

The Hymn to the Guru of all Gurus

Introduction

This wave is a major wave. It contains what is known as **dakshiNA-mUrTi ashTakam**, a hymn of ten verses composed by Adi Sankara. It is a capsule version of the entire advaita vedanta. A famous commentary called mAnasollAsa, by his disciple Sri Suresvaracharya (maNDana-miSra, was his earlier name before he took sannyAsa) is our main source for interpreting this hymn. We give, in the succeeding pages, for each verse: Sanskrit, Tamil (by Sri Ramana Maharshi), English (including tr. of RM additions) – see ProfVK's preamble here: <http://www.krishnamurthys.com/profvk/gohitvip/63.html>

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Verse No.0

mauna-vyAkhyA-prakaTita-para-brahma-tatvaM yuvAnaM
varshishTAnte vasad-Rshi-gaNair-AvRtaM brahma-nishTaiH /
AcAryendraM kara-kalita-cin-mudram-Ananda-rUpaM
svAtmArAmAM mudita-vadanaM Sri-dakshiNA-mUrTim-IDe //

MAUNAMA-MURAIYAR-KATTU-MAPPIRAMA-VATTU-VALAN
SIVA-NILAITTAVAR-SAR-CIDAR SERI-KURU VARAN SIR-KAIYAN
UVAGAIYOR-URUVAN TANNUL-LUVAPPAVAN KALI-MUGATTAN
AVANAIYAN TENPAN MURTTI YAPPANAI YETTUVOME //

0. I propitiate that dakshiNA-mUrTi, who is the Transcendental Absolute declared by an eloquence called Silence, who is a youth, who is the best of the Gurus surrounded by great disciples who are themselves firmly rooted in brahman, who is the prince among preceptors, who shows by his hand the cin-mudrA, who is Bliss personified, who revels in His own Self and who always radiates happiness.

This has been numbered verse No.0 because, it is not part of the dakshiNA-mUrTi ashTakam. But it is traditionally recited as a preliminary verse to the hymn. Maybe it was also composed by Sankara himself. It propitiates that form of Lord Siva by which He is known as a youthful world teacher seated beneath the sacred fig-tree, facing South (dakshiNa means 'south') and teaching elderly disciples through silence. The South indicates a downward path (spiritually) and the North indicates an upward path. He faces south so that we may face Him and therefore face north, that is, face the side of, and look forward to, Immortality. The word dakshiNA means also 'efficient'. He is the One who can teach us the most difficult thoughts in the most efficient manner. He is the teacher of all teachers. He is the Ultimate which is inaccessible even to the mind and speech. His silence is an eloquence of the Experience of Bliss. He is the Form which makes us understand if only we make the effort. The Absolute and its Energy -- namely, the Lord and the Mother Goddess -- have sometimes two different Forms, sometimes a single form in which it is half masculine and half feminine - the classical ardh-

nArISvara Form - and sometimes they have a third Form in which one of them is subordinate to the other. In the Form of kAmAkshi the Lord is subordinate and the feminine Sakti is dominant. In the Form of dakshiNA-mUrti, the Lord is the dominant factor; here is the Form where there is no explicit expression of vibrant Energy. The Form of the Bliss-filled Goddess is sublated by the sat-cid-Ananda Form of dakshiNA-mUrti. That is why She is called dakshiNA-mUrti-rUpiNI in the lalitA-sahasranAma.

Verses 1, 2 & 3 – Origin of Universe & philosophical implications

Verse No. 1

viSvam darpaNa-dRSyamAna-nagarI tulyam nijAntar-gataM
paSyana-nAtmani mAyayA bahirivo-dbhUtam yathA nidrayA /
yas-sAkshAt-kurute prabodha-samaye svAtmAnam-evAdvayaM
tasmai Srl-guru-mUrtaye nama idaM Srl-dakshiNA-mUrtaye //

ULAGU KANNADI YUR NERURAT-TANNUL-LAJNANATTAL
VELIYUNIL TUYIL KANAPPOL VILANGIDAK-KANDU JNANA-
NILAIYURU NERAN-TANNAI YORUVANA-YEVANER KANBAN
TALAIYURU KURUVAM-ANDAD-DAKSHINA-MURTTI PORRI //

1. To Him who, by mAyA, who sees in Himself `the universe which is inside Him as if it were outside, just as in a dream, like unto a city that is seen in a mirror, to Him who apprehends on awakening, His own Self as the One without a second, to Him of the form of the Guru, (the ancient of all) the blessed dakshinA-mUrti, is this prostration.

Verses 1, 2 and 3 dwell on the origin of the universe and its philosophical implications. In this verse there are two analogies cited. One is that of the dream, and the other that of the appearance of reflection in a mirror. Each serves a purpose. The dream analogy says that unless we wake up from the dream we cannot see the falsity of the dream. The mirror analogy says that even as we experience the reflection before us we know its falsity; so also even as we experience the presence of this universe 'outside' of us, we must realise their falsity, because it is only a projection of the real Self within.

