

Divine Discourse Date: d6 Sep 1996
Ways of the Divine: Advent of Sankara

Clay is one substance. But out of it a variety of products with different names and shapes can be made. Likewise, out of gold a variety of ornaments can be made. The same white milk is got out of cows of different colors. The Supreme Self is one, but dwells in innumerable bodies, with different names and forms.

If you examine the cosmic scene, you will find that out of the same basic substance a variety of objects with different forms are produced. For instance, out of a single seed, comes a tree with various branches, leaves, flowers and fruits. These different things vary in form, name and use. But they have all come from one seed.

Ekoham Bahusyaam. The One chose to become the many. There are three factors involved in this. For making a pot, a potter is the cause (the instrument for its making). The potter is the cause and the pot is the effect. The base for the production of the pot is clay. The pot may break but the clay remains as such.

Out of the permanent substance, clay, the potter makes a pot. The fate of the pot does not affect the potter. The clay in the pot also remains as such. The analogy applies equally to gold, the goldsmith, and the jewels made from gold. On the same analogy, God is the changeless creator who creates the innumerable objects in creation which are subject to changes in names and forms. The relations between the three entities involved should be properly understood. The potter cannot make a pot without clay. No pot can be made if there is clay alone but no potter. Both potter and clay are necessary for making a pot.

The Creator is the instrumental cause of creation (*nimitha-kaarana*). The bodies are like the pots. They are used for various purposes and are a source of enjoyment. But, like the pots, the bodies are perishable. When their time is up, they fall away. But the Creator is permanent. The elements out of which the bodies were made remain. Only the bodies have gone. The bodies are capable of being put to good or bad uses.

FIVE FORMS OF THE LORD

Divinity has five names. The first is *Paranaamam*. Second, *Vyuhanaamam*. Third is, *Vibhavanaamam*. Fourth, *Antharaatmanaama*. Fifth, *Archananaama*. The Divine functions in the cosmos in these five names.

Paranaamam refers to the abode of the Supreme, *Vaikunta*. *Vaikunta* means that which is unchanging. There the Supreme Lord dwells under the name *Paranaamam*. No one can enter that abode of the Lord. The Lord dwells there as an effulgence. He oversees everything. But He is not visible to anyone and no one can see His form.

The second is: *Vyuhanaamam*. This name refers to the Lord who reclines on a serpent on the ocean of milk. The Lord in this form can be seen only by *Devas* (the various deities). Only those with special powers can see the Lord here. Ordinary beings cannot do so. But the Lord in His *Vyuha* form fulfills the desires of the *Devas*. You are aware of the story of Hiranyakasipu. He was harassing the *Devas* in various ways. So, they went to the Lord's couch on the ocean of milk and prayed to Him. In answer to their prayers the Lord agreed to incarnate on earth.

Third is: *Vibhavanaamam*. This refers to the various human forms in which the Lord incarnates on earth as Avatars of Rama and Krishna to protect the good and punish the wicked and turn them to the righteous path. The incarnations that are adored as the ten Avatars belong to this category of *Vaibhavanaama*. In this form, the Lord manifests the relationship between God and the devotees.

The fourth is: *Antaraatmanaama*. In this form, the Lord pervades every part of a human being as an indwelling spirit. This indwelling spirit is Divine.

The fifth is: *Archananaamam*. This refers to the form in which the Divine can be worshipped, praised and adored for securing His grace.

MAN THROUGH THE AEONS

Avatars of the Lord in these different forms have been manifesting themselves for aeons and aeons. This may be quite astonishing to children of today. For instance, when they hear about the state of things in the *Kritha Yuga* they will feel that they are amazing and incredible. Human beings in that age used to live for hundreds of years. Moreover, their bodies were not as small as in this age. They were gigantic figures, with arms as long as six feet. What kind of life did they lead? In the *Kritha Yuga*, life remained in the body as long as the bones were intact. All other parts of the body may disintegrate, but life remained in the skeleton.

In *Tretha Yuga*, the height of human beings was less. The longevity was also less. Life remained as long as muscles and flesh remained in the body.

In *Dwapara Yuga*, life remained as long as blood circulated in the body. As you may know, Bhishma lay on a bed of arrows after he had been wounded in the Kurukshetra war. As long as blood remained in his body, he lived. His life lasted for 56 days.

In the *Kali Age*, life lasts as long as there is food in the body. Without food man cannot survive.

In *Kritha* and *Tretha Yugas*, men had intimate relationship with God. Food was not so important. In *Dwapara Yuga*, the head became important.

In the *Kritha* and *Tretha Yugas*, *Dharma* was all-important. *Dharma moolam idam jagath*. The cosmos is based on *Dharma*. In *Dwapara Yuga*, the decline started and wealth became all important. *Dhana moolam idam jagath*. The world is founded on wealth. The war between the Kauravas and the Pandavas was over property rights.

In the *Kali Age*, neither *Dharma* nor *Dhana* (wealth) is as important as *Daya*, Compassion. It is because of the absence of compassion that the world today is afflicted with so many troubles.

THE ADVENT OF SANKARA

In the early centuries of the *Kali Age*, Buddhism and Jainism were predominant religions. At that time, a young child was born in a village called Kaladi in Kerala to a couple, Sivaguru and Aryaamba. In those days, there used to be frequent wars between Kings of different territories. These wars generated hatred between peoples of different regions. The feeling of national unity was lost. With the loss of unity, all kinds of bad practices developed. Untruth, injustice, dishonesty and disreputable conduct became the order of the day. Nor was that all. Even the learned *pundits*, scholars and intellectuals of the time started interpreting the Vedas in perverse ways. The very face of the scriptures was blackened. With the result that the people's faith in the Vedas and scriptures was undermined.

At such times, God or a divinely inspired saint or messiah makes His advent on earth to reform the wicked and restore the reign of *Dharma*. Such incarnations are known as *Archananaama* forms of the Divine. In this *Archananaama* form, the manifestations are regarded as *Amsa-avathars* - manifestations of aspects of the Divine.

The *Vibhava avatars* (like Rama and Krishna) are *Purna-avatars* (total manifestations of the Divine). The *Archa-avatars* are *Amsa-avatars* (or partial manifestations). Such *avatars* incarnate from time to time, not only in India but in all countries.

Jesus declared at first that He was a messenger of God. Who are these messengers? They are of two kinds. *Avadhutha* and *Yamadutha*. *Yamaduthas* are messengers who inflict harm on people. *Avadhuthas* are messengers who protect. Jesus belonged to the second category. In due course,

he recognized his own inner divinity. Then he declared: I am the Son of God. Thereby he proclaimed his right to a share in all the qualities of God. When he acquired all the qualities of the Divine, he announced: I and my Father are one.

The same threefold progress can be seen in the pronouncements of Zoroaster. First, he declared: I am in the light. Then he said: The light is in me. Finally he declared: I am the light. These declarations can be compared to the three systems of Indian philosophy: Dualism, Qualified Non-dualism and Non-dualism. In propagating the doctrine of Non-dualism, Sankara considered himself a servant of God.

SANKARA AND HIS GURU

Sankara's father, Sivaguru, passed away when Sankara was barely three years old. In this context, it is interesting to note how the Divine operates. Ten days before his passing, Sivaguru had a vision of an effulgence. The effulgence conveyed a message to Sivaguru. Perform the *Upanayanam* of your son, was the message. Sivaguru hurriedly arranged to have the *Upanayanam* performed for the three-year old child. The little boy started reciting the *Gayathri Mantra*.

After the passing of Sivaguru, the grief-stricken mother devoted herself to bringing up the little boy. She took him to a guru, who taught the boy all kinds of scriptural knowledge. By the time he was 16, Sankara had completed study of the four Vedas and the six systems of philosophy. Normally even 50 years would not have sufficed for such study. Sankara was a prodigy. He could grasp anything at the first mention of the subject. Even the guru was astonished at the boy's genius.

