



VEDANTA TEXT TRANSLATION

MAHARAJA THURAVU

Glory of Sannyasa: The Life and
Teachings of the King-turned-Ascetic

SRI KUMARA DEVA SWAMIGAL

TRANSLATED BY SWAMI TANMAYANANDA SARASVATI

Introduction

The Advaitic work *Maharaja Thuravu* was originally composed in Sanskrit. It narrates the story told by Maharshi Suta Muni to the ascetics of Naimisharanya forest in the present day state of Uttar Pradesh. Much later, the medieval saint Sri Kumara Deva Swamigal rendered this work in exquisite Tamil poetry for the benefit of Tamil-knowing devotees and seekers. In the Karaikudi Kovilur Math teaching tradition of Vedanta, established about 180 years ago by Srilasri Muktiramalinga Gnanadesika Swamigal, this work is the fourth in the syllabus list of canonical texts numbering sixteen.

Swami Tanmayananda Sarasvati, formerly Sadhu Tanmaya Chaitanya, received *sannyasa diksha* from Swami Virajeshwara Sarasvati, 'Hamsa Ashrama', at Anusoni, near Hosur, on Maha Sivaratri day, 12.02.2010. Swami Virajeshwara belongs to the *parampara* of Swami Sivananda,

2010

H.H. Swami Chandrasekhara Bharati, the Sankaracharya of Sringeri
receiving obeisance from his disciple, Abhinava Vidya Tirtha

Great sages like Tattvarayar, Tandavarayar, Ulaganathar, Sivaprakasara, Santalinganar and others have rendered these texts in chaste Tamil poetry, capturing in elaborate detail and depth the great truths of Vedanta found in Sanskrit texts. Not being merely translations, these compositions rival their Sanskrit precursors in richness and depth and are treated on par with them as independent original classics. The first three texts¹ give the essence of Advaita Vedanta while the next three,² beginning with *Maharaja Thuravu*, focus on the methods and analysis to strengthen the seeker's dispassion (*vairagya*), which is indispensable for spiritual sadhana.

The author of *Maharaja Thuravu*, meaning 'The Renunciation of the King (by name Maharajan)' is Sri Kumara Deva Swamigal, who was himself a *mahayogi* and a *jivanmukta*. In a sense, the text has a touch of an autobiographical flavour because he himself was originally (in his *purvashrama* or householder stage) a king of a large province in the present day state of Karnataka following the Veera Saiva tradition. He had renounced everything out of dispassion, with the intense intent of gaining Self-knowledge. Searching for a guru, he came all the way to south Tamilnadu near Coimbatore and surrendered at the feet of Peraiyur (Perur) Santalinga Swamigal, who was an illustrious enlightened sage. After serving the master for some time and passing all his tests of conduct and ripeness of renunciation, he received from him esoteric instructions in yoga sadhana and Vedanta vichara. In due course, his intense sadhana culminated in spiritual illumination, as recognised by the guru himself, who was most pleased by the achievements of his eminent disciple. One day Sri Santalinga Swamigal called Sri Kumara Devar and after giving him the new title of 'Maharaja', he bade him farewell, instructing him to go and live henceforth in Vriddhachalam as an independent guru. (This is similar to the story of that other famed sage of Arunachala, Guhai Namasivaya Swamigal who commanded his enlightened disciple, Guru Namasivaya Swamigal, to go away from him and

live in Chidambaram, saying that 'two mighty elephants cannot be tethered to the same post'!)

Obedying the guru's commands, Sri Kumara Devar journeyed alone to Vriddhachalam for many days by foot where he had a vision of Goddess Perianayaki (Vriddhambika), the presiding deity of the temple as the holy Consort of Lord Siva who is known as Pazhamalainathar in that holy town. Experiencing Her Grace by way of being fed by Her with milk in a golden vessel, he was overjoyed and obeying Her personal command to remain there, he lived there in spiritual ecstasy. Performing many miracles, he lavished his blessings on all the devotees who came to him, recognising his exalted attainments.