There is another point of distinction between the dream analogy and the mirror-reflection analogy. In the dream analogy what is really 'within' appears as 'outside'. In the analogy of the mirror-reflection what is really outside of the mirror appears as 'within' the mirror. We have to extrapolate both the analogies and understand that the universe is actually within us but appears as outside of us by the sheer force of the projecting power of mAyA.

The purport of this verse is to tell us that brahman is the Truth, the visible universe is only an appearance and to that extent it is unreal. When one thing appears to us as something else it is false knowledge of the thing. By reason of the mAyA power we have this false knowledge and think that the universe is something other than brahman. But

when the Realization dawns on us by the grace of the Guru we will then realize that there is nothing other than brahman.

Verse No.2

bljasyAntarivAnkuro jagadidaM prAng-nirvikalpaM punar-
mAyA-kalpita-deSa-kAla-kalanA-vaicitrya-citrl-kRtaM /
mAyAvlva-vijRmbhayaty-api mahA-yogISvarecchayA
tasmai Srl-guru-mUrtaye nama idaM Srl-dakshiNA-mUrtaye //

VITTULE MULAI POL MUNNAM VIKARPAMILIC-CAGAM-PIN
KARPITA-MAYA DEYA-KALA-KARMATTAR-PARPALA
CITTIRAM VIRIPPAN YAVAN CITTANU-MAYIKAN POR
CATTIYAR KURUVAM-ANDAD-DAKSHINA-MURTTI PORRI //

2. To Him, who like a magician or a great yogin, displays, by (the power of) His own Will, this universe, which earlier was undifferentiated like the sprout in the seed, but which later was made differentiated under the varied conditions of space, time and causation created by mAyA, to Him of the form of the Guru, the blessed dakshinA-mUrti, is this prostration.

This verse dwells on the concept that the Absolute is also the material cause of the universe in addition to its being the efficient cause. But the analogy of the tree and the seed should not be carried too far. From the seed comes out a tree, from the tree again there is another seed. From brahman 'sprouts' the universe, of course, but from the universe there does not shoot forth a brahman! That is why brahman is called 'bljam avyayam' (Gita: 9 - 18) (= the non-perishing seed). The analogy of the yogi is more apt here. The use of the words 'prAk' (earlier), MUNNAM in the Tamil version, and 'punaH' (again), PIN in the Tamil version, is not to indicate a passage of Time, but is to show the difference between the unmanifest state and the manifested state. Time starts only in the manifested state. In the unmanifested state, Time itself was - our language itself is failing us here! Why did we say 'was'? - unmanifest! Just as manifestation of the Absolute is a phenomenon of mAyA, Time also is a phenomenon of mAyA.

The Absolute doing the Creation of the Universe out of Itself is indeed a difficult concept. But there is very heavy scriptural authority for this. In fact one can give at least seven such evidences:

1. Only if brahman is the material cause of the world it is possible to know everything of the universe through the knowledge of brahman which is what is asserted in the following passages:

kasmin nu bhagavo vijnAte sarvam-idam vijnAtam bhavati

What is that, knowing which, everything becomes known?

— *Mundaka-Upanishad: 1-1-2*

yat-jnAtvA neha bhUyo'nyat jnAtavyam avaSishyate /

Having known which, nothing else remains to be known.

– *Bhagavad-Gita: 7.2*

yena aSrutam Srutam bhavati, amatam matam, avijnAtam vijnAtam

By which unheard becomes heard, uncognized becomes cognized, unknown becomes known.

– *Chandogya-Upanishad VI-1-3*

ekena mRt-piNDena sarvaM mRNmayaM vijnAtaM syAt,
vAcArambhanaM vikAro nAma-dheyaM mRttiketyeva satyaM

By one handful of earth, all earthen articles become known, so everything that is earthen is only a play with words (and forms), what is true is only earth.

– *Chandogya-Upanishad VI-1-4*

2. bahusyaM prajAyeyeti, (May I be many, May I grow forth), says *taittirlya-Upanishad, II.6*. This in so many words says that He Himself became the multiplicity of created things.

3. The next statement in *taittirlya-Upanishad*, tad-AtmAnaM svayaM akuruta, says more. It means: That itself manifested itself. Here the use of the two words 'AtmAnaM' and 'svayaM' both meaning 'itself' shows that there exists no other cause. So the Universe is only a modification of brahman. What kind of modification it is, is the only thing that the two major schools of Philosophy debate about. For an elaboration of this point, go to the paragraph beginning with 'To sum up' in Difference and non-Difference.

4. There is a standard statement in the Upanishads that 'all these beings were born from this', the word that is being used here for brahman, being 'yat'. cf. *taittirlya-U. III-1*:

yato vA imAni bhUtAni jAyante

This word is a connective pronoun like 'which' used to indicate an antecedent noun. 'Yat' is a self-substituting entity. Panini's grammar gives a special meaning to this word, as prakRti. We know prakRti is the power of brahman, which is what becomes the universe in the presence of brahman.

