

# A Dialog on Hinduism

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## Chapter 1 : Vedas and Sastras

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- 1. What is the basic authority (pramana) for Hindu religion and philosophy?**  
The Vedas are the basic, fundamental authority.
- 2. What is the meaning of the word Veda?**  
Veda, in Sanskrit means that which gives knowledge.
- 3. Is there any other name for Veda?**  
Veda is also called Sruti.
- 4. What is the meaning of the word Sruti?**  
Sruti means that which is heard (through you ears). The Vedas were originally taught by Lord Narayana to Brahma orally. From thereon the Vedas came down from the Guru to the students orally only. The Guru teaches the Vedas to the students. Thus the student hears the Veda from the teacher.
- 5. Are Vedas known by any other names, apart from Sruti?**  
They are also called Nigama and Amnaya.
- 6. What is the meaning of the words – Nigama and Amnaya?**  
Nigama means a settled text or work, which is handed down from the Guru to the student from time immemorial. Amnaya means what is learnt by the student, by frequent repetition of the text; and also by frequently thinking over the same.
- 7. Who composed the Vedas?**  
The Vedas have not been composed by anybody, not even by God Himself. The Vedas are eternally existent. Even God did not create or make the Vedas. Narayana has only taught the Vedas to Brahma and then down the line. Hence Vedas are called Apaurusheya – not authored or made by anyone, including God.
- 8. How many Vedas are there?**  
There are four Vedas. They are called: Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda and Atharva Veda.
- 9. How do you explain that the Vedas have not been authored by anybody; including God?**  
They are actually the breath of God. That is, after each deluge (pralaya), when the world is created, God Narayana remembers the Vedas and teaches them to Brahma and then it comes down the line. That is why, we say they are not made by anybody including God, but are self-existent.
- 10. Who divided the Vedas into four, as stated above?**  
Vyasa edited the Vedas and divided them.
- 11. On what basis did Vyasa divide the Vedas into four?**  
The Vedas were divided into four, to suit the Vedic rituals or karmas. There are four persons (Ritviks) who are prominent in the performance of rituals.

**12. What are the names of these four persons (Ritviks)? How are they connected with the four Vedas?**

1.The person, whose function is to recite praises of God and prayer to Him, sitting in one place, is called Hota. The Hota's function and Mantras are given in Rig Veda.

2.The person, who is engaged in the actual performance of the ritual, from the beginning to the end, is called Adhvaryu. The necessary mantras and the functions of the Adhvaryu are given in Yajur Veda.

3.The person who sings Samans (musical notes), sitting in another place, is called Udgata. The Udgata's functions and the Sama Ganas are given in Sama Veda.

4.The general supervisor of the rituals is called Brahman. The Bhrama's functions and the Mantras are given in Atharva Veda. The vedas are also broadly divided as Mantras and Brahmanas.

**13. What do the Mantras talk about?**

The Mantras are in praise of God and prayers to God. The Yajur Mantras give detailed formulas for the rituals. The sama Mantras are only Rik Mantras, set to music.

**14. Are these mantras in prose form or poetry form?**

The Rik Mantras are in poetry form. Yajur Mantras are in prose form. Sama Mantras are Riks, set to musical tones. The Atharva Veda contains both verses (poetry) and prose. This much idea is enough for the present regarding Mantras.

**15. Please explain the other part, namely Brahmana.**

The Brahmanas are in prose form. Their main aim is to prescribe the rituals in details and also praise the glory of the Devas

**16. How are the Brahmanas divided?**

Brahmanas are again divided into two parts: Vidhi and Arthavada.

**17. What do these talk about?**

Vidhi portions give command to do a thing, to perform rituals. Arthavada generally praises the rituals, the glory of Devas and also points out their weaknesses. They also contain stories to illustrate the points.

**18. What is the relative importance of these different portions?**

Portions connected with rituals are called Karmakanda. Generally, they teach how rituals like various yagas are to be done. They are also called Purvakanda. Portions dealing with philosophy and knowledge of Brahman are called Jnanakandra or Brahma kanda. So, Mantras and Brahmanas come under Karmakanda. Upanishads are called Jnanakanda. But, knowledge of Brahman and Philosophy are also discussed in Mantras and Brahmanas.

**19. What is the meaning of the word Sastra?**

Sastra in Sanskrit means that which gives teaching, instruction or command.

**20. What are the Sastras?**

The Vedas are the most important sastras. There is no sastra higher than the Veda. Then we have Smiriti, Itihasa, Purana and Agama, about which we will discuss later.

**21. What are Samhita and Aranyaka. ?**

Modern thinkers divide Vedas into four portions, as follows: Samhita Brahmana Aranyaka, and Upanishads. Samhita denotes collection of Mantras. Brahmanas have already been

described earlier. Aranyakas are texts, which were recited in hermitages in forests. Upanishads contain philosophical thoughts, in the form of discussions and explanations.

**22. Why are Upanishads called Jnana Kanda or Brahma Kanda?**

They talk about realisation of God, how to attain salvation. Since they speak about realising Brahman or the ultimate reality the Upanishads are called Brahma Kanda. Since they give us Knowledge about attaining salvation, they are also called Jnana Kanda. The Upanishads are also called Veda Siras, i.e., the head of the Veda. When we say the head, we mean the most important part of the Veda.

**23. What is the difference between Brahma and Brahman? Are both the same?**

No. Brahma is the four-faced one, who came from the lotus, out of the navel of Lord Narayana. Brahman means one who is great and hence denotes the Supreme Being or the Ultimate Reality.

**24. Talking about Upanishads, how many Upanishads are there?**

People say that there are more than a hundred Upanishads, but only some of the Upanishads are accepted authoritatively by all sections of the Hindus. The important ones are called Dasopanishad, i.e., the ten Upanishads. These ten Upanishads are accepted as authority and quoted by ancient philosophers like Sankara, Ramanuja, and Madhva.

**25. What are the ten Upanishads?**

The ten Upanishads are: Isavaya Upanishad, Kena Upanishad, Kata Upanishad, Prasna Upanishad, Mundaka Upanishad, Mandukya Upanishad, Taittiriya Upanishad, Aitareya Upanishad, Chandogya Upanishad, Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.

**26. Are there any other important and accepted Upanishads?**

We have Svetasvatara Upanishad, Kaushitaki Upanishad, Subala Upanishad, and Maha Narayana Upanishad forms part of Taittiriya Upanishad, Aitareya Upanishad, Chandogya Upanishad, Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.

**27. From which of the Vedas do these Upanishads come?**

Aitareya Upanishad is in Rig Veda Isavasya Upanishads, Kata Upanishads, Taittiriya Upanishad Brihadaranyaka Upanishad are in Yajur Veda. Kena Upanishad and Chandogya Upanishad are from Sama Veda. Prasna Upanishad, Mundaka Upanishad and Mandukya Upanishad are all in Atharva Veda.

**28. What are the Angas or subsidiaries of the Vedas?**

There are six such Angas (part or limbs) of Vedas. These are 1) Siksha 2) Vyakarana 3) Chandas 4) Jyotisha 5) Nirukta and 6) Kalpa.

**29. Can you tell me what the six Veda Angas talk about?**

- 1) Siksha explains the proper pronunciations of the Vedas.
- 2) Vyakarana explains the grammar of the Vedic words.
- 3) Chandas explains the metres of the various Riks.
- 4) Jyotisha helps in deciding the proper time for the performance of the various rituals.
- 5) Nirukta gives the meanings of difficult words in the Vedas.
- 6) Kalpa describes the proper method of performing the various ritual mentioned in the Vedas. These six angas of the Vedas help in a proper understanding of the Vedas. They also help in the performance of the various rituals or the yagas (yagnas), prescribed by the Vedas.

**30. How are these six Vedangas divided?**

They can be divided into two groups: 1) Those which are connected with the text of the Vedas: Siksha, Vyakarana, Chandas. 2) Those which are connected with the meaning of Vedas: Jyotisha, Nirukta, Kalpa.

**31. After the Vedas and Vedangas, what are the important texts or authorities for us?**

Next comes Smriti. Smriti helps us in understanding the various injunctions and truths propounded in the Vedas.

**32. How many Smritis are there?**

The Smritis are many in number and even an exact definition of Smriti is perhaps not available. Many of the Smritis are also not available now and are lost to humanity. The more important Smritis are : Manu Smriti, Parasarra Smriti, Yagnavalkya Smriti, Harita Smriti and Sandilya Smriti. Some say there are 20 Smritis and some others say that there are 57 Smritis.

**33. What do these Smritis talk about?**

The Smritis describe the codes of conduct for mankind in day-to-day life; how they should conduct themselves; and for any wrong doings, what are the punishments or atonements (prayaschitta) to be undergone. The Smritis can be considered as elaborating or explaining the Karma Kanda of the Vedas.

**34. What are Itihasas?**

Ramayana and Mahabharata are called Itihasas.

**35. Are they considered very sacred?**

They are considered as sacred as the Vedas themselves. The Mahabharata is called the Fifth Veda.

**36. How many Puranas are there?**

There are 18 Puranas. These are sub-divided into three sets or groups. The first set of six Puranas are authoritative, sacred. These are called Sattvika Puranas. The second set of six Puranas are of medium quality, i.e. the whole thing cannot be accepted as true. These are called Rajasa Puranas. The third set of six puranas cannot be taken as perfectly valid. Only some portions of them, which are not opposed to Vedas, can be taken as authoritative. These are called Tamasa Puranas.

**37. Please tell me the Puranas that fall in these three groups.**

1. The first set of six Puranas which are most sacred (Sattvika Puranas) are as follows: Vishnu Purana Bhagavatam Narada Purana Padma Purana Varaha Purana Garuda Purana

2. The second set of six Puranas, which are not wholly authoritative, (Rajasa Puranas) are: Vamana Purana Brahma Purana Markandeya Purana Bhaavishya Purana Brahmanda Purana Brahma Vaivarta Purana

3. The last set of six Puranas, which are not very authoritative (Tamasa Puranas) are: Matsya Purana Kurma Purana Agni Purana Linga Purana Siva Purana Skanda Purana.

**38. How do you accept these as authorities or Pramana?**

The basic rule is that the Vedas are the Ultimate authority or Pramana. So, in the Puranas, whichever does not conflict or contradict the Veda, can be taken as authority,

**39. What are Agamas?**

The Agamas accept the authority of Vedas. The Agamas prescribe idol worship in the place of rituals like Yagas, mentioned in the Vedas. They prescribed the methods of idol worship.

**40. How are the Agamas divided?**

The Agamas are predominantly divided into Saiva, Sakta and Vaishnava Agamas. Agamas mainly talk about construction of temples; the rules for installation and consecration of the deities in the temples; and the methods of performing pujas in the temples. The Vaishnava Agamas identify Brahman as Vasudeva. We will discuss this further later.

**41. What are the Vaishnava Agamas?**

The Vaishnava Agamas are : Pancharatra Agama and Vaikhanasa Agama

**42. Which Agamas do our Vaishnavite temples follow?**

Some temples follow Pancharatra Agama and some temples follow Vaikhanasa Agama. This is only by tradition and custom.

**43. Why is Vaikhanasa Agama so called?**

It is so called, because it was first taught by Vikhanas rishi to a group of disciples. Sage Vikhanas is stated to have been created by Lord Narayana Himself. It is also stated that he was created by Brahma.

**44. Why is Pancharatra Agama so called?**

Lord Narayana taught this Agama for five nights to five rishis. Hence, it is called Pancharatra Agama (Pancharatra means five nights)

**45. How are these Pancharatra Agamas divided?**

These are divided into Samhitas.

**46. What are these Samhitas?**

There are more than 100 Samhitas. Sattvata Samhita, Paushkara Samhita, Jayakhya Samhita. These three are considered more important and are called three gems (Ratna traya). We have also Ahirbudhnya Samhita, Padma Samhita, Parameswara Samhita and Lakshmitantra.

**47. What is Mimamsa?**

The Mimamsa consists of two parts. The first part is called Purva Mimamsa or Karma Mimamsa. The second part is called Uttara Mimamsa or Brahma Mimamsa.

**48. What is Karma Mimamsa?**

Karma Mimamsa is dealt with by Jaimini in 16 chapters or Adhyayas. They contain short statements or aphorisms. They clarify doubts regarding rituals mentioned in the Vedas and also clarify doubts about the general conduct. They interpret the Vedic texts in Karma Kanda.

**49. What is Brahma Mimamsa?**

Brahma Mimamsa is dealt with in Brahma Sutras. This is propounded by Sage Badarayana or Vyasa. This contains short statements or aphorisms, clarifying doubts in the Vedic text. Brahma Mimamsa interprets the Vedic text of Jnana Kanda or Brahma Kanda.

**50. What is the importance of Brahma Sutra?**

Brahma Sutra is considered very sacred and important. It helps in clarifying and explaining difficult passages in the Upanishads.

**51. Who have written commentaries on Brahma Sutra?**

This being one of the most important texts, many philosophers have written detailed commentaries. We have the commentaries by Sankara, Ramanuja, Madhva, besides many others like Nimbarka and Vallabha.

**52. How many chapters are there in the Brahma Sutra?**

We have four chapters or Adhyayas in the Brahma Sutra. Each of the four chapters consists of four parts or padas. There are 545 Sutras or aphorisms.

**53. Please tell me, broadly, the contents of the four chapters of the Brahma Sutra.**

The first chapter shows that Brahman is the sole cause of

1) creation of this world.

2) sustenance of this world and also

3) destruction of this world. The second chapter discusses some of the objections in this regard put forth by other schools and proves that Brahman is both the material cause and the instrumental cause of this world. (We will discuss this in detail later) The third chapter talks of salvation: what is meant by salvation and the glory of salvation.

**54. What are the most important texts or books which explain the vedanta philosophy?**

There are three texts or books which explain the Vedanta philosophy and so they are called Prasthanas Traya. They are:

1.Upanishads. 2.Brahma Sutra 3.Bhagavad Gita

These are the most sacred texts. All philosophers have written commentaries on these, trying to prove that these three books support their theory.

**55. Which is the most important portion in the Vedas?**

The Purusha Sukta is the most important.

**56. Which is the most important Smriti?**

Manu Smriti is considered the most important.

**57. What about the Puranas? Which is considered the most important?**

The Vishnu Purana is considered most sacred and important of the Puranas. It is called Puranaratna

**58. Which is the most important portion in the Mahabharata?**

Bhagavad Gita is the most important.

**59. What are the various systems of philosophy?**

The systems of philosophy in India can be broadly divided into Nastika Schools and Astika Schools.

**60. What is the Nastika School?**

The Nastika School does not accept the authority of Vedas. They only adopt logic and reasoning.

**61. What is the Astika School?**

The Astika school accepts the authority of Vedas primarily and also uses reasoning and logic.

**62. What are the various systems of philosophy coming under the Nastika School?**

These are Charvaka system, Buddhism and Jainism.

**63. What are the systems coming under Astika School?**

We have Sankhya, Yoga, Nyaya, Vaisesika, Mimamsa, besides the Vedanta system.

**64. What is the Vedantic system of philosophy?**

There is no specific single system of philosophy called the Vedantic system. Advaita, Vishishtadvaita, and Dvaita are the most well-known of the Vedantic systems.

**65. What are the other systems of philosophy?**



These are: 1. Charvaka system 2. Jainism 3. Buddhism 4. Sankhya system 5. Yoga system 6. Nyaya system 7. Vaisesika system 8. Mimamsa system

**66. Who propounded these systems of philosophy?**

Buddhism was propounded by Gautama Buddha and Jainism by Mahavir Jain. The Vaisesika system was propounded by Kanada and the Yoga system by Brahma. However, modern belief is that the yoga system was founded by Patanjali. The Sankhya System was propounded by Kapila: the Nyaya system by Gautama or Akshapada. The Mimamsa system was advocated by Jaimini.

## Chapter 2 : Azhwars and Acharyas

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**1. What is the importance of Guru or Acharya in our system of philosophy?**

To understand the proper meaning of Sastras is very difficult. We have to properly interpret some of the texts, which seem to be conflicting with each other. There are also inner meanings and secret meanings of the various mantras and slokas.

So, all these things can be properly understood, only by learning under a Guru or Acharya. So, the Acharya is most important, for properly understanding our religion and philosophy.

**2. What is the Chronology of our Sampradaya (Guru parampara). Who is our first Guru?**

Lord Narayana is our first Guru. He taught Vedas to Brahma and Brahma in turn taught the Vedas to others. Hence at the head of our line of Gurus is Lord Narayan

**3. Who comes next?**

Next in the line of Gurus is naturally our Goddess Mahalakshmi and then comes Vishvaksena or Senai Mudaliyar. This is a term of respect, traditionally used for denoting Vishvaksena). He is the controller of Vaikunta or Paramapada.

Vishvaksena taught Nammalwar or Satakopa the philosophy of Vishistadvaitam.

**4. Who comes next after Vishvaksena?**

Nammalwar or Satakopa comes next.

**5. How many Alwars are there?**

There are ten Alwars. Some people include Andal and Madhurakavi and say there are twelve Alwars.

**6. Why were they called Alwars?**

'Alwar' in Tamil means 'one who is immersed'. Since these saints were always immersed in the Lord and His qualities, they were called Alwars.

**7. When were they in this world? What was their period?**

We say that they were in this world before and near the beginning of Kaliyuga. That is more than 5,000 years ago. The modern research scholars say that the Alwars were between the sixth and ninth century A.D.

**8. Can you briefly tell me about the Alwars?**

The first three Alwars are called Poigai Alwars, Bhutattalwar and Peyalwar. All the three together are called the first alwars, because these three were the first in the line of Alwars and they lived during the same period.

Poigai Alwar was born in the month of Aippasi in the Star Sravanam. Bhutattalwar was born in the month of Aippasi in the star Avittam and the Peyalwar in the same month, in the Star Sathaya on three successive days!

**9. Where were they born?**

Poigai Alwar was born at Kanchipuram. Tradition has it that he was born in a tank and hence is called Poigai Alwar. (Poigai = Tank).

Bhutattalwar was born in Mahabalipuram and Peyalwar in Mylapore, Madras.

**10. Who came next?**

The next Alwar was Tirumazhisai Alwar. He was born in Tirumazhisai near Madras, in the month of Thai in the star Makha.

Then came Nammalwar or Satakopa. He was born at Alwartirunagari in the month of Vaikasi and star Visakha. Nammalwar is considered the chief of the Alwars. He expounded the system of Visishtadvaita Philosophy in clear terms in his works. Hence he is given the greatest importance among all the Alwars.

Madhurakavi was his disciple. Madhurakavi was born in Thirukkolor in the month of Chittirai, star Chittirai also.

Next came Kulasekhara Alwar. He was born in the month of Masi and star Punarvasu. His birth place is Vanjikkalam. It is not clearly known as to where exactly this place is. Some people say that it is Karur and some others say that it is in Kerala.

**11. Who came next?**

Next was Perialwar, who was born in Srivilliputtur in the month of Ani and star Swati. Andal was found among the Tulasi plants in Srivilliputtur in the month of Adi in the star Puram and was brought up by Perialwar.

**12. What about the other Alwars?**

Thondaradippodi Alwar was born in Tirumandangudi near Kumbakonam in the month of Margazhi and the star Kettai. Tiruppanalwar was born in Woriur, near Tiruchi, in the month of Karthikai and the star Rohini.

The last among the Alwars was Tirumangai Alwar, who was born in the month of Karthikai and star Karthikai in Kuraiyalur or Tirunagari near Sirkazhi.

**13. Can you indicate briefly the works of the Alwars?**

Nammalwar was the author of four Prabandhas which form part of the sacred 4000 verses, called Divya Prabandha. The Prabandhas of Nammalwar are: Tiruvaomozhi, Tiruviruttam, Tiruvasiriam, Peria Tiruvandai

The four works are equated to the four Vedas. Tiruvaimozhi, in particular, is called the essence of the Sama Veda.

Poigai Alwar is the author of Mudal Tiruvandadi. Bhutattalwar of Second Tiruvandadi and the Peyalwar of Third Tiruvandadi – each comprising 100 verses. Tirumazhisai Alwar authored Tiruchanda Viruttam and Nanmukhan Tiruvandadi. Madhurakavi authored Kanninun Siruthambu. Kulasekhara Alwar authored Perumal Tirumozhi and also Mukunda Mala in Sanskrit. (His authorship of Mukundamala is disputed by some people.)

Perialwar authored Perialwar Tirumozhi. Andal gave to the world Tiruppavai and Nachiar Tirumozhi. Thondaradippodi Alwar – Tirumalai and Tiruppalli ezhucchi. Tiruppanalwar – Amalanadipiran.

The last in the list of Alwars is Tirumangai Alwar who wrote six Prabandhas and these are equated to the six angas of the four Vedas of Nammalwar. The six Prabandhas of Tirumangai Alwar are: Peria Tirumozhi, Tirukkurunthandakam, Tirunedunthandakam, Tiruvezhukutrirukkai, Siriya Tirumadal, Peria Tirumadal

**14. Who is next in the line of Gurus, after Nammalwar?**

After Nammalwar come Nathamuni, who was born in Kattumannar Koil near Chidambaram, in the month of Ani and star Anusham.

His disciple was Uyyakkondar who was born in the month of Chittirai and star Karthikai, in Tiruvellari.

His disciple was Manakkal Nambi who was born in the village Manakal, near Lalgudi in the month of Masi and star Makham.

The next in the line of Acharyas is the great Alavandar of Yamunacharya. He was the grandson of Nathamuni and was the disciple of Manakkal Nambi. Alavandar was born in the month of Adi and star Uttaradam, in Kattumannarkoil

**15. Please tell me further the line of Acharyas.**

Alavandar's disciple was Peria Nambi who was born in Srirangam in the month of Margazhi and star Kettai.

Then comes the great Ramanuja.

Afterwards, there are two lines. There is one line of Acharyas of whom Vedanta Desika was the most prominent. There is another line of Acharyas which goes on to Manavala Mamunigal.

Ramanuja (1017-1137 A.D.) was born in Sriperumpudur in the month of Chitrai and star Tiruvadirai.

Vedanta Desika (1268-1369 A.D) was born in Thoopul near Kanchi in the month of Purattasi and star Sravanam.

Manavala Mamunigal (1370-1443 A.D.) was born at Sikkil Kidaram, in the month of Aippasi and star Mulam. It is also said that he was born in Alwartirunagari.

**16. But I heard that Ramanuja had five Acharyas?**

Yes. 1. Peria Nambi was the chief or principal acharya. Then Ramanuja learnt meanings of secrets (rahasyas) from

2. Tirukkottiur Nambi. He studied Tiruvaimozhi under.

3. Tirumalai Andan. He learnt stotras, under

4. Alavandar Alwar and studied Ramayana under 5. Tirumalai Nambi, Thus he had five acharyas.

**17. What are the other names of Ramanuja?**

Ramanuja is also called Bhashyakara, Yatiraja, Udayavar, Emberumanar and Yatiswara

**18. Can you indicate briefly the works of these great acharyas?**

Nathamuni gave us two works – Yoga Rahasya and Nyayatattva. Alavandar gave to this world 8 works. These are: Agama Pramanya, Purusha Nirnaya.

Three Siddhis called Siddhi Trayam, namely, Atma Siddhi, Iswara Siddhi and Samvit siddhi. Then Gitartha Sangraha, Stotra Ratna and chatus Sloki. The next great Acharya Ramanuja gave us nine works or nine gems. These are: Sri Bhashya, Vedanta Dipa, Vedanta Sara, Vedartha Sangraha, Gita Bhashya, the three Gadyas, namely Saranagati Gadya, Sriranga Gadya and Vaikunta Gadya and then Nitya.

The works of Vedanta Desika are more than 100 in number.

They cover different fields like devotional stotras, kavya, drama, works on philosophy, and commentaries on great works.

It is a wonder how a person could write so many works within a life span. It is difficult for us even to read and understand all his works in a life time.

All works are equally important. I will give you the name of some of the works.

**19. What are the most important works of Sri Desika?**

Rahasyatrayasara is a book which gives in detail the inner meaning of the three secrets or rahasyas. In the process, it expounds our Vaishnavite philosophy. It also dwells at length on the prapatti or saranagait as the means of attaining salvation.

**20. What are some of the other works of Desika?**

We have Taparya Chandrika. This is a lucid commentary on the commentary of Bhagavad Gita that was written by Ramanuja. Paduka Sahasra describes the greatness and beauty of the paduka of Sri Ranganatha in 1000 verses. Yadavabhyudaya gives the story of Sri Krishna. The slokas of Yadavabhyudaya are full of something supreme. It is because of the greatness of this work that it has been commented upon by Appayya Dikshitar, the great Advaita scholar.

We have Sankalpa Suryodaya. This is an allegorical drama, again explaining the Visishtadvaita philosophy.

We have the work Sata Dushani. This contains arguments against Advaita philosophy. As the name indicates, perhaps, it was intended to have 100 arguments. However, we now have only 66 arguments left, all against Advaita Philosophy.

We then have the devotional verses or stotras. Some of these are : Hayagriva stotra, Dasavatara stotra, Bhagavad Dhyana Sopana, Gopala Vimsati. Daya Sataka on Sri Venkateswara of Tirupati, Sri Stuti and Garuda Panchasat.

Nyayaparisuddhi, Nyaya Siddhanjana, Adhikarana Saravali and Tattvamuktakalapa are works on our philosophy.

**21. What are the works of Manavala Mamunigai?**

He wrote beautiful commentaries on Perialwar Tirumozhi and Ramanuja Nutrandadi; on Mumukshupadi, Tattvatraya and Sri Vachana Bhushana of Pillai Lokacharya; on Acharya Hridayam of Alagiamanavalapperumal Nayanar; and on Jnanasaram and Prameyasaram of Arulalapperumal emberumanar.

He also wrote Upadesaratnamala, Arthi prabandha, Yatiraja Vimsati and Tiruvaimozhi Nutrandadi, besides other works.

**22. What about other Acharyas?**

There are number of other Acharyas who have contributed significantly to Vaishnavism. I will mention some of the Acharyas now. You can refer to other books for fuller details. Kurattalwan wrote Panchastavas: Sri Vaikunta Stava, Atimanusha Stava, Sundarabahu Stava, Varadaraja Stava, Sri Stava

Tirukkurucaippiran pillan wrote commentary (6000 padi) on Tiruvaimozhi. Kidambi Achan; Embar;

Engalazhvan wrote commentary on Vishnu Purana.

Parasara Bhattar wrote commentary on Vishnu Sahasra Nama (Bhagavadgunadarpanam), Sri Rangaraja Stava and Srigunaratna Kosa, besides others.

Nanjiyar wrote commentary on Tiruvaimozhi (9000 padi); and Sri Sukta Bhashya. (This is disputed by some people.)

Vatsya Varadacharya (Nadadur Ammal) wrote Tattva Sara, Prapanna Parijata among others.

Sudarsana Bhattar wrote Sruta Prakasika and Sruta Pradipika, bothe commentaries on Sri Bhashya.

Appullar wrote Nyayakulisa.

Nampillai;

Periavachan Pillai wrote beautiful commentaries on Divya Prabandha, besides many other works.

Vadakku Thiruveethi Pillai wrote Edu Commentary on Tiruvaimozhi (36000 padi).

Pillai Lokacharya wrote 18 Rahasyas – the more important being Mamukshuppadi, Tattvatraya and Sri Vachana Bhushana.

Alagiamanavalapperumal Nayanar wrote Acharya Hridayam, besides commentary on Tiruppavai and other works.

(Pillai is a term of respect, and not to be confused with the present day use of this word.)

## Chapter 3 : “Doctrine Special” of Visishtadvaita

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### 1. What is an authority (Pramana)?

An authority is something from which we learn truths. We consider the Vedas, as the basic authority. We also use logic and arguments to arrive at the truths, in addition to learning from the Vedas.

Such things from which we learn the truths or arrive at the truths, are called authority (pramana).

### 2. What are the authorities or sources (pramana) for understanding things?

These are three in number, and are as follows:-

1. What we understand directly by our senses, like what we see with our eyes or what we hear with our ears. This is called Pratyaksha.

2. Inference or logic (Anumana) – That is, by seeing or understanding a thing, we logically infer something else, although it is not actually seen by us. For example, if we see smoke coming, we infer there is fire. So this is called one of the sources of knowledge (anumana).

3. Sabda (or sound). We accept the Vedas, Smritis, Itihasas, Puranas as authority (So long as they do not contradict the Vedas).

It is from these that generally the various systems of philosophy are developed by logical deductions and arguments.

### 3. Can you describe this further?

A detailed description or discussion of these will be difficult to understand. I will only briefly indicate the nature of each of these.

Talking of the first source, i.e. perception by senses, we have to be careful that our perception is correct and it is not wrong. For example, seeing is correct and it is not wrong. For example, seeing a rope from a distance, we may mistake it for a serpent. This is wrong perception. Similarly, in hot summer, on a tar road, seeing from a distance, you may think that there is water. This again is wrong perception. We have to guard against such wrong perceptions.

### 4. In talking of perception by senses, what are the senses?

The senses or Indriyas are of two kinds: the senses of knowledge (Jnana Indriyas) and the senses of Action (Karma Indriyas).

### 5. What are the senses of knowledge (Jnana Indriyas)?

These are five in number: 1.Eye 2.Ear 3.Nose 4.Mouth and 5.Skin (on the body)

### 6. What are the second set of senses or Indriyas?

These are called the five senses of action or Karma (Karma Indriyas)

### 7. What are they?

These are: 1. Tongue 2. Hand 3. Leg 4. Anus and 5. The Organ reproduction.

So, we have to be careful that what is understood through the senses of knowledge is correct.

We should also remember at a later time what we had seen or heard earlier. This is also accepted as an authority, since it is only remembering of an authority, which was understood through our senses earlier.

**8. What is an illusion or maya?**

We see a rope and wrongly think it is a serpent. We see a shell and wrongly think it is silver. This is called illusion.

**9. What exactly is Sabda?**

As you know, Sabda means sound. Sound evolves or develops into words, and then sentences. The Vedas are accepted as the basic authority. Along with this, we also accept the Brahma Sutra And Bhagavad Gita as authorities.

