

THE SCRIPTURES

Meaning and Inner Meaning

Brahmarshi Tatavarthy Veera Raghava Rao



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THE SCRIPTURES

Meaning and Inner Meaning

There are many scriptures in the world. Almost everyone accepts the scriptures as reliable. They do things according to the scriptures.

Whenever anyone does any work, elders ask, “Are you doing it according to the scriptures?” They also say, “Do it according to the scriptures.” That means they tell them to do it exactly as it is stated in the scriptures. Some people, whenever they have a doubt or want to do something, ask brahmins and scholars, “What do the scriptures say about this?” Then they will do whatever the brahmins and scholars tell them to do after looking into the books.

Likewise, when temples are built, when *gopurams* are constructed, when idols are consecrated, and in anything related to temples, everything is carried out according to the **Agama Shastra**, even changes and additions.

If we continue in this way, the importance of the scriptures becomes very evident. Everyone is following the scriptures and the Puranas in that manner. But those who think about them and study them are very few. However, anyone who follows them must necessarily think about them. Because, how many scriptures are there in reality? Who wrote these scriptures? What was the level of those who wrote them? Why were these scriptures written? With what expectation were they written? What did they intend to convey to the people and to future generations through these

scriptures? What results come from following these scriptures? Are those who have been following them for years obtaining the results they expected, or not? If the expected results are not obtained, why are they not obtained? What is the reason for that? One must think about many such questions.

Likewise, have any changes taken place in these scriptures over time? What were the conditions when these scriptures were written? What was society like at that time? What was the way of life of the people then? Are the conditions of that time and the conditions of today the same, or have there been any changes?

Will a scripture written under those circumstances be suitable for the present circumstances? Is it in accordance with the way of life of present-day human beings? When everything is changing, are changes in the scriptures also necessary? There is every need to study and think about such matters.

Because those who write these scriptures are at different levels. They write according to their respective levels. Likewise, the scriptures written by sages and yogis endowed with tapas are very exalted. Can those who are in an ordinary state or even scholars understand them? It can definitely be said that they cannot understand them. Therefore, those who tell about the scriptures and teach them can explain and teach only according to their level and only up to the extent that they have understood them. Because these people do not know with what meaning and intention such great yogis taught, do they? They can only tell up to the extent that they have understood. They are not at the level to say that this is exactly what those yogis meant. The reason is that we must understand that only that much has been understood by them.

Look, let us take Lord Sri Krishna Himself. He is a great Yogeshwara. Let us take the Gita that He taught. Different people have written many kinds of commentaries on the Bhagavad Gita. If we observe carefully, there is definitely a difference between one person's commentary and another person's commentary. Some commentaries have no connection at all. Think about it! If everyone gave the same meaning, the same explanation, and the same commentary, would there be a need for so many versions of the Bhagavad Gita? Everyone would follow what one person had written, would they not? Then what need would there be for another person to write separately?

Think for a moment. Recently, some people in Russia read the Bhagavad Gita and described Lord Sri Krishna as a terrorist. They said that he encouraged violence. Therefore, there was even a case filed in court seeking a ban on the Bhagavad Gita. Various people also made different commentaries on the matter. So, did the Lord really encourage violence? Or did He try to protect dharma? It may be said that each person understood it according to his own level. Each person also says that his understanding alone is correct. After all, who is correct? In this world, it has become a practice to say that whatever a person understands is correct for him. Each person keeps saying that what he says is correct, what he knows is correct, and what he does is correct. Think about it! If what a person says and what he does are correct, then why do others not accept it? After all, what is correct? It means that according to a person's level, that alone is correct for him. But if his level changes, then his opinion also changes.

Because, not all human beings in the world are at the

same level. Each person is at a different level. There are those who are in the bodily state, there are those who are in the mental state, there are those who are in the intellectual state and there are also those who are in the soul state. Therefore, the actions of those who are in the bodily state and the actions of those who are in the soul state will not be the same. Likewise, the actions and understanding of those who are in the intellectual state and those who are in the mental state will not be the same.

Because outwardly, when viewed physically, all human beings appear alike. But there are many differences in the mental state. A human being's behaviour and understanding depend upon the mind. Lord Sri Krishna also stated this very matter in the Bhagavad Gita. What He said was that the human beings in the world possess four kinds of qualities. They are: (1) Tamasic Quality, (2) Rajasic Quality, (3) Sattvic Quality, and (4) Nirguna.

Therefore, anyone understands according to their quality. Their behaviour will be according to their understanding. Therefore, another person can't question or think, "Why are they behaving like that?" The reason is that each person behaves according to their own quality and according to their own level. That is why Brahmarshi Patriji says, "Do not criticize anyone. Do not judge anyone."

In the Ramayana also, we find people possessing these four kinds of qualities. If we observe, we can see Kumbhakarna who is in Tamasic quality, Ravana who is in Rajasic quality, Vibhishana who is in Sattvic quality, and Lord Sri Rama who is in the Nirguna state. Thus, one person's behaviour has no relation to another person's behaviour. The reason for that is their qualities.

What can anyone say when someone asks, “Why is Kumbhakarna not like Rama? Why does Ravanaasura not think like Vibhishana?”

Every matter can be related to the body, and the soul. If it is related to the body, one kind of meaning arises. If it is related to the soul, another meaning arises.

For example, when Lord Sri Krishna says, “Take refuge in Me,” those who understand Him as the body take refuge in the idol and perform ritual worship. Those who understand Him as the soul take refuge in the soul and practice meditation. In that way, different meanings can be derived from the same words spoken by Lord Sri Krishna, they are deriving them as well. But Lord Sri Krishna was in the soul state, and He spoke in the soul state only.

Likewise, there are people who give different meanings to these scriptures according to their respective levels. Therefore, let us analyse the meaning and inner meaning of these scriptures.

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What is Virtue?

The word “Virtue” appears frequently in the scriptures. Elders, scholars, and gurus teach many things to the world and say, “Do these actions and you will gain virtue,” or “Do these works and you will gain virtue.” Those who read the scriptures and teach them also say the same. They keep saying, “Do good, perform virtuous deeds, engage in worship, render service, and you will gain virtue.”

As soon as anyone hears the word “virtue,” they immediately feel like doing that action. If it is said that virtue will be gained, anyone gives greater importance to doing that action. Likewise, there are many actions that are performed because virtue is believed to be gained through them. Thus, everyone does them as soon as they hear the word “virtue,” but they do not think beyond that.

What exactly is “virtue”? What comes from performing “virtue”? When does it come? How much does it come? No one thinks about these questions. But, even though they don't know what exactly happens by performing “virtue”, the belief that everyone has is: “Something good will happen”. Not only that, they believe that the more such actions are performed, the more “virtue” develops, and because of that one may become wealthy in life, become great, have one's desires fulfilled, and have all difficulties removed. There are also those who believe that sins will be removed. Thus, each person imagines the benefit he desires and, upon hearing the word “virtue,” performs that action. They do it, but they do not think beyond that.

Because, without knowing what “virtue” is... without knowing what comes from performing that action... if one performs that action throughout life, in one way, only disappointment may remain in life. The reason is that what they expect and desire is one thing, but the result that comes from what they have done may be something else.

Then what they desired will not come, will it? What they hoped for will not happen, will it? In the end, only disappointment remains. Therefore, any action should be done with understanding. It should not be done blindly. Therefore, let us think about the actions that are performed in the name of “virtue.” Let us also know a little about “virtue.”

Remember, “virtue” is not some bundle accumulating somewhere above. “Virtue” means the good that happens to us, the benefit that comes to us. That is, the good that happens in our life and the benefit that comes to us are called “virtue.” In other words, any action that brings good into our life or gives us benefit is called a virtuous deed. Those are called good deeds and virtuous actions. In one sense, all acts of service are also virtuous deeds.

But here we must think! By doing “virtue,” only a good result comes and only a benefit is gained. But the same kind of good does not happen, the same result does not come, and the same benefit is not gained from all kinds of virtuous deeds. We receive only the kind of result that corresponds to the kind of action we perform. That is, the benefit that comes depends upon the action that is performed. This is what we must understand clearly. Otherwise, if one does all sorts of things merely in the name of “virtue” and expects all sorts of results, the expected result will

not come, and in the end only disappointment will remain. What was done becomes futile (useless). Once again, remember that the kind of benefit gained depends upon the kind of virtue performed.

Another belief that many people have about “virtue” is that it is credited to our account only after death and that it will be experienced in the next birth. But whether it is virtue or sin (sin means the evil that happens to us, the loss that comes to us), most of it is experienced here itself in this birth. Only a small portion applies to future births. If we observe a little, we can know that the result of what we have done is experienced here itself; sometimes it is experienced immediately. Therefore, we must first know what result we want. To obtain that result, we must know what kind of virtuous deed, that is, what kind of action, should be performed. That action alone should be performed. Otherwise, what is done becomes wasted. The reason is that what is wanted is one thing, while what is done is another. Therefore, let us see what kinds of benefits arise in life from different kinds of “virtue.”

**If one practices something after understanding
its meaning, one experiences joy.**

**If one practices it without understanding
its meaning, one gets disappointed.**

Fasting

Some elders and scholars say that observing a fast brings “virtue.” They say that one should observe a fast on festival days such as Shivaratri. They also say that by fasting on that day, one can attract the attention of God.

Those who have greater interest in fasting observe a fast on every Ekadashi. Those who can do more, observe a fast every Saturday. They believe that by doing so, even more Virtue will be gained. Thus, people observe fasting according to their capacity. But they do not think beyond that. However, one must know what is the virtue that comes from fasting. That is, what is the benefit?

First, let us see what fasting actually means. Fasting means giving complete rest to the stomach, that is, to the digestive system. That means putting nothing into the stomach on that day; in other words, not eating anything. This is what is called fasting. But over time, people have made changes to fasting according to their own preferences.

Because, some people observe fasting very strictly, without even drinking plain water. Some people take nothing except water. Some others, in the name of fasting, take only liquid food, such as milk, buttermilk, and fruit juice. Some people take only fruits. Still others, in the name of fasting, skip meals and take some kind of light food, that is, tiffin. Thus, people observe fasting in whatever way they like and according to their own wish. But however they do it, they think that a great deal of virtue is gained. But they do not know about what kind of Virtue it is, how much has been gained, and when they will experience that result, that is,

that benefit. It is only because of this lack of understanding and lack of thought that so many changes have come into fasting.

But remember, “**fasting means giving complete rest to the stomach.**” Complete rest means not even putting water into the stomach.

Then what is the virtue that comes from doing so? That is, what is the benefit? Let us think about it. Look, the food that we take is digested by the **digestive system** in the stomach and converted into energy, and it supplies the body with the energy required for the body to function.

This digestive system is also like a tool. If it is used excessively, that is, overused, it gets damaged quickly. For example, take a car, If it is driven continuously without stopping, if excessive weight is loaded onto it, or if a different fuel is used, it wears out quickly. That is, the engine gets damaged. But if it is stopped for a few hours from time to time, it works for a long time.

Our stomachs are also like that. Many people, without giving any rest to the stomach between one meal and the next, keep putting some kind of food into it. That means they do not allow the stomach to rest even during that time. They keep making it work continuously. They know how to eat, but they do not understand how much effort the digestive system inside has to make after they eat. They always give importance to taste and food items, but they do not think about the stomach. Some people, if the food is tasty, eat even more. They keep eating like that, but afterwards they do not think about how much of a burden it is on the stomach.

Some people even put non-vegetarian food into the human

body which is designed for a vegetarian diet. If that is done, will the digestive system not be damaged? Will health not be ruined? Let us take the car itself as an example. The engine of each car is designed according to a particular fuel. That is, some car engines are designed for petrol, while some are designed for diesel. If the appropriate fuel is put into the appropriate car, the engine functions properly and lasts longer. But if diesel or kerosene is poured into a petrol car, that engine gets damaged quickly, it wears out.