5. The classical statement: (*Chandogya-Upanishad, VI-2-2*):

ekaM eva advitIyaM brahma /
brahman is One only, with no second.

This says there is no supporting entity, therefore there is no other efficient cause; and secondly it says there is nothing other than brahman, therefore there is no other material cause.

6. *MuNDaka-Upanishad* gives three analogies for the relationship between the universe and brahman. For details go to page 2 of *The Absolute As It Is*.

7. The *Chandogya-Upanishad* (I-9-1) explains what happens at the time of dissolution.

sarvANi ha va imAni bhUtAni, AkASaAdeva samutpadyante,
AkASaM pratyastaM yAnti /

All these elemental principles emanate from Space
and they finally dissolve into Space. :

In the *taittirlya-Upanishad* also, after the statement that they all come from 'yat' it is said (III-1) that they finally dissolve into 'yat':.

yat prayanty-abhisamviSanti /

A thing may be said to be produced from its efficient cause but it cannot return to that at dissolution unless it is also the material cause. This verse rejects the theory of the philosophy of NyAya and the philosophy of sAnkhyā. The former holds that the atomic elements are the material cause of the universe. The latter holds that the three guNas satva, rajas, and tamas constitute the material cause of the universe. Both are rejected and this verse establishes that just as the plant was in the seed so also the universe was in its latent state in the Atman-brahman and by its inherent mAyA power it appears as manifest.

Verse No.3

yasyaiva sphuraNam sadAtmakam-asat-kalpArthakaM bhAsate
sAkshAt-tat-tvam-asIti veda-vacasA yo bodhayaty-ASritAn /
yas-sAkshAtkaraNat bhavenna punarAvRttir-bhavAmbhonidhau
tasmai Srl-guru-mUrtaye nama idaM Srl-dakshiNA-mUrtaye //

EVANOLI YUNMAI INMAI IYAIPORULIL-ANGU NERE
EVAN ADU NIYANAY-ENRISAITTUNARTTUVAN CERNDORAI
EVANAI NER KANIN MINDUMIP-PAVAK-KADAL VIZHVILLAI
TAVARURU KURUVAM-ANDAD-DAKSHINA-MURTTI PORRI //

3. To Him whose luminosity of Absolute Truth alone, shines forth in the false world of appearance, to Him who instructs those who resort to Him through the vedic text 'That Thou Art', to Him by realising whom there will be no further return to the cycle of transmigration, to Him of the form of the Guru, (who is attained by kinesis), the blessed dakshinA-mUrti, is this prostration.

The phenomenal appearance of the universe is actually the shining of brahman and not its own shine. The 'reality' of the universe is actually the reality of the substratum that is brahman. When the movie appears on the screen, what is real is the screen, not the movie; because the screen is the only thing that is present before, during and after.

That Thou Art is the famous Grand Pronouncement (mahA-vAkya) found in the Chandogya-Upanishad of the Sama Veda, meted out by AruNi to Svetaketu. It is repeated nine times to him and explained nine times. It is not supposed to be a casual statement.

It is the summum bonum of all Upanishadic teaching. It says: That brahman which is the common Reality behind everything in the cosmos is the same as the essential Divinity, namely the Atman or the Self, within you. This latter is the innermost core of our selves and so seems to have an individuality of its own. In saying that it is the same as the unqualified brahman in the infinite cosmos, we seem to be identifying two things, one that is unlimited and unconditioned and one that is possibly limited and conditioned.

Whenever someone says, for instance, that the person (call him B) whom you are meeting just now is the same as the one whom you saw (call him A) twenty years ago at such a such a place, what is actually meant is not the identity of the dresses of the two personalities of A and B, nor of the features (those of B may be totally different from those of A), but of the essential person behind the names. So whenever such an identity is talked about we have to throw away certain aspects which are clearly distinctive in both and cling on to only those essentials without which they are not what they are. B and A may be engaged in distinct professions, B and A may be having different names, B and A may be having different attitudes towards you or towards a certain issue, B and A may be posing as different persons, by, say, showing off different passports, -- but still they are the same, is what is being asserted. So when brahman and the individual Self are being identified in this statement, we have to see what commonality or essentialness there is in them that is being identified. brahman is the cause of this universe. But this is a predication of brahman and is extraneous to the identity that we are talking about. We want the essentiality, the svarUpa-lakshaNa of both. (For two types of lakshaNas go to The absolute As It Is). The capability of creation is only a taTastha-lakshaNa of brahman, that is, it is a definition which is only indicative, and does not distinguish it from everything else. The Self of Man appears to be limited by an individuality which keeps it under the spell of Ignorance; this is extraneous to the essentiality of the Self. So what we are identifying is brahman, minus its feature of being the Cause of this Universe and the Self minus its limitations of Ignorance-cum-Delusion which individualises it. That these two are the same, is, in essence, the content of the statement: tat tvam asi. The Cosmic mAyA is what makes brahman the cause of the universe. The individual avidyA (=Ignorance) is what makes the Self circumscribed and delimited. So the mahA-vAkya says

brahman minus its mAyA and
the Self minus its avidyA are identical.