We also accept the Itihasas (Ramayana and Mahabharata), the Purana, the Smritis and the Vaishnava Agamas as authorities.

However, there is one important condition and that is, that anything in these works, which are Not in tune with the Vedas or which are contradictory to Vedas, are not accepted as authority.

**10. What is the ultimate aim or objective of the human being?**

The ultimate aim or objective of the human being is to attain salvation or moksha.

**11. What is salvation or moksha?**

We human beings are repeatedly born, come into this world and then die. Thus, there is a cycle of births and deaths. In this life, we commit so many sins, we undergo so many hardships. We do not follow the code of conduct prescribed by Sastras and we go on committing sins.

Salvation means, release from this cycle of births and deaths and attainment of moksha or mukti.

**12. What are the things we should know to achieve salvation in due course?**

We have to learn five things (Arth Panchaka ) and these are as follows:

1. The object of attainment is Sriman Narayana, who is permanently associated with Lakshmi. So, The nature of God.
2. The nature of our Soul or Jivatma
3. The means or the methods to be adopted by us, for attaining Moksha at the end of this life.
4. The exact nature of Moksha or Parmapada.
5. The hindrances that arise in attaining our goal of Moksha at the end of this life; and how to get over these hindrances or difficulties.

**13. What exactly is Tattva? How many tattvas are there?**

“Tattva” means that which is real.

There are three tattvas or reals. These are:

1. Jivatma. It is also called as Chit, Soul, Self, Atma and Chetana. It is sentient i.e., has Knowledge.
2. Achetana or matter or achit. It is non-sentient. i.e., does not have knowledge.
3. Iswara or the Supreme Lord.

**14. What is the most important principle or doctrine of our sampradaya?**



A. The most important principle (pradhana pratitantra) is the body/soul relationship (sarirasariri Bhava or sarira – atma bhava) between sentient (Chetana), non-sentient (achetana); and Iswara.

B. The Brahman or Iswara is the soul and the other two reals (tattvas), chetana and achetana, form His body.

**15. Please explain this further. How do you define a body?**

You can say that the body has legs and hands. The body of a serpent does not have any hands. Similarly, the shape and size of one body are different from that of another. A tree has a different body. An animal has a different body from that of a bird. The body of an elephant is different from the body of a mosquito. So, you cannot give physical characteristics to define a body.

There are three characteristics which decide what the body is.

**16. What are these characteristics?**

The first one is that the body is supported by the soul. The body exists from the time of the soul entering into it, in the mother's womb. The body continues and perishes or dies, only when the soul leaves the body. In other words, the body is supported by the soul. As long as the soul remains in the body, the soul supports the body. This is the first characteristic of the body. Even in a state of dreamless sleep, the body continues to exist. So, the soul fully supports the body.

**17. What is the second characteristic?**

The second characteristic is that the Soul also controls or rules over the body. When the body is awake, the body is controlled by the will of the soul. The soul thus rules or controls the body. The body acts as per the will of the soul.

**18. What is the third one?**

The third one is that the body exists only for the fulfilment of the desire of the soul. The soul, through the mind, desires something and then the body acts accordingly. So, the body exists only for the purpose of the soul.

These three govern the relationship between the body and the soul.

**19. So, what is the significance of body/soul relationship?**

The soul performs the following three functions, over the body:

- (1) Supporting (adharatva)
- (2) Controlling (nivantrutva)
- (3) Mastership (Seshitva).

So, the soul is, in relation to the body, as follows:

- (1) Supporter (adhara)
- (2) Controller (niyanta)
- (3) Master (Seshi).

So, the body is

- (1) being supported by the soul; (adheyatva)
- (2) being controlled by the soul; (niyamyatva)
- (3) existing for the pleasure of the soul (seshatva).

**20. Can the above three qualifications be taken to define the body/soul relationship?**

Yes.

**21. How do you then conclude that by logic, Brahman or Iswara is the soul of all chetana and achetana?**

You take all the three factors, which has have mentioned above and apply the principle to Brahman versus the chetana and achetana:

- (1) All these chetana and achetana are supported by Brahman.
- (2) Secondly, in their waking state, they are controlled or ruled by Iswara.
- (3) Thirdly, all these exist only for His pleasure.

Thus, all the three characteristics or factors which determine the relationship between the soul and the body, are present in the case of Brahman or Iswara versus the entire chetana and achetana. Hence the fundamental doctrine of our philosophy is that Iswara is the soul of all chetanas or Jivatmas. Iswara is also the soul of all achetana i.e.the fundamental Matter and its evolutions. In other words, all the Jivatmas are the body of Iswara. Similarly, Matter and its evolutions also are the body of Iswara. This is the basic doctrine of our religion and philosophy.

**22. Can you prove the Sarira – Sariri bhava by quoting from the Vedas?**

We have a full section called “Antaryami Brahmana” in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad and also similar passages in the Subala Upanishad. These specifically and clearly say that Iswara is the soul and the Jivatma and Matter are His body. The following are some of the passages:-

- “He is dwelling in the earth, is within the earth.”
- “His body is the earth”,
- “His body is the water”,
- “His body is the fire”
- “His body is the air”
- “His body is the sun”
- “His body is the moon and the stars”
- “His body is ether”
- “His body is the light”
- “His body is speech”
- “His body is the eye”
- “His body is the ear”
- “His body is the mind”
- “His body is the skin”
- “His body is the soul or Jivatma”
- “His body is the intellect”
- “His body is matter”
- “His body is death”
- “He is the internal soul of all beings”
- “He is the divine Lord Narayana. He is the soul of all”.

**23. So, am I correct in saying that the fundamental basis for our philosophy is the body/soul relationship?**

Yes, We have established body/soul relationship between the Paramatma and Jivatma/achetana in two ways:

- (1) By logic and argument, we have said that Brahman supports and controls the Jivatma/achetana and it is for His purpose that the; Jivatma/achetana is there. So, the Jivatma/achetana is the body and Brahman is the soul.

(2) Secondly, we have also quoted several passages from the Vedas, which clearly and explicitly state that Brahman is the soul; and the Jivatma, the matter and other evolutions are all His body.

**24. You say that Ramanuja perfected our system of philosophy and body/soul relationship. Then were there earlier acharyas who propounded this?**

Yes. There were earlier acharyas like Bodhayana, Dramida and Tanka. But unfortunately their works have been lost and are not available now.

**25. Have the Alwars mentioned about the body/soul relationship?**

Nammalwar has explicitly mentioned this. He says that the Lord is present everywhere, as the soul in the body.

## Chapter 4 : The Eternal Jivatma

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**1. Please explain how you say that the soul is different from the body?**

When I say “this is my book”, I mean the book belongs to me. The book is obviously something different from myself.

Similarly, I say “this is my body”. So, the body is different from myself. Here, the word “myself refers to the soul. Thus, we can see that the body is different from the soul. Otherwise, we will not say that “this is my body.”

**2. What is the relationship between the soul and senses, mind, knowledge?**

Here again, the soul is different from all these. We say “I see through my eyes”. Hence I or the soul is different from the eyes. We say “I hear through my ears.” So I or soul is different from the ears. We say that “my leg is paining or my hand is paining.” So, it is clear that the leg is different from the ‘I’ or soul. Thus, the five senses of action or karma (Karma Indriyas) and the five senses of knowledge (Jnana Indriyas) are all different from the soul. Similarly, we say that “my mind is clear.” From this also, it can be seen that T or the soul is different from the mind.

**3. Please explain this with an analogy? .**

The child which comes out of the mother’s womb is very small in size. Then it becomes a boy or a girl and then a young man or woman and then finally he or she becomes old and then passes away. Thus, the body varies in size. It starts at the time of birth as a very small baby and then grows up. The body becomes ill, the body becomes well and is thus subject to so many changes, whereas the soul is not affected. Thus the body changes in size. The body becomes old, weak. The body shrinks in old age. The body is that of a male or female or animal. Thus the bodies are different for different persons. But the souls are all similar and are not subject to any change.

**4. Does the soul also come to live along with the body and die along with the body?**

No. The soul or Jivatma is eternal and Permanent. The soul has no beginning or end. or when the body dies, the soul does not die.

**5. How many souls are there?**

The souls are infinite in number. I will give you a very simple example. We stay in one house for some time. After some time we shift to another house. Again, we go to another town or place and shift to another house. Thus, we are going from one house to another or from one place to another. Just like this, the soul also stays in one body for some time. At the death of the person, the soul leaves the body; then it either attains salvation and reaches Paramapada; or, it goes to Svarga -(heaven); or directly takes on a new body. Where the soul goes to Svarga, after experiencing pleasures the soul returns to earth and takes on another body, as a man, or an animal, or a bird or anything. Thus, the soul also goes from one body to another, just as we shift from one house to another.

**6. Can you give me a further example?**

For the same person, in the body, first there is childhood; from childhood, youth comes over and then old age comes over. Similarly, for the soul also, from one body it changes over to another body. We do not feel sorry when a child becomes a young man or when a young man becomes old, because the body remains the same. But when the soul goes from one body to another, we call it death and grieve for the dead person.

**7. What is the size of the soul?**

The soul is atomic in size.

**8. How do you explain this?**

The soul enters a new body, based on the previous karma. Thus, the soul can take on the body of an ant or it can take on the body of an elephant or a man. So the soul has to be smaller than the ant for it to enter the body of the ant. Thus by logic, the soul has to be smaller than the smallest of the bodies like ant or mosquito. Thus, the soul is atomic in size.

**9. Why not say that the soul also changes in size, like the body? For example, the body of an elephant is much bigger than the body of an ant. Can the soul of an elephant be much bigger than the soul of an ant?**

This is actually the philosophy of Jainism that the soul is as big or as small as the body of the person. However, we do not accept this theory and we have the proof of the Vedas. In several places, the Vedas declare that the soul is atomic in size. In fact, the Vedas say that the soul is of the size of 1/100th of 1/100th of the tip of a grain. This is only to explain that the soul is atomic in size. Further, I can give one more reason why the soul is atomic. At the death of a person, the soul leaves the body and goes out, according to sastras. We accept the authority of the sastras. We are not able to see the soul actually leaving the body. Thus, the soul is smaller than the smallest object that our eyes can see, and is atomic.

**10. Can the soul be destroyed?**

The soul is eternal and permanent, i.e., always existing. Since it is atomic in size, it cannot be cut by a sword, it cannot be burnt by fire, and it cannot be thrown about by air. It is so minutely small.

**11. What is the meaning of saying that a person is born or a person is dead?**

When the soul has taken on a new body, we say the child is born. Similarly, when the soul leaves the body, we say the person is dead.

**12. Why do people grieve when a person dies?**

A really intelligent man, who knows philosophy, does not grieve. However, it is because of his attachment that a person really feels for his near and dear ones when they die. Let me give you another example. When the clothes we are wearing are torn, we naturally throw them away and we put on new clothes. Similarly, the soul also throws off the old body and takes on a new one, just as we take on new clothes.

**13. You said the souls are infinite in number. Is there any variation between these different souls?**

There is no variation. They are all atomic in size. However, the souls are divided into three categories.

**14. What are the three categories?**

The souls or Jivatmas, which are still bound by samsara-pass through the cycle of births and deaths. They leave one body after death, but are again born in this world in some other body and go on rotating in the cycle of samsara. Thus, these souls are called Baddha, i.e., Bound (by samsara).

**15. Who are these Baddhas?**

They start right from the four-faced Brahma and include the various devas, gandharvas and so on, viz. people in the other worlds. They include human beings, animals, trees, insects, birds and those in water like fish, ants and everything.

**16. Do you mean to say that trees also have souls?**

Yes. The trees also have souls. It has been proved by modern biologists that the trees and plants have life in them.

**17. How many sub-divisions are there in the first category of Baddhas?**

We can broadly say that there are four subdivisions.

These are:

1. The Devas. Under this group we include the pitrus, siddhas, gandharvas, kinnaras, vasus and yakshas.
2. Human beings.
3. The animal category. Under this are included all animals, birds, those which crawl like serpents and worms.
4. Trees and plants, whose knowledge is much less.

**18. What is the second category of soul?**

The second category is Mukta. That is, the souls or Jivatmas, which have been released from the samsara, from the cycle of births and deaths. The jivatma, after adopting the means prescribed in the sastras for attaining salvation, thus attains salvation or moksha and then becomes mukta or liberated. He is in Paramapada, permanently enjoying and serving the Lord Narayana and His Consort Lakshmi.

**19. Who are the third category?**

The third category consists of Nityas, namely, those souls who are eternally free, who are never born in this world. We also call them as Nitya Suris. These are Adishesha, Garuda, Vishvaksena and such others.

**20. Are souls of these categories also atomic in size?**

Yes, the souls of all these categories are also atomic in size.

**21. Whose souls are infinite?**

Only those of Narayana and Lakshmi are infinite (vibhu).

**22. What are the other qualities of the souls?**

The souls are of the nature of knowledge, happiness and purity and the like. Their knowledge is infinite, i.e., they can perceive and understand everything.

**23. But, this is not the case with human beings. Our knowledge is certainly not infinite.**

The essential nature of the knowledge of the soul is infinite. But, having come into the world, the knowledge is temporarily contracted or becomes restricted. On release from samsara, the knowledge is restored to infiniteness.

**24. Why is the knowledge contracted or reduced, when the Jivatma comes into this world?**

This is because of the past karma of the Jivatma and his association with the material world around. The knowledge of one is much different from the knowledge of another. The knowledge of a tree or animal is much lower and that of man is much higher. Again, among different men and women, the knowledge of one is much higher or lower than that of another. All these variations are due to the differences in the past karma of the individuals.

**25. How do you classify the normal activities of the Jivatma?**

The activities can be classified into three kinds.

- 1) Those activities which bring punya to the soul, like going to the temple, worshipping the Lord and doing service to the Lord.
- 2) Those activities which bring papa or sin to the Jivatma like uttering lies, committing murder and drinking liquor.
- 3) The third kind of activities are those which are neutral in character. That is, which brings neither punya nor papa to the soul, like remaining quiet or lying in deep sleep.

**26. Sometimes, I read the words “attributive knowledge” (Dharmabhuta Jnana). What is this?**

As I explained earlier, the soul itself is of the nature of knowledge, but it has also knowledge as an attribute or quality.

**27. It is difficult for me to understand**

Let me explain by a simple example. We have a lamp. When the lamp is lighted, the lamp lights up the surrounding areas. At the same time, the lamp itself glows with light. In other words, by the lighting of a lamp, the surrounding areas are seen by us and the lamp itself is also seen by us. Somewhat similarly, by the attributive knowledge of the soul, we are able to understand the surrounding things. It is this attributive knowledge, which is contracted or restricted, when the Jivatma is in samsara.

**28. You were saying that the soul is atomic in size. How is it then we are able to see the various places, the various things, which are quite far off?**

Again, the example of the light that I gave you will apply. You keep the lamp at one place but you are able to see things which are quite far off by the light of the lamp. Similarly, by the attributive knowledge of the soul, you are able to see things which are far off.

**29. I do not understand your saying that the essential nature of the soul or Jivatma is happiness; In this world, we face so many sorrows and difficulties. It is rarely that we are happy. How do you say that the Jivatma is essentially happy?**

The essential nature of the soul is indeed happiness. But because of his contact with the body and as a result of his previous karma (papa or sin), the degree of happiness is reduced. Once he attains moksha, the permanent happiness is fully restored.

## Chapter 5 : Matter and Creation

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**1. What is the meaning of Achetana?**

As mentioned earlier, we have three tattvas or reals. We will next take up Achetana and then finally Iswara. Achetana means non-sentient. It means that it does not possess any knowledge. So, the Achetana is not capable of thinking, since it has no knowledge (pramana).

**2. What are the categories under this Achit or Achetana?**

There are three categories, which are called: 1. Matter (prakriti) 2. Time (kala) 3. SuddhaSattva

**3. Please explain each category.**

Matter is the most fundamental element. It is called by different names like prakriti, mula prakriti, akshara, pradhana, avyakta, triguna and primordial matter.

**4. How is it involved in the process of creation of the world?**

At the time of pralaya, matter (prakriti) is in a subtle, undifferentiated state. It is then called Avibhakta. We plant a seed. In course of time, the seed grows, sprouts into a small plant and then into a big tree. Similarly, the undifferentiated Matter is like the seed. It slowly develops and in the next stage, it is called Vibhakta.

**5. How do you describe this matter?**

Matter is made up of three qualities or attributes (gunas). This matter is frequently undergoing changes or alterations.

**6. What are the three qualities in matter?**

The three qualities are: 1) Sattva 2) Rajas and 3) Tamas.

**7. What is the meaning of these?**

- 1) Sattva is the quality of matter that leads to harmony and happiness.
- 2) Rajas is the quality of matter that produces restless activity.
- 3) Tamas is the quality of matter that results in laziness and inertia.

**8. Please explain what are the further transformations of matter**

Initially matter is subtle in dormant state. It evolves into the next stage and the tattva called mahat comes out. From mahat we get the tattva ahankara. Both the mahat and ahankara are of three kinds.

**9. What are the three kinds?**

They are: sattvika, rajasa and tamasa, based on the qualities. Sattvika ahankara is called vaikarika; Rajasa ahankara is called taijasa; and Tamasa ahankara is called bhutadi.

**10. How are the senses (indriyas) developed?**

From the sattvika ahankara we get all the senses. These are five senses or indriyas of knowledge (jnana indriyas) and five senses of action or karma (karma indriyas) which were described earlier.

**11. What is mind?**

Mind is the inner sense organ. It is the seat of memory and knowledge. Mind functions in three ways, as 1) Ahankara 2) Chitta and 3) Buddhi.



1. Mind is called ahankara, when we falsely think that body and soul are the same.
2. Mind is called chitta, when we desire something.
3. It is called buddi, when it discriminates between good and bad, merit (punya) and sin (papa), true and false. Note: This ahankara is different from the ahankara which evolves out of mahat and which we have described earlier.

**12. Explain briefly the process of creation?**

I had mentioned the three types of ahankara – viz., sattvika ahankara, rajasa ahankara and tamasa ahankara. Now, from the Tamasa Ahankara is born the subtle element (tanmatra) of sound (sabda).

**13. What do you mean by the subtle element?**

The subtle element (tanmatra) is something in between two gross elements (bhuta). Supposing milk is being turned into curd, the intermediate stage of formation of curd, i.e., the stage between milk and curd is called the subtle stage. So from tamasa ahankara is created the subtle element of sound. (sabda)

**14. What is produced from the subtle element of sound?**

Ether (akasa) is produced from the subtle element of sound. Ether is called the gross element (bhuta). From ether is produced the subtle element of touch (sparsa). From the subtle element of touch is produced the gross element of air (vayu). From the gross element of air is produced the subtle element of sight (rupa). From the subtle element of sight is produced the gross element of light (tejas).

From the gross element of light is produced the subtle element of taste (rasa). From the subtle element of taste is produced the gross element of water.

From the gross element of water is produced the subtle element of smell (gandha). Finally from the subtle element of smell is produced the gross element of earth (prithivi).

Thus, each of the subtle elements (tanmatra) is an intermediate stage of creation, between two gross elements (bhuta).

The process of creation is, therefore, like this: prakriti or matter, mahat, ahankara, sound, ether, touch, air, sight, light, taste, water, smell, earth. Thus, in the process of creation, we have 24 items, i.e., starting from the empirical or fundamental matter, we have No. 2 mahat, No. 3 ahankara and No. 4 to 8 the 5 subtle elements mentioned above; and No. 9 to 13, the 5 gross elements (pancha bhutas) mentioned above; No. 14 is the mind (manas); No. 15 to 19 the 5 senses of knowledge; No. 20 to 24 are the 5 senses of action or karma. Thus we have a total of 24 elements.

**15. What is the 25th item?**

Having exhausted all the items of Prakriti as 24, as described above, we call the Jivatma the 25th item. All these 25 elements are also called as reals or tattvas. So, the Jivatma is the 25th tattva.

**16. what about ether? Is it also eternal, permanent, like the soul, or is ether produced?**

Yes, ether is created by Brahman. It is not eternal.

**17. What about the other four elements, air, fire, water and earth?**

These elements are also created by Brahman. They are not eternal.

**18. Is air created by ether; is fire created by air and so on; each by the preceding element? Or are all these five elements directly created by Brahman?**

Each is created by Brahman from the preceding element, which is His body. So, air is not created by ether, but air is created by Brahman, whose body is ether; and so on.

**19. Are the five senses of knowledge and five senses of action, eternal or are these created ones?**

The five senses of knowledge and the five senses of action are all created by Brahman, just like the five elements of ether, air, and so on. The 11th sense, i.e., the mind or manas is also created.

**20. What is the size of these 11 senses (indriyas)?**

These 11 senses are also atomic in size. These senses also depart from the body, when a person dies. Hence they have to be necessarily atomic; since we cannot see these 11 senses, leaving the body, at the time of death.

**21. What about the principal vital air (prana)? Is this also created or eternal?**

The principal vital air is also created like the senses.

**22. You mentioned about the principal vital air. Is it the same as ordinary air or is it different?**

It is different from the ordinary air. It has five functions. We give them five different names, depending upon their functions.

**23. What are these names?**

1) Prana 2) Vyana 3) Apana 4) Samana and 5) Udana.

**24. What is the function of each of these types of air?**

1) Prana is the most important. It has the principal vital activity, so long as the person lives.  
2) Vyana helps in the circulation of air in the body. It has the circulatory activity.  
3) Apana helps in excretion of unwanted air from the body.  
4) Samana helps in digesting things, eaten by the person. 5) Udana helps in respiration, in the breathing activity of the person.

**25. Is the principal vital air also atomic in size?**

Yes.

**26. Please explain further, the process of creation.**

What is called quintuplication of five-fold division takes place in the process of creation. I have to talk a bit of mathematics. We saw that there are five gross elements that are ether, air, light, water and earth. Now, the process of creation is like this. Each gross element is taken and divided into two halves. One half of this element is again split up into four equal parts and added to the remaining four gross elements. For example, let us take the gross element of ether. This is divided into two halves. One half of it is further divided into four equal portions, namely, 1/8th each and so 1/8th ether is added to each of the remaining four elements, namely, air, light, water and earth. In the same way, the remaining four gross elements are also divided into halves and each half is again divided into four portions and added to the other gross elements.

**27. What is the net result?**

Let us take the gross element of ether. After all these transformations or quintuplication, the element ether will actually consist of the following: Half of ether, 1/8th portion of air, 1/8th portion of light, 1/8th portion of water and 1/8th portion of earth. So half plus  $\frac{1}{8} + \frac{1}{8} + \frac{1}{8} + \frac{1}{8}$ , will add to one. So after this mixing up, finally we shall have ether consisting of half of ether and 1/8th of the remaining four gross elements. So, this method of mixture is called quintuplication or five-fold division (panchikarana).

**28. Then how are we justified in calling them by their names as ether etc., when each of these is individually composed of all the five gross elements?**

From the mathematics explained above you will observe that in the composition of each element, the dominant element is 50%. The other elements are only 1/8th each making up the other half. Since one element is predominant, the element is named after it.

**29. We have heard of trifold division or tripartition (trivrit karana). What is it? How is it different from quintuplication?**

The same process which has been explained above is talked of in regard to three gross elements, namely, light, water and earth, instead of all the five gross elements. The principle of mixing up of these three elements is also the same as I have explained earlier in regard to all the five elements. When only three elements as above are involved it is called tripartition. The principle in both the cases is the same. Actually, quintuplication is only an extension of the principle of tripartition.

**30. Is there any further extension of this principle?**

Yes. In fact, in Vishnupurana, along with the 5 gross elements as above, the two earlier tattvas of mahat and ahankara are also added. These make up a total of seven. Then the Vishnupurana describes the principle of seven-fold division (saptikarana). So, it is only a further extension of the principle of mixing up of the elements.

**31. Then how is the world created?**

I have explained to you the quintuplication of the five gross elements. After the five-fold division, as above, of the gross elements, they join up and then the world is created.

**32. How many types of creation are there?**

There are two types of creation: aggregate creation (samashti srishti) and individual creation (vyashti srishti).

**33. What is aggregate creation?**

The creation of mahat out of the elementary or fundamental matter; the creation of ahankara and the ten indriyas of knowledge and karma; the creation of the gross elements and the five subtle elements – all these are called aggregate creation.

**34. What is individual creation?**

Out of the above process or after the above process, the world is created. The further creation of human beings, devas, animals, trees and plants is called individual creation. I think this much of understanding about matter (prakriti) is enough for the present.

**35. How is time sub-divided?**

As is common knowledge, time is divided into three portions. These are: 1) past, 2) present 3) future.

**36. What are the further sub-divisions?**

The further sub-divisions are again as is commonly known, day, month, year, hours, minutes and seconds. This much is enough for the principle of time.

**37. What is suddha sattva?**

Suddha sattva, as the name indicates, is pure sattva, without any mixture or trace of the other two qualities, namely, rajas and tamas.

**38. Where is Suddha Sattva?**

Sri Vaikunta or Paramapada is fully suddha, sattva. In this world also, the archa forms of Sriman Narayana and Lakshmi in the temples are suddha sattva.

## Chapter 6 : Iswara – The Lord and the Master

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- 1. What is the essential nature of Iswara?**  
The essential nature of Iswara is truth, knowledge, infiniteness, happiness and purity. He is present everywhere. He knows everything.
- 2. Why is He called Bhagavan?**  
He possesses six qualities and that is why He is called Bhagavan. Bhaga in Sanskrit means good quality.
- 3. What are these six qualities?**  
These are: 1) Knowledge 2) Lordship 3) Strength 4) Valour 5) Energy and 6) Splendour.
- 4. We have heard people saying that Iswara is the cause of this world. Please explain.**  
You have a potter and the mud pot. The pot is made from the material mud. So mud is the cause and pot is the effect. Mud is called as the material cause of pot (UpadanaKarana). Now, mud by itself cannot change into a pot. The potter has to change the mud into a pot. So, in the making of the pot, the potter is also the cause, like the mud. The potter is called the instrumental cause (Nimitta Karana). Thus, for a mud pot, the mud is the material cause and the potter is the instrumental cause. I will give you another example. Take the case of a weaver. The weaver weaves a cloth out of the raw material yarn. In this case, the cloth is the produced effect. For the cloth, the yarn is the material cause and the weaver is the instrumental cause.
- 5. Are there any other causes for such things?**  
Again, take the example of the mud pot and the potter. Now, just with mud alone, the potter cannot make the pot. He requires the wooden wheel and some other similar wooden implements to make the pot out of the mud. Such implements like the wooden wheel are called the supporting cause (sahakari karana). So, summarising, we have three causes for producing anything. One is the material cause (upadana karana); the second is the instrumental cause (nimitta karana); and the third is the supporting cause (sahakari karana).
- 6. So far as creation of the world is concerned, what is the relationship of Iswara or Brahman?**  
Brahman is the material cause in the creation of the world. He is also the instrumental cause in the creation. There is no supporting cause required for Him in the creation of the world. Or, we can also say that He is also the supporting cause in the creation of the world. If we consider the world as a pot. He is both the mud and the potter, for the creation of the pot (i.e. the world).
- 7. What is the difference between creation and evolution of the world?**  
Brahman is the material cause; so, we say that Brahman evolves into the world. Brahman is the instrumental cause; so, we say that Brahman creates the world. Thus, the evolution of the world means that Brahman is the material. in case. Creation of the world means that Brahr the instrumental cause. (Just as mud evolves'into mudpot; the potter creates the pot.)
- 8. He is the instrumental cause in the creation, but it is rather hard for one to understand that He is also the material cause. How can Brahman or Iswara Himself change into the world,just as the mud changes into pot or just as the yarn changes into cloth?**

I shall describe this to you in some detail. We should fully accept the authority of the Vedas. Let me quote to you the following passages from the Vedas, which make it clear that Brahman is also the material cause. "He thought may I become many." "The Brahman is the wood. Then Brahman became the tree." "He desired may I become many." "He became defined and undefined, real and unreal. Yet He remained as real. The wise perceive Him as the source of beings." There are many other passages also, which clearly show that Brahman is the material cause of the world, besides being the instrumental cause. A story in Chandogya Upanishad says that there was a young boy Svetaketu who was sent by his father to a teacher for learning. He studied under the teacher for 12 years and after study, returned home.

His father asked Svetaketu: "I find that you are arrogant and you are thinking that you have learnt everything. Do you know about that, by knowing which everything else becomes known?" Svetaketu did not know, how by knowing one thing, all other things will become known. So, his father proceeds to give examples and teaches him. The father says:

1. From mud, we make pots and dolls. So by knowing mud, all that is made of mud, is also known; because they are all products from the same basic raw material mud.
2. Similarly, we make jewels out of gold. So, by knowing gold, all that is made of gold, like jewels, are also known; because they are only modifications or products of gold.
3. Again, from iron, we make so many materials like knife and scissors. So, by knowing iron, all the products that are made of iron, also become known; because basically there is only iron and all others are only modifications of iron. Similarly, by knowing Brahman, the whole world and everything in it becomes known.

**9. So, what do we understand from these examples?**

From this, it is clear that Brahman is compared to mud or gold or iron, out of which, pot or jewel or knife (respectively) are made. From mud comes the pot. So, by knowing mud, everything made of mud becomes known. Similarly, Brahman evolves in to the world and all other things. Hence by knowing Brahman, everything else becomes known. This is the meaning of these examples. In other words, Brahman is the material cause (upadana karana) of whatever we see in the world; just as mud is the material cause of mud pot; just as gold is the material cause of gold jewels; and just as iron is the material cause of knife and scissors.

**10. Please explain further about Brahman being the material cause of the world.**

The Chandogya Upanishad states as follows:- "Then the Brahman desired "may I become many, may I grow". Then it created fire, etc." From this, it is clearly seen that the Brahman evolved into the world; because the Brahman says "may I become many." So it is proved that Brahman is the material cause.