Meanwhile, the mother was anxious to get the boy married and broached the subject with the guru. The boy was totally opposed to marriage. I want to be a *sanyasi* (renunciant) he said. I want to dedicate my body, mind and all else to God. They are all gifts of God. I have surrendered myself to God.

SANKARA'S SANYASA

The mother was in deep distress over the son's resolve. One day she was going to the river to fetch water. The young Sankara followed her earnestly pleading: O Mother! permit me to take to *sanyasa*. She did not agree. When she got into the river for her bath, Sankara jumped into the river and going down the river for a while, he raised one hand and shouted: Mother, a crocodile has caught hold of me. At least now permit me to become a *sanyasi*. The mother said: If you can be saved from the crocodile by taking to *sanyasa*, you better do so, so that you may live. Sankara then came out of the river and told his mother: In the ocean of *samsara* I was about to be drowned by a crocodile in the form of a wife. When you let me become a *sanyasi* I was free from the hold of the crocodile. No one could marry a *sanyasi*.

Sanyasa does not mean a mere change in the color of the robe. It is really a change in one's qualities. Sankara prostrated before his mother and took her leave to embark on his career as an ascetic. At that time, the mother made Sankara take a pledge that he should come and see her at her last moments.

TRIUMPHAL TOUR

Sankara set out on his wanderings, visiting all the sacred shrines in the land. All travel had to be done by foot. He went to every assemblage of scholars and vanquished them in debates. He propagated the *Advaitic* doctrine. He declared: The bodies are different, the forms are different, but the inner Self is one alone. The Divine is present in all like sugarcane juice, which is the same, regardless of the cane from which it is got.

He had an encounter with Mandana Misra, who was an upholder of the *Karma siddhaantha* (the doctrine of action). He defeated Mandana Misra in the debate.

In this manner, Sankara went all over the country, from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, several times. He convinced the scholars of the truth of Non-dualism. *Ekam eva Advitheeyam* (The Self is one only; there is no second).

Adi Sankara was able to convince all the scholars about the truth of *Advaita*. People are deluded by the multiplicity of names and forms. But the basis for all this diversity is the one Divine. Without the basis nothing can exist. This fact is recognized by all faiths. God is one and the goal is one. The doctrine of *Advaita* is not easily understood. It has to be explained to the students in simple and intelligible terms.

Sankara passed away at the early age of 32. But he had completed the mission for which he had come. Before his passing, he collected five *lingas* and installed them in five different centers: Puri, Dwaraka, Sringeri, Benares and Kanchi. At Kanchi he installed the *Yoga Linga*. One of the pontiffs was Suresa, who was none other than Mandana Misra before he took to *sanyasa*.

By establishing these mutts and promoting the sense of spiritual oneness among the people, Adi Sankara promoted harmony in the country. Unfortunately some of his disciples started distorting Sankara's doctrines and attributing their own views to Sankara. Vidyaranya was also a disciple of Sankara. Ultimately the disciples fell apart and opposed each other's views.

Similarly, among Christ's eleven disciples differences developed and they fell apart. Only Matthew remained true to Jesus. He propagated the gospel. Peter was the first among Jesus's disciples. But he denied Christ when the authorities questioned him.

Ramanuja who came after Sankara enunciated a modified version of Sankara's Non-dualism. Then came Madhvacharya, who propounded dualism. (*Swami said that He would be explaining their doctrines in subsequent discourses*).

[Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the song: *Bhaja Govindam*]

Divine Discourse Dated:7 Sep 1996

The Glorious Saga of Sankara

When the branch of a tree rubs against another branch incessantly, fire emerges from the branches. When you repeatedly churn buttermilk you get butter from which ghee is got. By engaging one's self in a continuous process of enquiry one realizes the Divinity within. [Telugu Poem]

By perseverance anything can be accomplished (says a Telugu proverb). The Gita declares that by repeated practice one acquires the wisdom that ultimately leads to renunciation (Thyaaga). Every activity in life is based on practice. Likewise, to realize the Divine constant practice is necessary. Mere repetition of the Lord's name is not enough. Devotion should express itself in social service. Any service done with social well-being in mind will become service to God. The one Self dwells in a myriad bodies like butter in milk, oil in til (sesame) seeds, fragrance in a flower, sweet juice in a fruit and fire in wood (Sanskrit sloka). This is the truth proclaimed by Vedanta. Today, modern youth, not realizing this truth, are wasting their lives in every way.

Adi Sankara demonstrated that underlying all forms, names and qualities, there is one basic reality which alone is real and changeless. This is the doctrine of Advaita or Nondualism. Out of a mango seed comes a tree with branches, leaves, flowers and fruit each with distinct forms and uses. But all the myriad things that have come from the seed owe their existence to the seed from which the tree arose. This truth was declared by Krishna in the Gita when He said: Beejam Maam Sarvabhoothaanaam (I am the seed that is the origin of all beings.) All things in the universe are manifestations of the One Divine.

Yesterday I related the story of how Adi Sankara took to sanyasa at an early age and came to his guru, Govinda. The preceptor for Govinda was Gaudapaada. Gaudapaada distinguished the Riks in Rig Veda which proclaimed the oneness of the Divine. Sankara received this teaching from Govinda and mastered all the Vedas and Sastras by his fourteenth year. Earnest pursuit of knowledge leads to total understanding (Jnaana).

DEBATE WITH PRECEPTOR

One day, to test Sankara's mastery of the scriptures Govinda engaged Sankara in a philosophical debate. It was a debate between the preceptor and the disciple. Sankara was full of humility and reverence for the guru. Hence, before entering on the debate he prostrated before the preceptor and prayed to him for permission to argue with him. With the guru's sanction he began his argument with amazing skill and demolished, with due scriptural authority, the propositions of the preceptor and presented his views in accordance with Vedic authorities with due regard to worldly understanding and showed how the inward (Nivrithi) path could be harmonized with the external (Pravrithi) path.

A LESSON FOR PANDITS

Sankara was deeply perturbed over the conduct of great Vedic scholars of those times who were more concerned about making a money out of their scriptural scholarship than to gain spiritual wisdom from it. They forgot that knowledge should not be used for commercial purposes. Even today many students consider education as a means for earning a living. This is utterly wrong. One should work for a living. But knowledge should be sought for acquiring wisdom. Sankara sought to bring about a change in the use of scriptural knowledge.

Of what use is the acquisition of all kinds of knowledge if one does not think of God and use his hands for the adoration of the Divine. All such knowledge is a sheer waste. (Telugu Poem)

Sankara was deeply distressed over the conduct of the scholars. His preceptor Govinda observed Sankara's sadness. Govinda's guru, Gaudapaada, also felt unhappy over this state of things. Both of them were elated at the sublime feelings of the young Sankara. They both realized that Sankara was best qualified to use the sacred teachings of the Vedas to combat the prevailing unrighteous and immoral tendencies in the society. They summoned Sankara and told him: Child! There is no need for you to stay here any longer. Leave for Kaasi (Varanasi) tomorrow. You must meet the great pundits in Kaasi and propagate the doctrine to the whole world. Nobody else can carry out this mission.

Students today should realize that they are the most powerful instruments for rectifying all the evils rampant in our society today.

THE JOURNEY TO KAASI

With the permission of the two preceptors, Sankara set out for Kaasi. No modern means of transport were available in those days. Sankara had to walk all the way to Benares. The sixteen- year old lad gathered his disciples and left for Kaasi. On the way he saw a pundit sitting under a tree and cramming the rules of grammar. At that moment, he began composing the famous hymn Bhaja Govindam. (Swami recited the opening stanza from Bhaja Govindam). You dull-witted fellow! Why do you immerse yourself in the rules of grammar? They will not save you when death knocks at the door. Instead, worship Govinda! At the time of death nothing and nobody will follow the departing soul when it leaves the body. Only the remembrance of the name of the Lord will keep you company at all times. Sankara advised the pundit to chant the name of the Lord instead of conning (committing to memory) the rules of grammar.

