed uncontrollably; the Chakra fell down from his mouth and was picked up by Vishnu. ‘Dorbhik karanam’ became a practice since then; Vinayaka has been blessing everyone.

A common sloka used while tapping one’s head for praying to Vinayaka is as under:

शुक्लाम्बरधरं विष्णुं शशिवर्णं चतुर्भुजम् ।

प्रसन्न-वदनं ध्यायेत् सर्वविघ्नोप-शान्तये ॥

“I meditate on Vinayaka, who is attired in white, all-pervasive, of the colour of moon, with four hands and happy face, for removal of all obstacles.” By tapping at the forehead at certain nerve locations, our memory power increases as per Yoga Sastra.

Shall we now look at the sixteen names of Vinayaka?

सुमुखश्च-एकदन्तश्च कपिलो गजकर्णकः ।
लम्बोदरश्च विकटो विघ्नराजो विनायकः ॥

धूमकेतुर्-गणाध्यक्षः फालचन्द्रो गजाननः ।
वक्रतुण्डः शूर्पकर्णो हेरम्बः स्कन्द-पूर्वजः ॥

षोडशैतानि नामानि यः पठेत् शृणुयादपि ।
विद्यारम्भे विवाहे च प्रवेशे निर्गमे तथा ॥
सङ्ग्रामे सर्वकार्येषु विघ्नस्-तस्य न जायते ॥

“The sixteen names are: 1.Sumukha (pleasant faced) 2.Ekadanta (with one tusk) 3.Kapila (of tawny colour) 4.Gajakarnaka (with ears of elephant) 5.Lambodara (with large belly) 6.Vikata (of strange short appearance) 7.Vighnaraja (lord of obstacles) 8.Vinayaka (one who has no overlord) 9.Dhumaketu (shining like Agni) 10.Ganadhyaksha (lord of Bhutaganas) 11.Phaalachandra (with Chandra in forehead) 12.Gajanana (with face of elephant) 13.Vakratunda (with curved trunk) 14.Surpakarna (with ears like winnow baskets) 15.Heramba (one who blesses devotees) 16.Skandapurvaja (elder brother of Skanda). One, who reads or listens to these sixteen names at the time of commencement of studies, marriage, while starting from a place or entering a place, during war and in every activity, shall not face any obstacles.” One should practise chanting these names from childhood. The offerings most liked by Vinayaka include Appam (‘Gudaapupam’), Aval (‘Prithukam’), Modaka, Durva, sugarcane, smashed coconut etc.

Parameswara, Mahavishnu, Brahma, Veda Vyasa, Skanda (Muruga), Krishna and many others worshipped Vinayaka and attained benefits. In fact it is clear from Puranas that all Devatas attained success in their endeavours only by worshipping Vinayaka. When Parameswara started on his mission of Tripura Samharam, he forgot to worship Vinayaka, being in a hurry. On the way, when the chariot was on the move, Vinayaka caused the chariot axle to break. The chariot came to a stop. Parameswara, who realised what had happened, performed Pooja of Vinayaka immediately. Vinayaka also removed the obstacles. The chariot then moved ahead; Parameswara won a big victory by annihilating Tripurasuras and came to be known as Tripurantaka. There is a place called Achiruppakkam between Chingleput and Tindivanam (in Tamil Nadu). This is the place where the axle gave way.

A few years ago large stone images of Sankara Bhagavatpada and his four disciples were being taken in a lorry for installing in the Sankara Mandapam in Rameswaram in Agni Tirtham. The lorry broke down at this very place, Achiruppakkam. Then ten smashed coconuts were offered to Vinayaka; the lorry was repaired and it reached Rameswaram. The way the images of Sankara, the incarnation of Parameswara, came to a stop at that very place is only a lila (sport) of Tripurantaka. Kumbhabhishekam for Sankara and disciples in Srimatham in Rameswaram was performed in 1963 in a grand manner in the benign presence of Sri Maha Periyaval and Sri Periyaval on Sri Sankara Jayanthi day.

Vinayaka, the child God

The 68th Peethadhipathi of our Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham was Paramahansa Parivrajakacharya Pujyasri Chandrasekharendra Saraswathi Sri Sankaracharya Swamiji, hailed as the Great Muni of Kanchi, Walking God and Maha Periyaval (Great One). He is a great Gnani, Jivanmukta, who lived a life of austerity for a hundred years and blessed the entire world. Even to this day many thousands pray at his Adhishthanam and attain benefits. Let us now see what he said about Vinayaka in his own words.

“The practice of smashing coconut into small pieces is generally prevalent among the Tamils. The coconut pieces that are scattered while smashing actually belong to children. I came to know this through a child. In 1941 I observed Chaturmasya Vratam in Nagappattinam (Tamil Nadu). Many coconuts used to be smashed there. A large number of children used to gather such that it would even become difficult to carry out the smashing process. People who were with me were worried that in this commotion the children might fall on me. So they chided them to keep away. At that time a boy said majestically: ‘After smashing a coconut what right do you have to ask us not to gather here? The broken coconuts do belong to us. We shall certainly be coming here for that.’ I realised that what he said was perfectly correct; in the Prasadam of the child God, children alone have the full right.”

It is only with Vighneswara’s blessing that any activity in this world will happen without obstacle. He is the beautiful child God who removes obstacles and bestows full success. Let us pray to him, do Pooja and live a good life without obstacles!

Questions

1. Write down the sixteen names of Vinayaka.
2. Write the sloka chanted while tapping the forehead.
3. 'Thoppukkaranam'- write the reason and the story behind the name.
4. Whom should we worship first?
5. Where is Achiruppakkam?
6. Who is the Child God? Who told us about the Child God?
7. In which year was the image of Sri Sankara Bhagavatpada installed in Srimatham in Rameswaram?

Lesson 3

Foundation texts of our Sanatana Dharma

Dharma is what we practise for living comfortably in this world. If we practise Dharma without desire or hatred, in the way our ancestors have taught us, with the desire of getting Bhagavan's satisfaction and blessing, then that itself will pave the way for Moksham, Liberation. That is called religion. Religion and Dharma are the same, so say the Sastras. The ways in which life will attain completeness constitute Dharma.

The texts which tell us about the matters basic to Dharma are known as 'Dharma Pramanas' (Authorities for Dharma). There are fourteen such texts which are the basic Sastras expounding Dharma obtaining eternally from Vedic times. The texts written by ancient Rishis based on the import of Vedas, hailed as the life-breath of Bhagavan, are called 'Smritis'. The most important Smriti, which we have been following traditionally from ancient times, is Manusmriti. Therein authoritative sources of knowledge have been defined as fourteen – Vedangas (6), Vedas (4), Mimamsa, Nyaya, Puranas and Dharmasatras.

अङ्गानि वेदाश्-चत्वारो मीमांसा न्याय विस्तरः ।

पुराणं धर्मशास्त्रं च विद्याह-येताश्-चतुर्दश ॥

Yagnavalkya has also mentioned the same in his Smriti also.

पुराण न्याय मीमांसा धर्मशास्त्र अङ्गमिश्रिताः ।

वेदाः स्थानानि विद्यानां धर्मस्य च चतुर्दश ॥

It is clear that all the knowledge in the world is contained in these fourteen sources. They are books of knowledge as well as of Dharma; they are known as 'Vidya Sthanas' or abodes of knowledge. Shall we now have a look at these fourteen sources of knowledge?

Four Vedas

1. Rig Veda
2. Yajur Veda (Two categories- Krishna Yajur Veda, Sukla Yajur Veda)
3. Sama Veda
4. Atharva Veda

These four Vedas are the basis on which all dharmas are founded. It is traditional practice to worship Vedas as Veda Matha and Veda Purusha.

Shadangas

There are six parts of the Veda Purusha, known as Shadangas (six parts). They are:

5. Siksha – Nose of Veda
6. Vyakarana – Mouth of Veda
7. Chandas – Foot of Veda
8. Nirukta – Ear of Veda
9. Jyotisha – Eye of Veda
10. Kalpa – Hand of Veda

Saivite Nayanmars have sung of Parameswara as ‘one who has become Veda with its six parts’.

There are four more Vidya Sthanas:

11. Mimamsa
12. Nyaya
13. Purana
14. Dharma Sastra

The above fourteen are reckoned to be Vidya Sthanas.

It is also in practice to include Ayur Veda, Gandharva Veda, Dhanur Veda and Artha Sastra and thus consider 18 Vidya Sthanas.

In Vishnu Purana of Maharshi Parasara, Vidya Sthanas are said to be 18.

अङ्गानि वेदाः चत्वारो मीमांसा न्यायविस्तरः ।

पुराणं धर्मशास्त्रं च विद्याह-येताश्-चतुर्दश ॥

आयुर्वेदो धनुर्वेदो गान्धर्वश्चैव ते त्रयः ।

अर्थशास्त्रं चतुर्थं तु विद्या ह्यष्टादशैव ताः ॥

All these together are known also as Sastra. ‘Sastra’ means that which has been instructed. All Vidya Sthanas are centred on the four Vedas alone. The root of all dharmas is Veda alone, as stated in Gautama Dharma Sutra:

वेदोऽखिलो धर्ममूलम्

Srimad Ramayana also states:

वेदाः ये नः परं धनम्- ‘Vedas are our supreme wealth’. Veda’s greatness has been hailed in many texts.

Let us look at more of Veda’s greatness in the next lesson.

Questions

1. Write down the names of the 14 Vidya sthanas.
2. Which is said to be Veda's eye?
3. Which is said to be Veda's foot?
4. Which are the four Vidya Sthanas other than the fourteen?
5. Write down the sloka from Manu Smriti.
6. Write down the sloka from Yagnavalkya smriti.
7. Which books are called Sastra?
8. Write the sloka from Vishnu Purana.
9. By whom was Vishnu Purana written?

Lesson 4

Greatness of Veda

Veda is said to be 'Apourusheyam' – not man-made. Veda is Anadi- beginningless; beyond Time. Rishis perceived Veda mantras through the power of their Tapas. If Veda mantras had been written by Rishis, the Rishis would have been known as 'Mantra Kartas'. But they are called 'Mantra Drashtas'- those who perceived, saw Mantras. Rishis saw through their Tapas and Bhagavan's grace, the great mantras which are all-pervasive and constantly making vibratory sound in the atmosphere. It is said:

श्रुतिं पश्यन्ति मुनयः – Munis see Sruti- Veda mantras.

When it is said that Columbus discovered America, it means that he did not create America, but he made a pre-existing mass of land called America known to the world. Similarly Rishis discovered mantras, which are there everywhere at all times and made them known to disciples out of compassion for the good of the world.

The sound of Veda mantra produces healthy nerve vibrations in the person who chants them. It also generates wholesome changes in the persons who listen and in the general environment. It gives complete peace of mind to humans and improves general well being in the world. No other religion has the kind of prayer for the welfare of all creation like our Veda, which is eternal and beginningless. Veda prays for the welfare of Dvipad (two legged creatures), Chatuspad (four legged creatures), and even grass, plants, trees, mountains, rivers etc. The very sound of Veda causes the well being of the entire creation, not to speak of the meaning of Veda.

We have life here and life hereafter. Our Vedas are the valuable treasure of lofty teachings covering subjects like the actions to be done by every jiva from the time of birth till his last breath such that he can avert rebirth and realise the Atma. The Vedas also have laid down rules of conduct for every man and every woman, on how the king should conduct his rule, how the general public should act etc. Veda is the highest of all the rule books in the world.

Puranas declare that Garuda is of the form of Veda and Bhagavan is seated on Garuda. The 63 Nayanmars and 12 Alvars have sung the praise of Veda in their Devara and Divya Prabandha

poems. In Devaram songs, they say: 'Parameswara, who chants Sama Veda'. Always similarly sing: 'Chakrapani, who sings Sama Veda' etc.

Gautama Dharma Sutra says:

वेदोऽखिलो धर्ममूलम् – Veda is the root of all Dharma.

Apasthamba Dharma Sutra says: धर्मज्ञसमयः प्रमाणं वेदाः – The authority for Dharma is Veda.

Manusmriti says: धर्मं जिज्ञासमानानां प्रमाणं परमं श्रुतिः – Sruti (Veda) is the highest authority for those who are interested to know Dharma.

Sri Sankara Bhagavatpada says in Gita Bhashyam: शास्त्रं अन्त्यं प्रमाणम्- गी.भा. (२.१८) – Sastra is the final authority.

Bhagavan Krishna says in Bhagavad Gita: तस्मात् शास्त्रं प्रमाणं ते (गी. १६.२४) – Therefore Sastra is authority for you. We have already noted that 'Sastram' refers to Veda primarily.

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad states that Veda is the life-breath of Bhagavan:

अस्य महतो भूतस्य निश्चसितं एतत् यत्
ऋग्वेदो यजुर्वेदः सामवेदोऽथर्वाङ्गिरस
इतिहासः पुराणं विद्या उपनिषदः श्लोकाः...

Sri Vidyaranya swamigal, who wrote commentary for all the four Vedas says while praising his Guru as Iswara: यस्य निश्चसितं वेदाः – one whose life-breath is Veda.

It is not correct to think that Rishis have discovered all of the Vedas. Veda itself states: अनन्ता वै वेदाः - Vedas are endless. Even then, the Veda branches (Sakhas) that we now have and which have been saved in the last 100-200 years are indeed very few. It is stated in Muktikopanishad that there were 21 Sakhas of Rig Veda, 109 Sakhas of Yajur Veda, 1000 Sakhas of Sama Veda and 50 Sakhas of Atharva Veda; thus there were 1180 Sakhas of Vedas in all, and every Sakha had one Upanishad. Muktikopanishad was taught by Sri Rama to Sri Anjaneya. But now we have only 1 Sakha of Rig Veda, 4 Sakhas of Yajur Veda (Krishna-2, Sukla-2), 3 Sakhas of Sama Veda and 2 Sakhas of Atharva Veda; thus there are only 10 Vedic Sakhas and 108 Upanishads today. In every Veda there are four parts – Samhita, Brahmanam, Aranyaka and Upanishad.

Brahmanams give the meanings of words in Samhita mantras, appropriate to various Vedic Karmas and also stipulate the Karmas to be performed. If Vedic Karmas are performed in a spirit of dedication to Easwara, mind will get purified. Aranyakas explain the principles of the Karmas in Brahmanams and the inner meaning of the mantras in Samhita. Upanishads occur at the close of

these Aranyakas. If Samhita were to be considered a tree, Brahmanam is the flower; Aranyaka is the unripe fruit and Upanishad is the final ripe fruit. Upanishads teach the principle of the unity of Jivatma and Paramatma in the path of Gnana. Jagadguru Sri Sankara Bhagavatpadacharya has written commentaries on ten Upanishads, listed in this sloka.

ईश केन कठ प्रश्न मुण्ड माण्डूक्य तित्तिरिः ।

ऐतरेयं च छान्दोग्यं बृहदारण्यकं दश ॥

The ten Upanishads are: Easavasya, Kena, Katha, Prasna, Munda, Mandukya, Taittiriya, Aitareya, Chandogya and Brihadaranyaka Upanishads.

Brahma Sutras of Sri Veda Vyasacharya, the ten Upanishads and Srimad Bhagavad Gita taught by Bhagavan Krishna to Arjuna – these three are known as Prasthan Traya (the three systems or means of reaching the end, viz. Liberation).

Questions

1. How was Veda obtained by us?
2. What are the subjects covered in the Vedas?
3. State the Devara song referring to the greatness of Veda.
4. Which is the life-breath of Bhagavan? Where is it stated?
5. How many Sakhas were there in Vedas? Categorise them.
6. Write down the names of the ten Upanishads.
7. Which are the parts of Veda?

Lesson 5

Sri Veda Vyasa

In ancient times humans had good Yogic power and strong intellect. Hence they were able to learn many Veda Sakhas (branches). Many rare and deep flashes of knowledge occurred to Maharishis spontaneously. In latter days, the divine powers of humans started to diminish. In the beginning of Kaliyuga, about 5116 years ago, the powers of memory and intellect, longevity, health etc. gradually started to shrink. The Tamil poet Nachchinarkkiniyar refers to 'humans of short life, many diseases and small intellect'. Srimad Bhagavatham also says:

प्रायेण अल्पायुषः सभ्य कलावस्मिन् युगे जनाः ।

मन्दाः सुमन्दमतयः मन्दभाग्या ह्युपद्रुताः ॥

दुर्भगांश्च जनान् वीक्ष्य मुनिर्दिव्येन चक्षुषा ।

सर्ववर्णाश्रमाणां यद्ध्यौ हितममोघदृक् ॥

“In this Kali yuga, people will generally be of short life, slow in learning and retention, of poor luck and subject to distress.” (1.1.10)

“Muni (Veda Vyasa) saw with his divine eyes the poor luck of people. The infallible visionary that he was, he pondered over what was in the interest of people of all Varnas (divisions) and Asramas (stations in life)”. (1.4.18).

Bhagavan, out of his infinite grace, got Vedas divided and organised into four groups at the hands of his Amsavathara, Krishna Dvaipayana, also known as Badarayana and Veda Vyasa. As the Maharishi named Krishna was born in an island (Dvipa), he came to be called Krishna Dvaipayana. As he performed penance in Badarikasrama at the foot of a Badari tree, he was known as Badaryana. As he divided Vedas into four groups, he was called Veda Vyasa. Vyasa means one who divides. Though he was born towards the end of Dvapara yuga, he had the capacity to absorb all Vedas, as he was Amsavathara of Bhagavan. He preserved Vedas by dividing them into four groups and many sub-groups called Sakhas (branches). He taught Rigveda Sakhas to his disciple Paila, Yajurveda to Vaisampayana, Sama Veda to Jaimini and Atharva Veda to Sumantu, and made the disciples propagate the same through many of their own disciples. He taught Itihasas and Puranas to Romaharshana. This is stated in Srimad Bhagavatham:

चातुर्होत्रं कर्मशुद्धं प्रजानां वीक्ष्य वैदिकम् ।
व्यदधाद्यज्ञसन्तत्यै वेदमेकं चतुर्विधम् ॥
ऋग्यजुः सामाथर्वाख्या वेदाश्चत्वार उद्धृताः ।
इतिहासपुराणं च पञ्चमो वेद उच्यते ।
तत्रर्वेदधरः पैलः सामगो जैमिनिः कविः ।
वैशम्पायन ऐवैको निष्णातो यजुषामुत ॥
अथर्वाङ्गिरसामासीत्सुमन्तुर्दारुणो मुनिः ।
इतिहासपुराणानां पिता मे रोमहर्षणः ॥

After completing study of their own Sakha (Svasakha), many learnt two or three other Sakhas by virtue of their accumulated religious merit. There are such families in north India, whose surnames like Dvivedi, Trivedi, Chaturvedi etc. proclaim this fact. Surnames 'Dave' and 'Dubey' are corrupted forms of Dvivedi only.