After this, the Chandogya Upanishad describes (he three-fold division of elements. I have already described this to you earlier. Further, it is said that Brahman desired and said "I will create names and forms." So, this also shows that Brahman is both the material cause and the instrumental cause.

**11. What is the position of Jivatma, before and after pralaya?**

At the beginning of creation, namely, after the pralaya, the matter and Jivatmas are all merged, in an extremely subtle state, in Brahman. Then the Brahman desired "may I become many". He then created the elements and the worlds, out of Himself. Then He gave them names and forms. So, the Brahman becomes both the material and the instrumental cause (upadana karana and nimitta karana).

**12. Are there any other passages in the Upanishads which explain that the Brahman is the material cause?**

There are very interesting examples in Mundaka Upanishad. Saunaka asks Angiras:- “What is that, by knowing which, everything else in the world becomes known”?

Angiras proceeds to explain. He gives the example of a spider. A spider creates thin threads, out of its own body and mouth and spits them out. It weaves a web around its body, out of these threads. The spider, then, eats back the threads forming the web. In other words, the threads come out of the spider and are eaten back by the spider,

Similarly, Brahman creates the world, out of Himself and again withdraws the whole thing, the world, into Himself, at the time of deluge. This example clearly shows that Brahman is the material cause of the world. There is another example in the same Upanishad. The plants and herbs grow from the earth, i.e., come out of the earth. In the same way, the world also comes out of Brahman. Thus, the teacher Angiras explains that, since the world and everything else comes out of Brahman; by knowing Brahman, everything else becomes known. There is another example given in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. Yagnavalkya tells his wife that, by knowing Brahman, the whole world and everything else becomes known; and proceeds to give an example. From a moist and wet firewood, we try to light up fire. But only smoke comes out, because of wetness of the firewood. Just as smoke comes out of the wet firewood, all the world and everything else, come out of Brahman. These examples show that Brahman is the material cause of the world.

**13. You say that the Lord – Iswara – is present everywhere. Have our Alwars and Acharyas specifically stated so?**

Yes. Nammalwar says that the Lord is present everywhere, as the soul in the body. He also gives a beautiful simile. He says that the Lord is present everywhere and in everything, like ghee in the milk. We cannot straightaway see ghee in the milk. Milk has to be turned into curd. From curd, you churn and get butter. You heat the butter to get ghee. Thus, although ghee is in milk, we cannot see the ghee directly. Similarly, God is in everything, although we cannot see Him directly with our eyes.

**14. Is this Lord's presence in everything mentioned in the Vedas?**

Yes, in several places. Let me give you some beautiful examples from Svetasvatara Upanishad.

The Paramatma is in the Jivatma, like

oil in til seeds (sesame):

butter in curds:

water in the earth (under ground):

fire in wood.

Although the Upanishad mentions Paramatma's presence in Jivatma, the extension of this principle shows Paramatma's presence in everything.

**15. What about our Acharyas?**

We have the great Alavandar, who has also used the simile of ghee in milk (like Nammalwar), to show the presence of the Lord in everything.

**16. Who exactly is Brahman or Iswara? Is there one single deity, who is supreme?**

Here are some passages from the Vedas which will answer your query.

1) “There was only one Narayana, no Brahma, no Rudra”

2) “From His forehead, the three-eyed person, having Sula is born; the four-faced Brahma is bom.”

3) “Brahma is born from Narayana, Rudra is bom from Narayana”

4) “Brahma is Narayana, Siva is Narayana, Indra is Narayana, The directions are Narayana. All things are Narayana”

5) “There is only one Divine Being – Narayana”

6) “Narayana is the inner soul of all beings,”

7) “He crosses the human bondage of samsara and reaches the Paramapada of Vishnu.”

- 8) "Among the Devas, fire (Agni) is the lowest and Vishnu is the highest:  
 9) "He created Brahma as before and taught him the Vedas."  
 10) "From the Brahma's forehead, Rudra was born."  
 11) "The Universe is Narayana."  
 12) "Narayana is the supreme Brahman. Narayana is the supreme truth or reality. Narayana is the supreme light. Narayana is the supreme atma or Paramatma. Whatever is in this world, seen or heard, all that is pervaded by Narayana, both within and without. He is Brahma. He is Siva. He is Indra."  
 From these, it will be clear to you who is the supreme deity, who is the Brahman and who is Iswara. There are innumerable such passages in the Vedas.

**17. Where does this last passage, "He is Brahma, He is Siva, He is Indra" occur?**

This passage occurs in Taittiriya Upanishad. This is called Narayana Anuvaka.

**18. Doesnt this occurs in Maha Narayana Upanishad**

Actually it forms part of Taittiriya Upanishad. But some modern people call it by a separate name as Maha Narayana Upanishad.

**19. You read the passage as "He is Brahma, He is Siva, He is Indra." But some people read it as "He is Brahma, He is Siva, He is Hari, He is Indra." Which is correct?**

The Vedic passage should read without the words "He is Hari". The words "He is Hari" are later interpolation; and it is not correct.

**20. How do you say that the words "He is Hari" are later interpolation and not correct?**

The reason is very simple. If you add the words. "He is Hari" in this verse in the Vedas, the metre becomes incorrect. According to Sanskrit grammar, the metre of the verse is correct, only if the words "He is Hari" are not there. Thus it is very clear that the words "He is Hari" are only interpolation, at a much later period.

**21. What was the need for this interpolation, at a later stage?**

With the interpolation, it reads as "He is Brahma, He is Siva, He is Hari, He is Indra." This will give an impression that all the three viz., Brahma, Vishnu and Siva are equal, as also Indra. So, perhaps this was the intention of the people who interpolated, that all the Gods should be treated as equals.

**22. Are these passages in the Vedas also supported by Smritis, Itihasas and Puranas?**

Yes. Here they are.

1) Varaha Purana: Narayana is the supreme deity. From Him was born the 4-faced Brahma and from Brahma arose Rudra.

2) Mahabharata: when the Jivatma and matter have gone into dissolution, i.e., during the deluge (pralaya), there is only one remaining and He is Lord Narayana.

3) Mahabharata: There is no being in the world that is eternal or permanent, except Vasudeva.

4) Harivamsa: Siva's words to Narayana; "Brahma is called Ka and I am called Isa. We two were born from your limbs. Therefore, you are called Kesava."

5) Mahabharata: Brahma's words to Siva: "I was born by His grace and you from His anger, in one of the earlier creations."

6) Mahabharata: Brahma, Rudra and Indra together with all other devas and rishis, worshipped the divine Narayana, the greatest of Gods.

- 7) Ramayana: Rudra sacrificed all things in a great yaga called Sarvamedha and then sacrificed himself also mentally.
- 8) Ramayana: They knew Vishnu is greater .(than Siva).
- 9) Mahabharata: These two, Brahma and Rudra, who are the greatest among the devas, are born out of the Lord's grace and anger. They perform the duties of creation and destruction, as ordered by Him.
- 10) Mahabharata: The devas are under the protection of Rudra. Rudra is under the protection of Brahma. Brahma is under my protection. I do not need the protection of anyone, I am the refuge of all.
- 11) Vishnupurana: Brahma, Daksha, Rudra, all these are among the attributes of Bhagavan.
- 12) Mahabharata: The words of Brahma to Rudra: "He (Narayana) is the inner soul of you, of me and all beings. He sees everything, but cannot be seen by anyone or anywhere."
- 13) Rudra says in Mantra Raja Pada stotra: All beings are the servants of Paramatma. Therefore, I am also your servant and with this knowledge, I bow to you.
- 14) Mahabharata: There is no one superior to Narayana, the God of the lotus eyes. There is no God superior to Vishnu.
- 15) Naradapurana: There is no divine being, higher than Kesava.
- 16) Mahabharata: He (Vishnu) is the king of all kings. He is the Iswara, He is the father. He is the creator,
- 17) Mahabharata: Those intelligent people do not worship Brahma or Rudra or any other devas, because the fruit of their worship is limited.
- 18) Mahabharata: Lord Narayana told the devas: "This Brahma is your father and mother and grandfather. He will give you boons under instructions from me. Rudra, his younger brother, had his origin from my forehead. Rudra will grant boons to beings under instructions from Brahma."
- 19) Bhagavad Gita: Krishna says: "Those who do sacrifices to other deities, they also do sacrifice only to Me; but not in the proper manner and according to rules." 20) Ramayana: Brahma, the three-eyed Rudra – cannot save a person from being killed in war, by Rama.
- 21) Mahabharata: Meditating always of the Lord, Brahma, Rudra and others have not yet realised the Lord's nature.
- 22) Mahabharata: Mahadeva (Rudra) sacrificed -himself in Sarvamedha yaga and became Devadeva.
- 23) Mahabharata: He, whom Madhusudana sees at the time of birth, becomes Sattvika – If Brahma or Rudra sees him at the time of birth, he is rilled with Rajoguna and Tamoguna (respectively).
- 24) Mahabharata: Narayana is Parabrahma. Narayana is Paratattva. He is greater than the greatest. There is none greater than Him.



25) Mahabharata: Siva said: I was born from His (Narayana's) head – He is the one, fit to be worshipped always – By seeing Him, all other devas can also be deemed to be seen. I (Siva) also worship Him (Narayana) always – All of us, devas, reside in His body.

26) Vyasa: This is the Truth, Truth and Truth. There is no greater deity than Kesava.

27) Harivamsa: Siva said:- Only Hari is to be meditated upon, always. He is to be worshipped always. I (Siva) help in the worship of Hari.

28) Vishnu Purana: The world is born out of Vishnu and rests in Him. He is the world – He resides in all; and all beings reside in Him. Hence He is called Vasudeva. He is the Parabrahma.

29) Varaha Purana: Lord Narayana was at the beginning. From Him was born Brahma.

30) Bhagavata: Brahma said:- I, Brahma, create the world, commanded by Narayana. Siva, controlled by Narayana, destroys the world.

31) Bhagavata: The water from (washing) the feet of Vamana, which was borne on the head, with supreme devotion, by Kailasa vasa, Chandra mouli (Siva)....

32) Bhagavata: Brahma to Vishnu: We – Rudra and others – drink with our 11 senses, the honey in your lotus-like feet.

33) Bhagavata: Rudra to Krishna: You are the highest jyotis. The sky is your navel, agni is your mouth – You are the first purusha. You have no equal or superior. Myself (Rudra), the devas and rishis – all seek refuge in you. You are everything to us. You are our atma and ruler. You have no equal or superior; there is nobody else to be approached for protection. I come to you so that my samsara may be ended.

34) Bhagavata: Rudra to Parvati:- You asked me, when I rose from my yoga on whom I meditated. That person is Bhagavan (Narayana), whose maya, you have just witnessed. He is eternal.

35) Bhagavata: Rudra:- One, ... who loves Bhagavan Vasudeva, goes after a hundred births to the world of Brahma; then he comes to my world. He will then reach the eternal world of Vishnu, as myself, Indra and other devas will do, at the expiration of our authority.

36) Bhagavata: Markandeya to Rudra: I will ask for this boon:- “May my love for Bhagavan (Narayana), for those that regard Him as the highest goal, and for you, remain unshaken.” Rudra: “You will be a lover of Bhagavan (Narayana).”

37) Parvati asks Siva: “I want to hear from you this: How do the learned people recite the 1000 names of Vishnu easily? Siva replies: “It is enough, if you say Rama. This is equivalent to all 1000 names of Vishnu. I also enjoy saying the name of Rama.” I have quoted above, only very few passages. There are innumerable such passages in smrtis, puranas and itihisas stating that Narayana is the supreme deity.

**23. In some places in the Vedas, Siva is also called as the supreme deity. How do you explain this contradiction?**

I have to tell you one thing. Narayana is a proper noun. According to Sanskrit grammar, Narayana can mean only one person. It cannot mean any Other person. But, Siva, Rudra and Sambhu are common nouns. Siva means an auspicious person. Rudra means, one who weeps or one who is dreadful. Sambhu means one who grants happiness and prosperity. So, these

are common nouns. So, as common nouns, they can refer to any person, including Narayana; although normally they apply to Siva. This is on the authority of Sanskrit grammar.

**24. Can you give some examples?**

We have a word in Sanskrit, called Sarasija. This is a common noun. This means that which comes out from a lake. There are so many flowers, which come out from a lake, i.e., which are there in a lake. But still, by common understanding, Sarasija means only a lotus flower. Similarly, there is a word Pankaja in Sanskrit. This means that which comes out of mud or slush. Again, so many flowers can sprout out of mud or slush. But it is commonly accepted in Sanskrit, that Pankaja refers only to Lotus. So, two of the common nouns, Sarasija and Pankaja, although they can apply to all flowers, are still taken to refer only to Lotus. Similarly, Sambhu, Siva and Rudra are common nouns. So, they can refer to any deity or person, although normally we identify these names with Siva.

**25. So how do you explain the apparent contradiction?**

We have to apply some logic here. We accept that the Vedas as a whole, are the ultimate authority. There is nothing in the Vedas, which is not authority. So, in a majority of passages, the word Narayana occurs as Paramatma. In some places, the word Siva or Rudra also occurs as Paramatma. Now, we have to be clear on one thing. Narayana, according to Sanskrit grammar, is a proper noun. It cannot refer to any other person. But Siva and Rudra are common nouns. So they can refer to any other person. Since we do not accept any contradiction among the different passages in the Vedas, we say that the words Siva and Rudra also, when they refer to Paramatma, actually mean Narayana, because these are common nouns.

**26. Why can't we take it that the word 'Narayana' (as Paramatma) refers to Siva; instead of saying that the word "Siva" refers to Narayana?**

The answer is very simple. Siva is a common noun. It can mean any person and hence it means Narayana in the particular context. But the word Narayana cannot refer to Siva, because Narayana is a proper noun. This is on the authority of Sanskrit grammar; and we have to accept the grammatical position.

**27. Quote some passages in the Vedas, praising the greatness of Siva.**

There are several passages in the Vedas, which praise the greatness of Brahma; which praise the greatness of Indra; which praise the greatness of Agni or fire. Similarly, many passages in the Vedas also praise the greatness of Siva. But the important thing to see is who is declared as the supreme deity or Paramatma. As I have explained to you so far, it is clear from the Vedas and Puranas and Itihasas, that Narayana is the Supreme deity, the Paramatma.

**28. Why not we say that Brahma, Vishnu and Siva are all equal?**

What you are saying is not supported by the fundamental authority, the Vedas. From the Vedic passages I have given above, you can see that the Vedas speak of only one supreme deity and that supreme deity is Narayana. There is nothing in the Vedas to show that two or three Gods are equal; and that two or three Gods can be considered as supreme deities. Further, as you will see from the quotations given earlier, both Brahma and Rudra themselves accept that they have come out of Narayana, that they are born out of Narayana. Nowhere in the Vedas, is it stated that two or three Gods are equal; that Brahma, Vishnu and Siva are equal. The Vedas all along say that there is only one supreme deity and that is Narayana.

**29. We have got the ancient Tamil works (Sangam literature), which are several thousand years old. What do these mention about the supreme deity?**

All these ancient Tamil works also mention that Narayana is the supreme deity.

**30. If Narayana is the supreme deity, why should Rama (His Avatara) worship another deity in Rameswaram, as people say?**

This version is not authentic. We accept Valmiki Ramayana as the authority. There is no mention at all in Valmiki Ramayana about Rama worshipping any deity in Rameswaram. There is no such mention in the authoritative version of Kamba Ramayana also.

**31. Similarly, there are stories that Narayana took the form of a boar (Varaha) and searched the feet of another deity; that Narayana took out his eye and surrendered it to Rudra and got chakra, etc. What do you say about these?**

I can only say that these are not found in any ancient, authoritative works. These have not been quoted by Adi Sankara or any of the Acharyas, belonging to the other schools of Vedanta. These have not been mentioned in Sastras, which are accepted as authority.

**32. Please tell me something more about Rudra**

1) I will give you a quotation from Bhagavata: "The river Ganga is the greatest among all rivers. Narayana is the greatest of all deities. Siva is the greatest of all Vaishnavas. Bhagavata is the greatest of all Puranas."

2) We accept Ahirbudhnya Samhita as one of the respected authorities. Here, Rudra has praised Narasimha in Mantra Raja Pada Stotra. Here, Rudra says as follows: "All the Jivatmas are the servants of you, the Paramatma. So, I am also your servant and worship you."

3) Parvati asks Siva "How can the thousand names of Vishnu be recited easily every day?" Siva replies: "It is enough to say Rama. This is equal to thousand names of Vishnu. I also enjoy Uttering the name Rama."

**33. But Harivamsa says Krishna requested for a child, from Siva. How do you reconcile this?**

Varahapurana says, that Rudra requested Narayana as follows: "Please grant me a favour. In one of your avatars, you should also pray to me and ask for some favour." Narayana agreed and said that in one of His avatars He will ask for a favour, from Rudra. That is why, in Krishna avatara. He requested Rudra for a child, as per the promise given earlier. This has been mentioned in Varahapurana. It will also be clear from the fact that, immediately after granting the favour for a child to Krishna, Rudra says as follows:- "Krishna, out of His simplicity only, came to me for a child. But He is the source of all beings. He is the protector of all. He is the supreme Tattva. He alone gives Moksha." Summing up, it is only because of these things, that Vedavyasa says as follows:-

"This is the truth. This is the truth. Again, this is the truth. I raise my hands and say there is no greater authority than the Vedas. There is no greater deity than Kesava." It is in keeping with this only, that Krishna says in Gita "It is I alone, who is understood from all the Vedas."

**34. Does it mean that we cannot give or we should not**

No. It does not mean that. They are also highly respectable. We give them proper and utmost respect, like we will give to other respectable persons. Only thing is, on the authority of the Vedas. Narayana is the supreme deity.

**35. We see that God Narayana also takes avatars like Rama and Krishna. Does it mean that He is also born in this world, like us?**

No. We human beings or animals or trees are born in this world because of our past karmas – punya and papa. There is no such thing as Karma or punya or papa for Lord Narayana. So, when He comes into this world, as Rama or Krishna, it is not like other Jivatmas. He comes into this world of His own free will and desire. So, it is not birth for the Lord, like we understand the birth of any of us.

**36. Can you quote the authority of the Vedas?**

The Vedas say that He is not born; but still, He is born in many ways.

**37. Well, that sounds puzzling.**

What the Vedas say is that He is not born, because of past karma, like us. But He is born in many ways. He takes many avatars, like Rama and Krishna, out of His own free will, not bound by any karma.

**38. Then are these avatars real**

They are real. We have been reading the Ramayana and Mahabharata and Bhagavata. The avatars are real. In fact, the Bhagavad Gita has been preached by Krishna in this avatar only.

**39. Why should He take avatars in this world?**

This is to uphold dharma or righteousness. In the Gita, Krishna says that whenever there is a decline in righteousness or dharma, whenever adharma raises its head, then the Lord takes avatars in this world.

**40. What is the purpose of these avatars?**

The purpose is to protect the good people and punish the wicked; and to re-establish dharma.

**41. Between the two, namely, protection of the good people and punishing the wicked, which is the more important purpose of the avatars?**

Certainly, protection of the good people is the more important purpose. Good people like rahlada, Vidura, Akrura and others desired to see the Lord, to worship Him in person. It is to bless such good people that the avatars are made. If it is only for punishing the wicked, this can be done even from Paramapada or Sri Vaikunta, by His simply desiring to that effect. The Sudarsana chakra is there to carry out His orders and for punishing the wicked.

**42. When the Lord took avatars in this world, like Rama or Krishna, did He also have bodies like us, ordinary human beings, of flesh and blood?**

No, Here Gita says that the bodies the Lord takes during these avatars are of Suddha Sattva. I have explained to you already, what is Suddha Sattva. So there is no question of the Lord having bodies like us, ordinary human beings.

**43. What are the forms of Bhagavan Narayana?**

We can say that, for the purposes of meditation, He has two forms. One is the divine and auspicious form. The second is, with the body consisting of Jivatmas and matter (chetana and achetana). This is what we saw earlier that Iswara or Narayana is the soul and Jivatma and matter are His body.

**44. Please describe in a little more detail the divine and auspicious form, which you mentioned.**

His form has four arms. His body shines like gold, He has eyes like lotus; feet like lotus; hands like lotus. This form is in Paramapada or Sri Vaikunta. Besides divine ornaments, He also has weapons, like the sankha and chakra, gada, sword and bow.

**45. Lord Narayana has five kinds of forms. What are these?**

The five forms are called:

1. Para. 2. Vyuha. 3. Vibhava. 4. Antaryami. 5. Archa.

**46. Please describe the essential features of each of these forms. What is Para form?**

The Para form is that of Sri Narayana in Paramapada or Sri Vaikunta. There, He is also called Para Vasudeva. The description of Sri Vaikunta is given in Kaushitaki Upanishad and also in the Sri Vaikunta Gadya of Ramanuja. The throne (simhasana) has eight legs, like dharma. The adishesha (serpent) is the seat. There Narayana shines along with Lakshmi, Bhudevi and Niladevi. He has four arms and has sankha, Chakra and gada. He has a number of ornaments.

**47. What is the second form, i.e., Vyuha form?**

This is a bit difficult and you have to listen carefully. The Lord Narayana assumes four forms by name, Vasudeva, Sankarshana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. The first vyuha is Vasudeva. From the first vyuha Vasudeva, arises the second vyuha Sankarshana. From the second vyuha Sankarshana, arises the third vyuha Pradyumna. From the third vyuha Pradyumna, arises the fourth vyuha Aniruddha. As I told you earlier, the Lord is called Bhagavan, because He has six qualities. The six qualities are: 1) knowledge, 2) strength, 3) lordship, 4) valour, 5) energy and 6) splendour.

**48. You are saying that because He has the six qualities, He is called Bhagavan and these qualities are not found in others. But we hear many people being called as Bhagavan, like Vyasa Bhagavan and Narada Bhagavan, How do you explain this?**

We apply the word Bhagavan to others, only out of respect. When we say that Rama is a lion, it only shows that Rama is as majestic and strong as a lion. Similarly, when we say Vyasa Bhagavan, it is only a term of respect for Vyasa.

**49. How do you differentiate between the four Vyuhas, Vasudeva, Sankarshana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha?**

Although these are all forms of the Lord, in Vasudeva, we have all the six qualities, which I have just mentioned, in full. Of course, in the other three vyuhas also, all the six qualities are present; but some qualities are found predominantly in some of the vyuhas. The qualities 1) Knowledge and 2) strength, are in plenty in Sankarshana. Similarly, the qualities, 3) lordship and 4) valour are in plenty in Pradyumna. The qualities, 5) energy and 6) splendour, are in plenty in Aniruddha.

**50. What is the function of Vasudeva?**

Vasudeva is the object of worship and enjoyment by the Jivatmas, who have attained salvation or moksha.

**51. What is the function of Sankarshana?**

We saw that Sankarshana has knowledge and strength in plenty. Because of the knowledge, as Sankarshana, the Lord promulgates the sastras. Because of the strength, as Sankarshana, He destroys the universe.

**52. What about Pradyumna?**

As Pradyumna, having in plenty lordship and valour, the Lord creates the universe, and makes dharma prevail.

**53. What is the function of Aniruddha?**

Aniruddha has in plenty energy and splendour. So, as Aniruddha, the Lord protects the world, and also teaches the truth.

**54. Is there any further sub-division of these vyuhas?**

Yes. As we have been doing sandhyavandana, you know the 12 names of the Lord Narayana. The 12 names are: Kesava, Narayana, Madhava, Govinda, Vishnu, Madhusudana, Trivikrama, Vamana, Sridhara, Hrishikesa, Padmanabha and Damodara. So, from each of the four Vyuhas mentioned above, the forms of three sub-Vyuhas appear. For example, from the first Vyuha of Vasudeva, we have the three sub-Vyuhas, Kesava, Narayana and Madhava. Similarly, from the second Vyuha Sankarshana, we have Govinda, Vishnu and Madhusudana. From the third

Vyuha Pradyumna, we have, Trivikrama, Vamana and Sridhara. Finally, from the fourth Vyuha Aniruddha, we have Hrishikesa, Padmanabha and Damodara.

**55. What is the significance of these 12 sub-Vyuhas?**

We state that symbolically they are called the Lords of the 12 months, beginning from the Tamil month of Margazhi. Kesava is the lord for the month of Margazhi. Narayana is the Lord for the month of Thai. Madhava is the Lord for the month of Masi and so on. For the 12 months, these 12 sub-Vyuhas are the Lords. We also wear the 12 urdhvapundras (Tirumann) in our body. These 12 Lords are respectively masters of each one of these.

**56. Earlier you mentioned about para Vasudeva in the first form of para. Again you mentioned as the first Vyuha Vasudeva. What is the difference between the Para Vasudeva and Vyuha Vasudeva?**

There is no difference at all. Both are differentiated only for the purposes of meditation. There is no other difference.

**57. What is the third form of the Lord?**

The third form of the Lord is called Vibhava. That is, when He takes avataras and comes down to this world. He takes the form of men like Rama or Krishna; or animals like fish, tortoise and boar. These avataras are called as the third form, or Vibhava, of the Lord.

**58. How many avataras are there?**

There are ten avataras which are considered as the main and important ones.

**59. What are they?**

1) The first is called the avatara of fish. This was taken, because a demon took away the Vedas from Brahma and hid himself in the sea. So Lord Narayana took the form of a fish, to get back the Vedas from the demon and give them back to Brahma.

2) The second avatara is that of the tortoise. The Devas wanted to have the nectar or amrita, for immortality. So the Lord advised them to churn the milky ocean. Naturally, for churning the ocean, they required a support. The mountain of Mandara was used as the support. But, when they started churning the ocean the mountain itself started sinking into the ocean. So the form of tortoise was taken to support the mountain itself, from the bottom and thus prevent it from sinking into the ocean.

3) The third avatara was that of the boar. The demon Hiranyaksha took away the mother earth. He rolled the earth and went down into the sea, with it. So the Lord took the form of a boar, entered into the sea, slayed the demon Hiranyaksha and brought back the mother earth. This was the purpose of the avatara as a boar.

4) The fourth avatara was that of Narasimha. You must be well aware of the story of Hiranya and his son Prahlada. Prahlada told Hiranya that the Lord is present everywhere. He is there even in a small vessel, even in a pillar. So Hiranya wanted to break a pillar and see whether the Lord was there. When Hiranya kicked the pillar, Lord appeared as Narasimha, came out of the pillar and killed him.

5) The fifth avatara was that of Vamana. He went to the demon Mahabali, as a small boy; and requested only for that much land which he would measure in three steps. When Mahabali granted his boon, He grew into Trivikrama and measured the whole earth and above. So this avatara is called as Vamana avatara. Vamana in Sanskrit means a dwarf. 6) The next one, i.e., the sixth avatara was that of Parasurama. In this avatara. He slayed the wicked kings, all over the world, to protect dharma.

7) The seventh avatara was that of Rama The Ramayana is too well known, and I need not repeat here the purpose of this avatara.

8) The eighth avatara was that of Balarama, who was the elder brother of Krishna.

9) The ninth avatara was that of Krishna – too well known

10) The tenth avatara is yet to materialise. This is called the avatara of Kalki, when the Lord will come on a horse, at the end of the Kali” yuga.

**60. You have briefly told me about the ten avataras. Where can one get more details?**

One can read about them in Vishnu Purana, Bhagavata, Ramayana and Mahabharata.

**61. What are the four yugas**

1) The first yuga is called Krita yuga. In that yuga, people would be highly religious, follow the principles of dharma, vedas and sastras.

2) The second yuga is Treta yuga. In this yuga, practice of dharma gets diminished.

3) The third yuga is Dvapara yuga. The practice of dharma in this yuga gets further - diminished.

4) The fourth and the last yuga is Kaliyuga. Here the practice of dharma is at its worst; adharma flourishes unabated. So, these are the four yugas. After every cycle of four yugas, there will be a great deluge (pralaya). After the deluge, again the cycle of the four yugas starts. The cycle of four yugas is unending.

**62. What are the characteristics of the four yugas?**

There is a simile about the practice of dharma in the four yugas. Dharma is compared to a holy cow. This cow has four legs, i.e., it is perfect in Krita yuga. In the second yuga, namely, Treta yuga, the cow has only three legs, i.e., dharma starts diminishing. In the third yuga, which is Dvapara yuga, the cow of dharma has only two legs. And lastly in Kali yuga the holy cow is left with only one leg. This is a simile, to illustrate how dharma goes on diminishing, yuga after yuga.

**63. Are these ten avataras only, called Vibhava?**

No. These are the more important or principal avataras.

**64. What are the Other avataras then, apart from these?**

Apart from these ten principal avataras there are innumerable avataras like Padmanabha, Hayagriva, Hamsa (Swan) and even a small mango tree.

**65. Are there any further classifications of these avataras?**

Yes, in a way, we can divide them as primary or important and secondary avataras.

**66. What are the primary avataras?**

The primary avataras are those ten described earlier. Out of these, even Parasurama avatara and Balarama avatara are considered secondary.

**67. What do you mean by secondary avatara?**

The secondary avataras are of two kinds:

1) where the Lord, enters a Jivatma, with His form;

2) where the Lord, without entering a Jivatma, in His own form, gives him extraordinary divine powers.

**68. What are the examples of secondary avatars, where the Lord enters Jivatmas, in His own form?**

Such avatars are like Parasurama and Balarama. These avatars were taken for specific purposes. The Parasurama avatars was for the purpose of destroying the kings who were practising adharma. Balarama avatars was to be of service and assistance to Krishna.

**69. What are the types of secondary avatars, where the Lord, without entering Jivatmas in His own form, gives them extraordinary powers?**

We have avatars like Vyasa, Brahma and Siva, where the Lord gives them extraordinary powers, without entering in His own form.

**70. So, how many types of Vibhava avatars are there?**

To sum up, among the Vibhava avatars, there are two types.

1) The first set is called primary or important avatars.

2) The second set is called subsidiary or secondary avatars.

These secondary avatars are further subdivided into two kinds:-

1) Where the Lord enters into Jivatmas, in His own form.

2) Where the Lord does not enter Jivatmas, in His own form; but gives them extraordinary powers.