Likewise, the human digestive system has been designed according to a vegetarian diet, but it has not been designed according to a non-vegetarian diet. That is why the naturopathy expert Manthena Satyanarayana Raju clearly says that a human being should consume only natural food. He says that one should not consume non-vegetarian food, which is unnatural and consists of dead food. He says that if a vegetarian diet is taken, it gets digested within two hours. But if a non-vegetarian diet is taken, it takes six to seven hours to digest.

Observe this. For how many days can a human being live by eating only raw meat like a tiger or a lion? But he can live his entire lifespan by consuming only a vegetarian diet. Therefore, just as the engine of a petrol car gets damaged quickly when kerosene is poured into it.

Likewise, if non-vegetarian food is put into the human body, which is meant to receive a vegetarian diet, the human digestive system also gets damaged and deteriorates quickly. That is, problems such as indigestion, stomach pain, constipation, ulcers, and gastric pain keep arising.

Those who are in their youth often say, “We eat meat, but

we do not have such problems.” But remember, even if kerosene is poured into a new petrol car, it does not immediately wear out or require repairs. Likewise, if non-vegetarian food is put into the human body, the human body does not get damaged immediately. But once it gets damaged, there will be only problems. Therefore, those who consume food should think about all these matters. They should not eat blindly.

Because the behaviour of human beings is like this, the Maharshis and great souls of ancient times thought deeply. Not knowing what to tell these foolish human beings or how to tell them, they used the one weakness and strong belief that people had—the word “virtue.” They said, “Observe fasting. You will gain virtue.” Thus, they made people digest what they ate throughout their lives. They enabled them to remain healthy throughout their lives. They knew that people would not listen unless they were told that “virtue” would be gained. Therefore, know this: The “virtue” that comes from fasting from time to time—that is, the benefit—is that the digestive system remains in good condition. That means it functions well. That means one can digest what one eats and live healthily. That is the “virtue” that comes from fasting.

Know this: “The virtue of fasting means the benefit of health.” There is nothing more than that. Therefore, know once again. The result of the actions we perform, whether it is a benefit or a loss, is experienced by us alone. It depends upon what has been done. Therefore, virtue depends upon the actions that we perform.

That is why Patriji keeps saying that there are many dharmas that a human being must follow in this creation. Among

them, “Sharira Dharma” (The dharma of the body) is one. That is, what kind of food should be given to the body? How much should be given? How many times should it be given? What should that food be like? He teaches about many such matters.

Patriji especially says not to consume non-vegetarian food. He says that only a sattvic vegetarian diet should be taken. He also says that it should be taken in moderation. He advises to drink plenty of water. Not only that, he says that the food we consume should be earned through righteous means.

Not only that, he says that the food we consume should not be such as that it enhances the tamasic and rajasic qualities. It should be such that it enhances the sattvic quality. For that reason, he says that especially garlic should not be used in a vegetarian diet. Not only that, he says that one should not consume the food which has become cold, stale, fermented, spoiled, foul-smelling, stored for a long time, or cooked and stored in a refrigerator.

Likewise, vegetables and fruits that are slightly damaged, rotten, or blemished should not be used. Thus, if one follows certain rules regarding the food one consumes and observes fasting from time to time, anyone can remain very healthy, remains with the sattvic quality, able to think about everything, able to distinguish between good and bad, one thinks only good thoughts, performs only good actions and obtains good results in life.

Patriji further says that since everything in this creation is a divine form, we should regard the water we drink and the food we eat also as divine forms. He says that our behaviour towards food should be based on that feeling. That is why the elders said, “Food is the form of Parabrahma.” That means the food we

consume is also a divine form. Therefore, merely saying that it is a divine form is not enough; our behaviour should also be in accordance with that. We should respect the food that we consume. That is why, when Patriji is seated in a chair, he does not allow drinking water to be placed on the ground near his feet.

When he eats food, he serves himself only a small quantity. He says that food must be enjoyed. It should not be eaten unwillingly or with difficulty. Also, he says that food should not be wasted. That is why he says that only a small quantity should be served. Likewise, he says that no one should be forced. One should not cause discomfort to others by forcing them to eat. Therefore, one must know that many precautions should be taken with regard to food.

It is not enough to say that water is God and offer harati to rivers. It is not enough to say that food is the form of Parabrahma and offer prayers before eating. Our behaviour towards food should be in that manner. Only then do we gain benefit, that is, “virtue.”

Information available on Tatavarthy's website:

Website address: www.tst.org.in

a) Details of programs conducted under the guidance of Mr. and Mrs. Tatavarthy and Google Maps location are available.

b) All books by Mr. and Mrs. Tatavarthy are available in PDF format for free download in Telugu, Kannada, Hindi, and English languages.

c) All the messages of Mr. and Mrs. Tatavarthy are organized in concept-wise YouTube playlists.

d) Summaries of Mr. and Mrs. Tatavarthy's messages are provided in the form of quotations.

e) The gallery of Mr. and Mrs. Tatavarthy is also available.

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Vigil

Likewise, it is said that keeping vigil is also “virtue.” Since we have mentioned that “virtue” means the benefit that comes to us, let us see what benefit comes from keeping vigil.

By vigil, many people mean staying awake throughout the night without sleeping. They think that if they stay awake in that way, they have observed a vigil. Therefore, some people stay awake all night watching movies, some watching television, and some listening to religious stories and discourses. That is, they think that they have kept vigil. By doing so, they think that they have gained great Virtue. But we can imagine what benefit comes from remaining awake throughout the night in that manner. If one stays awake all night, one loses even more of their energy and has to sleep the next day, unable to do anything. Even if one remains awake during the day, one cannot do any work properly.

Likewise, in some places, it is believed that if one remains awake throughout the night without sleeping and one focuses on God, it is a virtue. Therefore, on Shivaratri, after completing the worship and rituals, people spend the entire night without sleeping, without closing their eyes, looking continuously at the Shiva Linga. In their view, the Shiva Linga itself is Shiva. Therefore, they keep vigil while looking at the Linga.

But whatever the case may be, **“Focusing on God throughout the night without sleeping is the true vigil.”**

But what we must know here is: Who exactly God is? What is He like? Where does He reside? Without knowing these things, how can we focus on God? Most people consider a Shiva

Linga or an idol to be God. But Vemana Yogi explained very clearly who God is and where He resides. What he says is:

Human beings think that stone idols and stone images are Shiva. But they are only stones and not Shiva. Vemana Yogi has taught that human beings are unable to realize that the real Shiva is within themselves.

Everyone should know that the real Shiva is within oneself in the form of the 'soul'. Therefore, whoever focuses on the soul, which is in the form of light within themselves, throughout the night without sleeping, has truly kept vigil. That alone is the real "vigil".

Then what should one do to focus on the Shiva within? To focus on the Shiva within, one must turn inward. That is, one must do "observation of the breath meditation". Thus, whoever remains awake throughout the night on Shivaratri and meditates all night has truly kept "vigil." Those who keep such a "vigil" gain much "virtue." That is, they gain many kinds of benefits.

Let us know some of those benefits. By giving complete rest to the body, the senses, and the mind throughout the night in that way, a great deal of energy is preserved. Preserving energy is, in one sense, the same as developing energy in the body. Not only that, when the mind becomes void in meditation, additional energy is received from the universe. By developing the energy within us in this way, many diseases are cured. Many functions of the body work properly. Through that, we will be able to live healthily.

Likewise, in meditation, the restless mind becomes still. In that way, the mind attains peace. That is, we attain peace of mind. When the restless state of the mind disappears, concentration

arises in the mind. As a result, we will be able to focus the mind on every task we perform. Because of that, we will be able to do any work skillfully and excel in any field. We will be able to reach great heights. We will receive the appreciation of everyone.

Not only that, when the mind becomes still, we will live in the present moment. We do not waste life unnecessarily. We live happily at all times. We do not go into the past and grieve over what has already happened. We do not suffer because of it. We will not worry about the future. When the mind is kept still in this way, gradually it becomes pure. Through that, some more benefits are attained. When the mind becomes pure—that is, when it becomes clean, when it becomes good—we perform good actions. That is, we perform actions that are beneficial to the world. We do not cause suffering or loss to anyone. When we perform such good actions, we receive only good in life.

When the mind becomes pure, our qualities change, useless bad habits disappear on their own. Since all the actions performed in that way are good, and since good karmas are performed, all their results in the future will be joyful. Life becomes blissful.

As the mind becomes purified, the sattvic quality is attained. We will be able to think, discretion develops, discernment is attained. We come to know the differences between good - bad, justice - injustice, dharma - adharma. We behave in accordance with creation and the laws of creation. We attain the discrimination between the eternal and the non-eternal. Worldly thoughts disappear, and we begin to think about God. Gradually, we come

to know about Him.

If we continue in this way, there are many benefits. If one keeps vigil—that is, if one focuses on the true God, that is, if one focuses on the soul—everything is beneficial; it is all “virtue.”

Not only that, by continuing in that way—that is, by keeping vigils again and again—gradually the mind becomes void. Then divinity, divine powers, extrasensory wisdom, extrasensory powers are attained. We perform tasks that cannot be done with these senses. We come to know things that cannot be known. Wisdom that cannot be known is attained. Everything becomes known through direct experience. Gradually, Soul-realization is attained. We attain divinity, our life is transformed and a human being is transformed into Madhava. If one were to explain all this in detail, much more could be said. Therefore, through meditation—that is, by focusing on the true God, that is, through true vigil—it is all “virtue,” it is all “benefit.”

All that the yogis have taught is meditation -

All that the yogis practiced is meditation

Meditation means “Observation of the breath”

Ritual Worship

Likewise, it is said that if one performs ritual Worship, it is Virtue. Then let us see what benefits come to us through ritual worship. If we observe the world, almost everyone appears to be an imitator. But those who think are few. Because, we generally see only three reasons behind whatever people do:

1. They do it because it has come down as a tradition from many generations.
2. They do it because everyone else is doing it.
3. They do it because someone told them to do it.

Thus, in whatever way we look at it, they are imitating someone or the other. But no one is doing it after thinking about it. Likewise, ritual worship is also being performed for the above reasons. They do not think beyond that. Therefore, let us see what the “virtue”—that is, the benefit—that comes through ritual worship.

People think that ritual worship has many benefits, that through ritual worship one can please Him, thereby obtain His grace, remove difficulties, and fulfil desires. Many people say and believe that ritual worship is the only way, and the easiest way, to please God. In one sense, many people also believe that one can come closer to God through ritual worship. On the whole, it is because people believe that ritual worship brings a great deal of virtue that so many perform ritual worship daily .

Then let us see what is the “virtue”—that is, the benefit—that comes through ritual worship. If we observe, ritual worship is performed to an image, or to an idol, or to a photograph. By performing ritual worship in that way, people feel that they are worshipping God. They think that by doing so God becomes pleased

and shows compassion. Thus, by performing ritual worship to an image, they feel that they are worshipping God. There are also those who believe that the image itself is God.

But remember, more than ritual Worship, God is pleased by service and gives importance to service. It is only when service is rendered to Him that He is pleased. That is why Sathya Sai Baba taught everyone to serve all. The reason is, “Service to all living beings is service to God”, as all living beings are forms of God.

Consider your parents, will they be happy if you serve them? Or will they be happy if you merely perform ritual worship to them? If you want to know this, perform the ritual worship to your aged parents once and also serve them. Then ask them which brought them happiness. They will certainly say that it was the service that brought them happiness. Likewise, when you become very old, you too will seek service from your children.

Ritual worship will be of no benefit to you. On the other hand, the service rendered to you by your children will give you great joy. Therefore, not only to us, but even to God, service gives more joy than ritual worship. Then how do we render service to God? Since all living beings are forms of God, service rendered to all living beings is service rendered to God.

This very matter is stated in the Bhagavad Gita.

