

Divya Dvaita Drishti

GSB
Madhva



PREETOSTU KRISHNA PRABHUH

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Madhva Drishti

The super soul (God) and the individual soul (jeevatma) reside in the same body. But they are inherently of different nature. Diametrically opposite nature. The individual soul has attachment over the body

The God, in spite of residing in the same body along with the soul has no attachment whatsoever with the body. But he causes the individual soul to develop attachment by virtue of his karmas – Madhvacharya

tamasOmA jyOtirgamaya

We find many happy celebrations in this period of confluence of ashwiya and kartika months. The festival of lights dipavali includes a series of celebrations for a week or more - Govatsa Dvadashi, Dhana Trayodashi, Taila abhyanjana, Naraka Chaturdashi, Lakshmi Puja on Amavasya, Bali Pratipada, Yama Dvitiya and Bhagini Tritiya. All these are thoroughly enjoyed by us. Different parts of the country celebrate these days in one way or another. The main events are the killing of Narakasura by Sri Krishna along with Satyabhama, restraining of Bali & Lakshmi Puja on amavasya. Cleaning the home with broom at night is prohibited on other days, but on amavasya it is mandatory to do so before Lakshmi Puja. and is called alakshmi nissarana. Next comes completion of chaturmasa and tulasi puja.

We should try to develop a sense of looking for the glory of Lord during all these festivities. In all the complexities present in the world, the celebration of festivals has hidden meanings pointing to the greatness of Lord. It is a great opportunity to learn the habit of feeling the divinity in the events and the persons while we celebrate and make merry with our family and friends. We have been focusing on articles to help develop such a state of mind in the newsletters. A mind that becomes receptive to look for the divinity everywhere and everything.

There are certain dos and don'ts laid down and also some practices which have crept in which are against the original intent. To illustrate this, an example is given here of the unacceptable nature of placing Amla tree branches in tulasi.

Supremacy of Vishnu as a fact of Vedic teachings will be a continuing feature.

Articles by esteemed lady members of the group is introduced from the current issue. Devotion to divinity and its expression in various ways is a necessity. The singing of bhajans is a community activity which teaches the tenets of our holy scriptures and also the greatness of Lord in the form of praising his various attributes and stories illustrating them. As such lyrics are also important as the music and voice. These have great sentimental and emotional impact on the audience. Therefore we have to choose the author and type of songs carefully. Otherwise it becomes only a literary activity, many times misleading us. This is also dealt with in an article.

Unfolding Ramayana continues. Why did Rama kill Vali from behind? This is a frequent & contentious question. Correct understanding can be derived from Sriman Madhvacharya's works when Valmiki Ramayana is silent on issues. The reasons for that are given in another article.

This issue, on the whole has been planned to have many articles useful for beginning a serious study. We look out for suggestions about the subjects that can be included in future. With a feedback from the readers we can plan the issues with articles that are interesting and useful

In the service of Srihari and Guru Sri Madhvacharya

Team. GSB Madhva

Special Days of interest

- OCT 27 DWADASH - AKASHA DEEPA
- OCT 28 TRAYODASHI JALA POORANA
- OCT 29 NARAKA CHATURDASHI
- OCT 30 DEEPAVALI
- OCT 31 BALI PUJA
- NOV 11 KARTIKA EKA-DASHI
- NOV 12 UTTHANA DWADASHI - TULASI PUJA

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Divya Dvaita Drishti

FESTIVALS LIKE DEEPAVALI ARE GOD SEND FOR TRAINING OUR MIND TO SEE DIVINITY & ULTIMATELY REALIZE IT BY ASSOCIATING THE ACTS AND ENTITIES WITH GOD. HERE'S HOW

Deepavali - Spiritual Rituals

Festivals are fun. Deepavali, the festival of lights is undoubtedly the king of festivals. And now-a-days Deepavali is a festival of super diwali sales at steep discount prices – online or otherwise. Not to mention the gifts. Nothing wrong in all that. However, in the middle of all these, it is very easy to lose the core concept of Deepavali; the very reason why a festival as Deepavali was constituted and prescribed in the first place.

The rituals of Deepavali, like any other festival, train our mind. It serves us to

- To rekindle the thoughts of fleeting life, bondage and liberation, control of ego & surrender to Lord,
- As an aid to visualize and reaffirm the thoughts of divinity around us and in all activities and objects

How to connect the mere rituals to divinity? Read ahead; for that is the topic of this article.

Readers, Please Note: There may be some regional variations in the rituals of Deepavali described here and how it is done at your home. It does not matter. As long as the aachara praapta vidhi that has come to you through generations as sampradaya does not violate the essence of Deepavali and its core purpose, all is well and good. But where it is completely at logger heads – you know what to do. Dump the sampradaya and stick to shaastra. A classic example of this: Some people have this ridiculous ritual of eating fried fish after “jala poorana” – filling the water on Trayodashi night. Not only is this diametrically opposite to spirit of shaastra, it even trains the mind to reflexively associate jala poorana with satisfaction of palate and salivate. Gone is the thought of the Matsya avatar Vishnu. We have just become Pavlov’s dogs.

The five important & continuous days of Deepavali celebration are:

1. Dvadashi – Beginning Akasha Deepa
2. Trayodashi – Yama Deepa and Jalapoorana (Ganga Pooja or filling water)
3. (Naraka) Chaturdashi - Oil Bath, Laxmi Uthaana Puja
4. Amavasya – Dhanalakshmi Puja, Bali Puja
5. (Kartika Shukla) Pratipat – Go Puja

Various themes run through the process of rituals of worshipping Vishnu and other devatas during Deepavali. And we can see a prominent theme of highlighting Vishnu’s ashta kartrutva and its enablers.

Akasha Deepa (Dwadashi) & Yamadeepa (Trayodashi)

The Akasha Deepa and Yama Deepa revolve around the death, afterlife and its responsible devatas. It is meant to show the way to the pitrus returning after Mahalaya. Six of the eight devatas to whom lamps are lit in Akasha Deepa are associated with laya/samhaara – Yama, Dharma, Rudra, Pitru, Preta, Shyama and Shabala. The seventh lamp - Prajapati for whom the lamp is lit is associated with creation. And the eighth is for Bhudevi who provides the substratum for sustenance – stithi. And at the center of all is Damodara – Vishnu – the controller of all (creation, sustenance and destruction) and independent doer. He does the niyamana.

The purpose and placement of Akasha Deepa was described in the last month’s newsletter. Akasha Deepa is lit for a week, fortnight or a month. Yamadeepa is a south facing lamp placed on Trayodashi alone at sunset.

Jala Poorana (Trayodashi) & Oil Bath (Chaturdashi)

The water is filled into the vessel and Ganga Puja is done. Ganga represents purity. Here we need to remember that it is not Ganga who herself gives the purity. It is the attribute of Vishnu. Specifically one should think of Trivikrama, whose toe nails were responsible for the release of Ganga from the upper world. Such Ganga who washed the feet of Vishnu when flowing down got her purity by that very act of washing Vishnu’s feet. Now a days, there is no provision to “fill” the bathing container per say. The tap water flows directly into the geyser. But that need not be the reason to skip Ganga Trivikrama Puja. Here too one can just think and say the names of Trivikrama and Ganga. She is bestowed with the power of cleansing the sins of those who merely chant her name.

Gangaa gangeti yO brooyaat yojanaanaam shatairapi muchyate sarva papebhyo vishnulokam sa gacchati

The very next day – in the wee hours of morning one gets a bath with oil massage.

(Continued in Page 3)

Deepavali - Spiritual Rituals (Continued)

This bath is just not by the mere application of oil on the body followed by hot water bath. That would be just too bland. One has to remember to bring water in a small vessel (the one that was worshipped and filled the previous night) and oil and place them in front of Lord. Then do a mangalarati to Lord. Such worshipped oil has the presence of Lakshmi in it. Lakshmi herself is the abhimani deity of knowledge (jnaana). Ganga is the abhimani for purity (paavitrya).

We all know the underlying reason for taking the oil bath. It is to celebrate killing of Narakasura and freeing of 16108 princesses from his prison. The princesses are originally agni putras – sons of fire.

Narakasura represents the ajnaana – who causes the bondage (prison) for the princesses – the agni putras. All those desiring the knowledge of agnimeeLe (viz. Vedas) are agni putras (all of us). Such knowledge comes our way through Lakshmi who is especially present in the oil used in the bath.



This bath of jnaana (oil) coupled with the purity of our heart, mind and acts (water) is what Krishna will use as the tools to take us from bondage (bandha) to liberation (moksha).