Once when Kumara Deva Swamigal was immersed in *samadhi nishta*, Divine Mother Perianayaki, wishing to obtain Vedantic texts through him in order to guide humanity, appeared in front of him and commanded him to author a few shastras. Kumara Devar replied in all humility, "Oh Mother! How can I undertake such an onerous task with my little knowledge? Where is the capacity and what scholarship do I have to fulfil such an enterprise?" Then Perianayaki Amman assured him lovingly, "Have no worry, my dear child! I myself will dwell in your tongue and complete the compositions of these Vedanta shastras. Therefore, with courage and confidence, commence your recital of these works forthwith." Blessed with such a gracious commandment, Sri Kumara Deva Swamigal started dictating Vedantic poetry at a prolific rate and composed many Vedantic works beginning with this *Maharaja Thuravu*. He finally concluded his literary outpourings with a decad of devotional verses called *Perianayaki Pathigam*. In all, he authored sixteen texts including *Advaita Unnmai*, *Suddha Shatakam*, *Brahma Siddhi Agaval*, *Brahma Anubhava Agaval*, *Sahaja Nishtai*, *Vedanta Dasavatthai Kattalai*, etc. In the hallowed hall of Tamil Vedantic literature, these philosophical poems occupy pride of place and serve to guide serious seekers of Self-knowledge.

A more detailed account of his life, which is filled with many interesting miracles and quaint surreal happenings, will appear in a future issue.

¹ *Naanaa Jivavaada Kattalai*, *Geetha Saara Thaalattu* and *Sasivanna Bodham*.

² *Vairagya Shatakam* and *Vairagya Deepam*.

Maharaja Thuravu champions the supremacy of monastic renunciation as the unfailing means for achieving Self-realization. In the present day milieu of ‘liberal Vedanta’ propagation, such an orthodox viewpoint is looked askance and even labelled as regressive, for ‘is not inner renunciation the only thing that matters?’ For those with such a mindset, the topic of *sannyasa* has become highly debatable and rightly so. No doubt ‘inner renunciation’ alone is true renunciation, but because a majority of us do *not* have it, we tend to blithely disparage ‘external renunciation’ too, though it is the highest palpable symbol of the former. To smother an uneasy conscience, we further quote a few who failed to live up to the ‘fourth stage’ of human life, assumed by them in all sincerity. Traducing the ideal of *sannyasa* thus, in cynical disdain, merely betrays a shallow understanding of its ennobling depth and grandeur. Do we dismiss the ideals of all medical science (as enunciated by Hippocrates), just because quacks are also occasionally encountered? It is part of our tradition to revere the external symbols of renunciation as a powerful reminder of what they stand for in our own individual inner growth. In the *Periapuranam*, many Nayanmars won the Grace of Lord Siva by honouring such external symbols at the cost of their very lives!

It is always better to understand and judge any ideal by its ‘best examples’ rather than to take the easy option of trashing it by citing a few failures. Ideals are never at fault. If a few practitioners go wrong, their inability *only* reinforces the loftiness of their chosen pursuit and its formidable challenge. A few stray lapses cannot be pounced upon to condemn the ideal itself or to water it down so much as to make a travesty of *sannyasa*. *Maharaja Thuravu* categorically affirms that inner renunciation *must* eventually blossom and manifest as external renunciation too, sooner or later, and gives many powerful examples to support its thesis. Since there is a synergy between both kinds of renunciation — inner and outer —, the text espouses the adoption of the latter in order to achieve the former. As one famous contemporary sannyasi tellingly put it with regard to *sannyasa*, “Fake it, to make it.” This is indeed a sound strategy, as borne out in a famous parable of Sri Kamakrishna Paramahansa. For only a very rare

few are perfect to begin with and this mode of journey need not be postponed indefinitely till one becomes truly fit. Bhagavan Ramana took a superbly nuanced stand to resolve this vexatious issue, but to dwell on that would require a separate article. All we can say now is that the view of Sri Kumara Deva should be accorded an honoured place in our overall vision, though it may not be fashionable to do so in the consumerist age we live in.

The present work contains 117 verses and is rich in poetic imagery. The initial descriptions are full of extravagant flourishes, providing an interesting and elaborate backdrop for the uncompromising Vedantic teachings that follow, which then shine in sharp relief. Modern readers unaccustomed to such unabashed hyperbole are apt to find it amusing and the initial 25 verses are therefore greatly summarised to save space and perhaps spare the reader much tedium. The conversations are often blunt with no smooth niceties and exude a quaint, native charm.

The present translation is a free-flowing paraphrase of the verses, based mainly on *Kovilur Marabu Vedanta Noolgal — Part Two*, the commentary published by the Kovilur Matalayam in 2006 under the aegis of Srilasri Nachiyappa Gnana Desika Swamigal, the venerable pontiff of the Kovilur Aadheenam. Where necessary, a