**71. What is the fourth form of the Lord?**

The fourth form of the Lord is called Antaryami. The Paramatma or the Lord lives within the heart of the chetana. The Lord takes the minute form and resides in the heart of the human being or animal, along with the Jivatma himself. So, this form of the Lord is called Antaryami or "One who controls from inside".

**72. What is the fifth form of the Lord?**

The fifth form is called Archa avatars. That is, where the Lord is worshipped in Srirangam, Tirupati, Kanchipuram and other temples.

**73. What are the Divya Desas?**

As explained earlier, we have ten Alvars, besides Andal and Madhurakavi. The verses they have sung in praise of the Lord, are called Divya Prabandha. Now, the places having temples, which have been sung by the Alvars, are called Divya Desas.

**74. How many Divya Desas are there?**

We have 108 Divya Desas. Out of these, now we cannot worship in two places. These are Sri Vaikunta (Paramapada) and Milky Ocean.

**75. Are there other temples, which are considered equally holy and sacred?**

Yes, we have 1) Tirunarayanapuram (Melkote) 2) Mannargudi 3) Sriperumpudur, and other places which are considered equally holy and sacred.

**76. What about the temples in other places, villages or towns, which have not been sung by Alvars?**

There also, the Lord does exist and is of the same sanctity, divinity and importance. So far as the Lord's presence is concerned, there is no difference absolutely, between any temples, whether they are Divya Desas or not. In any temple, in any village or town, where Lord Narayana is installed and worshipped, He is of the same form and He manifests Himself in full. So, this form of manifestation in temples is called archa avatars.

**77. How many kinds of such temples are there?**



There are four such kinds of temples.

**78. What are these?**

- 1) The first category consists of temples, where the Lord has manifested Himself of His own accord. This is called Svayam Vyakta Sthala.
- 2) The second category is of temples established by devas.
- 3) The third category of temples are those installed by siddhas.
- 4) And the fourth category is the temples constructed and consecrated by human beings.

**79. Is there any difference between these five forms of the Lord, which you have explained. (Para, Vyuha,etc.)?**

There is absolutely no difference. The Lord is fully present in all these five forms; and everyone can worship the Lord, in whichever form he likes, and in whichever temple he likes.

**80. Who is Niladevi?**

Lord Narayana has three consorts. They are: Sri Devi or Mahalakshmi, Bhu Devi and Nila Devi.

**81. Are they also mentioned in the Vedas?**

Yes. We have separate suktas (hymns) for each one of them. The suktas are called Sri Sukta, Bhu Sukta and Nila Sukta, respectively. It is this Nila Devi, whom we have as Nappinnai in Krishna Avatara. It is to win the hand of Nappinnai, that Krishna fought and subdued the 7 bulls.

## Chapter 7 : Advaita, Visishtadvaita and Dvaita

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**1. How did the three systems of Vedanta philosophy, namely Advaita, Visishtadvaita and Dvaita come about?**

The question can be answered with a little bit of background on the Upanishads. The Upanishads are of three types namely bheda sruti, abheda sruti and ghataka sruti.

**2. What is the Bheda sruti?**

There are many passages in the Vedas, which clearly and categorically state that Brahman or Paramatma is different from Jivatma. These are called bheda sruti, because they show the difference between Paramatma and Jivatma.

Bheda in Sanskrit means difference.

**3. What are the passages in the Vedas which come under the category of bheda sruti?**

The following are some of the quotations.

- 1) "Two birds with similar qualities and attached to each other, reside in the same tree. One of them (Jivatma) eats the fruit (the results of his karma), whereas the other (Iswara or Brahman) shines, without eating the fruit."
- 2) "The Jivatma realises that the supreme self or Brahman directs him and he is the object of direction".
- 3) "He, the Jivatma, is different from Brahman. By winning the grace of Brahman, the Jivatma attains salvation".
- 4) "The three-fold nature, can be simply put as follows (1) who experiences pleasure and pain; (2) the object of such experiences and (3) He, the Brahman who directs all". 79
- 5) "He is the lord of Matter and Jivatma and the possessor of qualities".
- 6) "Brahman is the ruler whose knowledge has no limits. The Jivatma has his knowledge limited".
- 7) "The Brahman is different from Matter or Achetana and is greater than the Jivatma."
- 8) "He is different and He rules over the Jivatma and the Matter."
- 9) "The knower of Brahman attains the supreme."
- 10) "He reaches the other side of samsara and reaches the Paramapada of Vishnu".
- 11) "I belong to the Brahman and I will not leave Him".
- 12) "All these are born out of Him and because of Him they live and they go back to Him."
- 13) "The brahmins understand Him, by learning the Vedas, by doing penance, by giving donation and by doing yagas."
- 14) "The Brahman cannot be attained by reading the scriptures, by intelligence,..."

15) "He is the lord of all. He is the ruler of all".

16) "There are two eternal, permanent things. One is Brahman, knowing everything and all powerful. The other is with limited knowledge and powerless, namely, Jivatma."

17) "The Jivatma enjoys the Paramapada along with Brahman."

So, the above are a few examples of bheda sruti. These are some of the passages from the Vedas, which clearly show that the Jivatma is different from Paramatma.

There are innumerable such passages in the Vedas.

**4. What is Abheda sruti?**

There are also passages in the Vedas, which show, on the face of it, that Paramatma and Jivatma are one and the same.

**5. What are the passages in the veda that describe the Abhedasruti?**

The following are some of the passages:-

"You are that (Brahman)".

"I am Brahman".

"Everything here is Brahman".

"All the things here are Brahman".

"There are no different things".

"There is only one".

**6. What is Ghataka sruti?**

The third type of sruti, ghataka sruti, describes the relationship between Brahman and Jivatma and Matter, as that of the soul and the body (body/soul relationship).

**7. Name the passages from the Vedas, which are in the nature of Ghataka sruti?**

The passages from the Antaryami Brahmana of Brihadaranyaka Upanishad and Subala Upanishad which explain the body-soul relationship. These are called Ghataka sruti.

**8. Why is this called Antaryami Brahmana?**

This is called so, because this talks about the Iswara being the soul or antaryami of Jivatma and the matter. 'Antaryami' means "One who controls from inside".

**9. Why are the above passages of the Vedas called ghataka sruti?**

They are so-called, because they join or synthesise the apparently contradictory passages in the Vedas. They give "the proper to abheda srutis, which seem to state there is no difference between Jivatma and Paramatma.

**10. How do we then interpret the abheda sruti?**

By using this body/soul relationship, which has been shown above in the ghataka sruti, one can give proper interpretation to the abheda sruti.

**11. How do you do that?**

When we say Rama, we mean the body of Rama, as well as the soul of Rama. We say Rama has a fair skin. We mean Rama's body has a fair skin. Similarly, the word "Rama" means his soul also.

By the extension of the same principle, it also means the soul of Rama's soul, i.e., Iswara or Narayana. We have just seen that the individual soul or Jivatma is also the body of Iswara. In other words, Iswara is the soul of the individual soul, namely Jivatma.

So, when we say Rama, this refers grammatically to 1) Rama's body, 2) Rama's soul, 3) Rama's soul's soul, i.e., Brahman or Iswara.  
With this understanding, if one reads the abheda sruti, the meaning will be quite clear.

**12. Explain a little more on Abheda Sruti?**

1) One passage says "you are that", Now what this means is that your soul's soul is Iswara or Brahman, i.e., Brahman is also your soul's soul.

2) The passage "All this is Brahman" is also correct, because all Matter and Jivatma have Brahman as their soul and Brahman has all of them as His body. Hence naturally all this is Brahman.

3) The passage "I am Brahman" is also correct, because my soul's soul is Brahman. In other words, I am myself Brahman.

Thus, by applying the body/soul relationship between Jivatma and Paramatma, all the passages in the Vedas, which appear like saying identity of Jivatma and paramatma, will be properly explained.

**13. So, what is the final conclusion on Abheda Sruthi?**

The basic principle has been established that Brahman or is the soul of Jivatma and I Matter and all its variations.

So, the Jivatma and Matter and its variations are all the body of Brahman.

As mentioned earlier, this is the fundamental doctrine of Visishtadvaita philosophy.

**14. What is the meaning of the word "Advaita"?**

"Advaita" means "Not Two". The advaitins say that Jivatma and paramatma are not two (i.e., different) but they are One, i.e., identical. Hence this system of philosophy is called Advaita. The founder of Advaita philosophy is Adi Sankara.

**15. What is the meaning of the word "Visishtadvaita"?**

"Visishtadvaita" means "Not Two-in a special way" or "Only one – in a special way". We say that Jivatma and paramatma are different and yet not different.

They are different, as we have shown from the bheda sruti. Jivatma is the body and paramatma the soul. The soul is different from the body. This way, the paramatma is different from the Jivatma.

They are not different because of the body-soul relationship, as explained in ghataka sruti. We call both Rama's body and Rama's soul, as Rama. Rama's body and soul together, are called as "Rama" only. So, Rama is only one.

Similarly, Jivatma (the body) and Paramatma (the soul), can be called as only one – in a special way, because of the body/soul relationship.

So, Jivatma and Paramatma can be called two-in-one or one-in-two. Hence our system of philosophy is called "Visishtadvait'a".

This system was perfected by Ramanuja.

**16. What is the meaning of the word "Dvaita"?**

“Dvaita” means Two. Dvaitins say that Jivatma and Paramatma are eternally different, i.e. they are two and not one. They do not accept body/soul relationship. Hence this system of philosophy is called “Dvaita”.

The exponent of Dvaita philosophy is Madhva.

**17. How do the Advaitins explain the various passages in the Vedas, which do not support their philosophy? In other words, how do they explain the bheda srutis which say that Jivatma and Paramatma are different?**

The Advaitins argue that abheda srutis, which say that the Jivatma is identical with Paramatma, supersede the bheda srutis. So, they do not accept the validity of bheda srutis. In other words, they accept only abheda srutis as authority.

**18. How do Vishistadvaitin’s rebut the argument of Advaitins that abheda srutis supersede the bheda srutis?**

We say that the Vedas as a whole are authority. So, why should the Vedas mention the bheda passages, if they are to be superseded.

No sensible person will make a statement, if it is false and if it is to be superseded. Unless a statement is specifically mentioned as opponents point of view, it has to be taken as correct. Nowhere in the Vedas, it has been stated that the bheda passages represent opponents point of view. Hence the bheda srutis have to be taken as correct; and have to be properly synthesised with the other passages in the Vedas.

Thus, we do not accept the Advaitins’ argument.

**19. How do the Dvaitins explain the abheda srutis, which are against their philosophy – that Jivatma and Paramatma are eternally different?**

Dvaitins do not accept the abheda srutis as authority (pramana). Their argument is that abheda srutis are very few. They are very much less in number, as compared to bheda srutis, Hence, the small number of abheda srutis must be ignored.

**20. What is Vishistadvaitins answer to this argument?**

Vishistadvaitins do not accept this view of Dvaitins. They say that all-passages in the Vedas are authority. We have to properly interpret the various passages in the Vedas, so that any apparent contradictions are resolved. Hence, Vishistadvaitin makes use of ghataka sruti, to resolve the apparent differences between bheda srutis and abheda srutis.

**21. So, what is the speciality of Visishtadvaita vis-a-vis Advaita and Dvaita?**

As mentioned above, the Advaitins are not able to properly explain bheda srutis.

Dvaitins are not able to properly explain abheda srutis.

Visishtadvaita is the only system, which is able to explain properly both the Bheda srutis and Abheda srutis, with the help of Ghataka srutis.

**22. What does the term ‘maya’ mean?**

The Advaitins say that everything, other than the Paramatma, is ‘maya’ or illusion. For Advaitins, the world itself is an illusion.

**23. But certainly, one is seeing the world; and one sees the various things in the world, with our eyes. Then how can this world be called an illusion?**

For this, the Advaitins have got three types of reality. They say that the Brahman is the only real thing or the ultimate reality; and everything else is illusion or maya.

**24. What are the three types of reality – according to them?**

- 1) We see a shell from a distance and we think it is silver. Only when we go near and examine, we find that it is really shell.
- 2) Similarly, from a distance we see a rope and mistake it to be a serpent.
- 3) Again, in a hot summer, on a tar road, we see at some distance water on the road, which is not actually so. It is only the reflection of the sun on the tar road

So, such illusions, as explained in the three cases above, fall into the first category, according to the Advaitins. These are called "Apparent Reality" (Pratibhasika Sat). In these cases, we are able to realise ourselves, at a later stage, that what we saw first was only an illusion. For example, thinking as silver, whereas it was only shell; similarly, thinking as serpent, when it was only a rope, is only an illusion.

**25. What is the second category of reality, according to Advaitins?**

The second category of reality is called by Advaitins as "Relative Reality" (Vyavaharika Sat). In this category come the world, air, sky, water. and so on. All these things are there and still, ultimately, they are only an illusion according to Advaitins. But, for all practical purposes, world, air, water and other elements are real things. So these things are called "Relative Reality" and form the second category.

**26. What is the third category of reality, according to them?**

The third category of reality, is the "Absolute reality" (Paramarthika Sat). This is Brahman.

**27. Please sum up the Advaitins' view point on Maya and Reality.**

The Advaitins classify all things into three types of realities, as follows:

- 1) Apparent reality (Pratibhasika Sat) – like mistaking shell as silver; mistaking rope as serpent.
- 2) Relative reality (Vyavaharika Sat) – like world, sky, fire, water.
- 3) Absolute reality (Paramarthika Sat) – This is Brahman.

So, according to them, except for item (3) above, Brahman, everything else is maya (illusion).

**28. What is the stand point of Visishtadvaitins on this?**

The theory of Visishtadvaitins is exactly the opposite. We say that everything is real. There is no maya or illusion. The world is very much real. The Jivatma is very much real.

In fact, we also say that, even the objects which we see in a dream are also real. Of course, the dream objects are purely temporary and are seen only by the person who dreams.

**29. What is our argument to say that the world is real?**

We say that this world is not an illusion. We mistake shell for silver. We mistake brass, or bronze for gold. We mistake a rope for a serpent – These are actually illusions.

The world is not such an illusion. Whatever materials we find in this world, we are making use of them. The silver which we see, we make vessels out of it. We keep water in the silver vessel.

Similarly, the gold which we see, we make jewels out of gold, and we wear them.

So, the world, the materials, the objects which we see in the world, are all real.

**30. What do the Vedas say about the reality of the world?**

The Vishistadvaiti's have full support from the Upanishads. Its been explained earlier about the process of creation, starting from matter.

How from matter comes mahat, how from mahat comes ahankara and so on. I have also explained about the quintuplication, three-fold division and seven-fold division.

The Upanishads have thus explained in detail the process of creation. So, the world and the objects and materials of the world are all the results of creation.

When Upanishads take so much pains to explain the process of creation, is it correct to say that the whole thing is an illusion? There is no need for the Upanishads to describe in great detail the process of creation, if the whole thing is an illusion.

Further, the Upanishads do not state anywhere that the world is an illusion.

**31. Then how do the Advaitins say that they have also the authority of the Upanishads, for the world being an illusion?**

The Upanishads say that the Lord, Brahman creates the world out of maya. So the Advaitins interpret the word maya as illusion. But we interpret the world maya as matter (prakriti). The Upanishads themselves say that maya is matter. So, apart from other reasons, we interpret the word 'maya' as matter. From matter, the process of creation starts.

But taking the meaning of 'maya' as illusion, the advaitins say that the whole world is an illusion.

**32. Any other quotations from the Upanishads which describes "BRAHMAN"?**

At many places, several Upanishads categorically declare that Brahman creates this world.

"Brahman creates beings, starting from Brahma, as before".

"Brahman creates the beings, like sun and moon, as before".

Unless the world, sun and moon, and other objects are real, there is no need to create them. This clearly shows that the created world is real.

Of course, the Jivatma and Matter are eternal (nitya). At the time of pralaya, Matter and Jivatmas take very subtle (sukshma) form and merge with the Lord. Again, the process of creation starts, after pralaya. Thus we say that everything is real.

**33. Apart from the Upanishads, what do the Smritis say?**

The Bhagavad Gita says: "I, who am the ultimate. cause of this world, join the Jivatma with Matter. Thus, all beings come out of this union".

There are several such passages in Vishnu Purana and other Sastras which go to show that the world is indeed real.

**34. What are the arguments of Advaitins to say that the world is not real?**

They say that many objects in the world are not permanent. For example, there is a mud pot now; after some time it gets broken and it is destroyed. Similarly there is water in the river now. But in summer, the water gets dried up.

Thus water is no longer there. Thus, nothing is real, because they are not there permanently at all times. This is one of the arguments of the Advaitins. ....

**35. How do we get over this Objection?**

We agree with them on the facts. But we say that these facts only show that objects are not permanent. It does not follow that the objects are not real. In other words, even though the objects are not permanent, they are real.

We have to distinguish between a real thing and a permanent thing. Taking the example of the mud pot, the mud is there, which the potter makes into a pot. Again, after some time, the pot gets broken, and we come back to the mud. So, mud is there although the mud pot gets broken.

Just because something is not permanent, we cannot say that it is not real. The mud pot is not permanent because it gets broken; but it's real. We make use of the mud pot.

Similarly jewels are not permanent. We can melt them into gold and re-make some other jewel.

So the jewels are not permanent, but the raw material, gold is permanent. But both gold and jewels, made out of gold, are real. We make use of the jewels. We wear the jewels. So, we cannot say that jewels are not real. Mud is real and mudpot is real. Gold is real and gold jewel is real. These examples are given in Chandogya Upanishad to discuss the relationship between Brahman and the world. So, Brahman is real and the world is also real.

Thus the argument of Advaitins that just because something is not permanent, it is not real, (but an illusion) is not correct.

**36. Do the examples given in the Chandogya Upanishad, of mud and mud pot, gold and jewels, iron and knife, justify that the world is real?**

We are seeing the world. We make use of the things in the world. We enjoy them. So this has to be real. The above examples clearly show that the world which has come out, in the above examples are real.

If the Vedas wanted to show that the world is unreal, they need not have given the above examples. Instead, the Vedas could have given the examples of mistaking a rope for a serpent, mistaking a shell for silver and so on.

But instead of giving such examples, which suggest illusion, the Vedas have given examples of reality. From this also, it is clear that the world and everything else is real.

**37. Further, if the world and its beings are only an illusion, where is the question of the Lord protecting the world and destroying the world?**

It's correct. In many places the Upanishads say that Brahman creates the world, protects the world, and destroys the world. So, there is clear evidence as to what the Brahman does to the world.

All these activities of creating the world, protecting the world and destroying the world will have no meaning if the world is not real.

The world is destroyed at the time of Pralaya. So the world is not eternal or permanent. It is in this meaning that sometimes it is mentioned that the world is not real.

**38. What is the explanation for, some of the Upanishads saying that the world is an illusion?**

1) The Upanishads talk in great detail about the process of creation of the world. If the world is an illusion, there is no question of creation and there is no question of detailed process of creation.



2) The basic axiom that the Vedas as a whole , are the fundamental authority. So , there cannot be any inconsistency or difference between the different passages. If there is an apparent contradiction or inconsistency between two different two different portions of Upanishads, these have to be suitable reconciled or synthesized.

3) The normal logic is that if the majority of the portions mean one thing and a small number of portions apparently mean something else, then these minority portions will have to be explained in keeping with the majority version.

4) While the world is mentioned as real in innumerable places and the process of creation is described in detail, in a few places it is mentioned that the world is not eternal or everlasting. The world will be destroyed at the time of pralaya.

What is meant is that all the chetanas and achetanas merge in the Lord, in a very subtle form, at the time of pralaya.

### **39. How does one justify the reality of the world?**

The three reasons to show why the world is real:

1) The Vedas describe Brahman thus: Brahman is that, from whom all these beings are born; by whom all these beings live; in whom all these beings rest, after death. From the above description, it can be seen that all these beings have to be real.

2) Brahman is the material cause of the world. He therefore evolves into the world. So how can the world which has been created by Brahman, be unreal?

3) Brahman is also the instrumental cause of this world. He creates this world. So, how can a thing, which has been created by Brahman, be unreal?

Thus we say that the world and all the beings in it are real.

### **40. What is the explanation of the dreams that one sees in his sleep?**

The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad clearly says that:

” In this dream world, there are no chariots. There are no horses to draw the chario. There are no roads on which the chariot can go. Then the Brahman creates chariots. He creates horses to draw the chariot and He Creates roads.

In this dream world, there are no joys or delights or raptures. Again, Brahman creates joys , delights and raptures.

In the dream world, there are no pools, no tanks and no rivers. Again, Brahman creates pools, He creates tanks and He creates rivers. Indeed Brahman creates all these, in the dream world”.

### **41. We only dream.So,how can we say that Brahman creates the objects in the dream?Why not we say that we(jivatma) create the various objects in the dream?**

There are two reasons why the jivatma can not create the objects in the dream:

1) The jivatma is not capable of creating the various objects in the dream. He does not have the power of creation because of his natural powers are restricted, as long as he is in this world.

2) We also see many bad things in the dream. We are afraid to see such terrible things in our dreams.We often wake up with a start whenever we see bad things in the drea. If the Jivatma

creates these objects, naturally he will create such bad things, such bad objects, which give him pain in his dreams. If the Jivatma creates these objects, naturally he will only create good and pleasant things in the dream. Since the dream consists of bad things also, it is clear that jivatma does not create the objects in the dreams. Only Iswara creates objects in the dream. This is exactly what has been quoted in Brahadaranyaka Upanishad.

**42. Are these objects created in the dream real?**

Well they are real, so far as the person who dreams is concerned. They are only for the duration of the dream.

**43. But we also say that the things which we dream are not real?**

They are not real in the sense that, immediately after the dream, the objects vanish. Further they can not be seen by others, but only by the person, who dreams.

**44. What are the reasons for the creation of these objects in the dream, which give us pain or pleasure?**

The reason is simple. The Jivatma does some small good things and some small bad things. These are not big enough, or significant enough. As a reward for small good things done, God gives him pleasure and good things, in the dream. So, he is happy during the duration of the dream, enjoying pleasant things.

Similarly the Jivatma does small bad things, which are not very significant. Then a very mild punishment is given by the Lord, for those small bad things. This is by making the Jivatma feel the pain, by dreaming bad things or shocking news. So he is made to experience pain and sorrow during the duration of the dream.

Such is the reason for certain of good and bad things during our dream.

**45. I find it difficult to understand that the objects in our dream are real?**

I have cogently explained above the philosophy behind our dreams. I have also quoted extensively from the Brahadaranyaka Upanishad to show that Brahman creates the objects in our dream.

I have also explained the reasons for our seeing or experiencing good and bad things in our dream.

The creation of things in the dream world by Brahman is real 1) for the duration of the dream and 2) for the person who dreams.

**46. Is there only one Brahman or there is more than one Brahman?**

There are several passages in the Vedas, which declare that there is only one supreme Lord or Brahman.

The advaitins also agree that there is only one Brahman, the Para Brahman. However for purposes of worship, they accept a lower Brahman. This lower Brahman, is, according to them, not real ultimately, but is only Vyavaharika sat.

**47. What is the difference between these two Brahman according to The Advaitins?**

They say that 1.) The Para Brahman has no attributes or qualities. (Nirguna) 2.) It has no form. (Niravayava Brahman)

According to them 1) The lower Brahman (Apara Brahman) has good qualities (Saguna Brahman), 2) It has a form (body). The lower Brahman can be worshipped as a Vishnu and so on.

They further say as follows: "After worshipping the Brahman, in a form with qualities, like Vishnu, a person develops sufficient maturity of knowledge and viveka. Then he understands the real Brahman, which is without attributes.

Then he also realizes that he is not different from the real Brahman or Paramatma. In other words, he ultimately realizes that the Jivatma and Paramatma are one and the same.

**48. What is our philosophy in this regard?**

We do not accept that there are two Brahman. There is no question of one Brahman being higher and another Brahman being lower. There is only one Brahman.

The Brahman has all the auspicious qualities. That Brahman is free from all evil. The Brahman has also got a form – a beautiful and auspicious body, with four arms and sankha and chakra.

Further the Brahman has Jivatma and matter as His Body.

**49. So, it is rather amusing – the Advaitins say that Brahman has no body. But we say that Brahman has, not one, but two bodies!**

You're right. Brahman has a divine and auspicious body, with four arms, sankha and chakra. He has also another body; the entire world, Jivatmas and Matter, as His body.

**50. What about the identity of Jivatma and Brahman?**

There is no question of Jivatma being identical with Paramatma. But Jivatma has Paramatma as its soul; and Jivatma; and Jivatma is the body of the Paramatma.

Thus both the Jivatma and Paramatma are one in the sense, that they form together the body and soul. So, they are 2-in-1. That is why our philosophy is called as Vishistadvaita.

**51. How can one say that Brahman has all auspicious qualities?**

You have to apply logic. At several places, the Vedas say that He has many auspicious qualities, attributes. In a few places, they say that Brahman is without attributes. We have to interpret this, in keeping with the majority portions.

So when the Upanishad says "without Attributes" we interpret this as "without bad attributes" i.e., "with only good qualities". This interpretation is necessary, to resolve the apparent contradiction between the portions saying Brahman has many auspicious qualities and the portions saying that Brahman is without attributes.

If we stick on saying that Brahman is without qualities, then all the portions mentioning about the good qualities of Brahman will have no meaning.

**52. Can you give me some examples or illustrations?**

In many places the Upanishads mention that Brahman is the Lord. He is the protector, and the world and the Jivatmas are Protected By Him.

Again the Upanishads talk about Bhakti, about 32 vidyas or methods of doing bhakti to the Lord, for getting salvation. If the Lord has no attributes, no qualities, how can He protect the world. How can He give Salvation or Moksha to the Jivatma?

It cannot be said that the Upanishads lay down the methods of Bhakti, for attaining salvation, and then deny these things, by saying that the Lord has no attributes or qualities. Without qualities how can He grant Salvation?

**53. How can the passages saying Brahman has no qualities can be interpreted?**

We interpret these in two ways:

1) "Without Qualities" mean "without bad qualities". So, Brahman has all good qualities.

2) The qualities are three sattva, rajas and tamas. So, "without qualities" can mean "without any of these three qualities". This will mean "suddha, sattva". Thus, we can say that the Brahman has the quality of "Suddha Sattva".

**54. The Advaitins say that the words "Tattvamasi" proves the identity of Jivatma and Paramatma". How can we interpret this?**

The words "Tattvamasi" means "That you there". Here "That" means Brahman. "You" means "Your soul's soul".

So the words, "Tattvamasi" mean Brahman is your soul's soul. This is exactly the body / soul relationship. Brahman is the soul of ones soul. ..viz...Jivatma. So, the word, "Tattvamasi" only says that Brahman is the soul of Jivatma. The above is the teaching of the father, to son Svetaketu. When we say Svetaketu, it means his body and his soul. It also means his soul's soul which is Brahman.

**55. How do you say that "you" means "your soul's soul?"**

The above is the teaching of the father, to son Svetaketu. When we say Svetaketu, it means his body and his soul. It also means his soul's soul which is Brahman. Please refer to Chapter 3 where I have discussed the body/soul relationship.

**56. So, according to us, the famous words "That you are " actually denote body/soul relationship. Am I correct?**

You are right.

**57. Chandogya Upanishad says that Brahman was the only one. There was no second. Does this mean that the world is not real; that the Jivatmas are not real; that everything except Paramatma in unreal?**

No, that is not correct. Brahman is eternal. Jivatmas are eternal, Matter ( mula Prakriti) is eternal and the Vedas are also eternal. These are all eternal and Vedas are also eternal as specifically mentioned in in so many Upanishads.

So, when Upanishads say Brahman is only one, without a second, it does not mean that everything else is not real. What it actually means is that Brahman has no equal. "He is without a Second" means, " He is without an equal", "He is unparalleled".

All this means is that Brahman is Supreme, without any equals. It does not mean that there is nothing else than Brahman; and that everything else is an illusion or unreal.

If this view ( that all other are not real) is to be adopted, then let me repeat again that all the Upanishads explaining the process of Creation, explaining the Salvation of the jivatma, will all become meaningless.

When we say that the Chola King was unique and there was no second person, what does it mean? We only mean that, in strength and valor, he had no equals. He had no parallels. It does not mean there was no other person in this world, at that time. Similarly here also, it only means that Brahman has no equals..

**58. Does it mean that the Jivatma does not have all these good qualities like Brahman and that he is fully or mostly all evil?**

The Jivatma also, by nature, has all the auspicious qualities and is free from evil, just like Brahman. But unfortunately, these good qualities are not fully exhibited, so long as he is in this world.

During the period he is in this world, in this samsara, he is like a diamond, covered with dirt. When he attains salvation and reaches Paramapada, all the auspicious qualities shine in full in him and he is free from all evil. That is, he becomes like a diamond, cleaned from all dirt, and fully shining.

**59. What are these auspicious qualities?**

They are eight in number:

1. Freedom from evil
2. Freedom from old age
3. Freedom from death
4. Freedom from sorrow
5. Freedom from hunger
6. Freedom from thirst
7. Desiring the truth (Satya kama)
8. Willing the truth (Satya sankalpa)

These are apart from the basic nature of the Jivatma, of knowledge, bliss or happiness, and purity and so on.

**60. What is the concept of liberation or salvation, according to Advaita?**

According to Advaita, liberation comes finally, when the Jivatma realises that he is identical with Brahman or Paramatma. So, it is this knowledge, which leads to salvation..

**61. Then, is it possible for salvation in this world itself, according to Advaita?**

Yes. According to Advaita, even in this world itself, it is possible to attain salvation. They call it Jivanmukti.

**62. Is there the concept of Sri Vaikunta or Paramapada, in Advaita?**

No. They do not recognise Paramapada, as the ultimate salvation.

**63. In the Upanishads, the journey of Jivatma to paramapada is described in detail. How does the Advaitin explain this?**

The Advaitins say that it is only a partial salvation. They call it Krama mukti. They do not recognise Paramapada as the ultimate salvation.