Sakhas extant now

1. Rigveda: Saakala Sakha. As Aitareya Upanishad occurs in this, it is also called Aitareya Sakha.
2. In Krishna Yajurveda, it is Taittiriya Sakha which is being studied generally. Maitrayaniya Sakha is available in some pockets in the north.
3. In Sukla Yajurveda, two prominent Sakhas are Kaanva Sakha and Maadhyandina Sakha.
4. In Sama Veda, three Sakhas are available: Raanaayaniya, Jaiminiya and Koutuma Sakhas.
5. In Atharva Veda, Sounaka and Pippalada Sakhas are available.

Brahmanams

1. Rigveda: Aitareya Brahmanam, Saankhyayana Brahmanam (or Koushitaki Brahmanam).
2. Sukla Yajurveda: Satapatha Brahmanam.
3. Krishna Yajurveda: Taitriya Brahmanam.
4. Atharva Veda: Gopatha Brahmanam.
5. Sama Veda: Eight Brahmanams are available – Taandya, Shadvimsa, Vamsa, Samhitopanishad, Devatadhyaya, Aarsheya, Samavidhana and Chandogya Brahmanams.

Lesson 6

Forty Samskaras

People in this world face a combination of happiness and misery. In order to make the present life fruitful and to avert future rebirth, one must get rid of the impurities in mind. Vedas bestow on us the knowledge of Bhagavan and our true state. If we follow the path shown in Vedas, we can attain the lofty state of no rebirth. Maharishis have prescribed forty Samskaras (purificatory rituals) by way of initial steps in that direction. Our ancestors have also walked this path.

Just as the image in the mirror becomes clear once we clean the mirror and remove the impurities, the impurities of attachment, hate, desires, anger etc. in our mind will be removed gradually if we perform the forty Samskaras laid down in Vedas in a spirit of dedication to the Lord and also practise the prescribed eight Atma Gunas (qualities of soul). Our mind will become clean like crystal and the principle of Bhagavan will be perceived clearly.

Veda is called Sruti; it should be learnt only from a Guru. One, who learns Sruti from a Guru and masters it, is called a Srotriya. There are forty Samskaras specified in the Sutras of brahmanas. Out of these, 14 are Smartha karmas and the balance 26 are Sroutha Karmas.

I Smartha Karmas चतुर्दश स्मार्त कर्माः- 14

1. गर्भाधानम् Garbhadhanam
2. पुंसवनम् Pumsavanam
3. सीमन्तोन्नयनम् Seemantonnayanam
4. जातकर्मा Jatakarma
5. नामकरणम् Namakaranam
6. अन्नप्राशनम् Annaprasanam
7. चौलम् Choulam
8. उपनयनम् Upanayanam

II चत्वारि वेद व्रतानि Four Veda Vratas

9. Prajapatyam प्राजापत्यम्
10. Soumyam सौम्यम्
11. Aagneyam आग्नेयम्
12. Vaisvadevam वैश्वदेवम्
13. Vratasamavartanam (Snanam) व्रतसमावर्तनम् (स्नानम्)
14. Vivaham विवाहः

III षड्विंशत् श्रौत कर्माः Sroutha Karmas – 26

Five Veda Yagnas पञ्च वेद यज्ञाः

1. Deva yagna देव यज्ञः
2. Rishi yagna ऋषि यज्ञः
3. Pitru yagna पितृ यज्ञः
4. Bhuta yagna भूत यज्ञः
5. Manushya yagna मनुष्य यज्ञः

सप्त पाक यज्ञ संस्थाः Seven Paka yagnas

1. अष्टका Ashtaka
2. स्थालीपाकः पार्वणः Sthalipakam Parvanam
3. श्राद्धम् Sraadhham
4. श्रावणी Sraavani
5. आग्रहायणी Aagrahayani
6. चैत्री Chaitri
7. आश्वयुजी Aasvayuji

सप्त हविर्यज्ञसंस्थाः Seven Havir yagnas

1. अग्नयाधेयम् Agnayadheyam
2. अग्निहोत्रम् Agnihotram
3. दर्शपूर्णमासम् Darsapurnamasam
4. आग्रयणम् Aagrayanam

5. चातुर्मास्यम् Chaturmasyam
6. निरूढपशुबन्धः Nirudhapasubandha
7. सौत्रामणी Soutramani

सप्त सोमयज्ञसंस्थाः Seven Soma yagna Samsthas

1. अग्निष्टोमः Agnishtoma
2. अत्यग्निष्टोमः Atyagnishtoma
3. उक्थ्यः Ukthyam
4. षोडशी Shodasi
5. वाजपेयः Vajapeya
6. अतिरात्रः Atiratram
7. आप्तोर्यामः Aptoryamam

It is stated in Goutama Dharma Sutram:

यस्यैते चत्वारिंशत् संस्काराः अष्टौ आत्मगुणाः स ब्राह्मणः सायुज्यं सालोक्यतां जयति - "The brahmana, who performs these forty Samskaras and possesses the eight Atma Gunas, attains Sayujyam, integral unity with the Lord.

Eight Atma Gunas अष्टौ आत्मगुणाः

- 1.Compassion 2.Patience 3.Absence of jealousy 4.Cleanliness 5.Not torturing oneself
- 6.Auspicious conduct 7.Absence of miserliness 8.Non-attachment.

We should practise these eight Atma Gunas and also perform the specified forty Samskaras.

Questions

1. Who divided Vedas into four groups? How did he get that name?
2. What are his other names?
3. What is the state of people in Kaliyuga?
4. Write the sloka from Srimad Bhagavatham in support.
5. Who are the four disciples of Veda Vyasa?
6. Which of the Vedas was handed to each disciple by him?

7. Write the slokas from Srimad Bhagavatham in support.
8. Write the names of Veda Sakhas extant now.
9. Write the names of the forty Samskaras.
10. What is the benefit of the forty Samskaras?
11. Which are the eight Atma Gunas?

Lesson 7

Importance of birth as Brahmana

Out of his motiveless and intense compassion Jagadguru Sri Adi Sankara Bhagavatpadacharya has written commentaries for the 'Prasthan Traya' texts, and also hundreds of 'Prakarana granthas' (explanatory manuals) with a view to saving us all from the ocean of samsara (cycle of births and deaths). He writes in the wonderful book 'Viveka Chudamani':

जन्तूनां नरजन्म दुर्लभमतः पुंस्त्वं ततो विप्रता, तस्माद्वैदिकधर्ममार्गपरता विद्वत्त्वमस्मात्परम् ।

आत्मानात्मविवेचनं स्वनुभवो ब्रह्मात्मना संस्थितिः, मुक्तिर्नो शतकोटिजन्मसु कृतैः पुण्यैर्विना लभ्यते॥

"Birth as a human being is difficult of attainment; birth as a male more difficult; birth as a brahmana even more so. Hence following the path of dharma (of Pravritti, Nivritti – engaging in Karmas; withdrawing from Karmas) delineated by Veda is necessary. To master the path is meritorious. Then one should constantly analyse and distinguish between Atma and Anatma, and practise abidance in the state of Brahman. Constant abidance in this state is Mukti, Liberation; that is attained not without the merit accumulated over hundreds of crores of births. It is therefore the duty of a human being to strive for Atma Gnana and attainment of Mukti. Sri Sankara adds:

दुर्लभं त्रयमेवैतत् देवानुग्रहहेतुकम् । मनुष्यत्वं मुमुक्षुत्वं महापुरुषसंश्रयः ॥

"Three attainments are difficult and are reached only through the grace of Bhagavan: being a human being, unquenchable desire for Moksha and the refuge under a saint."

लब्ध्वा कथञ्चित् नरजन्म दुर्लभं तत्रापि पुंस्त्वं श्रुतिपारदर्शनम् ।

य स्वात्ममुक्त्यै न यतेत मूढधीः स आत्महा स्वं विनिहन्त्यसद्गहात् ॥

"Having somehow obtained the rare birth as a human being, that too as a male and mastered the Srutis, one, who is of deluded intellect and does not strive for his own Liberation, kills his own self by claspings the insubstantial things."

इतः को न्वस्ति मूढात्मा यस्तु स्वार्थप्रमाद्यति । दुर्लभं मानुषं देहं प्राप्य तत्रापि पौरुषम् ॥

"Having somehow obtained the rare birth as a human being, that too as a male, if one neglects attaining the desirable end, who is more foolish than him?"

वेदो नित्यमधीयतां तदुदितं कर्म स्वनुष्ठीयताम् - Sri Sankara asks those who have obtained birth as brahmana to study Veda daily and perform Karmas laid down therein with the spirit of dedication to the Lord. That will fetch great benefits and lead to good state in next birth. It has been said:

दशभिर्जन्मभिर्वेदो वेदार्थश्शतजन्मभिः । सहस्रजन्मभिस्सोमः सन्यासः कोटिजन्मभिः ॥

“One, who has taken birth as brahmana ten times, studies Veda; in hundred births, he learns the meaning of Veda; in thousand births, he performs Somayaga; in a crore of births, he attains Sanyasa.” Sri Thayumanava Swamigal has also sung: ‘Rare indeed is human birth.’

Hence children, who learn Veda, should study these lessons and put in best efforts to grasp Veda and its importance and adopt Vedic way of life. Veda teachers should also show the best path to the students. Vedas have come down to us from ancient times through the tradition of Guru and disciple. Vedas are hence called ‘Sruti’. That Veda or its meaning should not be studied from the book by oneself is a strict rule. Disciples must learn Vedas from a Guru only.

नाध्यापयिष्यन् निगमान् श्रमेणोपाध्यायलोका यदि शिष्यवर्गान् ।

निर्वेदवादं किल निर्वितानमुर्वीतलं हन्त तदा भविष्यत् ॥

“In case teachers do not take the trouble of teaching Vedas to disciples, the earth will become empty with no Vedas.” Bhagavan ensures protection of Vedas through brahmanas. Hence he says: ब्राह्मणो मम देवता - “Brahmanas are my gods.”

लौकिकं वैदिकं वापि तथाध्यात्मिकमेव च । आददीत यतो ज्ञानं तं पूर्वमभिवादयेत् ॥

अभिवादनशीलस्य नित्यं वृद्धोपसेविनः । चत्वारि तस्य वर्धन्ते आयुर्विद्या यशो बलम् ॥

“The Guru who imparts material, Vedic or spiritual knowledge, should be accorded the first obeisance.” Study of Vedas is the beginning for being initiated into Brahavidya.

“For one, who regularly worships and serves the elders, four attainments grow – long life, knowledge, fame and strength. The Veda teacher of today had once served his Guru and studied Vedas under his feet. Thus has Vedic knowledge come down to us through generations.

गुरु शिष्योभयाधीनो विद्याप्रचारः ।

अद्य शिष्यभूतः श्वो गुरुर्भवेत् ।

गुरुशिष्यपरम्परयैव विद्याप्रचारस्य शाश्वतिकत्वम् ॥

“Propagation of knowledge is subject to Guru and disciple. The disciple of today will become the Guru of tomorrow. The Guru-disciple tradition alone is the cause of the sustenance of propagation of knowledge.” Sruti, Smriti and Puranas extol the greatness of Guru.

समित्पाणिः श्रोत्रियं ब्रह्मनिष्ठम्, आचार्याद्वैव विद्या साधिष्ठं प्रापत् ।

गुरोरनुग्रहादेव पुमान् पूर्णः प्रशान्तये ॥

“The disciple should approach the Srotريا Guru with sacrificial faggots in hand. It is only from Acharya that knowledge is best obtained. It is only with Guru’s blessing that the disciple attains fullness and peace.” Our Guru Parampara is adored through these verses:

नारायणं पद्मभुवं वसिष्ठं शक्तिं च तत्पुत्र पराशरं च ।
व्यासं शुकं गौडपदं महान्तं गोविन्द योगीन्द्रं-अथास्य शिष्यम् ॥
श्रीशङ्कराचार्यं-अथास्य पद्मपादं च हस्तामलकं च शिष्यम् ।
तं तोटकं वार्तिककारं-अन्यान् अस्मद्-गुरून् सन्ततं-आनतोस्मि ॥

All teachers and students of Veda should prostrate, chanting the above slokas and other Guru stotras. Guru bhakti alone is the highest bhakti. Hence children should show devotion first to their Veda teacher. With his blessing they will get opportunity to study many Sastras and Veda bhashyas (commentaries) from great Gurus and reap many benefits including the highest goal of life.

Questions

1. Who has said that birth as brahmana is high? Which book has this statement?
2. Write slokas extolling the birth as brahmana.
3. Write the meaning in Tamil of any one sloka.
4. What attainments are reaped by one who worships elders?
5. Write the Dhyana sloka for Guru Parampara.

Lesson 8

Greatness of Sandhyavandanam and Gayatri Mahamantra

गायन्तं त्रायते यस्मात् गायत्री इत्यभिधीयते ।

“Gayatri mantra is so called because it protects the one who chants it.” Singing normally meant by the term ‘Gaanam’ is not intended here; ‘Gaanam’ here actually refers to chanting with love and devotion.

गायत्री छन्दसां माता Gayatri is the mother of all ‘Chandas’, meaning all Vedic mantras. There are three ‘paadams’ (parts), each of 8 letters in the Gayatri mantra, thus making it a total of 24 letters. The three paadams are the essence of the three Vedas respectively – Rig, Yajur and Sama. For Atharva Veda there is separate Gayatri; one has to be initiated into that mantra through a second Upanayanam.

Idaikkaattu Siddhar, one of the 18 Siddhars has said in Tamil:

“Kaanaamal konaamal kandu kodu
Aadu kaan pogudu paar pogudu”

Similarly it is said: सज्योतिष्या ज्योतिषो दर्शनात् वाग्यतः

The intent is that Argya during Sandhyavandanam should be offered at dawn before Sunrise, at noon when Sun is right on top and at dusk before Sunset. In Siddhar’s verse, ‘Aadu’ refers to bath in the holy Ganga; ‘Kaan’ represents darshan of Sethu; ‘Pogudu Paar’ indicates destruction of sins by the three acts – Sandhyavandanam thrice a day, bath in Ganga and darshan of Sethu.

It is only by chanting Gayatri mantra properly that one can attain fruit of other Veda mantras. Offering of Argya and chanting Gayatri should be performed properly. Gayatri should be worshipped as the form of mother. Manusmriti teaches:

ऋषयो दीर्घ सन्ध्यत्वात् दीर्घमायुरवाप्नुयुः ।

प्रज्ञां यशश्च कीर्तिं च ब्रह्मवर्चसमेव च ॥

When we prostrate to elders, we say ‘Abhivadaye....’, wherein we identify the lineage of the Maharshi in which we are born. We say ‘Ekarsheya’, ‘Trayarsheya’, ‘Pancharsheya’, ‘Saptarsheya’ etc., which means that there were one, three, five, seven etc. Rishis in that lineage. That they were blessed with long life, deep knowledge, fame and Brahmnic brilliance is due to their regular performance of Sandhyavandanam, according to Manusmriti. The chant of Gayatri has been continuous in the lineage, starting from the Rishi mentioned.

Sandhyavandanam has all three yogas – Karma yoga, Bhakti yoga and Gnana yoga, ingrained in it. One must maintain his own Panchapatra for performing Sandhyavandanam. **The importance we give to our breath should be given to Sandhyavandanam.** If it is performed with appreciation of meaning of the mantras, it will confer great benefits – all benefits which accrued to the Rishis including complete peace of mind. For students of Veda, it will give power of intellect, retention, Brahmic brilliance etc. and enable them to lead a good life. Let us now look at a story to understand the importance of Sandhyavandanam.

Lesson 9

Kannadiga's Canal

Some 500-600 years ago, a king ruling from Tiruvananthapuram contracted a severe disease, which could not be cured with any type of treatment. The king kept up his prayer to Bhagavan. One day Bhagavan appeared in his dream and said: "O king, the disease you have contracted is due to your past karmas; it cannot be cured with any medicine. However, pleased with your bhakti, I shall tell you a way out. You make an image out of sesame (til), fill it with all nine precious stones, gold etc., invoke your sinful karma in it and give it in charity to a brahmana, who is keen on performance of Karmas. Your karma will leave you and attach to him. If he has good power of mantra, he will digest it."

Early next morning the king accordingly announced the plan to all people through beating of drum. No brahmana came forward to accept the king's sinful karmas. The news spread to the adjacent Karnataka state. A brahmachari from Karnataka, who had good power of mantra and courage, came to Tiruvananthapuram and conveyed his acceptance of the offer. The king's happiness knew no bounds. He gave the til image in charity to the brahmachari, chanting the necessary mantras. A miracle happened at that time. When the brahmachari stared at the image, it gained life and raised its right hand and showed the three middle fingers to the brahmachari, keeping the thumb and the little finger folded. The brahmachari refused. The image now folded the ring finger and showed the other two fingers. The brahmachari refused this time also. The image then extended only one finger, the index finger. The brahmachari reluctantly agreed. The image became very happy and fell at the feet of brahmachari. The image then became lifeless; Kalapurusha left the image. Everyone including the king, who had watched these proceedings, was struck dumb with wonder. They asked the brahmachari to explain what had happened.

The brahmachari had stared at the image and asked mentally as to how much of his mantra japa should be given to the image for the Kalapurusha to go away without affecting him. The image showed three fingers, indicating that he would go away if the brahmachari gave him the fruit of the three occasions of Sandhyavandanam performed daily. The brahmachari refused. The image bargained for two occasions; again the brahmachari did not budge. Finally when the image asked for one-time Sandhyavandana benefit, the brahmachari agreed. All the sinful karma left the

brahmachari's presence just by his agreeing to part with the benefit of Sandhyavandanam performed once every day. This shows the power of proper Gayatri japa and Sandhyavandanam. The king got completely cured. But the brahmachari was feeling sad that he had lost the fruit of mantra chant for the sake of the lowly gold. He meditated on sage Agastya. He submitted his grievance to him. Agastya suggested a remedy. He said: "A cow will come here now. It will halt on the banks of Tamraparani river. You construct a dam at the spot where it halts. You dig a canal from the dam and continue along the path walked by the cow. You build tanks and lakes on the way. The cow will disappear at a point. In the canal you build ghats for people to bathe; make water flow to the fields. Fertility of land will improve; there will be more and better crops. People will be very happy. Your sin of having lost the fruit of mantra japa will disappear with this merit." The brahmachari did everything accordingly. That canal which he dug is known as Kannadiga's canal and exists even today on the banks of river Tamraparani.

This is a real story. This story is reported on page 54 in the Government's annual report of 1903-04 relating to the Archaeological department based on an inscription.

