

Knowing our Roots

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Contents

Chapter – 1 : Historical Perspective	2
Chapter – 2 : Spiritual Perspective.....	49
Chapter – 3 : Scriptural Perspective.....	91
Chapter – 4 : Practical Perspective	112
Chapter – 5 : Synopsis.....	126

Chapter – 1 : Historical Perspective

**“Swastih Prajaabhyah Paripaalayantaam
Nyaayena margena maheem maheeshaah
Gobrahmanebhyah shubhamasthu nithyam
Lokaah samasthaah sukhino bhavanthu”**

Mangalam Kosalendraaya.....

My father, after his daily *Tiruvaaraadhanam* and *Sundarakaanda Paaraayanam* was coming out of the Pooja room chanting in his routine way. It was one of those bright summer mornings and I came home from my Engineering college hostel for the summer vacation. Although I brought home my college books, I hardly used to open them till the end of the vacation. Hence lot of time to think whatever I want especially It is also difficult to roam around in the hot sun and hence lot of time to think whatever I want. So I started a conversation with my father:

I: Naannagaaru, if you don't mind I want to ask you something.

Naannagaaru: Why are you asking me the permission. It sounds new to me.

I: When you are chanting those *shlokaas*, I am remembering the discussions with my friends in the hostel. I want to ask you on the same.

Naannagaaru: What is your doubt?

I: See, when you are chanting those *shlokaas*, there appears to be discrimination among various people giving preference to the *Kshatriyaas* and *Brahmanaas*. Discussions on this subject keep coming among our friends quite often that our tradition is based on differentiation. The man kind is differentiated based on caste, gender, elite etc. and even Gods are differentiated as there are many Gods for us. Of course, over a period of time, I think slowly these differences are coming down in our country.

Naannagaaru: In the *Shloka* that I am chanting, there is such no discrimination. There is some differentiation, but for that matter, our fingers are also not the same. But all have different purposes and there is nothing like one is superior and the other is inferior. We will look into this little later. By the way, the *shloka* starts with “*Prajaabhyah*” meaning all people, it ends with “*Lokaah samasthaah sukhino bhanthu*” meaning “*all the worlds ie all things and being in all the worlds*”. The word “*Go..*” although specifically means cows but also represents all animals which move, the mother earth and the Vedaas as well. *Maheeshaah* and *Brahmanaah* are mentioned to represent all the humans. Rulers are

supposed to take care of the material needs of people where as “*Braahmanaas*” are supposed to take care their spiritual needs.

In the case of Gods also what you are saying is not correct. Our philosophy says there is only one “*Paramaatma*”. All those Gods whom you are referring are those who have been assigned specific powers and responsibilities by *Paramaatma* for the maintenance of the universe. They have some special powers to perform their duties and if those Gods are pleased, with those special powers, they may be able to help us in their own limited way. But they are not *Paramaatmaas* but are only more powerful beings. We will discuss this aspect further some time later as the time comes.

By the way, it appears you have a feeling that we are traditionally differentiated by various factors. Can you explain me this point further.

I: What I studied in our text books and other material is that India got its civilization from Aryans some years before birth of Christ. These Aryans came from East Europe and Central Asia across Hindu Kush Mountains and established themselves in our country. They only brought civilization to our country, I mean the science of agriculture etc. was brought by them only, as I understand. Before their coming to India, the people in our country are called Dravidians and tribals. The Vedas and our mythological stories like the *Ramayana* and *the Mahaa Bhaaratha* were all written during their time only. That’s why, the *Ramayana* narrated the story how an Aryan king *Rama* conquered over the south. The Sanskrit language and the literature etc. was all from them only. Since Sanskrit has its roots in Europe, there are lot of similarities between Sanskrit and European Languages like German. Of course, as promoted by various Kings in North India subsequently, lot stories portraying the greatness of these kings has been written by some poets which gained lot of popularity.

Originally these Aryans settled around Sindhu river area and hence our country was named as Hindu and our religion was named as Hinduism. The present names like *Iran* originated from the word Aryan only. These Aryans dominated over the local Dravidians and drove them down to southern plateau from the Northern plains. This might be the origin of differentiation in our country. The Aryans considered themselves superior by their color, valor etc. and considered Dravidians as an inferior race. Thus the caste system emerged forming a hierarchy of the humankind in our country. This system was also prophesied in our *Shaastraas* like *Vedaas* and *Manu smriti* etc. and formed the basis for the rule and order.

As mentioned earlier, Aryans came to India before the birth of Christianity or Islam in Europe or central Asia. In those days, people in different regions used to believe in different Gods. These “*Adi Vaasis*” were called “*Pagan*” as we said earlier meaning village

bumpkin. Hence, these Aryans who came to our country followed the same practice of multiple Gods. Hence our religion has become conglomeration of multiple Gods, multiple belief systems with multiple differentiations. Due to this inter differentiation and disunity among people, we have suffered multiple invasions initially by Muslims and then by the Europeans. After a lot of reformation during the British rule, we became one nation "India". However, the internal squabbles and differences have not completely died down yet. Hence we still remain as one nation with a bunch of people with various religions, practices and Gods.

(The Answers begin.)

Naannagaru: Your question has essentially two parts.

1. History of our heritage and tradition
2. Problems of differentiation etc. based on our tradition.

I am not a historian nor am I proficient in our scriptures. My knowledge is limited what I have read or heard here and there from the works of Indologists such as S/ Sri Rajiv Malhotra, S.N.Balagangadhara, Kapil Kapoor, Wendy Doniger, K.N.Neelakantan etc. However, I will try to clarify based on my limited information. We will get further clarified or verified from the learned later.

Our heritage has not started by Aryans as you mentioned. If Aryans brought us the civilization few years before the birth of Christ, how do you understand the Indus Valley Civilization of *Harappa* and *Mohenzadaro* etc. which are dated back to 5000 to 10000 BC. There are Archeological sites located now in Haryana etc. which are dated back to 10000 BC. These are historical facts. You have also mentioned that the *Ramayana* and the *Mahaa Bhaaratha* are all mythological stories. But, the Archeological findings of *Dwaraka* or *Rama Sethu* etc. all are well before the so called Aryan invasion to India. Hence your statement that the Aryans have given us the civilization doesn't have credence.

I: Then how did this theory evolve?

Naannagaaru: Actually this theory of European origin of Indian civilization started some time during the British rule. Sir William Jones who was appointed in the Supreme Court in Kolkatta wrote to his fellow Europeans in 1799 " *Sanskrit languageis of a wonderful structure, more perfect than Greek, more copious than Latin, more exquisitely refined than either, yet bearing both of them a stronger affinity....than could possibly have been produced by accident*". Discovery of Sanskrit language by these proud Europeans led to believe that such a great language can be only of European origin and hence, the Indian civilization should have its roots in Europe. During this period, Germans were trying to identify their roots. Unlike England and France, Germany doesn't have rich history. So

they readily grabbed this idea of Aryan invasion to India and claimed themselves as the master Aryan race. Max Muller (1823-1900) who came to India to study Indian history and scriptures developed liking for Sanskrit. He believed that Vedas are the root of the religion in India. He was one of those who formulated this Aryan invasion myth. He also believed that the contemporary Indian civilization is a corrupt form of its ancient glory. He started translating these scriptures from his point of view. Sir Ernst Renan believed that initially Aryans had multiple Gods as this was the case with so called "Pagans" (literally meaning village bumpkin and name given to uncivilized locals in Europe before the Birth of Christ). Subsequently, with the advent of Christianity, more civilized races in Europe became mono theists. They had in turn colonized others and helped them towards changing them from poly theism to mono theism. Adolphe Pietet (1799-18750) felt Christianity should help reviving mono theism which was first planted by Aryans in India but distorted later. Rudolph Friedrich Gran (1835-93) was afraid of glorifying Aryan race for fear of forgetting Christ. A French diplomat by name Gobineau(1816-82) proposed his race science. Further, Karl Marx said "*India doesn't have history but created by others*". E De Michelis said that *Asia is the grave of Aryans* meaning that Europeans migrated to India and degenerated themselves. Even John Ruskin supported race theory in his writings. Like this many European scholars conceived and cognized in their own way to meet their selfish motives and framed their own theories. During this period, as an off shoot of Darwin's theory of evolution, it was said that civilized races will replace savage races. Georges Vacher De Lapouge (1854-1936) while categorizing the races, placed Aryan white race on the top of the races. Portuguese brought "Casta" for differentiation of human races. This word subsequently became caste in Indian context. H.S.Chamberlain (1855-1927) linked these races to castes. Now, in order to give the identity to the native Indians and link them to Biblical history, it was said that they belong to the off spring of Noah. Noah had three sons. It was said that Indians came from one his sons, Ham(Haran). Ham was cursed by Noah for committing something wrong (seeing Noah naked) and thus he became a slave. This explanation was brought in to justify slavery. But there were no historical evidences to any of the above theories. Then Lord Risley, was appointed by the British as the Census commissioner and was assigned the task of differentiating the Indians for their own purposes. He utilized the *Jaati* and *Varna* known in the Indian tradition that time and introduced caste system in his own way. One of the main criterion for the determination of caste was nasal index ie based on the size of the nose. He categorized some 2,378 main castes with some sub castes and seven races from Aryans to Dravidians. He reported that the people were so much ignorant that they didn't know their castes and hence he had to determine their castes. These census were conducted every ten years and castes of the people were decided and registered. People had to accept this classification because, it was like an identity mark or a ration card based on which the Government decided the benefits and rations etc. for the public. Those whom he could not classify had been considered as tribals. He had categorized

some people as criminal tribes ie some people by their birth itself were categorized as criminals. The criminal tribes Act 1871 is a testimony for the same. Of course, Dr. Ambedkar demolished this categorization based on nasal index subsequently. Bishop Robert Caldwell came up with his own theory that *“Dravidians were living earlier but dominated by the Aryans. They have a different language(Tamil), different culture whereas Sanskrit is from Europe.”* Campbell Ellis brought in linguistic separation among people. He said Telugu grammar is also different from that of Sanskrit. Of course this is also debatable considering the Telugu language today. All of them have operated with their intentions and utilised their limited knowledge to meet their selfish ends. In spite of all these efforts if we are all still together, that is because of the strength of our tradition and heritage.

By the way the name “Hindu” was not necessarily from the word “Sindhu”. Persians had lot of words with letter **S** and it is ironical that they are not able to say Sindhu and thus it became Hindu. It is said that there is word by name *Hindu* in Persian language which means *“thief”* or *“Slave”* and that is the name given to us by the foreigners. The word “Hindu Kush” meaning *“Killer of Hindus”* also came from that only. It is more appropriate probably to call our religion as *“Sanathana Dharma”* or *“Vaidika Dharma”* .

I:What does it mean?

Naannagaaru: “Sanathana Dharma” means eternal Dharma and “Vaidika Dharma” means Dharma as prescribed by the Scriptures. History centric Religions like Islam or Christianity have started from some point of time. Then the question comes what happens to people before that. In fact there is no rebirth also as per those religions. That means who ever has taken birth before cannot get salvation or *Moksham*. We will discuss these details little later. However our Dharma is eternal. It is not history centric. Hence, it does not have time, space, racelimitations. Dharma broadly means the one which keeps us together and takes care of us if we discharge it towards ourselves and others as prescribed by the scriptures. Mamayya says *“it is like a walking stick and when we hold it sincerely it helps to lead us properly without falling”*.

I: But Pandit Nehru says in his “Discovery of India” “Hinduism as a faith is vague, amorphous, many sided, all things to all men”!

Naannagaru: That was his opinion. But Mahatma Gandhi said *“Hinduism is a religion of Truth”* and this was also quoted in the *“Discovery India”*. We will discuss *“Hinduism as a religion”* in detail a little later.

I: But, Hitler has adapted Hindu symbol like “Swastka” and claims that he is an Aryan.

Naannagaru: Yes, as we have discussed earlier, Germans have adapted this Aryan theory to find their identity and so also Hitler. That is why he felt he has developed animosity against Jews who are also of Abrahamic religion.

I; Not understood!

Naannagaru: See, earlier we discussed that Christianity and Islam are history centric religions and so also Judaism(religion of Jews). Abraham being among their ancestors and hence are called Abrahamic religions. Origin of these religions is same, but those who believed Jesus Christ as the son of God and as their savior became Christians. Those who had faith in Prophet Mohammad became Muslims.

I: Looks interesting. How can we say that our origins are not from Christianity.

Naannagaaru: As we discussed earlier, our roots were much older, rather eternal. This was proved by archeological evidences beyond any doubt. Unfortunately, our rich tradition was demolished by these foreigners such as Lord Macaulay who introduced the education reforms in our country..

I:But I understand Raja Ram Mohan Roy also supported and recommended these reforms.

Naannagaaru: You are right. Sri Raja Ram Mohan Roy was considered as one of the reformers of Indian social systems. He was working in Kolkata at the East India Company for the British. He was good at English language and was an excellent orator. We might not deny his contribution towards social reforms such as abolition of *Sati* etc. However, there were varying views on that subject because *Sati* was not a prevailing practice followed in Bengal those days there was no registered case history for Raja Ram Manohar Roy to go against it. It was said that it was all the creation of the British to malign our society and its customs. Of course custom was prevailing in Rajasthan and it was projected through the magnified lenses. Let's leave it aside. Coming back to Sri Ram Manohar Roy's contribution on the education system, we don't know whether he was influenced by the British or whether he was actually interested in the English Education system, but he had written to the British 12 years before Macaulay came to India to work on that proposal. He wrote "*The Sanskrit system of education would be best to keep this country in darkness, but as the improvement of the native population is object of the British Govt. it ought to promote a more liberal and enlightened system embracing maths, natural philosophy, chemistry and anatomy with*".

I: In fact I also thought that without introduction English our country would have been doomed because all the science, technology, mathematics etc. happened to be in English and all inventions are by the west.

Naannagaaru: As you may be aware, till 1850 the trade from India used to be more than 25% of the world trade. There were lot of exports in the area of textiles, metals, herbal medicines, spices, Jewellery and other agricultural products etc. Contrary to what you said, the real decline happened after 1850 and when the British left India, our trade export was less than 2% of the world trade. We will discuss our achievements in the fields of science and technology etc. some time later. Further, those countries who are advanced today like China, Germany, Japan, Russia, France etc. have not dumped their native language to embrace English but retained it as their first language. When the British had colonized many countries around the 18th/ 19th century and dominated the ethnic population natural language of those countries became English. In fact the ethnic races in those countries got more or less extinguished because of various methods adapted by their rulers. Hence the premises that *“English was necessary for our country at the cost of Sanskrit or the local language to prosper”* needs investigation. This is not to doubt the importance of English language and the contribution of the west, but I am not so sure whether it was the best of the options to dump our native language in which treasures of knowledge and traditional heritage were available in our country. All this knowledge was taken away by the so called our well wishers from the west.

I: So, Lord Macaulay introduced the reforms in the Indian education system there after?

Naannagaaru: Yes, on receiving the correspondence from Sri Raja Ram Manohar Roy, British invited him for detailed discussions to England. A strategy was formulated towards the reforms in the education system In India. In fact Sri Rama Manohar Roy breathed his last in England only. Lord Macaulay was then sent to India to study the education system in India and to introduce the necessary reforms. You might have heard his controversial speech in British Parliament *“...I do not think we would ever conquer this country unless we break the very back bone of this nation, which is her spiritual and cultural heritage and therefore I propose that we replace her old and ancient education system, her culture...”*

I don't know how far the above speech was true, but fact was that it formed the base for the loss of our culture and intellect and transformed us into adaptive child mentality and perpetual state of slavery.

I: What do you mean by *“adaptive child mentality”*.

Naannagaaru: When somebody loses his creativity and strength and tries to follow somebody for everything and looks for instruction from others it is called “*adaptive child mentality*”. in psychological language and transactional analysis.

I: I see.

Naannagaaru: The reason behind introducing English education system might be considered to serve dual purpose for the British. They were able to get intelligent Indian people for working as the clerks and labor in their offices since not many English men were willing to come to India for such petty jobs. The other reason was, the Church was able to conveniently step in to manage the education system and thus propagating their religion in our country. It would be always the education system which could influence the future generations and thus the future of any country.

I: But, in other countries like America and Australia which were also colonized by the Europeans, you said, the locals were more or less eradicated by various means. Why in India, they had to educate us and give us the employment instead of eradicating us like they did in other countries.

Naannagaaru: When a new company takes over the old, they will evaluate the existing employees in that old company. If the existing employees are useless they will be sent out of the company. In case they are found to be useful, they are downgraded in their positions and employ them paying them less salaries. The strategy is similar in this case. The Indians are intelligent, civilized and soft unlike in those countries. Hence they are utilized for working for them.

I: If they were not intelligent in those countries, at least for manual labor work, couldn't the native people in Americas etc. been utilized?

Naannagaaru: But, probably those people were not as docile and civilized as Indians. Since they were afraid of employing them, they used to bring Africans for such manual labor activities. Those Africans, being outsiders were not able to turn against their bosses.

I: That means, while the Moghuls enslaved us by physical means, the Europeans employed psychological methods to enslave us. But, even after Moghul rule, India did remain rich as you said with lot of export trade?

Naannagaru: Otherwise, why should the Europeans find their way to India. There was lot of trade happening from India to Europe those days and they were heavily depending on India. However, due to the seize by the ottoman empire in the central Asia, the land route

to India for the Europeans was blocked. In fact when Columbus went on his expedition, he was in search of India only. When he found the land he named it west Indies. Vasco Da Gama came around the African continent via cape of good hope to reach India. In fact he appointed a Gujarati Indian as the sailor and guide to show him the route to India. That means, the Indians were good at sea ways also those days. The Europeans were coming to India only because of its richness.

I: Can you tell me briefly about the various areas of strength of India in those initial times.

Naannagaru: There were many. Let me not dwell up on our *Pauranic* references to say that in the *Ramayana* period itself our people knew about technology of Planes, techniques of war fare and mass destruction, construction of palacial buildings, building bridges, intricate jewellery, modern amenities as described in the feast arranged by Sage Bharadwaja to Bharatha etc. But, at least we can safely conclude that they have clarity of Maps, various features of universe, techniques of agriculture etc.

I: But, as per the western scholars, our *Itihasas* are mythological stories and not factual.

Naannagaaru: That is not correct as there are archeological evidences like *Ram Sethu* or *Dwaraka* available now to disprove their claim. However, let us look at some of the things which are accepted by even western scholars.

In the field of Civil Engineering: From the complex Harappan towns to even our Golkonda fort, India's indigenous technologies in the field of Civil Engineering were very sophisticated. They included the design and planning of water supply, traffic flow, natural air conditioning, complex stone work, and construction engineering.

World's oldest and most advanced civilization was the Harappan or Indus-Sarasvati Valley Civilization in India. The Indus-Sarasvati Civilization was the world's first to build planned towns with underground drainage, civil sanitation, hydraulic engineering, and air-cooling architecture. While the other ancient civilizations of the world were small towns with one central complex, this civilization had the distinction of being spread across many towns, covering a region about half the size of Europe. Weights and linguistic symbols were standardized across this vast geography, for a period of over 1,000 years, from around 3,000 BCE to 1500 BCE. Oven-baked bricks were invented in India in approximately 4,000 BCE. Over 900 of the 1,500 known settlement sites discovered so far are in India.

Since the Indus-Sarasvati script is yet to be decoded, it remains a mystery as to how these people could have achieved such high levels of sophistication and uniformity in a dispersed complex and with no visible signs of centralized power.

For instance, all bricks in this civilization are of the ratio 1:2:4 regardless of their size, location or period of construction. There are many pioneering items of civil engineering, such as drainage systems for water (open and closed), irrigation systems, river dams, water storage tanks carved out of rock, moats, middle-class style homes with private bathrooms and drainage, and even a dockyard; there is evidence of stairs for multiple-storied buildings; many towns have separate citadels, upper and lower towns, and fortified sections; there are separate worker quarters near copper furnaces; granaries have ducts and platforms; and archeologists have found geometric compasses, linear scales made of ivory. Indians also pioneered many engineering tools for construction, surgery, warfare, etc. These included the hollow drill, the true saw, and the needle with the hole on its pointed end.

The temple construction science which was known as *Aagama Vaastu* and *Shilpa* is extremely scientific and even after their destruction by the foreign rulers we can see evidences of the same even today.

In the field of Water Management:

Given the importance of fresh water in India, it was no surprise that the technologies to manage water resources were highly advanced from Harappan times onwards. For example, in Gujarat, Chandragupta built the Sudarshan Lake in late 4th century BCE, and was later repaired in 150 BCE by his grandson. Bhopal's Raja Bhoj Lake, built in 1014-1053, is so massive that it shows up in satellite images. The Vijayanagar Empire built such a large lake in 14th – 15th century CE that it had more construction material than the Great Wall of China. What some historians call the “Persian Wheel” was actually pre-Mughal and indigenous to India.

Scientists estimate there were 1.3 million man-made water lakes and ponds across India, some as large as 250 square miles. These are now being rediscovered using satellite imagery. These enabled rain water to be harvested and used for irrigation, drinking, etc. till the following year's rainfall. Unfortunately most of these lakes are now encroached for residential purposes.

In the field of Textiles:

Indian textiles have been legendary since ancient times. The Greeks and Romans extensively imported textiles from India. Roman archives record official complaints about massive cash drainage due to these imports from India.

One of the earliest industries relocated from India to Britain was textiles and it became the first major success of the Industrial Revolution, with Britain replacing India as the world's leading textile exporter. What was suppressed in the discourse about India and Europe was the fact that the technology, designs and even raw cotton were initially imported from India while, in parallel, India's indigenous textile mills were outlawed by the

British. India's textile manufacturers were de-licensed, even tortured in some cases, over-taxed and regulated, to 'civilize' them into virtual extinction. Textiles and steel were the mainstays of the British Industrial Revolution. Both had their origins in India. The Ahmedabad textile museum is a great resource for scholarly material.

In the field of Iron and Steel:

Iron in India was much older than the one in any other country. Cemeteries in present-day Baluchistan had iron objects. The earlier iron found in Middle Eastern archeological sites was essentially meteorite material sculptured as rock/stone carvings, and was not metallurgically processed at all. Since iron can be a by-product of copper technology, this could be its likely origin in India because copper was a well-known technology in many parts of ancient India. A smelting furnace dated 800 BCE is found in Naikund (Maharashtra), India. Recent discoveries reveal that iron was known in the Ganga valley in mid second millennium BCE. In the mid-first

millennium BCE, the Indian wootz steel was very popular in Persian courts for making swords.

Rust-free steel was an Indian invention, and remained an Indian skill for centuries. Delhi's famous iron pillar, dated 402 CE, is considered a metallurgical marvel and shows minimal signs of rust. The famous Damascus steel swords, now displayed in museums across Europe, were made from Indian steel imported by Europeans. The acclaimed Sheffield steel in UK was Indian crucible steel. The best brains of European science worked for decades to learn to reverse-engineer how Indians made crucible steel, and in this process, modern alloy design and physical metallurgy was developed in Europe. Indian industry was dealt a death blow by the colonial masters who banned the production and manufacture of iron and steel at several places in India, fearing their use in making swords and other arms which would be threat to them. In addition, they also ensured India would depend upon iron and steel imported from Europe.

In the field of Zinc Metallurgy:

Another important Indian contribution to metallurgy was in the isolation, distillation and use of zinc. From natural sources, zinc content in alloys such as brass can go no higher than 28 per cent. These primitive alloys with less than 28 per cent zinc were prevalent in many parts of the world before India. However, to increase the zinc content beyond this threshold, one must first separate the zinc into 100 per cent pure form and then mix the pure zinc back into an alloy. A major breakthrough in the history of metallurgy was India's discovery of zinc distillation whereby the metal was vaporized and then condensed back into pure metal.

Brass in Taxashila has been dated from third century BCE to fifth century CE. A vase from Taxashila is of particular interest because of its 34.34 per cent zinc content and has

been dated to the third century BCE (Marshall 1951: 567-568). Recently two brass bangles belonging to the Kushana period have been discovered from Senuwar (Uttar Pradesh, India). They are also made of metallic zinc as they have 35 per cent zinc content (Singh 2004: 594). Experts are unsure if this zinc was made by distillation process.

There is evidence of zinc ore mining at Zawar in Rajasthan from the fifth century BCE. Unfortunately there is lack of evidence of regular production of metallic zinc until the eighth century CE. This is the earliest date for zinc smelting and production of metallic zinc by distillation process anywhere in the world.

Europeans learnt it for the first time in 1743, when know-how was transferred from India. Until then, India had been exporting pure zinc for centuries on an industrial scale. At archeological sites in Rajasthan, retorts used for the distillation are found in very large numbers even today.

Once zinc had become separated into a pure metal, alloys could be made with the required zinc component to provide the required properties. For instance, strength and durability increase with higher zinc component. Also, copper alloys look like gold when the zinc component is higher than 28 per cent. Most early brass objects found in other countries had less than 10 per cent zinc component, and, therefore, these were not based on zinc distillation technology.

Alloys that exceed 10 per cent zinc are found earliest in Taxashila in the fourth century BCE. However, while Taxashila was distilling and manufacturing zinc on a small scale, it was in Zawar, Rajasthan, where this first became industrialized on a large scale. Zinc mines have been found in Dariba (11th century BCE), Agucha (sixth century BCE) and Zawar (fifth century BCE). These mines have pots and other manufacturing tools of these dates, but the mining could be even older.

Three important items are now proven about the history of zinc metallurgy: (i) zinc distillation and metallurgical usage was pioneered in India; (ii) industrial scale production was pioneered in Rajasthan; (iii) England transferred the technology of zinc from India in 1736. British metallurgy documents do not mention zinc at all prior to this transfer.

An important example of Indian metallurgy is the famous 'tubular bridge' built in the early parts of the 19th century across the Menai Straits in the United Kingdom. It is categorically stated "...its (iron's) superiority is so marked, that at the time when the Britannia tubular bridge across the Menai Straits was under construction preference was given to the use of iron produced in India" (T.H.D. La Touché, 1918). It has been recorded that 50 tonnes of Indian steel have been used in construction of the famous London Bridge.

In the field of Shipping and Shipbuilding and Navigation:

Shipbuilding was one of India's major export industries until the British dismantled it and formally banned it. Medieval Arab sailors purchased their boats in India. The Portuguese also continued to get their boats from India and not Europe. Some of the world's largest and most sophisticated ships were built in India and China.

The compass and other navigation tools were already in use in the Indian Ocean long before Europe. (“Nav” is the Sanskrit word for boat, and is the root word in “navigation” and “navy”.) Using their expertise in the science of seafaring, Indians participated in the earliest-known ocean-based trading system.

Few people know that an Indian naval pilot, named Kanha, was hired by Vasco da Gama to captain his ships and take him to India. Some of Europe's acclaimed “discoveries” in navigation were in fact appropriations of a well-established thriving trade system in the Indian Ocean. Contrary to European portrayals that Indians knew only coastal navigation, deep-sea shipping had existed in India as Indian ships had been sailing to islands such as the Andamans, Lakshdweep and Maldives around 2,000 years ago. Kautilya describes the times that are good and bad for seafaring. There is also extensive archival material on the Indian Ocean trade in Greek, Roman, and Southeast Asian sources. Europeans found it difficult to use the precise sine value for determining longitude till the techniques in Indo-Arabic navigational techniques or those in the *Laghu Bhaskariya* were known to them.. This was because this technique of longitude determination also required an accurate estimate of the size of the earth, and even Columbus had underestimated the size of the earth.

In the field of Dyes and Detergents (Traditional Himalayan Technology):

The Central Himalayan region is one of the richest regions for studying indigenous technologies. This region has its own traditional medicine system with more than a thousand medicinal plants and many traditional therapies, including cures for diseases classified as incurable. Other traditional technologies include earthquake-proof architecture, watermills, mining and metallurgical activities. One of the important traditional techniques of this region is wool and cloth dyeing and washing, which many jatis practice using plants and plant products. These ancient techniques are preserved and transmitted only orally. Basically, these techniques are eco friendly and beneficial to society. Modernization is destroying and replacing these eco-friendly techniques, replacing them with chemical products that are harmful to humans and the environment. Various communities make a range of woollen garments and materials, in addition to processing and colouring wool and cloth. The indigenous knowledge of making natural dyes from native plant species originally developed in the high altitude regions of Kumaun over a long period of time. These practices were very common in the high altitude districts of Pithoragarh in Kumaun, Chamoli and Uttarkashi districts of Garhwal. They had

perfected their knowledge to such a level that they could get most of the bright shades of colours for their woollen products

Distillation

Even more startling is the fact that Historians attributes the distillation of alcohol to India. Needham details the history of early liquor distillation in India in his works.

In the field of Forest Management:

Many interesting evidences are available about the way forests and trees were managed by each village and how a careful method was applied to harvest medicines, firewood and building material in accordance with natural renewal rates. There is now a database being built of 'sacred groves' across India. Once again, it's a story of an economic asset falling into disuse and abuse because of the dismantling of local governance and disrespect for traditional systems.

Furthermore, when scholars try to explain India's current ecological disasters, they seldom mention the large-scale logging of Indian timber by the British in order to fund the two world wars and various other industrial programs of the empire.

India has a long history of forestry traditions. Indeed, these traditions predate the documentation of known sources of Indic traditions. These traditions existed in the Vedic period, later Vedic period and later were recorded in Puranic literature. In fact, one can refer to the Vedic references as the theory, and the later Vedic and Puranic literature as the practical application. Subsequently, these ancient and proven traditions guided Indian foresters. Most importantly, these traditions still continue to survive and continue to be practiced by modern traditional foresters. An instance of the continuity from Vedic to modern forestry techniques is the relationship between tree groves and water tanks known as talabs. From the Rg-vedic period through Puranic times, descriptions of various trees groves and talabs in India exist. In the 5th century CE, Varahamihira wrote, in detail, on the tank-tree relationship.

Such writings and their prescriptions were considered sacred and the forester had the ethical duty to adhere to them, since they benefitted the entire society. The effect of this particular prescription was and still is amazing. A total of 1.53 million village tanks built from 2000 BCE onwards still survive in India today. These tanks vary in size from 0.5 ha (hecta-acres) of water harvesting area for the maintenance of a grove of a few trees to several hundred hecta-acres in order to serve a very large grove. The indigenous knowledge of local forests, known as ethno-forestry, provides another vivid example of the continuity of Indic forestry science. Several references can be found in such texts as

the Vedas, Upanishads, the Mahabharata, the Ramayana, the Arthasastra, and the Brihatsamhita on the role that forests and trees play and how to manage resources required by Indian forests. It is critical to analyze these accounts of ethno-forestry in India, not just in the context of the history of forest management, but also in the context of contemporary relevance. This knowledge could then be applied to the indigenous forests in present-day India.

In the field of Farming:

Indian farmers developed non-chemical, eco-friendly pesticides and fertilizers that have modern applications. These traditional pesticides have been recently revived in India with excellent results, replacing other products in certain markets. Crop rotation and soil technology that has been passed down for thousands of years are traditional practices which India pioneered.

Historically, India's agricultural production was large and sustained a huge population compared to other parts of the world. Surpluses were stored for use in a drought year. But the British turned this industry into a cash cow, exporting very large amounts of grain even during food shortages. This caused tens of millions of Indians to die of starvation in the 19th century.

In the field of Traditional Medicine:

Indian medicine was extremely popular in the world and herbal medicinal products were among the important items exported by Portuguese during their colonial period. Ayurvedic medicines and concoctions are being tried, tested and extensively used by western companies even today. The Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita etc. were very popular and important treasures of knowledge for doctors even today. However, Many companies have in fact been trying to secure patents on Indian medicine without acknowledging the source.

In the field of Mathematics:

When Europeans started to import Indian ideas about mathematics, what had been natural to Indian thinkers for a long time was very hard for Europeans to accept. For example, it took Europe 500 years to accept the zero, because the Church considered it to be heresy. Similarly, Indian concept of indivisibles, which led to the theory of real numbers and infinitesimals, paved the way for the development of calculus. Europeans struggled for 300 years from the 17th to 19th centuries to learn the same. Even now,

struggle is on between computational math (Indian algorithmic approach) and formal math (Western approach).

Additionally, Indians developed many important concepts including the base-ten decimal system, now in global use, and crucial trigonometry and algebra formulae. They made several astronomical discoveries. Diverse schools of logic and philosophy proliferated. The so called Arab numerals have their origin from India only.

Mathematical thought was intertwined with linguistics. In the field of number theory, infinite series like value of pie etc. we all know the contribution of Indian mathematicians. Indian mathematician, Madhava's work on power series for pi and for sine and cosine functions are of great importance. However, the original sources remain undiscovered or unstudied. Nilakantha (1445-1555) was mainly an astronomer, but his *Aryabhatiya Bhasya* and *Tantra Samgraha* address infinite-series expansions, problems of algebra and spherical geometry. Jyesthadeva's (c. 1550) text, *Yuktibhasa*, is one of those rare texts in Indian mathematics or astronomy that gives detailed derivations of many theorems and formulae in use at the time. This work is based mainly on the *Tantra Samgraha* of Nilakantha. *Kriyakramakari*, a joint commentary on Bhaskaracharya's *Lilavati* by Narayana (c. 1500-75) and Sankara Variar (c. 1500-1560), also contains a discussion of Madhava's work. The Karana *Paddhati* by Putumana Somayaji (c. 1660-1740) provides a detailed discussion on the various trigonometric series.

Apart from the work on infinite series, there were extensions of earlier works, notably of Bhaskaracharya:

1. The discovery of the formula for the circum-radius of a cyclic quadrilateral,
2. The use of the Newton-Gauss interpolation formula (to the second order) by Govindaswami; and
3. The statement of the mean value theorem of differential calculus, first recorded by Paramesvara (1360-1455) in his commentary on Bhaskaracharya's *Lilavati*.

In the field of Astronomy:

The amount of knowledge that was available in India in the field of Astronomy is mind boggling. When the west doesn't even know the shape of the earth, our people were able to calculate exact distances between planets, their orbits, their speeds of rotation, their mutual influences etc. Some of these aspects are not comprehensible to the west even today. One of the Vedangaas Jyotissashtra (Shiksha, Vyakarana, Chandas, Nirukta, Kalpa are other Vedaangaas) deals extensively on the planetary movements and their effects, various aspects of time etc.

In the field of Education:

The ancient Indian Universities like Nalanada and Takshasila were education centres even before the birth of Christ. Thousands of students from all over the world used to come for education to these universities. Queen of Cambodia did set up an associate centre in Nalanda exclusively for the people of Cambodia so that the teachers of Nalanda University will be able to teach the cambodian students also.

In the field of Economics and Politics and Business:

Kautilya's "Artha Shastra" was a treatise on governance and economics. Unfortunately, its manuscript went missing till the beginning of early 20th century. Finally it could be traced somewhere in southern part of India. In fact, its absence is considered as one of the reasons for successive defeats of Indian rulers at the hands of foreign invaders. Leave alone the Vedaas, even if one peeps into the Anusaasanika Parva or Shanti Parva of Maha Bhaaratha one will realize the amount all encompassing knowledge that is available in our great books and scriptures.

Ancient Indian guilds were a unique and multi-faceted form of organisation, which combined the functions of a democratic government, a trade union, a court of justice and a technological institution. The trained workers of the guilds provided a congenial atmosphere for work. They procured raw materials for manufacturing, controlled quality of manufactured goods and their price, and located markets for their sale. Unfortunately, Eurocentric lens has distorted the Indian guild by equating it with the European feudal or manorial system of the high Middle Ages. , due mainly to sudden increase in trade. These European guilds, identified as Merchant Guilds and Craft Guilds, lasted in some places until the 19th and 20th century, though their golden age probably was in the 13th and 14th centuries. The Craft Guilds were the direct producers and, therefore, more important than the Merchant Guilds. But the Indian guilds were far more important and complex than the European institutions.

In the field of customs and habits:

The Aacharaas and Sampradaayams of the Indians had very firm footing of hygiene and health, ecological balance and universal brother hood. Even the use of Neem for cleaning the teeth and tongue, use of neem and turmeric for bath, use of Tulasi and ginger by the gran'ma for treating the ailments, use of bindi or tilak, anklets and bangles etc. by the

ladies, use of cow dung for the cleaning the house ...all are of scientific basis and in line with keeping ecological balance. The Saattvic, Raajasik and Taamasik food described in our scriptures including in Bhagavadgeetha have great significance. The world is now aware of most of these customs and are following the same.

In the field of “Folk” Sciences:

Besides the above examples of Indian contributions to the origins of the so-called “Western” science, there is another category of traditional knowledge called non-literate folk science. Western science as a whole has condemned and ignored anything that it did not either appropriate or develop, by branding it as magic and superstition. However, in countries such as India, which boast of cultural continuity, ancient traditions survive with a rich legacy of folk science.

India's advanced metallurgy and civil engineering was researched and practiced by artisan guilds. Western science seldom realized that non-literate folk science preserves the wisdom gained through millennia of experience and direct observation, and has been transmitted by word of mouth.

For instance, modern scientists have humbly admitted that the ecological management practiced today by the tribes of India's Northeast is far superior to anything they could teach them. A good example is the use of alder (*Alnus nepalensis*), which has been cultivated in the *jhum* (shifting cultivation) fields by the Khonoma farmers in Nagaland for centuries. It has multiple usages for the farmers, since it is a nitrogen-fixing tree and helps to retain the soil fertility. Its leaves are used as fodder and fertilizer, and it is also utilized as timber. One could cite numerous such examples.

The vast majority of modern medicines patented by Western pharmaceutical firms are based on various tropical plants. The most common method to select candidates for detailed testing has been for Western firms to scout tropical societies, seek out established “folk” remedies and subject these to testing by “Western science”. In many cases, patents owned by multinationals are largely for isolating the active ingredients in a lab and going through rigorous protocols of testing and patent filing. While this is an important and expensive task that deserves credit, these are seldom truly independent discoveries from scratch. Never has the society that has discovered them through centuries of empirical trial and error received any recognition.