Verse: Aham Atma Gudakesa Sarva-bhutasaya-sthitah (B.G. 10-20)

“Oh Arjuna! I am the soul abiding in all living beings,” says the Lord.

Shirdi Sai Baba also said, **“Whoever is able to see Me in all living beings is truly My beloved devotee. Therefore, give up the dualistic feeling that I am separate and the rest of**

the living beings are separate, and serve Me.” (Sai Satcharitra, Chapter 9, Page 81).

If God is pleased only by service, then why is everyone performing ritual Worship? What is the benefit that comes from ritual worship? Then why did the elders of ancient times introduce ritual worship to the world? Anyone may have these doubts. Therefore, let us know a little.

God, who is in the form of the soul, is formless and cannot be seen with the eyes. Then, how would ordinary people know that there is One called God? They would not know, would they? That is why the scholars introduced this method of ritual worship. Ordinary people will know that there is One God by placing a photograph, or an idol of a God and performing ritual worship. Think about it! If these idols and photographs did not exist, how would ordinary people know that there is One called God? They would not know, would they? That is why there are idols and photographs of God.

Then, is it enough to look at that idol or photograph just once? They will forget again, will they not? Therefore, they said that daily ritual worship should be performed. That is, by performing ritual Worship every day, one would remember God every day. Think about it for a moment, how many people are remembering God until the next day after performing ritual worship? How many people are focusing on God? If we think about it, most people do not focus on God at all. God does not even come to their mind. As soon as the ritual Worship is over, they become absorbed in family life, earning, problems, entertainment, and such things. Think about it! If there were no ritual worship at all, how many people would remember God? Would they even know that there is One called

God? That is why there is ritual worship.

Look, suppose you are travelling somewhere by car. While travelling, you keep talking about various things and travel many kilometres. But if you happen to see a temple or an idol on the way, immediately both the hands come together. You do something with your hands. Why did you do, at that very moment, something that you had not done until then? It is because only when you see the temple your focus has turned towards God.

That is, you remembered God. Think about it, if that temple were not there, even if you travelled hundreds of kilometres, would your focus be on God? It would not, would it? Think about it, if these idols and temples did not exist, would human beings know that there is One called God? Would they remember God? It can certainly be said that they would not. That means ritual worship exists only to make us know that there is One called God. That is the benefit that comes from ritual worship, that is, “virtue.”

Think about it, suppose there is a photograph of Mahatma Gandhi on the wall of your house or a statue of him on your table. Is Mahatma Gandhi actually hanging on your wall? Is he sitting on your table, looking at you continuously for days without moving? You would only say that he is not. Then why have you kept the photograph? You would say, “To remember Mahatma Gandhi.” You would say, “I like him. I have kept his photograph so that I may not forget him.” Thus, it becomes clear that photographs and statues are only for remembering them.

Know this, “Statues and photographs are all just for inspiration, but are not objects of ritual worship.” They are meant for remembering them and for taking their lives as inspiration. Not only that, they are meant for remembering their messages and

teachings and putting them into practice.

That is why Sathya Sai Baba said, “Do not hold on to My feet; hold on to My words.” He also said, “My life itself is a book for you.” Therefore, it can be clearly known that these acts of ritual worship, idols, and photographs make us know that God exists. That is the benefit we receive. That is why the elders introduced them.

Not only that, there is another benefit that comes from ritual worship. That is, “Those who perform ritual worship gain satisfaction, and those who conduct it gain livelihood.” If we observe carefully, apart from that benefit, no one is attaining liberation. That is why, no matter how many acts of ritual worship are performed, both those who perform them and those who conduct them continue to face problems, difficulties, and diseases. Every person is struggling with one problem or another. If we observe, there is no one without problems. Think about it, if ritual worship alone could remove difficulties and problems, would there be difficulties in the world? Would there be problems? Would there be diseases? There would not be, would there? Therefore, ritual worship exists only to make us know that God exists.

This is what Shirdi Sai Baba called “Shravanam”, the first of the Nine Forms of Devotion (Nava Vidha Bhakti). That is, listening about God, that is, knowing about God. Thus, the more one performs ritual Worship, the more one comes to know that God exists. One believes it more firmly. That is the “virtue” that comes from ritual worship. That is, the benefit that comes from it.

Hymns

Likewise, it is said that even if one recites hymns, that is, performs stotram (hymn), it is a virtue. Therefore, what is the benefit that comes from hymns? We must understand why the elders and scholars composed hymns and why did they ask people to recite them.

First, let us understand what a hymn is. Hymn means praising, glorifying, extolling, that is, speaking of greatness. To praise God means to speak of the greatness of God. That is, to know that God is great. Thus, by reciting hymns daily, those who have come to know that God exists also come to know that God is very, very great.

Because, there is no benefit in merely knowing that God exists. Only when one knows that He is great does one's interest in Him develop. One develops the curiosity to know more and more about Him, and develops love for Him. Therefore, through hymns, the scholars described the greatness of God. This is what Shirdi Sai Baba called "Kirtanam," the second of the Nine Forms of Devotion (Nava Vidha Bhakti).

Thus, through hymns such as the Vishnu Sahasranama Stotram and the Lalita Sahasranama Stotram, the greatness of God has been described in a thousand ways through a thousand names and made known to the world. By reciting those names again and again, one is able to know the greatness of God more clearly. That is why they asked people to recite them repeatedly.

Their intention was that as one continues to recite hymns, and as one comes to know more and more about the greatness of

God, their interest in God should develop and detachment from worldly things should arise. But everyone is reciting hymns; because they do not know their meanings, there is no change in their behaviour. But no matter how many times one recites hymns, if one does not understand the greatness of God, even the “virtue” of reciting them will not be gained. That means there is no benefit. That means what has been done is futile. The reason is that they are reciting them, but they are not understanding their meaning. But let us see the benefit that comes from understanding them.

There are only two things in this creation: (1) God, and (2) The creation made by Him. If we observe, God cannot be seen, but His creation can be seen. If we observe further, not only the creation, but everything in the creation is impermanent. But God is eternal. Again, if we observe, everything in creation keeps changing and undergoes change. But God does not change and does not undergo change. It appears as though everything in creation exists, yet nothing remains. Moreover, there is happiness in the things of creation, but it is temporary. Likewise, there is also bliss with God, but it is eternal. This is the meaning of the many truths conveyed by the scholars through the hymns.

But human beings, without realizing this and without understanding the greatness of God, continue to desire only the insignificant things in creation made by Him. They keep longing for those things. They keep trying to obtain them. Thus, they think that money, gold, wealth, mansions, cars, positions, jobs, children, and family life in this creation are great. They think that happiness lies in them. They pray to God to grant them these things. For their sake, they commit mistakes and sins. In the end, they become

victims of suffering.

But they do not think beyond that. Everything that they desire and hope for is insignificant, impermanent. The sorrow of not obtaining those things is greater than the happiness gained by obtaining them. Even if they obtain them, they are unable to realize that the happiness is only temporary and not eternal. But God is greater than all these things, because He is the One who created them all. Moreover, the creator is always far greater than the things that are created. The reason is that if the things created by Him possess such attraction, how much greater must His attraction be? How great must He Himself be?

Therefore, one should not desire the insignificant and impermanent things in His creation. One should desire only God, who is eternal and great. One should seek Him alone. One should not strive to obtain these insignificant things. One should strive to attain God, who is great and the embodiment of infinite power. Because, in this infinite creation, whatever you obtain, you obtain only that one thing. But if you attain God, it is as though you have attained everything in creation. Yet human beings spend their entire lives striving to obtain a few of the most insignificant things on this earth, which is only one world among countless worlds.

But they do not make even a little effort to attain God. No matter how many times these hymns are recited, the greatness of God is not being understood. Not even the desire to attain God has arisen. At present, even the scholars who explain the meanings of these hymns say, “God is great. Take refuge in Him and perform ritual Worship. All your desires will be fulfilled.” But they do not say, “These are not what you should seek. All these are insignificant

and impermanent. They cannot remove sorrow. What you should seek is not these things. Seek God Himself. Strive to attain Him. If you attain Him, it is as though you have attained everything.” Moreover, because they do not say that once God is attained, there remains nothing else to be attained in this creation, ordinary people never develop the desire to attain God. If we observe, everyone continues to desire throughout their lives. They are continuing to desire. Their desires remain unfulfilled. Does this not make clear that no matter how much a human being attains, there is always something more to attain?

But if one attains God, it is as though one has attained everything. The reason is that the one who attains God gains all the wisdom in this creation. One attains eternal, indescribable, inexpressible Brahmananda. One attains peace and contentment, fear disappears, desires are destroyed, ego is destroyed, greed disappears, dharma becomes evident, and many powers are attained. In one sense, one becomes capable of creating another creation like Vishwamitra. All these are attained by attaining God.

Therefore, do not spend your entire life asking things from God, seek God Himself. Do not try to obtain things from God, strive to attain God Himself, your very life will become blessed. This is what you should know by reciting the hymns. This is the message that the rishis have given us. God is great. Understanding that He is to be attained is the benefit that comes from the hymns. That is the “virtue” that comes from the hymns. This is the inner meaning of the hymns. That is, the meaning of the hymns is to know the greatness of God. The inner meaning is to know that God is to be attained.

Japa

(repetition of a chant)

By merely knowing that God exists, or merely knowing that He is great, will our difficulties come to an end? Is that enough to reach God? It is not enough. That is why the elders and scholars also introduced japa.

Due to their problems, responsibilities, and the pressures of many activities in daily life, there is a possibility that ordinary people may forget God, however great He may be. What is the benefit if one forgets God in that way? There is none, is there? That is why there is japa.

That is, the elders and scholars introduced japa so that, through the names of God, in the form of mantras, one may remember Him again and again and keep Him in mind. Thus, whenever one finds free time, by remembering God in the mind and by practicing japa, one is unable to forget Him.

That is why many people outwardly, and many others within their minds, keep saying, “Krishna... Krishna...”, “Rama... Rama...”, “Shiva... Shiva...”, “Sai Ram... Sai Ram...” and remember Him. They perform japa within the mind. By practicing japa in that way, they are unable to forget God. That is, the “virtue” that comes through japa, that is, the benefit is not forgetting God. This is what Shirdi Sai Baba called “Smaranam,” the third of the Nine Forms of Devotion (Nava Vidha Bhakti).

Think about it! Is it enough merely to know that God exists, merely to know that He is great, and merely not to forget

Him? Will our difficulties come to an end? Will our problems disappear? Certainly not. Is the virtue that comes through worship, hymns, and japa sufficient? It is not sufficient.

Then, if our problems are to disappear, if our difficulties are to be removed, and if we are to be permanently freed from all these—that is, if liberation is to be attained—even after doing all these, there is no benefit and no use. Because, no matter how much one does, unless one takes refuge in God, that is, unless one reaches Him, that is, unless one attains Him, no one's difficulties will disappear. No one's problems will come to an end. Then, let us know what should be done to take refuge in God.

**Until Experience of Brahma is attained—
that is, until God is attained—
even if you take millions of births,
unrest and sorrow will not leave you.**

Who is God?

To take refuge in God, we must especially know three things.

- (1) Who is God?
- (2) Where does He reside?
- (3) How should we take refuge in Him?

How can one take refuge in God without knowing these things? Without taking refuge in Him, how can our difficulties disappear? Therefore, let us especially know these three things.

Everyone has become occupied with worship, reciting hymns, and practicing japa, and has forgotten these three things. In fact, there is not even a thought of knowing about God. They think that whatever they are doing is sufficient. Therefore, they are content with worship, hymns, and japa. But if difficulties are to disappear and problems are to be removed, one must certainly take refuge in God.

Let us look at a small example. Suppose, you have a friend in Delhi whom you know through the telephone. You do not know what he looks like, where he lives, or how to reach him. You have some work in Delhi. Then he tells you over the phone, "If you come to me, I will get your work done."