Questions

1. Which is the essence of the three Vedas?
2. What is meant by the word 'Gayatri'?
3. What has Idaikkaattu Siddhar said?
4. Write the sloka of Manusmriti.
5. What will one get if he does Sandhyavandanam?
6. Who cured the king of his disease?
7. What did the image ask of the brahmachari?
8. What did Agastya say to the brahmachari?
9. What is the name of the canal dug by the brahmachari?
10. Where is the story of 'Kannadiga canal' found?

Lesson 10

Sixty Tamil years

In the great book 'Nirnaya Sindhu', the sixty Tamil (solar) years have been listed in the form of slokas, easy to get by heart.

Gaargi:

प्रभवो विभवः शुक्लः प्रमोदोऽथ प्रजापतिः ।
अङ्गिराः श्रीमुखो भावो युवाधातेश्वरस्तथा ॥
बहुधान्यः प्रमाथी च विक्रमोऽथ वृषस्तथा ।
चित्रभानुः सुभानुश्च तारणः पार्थिवो व्ययः ॥
सर्वजित्सर्वधारी च विरोधी विकृतिः खरः ।
नन्दनो विजयश्चैव जयो मन्मथदुर्मुखौ ॥
हेमलम्बो विलम्बोऽथ विकारी शार्वरी प्लवः ।
शुभकृच्छ्रोभनः क्रोधी विश्वावसुपरभवौ ॥
प्लवंगः कीलकः सौम्यः साधारण विरोधकृत् ।
परिधावी प्रमादी स्यात् आनन्दो राक्षसोऽनलः ॥
पिङ्गलः कालयुक्तश्च सिद्धार्थो रौद्रदुर्मतः ।
दुन्दुभी रुधिरोद्गारी रक्ताक्ष क्रोधनोऽक्षयः ॥ इति

- 1.Prabhava 2.Vibhava 3.Sukla 4.Pramoda 5.Prajapati 6.Angirasa 7.Srimukha 8.Bhava
- 9.Yuva 10.Dhatu 11.Easwara 12.Bahudhanya 13.Pramaathi 14.Vikrama 15.Vishu
- 16.Chitrabhanu 17.Subhanu 18.Parthiva 19.Taarana 20.Vyaya 21.Sarvajit 22.Sarvadhari
- 23.Virodhi 24.Vikrit 25.Khara 26.Nandana 27.Vijaya 28.Jaya 29.Manmatha 30.Durmukhi
- 31.Hemalamba 32.Vilamba 33.Vikari 34.Saarvari 35.Plava 36.Subhakrit 37.Sobhana
- 38.Krodhi 39.Visvavasu 40.Parabhava 41.Plavanga 42.Kilaka 43.Sowmya 44.Sadharana
- 45.Virodhakrit 46.Paridhavi 47.Pramadi 48.Ananda 49.Rakshasa 50.Nala 51.Pingala
- 52.Kalayukta 53.Siddhartha 54.Roudra 55.Durmathi 56.Dundubhi 57.Rudhirodgari
- 58.Raktakshi 59.Krodhana 60.Akshaya.

Prasadam 2

	Page
1. Brahma Vidya Guru Parampara	32
2. Padmabhuva – Brahma	35
3. Vasishtha Maharishi	36
4. Sakthi Maharishi	39
5. Parasara Maharishi	41
6. Vyasa Maharishi	43
7. Sri Sukabrahmam	48
8 & 9. Sri Goudapadacharya and Sri Govinda Bhagavatpadacharya	54

Lesson 1

Brahma Vidya Guru Parampara

सदाशिवसमारम्भां शङ्कराचार्यमध्यमाम् ।

अस्मदाचार्यपर्यन्तां वन्दे गुरुपरम्पराम् ॥

This sloka offers prayer to Guru Parampara, the traditional lineage of Gurus, starting from Dakshinamurthy in the form of Sadasiva, and having Sri Adisankara Bhagavatpadacharya in the middle and our present Guru right now at the end. Though the primal Guru was Sadasiva – Dakshinamurthy, since he taught through silence, there is another traditional sloka describing the Brahma Vidya Guru Parampara as starting from Mahavishnu, since he taught openly through words.

नारायणं पद्मभुवं वसिष्ठं शक्तिं च तत्पुत्र पराशरं च ।

व्यासं शुक्रं गौडपदं महान्तं गोविन्द योगीन्द्रं-अथास्य शिष्यम् ॥

श्रीशङ्कराचार्यं-अथास्य पद्मपादं च हस्तामलकं च शिष्यम् ।

तं तोटकं वार्तिककारं-अन्यान् अस्मद्-गुरून् सन्ततं-आनतोस्मि ॥

Dakshinamurthy, Dattatreya, Narayana and Brahma are the divine Gurus who come first in the line of Acharyas. Vasishtha, Sakthi, Parasara, Vyasa et al, who followed, received the secret of Advaita and Veda Vidya in the order of father to son and taught successively to their sons. They were all Rishis. It is not the practice to club Rishis along with human Acharyas. Rishis have the super-sensuous powers of knowing the unknowable, hearing the unheard, seeing the unseeable and doing the undoable. They have the great powers of catching the breath of Paramatma floating as sounds in space and handing them over to us as mantras.

Sri Sukacharya, the son of Sri Vyasacharya, is greater than man, Rishi and Deva; he is gloriously hailed as Sukabrahmam. Suka was brahmachari. After Suka, the Guru Parampara continued from teacher to disciples, who were all Sanyasis. The above sloka refers to Suka, Goudapada, Govinda Yogindra, Sri Sankaracharya, Padmapadacharya, Hastamalakacharya, Totakacharya, Sureswaracharya known as Vartikakara and Gurus down the line.

Guru is our immediate teacher. His Guru is called Paramaguru, whose Guru is Parameshti Guru. Parameshti Guru's Guru is Parapara Guru. Gurus previous to him are generally referred to as Purvacharyas. Sri Sankaracharya's Guru was Sri Govinda Bhagavatpada; Paramaguru, Sri Goudapada; Parameshti Guru, Sri Sukacharya; Parapara Guru, Sri Vyasacharya.

Mahavishnu

Mahavishnu or Narayana handed Veda to Brahma and made him take up the work of creation using the Veda mantras. Veda says: धाता यथापूर्व-अकल्पयत् “Brahma created as before.”

Mahavishnu taught the famous ‘Chatusloki Bhagavatham’ containing the secret of Advaita to Brahma. This is mentioned in Srimad Bhagavatham, Skandha 2, Adhyaya 9, slokas 30 to 36.

श्री भगवानुवाच

ज्ञानं परमगुह्यं मे यद् विज्ञानसमन्वितम् ।
सरहस्यं तदङ्गं च गृहाण गदितं मया ॥ १
यावानहं यथाभावो यद्रूपगुणकर्मकः ।
तथैव तत्त्वविज्ञानमस्तु ते मदनुग्रहात् ॥ २
अहमेवासमेवाग्रे नान्यद् यत् सदसत् परम् ।
पश्चादहं यदेतच्च योऽवशिष्यते सोऽस्म्यहम् ॥
ऋतेऽर्थं यत् प्रतीयेत न प्रतीयेत चात्मनि ।
तद्विद्यादात्मनो मायां यथाऽऽभासो यथा तमः ॥
यथा महान्ति भूतानि भूतेषूच्चावचेष्वनु ।
प्रविष्टान्यप्रविष्टानि तथा तेषु न तेष्वहम् ॥
एतावदेव जिज्ञास्यं तत्त्वजिज्ञासुनाऽऽत्मनः ।
अन्वयव्यतिरेकाभ्यां यत् स्यात् सर्वत्र सर्वदा ॥
एतन्मतं समातिष्ठ परमेण समाधिना ।
भवान् कल्पविकल्पेषु न विमुह्यति कर्हिचित् ॥

Mahavishnu said to Brahma: “I shall now give you the knowledge relating to me, together with means of realisation with all its esoteric aspects; you take it. With my blessing you will realise the truth of who I am, what are my characteristics, forms, qualities and karmas (lilas).

Prior to creation I was alone. Other than me, there was no gross or subtle object, nor ignorance, which is the cause of both types of objects. Whatever is perceived in this creation is also me alone; whatever is balance (outside of perceived creation) is also me alone. Whatever else is seen in me Paramatma as apparent reality (like reflected moon, giving the notion of two moons), whatever else is not seen, but present apparently (like Rahu not being observable in space) – understand both of them as my Maya. In the small and large bodies of jivas, made of the five Mahabhutas (elements), the five elements appear as having entered them giving the result of gross appearance of bodies. The elements are also seen as not having entered the bodies as

they were present earlier also as the cause. In the same way, I appear as having entered the bodies of jivas as the soul; I also appear as not having entered the bodies, as there is nothing other than me. Through the process of exclusion, one recognises objects as not being Brahman; through the process of inclusion, one recognises all objects as Brahman alone. Brahman alone is omnipresent and all-pervasive. This alone is required to be understood by one who wishes to know the reality of Atma. Brahma, you become immersed in this principle by deep meditation. You will never be deluded when you perform the work of creation in various Kalpas.”

This teaching contains the essence of the Mahamantra पूर्णमतः पूर्णम् in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. Brahma proceeded with his work of creation after receiving this teaching from Vishnu. Narayana is therefore considered as Adi Guru in the Advaita Vidya Guru Parampara. The greatness of Narayana can be found in Puranas.

नारायणपदद्वन्द्वं नारदादिभिराहतम् ।

नमामि शतशो नित्यं नमतां मुक्तिदायकम् ॥

“I always worship the twin feet of Narayana a hundred times, adored by sages like Narada and which confer liberation on the worshippers.”

Lesson 2

Padmabhuva - Brahma

As Brahma appeared from the navel-lotus of Mahavishnu, he is known as Padmabhuva and Kamalaja. He is the second Guru in the Advaita Vidya Guru parampara. His greatness is expounded in Puranas. His consort Saraswathi is the Devata of all knowledge. She resides in the tongue of Brahma. It is very important for all of us to have the blessing of Saraswathi.

There are only very few temples for Brahma in the entire land of Bharat. They are located in Pushkar (Rajasthan), Kumbakonam, Kandiyyur near Tiruvaiyaru, Kodumudi and Uttamarkoil (all in Tamil Nadu). Though there are hardly any temples for direct worship of Brahma, he is always adored by all Veda students when they chant the prayer verse 'Narayanam Padmabhuvam ...' and he blesses us. It can be seen in Puranas that Asuras and Devas performed severe penance and obtained many rare boons from Brahma, the Creator. Many Asuras have prayed to him for immortality. He used to respond that immortality cannot be granted by him, but long life could be. Though Asuras and Devas prayed with the thought that Brahma was all-powerful, Brahma knew that he acted within the power vesting in him, as Puranas inform.

Brahma has three consorts – Gayatri, Savitri, Saraswathi. Gayatri is the Chandas (metre) of the Gayatri Mahamantra. गायत्री छन्दसां माता – Gayatri is the mother of all Chandas. Savitri is the power of Light in that mantra. Brahma as Brahma Vidya Guru taught Brahma Vidya to his son Vasishtha. Sri Sadasiva Brahmendra prays to Brahma in his wonderful book 'Jagadguru Ratnamala':

गरुडाङ्क गभीर नाभि पद्मोदरभूगह्वर निष्ठनैष्ठिकाग्रम् ।

चतुराननमाश्रयामि कामं चतुराम्नायवदावदं सदापि ॥

"I always take refuge in the four-faced Brahma, seated in the deep navel-lotus of one who has Garuda as his sign (Vishnu), and who is the foremost meditator and the abode and exponent of the four Vedas".

Lesson 3

Sri Vasishtha Maharishi

Sri Sadasiva Brahmendra prays to sage Vasishtha in ‘Jagadguru Ratnamala’:

कुशिकप्रभवास्त्रशस्त्रपाली प्रशमाचार्यकसिद्धहस्तदण्डम् ।

शमवन्तमरुन्धतीसहायं शरणं यामि वसिष्ठमप्रमेयम् ॥

“I take refuge in Vasishtha, whose staff is a master in subduing the series of divine and other weapons in the power of Viswamitra; whose mind is ever under his control; who is the consort of Arundhati; and whose greatness is immeasurable.” In the Sandhyavandanam we perform every day, we think of seven Rishis and pray to them, keeping our hand on the head – Atri, Bhrgu, Kutsa, Vasishtha, Goutama, Kasyapa and Angirasa.

In Srimad Valmiki Ramayanam, in Bala Kandam (19th Sarga), we find that Viswamitra Maharishi comes to meet Emperor Dasaratha. He asks Dasaratha to send Sri Rama with him to protect his Yaga from Asuras, who create severe obstacles. When Dasaratha hesitates, Viswamitra rises to leave in anger. At that time Kulaguru Vasishtha pacifies Viswamitra, expounds dharma to Dasaratha and tells him about Viswamitra’s greatness. Viswamitra then tells Dasaratha about Sri Rama:

अहं वेद्मि महात्मानं रामं सत्यपराक्रमम् ।

वसिष्ठोऽपि महातेजाः ये चान्ये तपसि स्थिताः ॥

“I know about the high-souled Rama, who is truthful and valorous; the highly brilliant Vasishtha and other men of austerity also know.” Having heard Vasishtha’s conciliatory talk and Viswamitra’s assertion, Dasaratha despatches Sri Rama along with Lakshmana, with Viswamitra.

In Yuddha Kandam, when Sri Rama returns to Ayodhya with his entourage, Maharishi Vasishtha, along with seven other Rishis, Vamadeva, Jabali, Kasyapa, Katyayana, Suyagna, Goutama and Vijaya, performs Pattabishekam to Sri Rama in a grand manner.

Maharishi Vasishtha’s greatness is limitless. It was to his credit that he was the teacher of Sri Rama, who was none other than Avatara of Narayana, the Supreme Guru. The following verse extols the greatness of Srimad Ramayanam:

वासिष्ठगिरिसंभूता रामसागर गामिनी ।

पुनातु भुवनं पुण्या रामायण महानदी ॥

“May the great sacred river Ramayana, originating in the mountain of Valmiki and flowing towards the ocean of Rama, protect the world.” Srimad Ramayana, having 24000 slokas, bestows all auspiciousness and complete peace in the family.

Similarly the wonderful book called ‘Yoga Vaasishtham’ (also called Gnana Vaasishtham or Vaasistha Ramayanam) was taught by Vasishtha to Sri Rama. It has 32000 slokas. It has two sections, Purva Bhaga and Uttara Bhaga and six chapters (Prakaranas) – Vairagya, Mumukshu, Utpatti, Sthiti, Upasama and Nirvana. Maharishi Vasishtha teaches us Supreme Gnana, through the medium of Sri Rama, clearly like ‘gooseberry on the palm’ (Hasta-Aamalaka).

Vasishtha is one of the ten mind-born sons of Brahma. He is the Rishi (Mantra drashta-seer of mantras) of many Vedic Suktas. He is the consort of Arundhati, worshipped as the first among chaste women.

Raghu Vamsam is an epic written by Mahakavi Kalidasa. Here he describes the greatness of the kings of Solar Race; it is a wonderful and simple work; it contains deep import, moral teachings and Sastra concepts. Mahakavi Kalidasa , who enjoyed the special blessings of Devi Kali, has authored the book in such a manner that students of Samskrit could easily gain knowledge of the language as well as good morals.

ऋसूर्यप्रभवो वंशः क्व चाल्पविषया मतिः ।

तितीर्षुर्दुस्तरं मोहात् उडुपेनास्मि सागरम् ॥

“Where is the lineage starting from Surya and where is my little intellect? Out of delusion I wish to cross the difficult ocean in a small boat.” So says Kalidasa at the beginning with great humility. However he has written 21 chapters wonderfully.

In the first Sarga in Raghu Vamsam, emperor Dilipa goes along with his wife Sudakshina to Maharishi Vasishtha, the Kulaguru of Surya Vamsa. He expresses his sorrow at not having a son and asks Vasishtha to bless him and tell him of the expiation to be undertaken by him. Vasishtha meditated and found the cause of his misery and advised him. “Once when you were returning after meeting Indra, Kamadhenu was resting in the shadow of Kalpaka tree.

प्रदक्षिणक्रियाह्यां तस्यां त्वां साधु नाचरः ।

Instead of circumambulating Kamadhenu and worshipping her, you ignored her and came away. The infuriated Kamadhenu cursed that you would be childless.

पूज्यपूजाव्यतिक्रमः श्रेयः प्रतिबध्नाति हि ॥

“Not worshipping those who deserve to be worshipped deters well being.” Kamadhenu is now in Patalaloka; but her daughter Nandini is here in this Asrama. You serve Nandini. Nandini will be pleased and will undo the curse and bless you with child.”

As Dilipa and Sudakshina acted exactly as instructed by Guru Vasishtha, they were blessed with the child Raghu. Surya Vamsam grew well owing to Maharishi Vasishtha’s annulling the curse on emperor Dilipa. The lineage grew extensively and became famous as Raghu Vamsam. We got Sri Rama’s rulership eventually. Let us pray for obtaining the blessings of Maharishi Vasishtha and Brahma Vidya Gurus.

Maharishi Vasishtha’s son is Maharishi Sakthi, the next Guru in the Parampara.

Lesson 4

Sri Sakthi Maharishi

Brahma Nishtha Nerur Sri Sadasiva Brahmendra Saraswathi Swamigal, disciple of Sri Paramasivendra Saraswathi Swamigal, the 57th Peethadhipathi of Moolamnaya Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham, has detailed and prayed to the lineage of Gurus of the Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham upto his Guru, the 57th Peethadhipathi in a book 'Jagadguru Ratnamala'. Therein he has written a verse on Maharishi Sakthi. That gives an indication of the story of Maharishi Sakthi. Sri Atmabodhendra Saraswathi Swamigal has written a commentary for it called 'Sushma'.

बहुमित्रसहक्षितीश पापापह सान्निध्यमरोध्य सत्प्रतापम् ।

महदञ्चितमन्त्रतन्त्रशक्तिं मनसा शक्तिमुपैमि सद्विरक्तम् ॥

"I adore Sri Sakthi, who removed the sin of king Bahumitrasaha by his mere presence and who had great powers of mantra and tantra and who was truly dispassionate." In the commentary 'Sushma' the greatness of Maharishi Sakthi has been told clearly.