Rarely have Western scholars acknowledged India's knowledge bearers as equal partners. The obsession to make 'original' discoveries and to put one's name on publications has exacerbated the tendency to appropriate with one hand, while denigrating the source with other hand. Very unfortunate state of affairs indeed.

In the field of Anatomy and physiology:

Human anatomy and physiology was well understood by our ancestors. Various Yogic exercises, breathing techniques, Pranic therapies etc. evolved and practiced for the upkeep of good health in our country. Of late many of these concepts are becoming popular in the west but without any reference to the source.

In the field of Arts:

The first known treatise on arts came from India. 64 types of arts were described in our books. Naatya Shaastra by Bharatha Muni was well known to the world in the field of Dance. In fact various dance forms belonging to different parts of the country were described along with their subtle differences and specialties by Bharatha Muni. Similarly history of Indian classical music dates back to Saama Veda. Indian temple sculpture was unparalleled in the world. Any amount of writing will be less to describe the Shilpa in corner figures, the carvings the intricate details of the jewellery of the idols made of stone, the techniques they followed in the construction temples like Belur, Halebeedu, Brihadeeswara temple in Tanjore, The temple complex in Srirangam etc.

In the field of Jewellery and ornaments:

India had been the pioneers in this field since ages. Our country was known as “Sone ki Chidia” not without reason. Even today, world diamond trade is controlled by Indians. In fact it is for this Jewellery and gold, that initially all the invasions did take place. Whether it was Mahmood Ghazni, Nadir Shah, Chenghiz Khan or Europeans ...all of them plundered the wealth from our country. Many palaces and buildings those days were studded with precious stones and we can see those evidences in many places. Many temples used to have lot of Jewellery and ornaments. The value of jewellery in the Anantha Padmanabha Swamy temple in Tiruvananthapuram is not estimated even today. Even in the recent times, Nawab of Golkonda was considered among the richest in the world of his time due to his jewellery and gold collections. Even now India is known world over for gold and diamond trade. Due to some policies the trade centres might be getting shifted to other countries but majority of the trade is still managed by Indians.

In the field of Language and literature:.

Vedaas and Upanishads are the earliest literary works all over the universe as they exist from time immemorial. Although most of these are lost now and only a very small fraction

are available, still they are great treasures of knowledge- both materialistic and spiritual. Since west realized their value, many of those manuscripts were taken by them by various means and one can see them in their libraries today. The amount of literature in the Indian languages is beyond one's comprehension. The largest poetic Epic (Itihaasa) till date in the whole world is Mahaa Bhaaratha consisting of over 1,00,000 verses. Even the books of science and mathematics were written in poetic form. Encrypting confidential information was also done in these literature way back during *Mahaabhaarata* times itself and we could find several evidences for the same. For example there are two verses of *Vedaanta Desika* one verse being the viloma (read in the reverse order) of the other and when both verses are read together, it gives the path of the knight to cover all the houses in the chess board without repeating any house on the chess board. Mind boggling indeed.

Indian languages like Sanskrit, Tamil etc. were very rich and tons of literary works are available in these languages. Sanskrit Grammar written by *Paanini* in about 4000 suutraas which is called *Ashtaadhyayi* is a boon for computer scientists today. According to the distinguished linguist Frits Staal: "*We can now assert, with the power of hindsight, that Indian linguists in the fifth century B.C. knew and understood more than Western linguists in the nineteenth century A.D.*" We may not be able to discuss the intricate aspects as to how Sanskrit is used by the computer scientists. But a brief insight will be helpful to appreciate the same.

Rules of *Paanini's* grammar, *Ashtaadhyayi*, is traditionally studied together with the *dhaatupaatha*, which is a list of verbal roots arranged into sublists, and the *ganapaatha*, which is a list of various classes of morphs, one class being the *dhaatupaatha*. It is now becoming clear that *Ashtaadhyayi* does not merely deal with analysis of words (*shabdaanusahasana*) but in fact provides a structure for the analysis of sentences. Due to its algebraic nature and its comprehensiveness, the structure has been described as a machine generating words and sentences of Sanskrit. Panini's *Ashtaadhyayi* captures the fundamentals of Sanskrit language in terms of its phonology, morphology and syntax. Some of the issues of interest to the computer scientist include analysis of the arrangement of the rules and search for other arrangements that are equivalent in terms of their generative power. The formal aspects of these arrangements and their relationships will help define the notion of relation between grammars. Such a notion is of immediate relevance for machine translation. Hence Sanskrit is used for computational linguistics by the western scientists.

In the field of Inner Sciences and Engineering:

India's inner sciences and Engineering of mind and consciousness ironically are simultaneously (a) being appropriated by the West and (b) being depicted as anti-progressive and irrational. In fact, inner and outer realms of inquiry are often viewed as

opposites that can, at best, be balanced but not unified. However, India's inner sciences and outer development coexisted in a mutually symbiotic relationship. The discussion between Swami Vivekananda and Dr Tesla is a testimony for the same. *“Mr Tesla was charmed about Vedantic Prana & Akasha and the Kalpa which according to him are only theories of modern science can entertain. Mr Tesla thinks he can demonstrate mathematically that force and matter are reducible to potential energy as mentioned in Indian Vedanta”.*

The divorce of 'religion' and science is a strictly Western construct due to the dogmatic and rigid nature of the Abrahamic religions. History-centric religions (such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) are often not compatible with the human tendency towards freedom of thought, intellectual originality, and non-conformity to pre-opinionated rigid thought which are necessary in scientific innovation. That is why many scientists like Antoine Lavoisier have been imprisoned and hanged to death those days by the Church in the west. That is never the case in India. The tradition of spiritual experimentation in India, however, is compatible with the material and intellectual experimentation required by science.

The above are some of the few references of our ancient knowledge base since we cannot narrate all of them in a limited time. The greatness of Ramanujam, Arya Bhatta etc. are already known to you and I have not mentioned them separately. You will appreciate that here I have mentioned only those which have solid evidences for which validation is very much possible. Some of our people tend to become over enthusiastic and try to overstep by mentioning many things for which evidences cannot be established. In such a case, the rivals pick up such examples to bring down credence of rich heritage completely. Hence one shall be sincere and do hard work before putting forth the facts lest we should lose the credence.

I: Very interesting. But why at all this quest for knowledge did stop in India suddenly which led us to depend on others.

Naannagaaru: There may be many reasons. Due to foreign invasions and demolition of institutions, destruction of manuscripts and other valuable works, demotivating and punishing those who were working in those fields by the imposition of all draconian laws may be one reason. The industrial revolution in Europe and path breaking discoveries and innovations in the west may be another reason. The change in the education system might have also contributed to this problem killing the native skill and creativity. By wedging divisions among people and killing the skill set of the local population, the foreign rulers might have worked for themselves. Then, our complacency and contentment and lack of greed about materialistic things and too much philosophical orientation and detachment to worldly things by our people may be another contributing factor.

I: I didn't quite understand what this "*Inner Science and Engineering*" is all about. Can you please elaborate further.

Naannagaaru: Our people have understood the relationship between body, *Manas* and *Aatma* and their relation very well.

I: *Aatma* is same as soul which is usually mentioned in western philosophy. Isn't it?

Naannagaaru: Not really. As per western philosophy, the Hebrew word translated "soul" means a breathing creature and is referred to human beings. Whenever the word "soul" is used, it can refer to the whole person, whether physically alive or in the afterlife. There is another term "spirit" used by the west, and The "spirit" is that part of us that is enabled by God to know and worship Him, the part of humanity that "connects" with God or refuses to connect to God, who Himself is Spirit. Our spirits relate to His Spirit, either accepting His promptings and conviction, thereby proving that we belong to Him or resisting Him and proving that we do not have spiritual life. Accordingly, Soul will not be there plants etc. Further whatever is created on the earth is sinful. Hence all things and beings are sinful as per their religion. As per those religions, the animals and plants are meant only for the enjoyment and consumption of the humans. Since there is no reincarnation as per Abrahamic religions, once a human being is dead, the soul cannot take rebirth. That means there is no second chance for the soul to get the *Moksham* or salvation. Due to such differences, it is not correct to call Soul and *Aatma* as same. That's why some of our *Sampradaaya* terms shall be considered as non-translatable. Otherwise, there will be confusion. Similarly, I feel, *Manas* shall not be translated as Mind.

I: Understood. Please continue with what you are saying about the body, *Manas* and *Aatma* relationship as per our philosophy. By the way what this *Manas* is ?

Naannagaaru: I will briefly touch upon this aspect. As per our philosophy, the body that we are seeing externally consisting of skin, blood, bones, flesh, limbs etc. is this physical body. Inside this there is *Prana maya Kosa*. *Prana* broadly means Vayu ie air and *Kosa* means sheath. There are different *Vayus* within the physical body. Inside this, there is *Manas*. *Aatma* is also inside the body. *Manas* helps *Aatma* to perform various activities and it is the combination of memory store house as well as an entity with logic and decision algorithms. When we say store house, it stores all the data received by us not only during this *Janma* but also of all the previous *Janmaas*. This receiving of the data is done by *Gnyaana Indriyaas* ie eye, nose, ear, tongue and skin. Based on the data received, the *Manas* helps in the analysis and decision making. The decision taken by the *Aatma* is implemented through *Manas* and the five *Karmendriyaas* like hands, legs, mouth etc. That means receipt of all inputs is done by *Gnyaana indriyaas* and are further received by *Aatma* through *Manas*. Similarly, discharge of all output action by *Aatma* goes

through *Manas* and further performed by all *Karma indriyaas*. *Paramaatma* resides within the *Aatma*. The *Gnyaana* is there in the *Aatma* which is called *Dharmi Gnyaana* as per *Visishtadvaita* philosophy. The *Gnyaana* from the *Aatma* flows through *Manas* and the *indriyaas* and this *Gnyaana* is known as *Dharma Bhoota Gyaana* as per *Visishtadvaita* philosophy. Now, we understood that there is intricate relation among all the above. By controlling the inputs to our body we can control the physical body as well as the *Manas* to some extent. However, there will be influence of the previous *Janma Vaasanaas* and getting rid of them involves different techniques. *Patanjali Maharshi* explained control of body and *Manas* through *Astanga Yoga* in which there are eight parts. They are *Yama*...Control outer organs, *Niyama*...is moral discipline, *Asana*...various body postures to have control of body, *Praanaayama* ..control on breathing, *Pratyahara* ... withdrawal from external influences, *Dharana* .. to concentrate on any particular object, sound continuously without break, *Dhyana* .. meditative absorption and *Samadhi*... is last stage when one is expected to attain the Bliss. Hence, the process finally is expected to lead to eternal Bliss and *Moksham*. As it is said, “*Shareeram Aadyam Khalu Dharma Saadhanam*” sound body is the means for attaining the eternal Bliss. Of course, there is some variance on the idea of what this eternal Bliss is among various Indian philosophers which we will discuss later but generally the ultimate eternal Bliss or *Moksham* means attaining “*Paramaatma*”.

For each of the above eight parts, many techniques were prophesied and explained by various *Achaaryaas* or *Gurus*. Some of the meditation techniques have been popularized by *Budhists* as well. *Vipaasyana* meditation in Buddhism is considered as the most difficult. This is aimed at reducing the influence of Previous *Janma Vaasanaas* as well. But this is a very rigorous meditation practice technique. In this meditation technique, instead of concentrating on any object or Mantra, the *Yogi* concentrates on breathing alone. The *Yama* and *Niyama* are extremely essential for this Meditation. *Maharshi Mahesh Yogi* popularized Transcendental Meditation. Among other meditation techniques *Sudarshana Kriya* is propagated by *Sri Sri Ravi Shankar*. This is a combination of physical exercise, breathing techniques, meditation and mantra chanting. *Kriya Yoga* from *Paramahansa Yogananda* school is also very popular. There are many more techniques like *Third eye meditation*, *Kundalini* etc. Quite a few of these techniques or practices have been adapted and practiced by the west under different names without necessarily revealing the original source of the technique. For example Christian Yoga, Mindful meditation are some of them which are a fall out of our ancient meditation techniques. The Transcendental Meditation is popularized by Herb Benson with a different name. Yoga Nidra is called Lucid Dreaming and is popularized in USA. *Yogasanas* which was popularized by the great *Achaaryaas* like *Yogaachaarya B.K.S. Iyengar* are now adapted and practiced by the entire world. Different *Mudraas* and *Bandhaas* for good health and control over mind and body are all practiced all over the world which are of Indian origin only. However, in order rip off the Indianness and to give a color of their culture they make subtle modifications like removing or changing the *Mantras*, symbols, names etc. For example “*Suurya Namaskaara Kriya*’ is called “*Son Salutation*”. Here Son

means not sun but Son of God ie Jesus Christ. They will not say the names of the Sun like *Savitrumandala* ,*Madhyavarthi* etc. during the process but different names of their choice. Of course, I don't know what will be the effect of such modifications. For example, the *Mantra* pronunciation during the meditation in its original style and form and syllables will have certain vibrations and effect and when they are changed what effects it will have are not known to us.

I: Why?

Naannagaaru: Suppose, a *Mantra* is recorded in and repeated by a computer, that computer will not attain *Moksham* or get enlightened. Similarly, if you are given a computer with which the whole process of a *Yagnya* is virtually simulated, you will not get the complete fruits of the *Yagnya* without really performing it using all the prescribed material in the prescribed process. Hence, both conscious internal experience including the *Mantrik* vibrations etc. and the external procedure are important for the *Adhyatmic* activity. As you know, for the sound, there are four stages - *Para*, *Pashyanthi*, *Madhyama* and *Vaikhari* and the scientific process of this sound generation during chanting of the *Mantra* and its effects etc. are not clearly known to us. Our *Rishis* during their course of *Tapas* were blessed by these techniques/ knowledge and selflessly they passed them on to our ancestors for the benefit of the mankind. Since our *Achaaryaas/ gurus* had faith in that knowledge they had practiced and further passed on to their students. Hence no validation, testing etc. was conducted on the same. Further, testing would not only raises doubts on one's faith but would also be extremely difficult. Our scientific rules can be verified by anybody at any place on the earth any time to get the same results. For example when Oxygen and Hydrogen combine to give water, the ratio in which they combine, the temperature and other conditions for the reaction would be always same. However, our inner technology is different. That is because, all of us have unknown entities like old *Janma Vaasanaas*, our state of *Manas*, body constitution etc. Hence, the empirical results of any such technique, process or *Kriya* may not be same for different people or for that matter for the same person at different times. However, qualitatively you may know whether it has an effect, whether it is good or bad to some body etc. to a limited extent. Nevertheless, these experiments are being conducted by the west and slowly they are realizing the far reaching effects of this knowledge and techniques in the Neuro/ Mind sciences related areas like assessing and improving one's memory, solving neurological disorders etc. today and are realizing lot of benefits by these different techniques taught by our *Rishis*. Unfortunately very little research or insight has been done by our people in our country. Hence, this knowledge has flown out of India and now, our people are contented with accepting the superiority of the west in these fields in which were once masters.

I: But are they acknowledging all this?

Naannagaaru: Rarely. Many a time, the techniques are modified so that the source is never to be revealed. The modified techniques are re-exported to India and we consider them as great inventions by the west. Mr. Rajiv Malhotra says this is the process digestion. For example, the tiger eats the deer, digests and whatever it cannot digest or whatever doesn't suit will be thrown out. Then the deer is vanished without a trace and the tiger becomes stronger by digesting the deer. Similarly, many a time our techniques and technologies are digested by them, then they become stronger and that knowledge is lost by us forever. Some portion of the knowledge which has religious interlocking or ethnic flavor which is not suitable to them will be thrown out. Unfortunately, this has been happening for a long time.

I: Why can't we question them?

Naannagaaru: Who will question. It needs lot of initiative, courage, home work, knowledge and institutional support. Most of us lack these qualities.

I: But, why should they do like that, they have nothing to lose by acknowledging the source of knowledge.

Naannagaaru: There can be many reasons. One of the reasons is religious interlocking of these techniques. For example, in the *Sudarshana Kriya*, *Om* is pronounced thrice during the *Kriya*, similarly *Soham* is pronounced certain number of times. Similarly in Transcendental Meditation technique, meditation is done on a *Mantra* which will be given by the *Guru*. These things may not be in line with their religious orientation. Hence, they may conveniently modify those things. Further, ego and pride of oneself and one's heritage will always play a major role. Countries like China will not allow such things to happen. However, neither ourselves nor our rulers are bothered about such happenings. Over and above, it is even said that we should be thankful to them for utilizing and popularizing our knowledge. It is like saying that "*when the Queen of England wears our Kohinoor Diamond in her crown, Indians should be thankful to the British crown for wearing our diamond thus adding to its value*". That is the state of affairs. There are foreign academicians, governments, the religious institutions, media, NGO'sall working in that direction and then there are sympathizers in our own country. We have to face the brunt from so many fronts.

I: I think we should fight all this in united way.

Naannagaaru: True, but there are many powerful forces working against to break us too using the same age old time tested techniques of using religion, language, caste, gender etc. If you look into History of India, Indians are defeated only because of this disunity and all successful foreign rulers have strategically employed the same against us.

I: Those days have gone, haven't they? After all those invasions by the foreigners, now at last we are free people and are one Union of India.

Naannagaaru: True, the invasions are over. But the breaking forces have not gone. There are religious forces from other religions and then there are forces from some communist countries and others who bring in divisions by over publicizing human right violations, caste divisions, atrocities against women and downtrodden etc. in our country. Our vote bank politics also tries to fish in these troubled waters for its own selfish ends. There are many foreign funded NGO's who work for their own interests.

I: Are those countries really interested to divide our country.

Naannagaaru: May not be all countries. But, there is always this *Mother in law syndrome* that prevails. i.e. The mother in law is worried that her daughter in law will become more powerful than her. Hence she always creates trouble in their family harmony working for some division. However, she may not be interested to create such a chaos that the family is broken which will disturb her life as well. Hence she plays the role a *big mother* role as if she is trying to unite the family. Many big countries play all these games.

I: May be we were originally divided. I mean, as India we were never united before we got this independence. We had different languages, cultures, practices besides other divisions like castes etc. Since this combination was basically unstable and was never integrated union, any disturbance would be showing its effect.

Naannagaaru: I am not so sure about it. If you look into our epics like the *Ramayana* or the *Mahaabhaarata*, our whole country was described in those epics. If you take our scriptures like *Naatya Shaastra of BharathaMuni*, different forms of Dance in the whole country were described in those books. Hence you cannot say we had been never one country. In the historical perspective also, Kings like *Ashoka* ruled the country without any divisions and differences. It is true that *Varna* and *Jaati* had been there in our country but they were not same as castes introduced by the Europeans. Lord *Krishna* Himself said in the *Bhagavadgeetha* " *Chaathurvarnam mayaa srushtam guna karma vibhaagashah*" That means the four varnaas were the conception of Lord Himself. But it was based on their Qualities and activities. However, the qualities of the progeny would be generally in line with that of the parents. Even the activities which were called *Vrittis* would be in line with the family traditions. ie the techniques of weaving would be learnt by a weaver's child

from his parents more easily. So also a boy born in a potter's family would gain expertise in that particular art. In fact this type of division of duties and activities would be necessary for any prosperous society. It should not be construed that a potter is superior to a weaver or vice versa.

I: But, is it not wrong to deny the right of *Vedaas* to some *Varnaas*.

Naannagaaru: For every *Varna*, there are do's and don'ts. *Brahmins* are not supposed to accumulate wealth. They don't have right to rule or do agriculture. People of other *varnaas* are assigned these rights and responsibilities. Even other habits and duties are in line with their responsibilities. As I said, the functions of leg are different from that of the hand. That doesn't mean one is superior to the other. Similarly, the *Brahmins* who study scriptures cannot be meat eaters since they have to maintain spiritual purity and celibacy. The ruling community who should protect their people may eat meat in order to have physical strength. Based on the social requirements, the codes of conduct have been drawn in the *Smritis*. There are different *Smritis* applicable for different times. However, now a days we are not following any of them, nor are we aware of them either. Foreigners adapted some pick and choose policy to selectively show some things many a time out of context in order to criticize our practices and to bring division among ourselves. We have discussed this earlier.

I: But why at all should they do this.

Naannagaaru: The Europeans during their colonial rule wanted our *Vritti Vidyaas* ie traditional crafts etc. to be demolished so that the industries in Europe would prosper. Hence they employed some educated Indian clerks who would ensure the demolition of these crafts. Even now the district head is called "*collector*" as designated by them those days because, his main duty used to be collecting or squeezing the taxes from the workers and peasants on behalf of the European crown.

However, even today, if you look at the Indian economy, major contribution to the national wealth is not from multinational enterprises but from people of these *Vrittis*. Unfortunately they are classified by the Government as unorganized sector and are given the least importance, financing or support. In fact they are the best organized because although they are not necessarily well educated from any big technical or management school, they know their job precisely as they learn it from their parents and predecessors. Take the example of the flower vendor who visits our house. She deals with a perishable product. However, she knows all her customers by name, their needs, I mean when they have their festivals or functions and which flowers are needed for the same, how to manage her inventory, how to manage her suppliers etc.

For that matter, whatever we have discussed about manufacture of Iron and steel, Zinc, Textiles etc. in the ancient India was not the job of so called the elite. There were no historical evidences to say that there were lot of fights among those *Varnaas* those days. All this is a more recent affair. While the English educated Indians were exercising demonic powers over the others on behalf of the British crown, obviously others got alienated from them. After all, when General Dyer ordered Jalian Wala Bag massacre, he didn't shot a single bullet. The order was carried out by the Indian Sepoys. Such Sepoys of our soil who work for the foreign establishments and institutions are still in India. We may call them minorities. But, Mc Dowell company which has a small establishment in our country but supported by a big multinational establishment abroad cannot be called a minority organization. Similarly, a community which draws its strength from Middle East or Vatican, Karachi or Washington cannot be called minority.

I: That means protection is required from these Indian Sepoys also. How to correct the situation.

Naannagaaru: We should protect ourselves from both internal and external forces. It can be done by proper education to some extent. For example, you said earlier that "*Aryans brought us the civilization*" because of your improper educational inputs. Proper education might help such situation. Further we have to find our own defense mechanism as per Mr Rajiv Malhotra. For example, a porcupine spreads its thorns to protect itself against its predator. Similarly, we have to ensure that such thorns are built into our knowledge systems so that the outsiders cannot digest easily. For example, suppose we use our traditional terms like *Karma, Aatma, Yoga, Paramaatma, Dharma, Punarjanma* etc. not only these words but also these concepts cannot be straight away amalgamated or digested by others because these are unique to our philosophy. Similarly, we should ensure that the techniques and knowledge systems that are used shall not be intentionally stripped off their integral religious content.

We have to also improve our institutions. For example, today there is no institutional mechanism for temple administration in India. We keep crying or complaining that our temples are mismanaged by the Government and that Government shall not be involved in the temple administration. But, in case on one fine day, if the Government decides to hand over the administration, what is the system that we have to take over and manage them better. We are simply unprepared for the same. In fact, today, the hall mark of the Indian mentality is to sit on the shore and criticize the system or the public at large without really getting into the problem. It needs sincerity and hard work to bring in the reformation. Lot of preparation is required to build the knowledge base, institutions, voluntary work force to take on the rivals etc. The *Pandits* in the temples might also be not equipped enough in the relevant fields well enough to deal with the subject. Unlike *Islam* or *Christianity* where there is a central authority for the control and administration, our

temples don't follow such centralized control concept. This is one way good, but then they should be equipped well enough to organize themselves. Leaving to the Government is no solution either.

Further, defense alone would not be sufficient to deal with the problem. In good olden days, our philosophers used to study the rival philosophy to prepare themselves not only to defend but also to attack their rivals as and when required. This is called studying the *Poorva Paksha*. If you see *Sribhashyam*, you will know, *Bhagavadramanuja* knew about other contemporary *Darshanams* and prevailing philosophies even better than his rivals. Mr. Rajv Malhotra says somewhere down the line we have stopped looking into this aspect. We stopped studying our opponents. *Kautilya* in *Artha Saastra* says, considerable time and money shall be spent on knowing the opponent. If *Chaanakya* had won against *Raakshasa* or *Nandaas*, it is because he knew them or their moves well before hand. Chess game which was invented in India could be won only when you understand the opponent and his moves beforehand. Over the ages we became lethargic and complacent and stopped this practice. When the foreigners came, our own people did invite them without knowing their intentions. It happened during *Ghazni* and *Ghori* times, it happened during *Babur's* invasion and it happened when the Europeans came to India. When the Europeans came to India, they had a clear strategy what to do in India. But we were absolutely blind about their plans and proposals. Even today, when foreign NGO comes and offers petty gifts, some of us fall on their feet to extend any support without understanding the repercussions. Hence, studying *Poorva Paksha* is extremely important.

I: I see, then can you tell me briefly about their religions and what they think about us.

Naannagaaru: I am not an expert. However, I will try to give some idea.

See, the two major foreign religions which have some influence in our country are *Christianity* and *Islam*. Both these religions have centralized control and promote expansionism.

I: What is basis of these religions?

Naannagaaru: It all started with the disobedience of *Adam* and *Eve*. When God ordered not to eat the forbidden fruit in the *Eden* garden in the paradise, His order was not obeyed. Hence He gave the curse that not only *Adam* and *Eve* but all their progeny and all further generations would become sinners and would go to Hell. As per Christianity, subsequently, God took pity and sent His Son and He was *Jesus*. However, had He also

taken the natural birth He also would have become another sinner. Hence, He was born to virgin Mary. In order to protect all people who believed and followed Him, He underwent *Substitutional Atonement* ie. He Himself suffered the crucifixion on “*Good Friday*” for the good of all the His followers so that they will not go to Hell.

But, Some people did not believe that *Jesus* was the son of God and almost six centuries later they believed that *Mohammad* was the Prophet of God(Allah) and became His followers became Muslims. Jews of course, didn't believe in both Jesus and Mohammad. That's a different religion. As per both Christianity or Islam, all humans would be born sinners and since there would be no rebirth, if they would not follow their Son of God or the Prophet as the case may be, they would go to Hell and there would be no second chance also. Both believe in expansionism of their religion and are controlled by a centralized authority. Of course, there are different branches respectively within these religions themselves with some differences but, let us not get into all those details because that is not the subject of our discussion. But they are also not totally devoid of the so called oppression, differentiation etc. As per them. other than human beings, rest of the living things like plants and the other nonliving things like mountains etc. are all created for the enjoyment of Humans and hence are of not any significance. Further whatever is there on earth, it is all sinful and nothing is sacred or divine.

I: But in our case, the *Aatma* is of *Gnyananada swaroopam* and it is present in all living things. The suffering is due to *Prakriti* which is of *Sattva, Raja, Tama Gunaas* and its association with the *Aatma*. Isn't it?. In that case, we don't have to call ourselves born sinners for no fault of us. Further, our religion is all inclusive because *Aatma* is there in all living things.

Naannagaaru: Not only that. We believe that *Paramaatma* is there in everything i.e. living or nonliving. ie *Chetanas* and *Achetanas*. But as per them, since whatever is there, it is all sinful, even our deities in the temples are also not divine. Hence they have a reason to destroy them.

I: How would God create everything which would be only sinful.

Naannagaaru: Because of the disobedience of *Adam* and *Eve*.

I: Oh, my God. OK, let's not get into too much of those controversial things. Please tell me what do they think about our religion and our practices.

Naannagaaru: All nonbelievers of their religion are sinners and are eligible for punishment. In order to protect them from sin, they will help all of them for the reformation ie to get converted into their religion. There are well laid down procedures in their systems

for such conversions and outsiders are welcomed with open arms. In case of Hindus, it is, of course, other way round.

I: I thought, as said by Gandhiji "*Raghupathi Raaghava RaajaaraamEeswara Allah Tero naam sab ko sanmathi de Bhagavan*" all religions are same and all Gods are same although we may call them with different names.

Naannagaaru: That is not the original poem of "*Raghupathi Raaghava Raajaaraam.*". Any way Keeping that aside, you might have heard the two principles often preached by our HH Chinna Jeeyar Swamiji, i.e. "*Serve All Beings as Service to God, Worship Your own Respect All*". God is there in every living being and nonliving thing as per our philosophy. Everything is His creation and belongs to Him only. You love your brother because he is born to your parents. You love this home because it belongs to your parents. Similarly all the creatures and the whole universe belong to Him only and hence we love and respect others. However, what do you do if the other fellow hates you or beats you. While we respect others, we follow our own religion and philosophy. You respect all women but your mother only is your mother and you approach her only for your needs. The principle is similar. However, what do you do if the other fellow hates you or beats you. Some people say we should tolerate them. However, Rajiv Malhotra introduces the word *Mutual Respect*. i.e. the respect for other shall be mutual. If Osama Bin Laden doesn't have respect for you and your philosophy, then your respect for him and his philosophy will not applicable.

I: But Mahatma Gandhi said we are peace loving nation and ...

Naannagaaru: We are indeed peace loving and hence we shall not undertake any violent activities on our own against anybody. That is why we never believed in expansionism and invaded any other country. However, for our living in peace, once again the others also should be peace loving. Otherwise in order to protect the larger good, we may have to resort to defend the Dharma. Hence we shall be followers of *Dharma*. A soldier on the borders cannot say he will always follow nonviolent methods to fight his enemy. India had suffered this dilemma of *Yogi syndrome* for a long time. ie. If a *Yogi* doesn't fight the gladiator he will be consumed. But if he fights the gladiator and conquers him he may not be known as a *Yogi* any longer. The point here is, a *Yogi* shall be externally strong and internally soft. His fight shall be for the Dharma and against the evil for the over all good of the mankind and the universe but not to meet his selfish greed. This is what is taught to us in our scriptures like *Geetha*. For example, in our *Pauranic* texts, Lord *Shiva* is portrayed among the greatest of *Yogis*. But when things are not in order, he is the destroyer also. Hence, this dichotomy shall be understood properly. Otherwise as has been the case of countries like Philippines where the native systems have been digested

by the others, one day ethnic tradition and the rich heritage of our country will also vanish into thin air.

I: Is it true that our scriptures were not in the written form and thus cannot be taken as *Pramaanaas* ?

Naannagaaru: This is one of the propositions by some Indologists like Mr. Sheldon Pollock. But the manuscripts came to existence only few centuries back whereas our scriptures are of prehistoric times. In fact, corruption of our scriptures started after the written word came to existence. Our great ancestors have been protecting and passing them on to next generations sincerely. However, there might be some mix up or communication gap that could have taken place in the later periods which led to some inconsistencies in the *Puraanaas* etc. Further these *Pauraanic* versions may be belonging to different *Kalpaas* and hence differences may exist among them. Further, as you know we are all in this *Leela Vibhoothi* i.e. *this universe* which is of *Prakriti* and whoever, is in this *Leelaa Vibhoothi* will be influenced by the *Sattva, Rajas and Tamas Gunaas*. Since *Veda Vyaasa* who wrote these *Puraanaas* was also in this *Leelaa Vibhoothi*, the influence of the *Gunaas* will be on him too during the process of his writings. Hence we have to understand them carefully and this needs the help of *Guru*. It has been always the practice those days to learn them in a Gurukula from an Enlightened Guru to avoid such misunderstandings or misinterpretations. Now, these so called scholars who may not even know the intricacies of the Sanskrit language fully, try to read, understand and translate those sacred texts into their languages and interpret as they like or as they know. Some do it intentionally due to bias where as some may do it out of ignorance. This way lot of damage is done to our sacred texts.

I: Is it so. I thought they are doing lot of service by translating all those texts into English and other languages to enable people like us who do not know *Sanskrit* to understand these sacred texts.

Naannagaaru: Not necessarily understand but misunderstand too.

I:How do you say that? It cannot be so.

Naannagaaru: OK, let me give you from the book "*Invading the Sacred*" couple of Quotes of Dr Wendy Doniger, a Professor of History and Religion at the University of Chicago and is one of the most influential persons in the study of religion and the former president of the American Academy of Religion and a past president of the influential Association of Asian Studies (AAS).

1. *“The Bhagavad Gita is not as nice a book as some Americans think . . . Throughout the Mahabharata . . . Krishna goads human beings into all sorts of murderous and self-destructive behaviors such as war . . . The Gita is a dishonest book; it justifies war.”*
2. *“There is generally, therefore, an inverse ratio between the worship of goddesses and the granting of rights to human women. Nor are the goddesses by and large compassionate; they are generally a pretty bloodthirsty lot. Goddesses are not the solution.”*

In the above quotes Lord Krishna and Goddess Kaali are described as blood thirsty characters and anybody who does not know the Indian philosophy and reads the above will misunderstand about our religion and tradition.

Again as mentioned in the same book, one of the foremost art museums in the US is the famous Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore. Its display on the Asian Art features some rare and precious art objects of Asia. The large eleventh century *Ganesha* carving in the collection, it is said, to have a write-up, and the following are some excerpts from it:

“Ganesa, is a son of the great god Siva, and many of his abilities are comic or absurd extensions of the lofty dichotomies of his father.”

And it then goes on to say: *“Ganesa’s potbelly and his childlike love for sweets mock Siva’s practice of austerities, and his limp trunk will forever be a poor match for Siva’s erect phallus.”*

In an introductory textbook on Eastern religions that is used extensively in undergraduate courses on “World Religions and Asian Studies”, *Awakening: An Introduction to the History of Eastern Thought*, Dr.Patrick Bresnan writes ‘authoritatively’ about *Shiva*. Following is a sample prose.

“Entering the world of Shiva worship is to enter the world of India at its most awesomely mysterious and bewildering; at least for the non-Indian. In Shiva worship, the Indian creative imagination erupts in a never-ending multiplicity of gods and demons, occult rituals, and stunning sexual symbolism . . . Linga/yoni veneration was not the whole of it . . . Young women, known as devadasis, were commonly connected with Shiva temples, and participated in the rituals, sometimes only in a symbolic fashion; sometimes not. In a degraded form the devadasi became nothing more than temple prostitutes. These extremes were more often to be found among the practitioners of Tantra, that enigmatic antithesis of conservative Hinduism that developed in north eastern India. Some Tantra temples became notorious for all kinds of extreme practices, including ritual rape and

ritual murder. In Calcutta, at the Temple of Durga (one of the forms of Shiva's shakti) there was an annual festival at which many pigs, goats, sheep, fowl, and even water buffaloes would be slaughtered and ritually burned before the statue of the goddess”.

I: Shocking, but I understand that Sri Vivekananda was well respected and well received for his philosophical discourses all over the world. I think he promoted and popularised Hinduism all across the globe. It would have considerable effect in proper understanding of our philosophy.”

Naannagaaru: Let me give a quote of Dr Jeffrey Kripal (a Czech by Nationality) on Ramakrishna who is the mentor of Swami Vivekananda.

Ramakrishna was a conflicted, unwilling, homoerotic Tantrika[. . .] Tantra's heterosexual assumptions seriously violated the structure of his own homosexual desires. His female Tantric guru and temple boss may have forced themselves . . . on the saint . . .but Ramakrishna remained . . . a lover not of sexually aggressive women or even of older men but of young, beautiful boys.”

I: These may be isolated examples.

Naannagaaru: I don't want to say that all the foreign philosophers are of the same mould. But, just to say that these are not isolated cases, let me quote couple of more examples and close it. One from Mr. Paul Courtright (Department of Religion at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia) from his book

“From a psychoanalytic perspective, there is meaning in the selection of the elephant head. Its trunk is the displaced phallus, a caricature of Siva's linga. It poses no threat because it is too large, flaccid, and in the wrong place to be useful for sexual purposes. . . . So Ganesa takes on the attributes of his father but in an inverted form, with an exaggerated limp phallus—ascetic and benign—whereas Siva is ‘hard’, erotic, and destructive . . . [Ganesa] remains celibate so as not to compete erotically with his father, a notorious womanizer, either incestuously for his mother or for any other woman for that matter Ganesa is like a eunuch guarding the women of the harem”.

Another from Mr White's book:

In about the eleventh century, a scholasticizing trend in Kashmirian Hindu circles, led by the great systematic theologian Abhinavagupta, sought to aestheticize the rituals of the Kaula. These theoreticians, whose intended audience was likely composed of conformist householder practitioners, sublimated the end and raison d'être of Kaula practice—the production of powerful, transformative fluids—into simple by-products of a higher

goal: the cultivation of a divine state of higher consciousness . . .

Note: Certain words are censored intentionally for reduce the discomfort in reading.

You can see literature which are assault on *Mantraas*, *Mudraas*, *Bindi* (described as related to drops of Menstrual fluid), *Srividya* etc. by David White etc.

I will not be getting in to further discussions of this controversial subject. But, due to invasions and incursions on our sacred texts, it is all the more important that we are educated and equipped ourselves in a proper way so that our future generations are not misinformed and misunderstand our treasures of knowledge and thus move away from our tradition.

I: I think, I am getting to know, but I think this problem is there only from the outsiders because of their lack of understanding of our scriptures or due to their biased outlook.

Naannagaaru: O.K. Leave aside the outsiders. There are so many, so called indologists and intelligentsia in our own country, who consider our sacred texts like the *Ramayana*, the *MahaaBhaaratha* as myths. I don't want to name all of them, lest it should become controversial, but you keep seeing them on TV etc. regularly and they enjoy a lot of clout. Normally the epics like the *Raamaayana* and the *Maha Bhaaratha* are known to most our people as mythological stories rather than sacred texts. You keep reading Telugu writers like *Muppaala Ranganayakamma*, *Thaapi Dharmaa Rao* etc. in spite of my discouraging you because they look new and sensational. *Muppaala Ranganayakamma* has written "*Raamaayana Vishavrikshamu*" totally distorting the characters and story of the *Raamaayana*. *Thaapi Dharma Rao* wrote books like "Devaalayaalapi Boothu Bommalenduku" Since you know about them better than I, I didn't want to discuss them. There are great painters in our country who paint our deities as sexual objects. There are great thinkers in our country who think that our great epics as stories of oppression and porn. You would have seen *Geeta Govindam* poems and pictures described or explained differently. It is all considered as signs of progressive society, free media and secular thinking.