Even when dissected in isolation, the act of Narakasura itself concludes similarly. As we know, Krishna fought Narakasura with his bow Sharnga (even though he was killed by chakra). Atharvanopanishat says

pranavo dhanuh sharohyaatmaa brahma tallakshyam uchyate |
apramattena veddhavyam sharavat tanmanyam bhavet | |

Meaning: The Pranava is bow. (Pranava or Aum is the crux of all Vedas. It has 3 parts – a, u ma. Accordingly there are 3 Vedas. The bow also has 3 parts. Such Pranava is the mechanism to reach the target - the Pranava Pratipaadya – the one extolled by Vedas i.e. Vishnu himself.) The arrow is the individual soul. The God is the target to shoot at. Just as one applies the arrow into the bow, one should apply oneself into Vedas and aim at the God. Just like the arrow strikes the target (but never becomes target by itself), the individual soul gets into the God (moksha), but remains distinct from it (no aikya).

Thus, a deep philosophical thought centered around Vishnu, liberation and its mechanism exists in the ritual of Naraka Chaturdashi. One just needs to start seeing it that way. Then the ritual itself (be it oil massage or bathing) becomes the conjugative instrument to connect with the Lord – the medium for anusandhana.

Additional thoughts around oil bath anusandhana

Oil Massage is not a one-time application. It is repetitive in nature. Again and again until the body absorbs it as much as it can. The oil of jnaana is also not a one time reading. It is applied again and again (Avartana) until the soul absorbs it and allowing its manifestation - the ever blissful nature of the soul concealed by several layers of ignorance and bondage.

The virtuous of the world rejoiced when Narakasura was killed and the imprisoned princesses were liberated. They celebrated with fireworks (ulkaa). The practice continues till date. The lighting of fireworks represents the manifestation of bliss. Just watch an innocent child lighting fireworks and then jumping around at the sight of its burning. Although all activities of ours are with a purpose, the act of rejoicing by jumping around (even adults do sometimes) by lighting fireworks is plainly the manifestation of the bliss and an activity without any reason. Similarly the liberated souls rejoice without any reason for their act – but as a pure by-product of manifestation of their unadulterated innate bliss in moksha.

Trivia: Dhanvi, one of the names in Vishnu Sahasra Nama means the one with the bow. It is the 77th name in VSN. $7 + 7 = 14$. One of the rare occasions Krishna used bow was against Narakasura later killing him which came to be known as Naraka Chaturdashi - the 14th day of Ashwija Krishna Paksha.

Lakshmi Uthaana Puja & Yama Tarpana (Chaturdashi)

Vishnu is yet to get up from his Yoga Nidra. That is yet to happen on Kartika Ekadashi. Roughly a fortnight away from Naraka Chaturdashi. Lakshmi however gets up early. Such Lakshmi is worshipped in the morning itself. Yama Tarpana is also given in the morning.

Fireworks are lit in the evening. From a shastra perspective, the evening fire work is more of just a display of fire (as ulkaa) to the southern skies serving the same purpose as Akasha Deepa – showing the way to Pitrus. It also pleases the pitrus. Pleasing the pitru is one of the paramount duties of progeny.



Deepavali - Spiritual Rituals (Continued from Page 4)

Alakshmi nissaraNa (Amavasya)

Lakshmi is just not about money alone. She takes many forms in our households; be it entrance (Dvara Lakshmi), granary (Dhaanya Lakshmi), progeny represented by cradle (Santana Lakshmi), wealth (Dhana Lakshmi), vehicles, cattle (Gaja Lakshmi), books (Vidya Lakshmi). All these are auspicious places of residence for Lakshmi. Lamps are taken to all these places with chanting of Sri Sukta, Sri-Srisha Guna Darpana and the light from the lamp is thought to drive out the very evils causing the destruction and reduction of all these sources of wealth—the very alakshmi is kicked out. Hence the name.

Bali Puja and Dhana Lakshmi Puja (Amavasya)

Bali is the grandson of Prahlada. A great devotee of Vishnu in spite of being a Daitya. It is Trivikrama's decree that we worship such great devotee on this day – Amavasya. In some places this is done on the next day – pratipat. Bali is the classic example of how ego can cause the downfall of an inherently virtuous person. Krishna says in Bhagavat –

Yasya anugraham ichaami tasya vittam haraamyaham

The one whom I try to bestow grace, I take away his wealth (when he feels egoistic due to his wealth power etc.). But this should not be a reason for anyone not to be a devotee of Vishnu. For those that never become egoistic due to the power and wealth and for those virtuous persons who use the wealth for good activities, he gives more wealth.

But all is not lost in Bali's case. Bali being virtuous, realizes his ego has caused his downfall. He sees he has nothing to give to the great Lord who owns everything.

We live with what Lord has given us. When this realization strikes Bali, he offers his head – symbolizing his ego. And the story of Bali after this is not given enough attention. When Bali offered himself to the Lord, Vishnu gives him the kingdom of rasatala. Humongous amount of wealth. He is even blessed to be the Indra of next kalpa. Then Vishnu sends his Sudrashana Chakra to protect Bali. Apparently not pleased with showering his blessings on the devotee Bali, Vishnu himself stands guard in his palace, thus giving Bali the fortune of seeing Vishnu any time all the time. This wealth granted later by Vishnu's grace stays with Bali. Whereas the wealth gained with rajasa means driven by ego didn't stay with him all the time. It is a lesson for us. And to remind ourselves constantly that let the weed of ego not sprout in our minds. Let the constant introspection backed by jnaana given by Lakshmi help us in this battle against ego. Let us remain humble. Because we don't really own anything to be boastful of. Everything belongs to Him.

Dhana Lakshmi Puja (Amavasya/Pratipat)

Businesses perform Dhana Lakshmi Puja with great pomp and show. And with great devotion. Rightfully so. Who doesn't want money? The amount spent on bursting of crackers becomes the status symbol. Vishnu is often forgotten in the process of giving importance to Lakshmi. And such puja doesn't yield result. Let this not happen. Let the worship of Lakshmi be in accordance with scriptural tenets. Generally this puja is done by a priest—as business men will be busy with other duties during this time. The business men should show interest in knowing how and why the puja is done in a particular way. If there is interest in the flow of money, then there should be equal (if not more) devotion to the deity (Lakshmi) that controls and enhances the flow of money. This is the ground rule. Lakshmi blesses with ample wealth only when her husband is given the rightful place in worship.

Go Puja (Kartika Shukla Pratipat)

Scriptures extol the presence of devatas in the cow. Such cow is worshipped specially on the Kartika Shukla pratipat. Not many people own or rear cows by themselves these days. It is perhaps a good idea to think of the protection of cows as our social obligation and set aside our contribution on this day with a solemn vow (mental sankalpa). It is the best we can do due to the modern constraints of living in cities, towns and suburbs

Conclusion

Deepavali is definitely more than a festive season of gifts, new dresses, joy, crackers and lamps. The process of seeing God in all the acts and rituals of Deepavali is paramount. Everything else is just an aid for this main purpose of remembering God and thanking him for what he has given. And being content with what he has given. For human life itself is a great gift that God has bestowed. Let us be thankful to God for this gift of life where we can think and act judiciously by looking beyond what we see and lighting the lamps of knowledge in our hearts and minds.

Tulasi Vivaha with Gooseberry branches? A Strict No-No

During Tulasi Vivaaha we see truckloads of Gooseberry (Amla. Konkani: Avalo) tree branches along with sugarcane brought to market. At some places tamarind tree branches are also sold. And we bring the Amla tamarind tree branches on Kartika Ekadashi and keep it in Tulasi. What is the scriptural background for this practice?

Padma Purana Brahmakhanda Tulasi Dhaatri Maahaatmya kathana says:

यज्ञा देवाश्च मुनयः तीर्थानि विविधानि च । धात्रीवृक्षम् समाश्रित्य तिष्ठन्ति कार्तिके सदा ॥

तुलसीवनमध्ये च धात्रिमूले तु कार्तिके । कुर्यात् हर्यर्चनं विप्र वैकुण्ठम् याति स ध्रुवम् ॥

धात्रीपत्रैः फलैर्विप्र श्रीहरिं चार्चयेद् द्विज । कोटिजन्मार्जितं पापं पूजया नश्यति क्षणात् ॥

In the month of kartika yajnas, devatas, munis and teerthas reside in the Amla tree. Therefore one who worships Vishnu under an Amla tree in kartika month resides in Vaikuntha. One who worships Vishnu with Amla leaves and berries gets his sins of crores of lives destroyed. It is also said

धात्रीछायां गतो यस्तु द्वादश्यां पूजयेद्धरिम् । तत्रैव भोजनं यस्तु ब्राह्मणानां तु कारयेत् ॥

One who worships Lord under the Amla tree on Kartika shukla dvadashi, serves meals to brahmanas and himself eats there will never get reborn.