There was a king called Mitrasaha in Surya Vamsam. Vasishtha was the Guru of Surya Vamsam. The king was very valorous and had great devotion to Guru. A rakshasa, who could not fight with him, wished to conquer him deceitfully and make him suffer the curse of his Guru. He disguised himself as a cook and joined Mitrasaha in his kitchen. One day when Mitrasaha was performing Sraadham with Vasishtha as Guru, the rakshasa mixed human flesh in the food served to Vasishtha. Mitrasaha was unaware of this; but Vasishtha came to know of this as soon as he saw the food served to him. In the sport enacted by Bhagavan, sometimes even Rishis with divine vision miss to see the reality. In the Brahma Sutra Bhashya, Sri Adi Sankaracharya says:

सुनिपुणानामपि सूक्ष्मोऽपराधः दृश्यते - "Even in great masters a small subtle fault is observed." This

is all divine sport. Accordingly Vasishtha failed to recognise that king Mitrasaha was in no way responsible for serving him human flesh. He became very angry and cursed the king to instantly turn into a rakshasa eating human flesh. As the king was not guilty, he too became very angry and prepared to curse Guru Vasishtha in turn. As he took water in his hand for pronouncing the curse, his minister intervened to say that a disciple cursing his Guru will not have redemption at any time and that his entire lineage would be destroyed. The king regained clarity of vision. He did not know where to put the consecrated water in his hand; wherever it is put, that place would turn black and the living beings there would die. He then put the water on his own feet. His feet turned

black. He came to be known as Kalmashapada. Though he was free from any guilt, Vasishtha's curse came into effect; the king turned into a rakshasa, an eater of human flesh. He pounced upon Vasishtha's sons and wished to eat them.

At that time Maharishi Sakthi appeared. By his mere darshan, the king's curse got annulled and his sin was destroyed. The king prayed to him with devotion for teaching him Gnana. Sakthi taught him Brahma Vidya, the fount of all knowledge and got him relieved from samsara and delivered to Moksha.

In Sri Mahabharatam in Adi Parva, chapters 192 to 195 describe the greatness of Maharishi Sakthi. It appears Mitrasaha had the additional name of 'Daivodasa'. In Linga Puranam in 65th chapter Maharishi Sakthi has been referred to. His wife is named 'Adrushyanthi'. Their son is Saakteya, known as Maharishi Parasara.

Lesson 5

Sri Parasara Maharishi

Sri Sadasiva Brahmendra pays obeisance to Maharishi Parasara:

पवनाकुलकाशलेशकल्पं प्रभवादेव पराहताशराशम् ।

प्रणमामि पराशरं मुनीनां प्रचरद्वैष्णवसंहिताप्रकाशम् ॥

“I bow to Parasara, the great Muni, whose physical form is thin like darbha grass fluttering in the wind, but who terrifies the enemies like an arrow by mere appearance and who blessed us by writing Vishnu Puranam.” Born to Maharishi Sakthi and Adrushyanthi as Saakteya, he chanted Veda mantras while still in his mother’s womb. Pulastya Maharishi gave him the name of Parasara, as he appeared like a terrible arrow to his enemies. The treasures Parasara has conferred on us include Bhagavan Vyasa and Vishnu Puranam. He gave us Maharishi Vyasa known as Krishna Dvaipayana through Sathyavathi. Vishnu Puranam is considered to be the basic text for Srimad Bhagavatham. Sri Sankara Bhagavatpadacharya quotes in his commentaries from this Puranam more than from other Puranas. He also must be remembering Parasara, his Purvacharya more.

Though Vishnu Puranam appears as a book of devotion, Gnana, i.e. Advaita Vedanta is mixed in that bhakti itself like sugar in milk. Paramahansa Sanyasis chant every day Srimad Paramahansa Samhita known popularly as Srimad Bhagavatham and Sri Vishnu Puranam. They usually deliver discourses on these texts.

Maharishi Parasara has also given us Parasara Smriti, a Dharma Sastra teaching us about observance of Karmas, ways of life, social norms, individual dharmas etc.

In Kaliyuga, Parasara Smriti is said to be in use more. It is said: कलौ पराशर स्मृतिः

Maharishi Parasara’s son is Maharishi Veda Vyasa.

Questions

1. Write the two slokas on Brahma Vidya Guru Parampara
2. Write the names of Gurus in the Parampara.
3. Who was Brahma’s Guru?

4. Write the slokas of Chatussloki Bhagavatham.
5. Where are temples for Brahma located?
6. Who are the consorts of Brahma?
7. Write the meditative verse on Vasishtha.
8. Who wrote Yoga Vasishtham? How many Prakaranas are there in it? Write their names.
9. What is the name of Vasishtha's consort?
10. Who wrote Raghu Vamsam?
11. Who was the Guru of Emperor Dilipa? Why was Dilipa childless?
12. What was the suggestion of Vasishtha to Dilipa?
13. What was the name of Dilipa's son? Which lineage did he belong to?
14. Write the meditative verse on Maharishi Sakthi.
15. By whom was Mitrasaha's curse annulled?
16. What was the reason for getting the name of Kalamashapada?
17. What was the name of Sakthi Maharishi's consort?
18. Write the meditative verse on Parasara.
19. What are the books written by Parasara?
20. Write the names of Parasara's wife and son.

Lesson 6

Sri Veda Vyasa

We should chant Vishnu Sahasranama every evening. The verse of prayer to Sri Veda Vyasa occurs there.

व्यासं वसिष्ठनप्तारं शक्तेः पौत्रमकल्मषम् । पराशरात्मजं वन्दे शुकतातं तपोनिधम् ॥
व्यासाय विष्णुरूपाय व्यासरूपाय विष्णवे । नमो वै ब्रह्मनिधये वासिष्ठाय नमो नमः ॥

In the above verse we are blessed with remembrance of the Guru Parampara extending from father to son, grandson, great-grandson and great-great-grandson. Sri Veda Vyasa is the great-grandson of Vasishtha, the grandson of Sakthi, the son of Parasara and the father of Sukabrahmam. He is also known as Krishna Dvaipayana and Badarayana. It was owing to him, who was Amsavatara (partial incarnation) of Bhagavan Narayana that Sanatana Dharma was re-established and Veda was protected.

Protecting dharma has four facets: protecting dharma and those who protect it; destroying evil powers; removal of ignorance; brightening the lamp of Gnana. Bhagavan Narayana incarnated as Veda Vyasa for the purpose of removing ignorance and bestowing the light of Gnana. In 'Bhamati', the explanatory book on Brahma Sutra Bhashya, it is stated:

ज्ञान शक्ति अवताराय नमो भगवते हरेः ॥

“Prostrations to Bhagavan Hari, the incarnation of the power of Gnana.” Guru Ratnamala says:

निगमानपि योऽन्वशाच्चतुर्धा व्यधिताष्टादशधाऽपि यः पुराणम् ।
स च सात्यवतेय ईप्सितं मे सकलाम्नायशिरोगुरुर्विधत्ताम् ॥

“May that Saatyavateya, the son of Satyavati, Veda Vyasa, who classified Vedas into four groups, who wrote 18 Puranas and who is the Guru of all Upanishads, fulfil all my wishes.”

There are six Darsanas- philosophies: Nyaya, Vaisesika, Saankhya, Yoga, Purva Mimamsa, and Uttara Mimamsa or Vedanta. Of them, for Uttara Mimamsa Darsana, (based on Vedanta or Srutisiras or Upanishad), Brahma Sutra is considered the best authority. It is also traditionally called Vedanta Sutra, Vyasa Sutra, Bhikshu Sutra and Saaririka Sutra. Maharishi Veda Vyasa is the author of this work.

Brahma Sutra has four sections: 1.Samanvayadhyaya 2.Avarodhadhyaya 3.Sadhanadhyaya 4.Phaladhyaya. Each section has four 'Padas', thus making a total of 16 Padas. There are a total of 191 Adhikaranas (subsections), carrying 555 Sutras. Brahma Sutra is the fundamental text,

which brings together and classifies ideas spread over several Upanishads and puts them forward in the form of brief Sutras and establishes Advaita as the supreme purport of all Upanishads. Sri Sankara Bhagavatpada has written a beautiful commentary for this lofty Brahma Sutra. In that Bhashya, he says: वेदान्तवाक्यकुसुमग्रथनार्थत्वात्सूत्राणाम् ॥ (१.१.२)

“These Sutras are written for the purpose of tying together various flowers, which are statements of Vedanta.” (Sutra in Samskrit means an aphorism and also a thread).

When Sri Sankara Bhagavatpada was holding Bhashya classes in Kashi for his disciples, Sri Veda Vyasa came there in the guise of an old brahmana and tested him. There were extensive arguments between the two, specially on the Sutra in the first Pada in Sadhanadhyaya:

“तदन्तरप्रतिपत्तौ रंहति संपरिष्वक्तः प्रश्ननिरूपणाभ्याम्”

Sri Veda Vyasa became extremely happy at the nectarine talk of Sri Sankara, like a father would on hearing his child speak. This Adhikarana is called तदन्तरप्रतिपत्त्यधिकरणम् . Here matters like the Jiva’s movements for getting dispassion, the jiva’s departure from one body and entry into another body etc. are discussed.

Further Sri Veda Vyasa blessed humanity by writing 18 Puranas and 18 Upapuranas. As the essence of Vedas, viz. Gnana is difficult to grasp, he makes it easy to understand through simple stories in these books relating to Bhagavan’s incarnations. It is said that Veda Matha is afraid of getting cheated by those who interpret Vedas as they like without studying Itihasas and Puranas. Suta Samhita says (1.1.34):

यः चतुर्वेदविप्रः पुराणं वेत्ति नार्थतः

तं दृष्ट्वा भयमाप्नोति वेदो मां प्रतरिष्यति

The 18 Puranas are: 1.Mathasya 2.Markandeya 3.Bhavishya 4.Srimad Bhagavatha 5.Brahma 6.Brahmanda 7.Brahmavaivarttha 8.Vamana 9.Siva 10.Varaha 11.Vishnu 12.Agni 13.Narada 14.Padma 15.Linga 16.Garuda 17.Kurma and 18.Skanda Puranas.

The 18 Upapuranas are: 1.Sanatcumara 2.Naarasimha 3.Naaradiya 4.Vayu 5.Durvasa 6.Kapila 7.Manava 8.Ousanasa 9.Varuna 10.Kalika 11.Saamba 12.Nandi 13.Soura 14.Parasara 15.Aditya 16.Maheswara 17.Bhagavatha and 18.Vaasishtha Upapuranas.

Purana is like a magnifying glass for Veda. Purana magnifies and presents rules of dharma mentioned in brief in Veda through stories. Veda's injunction सत्यं वद 'Speak the truth' is told through Harischandra's story, which leaves an impression on the child's mind. धर्मं चर 'Observe dharma' is conveyed through the story of Dharmaputra in Mahabharatam; मातृदेवो भव पितृदेवो भव 'Treat mother as God; treat father as God' is emphasised through Srimad Ramayanam. Thus if we learn many of the Veda dharmas through Puranic stories and practise those dharmas in life, we will reap unlimited benefits including the highest state of no rebirth. When Purana and Itihasa stories are told to children, their minds are trained on good paths. When we learn the stories of the kings of Solar and Lunar races through Puranas, their great success and fame impel us to strengthen our attachment to dharma.

Mahabharata

Mahabharata is considered to be the fifth Veda - भारतः पञ्चमो वेदः. It is said that dharmas not found in Mahabharata are not to be found anywhere else; dharmas found elsewhere are found in Mahabharata – यदिहास्ति तदन्यत्र यन्नेहास्ति न तत् क्वचित् ॥

Srimad Bhagavad Gita, Sanatsujatiyam, Anugita, Moksha Dharma Parva in Santhi Parva etc. are the heart of Mahabharata. The secret messages of Upanishads are to be found in them. Vidura Niti, Yaksha Prasnam, Anusasana Parva etc. teach Veda dharmas in a simple manner. Stotras like Vishnu Sahasranama, Siva Sahasranama etc. embed bhakti as taught in Vedas, in our minds. Similarly chapters on Raja dharma and dharma in emergency (Aapad dharma) are like the very breath of Santhi Parva. They teach us administrative skills.

Mahabharata is an Itihasa. There are 18 Parvas in it: 1.Adi 2.Sabha 3.Vana 4.Virata 5.Udyoga 6.Bhishma 7.Drona 8.Karna 9.Salya 10.Souptika 11.Stree 12.Santhe 13.Anusasana 14.Aasvamedhika 15.Asramavasika 16.Mousala 17.Maha Prasthanam and 18.Svargarohana Parvas.

Many Samskrit poets have written beautiful and pleasing epics based on Mahabharata. Sri Harsha's Naishadham, Bharavi's Kiratarjuniyam, Magha's Sisupalavadham and Bhasa's dramas can be cited as such examples. Sri Veda Vyasa's great accomplishment is Mahabharata. It has nearly a lakh of slokas. It is blessed by Maha Ganapati. As Veda Vyasa dictated, Maha Ganapati

broke one of his tusks and wrote the epic, using it as stylus. Maha Ganapati imposed a condition that Vyasa should dictate without halting. Veda Vyasa put in a counter that Ganapati should write only after understanding the meaning. Vyasa composed many slokas, which were tough and needed time to understand the hidden meaning. By the time Ganapati grasped the meaning and wrote down the slokas, Vyasa would have readied many verses in his mind. Such tough slokas are known as 'Bharatha Guddu'.

A prayer to Sri Vyasacharya is found in the Dhyana slokas of Srimad Bhagavad Gita.

नमोऽस्तु ते व्यास विशालबुद्धे फुल्लारविन्दायतपत्रनेत्र ।

येन त्वया भारततैलपूर्णः प्रज्वालितो ज्ञानमयः प्रदीपः ॥

"I bow to Vyasa, who has broad intellect, whose eyes are like fully bloomed lotus, and who composed Mahabharata, which acts like oil nudging the lamp of knowledge to glow." Markandeya Purana also says:

त्रिदशानां यथा विष्णुः द्विपदां ब्राह्मणो यथा । भूषणानां च सर्वेषां यथा चूडामणिर्वरः ॥

यथा आयुधानां कुलिशं इन्द्रियाणां यथा मनः । तथेह सर्वशास्त्राणां महाभारतमुत्तमम् ॥

"Like Vishnu among Devas, brahmana among two-legged creatures, chudamni (crest jewel) among all ornaments, Vajra among weapons, and mind among sense organs, Mahabharata is the greatest among all Sastras" (1,4,5).

Sri Veda Vyasa has also written Vyasa Smriti dealing with Dharma Sastra, and Vyasa Siksha on Veda Lakshana.

Chaturmasya Sankalpam with Vyasa Pooja undertaken by Sanyasis every year during Ashadha Pournami is very sacred. It is also the practice for brahmacharis and Grihasthas to perform Vyasa Pooja during Sravanam (Avani Avittam) and on every occasion Veda Parayanam is commenced. It is only due to Sri Veda Vyasacharya that our Vedas, the root of Sanatana dharma are protected.

In every Manvantara in Dvapara yuga the position of Vyasa is taken by a designated person like a Maharishi. In the present Vaivasvata Manvantara, Krishna Dvaipayana is the designated Veda Vyasa. This is detailed by Maharishi Parasara in his Vishnu Purana in section 3, chapter 3, slokas 7 to 21. By mere knowledge of the names of Veda Vyasas and thinking of them, we obtain their full grace. The Veda Vyasas in the Manvantaras are: 1.Brahma 2.Prajapathi 3.Sukracharya 4.Brihaspati 5.Surya 6.Bhagavan Mrityu 7.Indra 8.Vasishtha 9.Saraswatha 10.Tridhama 11.Trisikha 12.Bharadwaja 13.Antariksha 14.Varni 15.Trayyaruna 16.Dhananjaya

17.Kratunjaya 18.Jaya 19.Bharadwaja 20.Goutama 21.Haryatma 22.Vajasrava
23.Somasushta vamsa Trinabindu 24.Bhrigu vamsa Riksha or Valmiki 25.Sakthi Maharishi
26.Parasara 27.Jatukarna and 28.Krishna Dvaipayana.

अष्टा विंशतिवित्यते वेदव्यासाः पुरातनाः ।

एको वेदश्चतुर्धा तु तैः कृतो द्वापरादिषु ॥

भविष्ये द्वापरे चापि द्रौणिर्व्यासो भविष्यति ।

व्यतीतो मम पुत्रेऽस्मिन् कृष्णद्वैपायने मुने ॥

Parasara told Maitreya that the next Veda Vyasa would be Drona's son Asvathama.

The next Brahma Vidya Guru is Sri Sukabrahmam, son of Krishna Dvaipayana, Veda Vyasa.

Questions

1. Where is the Dhyana sloka on Veda Vyasa found?
2. Write the Dhyana sloka of Vishnu Sahasranama.
3. Who wrote Brahma Sutra?
4. Brahma Sutra- write a short note.
5. Write the names of the 18 Puranas.
6. Write the names of the 18 Upapuranas.
7. Who wrote Mahabharata?
8. How many Parvas are there in Mahabharata? Write their names.
9. Write about the greatness of Mahabharata.
10. Write the names of Veda Vyasas.
11. Who is the next Veda Vyasa?

Lesson 7

Sri Sukabrahmam

Sri Sukacharya, known also as Sukabrahmam, is the gifted son of Krishna Dvaipayana, known popularly as Veda Vyasa. Sri Sukacharya was ever immersed in the bliss of Brahman. Nerur Sri Sadasiva Brahmendra, who was a similar Brahmanishtha, wrote as Dhyana sloka of Sri Sukabrahmam in his 'Jagadguru Ratnamala' some 200 years ago:

जननी जठरादिव च्यवन् यो जगतो नाद्रवदात्मविद् विपद्भ्यः ॥

अनहन्तमहं तमात्मवन्तं भगवन्तं शुकमाश्रये प्रशान्तम् ॥

"I take refuge in Bhagavan Suka, who, even while emerging from his mother's womb, never lost his poise when confronted with mundane difficulties owing to his steadiness in Atma Gnana, who was free from the sense of individual identity (I) and ever in peace."

When we think of Sri Sukacharya, what comes to mind is Srimad Bhagavatham, known by other appellations too – Paramahansa Samhita, Adhyatma Deepam, Sarva Vedanta Saram etc.

Uttara was Abhimanyu's wife. In order to protect the child in her womb, Bhagavan Krishna took thumb-sized form and went round the child. The child in the womb saw him and was curious as to who that person was. After the child was born, the child looked outside for the person whom he had seen in the womb. The child, whose name was Vishnuratha, came therefore to be known as Parikshit. He was the only heir left in the Pandava race. He ruled the kingdom with complete adherence to truth. Once he went hunting. Kali Purusha had just entered the world. In order to protect Dharma Devatha, Parikshit started fighting with Kali Purusha. Kali Purusha fell at the king's feet and said that he is also a creation of Bhagavan and that he would not trouble anybody, but he wished to have some places designated for living. Parikshit allotted to him the places where gambling is done, liquor is taken, women are lusted and chased, gold is hounded, and where untruth, arrogance, jealousy and anger are present. Kali Purusha left for those places.