Either people have not understood properly or misinterpret deliberately to mislead the innocent public. Unfortunately, anybody can change the original sacred texts the way he likes in our country. For example, some body describes *Raavana* as a great Hero in the *Raamaayana*. Some body treats sage *Naarada* as a comic character. After all, without *Naarada*, we would not have great works like the *Ramayana* or the *Bhaagavatha*. Indian dance, drama and music classics are copied into different religions distorting the original

source and script and freely played at one's convenience. For example *Bhagavadgeeta*, *Ashtottara naama Pooja* etc. are all played changing the texts without a trace of the original. Many parodies of our sacred scriptures are very popular today and all of us enjoy them. However, if anybody touches a single word in any of the Holy texts of other religions, it will be considered as Blasphemy and such an act is liable for punishment. Even a badly translated holy religious book of any religion, once sanctified cannot be meddled with for any improvement of language etc. I think we should also consider our sacred books similarly.

I: But why should somebody do such disservice to the culture and the sacred literature.
 Naannagaaru: May be both intentional and unintentional. It may be done out of ignorance. It may be to get into lime light. It may be to promote their philosophies. It may be to put down the others. There may be other reasons as well. For example, translations of *Vatsyaayana's Kama Shastra* book is more readily available in many book stalls rather than *Kautilya's Artha Shastra*. Hence, media also tries to look for something sensational against something which will be safe and purposeful to the society. Many look for petty benefits rather than working for a noble cause.

I: You are using words *holy* and *sacred* differently. Are they not interchangeable.

Naannagaaru: Not really. Sacred means the God resides in it. Our religious places are sacred places. That means, God resides in them. For example, once the *prana prathista* of Lord *Venkateswara* is done in the temple as per the *aagama* procedures and scriptures, the *Vigraha* becomes the Lord *Venkateswara* only. In *Visishtadvaita* we call it *Archyamurthy*. But, as per Abrahamic religions, nothing in this world can be sacred because everything in this world is sinful as per the curse of God. Hence we call Holy book, Holy Bible, Holy Quran etc. God will not be there in their prayer halls. Hence their prayer halls can be relocated easily unlike our temples.

I: But how can we say we are all one because there are different religions and languages etc. For example, Tamil language has evolved independent of Sanskrit and *Vedaas* etc.

Naannagaaru: I think we have discussed this point. There is nothing wrong in such local variances of culture and language. There will also be intermingling of ideas and practices. That way, Mr. Rajiv Malhotra says, our Hinduism is of open architecture. i.e. "numerous different philosophical schools exist which share common principles, symbols, and techniques, all... designed to help people gain access to higher states of consciousness and all have certain common standards and architectural principles" for the betterment and elevation of the mankind. It is said that one of the most ancient Tamil poet and philosopher *Thiru Valluvar* had his ideas and writings very similar to those in the *Vedaas*

and the *Smritis*. For example, *Dharma*, *Artha* and *Kaama purushaarthaas* are told in our scriptures. His *Thirukkural* also addresses these three in three parts namely *Aram*, *Porul* and *Inbam*. In the *Dharma* section, *Dharmas* of *Brahmacharya*, *Grihastha*, *Vaanaprastha* etc. are addressed in that order in his work. The *Pancha Maha Yagnyas* (*Deva*, *Rishi*, *Pitru*, *Manushya*, *Bhoota Yagnyas*) are also mentioned in his work similar to our traditional Sanskrit scriptures.

Bhagavadramanuja had established that the great *Alwars'* works of *Naalaayira Divya Prabandhams* (4000 Tamil poems) are in line with *Vedaas* and *Upanishads* only. *Swami Nammalwar's* work "*Tiruvoymozhi*" is called *Saama Veda Saaram* (gist of *Saama Vedam*) in Tamil. This is not to say one is superior to the other but to clarify that one is not alienated from the other, rather one was enriching the other. Hence it is not correct to say that *Dravidians* or their language have *Abrahamic* roots.

I: In fact, I heard that Hinduism itself had its roots from Christianity.

Naannagaaru: On what basis?

I: They say it is *Pizza* effect. ie *Pizza* originally came from Italy. But, when it is localized or indigenized it changes into local variants. For example "*tempering of the "Pizza"*", *masala "Pizza"* etc. Similarly Christianity when came from Europe was pure and was mono theistic religion. Then poly theism etc. got added to it. In the process it got alienated from the welfare of the society. Subsequently, people like *Vivekananda* who had exposure of the west and the principles of Christianity have brought concepts like Service to humanity etc. in to Hinduism. Otherwise Hinduism was a religion built on the principles of Oppression of the down trodden. The *Maha Vakyaas* like "*Tat Tvam Asi*" in Hinduism create the concept that "*I am God*" and the rest is all nothing and hence one need not bother about the rest of the society.

Further, people are now mixing up *Yoga* with religion but *Yoga* is independent of Hinduism and not a part of Hinduism. As such Hinduism doesn't have any definition, no discipline, no authority and control, no history and promotes "*don't bother about anything*" attitude. People like Gandhi brought in the concept that all religions are same to give some respectability to Hinduism.

Naannagaaru: You are referring to some of the concepts of *Neo Hinduism* theorists like "Mr Paul Hacker" and "Mr. Leopard Fisher" although you seem to be thoroughly confused while narrating the same. Let me clarify one by one.

Our religion did not have roots from the west. As I mentioned earlier, no historical evidences are available to support such a proposition.

Our “*Sanaathana Dharma*” is from time immemorial and it is not history centric unlike Abrahamic religions. Also it does not have one centralized authority. The basis of the religion is the *Vedaas* and the *Upanishads*. Our *Vedaas* are like loving mother. A mother will treat all its children with equal love and meet their needs as per their specific nature. If a child wants to succeed in sports, there is no point in thrusting studies on it. Similarly our *Vedaas* also meet the needs of all the people. Some may look for money. Some may look for health. But, some may look for the *Moksham*. The *Vedaas* provide solutions to all the needs. There are two important sections in the *Vedaas*. One is *Karma Kaanda* and the other is *Gnyaana Kaanda*. The *Karma Kaanda*, besides our duties and responsibilities, code of conduct etc., also deals with various Karmaas ie performances like *Yagnyas* etc. which will give fruits that can be enjoyed in the *Leela Vibhooti*. i.e. all this universe including the worlds like *Svarga* etc. up to *Satya Loka* of *Chaturmukha Brahma*. Starting from *Chaturmukha Brahma*, this *Leela Vibhooti* has many officials like *Indra*, *Rudra*, *Varuna*, *Agni* etc. with specific responsibilities. *Chaturmukha Brahma* is assigned to help the activities connected with creation, *Rudra* is for destruction, *Varuna* is for the rain and so on and so forth. When the *Maha Pralaya* takes place, the whole *Leela Vibhooti* will become part of *Paramaatma*. When we say *Leela Vibhooti* it consists of *Jeevaas* ie *sura*(Devas, asuraas etc.), *nara*(humans), *tiryak* (animals etc.), *sthavaras*(plants etc.) and the *Prakriti* ie *Pancha Bhootaas* etc. Our body, *Manas*, *Indriyaas* are also part of *Prakriti* only. During the *Maha Pralaya* the *Jeevaas* also join the *Paramaatma* in micro form. When the creation is started once again, these *Jeevaas* and *Prakriti* come back to *Leela Vibhooti* and this cycle goes on. When a *Jeeva* attains *Moksha* by the grace of *Paramaatma*, that *Jeeva* is detached from the *Prakriti* and joins the *Paramaatma*. He enjoys the eternal Bliss with *Paramaatma*.

Now let's understand this confusion of poly theism and mono theism in our religion. As discussed earlier, every *jeeva* may not be interested in the *Moksham* only. Some may want good health. They can perform *Karmas* or *Yagnyaas* which may give them good health. They may approach a God like the *Suurya* (Sun) who can bless them with good health. As such, in such a case also, it is only *Paramaatma* who resides in *Suurya* as *Antaryaami* actually fulfills the needs of the seeker. These concepts have been very clearly explained in our scriptures like *Bhagavadgeetha* etc. But that will be temporary relief because as long as the *Jeeva* is in this *Leela Vibhooti*, he has to undergo the cycle of births and deaths. If one wants only *Moksham* or permanent Bliss, it can be directly given by *Paramaatma* only. Of course *Paramaatma* can give whatever the seeker wants.

Then there are different methods/ paths of reaching this goal ie *Moksham*. They are called *Karma Yoga*, *Gnyaana Yoga*, *Bhakti Yoga*, *Prapatti* or *Saranagati* etc. Although you might have heard these names ,let me briefly refresh your memory.

Karma Yoga: Having Known the *Swaroopa* of the self(*Jeevaatma*) and not considering self as the doer, performing the *Karmas* like *Nitya(daily) Karmaas*, *naimittika(specific)Karmaas* etc. as prescribed in the scriptures following the *Dharmas* of *Varna* and *Ashrama* with the thinking in the *Manas* that it is the service to *Paramaatma* and not getting concerned with the fruit of the action is known as *Karma Yoga*.

Gnyaana Yoga: The *Gnyana yoga* is the spiritual practice that pursues knowledge of *Jeevaatma*, *Paramaatma* and their relationship by meditating and reflecting on a continuous basis i.e. without any discontinuity without any other disturbance or activity.

Bhakti Yoga: *Bhakti* means unconditionally loving and doing service of *Paramaatma*. Such a state of life is *Bhakti Yoga*.

Prapatti or *Sharanaagathi*: Completely surrendering oneself to the *Paramaatma* and performing the duties as service to *Paramaatma* is called *Prapatti* or *Saranaagathi*.

There are some differences in the idea of *Moksha* among some of the *Aachaaryas*. For example, *Sankara Bhagavadpaada* said that becoming same as *Paramaatma* is *Moksham*. *Bhagavadramanuja* said having got the qualities same as *Paramaatma* and Joining *Paramaatma* in *Nitya Vibhooti* and enjoying His Service is called *Moksham*. *Bhagavadramanuja* said *Jeevatma* and *Paramaatma* are separate but not separable like Body and the *Aatma* as the *Aatma* resides inside the body. *Paramaatma* resides in every living and nonliving thing and without *Paramaatma* residing inside, nothing can have existence. *Sankara* said *Jeevatma* and *Paramaatma* are not two. But these are subtle differences. The important point is that everything is Divine, ie *Paramaatma* resides as *Antaryaami* inside everything or being. Hence our philosophy is to treat every body or everything as Divine and not sinful. We treat not only humans as Divine but even the animals, plants, mountains and rivers as Divine because *Paramaatma* resides inside everything. The meaning of "*Tat Tvam Asi*" does not mean "*everything is "nothing"*" but says that "*everything is "Divine"*". Compare this noble concept that "*Everything is Divine*" with the idea "*Everything is sinful*". How can you say, our religion preaches no concern for the society when we consider everything is Divine. With such major departures, we cannot say our philosophy has come from Christianity.

I: But, what about oppression and discrimination in our tradition?

Naannagaaru: Where ever greed and selfish ness are there, oppression will be there. It is not necessarily because of our religion. As discussed earlier, a human being is affected by *Sattva*, *Rajas*, *Tamas Gunaas* in this world and is subjected to *Ahamkaara* (Rudely translated as ego but it is the feeling that *I am Great*) and *Mamakaara* (feeling *all these are mine*). Such feelings result in working selfishly for wellbeing of self at the cost of others. In fact our scriptures and epics teach against such greedy and selfish behavior and oppression against others. If you take the *Ramayana*, it teaches how *Ravana* ruined himself due to these vices and so also in the *Mahaa Bhaaratha* it is explained how *Dhuryodhana* is ruined. There are not many evidences to say that there was oppression of the down trodden during our ancient times. Lord *Rama* treated with respect a tribal king *Guha*, monkeys like *Sugreeva*, a bird like *Jataaya*, a tribal lady like *Sabari* and the people from the rival camp like *Vibheeshana* as equals. Had there been oppression, it would have got reflected in those writings. For that matter, *Ravana* although was a *Brahmin* was punished for the wrong doing, of course after giving multiple chances for reformation. *Ravana* was not protected or given exemption from the punishment because of his *Varna*. In fact oppression was practiced and promoted by these foreign rulers.

I: But, ,it is said that Aryans dominated Dravidians and imposed Sanskrit. Mr E.V.Ramasamy says “*If you ask who is Aryan and who is Dravidian, in short, the ones who call themselves Brahmins, and therefore of higher caste, are the Aryans. In the same way, the ones who by these Brahmins, their gods, their religions, Śāstras, Puranas, Itihasas call as the fourth caste, the lowest caste who are the Sudras, are the Dravidians.*” Is it not true that “*Dravidians have been oppressed*”?.?

Naannagaaru: It seems you need clarity on the Dravidian history. Let me once and for all clarify the myth of Aryans dominating the Dravidians and imposing Sanskrit based on the book “*Land of Dharma*”(Editors *Shrinivas Tilak and Sharada Naryanan*). See the history of Dravidians dates back to around 10,000 BC. However, the earliest popular literature and culture had been known from *Sangam* period which is between 300 BC to 500 AD. Similar to *Pancha Maha Kaavyaas* in Sanskrit, the five most popular literary works in Tamil during the *Sangam* period had been *Mani Megalai*, *Sivaka chintamani*, *Silappadikaaram*, *Kundala Kesi*, *Valayapathi*. Then there are five more popular works which also belong to this period are *Neela Kesi*, *Naga Kumara Kaviyam*, *Udhayana Kumaara Kaaviyam*, *Yasodhara Kaviyam*, and *Soolamani*. You see most of these names sound similar to Sanskrit words. As discussed earlier by us, this is not to say that Tamil has evolved from Sanskrit but to say that one is not totally isolated from the other. Even the names of the kings sound similar to Sanskrit names. As you know the Southern part of our country i.e. present day Tamilnadu and Kerala and some parts of Karnataka was mostly ruled by Chera, Chola, Pandya, Pallava and Chalukya dynasties. As an example for the names of some of the kings with Sanskrit connection look at Ravi Varma Kulasekhara of Chera dynasty, Vijayalaya Parantaka of Chola dynasty, Mahendra Varma,

Narasimha Varma, Nandi Varma of Pallava Dynasty, Vikramaditya etc from the Chalukya dynasty. The Gods and Goddesses like Siva, Kaartikeya etc. are also same as names of Hindu and Sanskrit names of Gods and we find references of Sanskrit epics too. We have earlier discussed on similarity of ideas in Tirukkural with those mentioned in our Sanskrit scriptures. For that matter the name you have mentioned i.e. Mr Ramasamy is the name of Hindu God and in that sense an Aryan Sanskrit name. Hence both north and south of India and the languages are all well intertwined. Dr. Subramaniam Swamy says the DNA of Aryans and Dravidians is the same.

Then to explain the reason for the drift or division between them, let me quote here from the book *“Breaking India”* by M/s Rajiv Malhotra and Neelakandan

“Bishop Caldwell proposed that the Dravidians were in India before the Aryans, but got cheated by the Brahmins, who were the cunning agents of the Aryans. He argued that the simple-minded Dravidians were kept in shackles by Aryans through the exploitation of religion. Thus, the Dravidians needed to be liberated by Europeans like him. He proposed the complete removal of Sanskrit words from Tamil”

Caldwell thus divided Indians linguistically and religiously and established the theological foundation for Dravidian separatism from the pan-Indian Dharma. The word ‘Draviḍa’ came into popular use to denote the people of non-Brahmin class belonging to the Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra and Tamil Nadu regions of South India was in 1912 with the formation of the ‘Draviḍa Association.’ It adopted the name ‘*Draviḍa*’ from an earlier group that called itself *-Dravida Jana Sabha*. This was an important tipping point in the history of Dravidian nationalist movement, which began to declare itself as the custodian of ‘*Dravida*’ interests. Later, DMK inherited its policies from the *Draviḍa Kalā gam*, which came into being when caste divide in the society had become visible. The era of Indian independence coincided with this context and many leaders emerged who gave vent of this oppressive climate. One of them was *E. V. Ramasamy Naicker* (1879-1973; EVR). Due to his early experiences in life of caste divisions and separation, he was against the *Brahmin* class and the importance given to this section of society in social, religious and political context. He also propagated the self-respect movement in 1925 which demanded equality for all classes in the society and encouraged backward classes to command self-respect in a caste-based hierarchical society. EVR shaped the Dravidian social movement’s focus of recognizing the Brahmins as the real threat rather than the British who ruled India then. Under M. Karunanidhi (1924–2018), DMK executed what EVR had envisaged — wiping out the collective memory of the Brahmin community in Tamil Nadu which was accomplished by institutionalizing the theory of Dravidian-Aryan Divide. Lot of efforts have gone into remove all Sanskrit words from the Tamil language. Over time,

however, M. Karunanidhi and DMK realized that their atheist beliefs were not popular with the majority in Tamil Nadu. The majority of the society found relief in following their beliefs in traditions and customs of religion. Recognizing the trend, they tried to rebrand DMK as the flag bearer of caste equality and decided to associate DMK with Rāmānuja, the patron saint of Brahmin community seen by all as a saintly person who strived for everyone's spiritual liberation beyond all differences in castes, gender, etc.

I: Then how did the Christian origin theory for Dravidism come about?

Naannagaaru: Mr. Rajiv Malhotra clarifies this point very clearly in his book "Breaking India".

"The missionaries' strategy was two-pronged: First, they intensely studied the devotional Tamil literature and praised it in glowing terms to Tamil scholars. Second, they projected the Tamil culture as being very different and totally independent from the rest of India. Their work provided the ideological underpinnings of later Tamil racist politics. Missionary scholarship stimulated a new local ethnic identity, which was instructed to reject its Hindu nature. It became strategic to show that Tamil religion had strong underpinnings, on par with 'civilized' religions, and that 'civilized' meant monotheistic. These positive features were isolated and claimed to be indigenous to the Tamils, and shown to be in opposition to the 'foreign' traits that were attributed to the Aryans"

There is no evidence to show any form of genetically distinct identities, viz., Dravidian and Aryan, in the subcontinent. India's population mix has been stable with no evidence of Central Asian gene influx for the past ten thousand years. Further, there is no literary reference to any invasion and subjugation either by the (supposed) invader or by the invaded peoples. Next, there is no reference to the areas of the subcontinent from which the Aryans are accused of having pushed away the Dravidians. On the other hand, the word 'Aryan' and several of its variants are seen in the Tamil Sangam literature (as mentioned earlier) but none of the multiple usages has any racial/cultural implication. This is in stark contrast to the common references to the Bauddhas and the Samanas (Jainas) as distinct Dharmic communities in these works as well as in inscriptions. An occurrence of such magnitude as the Aryan Invasion — which is purported to have turned topsy-turvy the social and political equations — is mentioned in none of the earliest Tamil works which is concrete proof that it never occurred in the first place. Furthermore, there is no reference to any such invasion in any of the literary or oral traditions of the outsiders while referring to Aryans and Dravidians.

Apart from the ancient Vedic Hinduism, the Āgama–Tāntric (i.e the post Vedic Hinduism where temple and image worship became popular) or Itihāsa- Purāṇic form of Dharma was also practiced in Sangam age Tamil kingdoms.

'Karnatic Music' and 'Hindusthani music' appear in the *Sangeeta Sudhaakara* of Haripaala, written between 1309-1312 CE and the formal division into North Indian (Hindusthani) and South Indian (Karnatic) systems of music.

The Myth of Dravidian-Aryan Divide is said to be a politically motivated fabrication without basis in fact tearing the national and cultural fabric by striking at the unity of India. Although the myth of Aryan Invasion, its root, has been systematically debunked, it continues to be circulated in the Dravidian nationalist circles, with its tentacles spanning the range of social, political, cultural, economic, and scientific studies. Tamil is one of the most ancient living languages that is both classical and sacred. For at least past two thousand and five hundred years, Tamil has been nourishing the two spiritual streams of Āgama and Nigama that are an integral part of pan-Indic spiritual and cultural traditions. The three great Acharyas—Śankara, Rāmānuja and Madhva came from South India and the *bhakti* movement with rich philosophical content began and flowered in South India and spread to entire India and beyond. Just as Tamil has enriched itself with other Indic traditions, other parts of the country also got benefitted by its richness.

Despite the long-time attempts of the Dravidianists to bring under their umbrella the other southern states of Kerala, Andhra Pradesh/ Telengana and Karnataka, they have not materialised owing to several reasons. Malayalam, Kannada and Telugu languages, though have a vast vocabulary that is southern in origin, have long adopted the Devanagari phonetic system and alphabet. There is a significant linguistic syncretism between Sanskrit and these languages which is very obvious to even the layman. It, therefore, becomes quite challenging to adopt the Dravidianist stance and question Sanskrit. Of course, despite claims of being distinct, the Tamil alphabet layout is similar to Devanagari with the exceptions that Tamil has a few phonetic distinctions and has no aspirated consonants. The work of the Christian Missionaries in the early years was to show a clear distinction between 'root' languages and 'derived' languages. i.e. Tamil became categorised as a root language while the others are derived languages notwithstanding the fact that each of these languages has a vast repository of their own vocabulary not found in Tamil. This position was not acceptable to other people of other states and thus they have not joined the so called Dravidian movement.

The word 'Draviḍa' is conspicuous by its absence in Sangam literature. It is not even seen in any of its variants either such as 'draviḍar', 'draviḍam' and so on. The word 'Draviḍa' itself may not of Tamil origin and this can be simply proven by the fact that Tamil

grammar does not provide for two of the details of the word: First, no word begins with a voiced plosive (here, the dental plosive) and so cannot begin with 'd'. Second, no word begins with a half-letter or a 'pure' consonant. With these two rules having been broken, we know that the word *Draviḍa* itself cannot be Tamil word. 'Drāviḍa Śiṣu', found in Adi Sankara's *Soundarya Lahari*, as a Sanskrit word meaning "Flowing Knowledge". The word *Dravida* was mentioned in *Mahaa Bhaaratha* also about 11 times. Further it was also referred in *Naatya Shaastra* and *Manusmriti*.

There is not a single historic record of any attempt – by the imposition of Sanskrit – to destroy Tamil language or culture, which evidently has continued to grow and flourish through the ages. One of the Saivite devotee poets' quartet, Tirunāvukkarasar (7th century CE), sings of Siva, "*The one who is the music issuing out of Āriyam blended with Tamil*". Many commentaries for the Tamil *Prabandhams* were written in *Mani Pravaala* which is combination of Tamil and Sanskrit. Great *Aachaaryaas* like *Bhagavadramanuja* and *Vedantha Desika* gave equal importance to both the languages and considered works in both languages i.e. *Dravida Prabandhams* and *Vedaas/Upanishads* at the high pedestal.

I:How about the Brahmin domination over the lower castes?

Naannagaaru: As we have discussed earlier, the selfishness of the human being had been contributing to the exploitation of the people with less opportunities and strengths by the those who had been better placed independent of races and religions, castes or creeds. It had been happening all over the world and in all ages. When Brahmins had the power of management of the temples and their procedures, education and institutions, there had been misuse or abuse of the power. That had surely led to some sort of oppression of the others. This situation was exploited by the west. But, this had happened more in the last 200 years due to the intrusion and influence of the foreigners. They did drive the wedge among people. The Tamil Poetic ascetics like *Alwars* or *Nayanmars* belonged to different castes and they were all very highly placed with reverence. *Bhagavadramanuja* went up the temple *Gopuram* (tower) and made the *Upadesam* of the sacred *Mantrams* to the public without any distinction of class or creed. He had permitted temple entry to all people. We see in *Shankara Vijayam* the story of a Shoodra who did *Gnyaanopadesam* to *Adi Shankara* whom *Adi Shankara* subsequently understood as Lord Shiva himself. Today Chinna Jeeyar Swamy is constructing a 216 meter high statue of *Bhagavadramanuja* which is called statue of Equality to commemorate *Bhagavadramanuja* and His preaching. Hence many of our *Aachaaryaas* have been trying to control such differences among our people. The successive governments have introduced legislations allowing all people of all castes to perform the rituals in the temples.

I: I understand Sri E.V. Ramasamy did insult our sacred scriptures and Gods also.

Naannagaaru: Yes. He was involved in burning the *Ramayana*, the Indian Constitution, an insulted the *Sri Rama Archya murthy Vighraha*all these activities cannot be construed as peace loving activities. Our *Pedda Jeeyar Swamy* was saddened so much by such actions that he had under taken country wide movement of installing 108 *Srirama* pillars and finally conducted a procession with the *Ramayana* in a palanquin in Tamilnadu in honour of the sacred text.

When these Dravidian reformists and politicians oppose this classification of people by birth, how come their sons and daughters also become politicians and the fathers try to pass on the mantle to their children. I think it is all more to do with selfish greed of the human beings. Unfortunately the problem got aggravated by the by these foreigners and we are paying the price for the same.

I: Further, does this Sanskrit is promoted only by the upper class communities of Hindu religion and now as Mr. Sheldon Pollock says "*Government feeding tubes and oxygen tanks may try to preserve the language in a state of quasi-animation, but most observers would agree that, in some crucial way, Sanskrit is dead... Sanskrit literature could hardly be said to be alive if it had ceased to function as the vehicle for living thought, thought that supplemented and not simply duplicated reality*". is it true that all that greatness we keep boasting of this Language is now only a history?

Naannagaaru: let me now refer to the paper by Sri *Jayaraman Mahadevan* in the book on "*Reclaiming Sanskrit Studies*" to explain this aspect.

Sanskrit language is not religion, class or gender based. The following statements of the Commission testify to this –

"That Sanskrit does not belong to any particular community is proved by Andhra and Kerala where the entire non-Brahman classes are imbued with Sanskrit, and speak a language highly saturated with Sanskrit. In Kerala, even Izhavas, Thiyas, Moplas and Christians read Sanskrit. In Madhya Pradesh, we were told, a paper in Sanskrit was compulsory at the School Final Examination and even 66 Muslims took it. In a Lucknow Intermediate College, there are Muslim girls studying Sanskrit; in Gujarat, Parsis study it; in Panjab, there are several Sikhs among Sanskrit students and teachers, and Sastris and research scholars in Sanskrit. The

Director of Public Instruction of Madhya Pradesh, who is a Christian, told us that he advised the Anglo-Indian students also to read Sanskrit. It was necessary that, as future

citizens of India, they gained an insight into the mind and the culture of the bulk of the Indian people. And this, he added, was possible only through the study of Sanskrit.”

(Sanskrit Commission of India Report 1957:64)

“This aspect of Sanskrit, that it was not exclusively religious, was appreciated even by some of the Muslim rulers of India, who patronised Sanskrit literature, and, in some cases (as in Bengal and Gujarat), had their epigraphic records inscribed in Sanskrit. It was the scientific and secular aspect of Sanskrit literature that made the Arabs welcome Indian scholars to Baghdad to discourse on sciences like Medicine and Astronomy, and to translate books in these subjects into Arabic. The Ayurveda system of medicine, until recently, was the truly National Indian System, which was practised everywhere, and access to this was through Sanskrit books, which even Muslim practitioners of the Ayurveda in Bengal studied.” **(Sanskrit Commission of India Report 1957:79)**

However, on the existing situation, the commission notes that

“We specially enquired whether the Pandits still carried on the tradition of writing new commentaries or dialectical works. We were sorry to note that the number of outstanding Pandits of the old type was generally not large; in some States, they could be counted on one’s fingers. Some Pandits, however, did continue their literary activity; a few of them have,

under the inspiration of modern research, produced critical and expository treatises in Sanskrit or in the regional languages on Sastraic and other general philosophical subjects.”

(Sanskrit Commission of India Report 1957:45)

Hence, it is true that the level of Sanskrit scholarship has certainly come down substantially but is still not dead because of the following statement.

“We also found that the Sanskrit Muse was still an inspiration and that the Pandits everywhere wrote poems and plays in Sanskrit. Of course, Sanskrit was very freely used as a means of communication and for the expression of all current ideas. We actually met some Pandits who could employ Sanskrit with eloquence and oratorical effect.”

(Sanskrit Commission of India Report 1957:45)

It is said that the following agencies have been supporting Sanskrit for its survival.

- (a) The erstwhile Maharajas of the Princely States
- (b) Hindu religious institutions
- (c) People belonging to non-Brahmin castes and other religions (out of curiosity to learn)

- (d) Individual Traditional Pandits
- (e) Nationalistic Spirit
- (f) Voluntary Academies and Organizations
- (g) People in General

The list pertains to the Pre-independent as well as post independent period.

It is not possible to quote all the complete reports of the Sanskrit Commission of India, but as one of the contributors for the survival of Sanskrit, it is mentioned that a *“nationalistic spirit which sought to make up for the drawbacks in the scheme of education on the cultural side by founding institutions of cultural importance.”*

Since Sanskrit language is the back bone of our tradition and culture, lot needs to be done for it to flourish and reach its past glory, but it cannot be treated as a dead language.

END OF THE CHAPTER HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Chapter – 2 : Spiritual Perspective

I: When we speak about our culture and heritage, many people refer to our spiritual progress and advancements like Yogas, Siddhis etc. in our ancient times. Of course, earlier you have also been using the word “Yoga” in various contexts. First you have used it for meditation, then referred to *Ashtaanga Yoga*, for bodily postures and also for *Karma*, *Gnyaana*, *Bhakti* Yoga etc. I am confused. I heard this “Yoga” word also from Yoga center in our street corner. Further many people say one should do Yoga to reduce weight or keep oneself fit etc. Are they all same? How is it related to our heritage?

Naannagaaru: It is good question. It is true that our country has been leading the world in the field of spirituality for many a millennium. Although the word “spirituality” is not the apt word for “Adhyatmikata”, we can use the same for the sake of convenience for the time being. For the culture and heritage of any country to survive and flourish it should be rich in both physical and spiritual aspects. That was why those countries which have prospered only with respect to material wealth could not remain in history for long years.

I: What does this spirituality is all about. By the way, you have not yet answered my question on Yoga. Is it connected with the so called “spirituality”?

Naannagaaru: Let me complete my answer. Material wealth is achieved by intelligent utilization and management of country’s resources and appropriate distribution of the wealth among the deserved. This is where, the advancement in the field of science and technology, economics and politics, law and order etc. will help. We have seen how our people have excelled in these fields because of which our country was known as “Sone ki Chidiya” during those days and became the centre for knowledge and trade. However, mere physical wealth will not keep people happy and healthy for long years. This is where the importance of spirituality comes into picture. Spirituality can be broadly be understood as the knowledge of “Aatma” and how one realizes it and there by attain infinite happiness and bliss in communion with Paramaatma.

I: If I have the knowledge of “Aatma” will I have infinite Happiness and Bliss. Then what is this “Aatma”. By doing the Yoga do we get the knowledge of “Aatma”?

Naannagaaru: When you say Yoga, I think you are referring to what is taught in the Yoga Institute where there is a display board of various body postures at the end of our street.

I: Yes, don’t they teach Yoga?

Naannagaaru: They do teach, but a small segment of Yoga, which is called Yogaasanaas.

I: Then what is Yoga? We keep hearing Yogis and Siddhas etc. Are they the same people with this knowledge of Yoga? “Auto biography of a Yogi” is a very popular book all over the world. Isn’t it?

Naannagaaru: Yes, it is. India is blessed with so many great Rishis, Yogis, Siddhas, saints, Aachaaryaas etc. Rishis are those who could by their penance visualize the Vedas and the sacred scriptures and handed over to the next generations. Yogis are those who

practiced Yoga and reached various elevated levels in spirituality. Siddhas are those who could achieve Siddhis etc.....

I: What are these Siddhis?

Naannagaaru: You would have heard earlier Ashta Siddhis namely Anima, Mahima, Garima, Laghima, Praapti, Prakaamyaa, Eeshatva, Vashatva. These are meta physical or super natural powers like becoming very small, becoming very big, very heavy, very light, getting what you want, having control on others etc. achieved by some people by special and stringent practices. But, let me not get into further details of these practices because that is not our topic of discussion.

I: But, it is interesting. How do they get such Sidhhis. Are there any Siddhas still living in our country.

Naannagaaru: Some people get these Sidhhis by their old Janma Vaasanaas which are known as Samskaaraas .We will learn about them a little later. Some people get them by doing great Saadhana i.e. practice like Mantra Japa etc. It is said that when you do Saadhana you will get some Sidhhis. Some people may stop at that stage and some may not stop but continue to pursue with their practice till they get the ultimate Bliss. There may be other ways like Tantra etc. for getting these Siddhis. People say Akalkot Swami of Maharashtra, Gandha Baba of Varanasi are some such Sidhhas. I heard that there are many such Sidhhaas even now in in Himalayaas. Even in South India you may find them. It is said that Kuttralam Swami i.e.Prasada Raya Kulapathi Swami from our state is one such person who got possession of some Sidhhis. It is said that they may have knowledge of previous Janmaas etc.

I: Whne you say Mantra is it like what Mantra for Snake bite, scorpion bite etc which are used by our Koteeswararao garu for such problems. He will practice them during the times of eclipses without fail.

Naannagaaru: There are many types of Mantraas. When one gets initiation of a Mantra from a Guru and does the Japa i.e. repetition of the same with focus and sincerity in the prescribed way, one will get Sidhhi of that Mantra. The Mantraas for Snake bite etc. are Rajo/ Tamo Mantraas. One may get the Sidhhi of such mantras by doing the Japa sincerely for say 40 days in the prescribed way and procedure. Since the Rajo/ Tamo Gunaas are more influential during the period of Eclise, practice during that time will have better effect and that's why people practice them during the times of eclipse. However, it is said that these have to used for service only and not with any selfish interests. The effectiveness of the Mantra will depend on the Anushthanam and attitude of the person. Even a plant will give you fruits only if you treat it well. However, Mantraas for the eternal Bliss and communion with Paramaatma are different. We will discuss these things in detail a little later.

I: But, please tell me more about Yoga because I am thoroughly confused about this word.

Naannagaaru: Don't worry. You are not alone in this aspect..

The word “Yoga” is one of the most used or misused word these days. Many people think Yoga means only body exercises and postures which are called “Aasanaas” or breathing exercises which are called “Praanaayaamaas”. These have become popular now all over the globe. However, these are only two limbs or parts of the complete concept of “Yoga” as told by Maharshi Patanjali. Patanjali set out his definition of [yoga](#) in the [Yoga Sutraas](#) as having eight limbs as given below:

The eight limbs of yoga are yama (abstinences), niyama (observances), Aasana (yoga postures), pranayama (breath control), pratyahaara (withdrawal of the senses), dhaarana (concentration), dhyaana (meditation) and samaadhi (absorption)."

The eightfold path of Patanjali's yoga consists of a set of prescriptions for a morally disciplined and purposeful life, of which yoga postures i.e. aasanas, form only one limb.

1. Yama

“Yama” are ethical rules in [Hinduism](#) and can be thought of as moral imperatives (the "don'ts"). The five yama listed by [Patanjali](#) in *Yoga Sutra* 2.30 are:

1. [Ahimsa](#): Nonviolence, non-harming other living beings
2. [Satya](#) : truthfulness, non-falsehood
3. [Asteya](#) : non-stealing
4. [Brahmacharya](#) : chastity, marital fidelity or sexual restraint
5. [Aparigraha](#) : non-avarice, non-possessiveness

Patanjali, states how and why each of the above self-restraints help in an individual's personal growth. For example, in verse II.35, Patanjali states that the virtue of [nonviolence](#) and non-injury to others ([Ahimsa](#)) leads to the abandonment of enmity, a state that leads the yogi to the perfection of inner and outer amity with everyone, everything.

2. Niyama

The second component of Patanjali's Yoga path is niyama, which includes virtuous habits and observances (the "dos"). Sadhana Pada Verse 32 of Patanjali Yoga Sutras lists the niyamas as:

1. [Shaucha](#): purity, clearness of mind, speech and body
2. [Santosha](#) : contentment, acceptance of others, acceptance of one's circumstances as they are in order to get past or change them, optimism for self
3. [Tapas](#) : persistence, perseverance, austerity, asceticism, self-discipline
4. [Svadyaya](#): study of Vedas, study of self, self-reflection, introspection of self's thoughts, speeches and actions
5. [Ishvarapranidhana](#) : contemplation of the Ishvara (God head/ Supreme Being, [Brahman](#), Paramaatma)

As with the Yamas, Patanjali explains how and why each of the Niyamas help in personal growth. For example, in verse II.42, Patanjali states that the virtue of contentment and acceptance of others as they are ([Santosha](#)) leads to the state where inner sources of joy matter most, and the craving for external sources of pleasure ceases.

3. Āsana

Patanjali begins discussion of [Āsana](#) (posture, seat) by defining it in verse 46 of Book 2, as follows,

स्थिरसुखमासनम्

॥४६॥

Translation 1: An *asana* is what is steady and pleasant.

Translation 2: Motionless and Agreeable form (of staying) is *Asana* (yoga posture).

(— *Yoga Sutras II.46*)

Asana is a posture that one can hold for a period of time, staying relaxed, steady, comfortable and motionless. Patanjali does not list any specific *asana*, except the terse suggestion, "posture one can hold with comfort and motionlessness". Āraṇya translates verse II.47 of Yoga sutra as, "asanas are perfected over time by relaxation of effort with meditation on the infinite"; this combination and practice stops the quivering of body. Any posture that causes pain or restlessness is not a yogic posture. Secondary texts that discuss Patanjali's sutra state that one requirement of correct posture is to keep chest, neck and head erect (proper spinal posture).

The *Bhasya* commentary attached to the *Sutras*, now thought to be by Patanjali himself, suggests twelve seated meditation postures: [Padmasana](#) (lotus), [Virasana](#) (hero), [Bhadrasana](#) (glorious), [Svastikasana](#) (lucky mark), [Dandasana](#) (staff), Sopasrayasana (supported), Paryankasana (bedstead), Krauncha-nishadasana (seated heron), Hastanishadasana (seated elephant), Ushtranishadasana (seated camel), Samasansthanasana (evenly balanced) and Sthirasukhasana (any motionless posture that is in accordance with one's pleasure).