This statement 'That thou Art' is not just a flattery of the individual Self; because the subject of discussion is vedanta where sentiment is not the issue. It is not just a comparison between two entities; there is no necessity to compare. It actually says they are identical. There is no status of cause and effect here; the tvam, that is the individual self, is not the effect of ISvara as the pot is that of the potter. There is no question of attribute and subject here; because, on the one hand, if ISvara is the subject which is attributed by the jlva-guNa then it should be mortal and on the other hand, if jlva is the subject with ISvara-guNa then it should be immortal. Nor is the

statement just one of worship or prayer.

The Seer in us Verses 4, 5 & 6

Verse No.4

nAnAcchidra-ghatodara-sthita-mahA-dIpa-prabhA-bhAsvaram
jnAnaM yasya tu cakshurAdi-karaNa-dvArA bahi-spanditam /
jAnAmlti tameva-bhAntam-anubhAty-etat samstaM jagat
tasmai Srl-guru-mUrtaye nama idaM Srl-dakshiNA-mUrtaye //

PALATULAIK-KUDATTUL DIPAP-PAYKADIR POL-YAR JNANAM
VIZHI-MUDAR-PORI-VAYP-PAYNDU VELI-SARIT-TARINDEN-ENNA
VILANGIDUM-EVANAIC-CARNDU VILANGUM-IVVAVANI-YAVUM
CALAMARU-KURUVAM-ANDAD-DAKSHINA-MURTTI PORRI //

4. To Him who is luminous like the light of a great lamp set in the belly of a pot with many holes, to Him whose knowledge moves outward through the eye and other organs, to Him who shining as 'I know' makes all this entire universe known, to Him of the form of the Guru, (who has no movement or vibration) the blessed dakshinA-mUrti, is this prostration.

Verses 4, 5 and 6 talk about the Seer in us. It is the Light of the Spirit within that leaks out of the senses and gives Light to all the objects and experiences in the universe. This is the purport of this verse. It broadcasts from the housetops the one Truth repeatedly proclaimed by the scriptures: 'It is not lit by the light of the sun, nor by the light of the Moon, nor stars, nor by lightning nor by fire. Only through its Light do all the others shine.' (katha-upanishad, 2 - 2 - 15):

na tatra sUryo bhAti na candra tArakaM
naimA vidyuto bhAnti kuto'yam-agniH /
tameva bhAntam-anubhAti sarvaM
tasya bhAsA sarvam-idam vibhAti//

It is the Light of the universe. By its shining all else is seen. Even an ordinary light (from lamp when lit) does not need another light to show its existence. When such is the case, the Supreme Light which lights up everything does not need any other equipment to see it. It is svayam-prakASaM, self-luminous. In the dream world the one Light that is the Self lights up hundreds of objects; it needs only a little extrapolation to conclude that even in the the waking world it is the Light of the Self again that lights up everything . Ordinary matter does not have a luminosity of its own. If everything had a luminosity of its own, then a chair and a table should make their presence felt by us even when we do not 'look' at them. If nothing was ever luminous, then we would be totally ignorant of everything. Thus matter in the world needs a 'light' to make their presence felt. We wrongly think that it is the physical light that brings the knowledge of matter to us. Even the physical light has to be prompted, supported, boosted, in fact 'lighted' by the

spiritual Light which is the substratum of all - this is what the scripture says when it declares that 'only by Its Light everything is lighted'.

The supreme is shining as the Light of Lights (jyotishAm jyotiH) within ourselves. This is analogous to a lighted lamp placed in a vessel with several small holes in it. The Light of the Self which is within this body of nine gates is then reflected by mAyA through the sense organs and projected as rays of bliss -- because what is inside is full of bliss. Wherever these rays fall -- on the objects of sense, for instance -- those objects come to light. The soul which identifies itself with the body and the senses wrongly thinks that the sense of happiness that he derives in 'seeing', 'hearing', 'smelling', 'touching' and 'tasting' is actually in the external sense object and it is these rays from the senses that bring him this happiness.

Take another analogy. There is a tent full of holes which allow the rays of sunlight to creep in. A child who is inside the tent may wrongly think that it is the tent that gives the light. Actually the child does not realize it is the tent that is an obstacle to the light from the Sun and it is the holes in the tent that bring the sunlight in. In the same manner we do not realize that it is the body-mind-intellect that hides the Light of the Self within and it is the holes of the sense-organs that sneak in the bliss from that Light now and then through the various sense-experiences. And we mistake the happiness we enjoy as that which arises from the sense objects. Suppose the child attempts to get the light that it needs from the very tent which prevents light from coming in; so also we are so childish spiritually that we expect to improve our happiness from the very sense objects and sense organs which prevent us from 'seeing' the Light of the Self which is already there in us. If we cast away the tent the whole place will be flooded with all the light from the sun; so also if we cast away the identification with the body-mind-intellect we will become the mass of Bliss that is natural to the Self.