After teaching him this lesson, Sankara proceeded to Kaasi with his disciples. Sankara's teachings were spreading far and wide. The pundits of Benares arranged for a grand assembly of scholars in the holy city. Many scholars had gathered there in all their regalia. Nothing was lacking in terms of ostentation at that assembly. Sankara entered in a simple way, wearing a dhoti covering up to his knees and a towel over his shoulder. On seeing him, the pundits seemed to feel that it was all a joke. Some pundits remarked: He does not even wear a rudraakshamaala (a garland of prayer beads). A pundit should have an imposing figure. What is it that this stripling can tell us?. They addressed him thus: We have come to know that you are proficient in all the Vedas and Sastras, an authority on grammar and logic and a great exponent of the Advaita doctrine.

SANKARA AND THE SCHOLARS

Sankara then sang the Bhaja Govindam songs, pointing out the transitory nature of material wealth and exhorting all to give up worldly desires. He declared that pundits should be equal-minded and should give up the desire for wealth, which is the result of one's actions. Give up this thirst for money Develop the thirst for God, declared Sankara in strident terms. Then he gave a superb exposition of the metaphysics of Advaita.

All the pundits and their disciples were astonished at the performance of the young Sankara. They realized that here was one who was not only a great teacher but one who practiced what he taught. This unity in thought, word and deed is the mark of greatness. Sankara was the very embodiment of unity and purity in thought, speech and action.

Many pundits got up and plied Sankara with questions. He answered them all with perfect ease. He declared that Advaita means oneness of the spirit and awareness of this oneness is true wisdom (Jnaana). Spiritual wisdom alone is true wisdom. pundits today, he declared, are not having this realization.

EXPOSITION OF ADVAITA

Sankara pointed out that though names and forms may be many, the Self is one only. That Self resides in everyone's heart. He exhorted the pundits to purify their hearts and follow the dictates of the conscience. Sankara made it clear that creeds may vary but God is one.

Sankara called upon the pundits to be content with moderate incomes and not hanker after riches. Vast knowledge and petty desires go ill together.

STUDENTS' DUTY

Students should realize how a young lad born in Kaladi brought greatness to Kerala and Bharat.

Students should cultivate human values like love, compassion, righteousness and truth and become truly human. Every student should strive to lead an ideal life like Sankara.

In this context, I should like to mention that in Bhaja Govindam Sankara commends renunciation of all worldly attachments. People may feel that Swami is telling the students these unworldly teachings. This does not worry me, because what I am saying is the Truth. Is renunciation acquired so easily? No. People who have been listening for years have not changed to the slightest extent. To imagine that a single discourse is going to make a big change is fanciful. Only a fortunate few experience such transformation. If real renunciation is promoted in anyone, there can be no greater blessing than that.

Nearness to God will inspire the spirit of renunciation even without one being conscious of it. In that renunciation lies fulfillment. And one's life is redeemed.

[Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajan: Siva, Siva, Siva, Siva Anaraadaa".]

Divine Discourse Dated:8 Sep 1996

Veda and Vedanta

One may have mastered the Vedas
Or be a versatile writer
But, without purity of mind
He will take to bad ways.
Hearken, oh son of Bharat.
To this good counsel.

Embodiments of Love,

Sankara propagated the view that the *Vedas* uphold dualism (*Dvaita*) and *Vedanta* teaches non-dualism (*Advaita*) on the basis of citations from the scriptural texts. The difference between the *Vedas* and *Vedanta* is like the differences between various organs in the same body. The eyes, the ears, the nose, the arms and the feet are different parts of the body. The individual is a limb of society. Society is a limb of humanity. Humanity is a part of Nature (or the phenomenal world). Nature is a limb of the Supreme Self (*Paramaatma*).

In Kaasi (Vaaraanasi), at the assembly of scholars, debates raged over many philosophical issues. Amused at this spectacle, Sankara remarked: *Vaade Vaade Vardhathe Vairam* (Enmity grows with controversy). Continuous disputation only results in increasing bitterness among the disputants. Argumentation is not the proper method for settling spiritual issues.

DUALISM OF THE VEDAS

Man is obliged to resolve problems in life. In daily existence man will never be free from worry. From birth to death man is confronted continuously with worries. The only way out of them is for people to develop love of God [*Swami recited a Telugu poem in this context*]. Love is the sovereign remedy for all ills. The *Vedas*, however, have not given sufficient importance to this love. Their emphasis is more on aspiration (*aasayam*) than on experience (*anubhavam*). There are innumerable *Vedic* scholars who ceaselessly chant the *Vedas*. All this is verbal and not concerned with active practice. This attitude was described by Sankara as dualism (*Dvaita*). All the *Vedic mantras* were in the form of prayers for favors. (I want this, I want that). Desire is at the root of dualism. Desire arises because of the feeling that there is the other. The one who desires and the object that is desired are two things apart from each other. True non-dualism is the extinction of this separation by the unification of the subject and the object. Dualism exists when the object that is desired, for instance, a kerchief, is distinct from the person who desires it.

NON-DUALISM

Non-dualism is a state of consciousness which can only be experienced and not described in words. In this regard, the *Advaitin* is like a dumb man who has enjoyed a delightful dinner but cannot describe the taste of the dishes he has consumed. There are two kinds of proof for the existence of anything. *Prathyaksham* (direct perception) and *Paroksham* (indirect proof). The bliss derived from the *Advaitic* consciousness is beyond words. It can only be experienced, but cannot be described or explained. In this matter, if indirect proof did not exist, direct perception would be out of the question. Unfortunately, today people attach value to direct perception alone and have scant regard for indirect evidence. This is not the right attitude. For instance, one sees a block of ice. It appears solid, but it is entirely made up of water, which is a liquid. Thus water, whose presence is inferred indirectly, is the basis for the solid block of ice that is seen by direct perception. Thus it can be realized that what is indirect is the basis for what is perceived directly.

Likewise, for this visible phenomenal universe, the invisible basis is the Divine. Not recognizing this truth, men go by the *Vedic* conception of dualism instead of recognizing the truth of the *Vedantic* doctrine of non-dualism.

Man spends his life immersed in worldly affairs. To point out to mankind the more vital inward path, Sankara dedicated his life. His preceptor, Gaudapada, gave Sankara all help and encouragement. Despite being young in years, Sankara showed great determination and strength of conviction. At the age of 16 he could convince the venerable *pundits* of Kasi about the validity of the *Advaitic* doctrine. What is *Advaita*? The oneness of everything is *Advaita*. The scriptures have declared that the whole cosmos is permeated by the Divine. It is the desire of devotees to worship the Divine under different forms and names that is the reason for the various creeds and sects.

THE FORM AND THE SUBSTANCE

An affluent devotee, filled with dualistic feelings, adored the form of Krishna. He wished to offer worship regularly to an idol of Krishna. He got a gold idol of Krishna made by a goldsmith out of 20 coins. He got a golden cow made to match the idol. He got made a peacock and a golden cup to perform the *abhishekam* for the idol, both of the same weight as the idol. Everyday he used to perform the *abhishekam* and enjoy the worship of Krishna. But the tide of time brought in its wake a decline in his fortunes and he found himself nearly destitute. He collected all his golden articles of worship and took them to another rich man to sell them. Each of the four items was weighed and valued at Rs. 60,000 each. The old devotee could not bear to learn that his revered Krishna idol was valued at the same price as the cow, the peacock and the cup. He said that more should be paid for the Krishna idol. The intending purchaser said: Sir, for you the Krishna form is more precious than the other. But for me only the weight matters, not the form. What is happening in the world today is that men are attaching value to the external forms and not to the Divine substance which is common to all of them. The five elements constituting every being are Divine. Apart from the five elements there is no sixth element. People imagine that there is a sixth element and go after it. This crazy desire is the cause of much of man's misery. Desires are inescapable.