Over a thousand years later, the [Hatha Yoga Pradipika](#) mentions 84 asanas taught by [Shiva](#), stating four of these as most important: Siddhasana (accomplished), Padmasana (lotus), [Simhasana](#) (lion), and Bhadrasana (glorious), and describes the technique of these four and eleven other asanas. In [modern yoga](#), asanas are prominent and numerous, unlike in any earlier form of yoga.

4. Prāṇāyāma

Prāṇāyāma is the control of the breath, from the Sanskrit *prāṇa* (breath) and *āyāma*, (restraint).

After a desired posture has been achieved, verses II.49 through II.51 recommend *prāṇāyāma*, the practice of consciously regulating the breath (inhalation, the full pause, exhalation, and the empty pause). This is done in several ways, such as by inhaling and then suspending exhalation for a period, exhaling and then suspending inhalation for a period, by slowing the inhalation and exhalation, or by consciously changing the timing and length of the breath (deep, short breathing).

5. Pratyāhāra

Pratyāhāra is a combination of two Sanskrit words *prati-* (the prefix प्रति-, "against" or "contra") and *āhāra* (आहार, "bring near, fetch")

Pratyahara is drawing within one's awareness. It is a process of retracting the sensory experience from external objects. It is a step of self extraction and abstraction. Pratyahara is not consciously closing one's eyes to the sensory world, it is consciously closing one's mind processes as well to the sensory world. Pratyahara empowers one to stop being controlled by the external world, fetch one's attention to seek self-knowledge i.e. Aatma Gnyaana and experience the freedom innate in one's inner world.

Pratyahara marks the transition of yoga experience from the first four limbs of Patanjali's Ashtanga scheme that perfect external forms, to the last three limbs that perfect the yogi's inner state: moving from outside to inside, from the outer sphere of the body to the inner sphere of the spirit.

6. Dhāraṇā

Dhaarana (Sanskrit: धारणा) means concentration, introspective focus and one-pointedness of mind. The root of the word is *dhr* (धृ), meaning "to hold, maintain, keep".

Dhaarana, as the sixth limb of yoga, is holding one's mind onto a particular inner state, subject or topic of one's mind. The mind is fixed on a [mantra](#), or one's breath/navel/tip of tongue/any place, or an object one wants to observe, or a concept/idea in one's mind. Fixing the mind means one-pointed focus, without drifting of mind, and without jumping from one topic to another.

7. Dhyāna

Dhyaana (Sanskrit: ध्यान) literally means "contemplation, reflection" and "profound, abstract meditation".

Dhyaana is contemplating, reflecting on whatever *Dhaarana* has focused on. If in the sixth limb of yoga one focused on a personal deity, Dhyaana is its contemplation. If the concentration was on one object, Dhyaana is non-judgmental, non-presumptuous observation of that object. If the focus was on a concept/idea, Dhyaana is contemplating that concept/idea in all its aspects, forms and consequences. Dhyaana is uninterrupted train of thought, current of cognition, flow of awareness.

Dhyaana is integrally related to Dhaarana, one leads to other. Dhaarana is a state of mind, Dhyaana the process of mind. Dhyaana is distinct from Dhaarana in that the meditator becomes actively engaged with its focus. Patanjali defines contemplation (*Dhyaana*) as the mind process, where the mind is fixed on something, and then there is "a course of uniform modification of knowledge". It is said that Dhyaana is distinguished from Dhaarana, in the sense, Dhyaana is the yoga state when there is only the "stream of continuous thought about the object, uninterrupted by other thoughts of different kind for the same object"; whereas Dhaarana, is focussed on one object, but aware of its many aspects and ideas about the same object. For example of a yogi in a state of dhaarana on morning sun may be aware of its brilliance, color and orbit; the yogi

in dhyana state contemplates on sun's orbit alone for example, without being interrupted by its color, brilliance or other related ideas.

8. Samādhi

Samadhi (Sanskrit: समाधि) literally means "putting together, joining, combining with, union, harmonious whole, trance".

Samadhi is oneness with the subject of meditation. There is no distinction, during the eighth limb of yoga, between the actor of meditation, the act of meditation and the subject of meditation. Samadhi is that spiritual state when one's mind is so absorbed in whatever it is contemplating on, that the mind loses the sense of its own identity. The thinker, the thought process and the thought fuse with the subject of thought. They are in union i.e. Yoga.

I: Oh my God, so many aspects for this word Yoga. Now I see Yoga is the knowledge of controlling our own selves, both physically and mentally in order to lead pious way of life. Then how come, all of us use the word Yoga only for postures or Aasanaas only.

Naannagaaru: Today, the world is interested mostly in materialistic things and people look for quick results with least efforts. The physical benefits of Aasanaas i.e. Body exercises and postures are experienced by all of us. Hence, only this particular aspect of the Ashtaanga Yoga is becoming more popular.

I: What all you said is very confusing. You have also indicated that it is an integral system to attain ultimate Bliss in communion with Paramaatma also. How can it be achieved. If it is so, is it only applicable for the so called Hindus.

Naannagaaru; Yoga system explained by Maharshi Patanjali essentially provides the tool box to ultimately help us to realize one's own Aatma. This is what we call Aatma Saakshaatkaara.

Further, in Bhagavadgita Bhagavan Sri Krishna explained various Yogas like Karma Yoga, Gnyaana Yoga, Bhakti Yoga etc. I will briefly touch upon these aspects little later. These are all various paths to achieve the knowledge of Aatma, realize our relationship with Paramaatma and so also to enjoy the eternal divine Bliss in association with Paramaatma.

I: That means Yoga really starts with Yama, Niyama etc. which are essentially needed for right way of living and to achieve self control. Then, in order to have control on the body and have good health which is essential for any further progress, Yogaasannas and Praanaayaama come into picture which are also necessary for the subsequent steps like Prathyaahaara, Dharana, Dhyana etc. Further, all these i.e. Pratyahaara, Dhyana etc. appear to me as practices for developing self control and involve meditation. Although I am getting some idea of these concepts, still I am not able to comprehend completely. Is it applicable only for Hindus?

Naannagaaru: OK, Let me give a gist of some of the important aspects of the Yoga system. Yoga is a system of integral education, education not only about the body and the mind or the intellect, but also about the inner self i.e. Aatma. Yoga shows you the right method of rising from evil to good, and from goodness to holiness and then to eternal divine splendour. Yoga is the art of right living. The Yogi who has learned the art of right living is happy, harmonious, peaceful and free from tension. Our ancestors have shown us the path for evolving ourselves.

Yoga concepts, in general, need not be applicable for Hindus alone but universally adaptable. However, this aspect is misused by some religions distorting its basic fabric by giving different names such as “Christian Yoga” etc.

While on this context we shall remember that one shall not stop the practice when one gets a few glimpses and experiences. One shall continue the practice until one attains the ultimate goal.

I: Can you please briefly explain why at the initial stages Aasana, Praanaayaama etc are required for reaching the subsequent stages like Dhyaana etc.

Naannagaaru: We have earlier discussed some of the aspects of our body and its inner constituents. It constitutes Annamaya kosa, Praanamaya kosa, Manomaya Kosa, Vignyaanamaya Kosa and Anadamaya Kosa. Here, you may think that Kosa is some thing like a sheath.

I: Are they like the way mother arranges one vessel inside the other in our kitchen.

Naannagaaru: Not exactly, But if it helps you to conceive that way, you can think like that. So, what we see out wards in our body is Annamaya Kosa. It also consists of various limbs or avayavaas for the Gyanendriyaas (input devices for the body) and Karmendriyaas (output devices for the body). These avayavaas which are hardware part are operated by the Indriyaas which are the organs inside forming say software part. Sound, touch, taste, sight, smell are all received by these input devices. Hands, legs etc are output devices which are used for action. Hence, in order to gain control on these devices, the first three steps i.e. Yama, Niyama, Aasana are important. Then we have Praanamaya Kosa. You would have heard Pancha Praanaas i.e. Praana, Apaana, Vyaana, Udaana, Samaana vaayus. It is said that there are five more Praanaas, but let us not get into those details. The point to be understood here is that these will provide the support for the Annamaya Kosa. Then we have Manomaya Kosa. This is what we generally call Manas. It is not same as biological brain. There are essentially three components in this Manas. One is data store house which is called Chittam. The store house keeps all the data that is received through Indriyaas not only in this life but also in our previous lives.

I: You mean to say the same body and mind etc. will continue in various Janmaas. But my understanding is the body keeps changing. We get our bodies based on the Punya and Paapa Karmaas I mean actions that we perform.

Naannagaaru: Yes, the body changes and you may get Sura, Nara or Tiryak (bodies of animals and birds etc. which don't have vertical back bone like we have) or plants etc(which cannot move in spite of having life) as per your actions in this or your previous Janmaas. This is hardware part of it. But, the same Mind and Indriyaas, which are essentially the software content does continue to be with the same Aatma till it attains Moksha. Here when I say Moksha, it is the state of physically getting relieved from this Prakriti and join Paramaatma in his abode.

I: I see, that means these indriyaas are there in plants also. But they cannot see, walk etc.

Naannagaaru: Although they have indriyaas, if the corresponding avayavaas i.e. limbs are not there, the indriyaas cannot perform. It is like, although the computer has the printer software, if the printer is not attached to it, it cannot print.

I: OK, please continue.

Naannagaaru: There is another faculty which facilitates thinking process in the Manas. Then there is Buddhi which aids in decision making. This faculty will help taking a decision for any action. Since, the Manas is nearer to Praanamaya Kosa, control of Praana will help in the control of mind. That is why Praanaayaama is important for the control of Manas. Within Manomaya Kosa, Vignyaanamaya Kosa is there which represents Aatma. Anandamaya Kosa represents Antaryaami i.e. Paramaatma. Now, we shall understand that the Aatma is Gnyaana Svaroopaa (basic nature if one is to translate crudely) and has the Gnyaana as the Guna (characteristic) also. This is like a lamp and its light spread around. The lamp light i.e. Svaroopaa Gnaaya of the Aatma is called Dharmi Gnyaana and the light spread around i.e. Gnyaana that flows externally from the Aatma is called Dharmabhoota Gnyaana. This Dhrama Bhoota Gnyaana flows outside the body through Manas and Indriyaas and that is how we get to know things. This is like light from the lantern flowing through a glass chimney or light from the filament flowing through a glass bulb. In case the chimney/ bulb is dirty, the flow of light will be bad. Similarly, when the Gnyaana flows through the mind and indriyaas and you know the mind has already stored lot of data based on previous experiences and impressions which will have effect on that flow. For example, if a baby touches a burning candle and feels the heat, that experience is stored in the Manas and next time when it sees the burning candle, the data stored earlier will give the input that it will be hot, and the Buddhi will decide not to touch it and

the indriyaas and limbs will act accordingly. Thus we see, Manas influences our inputs and outputs, the knowledge flow i.e. Dharma Bhoota Gnyaana, so also our actions. Hence, in order to control our input and output devices, control of Manas is important.

I: Not very clear.

Naannaggaru: When the honey collector wants to change the position of the beehive, he catches the queen bee and changes its position. Then all other bees will follow the mind. Similarly, if you are able to take care of the Manas, all other indriyaas and organs will follow it.

I: You are telling as if it is simple. How is it possible?

Naannagaaru: I am not saying it is simple. It is of course very difficult. In fact, you should read Bhagavadgita to learn all this and practice what has been told by Lord Sri Krishna. Gita represents greatness of our Heritage.

I: Now I, remember, there is one Stita Pragnyaavastha described in Gita. Are you referring to that now! Can you briefly explain the same.

Naannagaaru: The first stage of the Practitioner of the Stita Pragnyaavastha of course is to practice withdrawing the Indriyaas from the external Vishayaas such as sound, touch, sight, taste, smell etc. of the world similar to the way a tortoise withdraws its limbs when it suspects any danger. This stage is called "Yatamaanaavastha".

Then the second stage is to practice being neutral to things which make you happy or unhappy. When we say being neutral, he will not either greet some body for good things or dislike some body for bad things. In this state, he will be conscious of the happiness and sorrow during an event but will not retain the same in his Chittam. This stage is called "Vyatirekaavastha"

In the third stage of practice, he will not feel either happiness or sorrow, fear or anger for/ against anything. This stage is called "Ekendriyaavastha".

In the fourth stage, he will have his Manas in the Aatma, devoid of all worldly desires and influences including the Vaasanaas and feel fully contented and enjoy the Bliss in the Aatma only. This stage is called "Vaseekaraavastha".

I: What is meant by "being devoid of all worldly desires along with Vaasanaas"?

Naannagaaru: Earlier, we have been talking about Vishayaas and their experiences by ourselves. i.e., when we eat a mango, we enjoy its taste at that point of time. This is “Ruchi”. However, the experience, as discussed earlier, is stored in the Chittam and this is called “Vaasana”. In other words, it forms an impression in the Manas which is called Samskaara. We may try to practice not to eat Mango, that is control of Indriya. But, the Vaasana will still be present in the Chittam in a dormant state. That keeps suggesting us that mango is very tasty and hence we must eat mango. When this dormant vaasana becomes so dominant that we cannot resist eating mango, then the control on the indriya will be defeated. That time, if some body denies us the mango, we get angry. In the anger, we lose the sense of discretion. In that state, we forget every sensible thing and thus ruin ourselves. That is why, these Vaasanaas are also to be get rid of. In other words, we are influenced by both external inputs received through Indriyaas and internal impressions stored in the Manas. Both these aspects are to be addressed.

I: How?

Naannagaaru: It is not easy. These Vaasanaas may belong to the current birth or may be of previous births also. That is reason we develop instantaneous liking or disliking for/ against some thing or some body for which we may not be able to identify any logic or reason. This is because, some impression is created in the Manas either in the previous Janma or in this Janma which we may not be aware of . Sri Krishna says, we can get rid of these Vaasanaas once we have Aatma Saakshaatkaara and start enjoying the Bliss. However, Aatma Saakshaatkaara can happen only when you go through the process of controlling yourself completely. This is like “ a mad man gets married once he is out of madness and he will be devoid of madness once he is married” . It is a very tricky situation. It is said that some techniques like Vipasana meditation etc. will help identifying these Vasanaas not only of this Janma but also of previous Janmaas and then cleansing them too. For these techniques, the initial stages like Yama, Niyama etc. are extremely important and to be followed very strictly. Then, you start identifying your Vaasanaas in the deepest meditative stage and give strong suggestions for cleansing them. For example, you ate a mango today morning and liked it. This “impression of liking” is stored in the Chittam. You meditate and identify this “impression of liking” in your Chittam and give suggestion to cleanse it so that you will not develop attachment towards it. This is how, the journey through Vyatirekaavastha and Ekendriyaavastha is done. However, the problem is how do you identify the Vaasanaas of the previous Janmaas. It is once again said that in the deepest meditative state during the techniques like Vipasana etc, it may be possible to identify the same. However, I don’t have knowledge of them. However, as a student of this Adyaatmic practice, we can remain always conscious of previous and current thought processes and actions and keep correcting them on a continuous basis

in order to follow the right path. Then, we shall submit to Paramaatma to help us further in this journey.

I: Why bring in Paramaatma in the bargain? These impressions are of our own making, aren't they?

Naannagaaru: As per our (Visishtadvaita) philosophy, Aatma doesn't have independent existence without Paramaatma. Paramaatma is for the Aatma like Aatma is for our body. Of course, there are some differences on this aspect in case of Advaita and Dvaita philosophies. But, we will understand them separately later. Hence we shall be always like obedient servants of Paramaatma and be aware that whatever we do is not for ourselves but shall be as a service to Paramaatma. In fact, this is the concept behind Karma Yoga.

I: I see, we will discuss Karma Yoga after some time. But I am still not clear about the role of Manas and how it influences the Dharma Bhoota Gnyaanam.

Naannagaru: Dharma Bhootha Gnyaanam flows from Aatma through Manas and through Indriyaas and the avayavaas outside and vice versa. As we have discussed earlier, suppose there is a mango. The Gnyaana of mango flows through the physical eye, the hardware part and its indriya, the software part and then through Manas to the Aatma. Assume that the Manas has stored the information on Mango earlier and it thus complements data received with its stored information to help recognizing that the object is mango, it is good, tasty etc. The Manas software consists of three Gunaas, i.e. Sattva, Rajas, Tamas. The influence of these Gunaas will influence the thoughts and thus the actions.

I: Is there any way to manage these Gunaas.

Naannagaaru: Sri Krishna in His Gita says that it is to be done by your inputs and habits. What I mean by inputs is the food we eat, the people and places we move with etc. and their influences. Crudely speaking, Sattvik Gunas will facilitate positive thinking, Rajo Guna kindles turbulent and tormented behaviour, Tamo Guna will make one dull and slow. By controlling and managing properly the inputs we may be able to manage these Gunaas to some extent.

I: But, how does the Gnyaana flow when we sleep.

Naannagaaru: Gnyaana doesn't flow outside when we sleep since our organs will not work that time. But when we dream, it flows into the Manas and gets influenced by some

stored information/ impression there. That's how you see the dreams. But in deep sleep, the Dharma Bhoota Gnyaana will not flow outside but gets reflected into Aatma. That is why you feel happy during such deep sleep because you are devoid of any external influences or even internal influences from the Manas..

I: That means, such state is like Aatma Saakshaatkaara state only, isn't it, because during that stage also Dharma Bhoota Gnyaana, instead flowing outside, gets reflected into Aatma only.

Naannagaaru: You can say similar. But, the state of Aatma Saakhaatkaara is not when you are in sleep but when you are awake. When you withdraw yourself from the outside world completely, the Dharma Bhoota Gnyaana, instead of flowing outside will go back to Aatma. However, such a state is possible when it is not influenced by Manas also. i.e. The Manas shall not work like a muddy glass sheet but shall act as clean and perfect mirror. That is the state of Aatma Saakshaatkara. However, this state cannot remain for long time when you are living in this world since you are always subjected to influences of the world. However clean you are, as long as you happen to be in midst of strong dusty storm, you are bound to gather dust too.

I: I have heard a lot on this Aatma Saakshaatkaara. Is this the ultimate goal?

Naannagaru: We have earlier discussed that Paramaatma is within this Aatma and known as Antaryaami. i.e. he dwells within and is the ultimate Boss. Paramaatma Saakshaatkaara is the ultimate goal.

I: We will come to that later, but can you please once again explain how to achieve this Aatma Saakshaatkaara. So far, what you have explained seems to be very theoretical and looks impractical. How can anybody disassociate himself from the world completely. He cannot be totally devoid of action and any action will have influence of the world. He is required to at least eat food, drink water etc. Isn't it?

Naannagaaru: Bhagavaan Sri Krishna explained this in His Gita. It is not possible for somebody to be totally devoid of action or disassociate himself from the world. Hence, you don't act for yourself but act as a service to the Paramaatma. You shall not have any attachment with result or output of your action. Sri Krishna says, "You must perform all actions as told in the scriptures with full devotion but without any attachment with the output of the action as if He is getting it done through you for Him". Then, you will not have any problem.

I: How can you put your efforts fully when the fruit doesn't belong to your. We will not apply ourselves fully if the fruit of our action is not ours.

Naannagaaru: Suppose I ask you to bring vegetables from the market. Will you do it.

I: Yes

Naannagaaru: But the fruit/ outcome of your action is not yours!

I: But you told me to bring the vegetables and you are my father and I do it out of respect and love for you.

Naannagaaru: Paramaatma is the Father and protector of all of us. We shall perform our duties out of love and respect for Him. What is the problem?

I: Understood. But, how do we do it.

Naannagaaru: By 100% conviction and faith.

I: I mean, can you explain the gist of this process of achieving Aatma Saakshaatkaara.

Naannagaru: As I told you earlier, Bhagavaan Sri Krishna, dealt with this in Gita while explaining Karma Yoga and Gnyaana Yoga. Listen, this is essentially experiential and cannot be explained by anybody to anybody. Suppose you have to explain the taste of sugar to some body who has never tasted such sweet item. You can only say it is sweet. But that other person cannot understand because it is not known to him. Suppose somebody says such Aatma Saakshaatkaara is a very happy experience, the question comes how much happy, what kind of happiness, is it like eating good food, meeting nice people etc. None of our worldly experiences can be compared to such experience. Neither I have such experience myself. My knowledge is only limited to whatever I have read or heard. However, from whatever I have heard and understood, I will try to bring out some points of this Aatma Saakshatkaara process.

It is like having knowledge of your own self. But, you must know that this Aatma Sakshaatkaara is not like the way you physically look at me.

I: I know, it is like looking myself in a mirror. i.e. When the Dharma Bhoota Gnyaanam reflects back to Aatma, that's what happens.

Naannagaaru: It is not like that also. It is neither similar to seeing your body with your eyes nor learning about something by listening to some body. It is somewhat similar to

the way you learn yourself how you became a grown up adult from the state of childhood. i.e. when your practice reaches fructification stage, you will realize yourself your true self.

I: in that stage, will I be blind to everything else, I mean will I blind to everything else.

Naannagaaru: Not necessarily. Once you know what you are, you will also know what you are not. That means, you will know that you are not this body, not the Manas nor any worldly thing that you are seeing around.

I: But, now also I know that I am not the body.

Naannagaaru: But if I beat you, I mean beat your body you will react, don't you. But, that is not case at that stage.

I: But you said, there is Paramaatma within this Aatma.

Naannagaaru: Since, you said we learn about Paramaatma later, I didn't touch that subject. But, in fact, "knowing our relationship with Paramaatma and learning that we belong to Him and that our existence is essentially for His service and to make Him happy" is the final goal as discussed earlier.

I: But, in order to realize this Aatma, we must know its characteristics. Can you please tell me at least some of them.

Naannagaaru: We have understood that it is different from all this world, body and Manas which are products of Prakriti- which are essentially the non-sensient i.e. non living things. It is infinitesimally small, cannot be identified with our sensory organs, it doesn't have birth and death, Gyaanam is its characteristic as well as its basic nature, its nature is bliss and ultimate happiness, all our Aatmaas are different but identical in nature like the grains in a heap of rice, it is responsible for our actions and fruits under normal circumstances etc....

I: Let's come back to what you have been telling about its Saakshaatkaaram.

Naannagaaru: Dharmi Gyaanam resides in Aatma and Dharma Bhoota Gyaanam flows out side through Manas and Indriyaas. The Dharma Bhoota Gyaanam is influenced by Manas and the Samskaaras/ impressions in it. When, Dharma Bhoota Gyaanam doesn't flow outside through Manas, one can have the clarity on Aatma. i.e. the Aatma shall not have any contact with Manas at that stage.

. However, under normal circumstances, the Dharma Bhoota Gnyaanam when flows externally through Manas and Indriyaas, external knowledge impressions are stored in the Manas which will be source of our various thoughts. These thoughts also rest in Manas and after some time they may result into actions. These actions are performed through Karmendriyaas, i.e. output devices. Manas consists of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas gunaas as was mentioned earlier. The increase and decrease or imbalance of these gunaas take place based on our earlier Janma Samskaarams and our present inputs like what we eat, what we see etc. Our actions depend on the same.

I: That means, our actions depend on our previous Janma samskaaraas or current Janma Inputs? But it is said that we act as per our old Punya and Paapa only.

Naannagaaru: Our present reflexive actions depend on both our old Janma samskaaraas and present Janma Inputs and both are the result of our own earlier actions. After all our Punya or Paapa are also fruits of earlier actions.

I: Not understood.

Naannagaaru: You saw a mango in the shop. Based on the Samskaaraas in your Manas, you got the knowledge that it will be tasty and good to eat. But you don't have money in your pocket. In case your liking for mango increases substantially, you may feel like stealing the mango from the shop to eat it. But there is another samskaara in the Manas which tells you that stealing is not the right way. Then Budhhi will help deciding based on which Samskaara is stronger or more dominant. Now let's understand how these samskaaraas are formed. They are formed based on previous actions which result into Punya and Paapa. In other words, our earlier actions will have influence on our present behavior.

I: Then how do we change ourselves towards positive behavior.

Naannagaaru: This is what we call Sattvika behavior. Like we said earlier, it is possible by eating Sattvik food, receiving sattvik inputs and developing sattvika habits etc. and surrendering oneself to Paramaatma. You may question how do we know whether our behavior is sattvik or not and when do we correct ourselves. Bhagavaan Sri Krishna in His Gita not only explained the characteristics of all people with all these three gunas i.e. Sattvik, Rajasik and Tamasik but also the inputs that promote those characteristics. Many other Aachaaryaas have detailed them out further in their books. We can discuss them some other time.

I: Every time you have been mentioning about Paramaatma and submitting ourselves to Him. You have mentioned about doing everything as service to Paramaatma as the concept behind Karma Yoga. I think, my concepts will become clearer if you explain these aspects as well.

Naannagaaru: As discussed earlier, we are all servants and dependents of Paramaatma. He has created all these worlds to give us the opportunity to get rid of our old sins and attain the eternal Bliss at His abode. As you know, the fifth point in Niyama is also Eeshvara Pranidhaana which is nothing but submission to Paramaatma. This is what is told in Karma Yoga and Gnyaana Yoga also.

I: Are these Karma Yoga and Gnyaana Yoga different or are same.

Naannagaaru: Both.

I: Not understood. How is it possible?

Naannagaaru: It is possible that when you are practicing Karma Yoga ultimately gets transformed into Gnyaana Yoga and gives you the result. It is possible you may practice Karma Yoga or Gnyaana independently also and reach your goal. For example, when you want to go to Bangalore from Vizag, you may go to Hyderabad and go to destination i.e. Bangalore from there. However, it is also possible that you may go to Bangalore directly from Vizag without going to Hyderabad. If you go from Vizag to Hyderabad and then go to destination then it is like practicing Karma Yoga which gets transformed into Gnyaana Yoga during your practice. Going directly to the destination is like practicing Karma Yoga to attain the ultimate goal.

I: Does that mean, practicing first Karma Yoga and changing over to Gnyaana Yoga takes more time to attain the Goal.

Naannagaaru: Not necessary. May be in our example it may sound so. But there also it depends on the speed of the train etc. Hence, both are possible.

I: Please explain further about these two Yogas.

Naannagaaru: Let's first dwell upon Karma Yoga. In the Karma Yoga, the practitioner shall perform all Karmaas i.e. actions as specified in the scriptures. But, he should perform them as service to the Paramaatma as if He (Lord) is making him perform those actions. The practitioner shall not have any attachment to the outcome and he shall be aware that he is merely performing the duty. He should not stop doing Karmaas.

I: Like I bring vegetables from the market on your instruction. But how can we consider all our activities as service to Paramaatma. I brush my teeth for myself, take bath for myself or eat food for myself. They are not services to Paramaatma.

Naannagaaru: You change the orientation of your thinking. If you brush your teeth or take bath, it is to keep you healthy and clean to make yourself available for the purpose of serving the Lord. You may think that even your breathing is for the comfort of Paramaatma who resides within you. When you cook food it is for the offering to the Lord. When you eat the Prasadam it is to enable you to serve the Lord. Hence, every activity shall be in service of the Lord.

I: Will our actions towards other people or other things be also service to Lord.

Naannagaaru: You love your brothers and sisters since you are all children of the same parents. You love our home since it is place we all stay. Similarly we are all children of the Lord and are staying in the same world which is created by Him. Our scriptures prescribe “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam” i.e. the whole world in one family of the Lord and we are for His service.

I: But, why no attachment for the outcome.

Naannagaaru: See once you have attachment for the outcome, the fruit of any action will result in some Punya or Paapa. It is like the credit or debit account in our Karma Phala bank balance which has to be spent for which you have to continue with your Janmaas. When our goal is to get rid of this birth –death cycle to attain the eternal Bliss in communion with Paramaatma, attachment or ownership of the outcome of the action will become a hindrance. Further, any such attachment will result in desire and as discussed earlier, it leads to anger etc. Further attachment creates tension and steals the enjoyment of performing the action. That doesn't mean you lose focus while doing your duty. The duty is to be performed with complete sincerity but without attachment to the outcome. If the process is perfect, the outcome will follow. You will realize the comfort when you practice it.

I: But, when you are sleeping, you are not doing any action, are you?

Naannagaaru: Sleeping is also an action. Rest is required for recouping yourself to join the Lord's service later. Hence it is also part of Service only. We shall be consciously observing our thoughts and actions whether our actions are integrated to the Lord's

service as prescribed in the scriptures, but without fooling ourselves, then work towards correcting ourselves on a continuous basis.

I: Whatever control you have been talking about regarding Manas or Indriyaas is to work in this manner. Isn't it? What happens if you keep doing,I mean, working like this. Will we get Aatma Saakshaatkaaram.

Naannagaaru: We said the final step is Paramaatma Sakshaatkaram, didn't we ? Hence we can reach that state. However, it may take several Janmaas for this to happen.

I: If you don't achieve your goal while practicing Karma Yoga in this Janma, do you have to start the process afresh in the next.

Naannagaaru: Not necessary, you will start from where you have left. Suppose while doing Karma Yoga, you have discontinued it due to some worldly desires or attachments etc. you will complete that activity either in this Janma or in the subsequent Janmaas and then continue with the Karma Yoga later. Hence, your practice of Karma Yoga will not go waste.

I: You said, while practicing Karma Yoga, one may turn into Gnyaana Yogi too. By the way, what is Gnyaana Yoga.

Naannagaaru: While practicing Karma Yoga i.e. performing actions as service to the Lord, you may start developing bonding with the Lord. When you develop such bond, you start disassociating yourself from all worldly things and think of only the Lord. This is the process of Gnyaana Yoga. But, this Gnyaana Yoga can be practiced without necessarily passing through Karma Yoga stage. i.e. you control your sensory organs and Manas forcefully and meditate upon the Lord. But the problem is, when you forcefully try controlling the Organs and Manas, the moment you are out of control, there is a possibility that they will ruin you. It is like riding the tiger. Hence, starting Gnyaana Yoga directly, that way, involves the element of risk.

I: Is it required for Gnyaana Yogi also to perform the actions as per the scriptures?

Naannagaaru: Yes, Sri Krishna says, although He is not bound by any Karmaas or duties, still He performs the Karmaas because the common will follow Him and if He doesn't perform the actions as per the scriptures, the society also will not follow and thus gets spoiled. While we are always saying doing Karmaas as per the scriptures, we shall understand that it includes not doing actions as forbidden by the scriptures. This point is to be understood automatically.

I: Who are all considered to be doing Karma Yoga.

Naannagaaru: Those who are devoted in offering prayers to Paramaatma, those who perform Yagnya etc. those who don't show interest in worldly interests for themselves, those who earn for the purpose of service to Paramaatma, those who spend time in studying scriptures... all those who perform the above activities while continuing to perform their Karmaas as per scriptures are called Karma Yogis.

I: While performing Karma Yoga, if one shall perform actions as service to Lord, then it is not physical activity alone.

Naannagaaru: Yes, in the Karma Yoga also, the element of Gnyaana keeps continuing parallelly. Gradually, this element becomes stronger and stronger. That is what we have mentioned earlier.

I: Then,

Naannagaaru: When you reach the ultimate stage, there won't be any sort of ignorance. It will be clear that the Aatma is different from body, mind, indriyaas and other worldly things. It is also realized that all the Aatmaas in various bodies are identical and their basic nature is Gnyaana.

I: That means, in that state we will see only the Aatmaas but nothing else...

Naannagaaru: Not exactly, when you see artificial jewellery each studded with similar precious diamond, how do you feel. You see the jewellery identify the differences among various ornaments, but don't bother about those differences. The whole focus will be on the precious diamond since the presence of diamond overrides everything else. Hence, you treat all of them similar though may be used for different purposes. One of them may be diamond studded necklace, another may be diamond studded ear ring, other diamond studded bangle etc.....their purposes may be different but we value them all same although meant for different applications. Similarly, all Aatmaas are of same nature, have same Paramaatma as Antaryaami, all are subservient and inseparable to Paramaatma in a similar way, but residing in different lifeless temporary bodies. This clear realization will be there in such state. Please be aware that you are also one such diamond only in one such ornament and all these ornaments are inseparable part of same Paramaatma

I: We have discussed about detaching ourselves from the worldly influences to focus towards Aatma. How do you detach yourself when you are experience pain or pleasure.

Naannagaaru: By sincere practice and detachment from the body. Lord Krishna says that you shall be conscious that you are not the body but Aatma and practice detachment from the body and worldly Vishayaas. After all these pains or pleasures are temporary and are not to the Aatma but to the non-permanent body.

I: But, if you scold me it may not affect the body but still I am agitated.

Naannagaaru: The pain or pleasure can be to either the body or Manas or both. In fact the experience is stronger when it is Manas as compared to when it is to body and when it is both the effect will be even more stronger. When you are scolded it affects the ego in your Manas. Let me explain. There may be samskaara in your Manas that you are a handsome boy and it is good to be handsome. This samskaara might have been formed either based on inputs from this Janma or from the previous Janma. Of course, when you say “you are handsome”, it is the characteristic of the body and not of Aatma. But, you may not be conscious that you are not the body. Now, if I tell you that you are not handsome, this input confronts with the impression/ samskaara which is already in your Manas. Then your agitation starts. If this agitation becomes more, it may also result into some undesirable action.

I: What action?

Naannagaaru: When you blow air into a balloon beyond its capacity it will burst. It will burst through its weakest point. Similar way, your action comes out through your weakest point. It may be different for different people on different occasions based on the active samskaraas at that point of time with that person. If there is a samskaaram to tell that “I am your father and shall not be beaten or scolded but to be respected”, since you cannot do that you may throw a flower vase on the floor or your face may turn red and so on so forth. Let’s not get into all those details. The point here is, we have to be conscious that we are not the body or the Manas on a continuous basis.

I: And don’t react In spite of pain or pleasure...

Naannagaaru: Reaction comes when you accept the input in its negative sense. You have to practice that it is not for you but to something else. Suppose somebody scolds you and you reject the emotional element and understand as a feedback, evaluate it, take it if it is useful to you and don’t take it if it is not useful. It is like if I give you a book, accept if it is useful and don’t accept if it is not useful. If you don’t accept, the book remains with me and makes my bag heavy. Similar is the principle.

I: But, that is for input to Manas. How do you deal with physical input like pain etc.

Naannagaaru: We have discussed different stages of Sthita Pragnyaavastha. We have to practice the same.

I: You have said our food habits etc. will help in this regard.

Naannagaaru: That's true. Although Patanjali's Yoga principles are mentioned in Ashtanga Yoga and not exactly in the context of Karma Yoga, some of those concepts may be applicable to some extent in this process also. That's why for any yogic practices Yama, Niyama etc. are to be understood.

I: Like what?

Naannagaaru: If one becomes established in Ahimsa or non-injury, he acquires the power to overcome enmity. To that person, no one can come with anger or hatred. No one can raise the hand of violence. Before him all enmity ceases. That is the result or the effect of acquiring perfection in Ahimsa. And, perfection in truth is Satya. It gives you Vak-Siddhi. If one is absolutely established in truthfulness, then after a period of 12 years of such perfect adherence to truth, whatever the person utters will come out true. Establishment in Brahmacharya brings about super powers in the individual. When you are established in absolute cleanliness, both outer and inner, he can carry on further. By Santosha, you get rid of attachment. Through the power of austerity, your senses become keen and your intellect becomes sharp and are devoid of aversion. Through absorbing study of spiritual scriptures, you can have a vision of Paramaatma. When he carries on his studies, deeply and regularly, you can have a understanding or vision of Paramaatma. That is the state of Eeshwar Pranidhaana.

I: I know, "Niyama" includes Eeshawara Pranidhaana also in the end. These are what are prescribed by Maharshi Patanjali. Are there any other schools which have different points of view.

Naannagaaru: In fact, there are six popular schools of Indian Philosophy and these are called Darshanas. Yoga preached by Maharshi Patanjali is one of them. Although the ultimate goal of all of these Darshanaas is to get rid of sorrow or/ and to attain eternal happiness there are differences among these Darshanas with respect to the path to achieve it and also with respect to the nature of the final goal. Getting into all of aspects may be difficult now, but to answer your question briefly, in case of our Ramanuja Darshana which is Visishtadvaitam, Sadhana Saptakam i.e. Viveka, Vimoka, Abhyasa, Kriya, Kalyana, Anavsada, Anudhrasha are the prerequisites for Brahma Jignyasa i.e. enquiry into Brahma or Paramaatma, the final goal for all of us. Let's not get into further details of the same. But, these are essentially based on our sacred scriptures only and

that is why it is said in Karma Yoga that we shall perform our actions following the sacred scriptures.

I: Why are yogaasanaas also necessary for Karma Yoga? We are only perform our actions as service of Lord in Karma Yoga, isn't it?

Naannagaaru: It may be true that you don't have to be master of Yogaasanaas for following Karma Yoga. As you know, Karma Yoga includes performing all your duties as per the scriptures with the mind that they are all service to the Lord. For doing this you have to have love and interest in the Lord. This is called Bhakti.

I: Oh, I have heard about Bhakti Yoga....

Naannagaaru: We will discuss it later. Let's come back to our point. Apart from having Bhakti towards Lord, you have to develop disinterest towards the worldly inputs too. Incidentally we have been used to be influenced by the worldly inputs for so many Janmaas. Millions and millions of Samskaaraas have been formed in the Manas and they show their effect on a continuous basis. Further, we are simultaneously influenced by the worldly Vishayaas too. Hence, it is not easy to protect ourselves from them. This requires serious efforts.

I: I understand.

Naannagaaru: That is why different tools are used to protect ourselves from different things. You may use an umbrella to protect yourself against rain, use a wool sweater to protect yourself against cold weather. Similarly all these techniques.....

I: But I asked about the need of the Yogaasanaas.