(In the explanations above for Verse No.4, we have rather closely followed the Paramacharya as presented in Ra. Ganapthy's 'deivattin kural' Vol.4, page 650 et seq.)

Verse No.5

dehaM prANamapIndriyANyapi caAm buddhiM ca SUnyaM viduH
strI-bAlAndha-jaDopamAs-tvahamiti bhrAntA bhRSaM vAdinaH /
mAyA-Sakti-vilAsa-kalpita-mahA-vyAmoha-samhAriNe
tasmai Srl-guru-mUrtaye nama idaM Srl-dakshiNA-mUrtaye //

UDALUYIR PORIGAL PUNDI -YONRU-PAZHAGAMAT-TERVAR
MADANDAIYAR-BALAR-ANDAR MADAIYAREY MUDAVADI
MADAMAIYAL VILAIYUMAM-MA MAYAKKAME MAYKKU JNANAT-
TADAIYARU KURUVAM-ANDAD-DAKSHINA-MURTTI PORRI //

5. Those who think of the body, breath, the senses, the changing intellect, or the void as the 'I', are just like deluded women, children, the blind and the stupid

who only talk much. To Him who destroys the great delusion caused by the expression of the power of mAyA, to Him of the form of the Guru, (who has no confusion) the blessed dakshinA-mUrTi, is this prostration.

From the atheism of the cArvAkas down to the Sunya theory of Buddhism, all the opinions are delusions. These delusions will vanish once the intuitive perception of the Transcendental Absolute dawns on us. The body cannot be the Self, because it is visible, it is inert, it has colour and form, it has parts, it is made up of the five elements of matter. Also, if body were the Self, even when it is sleeping, even when it is in coma, in fact, even after death, it should be able to recognize itself as 'I'. The senses cannot be the Self, because, the blind, the deaf, the lame all can recognize the 'I' in them. The vital breath prANa cannot be the Self because when the body is sleeping, the prANa is still working, but it is not sentient as is clear from the fact that it does not recognize the purse being pick-pocketed from its body. The intellect cannot be the Self because it exists neither before nor after life in the body and even while it exists in the body it is so full of change that you can never call it the immutable!

Verse No.6

rAhu-grasta-divAkarendu sadRSo mAyA-samAcchadanAt
sanmAtraH-karaNopa-samharaNato yo'bhUt sushuptah pumAn /
prAg-asvApsam-iti-prabodha-samaye yah-pratyabhijnAyate
tasmai Srl-guru-mUrtaye nama idaM Srl-dakshiNA-mUrtaye //

IRAGU-PARRI RAVI TINGALENA-VULAN MAYAI MUDAP-
PARAVULAMODUNGAT-TUNGIP-PARAVIDA-VUNARUM KALAM
PURA-VURANGINA-NANENRU PODANAMEVAN PUMANAYC-
CARACARA-KURUVAM-ANDAD-DAKSHINA-MURTTI PORRI

6.To The Self, who in sleep becomes Pure Existence, on the withdrawal of the veiling by mAyA, as in the case of the sun or the moon in eclipse, and on waking recognizes, 'I have slept till now' to Him of the form of the Guru, (of the animate and the inanimate) the blessed dakshinA-mUrTi, is this prostration.

This is actually a rebuttal of the Buddhist theory that the absence of knowledge in sleep shows that the Ultimate is Emptiness. This verse is a very important one, because this brings in the punch line with respect to the debate with the nihilist point of view. When there is nothing presented to consciousness, as in the case of deep sleep, it is not as if consciousness is not there. The very fact that later one is able to say 'nothing was presented to my consciousness' shows that consciousness was aware of that nothingness. So consciousness is never absent. When the sun is under eclipse, the sun does not vanish. It is there all by itself. It is our view that is mutilated and distorted. It is this wrong perception that is removed by the Guru of all Gurus.

In deep sleep consciousness is there all by itself. See also The Fundamental Urges of Man. It is not necessary to have another agency show the presence of consciousness. It is

self-luminous. In a dark room it is not necessary to have a torch to find a lighted lamp. The lighted lamp itself is self-luminous. The silent condition of the mind without thoughts of objects is the pure conscious condition of oneself. The bliss of sleep and the ignorance that characterises sleep are both experienced by Consciousness. This consciousness is brahman. The 'memory' of sleep as well as the happiness of sleep is technically called pratyabhijnA. It is knowing oneself by oneself. When it is used as a verb, as in this verse (pratyabhijnAyate), it is a peculiar grammatic usage called karmakartari prayoga. It is like saying that a calf released itself from the knot which held it on to the pole. The verb means: 'to come to oneself, recover consciousness'. The statement 'I slept happily' has a factor of awareness in it, a factor of bliss, and a factor of existence. These three are the cit, Ananda and sat of the sac-cidAnanda that is the Ultimate. The happiness that was enjoyed was not the pleasure of the senses, because the senses had gone to sleep. It was not the happiness of the soul resting, because the soul was always what it was: cf.

nAsato vidyate bhavo nAbhAvo vidyate sataH /

What is not can never be, nor can what is, cease to exist

(Here the meaning of 'is' and 'is not' should be taken in an absolute sense.)