But there should be a limit for them. [*In this context Bhagavan related the story of Midas who prayed and got a boon that whatever he touched should turn into gold. He soon found that he could not even eat his food as it turned into gold at his touch. He prayed again to the good fairy to take back the boon she had given to him.*]

It is evident from this story what will be the grave consequences of insatiable desires. Those who act up to Divine injunctions will be happy and prosperous.

Sankara, therefore, warned mankind against the mad pursuit of wealth and exhorted everyone to reduce one's desires. [*Swami sang a song. One gets wealth according to his Karma. Therefore be content with what you get.*].

CONTROL OF DESIRES

Control your desires. Cultivate love of God. That love will confer on you everything according to your needs. There is no need for you to ask for anything from God. Did He not give to Sabari what she needed without her asking? Did He not bless Jataayu with His grace?" [*Telugu Poem*]] Dasaratha had prayed for so long that his son should perform the last rites for him. But he did not get it, while the bird Jataayu had the privilege of getting his last rites done at Rama's hands. Jataayu got liberation after receiving the saving drops of water from Rama. [*Swami related the story of how Sabari was eagerly waiting for the arrival of Rama and how she made all the arrangements to welcome him and offer him the sweetest fruits.*] Sabari's intense devotion to Rama got its reward.

God confers His grace according to each (*Anugraha*) and not anger (*Aagraha*). But devotees tend to judge the ways of God according to their own predilections. A man standing before a mirror will see his moods reflected in the mirror.

No one can escape from the consequences of his actions whatever efforts he may make to run away from them. [Swami sang a song with the refrain, *Karmadaata vasamaa, narudaa* (Is it possible to escape from Karma, oh man?) As are your actions, so are the reactions].

In the cosmic context, nature is the mirror. God is the viewer. All that is reflected in nature is Divine. The One alone exists. The object and the image appear because of the presence of the mirror. When there is no mirror there is no image. This is the mystery relating to nature and the wonders of the Lord. The glories of the Lord are multifarious and marvelous beyond words.

God's arithmetic is different from man's. For instance, when a mirror is placed before you, you have three entities. Yourself, the mirror and your image. When you take away the mirror, according to ordinary arithmetic, three minus one should be two. But when the mirror is removed only you remain. Three minus one becomes one!

Many people think, many people say: Money makes many many things. But I say: Money makes many wrongs. Only when the distinction between the worldly point of view and the Divine point of view is understood will people learn to make proper use of money.

YOU AND I ARE ONE

This is the distinctive significance of Sankara's non-dualism. Sankara related the experiences of daily life to the doctrine of spiritual oneness (*Ekatvam*). The Divine is one, but is adored under different names and forms: Allah, Jesus, Buddha, Zoroaster, Rama, Hari or Hara. All are the same. Sankara did not approve of God being described as mother, father, etc. The relationship between God and man is oneness. You and I are one. This is the essence of the *Advaitic* doctrine. This awareness of oneness can give infinite joy, according to Sankara.

This experience does not come easily. One has to undertake intensive enquiry and also practice spiritual discipline (*samskaaras*). When the *samskaaras* lead to the refinement of the spirit, the experience of oneness with the Divine comes. How fortunate is the one who gets that experience! None can be more fortunate.

The one who gets this experience is the Lord of the universe. As the Master of the Self he is the Lord of the Cosmos. This *Atma* is present in every cell of the human body. When this nectarine truth is realized, man will not seek the ephemeral. Everyone should therefore seek the nectar of enduring *Atmic* bliss. Sankara made all endeavors to propagate the *Advaitic* message to the entire country and to every person whether he was a king or a commoner, scholar or ignoramus.

PLEDGE TO THE MOTHER

Sankara had given a pledge to his mother that he would reach her in her last moments and perform the last rites for her. Being a pure and high-souled being, he was determined to keep his word. For the pure-hearted the plighted word is bound to be kept. Moreover, whatever they say will happen.

[Bhagavan related an episode from the *Mahabharata* to indicate that the Divine chooses the time and the situation for showering His grace and conveying His message. In the case of Arjuna, the *Kurukshetra* war was the right moment for Krishna to test Arjuna's total faith in Krishna and his deservedness for receiving the message of the *Gita*].

[Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajan: *Hey! Girijaapathi Bhavaani Sankara*]

Divine Discourse Dated:9 Sep 1996

Sankara's Call to Youth

What does it matter
If the petty-minded
Slight noble souls?
Does the mighty elephant lose
Its grandeur when dogs bark?

Embodiments of the Divine Atma!

All objects in the world which you see display some kind of color. We think that these colors are natural to those objects. It is not so. The colors are really a reflection of our own vision. The sky appears blue when we look at it. The ocean appears dark blue in color. We say that the sky is blue, the ocean is blue. This is incorrect. Neither the sky, nor the ocean is blue in color. It is the vastness of space and the depths of the ocean which produce this impression of bluishness. When you take a handful of sea water and look at it you will find that it is colorless. It will not show the color that you fancy.

Likewise, good and evil depend on thoughts and feelings. The true color of any object is not perceivable. Equally, the true form is not apparent.

Electrical energy is generated from a hydro-electric power station. The electric current is not visible to us, though the different uses to which the energy is put are obvious. Likewise, all beings, all living creatures, emerge from the *Atmic* Principle. But this Principle is not apparent. We can see the beings arising from this Principle and their behavior, good and bad.

A PROMISE FULFILLED

After Sankara propagated his *Advaitic* doctrine from Kaasi, there was an assembly of great scholars in the holy city. Sankara, who was in that assembly, closed his eyes for a moment and experienced the vision of his mother in great distress. Immediately he dispersed the assembly and left for Kaladi. He reached his mother in her last moments, as promised, administered *tulasi* water to her lips and discharged his duties to the mother.

At that time, the people of Kaladi did not view with approval the actions of Sankara, because in their view, one who had taken to *sanyaasa*, should not revert to the activities of a householder and perform rituals. "*Sanyaasa*" means giving up all desires. The view of the orthodox *pundits* was that once a person had taken to synapse he should not perform the last rites for a mother or a father, which are the obligations of a householder.

To enable the students to understand the implications of this incident, I shall explain what *sanyaasa* means. Before one takes to *sanyaasa*, the "*Viraga Homa*" is performed which signifies that the person dies, as it were, and gives up all his previous worldly commitments and enters on a new life, assuming a new form and wearing a new robe. The old form is cast away and the former name is also given up. He gets a new name related to the ascetic order. The suffix "*Ananda*" is tacked on to the name, though few of them experience *Ananda*! After going through this ceremony, where is the place for mother or father?

SWAMI' S VISIT TO HRISHIKESH

In this context, I should like to recall an incident which happened when I was traveling with Burugula Ramakrishna Rao, the then Governor of Uttar Pradesh. He was a good devotee and was proficient in a

number of languages. He was a very intelligent person. He resolved to make the trip to Badrinath and Kedarnath "in the company of the Lord Himself (Bhagavan Baba)". On learning that Swami was going to Badrinath nearly 200 devotees joined Bhagavan's group. The Ramakrishna Rao couple were very pure and pious people and every day they would take their food only after the 200 devotees with Swami had taken their food. Such was their devotion! When the devotees sat for the meals, Ramakrishna Rao himself would serve water for all of them. He would not allow his ADC or others to do this service. He used to declare: "I am a servant of Swami, not a Governor".