Naannagaru: Yogaasanaas will help getting control on the body and helps it to remain flexible. They help to provide with good health and helps to conserve the energy. Without healthy body and mind what can you do? Also they prepare us in further practices.

I: What do you mean by further practices.

Naannagaaru: Praanaayaama, Dhyaana etc. For all those practices you have to have a comfortable stable posture. If you cannot even sit in one place properly for some time due to leg pain or back ache how do you practice Praanaayaama etc.

I: Then my question will be why Praanaayaama?

Naannagaaru: As discussed earlier, besides control over body, we need control over Manas too. We have seen earlier that Praanamaya Kosa is closer to Manomaya Kosa. Praanaayaama helps us to gain control over Manas. Praanaayaama essentially means control of breathing. There are many Praanaayaama techniques for various objectives. You may like to refer “The science of Praanaayaama” by Swami Sivananda” to get comprehensive understanding of Praanaayaama. The Prana may be defined as the finest vital force in everything which becomes visible on the physical plane as motion and action and on the mental plane as thought. The word Pranayama, therefore, means the restraint of vital energies. It is the control of vital energy which tingles through the nerves of persons. It moves his muscles and causes him to sense the external world and think his internal thought. It is used for the purification of Nadis, body chakraas...

I: What are these Nadis, Chakraas etc.

Naannagaaru: Oh, it is said that in our body there are 72,000 Nadis. Out of them three are important. There are Ida, Pingala, Sushumna. These are not the nerves which carry the blood but are those which are meant for Gnyanam and hence are known as Gnyaan Nadis. It is said that after the death, if Aatma goes to Paramaatma’s abode i.e. Paramapada, it leaves the body through Sushumna Nadi.

Chakras are centres of spiritual energy. They can hardly be seen by the naked eyes. Only a clairvoyant may be able to see with his astral eyes. Tentatively they correspond to certain plexuses in the physical body. They are: Moolaadhaara at the anus, Svaadhishtana at the genital organ, Manipura at navel, Anahata at the heart, Visudhha at the throat and Ajna at the space between the two eyebrows. The seventh Chakra is known as Sahasrara. You might have heard Pranik healing. Those who practise can impart their Prana in healing morbid diseases. They can also recharge themselves with Prana in no time by practising Kumbhaka. The Pranik healers study and clean these Chakras of their patients by practice of those techniques. Since this is not out topic of discussion, let us not get further into this subject.

In order to effectively practice Praanaayaama, certain Kriyaas like 1. Dhauti, 2. Basti, 3. Neti, 4. Trataka, 5. Nauli and 6. Kapalabhati. are also performed before doing Praanaayaama.

I: Why these Kriyaas.

Naannagaaru: Five things are necessary for practising Pranayama effectively. First a good place; second, a suitable time; third, moderate, substantial, light and nutritious food; fourth, patient and persistent practice with zeal, ease and earnestness and lastly the purification of Nadis. These Kriyaas help us in the purification of Naadis.

I: Can anybody do Praanaayaama.

Naannagaaru: One who has a reasonably calm mind and subdued his Indriyas, who has faith in the words of the Guru and Sastras, who is an Astika (i.e., one who believes in sacred scriptures) and is moderate in eating, drinking and sleeping and one who has an eager longing for deliverance from the wheel of births and deaths—is the qualified person for the practice. You should sit in comfortable posture with your straight back i.e. Chest, neck, and head must be in one vertical line. A man takes fifteen breaths in a minute. The total number of breaths comes to 21,600 times per day. Hence, by controlling the number of breaths, you may control the life span also although that is not our goal in this context. There are many types of techniques like Ujjayi, Surya Bheda, Anuloma Viloma, Kapala Bhati, Sitkari, Sitali, Bhastrika, Bhramari, Plavini, Murchha etc. One simple process is to fix the gaze at the tip of the nose, to inhale through the left nostril, retain the breath and then exhale slowly through right nostril. Repeat the process by inhaling through the right and exhaling through the left. This is one cycle. Repeat the certain number of cycles and try increasing the number gradually. Your Manas too calms down gradually.

I: What next?

Naannagaaru: While, discussing Sthita Pragnyaavastha, we discussed on withdrawal or abstraction of our senses. As per Patanjali, this is called Pratyahaara. However, when you are doing Karma Yoga, withdrawal of senses is applicable with respect to being away from your selfish ends since your actions are meant for the service to the Lord. i.e. when there is mango, you shall think that it shall be for the service of the Lord shall be used for offering to the Lord. Hence the word “withdrawal” is applicable in the sense, you shall not view from the point of fulfilling the needs of your taste buds on your tongue.

I: OK. As per Patanjali, the next steps are Dhaarana, Dhyaana, Samaadhi.. ...

Naannagaaru: These three together are called Inner Yoga stages. So far, our efforts have been to control the external flow of the Dharma Bhoota Gnyaana. Now our efforts are to see that it gets reflected into Aatma itself. This of course is the component of Gnyaana Yoga. By practice of Karma Yoga, you develop disinterest on the worldly things and develop interest in Aatma and its true nature i.e. its dependence on Paramaatma and thus realizing Paramaatma. Then we keep experiencing everything with this realization.

I: That is when, you said, you see everything like artificial jewellery each studded with precious diamond, where artificial jewellery are worldly objects and the precious diamond/s is Aatma/ Paramaatma.

Naannagaaru: You are right. But you (Aatma) are also one of the diamonds among one of such ornaments, of course, a diamond with consciousness as also all other Diamonds.

All of them are inseparable from Paramaatma and hence through Paramaatma are related to one another.

I: You mean, we are like various limbs to Paramatma, and are inseparable

Naannagaaru: One of our hands even if it has consciousness, will not have any hatred or jealousy against another hand because both belong to the same body. Similarly, since everything or everybody is inseparable part of Paramaatma, one shall not have any ill feeling against another.

I: So we have to follow this inner Yoga as per Patanjali. But is it also not as per our Ramanuja Philosophy?

Naannagaaru: Ramanuja also explained Dhyaana as series of continuous thinking of Paramaatma without break. He gives the example of oil flowing into the wick of the lamp. Our scriptures also say "Aatma are va Srotavyah, Mantavyah, Nididhyasitavyah, Drashtavyah.

I: Meaning!

Naannagaaru: Aatma to be heard, thought in the Manas, meditated and seen. Hence, the saakshaatkaara stage is after meditation stage.

I: I see. How to do it?

Naannagaaru: Mantra Japa is one method. Mantra is given by Aachaarya to his student, the practitioner, once he finds him to be eligible for the same. The student shall meditate upon that Mantra for multiple times as prescribed by the Aachaarya. It is said that when you chant the Mantra, the Mantra itself will lead you into right path. When you are chanting the Mantra multiple times number days, you may have different experiences, like hearing some sounds, sighting some objects etc. These experiences are individual specific and the experiences of two practitioners may not be same. The practitioner may get some powers also during the process. But, he shall not be satisfied with such experiences or powers but continue the practice till he attains his goal. During the Japa, he may focus on the meaning of the Mantra or he may simply repeat it focussing on his breathing. Or he may focus on the sound of the Mantra etc. since without focussing upon some specific object or thing, meditation is difficult. He can meditate up on the Lord with His great qualities, amazingly beautiful form etc. His Aachaarya will guide him in this aspect.

I: But, in the sentence you mentioned above it is Aatma to be meditated upon.

Naannagaaru: Yes, but Aatma is not independent of Paramaatma. We have discussed the relationship between Aatma and Paramaatma earlier too.

I: I see. But, do you think the external inputs from the world or the internal influences from the Manas will not disturb you during the process.

Naannagaaru: That's why we have been discussing various techniques of preparation. By the way, when we go to Vijayakumar uncle's house, you see a ferocious dog. It keeps shouting when it sees you and looks as if it is ready to jump at you. What do you do?

I: I will try to take care of myself i.e. I will be careful not to do anything to agitate or irritate the dog. If it is still looks dangerous, I will call uncle to control the dog.

Naannagaaru: Why uncle?

I: Because, he is its master and it will listen to him only.

Naannagaaru: We have discussed earlier that our body, organs, Manas and all these worldly things are all part of Prakriti crudely translated as Nature. Similar to the way Aatmaas are not independent of Paramaatma but dependent and subservient to Paramaatma only, the Prakriti is also dependent on Paramatma and subservient to Him. In other words, Paramaatma is the Master for both Prakriti and Aatmaas. Hence, if you want control of anything that belongs to Prakriti, you have to approach its Master i.e. Paramaatma. That's what we have discussed earlier.

I: Will Paramaatma reside in and control those worldly objects also like He resides in and exercises control of Aatmaas.

Naannagaaru: Of course yes, when we say He is Antaryaami, He is Antaryaami of both the sentient and insentient.

I: OK, you make your efforts and then, pray to Him to take care of the rest. But, sometimes we get sleep while meditating. Then?

Naannagaaru: Once you develop interest, chances of getting sleep are less. When you see cricket match, you don't get sleep but when you read Hindi text book you will sleep. That is because of your interest and lack of interest. But, we have to consciously practice with interest and sincerity. In spite of that if we get sleep, only thing we can do is to sleep. May be that is what Paramaatma conceived for us in this context. After all He has to take care of us.

I: OK, how to do this meditation?

Naannagaaru: Suppose you take Ashtakshari Mantra. Its brief meaning can be understood as "all of us belong to and subservient to only Lord Srimannarayan who is along with Laksmi Ma. He is the creator of all of us with whom we have inseparable

bonding, who has all the greatest qualities, whom any bad thing cannot even reach, who is our saviour and final Goal. Our Poorvaachaaryaas like Swami Pillai Lokacharya and Manavala Mahamuni have written lucid explanations of these Mantraas. We can meditate upon these meanings.

We have earlier described various Kosas of our body. i.e. Annamaya, Praanamaya, Manomaya, Vignyaanamaya and Anandamaya Kosas. We can meditate upon them, how they all exist one inside the other and how Gnyaana, instead flowing outside gets reflected into our Aatma when you are able develop detachment towards worldly things. We can meditate upon our relationship with Paramaatma. You can meditate upon His various deeds, His great and beautiful figure, His great qualities.... so on and so forth as you have understood from the scriptures. For example, you can meditate upon His quality of Daya i.e. mercy for any amount of time. How merciful He is, how He has taken various Avataarams to save His devotees, for ex. How He has taken the form of dwarf i.e. Vaamana and became a beggar for the sake of Indra, how He has taken scolding and beating from His mother Yashoda...there is no end for it.

You may meditate on a song, may be on the music of the song or may be on the meaning of the song. You may follow a guided meditation method. For example, put on a sound recorded cassette which describes you the way you will have darshan of Sri Lord Venkateswara. Close your eyes and follow the cassette and start experiencing as per the cassette. You may start with your taking bath, getting yourself ready and start from your room in Tirumala, do the waiting, stand in the queue, cross the Bangaru Vaakili, feel the cold water below your feet, see to your left the Anantaalwan's iron crowbar, go round Ranganaayaka Mandapam so on have the Darshan of the Lord from His feet up to His beautiful crown, His Chakra, Sankha, Nandaka, His garlands of flowers, saligramaas, all the ornaments, the position of His legs, hands, His chest, the consorts on His chest, His smiling face, the Tirumani, the white spot below His chin,, come out see Vakuladevi who like an old mother of a very big very rich and powerful man, who without bothering about His earnings or popularity sits near the dark, humid kitchen to ensure good food to her dear son.....it can go on. Keep enjoying the state of meditation. You will not get sleep.

You may meditate Him as child Krishna, His cunning acts, how His posture when Yashoda threatened Him, His posture dancing on Kaaleeya serpent

You can meditate Him as the Lord of Paramapada, how He is sitting on the Aadishesha along with His consorts, how all the others like Garuda, Vishvaksena etc. doing His service....

You can meditate Him lying in the milky ocean on Adishesha, how Adishesha is looking with 1000 heads, Mahalakshmi at His feet, your first requesting Mahalakshmi and offering service to the Lord, keep meditating on various services that you are offering the Lord. The process and the experiences have indeed no bounds.

I: All this while doing the Japa?

Naannagaaru: If you can, you may do it while doing the Japa. But, initially, it may be difficult because you may focus on the Mantra well as turning of the beads of the Maala. Once, you get used to it, you may be able to do it while continuing the Japa as well. However, you may meditate without doing Japa too.

I: But, we keep getting disturbed ...

Naannagaaru: That's why the earlier preparation is necessary. Try to sit in secluded place where you have no disturbance and do your practice. Sit in comfortable stable posture, close your eyes, try to ignore any external disturbances like sounds, smells etc. Initially it is better to keep a maala of beads in your hand and use it for the Mantra Japa. Your Aachaarya will tell you how to use the Maala, how to turn the beads etc.

I: Independent of external disturbances, some random thoughts keep visiting and keep disturbing us.

Naannagaaru: That is what we have discussed about influences of Samskaaraas and some possible techniques to take care of. We can only make our efforts. We have mentioned earlier, we have to perform our duty/ action without any attachment with the result.

I: I am still not clear on one thing. We started the whole thing for Aatma Saakshaatkaara. But, somewhere on the way, we have taken a deviation. You have brought in Paramaatma and now Aatma Saakshaatkaara went into the back ground.

Naannagaaru: OK. What is your idea then, how do you get Aatma Saakshaatkaaram?

I: By controlling our senses, restricting the influences of our Manas and trying to focus on Aatma and its nature. I know it is not easy, but at least, this process is in our hands and we will be able to achieve, if not soon, at least some day. But, this Paramaatma Sakshaatkaaram seems to be depending on Him.

Naannagaaru: You are right, Paramaatma Saakshaatkaaram depends on Him and He will only decide when to bless us with the same.

I: Hence, is it not better to start with Aatma Saakshaatkaaram, in stead? After that we can work on Paramaatma Saakshaatkaaram, if we want.

Naannagaaru: Then you have not understood the essence of our discussion.

I: Why?

Naannagaaru: Can you eat banana without experiencing its smell. The smell of banana is inseparable from banana. Similarly, as per our philosophy, our Aatmas are solely integral to Paramaatma. Hence, it is not correct to say we will know Aatma independent of Paramaatma or have Sakshaatkaaram of Aatma independent of Paramaatma.

I: But some people refer to only Aatma Saakshaatkaara without Paramaatma Saakshaatkaara, about which they describe all those processes/ practices we have been discussing thus far. It is said that great saints like Ramana Maharshi etc.had Aatma Saakshaatkaaram!

Naannagaaru: Here, I have to clarify some differences amongs our Vedanta schools. Advaitins believe that there is nothing other than Paramaatma and there is one Paramaatma and nothing else. Accordingly, whatever we have been talking as Aatma so far is Paramaatma only. In such a case, Aatma Saakshaatkaara is the ultimate goal and there is nothing beyond. But, we, the followers of Visishtadvaita believe that Paramaatma, Aatmas and Prakriti- all the three are real and do exist. Aatmas and Prakriti are separate from Paramaatma but not separable. Further, the Aatmas which are in our bodies are all different although they are identical nature. However, in case of Advaitins, there is only one thing real i.e. there is only one Aatma or Paramaatma whatever you call it and nothing else. Hence there are no multiple Aatmas. In case of Dvaitins, all the three i.e. Paramaatma, Aatma and Prakriti are different and they have independent existence.

Now, coming back to our Ramanuja Philosophy, Aatma Saakshaatkaara means Paramaatma Saakshaatkaara also. That's why we have been dealing with both.

I: In our philosophy, is there no Aatma anubhava or experience of Aatma alone. I heard....

Naannagaaru: After our death, based on what we seek from the Lord, we may get Aatmaanubhava i.e. enjoying the Aatma which is known as Kaivalya state and Paramaatmaanubhava i.e. enjoying the association of Paramaatma which is called Moksha. The state of Kaivalya is said to be inferior to Moksha. That's why our seniors don't recommend it.

I: OK, during the practice while we are here on this earth, as per you, both Aatma Saakshaatkaaram and Paramaatma Sakshaatkaaram are essentially same. I thought, for Aatma Saakshaatkaaram we have to meditate on Aatma where as for Paramaatma Saakshaatkaaram we have to meditate on Paramaatma. Now you are saying both are inseparable and Paramaatma resides in the Aatma as Antaryaami. But the examples you have given for meditation happen to be different. In all those examples, you have been discussing Paramaatma in Paramapada, Paramaatma in Milky ocean, Paramaatma in the form of Avataarams like Vaamana, Krishna, Paramaatma in the form of Lord in the temple

like Tirumala. This puzzles me because, even if we have to meditate Paramaatma integral to Aatma, then we have to meditate Paramaatma as Antaryaami to our Aatma i.e. Vignyaanamaya Kosa and Aanadamaya Kosa as has been mentioned in the earlier discussion.....

Naannagaaru: True, it can be done that way. Our scriptures have mentioned that also. Let me clarify. As per our philosophy, Paramaatma has Five forms. They are called Para i.e. in Paramapada, Vyuha i.e. in Milky ocean from where He performs the creation etc., Vibhava i.e. in the form of Avataarams like Vaamana, Krishna etc. He takes to safe guard His devotees and protect the world order, Archya i.e. in the form of the Lord in temples like Tirumala where He is under the control of the Archaka and provides us with the opportunity to serve Him and then like you said within our own selves as Antaryaami, supervising our thoughts and actions. Earlier I have mentioned the other four forms and not Antaryaami. That is why you are getting this doubt. It is possible to meditate any of these forms and fruit will be same because He is same in any of these forms.

I: Then why did you refer to all the other forms and not Antaryaami.

Naannagaaru: What is the form of Aantaryaami? It is also essentially similar to Aatma except that Aatma is the subservient to Antaryaami i.e. Antaryaami is the Master. For meditation, a Shubhasraya Moorthy of the Lord, a form without any blemishes, a form with all great qualities and the qualities we love to experience and enjoy, a form we have read, heard and appreciated clearly from the scriptures, a form which is possible to conceive is easier. That is why I mentioned those examples.

I: Now, I have another confusion. I had earlier thought that Aatma Sakshaatkaara happens by our efforts where as Paramaatma Saakshaatkaara is with the help of Paramaatma. Now that you are saying Paramaatma is the Master, hence Paramaatma's help and Sankalpa is required for either.

Naannagaaru: Aatma Sakshaatkaara means being aware of Aatma; Aatma's relationship with the Paramaatma; i.e. the servant-Master relationship. Hence being aware of one of them means being aware of the other as well as the relationship like an electrical plug and socket. Hence, in both the cases, the fruit is essentially same and the fruit will come only by His mercy.

I: Then, besides whatever practices you have been telling to do like controlling senses, Mnas etc. we have to request Him to facilitate us with that Saakshaatkaaram also. This is similar to what we do when we want anything, isn't it? If we want to get rid of the difficulties we pray that our difficulties get over. If we want our lost wealth to be back or if we want to get new riches, then also we pray to Him accordingly.

Naannagaaru: Even for getting the state of Kaivalyam also we have to pray to Him only.

I: There are so many Gods like Indra, Rudra etc. why can't we pray them instead?

Naannagaaru: They are all also Aatmas like us only, but are given some administration powers by Paramaatma to manage certain activities in this Leela Vibooti i.e in this universe i.e. including the Satyaloka which is the abode of Chaturmukha Brahma, because they have more Punya in their account. But even all those worlds in this universe are also temporary as also all those demi Gods because during Pralaya all of them will immerse into Paramaatma and get created again when the creation takes place. They don't have access themselves to Paramapada (and the state of permanent and unlimited happiness there), which is different from this universe and which is the abode of the Lord. Hence any prayers to them will not get you Paramapada or the state of permanent and unlimited happiness which is possible only there. However, if you want any petty help from them and pray them, within their limited jurisdiction, they may help you but in such a case also Paramaatma, as their Antaryami, will only be behind the process of helping you.

I: So, we have to pray only Him for getting the Sakshaatkaaram too. Is that the only way?

Naannagaaru: Let me explain with an example. You ask your mother for milk. She will give you. Then you will leave her and go to do your work. But, your baby sister will not ask for milk. She simply keeps seeking for mother, if she doesn't get her, she keeps crying as she can't miss her or bear with her mother's absence. She wants her Mother and nothing else. Then mother will take care of her and feed her whatever is needed. Tell me, whom does your mother likes more.

I: She likes my sister more.

Naannagaaru: I will give another example. Both Duryodhana and Arjuna went to Lord Srikrishna for help. Arjuna only wanted Lord Krishna to be alongwith him whereas Duryodhana got lot of army. Whom did Krishan like and ultimately who was more successful?

I: Arjuna only.

Naannagaaru: There is a wife who sincerely requests her husband for something. There is another who wants only her husband and is interested only in serving him. Whom does the husband like?

I: The later.

Naannagaaru: In the Gnyaana Yoga, you are requesting the Lord for Saakshaatkaaram. That is like the first case in the above examples. But, like the later in above examples,

you may not ask for anything from Paramaatma but want Him only and you are interested only to serve Him. That is Bhakti Yoga. This is the next method.

I: Then the Lord may like the Bhaktas more as compared to Gnyaani. What is Bhakti then? How do you get?

Naannagaaru: You know loving, don't you? If you love Paramaatma, it is known as Bhakti. There four steps for it.

1. You shall not have any wants for your own self.
2. Have one hundred faith and conviction that He is the only saviour.
3. Never think of or expect any benefits from the Lord.
4. Keep thinking about Him all the time.

I: I want to ask another question. Suppose I have still likes and dislikes, then...

Naannagaaru: That means you are still not able to distinguish your body from your true self i.e. Aatma. The likes and dislikes are due to your attachment to the body.

I: OK, that means we shall not look for or ask anything from the Lord.

Naannagaaru: In love there is only giving. There is no expectation from the other person in Love. Not even an appreciation or the word "Thanks". In such a case it becomes a commercial relationship. Your mother loves you, hence she takes care of you expecting nothing from you. She forgets her sleep or hunger to take care of you. When she buys fruits, she keeps for you the best of them, not for herself. She keeps thinking about you wherever you are, whether you are ok or whether you are taking food correctly.. so on and so forth. She doesn't even expect a word of Thanks from you. Does she? A Bhakta will be like that.

I: But in case of Paramaatma...

Naannagaaru: A Bhakta spends his time in praying, singing His keertans, Bhajans, satsang, spending time with the other Bhaktaas, doing Parayan etc. Keeps thinking about the Lord only all the time. They will use their body, mind and all their possessions only for the purpose of the Lord.

I: Then....

Naannagaaru: They focus their Manas only on Lord like a mother will have her Manas only on her new born.

I: So what...

Naannagaaru: See, when you want something very valuable, you have to put lot of efforts, wait for some time to get it. However valuable it is, it will be there with you for limited time and gives you limited happiness. However, in case of Paramaatma all these four cases are different. You don't have put lot of efforts, you have to only sincerely love Him. You don't have to wait for the result. Your result will start the moment you start loving Him and there are no limits either with respect to time or amount of happiness that you experience by loving Him. It is boundless.

I: But, it is not easy to keep Manas on Him all the time,

Naannagaaru: Then, He says, practice remembering Him or His name and develop liking to get Him, I mean experiencing Him.

I: We are aware of the worldly things and thus know their experience. But we don't know the experience of the Lord.

Naannagaaru: That is why we have our sacred scriptures. They will tell us.

I: How can we imagine something about which we don't have experience. Is it possible?

Naannagaaru: It is possible. When you see a movie, you will see some beautiful place and think of spending time at such beautiful place. Similarly, you would have thought that of experiencing infinite amount of happiness eternally without any of these worries or sorrows. Experience with Paramaatmaa will be like that only.

I: How to get it?

Naannagaaru: By pleasing Him. By doing service to Him. For example, you can help build temples, grow gardens for His flowers, light the lamps, clean His temples, doing Parayana ...any such service...

I: This looks easier.

Naannagaaru: You have to do the service out of love and not with any expectation.

I: Oh!

Naannagaaru: Otherwise you keep doing your activities as service to the Lord.

I: Again this looks like what you told me in the beginning when you told me Karma Yogam.

Naannagaaru: Or offer the fruits of all your actions to the Lord.

I: Like in karma Yoga.

Naannagaaru: Yes, it is like Karma Yoga, but here you are doing everything out of love but not with any expectation of getting Saakshaatkaarams or some such thing.

I: If you don't mind it reminds me the cases of arranged marriage and love marriage shown in the movies.

Naannagaaru: Nothing wrong of speaking about marriage at your age. Can you please explain further?

I: In an arranged marriage, a girl is married to a king as per their tradition through the prescribed procedure. The girl doesn't know anything about the king, but since she has been told, she keeps serving the king. Over a period of time she gradually develops liking for the king and the king also takes care of the girl. This is like Gnyaana Yoga.

But in a love marriage, the girl first falls in love with the king and comes to a stage when she cannot live without him. She thinks of only him, works for him tries everything to get his acceptance. The king also realizes her liking and accepts her. This is like Bhakti Yoga.

Naannagaaru: I think you are getting it correctly. But, the love shall not be with any expectation. I will continue your story. There is more than one girl who wants to marry the king. The king called his minister and asked for a suggestion whom he shall marry. Then the minister suggested him to ask a question to each of the girls. "Why do you love me?". Each girl replied differently, one said because of his wealth so that she can become the owner of the wealth, another said because she can become more powerful and so on so forth. But only one girl said she loves him naturally but not due to any specific reason or expectation. The minister suggested the king to marry the last girl. Hope you have understood.

I: But is it practically possible: I mean, loving some body without any specific reason.

Naannagaaru: OK, I will tell you another story. There was a king. He had a small child. The child was lost when he went out to play. He was taken by somebody who lives in forest. The boy grew up without the knowledge that he was the son of a king. After some years, a wise man who knew the story of the boy came and told him about his childhood and the previous life. Then the boy realized his original identity, the wise man took the boy to the king. When the boy saw the king, realising his relationship with the king, the boy embraced the king with delight.

I: OK, Once we know our relationship with the Lord, we start loving Him naturally. But, as discussed earlier by us, the relationship between the Aatma and Paramaatma will be

perfectly clear at the stage of Aatma Saakshaatkaaram. Does that mean, Bhakti Yoga shall start after fructification of Gnyaana Yoga.

Naannagaaru: That is one possibility. Similar to the way we discussed regarding Karma Yoga and Gnyaana Yoga which can be either serial paths or parallel paths for our Goal, so also Bhakti Yoga. i.e. Bhakti Yoga can be followed after Gnyaana Yoga. In such case Gnyaana Yoga becomes anga or a component of Bhakti Yoga. Or you can also follow Bhakti Yoga if you are blessed with such Bhakti.

I: OK, whom does the Lord like, I mean, what are the qualities of Bhakta who is liked by the Lord.

Naannagaaru: He likes those who will not hate anybody, those who treat everybody in a friendly way, those who are merciful to others, those who are not possessive, those who are contented i.e. not greedy, those who are aware that this Aatma is subservient to Paramaatma, those who have control on their senses and Manas, those who have faith on our sacred scriptures, because of whom there will not be any difficulty to any part of world, those who will not face any difficulty with the world, those who have clean habits and follow the sacred scriptures and don't do anything against the sacred scriptures, those who are not disturbed by worldly things or events, those who don't experience extreme happiness or sorrow for the worldly things, those who perform actions without any selfish interest for fruits of those actions, those who treat every body same, those who feel and treat pain and pleasure, cold and heat, praise and abuse etc. in the same manner, those who have stable mind, those who have love and Bhakti for Him are liked by Him. A Bhakta is one, who cannot live doing some service or the other to the Lord, singing, dancing, decorating with flowers ornaments etc. and lives as if his only purpose of living is to do service to the Lord.

I: Long list indeed! How to get them?

Naannagaaru: If you have fever, body temperature will increase, your hunger will reduce, you will have weakness, you will have head ache....

I: What are you talking, doesn't seem to be relevant!

Naannagaaru: What I mean fever is the cause and high temperature etc. are the effects. Similarly, if you have love for the Lord, these qualities you develop these qualities gradually. For example, if you love me, do you spoil my pen.

I: No, I will take good care of the pen.

Naannagaaru: Once you love the Lord, you start liking all His creation i.e. the nature and all the people around you. Once you are conscious that you are Aatma and not the body,

you will not treat pain and pleasure differently so on and so forth. Of course, you may gradually keep developing these characteristics consciously.

I: Who are the best examples for Bhaktas.

Naannagaaru: Our Alwars. Some of these Alwars loved the Lord the way love their lover, some loved as if they love their child etc. There are 12 Alwars in our philosophy. If you read their life stories or their books which are called Draavida Prabandhaas (around 4000 verses in Tamil language), you will realize how much love they had for the Lord. They didn't go through the process of Gnyaana Yoga, Aatma Saakshaatkaaram etc. to get in to Bhakti.

I: Earlier I thought that the spiritual meditation practice is a serious affair and one should be like rock to seriously focus and concentrate. But, for somebody to have Bhakti, he should have soft and loving nature. He should be merciful.....

Naannagaaru: It is not only for Bhakti but also for other spiritual meditation practices too. It is said that Koorattalwan an ardent student of Bhagavadramanuja got fainted when he saw liquid coming out of a torn off leaf because his heart moved thinking that the plant would have suffered lot of pain. When we are saying that he should be unmoved by pain and pleasure, it is with respect to his body but not with respect to others.

I: So, if we have to rate these methods, how do we rate them.

Naannagaaru: These are all different methods applicable to different types of individuals. Hence it is not correct to rate them. For some Karma Yoga may be more suitable and for some Bhakti Yoga. If you are not able to have love for the Lord the way we described in Bhakti Yoga, it is better to practice the other methods. By meditating on Aatma and its relationship with Paramaatma you will get the awareness of true knowledge with conviction. If that is not possible, practice Karma Yoga to get peace of mind and minimise the external disturbances. There by you will be devoid of likes and dislikes etc. Ultimately, you will get Bhakti towards the Lord.

I: That means Bhakti Yoga is the ultimate Yoga, I mean path for attaining the goal.

Naannagaaru: Not necessarily, there is also another.

I: What is that?

Naannagaaru: It is called Prapatti or Saranaagati. In other words surrendering ourselves completely with one hundred percent conviction and faith. This concept is very important and hence I will try to explain it further. Meaning of "Saranam" in this context is "means". "Aagiti" means staying with or keeping the idea strongly in the mind. i.e. thinking with fullest conviction and faith that Paramaatma is the only "means" for us reach the goal. i.e.

we shall have one hundred percent faith that we don't have anybody or anything else to save us and reach us our goal, neither we are capable of achieving it ourselves. He, the Lord, is our only savior our goal and He will only accept and reach us to Him. It is said that

- “1. we have to think that Paramaatma can only help us
2. leave aside all other means
3. have one hundred percent faith that He will save and protect us
4. express your acceptance that He can and He should only save us
5. surrender our own selves i.e. Aatma to Him
6. wait for His grace and mercy for Him to take pity on you”

are required for doing Saranaagati. You can be rest assured that He will take care of you. We have been discussing Karma Yoga, Gnyaana Yoga, Bhakti Yoga etc. as the means of getting our goal. But, in Saranaagati process, we believe that Lord is the only means to reach us to Him. As per our philosophy, in the process of Saranaagati, we first pray to Goddess Sri Maha Lakshmi so that she will recommend our case to the Lord. That'swhy, in the Saranaagati Gadya, Bhagavadramanuja first offered his prayers to Lakshmidivi and then approached the feet of the Lord for Saranagati. When you do Saranaagati, you don't consider anything else i.e. Karma Yoga, Gnyaana Yoga, Bhakti Yoga as the means for your reaching the goal. **He is the only means.**

I: In such a case none of them is required. Isn't it?

Naannagaaru: None of them will be means for your goal. Whatever you do will be in the form of service to the Lord, Gnyaana takes the form of appreciating your relationship with the Lord, Bhakti takes the form of love for Him, but they will not be means for your goal any more.

I: Then Saranagati will be the means in that case. Isn't it?

Naannagaaru: No, He is the only means, not Saranagati.

I:How come?

Naannagaaru: A girl married to a man. He is taking care of her. Now tell me, by what means her needs are fulfilled.

I:Her husband.

Naannagaaru: Not because of her accepting to marry him, isn't it? Similarly, you will be attaining the goal because of Him and His mercy only. If you think you can attain the goal

yourself by some other means, the Lord will give you the chance and then He will not interfere. If only you leave it on Him, He will reach you to the destination.

I: Like, in Gajendra Mokshana story, as long as the elephant was trying, the Lord didn't interfere. But, when the elephant prayed with full faith and conviction that he didn't have the capability to save himself and only the Lord should save him, He came running.

Naannagaaru: Exactly. All other means like Karma, Gnyaana, Bhakti etc. are called "Saadhya Upaayas" where as Lord in this case is known as "Siddhopaya"

I: What does it mean?

Naannagaaru: If somebody has fever, and because of vomiting sensation not able to eat or drink anything and feeling very hungry. Then he takes medicines for getting over the fever. Here, the medicines are called "saadhya Upaya" i.e. you have used some means to get something else and then that means is called "Sadhya Upaya".

In another case, it is understood that the fever is due to Pitta disease and by drinking milk it will go off. Then he takes the milk which is to his liking too, thereby his disease is also cured and he got rid of his hunger by drinking milk which he wants. Here drinking milk is "Siddhopaya". i.e. Here, both his means and his need are same. That is the difference. In case of "Saranagati" the Lord is both means and the goal.

I: In that case, others means are not required, aren't they?

Naannagaaru: When Brahmaastras applied for tying Hanuman by Indrajit, the other Rakshasas started tying him with ropes etc. Then, Brahmastra left because it cannot tolerate the presence of some other things when it is on. Similarly, if you have accepted Lord Himself as the means which is Saranaagati, and then still adapt other means like Karma, Gnyaana etc. for reaching your goal, it amounts to your lack of conviction and confidence in the Lord. This is not acceptable.

I: In your example, the wife is married to the husband and the husband is fulfilling her needs. Here the question is, is it necessary that the wife shall ask her husband to fulfill her needs or the husband will take care of automatically.

Naannagaaru: Once the wife accepts the husband with 100% faith and respect, the husband, who in our case the omnipotent and omniscient, will certainly take care of needs of his wife. However, in case the wife expresses what she needs with love and affection, he will be all the more happy.

I: Then this is the simplest path. You can leave everything to the Lord without doing anything. He will save you?

Naannagaaru: True. But you shall be leaving the responsibility of protecting you completely to Him, like Draupadi, who in the middle of the court, when a Kaurava was disrobing her before everybody, left trying to protect herself, lifted both her hands and offered prayers to the Lord to save her. It is not easy to have that kind of faith and conviction. That is most important. Then, you said "leave everything to the Lord". Here you should understand that "you should leave your responsibility of protection to the Lord" but not leaving your duties and actions as prescribed by scriptures. You should be clear about this distinction. In our example, the wife leaves the responsibility of her care to her husband, but she shall not leave her responsibilities like cooking, managing the home etc. and sit idle. In other paths you should work for your liberation. In this path you should not work for your liberation. It is taken care of by the Lord.

I: I understand. But is everybody eligible to do this Saranagati?

Naannagaaru: When an elephant performed it, when Draupadi performed when she was not clean and pure, you must have understood that anybody can do Saranagati any time. The faith and dedicated thinking and one hundred dedication of our own selves are important. One more important aspect to be remembered. For any other means like Karma, Gnyaana etc. you may attain your goal either in this janma or after few janmaas. But, in case Saranagati done perfectly, you will attain the goal after this janma itself.

I: Sounds good.

Naannagaaru: That's why, our senior Aachaaryaas like Bhagavadramanuja, Pillai Lokacharya and Manavala Mahamuni etc. have recommended Saranagati to people like us.

I: It looks to me that there is very subtle difference between Bhakti and Saranagati. Will they not overlap? I mean, while doing Saranagati also, you may keep loving Him or vice versa.

Naannagaaru: It is possible. If Bhakti becomes the main thing, Saranagati becomes its component or Angam. On the other hand, if Saranagati becomes main, the Bhakti may become its component or Angam. But both cannot be adapted as parallel paths.

I:Hence Saranagati is the ultimate route to our goal.

Naannagaaru: Not necessarily.

I:Then?

Naannagaaru: Aachaarya samasrayanam and Bhagavata Samasrayanam are also there.

I: What are they?

Naannagaaru: Taking refuge at the feet of the Aacharya is known as Aachaarya Samaashrayanam.

I: How to get an Aachaarya?

Naannagaaru: When you are sincere and serious in your efforts and pray the Lord for the same, He will show you the right Aachaarya. Srimaan Pillai Lokachaarya in His book "Srivachana Bhushanam" which is a Magnum Opus of "Prapatti Sastra" described all these details. i.e. what are qualities of Sishya, what are the qualities of Aachaarya etc.

I: Why Aacharya?

Naannagaaru: In fact it is Aachaarya who helps the Sishya by leading him in the right path to reach his goal and he helps the Lord also to get his disciple back into His fold. In our tradition, Aachaarya samashrayana involves sishya getting initiated with the Mantra, providing with the Tirumani which we all wear, the impressions of Sudarshana and Panchajanya on his both arms, a new name which includes Ramanuja dasa as part of his name and the procedure of offering the prayers to the Lord. These five things are called Pancha Samskaarams without which you are not initiated into Srivaishnavism. Aachaarya provides you the link through his senior Aachaaryaas to the Lord. The names of your Aachaarya and your senior Aachaaryaas up to the name of Lord are chanted by us daily. The Lord is our first Aachaarya, then Lakshmi, Vishvaksena, Swami Nammalwar. Further Aacharyaas are Nathamuni, Pundareekaaksha, Rama Mishra, Yamuna Muni, Parankusa dasa, Bhagavadramanuja and so on up to your Aachaarya. We will discuss about these details some time later. Without Aachaarya we can't expect any spiritual progress in life. Among our Aachaaryas, the Aacharya who does the Samasrayanam i.e. provides the Pancha Samskaaram and the Aacharya who teaches the knowledge of our Sampradaayam and the sacred Prabandhaas are most important. In fact one of the Alwars i.e. Madhura Kavi Alwar, wrote his Prabandham "Kanninun Siruttambu" only on his Aacharya i.e. Nammalwar and declared that his goal is to reach his Aacharya's divine feet only. That's why whenever any of senior people pass away, we say they have left for the Aachaarya's divine feet.