Parikshit, who was exhausted after hunting, looked for water to drink in the forest, but found no source. He then chanced to go to Maharishi Samika's Asram. Samika was completely immersed in the indivisible bliss of Samadhi. Without realising it, the king said to him that he was very thirsty and needed water. When the Maharishi did not respond, he thought that the Maharishi was

insulting him. He took a dead snake and hung it on the Maharishi's neck and went to his palace. By meeting Kali Purusha, the king had lost his poise and intellect.

After some time, the Maharishi's son Sringeri returned to the Asram and became very sad on seeing his father with a dead snake round his neck. He became furious and pronounced a curse with Vajra-like (stern) speech, taking water in his hand. He said that the person, who had ill-treated his father, would be bitten by Takshaka, the king of serpents and die on the seventh day. Maharishi Samika woke up after a while and divined all that had happened. He taunted his son for his impatience and asked him to go and inform king Parikshit about the curse.

On his return to the palace, the king felt restless. He felt sad about his hasty act driven by ignorance and severity of thirst. At that time Sringeri's curse was communicated to him. The king became extremely happy; he abandoned all his possessions in half a ghatika and proceeded to the banks of river Ganga. He consulted all the great saints there about what he should do in the next seven days in order to have darshan of Bhagavan and unite with him. At that very moment, owing to the great merit of his lineage, Sri Sukabrahman, who was moving about in bliss, immersed in the thought of Brahman, arrived there as a lad, unclothed, surrounded by boys. Srimad Bhagavatham describes this thus:

तत्राभगवद्भूगवान् व्यासपुत्रो यदृच्छया गामटमानोऽनपेक्षः ।

अलक्ष्यलिङ्गो निजलाभतुष्टो वृत्तश्च बालैरवधूतवेषः ॥ (श्रीमद् भागवतम् १.१९.२५)

All the Maharishis, Rajarishis, Devarishis and Brahmarishis rose and welcomed Sri Suka with reverence. प्रत्युत्थितास्ते मुनयः स्वासनेभ्यः. King Parikshit bowed to him and said: "O great soul, I am indeed very fortunate. Your arrival here is due to my accumulated merit. Your very darshan has destroyed all my sins. You are the Gnani among Gnanis. I seek to know from you. What should one, who is about to die, do? What should he hear? What should he think of? Whom should he worship? What should he speak?" He prostrated to Sri Suka and prayed with tears in his eyes. Sri Suka taught him the story of Krishna, Srimad Bhagavatham in the next seven days, all day and all night. Parikshit drank the nectar of Sri Bhagavatham.

When Suta Pauranika, who was replying to the questions of Maharishis in Naimisaranya kshetra, started to narrate Srimad Bhagavatham, he first pays his respects to Sri Sukacharya. He praises

him with wonderful slokas. The greatness of Sri Sukacharya, the Brahmagnani, is higher than ocean, sky etc.

यं प्रव्रजन्तमनुपेतमपेतकृत्यं द्वैपायनो विरहकातर आजुहाव ।

पुत्रेति तन्मयतया तरवोऽभिनेदुः तं सर्वभूतहृदयं मुनिमानतोऽस्मि ॥ (श्रीमद् भागवतम् १.२.२)

Once Sri Suka started out from his father Vyasacharya's asram as a Parivrajaka (mendicant), cutting himself off from karmas. Unable to keep pace with the child, who walked fast, Vyasacharya ran after him crying out 'o son, o son'. What a wonder! The trees, plants, creepers etc. responded saying 'what, what'. Vyasacharya became extremely happy. Setting aside his limited love for a son, he was touched to know that his son was a great Gnani. The above sloka conveys this story. The sloka says: 'You had not even been initiated into upanyanam. But you were 'Sarvabhuta-hridaya', present in the hearts of all beings. I pay homage to that Sukabrahmam'. We noted that in Vishnu Sahasranama also, in the prayer to Sri Vyasacharya, he is addressed as - father of Suka. In Mahabharata in Santi Parva in chapter 323 and in Sri Devi Bhagavatham, accounts of Sri Sukacharya, Maharaja Janaka, thoughts on Advaita Vidya etc. are found.

Sri Sukacharya becomes very happy to hear the question of king Parikshit and says: वरीयानेष ते प्रश्नः कृतो लोकहितं नृप ॥ (२.१.१)- 'O king, your question is very virtuous and meant to help the people.'

तस्मात् भारत सर्वात्मा भगवानीश्वरो हरिः ।

श्रोतव्यः कीर्तितव्यश्च स्मर्तव्यश्चेच्छताभयम् ॥

एतावान् सांख्ययोगाभ्यां स्वधर्मपरिनिष्ठया ।

जन्मलाभः परः पुंसामन्ते नारायणस्मृतिः ॥ (२.५,६)

Here by addressing king Parikshit as 'Bharata', Sukabrahmam is actually referring to all people who, owing to their religious merit, are born in the sacred land of Bharat. He says: 'One, who wishes for fearlessness, should listen to the lilas of Bhagavan, sing his glory and think of him till one's last breath. One should adopt the path of Gnana, yoga and adherence to Svadharma and ensure that the thought of Bhagavan is present when one leaves his body; this is the greatest attainment of man.' Here reference to Hari includes Siva. The intent is that one may worship whichever aspect of Bhagavan he likes. Whichever manifestation of Bhagavan one adores, it reaches one and the same Parabrahmam ultimately; just as rivers with various names like Ganga, Yamuna, Kaveri etc. ultimately join the ocean. Parabrahmam blesses one through any aspect of

Bhagavan he worships. Here the term to be noted is स्वधर्म-परिनिष्ठया; if all people perform their allotted Svadharma with devotion to Bhagavan, Bhagavan makes them think of him at the last moment and unites them with him and blesses them with no rebirth. That is why he says अन्ते नारायणस्मृतिः. Bhagavan Krishna also says in Srimad Bhagavad Gita:

स्वधर्ममपि चावेक्ष्य न विकम्पितुमर्हसि । धर्म्याद्धि युद्धाच्छ्रेयोऽन्यत्क्षत्रियस्य न विद्यते ॥ (२.३१)

श्रेयान्स्वधर्मो विगुणः परधर्मात्स्वनुष्ठितात् । स्वधर्मे निधनं श्रेयः परधर्मो भयावहः ॥ (३.३५)

'Looking at Svadharma also, you should not hesitate; for a kshatriya, there is no greater act than fighting for righteousness.'

'Performing Svadharma, even if imperfectly, is more virtuous than performing someone else's duty, even if well done. Even dying during performance of Svadharma is meritorious; someone else's duty is terrifying.' These teachings, though addressed to Arjuna, are meant for all people. Hence the Svadharma of brahmanas consists of learning of Vedas from Guru, studying meaning of Vedas, performing prayoga (ritual) karmas laid down in their respective Grihya sutras with the sense of dedication to Easwara and leading a life imbued with devotion to Bhagavan. Puranas and Itihasas are meant to enable them to make their lives meritorious.

By learning the stories of earlier Acharyas, we will develop interest in dharma, paving the way for our walking the path of dharma. The Purvacharyas will always bless this effort. The greatness of our Sanatana dharma is the principle of Guru. Sri Sankara Bhagavatpadacharya begins his commentary on Sri Brihadaranyaka Upanishad with prayer to the traditional Gurus:

ओं नमो ब्रह्मादिभ्यो ब्रह्मविद्यासम्प्रदायकर्तृभ्यो वंशऋषिभ्यो नमो महद्भ्यो नमो गुरुभ्यः

He concludes the commentary with prayer to Gurus who follow the tradition: नमः तत् अनुवर्तिभ्यः
गुरुभ्यः

Our support stems from the greatness of Guru.

On the basis of what Brihadaranyaka Upanishad says श्रोतव्यः मन्तव्यः निदिध्यासितव्यः,

Sri Sukacharya also says in Srimad Bhagavatham श्रोतव्यः कीर्तितव्यः च स्मर्तव्यः.

गुरोरनुग्रहेणैव पुमान् पूर्णः प्रशान्तये । (१०.८०.८३)

'It is only through Guru's blessing that man will attain perfection and peace.'

Kunti Devi also refers to Bhagavan Krishna as Akhilaguru in her prayer:

श्रीकृष्ण कृष्णसख वृष्ण्यृषभावनिधुग् राजन्यवंशदहनानपवर्गवीर्य ।

गोविन्द गोद्विजसुरार्तिहरावतार योगेश्वराखिलगुरो भगवन्नमस्ते ॥

We also pray to Krishna as Jagadguru:

वसुदेवसुतं देवं कंसचाणूरमर्दनम् । देवकीपरमानन्दं कृष्णं वन्दे जगद्गुरुम् ॥

The Matsyavatara Stotra in chapter 24 in 8th Skandha of Srimad Bhagavatham also is in the form of prayer to Guru.

Though Sri Suka was Brahmanishtha (ever established in Brahman), he says that he learnt the accounts of Bhagavan from his father Sri Veda Vyasa.

इदं भागवतं नाम पुराणं ब्रह्मसम्मितम् । अधीतवान् द्वापरादौ पितुद्वैपायनादहम् ॥ (२.१.८)

परिनिष्ठितोऽपि नैर्गुण्य उत्तमश्लोकलीलया । गृहीतचेता राजर्षे आख्यानं यदधीतवान् ॥ (२.१.९)

'I studied this Purana called Bhagavatham, equivalent to Veda, from my father Dvaipayana at the beginning of Dvapara yuga. Though established in the attributeless Brahman, I am attracted by the lilas of Bhagavan Krishna, whose fame is great and whose story I studied.'

What we understand from the nectarine words of Sri Suka is that we should learn the Vedas, Sastras, Puranas and Itihasas from a Guru alone. Sri Sankara Bhagavatpadacharya says in the commentary of Gita that following the traditional route is indeed the royal route राजमार्गः.

Mundakopanishad teaches: तद्विज्ञानार्थं स गुरुमेवाभिगच्छेत् समित्पाणिः श्रोत्रियं ब्रह्मनिष्ठम् ॥

'To understand Brahma Vidya, one should approach Guru, who is well versed in Vedas and established in Brahman, with samit (sacrificial faggot) in hand'.

Sri Acharya, while explaining this, says शास्त्रज्ञोऽपि स्वातंत्र्येण ब्रह्मज्ञानान्वेषणं न कुर्यात् ॥

'Even if one is learned in Sastras, he should not seek Brahmagnana on his own independently'. Only if one listens to Upanishad bhashyas (commentaries) from Guru in the traditional manner, he will attain Brahmagnana with Bhagavan's grace; the darkness of ignorance will retreat. This same idea has been expressed more clearly as a note of abundant caution in the Gita commentary in chapter 13 in sloka 2: असंप्रदायवित् सर्वशास्त्रविदपि मूर्खवदेव उपेक्षणीयः.

'One should ignore a person, even if he is learned in all Sastras, but is not learned in traditions, as a fool.' He says that one should not approach those who have picked up knowledge directly

from books instead of from Guru and who teach others. Sri Sukacharya says that though a Brahmanishtha, he learnt Srimad Bhagavatham from his father Sri Veda Vyasa.

Realising the importance accorded by Sri Sukacharya to Guru, we should also develop Guru bhakti and Jagadguru bhakti. Sri Sukacharya is hailed as the Guru of Munis:

यः स्वानुभवमखिलश्रुतिसारमेकम् अध्यात्मदीपमतितितीर्षतां तमोऽन्धम् ।

संसारिणां करुणयाऽऽह पुराणगुह्यं त व्याससूनुमुपयामि गुरुं मुनीनाम् ॥

'I adore Vyasa's son Suka, the Guru of Munis, who taught this secret Purana, which helps in attainment of Self-realisation, is the unique essence of all Vedas and is the light of spirituality for those who are caught in the darkness of the mundane world and are keen to get out.'

Questions

1. Whose son was Sri Sukacharya?
2. What is the title of the book taught by Sri Suka?
3. What did Kali Purusha ask of Parikshit?
4. Which are the places of residence of Kali Purusha?
5. What are the names of the parents of Parikshit?
6. Write the dhyana slokas of Sri Suka.
7. Explain Guru's greatness.

Lessons 8 and 9

Sri Gowdapadacharya and Sri Govinda Bhagavatpadacharya

Sri Sadasiva Brahmendra Saraswathi, who was a partial incarnation of Sri Sukabrahmam, prays to Sri Gowdapadacharya in his Jagadguru Ratnamala:

अभियुञ्जदयार्च्यपूज्यपादान् अपलून्यादिनिषाक सिद्धनेतृन् ।

अथ गौडपादान् फणीशभाष्यप्रथमाचार्यकपण्डितान्प्रपद्ये ॥

'I take refuge in Gowdapada, who was worshipped by Ayarchya et al (of Buddhism, who were defeated in debate), who taught Atma Vidya to Apalunya and others and became their head, and who was the first master and Acharya to teach the commentary of Patanjali (on Panini's Sutras).'

He bows to Sri Govinda Bhagavatpadacharya:

हरितल्पहरांघ्रिनूपुर-क्षमाधर सौमित्रि बलात्रिपुत्रलक्ष्मा ।

जयतादुपरेवमात्तधामा जयगोविन्दमुनिः स चन्द्रनामा ॥

'May Jaya Govinda Muni, who is the resting place for Vishnu, the anklet of Siva, the supporter of earth, one who took the forms of Lakshmana, Balarama and Patanjali, one who resided near Reva river, one who bore the name of Chandra Sarma earlier, shine.'

It is said that by mere Darshan of Chidambara kshetra one attains Mukti- दर्शनात् अभ्रसदसि. It is the wonderful kshetra where Bhagavan Parameswara dances Ananda Tandava. Based on the sounds emanating from the drum (damaruka) in Nataraja's hand, Maharishi Panini evolved the Vyakarana Sutras-

अइउण् । ऋलृक् । एओङ् । ऐऔच् । ह्यवरट् । लण् । जमङणनम् । झभञ् ।

घढधष् । जबगडदश् । खफछठथचटतव् । कपय् । शषसर् । हल् । "इति माहेश्वराणि सूत्राणि"

These are known as Maaheswara Sutras. It is only great tapasvis (men of austerity) and great intellectuals who can understand these 14 Sutras.

Adishesha said to Mahavishnu that he wished to see the Ananda Tandava of Parameswara. Mahavishnu told Adishesha to go to Chidambaram, known as Tillaivanam in the south of the sacred land of Bharat and have darshan. Adishesha incarnated as the son of Maharishi Atri and hence he was known as Aatreya. He was also called Gonikaputra. A great woman of austerity called Gonika prayed to Surya for a high souled son, while offering Arghya. Adishesha dropped from sky at that

time into her hand held in Anjali posture. Hence he became known as Patanjali (Pat + Anjali, one who dropped in hand of Anjali posture). He was also called Charaka.

He incarnated as Patanjali in order to have darshan of Nataraja Tandavam. His wish was fulfilled. Along with the tiger-footed Maharishi Vyaghrapada, the serpent-footed Patanjali had happy darshan of Nataraja and was his great devotee. For the Vyakarana Sutras written by Maharishi Panini, Maharishi Patanjali wrote 'Mahabhashyam' (commentary) and propagated it.

योगेन चित्तस्य पदेन वाचां मलं शरीरस्य च वैद्यकेन ।

योऽपाकरोत्तं प्रवरं मुनीनां पतञ्जलिं प्राञ्जलिरानतोऽस्मि ॥

'With folded hands I pray to Patanjali, the foremost among Munis, who cleansed the mind with Yogasastra, the speech of words with the science of grammar and the body with medicine.'

Patanjali has blessed us by writing three books – Paatanjali Yoga Sutram for training the mind, Vyakarana Mahabhashya for Samskrit grammar and Charaka Samhita, the Ayurvedic medical text for treatment of diseases. 'Charakam' is also known as 'Aatreya Samhita'. It is noteworthy that Patanjali has offered us excellent Sastras for purification of the three karanas, instruments - mind, speech and body.

It is usual to pray to Maharishi Panini and Maharishi Patanjali with the following slokas:

येनाक्षरसमाम्नायं-अधिगम्य महेश्वरात् ।

कृत्स्नं व्याकरणं प्रोक्तं तस्मै पाणिनये नमः ॥

येन धौता गिरः पुंसां विमलैः शब्दवारिभिः ।

तमश्चाज्ञानजं भिन्नं तस्मै पाणिनये नमः ॥

अज्ञानान्धस्य लोकस्य ज्ञानाञ्जनशलाकया ।

चक्षुरुन्मीलितं येन तस्मै पाणिनये नमः ॥

वाक्यकारं वररुचिं भाष्यकारं पतञ्जलिम् ।

पाणिनिं सूत्रकारंच प्रणतोऽस्मि मुनित्रयम् ॥

'I prostrate to Panini, who gathered the group of letters from Maheswara and created the entire Vyakarana (grammar).

I prostrate to Panini, who cleansed the words of men with waters of grammar and removed the darkness of ignorance.

I prostrate to Panini, who opened the eyes of men, blinded by ignorance, with the collyrium of Knowledge.

I prostrate to the three Munis - Panini the Sutrakara, Patanjali the Bhashyakara and Vararuchi the Vakyakara'.

Sanskrit Vyakarana is the basis of all Sastras; Vyakarana Mahabhashya is very important for all philosophers. It is universally acceptable. Patanjali started to teach Mahabhashya in the temple at Chidambaram; it was but appropriate that the Mahabhashya was taught in the sannidhi of Sri Parameswara, whose Damaruka sounds during Ananda Tandava were the progenitor of Panini's Vyakarana Sutras, which were explained by Patanjali. From that day the practice of teaching Vyakarana in Siva temples took off; Vyakarana Dana Mandapam was provided in temples. As thousands of disciples gathered to learn from Patanjali, he wished to teach all of them at the same time. It is said that the qualities of Bhagavan are so many that even the thousand-tongued Adi Sesha cannot completely tell all of them. As it was not possible to teach Mahabhashya to so many with one mouth, Patanjali decided to adopt his original form of Adi Sesha. It is not possible for anyone to have a direct vision of Adi Sesha; his poisonous breath will reduce him to ashes. Patanjali therefore decided to erect a screen behind which he would sit with a thousand mouths and in front of which a thousand disciples would sit and listen, one in front of each mouth. He ordered that no one should meddle with the screen; though the students could not see him, he would be able to see each one of them. He said that in case anyone went out during the lessons without permission, he would turn into a Brahmarakshasa by his curse. The curse of great men does indeed turn into a blessing.

Patanjali continued with his teaching for many days; the students studied well. One day one of the boys developed a keen desire to know how one person was able to teach a thousand boys independently; he wished to know what trick he employed. He opened the screen; all the boys were reduced to ashes in a moment. It was as if a proof of the fact that if Guru's order is violated, mishap would result. Patanjali Charitam says: गुरुवचनव्यतिलङ्घनम् ह्यनर्थः.