These narrations in puranas make us think that it is compulsory to have Amla along with tulasi for worship on Utthana Tulasi Dvadashi. But we forget that it is also said

धात्रीपत्रं कार्तिके च द्वादश्यां तुलसीदलम् । चिनोति यो नरो गच्छेत् नरकं यातनामयं ॥

Amla tree or leaves in kartika masa should not be plucked. Tulasi leaves on dvadashi should not be plucked. One who does so will suffer in hell.

When we look at this, it becomes clear that the shAstra recommends Vishnu puja with vivaha to tulasi as well as Amla tree in kartika. So what should be done? One should first do the worship and vivaha of Srikrishna with tulasi. And then keep the vighraha at the base of Amla tree and do puja vivaaha with dhaatri tree. What if this is not possible due to restrictions of time and availability of Amla tree? One can do mAnasika anusandhAna of dhAtri tree near tulasi and do puja and vivaha with it. But at no cost should a branch of Amla tree be cut and put in tulasi. The dhatri tree has major presence of lakshmi devi in kartika and by cutting a branch of the tree will certainly bring on the wrath of Vishnu. Of course Amla berries can be used to make a garland to put on Vishnu along with tulasi mAIA.

The marriage ceremony of Srikrishna with Lakshmidivi in Tulasi is performed in the evening on a muhurta called ksheeraabdhhi.

संध्यायामात् परं यामादवाक् त्रिघटिका शिवा । क्षीराब्धिरिति तत्कालं इति वेदविदो विदुः ॥

3 ghatish (66 mins) from sunset is the period of Ksheeraabdhhi and a jnani should do tulasi vivaha in this period. Keeping an idol (and a shaligram if possible) a short marriage ceremony is conducted after worshipping Daamodara and Tulasyantar-gata Lakshmidivi with arghya paadya etc. The marriage can be done according to one's convenience.

Vishnu is avyaakrita grihastha. The couple , Vishnu and Lakshmi are since anAdi. Still we do this marriage every year and the beauty lies in knowing and doing it. The anusandhaana is same as for daily worship with arghya padya abhisheka etc. We could also arrange for a Shrinivasa kalyana at a time which is auspicious to us. The prayer to Lord when we do the vivaha of Damodara with tulasi is,

अनादिमध्यनिधन त्रैलोक्यप्रतिपालक । इमां गृहाण तुलसीं विवाहविधिनेश्वर ।

पयोघटैश्च सेवाभिः कन्यावद्वर्धिता मया । त्वत्प्रियां तुलसीं देव दास्यामि त्वं गृहाण भोः ॥

My Lord, being present everywhere you protect all. I have grown this tulasi with the loving care for a daughter and today, with devotion I am giving Her to you beautifully decorated with flowers and jewels.

After this, if it is convenient, we can take the idol and keep it below an Amla tree and do a similar worship and ceremony. If not we can have the anusandhana of a Amla-dhaatri near Tulasi itself and simultaneously do the puja where you can put a gooseberry/Amla garland to Damodara.





Divya Dvaita Drishti

Who is Tulasi?

There is no Hindu house without a Tulasi. Tulasi is absolutely needed for Vishnu Puja. One can offer a tulasi dala, or a single leaf, or reuse a Tulasi stem and offer it to God. Who is this Tulasi who is so dearest to Lord? A seemingly simple question. But this question needs analysis at multiple levels.

At the most gross level - Tulasi is a plant. A gross physical manifestation with root stem leaves. Those are all the externally visible insentient parts of the plant's gross body (jaDa). As simple as that. It is these plant parts that have ayurvedic medicinal properties.

For our next level of analysis, we need to consider the Tulasi plant as a living thing. And so it has a soul. Therefore it is sentient (chetAna). Just like our soul resides in the body we call as ours, each Tulasi plant has a different resident soul.

The Tulasi that we worship is neither. We do not worship the gross Tulasi plant. Neither do we worship the soul residing in the Tulasi plant. We worship the abhimani devata of the plant of category called Tulasi.

Vedas are replete with statements like the mudabravaet, apObruvan etc. The soil talked. The water talked etc. Everyone knows that insentient objects don't talk. Then why does Vedas use this cryptic language of personification of insentient? It would be a gross mis-judgement to marginalize this personification similar to animals talking in Panchatantra for conveying a certain moral. The Vedic statements personifying insentient is actually referring to the abhimani devata of that object talking and expressing themselves.

Just as the river whose abhimani devata is GangaDevi is called Ganga, so is the plant whose abhimani devata is Tulasi is also called Tulasi. This abhimani devata called Tulasi is worshipped and is entirely different from the resident soul of that plant.

There are differing opinions about who is Tulasi, the abhimani devata. But first a clarification on who Tulasi is NOT is of order. Tulasi is not Vrunda, the wife of Jalandhara. The story of Jalandhara goes like this: Jalandhara, an asura was invincible due to boons. Vishnu had to resort to deceit and cheat Vrunda to think he is Jalandhara himself, leading to sexual union. Upon subsequent realization, Vrunda curses Vishnu. Vishnu then makes Vrunda as the pulpit on which the Tulasi plant, dearest to him is planted. This story from Padma Purana never tells Vrunda herself is or became Tulasi. That is a concoction of a later day. In reality Vrunda and Tulasi are totally different.

There are three views prevalent about Tulasi's identity. There are statements somewhat supporting all three views

1. Tulasi is Lakshmi herself - Pancharaatra quotes exist such as ramA shrl tulasIsaMsthA kapilastatra dEvata and tulasyaAH shrIH kapilastu niyAmakaH suggesting Tulasi is Lakshmi herself
2. Tulasi is a different devata altogether with Lakshmi's perpetual presence in her - Tulasi is also mentioned in Bhagavatam as the devata who was born out of the tear drops of Dhanvantari. Lakshmi also takes birth in the same amruta mathana. Hence they have got to be different entities. Thus Tulasi is a devata having continuous uninterrupted perpetual presence of Lakshmi in her. She is not mentioned anywhere in Devata taratamyā but she always has her mind fixated on Vishnu. It is due to this devotion of Tulasi that Lakshmi & Vishnu have placed themselves in Tulasi all the time (just like Vishnu's presence in Saligrama). Note the perpetual presence of Lakshmi Sannidhana coinciding with perpetual presence of Vishnu.
3. Jambavati is Tulasi - Padma Purana says Tulasi Jambavati Prokta. Harikathamrutasaara also opines so. Thus the opinion is that Tulasi is Jambavathi seems to be more correct than any other. In any case, Jamabavati is one among the shanma-hishi (6 wives of Krishna.) The 6 belong to the orbit (kakshaa) 6. And they are just below Garuda Shesha and Rudra in hierarchy. Their specialty is that they all have nitya-sannidhana of Lakshmi in them. Even among the 6, Jambavati has the highest presence of Lakshmi in her. As devatas have the capability to take multiple births, it is also possible that the devata born during churning of ocean from the tears of Dhanvantari is none other than Jambavati herself as Tulasi.

Thus it is this third view that seems to be most appropriate among all. Hence Tulasi is none other than Jambavati.

Just like the Sudarshana Chakra (which is Vishnu himself) is said to have Durga as abhimani devata some times and Kaama as the abhimani devata at other times, we could apply the same principle here and say: Tulasi plant has Jambavathi (as Tulasi) as the intermediate abhimani and finally Lakshmi herself as the main abhimani.

There is special presence of Lakshmi in Tulasi form of Jambavati on Utthana Dvadashi which itself is due to the grace of Lord placing his special form in Lakshmi for that day. If Lakshmi herself was Tulasi, then we could have performed Tulasi Vivaha on any day of the year (just like Srinivasa Kalyana is performed on any day of the year), not just Utthana Dvadashi. Hence we can conclude that Tulasi is Jambavati or a form of Jambavati having nitya sannidhana of Lakshmi endearing herself to Vishnu.