I: You have mentioned Bhagavatha Samasrayanam also.

Naannagaaru: Yes. Let's understand the order once again. How do you know about the Lord and your relationship with Him- it is through Aachaarya isn't it? Hence, first step is

Aachaarya Samaasrayanam. Then second step is to know your relationship with the Lord and start loving Him and serving Him and making Him happy.

I: Understood. But, then why are we talking about Bhaagavatha Samasrayanam.

Naannagaaru: Suppose, somebody wants to make your mother happy. How does she become happy?

I: May be by offering her a good saree or jewellery. Sorry, let me think, in fact, she gets more delighted if anybody praises me about my studies or gives our baby sister a petty gift. That is the best way to please mother.

Naannagaaru: Yes, hence, when you love the Lord and want to make Him happy, the best thing is to please those who are loved by Him.

I: Who are loved by Him?

Naannagaaru: There is saying that “somebody like you, after listening to whole Ramayana asked about the relationship between Rama and Sita”. We discussed sufficiently on this in the context of Bhakti Yoga.

I: Yes, I remember, so such Bhaktas are called Bhagavathaas. You have given example of Bhaktas as Alwars. Our senior Aachaaryas may be considered as Gnyaanis. But is there anybody who has followed the path of only Aacharya Samasrayanam or Bhagavatha Samasrayanam.

Naannagaru: We have earlier talked about Madhurakavi Alwar who followed the path Aacharya Samasrayanam only. In Ramayana, Sabari is considered as one who followed Aachaarya Samasrayanam. She was ardent devotee of Her Aacharya. Her Aacharya told her that Srirama would come some years later and she should receive Him as the guest and provide Him with food and other facilities. She did not know when He will come. But as per the instructions of her Aacharya, she kept waiting for many years and after Rama's arrival and her becoming His host, she sought His permission to go to her Aacharya and passed away. For Bhagavatha Samasrayanam, our seniors quote Shatrughna in Ramayana as a good example. Bharatha was an ardent devotee/ Bhakta of Bhagavan Rama. But Shatrughna was always serving Bharatha but not Rama. He followed wherever Bharata went to serve him. That is Bhagavatha Samasrayanam. You will find many such examples in the life stories of our Aacharyas also.

I: This Bhagavatha Samasrayanam seems to be simple. We don't have to work for pleasing the Lord who is somewhere in His distant Home and we don't know whether He is pleased with what we do. In case of Bhagavathas, they are among us only and we

understand what they like. We will also come to know, how, whether and when they are pleased. It is easier to serve and satisfy these people who are among us.

Naannagaaru: It is easier said than done.

I:Why?

Naannagaaru: Because of your Ego or Ahankaara. After all, it is easier to accept that the Lord is superior to us and hence it is simpler to offer our services. But these people are among us or may be inferior to us in some respects, z.B. some may be poorer, less intelligent etc. Can you offer your services to them?

I: Now, it is my turn to take you the class. We have been discussing that we should not take any of these worldly things like poverty, richness etc. into consideration which are all temporary in nature; that we should treat and respect everybody same way since we are all identical Aatmaas with Paramaatma as Aantaryaami; that like two hands of the same body, we are part of the Paramaatma'a body there is no question of one being superior to the other although the functionalities may be different; that this Ego doesn't belong Aatma and hence to be forbidden forthwith; our very purpose is to make Paramaatma happy and the best way make Him happy is making the people who are loved by Him happy.....

Naannagaaru: Good, You have understood the concept and need no more teaching on the same. The other thing that is to be done is to implement the same by conscious and continuous practice. Hope you will do it.

I: During our discussions, we keep referring to our sacred scriptures and say we have to follow our scriptures. I am aware that there are four Vedas which are our scriptures although the word script may not be very much applicable to them since it is considered that they are not written by anybody. They have been transferred from one to the other by only listening to them. Are there any more scriptures that you are referring? I don't quite understand the logic why such great knowledge is to be transferred only by word of mouth. Westerners say it is because some section of people in India want to have monopoly of this knowledge and that's why this practice is followed without putting into writing. Further, anything that is not documented properly is not considered by the west as part of history or true knowledge but it is considered as rumor or humbug!

END OF THE CHAPTER SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVE

Chapter – 3 : Scriptural Perspective

Naannagaaru: Do you know when the written word came to existence. Only few hundred years back. But, our Vedas and Upanishads are there from time immemorial. Even as per the western historians, most of our sacred texts did exist few millenniums earlier, well before the written word. Although for the purpose of understanding we can keep calling them as scriptures, scripture is not the correct word and the correct word is Shaastra.....

I: What are these scriptures, I mean Shaastraas. You don't have to tell all of them. Please tell briefly about the important ones.

Naannagaaru: I know, we have already spent lot of time in this discussion and we will try conclude it quickly. By the way, our seniors have defined 18 Vidyasthaanaas, sources of knowledge as per our tradition. They are

The Vedas(4)- Rig, Yaju, Sama, Atharva

Vedaangas(6)-Siksha, Vyaakarana, Chandas, Nirukta, Jyotishamu, Kalpamu

Upaangaas(4)-Mimamsa(Poorva and Uttara), Nyaaya Vistaara, Purana, Dharma Sastra

Upa vedas(4) -Ayurveda, Dhanurveda, Gandharvaveda, Arthasastra

Further, there are many more like Itihaasaas, Aagamaas, 6 Darshanams, 10 Maha Vidyaas...

I: First let me understand the above. I think, that itself is a huge task for me to comprehend. Now can you please tell me briefly about each of them, I repeat, briefly.

Naannagaaru: Sure, let's start with the Vedas.

The Veda word is originated from the root "vid" meaning "Knowledge". The Vedas give Knowledge of all kinds for all times. These have not been written by anybody. In case it is written by anybody, then it is possible that it may have some deficiencies due to the limitations and human errors of the writers like accidental mistakes, intentional mistakes, lack of capability, fallacies etc. But since these Vedas came directly from the Paramaatma which were visualized by our Rishis and then passed on the knowledge to their students selflessly, the knowledge from the Vedas is fault less and complete.

Initially these Vedas used to be only one unit. Subsequently for the sake of convenience of the people, Veda Vyasas have segregated them. They are Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda, AtharvaVeda. Anukramanikaas are those which give information on details of the Rishis for all those Vedas, the Devathaas, the details of Chandas in them, how they are organized etc. There are different Aanukramanikas for different Vedas.

Each of the four Vedas comes in multiple Shakhas or recensions. Each Shakha has its own Samhita, Brahmana, Aranyaka, and Upanishad.

I: What are they?

Naannagaaru: Samhitas contain mantras – sacred sounds which are generally prayers, litanies and benedictions petitioning nature or Vedic deities. Vedic Samhita refer to mathematically precise metrical archaic text of each of Vedas.

The Brahmana lays down the various rites - karma - to be performed and explains the procedure for the same. It interprets the words of the mantras occurring in the Samhita, how they are to be understood in the conduct of Yagnyaas. The Brahmanas constitute a guide for the conduct of yagnyaas.

The word "Aranyaka" is derived from "aranya". You must have heard of places like "Dandakaranya" and "Vedaranya". "Aranya" means a "forest". Neither in the Samhita nor in the Brahmana is one urged to go and live in a forest. Vedic rites like sacrifices are to be performed by the householder (grihastha) living in a village/ town. But after his mind is rendered pure through such rites, he goes to a forest as a recluse to engage himself in meditation. It is to qualify for this stage of vanaprastha, to become inwardly pure and mellow, that Vedic practices like sacrifices are to be followed. The Aranyakas prepare one for one's stage in life as an anchorite. They expound the concepts inherent in the mantras of the Samhitas and the rites detailed in the Brahmanas. In other words, they explain the hidden meaning of the Vedas, their metaphorical passages. Indeed, they throw light on the esoteric message of our scripture. For the Aranyakas, more important than the performance of sacrifices, awareness of their inner meaning and significance. According to present-day scholars, the Aranyakas incorporate the metaphorical passages representing the metaphysical inquires conducted by the inmates of forest hermitages.

The Upanishads are commonly referred to as Vedānta. Vedanta doesn't necessarily mean "last chapters, parts of the Veda" but "those which are of the highest purpose of the Veda".

I: Why so?

Naannagaaru: The content of the Vedas are broadly divided into two categories, Karam Kaanda and Gnyaana Kaanda. The other deal with the subjects which are useful for better life in this Universe i.e. Leela Vibhooti whether in on this earth while we live, or whether after we die and go to Indra Loka etc. whereas Upanishads which are called Gnyaana Kaanda deals with aspects of liberation from this Universe i.e. Moksha etc. i.e. beyond this Universe and hence called Gnyaana Kaanda. The concepts of Brahma (Paramaatma) and Ātma are the central ideas in all of the Upanishads, and "know that you are the Ātma" is their thematic focus. Along with the Bhagavad Gita and the Brahmasutras (Inquiry into Brahma written in the form of 545 small sentences) the important Upanishads (known collectively as the Prasthanatrayi) are considered as the foundation for the several later schools of Vedanta. More than 200 upanishads are now available although some 10-15 of them are considered important and are often referred by the philosophers like Ramanuja, Sankara etc in their commentaries. Some of them are Eesha, Kena, Katha,

Prashna, Mundaka, Mandookya, Taittireeya, Aitareya, Chandogya, Brihadaranyaka, Swetaswatara, Subala, Kausheetaki.

According to Patanjali's Mahabhashya, there were originally 1131 Shakhas, so there were 1131 Brahmanas and 1131 Aranyakas. But most Shakhas are now lost and only two are currently available. Let us try to discuss briefly some of the aspects.

Rig Veda: The comes from the root word "Rik" meaning "praise". i.e. praising of various Gods. "Rik Samhitha" is meant for various Yagnyaas. Veda Vyaasa first transferred the knowledge of Rigveda to Pyla, from him Indrapramathi and Bashkala, from Indrapramathi to Mandokeya, Mandokeya to Satyasrava, from him Satyahita, from him Satyasri, from him Saakala got transferred this Veda. "Rik Samhiti" is divided into various "Mandalams and "Suuktams". "Suuktams" are of four types. They are -Rishi Suuktam, Devata Sauuktam, Chandahsuuktam, Arthasuuktam. The Mantraas visualized by one Rishi are called Rishi Suuktam. The Mantraas on one God are called Devata Suuktam. The Mantraas in same Chandas are Chandassuuktam. The Mnatras which are on the same subject are Artha Suuktam. Naasadeeya Suuktam which describes the creation is very popular among west also. As per Patanjali, Rigveda consists of 21 Shakhas. The Rig Veda has two surviving Shakhas, the Sakala Shakha and the Bashkala Shakha. The Sakala Shakha contains the Aitareya Brahmana and the Aitareya Aranyaka. The Bashkala Shakha contains the Kaushitaki Brahmana and the Shankhayana Aranyaka. Commentaries by Saayana and Venkata Madhava are popular on Rigveda. Ayurveda which deals with health and medicine is the upaveda of Rigveda. Great Aayurvedic scholars like Charaka, Susrutha, Vaagbhata, Saargnyadhara etc. have written books on Aayurveda.

Gods like hymns on especially and Indra and Agni are found in Rigveda. Hymns on others like Soma, Varuna, Ashvinidevathaas, Maruts, Sun, Savitha, Vishnu and Rudra etc. are also there. There are 403 Rishis like Bharadwaaja, Vishwaamitra, Vamadeva, Gritsamada, Deerghatama, Agastya, Gotama etc who visualized these hymns. These hymns will be in poetic form in Chandas i.e. metres such as Anushtup, Gayatri, Ushnik, Brihati, Pankti, Trishtup, Jagati etc. The sounds themselves are very powerful and one shall not pronounce them wrongly.

I: Is that the reason, they are always learnt by listening?

Naannagaaru: Yes. If pronounced i.e. changing the original "svara" wrongly, the meaning may change and it may become at times dangerous too. There are such examples in our Puraanaas. Now a days when you see the book for the Vedic hymns, there will be top line, bottom line etc. when these are printed. If there is top line it is called "Svaritam", if there is bottom line it is called "Anudaattam" which is spoken with lower jaw, the letter normally before "Anudaatam" is called "Udaattam" which is spoken with upper jaw. If there is no symbol then it is "Prachayam". There are so many aspects while chanting these hymns and it is thus extremely important to learn them from Aacharya systematically and not from a book. In olden days, because of the discipline and sincerity they are able to learn all of them by heart and pass them on to next generation. Your grandfather, when he was teaching his students, whether it is Sanskrit Vyaakaranam etc. or Tamil

Prabandhaas, never referred to any book. Now, even for reading Vishnu Sahasranaama stotram, you people cannot do it without looking at the book. In fact, we started losing our Shastras only after their printing.

Rigveda starts with the hymn "Agni Meede Purohitam" and ends with the hymn "Samaani Va Aakootih". There are 10(/ 11) Mandalams and 1017(/1028) (bracketed figures are given considering the Valakhilya Mandalam also) Suuktas in Riksamhita. Each Suuktam may have many Riks totalling more than 10,000 in Rigveda.

As such Rigveda is base for other Vedas also. Almost 95% of Sama, 25% of Yajus, 20% of Atharva are based on Rigveda. Of course there are many divisions, sub divisions etc. All of them may not be required for the discussion for the time being.

I: This is enough, please tell me something about Yajurveda also.

Naannagaaru: Yajus means "worship" i.e. worship of the Gods. As discussed earlier, Yajurveda is normally meant for conducting Yagnyaas etc. Veda Vyaas gave this knowledge to Vysampaayana who taught to Yagnyavalkya. Yajurveda comes in two forms, Shukla or white and Krishna or black. Yajurveda originally consisted of 86 Shakhaas. But, now the Shukla Yajur Veda has two surviving Shakhas, the Madhyandina Shakha and the Kanva Shakha. The Madhyandina Shakha contains one version of the Shatapatha Brahmana and one version of the Brihad Aranyaka. The Kanva Shakha contains another version of the Shatapatha Brahmana and another version of the Brihad Aranyaka. The Krishna Yajur Veda has three surviving Shakhas: the Taittiriya Shakha, the Maitrayaniya Shakha, and the Kathaka Shakha. Shukla Yajurveda is more popular in the north India whereas Krishna Yajurvedam is popular in the South. The commentaries by Bhattaswami, Bhatta Bhaskara, Durgacharya, Upata, Maheedhara, Sahadeva, Bhaavaswami are popular for Yajurveda. Of course Saayana's commentary is available for all the Vedas.

I: My God, one person wrote commentary for all the Vedas. Great feat indeed!

Naannagaaru: Yes, he was the brother of Vidyanaraswami who was instrumental in the establishment of Vijayanagara empire. We are greatly indebted to such people who have protected our heritage.

Dhanurveda is the Upaveda for Yajurveda. When you say Dhanurveda it is not only about the archery. It is science and art of all varieties of warfare. But it is really not available any more now. We keep hearing that it has science of Astras like Indras, Varuna, Agni, Paasupata, Brahma...

I: Yes, we hear in Ramayana, Mahabharata etc.

Naannagaaru: Yes, not only Astras, it contains Yantramuktaka i.e. how to operate Machines in the battle etc. Anyway, they are not relevant now.

Krishna Yajurveda starts with the hymn "Ishotvorjetva..." and ends with "Samudramudaramantariksham Paayuh".

Taittireeya Samhita has 7 kandas, 44 prapaathakaas, 635 Anuvakams. Maitrayini Samhita has 4 kandas, 54 prapaathakaas, 2144 Mantraas. Katha Samhita has 5 kandas, 40 Sthanakams, 13 Anuvachanams, 843 Anuvaakams and 3091 Mantraas. Kaapishthala katha Samhita has 6 parts. But, mostly they are not available. kandas, 44 prapaathakaas, 635 Anuvakams. There are different ways of reading these Mantras and they are called Jata, Ghana etc. Vedic pundits practice extensively to get mastery over these techniques. The Yagas like Rajasooya and Vaajapeya are described in this Veda.

Hymns on Agni more often are found in Yajurveda. Agni is the most important for any Yagnya, isn't it! Hymns on others like Indra, Sun, Savitha, Vaayu, Soma, Eeswara, Vishnu and Rudra, Brihaspati, Viswedevs, Pitrudevs, Prajapati, Vidwnasa, Yagnya etc. are also there. There are Rishis like Prajapati, Gautama, Bharadwaaja, Vishwaamitra, Vamadeva, Kutsa, Vasishta, Parameshti, Medhatithi, Madhuchhanda, Varuna, Angirasa, Sunassepa, Jamadagni, Deerghatama, Agastya etc. who visualized these hymns. These hymns will be in poetic form in Chandas i.e. metres such as Anushtup, Gayatri, Ushnik, Brihati, Pankti, Trishtup, Jagati etc. "Rudra Prasasti " which is popular as "Namaka" Prapaathakam is chanted while doing Rudraabhishekam. Very popular Upanishads i.e. Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, the Eesha Upanishad, the Taittiriya Upanishad, the Katha Upanishad, the Shvetashvatara Upanishad and the Maitri Upanishad are also part of Yajurveda.

I: Now, you may please say something about Samaveda also.

Naannagaaru: Sama means "Singing". The "Riks" in the Rigveda are sung melodiously supplementing with letters which are called Stobha varnaas i.e. "Hoi" and "Hua" before and after the Mantras. Of course, letters like " au", "Hau", "va", "ha" are also used in the similar way. These are also sung during the Yagnyaas. Samaveda is considered is most important among the Vedas as per Bhagavadgita as Lord says He is the Samaveda among the Vedas and not easy to sing too. As per Patanjali, there were originally 1008 Shakhas in Samaveda. That is why, "Tirovmozhi" of Nammazhwar with more than 1000 verses is known as Samavdam in Tamil. However, now the Samaveda has only three surviving Shakhas: the Kauthuma Shakha, the Ranayaniya Shakha, and the Jaiminiya Shakha. It starts with the Hymn "Aagna Aayaahi Veethaye" and ends with "Svasti Na Indro vridhha sravaah". The Samhita is divided into "Poorvarchikam" and "uttaraarchikam". There are 585 Mantraas in Poorvarchikam and 1220 in Uttaraarchikam. If you add some more Mantraas from Aaranyakakaanda and Mahanamnyarchikam the total Mantras will be 1870. Veda Vyasa taught this Veda to his disciple Jaimini. From him it is transferred to Sumanta, then to Suttva, then to Sukarma from him to Paushpanji and Hiranya Nabha who have learnt 500 each. The disciples of Paushpanji i.e. Laugakshi, Kuthumi, Langali. In that Laugakshi had 5 disciples namely Ranayani, Tandyaa, Aanovena, Sakaitiputra, Satyamugra.

I: I think, what you are telling as Kauthuma shakha, Ranayani Shakha, Jaimini Shakha are in line with the names of those Rishis only.

Naannagaaru: Yes. Samaganas are essentially of two types- Prakriti and Vooha and each have two geyaas – Grama geya and Aaranya Geya. There are subdivisions in both Prakriti and Vooha each containing 7 gaanaas.

I: These are like saptaswaras only.

Naannagaaru: No, subdivisions in Prakriti are known as Aagneyam, Aindram, Paapamaanam, Arka parva/ dvandva parva/ vrata parva, Shukriyam, Mahanamni. The subdivisions in Vooha are Dasartram, Samvatsaram, Ekaham, Aheenam, Satram, Prayashchittam, Kshudram. Like any type of singing, these are sung in Mandra(sung in the morning), Madhyama(afternoon), and Taara pitches(evening) frequencies. Further, there are different parts in the singing i.e. Prastavam, Udgeetham, Pratihaaram, Upadravam, Nidhanam etc. and there are various rules for the same. There may be subtle variations in this singing based on certain local practices. Seven svaras in the classical music are also applicable for the singing of the samas. Chaandogya Upanishad and Kena Upanishad belongs to Saaam veda only.

Gods especially like Agni, Indra, Soma are found in Samaveda. Hymns on others like Ushassu, Vishnu, Aaditya are also there. There are Rishis like Vasishta,, Gautama, Jamadagni, Vamadeva, Medhatithi, Praskranvudu, Sunassepa, Saubhari, Jamadagni, Nrimatha, Parama, Praanadha, Kashyapa, Rebhu,Atri, Vaalakhilya, etc. who visualized these hymns. These hymns will be in poetic form in Chandas i.e. metres such as Anushtup, Gayatri, Ushnik, Brihati, Pankti, Trishtup, Jagati etc. Although most of the hymns in Samaveda are from Rigveda only, there are about 105 hymns independent of Rigveda. “Gaandharvaveda “ is the Upaveda of Samaveda. Gandharvaveda is about music and melody which are also applicable for Samaveda.

I: The last one is Atharvaveda!

Naannagaaru: Yes. The Atharva Veda was taught by Veda Vyasa to Sumantha. From him, it came to Kabandha, then Pathya, devadarshi, Paippalada etc. It starts with Hymn “Ye trashastaah pariyanti” and ends with “Panaayyam tadashvina kritam”. It has two surviving Shakhas, the Shaunaka Shakha and the Pippalada Shakha. Most of the Brahmanas and Aranyakas of the Atharva Veda are lost, which might have happened considering how Kali Yuga people might misuse it, but one Brahmana survives, the Gopatha Brahmana of the Shaunaka Shakha. There are 736 Suuktaas, 5918 Mantraas in Shaunaka Shaakha.

Gods especially Agni is found in Atharvaveda. Hymns on others like Sun, Aditya, Soma-Chandra, Maruta, Vaachaspati, Brihaspati, Rudra, Varuna, Parjanya, Earth, Sky, Viswakarma, Garutamntha, Suparna, Aditi, Vishnu are also there. Rishis like Atharva, Bhrgu, Vasishta, Vishwaamitra, Shounaka, Shukra, Gautama, Jamadagni, Vamadeva, Medhatithi, Praskranvudu, Sunassepa, Saubhari, Jamadagni, Madhuchhanda etc. who visualized these hymns. These hymns will be in poetic form in Chandas i.e. metres such as Anushtup, Gayatri, Ushnik, Brihati, Pankti, Trishtup, Jagati etc.

Mundaka, Madookya and Prasna Upanishads are part of the Atharva Veda.

I: You are saying misusing it. Why misusing?

Naannagaaru: The Atharvaveda Samhita originally was organized into 20 Kāṇḍas. These are arranged neither by subject nor by authors (as is the case with the other Vedas), but by the length of the hymns. Each generally has hymns of about a similar number of verses. Most of the hymns are poetic and set to different meters. There are many magical poems in this Veda for all sorts of healing and sorcery and even witchcraft. These may be misused by people in our times.

But, the Atharvaveda includes mantras and verses for treating a variety of ailments too. For example, the verses in hymn 4.15 of the recently discovered Paippalada version of the Atharvaveda, discuss how to deal with an open fracture, and how to wrap the wound with Rohini plant. Numerous hymns of the Atharvaveda are prayers and incantations wishing a child or loved one to get over some sickness and become healthy again, along with comforting the family members. Several hymns in the Atharvaveda such as hymn 8.7, just like the Rigveda's hymn 10.97, is a praise of medicinal herbs and plants. A number of verses relate to gaining a husband, or a wife, or love of a woman. There are prayers for harmony and peace etc. Hence it is not correct to say that Atharvaveda contains only Abhicharakarmas and helped those who are involved in violence or work for selfish ends. As such, when a Yagnya is performed, there will be four scholars who specialize in four Vedas. Hota in Rigveda, Adhvarya in Yajurveda, Udgaata in Samaveda and Brahma in Atharvaveda and Brahma is the leader among the four and supposed to monitor and correct any mistakes if committed during the process of the Yagnya. Hence, the importance of Atharvaveda is no less. However, now most of it is not available in our country. People say it is all stolen by the West for learning various techniques and technologies of warfare etc. Some components of Atharvaveda include Sarpa veda, Pishacha veda, Asura Veda, Itihasa Veda, Purana Veda. Artha Veda, on economics and politics, law and order and administration, is the Upaveda of Atharvaveda. However, I am not sure whether any of them are now available in India.

I: It appears more than 95% of the Vedas seems to have been lost now. You said Artha Veda is also lost now. Is it not same as Artha Saastra. I heard "Artha Saatra" is written by Chanakya, isn't it?

Naannagaaru: Yes. Artha sastra, by Chanakya might have been written taking inputs from Smritis like Yaagnyavalkya smriti and the Arthaveda. It contains about 6000 hymns and is a comprehensive manual on how a state ought to be ruled and administrated by a king and his administration. It is very detailed and systematic in prescribing solutions to the various problems associated with the governance. Several of the administrative suggestions prescribed by the author are still relevant and practicable in the modern administrative world. The work was lost for quite some time, until in 1906 one Mr Shama Sastri, in south India discovered its manuscript and translated it into English. Now same is available in English too.

The Arthashastra says that there are four necessary fields of knowledge of Dharma the Vedas, the Anvikshaki(philosophy, logic, Yoga etc.), the science of government and the science of economics (Varta i.e. activities of agriculture, cattle and trade). It is from these four that all other knowledge, wealth and human prosperity is derived. Chanakya's text further asserts that it is the Vedas that discuss what is Dharma (right, moral, ethical) and what is Adharma (wrong, immoral, unethical), it is the Varta that explain what creates wealth and what destroys wealth, it is the science of government that illuminates what is Nyaya (justice, expedient, proper) and Anyaya (unjust, inexpedient, improper), and that it is Anvishaki (philosophy and technology) that is the light of these sciences, as well as the source of all knowledge, the guide to virtues, and the means to all kinds of acts. He says on government in general that "Without government, rises disorder as in the Matsya nyayamud bhavayati (proverb on law of fishes). In the absence of governance, the strong will swallow the weak. In the presence of governance, the weak can resist the strong".

To give an example of this great book, the King, as described by Chanakya, shall have self-control and shall not fall for the temptations of the senses, he learns continuously and cultivates his thoughts, he avoids false and flattering advisors and instead associates with the true and accomplished elders, he is genuinely promoting the security and welfare of his people, he enriches and empowers his people, he practices ahimsa (non-violence against all living beings), he lives a simple life and avoids harmful people or activities, he keeps away from another's wife nor craves for other people's property. The greatest enemies of a king are not others, but are these six: lust, anger, greed, conceit, arrogance and foolhardiness. A just king gains the loyalty of his people not because he is king, but because he is just.

Some of the important topics covered in this Artha sastra include "The Duties of Government Superintendents and regulation", "spying and publicity", "managing mines and other national resources", "wild life and forests", "Tax collection and management of revenues", "Concerning Laws", "The Removal of problems of governance", "the Conduct of Courtiers", "Sovereign States", "Concerning Vices and Calamities", "the Work of an Invader", "all relating to War and peace", "the Conduct of Corporations", "concerning a Powerful Enemy", "strategic Means to Capture a Fortress" etc.

I: Looks very relevant even today. Now tell about the Vedangaas.

Naannagaaru: For understanding the Vedas, these Vedangas are important. They are

Siksha: It is the science of pronunciation and phonetics. It explains how each syllable should be pronounced in which context and the psychic effects of those. There are two variations to plain pronunciation, called Udaata and Anudaata. Altering the pronunciation alters the meaning of what is being chanted and the results of chanting. There are about 30 books by various authors like Panini, Vasishta etc. on Siksha.

Vyaakarana: It is the science that informs use of the right and wrong words and their usages including the science of linguistics and structure of language. It scientifically explains the origin of letters, formation of words, sentences etc. Ashtadhyayi by Panini and Patanjali Mahabhashya are some of the important books in Sanskrit Vyaakarana. Of course there are many more and Sanskrit Vyakarana is so logically structured that the computer engineers today adapt it and these details have been discussed earlier by us.

Chandas: The science of "metres" i.e. poetry relating to both Vedic and non vedic literature. Syllables are classified into two categories, Guru and Laghu. A string of Guru-Laghu sequence of a particular length and order is called a metre. For any "Mantra", the Rishi, Chandas, the God addressed in the Mantra are very important. Some of the Chandas types include Gayatri, Anushtup etc. There is lot of science as to which Chandas is to be used for which purpose etc. because of which the Hymns will become powerful and auspicious. We may be the only country to have the whole world of spiritual literature, science, arts, mathematics, philosophy, logic...all written in Chandas which not facilitates easy remembarence but also adds beauty to the content.

Nirukta: The meanings of the words used in vedic Sanskrit along with etymology etc. is Niruktam. It explains the word-roots and derivation of meanings of words in different contexts. Treatise on Niruktam by Yaaska is very famous. This is divided into three parts namely Nyghantuka Kanda, Nygama Kanda, Devata Kanda.

Jyotisham: Jyotisham is the science of astronomy and astrology which tells what to do when i.e. which Yagnyam is to be performed at what point of time etc as well as planetary movements, their effects on individuals etc.

Kalpamu:The procedures to perform Vedic rituals and other related aspects. There are four divisions called "Sulabha suutraas", and "Srauta Suutras", "Gruhya Suutraas" and "Dharma Suutrams"

Sulabha Sutras: contain the geometry of altars along with mathematical deductions for the geometry.

Srauta Sutras: contain guidelines for conducting sacrifices.

Grihyasūtram: The saṃskāras (ceremonies of purification, such as Vivāha – marriage) are dealt with in this branch.

Dharmasūtram: Different aspects of Vedic Culture and ethics, both mundane and spiritual, are discussed in terms of Dharma.

I: Understood. Now can you tell something about Upaangaas.

Naannagaaru: They are four in number.

Meemamsa: Means critical investigation" and thus refers to a tradition of contemplation which reflected on the meanings of the Vedic texts. Earlier we have understood that the Vedas can be divided into two i.e. Karma Kaanda and Gnyaana Kaanda. Karma Kanda essentially deals with ethics, discipline as well as rituals and Yagnyaas to be performed for worldly needs and comforts, either in this world during this life or after our death for the soul experiences in Svarga etc. For example the ritual Kaareeri is performed to get rains which will benefit in this life and performing Agnishtoma Yagnya is performed for getting Svarga. Poorva Meemamsa deals with this portion of the Vedas. There are 1000 Adhikaranas, crudely you can say chapters in Poorva Meemamsa, mostly dealing with Samhita, Brahmana and Aaranyaka part of the Vedas.

The foundational text for the Mīmāṃsā school is the Purva Mīmāṃsā Sutras of Jaimini. A major commentary was composed by Śābara. Further, both Kumarila Bhatta and Prabhākara (along with Murāri, whose work is no more extant) have written extensive commentaries on Śābara's Mīmāṃsāsūtrabhāṣyam. Kumārila Bhaṭṭa, Mandana Miśra, Pārthasārathi Miśra, Sucarita Miśra, Ramakrishna Bhatta, Madhava Subhodini, Sankara Bhatta, Krsnayajvan, Anantadeva, Gaga Bhatta, Ragavendra Tirtha, VijayIndhra Tirtha, Appayya Dikshitar, Paruthiyur Krishna Sastri, Mahomahapadyaya Sri Ramsubba Sastri, Sri Venkatsubba Sastri, Sri A. Chinnaswami Sastri, Sengalipuram Vaidhyanatha Dikshitar were some of Mīmāṃsā scholars. Meemamsa Suutrams by Jaimini are standard literature for Poorva Meemamsa saastram.

I: What is an Adhikaranam?

Naannagaaru: It is the critical analysis on a specific topic/ Vedic reference/ sentence. Normally, Adhikaranam will have six parts. They are

Vishaya : subject

Samshaya: Doubt

Poorva Paksha: Apparent view which may not be correct

Uttara Paksha(Siddhanta): Correct View which is established after logically negating the views of the Poorva Paksha

Akshepa: Objections raised based on logic or other references to question the veracity of the Siddhaanta

Samadhana: Answers to objections again based on logic or other references

Same method is followed for both Poorva Meemasa and Uttara Meemamsa too.

Let me give an example. In there is one Kapinjalaadhikaranam in Meemamsa Saastram. It is about understanding of a vedic sentence “Kapinjalaan Aalabheta”

It means Bring Kapinjala birds (for Yagnya purpose).

The doubt is how many birds are to be brought.

Poorva Paksha says since it is not defined any number is ok.

Uttara Paksha/ Siddhanta says, since Kapinjalaan is bahu vachana (not divivachana) it shall be three or more. But, since there is another sentence “Maa Himsyaat Bhootaani”, whose meaning is not to trouble any beings, thus the number of the birds shall be minimum and hence the number of birds shall be three only(since it cannot be either one or two due to use of divivachana). Further, in this case since the Siddhanta is very clear there is no Askhepa and hence there no Samadhana to it too.

This is how the argument is built up. As discussed earlier, it is divided into two i.e. Poorva Meemamsa which addresses the Karma Kanda of the Vedas and Uttara Meemamsa which addresses the Gnyaana Kaanda i.e. Upanishads. The works of our philosophers like Bhagavadramanuja, Sankara Bhagavadpaada who have written commentaries for Brahma Suutras of Veda Vyasa are all part of Uttara Meemamsa.

I: Is it applicable for only the Vedas.

Naannagaaru: The principles of Meemamsa saastram are used in the context of things also. When you want to discuss any thing for understanding Saastra says “Upakrama Upasamharo abhyaasah Apoorvataa Phalam; Arthavaada Upapattih cha Lingam Taatparya Nirnaye”. i.e. In order to decide on the quality and content of any dissertation, there should be proper introduction and conclusion and from the beginning through the end, it should speak on the same subject without wandering here and there, it should emphasize the subject by appropriate repetition, it should tell something new and for the first time, the resultant benefit to the reader should be clearly laid down, the ‘subject matter’ should be aptly established and proper logic and reasoning shall be freely used for the same. Don’t you think that these principles are applicable in your regular studies as well. In fact these concepts are very well used in “Discourse analysis” etc. in computers and such other applications. Srman V.V. Srinivasa Iyengar, a very well known Advocate, was known to be using the principles of Meemamsa Saastra regularly in his arguments and he earned laurels from one and all for the same.

I: After Meemamsa, what next?

Naannagaaru: Nyaaya Vistara. The Sanskrit root meaning is “neeyate iti Nyayah” It means "rules", "method" or "judgment". It is also the name of one of the six orthodox

schools of Hinduism. This school's most significant contributions to Indian philosophy was systematic development of the theory of logic, methodology, and its treatises on epistemology i.e. theory of knowledge. For example, if you say "I know the book", there has to be a knower(I), the known(the book) and the means of knowing. The means of knowing is called as Pramana. Although there are many Pramanaas, most important of them are Pratyaksha(Perception), Anumaana(Inference) and Sabda(Verbal testimony). Ordinary perception to Nyaya scholars was based on direct experience of reality by eyes, ears, nose, touch and taste. Extraordinary perception included yogaja or pratibha (intuition), samanyalaksanapratyaksa (a form of induction from perceived specifics), and jnanalaksanapratyaksa (a form of perception of prior processes and previous states of a 'topic of study' by observing its current state).

For "Anumana Pramana" means inference. The standard example for this is to infer that there is fire on the hill on seeing the smoke from the hill, because where there is smoke there will be fire. Inference can be classified into 3 types: Purvavat (inferring an unperceived effect from a perceived cause), Sheshavat (inferring an unperceived cause from a perceived effect) and Samanyatodrishta (when inference is not based on causation but on uniformity of co-existence). All these details may not be required for us now.

Śabda means relying on word, testimony of past or present reliable experts. Hiriyanna explains Sabda-pramana as a concept which means testimony of a reliable and trustworthy person (āptavākya). Saastra Vakya is taken as Pramana the philosophers like Bhagavadramanuja, Sankara Bhagavadpada etc. Even, in today's legal system, these concepts are followed for establishing any point of argument. In vedantic context, "Nyaaya" is one of the Darshanams for knowing the truth.

I:Next is Puranas. Isn't it?...

Naannagaaru: Yes, Purana is the next. You would have heard 18 Puraanaas. The word Purana means puraati navam i.e."ancient, still new". They describe the process creation and further generations etc. The Puranic literature is encyclopedic, and includes genealogies of gods, goddesses, kings, heroes, sages, and demigods, pilgrimages, temples, medicine, astronomy, grammar, mineralogy, humor, love stories, as well as theology and philosophy, and stories of various generations. They are a vast genre of Indian literature about a wide range of topics, particularly legends and other traditional lore. Veda Vyaasa composed them 17 of them and one Vishnu Purana is by his father Parasara Maharshi, together amounting to more than 4,00,000 verses.They are all in Sanskrit language, but they have been translated into various other languages also. The 18 Puranas are Agni, Bhagavatha, Brahma, Brahmaanda, Narada, Padma, Garuda, Kurma, Linga, Skanda, Markandeya, Matsya, Siva, Vamana, Varaha, Vayu Puranas besides Vishnu Purana which is considered superior to all other Puranas. Further there are 18 Upa Puranas.They are Sanat Kumara, Narasimha, Brihan-naradiya, Siva-rahasya,

Durvasa, Kapila, Vamana, Bhargava, Varuna, Kalika, Samba, Nandi, Surya, Parasara, Vasishtha, Devi-Bhagavata, Ganesha, Mudgala, and Hamsa Puranas. As mentioned earlier, these are vast store houses of Knowledge. But, there may be inconsistencies in their narratives which attracted criticism from others. These inconsistencies may be due to loss of the original texts because of which different people contributed different narratives in their own way that has led to this situation. Some people say Puranams are essentially allegorical and hence the intent is to be understood and appreciated rather than the narrative. Another view is that, the inconsistencies may be because they belong to different Kalpas i.e. different times. As you may know, the process of creation of various generations etc. keeps repeating in various kalpas(a specific measure of time period between creation and ending of the universe and there are various Kalpas between creation and ending of the universe) but there may be certain variations in their narratives in different Kalpas and hence there may be inconsistencies in various Pauranic narratives. It is also opined that Veda Vyasa wrote some of those Puranas under the influence of Sattva guna, some of them under the influence of Rajo Guna and some under the influence of Tamo Guna. Hence, it is said that those Puranas which are written under the influence of Rajo and Tamo Gunas need not be considered and those which are written under the influence of Sattva Guna shall be taken as Pramana or Standard. However, Vishnu Purana which was written by Parasara Maharshi is accepted as the Pramana by all the great philosophers like Bhagavadramanuja, Sankara Bhagavadpada etc.