One boy, who had come from Gowda Desa, had gone out for attending to call of nature in violation of Guru's order. When he returned, he was shocked to see what had happened and approached the Guru with tremendous fear in mind. Patanjali was now in human form; when he was feeling sad at the wasted effort, this boy Gowda (so called because he was from Gowda Desa) came, prostrated and asked to be forgiven. This is the basis of the common saying 'one in a thousand'. Patanjali, who was aggrieved at the death of so many boys, who had assembled

from far off places, was relieved to see at least one boy alive. But this boy was of dull intellect. As it would take a long time to teach him the Mahabhashya, Patanjali decided to impart his entire Vyakarana Bhashya knowledge to the boy using his special powers of blessing, just as a father gives away all his properties and gold, gathered over his lifetime, to his son in one moment. He placed his hands on the head of Gowda and blessed that all his knowledge would become Gowda's. The dull-witted Gowda attained complete knowledge of Vyakarana. He had got Mahabhashya by heart. When adverse Prarabdha karma comes to a close, Guru's darshan and blessing are attained.

But the happiness did not continue. The curse mentioned by the Guru that anyone, who leaves the classroom without permission, would become a Brahmarakshasa, started to bear fruit. The words of divine persons will not fail. They themselves cannot alter the curse. They can only prescribe the condition for relief from curse. Brahmarakshasa is a sect among Rakshasas. It is akin to the sect of goblins (Pisachas); it comes under the sect of Devas. Amarakosa says:

पिशाचो गुह्यकः सिद्धो भूतोऽमी देवयोनयः. One, who studies Vedas well, but follows evil path and tortures other brahmanas and robs and enjoys their wealth and family, and dies young, becomes a brahmarakshasa; he will remember Vedas. He will question those have studied Veda and, if they do not reply correctly, he will kill and devour them.

For Gowda to become free from the curse of brahmarakshasa, Patanjali imposed a condition. The brahmarakshasa should put a certain question in Vyakarana. If the brahmana replies correctly, he should be considered suitable to receive complete initiation of Mahabhashya. The brahmarakshasa should then teach him Mahabhashya like a human being. Once he has thus transferred his knowledge of Mahabhashya to a suitable person, thus preserving it for posterity, the curse would lose its effect; he would return to his original form.

The question framed by Patanjali was: 'What is the 'Nishtha' (past participle) form of the root (dhatu) 'Pach' (to cook)?' The correct answer is 'Pakvam'. If someone gives this correct answer, he was to be taught Mahabhashya. In Vyakarana, there are many 'Pratyayas' (suffix): तद्धितम्, कृत्, सुप्, तिङ्, निष्ठा. Of them, there is a Pratyaya called 'Nishtha'. When Nishtha Pratyaya is added to the root भुज् 'bhuj' , it will become 'bhuktam' (what has been eaten). Similarly, the

words 'Raktam', 'Siktam' etc. are formed. When Nishtha Pratyaya is added to the root 'Pach', it becomes 'Pakvam' as per a separate rule 'Pacho va:'. But people would generally say 'Paktam' in a hurry and the brahma-rakshasa would consume them. Gowda, the brahmarakshasa, was living in a peepul tree on the banks of river Narmada. Many great scholars became his food because of this erroneous reply they gave. When many years rolled on, Maharishi Patanjali took pity and he himself stood in front of the brahmarakshasa with the name and form of Chandra Sharma. He told him that he was on his way to Chidambaram to learn Vyakarana. The brahmarakshasa, as usual, asked him for the 'Nishtha' forms of many root words and jumped to the main question on the root 'Pach'. Chandra Sharma did not say 'Paktam' like others, but said 'Pakvam' correctly. The brahma-rakshasa was very happy. He said to Chandra Sharma: 'I shall teach you Vyakarana Mahabhashya here itself. You should not sleep. I shall keep teaching day and night without halt. You should write down without getting off the tree.'

Chandra Sharma started to write. He used the leaves of the peepul tree for writing; the pen was the stem of the leaf; the ink was the blood from his thigh. He kept writing on the leaves and dropping them. When the lessons were completed, he came down from the tree. Gowda got relieved of the curse and was very happy and satisfied that he was able to teach the Mahabhashya to a suitable disciple - a task given by Maharishi Patanjali well fulfilled. He desired to turn his mind to the spiritual path and went to Badarikasrama in Himalayas and meditated on Maharishi Suka; he took refuge under him. With Suka teaching him Brahmagnana, Gowdapadacharya received it in full measure. He thus shines as Advaita Vidyacharya next in order to Sri Sukacharya in the tradition of Brahma Vidya Gurus. With Sri Sukacharya the galaxy of Acharyas of divine beings from Puranas and Rishis came to an end. With Sri Gowdapadacharya the tradition of ordinary humans joining the line started.

Sri Gowdapadacharya has written a gloss called 'Karika' for Mandukya Upanishad. This Upanishad teaches that the state of Atmagnana is Santham, Sivam, Advaitam and Turiyam – Peace, Auspiciousness, Non-duality and Fourth state. 'Turiyam' is the fourth state beyond the three ordinary states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep. The Karika adheres strictly to the path of Advaita and is also called 'Agama Sastra'. Sri Sankara Bhagavatpadacharya has written a commentary for the Mandukya Karika. He is doubly happy to write it as the Karika is the work of his own Paramaguru. He offers a prayer to his Paramaguru at the close of his Bhashya. What a

great Guru bhakti! We can learn Guru bhakti only from our Acharya and practise it and cross the ocean of samsara.

प्रज्ञा वैशाख वेध क्षुभित जलनिधेर्वेदनाम्नोऽन्तरस्थम्
भूतान्यालोक्य मग्नान्यविरतजननग्राहघोरे समुद्रे ।
कारुण्यादुद्धारामृतमिदममरैर्दुर्लभं भूतहेतोः
यस्तं पूज्याभिपूज्यं परमगुरुममुं पदपातैर्नतोऽस्मि ॥

“I prostrate at the feet of my Paramaguru, the most adorable among the adorable, who, on seeing the creatures drowned in the ocean of repeated births and deaths, infested with terrible crocodiles, rescued, out of compassion, this nectar, which is difficult of attainment even for gods and which lies in the depths of the ocean called Vedas, which he stirred with the churning rod of his illumined intellect.” Similarly at the beginning of his Bhashyam of Taittiriya Upanishad, he says:

यैरिमै गुरुभिः पूर्वं पदवाक्यप्रमाणतः । व्याख्याताः सर्ववेदान्ताः तन्नित्यं प्रणतोऽस्म्यहम् ॥

“I pay obeisance always to those Gurus, who wrote commentaries earlier on Vedas and Upanishads using the Sastras of Vyakarana, Mimamsa and Tarka.”

Gowdapadacharya’s greatness can be understood and enjoyed from his Karika of Mandukya Upanishad. He prays to Gurus in the beginning of the fourth Pada, ‘Alatasantiprakarana’ of the Karika:

ज्ञानेनाऽकाशकल्पेन धर्मान् यो गगनोपमान् । ज्ञेयाभिन्नेन संबुद्धस्तं वन्दे द्विपदां वरम् ॥

“I pay obeisance to the One who is the chief among all men, who has known fully the dharmas resembling the (infinite) sky, through his knowledge that is comparable to space and is non-different from the object of knowledge.” While writing the commentary of this verse, Sri Sankaracharya says beautifully:

अद्वैतसम्प्रदायकर्तुः अद्वैतस्वरूपेणैव नमस्कारार्थोऽयं-आद्यश्लोकः ॥

“This first verse is for the purpose of paying obeisance in the true spirit of Advaita to those in the tradition, who established Advaita.” If we practise the Guru bhakti shown by the traditional Gurus, yearn for the compassion of our Purvacharyas and pray to them, we are sure to attain the state of no rebirth in this birth itself.

After Gowdapadacharya left, Chandra Sharma tied all the leaves containing his notes of Mahabhashya and walked with that headload, very exhausted after having spent many days and nights without food and sleep. He halted after some distance and started sleeping with that bundle

at his head. A goat ate away a part of the leaves at that time. A highly grieved Chandra Sharma tied up the balance leaves and walked his way and reached Ujjain. As the Bhashya now with him was the balance part after the goat ate away a part, the Bhashya came to be known as अज-भक्षित भाष्य .

After spending a few years in Griihasthasrama, Chandra Sarma became interested in spirituality by Guru's grace. He taught Mahabhashya to his sons and ensured its propagation through them. Having thus fulfilled the duty imposed by his Guru Sri Gowdapadacharya, he decided to enter Sanyasasrama with his initiation. He wished that his Vidya Guru should also be his Sanyasa Guru. He came to know that Sri Gowdapada received Sanyasa from Sri Sukacharya and remained in Badarikasrama, established in Brahman. He therefore went to Badarikasrama and had darshan of his Guru. Sri Gowdapada was very pleased to see his disciple of Purvasrama. He blessed him with all his heart and initiated him into Turiasrama. Chandra Sharma now became Govinda Bhagavatpada.

Govinda Bhagavatpada embarked on a yatra and reached the banks of river Narmada, where he engaged in austerity. Being established in Brahman, he taught Advaita vidya to his disciples and eagerly awaited the arrival of his prime disciple.

Questions

1. Who wrote Jagadguru Ratnamala?
2. Write the dhyana sloka of Sri Gowdapadacharya.
3. Write the dhyana sloka of Sri Govinda Bhagavatpadacharya.
4. Write the 14 Vyakarana Sutras. What is their popular name?
5. Patanjali – explain the name.
6. What are the other names of Maharishi Patanjali?
7. Where is 'Vyakarana Dana mandapam'?
8. What are the books written by Patanjali?
9. Why did Gowda become a brahmarakshasa?
10. How did he get relief from the curse?
11. Who studied under the brahmarakshasa?

12. Write the dhyana sloka of Mandukya Karika. Who wrote it?
13. How did the name 'Aja bhakshita bhashya' evolve?
14. Who was Gowda's Sanyasa Guru?
15. What is the name of Gowda's disciple?

Prasadam 3

	Page
1. Greatness of Sri Adi Sankara Bhagavatpadacharya	63
2. Sri Padmapadacharya	70
3. Sri Hastamalakacharya	75
4. Sri Totakacharya	79
5. Sri Sureswaracharya – Vartikakara	82

Lesson 1

Greatness of Sri Adi Sankara Bhagavatpadacharya

Bhagavan Krishna is known as Jagadguru- कृष्णं वन्दे जगद्गुरुम्. Kunti Devi also says while praying to Krishna Paramatma: अखिलगुरो भगवन्नमस्ते. One of the names of Jagadguru Bhagavan Krishna is Govinda. It is considered to be a special name. As it is a name of Jagadguru Krishna and it is also the name of Sri Sankaracharya's direct Guru, it appears that Sri Acharya has a special affinity for that name of Govinda. He has sung a soulful song भज गोविन्दम्. There is speciality for the name 'Hara' among the names of Siva and 'Govinda' among Vishnu's names. In response to the chant 'Namah Parvati Pataye', people say: 'Hara Hara Mahadeva'. Similarly when someone says: 'Sarvatra Govindanama Sankirtanam', people respond: 'Govinda, Govinda'. Govinda Pattabhishekam is noteworthy in Srimad Bhagavatham. Just as Parameswara has the name of Nataraja, Mahavishnu has the name of Govindaraja. 'Raja' is added to the name of Govinda alone. In Tiruppavai, Andal has sung extensively in praise of Govinda ('Kurai onrum illada Govinda, Koodarai vellum seer Govinda, Itraipparai kolvan anru kaan Govinda' etc.). When Achamanam is performed for purification of body, the name of Govinda is uttered after Achyuta and Anantha; in the twelve selected names of Vishnu, Govinda finds a place.

Among the Prakarana granthas (explanatory text) of Sri Bhagavatpadacharya, Viveka Chudamani is highly prized. At the start of this text he prays to his Guru Sri Govinda Bhagavatpadacharya:

सर्वेदान्तसिद्धान्तगोचरं तमगोचरम् ।

गोविन्दं परमानन्दं सद्गुरुं प्रणतोऽस्म्यहम् ॥

"I pay obeisance to Govinda Bhagavatpadacharya, who is knowable only by the principle of all Vedanta (Upanishads); who is not knowable by any other means; who is of the form of Supreme Bliss; who is Guru who is Sat, the only ever existent Paramatma." Here Guru is worshipped as Brahman. In Shatpadi Stotram he has also sung 'Damodara Guna Mandira, Sundara Vadanaravinda Govinda'; he has further composed a separate Govindashtakam.

Sri Sankara Bhagavatpadacharya met Govinda Bhagavatpadacharya, whose name of Govinda has such aforesaid greatness, on the banks of river Narmada and received initiation into Turiasrama as per rules. When Bhagavan wishes to show to the world a complete Gnani, who has

risen above all do's and don'ts, who has no more need for such restrictions and who is perfectly free, he shows him as Ativarnasrami (one who is beyond the system of varnas and asramas). When Bhagavan proposes to make people understand the essential nature of the restrictions of Sastras, he shows a Brahmagnani as a Sanyasi who observes all injunctions of Sastras. Though Ativarnasrami Gurus like Dattatreya and Sukacharya have appeared in Brahmavidya Sampradaya Guru Parampara, people will tend to copy the absence of observance of Sastraic restrictions in such Gurus in Kaliyuga, when all restrictions are already given a go by. They will not learn their inner sublime experience. This is the reason why the Guru Parampara from Gowdacharya onwards includes Sanyasa with the restrictions of Asrama.

The Acharya who has come down in order to show the right path to the world has to be a Sanyasi, observing fully the restrictions applicable to that asrama. Not only that, he should also be initiated not by an Ativarnasrami, but by a traditional Sanyasi. In order to emphasise this aspect, it is preferable that even the Guru's Guru should have been initiated by a Sanyasi. Hence it was that the traditional Guru Parampara from Gowdapadacharya onwards has figured Sanyasis with impeccable observance of Sastras.

In earlier yugas, when Asuras were there, they were easily identifiable with their cruel appearance and deeds; people could therefore keep away from them. When the troubles from Asuras became unbearable, people would pray to Bhagavan. Bhagavan would incarnate as and when necessary and destroy Asuras and protect dharma. Through great personages and his own incarnations, Bhagavan would protect Vedic Sanatana dharma. But, in Kaliyuga, Asuras and Rakshasas have entered the intellect of humans. They function as evil tendencies of mind and lead men astray, making it impossible to classify people as good and bad. Many non-Vedic religions appeared on earth inducing people to abandon the Vedic path and adopt anti-Vedic practices. They taught evil ideas and pushed people into dark forests of ignorance. The Vedic Sanatana dharma became emaciated. Tantric religions and non-Vedic philosophies ignored Veda and Paramatma; 72 such religions spread like wildfire. It was a situation that could not be rectified by humans. It called for Bhagavan to incarnate and re-establish Vedic Sanatana dharma on a sound footing. It came as a blessing to us. Bhagavan says in Gita:

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत । अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥
परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम् । धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय सम्भवामि युगे युगे ॥

“O Arjuna, whenever there is weakening of dharma and rise of adharma, I incarnate on earth. I appear from age to age for protecting the virtuous, destroying evil persons and re-establishing dharma.” However much adharma gains ground, there will always be a few virtuous great persons, who follow the path of dharma. Just as the Pravritti and Nivritti (engaging in Karmas and non-performance of Karmas) dharmas declined at the time of Krishna’s advent, the decay was far greater about 2500 years ago. During Bhagavan Krishna’s time, the path of Pravritti was not performed as yoga with a view to attaining Bhagavan, but was performed as mere rituals for reaping fruits like Swarga. At the time of Sri Sankaracharya’s advent, the situation was worse; many started abandoning Vedic karmas and leading people along evil paths. Hence the situation was ripe for Bhagavan to incarnate in order to protect and re-establish Pravritti and Nivritti dharmas. Evil persons were not to be decimated, but the evil in human beings had to be cleansed and people were to be made virtuous. It is said: आरोग्यं भास्करात् इच्छेत् । ज्ञानदाता महेश्वरः ॥

“Health is to be sought from Surya and Gnana from Siva.” In Prasnotara Ratna Malika, Sankaracharya says: को हि जगद्गुरुः उक्तः? शम्भु - “Who is called Jagadguru? Sambhu.”

ज्ञानं कुतः? शिवादेव - “From whom is Gnana to be obtained? From Siva alone.” Hence in order to rescue people from the terrible darkness of Agnana and give them the light of Gnana Surya, Paramatma willed for Parameswara to incarnate, just as Mahavishnu, another form of Paramatma, incarnated earlier. Sankara incarnated thus. ‘Sam’ means auspicious happiness. ‘Kara’ is doer.

अन्तः शाक्तः बहिः शैवः व्यवहारे तु वैष्णवः - “Sankara had aspect of Sakti inside and Siva outside (with Vibhuti and Rudraksha) and Vishnu in activity (being engaged continuously in activity).” Parameswara decided: We, being actionless, should engage in continuous action in order to teach actionless state to people, who are constantly engaged in action. Sri Vidyanaraya Swamigal says:

अज्ञानान्तर्गहनपतितानात्मविद्योपदेशैः

त्रातुं लोकान् भवदवशिखातापपापच्यमानान् ।

त्वक्त्वा मौनं वटविटपिनो मूलतो निस्सरन्ती

शम्भोर्भूर्तिश्चरति भुवने शङ्कराचार्यरूपा ॥

“Having abandoned silence and leaving the foot of the banyan tree, Sankaracharya, the form of Sambhu, is moving about in the world in order to save the people, who are fallen into the darkness of Agnana and roasted in the forest fire of samsara, through teachings of Atmavidya.” Sambhu,

who is actionless and the fountain of the stream of Gnana, became Sankara, the giver of that eternal bliss to all people. One, who remained silent, became engaged in many debates and many teachings and wrote hundreds of books. He toured the entire Bharata Desa three times.

Dakshinamurthy, whom thought and speech cannot attain, came down to where people were and approached them on his own, even if they kept away and taught them the highest Gnana with unparalleled compassion and that was our Sankaracharya.

Veda, Purana Authorities for Sankara's Advent

Rigveda

Vasishta Ramayanam describes the teachings of Advaita Gnana of Vasishtha to Sri Rama. There is a similar book named Vishnu Dharmottaram, which is an appendix to Vishnu Purana. It is stated therein that Pushkara, a Mahayaksha, taught Pravritti Marga as per Vedas (Karma Marga) to Sri Rama. Pushkara explains there the meaning of Rigveda Mantras:

एताम् धेनुं उपह्वयामि सुदुघाम्

उपह्वये सुदुघां धेनुमेताम्

“Like the cow suckling its calf, Parameswara protects the world.” In that context, Pushkara said: “When the principle of Advaita is forgotten on earth, Parameswara, like the cow rushing to suckle the calf, will incarnate as Sankaracharya along with four disciples in order to bless the world with milk of Gnana.” This is cited by Bhaskararaya, the famous Sri Vidya Upasaka, in a verse on Sri Bhagavatpadacharya.

