

Sri Adi Shankara Bhagavatpada's Bhaava

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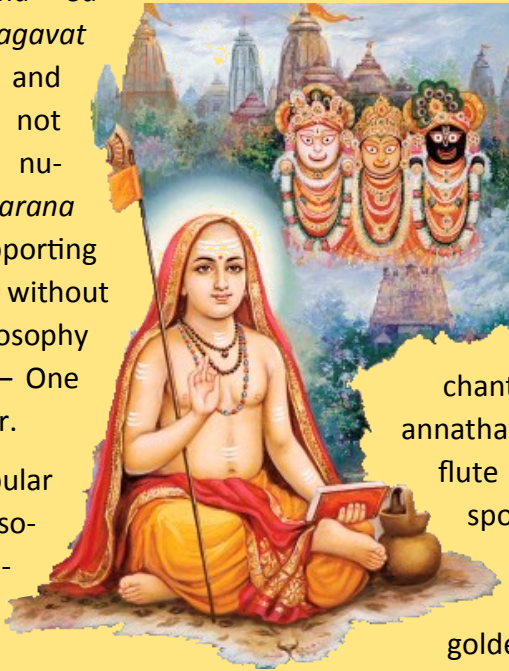
Sri Adi Sankara's name is etched in the history of our religion for reviving the Sanatana Dharma and establishing the philosophy of *Advaita*. His commentaries on the *Brahma Sutra*, the *Bhagavat Gita* and the *Upanishads*, not to mention the numerous 'Prakarana Granthas' (supporting works) establish without doubt the philosophy of Non-dualism – One without the other.

Contrary to popular belief, the philosophy does not preclude the tender and gentle expression of love for the Supreme, and Sankara's own works are standing corroborations to this. Many of his slokas exude Bhakti in the most astonishing of dimensions. One such example is his 'Jagannathashtakam' (octet on Jagannatha).

Puri is a coastal temple town located at the foothills of the 'Nilachala' on the Odisha coast. Shri Jagannatha (Lord Krishna) is the presiding deity of the *kshetra*, along with His brother Lord Balabhadra and His sister Subhadra. The deities are 'daarumayi murti' (made of wood). The colossal Jagannath Rath Yatra of the deities happens

during the *Aashada* month (June-July) every year.

Adi Sankara visits the Jagannatha Kshetra. He is mesmerized by the sweet notes from the flute of Jagannatha-



annatha-Krishna, who is playing it on the banks of Yamuna. In the second verse of his octet, Sankara describes the en-

chanting form of Jagannatha – who holds a flute in his left hand, sports a peacock feather on his head, wears a golden yellow silken

cloth and enjoys divine pastimes in Vrindavana.

Sankara beholds the beautiful sight of the Lord along with Balabhadra and Subhadra in this temple town and extols His glories, and virtues of mercy and compassion in the verses of his *Ashtakam*.

Adi Sankara happens to witness the grand 'Rath Yatra' at this holy place, where oceans of devotees are submerged in the ocean of His grace as the divine trio majestically ride in the chariot through the street. His *bhava* reaches new heights when he experiences a rare divine vision during the 'Rath Yatra' – Radha Devi riding the chariot

along with the Lord during the Yatra! Sankara sees that, being from a rustic background and a novice in riding on chariots, Radha Devi is gripped with fear as the chariot speeds up. The Lord comforts her with His loving embrace as the Divine couple ride the chariot.

Having witnessed this divine sight, Sankara wishes for nothing else: no kingdom, precious gems, family or material pleasures.

na vai yache rAjyam na ca kanakamANikya-vibhavam

na yaacheham ramyam sakalajana-kAmyam vara-vadhum

sadA kale kale pramatha-patina gita-charito

jagannathah swami nayana-pathagami bhavatu me

"Pray Lord Jagannatha be the constant object of my vision forever," implores Sankara in every verse of his octet!

Narayanan Sathiamoorthy, Boston, MA

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Yearn for the Lord... the Guru will Come!

Sant Kabir Das is a great Mahan who lived in north India only a few hundred years ago. He is famous for his *dohas* – simple 2-line poems that convey very profound spiritual concepts. In his *dohas*, Kabir Das sings the praises of Guru, devotion to God, the greatness of the company of Sadhus, dispassion and so on.