Although Itihasas are not separately mentioned in the above list of 18 Vidyasthaanaas, they are also considered along with Puranas as the supporting documents for understanding of the Vedas. We consider Srimadramayanam written by Maharshi Valmiki and Maha Bharatam written by Veda Vyasa as the important Itihasas. Maha Bharata is the largest Epic with more than 1,00,000 verses which can be considered encyclopaedia of knowledge. It is called the "Panchama Veda" i.e. 5th Veda. A work is considered to be 'Itihasa' only when the writer himself has witnessed the narrative and is a part of the narrative as well. Dvaipayana Veda Vyas, who wrote the Mahabharata, is himself a character in the Epic. Similarly, Maharshi Valmiki, who wrote the Ramayana, was also a character in the narrative. Since the writer himself is a witness and is part of the narrative in the case of Itihasas, these narratives are considered to be true and between Itihasa and Purana lihasas are given preference. Even the historians today accept the narratives of Ramayana and Mahabharata as true due to the archeological findings of "Ram Sethu" and "Dwaraka" etc.

Itihasa, in Sanskrit means "it happened this way" generally meaning history. The Mahabharatam includes the story of the Pandavas and Kauravas as well as Srikrishna, Yadavas etc. It is also about the traditions of the Lunar dynasty in the form of embedded tales. The Ramayanam contains the story of Rama and incidentally relates the legends of the Solar dynasty. During these narratives, both Veda Vyasa and Valmika packaged them with many intricate details and the meanings of the Vedas, both with

respect to our worldly living as well as spiritual upliftment. Bhagavadgita, which is one of the greatest works in our philosophy and life told by Bhagawaan Srikrishna is part of Mahabharata.

I: As per you, next in the list is “Dharma Sastra”. Isn’t it?

Naannagaaru: Yes.

Dharma-shastra (“Righteousness Science”) is an ancient Indian body of jurisprudence that is the basis, subject to legislative modification, of the family law of Hindus living in territories both within and outside India (e.g., Pakistan, Malaysia, East Africa). Dharma-shastra is primarily concerned not with legal administration, though courts and their procedures are dealt with comprehensively, but with the right course of conduct in every dilemma. Some basic principles of Dharma-shastra are known to most Hindus brought up in a traditional environment. Those include the propositions that duties are more significant than rights and that the king (i.e., the state) must protect the subjects from all harm, moral as well as material.

The Dharma-shastra literature, written in Sanskrit, exceeds 5,000 titles. It can be divided into three categories: (1) sutras (terse maxims), (2) *smritis* (shorter or longer treatises in stanzas), and (3) *nibandhas* (digests of *smriti* verses from various quarters) and *vrittis* (commentaries upon individual continuous *smritis*). The *nibandhas* and *vrittis*, juridical works intended for legal advisers, exhibit considerable skill in harmonizing divergent sutras and *smritis*.

The techniques of Dharma-shastra are mainly to state the ancient text, maxim, or stanza; to explain its meaning, where obscure; and to reconcile divergent traditions, if necessary by use of the traditional science of interpretation (Mimamsa). Where possible, Dharma-shastra permits custom to be enforced, if it can be ascertained and if its terms do not conflict with the rule of the land. However, Dharma-shastra provides only the basic principles of the law. The actual administration of law, the equivalent of case law, was historically carried out by local councils of elders called Panchayats.

The close study of Dharma-shastra sources by German and Italian scholars, principally Johann Georg Bühler, Julius Jolly, and Giuseppe Mazzarella, showed its psychological and sociological potential. British administrators then attempted to use Dharma-shastra in actual legal adjudications, as Hindus had not historically done.

Dharma-shastra’s roots do indeed go back to the Vedas and has greater continuity and longevity than others like Roman law. The British colonial administration in India affected the system of Hindu law by applying the traditional rules in a hard-and-fast way and by introducing the concept of precedent. Gradually, as judges lost familiarity with Sanskrit, the ancient texts began to be replaced with contemporary, cosmopolitan juridical and social concepts.

The Dharmasutras were also numerous, but only four texts have survived into the modern era. The most important of these texts are the sutras of Apastamba, Gautama, Baudhayana, and Vasistha. These extant texts cite writers and refer opinions of seventeen authorities, implying that a rich Dharmasutras tradition existed prior to when these texts were composed.

The extant Dharmasutras are written in concise sutra format, with a very terse incomplete sentence structure which are difficult to understand and leave much to the reader to interpret. The Dharmasastras are derivative works on the Dharmasutras, using a shloka (verse style chandas poetry in Anushtup meter), which are relatively clearer.

The Dharmasutras can be called the guidebooks of dharma as they contain guidelines for individual and social behavior, ethical norms, as well as personal, civil and criminal law. They discuss the duties and rights of people at different stages of life like studenthood, householdership, retirement and renunciation. These stages are also called ashramas. They also discuss the rites and duties of kings, judicial matters, and personal law such as matters relating to marriage and inheritance. However, Dharmasutras typically did not deal with rituals and ceremonies, a topic that was covered in the Shrautasutras and Grihyasutras texts of the Kalpa (Vedanga).

The sources of dharma according to Gautama Dharmasutra are three: the Vedas, the Smriti (tradition), acāra (the practice) of those who know the Veda.

Āpastamba felt that the Vedas once contained all knowledge including that of ideal Dharma, but parts of Vedas have been lost. Human customs developed from the original complete Vedas, but given the lost text, one must use customs between good people as a source to infer what the original Vedas might have stated the Dharma to be. Hence, the Dharma Sutras are based on the Vedas, but, filling the gaps wherever necessary as per the study of customs of good people as a source of dharma and guide to proper living.

I: Everyday, during Sandhyavandanam, I say I belong to Apastamba Sutra, but never knew what it means. You said the second category is Smritis. As such, there is lot of criticism on these Smritis. It doesn't recommend freedom to Ladies, promotes discrimination among people....

Naannagaaru: There are many Smritis. It is said that in this Yuga Parasara Smriti is most appropriate. Apart from that, Manu Smriti, Yagnyavalkya Smriti, Narada Smriti, etc. are also available. But many have been lost too. Further, these are to be understood in conjunction with the Āchāra, meaning "good behavioral custom" i.e. the normative behavior and practices of a community, conventions and behaviors that enable a society and various individuals therein to function and Vyavahāra meaning "judicial procedure, process, practice, conduct and behaviour" i.e. the due process, honesty in testimony, considering various sides. However, most of the people keep quoting some of them out of context just to rebuke our great Heritage. And, any such quotation shall be interpreted and understood with reference to various other references of other Saastraas. Tell how many are capable or qualified to have comprehensive knowledge of all these Saastraas.

I: It may be impossible for one to have comprehensive knowledge of all Saastraas.

Naannagaaru: It is true today. But, those days, it is not like that. For example, philosophers like Sankara Bhagavadpada or Bhagavadramanuja quoted from all the 18

Vidya sthaanaas in their commentaries. They didn't have google search or for that matter even written books for all of them. It is only out of their memory and wisdom that they did quote appropriately in their commentaries. Unquestionably, they are much more intelligent and selfless as compared any of the today's scholars. If they have accepted and recommended these treasures of knowledge, our rejecting them as the works not in the interest of society is not very wise. Of course, with the today's knowledge base and discipline, it may not be possible for us to understand them correctly and follow them aptly. But let us not criticise them.

I: You have mentioned about Nibandhas and Vrittis...

Naannagaaru: These are essentially digests and commentaries to explain or clarify the conflict and disagreements on a particular subject across the various Dharma texts. These digests attempted to reconcile, bridge or suggest a compromise guideline to the numerous disagreements in the primary texts. We may not get into these details.

I: I have heard about Aagama saastraas also.

Naannagaaru: Yes, they are about traditions and procedures, customs and systems to be followed in temples. They talk about construction of temples, installation and consecration of deities in the temples, the methods of performing Pujas and rituals in the temples etc. Siva temples may have Saiva Aagama, Sakteya in Sakti temples whereas Vishnu temples may have Vaishnava Aagamaas. Aagamic traditions are sometimes called "Tantrism", although the term 'Tantra' is usually used to refer to "Shaakta Aagamaas". The Aagam literature is voluminous, and includes 28 Saiva Aagamaas, 77 Shaakta Aagamaas (so called Tantraas) and 108 Vaishnava Aagamaas and numerous upa Aagamaas. (Of course Buddhists and Jains have also had their own Aagamaas). Among Vaishnava Aagamas Paancharaatra and Vaikhaanasa Aagamas are popular. For example, Vaikhanasa Aagama is followed in Tirumala whereas Paancharaatra is followed in Srirangam.

I: You said six Darshanams?

Naannagaaru: Yes, they are various schools of thoughts in philosophy defining different paths to attain enlightenment. They are as follows –

Nyaya – Nyaya is the basic principles of Indian logical system. It is a system of logical realism, founded by Sage Gautama. It is concerned with means of acquiring correct knowledge with its tools like enquiry and rules for argumentation. Nyaya is considered as perquisite for all philosophical inquiries.

Vaiseshika – Vishesha means "difference" or "Speciality". Vaiseshika or atomism is an add-on extension to Nyaya. Sage Kanaada contributed to the composition for Vaiseshika, who also happened to be the first to describe atoms and how the matter is composed of atoms. The nature is classified into nine dravyas, earth, water, light, air, ether, time, space, soul and mind as per Vaiseshika.

Sankhya – Sankhya Darshana or Sankhya system was introduced by sage Kapila. Sankhya is primarily concerned with categories of Tattvas which are considered to be 25 in number. The first two are unmanifest Purusha and Manifest Prakriti. Prakriti, out of which all things evolve is the consists of three Gunaas i.e. Sattva, Rajas and Tamas.

Sankhya and Yoga are considered as inseparable pair whose principles permeate all of Hinduism.

Yoga – Yoga is a supplement of Sankhya Darshana. It was created by sage Patanjali who mentioned elaborately ashtaanga Yoga etc. in his yoga sutras. We have discussed this earlier.

Mimamsa – Poorva Mimamsa is deals with the rituals mentioned in Hindu Vedas i.e. Karma Kaanda. It is proposed by sage Jaimini, who himself is a great disciple of great sage Vyasa. Jaimini taught the correct performance of the Vedic rites as the means to salvation. We have discussed this as well already.

Vedanta – It explains the teachings of Upanishads. Sage Badarayana composed the Vedanta Sutras or Brahma-Sutras for which Sankara Bhagavadpada, Bhagavadramanuja and Madhvaacharya have written commentaries as per their line of thinking which are called Advaita, Visishtadvaita and Dvaita respectively.

I: If all the Aachaaryaas have based their arguments on the same Upanishads, how are they different in their interpretations?

Naannagaaru: In the Upanishads, there are certain references which appear to say Paramaatma and Aatma are same. These are called “Abheda Srutis”. There are some references which appear to be saying Paramaatma and Aatma are different. These are called “Bheda Srutis”. There are some Srutis which say Paramaatma and Aatma are together. These are Ghataka Srutis. Sankara Bhagavadpaada took into consideration the Abheda Srutis saying that they appear in the later part of the Srutis and hence supersede the others and accordingly interpreted that there is no difference between Paramaatma and Aatma. Madhvacharya took into consideration the Bheda Srutis and interpreted Abheda Srutis also to mean that Paramaatma and Aatma are different. Bhagavadramanuja took all of them into consideration to explain that both Paramaatma and Aatma are like our Aatma and its body or like fruit and its color i.e. they are separate but not separable. The way the fruit and its color are not same, Paramaatma and Aatma are not same. But, since they are not separable, they can be addressed together. For example, when you call Rama, both Aatma and body will come and hence cannot be separated. This way all the Srutis can be explained without any contradictions as per Bhagavadramanuja. We can get into further details some time later.

Thus these six darshanas, generally deal with five topics – the existence and nature of Brahma or the Paramaatma, nature of the Jiva or the individual Aatma, Jagat or the creation of the world, how Aatma returns to Brahma which is known as the Moksha or liberation which is the ultimate goal for the Aatma and what are the obstructions for Aatma to achieve that and how to achieve that.

Some of these points have been discussed earlier too.

I: Our ancient knowledge spreads across all cross spheres without any exceptions. Isn't it? Earlier you have told me about arts, science ..

Naannagaaru: Yes. The above 18 Vidyaastaanaas form the basis for the study of philosophy although many of these concepts are applicable elsewhere also. Since we have already discussed briefly most of the other areas like arts (64 types), science, mathematics, commerce etc. we need not deal with them again.

I: So far, I think, we have been restricting our discussions on heritage or roots of those which are only Sanskrit language based. But, how about other languages?

Naannagaaru: Sanskrit is the mother language and most of the Indian culture has been built around this language. This is the reason why, the westerners tried to destroy it. Even others like Tamil literature had lot of influence of Sanskrit although they may have their own identity.

I: Like...

Naannagaaru: For example, Tirukkural by Tiruvalluvar is an encyclopaedia of knowledge and defines code of conduct and is very popular in Tamilnadu even today. We have discussed earlier that Tirukkural has its concepts also from our traditional philosophy. There are many works like "Manimegalai" in Tamil language which came around Sangam period which have reflected not only the customs and civilization at that time but also contained vast amounts of knowledge. This is applicable for works in other languages too, whether it is Kannada, Malayalam, Telugu, Bengali etc. For that matter, Sankara Bhagavadpaada is from Kerala, Bhagavdramanuja is from Tamilnadu and Madhvachaarya is from Karnataka and all have great works in Sanskrit and their philosophies are popular all over India as well as the globe. Both Alwars and Nayanars did contribute immensely to Indian Philosophy in Tamil language, but mostly connected with Bhakti. Nayanars are 63 in number who are Shaiva Bhaktas and composed poems full of Shiva Bhakti.

I: Please tell briefly about Alwar Prabandhams. I have heard a lot about them.

Naannagaaru: Alwars, are 12 in number and their songs total to about 4000 which are called Naalaayira Divya Prabandham. The Nalayira Prabandham consists of four thousand verses in praise of Lord Vishnu in His different forms in Tamil. Composed by the Alwars, literally the God-immersed, the Prabandham sings the praise of Narayana (or Vishnu) and his many forms.

A collection of 4,000 such verses composed by the 12 alwars is called as "The Nalayira Divya Prabandham". Due to their divinity they are called as divya Prabandas. ("Divya" means Divine in Sanskrit and "Naalayira" in Tamil means 'four thousand' and "Prabandham" means "work") Poigai alvar (Mudal Tiruvandaadi-100), Bhoothathalvar (Irandaam Tiruvandaadi-100), Peyalvar (Moonram Tiruvandaadi-100), Thirumalisai alvar (Tiruchhandaviruttam-216), Periyalvar (Perialwar Tirumoli-473), Aandal (Nachaiar Tirumoli and Tiruppavai-173), Thondaradippodi alvar (Tirumalai, Tiruppalliezhichi-55), Thirumangai alvar (Periya Tirumadal, Siriya Tirumadal, Tiruvezhukkurirukkai-1253), Thiruppaan alvar (Amalanaadipiraan-10), Kulasekara alvar (Perumal Tirumoli-105), Nammalvar (Tiruvoymoli, Tiruviruttam, Tiruvasirium, Perya Tiruvandadi 1296), Madurakavialvar (Kanninun Siruttambu-11) after including the Thiruvarangathamudhanar's Ramanuja noorandhathi (108) the Divya prabandas became 4000 in number. It was compiled in its present form by Nathamuni during the 9th – 10th centuries.

These Alwars loved Paramaatma so much that they used to be worried about His protection and perform Mangalaasanams to the Lord. The work is the beginning of the canonization of the 12 Vaishnava poet saints, and these hymns are still sung extensively

even today. The shrines in which these divine prabhandhas were sung are known as the Divya Desams. These Prabhandas once thought of being lost were collected and organized in the form of an anthology by Nathamuni. The nalayira divya prabhandam has four major divisions viz: - Mudhalaayiram, Periya thirumozhi, thiruvaimozhi and eyarpa. The major contributions to these compilations are by Thirumangai Alvar and Nammalvar. Most of us sing "Tiruppavai" of Aandal during Margali month.

I: How did Nathamuni compile them?

Nathamuni was born in Veera Naarayanapuram (Veeranam) or present day Kaattu Mannaar Koil. There is a lot of gap in time between Thirumangai Alvar (the last alvar) and Nathamuni. In this dark period, nobody knew what happened to the 4000 verses.

Legend has it that once Nathamuni heard some people reciting the decade of 'Aaraavamude' of Nammaazhvaar at Kumbakonam. Captivated by these paasurams, he wanted to know more about them. One of the verses also mentioned 'aayiraththul ippaththu' (Tamil: these 10 out of the 1000). When Nathamuni enquired about the remaining 990, the people who sang the 10 did not know anything about the other verses. But as the song mentioned the name and place of the alvar (kurugoor satakopan), Nathamuni proceeded to Thirukurugoor and asked the people there about Swami Nammazhwar's 1000 verses. The people did not know the 1000 that Nathamuni wanted, but they told him about 11 pasurams of Madhurakavi Alvar, who was the disciple of Nammaazhvaar (Kanninun Siruthaambu). They asked him to go to Thiruppuliaalwar, the place where Nammaalvaar lived, and recite these 11 pasurams for 12000 times. Nathamuni did as advised, and pleased with his penance, Nammaalvaar granted him not only his 1000 pasurams, but the entire 4000 pasurams of all the alvars. In South India, especially in Tamil Nadu, the Divya Prabhandha is considered as equal to the Vedas, hence the epithet Dravida Veda / fifth veda. In many temples, Srirangam, for example, the chanting of the Divya Prabhandham forms a major part of the daily service.

I: Are there any more important SriVaishnava works in Tamil.

Naannagaaru: There are Many; many Aachaaryaas like "Periya Vaachhan Pillai" have written commentaries for the Divya Prabandhams. "Eedu" commentary by Nambillai which is known as "Bhagavadvishayam" is the most popular commentary on "Tiruvoymozhi" of Swami Nammaalwar. Bhagavadvishayam which is in "Manipravala" language, a beautiful combination of Sanskrit and Tamil, is considered at very high esteem like Sribahshyam which is the commentary of "Veda Vyaasa's Brahma Suutraas" by Bhagavadramanuja.

Swami Pillai Lokacharya wrote 18 books, all in the form of "Suutraas" giving complete details of SriVaishnava Philosophy. Out of them "Mumukshuppadi" (Explanation of Ashtakshari, Dvaya and Charama Mantrams), "Tattva Trayam" (Explanation on three Tattvams i.e. Aatma, Prakriti and Paramaatma), "Srivachana Bhushanam" (Treatise on

Saranagati and a book on the code of conduct for Srivaishnavites) and “Archiradi”(way to Paramaatma’s abode) are some of the important works besides others (Artha Panchakam, Prameya Sekaram, Prapanna Paarijaatam, Saara Sangraham, Samsaara Saamraajyam, Navarathna Maalai, Navavidha Sambamdham, Yaadruchikappadi, Parandapadi, Tatva Sekaram, Tani Dwayam, Tani Charamam, Thani Pranavam). Besides many other contributions towards our tradition, Manavala Mahamuni Swami has given commentaries to Mumukshupadi, Tattvatrayam and Srivavachanabhushanam in Manipravala language which are great treasures of our tradition. Swami Vedantadesika wrote more than 125 works dealing with all aspects of Vishtadvaita Philosophy. You can learn these details from your Acharya some later.

I: Are there any works in Telugu? Are there any more people continuing these days too on this traditional activities or are they left to Paramaatma to be taken care of?

Naannagaaru: Most of the original texts have been translated into Telugu by various Acharyas. Further, in order to facilitate people who cannot read Tamil or Sanskrit, the original Tamil or Sanskrit works have been printed in Telugu script too. In the recent past, Gopalacharya Swami, Appalacharya Swami, Raghunathacharya Swami and many great Aachaaryaas in association of with various Jeeyar Swamins like H.H.Pedda Jeeyar Swami, H.H.Chinna Srimannarayana Ramanuja Jeeyar Swami, H.H.Rangaramanuja Jeeyar Swami, have made great contributions in passing on these great treasures to the next generations. Whatever information I have been trying to share with you is only what I have understood from their works and Pravachanams. Sriman Lakshmi Tatacharya Swami of Melkote, Sriman Anantha Rangacharya Swami and Srinivasacharya Swami of Bangalore are some of the many Kannada scholars who have contributed in a big way by way of their works and services. Many Tamil scholars like Uttamur Veeraraghavacharya Swami have contributed invaluable service in Tamilnadu. Besides writing many commentaries in Tamil and other local languages they have also translated these works into English and made available to those who know only English. Now- a-days lot of information is available in internet too.

I: Although, it is out of context, are Budhism and Jainism also form part of tradition.

Naannagaaru: These religions had their origin in India and subsequently, spread to other places. Budhism spread to countries like Tibet/ China, Bhutan, Japan, Sri Lanka etc. but Jainism has not spread much to other countries. These are non-vedic religions. i.e. they are not based on Vedas, although some vedic concepts and principles have influence on these religions. Both these religions preach Truth and non violence which are also basic principles in our scriptures. Yoga and Meditation techniques are adapted in both these religions. Budhism was preached by Gautama Budha whereas Jainism by Rishabhadeva and further revived by Vardhamaana Mahaveera. Both religions happened to be contemporaries of each other and both have initially developed around Magadha(current Bihar) region although they spread around later. Both generally believed of liberation from

this birth and death cycle by ethical and spiritual discipline, although they didn't believe in Paramaatma as the creator.

Budhhists believed that this life is suffering, and the only way to escape from this suffering is to dispel one's cravings and ignorance by realizing the Four Noble Truths and practicing the Eightfold Path (the Eightfold Path- right view, right aspiration, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration) to reach Enlightenment or Nirvana. Although Buddhism is divided into many sects in itself, Mahayana, Hinayana and Vajrayana are the popular sects.

Jains believed that all living things are to be respected and attaining liberation is by avoiding and shedding of bad karma which is the cause of rebirths and all sufferings. Good Karma leads to spiritual elevation and bad Karma and bad deeds to decline. Their goal is to unshackle the soul from bondages of karma which results in misery due to many rebirths and deaths by Five vows of Truth, Non-violence, Non-stealing, Non-attachment, control over desires and senses. Greater emphasis on non-violence and truth. Also follow 3 jewels of Right Perception, Right Knowledge and Right Conduct. Once soul is freed from these bondages, it achieves Nirvana and becomes perfect soul free from all attachments, in an eternal blissful state. In Jainism Svetambara(wearing white clothes) and Digambara (unclothed) are two main divisions although there are many off-shooting sects.

Since we have been discussing so far on Vedic roots of our culture and Heritage and these being non Vedic religions, these have not in our discussions.

I: This discussion, although has extended a bit long, is an eye opener to me. So much of knowledge and such a rich culture and heritage that we inherited, indeed. Since our roots are very strong, in spite of repeated destructions of our society by others, our tradition is still surviving and the sprouts of our culture keep shooting up in to big trees providing shelter to all of us.

But, I am afraid, all this what we have discussed turned into highly theoretical. It is very difficult to remember and practice, based on these discussions. Can you briefly tell me the practical approach in simple steps how to have lead our lives ourselves in a practical way without compromising on these value systems? Further, I request you to summarise the important aspects something like short epilogue of our discussions?

END OF CHAPTER "SCRIPTURAL PERSPECTIVE"

Chapter – 4 : Practical Perspective

Naannagaaru: You are right. Our discussion has gone too much theoretical. Any theory without appropriate practical approach will not be useful. When it comes to the aspect of practice, the practice shall run concurrently in both the spheres i.e. Spiritual (Aadhyaatmic) and secular (worldly). That's why we have two parts in our Vedas i.e. one Karma Kanda and other Gnyaana Kanda.

I: I thought spiritual aspects are in contradiction to the secular. Will it be possible to practice simultaneously.

Naannagaaru: That's what our scriptures have told us. Hence, they are not contradictory, but complementary to each other.

I: However, if one is interested in worldly affairs, he cannot focus on the Aadhyaatmic practices and vice versa. That's why, in case of spiritual pursuit, we have to develop detachment towards worldly affairs. That's what you have told earlier.

Naannagaaru: Detachment doesn't mean not performing the duties and running away from the responsibilities. Bharata, as per the instructions of Lord Sri Rama, performed the duties of the king of Ayodhya exceedingly well and improved the wealth of the Kingdom tenfold. But, he didn't have attachment towards the kingdom.

I: OK. But is it not difficult.

Naannagaaru: It is a question of paradigm shift and getting used to the practice.

I: In case, we don't want this material world, it is better to become a Sannyasi or saint!

Naannagaaru: But, in Sannyaashrama also, one cannot run away from one's responsibilities. There are defined responsibilities and duties for the Sannyaasi also. He cannot be an antisocial either. Of course, he can focus on the spiritual pursuit in a much better way, but in case he fails to do it, the outcome is much more dangerous.

I: Then, which path is better?

Naannagaaru: In different stages of life, our Shaastra has defined different duties and responsibilities. As a student and as a son and as a citizen of the country you have certain responsibilities and duties. As a married man, as a father and as a citizen of the country I have some too and so also every individual. A sannyasi has his own. We cannot say which is better. It depends on one's aptitude which once again depends on one's samskaaraas and will of the Lord. However, it is necessary that one has to perform the respective responsibilities and duties in whichever Ashram one belongs to.

I: But, if I want to focus and meditate on Paramaatma, and if people or circumstances are not conducive, then how can I pursue it ?

Naannagaaru: If you are sincerely trying and even then it is not happening it may be because of your old Janma Karma Phala. For that matter, some body may not have money to eat food. Then he may go after earning for his living rather than moving around the temples in spiritual pursuit. Some body may not have good health. In such a case, naturally, his priority is to take care of his health. One will get his supporting resources and environment based on one's Old Janma Phala. One has to manage the same and seek the Mercy of the Lord to show His mercy on you with the necessary strength and support so that one will not forget Him. Within these limits, you may like to choose the paths defined by Shaastraas as discussed earlier like Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Gnyaana Yoga, Saranaagati etc according to your taste and choice, ability and aptitude.

I: I am of the feeling that, our philosophy tells more of God and doesn't bother about the society around us?

Naannagaaru: Not really. As I told you, both Karma Kaanda and Gnyaana Kaanda are together in our philosophy. Our scriptures say, "Deva Pitru kaaryaabhyaam na pramaditavyam Maatru Devo bhava, Pitru Devo bhava, Aacharya Devo bhava, Atithi Devo bhava, yaanyanavadyaani karmaani taani sevityaani, no itaraani/ (Let there be no lapse in executing sercces/ rituals to Devas and Pitru Devas; let your mother be a Goddess, father a God preceptor a God and a Guest be a God; shun away all acts that are blameworthy and dutifully execute deeds deserving commendation and nothing else) Om, Sa hanaavavatu sahanou bhunaktu, sa ha veeryam karavaavahai, Tejaswinaavadheetamastu maa vidvishaavahai, om shanti shanti shantih(May we be protected, well nourished and blessed to think and act in the quest of Truth and Almighty! May there be Universal Peace, Peace and Peace for ever), Satyameva Jayate (Truth will only win), Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (the world is a family) and these are all the fundamental principles and values of living in our society. Hence, it is not correct to say our scriptures have not given importance to the society and fellows beings. In fact, as house holders we have to perform five Yagnyaas every day as prescribed in the scriptures to take care of not only the fellow humans but also the animals and birds.

I: What are those five things?

Naannagaaru: The Pancha Maha Yagnyaas are as follows.

- a) Chanting and teaching the Vedas is Brahma Yagna.
- b) Providing food and water to dead ancestors or Pitrus is Pitru Yagna.
- c) Propitiating Devas through homa and yajna and doing our Tiruvaaraadhanam is Deva Yagnam

- d) Providing food to other animals etc. is Bhuta Yagna.
- e) Providing food to human beings is Manushya Yagna.

I: That means, we have to do multitasking!

Naannagaaru: It is said that we shall be like a big mountain. At the feet of the big mountain, it feeds animals and men who are around with grass and fruits etc. At its middle, it stops the clouds to bring rains which help people who live away too. However, its head is always above all these not affected by even the clouds but constantly looking at the God. Figuratively speaking, our hands, heart and Head shall perform similar function. With hands we work to perform our duties, (Nitya, Naimittika and Prayaschitta). With heart, we take care of the society around. But our Head doesn't get distracted from the Almighty.

I: But, there are many examples in our history like Meera Bai or Leela Suka who did leave all the worldly activities or duties to follow the path of Spirituality?

Naannagaaru: Of course yes. So are our Alwars too. But they are all blessed by the Lord. If one had that kind of love and Bhakti for the Lord and out of sheer love for the Lord, if one leaves all other worldly things, they are indeed blessed. But majority of us may not be like that.

I: I am afraid, once again we are drifting towards theoretical aspects. To the extent possible, please segregate for me these actionable things and tell me like simple points.

Naannagaaru: OK. Actually for you, if you follow and practice Bhagavadgita, it is good enough. That way, Bhagavadgita is complete in all respects. Then there is Bhagavadramanuja's "Nitya Grantham" which gives you the procedure for the daily prayers and meditation towards the Lord. Further, there are many books by our Aachaaryaas and Jeeyar Swamijis' and the Anugraha Bhashanams of various scholars give you sufficient input. Our Jeeyar Nevertheless, since you have specifically asked me to tell in the form of practical action points in each category I shall try to tell you some points from these two books. However, since you have asked me, I will try to tell briefly to give you an idea based on what I have learnt and understood from people like Jeeyar Swamiji. You must appreciate that there will be many activities that may be common to both material and spiritual spheres and both shall be intertwined. Whatever I am telling you are general in nature, but may not be applicable for each individual specifically. Further details may have to be directly learnt from the seniors/ Aachaaryaas specific to oneself.

It is good to get up at early say 4/5 a.m. daily. All successful people have been early risers. This is Brahmamuhurta. The mind will be fresh and the climate will be positive and pleasant which is extremely favourable for doing anything good...i.e. for serious studies,

for review of day's important activities, for any essential planning and decision making activities or for meditation on Paramaatma. When you get up, express your gratitude to your Mother, Father, Aachaaryaas, Paramaatma and other revered Seniors. Getting up early gives you lot of lead time or extra time over other people. Drinking water on getting up early in the morning will help you towards keeping good health. It is better to avoid coffee or tea as compared to Milk, lemon juice with honey or Tulasi juice etc.

After such initial activities, complete your morning routine like brushing the teeth, taking bath etc. Wear washed clean clothes, preferably white, because that will promote Sattva Guna. Carryout Pundra Dharana (Tirumani) chanting the names of the Lord as per the prescribed procedure. Since you had your Upanayanam, you should also perform the morning Sandhyavandanam. In the beginning of the Sandhyavandanam, there are Mantrams for our purification and to burn away our sins that have been committed during the previous night. Then we do the japa of Dasa Vyahriti Pranava Mantram (a Mantra in which the syllable "Om" is repeated ten times) along with Praanaayaama and then the Gayatri Mantram as per the prescribed procedure. This will also provide you the necessary breathing exercise to your body thus not only calming your Manas but also helping your health. During the Gayatrimantra japa we are actually praying the Lord Narayana in the Surya Mandala to inspire/ rejuvenate our intellect and to lead us in the correct path. If you have Mantropadesam from Aacharya, then supplement that Mantram (Ashtaakshari) along with Gayatri Mantram while doing the chanting (Japa). During the Ashtaakshari Japa you are affirming that you are subservient to the Lord and all your activities are meant to make the Lord happy. While doing the chanting, visualize the Paramaatma in the Surya Mandala and do the chanting with utmost reverence and submission. In the end of Sandhyaavandanam please do Surya Namaskaarams along with postures. During these Namaskaarams, you will chant Savitrumandala Madhyavarti, Narayana, Sarasijasana, Sannivishtha, Keyuravaan, Makarakundalavaan, Kiriti, Haari, Hiranmayavapuh, Dhrita Sankha Chakrah for the ten postures of the Surya Namaskaarams. The number of cycles can be decided based on your ability and availability of time. This activity will help you to focus your mind, improve your intellect and strengthen your body as well. Of course if your body doesn't support you, you may not carry out the postures/ positions of the Surya Namaskaarams as mentioned.

After the Sandhyavandanam, as prescribed by your Aachaarya, go back to your Pooja Room, The Pooja room should have been cleaned prior to your entering into it. Sit comfortably preferably on a wooden stool with a soft clean cloth spread over it along with Darbha. Do Achamanam, Praanaayaamam, take water in a vessel, sanctify it by chanting the Ashtaakshari Mantram, sprinkle the water on your head and other Pooja materials that you may like to use for the purpose of your prayers. Do Achamanam, and with complete reverence, submission and love for the Aachaaryaas, pray to your Aachaaryaas. The series starts from your Aachaarya, Paramaacharya (Aachaaryaa's Aachaarya), all senior Aachaaryaas, Bhagavadramanuja, Yamunaachaarya, Ramamishra, Pundareekaaksha, Nathamuni, Sathagopa, Vishvaksena, Lakshmi and

finally Srimannaaraayana. If you have their Sripada cloth etc., offer Arghya, Padya, aachamanam, snanam and other Pooja etc. and take Sripada Theertham as per the prescribed procedure. Then, with complete reverence and love, submission and subservience to the Lord, chant the Ashtaakshari as many times as possible. While chanting the Mantram, you may keep a Mala in your hand and turn the beads as per the prescribed procedure. This will support the chanting. To facilitate concentration, you may keep a photo or an Idol of your Lord before you. Keep Him in clean and elevated place and visualize Him as if He is in His Paramapada.... The Vaikuntha Loka, Vaikuntha Nagara, Divya Vimaana, Mahamani Mantapa, Anantha and the along with His consorts comfortably sitting on Him with His ornaments, Kireeta, Divya weapons like Sudarshana, while all the Nityas and Muktaas offering their services to Him, with His right leg folded and left leg stretched out, looking with lotus like eyes and smiling face, His bright effulgence spreading all over...., Keep focussing on Him all the time while chanting the Mantram and keep remembering your relation with Him. This practice helps you in your next activity. During this process you may be experiencing each and every detail of the Lord such as His form, His Gunaas(characteristics), your relationship with Him etc.

Do Aachamanam once again, do Praanaayamam till you feel you are settled and not getting disturbed by external influences. It is always better to sit in the place for your meditation and prayers wherever you are comfortable. Sanctify your body as if it becomes Pancha Upanishanmaya i.e. Parameshti, Purushatma, Vishvatma, Nivrttyatma, Sarvatma. Then, put your right palm on the naval region and chant Ashtaakshari certain number times and visualize that every part of your body is sanctified and filled with the sound waves of Lord Srimannarayana Mantra and His effulgence, both inside and outside. i.e. external to Annamaya Kosa, Pranamaya Kosa etc. like a balloon that is filled with air. Be conscious that you, the Aatma, is not the Annamaya Kosa, Praanamaya Kosa or Manomaya Kosa. You are different and are away from them. i.e. you are not the body or Manas and you are subservient to the Lord only. This has to be thoroughly visualized and affirmed.

Then put your right palm on your heart region and chant Ashtaakshari and visualize that your Manas and all the samskaaraas, ignorance etc. are all sanctified/ burnt away.

Now, visualize the Lord,how He is sitting in His Paramapada, along with His consorts and all the Nityaas, Muktaas etc. You (your Aatma) will be at His right leg thumb requesting Him to grant you His Kainkaryam. His nails are shining like diamonds. The red colour from the bottom of the feet is flowing out and it along with the blue colour of the feet is getting reflected in the nails. The golden yellow colour of the ornaments on the feet is spreading all around.....Then, by the grace of the Lord, the Divya nector will flow from His left leg thumb onto your head and then all over your body and you are fully immersed in that Nector. Thus you are blessed by Him to carry on with His Kainkaryam.

Once again, sanctify yourself with Pancha Upanishnmaya Mantrams and feel His presence in your Heart i.e. Dahara Pundareeka as Antaryaami. You should visualize that the light and effulgence, the light and effulgence of Pure Sattvik knowledge, from Aantaryaami fills all your Kosas and Manas and cleanses and sanctifies them. The light should be visualized flowing through all your Nadis, thus cleansing them all. It is necessary to learn all this process from your Aachaarya and practice correctly at the feet of your Aachaarya with his blessings. I am briefing you only to give you an idea. Having felt His (the Lord's) presence in your Heart, you should experience His form like His feet, His legs, hands, His face etc., His Great Gunaas i.e. characteristics like Laavanyam and Saundaryam, Kaarunyam and Sauseelyam, Saulabhyam and Vaatsalyam so on and so forth. Enjoy this state and start doing His Kainkaryam mentally. It can be in the form of sixteen Upachaarams or many other ways as well. Retain this feeling throughout the day. You should feel His (Antaryaami's) presence during the course of all your activities. Whatever you eat, drink or enjoy, you offer to Him with the affirmation that they are all His kainkaryams. Even breathing is His Kainkaryam to provide the comfortable breeze while He is inside. Thereby, any negativity associated with the activities will be washed away and you will receive His mercy. When you are feeling His presence as Antaryaami, you will not do anything that is not to His liking. Hence you will not commit any sins or wrongs or anything against the Saastraas consciously.