श्रीरामं प्रति पुष्कराभिध महायक्षेण वेदत्रय
व्याख्यानावसरे विशिष्य कथितं श्रीविष्णुधर्मोत्तरे ।

एतां धेनुं-उपह्वयामि सुदुघां इतियऋक्गतं शङ्करा-

चार्यं शिष्यचतुष्टयेन सहितं वन्दे गुरुणां गुरुम् ॥

This also tells us that Sri Rama, along with his brothers, Bharata, Lakshmana and Satrugna, mastered all the four Vedas including their commentary.

Yajurveda

Sri Rudra Prasna occupies an important position in the fourth Kaanda, which is at the centre of the seven Kaandas of Yajurveda, which itself is at the centre of the three Vedas, Rig, Yajur and Sama. Siva Panchakshara occurs in the eighth Anuvaka in Sri Rudra Prasna.

नमः शम्भवे च मयोभवे च नमः शङ्कराय च मयस्कराय च नमः शिवाय च

Here, first Sambhu is mentioned, followed by Sankara and finally Siva Panchakshara. Sambhu is the silent form; Sankara is the form of Guru, who teaches in words. Then comes Panchakshara mantra, which must be received from Guru. Thus Yajurveda also proves that Sankara is indeed the incarnation of Sambhu. Further in the same Sri Rudra Prasna, it says: कपर्दिने च व्युत्केशाय च, meaning one with matted locks and one with totally shaven head. The matted locks of Parameswara are known as 'Kaparda'; he himself is called Kapardiswara. (In the Siva temple in Tiruvalanchuzhi near Swamimalai in Tamilnadu, where Sveta Vinayaka blesses us, Parameswara is known by the name of Kapardiswara). In the series of names of Parameswara, Kapardi and Vyuptakesa occur after the well known names of Bhava, Rudra, Sarva, Pasupathi, Nilakantha and Sithikantha. Vyuptakesa refers to the Sanyasa form of Parameswara; that refers to our Acharya only. Abhinava Sankara, a great scholar, who wrote commentary for Sri Rudra Prasna, says that when Veda unequivocally mentions a clean shaven headed form of Parameswara, it is indeed a clear reference to the future incarnation of Sri Sankaracharya through divine vision.

Sivapurana

Sri Sankaracharya's story is contained in chapter 16, Section 9. There Parameswara tells Parvathi that his Amsavathara would be born in a place called Sakala (Kaladi) in Kerala as Sankara, a virtuous brahmana.

केरले सकलग्रामे विप्रपत्न्यां मदंशजः ।
भविष्यति महादेवि शङ्कराख्यो द्विजोत्तमः ॥

Kurmapurana

Parameswara incarnating as Sankaracharya is mentioned here also.

करिष्यत् अवतारं स्वं शङ्करो नीललोहितः ।
श्रौतस्मार्तप्रतिष्ठार्थं भूतानां हितकाम्यया ॥

'Siva, Nilalohita (of purple colour) would incarnate as Sankara in order to re-establish Sroutha, the karmas of yaga etc. and Smartha, the rituals of Dharma Sastra, for the good of the living beings.'

Lingapurana

When Vedic knowledge and Vedic karmas would become subject to denigration in Kaliyuga, Nilalohita, a Rudra form of Mahadeva, would incarnate as Sankara, bring dharmas to light, overcome the evil of Kaliyuga and return to Kailasa victoriously.

निन्दन्ति वेदविद्याश्च द्विजाः कर्माणि वै कलौ ।
कलौ रुद्रो महादेवः शङ्करो नीललोहितः ।
प्रकाशते प्रतिष्ठार्थं धर्मश्च विकृताकृतिः ।
एतं विप्रानिषेवन्ते येन केनापि शङ्करम् ।
कलिदोषान् विनिर्जित्य प्रयान्ति परमं पदम् ॥

Bhavishyapurana

कल्यादौ द्विसहस्रान्ते लोकानुग्रहकाम्यया ।
चतुर्भिः सह शिष्यैस्तु शङ्करोऽवतरिष्यति ॥

‘Sankara would incarnate at the close of two thousand years from start of Kaliyuga along with four disciples with a view to blessing the people.’

Brahmandapurana

The story has been told of incarnation of Sankaracharya in Kaladi to Sivaguru and his wife for the purpose of annihilating the religions like Charvaka etc.

In Vedas and Puranas, Sri Sankara Bhagavatpadacharya’s incarnation as a partial appearance of Parameswara has thus been recounted in a grand manner.

The date of incarnation of Sri Sankaracharya is Nandana year- 509 B.C. The year of his return to Kailasa is Raktakshi year- 477 B.C. His age was 32 at that time. Based on many Puranas, records of Sankara Mathas, records of Guru traditions, proclamations, other supporting facts, hearsay beliefs etc., it is observed that the period of Sri Sankaracharya is from Kali 2593 to Kali 2625. This also tallies with the statement in Bhavishyottarapurana referring to his incarnation at the close of two thousand years after advent of Kaliyuga. Kali year period 2593-2625 is same as 509-477 B.C.

Questions

1. Write about the speciality of the name of Govinda.
2. Write about Asuras in Kaliyuga.
3. When does Bhagavan incarnate?
4. What did Bhagavan Parameswara decide?
5. Write the dhyana sloka of Sri Bhagavatpada.
6. Write the Rigvedic authority.
7. Write the sloka of Sri Bhaskararaya.

8. Write a short note on 'Vyuptakesa'.
9. What is the Sivapurana verse?
10. Write a short note on the period of Sri Acharya.

Lesson 2

Sri Padmapadacharya

In his Purvasrama, Padmapadacharya was known as Sanandana. He was from Chola Desa. He went on pilgrimage to Kashi, had darshan of Sri Kashi Viswanatha and Sri Visalakshi, had bath in the sacred Ganga waters every day and performed Anushthanas. During that period Sri Sankara Bhagavatpadacharya happened to arrive at Kashi along with his disciples. Sanandana met Sri Acharya and paid obeisance. Taking note of his humility, Sri Acharya asked him kindly: 'Who are you? To which place do you belong? Why have you come here?' Sanadana then replied:

पृष्टो बभाण गुरुमुत्तरमुत्तरज्ञो विप्रो गुरो मम गृहं बुध चोलदेशे ।
यत्रापगा वहति तत्र कवेरकन्या यस्याः पयो हरिपदाम्बुजभक्तिमूलम् ॥

"O wise Guru, my home is in Chola Desa, where Kaveri river flows, whose water instils devotion in the lotus feet of Hari." Sri Acharya was impressed by his modesty and accepted him as his disciple.

Earlier, while Sanandana was living on the banks of Kaveri, a certain venerable person had taught him Sri Nrisimha mantra. Sanandana chanted the mantra till complete Siddhi was attained and, desirous of having darshan of Sri Nrisimhamurthy, he went to a forest. A hunter saw his brilliance and asked him: "Why have you come to the forest? What do you want? I shall help you." Sanandana was not keen to talk with him and wished to send him away. He knew the hunter would not understand if he said to him that he had come in search of Nrisimha; he therefore told him that he had come looking for an animal, having a lion's head and human form below the neck. The hunter laughed terribly and said: "Our traditional occupation is hunting in forest. We have been living in this forest for many generations. That kind of animal does not exist here. Do not spoil your health; go home." Sanandana told him that he would not leave without seeing such an animal and asked him to mind his own business without worrying about him. The hunter left, saying: "There is no such animal in this forest. However I admire your courage and firmness, and I shall find out and catch that animal by tomorrow night and bring it to you. If not, I shall take my life." Sanandana felt relieved of the disturbance of the hunter and started to chant the mantra in peace. The hunter continuously searched for that strange half-lion, half-man animal with one-pointed devotion in the entire forest without food, water and sleep. As the next night neared, the hunter thought: "That brahmana boy will not tell a lie. I am unable to find the animal. As per my vow, I shall have to kill myself." He cut some creepers and tied them round his neck and tried to tighten their grip. He meditated only on that animal even at that point of time.

Pleased with his sacrifice and devotion to the cause, Bhagavan Nrisimha appeared before him. The hunter's determination to keep his word pleased Bhagavan immensely. The hunter examined the form of Bhagavan from head to toe to check agreement with the description given by the boy. Bhagavan submitted himself to the test and his graceful vision was directed to the hunter. The hunter tied Bhagavan with the very creepers he used in his attempt to immolate himself and pulled him to the presence of the boy. He asked the boy to check the animal he had brought. But Sanandana could not see Bhagavan. The hunter said: "I have brought the animal to you; you may now take it home happily." Sanandana could not believe what the hunter was saying. He however prayed to Bhagavan - लक्ष्मीनृसिंह मम देहि करावलम्बम्. In order to prove the hunter right, Bhagavan roared. Sanandana could hear the roar, though he could not see Bhagavan. He sang hymns in Bhagavan's praise. He said: "Bhagavan, I have been meditating on you alone and performing tapas; can I not have your darshan? What is the good fortune of the hunter? He has had your darshan." He then heard a voice from the sky: "The hunter had the single-pointed concentration which is attained after meditating on Bhagavan's form for a crore of years. There has been no Rishi, who, like him, concentrated without hunger and sleep and gambled his life in his pursuit. It is only because of association with this great devotee that you had the fortune of hearing the roar and this speech, though not darshan. You have now attained mantra siddhi too. You have my blessings always; I shall come to you and help you when you are in need." Sanandana became extremely happy and fell at the feet of the hunter. The hunter was aghast. He had received Bhagavan's especial grace.

Sanandana, who had been blessed by Bhagavan Nrisimha thus, joined Sri Bhagavatpadacharya at Kashi as his disciple after many years.

Saving the life of Sri Acharya

Sri Acharya condemned many religious branches pursuing paths opposed to Vedas and turned them to the right Vedic path. Of such branches, Kapalika was one. Kapalikas used to sacrifice humans and consume human flesh. A clever Kapalika decided to end the human sojourn on earth of Sri Bhagavatpadacharya. He approached him and after paying obeisance, said: "I wish to have direct darshan of Bhagavan. If I sacrifice the head of a king or an Atmagnani, I can get the darshan of Kapala Bhagavan. I cannot even think of a king's head. The ocean of compassion that

you are, my wish will be fulfilled if you grant your head.” Sri Acharya, compassion incarnate, said to him: “If this useless human body is going to be of use in securing the darshan of Iswara for you, I am happy. I shall come here when my disciples are asleep. You may fulfil your wish.” Accordingly Sri Acharya came to the place of the Kapalika when his disciples were asleep. The Kapalika was happy and made preparations for the human sacrifice. Sri Acharya, who was alone, was immersed in meditation on Brahman and entered Samadhi state. Sanandana, who was in deep sleep, jumped to that place, took the Kapalika in his lap and tore him into two. The Kapalika’s body dropped lifeless. Sri Acharya, who came down to the normal sensory plane after a while, saw Sanandana standing there and the Kapalika dead. Having understood everything that had happened, Sri Acharya sang hymns of praise of Sri Nrisimha Bhagavan. After some time, when Sanandana came back to normalcy, he said to Sri Acharya: “I don’t know anything. Everything is the grace of Sri Nrisimha Bhagavan.” Sanandana then narrated the incidents that occurred in his boyhood and recalled the assurance of Sri Nrisimha Bhagavan that he would come at suitable time. He became happy that Bhagavan used him as an instrument for saving the life of his Guru.

Padmapada

Once Sri Acharya was bathing near a bank of Ganga river. On the far bank Sanandana was folding the dried clothes of Sri Acharya. Sri Acharya wished to bring out Sanandana’s Guru bhakti to public knowledge. He asked Sanandana to fetch the clothes. Keen as he was on acting as instructed by Guru without delay, Sanandana got down into the river without bothering about the mighty Ganga. As he walked on the river as if on a plane solid surface, Devi Ganga materialised a lotus flower at every step of his. He reached the other bank of the river and handed the clothes to Sri Acharya and prostrated. All disciples saw this miracle with great wonder. Gurunatha said to Sanandana: “As you walked on the Ganga with your steps on lotus flowers, you will be known as Padmapada from now on.” Padmapada said: “When the Gurunatha, whose very thought renders the ocean of samsara knee-deep, orders, walking on the Ganga is no great feat”.

Panchapadika

As instructed by Sri Acharya, Padmapadacharya wrote a gloss on Sri Acharya’s commentary on Brahma Sutras. He read out some parts of it to Sri Acharya. He sought permission from Sri Acharya for going on pilgrimage to religious centres. Though Sri Acharya told him about the difficulties of pilgrimage, he started off on a South Indian tour, carrying the manuscript of the gloss

on Brahma Sutra commentary and reached Jambukeswaram. He went to his uncle's residence there. He entrusted the manuscript to his uncle and asked him to keep it safe till he returns from Rameswaram. After he left, his uncle read the gloss. He was a lover of Purva Mimamsa and a ritualist. He thought that if this book were propagated, the way of rituals might be harmed; he therefore decided to destroy the book. As destruction of the book in isolation might lead to suspicion, he destroyed the whole house by setting it on fire. As he did not realise the greatness of the book, being of impure mind, he did this terrible thing! Padmapada returned from Rameswaram. His uncle wept and said in mock grief: "Something terrible has happened! The house was engulfed in fire and the palm leaf manuscript got destroyed!" Padmapada, believing his uncle's version to be true, said: "Never mind, I shall write the book again." His uncle, afraid that he might rewrite the book, gave him Bhiksha which would affect his brain.

After some time, Padmapada met Sri Acharya and expressed regret at what had happened. Sri Acharya consoled him and said: "Never mind; you had read out to me your gloss on the four Padas of the first chapter, and the first Pada of the second chapter. I shall now dictate those parts. You write it down and propagate the same." That book, containing the gloss on the first five Padas of Brahma Sutra Bhashya, came to be known as Panchapadika.

During the period Sri Acharya spent his time in Kashi, having bath in the Ganga and having darshan of Sri Viswanatha and Sri Visalakshi, Sri Vyasacharya, the author of Brahma Sutras, came there in the guise of an old man and put Sri Acharya to test. Their debate on Brahma Sutra Bhashya extended over many days. Padmapada then saw through the visitor's true identity with his divine vision. Sri Acharya was the incarnation of Sri Parameswara; Sri Vyasa Bhagavan was Mahavishnu incarnate. There cannot be any victory or defeat in their debate. Sri Vyasacharya was just enjoying the nectar of Sri Acharya's Bhashya through his own words. Padmapada wished to put an end to the debate and said:

शङ्करः शङ्करस्साक्षात् व्यासो नारायणः स्वयम् ।

तयोर्विवादे सम्प्राप्ते किङ्करः किं करोम्यहम् ॥

"Sankara is none other than Siva; Vyasa is none other than Narayana. When these two debate, what should I, a poor servant do."

Padmapadacharya thus attained a high state in Guru bhakti.

Questions

1. Where did Sanandana meet Sri Acharya?
2. What was the reply given by Sanandana to the question put by Sri Acharya?
3. To whom did Bhagavan Nrisimha give darshan first?
4. How did the hunter locate Nrisimha Murthy?
5. Who was known as Padmapada? How did he get that name?
6. Write a short note on Panchapadika.

Lesson 3

Sri Hastamalakacharya

In the verse praising the traditional Guru lineage, Hastamalakacharya's name occurs after Padmapadacharya. 'Hastamalaka' means gooseberry in the palm. This term indicates an object which is clearly and completely visible. If you keep brinjal, mango etc. in the palm, a large part of it will be hidden from view. Though lemon, wood-apple etc. are round, they have weight and press the palm and are only partly visible. It is only 'Amalaka' which is light and visible in complete form. Hastamlaka was so called because he was like Amalaka in the palm. How did he get this name?

Once when Sri Bhagavatpadacharya was touring the country with thousands of disciples, he reached a village called Sribali near the famous Siva kshetra, Gokarna. There a brahmana called Prabhakara came and met Sri Acharya with his 13th son. He said: "My son has grown up well. But he does not understand anything; does not speak; does not eat even the food kept in the mouth; does not sleep. He has a vacant look; he does not appear to listen; he does not play. Please cure him. Please make him normal." As soon as he looked at the boy, Sri Acharya understood his state. The following lines describing Atmagnanis came to his mind.

१. वेदान्तवाक्येषु सदा रमन्तः
1. Those who revel always in the Upanishadic words.
२. विशोकमन्तःकरणे स्मरन्तः
2. Those who ever meditate on Atma, free from grief.
३. देहादिभावं परिमार्जयन्तः
3. Those who have cut themselves off totally from attachment to body etc.
४. आत्मानमात्मान्यवलोकयन्तः
4. Those who perceive Atma in their depths of mind.
५. नान्तर्न मध्यं न बहिः स्मरन्तः
5. Those who do not think of anything inside, outside or middle.
६. स्वानन्दभावे परितुष्टिमन्तः
6. Those who are fully contented in their blissful nature.
७. अहर्निशं ब्रह्मणि ये रमन्तः
7. Those who revel in Brahman day and night.

The boy's father did not appreciate this blissful state of his son and looked forward to Sri Acharya's blessings with great anxiety. Sri Acharya asked the boy with compassion: "Who are you? Which is your place? Why are you like this?" At that very moment, on listening to the nectarine words of Sri Acharya, the boy opened up like water gushing forth in a stream on opening the gate. He described in ten beautiful verses the state of Atma Svarupa, Jivanmukta - नित्य उपलब्धिस्वरूपोहं आत्मा - "I am Atma, ever attained". As this Stotra brings out clearly like 'gooseberry in palm' the state of eternal, free, pure consciousness, the Atma Svarupa, it has come to be known as 'Hastamalaka Stotram'. Above all, the fact that Sri Bhagavatpadacharya himself wrote a commentary for this gem of a Stotra describing the state of Jivanmukta, who ever revels in the bliss of Atma, is a pointer to its greatness. That commentary is known as 'Hastamalakiyam'. Sri Acharya took Hastamalaka as his disciple. In fact it was Sri Acharya who gave him the name of Hastamalaka. It is said that Sri Acharya appointed him as the first Acharya of the Puri Jagannatha Matham. Some books mention that he was the first Acharya of the Dwaraka Matham.

That Hastamalaka was an Atmagnani right from childhood owing to spiritual efforts made in many previous births can be perceived from Srimad Bhagavad Gita from Sri Krishna's reply to Arjuna.