**64. What is our concept of salvation?**

Salvation means reaching Paramapada or Sri Vaikunta at the end of this life; and enjoying the Lord Sriman Narayana and being of service to Him and Lakshmi.

**65. What are the “great sentences” (maha vakyas) in the Vedas?**

The Advaitins call some passages in the Upanishads as “great sentences” (Maha. vakyas). They say that these great sentences show that Jivatma and paramatma are one.

**66. What are these sentences?**

- No.1 “That you are”.
- No.2” I am Brahman”
- No.3 ” All the things here are Brahman.”
- No. 4 ” There are no several things here”.

**67. How do we interpret these sentences, as supporting the Visishtadvaita philosophy?**

The interpretation is very simple, if we apply the body/soul relationship

1) The first sentence is the famous “Tattvamasi”.

2) In the same way, the second sentence, “I am Brahman” also is correct. My soul is Jivatma. Jivatma’s soul is Brahman. So, my soul’s soul is Brahman. Hence “I am Brahman”.

3) The third sentence, "All things are Brahman," is also correct. Because, the soul or Atma of all things is Brahman, by the body/soul relationship. So, everything is Brahman, since everything has Brahman for its soul. Brahman has everything for His body.

4) By the same reasoning, the fourth sentence "There are no several things here" is also correct. Because all things have Brahman as their soul. Hence, all things are identified with Brahman, as their soul. Hence there are no several things. All things are Brahman only (as their soul)

Thus we interpret the great sentences, in accordance with our philosophy.

**68. How can these "maha vakyas", be interpreted on the basis of body/soul relationship?**

Apart from these "great sentences", we have many portions in the same Upanishads, which proclaim clearly that Paramatma is different from the Jivatma. So, if "maha vakyas" are interpreted to mean that Jivatma is identical with Paramatma, we find these are followed by passages, saying Jivatma is different from Paramatma, viz., contra-dicting the identity of Jivatma and Paramatma.

There is no need for the Vedas to proclaim something, to be contradicted immediately afterwards. Indeed in some places, the Upanishads give the opponents' view first and then give the correct view. But they clearly say that what was mentioned earlier was not the correct view and then explain or proclaim the correct view.

There is no such specific statement in the Vedas, saying that bheda srutis are incorrect; or that abheda srutis only are correct. So, we say that all are to be interpreted suitably, to avoid any apparent contradiction.

**69. The Advaitins say that the Upanishad sentence "Neti, Neti" ('not so', 'not so') shows that God has no attributes (nirguna). How do we explain this text in the Upanishad?**

We argue that 'Neti, Neti' ('not so\ not so'), in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad only means that Brahman's attributes cannot be limited to what was explained earlier. His attributes are infinite. Therefore, the passage means that the Brahman's attributes are not the only ones, which were mentioned earlier, but they are countless.

Our stand is also vindicated by the following:-

Immediately after this passage 'not so', 'not so', the Upanishad says that His name is Truth of the Truths. The Jivatmas are true, i.e., real and eternal. The Paramatma is the truth of the truth, i.e., also real and eternal.

So, this passage also clearly shows that Brahman has innumerable attributes, i.e., He is not nirguna..

**70. What are the seven inconsistencies (anupapatti)?**

While criticising the Advaita view point, Ramanuja develops subtle arguments and logic, to show that there are several inconsistencies in the Advaita standpoint, regarding the Brahman and the Jivatma. In particular, Ramanuja lists out 7 inconsistencies in the Advaita arguments, which say that Brahman is without attributes, Brahman is without form and the world is unreal..

**71. What are these seven inconsistencies ?**

I think we will not discuss them now. They require advanced logic philosophy, and knowledge of Sanskrit grammer. So, we shall pass over now for an advanced study at a later stage.

- 72. In the Dvaita system of philosophy, who is accepted as the supreme deity or Paramatma?**  
Narayana is accepted as the supreme deity.
- 73. Is He having attributes or qualities? Or, is He without attributes, Nirguna?**  
He is full of good qualities. The Dvaitins do not accept that Brahman is nirguna.
- 74. Who creates and destroys this world?**  
According to Dvaitins, Narayana only creates this world, sustains this world and destroys this world.
- 75. Do they accept the body also for Brahman?**  
They accept that Narayana has a divine body, a beautiful and shining body.
- 76. Do they accept the avatars of Narayana?**  
Yes. They accept the avatars like Rama and Krishna as all real.
- 77. What is the position of Lakshmi, according to Dvaitins?**  
Lakshmi is accepted as Narayana's consort. But, they give Her a slightly lower place than Narayana. She also has a divine and beautiful body, like Narayana. However, Lakshmi is considered Jivatma.
- 78. Is Lakshmi's soul atomic or vibhu - all pervading?**  
They state that Lakshmi is also vibhu, like Narayana.
- 79. Does the Dvaita system accept the reality of the world?**  
Yes. They accept the reality of the world and all beings
- 80. What about the Jivatmas?**  
They say that the Jivatmas are different from one another. The Jivatmas are grouped into two categories, as males and females. The Jivatmas are also atomic in nature.
- 81. What is their view, regarding salvation?**  
They accept the concept of salvation, viz., moksha and Paramapada. They agree that moksha means liberation from samsara and attainment of Paramapada.
- 82. Is their concept of moksha the same as for -Visishtadvaitins?**  
No, they have different categories or gradations in moksha, like salokya, sarupya, samipya and sayujya. Depending on their merits (punya), the Jivatmas attain salokya or sarupya and so on.
- 83. What are the means for attaining salvation?**  
They accept bhakti as the means.
- 84. What is the relationship between Jivatma and Paramatma?**  
The Dvaitins say that Jivatma and Paramatma are always different from one another. They do not accept the concept of body-soul relationship between Jivatma and Paramatma. Since according to them, the Jivatma is eternally different from Paramatma, they are two. So, this system of philosophy is called Dvaita.

## Chapter 8 : Karma, Jnana, Bhakti Yogas

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### 1. What are the types of activities of the Jivatma, in this world?

The activities pursued by Jivatma are of three kinds: 1) Nitya 2) Naimittika 3) Kamyā

1) Nitya: That which has to be done, without fail, regularly, like Sandhyavandana. By not doing these, one incurs sins.

2) Naimittika: Those, which have to be done on particular occasions, like Tarpana during eclipses.

3) Kamyā: Those, which are done if a person wants to achieve specific desires, like wealth, pleasure. These are not compulsory. By not doing these, no sin attaches. These can also be done, purely for the pleasure of the Lord, without desiring for fruits.

### 2. Is there any other division of the human activities?

There is another division of these activities.

1) Some activities have to be compulsorily performed. By performing these, you do not get any benefit or punya; but, by not doing these, you incur sin or papa. For example, Sandhyavandana and Tarpana (by those who are required to perform) have to be necessarily done. By doing these, you do not get any punya; but, by not doing these, you incur sin. These are called Ajna Kainkaryā.

2) The second type of activities are those, which are desirable. By doing these, you get punya. But by not doing these, you do not incur sin or papa.

For example, going to the temple, weaving garland for adorning the Lord, cleaning the temple premises – such acts are desirable and they result in punya. But by not doing these, you do not incur papa. These are called Anujna Kainkaryā.

### 3. What is the principle behind these activities?

Whatever activities you pursue you must carry them out as a service to the Lord, and for the pleasure of the Lord. You should not pursue any activity solely for your personal benefit. But it should be done only to please the Lord.

### 4. What is the meaning of Karma yoga as expounded in the Gita?

One should perform the normal duties laid down like Sandhyavandana and others according to his position and status in life.

He has also to do the duties, which have to be compulsorily performed on certain occasions, like Tarpana during eclipse.

He may also do the desirable works, like going to the temples, worshipping the Lord, preparation of flower garlands to the Lord.

He should do all these, without any desire for the fruits. He should also have the basic knowledge in regard to the real nature of the Jivatma and Paramatma. Then he can take up, in addition to all these, any particular duty or karma; and concentrate on its performance for the rest of his life.



In other words, the person does all the duties expected of him, as laid down in the sastras. Then he takes up a particular item of work and continues to perform the same, as much as possible, according to his capacity.

**5. What are the different types of work, that are laid down?**

1) The first is worshipping the Lord with tulasi and flowers. So, here, in addition to his normal duties, the person goes on worshipping the Lord.

2) The second type is doing yagna, as laid down in the Vedas.

3) The third type is to control one's senses.

As mentioned earlier, we have five senses of knowledge and five senses of action. The person has to control his senses. In other words, the senses should function and perform only those duties that are permitted by the sastras.

The eye should see only the Lord, in the temples, and only good people. The eye should not see anything bad.

The ear should hear the Vedas and other good things. The ear should not hear anything bad. Likewise with the other senses. So, the person controls all these senses by not doing anything bad.

4) The next type of activity is giving gifts to deserving people. The person should earn money by rightful means. The money or things in kind, which he earns by rightful means, should be given as gift to deserving people.

5) The next type of activity is called Tapas, i.e., by fasting repeatedly, as laid down in the sastras.

6) Another type of activity is bathing in holy waters like Ganga and Kaveri.

7) Another type of activity is repeatedly reciting the Vedas; also, discussing and understanding the sacred meaning of the Vedas.

8) Lastly, the Gita mentions doing pranayama also as a sacred work under karma Yoga.

All these people also do their daily rituals, as prescribed in the Vedas. Then, after doing Aradhana to the Lord, they take food.

**6. Abstaining (not doing) some of the things, which have been prescribed in the Sastras, can we take up a particular activity and do it?**

No. As I mentioned earlier, there are certain activities or rituals, which have to be necessarily performed. (Ajna Kainkarya). If these are not performed, you incur papa (sin).

In fact, the Daksha smriti says that a person, who does not do sandhyavandana regularly, is always unclean. He is unfit to do any work or activity.

So what are prescribed as compulsory, by the sastras, have necessarily to be done. Then a person can take up some activity in particular, as mentioned earlier and do it regularly. This is the essence of Karma Yoga.

But, no activity, which has been stipulated as compulsory by the sastras, should be omitted.

**7. How does one do these activities?**

While doing all these activities, you must be clear that you are not doing the activities; but the Lord only does these activities through you. Further, these are done for the pleasure of the Lord only.

**8. What is Jnana Yoga?**

Jnana yoga means, realising the soul as different from the body; that Jivatma and Matter are the body of Brahman, who is their inner soul. Then he has to constantly meditate on his atma, as the body of Brahman.

Here also, the prescribed activities, as laid down in the sastras, must continue to be performed.

**9. How do you define Bhakti Yoga?**

This should not be understood in the ordinary sense of the term as devotion. The term bhakti has a special significance in this context.

In the Upanishads, there are several methods described, for attaining Brahman, i.e., salvation. These are called vidyas. There are 32 such vidyas, described in the Upanishads. Each vidya explains one method of doing bhakti.

So, performance of any of these vidyas is called bhakti.

**10. Can you name some of the more prominent or important vidyas?**

We have Sad Vidya, Dahara Vidya, Madhu Vidya, Bhuma Vidya, Panchagni Vidya, Sandilya Vidya, Purusha Vidya, Prana Vidya, Vaisvanara Vidya, Prajapati Vidya, Purushatma Vidya, Balaki Vidya, Maitreyi Vidya, Paryanka Vidya and others.

**11. What is the significance of these different kinds of vidyas?**

In each Vidya, Brahman is meditated in a different way. Some of this characteristics or qualities of Brahman are highlighted and worshipped in each Vidya. Brahman is conceived in one way, in one vidya, and in another way, with some other qualities, in another vidya, and so on. Like the proverb "All ways lead to Rome", here also, these are only different ways of meditating on Brahman. The objective of all these vidyas is to attain Brahman i.e., salvation.

**12. As there are different ways of meditating in these vidyas, will the result also be different?**

No, the goal is the Paramapada, where the Jivatma enjoys Brahman. The Upanishads clearly declare that there is no difference at all, in the fruit or in the goal.

**13. So, how long are these vidyas to be practised?**

There is no specific duration or period, during which these vidyas have to be practised. Each person can choose a particular vidya and go on practising it. The Bhakti Yoga is completed in one birth or it may not be over in one birth. The Bhakti, in the form of vidya, may have to be continued in two or three or several births.

**14. Do people practise these vidyas in the present day?**

It is extremely doubtful whether anyone practises these vidya today.

**15. So, what is the essence of Bhakti Yoga?**

Bhakti Yoga means, we have to constantly meditate on Brahman and His qualities, according to any one of those 32 vidyas, prescribed in the Upanishads.

While performing Bhakti Yoga, we have also to perform the rites and duties prescribed in the sastras, such as sandhyavandana, tarpana and other things.

Bhakti Yoga is constant meditation, out of tremendous love for the Lord; knowing fully, all His auspicious qualities; and also knowing that He is the inner soul of all chetana and achetana.

**16. Does this mean that there may be delay in attaining moksha, if we adopt Bhakti Yoga?**

You are right. There is a chance of delay in the attainment of moksha, by adopting Bhakti Yoga. Salvation may be at the end of this life, or it may require several births. So, normally, in the present days, Bhakti Yoga is not practised.

**17. What are the conditions for taking up Bhakti Yoga?**

There are conditions or restrictions or 7 types. These are:-

1. Body purity has to be maintained, by avoiding impure and unclean food.
2. We have to be free from desires. We should not, desire any material things, like wealth and pleasures. Of course, if God gives, we accept them, as His gift.
3. Frequent meditation of the Lord, in the form you cherish.
4. Performing the rites and duties, as prescribed in the sastras.
5. Kindness and compassion towards all beings; not injuring any human being or animal, even by thoughts or words (apart from deeds).
6. To be in a cheerful and calm state of mind.
7. To be free from pride or egoism (ahankara)

**18. Are there different stages in this bhakti?**

Yes, there are three stages of step by step development or intensity of bhakti. In the ascending order of intensity of bhakti, these are:-

- 1) Para bhakti
- 2) Para jnana
- 3) Parama bhakti.

**19. The ultimate aim of the Jivatma is to attain salvation or moksha. Now, what are the means for achieving this goal?**

The means are two.

- 1) Bhakti
- 2) Prapatti

**20. If only bhakti and prapatti are the two means of attaining salvation. Then what about Karma Yoga, and Jnana yoga?**

Karma Yoga and Jnana Yoga only lead to bhakti. So they cannot directly lead to salvation. The appropriate performance of karma, and having proper knowledge or jnana lead a person to bhakti. Then by practising Bhakti Yoga, the man attains salvation.

**21. Then, what is the relationship between Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga and Bhakti Yoga?**

Karma Yoga, when properly done, can lead to Jnana Yoga: and then, to Bhakti Yoga. Or Karma Yoga can also directly lead to Bhakti Yoga. Similarly, Jnana Yoga leads to Bhakti Yoga. So Karma Yoga and Jnana Yoga, only lead to Bhakti Yoga.

Therefore, Karma Yoga and Jnana Yoga, by themselves are not means for attaining salvation, Only bhakti and prapatti are the means of attaining salvation. This can be explained , by a chart.

1) Karma yoga -> Jnana Yoga -> Bhakti Yoga or Karma Yoga -> Bhakti Yoga

(Or)

Karma Yoga-> Bhakti Yoga

2) Jnana Yoga -> Bhakti Yoga

**22. There are three types of people who worship only Lord Narayana. Who are they?**

1) People, who pray to Narayana, for the good things in this life and also for moksha are called Ekantins. They do not worship any other deity.

2) The second type of people are those, who pray to Narayana, not for any good things in this life: but pray to Him, only for moksha and nothing else. They are called Paramaikantins.

3) The third type of people are those, who worship Narayana, without prayers for anything. They leave everything to Narayana. Even granting of moksha is left to Him. So, these are the most devoted people.

**23. What is Prapatti?**

Prapatti is also called self-surrender, saranagati, bharanyasa and nyasa. If you adopt prapatti, the sastras declare that you can attain Paramapada at the end of this life itself.

**24. What is the difference between Bhakti, as described in the various vidyas and Prapatti?**

The major differences only

1. Bhakti is restricted to certain people. Prapatti can be adopted by any person and can be done for any living being.

2. Bhakti in the form prescribed in the Upanishads is practically not done now. Prapatti is being practised widely.

3. In the case of those who adopt bhakti, it is not definite whether they will attain salvation at the end of this life or they will have to continue their effort over several births. In the case of prapatti, sastras declare that a person attains salvation at the end of this life itself.

**25. Do the rituals like yaga, which have been prescribed in the karma kanda of the Vedas, lead us to this salvation?**

No. The performance of these rituals like yagas, gives us only limited results such as attainment of svarga (or heaven).

**26. Is svarga the same as Paramapada?**

No, svarga and Paramapada are entirely different.

Svarga is a celestial world, a world higher up in the universe. This is full of enjoyment, where there are Devas and Gandharvas.

The enjoyment in svarga is only for a limited period. The period may vary, depending upon the punya or the good things done by an individual. He may stay on, for longer periods, in svarga. In any case, there is return to this world from svarga. It is also just another world, of a superior type, compared with our world here.

But, moksha or Paramapada is something, which is eternal, which is permanent. There we have Sriman Narayana with Mahalakshmi and Nityasuris, about whom I have described earlier. Nitya Suris are Garuda, Adisesha, Vishvaksena and others. Also, all liberated souls are there in the Paramapada or Sri Vaikunta.

So, Paramapada is eternal and everlasting; and is the ultimate goal for every individual. Hence svarga and Paramapada are completely different.

**27. Are the results of performing rituals like yagas, only temporary in character and not permanent?**

The rituals, described in the karma kanda of the Vedas, by their nature, are supposed to be done for the pleasure of the Lord. If they are done, for achieving specific results like svarga, the results are not permanent.

**28. So, what has to be done for attaining liberation and enjoying the Paramapada?**

Only, bhakti or prapatti can lead to immortality and salvation.

**29. If so, what is the need to learn the karma kanda and purva mimamsa, since they mainly talk of rituals?**

It is true that the karma kanda of the Vedas and purva mimamsa of Jaimini, discuss mainly performance of rituals. But still a study of these is recommended, to understand that they in fact lead only to temporary results.

After studying the karma kanda and the purva mimamsa, and understanding that the performance of rituals leads only to temporary results; a man should proceed to study brahma sutra and understand Brahman.

**30. The Lord has given the Vedas and sastras, for helping and has also given him intelligence. So, in spite of all these things, man is not progressing. Man is not benefiting by the sastras. Why is it so?**

1) People, unfortunately, do not make use of the sastras and knowledge the Lord has provided. Some people foolishly think that they are their own masters; and they are interested only in the worldly pleasures. So, they do not bother about the Lord.

2) The second type of people are indifferent towards God. They also think that it is difficult to worship Him.

3) The third type of people are misled and deceived by the so-called rationalists, who argue that there is no God,

4) Lastly, there are people, the worst type, who are positively hostile towards God and hate Him.

So, these are the four types of people, who do not make use of the sastras and who go on committing deadly sins.

**31. What are the types of people, who worship the Lord?**

Here again, there are four types of people.

1) The first type are those who have lost wealth. They want to regain the lost wealth. They worship the Lord for regaining the lost wealth (Artha).

2) The second type of people are those who are not satisfied with what they have. They want more and more wealth; they want more and more power, They pray to the Lord for getting more and more wealth and power (Artharthi)

3)The third type of people are those who do not have any worldly desires. But they want the experience of their own soul. Experiencing one's own soul is called Kaivalya. So they pray seeking to experience Kaivalya (Jijnasu).

4)The fourth type. of people are really the intelligent ones. Their goal is only to attain moksha and to be with Brahman worshipping Him eternally. They are the people who love God and whom God also loves dearly (Jnani).

**32. Which of these four types of people are the best?**

Out of these four types, the last mentioned, namely, those, who want to attain moksha only and enjoy Brahman, are naturally the best and the wisest. Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita that these are the real intelligent people.

Krishna says that such type of people are extremely rare to find. These people believe that everything is the Lord; and the Lord is everything to them.

**33. We find there are many people, who worship other deities, other than Narayana.?**

People worship other deities for fulfilment of their desires, for securing wealth and property. But Krishna says in the Gita that although they worship other deities, in reality, they are worshipping Narayana only.

**34. How is it possible?**

This is because, as per our fundamental system of philosophy, all others are bodies, and Narayana is the soul of all chetanas and achetanas. Naturally, the other deities are also chetanas. So, Narayana is the soul of other deities also.

So, when people worship other deities, actually they worship Narayana only. But they do not know that Narayana is the soul of other deities also.

**35. Are their desires granted by other deities?**

For this also we have Krishna's reply in the Gita. He says that although people worship other deities, their desires are fulfilled by Narayana only, as the inner soul of those deities.

**36. What is the difference in the fulfilment of desires by worshipping other deities, and by worshipping Narayana?**

Individual desires or fruits the people get, by worshipping other deities, are of limited duration. Because, those deities themselves are not eternal. They are also like human beings. They have their own life span.

No doubt, their life time is much longer, as compared to the life of a human being. But still, they also have a specific or fixed lifetime. So, the desires or fruits got, by worshipping these deities, are also only for a short period.

But moksha can be attained only by worshipping Narayana.

**37. What happens to those people who worship other deities?**

Krishna says that people who worship other deities, reach those deities. But, those deities themselves, are not eternal or permanent and so there is no question of salvation for such people; But those who worship Narayana reach Him in Sri Vaikunta, never to return.

**38. How is it that people worship other deities and do not know Narayana's greatness?**

They do not understand the true greatness of Narayana; and, the secret behind His avatars. Just because He is taking avatars like Rama and Krishna, people think that Rama and Krishna are also ordinary human beings and so they do not worship Rama and Krishna.

They do not know that the avatars of the Lord, are only to bless the human beings; to protect the good and virtuous people and to destroy the wicked people; and to establish dharma, a well ordered way of life.

So, without knowing these secrets, people think that Rama and Krishna are just ordinary human beings.

**39. What are the three qualities Sattva, Rajas and Tamas.?What are these qualities?.**

1) Sattvika quality produces clear and definite knowledge. It produces interest in learning good things. It gives pleasure to the mind, so that the person can worship the Lord with devotion.

2) Rajasa quality is that which produces love between man and woman. It also produces desires of the senses, like listening to music, seeing good and pleasant things. This quality also produces desire to be with children, grand children and friends.

3) Tamasa quality is the worst of the three qualities. It leads to perverse and wrong knowledge. It results in carelessness and laziness. Tamasa quality creates desire for the wrong type of happiness. The tamasa quality leads a person astray, creates false knowledge and induces him to do wrong things.

**40. Does a person have only one of these qualities?**

No. Every person has all the three qualities, but in different proportions. Some people have an excess of sattvika quality. Some others have an excess of rajasa quality. Again some others have an excess of tamasa quality.

Even in the same person, at one time, sattvika quality will be predominant. During such times, he will think good and do good things. In the same person, at some other time, the rajasa quality becomes predominant, inducing him to do things pertaining to that quality, as mentioned before.

Again at some other time, the tamasa quality gets the upper hand, inducing him to pursue undesirable activities

**41. How do these qualities come about, at different times, in the same person?**

Well, the karma theory is the answer for it. Based on the person's previous karmas, different qualities rule him at different times. This also depends upon the type of food he takes.

**42. How does the type of food influence the qualities?**

1) Foods which are sweet and nourishing, pleasing to look at, are liked by people, in whom the sattvika quality is predominant.

2) Foods which are bitter or sour, excessively hot and producing a burning sensation in the stomach, are liked by those, who have the rajasa quality predominantly.

3) Food, which has deteriorated due to lapse of time, rotten, foul-smelling; and left over of food earlier consumed by impure persons; is liked by those in whom the tamasa quality is predominant. Also, the food which has not been offered to God, is liked by the tamasic people.

**43. It is said that one has to be pure, in regard to 1) body, 2) speech and 3) mind (manovak-kaya).Please explain.**

Purity of body means:-

1) showing due respect and doing namaskara, to the elders and learned people;

2) Keeping the body clean, by bathing in holy waters and rivers.

3) Not pursuing activities which are prohibited by sastras;

4) Not hurting other living beings.

**44. What does purity of speech mean?**

It means:

- 1) speaking the truth, without causing any harm to others
- 2) Speaking sweet words without causing anger or hatred in others,
- 3) Reciting the Vedas and Divya prabandha.

**45. What is purity of mind?**

It means:

- 1) not having any bad thought;
- 2) keeping the mind pure and clean;
- 3) always thinking about the Lord.

**46. What about giving of gifts to others?**

The giving of gifts is also classified into three categories sattvika, rajasa, tamasa.

**47. What is the sattvika type of gift?**

Gifts given to deserving persons, at the time when they are needy, are of sattvic type. Such gifts should be given, without expecting anything in return, from the other person.

**48. What is the rajasa type of gifts?**

Gifts made in return for gifts received earlier. Similarly, giving away useless things, which are not required by the giver; giving gifts, expecting some advantage at a later date; are also considered as rajasa type.

**49. What is the tamasa type of gifts?**

Gifts of things, which are prohibited by sastras; gifts which are given to undeserving persons, who may use these gifts for immoral purposes; gifts which are given with pride and merely for publicity; are all of tamasic type.

**50. What about performing works, ordained by sastras?**

All works should be done as a matter of duty, till death. While performing these works, they should give up the idea, that they are doing them. They should be clear that actually God is getting the work done through them for His pleasure.

Similarly they should do the work, without aiming for the fruit; i.e., without being interested in the fruit of action. They should leave the end results to God.

**51. What are the types of tyagas?.**

There are three types of tyagas, depending upon the quality: sattvika tyaga, rajasa tyaga, tamasa tyaga.

**52. What is sattvika tyaga?**

The duties, as prescribed by sastras, are done as a matter of devotion to the Lord; as worship of the Lord. Here the person does not think, that he is doing the duties.

He understands that God is getting the duties performed through him, for God's pleasure. So, he dedicates the fruits of his works also to the Lord. Such a type of tyaga is called sattvika tyaga.



In other words, whatever comes on, he takes calmly. He only does his duties as prescribed by the sastras. Whether he gets good results or bad results, he does not bother. He continues doing his prescribed duties.

**53. What is rajasa tyaga?**

Some persons give up the duties prescribed by Sastras because of difficulties in getting money and materials. Some persons give up the duties because of laziness. This is called rajasa tyaga.

**54. What is tamasa tyaga?**

The sastras have prescribed certain compulsory duties (Karmas), like sandhyavandana and tarpana. If a person gives up the performance of these compulsory duties due to some wrong ideas Or false notions this is called tamasa tyaga.

**55. Again, how are the works classified as sattvika, rajasa or tamasa?**

Works which are done, as prescribed in the sastras, without thinking that we are actually doing, are sattvika works. We should be clear that it is only the Lord, who gets these things done by us. So, without any desire for fruits or results, we should do the work, as prescribed in the Sastras.

**56. What is rajasa type of work?**

If a person does his work, and is proud that he is doing the work; if he does the work, with a desire for good results, and, for enjoyment of worldly pleasures; this type of work is rajasa work.

**57. What is tamasa type of work?**

If a man does the work, in ignorance, without understanding the implications; if he is not able to get the work done fully; if the work is done, against sastras; this is the tamasa type of work.

**58. How do you classify persons as sattvika, rajasa or tamasa?**

1) The person, who does not bother about the results; who remains unaffected by success or failure; is sattvika by nature. He is clear it is only the Lord who gets the work done by him.

2) If a person does the work, with a desire for good results, or with a desire for fame; if he does work, even at the cost of trouble or pain to others; he is of rajasa type.

3) A person who does a work, against the commands of sastras; who is lazy and is not qualified to do the work; who is deceitful; is of the tamasa type.

**59. What exactly is moksha?**

In Sanskrit the word "Moksha" actually means deliverance or freedom (from the bondage of samsara; from the cycle of births and deaths).

But we say that moksha means not only freedom from samsara, but also attaining Paramapada or Sri Vaikunta and enjoying the Lord.

**60. What are the different kinds of moksha. ?**

Moksha or Paramapada is only one and is unique. But there, are certain stages, which come very close to moksha or Paramapada. Let me describe them.

1) Salokya – is attaining the world, which is one of the Lord's; but is not exactly Sri Vaikunta; but the nearby worlds;

2) Sarupya – is the attainment of a form, resembling the Lord's. This is obtained, as a result of constant meditation on one of the forms, like Rama or Krishna. For example, by constant meditation of Rama, the jivatma may attain a form resembling Rama. This is called Sarupya.

3) Samipya – is attainment of a place, near Sri Vaikunta but not Sri Vaikunta itself.

4) Sayujya – is actual attainment of Paramapada or Sri Vaikunta.  
Sayujya alone is the real moksha. The other three, namely salokya, sarupya and samipya are very close to Sayujya.

## Chapter 9 : Jivatma and Paramatma

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**1. You said that like Brahman, the Jivatma and matter are also eternal. Is there only one Jivatma or there are several of them?**

Jivatmas are infinite in number. The fact that they are countless, has been made clear in the Vedas, as well as in the Bhagavad Gita.

**2. Then, is there any difference between one Jivatma and another, and if so, what is the difference?**

There is absolutely no difference between one Jivatma and another. The difference that we see is only in the bodies, like that of a man, a woman or animal, or bird. Thus the souls or Jivatmas are all identical in nature, and they are atomic in size.

**3. Does that mean that Jivatmas and matter are not created by Brahman?**

Jivatmas and Matter are not created by Brahman. They are self-existent. They are eternal. What is created is the world. From Matter, Brahman creates the subtle elements, the gross elements and then the world

**4. I have heard that Brahman exists in three forms. What are they?**

1) Brahman exists as the soul of the Jivatma Of soul (Chetana).  
2) Brahman exists as the soul of non-sentient beings, i.e., achetana.  
3) Brahman exists also in His essential nature, as the abode of all auspicious qualities and free from all evil. He has a beautiful form, with four hands, sankha, chakra, and so on. These are three forms of Brahman. These are useful for meditation.

**5. How do you say that the Lord is infinitely merciful, when human beings undergo so much suffering, in this world?**

He is loving; thousand times more loving than the mother.