Having enjoyed Him as Antaryaami thoroughly, now start offering Kainkaryam to Him as Archyamoorthy/ Saaligraamam. You might have seen me doing "Tiruvaaraadhanam" every day. We perform Upachaarams like Aasanam, Arghyam, Paadyam, Achamanam, Gandoosham, Jihvanirlepanam, Madhuparkam, Snaanam, Plotha Vastram, Vastra Yugmam, Uurdhvapundra dhaaranam, Yagnyopaveetham, Chandanam, Aabharanam, Pushpa Pooja with different names of the Lord and His consorts and subjects, Dhoopa, chanting of various scriptures or stotras(shaastra Pathanam), Deepam, (once again Arghyam, Paadyam, Achamanam), Naivedyam, Paaneeyam, (once again Arghyam, Paadyam, Achamanam), Taamboolam, Mangalaasaasanam, Geetam, Vaadyam, chamaram, Pavalimpu etc. We may read a relevant shloka or a Paasuram or both while offering the Upachaaram. For example, for Mangalaasaasanam we may read Shriyah Kaanthaaya .../ Pallandu Pallaandu... ,i.e. we pray/ wish for the wellbeing of the Lord out of our love for Him. There are prescribed books published by Sriman Gopalacharya Swami, Jeeyar Swamiji etc. as to what are items required for this Thiruvaaraadhanam, how they shall be arranged, what is the procedure of the offerings etc. You can get all these details from your Aachaarya if you are interested. It is better to have separate Pooja room for meditation and Pooja which can be closed when it is not used so that every body will not keep disturbing it. Mind you, all of us carry different Gunas i.e. Rajas, Tamas etc. and anybody entering with these Gunas will disturb the peace and sanctity of the place.

Having performed the Kainkaryam to the Archyamoorthy, express your gratitude to Him, your Aachaaryaas etc. for giving you the opportunity.

I: This process, itself, will take the whole day. Nothing else can be done then!

Naannagaaru: Not really, initially it may take little longer time. Hence, you start practicing in the holidays. Then, once you get used to it, the whole thing can be completed in about an hour. If you get up early, this time can be easily made up without any disturbance to your other routine. In the whole day, the Lord has given you 24 hours. It may be good idea to spend 10% of your time and income towards His service.

I: OK, then.

Naannagaaru: I will continue.

Take Sattvic food, Suddha Aahara. Reduce intake of very hot or sour things, those which have pungent smell like garlic, onion. Bhagavadgita gives you the list of food items which promote Sattvik nature and those which don't. Swami Vedanta Desika wrote a book by name "Aahaara Niyamam" giving further explanation of the same. You may take these details from them. It is now scientifically established that if we eat food cooked with agitated mind or anger, our mind is also agitated or influenced by anger. If we eat food prepared with stolen items will have its effect when eaten by us. Hence the the type of food, how and from where it is sourced, by whom it is prepared or served....all these things will induce either Sattvik, Rajasik or Tamasik Gunas in us. Hence we shall be very careful with food. It is better to depend on natural foods rather than readymade factory stuff. i.e. milk is preferred over Horlicks, fresh lemon juice is preferred over bottled juice, Tulsi juice with honey is preferred over coffee or tea and so on. Similarly, natural foods as medicines are preferred over allopathic medicines. i.e salt water gargling and taking pepper decoction may be better for cough than the cough syrup from the shop. Give time to the body to recover by itself. Of course, if it becomes necessary, you may have to visit the doctor and follow his advice any way.

Never forget to eat food which is only offered to the Lord. If it is not done before it reached your plate, you may offer it to your Antaryaami and take as if it is His Prasaadam. Observe moderation in diet. We should eat as per the requirement of stomach but as per the requirement of tongue. Controlling tongue both with respect to eating and talking is very important. In order to develop control of over our tongue, consciously practice say for about forty days. i.e. not to eat or talk anything that is not necessary or anything not good. Do not overload the stomach. Give up those things which the mind likes best for a fortnight in a year. Eat simple food. Milk and fruits help concentration. Take food as medicine to keep the life going. Reduce the intake of salt gradually. Do not ask for extra salt and sugar. Fasting once in a while like Ekadasi days etc. will help not only to check ourselves on our self control but also to improve health.

Give up those things which the mind likes best for a fortnight in a year. Bhagavadgita speaks about “Vaak Tapas” (use the tongue not to hurt others, speaking truth and that is good for everybody, chanting sacred scriptures or stotras in either Sanskrit/ Tamil/ Telugu..), “Body Tapas” (praying to the Lord and the learned, serving the Achaaryaas, have integrity of thought, speech and action, not having any illegitimate desire for other girls/ ladies, not troubling others unnecessarily etc.), “Mano Tapas” (not having any anger etc. against others, not having jealousy, not speaking unnecessarily, have focus on the goal, controlling the tongue etc.). It is a good idea to start practicing some aspects of the same on gradual basis. In fact, it is very good to read few verses from Bhagavadgita every day and meditate over them and try practicing the intent.

Be conscious the whole day, about the presence of Antaryaami and carry out your duties discharge your responsibilities with utmost sincerity. Remember, Antaryaami will be happy if you think/ speak/ do things that pleases Him and He will be unhappy if you follow otherwise. Each one of us are blessed with some special strength, characteristic which we shall discover and use it for the good. While carrying out your work, Shradhha is important. Bhagavadgita says action without Shradhha is Tamasik action. i.e. Shradhha includes Self Efficacy(one’s belief in one’s ability to succeed and excel in specific situations in order to accomplish a task), Self responsibility, Continuous value addition to what we do and apply ourselves with full focus.

Self responsibility demands your interest in your action, quality of your process, good behaviour and communication, management of time and keeping up your values and ethics and carry out your responsibilities under different roles ex. Student, son, citizen and servant of the Lord etc.

When we say time management, we should know which are the urgent actions, which are important actions, which are neither and which are both. For example, seeing a serial program on a TV is neither urgent nor important whereas getting up in the morning early is both urgent and important.

When I said, continuous value addition to what you do, it is necessary that whatever we do, we have to increase the limits of productivity, quality, creativity and utility of our activities on a continuous basis. We don’t know our limits. Suppose you do ten Surya Namasakarams and get exhausted today, tomorrow, you increase the same by another one or two. Then, on the day after by another one or two. Like this gradually you can increase the number to say fifty and carry them out still without getting exhausted. This is applicable to every activity. Similarly, if you have done gardening today and when you do it tomorrow, think of some improvement or value addition to what you will do tomorrow, however small that improvement is. It may be in the way you water the plant, in the manner you make clean the mud and the plant etc. That way not only your work satisfaction level will increase but also your productivity.

Whatever you do, do with interest and dedication. All those actions are after all kainkaryams to the Lord. Link up mentally everything to the Lord. When we say the Lord, His splendour and wealth are included too since all the beings and all these worlds are included in His splendour and wealth. Hence, whatever we do to contributing to His splendour and wealth is always His Kainkaryam. Work on how to synergize with the fellow beings not at the cost of nature but for a better and more beautiful world of tomorrow.

During your actions, you should be conscious as to which Guna is influencing you more. Bhagavan Sri Krishna mentioned clearly, which are all the actions which indicate your Sattva Guna, which will indicate Rajo Guna and which will indicate Tamo Guna. For example, if you feel like eating Sattvika food like, Milk, food made with Ghee, fresh fruits etc. then Sattva Guna is influencing at that time. Similarly, if you feel like eating very hot and sour foods, then Rajo Guna is influencing you. If you like to eat smelling and long stored stuff (like wine) then you are influenced by the Tamo Guna. By continuously being conscious of your status, you can keep correcting yourself and develop good habits. If you are influenced by Rajo Guna, you may get angry, greedy etc. If you are influenced by Tamo Guna, you may feel dull, procrastinating, feel jealous of others etc. As discussed earlier, these are caused by present inputs as well as old samskaaraas. Although it is not easy to correct the previous Samskaaraas, it is possible to control your present inputs if you are conscious about it. Hence, if you get anger or agitated, then check on your current inputs and correct them. This way, you can improve your behaviour pattern. When fire is burning, putting oil on it will further aggravate it whereas pouring water over it will extinguish it. So, in order to correct your behaviour, you should know the antidote for the same and apply it appropriately. One of the tests is how soon you will come back to normalcy from an undesirable or agitated state. Keep checking it for course correction and improvement.

You should be conscious of things which give you (a) momentary sensory pleasure which is only physical, (b) which give you happiness including your Manas and then (c) the one which provides you with the eternal Bliss. Our goal shall be not falling for the momentary physical pleasures but work for the eternal Bliss. Initially, it is good practice to keep any alarm watch to remind you every hour to analyse yourself i.e. your thoughts, speech and actions during the previous hour and then keep course correcting.

For example you can keep remembering the following poem every hour through some means, say a recorded message, in order to be conscious of what is said above.

“I do my actions to make Him happy,
 And as per scriptures with no pleasure and pain,
 As what I do is for Him and His Glory,
 And I am just a speck in His creation,
 Of the grand splendour which belongs to Him
 I am subservient always to Him,

Actions of rajas and tamas surely avoid,
Love and reverence to Thee always my Lord.

As discussed earlier, all beings are similar Aatmaas along with Paramaatma as Antaryaami. Hence, it is necessary that everybody be treated with respect.

When you are not doing or thinking anything also, the Dharma Bhoota Gnyaanam when flowing through Manas has the habit of flickering and wandering freely. This may happen independent of any external inputs. This is due to our previous Samskaaraas. Suddenly, I may think that Mr Ramarao is bad, he has a habit of stealing but never gets caught, after all when he is stealing and getting never caught, why should I not do the same thing, I can get things without straining myself much, then what should I steal.....the thoughts go on and on. And generally, like the way a house fly falls on the dirt, our thoughts also wander around bad things. It is because of the environment that we are in and our Samskaaraas. Hence, in order to help ourselves in this situation, while we have to ourselves engaged in doing some good things or the other, we should also move with the company of Good and Sattvik people. For getting engaged in doing some good deeds include helping others, reading good books, singing/ writing keertans etc. In Bhagavadgita, Bhagavan says that Abhayam(having no fear of losing something liked or acquiring that is not liked), Sattva Samsudhhih(not having greediness, jealousy etc.), Gnyaanayoga Vyavasthitih(inquiry into Aatma and its characteristics), Daanam(doing charity as prescribed in the scriptures), Damah(Self control), Yagnyah(performing one's duties including Pancha Maha Yagnyaas), Svaadhyaayah(studying sacred scriptures and learning about performing our duties as a service to Parmaatma and learning about Him and splendour etc.), Tapah(performing actions which will be pleasing to the Lord), Aarjavam(integrity), Ahimsa(not troubling others either physically, verbally or psychologically), Satyam(Truth which is good for all beings), Akrodhah(not having anger), Tyaagah(sacrificing all those which are not good for one's enlightenment), Shantih(Peaceful), Apaishuchunam(not speaking bad and hurting things to others), Daya (being kind), Alolaptvam(not being greedy), Mardavam(being associated with good people and being soft natured), Hreeh(feeling bad to do wrong things), Achaapalam(not getting distracted by sensory attractions), Tejah(not succumbing to bad people), Kshama(forgiveness), Dhritih(be conscious on the goal under all circumstances and working with focus towards attaining the same), Shoucham(keeping the body and sensory organs clean off any bad thing), Adrohah(not exploiting the weak), Naatimaanita(be humble).

Similarly, Lord Sri Krishna has narrated the bad qualities as well. They perform their actions with selfish motive, don't act as per scriptures, they show their pride for their wealth, qualifications etc., trouble others, act against good people, they are not aware what to do and what not to do etc.

Thus we should carry out our actions accordingly.

I: Pretty long list to practice. Then when to go to bed?

Naannagaaru: I think you are more concerned about sleep. Of course sleep is important, but it is the quality of sleep that matters. For good quality of sleep, you should sleep with peaceful mind and not with an agitated or confused mind.

It is a good idea to review your thoughts and actions during the day and analyse them before going to bed. Such analysis includes, the cause of those thoughts and actions also. Because, for every action, there is an underlying thought. If you get angry with me, that thought may result into an action of scolding or beating or something similar. And, for every thought, there is an underlying Samskaara. For example, the reason for your getting angry with me may be a samskaara that I am not nice to you which may be based on some earlier experience. Or, your anger may have been caused by some other cause that your wish is not fulfilled in some other context and it is getting resulted this way. It may be due to your bad health also. Hence, it is a good idea to analyse and work on for any course correction as may be required. If necessary you may seek the help of seniors or the wiser who can guide you in this regard.

It is also a good idea to record the thoughts and experiences that you encounter during the process of meditation, prayer or during the visualization. However, these need not be shared with anybody since, these experiences will be different for different people and they will be generally be based on the Samskaaraas and/ or the Mercy of the Lord. However, such recording may help us to understand/ evaluate ourselves.

Another method of evaluating ourselves in the path of spiritual progress is to know how much we are enjoying ourselves in the Kainkaryams of the Lord. Here, once again, when I say Lord's Kainkaryams, they include the Kainkaryams in His name to any of His splendour that include all these worlds and the things and the beings in it. During His Kainkaryam like Tiruvaraadhanam, if you feel that you are getting bored and feel like finishing it early, then the spiritual progress is not enough. Similarly, if you feel jealous of the name of fame of His disciples, then the progress is certainly not satisfactory. Thus, you have to analyse the reasons for the same. The reasons may be once again, your current inputs like food, your friends and the environment etc. or it may be the old samskaaraas. Since, we have been so much influenced by the Prakriti for so many births, it may take time for turning ourselves away the Prakriti and turn towards the Paramaatma. But, Bhagavaan says, by continuous Practice and detachment it is possible. Then, rest of the thing, we have to leave it to Him and His mercy only.

Sometimes you may get sleep while offering your prayers. As long as it is not due to the lack of sincere effort from your side, you need not too much worry about it. As we have discussed earlier, in such case too, we leave it to Him to take care of us.

Spending more time in the company of saints, good people, good places like temples etc. is good idea because you will be under the influence of Sattva guna in such places/ circumstances. However, in case you don't have such opportunity, we have to follow whatever we have discussed earlier with sincerity and commitment.

Cultivating a healthy and useful habit is another good idea. When you do something out of your own interest it is easy for you to focus on the same. For example, your sister likes Music, so she will focus on various aspects music while listening to the song with full attention. No meditation practice is required for that focus. That is one way of improving your concentration as well. It will also provide you the necessary relaxation to the mind and body that is required.

Review also from the point of the completion of the assigned activities for the day and plans and actions for the day/s to come is another good idea. However, don't get agitated for any failed or unfinished tasks but plan as to how to tackle the situation in the future. Perseverance with your tasks and faith in the Almighty shall continue.

Maintenance of a diary is another good habit to follow. Many great leaders have this habit of maintaining a diary. Of course, I don't maintain one myself and hence am not fit to tell you about the same. But your grandfather used to maintain the diary very sincerely.

Remember that you will have to play different roles in your life, for example, as a student, as a son, as a citizen of the country, as good friend to your friends, as a brother to your sister and so on. Balancing in all these spheres is recommended so that you work for success in one sphere at the cost of another. There will be always a sphere of influence and a sphere of concern in each of them. Sphere of influence is the one where your actions will have impact whereas the sphere of concern is where you may not be able to create your impact. For example, at your age, if you are concerned about terrorism in the world, you may be wasting your energy and time. Hence, while working on the sphere of your influence, you may have to try continuously towards reducing the size of your sphere of concern and increasing the sphere of influence. You may review your actions in each of these spheres before going to bed.

In order to go to bed peacefully, with good and Sattvik thoughts, listening to some Bhajan etc. may help. If you sleep with Sattvik thoughts, your sleep quality will be good and when you get up also, you will get up with Sattvik thoughts. Don't carry any ill feelings or negativity, anger or jealousy about anybody or anything in your mind before going to sleep. That will only spoil your health and your peace of mind. Hence, clear off everything before sleep and forgive and bless those that are involved.

The above are only to provide you with an idea of the direction. If you feel hungry, one can give you an idea where the food is. But, you have to struggle to get, you have to eat,

you have to digest and you have to experience. So is the case here as well. There is no short cut for the same.

It is also good idea to read the stories of great saints like Aalwaars, great characters like Abdul Kalam and learn the life lessons. They provide you with the smotivation and a sense of direction to your life.

If you have more time and opportunity, you may spend more time meditation and service/ Kainkaryam. Whatever I have mentioned so far is only as a sample. You can choose as per your taste and time. You may get better spiritual experiences by singing or dancing, serving others or listening to the music. There are other types of meditations or Dhyanams in which you chant the Mantram for some time and later silently keep observing it till such time you lose the focus. Whenever you lose the focus you will take the help of Mantram to focus once again and continue the meditation process which can be around twenty minutes.

There is another method of controlling the emotions through breathing. As you may know, when you are angry you will breathe through one nostril and when you are happy you will breathe through the other etc. Even the part of the nostril that is used for breathing changes as per the emotion at that time. That means your breathing through a specific part of your nostrils is dependent on your type of emotion at that time. Hence, by controlling the breathing through an appropriate part of the nostril, you can control your emotions.

Similarly, Kainkaryams can also be of several methods. Aalwars have enjoyed the Lord with different relationships.....as a lover, son, friend, mother etc. You can visualize such relationship and offer your kainkaryams too. They may include, playing and speaking with Him may be in a subconscious state, writing and reading about Him, telling about Him, speaking to His disciples, listening to His stories, seeing dances and dramas etc. about Him so on and so forth. As discussed earlier, all these depend on the tastes and talents of the individuals which may once again depend on the samskaarams. However, each of us will have some special talent or some special attribute which shall be discovered by us, if necessary taking help of others and utilize the same appropriately.

Bhagavadramanuja says, "remember the meaning of Dvaya Mantram all the time". i.e. with the help and recommendation of Lakshmidivi, you take refuge at the lotus feet of the Lord in order to perform the kainkaryam of the divine couple, Lord Narayana and Lakshmidivi, and hence whatever you do is only for their kainkaryam and not for yourself.

The road is long and thorny. To reach the Goal, besides all other things, your body and its health are important as well. It works like a sharpener blade used to sharpen your pencil to write your destiny. You don't use that blade to harm yourself but only to sharpen

the pencil. Once you finish your work, you may discard it without any attachment for it. But till that time you have to take care of your body and its health too.

In Bhagavatham it is said that in Kali Yuga the best way to please the Lord is by chanting His name which is easy to practice. Hence keep chanting His name whenever it is possible.

Don't forget to express your gratitude to the Lord, your Aachaaryaas and your seniors including your Mother and Father before you go to sleep. Please offer your prayers and seek their blessings.

Be clear about your aim, draw up a wise plan, guard your physical and mental health, conserve gainfully utilize your energy, uphold your character, value other beings and be conscious about your relationship with the Lord and don't lose focus.

Time is precious and you cannot have laid back approach but need to have a sense of urgency and direction and work with full commitment towards reaching your goal. After all even if you want to get the vegetables you will first know how to go etc. and when you have to get the eternal Bliss you shall be clear about your direction. Wish you all the best!!!

Hope you have got some inputs on the practical approach. However, pouring too many inputs all at one go will not be purposeful. We will see the rest of the things some other time.

I: Oh, naannagaaru. Lot of inputs indeed. Can you please summarise some of the important points of our discussions. It will help me in my comprehension!

END OF CHAPTER "PRACTICAL PERSPECTIVE"

Chapter – 5 : Synopsis

Naannagaaru: We have covered in our discussions mainly four topics, (a) the Historical perspective (b) the spiritual perspective (c) the scriptural perspective and (d) the practical perspective.

Historical perspective:

1. We have rich heritage and culture. It is called “Sanaathana Dharma” or “Vaidika Dharma”.
2. Well before rest of the world, Indians have excelled in many fields such as science, arts, mathematics, philosophy etc.
3. Our history is very ancient and great civilization existed here well before the period of so called Aryan invasion period. Hence, the theory Aryan Invasion is not correct.
4. Our culture does not promote discrimination. Of course, classification of people based on their qualities and activities existed. Exploitation and Misinterpretation of this has happened more during the rule of Europeans in India.
5. Christianity and Islam have come to existence well after our Sanatana Dharma. However, due to their expansionist philosophy they spread over many parts of the world so also in our country. Our culture is of inclusive in nature and Indians have not gone out to spread our religion and culture to other countries.
6. Since our culture is closely associated with Sanskrit language, in order to suppress our cultural heritage, efforts have been made by Europeans to make Sanskrit language useless. They changed our education system and made English as the medium of instruction. Although articulated by the west that Sanskrit is a dead language, its utility and richness, the scientific base and logical structure are very much appreciated by one and all today. It is used even in the computers very effectively.
7. Many Indian concepts and techniques, inventions and discoveries have been copied by others without even referring to the sources and claiming as their original efforts. In order to overcome this problem, we shall use some of the technical terms like Aatma, Dharma, Punarjanma etc. as non-translatable words. Then, it is not easy for the others to ignore or hide the original sources of knowledge.
8. Most of the time our country has been defeated or our culture has been dominated because of the divisions among others and these divisions were created by the outsiders. Unfortunate part was, the outsiders were always

- finding support from the insiders in our own country in such efforts. This problem exists even today. There are breaking India forces working both from inside and outside. It is more difficult to tackle the insiders than the outsiders. We should be conscious of the same.
9. The theory that Dravidians are a different and the upper caste dravidians are from the Aryan race who did oppress the lower castes is not correct. Although there has been some exploitation of the weak by the more powerful, this is the case all over the world and not limited to only south India. This theory, that upper caste was oppressing the lower caste, was initiated by the Europeans and was further promoted by the local political parties for their political gains.
 10. Although Tamil language and culture has its own identity and rich in history, it is not totally independent of and in contradiction to Sanskrit language and Vedic culture. Many Tamil scholars even wrote their works in Manipravala language which is mixture of Tamil and Sanskrit.
 11. Calling sacred Epics like the Ramayana and Maha Bharatha as mythology is not correct.
 12. Lot of literature has been created by scholars from the west to criticize and condemn our sacred texts and scriptures, Gods and Goddesses. We are not able to counter any of their theories or arguments because we are not knowledgeable either about our texts and other knowledge sources nor we have struggled to know details about their cultures and religions. Hence it is necessary for us to know not only about our roots but also the details of their texts.
 13. In the process of expansionism, it is often said that all religions are same and hence there is nothing wrong in following any other religion. But this is not correct. For example, Punarjanma and karma theory are not there in other religions. Our Sanatana Dharma is different and not same as other religions like Christianity or Islam. However, we do extend mutual respect to all other religions and don't hate or condemn any one. Nevertheless, we love and follow our own "Sanatana Dharma" like one loves one's own mother.

Spiritual Perspective:

1. Some people may think that in our religion, there are many Gods and anybody can chose any God as he likes and if somebody doesn't like any God, he may not chose any one of the Gods also. They say our religion is based on poly theism. But this is not correct. The Gods or Devathaas who are referred here are not Paramaatma the supreme God, Godhead or Paramaatma. When Paramaatma created these worlds, He has also created these Gods and gave some administrative powers (because of their earlier Janma Phala they are given better positions) like Indra, Varuna, Vayu etc. who will control rains, water, air etc. But

none of them is Paramatma. In fact, Paramaatma, resides within each of them and gets those activities performed by them. One may pray Indra for rains and Paramaatma (as Antaryaami), through Indra, may get the rains. But Indra cannot be considered as Paramaatma. It is only Paramaatma who can grant us Moksham, the ultimate and the eternal Bliss and all these Gods cannot get us Moksham.

2. Hence, Gods like Indra etc. are Jeevaas like us only except that they have some additional powers and hence are superior to us. The animals and plants are inferior beings to us.
3. Earth, water, air, fire, sky which around us are called Panchabhootams. The non living part of the worlds are made up of Panchabhootams only.
4. Hence, there are living beings, non living things and Paramaatma. There are three main schools in our philosophy Advaita, Visishtadvaita and Dvaita. As per Advaita, there is only Paramaatma which is really there and everything else is unreal. As per Visishtadvaita, the one we follow, the living beings(which we call Aatmaas/ jeevaas) and the non living things (Prakriti) are separate from Paramaatma but not separable from Paramaatma. They are subservient to Him and dependent on Him. In Dvaita, it is considered that Paramaatma, living beings and non living things are all different.
5. As per Visishtadvaita, Paramaatma resides in Paramapada. Except Paramapada, everything else will submerge into Paramaatma during Pralaya. Paramaatma will create the whole thing again, which is called Leela Vibhooti whenever He wants to give us another chance to attain Him in His Paramapada. Jeeva attaining Paramaatma is called Moksha, the state of eternal Bliss. That is the only place, jeevas can have unlimited Bliss for unlimited time. Otherwise, there are limits everywhere else in this Leela Vibhooti. That's why our ultimate goal shall be to attain Paramapada.
6. All living beings like us are essentially Aatmaas/ Jeevaas. The Jeevaas who are in Paramapada are of two types- those who have been always staying there with Him(Nityaas) and those who got relieved of this Samsara and attained Paramapada(Muktaas).
7. Jeeva/ Aatma cannot be seen with our eyes since it is not made up of Panchabhootams. Whatever we are seeing around in the nature including our body are all made up of Panchabhootams. Inside our physical body, there is another sheath called Praanamaya Kosa and within that another called Manomaya Kosa inside of which Jeeva resides.
8. Paramaatma also resides inside Jeeva who is called Antaryaami. In fact Paramaatma assumes five forms, i.e. in Paramapada which is called Karana Vaikuntham, at the milk ocean which is called Karya Vaikuntham because He performs the activities like creation etc. from there, Avataarams like Rama, Krishna, in the temples like Lord Srivenkateswara in Tirumala etc. and then as

Antaryaami.

9. All Jeevaas/ Aatmaas are similar in nature but their bodies may be different. Gnyaana is the nature of the Aatma which is known as Dharmi Gnyaana. Gnyaana is the also characteristic of Aatma. It is similar to the lamp which has light flame as its nature and the light flowing around as its characteristic. Gnyaana which flows out from Aatma is called “Dharma Bhoota Gnyaana”.
10. Dharma Bhoota Gnyaana flows through Manas and Gnyaana Indriyaas. Gnyaana Indriyaas are not same as our body parts like eyes, ears, nose, tongue or skin but those which are inside the body near Manas. You can compare Indriyaas to software and parts of the body to hardware. Gnyaana doesn't flow through Karmendriyaas and their associated limbs like legs, hands etc.
11. Manas will have stored data. This data may have been received earlier during this Janma or may in the previous Janmaas. These are called Samskaaraas. These Samskaaraas influence the Gnyaana flow as it flows through Manas. It is similar to the light flowing through coloured glass makes things look coloured. The process of thinking and decision making are also carried through Manas.
12. Jeevaas come to these worlds/ Leela Vibhooti to experience their old Janma Phala.
13. Based on the same, they get their bodies as well. After some time, a Jeeva may lose its body and then get another body. Losing its body is called death and getting another body is called birth and this process continues till such time, the Jeeva attains Paramapada. As long as the Jeeva is with these bodies which are made up of Pancha Bhootams, it will be going through some pleasures and some pains. But in Paramapada, there is not an iota of suffering and it is all eternal state of unlimited Bliss.
14. Paramaatma resides in both the living and the non-living as Antaryaami.
15. Our every action i.e. Karma, that we do, will be associated with a Phala/ fruit. It may be either Punya or Paapa. You will get Punya if you do good deeds and Paapa if you do bad deeds. These details are given in our Shaastraas. Thus we have to experience these fruits in this Janma or the subsequent ones.
16. Hence, as long as we are doing Karmaas, we will have to go through the cycle of births and deaths for experiencing the fruits of those Karmaas and can never attain Paramapada. It is also not possible for us not to do any Karma. However, in case you do Karma only as if it is done by Paramaatma with full conviction and without expecting any fruit for yourself, then we don't get the fruit/ Phala. That way you can avoid acquiring new Karma Phala. But, for spending the old Karma Phala, you have to still go through some births and deaths. This process of doing Karma in the name of Paramaatma without expecting any fruit is called Karma Yoga. In Karma Yoga, you perform all your duties without any selfish interest like gardener works for his master in the garden. But, in such a case, the gardener may get some

salary from his master, but in our case there is no such salary also.

17. When you start with Karma Yoga and over a period of time develop total detachment to all worldly activities and focus only on Paramaatma and meditate on Him only, it is called Gnyaana Yoga. In such a case, the Dharma Bhoota Gnyaana, instead of flowing outside, will flow only inside into the Aatma. Then, we will experience the true nature of Aatma which is Gnyaana, Ananda and its subservience nature to Paramaatma. Since all Aatmas are of the same nature with the same Paramaatma as Antaryaami, you will learn to consider and treat all others at par.
18. As you appreciate your relationship with Paramaatma as the servant and the Master, you start developing love towards Him. Then you will do everything for Him with love to make Him Happy and this is called Bhakti Yoga. It is like mother working for her baby out of sheer love without any selfish motive but for enjoying and longing the association of the baby and seeing her happiness.
19. Suppose you accept Him as your saviour, leave your responsibility completely on Him with 100% faith that He will take care of you and you will only carry out everything as His Kainkaryam/ service, and take refuge at His lotus feet through the recommendation and support Lakshmidēvi, that is known as Prapatti. Since you have given full responsibility only to Him to take care of you and you don't do anything to take care of yourself or even to attain Moksham, the burden lies with Paramaatma. Hence, Paramaatma will give you Moksham after the end of that Janma itself in such a case.
20. For any of these practices, you have to have control of your Indriyaas i.e. sensory organs as well as your body. For this purpose, some techniques of Ashtaanga Yoga (Yoga practices which involves eight different steps) can be adapted. They include Yama, Niyama etc.
21. These Yogas can be complementing to one another and run concurrently.
22. In order to meditate on the Paramaatma, there are various methods available like Japa, Dhyaana etc. The basic underlying principles remain as detachment from the worldly things and practice with full commitment and supreme faith in Paramaatma. Any obstacles will be removed by Him if you are sincere with your effort and have full faith in Him.
23. Aachaarya will provide us the correct path to attain Him. Aachaarya also will recommend our case to the Paramaatma and prepares us ready for His acceptability.
24. When we are sincerely longing for Him, Paramaatma Himself will arrange for us the right Aachaarya.
25. Hence, Aachaarya Samaashrayanam i.e. taking refuge at the lotus feet of Aachaarya, going through the Samskaara process (which include five activities like

giving Mantra by Aachaarya etc.) and getting ready for the Paramaatma's mercy is an important path in this regard.

26. Since Paramaatma is Almighty and He can only give Moksham, it is necessary that He should be happy. In order to make Him happy, it is good idea to please those who are liked by Him i.e. Bhaagavathaas or His Bhaktaas.
27. We have to carry out all these activities as prescribed in our Vedas/ Shaastraas since they are given by Him only.

Scriptural perspective:

1. We are blessed with treasures of spiritual literature. The important among them include (but not limited to) the Vedas(4)- Rig, Yaju, Sama, Atharva, Vedaangas(6)- Siksha, Vyaakarana, Chandas, Nirukta, Jyotishamu, Kalpamu, Upaangaas(4)- Mimamsa(Poorva and Uttara), Nyaaya Vistaara, Purana, Dharma Sastra, Upa vedas(4) -Ayurveda, Dhanurveda, Gandharvaveda, Arthasastra, Itihaasaas, Aagamaas, Darshanams etc.
2. There are two main divisions in the Vedas i.e. Karma Kaanda and Gnyaana Kaanda. Karma Kaanda deals with the knowledge that is useful for betterment in this Leela Vibhooti. They include subjects like science and politics, Ethics and social living also besides rituals like "Kaareri" for getting rains etc. Gnyaana Kaanada which is also known as the "Upanishads" or the "Vedanta" deals with what is Aatma, what is Paramaatma, what is their relation, how Aatma can attain Paramaatma, what are the obstacles and what is the fruit of attaining Paramaatma i.e. eternal Bliss.
3. Most part of the Vedas are lost and are not available today.
4. Traditionally the Vedas are learnt through Sishya(student) listening to Aachaarya(Master) and not through written texts. This is because, there are special sounds and methods of pronunciations which when written may be misinterpreted or wrongly chanted and may result in adverse outcome. However, in the recent past some efforts are being made to make the Vedas available in written form. Unfortunately many of our scriptures have been burnt or taken away by outsiders.
5. Vedaangaas will help in proper understanding the Vedas.
6. Upaangaas also will help in understanding the Vedaas. But, all these have independent high utility value as well.
7. Itihaasaas and Puraanaas are also used for understanding the Vedaas. They are in the form of historical stories which makes easy for understanding.
8. Smritis are essentially codes of conduct based on the intent of the Vedaas. There are many Smritis and their applicability keeps changing based on times etc.

9. The Dharma Shaastra/ sutras can be called the guidebooks of dharma as they contain guidelines for individual and social behavior, ethical norms, as well as personal, civil and criminal law.
10. The Nyaaya Vistara's most significant contributions to Indian philosophy was systematic development of the theory of logic, methodology, and its treatises on epistemology i.e. theory of knowledge.
11. Meemamsa means "critical investigation" and thus refers to a tradition of contemplation which reflected on the meanings of the Vedic texts although these concepts are very much applicable and used in many other fields. Ayurveda tells about biology and medicine etc., Dhanurveda tells about techniques of war, Gandharvaveda teaches music and dance and Arthasaastra teaches economics and politics etc.
12. Some of them like Dhanurveda are lost and are not available now.
13. The procedures to be followed in various temples, the construction, the consecration, the methods of conducting prayers and offering services etc. are detailed in the Aagama Shaastraas.
14. There are six Vedantik Darshanaas which essentially deal with the existence and nature of Brahma or the Paramaatma, nature of the Jiva or the individual Aatma, Jagat or the creation of the world, how Aatma returns to Paramaatma which is known as the Moksha or liberation which is the ultimate goal for the Aatma and what are the obstructions for Aatma to achieve that and how to achieve that. Different Vedantik Scholars have proposed different schools of thoughts in this regard.
15. Such vast treasures of knowledge and scriptures are not available anywhere in the world in any religion and culture. That's why, even more two thousand years back, many students used to come India for learning in Indian Universities like Nalanda and Takshasila. There are many people who have mastered all this knowledge and used to pass it on to the next generations.
16. However, now most of that knowledge is lost, may be because we stopped using them or putting them into practice due to the influence of the foreign rulers and our own disregard for them.

Practical Perspective:

1. Unless put into practice, any good system will not serve its purpose. However, since there is so much of literature, it is always difficult to assimilate, comprehend and follow the same in our daily routine.
2. Hence it is useful to know simple systematic daily practice to attain success both

in spiritual and secular spheres of our lives.

3. Some of the important things are to Get up early, do breathing exercises while doing Pranaayam and physical exercise during the Surya namaskaar while performing Sandhyavandaanam, do Mantra Japam, do Dhyaanam before Tiruvaaraadhanam visualizing Paramaatma near your heart, do tiruvaaraadhanam sincerely, link up your each and every action as Kainkaryam to Paramaatma, never lose focus, eat Sattvik food, maintain sattvik character by spending time in sattvik environment with sattvik people, practice Pancha maha Yagnyaas, follow the principles mentioned in Bhagavadgita, be conscious of your thoughts and actions throughout the day and keep reviewing the same so that you will not go out of the track of performing your actions as Karmayoga, balancing the activities in all the spheres in your various roles like son, student, citizen, friend etc. so that you will not work for success in one sphere at the cost of another, working for continuous improvement and value addition in whatever you do, developing good habits and good hobbies, working with perseverance, with a sense of commitment and urgency, with interest and full faith in Paramaatma, keep remembering the meaning of Dvaya Mantram all day, not carrying any negativity and bad feelings like anger or jealousy etc. in your Manas, considering all Jeevaas at par, not worrying on failure as long as you work with full dedication and leaving the rest to Paramaatma, chanting the name of the Lord as many times as possible, reading good books like stories of great saints like Aalwaars or great personalities like President Kalam etc. which give you energy and motivation, going to bed with a peaceful Manas without any ill feeling or negativity against anything or anybody, expressing gratitude to the Lord, to the Aachaaryaas and your seniors etc., doing Kainkaryams of His Bhaktaas are some of the points that may be addressed in our daily life.
4. **If you are enjoying the time when you are doing your Kainkaryams to the Lord and His Bhaktaas and feel like spending more and more time in such activities, then, it means that you are progressing in your spiritual pursuit. Otherwise, it means your progress is not satisfactory. It may be due either your present inputs and/ or your old Samskaaraas. While you have to review your present inputs like what you eat, with whom you spend time etc., to improve the situation, in order to help you come out of the old Samskaaraas, you have to submit yourself to the Lord with more sincerity and do more Japa(Ashtakshari). Ashtakshari defines that you are subservient to the Lord only and the Lord is the only Protector for you. He will help you in your pursuit. You can also take help of your Aachaarya to help you in progressing in your spiritual pursuit. Your commitment is of course important.**
5. Positive approach to life with a clear vision of the goal and the path to achieve it, complete faith on the Lord and carrying out your activities and duties with perseverance and commitment as Karma Yoga, chanting His name and being grateful to your seniors, Aachaaryaas and to the Lord are some of the important requirements that we have discussed in this regard today.

We have been discussing for a very long time and now it is time for us to conclude our discussions for today. In case of any queries or questions, we can sit on some other day. Let us remember our Kuladaivam, Lord Srinivasa, before our closing the session.

I: OK Naannagaaru, thank you.

Both:

Akhila Bhuvana Janma sthema bhangaadi leele

Vividha vinatha bhootha vraatha rakshaika deekhe

Sruthi sirasi vedeepte Brahmani Sreenivase

Bhavathu mama Parasmin semushee bhakti roopaa.

.....

Srimadvenkataramadesika sutam Kodanda Ramaasritam

Vaadhoolanvaya Sindhu seethakiranam Vaagbhooshanam me Gurum

Vignyaanadvaya saastra Panditavaram sachhaatra poojyam cha

Vaanee Sadmaanilayam Prasannahridayam Sribhashyakaaram bhaje

Kaasyapaanvaya samjaatham Saranyaarya padaarchitam

Vairaagya jaladhim Vande Rangaraamaanujam Munim

“KNOWING OUR ROOTS CONCLUDED”

“SARVAM SRIKRISHNARPANAMASTU”