RAMAKRISHNA RAO'S HUMILITY

Ramakrishna Rao was previously Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh at Hyderabad. When Swami went there during that period, thousands of persons were lined up in a queue for *darshan* of Swami at Malakpet. The volunteers were hustling the devotees in the queue to save time. I should like the students to realize what a tender heart Ramakrishna Rao had. He joined the queue. The Inspector General of Police approached Ramakrishna Rao and appealed to him to come separately and not join in the queue. Ramakrishna Rao told him: "Politically I may be Chief Minister. Spiritually I am a cheap devotee! I am not such a great devotee". Such was the devotional spirit of Ramakrishna Rao !

SWAMI AND SIVANANDA

All of us reached Hrishikesh. Ramakrishna Rao had arranged for the stay of the entire party in a big guest house and nearby cottages. At that time, Sivananda and a group of his devotees came to the guest house and requested Swami to visit Swami Sivananda's ashram the next day, which happened to be Sivananda's seventieth birthday. Swami remarked: "It is not Sivananda's birthday but Kuppuswamy's birthday. Before he assumed the name Sivananda, as a renunciant, his name was Kuppuswamy. He was a doctor. That Kuppuswamy ceased to exist with the taking of *sanyaasa*. He then adopted the name Sivananda. That was 26 years ago. Hence, the Swami is only 26 years old as Sivananda. It is the 70th Birthday for Kuppuswamy and only the 26th Birthday for Sivananda". Sivananda said: "Swami! No one has told me this truth so far in this forceful manner".

This body is 70 years old. People recognize the physical, but do not recognize the basis that sustains it. This truth can be understood only by Divine personalities like *avataars* and not by others. From the moment of birth till the end of this body it will bear one form, and one name.

People who profess *Advaita*, often remember their pre-*sanyasa* life and continue to think of it while carrying on their life as renunciants.

CREMATION IN THE BACKYARD

Sankara was confronted with a difficult situation. No one in his village was willing to help him. He had to perform the obsequies for his mother. The local *Nambudiri Brahmins* declared that they could not touch the body. They felt that Sankara was going against scriptural injunctions. Utterly helpless, Sankara carried the body himself to the backyard of the house and cremated it. What Sankara did then is practiced even today in Kaladi. When any elders pass away, their bodies are cremated in the backyard of their houses. There is no separate cremation ground for them. When you go to Kerala you will find houses facing the street but the backyard will be open space. Anyone who goes there will have to take a purificatory bath. In this manner Sankara fulfilled the promise he gave to his mother.

S

ankara then left for Kaasi. He was deeply pained at the attitude displayed towards him by the people of Kaladi. Sankara was walking all the way to Kaasi, with just a stick in his hand and an oil torch to light his way at night.

ADVICE TO THE YOUNG

Looking at young men and women going about on his way, Sankara remarked to his disciples that young people were more keen about sensuous pleasures than to enquire about the *Atma*. It is a pity that people

are attached to the body which is a container of many filthy objects. They are carried away by the external physical attraction of the body. It is a crying shame! What a pity that people should be so attached to this impermanent body! How long can youthhood last? Sankara then and there taught the people about the transitoriness of carnal pleasures.

His message was a warning to youth to be very careful in the life they led. They should give up attachment to the body. [In this context Swami related at length the story of a prince who wanted to marry a merchant's daughter for her beauty. The girl, who was devoted to God and wished to remain single, devised a plan to rid the prince of his infatuation. She sent word that she would agree to marry the prince if he approved of her after a week. Meanwhile, she took a series of purgatives, collected all the purging in vessels and went to meet the prince. By that time she was so emaciated that all her youthful charm had gone. She told the prince that the beauty he saw in her was all contained in the vessels. The prince learnt the lesson and decided also to remain single and devote himself to serve God].

PRECEPT AND PRACTICE

Sankara sought in this manner to turn the minds of the people away from sensual pleasures to thoughts of God. Sankara did not call upon all young men to take *tosanyaasa*. He exhorted them to do their duty and dedicate the body to the service of the Divine. He preached the truth, practiced it and broadcast it to the world.

Young people today have become slaves of the senses and are behaving like the lower animals.

Sankara pointed out how worldly life is like the scenes on a screen. They come and go but the screen remains. He declared: "*Brahma Sathyam. Jagath mithhya*". (The Self is real. The world is illusory). Sankara also declared: "*Sarvam Vishnumayam Jagath*." ("The Universe is permeated by God.") When scholars pointed out the contradiction between the two statements, Sankara said: Worldly life is illusory because it is continually "coming and going". At the same time, this worldly life is lived like the moving scenes on a permanent screen. In this process the world and the Divine become one, as it were, like the oneness of the screen and the pictures on it. This is the basis for the statement: "*Sarvam Vishnumayam Jagath*." Hence, the *Upanishadic* declaration that the whole cosmos is dwelt in by God.

ADVAITA AND WORLDLY DUTIES

This was the non-dualism preached by Sankara. Consider the Divine as the fundamental basis and lead your worldly life recognizing it's impermanence. Without the Divine the cosmos has no existence. Hence man must recognize the one Divine *Atmic* Principle that is present in all beings. It may be called by different names. The Eternal Divine is birthless and nameless.

[Swami described Sankara's successful debates with Mandana Misra and his wife, Ubhayabharathi; both of whom took to *sanyasa* thereafter. Sankara then went to Kashmir.]

ATONEMENT IN KASHMIR

The ruler of Kashmir was a great patron of scholars. Sankara wanted to defeat them in debates. The moment Sankara entered Kashmir the gates of the temple of Kanakadurga closed. All the efforts to open them proved fruitless. All the *pandits* went to the temple and prayed to the Goddess. In answer to their prayers the Goddess spoke in an ethereal voice: "Sankara is a great preceptor (*Acharya*). But he suffers from one taint. Only when the taint is removed will these doors open." Sankara then sang hymns in praise of Siva. Sankara realized that he had committed a mistake in entering the dead body of the king of Kaasi to acquire the experience of a householder for carrying on the debate with Ubhayabharathi, the wife of Mandana Misra. To atone for this lapse he decided on an eleven days' fast, without food or water, to perform *thapas*. On the twelfth day, the doors of the temple opened of their own accord. This showed the power of Sankara's determination and penance.

Krishnamurthi and Sandipan Chatterjee (who had spoken earlier) referred to "*Prema*" and called upon the students to cultivate love. What is the kind of love they should develop? Sankara has given the answer. The love should arise from the *Atma*. True prayer should stem from the soul and not the body. That love is God. Live in love.

DEVELOP DETACHMENT'

Sankara continuously preached the doctrine of detachment to young people because he realized that attachments developed over many lives cannot be shed by listening to one or two speeches [Swami related in this context the story of a businessman who feared that his son might develop aversion to the world if he listened to the discourse of a *pandit* who was expounding the greatness of renunciation. The *pandit* assured the merchant that one day's talk was not going to reform his son, when a series of talks had had no effect on the father]. When there was need for constant purity in daily life, the efforts at spiritual cleansing should be continuous. This was the way Sankara was preaching to the young the philosophy of renunciation and detachment. Students should hold fast to God as the only true friend and supporter. When you have firm faith, the Divine will manifest Himself to you. This is the Truth, the whole Truth and nothing but the Truth.

Today several *pandits* expound *Advaita*, but few practice it. *Advaita* should be lived not merely repeated in words! Realize the truth: "*Sathyam, Jnanam, Anantham Brahma!*"

[Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the *bhajan*: "*Sathyam, Jnanam, Anantham Brahma!*"]

Divine Discourse Dated:10 Sep 1996
The Conquest of Attachment

With what ingenuity does the tongue
Manage to move about in the mouth
With out getting caught between the teeth!
Man also should behave likewise
To avoid the perils of life,
Forget not these good words, Oh man!