Chaturmasa, Yoganidra, Awakening of Vishnu & His marriage

Ashada Ekadashi is the first day of chaturmasa—the four month period when Vishnu slips into yoganidra - something that can be likened to a sleep but not exactly sleep. As the Lord is forever sleepless. Exactly four months later Vishnu wakes up on Kartika Ekadashi and gets married the very next day to Tulasi. A sleep for the sleepless, an yearly marriage custom for the one who is always married to Lakshmi - all of these are tough concepts to reckon with. In this article, a spiritual perspective is presented by correlating it with the overall timeline and events in the four month period. There are no hard and fast pramanas for the perspective. Nonetheless the similarities on multiple fronts don't seem accidental either.

Roughly a month after Ashada Ekadashi is the time when Vishnu has slipped in deep sleep. It is Shravana Nakshatra of Shravana Masa, the day of Upakarma for Rgvedis. Traditionally Rgvedis undertook 4.5-5 months of rigorous and systematic studying of Veda from the day after Rgupakarma (or 3 days after - based on anadhyayana around upakarma). It is followed by Utsarjana at the end of 4.5-5 month period. Utsarjana is about stopping the systematic and rigorous Rgveda study. [systematic and rigorous study are key words.] Study in the sidelines still continues all year round. Vedanga, Itihasa and Purana were also studied for rest of the year. But there was also focus on making a living. Pretty realistic plans of those days.

The lack of rigorous and systematic study of Veda for the rest of the year led to rusting of the Vedic knowledge (= Vishnu's knowledge). As we can roughly agree - Vishnu vismruti is due to rusted knowledge of Vishnu. That is equivalent to Vishnu sleeping inside us. The rusted knowledge needs further systematic studies. This invigoration is again on the Rgupakarma.

But Vishnu (jnaanarupa in us) has already slipped into sleep by Ashada Ekadashi because there was no systematic and rigorous adhyayana in the prior 6 months. It takes a while to get upto speed again with rusted Vedic knowledge and move ahead. And the remaining 3 months of chaturmasa period is about waking him up (inside us) by gaining his knowledge. The waking process involves studying about him. Doing what he pleases. (No kaamya karma. Only activities enabling the adhyayana).

As we study, do manana and nidhidhyasana we get out of the slumber resulting from the lack of his remembrance and knowledge. And he has gotten up by Kartika Ekadashi - meaning we have substantially studied Veda and understood Vishnu supremacy in those 3 months since Rgupakarma. Thus lasts the Yoganidra of Vishnu inside us and our efforts to awaken him starts yielding efforts. The rules and rituals of Chaturmasya thus play an enabling role in the Vedic studies of awakening Vishnu in us. [On a side note - would it be right to say - that if one person strictly does the Chaturmasya vruta but does not even do adhyayana of a single Rgvedic Sukta - would it be equal to nicely tilling and preparing paddy field, but not planting even a single paddy?]

Why would Vishnu marry right after waking up (Tulasi Vivaha)? Here one important prameya from Katakopanishat finds connection. It clearly says

naayamaatmaa pravachanena labhyah | na medhayaa na bahunaa shrutena |

Vishnu isnt available to those who have listened and studied veda with their intellect. Clearly it should have triggered awakening/enhancement of devotion in us. Only then Vishnu will wake up. And the first thing Vishnu does after waking up is go and sit in the tulasi katte. And marry next day. The very next Kataka Upanishat statement says something interesting. The Vishnu is available to those who he likes, to whom he gives his prasada.

yamevaisha vrunute tena labhyah

Here we can see the word vrunute also can refer to the act of marrying. This is a rather interesting coincidence with Tulasi Vivaha. Such Vishnu who is pleased by the devotion arising out of his study in chaturmasya awakens in us in his jnaana form and if we indeed followed up the adhyayana with growth of devotion, then he will be pleased with us and "marry us". And he will vivrunute tanoom svaam - give himself to us (i.e. show his svarupa as per devotee's योग्यता).

And just because such Vishnu has given bimba saakshaatkaara to us, the adhyayana doesn't end on Kartika ekadashi. It still continues till Utsarjana - implying that even an bimba-aparokshi should do adhyayana beyond and till the end.

Please note: This effort to derive an adhyatmic interpretation in line with prameyas and existing practices does not rule out the importance of chaturmasa vruta, tulasi vivaha which are all mentioned in puranas and smrutis. On the other hand, the intention is to encourage its wholehearted adoption.

There is a feeling among sections of people that Chaturmasa vruta is only for yati. Not so. Also, some people stick just to symbolic meanings and ignore the aachara. Aachara and Vichaara are two wings of the bird. No Aachara and only Vichara makes one armchair philosopher. No vichaara and only aachara is no better than blind belief. Only when the two wings are exercised does the bird soar the heights of spiritual skies and bask in the glory of the God Vishnu.

Ramayana unfolded - Why did Rama kill Vali from behind?

[In this series, we will address some of the common misunderstandings people have regarding our scriptures, our God. Last time we saw the reasoning behind Rama leaving Sita. This time let us see another incident of Rama killing Vali from behind.]

Lord Rama's killing of Vali from behind is discussed in detail in Valmiki Ramayana itself. Many have casted a doubt on Rama's otherwise stainless character because of Him killing Vali from behind. Let us see what Valmiki says about this incident and subsequently go over Madhvacharya's commentary of MBTN. Vali himself argues with Rama on the same lines, which Valmiki explains in one full chapter dedicated to the rants of Vali.

We should note that Vali was quite aware of who Rama was and in fact says this to Rama before putting forth his argument:

कुलीनः सत्त्व सम्पन्नः तेजस्वि चरितव्रतः | रामः करुणवेदी च प्रजानां च हितेरतः ॥

सानुक्रोशो महोत्साहः समयज्ञो दृढव्रतः | इति एतत् सर्वं भूतानि कथयन्ति यशो भुवि ॥

"Rama is born in a great family, is powerful, resplendent, keeper of vows, merciful, is engaged in people's welfare, sympathetic, has a great zeal towards doing good deeds and is committed to it; He is also knower of time and action – thus speak all the living beings on this earth" [Valmiki Ramayana 4-17-17, 18]

राम राघव कुले जातो धर्मवान् इति विश्रुतः |

"..born in Raghava's lineage, Rama is known as a moralist, a knower of Dharma." [VR 4-17-28]

In spite of knowing Rama, Vali hurt by Rama's arrow, in angst and fury, puts forth, a series of arguments which seem very convincing at the first read. Let us go over each of them and the answers to each of these by Lord Rama:

- Vali's logical question: Rama is not a king and hence has no right to punish Vali.
- Even if Rama is a king, he rules only Ayodhya and Vali has not done any harm to Rama in the city of Ayodhya.

Rama breaks down both these arguments by saying that He is working under the order of Bharata and that Ikshvaaku dynasty rulers head the whole of universe. Rama Himself says this to Bharata after making the latter, the head of Ayodhya.

“त्वं राजा भरत भव स्वयं नराणाम् | वन्यानां अहमपि राज राण्मृगाणाम् ॥

'Bharata, you rule over humans and I shall be the king of the beings in forests...' [VR, Ayodhya Kanda, 2-674-17]. When entire earth belongs to the rulers of Ikshvaku dynasty, there is no question of city of Ayodhya or a small portion of a forest

- Vali: What wrong did I do to Rama for Him to kill me?

Rama says that the very immoral act of Vali misbehaving with brother's wife is the reason for Rama killing him.

तदेतत् कारणं पश्य यदर्थं त्वं मया हतः | भ्रातुर् वर्तसि भार्यायां त्यक्त्वा धर्मं सनातनम् ॥

"You misbehaved with Sugriva's wife, ignoring sanaatana Dharma. This reason for which I have killed you" [VR 4-18-18]

- Vali's counter: Monkeys need not follow the dharma humans follow. Animals don't have to follow morality which humans preach. Rama has not followed Dharma by killing a monkey. Why did Rama have to kill from behind?

Rama questions back Vali on how can Vali speak of so much of Dharma, if he says that he is just a monkey? How can a monkey who doesn't know Dharma talk about what Dharma a human being should follow? (We should remember the episode of Vali following sanaathana dharma, doing sandhyavandana, following Vedas etc. Vali is trying to hide behind a false veil and trying to escape saying that he is just a monkey). Rama continues his reply saying that if Vali thinks he is a monkey, then Rama is a hunter and He just hunted an animal in the forest. For a kshatriya king, hunting is legitimate and Rama did nothing wrong by hunting an animal. This also answers Vali's 5th point of killing from behind - that it is but quite natural for human Kings to go on hunting and hunting can be done from behind the bushes, from far away, and without the knowledge of the animal being hunted.