There are no clear records about Kabir's birth. But soon after he was born, he was found and adopted by a Muslim couple. He grew up in a Muslim weaver community in the holy town of Kasi, but he found his mind being drawn towards Lord Rama.

The fire of dispassion raged deeply in his heart. Once he happened to see a woman grinding some seeds, and he lamented,

chalti chakki dekh kar, diya kabira roye |

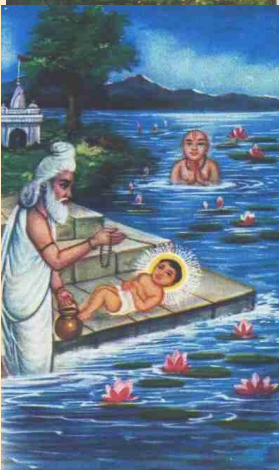
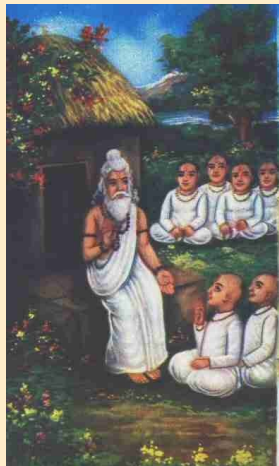
do paatan ke beech mein, sabuth bachana koi ||

Looking at the grinding mills, Kabir feels like crying. Caught between the two stones, no seed (life) is spared.

As he cried, a *sadhu* came up to him and consoled him saying that just like the seeds that were attached to the stone were not crushed, people who got caught hold of Lord Rama's Name will be saved. So Kabir longed to be initiated into the Holy Name by a Guru. With this longing in his heart, he approached the gates of Sant Ramananda's ashram. But the saint's disciples denied him audience with the Guru and drove him away as he was a Muslim. He cried all day in front of the saint's ashram, but to no avail.

Crestfallen, he finally went to the banks of Ganges and sat on the steps and wept uncontrollably. Exhausted, he fell asleep on the steps. That night Lord Rama and Lakshmana, the *puja murthis* of Sant Ramananda appeared in his dream and the

saint heard them talking among themselves. Rama told Lakshmana, "Come Lakshmana, let us go away from here. We should not stay in a place where a *bhagavata* is not respected!" Waking up from this dream, Sant Ramananda was very perturbed. He worried about what mistake he had committed and who was the *bhagavata* (true devotee) who he had disrespected.



Early that morning, as he was on the way to the Ganges for his morning ablutions, Sant Ramananda continued to muse over his dream. Walking absent-mindedly in the pre-dawn darkness, he stepped on sleeping Kabir. As his feet struck Kabir's head, he uttered "Ram, Ram." Kabir woke up, and seeing that it was none other than his Guru whose Paduka had blessed his head and from whose lips he had heard the Divine Name. He immediately prostrated to Ramananda. Sant Ramananda accepted him as his disciple. From then on, Kabir always chanted the Lord's name.

Kabir's *dohas* reflect his intense Guru bhakti:

Sath Guru mila to sab mile, na to

mila na koi |

Maath, Pita Suth bandhava, yeh to ghar ghar hoi ||

Getting a Sath Guru is equal to attaining everything in this world.

Whereas, every house has mother, father, son and relatives so there is nothing special about it.

Guru Bin Jnan na upje, Guru Bin mile na moksh |

Guru Bin likhe na sathya ko, Guru Bin mite na dosh ||

Without the Guru, one cannot gain any spiritual knowledge, nor can he attain salvation.

Without the Guru, one cannot realize the ultimate truth and nor can he get rid of his

Answers and beyond... Spiritual questions answered by Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji

Q. We say "Sarvam Vasudevamayam". Then why is there so much of division in the name of caste, religion and in the name of God?

A. "When you are in a state of worry that you are not well, the doctor consoles you by saying that you are perfectly all right. However, when you are well and you are pretty sure about it, then no question arises and hence no consolations are needed, right? Likewise, the ultimate truth is 'Sarvam Vasudevamayam'. When we do not realize it, that is when the duality comes where we see many forms. So we keep chanting it often to remind ourselves of the truth.

It is not enough if you see everything in Vasudeva. If you see Vasudeva inside you, then you will automatically see Vasudeva alone in everything else – nothing else; nobody else."