Sankara looked upon man's existence in the world as that of an actor on the stage, who plays his part, by being born, growing and dying. "Man's life is like a drop of water shimmering without rest on a lotus leaf. It is filled with grief and sorrow. Give up attachment to this life and start worshipping Govinda, Oh man lacking in wisdom." [Telugu Poem]

Human life is like a house filled with many rooms in the form of desires. Desires and disappointments are the order of the day. Doubts are rampant. Man is racked by fears. Fear haunts him wherever he goes or remains. He is caught up in a maze of troubles. How is he to escape from it? Even the happiness which he seems to derive from life is coupled with fear. There is no freedom from fear. How is it to be got? Where there is no attachment, there is no fear. How is this state to be got? By proximity to the Divine.

Sankara exhorted mankind to banish fear by cultivating detachment (*vairaagya*) and journeying towards the Self (*Atma*). It is through Self-Realization that the true nature of fear is understood. Joy and sorrow, profit and loss, light and darkness are pairs of opposites in which the absence of one is the sign of its opposite. For both the root cause is the *Atma*. All things originate from the *Atma*. Here is a flower. It has many petals. These petals appear distinct from each other. But all petals have emerged from the same single stem. The stem is the seat of the *Atma*, from which the petals have emanated. But we view the flower as a single object. The newer is one, but the petals are many. The petals have come out of the one stem.

THE OCEAN, WAVES AND FOAM

The analogy is applicable to the endless number of waves arising on the ocean. The waves are many and distinct. But they are of the same stuff as the ocean. From the waves arises the foam, which has the same properties as the waves and the ocean though different in form and name. These three are based on the ocean. The three represent the three kinds of proofs in logic: *Prathyaksha* (direct perception), *Paroksha* (indirect evidence) and *Anumaana* (inference). This is the logical basis for *Advaita*. It is termed *Trupthi* - the three-in-one, the *Atmic* Principle. In the human, this three-in-one is found in the unity of the body, mind and *Atma*. The body functions on the basis of the mind. The mind is based on the *Atma*. The *Atma* is the basis for everything. For humanness, the *Atma* is the basis. This is the doctrine of Non-Dualism.

Ignoring this truth and pursuing the myriad ephemeral objects of the phenomenal world, people ultimately come to a realization of the *Atmic* Principle.

SIDDHARTHA'S DISCOVERY

[Bhagavan then related the story of Buddhas Enlightenment]. After a long period Suddhodhana had a son, named Siddhaartha. The King kept Siddhaartha entirely within the palace so that the boy should have no knowledge of the sufferings in the world outside. Once Suddhodhana introduced his son to a high-souled *pundit* who had come to the palace. The *pundit* was an oracle. He told the king: Suddhodhana! This lad will become a renunciant. Moreover he will become a great teacher of wisdom to the people. Suddhodhana was alarmed on hearing this. Apprehending that the prince might develop *vairaagya* (total

detachment) if he went out, he kept the prince from going out. The king got him married when he reached his eighteenth year and crowned him Heir-apparent. After his coronation as *Yuvaraja*, Siddhaartha desired to go round the kingdom. There was no meaning in a ruler confining himself to his palace. He should know how the people lived. Hence he wanted to go round the country. Despite his apprehensions, the king agreed to the prince's request because he was now married and was unlikely to break away.

OLD AGE, DISEASE AND DEATH

Siddhaartha got into his chariot and set out on a tour of the capital. He saw an old woman, bent with age, trudging on the road with a stick. He asked the charioteer: "Who is this strange creature moving on the road?". "Lord! When one grows old, the back is bent and one becomes infirm. This is an old woman". The prince asked: "Does this happen to everyone as a result of old age?". He replied: "It is inescapable. It is a law of nature".

The chariot went further. A sick man was sitting under a tree, coughing and wailing. The prince asked what the matter was with the man under the tree. The charioteer replied: "The human body is subject to a variety of ailments. That man is suffering from a severe ailment. No one can tell when anyone may be afflicted with disease". The prince took note of this.

The chariot proceeded further. A dead body was being carried by four persons on a bier. The prince asked, what it was that the four men were carrying. He replied: "It is a dead body". "What is a dead body?", asked the prince. The charioteer replied: "A dead body is without life. What about us?", asked the prince. We are *Sivam* (alive). The prince asked: "Does everyone lose his life?". "Yes. Death is unavoidable, sometime or other". The prince heard this. He dropped the sword in his hand and returned to the palace. He did not eat that night. He went to bed, but could not sleep. By his side, his wife Yasodhara and his young son were sleeping. He looked at them intensely. The thought flashed in his mind: All is sorrow (*Sarvam duhkham*) Then he declared: *Sarvam Bhayam, Bhayam, Bhayam* ("All is filled with fear"). Next he declared: *Sarvam anithyam, anithyam, anithyam* (Everything is transient, transient, transient). Then, he declared: *Sarvam soonyam, soonyam, soonyam* (All is emptiness). Making these declarations, he left the palace.

What great renunciation is this! We see any number of ailing persons, old people and dead bodies. How many get the feeling of renunciation after seeing these scenes? Only Siddhaartha got this feeling. To acquire such a control over the senses (as to give up all attachments) God's grace is necessary.

THE JITENDRIYA KINGDOM

Likewise, a prince went to a forest for hunting. Feeling tired and thirsty, he went to an *ashram* for rest and water to drink. The sage of the hermitage asked the prince who he was and what brought him to the *ashram*. He said: "My name is Jitendriya. I have come from the kingdom of Jitendriya. I need some water". The sage offered water and asked him to sit. The sage wanted to find out whether the stranger was one who lived up to his name. (Jitendriya means one who has conquered his senses.) There are many persons who have names like Dharmaraju, but who belie their names.

The sage asked the prince to hand over his royal clothes to him and wear an ascetic's robes himself. He took the prince's clothes, sprinkled some red powder on them and set out for the kingdom of Jitendriya. At the palace gate, the sentry greeted the sage with reverence and asked him the object of his visit. The sage told them that the prince had been killed by a wild animal in the forest and that he had brought the prince's clothes. He asked them to convey this message to the king. The gatekeeper smiled and asked: "Why have you brought these clothes here? Who is free from death? Everyone that is born is bound to die. Birth and death go together". [Swami explained the practice in the railways to stamp on every

railway wagon the date on which it has to be returned to the workshop for repair and repainting. Likewise everybody has a return date, though it is not visible].

INDIFFERENCE TO DEATH

After hearing the sentry's words, the sage went in to meet the king himself. He told the king that his son had died and started crying. While the *Sanyasi* was wailing, the king was having a laugh. The king said to him: "You are wearing the ochre robe. But your words are unbecoming of a renunciant. Why do you cry? This is no matter for grief or worry. At dusk hundreds of birds return to a tree for rest. The next morning they fly away. What is the relationship between the different birds? Likewise on the tree of my family, birds like wife and children rest for a while and depart. No one can tell when and where any of them will leave. There is no cause for grief over their departure. It is a law of nature". The sage felt that the king was a heartless man. He then went to the queen, thinking that as a mother she would grieve over the death of her son. He told her: "Mother! your son is dead. Here are his clothes". She too laughed. "Oh *Sadhu*! You are one who has renounced everything in the world. How can you entertain any concern for the ephemeral? Life is like a choultry where wayfarers stay for a while and then pass on. Each has his own time of departure. There is no need to grieve when any one leaves the world".

Then the sage went to the prince's wife to find out whether she at least reacted differently. He broke the news about the death of her husband. She remarked: "When it rains, leaves fall away from a tree. When there is a flood, two pieces of wood come together for a while and separate again. In this ocean of life I am one such piece. The prince was another. We came together and we have gone apart. Why be surprised or lament over this? For all these, the cause is either attachment or possessiveness. The events themselves are not to be blamed. They are bound to happen. Why worry about them?"