You go to Delhi. You decide to call your friend. But by mistake, your phone falls on the ground, and everything recorded in it is lost. Now you have no opportunity to call your friend. Apart from the phone, you have no other means of knowing about him. Moreover, even if you decide to go to him on your own, you do not know what he looks like, you do not know where he lives,

you do not know how to reach him. Tell me, can you go to him? Can you take refuge in him? Will your work be done? Nothing will happen, will it?

Likewise, without knowing who God is... without knowing where He resides... that is, without knowing how to reach Him... how can you take refuge in Him? That is, how can you reach Him? Tell me. Through worship you have come to know about God. Through hymns you have come to know that He is great. Through japa you do not forget Him. But can all these enable you to reach Him? Tell me. All these may give us satisfaction, but they cannot enable us to reach God and grant liberation, can they? That is, they cannot remove our difficulties, can they?

You know your friend's name is Anand. You know that he is a man of great influence. But can this enable you to reach him? It cannot, can it? Is it enough to take refuge in him? Suppose you are loudly shouting "Anand... Anand...", suppose you take a mic and shout loudly through it, will you be able to reach your friend then? Even if you wander through all the streets of Delhi like that, will you be able to reach him? Tell me.

Likewise, without knowing who God is, where He resides, and how to reach Him, what is the benefit of yelling, merely installing loudspeakers and singing bhajans loudly... or going here and there saying, "this is a sacred place and that is a sacred place?" Therefore, we must especially know the above three things. Let us know about them.

No one needs to answer these three questions. The answers to these three questions—(1) Who is God? (2) Where does He reside? (3) How should we take refuge in Him?—were

revealed to all of us directly by Lord Sri Krishna Himself through the Bhagavad Gita.

Lord Sri Krishna explained the answers to the first two questions through Verse 20 of Chapter 10, and the answer to the third question through Verses 3 and 4 of Chapter 12. Let us know a little.

**Shlok|| Aham Atma Gudakesa Sarva-bhutasaya-sthitah |
Aham adisca Madhyam ca Bhutanam Anta Eva ca ||
(B.G. 10-20)**

Meaning: “Oh Arjuna! I am the soul. I abide in all living beings. I am the beginning, the middle, and the end of all beings.”

Its meaning is: The Lord said, “I am the Soul. I abide in all living beings. I existed before these beings were created—that is, before creation came into existence. I exist while they exist—that is, while this creation exists. Likewise, even when these beings come to an end—that is, when this creation comes to an end—I will still exist.”

From the above verse, we can know that the soul itself is God. Nowhere in the Gita did the Lord say, “I am the idol,” or “I am the photograph.” Therefore, the answer to the first question, “Who is God?” is clearly known to be the Soul. Once again, know this: The soul itself is God.

Where Does God Reside?

Then the second question is, Where does He reside? The answer to this is also given in the same verse.

Shlok|| “Aham Atma Gudakesa, Sarva-bhutasaya-sthitah.”

“Arjuna! I am the soul. I abide in all living beings.” That is, the Lord said, “I am present in all beings. I am present in all living creatures.”

By all living creatures, we should know that God is present in every living being that has life, in the form of the soul. That is, the same God who is present in all human beings is also present in all animals. That means, whether it is a hen, a goat, a fish, a pig, a tortoise, or any other animal, it can be clearly known that the One present in that animal is God Himself. Therefore, everyone should know that all animals are forms of God.

Therefore, know that if one harms a hen, it is the same as harming God. If one harms a goat, it is the same as harming God. If one harms a fish, it is the same as harming God. Think about it. Those who perform the Shodashopachara Puja (16 forms of ritual worship) to an idol and think that they are pleasing God, those who say that they love God, can they harm those living beings who are the very forms of God? Can they kill them? Can they eat their flesh? Can they become responsible for their suffering by eating them? Think about it. On one hand, they say that they love God. They say that they are pleasing Him through worship. By reciting hymns, they glorify Him as being very, very great. By practicing Japa, they say, “I always remember Him and never forget Him.”

Then why are they harming His forms? If they do so, will God be pleased? Will they receive His grace? If they harm God in this way, instead of receiving His grace, will they not become subject

to His wrath? Therefore, living beings—that is, animals—should not be harmed, should not be killed and their flesh should not be eaten. Above all, one must first know who God is.

Once again, remember this, everything in this creation is a form of God. Everything is One! This is the message of Lord Sri Krishna. Therefore, a hen is not merely a hen; it is God in the form of a hen. A goat is God in the form of a goat. A fish is God in the form of a fish. That is why God is described through the Dashavatara.

Matsya Avatar is the incarnation that conveys the message that all aquatic beings are God. Likewise, Kurma Avatar is the incarnation that conveys the message that all amphibious creatures are God. Likewise, Varaha Avatar is the incarnation that conveys the message that all land animals are God. Therefore, know this: Though the forms are different and their names are different, God is One alone! Everything is He. All is He!

Though ornaments are different, though their shapes are different, though their names are different, they are all gold. They have all come from the same gold. Likewise, when they are melted, they all become the same gold again. In the same way, the living beings in this creation appear to have different forms and belong to different species. When they exist in different forms, we give them different names for the sake of identification. But does that make them different? They have all emerged from the same God. Therefore, all are One. The One who is present in all is One alone. This is the message of Lord Sri Krishna.

Look, pots appear to have different shapes. Their names are different. Their purposes are also different. But they have all come from the same clay. When the pots break, they all become clay again. Therefore, know this: The One who exists in this creation

is God alone. That is why Tallapaka Annamacharya said, “Brahmam Okkate! Parabrahmam Okkate!” He also said, “Kanduvagu Hinadikamulendu Levu Andariki Srihare Antaratma.” That is, God is One alone! The invisible God is One alone.

Therefore, if we see, there is nothing in this creation that is inferior or superior, because Sri Hari dwells as the inner soul in everyone, said Annamacharya.

Therefore, in this creation, the king is not superior, and the poor man is not inferior, because Sri Hari is present in both. If the One present in both is the same Sri Hari, then who is superior and who is inferior? Are they not equal? Likewise, a Brahmin is not of a higher caste, nor is a Shudra of a lower caste, because who is present in both? The same One, Sri Hari, God Himself. Therefore, the scholar who teaches and the ordinary person who listens are also equal. There are no distinctions in this creation as there is nothing in this creation that is not God. That is why it is said, “Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma.”

This is the truth taught by Hindu Dharma. Those who understand this truth are the true Hindus. Those who merely wear different external appearances and adorn themselves with marks, sacred ash, or sacred threads are not Hindus. Those who understand that everything is One and all is One, and live accordingly, are the true Hindus. They are the ones who have understood Hindu Dharma. They are the ones who have understood the message of the Lord.

If this truth is known, one will not become proud by saying, “I am rich; I am great.” Nor will one look down upon another saying, “He is poor; he is inferior.” Because, Sri Hari is present in everyone, is He not? If the One present in the rich man and the poor man is the same Sri Hari, then who is greater and who is

lesser? Think about it.

That is why even Adi Shankaracharya, though he possessed great wisdom, did not understand this simple truth. When he was thinking that he was greater than everyone else, Lord Shiva opened his eyes through a small incident.

Once, in Kashi, Shankaracharya was returning with his disciples after bathing in the River Ganga. On the way, a Chandala (Outcast) came before him. Immediately, the disciples asked him to move aside. He did not move. Then Shankaracharya himself said, “move aside, move aside.” The Chandala asked, “why should I move aside?” Then Shankaracharya replied, “as you are a Chandala.”

Immediately, the Chandala said, “In what way am I inferior to you? Your body and my body are both made of the same five elements. Likewise, the One present in your body and in my body is the same soul. Then in what way are you greater?”

As soon as he heard this, Shankaracharya understood. He realized that he was not a Chandala but a great being who had come to open his eyes. He fell at his feet. Immediately, in the place of the Chandala, Lord Shiva manifested Himself. He explained to Shankaracharya that even if something in this creation appears to be inferior, it should never be regarded as inferior. Thus, He bestowed enlightenment upon Shankaracharya and removed his ego.

That is why Brahmarshi Subhash Patriji never accepts anyone to prostrate at his feet. The reason is that he does not consider himself superior, nor does he consider others inferior. Believing that everyone is equal, he greets everyone only with a handshake, thereby expressing equality.

Therefore, know this: All human beings belong to one

race. Not only that, animals, birds, and aquatic creatures are all One, all are forms of God. They should not be harmed. If they are harmed, it is the same as harming God. They should not be killed, their flesh should not be eaten, one should not become the reason for their suffering by eating meat.

Just as Sri Krishna said, “I am the soul. I am present in all living beings,” Shirdi Sai Baba also said the same. In Sai Satcharitra, Chapter 44, Page 323, under the heading “Who am I?” Baba Himself said: **“You need not go far away or elsewhere to search for Me. Not only within yourself, but in all living beings there exists Consciousness, or the inner soul. That is Me. Realize this, and see Me not only within yourself but in everything.”**

From Baba’s above message, He clearly said, “I am the soul. I am present not only within you but in all living beings.”

Likewise, in Chapter 22, Page 170, He said, **“God dwells in all living beings, whether they are snakes or scorpions. Therefore, we should show compassion and love to all living beings. We should not engage in unnecessary quarrels or killing, but remain patient. It is God alone who protects everyone.”**

In the above message, Baba said that no living being should be killed because God dwells in all of them. Baba not only said that He is the soul, but also said that no harm or suffering will come to those who take refuge in Him—that is, to those who keep their attention on the soul.

In Chapter 3, Page 27, Baba said, **“Remember that wherever you are and whatever you are doing, I know it. I am the ruler of everyone’s heart. I dwell in everyone’s heart. I pervade all moving and immovable beings in this world. Whoever turns his attention towards Me will suffer neither**

harm nor sorrow. Illusion (Maya) punishes the one who forgets Me. Worms, ants, and all visible moving and immovable beings are My body, My very form.”

From Baba’s message also, we have known the answers to the first two questions. We have known that God is the soul, and He dwells in all living beings. That means we have clearly understood that He dwells within us as well. Now, we need to understand the third question—that is, how should we take refuge in the God who is within us? That is, how should we reach Him? This is very, very important. Because, without making an effort to reach God, we cannot come out of any problems or difficulties. Without reaching God, we can never be permanently free from problems—that is, we cannot attain liberation. Therefore, we must know the path to reach God.

If we observe, many teachers explain the first two points—that God is the soul and that He dwells in everyone. But many can’t tell how to reach the One who is within. They only say, “Perform worship, recite hymns, practice japa.” Remember this: God is not outside, He is within everyone—that means He is within us. Therefore, no matter how many external forms of worship we perform, we cannot reach God. All of them are useful only for asking. But “the one who reaches is greater than the one who merely asks” because, such a person becomes permanently free from all sorrows.

That is why the Lalita Sahasranama says, “Antarmukha Samaradhya... Bahirmukha Sudurlabha.” That means, “I am attained only within, not outside.”

**Just as one would try to count
how many teeth a crow has in its mouth,
many people try to see God
in the external world.**

How to Reach God?

Then, what should we do to take refuge in the God who is within—that is, to reach Him? Lord Sri Krishna clearly explained this very matter in the Bhagavad Gita. Let us look at the following verses.

**Shlok|| Ye Tvaksaram Anirdesyam Avyaktam Paryupasate
Sarvatragam Acintyam Ca Kutastham Acalam Dhruvam
(B.G. 12-3)**

**Shlok|| Sanniyamyendriyagramam Sarvatra Samabuddhayah
Te Prapnuvanti Mam Eva Sarvabhutahite Ratah
(B.G. 12-4)**

Meaning: Those who have brought all the senses under their control, who treat everyone with equanimity, who are devoted to the welfare of all living beings, and who meditate upon the imperishable Parabrahma (the soul)—which cannot be defined, cannot be perceived by the senses, cannot be conceived by the mind, is changeless, unmoving, eternal, and all-pervading—they attain Me.