Q. How can I best express my love for God?

A. "When a person has wealth, he is ready to share it with his kids alone and none others. So he tries his best to acquire as much wealth as possible. In the same manner, a knowledgeable person is not ready to share his rare knowledge with one and all.

Likewise, if one is ready to share his love with the Lord, and the Lord alone, and no one else, then his Bhakti grows day by day. We should not let our love to be scattered in different directions. Love has to be carefully accumulated, saved and offered only to the Lord; no one else."

For more such answers by Sri Swamiji, or to ask a question of your own, please visit the Nama Dwaar website at www.namadwaar.org.

doubts.

Sant Kabir's *jayanti* falls in the month of June. Let us remember him on his birthday and pray to him to fill our lives with the names of the Lord and with Guru bhakti.

Sowmya Balasubramanian, Fremont, CA

Adherence to a Dharmic Father's Words...

This year Father's Day falls on June 17, 2012. Here is a story to show how the Lord Himself obeyed His father's instructions to the "t".

In a forest, on the banks of river Ganga, lived Sage Jamadagni with his wife Renuka and their sons. Sage Jamadagni was known for his austerities, penance and his adherence to *dharma*. Lord Parasurama, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, was his youngest son.

Mother Renuka used to go to the Ganga to fetch water for the sacrificial offerings that were performed by Sage Jamadagni. During one of her visits to fetch water, she saw Chitraratha, the king of the Gandharvas playing with other celestial women in the Ganga. He was decorated with a beautiful garland of lotuses, and it was an enchanting sight. Mother Renuka



was lost for a while and forgot that the time for the sacrifice was passing.

As soon as she realized her mistake, she rushed to the ashram with the pot of water.

There, out of fear, she dropped the pot when she looked at her husband, as she felt guilty that she had been distracted by her senses and neglected her duty. Jamadagni

immediately realized the cause for her delay and became very angry. Renuka trembled out of fear of his curse. The sage ordered his sons to kill their mother for her negligence. But the sons did not follow his order.

Jamadagni then ordered his youngest son, Parasurama, to kill all his brothers for disobeying their father and kill his mother for her mistake. Parasurama, who was

none other than the Lord and who knew the ways of *dharma* and its consequences, immediately obeyed his father's words and killed his brothers and mother. This act of Parasurama's pleased the father very much. The happy father offered his obedient son a boon. Lord Parasurama then replied saying, "Let my mother and brothers live again and not remember having been killed by me." At this request of Lord Parasurama, Jamadagni gladly brought them all back to life.

Such was the respect and obedience Lord Parasurama had for his father Jamadagni, who was a great sage and follower of *dharma*.

The father is one's foremost Guru. His advises are born out of love and concern for us and enriched by his experiences in life. However stern they may sound or unfavorable they may seem, ultimately his advise will mean only good for us - we may be too shortsighted to understand their purport!

Yamini ZivanPrakash, Chicago, IL

Kid's Quiz - Maha Periyava Trivia

Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati Swamigal (1894–1994), the 68th pontiff of the Kanchi Sankara Mutt is considered to be one of the greatest saints of India. His entire life can be characterized simply as one of divinity and humility. He was affectionately called Paramacharya and Maha Periyava (Great Elder) by his devotees. Maha Periyava stressed the importance of a Guru and the need to follow a dharmic path. His Jayanti was celebrated on June 4 this year. Here are a few questions that can help us know more about this great saint:

- Maha Periyava's composition "Maithreem Bhajata" stands for _____
 - Universal harmony and world peace in Sanatana dharma
 - The greatness of the Vedas
 - Importance of traditional art forms
- Maha Periyava lived in this world until which year?

- 1944
 - 1994
 - 1924
- What is MahaPeriyava's full name?
 - Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswathi swamigal
 - Sri Alangudi Mahaperiyava
 - Sri Abedhananda Swamigal
 - Name the Mutt for which Maha Periyava became the 68th pontiff
 - Belur Mutt
 - Kanchi Mutt
 - Sringeri Mutt
 - "Maithreem Bhajata" was composed by Maha Periyava _____
 - For the 50th Anniversary celebration of the UN
 - On the day of Indian Independence
 - In appreciation of renovating the ancient temples
 - For how long did Maha Periyava live in this world?
 - 99