TRUE DETACHMENT

The sage realized that what the prince had said about the kingdom was all true. Yet, he wanted to test the prince himself. He returned to the hermitage and exclaimed before the prince: "Oh prince! your kingdom has been overrun by invaders and your father and mother are kept as prisoners. You must leave immediately to recover the kingdom and release your parents. Get ready for war".

The prince replied: "All that has happened is according to the will of God. I did not bring that kingdom with me when I was born. Can I take it with me when I die? Why should I wage war to recover it? It is not my kingdom. My kingdom is the kingdom of the Spirit (*Atma*). I am striving to realize it. That is the Kingdom of Heaven. That is what I seek to secure. It cannot be got by waging war. It has to be won through love alone. I have no interest in other kingdoms".

BE TRUE TO YOUR ROLE

Then, the *sanyasi* prostrated before the prince and confessed: "We don the robes of renunciants, but we have none of the qualities of true renunciants. How many householders are leading lives free from worldly attachments".

[Swami related another story to drive home the point that whatever role one has to play in life, he should be true to it. Once an actor appeared before the court of a king in the guise of Sankaracharya, declaring in strident terms the unreality of all human relationships and the impermanence of worldly possessions. The actor gave such a powerful exposition of *Advaita* that the king directed his minister to present the actor with a plate of gold coins. But the Sankaracharya firmly refused to accept the present saying that it would be unworthy of him to receive it in his role as Sankaracharya. The next day the same actor appeared in the role of a beautiful dancer and performed an excellent dance before the king. The king was so much impressed with the dance that he directed the minister to present a plate of gold coins to the dancer. This time the dancer declined to accept what was offered as too small a reward for his performance. The minister who realized that the dancer was the same person who had come as Sankaracharya the previous day, then asked the actor what was the reason for his refusal to accept the plate of gold coins

the previous day and to ask for more that day. The actor explained that he declined the previous offer in keeping with his role as a renunciant. But, in the role of a dancer he was free to ask for more as it was natural for dancers to make as much money as they could].

SANKARA'S CALL TO HUMANITY

Sankaracharya called upon mankind to realize that as human beings they should cherish human values and practice them. Otherwise they would be betraying their true role in life. Sankara went round the country exhorting people to lead spiritual lives, shedding their animal qualities. His disciples imbibed the essence of Sankara's doctrines and became proficient in expounding *Advaita*. For a time the *Advaitic* doctrine held sway all over Bharat.

In course of time, however, the doctrine lost its hold. Students! I do not want you all to become *sanyasins* and to give up everything. All that I want you to do is to carry on your duties, place your faith in God and realize that there is one fundamental Reality underlying all things. When you get this realization, detachment will develop in you of its own accord. Detachment is not acquired by compulsion. As love of God grows, indifference to worldly things develops naturally.

[Bhagavan concluded His discourse with *bhajan*: *Bhaja Govindam! Bhaja Govindam!*]

Who are You? I am I

Divine Discourse delivered on 20th October 2004 (Dasara) at Prashanti Nilayam

Peace has become extinct
Truth has become scarce
Mind is the cause for both
Oh! Valiant sons of Bharat! Listen!
(Telugu poem)

Embodiments of Love!

Bharatiya does not mean a person born in the country of Bharat alone. The culture of Bharat is the mother. The country of Bharat is the father. Bharatiya is one who has faith in and lives under the care of these parents. Several noble souls have taken birth in Bharat, followed the great culture of this country and set examples to others. Sri Sankaracharya is one such great personality who spread the culture of Bharat throughout the length and breadth of the country and earned eternal fame. Adi Sankara taught the philosophy of Advaita. Three centuries after him came Sri Ramanujacharya who advocated the Visishtadvaita system of philosophy which emphasised Bhakti (devotion) and Prapatthi (surrender) to God. Two centuries after Sri Ramanujacharya, Sri Madhwacharya arrived on the scene and propagated the Dvaita system of philosophy emphasising the devotional path to the people vacillating between several systems of philosophy. However, the fundamental principle underlying all the three schools of philosophy is one and the same, that is, Atma Tattwa (Atmic principle).

The Advaita (non-dualistic) philosophy of Sri Sankaracharya advocates the oneness of Jiva (individual soul) and Brahman (cosmic soul). The Visishtadvaita philosophy of Sri Ramanujacharya presupposes that Jiva and Brahman are different. Sri Madhwacharya explained that there are, in fact, three concepts, namely, Dehatma Bhava (body consciousness), Jivatma Bhava (individualised form of God) and Paramatma Bhava (the universalised soul or the Supreme self). Nobody need hold on to a particular school of thought or deride the others. The question of adhering to a particular school of philosophy depends upon the mental frame work of the individual. Sri Sankaracharya emphasised that though the cloth is of different varieties, the thread underlying the cloth is one and the same. "The cloth is made of a number of threads woven together", explained Sri Ramanujacharya. One has to recognise the underlying principle behind the three schools of philosophy, namely, the Advaita, the Visishtadvaita and the Dvaita,

Ornaments are many, gold is one;
colours of the cows are many, milk is one;
Beings are many, the Indweller is one;
Nationalities are many, humanness is one.

Adi Sankara had a short life span of 32 years. Though the philosophy advocated by Sri Sankaracharya, Sri Ramanujacharya and Sri Madhwacharya acquired different names, namely, Advaita, Visishtadvaita and Dvaita, the underlying nature of the three types is one, that is Atma Tattwa. The same can be explained with the example of gold forming the base for ornaments with different names and forms. Not realising the fundamental unity between the three schools of philosophy, people adhering to the different schools of philosophy derided one another which gave scope for a number of misconceptions in the world about the country of Bharat. In order to explain the truth Ekatma Sarva Bhutantaratma (one Atma dwells in all beings), Adi Sankara gave some examples. He took out an ornament and explained that the metal with which the ornament was made was gold, thus going into the fundamental principle. The same principle was explained in a different way by Sri Ramanujacharya who emphasised that though gold forms the basis for the ornament, since it has assumed the form of a chain, it should be termed as a gold chain. Sri

Sankaracharya while advocating the Advaita philosophy quoted the Vedic dictum Ekameva Adviteeyam Brahma (God is one without a second). Sri Ramanujacharya, however, did not agree with this view. His viewpoint was how could there be a Prathibimba (image) without a Bimba (object). He thus explained the oneness of the object and the image, which he termed as Visishtadvaita (qualified non-dualism). Another example given in this context was the sugarcane juice. The juice is extracted from different varieties of sugarcane and a number of sweetmeats are made out of the juice. Though the juice is one, it has now assumed different forms. While Sri Sankaracharya emphasised the oneness of the sweet juice and the sugarcane, Sri Ramanujacharya dwelt upon the different forms the juice has assumed. Thus, ever since the times of the three great Acharyas till today, there are a number of arguments and counter arguments between the three schools of philosophy. But, present day students do not have faith in any of these three schools of philosophy. They just brush aside these systems as a figment of imagination. Sugar made out of the sugarcane juice is the main ingredient for making various sweets. The sugar is sweet. Similarly, Brahman is the source and sustenance for the entire universe. Wherever you see, you will find manifestation of the Divine (Brahman) in ever so many forms. The forms change and are illusory in nature. Brahman alone is the eternal, changeless principle. That is why Sri Sankaracharya has declared Brahma Sathyam Jagat Mithya (Brahman alone is real, the world is illusory). All the three great Acharyas, namely, Sri Sankaracharya, Sri Ramanujacharya and Sri Madhwacharya propagated the same principle, that is Atma Tattwa. The Upanishads declare that the entire universe is permeated by the same Atmic principle. That truth is contained in the Upanishadic dicta Ekatma Sarva Bhutantaratma (one Atma dwells in all beings), Easwarah Sarva Bhutanam (God is the Indweller of all beings) and Isavasyam Idam Sarvam (the entire universe is permeated by God). The rain, the water that flows into the river and the sand in the river that sustains it, all are one and only one. Everything is Brahman. Since every object in this universe is Brahman, nothing can be disregarded or ignored. This principle of Brahman is called "Divine" in the English language. But, many ignorant or cynical persons take it as "deep wine" and take to imbibing intoxicating substances. Disregarding such perversion, we have to realise that the sweetness underlying Divinity is one only. This oneness in the great culture of Bharat has been propagated since ancient times. In keeping with this great tradition, consider everyone, whether it is an ant or an animal or a human being, as verily Brahman. Some people may have a doubt in this context whether a human being and an animal can be equated. Yes, so far as the Atmic principle is concerned. However, the behavioural pattern of the animal is different from that of the human being. Considering this aspect, one may conclude that they are different but the underlying Jiva Tattwa is one and the same. On the basis of this Jiva Tattwa, you cannot differentiate at all between the living beings. Thus, Sarvam Brahmanam Jagat (the entire universe is permeated by Brahman). This truth can be explained by a simple example. This is a white cloth and that is a saffron cloth. Though the colours are different, the cloth is one. The cloth may be of different colours and put to different uses, but the cloth is only one and the same. The cloth is the source. One has to recognise the oneness of the source. Once you recognise the source, all differences vanish in no time. Unfortunately, today, we are giving importance to the names and forms, forgetting the basis and source for all names and forms. As a result, we are undergoing innumerable difficulties and sorrows.