The Lord gives Jivatma, the power of intelligence, and the capacity to take action. The Lord has also taught the Vedas to Brahma and through him, to others. Apart from the Vedas, we have smritis, puranas, Itihasas, and agamas.

All these prescribe the code of conduct; how we should perform rituals; what we should do in day- to-day life, and so on. Only out of mercy of the Lord these benefits have been conferred on us. The Jivatma must pursue them.

**6. Does the soul have power to act and How?**

Yes, the soul (Jivatma) is also the doer of actions.

**7. How do you say this?.**

The Vedas give instructions to do good things like yagas; not to do anything wrong, i.e., not to tell lies and so on. So, since these Vedic instructions have to be followed, the soul has to be the doer of things. He is to be capable of performing a yaga, of performing good acts, as enjoined in the Vedas. So, the soul is also the doer of actions.

Also, as you know, if a person does something, he also enjoys the fruit of his action. Hence, this is another reason to show that the soul is capable of action. He is the performer.

**8. Does this mean that the soul has full powers to do what he wants? Is he completely independent of Brahman?**

No. Although the soul is the doer, his action is dependent on Brahman.

**9. This is not clear to me.**

Brahman only gives the soul, the power of doership. The Vedas state clearly that the Brahman controls the soul; and guided by the Brahman, the soul does actions. So, although the soul has the power to act, it is controlled by Brahman.

**10. You say that the Jivatma's action is controlled by Brahman. If that is so, how can the Jivatma perform activities as stated in the Vedas? How can he do yagas and other such acts if his action is controlled by Brahman?**

Here one has to understand carefully, What is meant is this. The Brahman or the Lord is the common cause of all actions. The souls or the Jivatmas are particular causes for the action. For example, for the plant to grow, we require the land, water and the seed of the particular plant. Now, the land and water are common for all types of plants. Only the seed has to be the particular seed of the particular plant.

So, just like the land and water, which are common for all plants, the Lord is common for all actions of the souls or the Jivatmas. The Jivatma himself is the particular cause for the action, like the particular seed for the plant.

So, the soul has also got the independence to take a particular course of action. Hence, although the Jivatma's action is controlled by Brahman, he has also got the independence to do a particular course of action.

**11. Can this be explained with an analogy?**

You're right. We have got safe deposit lockers in Banks. A particular locker is owned by a customer. He cannot open the locker by himself, with his own key. As you are aware, each locker has got two keys. One key is kept by the bank and the other key by the customer. So, only when both the keys are operated, the locker can be opened. But still, the one who has hired the locker, is the owner of the contents of the locker.

In the same way, all actions of the Jivatmas are controlled by Brahman, just like the Master key for all lockers is kept by the Bank. The particular Jivatma has also got the independence to do a particular course of action. This is like the customer having his key for operating the locker.

The example is like this:

1. Brahman – Master key, kept by Bank, for opening lockers.
2. Jivatma – Individual key of locker, kept by customer.
3. Doership of action – Opening the locker, with both keys.

To sum up again, the Lord or Brahman is the common cause for all actions. The individual soul or Jivatma has still got the independence or liberty to take a particular course of action.

**12. How does the Jivatma perform the various types of action?**

There are several stages in an action.

- 1) First, we have to think about doing something.
- 2) Then the mind (manas) gives command to the concerned limbs of the body, for the necessary action.
- 3) Then the action is actually done. The Jivatma is given the necessary-knowledge and it is for him to make good use of the same.

**13. What is the role of the Lord in the actions of the Jivatma?**

This is explained in two alternative ways:

We can say that the Lord has three distinct roles, in the actions of the Jivatma:

1. Be indifferent or neutral.
2. Permit the Jivatma to, continue to do the action.
3. Positively inspire the Jivatma to do extremely good or extremely bad things.

**14. Please explain this further.**

When the Jivatma performs any action, Brahman has three ways of controlling it.

1. The first way is to remain neutral or indifferent. God remains neutral or indifferent, for the first stage of action, undertaken by the Jivatma.
2. The second way is for the God to consent or assent to the course of action, undertaken by the Jivatma.
3. The third way is for the God to induce Jivatma in the particular course of action.

In regard to the initial effort of the Jivatma for an action, Brahman remains neutral or indifferent.

In regard to the subsequent efforts of the Jivatma, God gives his consent or assent. This consent of the Lord is both for the good action and the bad action of the Jivatma. .

**15. When does the third form of inspiring the Jivatma to do a particular course of action arise?**

This arises when the person undertakes an action, which is exceedingly good or exceedingly bad. When the person proceeds to do something, which is exceedingly good; which is exceedingly favourable, in accordance with the Vedas and Puranas; then the Lord is pleased with his act. The Lord Himself induces him further to do the exceedingly good things.

Similarly, when a person begins to do something exceedingly bad, which is contrary to Vedic injunctions; then the Lord gets annoyed and He induces him further to do the exceedingly bad things and thereby leading to hell.

**16. What is the authority for this last type, i.e. when a person does extremely good or bad things?**

The authority is available both in the Upanishads and in the Bhagavad Gita. In the Gita, Krishna says:

“To those people, who worship me with loving devotion, I give the mental power to realise me, so that they can attain me.

Those people, who, because of their cruel nature, show hatred towards me; I put them into repeated cycles of births and deaths and that also in wicked forms of life.”

**17. What is the another interpretation of this principle?**

The other interpretation is that the Lord is not indifferent, even in the initial stage or the first stage.

In this interpretation, there are only two types of roles He plays (instead of three types of roles, mentioned earlier).

- 1) The first one is that the Lord permits or allows the Jivatma to do a course of action.
- 2) The second one is that the Lord induces or inspires further, when a person does extremely good deed or extremely bad deed.

In other words, in the three forms in the first interpretation mentioned earlier, the first form of indifference or being neutral is not here. In this second interpretation, only the 2nd and

3rd types are there, namely, 1) allowing the Jivatma to do a course of action and 2) inspiring him to do an extremely good or bad deed.

**18. It follows that in this method of interpretation, even in the initial stage, the Lord permits the Jivatma to do a thing?**

Yes, one can take the example of growth of a plant. Just as soil and water are common for all plants, the Lord is the common cause for all actions. This means that even from the first or initial stage, the Lord permits Jivatma to do what he wants.

However, there is only a very minor difference between the two interpretations. The difference is more academic in nature.

**19. Why is this supreme deity called Brahman?**

Brihat in Sanskrit means greatness. So, Brahman is one, who is great in all respects.

**20. How is Brahman defined actually?**

Brahman is defined as One from whom the creation of the world etc. takes place.

**21. What is the basis for this definition?**

The Vedas declare that from Brahman all these beings are created. Because of Brahman, all the beings, which are created, exist in the world. The beings are also destroyed by Brahman.

On the basis of this Vedic text in Taittiriya Upanishad, the above definition of Brahman is given in the Brahma Sutra.

**22. What is the source of knowledge about Brahman?**

The Sastras are the only source of knowledge about Brahman.

**23. I do not understand why logic should not be used to discuss about Brahman.**

The idea is this. Logic will be useful, when we discuss about known things, so that, with authority, we can make use of our logic and argument. But logic cannot be of use, in discussing about unknown things, unseen things like Brahman. Here we have to accept the authority of the Vedas.

**24. Does this mean that logic cannot be used at all for studying or understanding Brahman?**

No, it is not that. The primary authority is the Vedas and these can be supplemented by logic, without deviating from the authority of the Vedas.

The main purpose or perhaps the sole purpose of the Vedas and Upanishads is to teach about Brahman. Hence, they are the only source for us to understand the Brahman.

**25. Why not we say that matter itself evolves into the world?**

Matter cannot by itself evolve into the world. Matter (achetana) is not an intelligent being. We have mud. The mud, by itself, cannot evolve into a mud pot. It requires the potter to mould the mud and to make a pot, out of the mud. So, here also, the matter by itself cannot evolve into the world.

It requires an intelligent being to create the world from matter, and that intelligent being is Brahman.

There are many arguments to show that matter cannot evolve into the world, of its own accord. But what I have mentioned above is the main reason.

For the mud pot, we have the mud as material cause and the potter as the instrumental cause. But, for the world. God is both the material cause and the instrumental cause.

**26. If matter by itself cannot evolve into the world and requires an intelligent being; can the Jivatma evolve from world, out of matter?**

I agree that Jivatma is an intelligent being, but his powers are limited. He is imperfect and he is himself revolving in this samsara, in this world. So, obviously, he does not have the power or capacity to create the world, out of matter.

**27. How many ways of meditation or worship of Brahman are there?**

There are three kinds of meditation of Brahman:

1) The first one is, worship of Brahman in His own essential nature, namely, as Himself.

2) The second way is worshipping Brahman, having the Jivatmas as His body; that is, worshipping Brahman, as the soul or atma of the Jivatma.

3) The third way is worshipping Brahman, as having achetana as His body; i.e., worshipping Brahman, as the soul or atma of achetana.

**28. How do you explain Indra, Sage Vamadeva, Prahlada and others saying that "I am the Brahman"?**

It only means that Indra, Vamadeva or Prahlada are referring to themselves as the body of Brahman; that is, indicating the truth that Brahman is their soul. Only if we interpret this way, there will be no contradiction.

**29. What is meant by the pralaya?**

There are actually three types of pralaya:

1) The first one is the continuing pralaya. We have every day, people dying, trees and plants withering, the animals dying. This is called daily pralaya or continuing pralaya.

2) As you know, the lifetime, the day and night, etc. of the Devas are different from that of human beings. One day for Brahma is called a Kalpa. At the end of the Kalpa, namely, at the end of the day of Brahma, we have second type of pralaya.

We learn from our puranas that there are even worlds, starting from our world here. This world of ours is called 1) Bhuloka. After bhuloka, we have above us 2) Bhuvan loka, 3) Svar loka, 4) Mahar loka, 5) Janaloka, 6) Tapaloka and finally 7) Satya loka.

During this second type of pralaya, the first three worlds, namely, Bhuloka, Bhuvan loka and Svar loka, get destroyed.

The 4th world, which is Mahar loka, is partly destroyed and partly not destroyed. The people there shift to the next higher world, which is Janaloka. The last three worlds namely, Janaloka, Tapaloka and Satyaloka are not destroyed during this pralaya.

During this second type of pralaya, after destroying the first three worlds mentioned above, the Lord takes the form of a young child, Balakrishna, and lies on the leaf of a peepul tree.

3) Next we have the third type of pralaya. This happens at the end of the life of Brahma. At that time, all beings, chetanas, achetanas, all rest in the Lord in a very subtle (sukshma) form. The Lord alone remains, with Jivatmas and matter, lying in Him, in subtle form, undifferentiated.

These are the three types of pralayas.

**30. You said that the Brahman has matter and Jivatmas as His body and the Brahman resides in them. All the imperfections, and impurities, which are in the human beings or in this world: Will they not taint the Brahman?**

No. Although He is in all these, these do not taint him. We have water on lotus leaf. The water is on the leaf, but still doesn't get tainted by the impurities on the lotus leaf. Similarly, the Lord doesn't get tainted by His association with the chetanas and achetanas.

**31. I have a doubt. The Jivatma is the soul in our body. The Jivatma experiences the pains and pleasures, because it is associated with this body. In the same way, if Brahman is also associated with Jivatmas and matter as body, would not the Brahman also suffer the pains and pleasures, just as the Jivatma does?**

No, because of the inherent difference between the Jivatma and the Paramatma. What applies to Jivatma need not necessarily apply to Brahman also.

In the Vedas, Brahman is described as having two characteristics. The first one is that He is free from all defects and impurities. The second characteristic is that He possesses all auspicious qualities.

In view of this categorical statement in the Vedas, we have to understand that Brahman does not get tainted by His association with the chetanas and achetanas.

**32. You're saying that He (the Lord) is residing within the small heart of human beings. How can the Lord, who is present everywhere, also reside within the small heart?**

It is for the purpose of worshiping, that the Lord is identified as being within small heart. He is also big – bigger than everything else; and He is also small – smaller than everything else. That is His attribute.

**33. You say that He resides within the hearts of the human beings. When we experience pain or pleasure does the Lord inside our heart also experience them?**

No, as I have already stated, the impurities and imperfections do not taint the Lord. Similarly, He is beyond all pains and pleasures, which we experience.

**34. Do the Vedas say so?**

Yes. The Mundaka Upanishad very clearly mentions as follows:

“There are two birds, of beautiful feathers, residing in the same tree. The birds are friends and closely attached to each other. One bird eats the fruit of the tree. The other bird shines, without eating.”

Here, the tree is the body. The two birds are the Jivatma and Paramatma. The Jivatma eats the fruit of his karma. This means, the Jivatma undergoes the pains and pleasures, due to his past karma. Paramatma, although in the same body, shines without eating, i.e. He is not tainted by the pains and pleasure of the Jivatma.

This shows clearly that Paramatma, although residing in the body, is not tainted by impurities and past karma, of Jivatma.

The same passage occurs again in Svetasvatara Upanishad.

**35. You mentioned that the sankhya system of philosophy was propounded by Sage Kapila. Why is this system not acceptable to Vishistadvaitins, though this has been propounded by a venerable sage, Kapila?**

This system does not accept that the Brahman is the material cause of the world. This system states that the elementary matter is the material cause for the world and not Brahman. I have mentioned that the Upanishads state clearly that Brahman is the material cause and also the instrumental cause. The sankhya system talks against this and says that only matter is the



material cause, out of which world evolves. So this is contrary to the teachings of Upanishads and other sages like Manu. Hence it is not acceptable to us.

We have timber or wood. We require a carpenter to make furniture, out of timber. We require a potter to make a pot out of mud. Similarly, we also require an intelligent being to create this world, out of matter. This is possible only by the most intelligent being the Brahman. Since this is not accepted by Sankhya, the system is faulty.

**36. You said that the yoga system of philosophy has been propounded by Brahma himself. If so, why cannot this be accepted?**

In the yoga system of philosophy, propounded by Brahma, he accepts the existence of Brahman. He also accepts that Brahman is the instrumental cause. However, the yoga system also states, like the Sankhya system, that matter is material cause for this world; and that the world evolves out of matter. Hence this system is also not acceptable.

**37. Why is Buddhism rejected by us?**

The Buddhist philosophy says that the atoms join together and evolve into this world. In other words, the world and other materials are all caused by atoms joining together. They also say that the body and the senses are in turn produced by earth and other elements.

These are directly against the Upanishadic teachings that Brahman is the material cause of the world; and Brahman is also the instrumental cause. Hence we do not accept Buddhism.

Further, Buddhists say that everything is momentary, i.e., everything exists only for a moment and then it gets destroyed. So, this also is not acceptable.

**38. I heard that there are different schools of Buddhism. What are they?**

Yes, there are four schools of Buddhism, holding different views. The four schools of Buddhism are:

Vaibhashika, Sautrantika, Yogachara and Madhyamika.

We need not go into the different principles held by these schools, in our present elementary treatise.

**39. What about Jainism?**

We do not accept Jainism also. Jainism states that it is possible for an object, to be both existent and non-existent, at the same time. This is something contrary to fact.

Further, Jainism states that, for every animal or human being, the soul is of the same size as the body. If this is so, how can the soul enter into a body like that of an ant or mosquito, when earlier the soul was in an elephant? This is a major defect in Jainism.

If we accept that the soul is of the same size as the body, then the soul also will have to go on changing depending upon the size of the body it takes, in different births. Obviously, this is not possible, since the soul is defined in the Vedas as not subject to change". Hence, this system is not acceptable.

**40. What about the other systems of philosophy, like Vaiseshika system founded by Kanada; and Nyaya system founded by Akshapada?**

These systems also argue that Brahman is not the material cause of the world.

So, in the same way as the argument advanced against the Sankhya system of philosophy, these systems are also not acceptable. Because they teach contrary to the Upanishads. The Upanishads declare that only Brahman is the material cause of the world.

**41. What about the Pasupata religion?**

It is also not acceptable. It states that only Lord Pasupati or Siva is the instrumental cause of the world. It does not accept Brahman as the material cause also. Since this is opposed to Vedic texts, this philosophic system is not acceptable. Further, as mentioned earlier, the Vedas declare everywhere that Narayana is the supreme Brahman, Narayana is the supreme truth, Narayana is the supreme atma (paramatma). So, the philosophy of Pasupata that Siva is the ultimate God, cannot be accepted, as this is contrary to Vedas.

**42. What are Sankara's views in this regard?**

Sankara also, in his commentary, agrees that the system of Pasupata is not acceptable. There are other reasons also, as to why this system is not acceptable. We may pass over these, being high philosophy, in this elementary treatise.

**43. You mentioned that Adi Sankara propounded the Advaita philosophy. He has mentioned about: 1) Para Brahman, which is nirguna and without form, which is real; 2) Apara Brahman, who is saguna (with auspicious qualities) and beautiful form. This is Vyavaharika.**

**Which deity does Adi Sankara consider as Saguna Brahman?**

There are innumerable passages in Sankara's works, which show that he considers Narayana, as saguna Brahman. I will give you few quotations from his works:

- (1) His commentary on Gita (10-8) – Krishna's words – "I, Vasudeva, am Para Brahman. All the worlds come out of me. Existence, destruction, etc. of the world also evolve from me."
- (2) Commentary on Gita (9-22) – "Those who worship the supreme deity, Narayana, are the people, who know the truth".
- (3) Commentary on Gita (7-23) – "The Lord expresses pity that although the efforts are the same, people do not worship Narayana for eternal results (but worship other deities). This is very regrettable."
- (4) Commentary on Brahma Sutra (2-2-42) – "What is mentioned here, that Narayana is the Paramatma and that He is the soul of all, is accepted."
- (5) Introduction to commentary on Gita: "Bhagavan Narayana created this world, and for its sustenance, created Marichi, etc. The supreme deity, Narayana or Vishnu, took Avatara as Krishna."
- (6) Commentary on Gita (9-11) Krishna's words: "Fools disregard me....without understanding that I am the Supreme Brahman, Paramatma." (In this sloka, the word "Maheswara" occurs. Sankara has interpreted the word "Maheswara" as Narayana).
- (7) Commentary on Gita (4-6) – Krishna's words: "I am not born, because of karma. I am the Lord of all beings – capable of governing all beings, from Brahma to a blade of grass".
- (8) Commentary on Gita (9-22) – Krishna's words: "Those persons, who understand that I, Narayana, am the supreme deity and I am their soul, worship Me."
- (9) Commentary on Gita (7-15) – Krishna's words: "Fools do not take refuge in Me, although I am the supreme deity, Narayana."
- (10) Commentary on Gita (9-25) – Krishna's words: "Those who worship Me, the Vaishnavas, attain me."

- (11) Commentary on Gita (7-7) – Krishna’s words: “There is no other cause, other than Myself, the supreme Lord, Parameswara.”
- (12) Commentary on Gita (10-2) – Krishna’s words: “I am the source of all the devas and the great rishis”,
- (13) Commentary on Brihadaranyaka Upanishad – (3-7-3) “Iswara, who is Narayana, is the Atma of you, myself and all beings.” Here the Upanishad has not mentioned the name, Narayana. But Sankara specifically clarifies that Iswara, who is the soul of all beings, is Narayana only and not any other deity.
- (14) Chandogya Upanishad: “Brahman alone was existent. Then, Indra, Varuna, etc., were created”. Here, Sankara’s commentary: Rudra, the Lord of Pasus, i.e., Pasupati (was also created).
- (15) Commentary on Gita (6-47) – Krishna’s words: “one who worships Me is more steadfast than those who worship Siva, etc.”
- (16) Commentary on Gita (8-16) – Krishna’s words: “All the worlds, including that of Brahma, are perishable. So, only those people, who attain me, get salvation and are not born again.”
- (17) Mundaka Upanishad (2-4): Upanishad says “Brahman is the inner soul of all beings”. Sankara’s commentary on this: The Deva, Vishnu is the first to have a body. He has all the three worlds as His body. He is the inner soul of all beings
- 18) Commentary on Mandukya Upanishad – first karika ” Iswara whose name is Narayana”
- 19) Commentary on Gita (3-30) – Krishnas words ” I am the supreme Iswara. I know everything and all things . I, vasudeva, am the atma of all.
- 20) Commentary on Gita(13-18) – Krishna’s words:”I Vasudeva,am the supreme Iswara,I know all things.I am the supreme teacher.”
- 21) Commentary on Gita(11-43) – Arjunas words to Krishna ” There is nobody equal to you. There cannot be even two Iswaras. So, there is no question of many Iswaras. There is nobody equal to you. So how can there be anybody, who is greater than you? ”
- 22)Commentary on Gita(17-7) ” Nobody else is seen (other than Krishna), who is fit to be worshipped”.
- 23) Commentary onGita(13-10): “there is nobody else,who is greater than Vasudeva.So,He is the only refuge.So ,devotion is only to Him and not to anybody else”.
- 24) Commentary on Katopanishad (3-9) : ” Paramapada is the exalted place of Brahman, Paramatma whose name is Vasudeva”
- 25) Commentary on Vishnusahasranama – meaning of Kesava. Here Sankara refers to Siva’s words in Harivamsa; ” Brahma is named as Ka and I am Isa. Both of us were born from your limbs and so you are named Kesava”. This shows that Rudra was born from the limbs of Narayana.
- 26) Commentary on Vishnusahasranama – meaning of Arka: ” one who is fit to be worshipped, starting from Brahma and by all”.

27) Commentary on Vishnusahasranama – meaning of word “Amitasana” . At the time of destruction, Narayana eats the whole world”. So this includes all the deities and devas.

28) Desika wrote as follows in his Commentary: ” Tatparya Chandrika” on Ramanuja’s commentary on Gita:-

” It has been accepted as follows: ” I do not know any tattva greater than Krishna”.

29) Madhusudana Sarasvati,who has written commentary on Sankara’s commentary on Gita,states as follows:

”I do not know any tattva greater than Krishna”.

30) Narayana Bhattar , who has written the famous “Narayaneeyam” on Guruvayurappan, has written as follows :

” Adi Sankara worships you (Krishna) only. He is impartial. Hence , he has written commentary on Vishnusahasranama. He was only worshipping you (Krishna) and attained Salvation”.

**44. What about the Panharatra system, which mentions about worshipping?. Are these Agamas authoritative?**

Yes, this system has also been discussed in the Brahma Sutra. Pancharatra Agamas are accepted as authorities.

**45. What is the objection of others, to accepting the Pancharatra system?**

In the Pancharatra Agamas, it is stated that from Vasudeva is born the jiva, by name Sankarshana.From Sankarshana, Pradyumna, the manas or mind is produced.

Others object that this is contrary to Vedic teachings, that the Jivatma or the soul is eternal and has no birth. It is argued by them that, since Pancharatra Agamas state that the jiva. Sankarshana. is born from Vasudeva, this system is not authoritative.

**46. What is our (Vishistadvaitin) reply to this argument?**

Our reply is this. The Pancharathra system does not really say that the Jivatma or soul is born from Vasudeva.This refers actually to the four vyuhas, of Lord Narayana.

We have already discussed about the Vyuha forms of the Lord. From Vasudeva comes Sankarshana. Sankarshana is the Lord of the Jivatma. So, what is mentioned is, that Sankarshana, who lords over the Jivatma, arises out of Vasudeva. So, this does not really state that the Jivatma is born. Hence the argument of the opponent is not correct.

**47. Still, this is not quite clear.**

From Vyuha Vasudeva, Vyuha Sankarshana arises. Sankarshana is the Lord of jivatmas. So, it is figuratively stated that the jiva, Sankarshana,is born from Vasudeva. This has to be understood as a figurative statement.

Just as the individual soul or the Jivatma is presided over by Sankarshana, the manas or mind is presided over by Pradyumna. This is what is stated in the Pancharatra Agamas and this is how it has to be properly interpreted.

Further in many places in the Pancharatra Agamas, it is clearly stated that the Jivatma is eternal, that he is not created. Hence it is clear that the Pancharatra Agamas are acceptable as authority.

**48. You were saying that Brahman is the material cause of the world. In other words. Brahman evolves into the world. But Brahman has all the auspicious qualities and has no impurities. If He evolves into this world, how can the world consist of all**

**impurities, defects and imperfections?**

When the pot is made of the mud, the pot has got the same qualities as that of the mud. Similarly, the world also should have the same good qualities as that of Brahman, if the world comes out of Brahman.

The logic here is not correct. Actually, at the time of the final deluge (pralaya), all the Jivatmas and matter merge in Brahman, in a very subtle (sukshma) state. So, Brahman, at the time of the final deluge, has everything as His body, in a very subtle state.

After the deluge, these Jivatmas and matter, which merged in Brahman in a subtle state, come out in their normal (sthula) state. Then the process of creation starts. I have explained already in great detail, the process of creation. So, in view of this, the comparison of the mud and mud pot with the world and the Lord is not correct. This can be explained with a relevant example.

The Jivatma is in the body. The Jivatma does not undergo any change. But still, the body undergoes changes. The body is first that of a child, then becomes that of a young man, and then an old man.

Similarly, Brahman has all auspicious qualities and does-not undergo any change. But still, the world. His body, undergoes changes; consists of impurities and defects..

**49. I think this example is not quite correct. Brahman evolves into the world; but similarly, the Jivatma does not evolve into his body?**

You are right. The example given is limited in character. However, the Vedas clearly mention this point and so, we accept it as the truth.

**50. What is the purpose behind the creation of this world, by Brahman?**

The Brahman is full in all respects and there is nothing to be achieved by Him. So, the creation, sustenance and destruction of the world, etc., are only mere sport for Brahman. In this world also, the king, who has the entire kingdom under his control, plays with balls, just as a form of sport. In the same way, the creation of the world and destruction of the world, are also only-forms of sport to Brahman. ”

**51. Why should He create this world, full of misery and inequalities? Is this not a cruel sport?**

No. He cannot be called merciless or partial; because, creation of this world is also dependent on the karmas of the individual souls. In fact, Brahman is only the general cause for this world. The karmas of the souls are particular cause for their coming into this world.

I will remind you of the growth of a plant. For a plant to come up, we require both water and seed of the particular plant. Water is general and is common to all plants. But, for a particular plant to come up, we require the particular seed of the plant. Similarly, just like water is the general cause for the growth of the plant. Brahman is the general cause for creation. Just as the particular seed is required for the growth of a particular plant, the individual karma of the soul is the particular cause, for the soul coming into this samsara.

So, although creation, etc., of the world is sport to the Lord, He cannot be called merciless or partial.

Because, a person's enjoying happiness or pain in this world, is dependent on his past karma. So, the past karmas of the person are the special or particular cause for his pain or pleasure in this world.

**52. How does the Lord help the Jivatmas to do good things and avoid evil?**

The Lord loves the Jivatma thousand times more than a mother. He has revealed the Vedas and propounded the sastras. These clearly teach us what to do and what not to do.

He has given us knowledge, to know what is good and what is bad. He also remains neutral; or permits us to do, in the first stage of our action (refer earlier). So, it is for us, to make use of all the knowledge given to us.

**53. But, before creation, i.e., after the deluge, there was no karma and there was no soul. Is it not?**

You're not correct. The soul or Jivatma is eternal. It has no beginning. Similarly, his karma is also eternal. It has no beginning.

**54. Then, what do you mean by creation of the world?**

At the time of deluge, the souls and matter – all merge in a very subtle (sukshma) form in Brahman. They are indistinguishable. They are not distinct from one another.

So, after the deluge, Brahman separates them and makes them attain their usual (sthula) form. Then He gives them names and forms. So, what is meant by creation, is actually the manifestation of these chetanas and matter in their normal form; as against the subtle form in which they merged in the Lord. So, the souls are all eternal, they have no beginning and, therefore, their karmas are also eternal. The karmas also have no beginning.

**55. If the soul-(Jivatma).Is atomic in size, how can the soul-experience the pains and pleasures all over the body? If the soul is atomic, how can it realise the pain in any part of the body, say, in the leg or hand?**

This is indeed possible. Which can be explained with a simple example.

We apply sandal paste on our chest or hands. But the smell and pleasing sensation extend to the entire body. Similarly, the soul, although atomic in size experiences the pain and pleasure all over the body.

The Jivatma resides in the heart of a person. So, from there, he experiences pain and pleasure, all over the body.

A gem or a diamond is kept at a particular place, but because of its light, the surrounding space is brightened up. Again, the sun's rays travel far and wide, and light up the whole world.

Similarly, the soul is in the heart but it experiences the pain and pleasure all over the body. This is possible, because the soul also possesses knowledge: and by this knowledge, it experiences the pain or pleasure all over the body..

**56. If the soul (Jivatma) possesses knowledge, then what happens to this knowledge, when a person is in deep sleep?**

In deep sleep also, the knowledge is in the person, but it does not show itself.

**57. You mentioned that all the chetanas and achetanas constitute the body of Brahman. So does this mean that the chetana or the Jivatma is a part of Brahman?**

Yes, naturally. Since the Jivatma constitutes the body of Brahman, he is a part of Brahman. This has been clearly stated in the Vedas and also in the Smritis.

**58. How do you say that the individual soul is a part of the Brahman?**

There is light coming out from fire, or sun. The light which comes out from a shining fire or from the sun is also a part of the shining fire or the sun, as the case may be, Similarly, the Jivatma is a part of the Brahman.

**59. So, how do you explain the relationship between the Jivatma and Paramatma?**

As explained earlier, the Jivatma is the body of Paramatma: Paramatma is the soul of the Jivatma. The relationship between the Jivatma and Paramatma is similar to the relationship between the light and the source of light, namely, fire or sun. In one way, the light is a part of the fire or sun. But again the light is distinct and different from the fire or sun. In other words, they are the same and yet they are different.

That is the same way between the Jivatma and Paramatma; one constitutes the body of the other and still by the same reasoning, they are different.

## Chapter 10 : Departure of the Soul

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**1. At the time of death, how does the Jivatma depart from this body?**

This is well explained in the Upanishads. At the time of death, the Jivatma leaves the body. When the Jivatma leaves the body, the following also leave:-

- 1) The five senses of knowledge; (Jnana Indriyas)
- 2) The five senses of action; (Karma Indriyas)
- 3) Manas or mind;
- 4) Prana or principal vital air;
- 5) The five elements viz., ether, air, fire, water and earth, in subtle form.