- Vali: Had Rama asked, I would have brought back Seeta from Ravana. I would have held Ravana by his neck and brought him down to Rama's feet.

मैथिलीं अहं एकाहना तव च आनीतवान् भवेः ॥ राक्षसं च दुरात्मानं तव भार्यापहारिणम् | कण्ठे बद्ध्वा प्रदद्यां ते अनिहतं रावणं रणे ॥

Ramayana unfolded - Why did Rama kill Vali from behind?

“...At the first instance, you should have asked me to bring back Sita, and I would have brought that evil demon Ravana, in one day; and I would have brought him by holding him by his neck and without killing him, and would have presented Sita to you. [VR 4-17-49,50]

Rama retorts by mentioning that Vali himself is at fault by taking away, Ruma, the wife of Sugriva. Who will bring Ruma back? Rama wants to punish Ravana because He abducted Sita. It is impossible for Rama to take help of Vali who has committed the same sin (of taking away another's wife.) Vali's faulty logic is that Ravana alone is evil, as he abducted Sita. How about his own evil act of abducting Ruma, Sugreeva's wife? Rama follows Dharma, by punishing Vali and later by punishing Ravana for the same sin. At this juncture, Vali is convinced about his bad deeds and asks Rama to forgive him.

त्वं हि दृष्टार्थं तत्त्वज्ञः प्रजानां च हिते रतः | कार्य-कारण सिद्धौ च प्रसन्ना बुद्धिः अव्यया ||

"Rama, You alone are the knower of dharma, artha, kaama, moksha; You are the one who takes care of your subjects; your intellect is faultless and is capable of judging the causes and their effects. [VR 4-18-47]

मामपि अवगतं धर्मात् व्यतिक्रान्त पुरस्कृतम् | धर्म सम्हितया वाचा धर्मज्ञ परिपालय ||

"Oh, Rama, the knower of Dharma, I am the foremost among those who has not followed Dharma. Please take care of me by freeing me from guilt by your righteous words" [VR4-18-48]

But, alas! we are not convinced yet! Why did Rama have to kill Vali from behind? He could have confronted Vali upfront and killed him. This would have been a matter of pride for Rama and His fame would have been much more for killing a strong opponent like Vali.

Some people mention about a boon given by Shiva to Vaali, that Vali gets half the power of his opponent. i.e., if anyone comes to fight Vali in a battle, Vali absorbs half of the power of the person who appears before him. So, Rama did not want half of His power to go to Vali and hence decided to hide behind the bushes to kill him. This is not correct. From Chaturmukha Brahma, everybody, including Shiva are inferior to Rama. Rama is not bound by Shiva's boon to Vaali; Rama can surpass any such boons, as we have seen earlier too when Rama breaks the bow of Lord Shiva which Shiva had blessed to be unliftable. Lord Rama who is the Lord of all beings is not bound by anybody's words.

यः प्रेरकः सकललोकबलस्य नित्यं पूर्णाव्ययोच्चबलवीर्यतनुः स्वतन्त्रः |

किं तस्य दृष्टिपथगस्य च वानरोऽयं कर्तेशचापमपि येन पुरा विभग्नम् ||

"What can this monkey (Vali) do even if seen, to One Who eternally controls the strength of the entire world, Whose body consists of strength and prowess which is infinite and undecaying, and Who is independent, and by Whom the bow of Isvara was broken previously." MBTN 6.21

Then, what is the real reason for Lord Rama to kill Vali from behind? Madhvacharya answers this question in MBTN. Vali was a devotee of Rama (we have seen in the 4th paragraph in this article, about Vaali knowing Rama) and Vali would have fallen at the feet of Rama and would have taken shelter, had he seen Rama. Lord Rama, being the upholder of Dharma, could not have killed a person who had fallen at His feet. Thus, Vali would have survived without being punished for his misdeeds, and the subsequent incidents of Ramayana would not have happened. Knowing this very well, Lord Rama decided to kill Vali without appearing in front of him. The compassionate Lord also tells this to Vali:

“यदि वाञ्छसि त्वम् | उज्जीवयिष्य..” “If you desire to live longer, I shall revive you.” MBTN 6.22

But Vali, being convinced about the reason for Rama wanting to kill him, decides against it. What better than dying being killed by Lord Rama? Vali is so convinced about Rama granting the Kingdom of monkeys to Sugreeva that He says this before dying:

त्वया हि अनुगृहितेन शक्यं राज्यं उपासितुम् | त्वत् वशे वर्तमानेन तव चित्त अनुवर्तिना || शक्यं दिवं च आर्जयितुं वसुधां च अपि शासितुम् |

"When you favour someone, a person becomes capable enough to govern a kingdom; such a person by being himself under your control and following your orders, can rule the earth, why just a kingdom? Why just this earth, he can even rule the heaven." [Valmiki Ramayana 4-18-56, 57]. Remember always that Lord Rama is 'guna-paripoorna' (full of auspicious attributes) and 'dosha-doora' (defectless). Next time, someone talks about Rama's defects, you know what to say! Have more questions about Ramayana, or about Rama's actions? Write to us.

Bhajans - Which? Why? How?

- Shantala Isloor

Singing Bhajans has been an integral part and tradition of our lives. Now a days, it has lost its place in the households. And has been restricted to the temples. Even there it is sung to exhibit the singing prowess of the artist in many cases. Yet, there are some who sing to please, praise and extol the Supreme Lord with utter devotion.

1. Does mere devotion please the Lord?
2. How should one sing them?
3. What type of bhajans can one sing? Whose compositions are the best?
4. What should be the intention? What should one ask in return ?

Let us try to find answers to the above questions.

1. What pleases the Lord: Knowing the Lord, his attributes (guNa), his activities (kriya) and also knowing that the Lord is not different from his guNa kriya pleases him. Understanding the keertana counts. Then what about Devotion (Bhakti)? [If the question crosses the mind, then one has to know "what is bhakti". Sometimes the state of mind comes across as devotion. For instance, sometimes the worldly miseries bring the feeling of humility (deena bhaava) and can be mistaken for bhakti.] Blind devotion is not enough - as it is just that - blind.

Bhakti is knowing him and loving him more than anything else in the world. It is not a temporary phase where one swings to the tune (raga) and beats (taala). Rather it is the constant and consistent flow (like the uninterrupted flow of oil) of love towards Lord arising out of correct knowledge of magnanimity and majesty of His character/attributes and greatness & peculiarity of his exalted actions. And such unconditional love that exceeds the love of money, merry & men (women) [All the things that we deem essential for this life] even in the face of insurmountable adversities. Such an exalted love is only possible when we attempt to understand Him as He is. This is the very definition of Bhakti/Love of God laid out by Madhvacharya and Jayatirtha. Anything else is not bhakti; however tried to be masked so.

2. The best way to sing then is by knowing

- That the singer and Lord are two different entities; the Lord being supreme to all other entities in the world.
- That, all other deities are his subordinates. In no way they are equal or superior to the Lord; Not even in mukti.
- And that there exists a gradation (hierarchy – taratamya) among them.

So then, tune and beats (raga and taala) are not important? They are important but of lesser priority when compared to the devotion arising out His knowledge. This has been aptly captured by Purandaradasa in the song

kELanO hari tALano | tALa mELagalliddu prEmavillada gAna kELanO |

That Vishnu will neither hear nor bear the bhajans (however melodious it is) even with the best background accompaniments and top-of-the-line rhythm, tempo and tune; alas! when the main ingredient viz. devotion is missing in the recipe.

3. Having said that, it is now easy to find a suitable composition. It has to be composed by someone with the as-is knowledge of God in line with points quoted above. Not only they should know the aforesaid points, but they should have realized God beyond reasonable doubt. As the composer is the first singer, it is preferable to sing to the raga and taala that he/she has set. Who are such composers? Dasas like Purandaradasa, Kanakadasa, Vijayadasa, Gopaladasa, Harappanahalli Bheemavva, Helavanakatte Giriyamma are some who meet the criteria (to name a few) but not completely limited to the aforementioned list. Not to forget Madhvacharya himself being the first dasa with his Dwadasha Stotra compositions. They not only give the correct knowledge of God (by none other than Vayu), but also can be sung in beautiful tunes. Also not to forget Sripadaraja Swami who rejuvenated it and led to the upcoming Dasa Sahitya revolution.

Why only them? Why not any devotional song written by some poets or filmy devotional songs?

