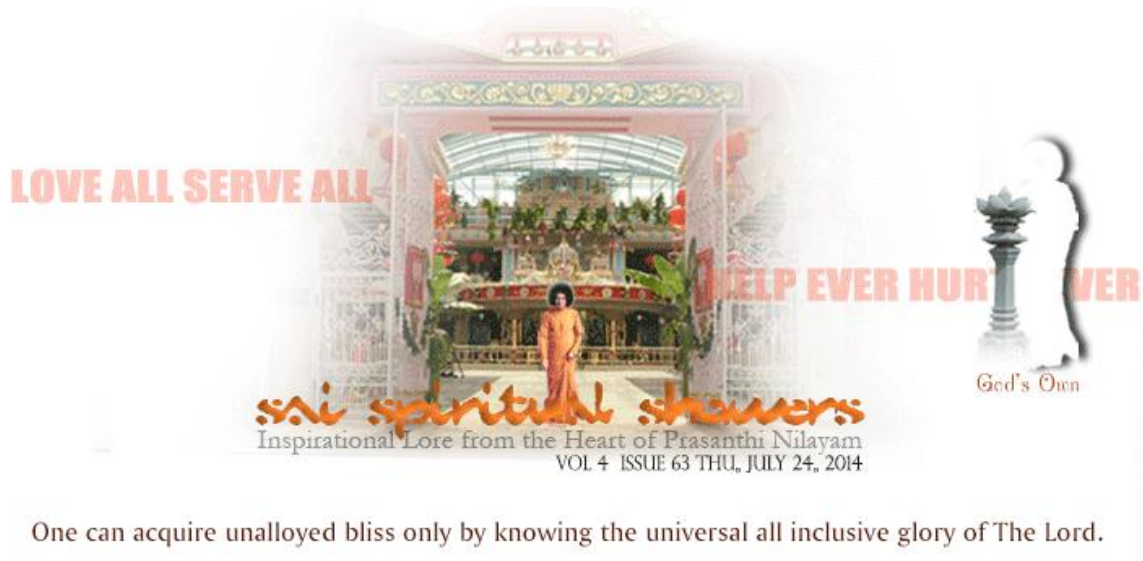


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One can acquire unalloyed bliss only by knowing the universal all inclusive glory of The Lord.

Every Indian has now to question himself of his awareness about the real truth about his country and her spirituality, asking whether he is helping by his acts, words and thoughts to promote the glory and splendour of his Motherland?... exhorts Bhagawan speaking of Bharat's Sanathana Dharma, recounting the illustrious life of Adi Shankara and the message of his famed composition 'Bhaja Govindam...'

India was the nursery of halos who adventured into the realms of the spirit, and achieved victories against the final of evil; they opened up the paths to God that are described in the texts of Sanathana Dharma. India is the sacred land from where the Voice of the Vedas rang over the world. It is the land which still retains the splendour of Yoga, and the glory of Renunciation. But, every Indian has now to question himself whether he is aware of this fact, and whether he is helping by his acts, words and thoughts to promote that glory and that splendour. One has to admit that the glory is being dimmed, the splendour is fast fading out. The Gayatri Mantra, enjoined on all, because it is the crucial mantra of the Vedas, has become a ritual of holding the nose while mumbling illegible sounds. Pranayama and its later stage of Pratyahara (the control of the senses and of their listless pursuit of external pleasure) are discoverable only in dictio naries. Yama and Niyama—the first steps in spiritual discipline are not practised at all, even by those who claim to teach and guide. Members of the monastic order, who have vowed to detach themselves completely from, worldly involvements and attachments are running about frantically, accumulating and investing money, with even greater fanaticism than householders. One wonders whether this is the same land that one reads about, the land that held high the ideals of the spirit and of mental peace!

With the return of Krishna to His abode after the Incarnation Interlude, the Age of Kali darkened the World. Many Preceptors, Saints and Sages tried subsequently to remind the people of their heritage and guide them, along the ancient path. Of these, Sankara, who realised the weakness of a dualistic interpretation of the Universe and the need for a unifying philosophy, was the most effective. He was born in the village of Kaladi, situated in the Kerala State. Initiated into the Gayatri Mantra in his fifth year, he mastered the Vedas and their Supplementary Texts on Grammar, Logic, Prosody, Astrology, etc., and in

his fourteenth year itself, he ventured forth on his mission of counteracting the forces of doubt, dissent and denial and establishing faith, wisdom and devotion throughout the land. He encountered many scholars reputed for their dialectical skill and convinced them of the validity of the non dualistic basis of the subjective and objective worlds. He wrote commentaries on the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita and the Brahma Sutras generally accepted as the authentic texts of the Hindu Faith. He dedicated his short life of 32 years to the revitalisation of the Sanathana Dharma.