**2. What exactly happens at the time of death?**

First, the speech rests in mind.

**3. What do you mean by this?.**

As you know, the mind thinks first and then the person speaks. So, at the time of death, it is the reverse. The power of speech stops first. He is unable to speak. He is able to think, but not able to speak. This is the first stage in the process of death.

**4. What happens next?.**

Similarly, the five senses of knowledge and the five senses of action rest in the mind. Then the mind rests in the vital air or prana. This means that his thinking function also stops. Then, the people say that he has become unconscious. He does not know what is happening around. But, life is still there. So, we say that the mind rests in prana.

**5. What happens next?.**

Next, the prana reaches the soul or Jivatma. After this, the soul joins with the five gross elements (panchabhuta), of ether, air, fire, water and earth, in a subtle form.

Then, they all depart from the body. The Upanishad figuratively states that the prana then rests in the fire, in the body. In other words, after the prana departs, there is still warmth in the body.

That is why for some time after death, the body is still warm. When the fire also departs, then the body becomes cold.

**6. What is the further process of the soul leaving the body, at the time of death?**

I have explained earlier how

- 1)the five senses of knowledge
- 2)five senses of action, combined with
- 3) mind (manas),
- 4) prana (vital air)



5) the soul and

6) the five gross elements in subtle form, proceed out of the body.

Now, there are innumerable veins (nadis) in the body. Out of these, there are 101 veins, which go upwards. Out of these 101 veins, going upwards, there is one special vein, called Brahma nadi.

1) The Jivatma, who is to attain moksha, passes through this special Brahma nadi.

2) The Jivatma, who passes through the other 100 veins, going upwards, reaches svarga; and enjoys pleasures, in the company of devas.

3) The Jivatma, who passes through one of the veins, going downwards, is born in samsara in this world.

**7. What happens to the senses (Indriyas)?**

When a person dies, the soul leaves the body; and depending upon the karma, the soul i) goes to svarga or ii) takes on some other body or hi goes to Paramapada. ~When the soul goes to svarga or to some other body, all the ten senses also follow the soul.

But when the soul goes to Paramapada, the senses are left behind. In any case the senses are not destroyed.

**8. Please explain the method of departure of the Jivatma, followed by these elements, from the body.**

Suppose the individual soul or Jivatma performs good and meritorious acts. So, for the good and pious acts done in this world, they have to enjoy the fruits. So, to enjoy these fruits in the other world, the Jivatma, accompanied by senses and elements, as mentioned above, reaches the heaven or svarga.

There he takes a body, to enjoy the fruits of his good acts. In the company of the devas, he enjoys the fruits of his action. When his good karmas or the good acts get almost exhausted, he is born again in this world, along with the balance of karma.

**9. So, how does he get into this world again?**

i) After enjoying the fruits of his good action, in the heaven, as described above,

ii) The Jivatma enters the clouds. Then, along with the rain from the clouds, he again enters this world.

iii) So as the rain water falls on the earth, he also falls on the earth. There, he then becomes united with the paddy, etc, which is grown in the earth.

iv) The paddy, is made into food, and is eaten by man. So, he also enters the man. v) Then, from the man, he (along with the creative fluid of the man), enters the womb of a woman; when the man and woman unite. He is subsequently born from the womb of the woman.

The above is described in detail in the Vedas and is called as the vidya of five fires (panchagni vidya).

The five fires are: 1) svarga or heaven, 2) The rain cloud, 3) earth, 4) man and 5) woman – as explained above;

**10. Please explain the types of persons who reach svarga.**

Some people do good and meritorious works, like performing the yaga, or digging ponds, for the good of the people. Such persons go through the path of smoke, night, krishnapaksha, dakshinayana, the world of manes (pitrus) etc. and – reach the Moon god.

Such people, who have done good work and reach the moon, through the path of smoke, enjoy the fruits of their action in svarga. Then they come back into this world, as described above.

**11. Explain the types of persons, who reach Paramapada, i.e., attain moksha, and their passage.**

Those who perform bhakti yoga or adopt the path of prapatti, also reach the moon, but by a different route, the route of the devas. They go through the path of light, suklapaksha, uttarayana, air, sun and moon. People, who after the bhakti yoga or prapatti reach the moon this way, go further beyond to reach Paramapada.

There is a big tank called Irammadiyam. Then the sacred river Viraja is there. On the banks of the river Viraja, the Jivatma casts off his subtle body, consisting of the senses and elements in the subtle form, along with the principal vital air. Then he enters the Paramapada.

**12. What happens in Paramapada?**

He is welcomed there by others. He sees the Lord, with Mahalakshmi, reclining on Adishesha. He announces himself to the Lord and is received by Him. After that, it is eternal bliss for him.

**13. Where is this described?**

This is described in detail, in Kaushitaki Upanishad and also in Sri Vaikunta Gadya of Ramanuja.

**14. What happens to those, who have done only bad things, who have never done any good things in their life?**

Those, who have done only bad things; and who have not done any good things in their life; do not go either by the path of smoke or by the path of light, to the moon. There is no question of the five fires for them, i.e., coming through the rains, down to the earth.

They are repeatedly re-born in this world, as trees, animals, birds, and so on.

**15. So, how do you categorise the departure of beings, after death?**

There are three ways of passage for the beings, after death, as follows:

1) Those, who have done bhakti or prapatti, go by the path of Light to the Moon and then on, they attain moksha or Paramapada. There is no return for them, from the Paramapada.

2) Those, who have done good things, like digging ponds for the benefit of the people, performing yagas or giving gifts to the deserving, go through the path of smoke and reach the moon. Thereafter, they enjoy the fruits of their good deeds in svarga. Afterwards, they come down to this world, through the five fires, with a balance of their karmas. Depending upon the balance of the karmas, they are born in this world, as human beings, animals or birds.

3) Those, who have done only bad things and have not done any good things, are repeatedly born and re-born in this world itself, as trees, animals and birds.

**16. A person has done prapatti and he is assured of moksha. At the time of death, what happens to the good karma, (punya) that he has earned so far; and similarly, to any bad karmas which also he earned so far?**

Now he leaves off both the results of the good karmas and bad karmas. The Upanishads say that, at the time of death, his good karma is distributed to his relatives and friends. The sins or bad karmas are distributed to persons who hated him.

**17. Do you mean to say that, for a person who has done Prapatti, even his good karmas are of no use?**

You are right. When a person, who has done prapatti, attains moksha after death, his good karmas are also of no use to him.

The good karmas of a person are useful to him, only when he attains svarga and not moksha.

**18. Then, why should a man, who has done prapatti, do anything good in this world, since they are of no use to him?**

So long as a person, who has done prapatti, is alive in this world, he has also to obey the sastras. He has to do good things voluntarily, for the pleasure of the Lord. That is why, whatever good things we do, we do for the pleasure of the Lord. We call this Sattvika tyaga.

**19. So, for a person who has done prapatti, both good karmas and bad karmas, are of no use, at the time of death.**

You are right. That is why, for a person who has done prapatti, the good karmas are called golden chain or shackle; and, the bad karmas are called iron chain. So the chain, whether golden or iron, is discarded, at the time of death.

**20. Why should the Lord wait till death, for distributing the person's punya and papa, to his friends and enemies? Why not earlier?**

There are two reasons for this:

1) Even a person, who has done prapatti, continues to do good things and also bad things (intentionally or unintentionally) till death. So the Lord waits till a man's death, for the final distribution of the results of his karmas, to his friends and enemies.

2) A person, who was earlier a friend, might later become an enemy. Similarly, a person who was an enemy, might later become a friend. So the Lord waits till a person's death, for distribution of his karmas, to his friends and enemies.

**21. You say that, for a person, who has done prapatti, at the time of his death, his papa and punya, (his sins and good deeds) are distributed to his enemies and friends or relatives. But sastras say that a man, who has done good or bad, has to reap the benefit. Is this not conflicting with what you have stated?**

It is not the exact sins and good deeds of the person, who has done prapatti, that go to his enemies and friends. An equivalent value is distributed to the enemies and friends.

The person, who has done prapatti, has friends or relatives, who do good to this person. So, in return, they get the effects of good deeds of the person, who has done prapatti. Similarly, his enemies do bad things to him (who has done prapatti). So, they get the equivalent effect of sins of the person, who has done prapatti. Further, in any case, for every general rule, there is always an exception. Even if the above interpretation is not accepted/you can take this, as an exception to the general rule, in the case of a prapanna (who has done prapatti).

**22. Now a man does good things or bad things. Consequently, he gets pleasure or pain. Do these results as pleasures or pains come from his earlier action, by themselves; or are these given by Brahman?**

The results of actions, whether good or bad, are bestowed by the Lord only. It is only the Lord, who gives pleasures or good results for good things done. Similarly, it is only the Lord, who gives punishment, for all bad actions of the Jivatma.

**23. Do we accept the concept of salvation in this world itself?**

No. This is the concept of advaitins. They call it as jivan mukti; and say that a person can attain salvation here itself. For us, the salvation is attaining moksha or Paramapada, where we enjoy and serve Lord Narayana.

**24. I have heard that death at night or in krishna-paksha or in dakshinayana, is not good. Is that so?**

For people who have done Prapatti and who are to attain moksha, it is immaterial, when the life departs from the body. Saying that it is not good to die, during night or krishnapaksha or dakshina-yana is only for others, who have not done prapatti.

**25. What is the meaning of Conductor (ativahika)?**

The presiding deities of light, year, moon, wind, sun, etc. are directed by Brahman, to receive and conduct those, who are to attain moksha. So, they are called conductors.

**26. What happens to the soul, after attaining moksha?**

His essential qualities of intelligence, happiness, etc. shine in their normal splendour. The soul (Jivatma) becomes free from all sins, free from sorrow, etc; having the highest degree of intelligence and happiness.

**27. Were these qualities with the soul even in this world?**

These qualities rightly belong to the soul, even in this world. But, as I mentioned earlier, they are hidden, because of the impurities and defects, due to his association with the body. So when he leaves the body and leaves this world and attains moksha; his essential in-born qualities shine in their normal splendour.

I also gave you the example of a gem covered by dirt. In this world, the soul is like a gem, covered with dirt. When he attains moksha, the dirt is cleaned; the soul becomes like a clear gem having its fullest brilliance.

**28. What are his powers, after attaining moksha?**

His powers become unlimited. He can get whatever he wants. He can do whatever he wants. He can take any body, if he likes. He can move without a body also. In short, whatever he desires, he can do. He enjoys things. He serves Lord Narayana, either with body or without body.

**29. After attaining liberation, in the Paramapada, does the Jivatma become one with Paramatma?**

No, the Jivatma does not become one with Brahman. But he acquires all the auspicious and divine qualities of Brahman.

**30. What do the Vedas say in this regard?**

The Vedas say that in the Paramapada, the Jivatma attains the highest degree of equality with Brahman. He is permanently free from the bondage of births and deaths. He enjoys the Lord, in the company of others.

**31. Are there any limitations or restrictions to this freedom of the soul, when he reaches Paramapada? Can he do anything he pleases?**

Yes, his powers are unlimited, except with regard to one matter. That is, except regarding creation, support and destruction of the world. The powers to create, support and destroy the world, are entirely that of Brahman. So in these matters alone, the released soul does not have the powers.

**32. Does this limitation not restrict or curtail the happiness of the released soul?**

No, it does not. Because, the released soul attains the same pleasure and happiness as that of Brahman, who creates, supports, and destroys the world.

He attains the highest degree of equality with Brahman. This can be explained with an example.

**33. Can you clarify this further?.**

Let me give you an example:

There are a father and his son. The father cultivates the land. He harvests the grains and he cooks. The meal is shared, both by the father and the son. So, the son does not till or plough the land. The father is tilling the land and is harvesting the proceeds.

Still, the son has the pleasure of eating the produce, just like his father. So, the pleasure remains the same, both for the father and the son. In the same way, although the released soul does not create the world, he gets the same pleasure as the Brahman in this regard.

**34. You said that even in Paramapada, Jivatma does not have powers to create, support or destroy the world. Are there any other powers or qualities, peculiar to the Lord?**

The following qualities are special to the Lord:

1. Being the cause of the world.
2. Giving of moksha to Jivatma.
3. Being the support and controller of the world and for whom all things and beings exist.
4. Having everything as His body.

**35. After attaining Brahman in the Paramapada, when does the released soul return to the world?.**

After attaining moksha, the released soul does not return to the world, because he has no karmas left. All his karmas have been destroyed; and he continues in eternity, enjoying the Brahman.

**36. Can the released soul then never return to the world?**

What I mentioned is that the released soul does not have any karma left. So, he is not re-born in this world. But if, out of his own free will, he wants to visit this world, he does so. As already mentioned, he can do anything he likes, anything he pleases.

**37. Can the Lord, because of His independence, send back the released soul into this world?**

There is no possibility of this; because, after getting rid of all karmas, the Jivatma has attained moksha. So, there is no reason or cause for the Lord to send him back into this world.

**38. Again, you say that he can do anything he likes. But, there are specific duties assigned to some of the Nityasuris, like Garuda and Adishesha. Garuda is the vehicle of the Lord. Adishesha is the couch (bed) for the Lord. So, can the released soul do these duties also?**

As I said earlier, all these have to be interpreted, without conflicting with other matters. The released soul does not desire to do things, which are already being done by some others, like Garuda and Adishesha. Further, the pleasure that results from doing any of these things, is the same, i.e. whichever service the released soul does to the Lord, he gets the same pleasure.

## Chapter 11 : Prapatti

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**1. You have already explained to me about bhakti yoga. Now, please tell me something more about the second means of attainment of moksha, namely prapatti.**

Prapatti is also called Saranagati, Bharanyasa, Bhara Samarpana and Nyasa. Here, we seek the Lord as the sole refuge, for salvation. We surrender ourselves unto Him; and pray for salvation.

**2. How frequently is this prapatti to be performed?.How is it different from bhakti yoga?.**

Prapatti has to be performed only once, in the life time. Bhakti Yoga, on the other hand, has to be performed throughout one's life. May be in sub-sequent lives also.

**3. What are the accessories (angas) for Prapatti?**

There are five accessories. One, who does prapatti, must do the following:

1. He must decide to do hereafter, only what will be pleasing to the Lord, as laid down by the sastras.

2. He must avoid doing, whatever will be displeasing to the Lord; namely, what is prohibited by sastras.

3. Faith is most important. He must have absolute faith that the Lord will save him and grant him moksha.

4. He must be aware that he does not have the capacity or capability, to attain salvation, by his own efforts.

5. He must positively pray to the Lord, to save him and grant him salvation.

**4. When a man performs prapatti, how are his sins or karmas destroyed?**

There are two types of karmas.

(1) The first type are those which have started yielding fruits. In other words, the person has to experience the pleasures and pains, for the past karmas, which have started yielding fruits (Prarabdha Karma).

(2) The second type of karmas are those which have been kept aside by the Lord. They have not yet begun to yield fruits, good or bad (Sanchita karma).

So, when a man does prapatti, the second type of karmas, namely, those which have not begun to yield fruits, are destroyed altogether.

The first type of karmas, namely, those which have begun to yield fruits, good or bad, will continue, only so long as the person's present life lasts.

At the time of death, the balance of karmas, are distributed to his friends and enemies (I have described this earlier). So, one, who has done prapatti, attains moksha, immediately at the end of this life itself. There are two types of karmas:-

1) Those which have started yielding fruits; 2) Those which have not yet started yielding fruits. For a person, who has done prapatti,

1) those which have started yielding fruits – he will experience these only till the end of this present life. 2) Balance of karmas, out of (1) above, are distributed to his friends and enemies, at the time of his death. 3) Those, which have not started yielding fruits, are destroyed completely.

**5. Please summarise.**

There are two types of karmas:

- 1) Those which have started yielding fruits;
- 2) Those which have not yet started yielding fruits.

**6. You is said that at the time of prapatti, a person should resolve, that he will not do anything, displeasing to the Lord. In other words, he should not commit any sins. What happens, if a person commits sins, after doing prapatti?**

For a person, who has done prapatti,

1) Those which have started yielding fruits – he will experience these only till the end of this present life.

2) Balance of karmas, out of (1) above, are distributed to his friends and enemies, at the time of his death.

3) Those, which have not started yielding fruits, are destroyed completely.

The person, after performing prapatti, may commit sins 1) either deliberately or 2) by oversight (without being aware that he is committing sins).

1) If a person commits sins, without being aware of the same, then these sins will be ignored by the Lord: since these sins were not committed purposely or deliberately.

2) If the person commits sins deliberately, due to the weakness of human nature, then he should do prayaschitta or atonement, for having committed them.

**7. How should he do the prayaschitta in this case?**

The prayaschitta or atonement for having committed the sin, is another prapatti, for this purpose. So, if the person atones for having committed the sin, by doing a prapatti for this purpose, then he is granted pardon by the Lord.

**8. What happens, if he commits the sins deliberately after prapatti and still does not do prayaschitta?**

Then the Lord will punish him in this life itself, before his death, in some way or other..

**9. What will be the type of punishment in such cases?**

The punishment can be that the person becomes lame or blind. Or, he may lose children or grandchildren or near relatives.

In fact, even inability to go to temples and worship the Lord there; or inability to bathe in holy rivers, are also punishments. In any case, one who has done prapatti, will definitely attain moksha, at the end of this life.

Incidentally, it may be said that once a person does prapatti, he becomes near and dear to the Lord. So, even for deliberate sins committed after prapatti, the punishment by the Lord will be comparatively minor.

Even in the world, if a mistake is committed by somebody close to the king, the king merely warns him; or gives him a lighter punishment. In the same way, God also gives comparatively lighter punishment, even for deliberate sins committed after prapatti.

**10. What are the different types of prapatti?**

There are two types:

- 1) Dripta Prapatti
- 2) Artha Prapatti

People, who want to live this life, as long as it lasts; and want to attain moksha, only at the end of this life: they do dripta prapatti.

People, who do not want to live even till the end of this life, but want to attain salvation immediately, at this very moment: they can resort to artha prapatti.

**11. How is prapatti done?**

This is a rite, which is performed, with the prescribed mantras and as per the procedure laid down in sastras.

**12. How many types of prapatti are there?**

There are four ways of performing prapatti:

- 1) Doing prapatti oneself (sva nishta).
  - 2) Where a disciple repeats the prapatti mantras, as taught by the acharya (ukti nishta).
  - 3) Where the disciple does not repeat the mantras, but the acharya performs prapatti, for the disciple (acharya Nishta).
  - 4) Where a learned Sri Vaishnava does prapatti, on behalf of the person (bhagavata nishta).
- So, one of these methods has to be adopted, for performing the prapatti.

**13. YOU said that, apart from the five accessories for prapatti, there are no other rites or duties to be performed by one who has done prapatti. Then, after prapatti, why should he continue to do karmas like sandhyavandana and tarpana?**

It is true that these rites, as ordained in the sastras, are not required for the efficacy of prapatti. But these are ordained by the Lord, through sastras and so the Lord's commands have to be obeyed.

If these rites are not performed, this will be a violation of the Lord's command. So the person will be punished by the Lord, for the sin of not doing his duties, laid down in the sastras.

Further, the person does these things for the pleasure of the Lord.

**14. We have discussed at length, about the means of attaining salvation. Now what are the hindrances or obstacles, a man faces, in the efforts for attaining salvation?**

1) Being in this world, because of the association with a body, and with the three qualities of sattva, rajas and tamas; there are several temptations which try to distract the person's thoughts from performing good deeds.

2) The person is carried away by the senses. He gets distracted by the worldly pleasures and runs after them.

3) His knowledge becomes perverse. He thinks that Narayana is not the supreme Lord. He thinks that all the deities are equal; or, he thinks there is no God at all.

4) Again, he does not realise the difference between the body and soul.

5) He does not study the sastras and perform the duties expected of him, as laid down in the sastras. As Krishna says in the Gita, sastras are only the divine command of the Lord.

6) Led away by the five senses, the person gets attached more and more to the worldly pleasures.



7) He spends his time in useless things. He does not recite the Vedas, or live an ideal life in detachment?

8) He does all forbidden things, for the sake of petty pleasures. So, all the worldly things and the five senses of a man, are the hindrances in his realising the truth.

**15. So, what should we do, to get over these?**

It is very necessary to completely conquer the senses; and direct one's attention only towards the Lord.

Supposing you have to leap over a well. Whether you leap only half the well or you leap three-fourths of the well, it does not make any difference. You fall into the well, all the same. Similarly, unless you conquer the senses completely, it does not make any difference.

**16. Is prapatti done to attain salvation only?**

Prapatti is also done, as a subsidiary to bhakti yoga. That is, while doing bhakti yoga, for any of the lapses or failures, prapatti is done as an atonement.

As mentioned earlier, practically nobody does bhakti yoga now. So doing Prapatti, as subsidiary to bhakti yoga, does not also arise.

**17. How is it that God accepts the acharya doing prapatti for the disciple?**

This is possible because, God accepts the prayers of the Acharya, for and on behalf of his disciple.

We have many examples of this, in this world also. If a man is blind, another man helps him in crossing the road. Similarly, if a man is tame, he is helped to cross the river, by the boatman, who places him in the boat and takes him across.

**18. We read in books that the blessings of the holy people; residing in holy places; bathing in holy rivers, etc. give Moksha. Is this true?**

This is not directly true. Only Bhakti or Prapatti can give moksha. What is meant is this: By residing in holy places, or bathing in holy rivers, or serving the holy people, a man starts getting the mentality to do good things. He is purified by such stay in holy places and bathing in holy rivers. So he starts learning the sastras and practising good things.

These things ultimately lead him to do Bhakti Yoga or Prapatti. Then finally he attains moksha. So, these things induce a man to attain Moksha, by doing bhakti or prapatti. So, you can say that bathing in holy rivers, etc., indirectly leads to moksha. by inducing a man to perform bhakti or prapatti.

**19. What are the special qualifications for a person to do prapatti?**

These are mainly two in number.

1) First, the person does not have the capacity to do Bhakti Yoga.

2) Secondly, he should not worship any other deity, other than Srīman Narayana. He should also have a hatred for all other worldly things or pleasures. .

**20. What is the principle behind Prapatti?**

Actually, at the time of prapatti, a person surrenders three things to the Lord.

1) The first is, surrendering himself to the Lord. He gives up the thought that he is the doer. He gives up the thought that anything belongs to him. In effect, he and everything belonging to him, actually belong to the Lord. This is the first type of surrender. This is called Svarupa Samarpana.

2) The second one is, to surrender to the Lord, the responsibility for protecting him, and granting Moksha to him. This is called Bhara Samarpana.

3) The third is, surrender of the fruits. In other words, the fruit or gain, arising from Prapatti, (i.e., of attaining Moksha), is also surrendered to the Lord. The pleasure of enjoying the Lord in Paramapada is also dedicated to the Lord. This is called Phala Samarpana. .

**21. So, how many types of surrender are there?**

There are three types of Surrender as mentioned above:

1) Svarupa Samarpana 2) Bhara Samarpana 3) Phala Samarpana. .

**22. You say that we should not worship any other deity, other than Narayana. But there are many passages even in our Sandhyavandana and Tarpana, worshipping the pitrus, Vayu (air), Agni, and the other Devas. So, how do you reconcile our worshipping these minor devas, with the fact that we should worship only Narayana?**

There are two explanations.

1) The first is that, as I have explained to you in sufficient detail, Narayana is the soul of everything else. He is the soul also, of all the Devas. So, when we worship the other Devas, during the compulsory duties like 169 Sandhyavandana, we actually worship the soul of these Devas, who is Narayana.

2) There is another interpretation. The names of the other Devas, also refer to Narayana directly; if you analyse the meaning of their names. For example, Agni, means "one who leads" in Sanskrit. So, this word can also appropriately refer to Narayana. Thus we take the ultimate meaning of the names (of the Devas), which is actually Narayana.

**23. Can you clarify this further?**

For example, When the boss or the king arrives, the subordinates garland the king or the boss. The king wears a shirt and so, the garland is placed over the shirt. This does not mean that garlanding is for the shirt. The garlanding is to the person, who is inside the shirt. Similarly, when we worship the devas, the worship is actually for the person, who is inside the Devas, namely, Narayana.

**24. Tell me briefly explain how a person who has done prapatti should behave afterwards.**

This is explained in detail, in one of the chapters of Rahasya Traya Sara. In fact, this particular chapter can be called the most sublime in the whole treatise.

A person who has done prapatti has nothing to feel worried. He has nothing to grieve. He is sure of Moksha at the end of his life. He should, therefore, behave, after prapatti, in a completely detached manner.

If anybody praises him, he should not become proud. If anybody abuses him, he should not feel angry. He should leave everything to the Lord.

He should spend his time in reciting Vedas, Divya Prabandha and reading sastras. He can do good things like going to temples and worshipping the Lord. He should try to learn from holy people. He should continue to do his compulsory duties like Sandhyavandana, as prescribed in the sastras.

He should continue to do all good things, without desiring for any fruit: but purely as service and pleasure to Lord. He should continue to do service, to the extent possible, to the acharyas and all other holy men.

**25. What is the importance to be given to doing service to the Lord's devotees?**

Service to the devotees is even more important than service to the Lord. The Lord himself feels happy, if His devotees are served and honoured by others.

Serving the devotees is like this. If we want to please a person, we fondle his children. The person becomes happier, if his children are praised and fondled by others. Similarly, the Lord becomes happier, when His children, namely His devotees, are praised and served by others. .

**26. What are the duties prescribed for us?**

Ramanuja himself has prescribed the following duties for a person:-

1) The first and most important duty is to study Sri Bhashya and spread its contents to others.

2) If a person is not qualified to read and understand Sri Bhashya, he should study the Divya Prabandha and spread its contents to others.

3) If a person is not competent even to read and understand Divya Prabandha, then he should serve in holy temples. He may light lamps in the temple; he may make garlands for adorning the deity; he may make sandal paste and such other works in the temple.

4) Even if this is not possible for a man, he should continuously meditate on the meaning of Dvaya mantra.

5) Lastly, even if a man is not able to do this, then he should attach himself to a learned, holy, Sri Vaishnava; and serve him, to the best of his capacity.

**27. After Prapatti where should a person reside?**

A person can conveniently reside in a place which is a divya desa, i.e. where the Lord has been sung by Alvars. Or he can stay in a place, where the Lord's devotees, Bhagavatas stay. To the extent possible, he should stay in such places.

## Chapter 12 : The Three Secrets

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### 1. What are the three secrets in our system (rahasya traya)?

The first and the most important is called Ashtakshara. This consists of 8 syllables and is in the form of three words.

The first word is a single syllable Om. The second word is Namaha. The third word is Narayanaya.

So, the ashtakshara is OM NAMO NARAYANAYA. This means "Salutation to Narayana". We will discuss the deeper meaning later.

### 2. What is the second secret?

The second secret is called Dvaya. This is in two parts. The first part is "Sriman Narayana Charanau Saranam Prapadye". This means "I seek refuge at the feet of Sriman Narayana." The second part is "Srimate Narayanaya Namaha". This means "My salutation to Sriman Narayana." We will discuss the deeper meanings later.

### 3. What is the third secret?

The third secret is Charama Sloka, which occurs in the last chapter of Bhagavad Gita. This sloka says: "Having already given up dharmas, as a means to attain moksha; surrender yourself fully to Me. I will free you, from all the sins; do not grieve." These are the words of Krishna.

Here, again we will discuss the inner meanings later.

So, these are the three important secrets which we should know.

### 4. What is the meaning of the three secrets.

We start with the most important secret, Ashtakshara. This is Om Namō Narayanaya. The Om has three letters A,U & M.

### 5. What is the meaning of A?

A means Narayana or Vishnu.

### 6. How do you say that?

There are three reasons.

1) According to Sanskrit dictionary and grammar, A means Vishnu.

2) A is the beginning of all letters. Similarly, Vishnu is the origin of all beings. Hence A denotes Vishnu.

3) The letter A is the shortened form of the Verb "Ava", which means "to protect". Since Vishnu is the protector of all the worlds, the letter A means Vishnu, who is the protector.

### 7. What is the meaning of the letter U?

The letter U means two things. 1) It means Lakshmi. 2) Another meaning is "only"..

### 8. What does the letter M mean?

The letter M means the soul or Jivatma.

**9. How do you say that?**

Now the letter M (Ma) is the 25th alphabet among consonants in Sanskrit. Similarly, the soul or Jivatma is the 25th tattva.

**10. How do we know that the Jivatma is the 25th tattva?**

The first tattva is matter. The second is the mahat. The third is ahankara. Then we have the five gross elements starting with ether, etc. Then five subtle elements, starting with sound, etc. Then we have the five senses of knowledge and then the five senses of action. So, the total number of tattvas so far is  $3+20=23$ . The 24th tattva is the mind or manas. So, soul or Jivatma is the 25th tattva.

1) Since the letter M (Ma) is the 25th alphabet among consonants in Sanskrit, it means the Jivatma, who is 25th tattva.

2) Secondly, the letter M is derived from the verb, which means "to know". Jivatma is a knower, who knows things. So also, M denotes the Jivatma.

3) The Letter M is also derived from the verb, which means "measure or limit". Since the Jivatma is limited in size as atomic, M denotes Jivatma.

Thus M denotes the Jivatma

**11. What is the meaning of the word Om?**

1) If we take the letter U to mean Lakshmi, then the word Om means that the Jivatma is the servant (sesha) of Vishnu and Lakshmi.

Here we have to take A (and U) with dative (4th) i.e. as "for A and U". So, M, Jivatma is for A and U; i.e. the servant of A and U, i.e. Vishnu and Lakshmi.

2) Suppose we take the meaning of U as "only". In this case, this will mean that the Jivatma is subservient to Vishnu only; and to no one else. This includes himself viz; he is not subservient to himself also. Of course Lakshmi always goes with Vishnu.

**12. What is the meaning of Namoh or Namaha?**

Namaha has two meanings.

1) If you take it as one word, it means salutation or worshipping.