Because these compositions were not written with the right sense i.e. to please the Lord. Neither were they written by knowing the Lord in the way he is meant to be known as he desires to be known. Nor were they written by realizing the Lord. How can blind lead the blind? They are just flowery literature and can wow us by its word play, raga and taala. Emotions arising in our mind upon listening to such artistic rendering is just the appreciation by our pleased and satiated senses; and is far from pleasing the Lord.

4. Now the intentions and the returns. One may seek worldly treats in return. The Lord being the epitome of compassion will

(continued in Page 11)

Vishnu in Scriptures - 2

(Cont'd from previous issue) In the last article we have seen how Vishnu is the only divinity described as the 'Supreme' in the Rigveda, through a few citations from it. In this writeup we can acquaint ourselves with a few citations from the other Vedas where Vishnu's primacy becomes crystal clear.

i) नारायणं महाज्ञेयं विश्वात्मानं परायणम्।(Mahanarayana upanishad, Yajurveda)

Narayana is the One who is supremely worthy of being known, the Lord of the universe and the supreme goal.

ii) नारायण परं ब्रह्म तत्त्वं नारायणः परः। नारायण परो ज्योतिरात्मा नारायणः परः॥ (Mahanarayana upanishad, Yajurveda)

Narayana is the supreme Brahman(God), Narayana is the supreme reality. Narayana is the supreme light, Narayana is the Supreme indwelling Lord of all.

iii) अनन्तमव्ययं कवि ँ् समुद्रेन्तं विश्वशम्भुवम्। पद्मकोशप्रतीकाश ँ् हृदयं चाप्यधोमुखम् ॥(Mahanarayana upanishad)

The infinite, unchanging, omniscient Lord resides in the oceans and is the cause of happiness to the world. He is to be meditated upon in the heart which is like an inverted lotus bud.

iv) हरि ँ् हरन्तमनुयन्ति देवा विश्वस्येशानं वृषभं मतीनाम्। (Mahanarayana upanishad, Yajur Veda)

Hari, the destroyer(who destructs the worlds during pralaya or he who destroys sins), is the Lord of the universe; He being the greatest, is followed by all gods like servants.

v) सोऽध्वनः पारमाप्नोति तद्विष्णोः परमं पदम्॥ (Kathopanishad, Yajurveda)

(He who achieves control over his mind etc.) will reach the other end of the path of his journey, which is the abode of Vishnu.

vi) एको ह वै नारायण आसीन्न ब्रह्मा नेशानो नापो नाग्निषमौ नेमे द्यवापृथिवी न नक्षत्राणि न सूर्यो न चन्द्रमाः॥ (Maha upanishad, Sama Veda)

Before creations, there was only Narayana. No Brahma, No Shiva, no Varuna, Agni nor the presiding deities of sky, earth, stars, sun and the moon.

vii) नारायणाद्ब्रह्माजायते। नारायणाद् रुद्रो जायते। नारायणादिन्द्रो जायते...॥ (Narayana upanishad, Atharva Veda)

Brahma is born from Narayana, Rudra is born from Narayana, Indra is born from Narayana...

There are many such examples in the Vedas among which a very few are cited here. These quotations are just pointers from all the 4 Vedas to the fact that Vishnu is the Supreme cause of the universe and is also its destroyer, he who is flawless, possessing infinite virtues and is the God of all gods. (To be cont'd...)

Bhajans - Which? Why? How? (Contd from Page 10)

grant them, no doubt, but then the seeker will be further bounded by circuit of mundane worldly existence (samsara saagara). Hence one should ask for the right knowledge which leads to bhakti through vairagya (disinclination towards worldly affairs) - which in turn leads to more right knowledge. This in turn leads one to release from samsara - to mukti i.e. liberation

Bhajan singing thus satisfies the "navavidha bhakti" one has to have towards the lord.

shravanam keertanam vishnoh smaranam padasevanam | archanam vandanam dasyam sakhyam atmanivedanam | |

By singing, one is doing 'keertanam'. Simultaneously listening to it is 'shravanam'. By thinking and knowing the meaning of the song and the attributes of the lord one is doing 'smaranam'. As this is done as a seva to the lord with dedication, it can be counted as 'padasevanam' which also satisfies the 'archanam' and 'vandanam' aspects. As one proceeds, a strong sense of 'dasya bhava' develops along with the 'sakhya bhava'. There is a realization that the lord alone has been the constant companion since time immemorial and will remain so eternally, while the rest come and go in between. As the session culminates with 'kayena vacha manasa...' one is doing 'atma nivedana'.

Knowing this, one can proceed to know the meaning of some commonly sung bhajans in upcoming installments of this series.

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Know the Masters - I (Sri Madhvacharya)

- Gururaj Bhandarkar

Knowing about the lives of the stalwarts of our tradition is important not only to appreciate the glory of the lineage which we owe allegiance to, but also to draw inspiration from their illustrious lives. We as Maadhwas have no dearth of personalities whom we can look up to as role models. Our creed has in fact produced a huge cluster of exalted personalities in the past, whose integrity, intellectual ability, unflinching faith in Dharma, zeal to uplift the society etc. are qualities which would dramatically improve our lives even if incorporated to a small extent. This series of articles intends at acquainting the readers with the biggest names of the Dvaita tradition who carried forward the torch of knowledge lit by Sri Madhwacharya, with great aplomb. Sri Madhwacharya and his able successors were reformers in the true sense who convinced the masses at the intellectual level proving to the world that their 'Bhakti movement' was not one among the others, but a unique one which channelised Bhakti in the most comprehensive way by developing a robust method of rational thinking not to be found in any other school of thought that advocates the path of devotion. It can be safely claimed that Dvaita vedanta is the most equipped school in the history of philosophy as it satiates both the emotional and the intellectual interests of its followers, all thanks to Sri Madhwa and the galaxy of successors that embellished the Maadhwa universe. Putting 'first things first', we shall have a bird's eye view of the glorious life of the founder of this fertile school of thought who was a genius of the highest order, a trail-blazer, a personification of wisdom, an enigmatic personality whose invincible adventures were not only limited to debates and discourses, but also included wrestling, swimming, climbing the most arduous of mountains and many such feats which we can hardly imagine in the life of a saint, whose very name sent shivers down the spines of opponents, a master whose rise couldn't be prevented even by the most hostile environment that he had to face, an unmatched theist, a courageous pioneer who never hesitated to break away from the philosophical norms of his time; Sri Madhwacharya a.k.a. Sri Ananda tirtha. The following are a few highlights of his spotless life.

Born: 1238 C.E.(Vilambi samvatsara, Ashwija Shuddha Dashami i.e. Vijaya Dashami) at Pajaka near Udupi in Karnataka.

Parents: Madhyageha bhatta(a revered scholar of his time) and Vedavati to whom Sri Madhwa was born as a result of their severe austerities at the Ananteshwara temple in Udupi for 12 years. He was named 'Vasudeva'.

Siblings: An elder sister viz. Kalyani devi who is said to be the composer of the famous Laghu Vayu stuti and some other stotras and a younger brother who was born after Vasudeva convinced his parents that he would become a saint only after another son(who was later given sainthood by Madhwa himself and renamed Vishnu tirtha) was born to them as they were reluctant in permitting Vasudeva to take sainthood.

Ashrama Guru: Sri Achyutapreksha Acharya; from whom the Vasudeva took sainthood(sannyasa deeksha) at a very young age. The former renamed Vasudeva as 'Purna prajna' seeing his extraordinarily vast knowledge. Later on, he also ordained Purna prajna as the successor to the throne of his revered lineage and named him 'Ananda tirtha'. Not only is the name 'Ananda tirtha' synonymous with "Madhwa"(Madhu=Ananda=Bliss, Va=Tirtha= scriptures/knowledge; thus both the names mean 'he whose works disseminate bliss') who is described as the third incarnation of Lord Vayu in the Vedas (Balitha sukta and Pavamana sukta of Rigveda) but it is the same person i.e. Ananda tirtha who has been called Madhwa in the Vedas, as proclaimed by himself and also confirmed by the puranas. It is thus noteworthy that the name Madhwa is a Vedic one by which the founder of Dvaita Vedanta is identified.

It is indeed unusual that Sri Madhwa owes nothing to his Guru Achyutapreksha, as far as the doctrines of his school are concerned. On the other hand, Achyutapreksha himself gave up his earlier beliefs and accepted the doctrines of Sri Madhwa. The Dvaita school of Vedanta was thus single handedly developed by Madhwa unlike other Acharyas who had good philosophical backing and only had to systematically organize and improvise the thoughts of their Gurus and propagate them.