Adi Sankara has explained the Advaitic principle beautifully in his famous Bhaja Govindam song thus:

Bhaja Govindam, Bhaja Govindam
Govindam Bhaja Moodha Mathe
Samprapthe Sannihithe Kale
Nahi Nahi Rakshati Dukrun Karane.

(Oh foolish man, chant the name of Govinda, the rules of grammar will not come to your rescue when the end approaches.)

If the end approaches, nothing can save you except the Divine Name. Therefore, chant the Divine Name. Thus, Sri Sankaracharya exhorted, awakened and taught the world.

Further explaining the sorrows and difficulties faced by man in his life's sojourn in this objective world and the need to seek refuge in the Divine grace, Sri Sankaracharya composed the following stanza:

Punarapi Jananam Punarapi Maranam
Punarapi Janani Jathare Sayanam
Iha Samsare Bahu Dustare
Kripayapare Pahi Murare.

(Oh Lord! I am caught up in this cycle of birth and death time and again; I am experiencing the agony of staying in the mother's womb. It is very difficult to cross this ocean of worldly life. Please take me across this ocean and grant me liberation.)

One has to analyse, in this context, as to what is it that is subject to birth and death again and again. The Deha (body) undergoes this cycle of birth and death, but the Atma is eternal. As long as the Atma remains in the body as the Indweller, there will be consciousness in the body. The moment the Atma leaves the body, it becomes jada (inert). This phenomenon is called death. Unable to realise this truth, man subjects himself to sorrow. Birth and death are only for the outer form, not for the Atma. A short story in this context. There was once a philosopher-son, who was learning Vedas. By the time he completed his Vedic learning, his mother completed forty years of life. She left her mortal body in her 40th year. The son was deeply immersed in sorrow. Then, his guru called him and tried to counsel him explaining, "Whom do you consider as your mother? The body? No, this is not your mother. You are wailing over a dead body which your mother has left. In fact, the body is right before you. Why should you have to weep? The Chaitanya Shakti (power of consciousness) has left the body. It means that Chaitanya Shakti represents your father and mother, not the forms and attachments to those forms. No doubt, it is true that relationship does exist with the physical form for sometime. But, thereafter the body ceases to exist. When you realise the truth, you will understand the futility of the relationship with the physical body". The objects may be different, but the source and sustenance for the objects is only one. The same source assumes different names and forms. One should not develop dependence on the names and forms, which are subject to change. This simple truth based on the Mooladhara Tattwa has been explained by different people in different ways as high sounding philosophy. This has given scope to some misconceptions to a certain extent. In fact, the underlying principle behind the Advaita philosophy of Sri Sankaracharya and Visishtadvaita philosophy of Sri Ramanujacharya is one and the same.

Embodiments of Love! Students!

Today, we are taking very lightly such a great and noble philosophy. Sri Sankaracharya's Philosophy is profound in nature and explains the great truth in simple and beautiful poetry. Any amount of explanation will be insufficient to bring out the underlying philosophy in full measure. Sri Sankaracharya has written a great commentary (bhashya) on Bhagavad Gita also. In his commentary on Gita, Adi Sankara has explained that there is Advaita in Dvaita and Dvaita in Advaita. Further, the Visishtadvaita contains both Advaita and Dvaita concepts as well. All the three schools of philosophy, therefore lead to the same goal and their underlying meaning is Brahma Sathyam Jaganmithya (Brahman alone is the truth and the world is illusory). The whole world appears as containing innumerable names and forms. One should not be enmeshed with these names and forms. It is only when the names and forms are set aside and the underlying source is identified that it is possible to recognise the truth. And that truth is Tattwamasi (That Thou Art). That is Prajnanam Brahma (constant integrated awareness is Brahman). That awareness is Ayam Atma Brahma (This Self is Brahman). When you analyse the Mahavakya Tattwamasi, it will lead you to the awareness "I am That" and "That I am". When you are able to realise this truth, you will find that the principle "I" underlies everything in the universe as the principle of unity. We have to recognise that "I" principle which is universal. It is a futile exercise to get into arguments and counter-arguments over this matter and waste one's time. The only aspect you have to realise is "I am

Brahman". When somebody questions you who you are, the proper answer would be "I am I", "I am the word, I am the form and I am the name". This "I" represents and explains everything. When somebody questions who you are, do not reply by quoting your name. The name represents the name given to the body. You are not the body. Hence reply "I am I". Everyone should strive to attain that state of unity.

The Vedantic concepts lead to endless arguments and counter-arguments. Do not enter into them. Always be under the awareness "I am I". This "I" principle is beyond names and forms. It represents Brahma Tattwa, which is one without a second entity.

When somebody enquires who you are, you reply, "I am I." Similarly, when you enquire somebody who he is, his reply would be "I am I." Thus all are "I am I." It is only when you think "I am not I" that there will be several questions.

Dear students!

You have to finally make a firm resolve "I am I." You should not identify yourself with the body and say, "I am a child", "I am a young man", "I am an old man", etc. These differences relate to the age factor. What is the next stage after old age? Nobody knows. But, "I" principle exists in the child, youth and old age. This is the fundamental and changeless principle. Therefore, when somebody enquires who you are, you reply, "I am I." If he is unable to understand this principle, do not bother; you hold on to your principle. It is only when you develop such firm conviction that you will be able to achieve anything in life. The philosophical concepts can be explained in ever so many ways. They contain several meanings.

On the 20th October 1940, I made a declaration for the first time revealing my true identity thus:

Know that I am Sai in reality,
Cast off your worldly relationships,
Give up your efforts to restrain Me,
The worldly attachments can no longer bind Me,
None, however great he may be, can hold Me. (Telugu poem)

Since I made this declaration on the 20th October, people celebrate this day in a big way. We should not give too much importance to the dates and try to celebrate them as birthday, Avatar Declaration Day, etc. Once Rukmini, the consort of Lord Krishna invited Him to her palace saying, "Swami! Today is my birthday. Please come for dinner." Sathyabhama, another consort of Krishna who was present on that occasion was angry. She argued, "If today is your birthday, this is also the day on which I entered into the in-laws' house. Krishna tied the nuptial knot round my neck on this day. Therefore, He should visit my house only, on this day." Thus, the day turned out to be a day of quarrel between the two consorts. Lord Krishna, however was prepared for visiting both the houses. He does not differentiate between them. Thus, one has to recognise the principle of unity in Divinity.

http://www.sssbpt.org/Pages/Prasanthi_Nilayam/Dasara_20th_Discourse.htm