When Sankara was residing at Varanasi (Benares City) on the Ganga with his pupils he used to visit the pundits in their own houses, and draw them into beneficial conversation on themes of philosophy. One day, when he went to a pundit, he found him immersed in complications of rules of grammar. When asked why he had taken up the intensive study of grammar, he replied that it would fetch him a few pieces of silver. "If I am designated a Pundit, I can go to the homes of some big Zamindars, and hope to receive alms and offerings from them, for the upkeep of my large family," he said. Sankara advised him in appropriate terms, and charged him with self confidence and courage.

Returning to his hermitage, Sankara wrote a verse summarising the advice he gave the poor struggling Brahmin house-holder.

Bhaja Govindam, Bhaja Govindam,
Bhaja Govindam, Moodha Mathe!
Sampraapthe Sannihithe Kaale
Nahi Nahi Rakshathi 'Dukrn' karane...

Praise God, Praise God, Praise God, you fool! When death does knock at door, rules of grammar cannot save.

Sankara exhorted his pupils to disseminate the ideal of this verse, and, they too, responded with a set of verses on the same lines, each of the 14 contributing one verse. Sankara added another twelve of his own, as well as four more verses about the transformation that the teaching would confer. Thus, there are 31 verses in all, in the text called Bhaja Govindam, or Moha Mudgaram. The latter name means, "The weapon with which delusion can be destroyed."

The study of these verses and the inspiration derived from them will promote discrimination and detachment, and thus, prepare the mind for the vision of the Supreme. You have to be initiated into these disciplines now itself, when you are young and entering on the adventure of living, and so, I have decided to expound to you one verse a day, during this course.

Sankara addressed these verses, to "moodha mathi" "the foolish person". Now, who are these fools? He has given the answer in another context: 'Nasthiko moodha uchathe' (These who deny the Atma are fools.) Those who assert and believe that "I am not this perishable body; I am not this feeble intellect; I am the undying everlasting all knowing all inclusive Atma" are few indeed. The vast majority assert and believe that "I am the moulder of my destiny I am the captain of my ship. I choose my likes and dislikes. I fulfill my desires through my own efforts."

But, even this vast majority pay taxes in ordinary life for the water they use, the electricity they consume, the houses they live in, and the professions they are engaged in! Now, what tax are they paying to Him who provides them with the essential requisites for mere living—the sun, the moon, fire, water, air, space etc? Those who do not recognise the Giver, the Provider, the Principle, the Person, they are the fools.

Scientists can weigh, measure, and analyse materials that already exist. They can, by means of permutations and combinations, put into currency strange forms and shapes from out of existing matter.

But, they cannot create oxygen or hydrogen or any other thing anew! That can happen only, through the Will of God. Without any matter originally supplied, no scientist can deal with things from the very beginning. They are helpless in the realm beyond earth, water, fire, air and space, the subject matter of the senses. Their activities are confined to nature, which is but the part manifestation of the Divine.

The verse with which Sankara started off the Moha Mudgaram speaks of the moment of the approach of the end of life. This indicates that of all the fears of man, the fear of death is the fiercest as well as the most foolish. For, none can escape death, having committed the error of birth. To get rid of the wheel of birth and death, awareness of the undying unborn Atma which is one's Reality is the only method available for man.

So, Sankara advises man to pray to Govinda. He refers to God as Govinda. Govinda means, 'He Who Is a Cowherd'. Man is both an animal and a Divine Being. He has risen from the animal level and is on the way to reveal his Divinity. He should be vigilant that he does not slide into the animal again. Man alone can rise into God hood, for, he is equipped, with the endowment needed for the achievement.

Cattle come near when a handful of grass is shown; they are scared and run away when a stick is shaken before them. Man should not fear; nor should he cause fear. Without cowardice; without aggressiveness, he should examine words deeds and thoughts, and progress from animality to Divinity.

The Word 'Go' means also sound, all sounds from the mooing of cattle to the chanting of Vedas. All sounds, emanating everywhere, praise or adoration, elation or adulation, are offerings to God. 'Go' also means the Earth. Govinda means, overlord of the Earth and all its phases and objects. The Earth is the arena of His Glory, the Stage on which His Play is enacted. So man has to remember Him in grateful joy.

Through this string of verses, Sankara called upon 'foolish persons' straying away into misery and mortality to proceed towards mukti or liberation. Moodha-mathis or foolish persons were exhorted to set their feet on the ladder of 31 steps (each verse being a step) and climb towards Muktimathi, the mind illumined by release from the bonds of desire.