Also it is incorrect to say that the happiness enjoyed during sleep was just the absence of unhappiness, because there was no instrument of enjoyment present. The pratyabhijnA cannot recall what was not experienced. Again it is incorrect to say that each instant the knower is changing and so instant after instant different knowers are registering different pieces of knowledge and therefore there cannot be any pratyabhijnA. This is a view called kshaNika-vijnAna. The buddhist philosophy therefore explains away the pratyabhijnA as delusion. But it is not a delusion. A recalling always needs continuity of consciousness between the past event and the present event of recalling and this continuity for recalling is available because the Seer never loses His Sight in view of His immutability. cf. (bRhad-AraNyaka-Upanishad)

na hi drashTur-dRshteh viparilopo vidyate avinASitvAt /

Verses 7, 8 & 9 –The Light that makes us see

Verse No.7

bAlyAdishvapi jAgrathAdishu tathA sarvAs-vavasthAs-vapi
vyAvRttAs-vanuvartamanam-ahamityantah-sphurantaM sadA /
svAtmAnaM prakaTI karoti bhajatAM yo mudrayA bhadrayA
tasmai Srl-guru-mUrtaye nama idaM Srl-dakshiNA-mUrtaye //
KUZHAVI-MUN-NANAVU MUNNAK-KURU PAL-LAVATTAI YELLAM
CUZHALINUN-KALANDIRUNDE SOLIKKUM-MAGAMA-NALUM
KAZHAL-VIZHUVORK-KAR TANNAIK-KATTUVAN CIR-KURIPPAR-

RAZHAL-VIZHIK-KURUVAM-ANDAD-DAKSHINA-MURTTI PORRI

7. To Him, who, by means of the beatific hand-mudra, manifests to His devotees His own Self, that, for ever, shines within as 'I' continuously in all the various states such as infancy, etc., such as waking, etc., to Him of the form of the Guru, (who has the eye of the fire of wisdom) the blessed dakshinA-mUrti, is this prostration.

Verses 7, 8 and 9 talk about the Light in us that makes us see. Whoever was there before I went to sleep and whatever I am after I woke up from sleep, -- the two are the same and it is the same 'Me' that was also having the experience of sleep during my deep sleep; this insight is called pratyabhijnA. Whatever stage of life and in whatever state of awareness we are, the concept of 'I' is the single truth that survives as the continuing thread; that is the Self. It is that which remains when all that we call 'mine' is removed from what we usually, in the mundane world of activity, refer to as 'I'. To recognize this no effort need be made, says Sankara in another context: we have only to dispel our beginningless ignorance. The tragedy here says he, is that the differentiations are nothing but names and forms stipulated by ignorance and this has misled our discretion and intellect the consequence being

atyanta-prasiddham suvijneyam Asanna-taram Atmabhutam-api
aprasiddham durvijneyam atidUram anyad-iva pratibhAti avivekinAm //

What is most explicit in us looks implicit,
what is well-known to us appears unknowable,
what is nearest to us seems distant,
what is our own self turns out to be
something other than ourselves.

That this Self is the same as the Transcendental Reality, brahman, is what is shown by the Preceptor's 'cin-mudrA' - the handpose showing the union of the index finger and the thumb. The index finger represents the 'thou' of 'That Thou art' and the thumb represents the 'that' of the same Grand Pronouncement. Observe that we naturally point to the person opposite to us by the index finger and point to ourselves by the thumb. The identification of the two by the handpose uniting the two fingers is just the teaching of the Grand Pronouncement. That the 'thou' is Consciousness can be logically arrived at. That the 'that' is also Consciousness also appeals to our reason. That the two things identified by intellectual reasoning as Consciousness are actually the same Consciousness is however impossible to reason out. That last step in the enlightenment needs the declaration of the vedas and the prompting of the guru. That is exactly what the cin-mudra shows and says.

Verse No.8

viSvam paSyati kArya-kAraNatayA sva-svAmi-sambandhataH
SishyAcAryatayA tathaiva pitR-putrAtmanA bhedataH /

svapne jAgrati vA ya esha purusho maYA-paribhrAmitaH
tasmai Srl-guru-mUrtaye nama idaM Srl-dakshiNA-mUrtaye //

ULAGAI-YAR-IPPUMANOKKURUM-PALA NANAK-KANAVIR
KALANGIYE MAYAIYALE KARIYA-KARANAM-PIN-
RALIAVANUN-DASAN CIDAN GURU-MAHAN-RANDAI-YADI
TALA-MURU-KURUVAM-ANDAD-DAKSHINA-MURTTI PORRI

8. To The Self who, deluded by mAyA, sees, in dreaming and waking, the universe in its distinctions, such as cause and effect, property and proprietor disciple and teacher, and father and son, to Him of the form of the Guru, (of the whole Universe) the blessed dakshinA-mUrti, is this prostration.