2) The second meaning is got by splitting Namaha as Na and Maha. Then, this will mean "not mine".

**13. Please clarify. What is the meaning of "not mine"?**

We have to add M (Jivatma) in the context. There are four meanings:

1) I am not mine. I am subservient to the Lord, I belong to the Lord.

2) Everything is not mine. In other words, nothing is mine. Everything belongs to the Lord.

3) Independence is not mine. I am not independent. I am depending on the Lord.

4) Mastership is not mine. I am not the master of anybody, including myself. Narayana is the master of everybody.

So, these are the four meanings of "not mine".

**14. What is the meaning of the word 'Narayanaya'?**

Now we go step by step.

1) "ra" means to perish. So, ra denotes achetana, which is perishable.

2) "nara" means that which does not perish. Hence, nara means chetana or Jivatma.

3) "Nara" means the group of naras or jivatmas.

There is a second interpretation also. Nara means, which does not perish. So, Nara means the Lord also. Nara is also a name in Vishnu Sahasranama.

So, Nara means those belonging to Nara, viz., the Lord . So Nara means Lord's qualities; and also Jivatmas and achetanas (which belong to Him).

**15. What is the meaning of the word Ayana?**

The word Ayana has three meanings:-

- 1) a resting place, or support or abode.
- 2) upaya or means.
- 3) fruit or objective.

**16. What is the meaning of the word Narayana?**

We will take the first meaning of the word, ayana, as the resting place. According to Sanskrit grammar, Narayana (Nara-ayana) means two things:

1) One, who is the resting place of Naras i.e. all chetanas and achetanas.

2) One whose resting place is Naras, i.e. all chetanas and achetanas.

If you take the first meaning, this means that all things – chetanas and achetanas – exist or abide in Narayana.

If you take the second meaning, this means that Narayana abides or exists in all things. This is possible because He is the soul of all chetanas and achetanas.

Thus, the two meanings show that 1) all chetanas and achetanas rest in Narayana; 2) Narayana rests in all chetanas and achetanas. .

**17. Please clarify these two meanings.**

1) The first meaning shows that He is the resting place of all chetanas and achetanas. All these abide in Him. This shows that He contains all chetanas and achetanas. All chetanas and achetanas are contained in Him. So, He is bigger than all these.  
This quality of the Lord is called as Bahirvyapti.

2) The second meaning shows that He rests in all chetanas and achetanas. This shows the exact opposite of 1) above, i.e. He is smaller than all these.  
This quality of the Lord is called Antarvyapti.

**18. How exactly do you define Antarvyapti?**

Antarvyapti means this quality:

The Lord is present, intimately connected with all chetanas and achetanas; in such a way that He is present, wherever they are.

**19. How do you define Bahirvyapti?**

Bahirvyapti means this quality:

The Lord is present also in places , where the chetanas and achetanas are not present.

**20. So,what follows?.**

A combination of these two qualities means:

- 1) The Lord is present, wherever all other beings are present.
- 2) The Lord is present, even in places, where other beings are not present.

**21. The above meanings arise,when you take ‘ayana’ to mean resting place.What happens when you take the meaning of “ayana” as upaya or means?.**

If you take the meaning of ayana as upaya or means for attaining salvation; then the word Narayana (Nara-ayana) will mean that He, the Lord Vishnu, is the upaya or means of attaining salvation, for all jivatmas.

**22. What happens, when you take the third meaning of ayana, i.e. fruit?**

If you take the meaning of ayana as the fruit (ie. one that is to be attained): then the word Narayana (Nara-ayana) will mean that He is the fruit or end, to be attained by all Jivatmas.

**23. So you have been telling different meanings for the different words, contained in Ashtakshara. By the various combinations of the meanings of the several words, several meanings are possible. Please explain.**

Yes. By the various combinations, there are 10 meanings possible, of the Ashtakshara. I give the meanings below:

1) Salutation and pranamas to Narayana.

2) I surrender myself to the Lord. As my existence is only for the pleasure of the Lord, I surrender the protection of myself to the Lord. I surrender the fruit or purushartha to the Lord.

3) I am the servant only to the Lord and Lakshmi. I am not subservient to anybody else. I am not subservient to myself also. I do not have any independence. I am completely dependent on the Lord.

4) I surrender myself to the Lord. Even this surrender is by the grace of Lord. The Lord alone is the protector. There is nobody else who can protect me. I cannot protect myself.

5) I will do service only to the Lord and Lakshmi. I will not do anything for my pleasure. Whatever I do, is for the pleasure of the Lord.

6) I will do service to the Lord and Lakshmi, at all times. I will also do service to Bhagavatas.

7) I do not belong to myself. I do not have anything as mine. Nothing is mine. I belong to the Lord. Everything, that I have, also belongs to the Lord.

8) I am not able to do any upaya (other than prapatti). The Lord is the only upaya. He should bless me with salvation and permit me to do service to the Lord.

9) My protection is the responsibility of the Lord. The Lord will free me from all sins. The Lord will bless me with eternal service to Him.

10) I belong only to the Lord. I do prapatti to Him. I will do eternal service to Him. These are the ten meanings of ashtakshara.

**24. Please explain the second secret.**

The second secret is called Dvaya Mantra. We will start with the word Sri. Sri has six meanings:

1) She is attained by chetanas.

2) She attains Narayana and pleads on behalf of chetanas.

3) She hears the prayers of chetanas.

4) She makes Narayana hear the prayers of chetanas.

5) She destroys the karmas of the chetanas, which stand in the way of attaining salvation.

6) She makes ripe the qualities of chetanas, so that they desire only moksha and nothing else. So, all these six meanings denote only Lakshmi; and so, Sri means Lakshmi.

**25. Please explain the first half of the mantra, “Sriman Narayana charanau saranam prapadye”.**

Here, two ways of interpretation are possible.

1) One is, addressing Him as, “Sriman Narayana!”; and then saying, “I seek refuge in your feet”. This is one interpretation.

2) The second interpretation is taking “Sriman Narayana charanau” as one whole. Then, this will mean “I seek refuge in the feet of Sriman Narayana”.

Both meanings are equally valid.

**26. Why does the mantra say as “feet” only?**

Although it says only the feet, what it means is the divine, auspicious form of the Lord.

**27. Then, why should it mention only the feet; and not the full form of the Lord?**

As you know, the feet are the most important of the Lord’s form. We only fall at the feet of the Lord, for obtaining salvation. Hence the feet are mentioned particularly in this context.

**28. So, what does the first part mean?**

The first part means, seeking refuge at the divine feet of Sriman Narayana. So, the first part indicates the upaya or means of attaining salvation.

**29. What does the second part denote?**

The second part denotes the fruit to be achieved, namely, service to the Lord.

**30. Please explain this?**

The second part of the Dvaya Mantra reads as follows:  
“Srimate Narayanaya Namaha”. This has two different meanings.

1) The superficial meaning is: “Salutation to Sriman Narayana”.

2) The deeper meaning is to be taken as follows:

May I be for the service of Sriman Narayana. I am not for myself. Nothing is mine. Everything be-longs to the Lord. I am the servant of the Lord; and I am for service to the Lord. I do not do anything for myself. The Lord only gets things done through me. Whatever I do is for the pleasure of the Lord only.

The above are the two meanings of the second part.

**31. So, what does the Dvaya mantra indicate?**

As explained above, the first part indicates the upaya or means for salvation. The second part indicates the upeya-fruit to be attained, viz., service to the Lord.

**32. Now let us go to the third secret, which is Charama sloka. I have a basic doubt here. This third secret occurs in Bhagavad Gita, in the last chapter, which is open to all. Then why is this called as a secret?. We do not call any other sloka in Bhagavad Gita as a secret.**

You are right. The sloka by itself, is not a secret. It becomes a secret, because of the hidden meanings of the sloka. The meanings of the various words in the sloka are highly



important. They have to be understood properly, under a proper acharya. Hence, referring to the meaning of the sloka, it is called a secret.

**33. What is the meaning of the first part of this sloka?**

Different people, belonging to different philosophies, have given various interpretations. We give three meanings, depending upon the different contexts. In the commentary on Gita, Ramanuja himself gives two alternative meanings.

**34. What are the two meanings given by Ramanuja?**

1) The first meaning given by Ramanuja is this:

A person who takes up the karma yoga or jnana yoga or bhakti yoga, should perform it, with Immense affection to God. At the same time, he should give up the thought that he is actually doing the karma or bhakti yoga. He should give up the thought that he has got the power to do various yogas. He should give up the thought that the fruit also belongs to him (Sattvika tyaga).

In other words, he should completely give up the idea that he is the doer and that he is also reaping the benefit or fruit. He must consider and understand that everything is done by God only; and it is for the pleasure of the Lord. This is the first meaning.

2) The second meaning is this. Suppose, while doing the bhakti yoga, a person has committed several sins or papa. These act as hindrances in the proper performance of the bhakti yoga. So these things have to be properly atoned for, before continuing the bhakti yoga.

For the atonement for sins, the sastras have laid down several prayaschittas like kricchra, chandra-yana, kushmanda homa, etc. These expiation ceremonies themselves take a very long time and are difficult to perform.

Krishna says: "Give up the various prayaschitta ceremonies, which have been prescribed in the sastras. Seek refuge in me. I will stand in the place of the various expiation ceremonies; so that the hindrances to the bhakti yoga are got rid of."

These are the two meanings which have been explained by Ramanuja, in his commentary on Gita.

**35. What is the third meaning?**

The third meaning is by treating this sloka as a secret. So, in the third meaning, the greatness of prapatti is explained.

'Dharman' here means various kinds of vidyas, mentioned in the Upanishads, like Sad vidya, Dahara vidya etc. Because of incompetence, because of inability to do the same, a person, in the present world, has already given up doing these vidyas, which come under bhakti yoga. In other words, giving up the bhakti yoga has become a fait accompli – i.e., the bhakti yoga has already been given up.

So, having already given up the bhakti yoga, due to sheer inability; you seek refuge in God, i.e., do prapatti. This is the secret meaning of the first part. Here again different meanings are given by Desika.

**36. What are the different meanings given by Desika?**

1) The basic meaning is this: "You have already given up the bhakti yoga, knowing that you are unable to do it. So, do prapatti, to attain salvation." Different meanings have been given by Desika, elaborating this basic meaning, as follows:

2) It is clear that prapatti does not require any other accessories, other than the five, which I have explained earlier. So, give up the idea that the other dharmas, namely, rites or duties, are required to be performed, as accessories to prapatti.

3) It is well realised that in the present day, the bhakti yoga cannot be performed, as laid down in the sastras. So, our efforts should not be wasted in doing something, which is not possible.

4) Knowing full well that bhakti yoga cannot be performed in the present day, we should give up even the desire to attempt to do bhakti yoga.

5) Prapatti is complete by itself and it does not require bhakti yoga. In fact, if a person simultaneously attempts to do bhakti yoga also, this means attempting two things together. So, the potency of prapatti is lost.

**37. Can we say that “Sarva dharman parityajya” means giving up all the rites and karmas, prescribed in the sastras?**

The Vedas and sastras cannot prescribe things that should be done; and then ask us to give them up. The sastras prescribe the duties and karma that various classes of people have to do; the various types of yagas a person has to perform, and so on.

It is not correct to say that, after prescribing these at length, the Vedas and sastras ask us to give up everything. If the idea is to give up all the karmas and duties, then there was no need to prescribe them in detail earlier.

**38. What does the Gita say about this?**

The Gita says that this is Tamasa tyaga. If a person gives up doing compulsory karmas like sandhyavandana, due to some wrong ideas or false notions, it is Tamasa tyaga. So, these compulsory karmas should not be given up on any account.

**39. What is the purpose of compulsory rites like sandhyavandana and tarpana? Does this mean that a man, who has done prapatti, can give up daily duties like sandhyavandana, if these are not accessories to prapatti?**

No. It is true that these duties are not required for prapatti. They are not accessories to prapatti. But these duties have been prescribed by the Vedas and sastras. So, these will have to be done till the end of life, by everybody, including one, who has done prapatti. What is meant is, that for the particular type of act, namely, prapatti, the other duties like sandhyavandana are not accessories. But they are duties prescribed in the Vedas and sastras. So, they should be done throughout one’s life.

**40. Please clarify.**

What is meant is, that for the particular type of act, namely, prapatti, the other duties like sandhyavandana are not accessories. But they are duties prescribed in the Vedas and sastras. So, they should be done throughout one’s life.

**41. What happens, if a person, out of ignorance gives up doing these daily duties and rituals?**

1) Not doing something, which is prescribed in the sastras; and 2) doing something, which is prohibited by the sastras; certainly earn the displeasure of the Lord. So, punishments will be given by God. Even if a person, who has done prapatti, fails in this regard, he also gets punished.

**42. You were saying that the duties, prescribed in the sastras, should be done. You also say that all these duties should be done for the pleasure of the Lord. Which is correct?**

Both are correct. Certain duties or karmas are prescribed in the sastras. The Lord himself says in the Gita that the Vedas and smritis are His own command.

So, anybody who violates His command, by not doing the prescribed duties, will be punished by Him.

**43. In the second part of the charama sloka, it is said “mam” and “ekam”. Why is there a repetition? Is it not enough to simply say “mam”?**

It is not a repetition, because, saying again has several significant meanings.

1) Saying “mam” and “ekam” denotes: “I am the means (upaya); and I am also the object of attainment (upeya or purushartha). So the two words “mam” and “ekam”, show the fact of 1) His being the means and 2) His being the object of attainment.

2) Another interpretation is that Iswara is the only means (upaya). The Jivatma does bhakti yoga or prapatti; this is not an important means. It is only an insignificant means, as compared to the Lord Himself, who is the main means (upaya).

So, this denotes that the Lord Himself is the only means, who is pleased by prapatti and grants salvation..

**44. I am not very clear about what you say that Iswara is the only upaya. You have also said that prapatti, is the better upaya. Please clarify.**

It is true that bhakti and prapatti are upaya for attaining salvation. But they cannot directly give you salvation. By your doing bhakti or prapatti, you please the Lord.

Then He decides to give salvation. The Lord only is the upaya, because He only gives salvation. Bhakti and prapatti are only instruments to please the Lord.

So, bhakti and prapatti are called Sadhyopaya (Sadhya Upaya = Upaya which can be done). Iswara is called siddhopaya (Siddha Upaya = Upaya, which is already there).

**45. What is the consolidated meaning of the first half of the Charama Sloka?**

The meaning is this. Having already given up bhakti yoga, due to inability, you seek refuge in Me alone.

**46. Now let us go to the second half of the sloka. What does this mean?**

“I will liberate you, from all your sins, which stand in the way of your attaining moksha. So, you do not grieve.” This is the consolidated meaning.

**47. What is the special significance of the words “Do not grieve?”**

This indicates the following, as being said by Krishna:

1) “Because of my independence and Lordship, you, who have done prapatti, need not be afraid that I will not grant you moksha. I will certainly grant you moksha.”

2) “You are afraid of the innumerable sins, which you have committed. You need not be afraid, as to whether these sins will stand in the way of your attaining moksha, even after doing prapatti.”

“You can be sure that having done prapatti; at the end of this life, you will certainly attain moksha.”

## Chapter 13 : Vadakalai and Tenkalai

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**1. We have got two sects, Vadakalai and Tenkalai. What is the difference between these two schools of thought?**

There is no fundamental or basic difference in the philosophy, between the two schools, Vadakalai and Tenkalai. There is only difference of opinion on some issues. These are not significant.

**2. When did this division, Vadakalai and Tenkalai actually take place?**

We cannot say for sure. There were differences of opinion, on some minor issues. In due course, these developed into two separate schools of thought, called Vadakalai and Tenkalai. The differences are more academic in nature. Each school stresses importance on some aspects. The minor differences of opinion arose, because of the degree of emphasis laid on some points, by each school. These minor differences need not be given importance.

**3. Please tell me some of the more important differences of opinion, between the two schools.**

The first one is about, the position and nature of Lakshmi. The principle of Vadakalais is as follows:

1) Goddess Lakshmi has three characteristics.

i) The first one is her recommending and pleading role to Lord Narayana on behalf of the Jivatma. (Purushakara).

ii) The second one is that she is herself the means for attaining salvation, just as Narayana is the means for attaining salvation (upaya).

iii) The third characteristic is that, she is also the object of attainment (upeya). In Sri Vaikunta, she and Narayana are served by the chetanas or Jivatmas after attaining moksha.

2) Lakshmi is Paramatma (along with Narayana); and is not Jivatma.

3) Lakshmi is also infinite in nature (vibhu), like Narayana.

**4. How does the Tenkalai view point differ from the above Vadakalai view point?**

The Tenkalais accept Lakshmi's role as a mediator, i.e. her recommendatory nature. They also accept that she, along with Narayana, is the object of attainment, in Paramapada.

But they do not accept the principle that she is also the means of attaining salvation; i.e., that she is also an upaya.

2) They say Lakshmi is a Jivatma.

3) Lakshmi is atomic in nature.

**5. What about Kaivalya?**

Yes, Another point of difference is about the status of the Jivatma who attains Kaivalya. Those who have performed Jnana Yoga perceive and enjoy their own souls. This is called Kaivalya.

4) Vadakalai school holds that Kaivalya is inferior to Paramapada or Moksha. It is not eternal; and the soul finally reaches Paramapada. So Kaivalya, according to the Vadakalai school, is situated outside Sri Vaikunta.

The Tenkalai school also accepts that Kaivalya is inferior. But they state that these souls enjoy Kaivalya eternally in the Paramapada or Sri Vaikunta only, in the outer most parts.

**6. What about bhakti and prapatti?**

5) The Vadakalai school accepts both bhakti and prapatti as the means for attainment of moksha.

The Tenkalai school does not accept bhakti as a means or upaya. They state that accepting or adopting bhakti yoga as a means is against the nature of the dependent soul. The soul is absolutely dependent on the Lord. So, he should not, by himself, adopt bhakti yoga.

**7. What about prapatti?**

6) The Vadakalai school states that prapatti has to be a positive, specific act of surrender, by the Jivatma to the Lord.

The Tenkalai school does not consider that a positive act of surrender is necessary. They say that i) knowledge of the essential nature of the Jivatma, and ii) mental acceptance (non-rejection) on the part of the Jivatma to Iswara granting him salvation, are required. So the Jivatma need not specifically adopt any means for salvation, as a positive act. He may, however, do good things and service to God, for the pleasure of the Lord.

**8. What about the point of getting the Lord's grace (Kripa)?**

7) The Vadakalai school holds that a positive effort is necessary, on the part of the Jivatma to attain the Lord's grace.

The Lord can be accused of partiality or unkindness, if He gives moksha to some and not to others. Further, the Lord cannot grant moksha to all people.

So, the Vadakalai school says that the Lord's grace has to have some reason, like the efforts by the individual soul.

The Tenkalai school says that the Lord's grace (kripa) is spontaneous. He grants moksha to those whom He likes.

The Vadakalai philosophy is compared with the practice of the monkey (markata nyaya). In the case of a monkey, the child must cling or attach itself to the mother. Similarly, the Jivatma has to make some efforts to gain Lord's grace.

The Tenkalai school is compared to the cat system. In the case of a cat, the mother cat holds the child cat, in its mouth and moves about (marjara nyaya). Similarly, Tenkalai school states that it is the Lord, who grants favours to those, whom He likes.

**9. What is the next point of difference?**

The next difference is the Lord's attitude towards the sinners.

8) The Tenkalai school states that the sins of a devotee are pleasing to the Lord; just like the dirt in the wife's body is pleasing to the husband; or the dirt in the calfs body is pleasing to the mother cow.

The Vadakalais say: The Lord ignores or does not see the sins of the devotee.

In the examples given, the husband or the mother cow does not hate the wife or the calf, respectively, because of the dirt. The dirt however is in due course cleaned. Similarly, the sins of a devotee are not seen by the Lord.

#### **10. What about performance of compulsory duties?**

Yes, another point of difference is about performance of compulsory duties, like Sandhyavandana and others.

9) The Tenkalai school holds that for an exalted person, who is ready to receive the Lord's grace, it is not an offence to give up the performance of these compulsory duties. But they do these compulsory duties, so as to set an example to ordinary persons; because, following the example of such great personalities others also should not give up their performance of compulsory duties.

The Vadakalai school holds that the performance of compulsory duties has been laid down by the sastras. So, these have to be done as laid down, by all persons. Non-performance of these is a sin, which will attract God's punishment.

#### **11. What about the interpretation of charama sloka?**

10) The Tenkalai school holds that in the first part in the charama sloka, "giving up all the dharmas" means that, all dharmas must be given up first, before seeking refuge in the Lord. The Vadakalai school states that these dharmas actually refer to the different vidyas, in the bhakti yoga. These vidyas have already been given up by the Jivatma, due to his inability; and that this is a statement of fact.

#### **12. How do they interpret the Lord's compassion (daya)?**

11) The Tenkalai school states that the Lord also grieves when a person is suffering. They quote the authority from Ramayana, where it is said that Rama becomes grief-stricken at the sorrow of human beings.

The Vadakalai school says: A person has to feel sorry, for somebody's grief, only if he is not able to remove the grief of the other person. When a person has the capacity to remove another man's grief, there is no need for him to feel sorry. He will remove the other man's grief.

Similarly, the Lord has got the powers to remove a person's grief. So, there is no need for Him to feel sorry. He will remove the grief of the human being.

It is stated in Ramayana, that Rama was feeling sorrow at the people's sorrow for two reasons:

1) Good people who see that in the avatars, like Rama or Krishna, He also feels sorry, develop further affection towards Rama or Krishna and thus do good deeds.

2) Bad, or wicked people, seeing the Lord also grieving, think that He is also a human being like themselves; and thus, do wicked things and suffer.

#### **13. What is meant by saying that the Lord is present Everywhere?**

The Vedas say that the Lord is smaller than the smallest; and is bigger than the biggest. The Lord is present everywhere.

12) The Vadakalai school states that the Lord's being inside an atom means that the Lord is present even in an atom. Similarly, when it is stated that the Lord is bigger than the biggest, or, infinite; this means that the Lord is also there, wherever such infinite things like Time are.

I have already explained these aspects earlier, as antar vyapti and bahir vyapti.

The Tenkalai school states that the Lord is also inside the atom and similarly He also envelops the infinite things, like Time, because of His special powers.

#### **14. Are these 12 the only points of difference between the two schools?**

Actually, there are 18 points of difference, but these are the more important.

I have only very broadly dealt with the points of difference, without going into details. As I already stated, the differences are more academic in nature and minor. They are not significant. Each school lays emphasis on certain aspects.

Sri Desika has also mentioned as follows: Among Sri Bhashyakara's (Ramanuja's) disciples, there are no differences on essential points. There are only differences in interpretation.

## Conclusion

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- 1. I now have a broad idea about the greatness of our philosophy and religion. I have a few doubts in regard to certain points which you mentioned. Now, there are certain passages, in our accepted authorities like the Vedas, Sastras, Puranas and Divya Prabandha, which appear to be mutually contradictory. So, which one should we take, as correct?**

We should understand that really there is no difference between these various authorities. We have to properly interpret, and reconcile the apparently contradictory statements.

In some cases, to praise a particular thing, the scriptures may overpraise it. In all such instances a proper interpretation will have to be done to resolve the apparent inconsistencies.

- 2. We have two types of duties. The first type consists of compulsory duties like sandhya vandana; and the other type of desirable duties, such as going to temples or making garlands for the Lord. Which is more important?**

Obviously, the compulsory duties are more important. Because, if these are not done, this results in sin (papa). But, if you do not do desirable activities, no sin accrues. Hence it is more important to do compulsory duties.

- 3. There are two types of duties: 1) One is, doing thing laid down by sastras. 2) The other is, not doing things, which are prohibited by sastras. Between the two, which is more important?**

It is more important to avoid things, which have been prohibited by sastras; like drinking liquor or taking meat. Doing things, as prescribed by sastras, comes next. It is only a question of degree and importance.

- 4. What is the importance of acharya and bhagavatas in our system of philosophy?**

The importance of acharya is even greater than that of God.

Bhagavatas or the disciples of God, have to be treated as even superior to the Lord. When such is the case, for bhagavatas or God's disciples; in the case of acharya, this is even more so and does not require any emphasis.

The highest respect is to be given to the acharya; and the service to the acharya is even more important than service to God.

- 5. How should the acharya treat a disciple?**

The acharya should test the disciple, as to whether he is really interested in our lofty principles. Then the acharya should teach him everything, without omission. Whatever he has been taught by his acharya, he should gladly teach his disciple, so that the disciple gets the full benefit.

- 6. Between the service to the archarya and service to the bhagavatas, which is more important?**

1) Service to the acharya is the most important.

2) Next comes service to bhagavatas.

3) After that only comes service to the Lord.



7. **It is generally accepted that serving somebody is not an act of happiness, and this has to be avoided. Then, how do we say that even in moksha, service is done to the Lord?**  
How does this service to the Lord and Lakshmi, give pleasure to jivatma?  
The statement that service to somebody produces unhappiness is only a general statement. There are exceptions.

When we do service to somebody, who is dear to us, it is not an act of unhappiness, but in reality it produces pleasure.

For example, a wife does service willingly to her husband, and derives a lot of pleasure in doing so.

Similarly, service to the Lord is also an act of pleasure.

8. **The Vedas, particularly Atharva Veda, have laid down acts, for achieving bad objectives like destruction of enemies. Why should the Vedas teach such bad things also?**

Actually, these are not normally to be followed. but the Vedas, being kind to humanity, want that they should study the Vedas and do good acts.

As an incentive for the ordinary people to develop faith in the Vedas, they have prescribed methods for achieving destruction of enemies. So, the bad persons, by following these methods, achieve their objective of defeat of enemies.

Then they develop faith in the Vedas. They then read the more important things, the jnana kanda. This will help them to develop faith in the good things and finally to do bhakti or prapatti and attain salvation.

The Gita also says that Veda is like a tank or lake. In the big tank or lake, we take only that much water, as is required for our bathing and drinking.

Similarly, the Vedas contain prayers or methods for different purposes; for defeat of enemies, for getting wealth or cows in this world, for getting svarga after death, for attaining moksha, and so on.

We must only follow what will help us in our goal in life, just as we would take only as much water from the tank as is required.

9. **Just as we do not adopt what is mentioned about destruction of enemies, in the Vedas, can we say that we should not adopt bhakti yoga also?**

The two are entirely different. Bhakti yoga has been prescribed as a means for attaining moksha. Different vidyas, in the bhakti yoga, have also been described at length. These are for the ultimate objective of attaining moksha.

So, this cannot be compared with the procedure laid down in the Vedas regarding destruction of enemies; since Bhakti yoga is one of the means of attaining salvation.

10. **It is said that bhakti yoga has to be performed throughout this life; and, perhaps, in the following lives also, until salvation is attained. But prapatti has to be done only once and is sure of giving salvation at the end of this life itself. Thus, prapatti seems to be much simpler, as compared to bhakti yoga.**

Yes, in one way, what you say is correct. But you should have absolute faith in the efficacy of prapatti; and you have also to adopt the accessories, like decision to do what is pleasing to the Lord; to avoid, what is not pleasing to the Lord. So, the adoption of these accessories,

particularly the absolute and full faith, is also very difficult. In any case, we go by the sastras and we accept the truth of what is mentioned in the sastras.

**11. I have heard that everyday, we have to do five kinds of service to the Lord. What are they?**

They are 1) Abhigamana 2) Upadana 3) Ijya 4) Svadhyaya 5) Yoga.

1) Abhigamana – First in the morning after bath and sandhyavandana, we pray to god that all services required to be done to Him during the day should be done without any hindrance.

2) Upadana – The next is to collect flowers, tulasi and other accessories for the aradhana of the Lord. Also, we read or learn the sacred works of the Alvars and Acharyas.

3) Ijya – The third is to perform aradhana to the Lord.

4) Svadhyaya – The fourth is to read in the afternoon the vedantic portions; and discuss with like-minded people, philosophy and deeper meanings of the texts.

5) Yoga – The fourth is to bed, meditating on the holy feet of the Lord; and thinking that we are keeping our head at the Lord's feet.

**12. I agree that doing the compulsory duties and karmas, like sandhyavandana, is necessary; because it is ordained in the sastras; and their non-performance will result in the displeasure to the Lord and invite punishment by the Lord. But, what is the need for doing recommended duties, like going to the temple, lighting up the lamps in the temple, presenting garlands to the Lord in the temple?**

I agree that such duties are not compulsory, but are only recommended. so, if such duties are not performed, they will not result in any displeasure to the Lord or invite punishment by the Lord.

But, if such things are done, they result in the pleasure to the Lord. So, such recommended duties should also be performed for the pleasure of the Lord.

**13. You have been telling me the basic principles of our philosophy and religion. What would you advise, regarding the books to be referred to, for further details?**

There are four most important books, which we should study under an Acharya. These are:

1) Sri Ramanuja's commentary on Brahma Sutra, called "Sri Bhashya".

2) Sri Ramanuja's commentary on Bhagavad Gita, called "Gita Bhashya".

3) The commentary of Kurukesa(Pillan) on Tiruvaimozhi of Nammalwar. Because the whole Tiruvaimozhi is concerning the Lord and His auspicious qualities, this commentary is called "Bhagavad Vishayam" or "subject concerning the Lord".

4) "Rashasya Traya Sara" or "The essence of the three secrets" of Sri Desika.

By learning the above four sacred works, the principles of our philosophy will be well understood. Also, the view points of other systems of philosophy, and how they are refuted by us, can also be learnt. It is our sacred duty to learn these works under the feet of an Acharya.

**14. My holidays are coming to a close. Have you still got much left?**

Knowledge is an ocean. However much you read, you find that you have to read and learn a lot more. I have so far told you the important principles of our Visishtadvaita philosophy and Sri Vaishnavite way of life, broadly called religion.

I will be very happy, if what I have told could induce a further desire in you, to learn more and more about our sacred religion and philosophy.

I want that our talks so far, should kindle in you an interest to learn more and more, and benefit by them.

I wish you all the best.

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