Through these two verses, it has been clearly explained how to reach God (attain Him), who can reach Him, and what one must do to reach Him. Let us know this in a little more detail. First of all, He said, **“Those who have brought all the senses under their control.”**

According to this, to reach God we must first bring the senses under our control. For that, we must first know what the senses are. Mainly, a human being has two kinds of senses: (1) External senses, and (2) the internal sense.

The external senses are of two kinds: (1) The five sense organs (jnanendriyas), and (2) The five motor organs (karmendriyas). The internal sense is the mind. To bring the senses under control like the lord Krishna says, we must first close our eyes, close our mouth, tie our hands, and also our legs. If we do so, we have brought the external senses under our control. This is easy; anyone can do it. But bringing the internal sense—the mind—under control is very difficult. The reason is that as soon as anyone closes their eyes, all kinds of thoughts arise. The mind keeps wandering somewhere. It does not listen to us. It does not remain under our control. If we tell it one thing, it does another. It keeps running in many different directions with countless thoughts. Under any circumstances, the mind does not come under control. Yet Lord Sri Krishna specifically said that all the senses must be brought under control. That means the mind also must certainly be brought under control. This is extremely important before reaching God. Unless the mind comes under control, it is impossible to reach God. Then what should we do to bring the mind under control?

Bringing the mind under control means that the mind should do nothing. That is, there should be no thoughts. Just as we brought the eyes under control by not seeing, and the mouth under control by not speaking, likewise we must bring the mind under control by having no thoughts. That means we should do nothing with our mind. That is, we should not think. In one sense, the mind should become void. Even if one repeats a name or a mantra, the mind is still functioning. That means it is not under our control. Therefore, the mind must become void, it must be given complete rest. That is the state in which the mind has been brought under

control. That is the state taught by Lord Krishna. It is the state in which the senses have been brought under control.

Observe here that a human being can do any kind of work, but bringing the mind under control is extremely difficult. The reason is that as soon as anyone closes their eyes, countless thoughts arise. The mind runs about like a monkey in all directions. If it is left like that, it will never surrender. But it must be brought under control. The mind must be calmed. It must be kept free from thinking. To do that, an easy and simple method is needed. Brahmārshi Subhash Patriji has given everyone such an easy and simple method for bringing the mind under control. That is **“Observation on the breath meditation.”**

That means whenever anyone closes their eyes, thoughts arise. The mind that keeps thinking should be redirected towards the breath. Then it again returns to the thoughts. Again the mind should be redirected to the breath. By doing this again and again, slowly... the thoughts begin to decrease. That is, the mind gradually becomes peaceful. Slowly, the thoughts decrease more and more until, at one stage, all thoughts stop. Then the mind no longer functions. The mind becomes peaceful. It remains in a state of complete rest. The mind is there, but it has no role to play. That is the state in which the mind has come under our control. That is the state which Lord Krishna taught us. By practicing it, anyone can know that this state is possible only through “Observation of the breath meditation” and by no other method. The reason is that the mind continues to function through a name, mantra, or a form but the mind does not become void. Therefore, one must especially do observation of the breath meditation.

Only after bringing all the senses under control can one meditate upon God—that is, keep one's attention on the soul. The reason is that if the senses are functioning, then the attention is not on the soul. The soul is not perceptible to the human senses. That is, God cannot be perceived not only through the sense organs but not even through the mind. The reason is that he is changeless. That means God has no form. He does not move. Moreover, He is eternal. He pervades the whole creation. Not only that, He is the Imperishable Parabrahma—that is, the One who never perishes, who is eternal, and who is invisible. Therefore, to meditate upon Him, one must focus on Him, one must first bring the senses under control. That means the senses must not be used. To attain that state, one must do "observation of the breath meditation".

Lord Sri Krishna says in the above verses that those who meditate in this way—that is, those who keep their attention in this way—attain Him alone. Thus, we know that God can indeed be reached. Blessed is the life of the one who reaches Him. The reason is that the Lord Himself says so in the following verse.

Shlok|| Abrahma Bhuvanal Lokah Punaravartino'rjuna

Mam Upetya Tu Kaunteya Punarjanma Na Vidyate

(B.G. 8-16)

Meaning: Oh Arjuna! Even if one reaches worlds such as Brahma-loka, one must be born again (one returns to Earth).

But if you reach the world where I reside (that is, reach Me), you will not return again.

That means those who attain God are not born again. Such a great fortune comes to them. They become permanently free from sorrow. There is no greater achievement for a human

being on this Earth than this. Therefore, one should strive to attain God. That is, one should meditate.

For such a state to arise, the Lord also said in the above verses that, along with meditation, a few more things must be practiced. He said that one must possess equanimity everywhere. That means one should maintain equanimity towards everyone and everything.

Remember that our behaviour reflects our attitude. The reason is that our behaviour depends upon our attitude. Naturally, if we observe the world, almost everyone's behaviour is based on the idea that all are different. That is, "He belongs to another caste, he belongs to another religion, he belongs to another region, he belongs to another country, I am a Hindu, he is a Muslim, I am a Brahmin, he is inferior, I am rich, he is poor, I am intelligent, he is unintelligent." Thus people hate one another and quarrel with one another. We see this all the time. That means we are unable to behave and show equanimity towards everyone, we are unable to believe that everyone is one.

Not only that, there are many other ways in which we fail to demonstrate equanimity. The clothes we wear and the ornaments we adorn ourselves with, display distinction. They express the feeling that "I am different and he is different." If this is so, then we do not possess equanimity towards everyone. We do not possess the equanimity taught by the Lord. Look, some people wear a bindhi, while others remove it, some others wear a burqa. Does this not express the feeling that "he is different and I am different"? Does it show that we have understood the truth that all are one, that everyone is a form of God, and that the same God dwells in

everyone? Does it show equanimity?

Likewise, some people wear sacred threads on their wrists, chains around their necks, and rings on their fingers. By doing so, they express the feeling, “I belong to this group, they are different, we are different,” and they display that attitude through their actions. Others wear saffron robes, shave their heads, or keep matted hair. Does that not indicate the absence of equanimity? Therefore, those who display distinctions, special identities, or special forms of dress instead of showing equanimity—even if they perform many spiritual practices, even if they meditate extensively—should know that they cannot attain the Lord.

The reason is that everyone is the same to God. All are equal to Him, because everything is He. That is why Lord Sri Krishna said that one should possess equanimity.

He also said one more thing. He said that one should be devoted to the welfare of all living beings, because they too are His forms. But in this world, people think, “we are human beings, and animals are different,” and they harm them, kill them, and eat their flesh. They subject them to unbearable suffering. Instead of doing good to them as the Lord instructed, they harm them. Instead of protecting them, they consume them. They behave towards them in the lowest possible manner. Such people—that is, those who eat meat and subject animals to various forms of cruelty—even if they perform many spiritual practices, acts of worship, or meditation, cannot attain God. This is the message of Lord Sri Krishna.

Therefore, the Lord’s message is that those who bring their senses under control through “observation of the breath

meditation,” who show equanimity towards everyone without distinctions, who do good to all living beings by protecting them without committing violence against them, and who focus on God—that is, on the soul—or in other words, meditate, will certainly attain God and reach Him. Those who attain God have indeed attained liberation. Know this well: giving up violence and practicing meditation is the path to reaching God.

**We love the idol in the temple,
but we do not love the God who dwells in our own body.
The reason is that the idol is visible,
but the God who dwells within the body is invisible.**

How to meditate?

Observation of the breath

Sit in a comfortable position, with your hands clasped (locked) and legs crossed, and close your eyes. Simply observe your natural breathing, noticing each inhale and exhale.

Even if numerous thoughts arise while observing the breath, let go of them and refocus on the breath. Gradually, you will reach a state of thoughtlessness, where the flow of thoughts ceases (stops), and the mind becomes void and calm. This is only a meditative state.

Once we reach a state of thoughtlessness, we must observe various experiences related to the body, nervous system and soul. In this state, the universal life force (cosmic energy) flows abundantly into the body, cleansing the energy body. This energy heals all ailments (illnesses), and as the energy body is purified, our karmas will dissolve.

Everyone should meditate twice daily for at least the same number of minutes as their age.

Why Temples?

At this point, a question naturally arises in everyone's mind. If meditation is the path to reach God, then why did the tradition of temples come into existence? Who introduced it? Was it not the elders who established the temple tradition? If there were no purpose behind it, why would such great elders and scholars have introduced this tradition? Anyone may naturally have this doubt. Moreover, this tradition has been followed from many generations since ancient times. Many scholars and spiritual teachers continue to follow and encourage it even today. Why, then, are all of them encouraging it? This too is a natural question that may arise in anyone's mind.

Furthermore, according to the temple tradition, it is said that walking to a temple situated on a hill brings virtue. It is said that circumambulating the temple brings virtue. It is said that taking a bath early in the morning in the temple pond or in the nearby river brings virtue. It is said that offering a full prostration (sashtanga namaskara) brings virtue. It is said that receiving the satagopam brings virtue. It is said that offering donations to the offering box (hundi) brings virtue. Likewise, it is said that eating the sacred offering (prasada) brings virtue. It is also said that merely having the darshan of the deity brings virtue. It is because all these are believed to bring virtue that people practice them and continue to follow this tradition.

Then we must know what is the virtue gained through all these? That is, as we discussed earlier, what is the benefit that we receive? We have already known that virtue means the benefit that comes to us. But remember, our elders would never have introduced

such a tradition without any benefit. Nor would everyone have followed it. Therefore, let us know what virtue, that is, what benefit, comes through these.

There is profound meaning and inner meaning hidden within the temple tradition. Such a tradition would never have been introduced without any benefit. Let us know it in a little more detail.

If we observe society, we find people of many different kinds. That is, people with different kinds of behaviour. Some commit robberies, crimes, and murders. Some engage in violence and brutality. Some commit rape and outrage the modesty of others. Some deceive and cheat people for their own selfish gain, they cause loss and suffering to others. Because of them, many people in the world experience sorrow. Some even go through a living hell. Because of such people, there is no peace in society. Such people are called sinners.

There are also some people who think only about their own benefit. They do not harm others. They work hard and look after their own livelihood. They do not bother about others. They do not interfere in the affairs of other people, others neither gain nor lose anything because of them.

There are yet others who, while looking after their own welfare try to benefit others. They engage in service activities. They make charitable donations. They do deeds that bring good to others. Others receive at least some benefit because of them. Such people are called virtuous ones.

There are still others who completely give up their selfishness and dedicate themselves to serving others and doing good. They do not even consider their own hardships but constantly

strive to bring happiness to everyone. Such people are called mahatmas.

Thus, even though all of them are human, if we see, we find many different kinds of behaviour among human beings. Then why do people behave so differently? Why do some help others while others cause harm? Why do some render service while others commit violence? Why do some share while others steal? Why do some show respect while others insult? No one understands why society is like this. No matter how much advice is given, those who do wrong do not change. They do not reform themselves. Because of such a situation, many people experience a living hell and live without peace not only in society but even within families. They cannot understand why their family members behave the way they do. All they can do is fold their hands and pray to God but nothing else. However, they keep hoping, “it would be good if such people’s behaviour is changed.”

Likewise, everyone in the world experiences happiness because of those who help others, render service, and share with others. All can live peacefully and joyfully. But because of those who harm others, commit violence, and exploit others, the whole world suffers and lives in unrest. Thus, while there are some who perform deeds that promote the welfare of the world, there are also some who engage in actions that become a menace to society. At present, the latter seem to be in the majority. This is the main reason why there is so much suffering in the world today. Even if such people are advised to change their behaviour, they neither change nor reform. Lord Sri Krishna Himself explained the primary reason for this. It is because of their qualities. He says in the Bhagavad Gita that their behaviour is determined by their qualities.