All our relationships in the mundane world are only manifestations of the same Ultimate, just as in dream the same mind produces multifarious characters and relationships which are all unreal though they appear as totally real within the dream. Even in the waking state what appears as the multiplicity is actually a manifestation of the Unity at the base. The natural question that this may raise is the following: If the relationship of guru and disciple does not have an absolute reality then how do you expect it to give an absolute knowledge of Truth. But recall how using the unreal reflections in a mirror we wipe off the dirt in our face. So also the philosophical teaching done in the phenomenal state does produce the knowledge of Reality in the Absolute sense.

The familiar method of giving analogies to everything in Vedanta in order to bring home the point has been very effectively used here by our ancient masters. Actions done in a dream do have real effects outside of the dream. For example, a man may have a wet dream.

The worldly relationships are therefore neither true nor false ; they are what is called an indescribable (anirvacanlya) phenomenon. That is exactly what mAyA is. Since it appears it is not totally unreal. Since it vanishes at the onset of Enlightenment, it is not totally real. That is why it is neither sat nor asat.

There is a beautiful analogy from the mathematical world for this. There are several levels of infinity in Mathematics. The lowest level of infinity is that of the set of numbers 1,2,3, A higher (larger) level of infinity is that of all points on any line segment. It is a difficult proposition to decide whether this higher level is really the next higher level or whether there is another level of infinity in between. That there is no such intermediate level was conjectured for long. In the thirties Godel proved that this conjecture cannot be disproved. In the sixties Cohen proved that it cannot also be proved. Thus this conjecture has got the famous stature of an 'undecidable' proposition in Mathematics. This undecidability is the status of mAyA in vedanta.

When the Enlightenment sets in all this world of multiplicity is shown to be only our mental construct. That is why the scriptures require us to 'sacrifice in the fire offering the Ego of the Self ', so that the Self alone remains:

aham-eva-aham mAm juhomi svAhA /
– yajur-veda, taittirlya AraNyaka, nArAyana-Upanishad.

Verse No.9

bhUr-ambhamsy-anilo'nalombaramahar-nAtho himAmSuh-pumAn
ityAbhAti carAcarAtmakam-idam yasyaiva mUrtyashTakaM /
nAnyat-kimcana vidyate vimRSatAM yasmAt-parasmAd-vibhoH
tasmai Srl-guru-mUrtaye nama idaM Srl-dakshiNA-mUrtaye //

MANPUNAL-ANAL-KAL VANA MADI-KADIRON PUMANUM-
ENROLIR CARACARAN-CER-IDUVEVAN-ETTU MURTTAM
ENNUVARK-KIRAI-NIRAINDON-EVANIN-ANNIYAN-CARRINRAR
TANNARUT-KURUVAM-ANDAD-DAKSHINA-MURTTI PORRI

9. To Him who appears as the moving and unmoving universe consisting of Earth, Water, Fire, Air, Space, the Sun, the Moon and the Individual Person, to Him beyond whom, supreme and all-pervading, there is nothing else how much you may search, to Him of the form of the Guru, (full of Grace and Peace) the blessed Dakshinamurti, is this prostration.

The delusion caused by mAyA can be removed only by the Grace of the Lord. The Realization of the Absolute can be obtained only by the Grace of the Lord who appears in the form of the Guru. In the Saiva Agamas there are 36 fundamental principles, have been enunciated. Of them the only ones which are understood by a direct experience are the five elements, Sun, Moon and the Self.

(Note that 'Space' the most subtle of the five elements is also included here as subject to direct experience; because, every time you open your eyes you know that space is enveloping you).

That is why the Lord is said to be of the eight-fold form (mUrty-ashTakaM) consisting of these eight. Probably this is the reason why this hymn is called dakshiNA-mUrty-ashTakaM even though it contains a total of ten verses. (ashTakam - means a hymn of eight verses).

'Beyond whom, supreme and all-pervading, there is nothing else, however much you may search' - is in fact the bottom line of all the scriptures. Cf. vedaiSca sarvair-aham-eva-vedyaH / (bhagavad-gItA XV - 15) I am the One to be known from all the vedas. Also: yasmAt-paraM na-aparaM asti kimcid-yasmAn-nANlyo'sti na jyAyo'sti kimcit (nArAyaNopanishat) meaning: That beyond which there is no supreme, there is no greater, no smaller.