- 100
 - 38
- How old was Maha Periyava when he embraced the path of Sanyasa?
 - Sixteen
 - Twelve
 - Thirteen
 - Maha Periyava traveled throughout India during his tenure as the Mutt Pontiff. How did he usually travel?
 - By foot
 - By train
 - By cart
 - In 1919, Maha Periyava embarked on a trip from Rameshwaram to Ganges. What was the duration of the journey?
 - Ten years
 - Twelve years
 - Fourteen years

Compiled by:

Ramya Srinivasan, San Jose, CA

Answers:

1-A, 2-B, 3-A, 4-B, 5-A, 6-A, 7-C, 8-A, 9-B

News and Events

Houston - Madhura Utsav Bhagavatha Dharma Retreat



With the immense grace of our beloved Guru Maharaj, a wonderful Bhagavata Dharma retreat was conducted by Sri Poornimaji on May 5-6 in the serene surroundings of Lake Houston State Park. Right from the time the idea was conceived, till the completion of the retreat, it was obvious that everything was being guided and taken care of from Above! All the arrangements, right to the minutest detail, were planned and completed unbelievably perfectly. Several devotees from Houston, Dallas, San Antonio, California Bay Area, Chico, Redding, Chicago and Michigan participated in this unique event, that took the participants through a complete 24+ hours filled with only thoughts and activities related to the Lord and the Guru. It was indeed a rare experience, and one to be cherished forever.

GK Shloka Contest in Milwaukee

By the immense grace of Lord Sri Hari and Our Sadgurnathar HH Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji **The Kids Kirtan & Shloka Contest** held at Milwaukee on May 26th, 2012 as an extension of Madhura Utsav Celebrations (April), turned out to be a delightfully awe-inspiring event for everyone. Children participated in it with zeal and joy. It was adorable to watch the little ones express their true nature (divinity) through wondrous sweet melodies (kirtans) of each kind. On the whole the event was a blessing for all that took part in it.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Houston

Jun 13 –July 25 - Gopa Kuteeram Youth Summer camp (ages 9-15) at Houston Namadwaar
Jun 23-24 - Gopa Kuteeram Li'l Gopas Summer Camp (ages 4-8) @ Houston Namadwaar
Contact: 281-402-6585, houston.god@godivinity.org

Atlanta

June 16, 5:30 - 7:00 PM - Bhajans in Shree Mandir, Mabelton, GA.
For more info write to raghupathy.rama@gmail.com

Chicago

June 16 - Akhanda Nama Sankirtan —10:00 AM - 4:00 PM at 3091 Coastal Dr, Aurora, IL.
Jun 27 - 29 - Gopa Kuteeram Summer Camp at Naperville Public Library, Naperville, IL.
For details contact 630.851.8578 or email chicagogopakuteeram@gmail.com

News Satsangs & Activities Around the USA:

Atlanta, GA

Saturdays, 5 to 7 PM - Gopa Kuteeram, kids spiritual enrichment program for ages 8 and below.
Sundays, 5 to 6:30 PM - Satsang with Bhajans, Bhagavath Katha and Vishnu Sahasranamam for Adults and kids over 8 years. For more info, email raghupathy.rama@gmail.com

Boston, MA: Thursdays, 5:00 to 6:00 PM - Gopa Kuteeram, a kids spiritual enrichment program. For more info email rekha.narayanan18@gmail.com

Holland, MI: Thursdays, 6:00 to 6:30 PM - Nama sankirtan satsang. For more info email shreedevi_bharath@yahoo.com

Weekly satsangs are held regularly in the following regions:

Atlanta, GA; Bay Area, CA; New England area; Chicago, IL; Cortlandt Manor, NY; Dallas, TX; Houston, TX; Milwaukee, WI; Orlando, FL; Richmond, VA; San Antonio, TX; Seattle, WA; Saskatchewan, Canada

A Telecon satsang is held every Fri evening and Tele-Bhagavatam discourse is telecast every Tue evening, both at 8:30 PM CST. Anyone is welcome to attend. Ph: 605-475-4000, Passcode: 131581

Gopa Kuteeram (kids' programs) & Srimad Bhagavatam study circles are conducted in various cities. Email newsletter@godivinity.org for more info.

Published by:

Global Organization for Divinity

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Illustrations—Sripriya Sarathy.