Tours and triumphs: Sri Madhwa is the only other Acharya to have traveled the length and breadth of the nation, after Sri Shankara. In his first visit to Badri at an early stage of his life, he is said to have traveled beyond the well known Badri and reached Uttara Badri or Vishala Badri, the abode of Lord Veda Vyasa which is inaccessible to mortals. After receiving several instructions directly from Vyasa, Madhwa returned to Udupi, visiting several other places on the way. In these pilgrimages, Sri Madhwa could sow the seeds of his doctrine all along the country. It was not at all an easy task though. He faced stiff opposition from the most accomplished scholars of the time, most of them being upholders of the Advaita school which was the order of the day. However Madhwa's wit and learning were too much for them to overcome. Many prominent scholars from various parts of the country were defeated by Sri Madhwa in philosophical debates; Trivikrama panditacharya, Shobhana bhatta (later became one of the most prominent disciples of Madhwa after taking sainthood from him and being renamed Padmanabha tirtha), Vadisimha, Buddhisagara, Pundarika puri, Amarendra puri, Vasudeva pandita, Kudyapustur Shankara etc. were some of the scholars who tasted defeat at the hands of Madhwa. Sri Madhwa carried out another major pilgrimage to Badri in the later stage of his life and again visited the abode of Veda Vyasa and obtained special instructions from him.

Know the Masters - I (Continued..)

Establishments: Udupi became the hub of Dvaita Vedanta and as if to mark its success story in the place of its origin, Sri Madhwa installed in Udupi the beautiful idol of Lord Krishna which reached him under miraculous circumstances at the edge of the sea near Udupi. For daily worship at Udupi and propagation of his philosophy, Sri Madhwa established eight mathas (monasteries) which were headed by eight saints who were Madhwa's disciples.

Works: Sri Madhwa authored 37 major works which are collectively called as 'Sarvamula'. These works cover a wide range of topics with a very fresh and convincing outlook. The 37 works not only include commentaries on the Upanishads, Brahma sutras and the Bhagavadgita, but also some unique ones like expositions of the Mahabharata and the Bhagavata in addition to a commentary on the first 40 suktas of Rigveda serving as a guideline to interpret the rest. There are ten monographs that are authored by Madhwa which intend to establish the tenets of Dvaita vedanta by refuting other doctrines (mainly Advaita). Apart from these we have few other works dealing with the rituals of Vaishnavas, saints etc. and also two stotras (Dwadasha stotra and Narasimha nakha stuti).

The outstanding features of Madhwa's works include

- Dignity of thought
- Brevity of expression - simple and straight sentences, to the point explanations & absence of unnecessary digressions
- Abundant quotations from various authoritative scriptures (he quotes around 400 authorities in his works)
- Powerful presentation,
- Conveying multiple ideas through a single sentence etc.

However, it becomes inevitable to study his works under the light of the glosses of illustrious disciples of his lineage without which it becomes too herculean a task to grasp his lofty ideas.

Fundamentals of Madhwa's philosophy:

1. Vishnu is the Supreme being.
2. The world is real (not an illusion).
3. Souls (jivas) are different from God (Vishnu).
4. All are dependent on God eternally, for their very existence.
5. There is a threefold classification among souls based on their intrinsic nature as Saattvika, Raajasa and Taamasa. Hierarchy is present among these souls based on their innate characteristics.
6. Mukti or moksha (liberation/salvation) is a state of complete manifestation of the bliss inherent to the soul.
7. Pure devotion in God born from the knowledge of his greatness is the means of achieving Moksha.
8. Valid proofs are three viz. perception, inference and verbal testimony.
9. God is to be known through the Vedas and Vedic scriptures (as he is beyond perception and can never be known through mere logical deductions).

In 1317 A.D.(Maagha Shuddha Navami) at an age of 79, Madhwa left to the abode of Veda Vyasa(i.e. Badarikaashrama) permanently never to return. This day came to be thus known as Madhwa navami.

Madhwa's biography: The only comprehensively authentic account of Madhwa's life and achievements is the 'Madhwa vijaya' authored by Narayana panditacharya who, at a young age, had the privilege of being in immediate contact with Sri Madhwa, as his father Trivikrama panditacharya was a prominent disciple of Madhwa. This makes the Madhwa vijaya a biography of historical importance as it was authored by a person who actually lived in the same time as that of the hero of his biography, which doesn't happen in many cases. The Madhwa vijaya consists of 16 chapters containing a total of 1008 verses in Sanskrit. It records many major feats of Sri Madhwa right from his childhood, most of them being supernatural. Even in terms of poetry, the Madhwa vijaya is a masterpiece, being embedded with the most poetically aesthetic usages.

Madhwa's identity with Vayu: The Maadhwa tradition has unequivocally acknowledged that Sri Madhwacharya is the third incarnation of lord Mukhya vayu whose first two incarnations are Hanuman and Bhimasena. This isn't merely a belief but is strongly substantiated by the Vedas and Puranas. The Balittha sukta (Rigveda-10th mandala), the Pavamana sukta (Rigveda-9th mandala), several puranas like the Garuda, Skandha, Padma, Varaha etc. and Madhwa's own revelation in some of his works stand as clear testimonies to the fact that Sri Madhwa is an incarnation of Mukhya prana.

Divya Dvaita Drishti

An Introspective monologue (Dialogue with the God within)

- Sulatha Nayak

Hare! Sriman Narayana,

I prostrate before You. It is Your abundant kindness that You have given me this *janma* despite my numerous *doshas*, and *ajnaana*. It is Your grace that I am born as a woman in a Gowda Sarasvatha Brahmana family following Sri Madhvacharya's philosophy as the way of life. You, being my *indweller*, have led me all through, from one family to another new family. You have made me play different roles. You made me a part of many religious rituals. You made me listen to divine hymns sung in Your praise. Although I know nothing, You have blessed me with company of *saatwik*, learned people. Now, I feel it is high time I try to analyze and take a small step ahead in the path of *dharma*, as an unconditional act of pleasing You.

It is my first & foremost duty to educate myself and my kith & kin, that YOU alone are Supreme. Omnipresent, Omnipotent, Omniscient. For that I need to know more and more about You. I need to proceed in the divine path of Sriman Madhvacharya. I must gain The true knowledge that leads to liberation. I should know as per my *yogyatha*. I know I can understand & assimilate tiny fraction, but that tiny fraction is Your grace - *Hari prasada*.

Besides leading me in the path of performing my duties at home, I pray to You motivate me and to help me motivate my family members to do their *anushtana* without fail. I need to learn the importance of doing *sandhyavandana*, *japa*, thereby motivating my children to do it knowingly. So that *all nitya karma* don't become a mere habitual act; it is done with *Right anusandhaana*.

I need to know why I light lamps, why I water *Tulasi*, why I sing bhajans. Let me have the right knowledge. You have given light without which life is impossible. As an act of gratitude, let me light lamps before You. *Tulasi* has your *vishesha sannidhaana*, and *avesha* of Your beloved *Lakshmi*. So let me water *Tulasi* everyday, sing Your glory, praise You with right words. This is what I should learn. Let me sing *Dasara pada*, because they are based on *Madhwa siddhantha* and thus adorned with *yathartha jnaana* about You. Let me chant *Vishnu Sahasra Nama*, knowing that every name of Yours is an epithet of Your *Guna* (attributes). Let me know that Your *gunas* are infinite.

I have been taught to pray for all *sowbhagya* at The lotus feet of Your beloved *Lakshmi*. You, who make yourself known and seen by your own independent will is the ultimate *sowbhagya*, which *Lakshmi* will grant with pleasure. By this kind of *anusandhaana*, Your beloved will undoubtedly be pleased and She will fulfill all our needs be it material or spiritual. Let me keep reminding myself that there is nothing unattainable, nothing unreachable when Oh *Lakshmi*, thou are pleased.

kim alabhyam Bhagavathi prasanne Srinikethane

I have to learn *Devatha Taratamya* and have a clear picture of worshipping you and your entourage of *devatas* accordingly during all festivals. Oh Lord!, Give me the clarity about *Adhishthaana Adhishteya* - so that my worship reaches you and *devatas* as per your wish in the manner you have prescribed through *jnaanis*. I have to teach my younger generation all these. I have to learn the *tattva* behind cooking *Naivedya*. Let all that gets cooked in kitchen reach you. Let it be cooked with my mind fixated in pleasing you. Let my mind be tuned to the ideology of 'unification of Your forms in the *naivedya* with your form in the idol being worshipped, your form within me and my husband and elders.