Srimad Bhagavad Gita, 6th chapter states:

अर्जुन उवाच

अयतिः श्रद्धयोपेतो योगाच्चलितमानसः ।
 अप्राप्य योगसंसिद्धिं कां गतिं कृष्ण गच्छति ॥ ३७
 कच्चिन्नोभयविभ्रष्टश्छिन्नाभ्रमिव नश्यति ।
 अप्रतिष्ठो महाबाहो विमूढो ब्रह्मणः पथि ॥ ३८
 एतन्मे संशयं कृष्ण छेत्तुमर्हस्यशेषतः ।
 त्वदन्यः संशयस्यास्य छेत्ता न ह्युपपद्यते ॥ ३९

श्रीभगवानुवाच

पार्थ नैवेह नामुत्र विनाशस्तस्य विद्यते ।
 नहि कल्याणकृत्कश्चिद्दुर्गतिं तात गच्छति ॥
 प्राप्य पुण्यकृतां लोकानुषित्वा शाश्वतीः समाः ।
 शुचीनां श्रीमतां गेहे योगभ्रष्टोऽभिजायते ।
 अथवा योगिनामेव कुले भवति धीमताम् ॥
 एतद्धि दुर्लभतरं लोके जन्म यदीदृशम् ।
 तत्र तं बुद्धिसंयोगं लभते पौर्वदेहिकम् ॥
 यतते च ततो भूयः संसिद्धौ कुरुनन्दन ।

पूर्वाभ्यासेन तेनैव ह्यियते ह्यवशोऽपि सः ।
जिज्ञासुरपि योगस्य शब्दब्रह्मातिवर्तते ।
प्रयत्नाद्यमानस्तु योगी संशुद्धकिल्बिषः ।
अनेकजन्मसंसिद्धस्ततो याति परां गतिम् ॥

Arjuna said to Sri Krishna: "Mind is unsteady. It is possible to control the flow of air; but mind is difficult to control. He, who, though possessed of faith, and whose mind wanders away from Yoga, to what end does he, having failed to attain perfection in Yoga, go, o Krishna? Fallen from both, does he not, o mighty-armed, perish like a rent cloud, supportless and deluded in the path of Brahman? This doubt of mine, o Krishna, please dispel completely; because it is not possible for anyone but you to dispel this doubt." Bhagavan replied: "O Partha, neither in this world, nor in the next, is there sorrow for him. None, verily, who strives to be good, o my son, ever comes to grief. Having attained to the worlds of the righteous, and having dwelt there for long years, he who had fallen from Yoga, is born again in the home of the pure and the wealthy. Or, he is even born in the family of the wise Yogis; verily a birth like this is very difficult to obtain in this world. There he comes to be united with the knowledge acquired in his former body and strives more than before for perfection, o son of the Kurus. By that very former practice he carries on in spite of himself. Even he, who merely wishes to know Yoga, goes beyond the Sabdabrahman. But the Yogi, who strives with assiduity, purified from sins and perfected through many births, then attains the highest state."

This same idea that one, who falls from the path of Yoga at the physical death of body, will never fall on evil days is brought out by Sri Bhagavatpadacharya in the commentary on Prasnopanishad. This is found in the 5th Prasna by way of reply of Bhagavan Pippalada to the question put by Maharishi Saibya Satyakama. He repeats Sri Krishna's statement there.

योगभ्रष्टः कदाचिदपि न दुर्गतिं गच्छति (५.३)

Further in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (4.4.2), there is reference to 'Purvapragna'.

सविज्ञानो भवति सविज्ञानमेवान्ववक्रामति ।

तं विद्याकर्मणी समन्वारभेते पूर्वप्रज्ञा च ॥ (४.४.२)

Sri Acharya says in his commentary:

पूर्वानुभूतविषया प्रज्ञा पूर्वप्रज्ञा ।

अतीतकर्मफलानुभववासना इत्यर्थः ॥ (तेन)

पूर्वप्रज्ञया विना कर्मणि वा फलोपभोगे वा न कस्यचित्प्रवृत्तिः उपपद्यते ॥

“The vasanas (tendencies) acquired in many births continue to follow us. We see that many children perform rare acts without any training in this birth. Without the previous impressions, that particular attitude to work or enjoyment of fruit is not gained.”

Lesson 4

Sri Totakacharya

Though the disciples of Sri Adisankara Bhagavatpadacharya are innumerable, we primarily refer to four of them in the traditional lineage of disciples. Sri Totakacharya was the jewel among them in Guru bhakti and surrender to Guru.

Totakashtakam is the stotra chanted every day in all Asramas by the devotees of Sri Bhagavatpadacharya, right from scholars to the unlettered. Everybody has Totakashtakam in his heart right from childhood. It was Sri Totakacharya who blessed us with that jewel of a stotra. As this stotra emerged from his mouth spontaneously in the metre 'Totaka' like surging nectar, he is lovingly called Totakacharya. Though many are the stotras on Sri Acharya written by many disciples, and many are the Advaitic texts authored by them, Totakashtakam stands out among them all as the best and the longest living. It is a stotra which will fetch Guru's blessings and fruit immediately; it can verily be called 'Stotra Chintamani'.

Giri was the child of one Brahma Jivisvanatha Adhvani. Adhvaris are those who have performed yagas. Yajna, Adhvani, Dikshita - all mean the same. Giri was born in an illustrious family, which performed all yagnas mentioned in Vedas by way of dedication to Iswara with the spirit of Karmayoga. Owing to the merit of such yagnas performed with dedication to Iswara in previous lives, Giri happened to join the glowing lineage of disciples of Sri Bhagavatpadacharya. Sri Acharya, who recognised his state of Gnana right at the first instance, took Giri as one of his four prime disciples. Giri is also called 'Ananda Giri'.

Giri had limitless and sincere devotion to his Guru. He was ever in the service of the Guru. He was very virtuous and full of humility. He used to perform various services for the Guru like arranging for his Anushthanas, drying and keeping his clothes properly, arranging the palm leaf scripts for Bhashya lessons, cleaning the place etc. Sri Acharya enjoyed his devoted service and blessed him fully. When Guru's Bhashya lessons were going on, all disciples used to enjoy the same; but Giri alone appeared to enjoy quietly with no outward sign. Everyone thought he is a dull student. However the fact was that Ananda Giri, who was ever in Guru's service, revelled in bliss.

One day in Sri Acharya's Bhashya class, the teacher and all the students had arrived. Sri Acharya was sitting silently. Ananda Giri had not reached the class yet. The other disciples started talking among themselves: "Why should we wait for Ananda Giri? Whether he is in the class or not, it is the same." Sri Acharya knew about this type of conversation going on. All disciples are the same for the Guru in the Gurukulam. The students should never think of their own superiority and another's inferiority and should not develop arrogance of learning. Sri Acharya felt a special compassion for Ananda Giri, whom others thought as dull.

Yes! It was the moment of end of certain Prarabdha karma for Ananda Giri; the time for all defects to vanish. Sri Acharya refers to क्षीणदोषः in his commentary on Kenopanishad and Chandogya Upanishad. This was the time when the Guru's sidelong glance, grace and compassion welled up. Ananda Giri was about to complete his service of folding the dried clothes of the Guru and starting off for the class. Sri Acharya blessed Ananda Giri through dhyana that all secrets of Vedas and Vedanta and Sastras might become apparent to him. Immediately Ananda Giri came there jumping, dancing in bliss and singing a rare beautiful hymn with rhythmic tapping of hands. That was a stotra composed by himself while in an abnormal mood of trance. It was set to the rare 'Totaka' metre. The words as well as the ideas in the stotra were all such that even scholars would admire and wonder. The student, considered by his friends as dull, had composed eight verses in praise of the Guru. He came jumping and singing and fell at the feet of Sri Acharya with tears of joy in his eyes. Is there anything that Sri Acharya's grace will not achieve? That jewel of a stotra is called Totakashtakam. From that day, Sri Ananda Giri came to be known as Sri Totakacharya, which name stuck to him for ever. All children should learn Sri Totakashtakam by heart and chant it and prostrate to Sri Acharya every day. Every verse in that stotra ends with "भव शङ्कर देशिक मे शरणम्" – "O Sankara Guru, please be my refuge." Once we take refuge under Sri Acharya, he becomes responsible to lead us and reach us to the right destination. The way Sri Totakacharya took refuge, danced, sang and wept that day moves us to this day and enables Sri Acharya's grace to fall on us too.

Sri Totakacharya has also authored a book titled श्रुतिसारसमुद्धरणम् "Srutisara Samuddharanam", in which he presents in 179 verses the essence of the secrets of Advaita. That book is also known as वेदान्तवेद्यपरतत्त्वनिवेदनम् . It is also set in Totaka metre.

Sri Bhagavatpadacharya established a Matham in the Himalayas in Badarikasrama in Badari kshetra. Sri Totakacharya was appointed by him as the first head of this Matham, known as 'Jyotir Matham'.

Let us all chant Sri Totakashtakam every day and prostrate to Sri Acharya and receive everything good and auspicious through his blessings.

Questions

1. What is the original name of Sri Totakacharya? What was his father's name?
2. How many slokas are there in Totakashtakam?
3. How did Sri Totakacharya get that name?
4. How did Sri Bhagavatpadacharya bless him?
5. Which is the other book written by Sri Totakacharya? How many slokas are there in that book?
6. Where is Jyotir Matham situated? Who was its first Peethadhipathi?

Lesson 5

Sri Sureswaracharya

As instructed by Sri Veda Vyasa, Sri Bhagavatpadacharya started off on Bharata desa yatra from Kashi. In Prayag, he went to the residence of Kumarila Bhatta, who was the incarnation of Sri Subrahmanya. Kumarila Bhatta was a great Purva Mimamsaka. He was keen on propagating that Vedas intended to establish Karma Marga alone. As victory over him in debate would amount to vanquishing all Mimamsakas, Sri Acharya went to meet him. But Kumarila Bhatta had covered himself in burning husk from neck downwards and planned to lose his life. When Sri Acharya saw him in this condition, he shed tears. Kumarila Bhatta told him that he would be lifeless in a short while and suggested that Sri Acharya should win over his disciple Mandana Misra in debate and that by doing so, the truth of Advaita would come to light.

Kumarila Bhatta had devoted his entire life to the path of Karma. Sri Acharya now told him that Advaita alone is the truth and the fruit, and cited principles from Sastras in support. Sri Acharya, the repository of Advaitic peace, thus taught him the unity of Jiva and Brahman, the secrets of Advaita, the pinnacle of peace that Karma could never touch. It was owing to Kumarila Bhatta's performing all karmas laid down in Vedas that Sri Acharya, the incarnation of Sri Parameswara, gave him darshan and granted him Mukti. As Sri Acharya expounded on Advaita with love, Kumarila Bhatta understood that it was incorrect to treat Karma as the final end. He came to know that eternal peace would result only by doing Vedic karmas with dedication to Iswara, obtaining Gnana through Guru and perceiving Atma. He said: "I feel fulfilled by your darshan and philosophical sermons. I accept your philosophy in toto." He added in prayer: "Please meet my disciple and Karma Mimamsaka Mandana Misra in Mahishmathi town, tell him that I have accepted Advaita philosophy, win him over in debate and establish Advaita on strong footing. He is quite wealthy and influential. He has spread the principle of Mimamsa quite well in that area. He has propagated that karma is the final end of Veda and has made people perform all Vedic rituals. Following his lead, many persons there are Somayajis, Vajapeyayajis and Sarvakratuyajis. Mandana Misra has been keenly following Maharishi Jaimini's Mimamsa Sastra and appears like Jaimini incarnate. Please go and win him over in debate."

Sri Acharya agreed to do accordingly. In Sri Acharya's presence the heat of the husk became cool for Kumarila Bhatta; the body disintegrated. Kumarila Bhatta, who was of the form of Agni and who had taken birth from the Agni-eye in the forehead of Sri Parameswara, got dissolved in Agni.

Sri Acharya went to Mahishmathi to meet Mandana Misra. He thought: "These Karmiks are not keen on eternal bliss; without devotion to Iswara, they are after karmas which bestow temporary pleasure! They are not on the path of Moksha and take birth again and again. In addition to the karmas as per Purva Mimamsa, if only they listen to Uttara Mimamsa – Upanishads, Brahma Sutras and Bhashyas- from a good Guru and do Mananam and Nididhyasanam (cogitation and absorption) and perceive the truth of Atma and reap limitless bliss and reach the state of no rebirth!" He therefore very compassionately went to Mandana Misra's residence along with his disciples in order to teach him the Moksha Sastra. That was the day of Sraadh in Mandana Misra's home. As he thought that a Sanyasi had come for alms of food, he said he would give him alms later (after the Sraadh is over). Sri Acharya clarified that he had not come for alms of food and that he was keen on alms of debate and that Mandana Misra's Guru Kumarila Bhatta had sent him there. Mandana Misra agreed for the alms of debate after Sraadh was over.

When both sides are engaged in keen debate on subtle points of philosophy, there is a need for an arbiter. They agreed that Sarasavani, wife of Mandana Misra, the incarnation of Devi Saraswathi, would act as the judge. Mandana Misra was actually the incarnation of Brahma; Sarasavani was Saraswathi incarnate. Sri Acharya was Parameswara himself. When Sri Acharya incarnated to establish the true Sastra, all Devas also took birth on earth to support his cause. Sarasavani agreed to be the arbiter. Certain conditions were agreed to by both parties: Both would wear garlands, and one whose garland fades first would be treated as defeated; if the defeated person is a Grihastha, he would accept Sanyasasramam from Sri Acharya, and if it were the opposite, the defeated Sanyasi would come back to Grihasthasrama.

As in the case of the debate between Sri Vyasacharya and Sri Sankaracharya held at Kashi, this debate also was very exciting right from day one. Hundreds of great scholars learnt the secrets of Sastra impart by attending this debate. विद्वत्संयोगे प्रज्ञावृद्धिः – They got rid of their doubts. Sri

Acharya has said श्रुतिमततर्कोऽनुसन्धीयताम्. Is it not a fact that if Sastra is debated without

deviation from Sruti's meaning, the mind would get cleansed? Sri Adisankara's biographies state that this debate lasted 21 days. Let us now turn to the conclusions reached.

Sri Sankaracharya showed through Sruti and reasoned arguments based on experience that through the path of Karma and Bhakti, it is Gnana alone that is required to be attained. The love generated by bhakti, followed by the subduing of the overflowing love in the final stage, resulting in peace of Advaita Gnana is what confers completeness on Jiva; this is the supreme import of Vedas. It can be seen in the commentaries of Prasthanatraya of Sri Acharya that he has established through Sruti and inferences and experiences that Advaita philosophy overrides Purva Mimamsa principles expounded by others. In his Upadesa Panchakam he says: वेदो नित्यमधीयतां तदुदितं कर्म स्वनुष्ठीयताम् - "Veda should be chanted every day; karmas mentioned therein should be performed well." He asserts that if the karmas are performed with attitude of dedication to Iswara, they would raise the Jiva to the higher plane of Gnana, ready for Liberation and grant him Moksha and thus avert the need for rebirth in this samsara.

Mandana Misra listened to the compassionate arguments of Sri Acharya built on the foundations of Sruti and, without feeling he was the defeated party, he saw Sri Acharya as Parameswara in the form of Dakshinamurthy, who had come to raise him to the state of Gnana. Like the progression of blossom, flower, unripe vegetable and finally ripe fruit in a tree, if the Jiva keeps performing Karmas of his Svadharma with the sense of dedication to Iswara without desire and anger, that Karma itself will gradually uplift him to a higher state and get him Gnana through a Sadguru and render the Jiva into the birthless state. Even in this world, proper performance of assigned Karmas is imperative for living with wealth and prosperity. For a brahmana, the first step in performance of Svadharma is study of Vedas from a Guru. Sri Acharya had come to rescue the virtuous Jiva, viz. Mandana Misra from the ocean of samsara.

The garland Mandana Misra was wearing started to fade. Sarasavani also, without considering her husband as the defeated party, permitted him to adopt Sanyasasrama, realising that Sri Acharya had indeed come to raise him to higher state. Sri Acharya gave Mandana Misra the Diksha name of Sureswara and took him as his disciple. He established Sarasavani, who was Saraswathi incarnate, as Sarada on the banks of river Tungabhadra and prayed to her to bless all people. One can read in the divine history of Si Acharya the dialogue of Manadana Misra with Sri

Acharya and of Sri Acharya with Sarasavani. That Mandana Misra, the chief life-breath of Mimamsa Sastra, became the disciple of Sri Acharya strengthened very much the resuscitation of the Vedanta philosophy.

Sureswaracharya wrote the book titled 'Naishkarmya Siddhi' based on Sri Bhagavatpadacharya's 'Upadesa Sahasri'. He, who was wedded to Karmas alone so far, wrote in this book that dropping of all karmas and keeping silence is the greatest attainment and Liberation and that was the conclusion of Vedanta. Sri Acharya, who saw the book, was very satisfied and happy. Sureswaracharya also wrote 'Taittiriyanopanishad Bhashya Vartika' explaining the import of Taittiriyanopanishad; similarly 'Brihadaranyakopanishad Bhashya Vartika'; and, 'Manasollasa' explaining Sri Acharya's Dakshinamurthy Stotra; and, 'Panchikarana Vartika' elucidating Sri Acharya's Panchikarana. Sureswaracharya was a dear disciple of Sri Acharya and blesses us.

Though Sri Acharya nominated Sarvagatma, a young brahmachari Sanyasi to perform all the functions of the first Peethadhipathi of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham, he ensured that Sureswaracharya guided and supervised his work. In Kanchipuram, there is a street named 'Mandana Misra Agraharam'. Sri Acharya brought from Mahishmathi, the town of Sri Sureswaracharya, some two hundred families of religious brahmanas wedded to Vedic karmas, who were housed in Mandana Misra Agraharam.

वार्तिकामृतसंज्ञेन ग्रंथेन सुधियां ददौ ।
योऽमृतत्वं नमामः तं सुरेश्वरसुधानिधिम् ।
वार्तिकं पठित्वा जीवन्मुक्तो भविष्यति ॥

"We worship Sureswara, the treasure of nectar, who bestowed immortality on the wise by writing the Vartika; by reading Vartika, one becomes Jivanmukta." This is the saying of the Gurus of Advaita Parampara. Does this not bring out Sri Sureswaracharya's greatness?

Questions

1. From Kashi where did Sri Acharya go and whom did he meet?
2. What did Kumarila Bhatta say to Sri Acharya?
3. Who was the arbitrator in the debate?
4. Which are the books written by Sri Sureswaracharya?
5. What is Liberation? What is the basis for attaining it?

6. What is the name of the Agraharam in Kanchi kshetra?

OM TAT SAT