**Shlok|| Prakrter Guna-sammudhah Sajjan te Guna-karmasu
Tan Akrtsna-vido Mandan Krtsna-vin Na Vicalayet
(B.G.3-29)**

Meaning: Those who are deluded by the qualities of nature become interested in qualities and actions. Those who possess soul-knowledge should not disturb such people of limited knowledge.

The meaning of this is that human beings in this world possess four kinds of qualities by nature: 1. Tamasic quality, 2. Rajasic quality, 3. Sattvic quality, and 4. Nirguna (beyond qualities). This is natural. A person's behaviour corresponds to his qualities. In other words, a person's actions always follow the qualities he possesses. Therefore, the behaviour of one who is dominated by the tamasic quality will be of one kind. The behaviour of one who is dominated by the rajasic quality will be different. The behaviour of one who possesses the sattvic quality will be different again. Likewise, one should know that the behaviour of one who is in the nirguna state will be entirely different from all of them.

The reason for their behaviour is not their fault; it is their quality that is responsible. Therefore, those who possess soul-knowledge—that is, those who know this truth—do not criticise or condemn such people, nor do they try to change their behaviour directly. The reason is that their behaviour will not change unless their qualities change first. Therefore, the soul-realised ones—that is, Yogis and Rishis—strive to transform one's qualities, rather than merely advising them, “change your behaviour and you will become a better person.” They know that no matter how much advice is given, a person's behaviour will not change unless their qualities are transformed.

Therefore, just as it is foolish to think that a dog's crooked

tail can be straightened, it is equally foolish to try to change a person's behaviour without changing his qualities. That means, if the world is to become a better place, if everyone is to live in peace and happiness, then first the qualities of all these people must change. Unless their qualities change, their behaviour will not change. Nor will there be peace and happiness in the world. Remember, it is mainly because of the tamasic and the rajasic qualities present in human beings that their behaviour goes against the welfare of the world. Since the majority of people are dominated by these qualities, the behaviour of the majority is harmful to the world and to everyone.

Now, if we simply tell all these people to change their behaviour, will they change? Certainly not. No matter how well we advise them or how many moral teachings we give them, they will not change, because their qualities have not changed. Then how do these qualities change? Is there any possibility of changing them? Yes, there is, but it is not easy. Brahmarshi Patriji says that for any human being to move from one quality to another—that is, from the tamasic quality to the rajasic quality—it takes approximately 100 to 150 births. He explains that a person's quality naturally changes only by about one millimetre in each birth.

That is why people sometimes say, "Nature acquired at birth does not leave even on the funeral pyre." In other words, for a person's qualities to change naturally, many births are required. Until their qualities change, their actions and behaviour won't change. Their actions will not be good.

Naturally, the actions of those who are in the tamasic quality and the rajasic quality are harmful to the world; that is, they cause loss to everyone. But the actions of those who possess the sattvic quality alone promote the welfare of the world; that is,

they benefit everyone. Therefore, if everyone is to become good, if their actions are to benefit others and bring happiness, then every individual must transform into the sattvic quality.

It was for this very purpose—to transform the qualities of human beings, to bring about a quicker change in them, to make them perform deeds that promote the welfare of the world, and to remove the tamasic and rajasic qualities from within them and lead them into the sattvic quality—that the elders, Rishis, and scholars of ancient times introduced the temple tradition.

All the traditions and customs introduced in this temple are designed to transform the qualities of human beings. Moreover, many of these practices benefit human beings not only physically but also mentally. They especially promote physical health and mental peace. They are also beneficial to society. If we carefully observe the traditions associated with temples, we can easily grasp this.

If ordinary people are simply told, “Do this work and you will gain this benefit,” or “Do that work and you will gain that benefit,” they generally do not give it much importance or show much interest. Therefore, since the scholars and elders knew this weakness of human beings, they used the word “virtue.” The reason is that as soon as people hear the word “virtue,” they become eager to perform that action. If they are told that they will gain virtue, they do it without even thinking. This is why the scholars used the word “virtue”—so that people would give importance to those practices.

Most importantly, what we must remember is that the temple tradition was introduced solely to transform the qualities of human beings and thereby enable them to perform deeds that

benefit the world. By doing so, their qualities change within fewer births. Then they begin to do good to the world and become useful to society.

Remember, every human being should primarily strive to transform their qualities. Only then will they perform good deeds. As a result, they will receive good, and at the same time they will also do good to others. By doing good in this way, both they and others will benefit.

Once again, remember: “What must be changed is not our clothes, but our qualities.” That is why Sathya Sai Baba said, “Do not change your clothes; change your qualities.” He also said, “You are singing bhajans and changing the tunes, but are you watching whether your qualities are changing?” By this, He clearly taught that transforming one’s qualities is what truly matters.

Likewise, Veerabrahmendra Swami also says: There is no real benefit merely in bathing in rivers or seas. There is no real benefit merely in drinking the sacred waters of the Ganga or the holy water offered in temples. Likewise, there is no real benefit in mantras recited by the mind or in tantras performed through the body. Veerabrahmendra Swami clearly teaches that only the one whose qualities are transformed—who becomes nirguna (beyond qualities)—is truly a great yogi.

Yogi Vemana also asks, “What is the use of performing countless acts of worship if one’s mind is not purified? That is, if the qualities of the mind have not changed? He clearly teaches that one’s qualities must be transformed.

What he says is that just as delicious food prepared in an unclean vessel is of no use, religious observances practiced without purity of the soul are equally futile. Likewise, when the mind is not

purified, all acts of worship are in vain.

Lord Krishna also says in the Bhagavad Gita:

Shlok|| Traigunya-vishaya veda nistrai-gunyo bhavarjuna

Nirdvandvo nitya-sattva-stho niryoga-kshema atmavan

(B.G.2:45)

Meaning: The vedas deal with the three qualities. But, oh Arjuna, rise above the three qualities. Be free from duality, always remain in pure sattvic quality, and become a soul-realised person without focusing on well-being and security.

Thus, Lord Krishna also taught that one's qualities must be transformed.

From all these teachings, it becomes clear that every person must transform their qualities.

Brahmarshi Patriji teaches a path through which this transformation can take place in this very lifetime, without requiring countless births. That path is "observation of the breath meditation."

Patriji clearly explains that whoever practices meditation can transform from tamasic quality to rajasic quality in this very lifetime, no matter how deeply they are in the tamasic state; and those in the rajasic quality can transform into the sattvic quality. We should know that meditation exists for the transformation of one's qualities so that everyone will become a better person.

Whatever anyone may say, the essential point is that one's qualities must change. Therefore, let us first know what these qualities are and why they must be transformed. As Lord Krishna taught, all human beings possess the three qualities—sattvic quality, rajasic quality, and tamasic quality. A person's behaviour is determined by their qualities. Among these, the tamasic quality and rajasic quality bring harm, whereas the sattvic quality alone

brings benefit.

Brahmarshi Valmiki explains in the Ramayana how people possessing these three qualities behave. Just as Valmiki describes, those dominated by the tamasic quality, like Kumbhakarna, give importance to excessive eating, drinking, and sleeping. Those who are dominated by the rajasic quality, like Ravana, demonstrate arrogance and seek to dominate everyone. Those who are in the sattvic quality, like Vibhishana, carefully discern dharma and adharma, justice and injustice, and good and evil.

In one sense, one who is in tamasic quality will possess laziness—they do not think. One who is in rajasic quality will possess ego—they act impulsively. But those who are in sattvic quality possess discrimination—they think. Consider the single incident of abducting Sita. The responses of these three individuals were entirely different. Kumbhakarna remained indifferent, thinking, “What has Sita’s abduction to do with me?” and simply looked after his own affairs. Ravana declared, “It is my royal right. I am the king, and I may do as I please.” But Vibhishana, who is in sattvic quality, declared that abducting another man’s wife was adharma and upheld the path of dharma.

Observe, Kumbhakarna, who is in tamasic quality, acted blindly according to his brother’s command and was destroyed. Ravana, driven by the rajasic quality and ego, refused to release Sita even when advised to do so, fought the war, and perished. But Vibhishana, who is in sattvic quality, thought about dharma and adharma, took refuge in dharma, and ultimately benefited—became king.

From this it is evident that whoever is in sattvic quality gains discrimination, develops deeper wisdom, understands dharma and adharma, clearly recognises what should and should not be

done, does only what ought to be done, and ultimately gains benefit. Vibhishana himself attained benefit and later brought peace and happiness to everyone. However, Ravana, who is in rajasic quality and driven by ego, destroyed himself and became the cause of everyone else's destruction.

Therefore, know this: the reason for any one performing actions that bring harm to others is their qualities. As long as such people exist, there can be no lasting peace or happiness in the world. Grasping all these, those great beings, Mahatmas and Rishis, introduced the temple tradition as a means of transforming the harmful qualities within human beings. Remember once again that whatever the great Masters did, whatever they gave to the world, always contained some genuine benefit. It may not necessarily be the benefit that we expect or desire. Once we grasp this, we can clearly perceive the true benefits that the temple tradition offers.

We should know that all the practices prescribed in the temple tradition exist solely to transform one's qualities. They do not grant liberation, fulfil desires, remove hardships, or erase sins. Therefore, let us know what kind of virtue—that is, what specific benefits—arise from each of the practices followed in the temple tradition.

“The belief that all the deities are different” disappears through meditation, just as salt dissolves in water and becomes one. Then the belief that everything is One arises.

Ritual Bathing

It is believed that taking a bath early in the morning in a temple tank or in a nearby river or the sea earns virtue. Especially during the month of Kartika, people bathe early every morning for the entire month and then visit the temple.

Naturally, many people do not wake up early because of laziness. They continue sleeping until late in the morning. Such laziness is a sign of the tamasic quality. We should know that the tamasic quality is a quality that brings loss in one's life. The reason is that, although such people are capable of working, they do not do anything. They simply sit idle and waste their time. They do not use their intellect; that is, they do not think. In this way, they incur many losses in life and ultimately waste their very life. Lord Krishna teaches this in the following verse of the Bhagavad Gita.

Shlok|| Aprakaso pravrttisca pramado moha eva ca

Tamasyetani jayante vivrddhe kurunandana

(B.G.14:13)

Meaning: Oh Arjuna, descendant of the Kuru dynasty! When the tamasic quality develops in a person, it gives rise to indiscretion (dullness of intellect), laziness, carelessness, and ignorance (superstition, misinterpretation).

That is why the scholars instructed people to wake up early every morning throughout the month of Kartika and bathe, saying that it would earn virtue. By waking up early and bathing every morning for a month, anyone can gradually overcome laziness. They develop the habit of rising early. Those who cultivate this habit are able to complete their daily tasks efficiently. Otherwise,

by continuing to sleep late, they fail to accomplish many of the things they ought to do and thereby suffer loss.

Thus, the virtue—that is, the benefit—of taking the Kartika ritual baths is the removal of the tamasic quality, namely laziness.

Since laziness gradually returns over time, the elders instructed people to observe the Kartika baths every year. In this way, little by little, anyone can overcome the tamasic quality.

Moreover, this is also the reason why many temples were built on hills and hilltops. Anyone wishing to visit such temples must climb steps with effort to reach them. By repeatedly making this effort, the laziness within them gradually disappears, and they slowly overcome the tamasic quality.

Circumambulations

Likewise, circumambulating the temple—sometimes even 108 times—or performing rolling prostration (anga pradakshina) are all to remove laziness. Otherwise, some people become accustomed to comfort, avoid all effort, refuse to work hard, and remain inactive. Such people, on hearing that these practices earn virtue, perform circumambulations around the temple believing they will gain some benefit or have their wishes fulfilled. However, the real benefit of making these circumambulations with effort is that it removes the laziness within them, so that they carry out all their duties efficiently. That is the virtue—the benefit—gained through circumambulation. By performing them repeatedly over many births in the name of virtue, one will come out of the tamasic quality and enter the rajasic quality.