Oh my benevolent Lord, I need to confess. I often get upset and angry in many situations. I need to remind myself that it is You being the *indweller* along with Your family of *Abhimani Devathas*, is behind every *vihita karma* (action in line with scriptural injunctions). And you use the *abhimani daityas* to provoke anger. All based on my own *jeeva yogyatha* and *praarabdha* and that of every being around me. This knowledge will keep me calm despite my innumerable *doshas*.

Oh my Saviour, *Shri Hari*, my humble prayers at Your Lotus Feet. Bless me with knowledge, I knowingly chant Your Divine *namas*. Let me offer everything at Your Lotus Feet. Bless me with company of *sajjanas*. May *Shruti Smritis* -Your very *aajnaa* be my guiding light. As your trusted & affectionate lieutenant *Vayu* as *Madhvacharya* ordained in *Dwadasha Stora*:

Kuru bhunshwa cha karma nijam niyatam haripAda vinamradhiyA satatam |

Instigate me to do my *varnashrama-vihita-karma* with my mind always in you for which you give me appropriate fruits. For it is *Bhagavata*, which is *pratyaksha Krishna eva hi* says -

kriyAsu yastvaccharaNAravindayOh AviShTa chittO na bhavAya kalpatE |

The one who does *vihita karma* with God preoccupying the mind will not return to the mundane worldly existence.

Author Bio: *Smt. Sulatha Nayak* is a home maker and w/o *M. Rayappa Nayak*. She is a *Carnatic classical singer* and adept at playing *Veena*. She is humble and extremely interested in listening (and rendering) *Dasara pada* and *Pravachanas* to understand the *Dvaita philosophy* and apply it meaningfully in life.

Must Do versus Nice To Do

Suresh: "I don't put Gopichandana. I don't perform Sandhyavandan and Gayatri Japa. I don't feel the need to announce to the entire world that I am a Maadhva Vaishnava Brahmin. Devotion should be in mind and not in external show off. "

Ramesh: "Why Not ?"

Suresh: "I go to temple many times everyday. I serve at temple on all occasions. I am a big devotee of Venkataramana. I am sure God is happy with my silent bhakti and seva at temple."

Ramesh: "But....."

Suresh rudely Interrupts Ramesh and says

Suresh: "I don't want to hear your same tune that not doing nitya karma disqualifies me even to have food. Or it makes me Brahma Bandhu. All these rules are man made. We have to rise above all these religious rituals, transcend the human plane and become spiritual by going inwards"

Ramesh: "I was only going to tell you a story. And not preach"

Suresh: "Cool. Shoot it bro."

Ramesh: "A lady complains to a pet store owner that her parrot doesn't talk. "Does it have a mirror in his cage?" he asked. "Parrots love mirrors. They see their reflection and start conversation".

The woman bought a mirror and left. The next day she returned; the bird still wasn't talking.

"How about a ladder? Parrots love ladders. The happy parrot is a talkative parrot"

The woman bought a ladder and left. But the next day, she was back.

"Does your parrot have a swing? No? Well, that's the problem. Once he starts swinging, he'll talk up a storm

The woman reluctantly bought a swing and left. The next day the parrot died. Before dying, it asked the woman in a weak voice "Don't they sell any food at that pet store?"

Sometimes we forget what's really important in life. We get so caught up in things that are good while neglecting the things that are truly necessary. Take a moment to do a "priority check", and strive for what is most important.

Suresh: "I think I am beginning to get it".

Ramesh: "Glad you are getting the idea. There are a gazillion **nice to do** things one can do in this world. But there are a few **must do** things. There is no point in doing all those nice things at the cost of few must do things. One may respect all the women in the world. But one should mandatorily respect the mother". If you are not doing the latter, there is no point doing the former".

Suresh: "But... All this sandhyavandan etc.. Where did God ask me to do those things?"

Ramesh: "Hope you trust what Krishna says. Krishna said in Bhagavata -

shruti smritir harerajne yah ullanghya pravartate | AjnA chedi mama dveshi madbhaktopi na vaishnavah | |

Krishna says those who don't follow the mandates of shruti and smriti are not vaishnava in spite of them considering to be my bhaktas. So the question of not doing sandhyavandan etc and still being a bhakta of Venkataramana is an oxymoron. If you are not following Venkataramana's orders, then what kind of bhakta are you?

Suresh: "Ok agreed. But mental bhakti has no value?"

Ramesh: "Ofcourse it does. However one cannot say that since mental strength is paramount, my vehicle will run on mental petrol from tomorrow. There are some ground rules for each playing field. The external rituals strengthen the inner conviction. Inner conviction in Lord's words and love towards him make us adhere to his words well. If we really love somebody, we try to please them. Abide by their likes and dislikes. And attempt to be in their good books. And this in turn increases our attachment. Our ancients weren't fools to concoct all this stuff for no reason."

Suresh: "Thanks bro. I get it now. I will start Sandhyavandan from tomorrow. Promise me you will teach coz I have forgotten".

Author Bio: Ullas Hegde has adapted this story circulated in whatsapp to drive home the point about the importance of Sandhyavandan. Ullas Hegde is from Mangalore, a pious devotee of Lord Veera Venkatesha & active member in Shri Veera Venkatesha Bhajana mandali, an active selfless volunteer in Shri Venkataramana temple.



न माधव समो देवो न च मध्व समो गुरुः

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Madhva

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PREETOSTU KRISHNA PRABHUH

Everybody takes birth & dies alone and has to suffer the good and bad deeds one has done. All the wealth remains at home. The dead body equivalent to the wood and soil is left behind by relatives. Only Dharma follows the person. Fire engulfs the body. Even though the fire burns away the body, his deeds (karma) are not burnt & remain steadily with him.

— Garuda Purana

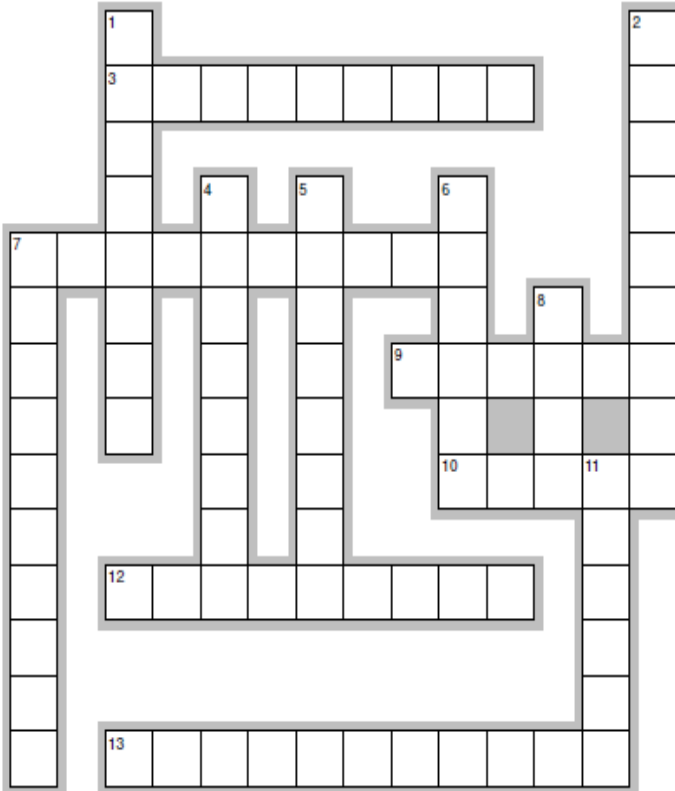
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Deepavali Special Crossword



Across

3. The 16000 princesses imprisoned by Narakasura were
7. Narakasura was killed by this weapon of Krishna
9. Narakasura's father
10. Narakasura stole the kundala of
12. Narakasura's mother
13. Narakasura was killed on this tithi

Down

1. The masa niyamaka for Kartika maasa is
2. Who is Tulasi
4. Bali was the grandson of
5. The name of Vishnu's bow
6. Vishnu avatar that asked Bali for daana
7. Krishna's wife who accompanied him to kill Narakasura
8. Alakshmi is the wife of
11. _____ Vivaha is performed on Uthana Dvdashi

Solutions

Across: 3.Agniputra 7.Sudarshana 9.Varaha 10.Aditi 12.Dharadevi 13.Chaturdashi

Down: 1.Damodara 2.Jambavati 4.Prahlada 5.Shaarnga 6.Vamana 7.Satyabhama 8.Kali 11.Tulasi