[There is a piece of four chapters, of about 130 verses in the mahA-bhArata, which gives a list of what Spirituality is. It is narrated to King Dhrita-rashtra by the divine sage Sanat-sujata, the mind-born son of Creator brahmA. It turns out to be a synthesis of the

entire vedanta made by the most knowledgeable person, who got his own spiritual insight by a direct inspiration from the dakshinAmUrti form of Siva, the form itself being a manifestation for the very purpose of giving, not only the knowledge of brahman, but the state of being brahman (cf. Knower of brahman is brahman). In this synthesis by Sanatsujata, there is an interesting analysis of vedas versus knowledge. The question is raised: What is the result of mastery of the vedas? The answer is scholarly. Truth is One. That is all what the vedas are supposed to reveal. The root word vid, from which the word veda is derived has several connotations; to be, to exist, to know, to be conscious of, to enquire, to gain. The One that exists is the Ultimate Supreme Consciousness. The thing to know is that One without a second. This is the bottom line. That has to be enquired into. And by that enquiry you reach the highest gain, namely, moksha. This is all there is to know from the entire vedas. Instead of learning this single lesson from the vedas one keeps on going round and round the truth. Thus the vedas become a vast ocean of words. Truth does not need so much scholarship. Those who possess scholarship of the vedas are called brahmins. But the real brahmins are those who are firmly established in that One Truth. There is no single knower of all the vedas. By knowing the vedas one does not know what is to be known. The knower of the vedas knows only what the vedas say. But the knower of Truth is different. By studying the vedas one gets to acquire knowledge but neither these knowers nor the vedas themselves know the Reality. Even then, it is the vedas which point to that Reality for the knower of the vedas to become the knower of brahman. The vedas cannot make you the knower of brahman. Let us not confuse understanding with a larger vocabulary. Like the branches of a tree which help to indicate the direction in which to look for the archlike streak of the moon two days after new moon, the vedas only show you the way. Only when your conviction of Truth is not just in your brain but also in your Being can you vouch for its validity. Let us just quote two verses in this analysis: (Chapter II: 42, 43):]

na vedAnAM veditA kaScid-asti vedena vedaM na vidur na vedyaM / yo veda vedaM sa
ca veda vedyaM yo veda vedyaM na sa veda satyaM //

None of the vedas know Him (who is of the nature of the Knower). For the vedas do not help us to know Him nor the known (The World). One who knows the Knower knows also the known. But one who knows only the known knows not the Truth. //

yo veda vedAn sa ca veda vedyaM na taM viduH veda-vido na vedAH / tathApi vedena
vidanti vedaM ye brahmaNA veda-vido bhavanti //

One who knows the vedas, knows the knowable. But neither the knower of the vedas nor the vedas themselves know That. Yet those seekers of brahman who become the knowers of the vedas know brahman with the help of the vedas.

Verse No. 10

sarvAtmatvam-iti sphuTIkRtam-idaM yasmAd-amushmin-stave
tenAsya SravaNAt-tathArtha-mananAd-dhyAnAcCa sankIrtanAt /

sarvAtmatva-mahAvibhUti-sahitaM syAdISvaratvaM svataH
siddhyet-tat punarashTadhA pariNataM caiSvaryam-avyAhataM //

CARUVAMUM TANA NANRAYC-CARRUMIT-TOTTIRATTIN
CIRAVANAN-TANNAL-ARTTA CINTANAN-DYANAN-GANAM
PURIVADALELLAN-TANAM BUDISERISAN-RANMAI
MARUVIDU MARRU METTA MADIVARU CELVAN-TANE

10. In this hymn of praise what has been explained is the state of being the Self of All. By hearing this, by reflecting on its meaning, by meditating on it and by reciting it one will attain the Lordship certainly, but , along with the grand attainment of the state of being the Self of All, also, the unrestrained eight-fold supra-normal powers.

The sarvAtmatvaM, all-Self-hood, that this final verse talks about is in fact the end of all Spirituality. He who sees Me everywhere, and who sees in Me everything, to Him I am never lost nor is he lost to Me - so says the Lord, (Gita, VI - 30):

yo mAM paSyati sarvatra sarvaM ca mayi paSyati /
tasyAhaM na praNaSyAmi sa ca me na praNaSyati //

It is the vision of One-ness amidst the plurality of experience. Perception of difference arises because of the recognition of name and form. The enlightened one however, sees the tile, the stone, the golden brick, all in the same way: (Gita, 14 - 24):

sama-loshTASma-kAncanaH /

The normal human being is distracted by the multiplicity of appearances and behaves like a child which cannot see the wood behind the wooden elephant and is carried away by the 'elephant'. We are really in a dream state and refuse to believe there is a more real world outside of our mundane excitements. We are not able to shake off the glamour of plurality and see the essential unity in all that we see. We tend to look at the multiplicity of things only in their separateness and variety of operation. We see the waves, not the ocean. On the other hand, the scriptures prescribe that we should see only the Lord's presence in whatever we see; hear only the melody of Krishna's flute in whatever we hear; taste only the amRt-like sweetness of the gangA that is flowing from the head of Lord Siva, in whatever we taste; smell only the fragrance of the dust of the Holy Feet of the Mother Goddess, in whatever we smell; and feel only the touch of the abhaya-hasta, of Lord Sri Rama, in whatever we touch.



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