All that the Yogis taught is meditation -

All that they practiced is meditation.

Meditation means observation of the breath.

Sashtanga Pranam – Shatagopam

(Full body prostration)

The rajasic quality is also one that brings harm to a person. Lord Krishna teaches about the behaviour of those who are in rajasic quality through the following verse:

**Shlok|| Lobhah pravrttir arambhah karmanam asamah sprha
Rajasyetani jayante vivrddhe bharatarsabha (B.G. 14-12)**

Meaning: Oh Arjuna, best of the Bharata dynasty! When the rajasic quality develops in a person, it gives rise to greed, one begins to perform prohibited actions, lacks peace of mind (lack of control over the senses), and a desire is born within them.

As Lord Krishna teaches, those who are in the rajasic quality are driven by desire and greed, engaging in actions that ought not to be performed. Because of their ego, they also lose their peace of mind, harm themselves and cause harm to others. Therefore, human beings must also rise above the rajasic quality. To help people overcome it, the elders of ancient times introduced certain practices in temples under the name of virtue.

Observe, however arrogant a person may be—whether wealthy, holding a high position, possessing great authority, or occupying an important office—when they enter a temple, they forget their ego. Those who are ordinarily accustomed to receiving salutations from others now bow down themselves. They perform full prostration (sashtanga pranam). Moreover, even the greatest of people must bow their heads to receive a sacred crown-like metal blessing vessel or lord’s footprint head-cover (shatagopam). No matter how important they are, they bow before the sacred sandals, acknowledging, “I am lower than Your feet.” By repeatedly

doing this, their ego gradually reduces. Over many births, the rajasic quality also gradually disappears, and they enter the sattvic quality. Thus, the virtue—that is, the benefit—of receiving the shatagopam and performing sashtanga pranam is the gradual reduction of ego and the removal of the rajasic quality. Beyond this, performing these practices does not mysteriously produce virtue that brings millions in wealth, removes hardships, or fulfils desires.

Sins committed do not disappear. However, through these practices, over many births, one overcomes the rajasic quality and enters the sattvic quality. As a result, one's behaviour changes, one comes onto the right path, develops discrimination, performs good deeds, and will be able to attain peace and happiness in life. The Bhagavad Gita teaches how the behaviour of those who are in the sattvic quality is transformed.

Shlok|| Sarva-dvaresu dehe'smin prakasa upajayate

Jnanam yada tada vidyad vivrddham sattvam ityuta

(B.G.14-11)

Meaning: When one comes into sattvic quality, all their activities become pure and radiant and are filled with wisdom.

In other words, the behaviour of those who enter the sattvic quality undergoes a complete transformation. They develop discrimination and discernment. They perform only good deeds—deeds that promote the welfare of the world. Thus, actions performed in the sattvic quality bring benefit not only to oneself but also to the world. Therefore, everyone should strive to enter the sattvic quality as quickly as possible. That is the very purpose of the temple tradition.

Moreover, Lord Krishna through the following verse taught us about what kind of results arise from actions performed

under each of the qualities.

**Shlok: Karmanah sukrtasyahuh sattvikam nirmalam phalam
Rajasas tu phalam duhkham ajnanam tamasah phalam
(B.G.14-16)**

Meaning: It is said that actions performed in the sattvic quality result in pure happiness; actions performed in the rajasic quality result in sorrow; and actions performed in the tamasic quality result in ignorance.

From this verse, we can know that both the tamasic quality and rajasic qualities are harmful to anyone, whereas the sattvic quality is beneficial to everyone. Lord Krishna further teaches about the kind of future one attains depending on the quality with which one dies.

**Shlok|| Yada sattve pravrdhe tu pralayam yati deha-bhrut
Tadottama-vidam lokan amalan pratipadyate (B.G.14-14)**

Meaning: When a person dies while the sattvic quality is developing, they attain the pure worlds of those endowed with the highest wisdom.

**Shlok|| Rajasi pralayam gatva karma-sangisu jayate
Tatha pralinas tamasi mudha-yonisu jayate (B.G.14-15)**

Meaning: When a person dies while the rajasic quality is developing, they are being born in the wombs of those who are interested in performing actions. Likewise, when a person dies while the tamasic quality is developing, they are being born in the wombs of the ignorant (those who lack discernment).

From what the Lord has said, we should grasp that the tamasic quality and the rajasic quality are harmful even to future births. Therefore, we should know that everyone must overcome them and enter into the sattvic quality. One should know that these

temple traditions exist for that very purpose.

Once again, know: the virtue that comes from these ritual baths, climbing hills, circumambulations, sashtanga pranams, shatagopams, worship, and the recitation of hymns cannot remove our hardships, cannot fulfil our desires, and cannot remove the sins we have committed. But all of them are only for transforming the qualities within a human being. They are only for bringing a human being onto the righteous path. That alone is the virtue that comes from them. That is, that alone is the benefit.

Moreover, there was another reason why the elders of ancient times introduced this temple tradition. What was that reason? In ancient times, the facilities available for acquiring education were not as many as those that exist today. There were no schools, educational institutions, books, pens, calculators, computers, or other modern facilities in those days. During that period, the Gurukula system of education existed. Anyone who wished to receive an education had to go to a gurukula and study under the guru who was there. Even that method of education was such that the guru would orally teach, and the disciple would listen and repeatedly recite it orally. In that way, they preserved the entire knowledge in their minds. In those days, the human mind itself was the book. The disciples would then pass on the knowledge they had learned in the same manner to the next generation. Such was the educational system of those times.

Likewise, through the tapas they performed—that is, through the practice of meditation—the Rishis and Gurus of those times were able to know the truth. The truth that they knew was that the soul alone is God. They realised that God exists in all living beings. They taught this very truth to their disciples. However,

because it was taught only orally, after some time, or after a few generations, people forgot the truth that the soul alone is God. Even if some people came to know this truth, it remained limited only to them. There was no opportunity for this truth—that the soul alone is God—to become known to ordinary people and the common masses.

They would not come to know about God. Therefore, we can understand that the ancient sages and Gurus introduced the temple tradition so that everyone would know the truth that “the soul itself is God” and that this truth would not be forgotten by future generations.

If we observe, a temple can be compared to the human body. The reason is that the place where God resides is called a temple. Since God is the soul, and since the soul resides in the body, the body itself becomes a temple. That is why Shankaracharya said, “The body itself is the temple; the living being itself is God.” Thus, the temple is the representation of the body. The idol inside the temple is the representation of the God who resides within the body. In this way, by constructing temples, the scholars of those times preserved this truth permanently for the world. The inner meaning of this temple tradition is to make people know that God resides within the body.

The goal of human life is not eating, drinking, and sleeping. The goal of human life is to know God and to attain God. Those who achieve this goal become permanently free from sorrow and suffering. The scholars introduced the temple tradition to the world to help people attain this goal. But people are accepting only the external meaning and are not knowing its inner meaning.

Look, why do people go to a temple? They go with the

intention of having the darshan of the idol. When they go to the temple, first they leave their footwear outside. Then they circumambulate around the temple three times. After that, they approach the priest. There they offer camphor and a coconut to him. As soon as they offer them, the priest breaks the coconut and offers the Harati. While he is offering the Harati, they bow before the idol. Then the priest offers the coconut to the idol and returns half of it. That is called Prasad. They eat it and enjoy its sweetness. Then they sit there for a while and return home. This is what everyone does when they visit a temple. But all these actions were not introduced without a meaning.

Likewise, unless a person has the darshan of the true Divine—that is, unless one attains God—no one's sufferings will come to an end, and liberation will not be attained. The meaning behind asking people to have the darshan of the idol is to teach them that they must have the darshan of the Divine. But to have the darshan of the true Divine, first, just as one leaves one's dust-covered footwear outside, one must abandon the evil qualities within oneself, namely the Inner Enemies—lust, anger, greed, attachment, pride, and jealousy. Then, the meaning of performing three circumambulations is that one must transcend the three qualities within oneself—the sattvic, rajasic and tamasic qualities. Likewise, to have the darshan of the idol in the temple, one must first approach the priest. In the same way, to attain the Divine within yourself—that is, the soul—you must first approach a Guru who is capable of making you realise the Divine.

When approaching the priest, a coconut is offered after removing its outer fibre, leaving only a single tuft. The meaning of this is that we must get rid of the desires that cling to us like the

fibre of the coconut. Removing the fibre signifies becoming free from desires. Then the priest breaks the coconut. Its meaning is that when we approach the Guru with the desire to realise the Divine, the Guru first breaks our deeply rooted ego. That is, he removes it. This is the meaning behind breaking the hard coconut.

After that, the priest lights the Harati and waves it three times before the idol. As soon as the idol becomes visible in the light of the Harati, our two hands, which had remained apart until then, automatically come together, and we offer our salutations. In the ancient temples—that is, in temples constructed according to the Agama Shastra—the inner sanctorum is kept dark. Only an eternal lamp burns in one corner. In that faint light, the idol cannot be seen clearly. Therefore, when the Harati is offered, the light of the Harati makes the idol clearly visible. As a result, without even realising it, our separated hands come together, and we bow in reverence.

When the Guru removes the ego within us, the darkness of ignorance within us gradually disappears, and the light of wisdom begins to shine. In the light of that wisdom, the true Divine—that is, the soul—is realised. As soon as the soul is realised, those who until then believed that the Divine was separate from themselves come to know that the Divine and they are not separate, but are one and the same. The Truth, “I myself am that Divine,” becomes revealed. The Truth, “Aham Brahmasmi,” is realised. This is the inner meaning of bringing together the two separated hands and offering salutations.

Therefore, know this: the inner meaning behind asking you to have the darshan of the idol in the temple is to make you realise that you must have the darshan of the Divine that resides within you.

PRASAD

After that, they return to us half of whatever we offered, whether it is bananas, a coconut, or anything else. That is, whatever we offer, they return the same to us. We receive it as Prasad. We accept it considering it sacred. This too has a meaning. It means that whatever we give to God—that is, whatever we give to Creation—we receive the same. This is the meaning behind returning the Prasad. Remember this, it is to teach us that in this Creation, whatever you give, that is what you receive; however much you give, that much you receive; and whatever kind of thing you give, that very kind you receive. This is the meaning behind returning the Prasad. That is why, if you offer bananas, you receive bananas; if you offer a coconut, you receive a coconut. Likewise, whatever you offer, you receive that as Prasad. That means, if you do good—you receive good. If you do evil—you receive evil. If you give violence—you receive violence. If you render service—you receive service. If you give respect—you receive respect. If you insult—you receive an insult. If you cause loss—you receive loss. If you cause suffering—you receive suffering. This is the meaning behind receiving back what we have given.

Without understanding this meaning, if you merely follow the ritual and offer something only in the temple, you receive back only half of what you offered. But you should know that if you know the inner meaning and give to the world, it returns to you multiplied.

We should understand this and try to give to Creation exactly what we expect from it. Whatever we do not wish to receive,

we should not give that. But because people do not understand this, everyone is behaving contrary to the law of Creation. The reason is that everyone is inflicting violence upon living beings, yet they desire happiness. That means what they give is one thing, but what they desire is something else. Then tell me, how can what they desire ever come to them? Is it not true that whatever we give is exactly what comes back to us from this Creation? Therefore, do not give violence. As far as possible, try to make everyone and everything happy. Then you will always be able to live happily. This is the meaning behind returning the Prasad.

Moreover, we place the received Prasad upon our eyes and then accept it, considering it sacred. The meaning of this is that whatever is given to us in life should be regarded as God's Prasad. We should accept it joyfully. We should consider it as the Prasad given to us in return for what we ourselves have offered. Whether it is hardship, happiness, profit, loss, honour, insult, violence or illness, we should accept it joyfully.

We should maintain equanimity towards everything. We should not become elated when happiness comes, nor should we become dejected when hardship comes. This is the meaning behind touching the Prasad to our eyes.

Remember this: what the priest gives is the priest's Prasad. What we receive from Creation is God's Prasad. But everyone sacredly accepts what the priest gives, while they do not regard what God gives as sacred.

Remember this: whatever we possess and whatever we receive have all been received from God's Creation. They are not things that we brought with us when we were born. Therefore,

whatever is given to us in life should be regarded as God's Prasad. This alone is the inner meaning of touching the Prasad to our eyes. But the Prasad that we eat will not bring us the things we desire, nor will it remove our hardships. Therefore, we should know its inner meaning and live accordingly.

We should also know a few more things regarding Prasad. Everything that is offered in temples consists only of sattvic food items. That is, not only Tamarid Rice, Curd Rice, Sweet Jaggery Pongal, Kheer, Sweet Flour Balls and Crepe, Soaked Split Yellow Moong Dal, Traditional Rice Flour and Jaggery Sweet are offered. More commonly, the tradition of offering fruits is seen. The reason is that fruit is not only the best food, but it also develops the sattvic quality. Moreover, the inner meaning of offering such items in temples is that everyone should enter into the sattvic quality, and everyone should consume sattvic food.

People follow the sattvic rule only up to the point of receiving Prasad because they think it brings virtue. But because they do not grasp why such sattvic foods and fruits are offered in temples, why the elders prescribed that only such offerings should be made in the temple tradition, and because they do not grasp its inner meaning, they do not follow the same rule in their daily food. Everyone eats whatever food they like, according to their own preference. They give importance only to taste. Giving importance to taste, they eat non-vegetarian food—that is, chicken, mutton, fish, and eggs. They prepare them in many delicious ways and eat them. They think that this alone is life. They do not think beyond that.

But they fail to know that non-vegetarian food and eggs

develop the tamasic quality. In the rajasic quality, there is impulsiveness, one's discernment is destroyed, and thinking is absent. As a result, people perform actions that should not be done. They behave contrary to Creation and the laws of Creation and cause harm to others. They fail to know that by performing such actions, they themselves will suffer in the future, and commit mistakes. When asked, "Why did you behave like that? Wasn't it wrong?" They even justify themselves by saying, "In some situations, I had no choice but to speak like that; I could not help behaving that way." But they fail to grasp that the real cause of such behaviour is their own quality.

Know this: those who believe in the temple tradition should eat only sattvic vegetarian food. They should consume more fruits. That is best for them, and it is also beneficial. That is why meat, fish, and eggs are not offered in temples. The reason is that such food is forbidden for the human body, which is designed for vegetarian food. Therefore, whoever knows the greatness and the inner meaning of Prasad and, in real life also, eats sattvic vegetarian food, their life will be completely transformed. The reason is that their qualities will be transformed. This is the inner meaning of Prasad.

Moreover, we have also known that the temple is the representation of the body. Therefore, if sattvic vegetarian food is offered in the temple, its meaning is that we should take only sattvic vegetarian food. The reason is that the body itself is the true temple, because God resides in the body. That is why Shankaracharya says, "Deho Devalayah Proktah, Jeevo Deva Sanatanah." That is, "The body itself is the temple, and the living being within it is God."

Therefore, the purpose of offering sattvic food in temples is to teach us what kind of food should be placed in the true temple. But without understanding this, people put the flesh of dead animals into the temple where God resides—that is, into the body. They do not think beyond that. The reason is that a dead animal is called a corpse. Think about how impure and improper it is to place corpses in the temple where God resides. Corpses are buried only in the cremation ground; they are not placed in the body, which is like a temple. Just think, if by mistake someone were to place a corpse inside any temple, people would consider it a great Sacrilege (a disrespectful act against God), and the temple would be ceremonially purified.

Think about it. Those who believe and practice that it is such a great Sacrilege even to make a temple that contains only an idol representing God impure, how can they make the very body in which God Himself reside impure? How can they place corpses there? How can they eat the flesh of corpses? Think about it!

Therefore, understand that every aspect of the temple tradition has a meaning. We should know the meanings contained in the temple tradition handed down by the scholars and elders and put them into practice. It should not be followed merely as a ritual. Know this: **“If it is followed merely as a ritual, there is no benefit. But if it is practiced after understanding its meaning, everything becomes beneficial and virtue.”**

If one takes life, they are demons.

If one does not take life, they are human beings.

If one protects life, they are Mahatmas.

if one gives life, they are Paramatmas.

Offerings in the Hundi

(DONATION BOX)

There is also the practice of placing offerings in the Hundi. Many people think that all the offerings placed in the Hundi are given to God. They believe that, through this, God becomes pleased and, in return, not only blesses them with wealth but also fulfils their desires. Thus, they hope that their hardships will come to an end.

But there is also a meaning behind offering gifts into the Hundi. The meaning behind giving them to God is to teach us that we should give to the world. This is the reason why the practice of making offerings was introduced for those who visit temples. The reason is that whatever we have received has come to us from God's Creation. Therefore, we should spend a portion of it for the welfare of the world.

But how does giving to the world become the same as giving to God?

Remember, there is nothing in this world that is not God. Therefore, whatever is given to this world is given to God Himself. That is, whatever we offer for the welfare of the world is an offering made to God. Know, it is not only money that can be offered. One may offer anything. Whether it is your time, strength, wisdom,

intelligence, speech, or anything else that you possess, it should be given to the world—that is, it should be offered to God.

Shirdi Sai Baba also taught this very truth. He says, **“Since everything is the Parabrahma, whatever anyone has received or possesses should be known as having been received from God.”**

Moreover, Baba also says, **“The prosperity received from God should be enjoyed with the spirit of sacrifice. It should be shared. One should not develop any kind of greed or attachment.”** While saying this, Baba also quoted a verse from the Isha Upanishad.

Know, the meaning behind making offerings is to teach us that we should share with the world—that we should give. It is only to convey this truth that the scholars instructed people to make offerings. This is the inner meaning behind it.

Offering Hair (Tonsure)

Likewise, in some temples, people offer their hair. This too has a meaning. Patriji often says, “It is not the head that should be shaved; it is the thoughts that should be cleansed.”

That means it is not the hair on the head that has to be removed; it is the thoughts in the head that must be removed. In other words, the mind must be made free of thoughts. That state is called the state of meditation.

This is what Maharshi Patanjali referred to as “Chitta Vritti Nirodha” (the cessation of the mind). He also called this yoga. He says, “**Yogah Chitta Vritti Nirodhah.**”

Lord Sri Krishna also taught Arjuna to become a yogi. He said that a yogi is greater than everyone else.

**Shlok|| Tapasvibhyo dhiko Yogi Jnanibhyo pi
Mato dhikah**

**Karmibhyashchadhiko Yogi Tasmad Yogi
Bhavarjuna (B.G.6-46)**

Meaning: Oh Arjuna! A yogi is superior to those who perform austerities, superior even to those who possess scriptural knowledge, and superior to those who perform sacrificial and ritualistic karmas. Therefore, become a yogi.

This is the greatest state that a human being can attain. Those who gradually make themselves free from thoughts attain Divinity itself. The meaning behind the tradition introduced by the scholars who wrote the scriptures to offer one's hair is that one should remove one's thoughts—that is, remove the impurities of the mind. For that, one should do “observation of the breath meditation”. In other words, the inner meaning behind offering one's hair is that one should do meditation.

“Two people cannot sit on the same chair at the same time. Only when one person gets up does the other get the opportunity to sit. Likewise, if you want to place your attention on God, your attention on the world and worldly pleasures must leave.”

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The Eternal Lamp – The Temple Bell

In everybody, the flame called the soul is ever shining. If the soul is absent from the body, the body becomes a corpse. Therefore, the flame of the soul must always remain radiant within the body. This is the reason why it is said that the Eternal Lamp (Akhandā Deepam) in the temple, which is the representation of the body, should never be extinguished. Its meaning is that just as the flame of the soul shines within the body, the eternal lamp should continue to shine in the temple, which represents the body. That is the significance of the eternal lamp.

Likewise, the meaning behind saying that the temple bell should always be rung is that within every person's body, the sound of Om (Omkaṛa Nada) is continuously resonating. It is as a symbol of that eternal sound that a bell is rung in every temple. In every religion, temple bells are rung.

Likewise, there is also a meaning behind constructing temple towers (gopurams) very high and lighting the Sky Lamp (Akasha Deepam) at night. In those days, roads and pathways were not as well developed as they are today. Because of the tall temple towers during the day and the Sky Lamp at night, travellers could recognise from a distance that a village was nearby. They were able to reach that village. They could also take rest on the temple premises. Thus, the temple tradition and temple architecture contain many meanings and inner meanings. All of them are beneficial to human beings.

Likewise, just as the idol represents God, the temple

represents the body. Furthermore, corresponding to the five elements of nature present in the body, the temple also contains their symbolic representations: Prasadam represents the Earth element, Udakam represents the Water element, the Deepam represents the Fire element, Dhoopam represents the Air element, and the Ghanta Nada represents the Space element which can be seen in the temple.

Moreover, the halls (mandapams) in temples were greatly useful for cultural and educational activities. Gurus and scholars delivered discourses there. Dancers delighted the people with their performances. Artists presented dramas and Burrakathas conveying messages of devotion. In this way, temples used to be very useful.

No matter how we look at them, the scriptures are full of meaning. But without knowing the real meaning, we are merely practicing them because they have come down as tradition. Without thinking about what benefits they bring, we keep asking for various desires. We do one thing but ask for another. We practice one thing but expect another. Then how can what is expected be obtained? How can what is desired come? Because it does not happen, people become disappointed, and finally they even lose faith in God. That is why we see people changing gods, changing photographs, and changing religions. Therefore, one should not perform something simply because it is said to bring virtue. One should know what kind of virtue comes from doing that act.

Therefore, you should know what you are doing and what result comes from it. If you know it and then do that act, you will certainly obtain the expected benefit. Remember, the entire temple tradition is to tell you to seek the Divine within yourself—

that is, the soul—in other words, to meditate. That is why, after having the darshan of the idol, people sit for a while in the temple and then leave. In earlier times, whoever came there would sit there for some time, meditate, and then leave. In other words, they used temples as meditation halls. As soon as they saw the idol in the temple, they remembered the Divine within themselves. They would sit there for some time and, through meditation, focus on that Divine. Gradually, sitting for a while and then leaving became a tradition, but everyone forgot that the meaning was to meditate.

Earlier, many people's homes were not suitable for meditation. Therefore, they used to go to temples, meditate there, and then return. Not only in the past, but even now, many people's homes are not suitable for meditation. Therefore, let us also use temples as meditation halls. Let us meditate upon the Divine within ourselves. Let us meditate.

Know, the inner meaning of temples is to tell us to meditate in order to know the Divine. Therefore, let us transform temples into meditation halls. Let us make our lives blessed. Let us meditate and attain God.

Those who do not remember God are the lowest.

Those who wish to have the darshan of God are of the middle order.

Those who always meditate for the experience of God are the highest.

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There are countless scriptures in the world. Since ancient times, many yogis, sages, scholars, and intellectuals have written many scriptures. However, they are all considered scriptures.

Every matter in the scriptures can be related to the body, and the soul. If it is related to the body, one kind of meaning arises. If it is related to the soul, another meaning arises.

For example, when Lord Sri Krishna says, “Take refuge in Me,” those who understand Him as the body take refuge in the idol and perform ritual worship. Those who understand Him as the soul take refuge in the soul and practice meditation. In that way, different meanings can be derived from the same words spoken by Lord Sri Krishna, they are deriving them as well. But Lord Sri Krishna was in the soul state, and He spoke in the soul state only.

Likewise, there are people who give different meanings to these scriptures according to their respective levels. Therefore, let us analyse the meaning and inner meaning of these scriptures.

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-Brahmarshi Tatavarthy Veera Raghava Rao

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