MAHARAJA THURAVU

Invocatory Verse

We shall prostrate in deep devotion, to attain the divine blessings needed for completion of the present text in the manner intended, to Lord Ganesha, who is showering His Grace in the comely temple of Vriddhachalam, and Lord Skanda who also resides in the same holy shrine and Divine Mother Parvati, the daughter of Himavan, the Lord of the Himalayas, called Perianayaki (Vriddhambika) and to Lord Siva, hailed as Pazhamalainathar in Vriddhachalam, who rids His devotees of the three great impurities of Ego, Karma and Maya

to all the deities like Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, gave away much charity to mendicants and ascetics, and also performed Vedic *yagnas* offering oblations to the sacrificial fires, to fulfil his desire for an heir. He visited various holy pilgrim centres, built temples, dug wells and ponds, developed gardens and performed acts of charity of thirty two kinds, that are described in *dharmashastras*. Owing to the performance of such penances and charities, eventually the king was blessed with a robust male child, which gave immense joy to the king. He was happy that his present life was finally fulfilled and his after-life was also guaranteed with felicity and eventual liberation. The king then performed all the rituals associated with child-birth in the prescribed manner, got the horoscope of the child cast by experts, and finally named his son as 'Maharajan' meaning 'the Great King'!

As the child grew in strength over the years, the king arranged for the education of the prince under the best instructors in all the sixty-four classical branches of arts and sciences and ensured his all-round development, including skills in warfare, like mastery in riding horses, elephants and chariots. As the prince reached marriageable age, the king desired to perform his wedding with a most eligible princess of a neighbouring kingdom and accordingly commenced the most splendid preparations for a grand royal wedding. The king of Karunada Desa then despatched his royal invitation message to all the fifty-six kings of every neighbouring country, conveying his personal request to all of them to attend and grace the grand celebration of the wedding festival of the heir. The kings, with their mighty armies and personal retinues, duly began arriving in Mapuram, the capital city of Karunada Desa to participate in the royal function.

The city wore a festive look, with the most gorgeous decorations to receive the royal guests in a befitting manner and shone with great splendour, rivalling Amaravati, the heavenly capital of Indraloka itself. The princess was of incomparable beauty, as if sculpted by Lord Brahma himself with greatest care and even Mahalakshmi, the Consort of Lord Vishnu, was struck with wonder at her bewitching form and grace. As the celebrations moved towards their grand finale, the crown prince was duly ushered into wedlock with the princess,

Text

1. Once upon a time, when many *rishis* (ascetics) were performing austere penances in the forests of Naimisharanya, Maharishi Suta came that way. The ascetics welcomed him with reverence and said, 'Lord, you have narrated many elevating stories of the past; however, you have not told us the story of the *celebrated renunciation of the king* [Maharajan] so far. Kindly bless us with a narration of the same.' Thereupon Maharshi Suta said, 'Alright, I shall tell you in brief the glorious story of the Maharajan's renunciation, which has been narrated in the Vedas at great length; listen to it with attention,' and proceeded to expound the same.

2 – 9. Once there lived a great king ruling over the fertile lands of a prosperous country called Karunadu, protecting the welfare of his subjects from the city of Mapuram. All the chieftains of the nearby regions accepted his leadership and paid their homage by obeying his commands and dutifully paying the taxes levied upon them. This king was greater than Lord Indra in affluence, more handsome than even Lord Manmatha (Cupid), valorous as the lion, stronger than even a mountain rock in physical strength and skilled in warfare, being equipped with a great spear, capable of protecting the three worlds. In his palace there always resounded the melodies of various musical instruments everyday, accompanying auspicious occasions and events like weddings. The king was also known for his great charity to all the needy and deserving citizens in his kingdom. He ruled the country with great justice and fame as per the *Manu Dharmashastra* and, thus loved by his subjects and revered by his vassals, he enjoyed all the pleasures of earthly life for many years. However, he did not have an heir to rule after his reign and this was a major worry that unsettled his otherwise enviable and happy life.

10 – 20. In order to remove this lack, the king resolved to perform a number of meritorious deeds which would neutralise his bad karma and bestow on him the wealth of progeny. Accordingly, he bathed in various holy rivers like the Ganga, did ritualistic worship

listening with much humility to the advice of the elders and to the teachings of wise saints concerning the ultimate goal of human life and practising together deep contemplation of the truths revealed in the sacred texts. Often resorting to solitude, the royal couple engaged themselves in studying spiritual teachings that were conducive to gaining the ultimate knowledge. They ascertained finally that it is only by gaining the Supreme Knowledge of Truth, that one can escape from the bondage of Maya, that causes the endless cycle of birth and death, to attain true everlasting happiness. They then sought the feet of great souls who were illumined with that knowledge, served them everyday and asked them, with humility, about how to obtain that liberating knowledge. Of the two, the king began to develop an acute sense of discrimination between what is eternal and ephemeral, and detached his mind from the world and the pleasures that it can give. He concluded that there is no end to pampering the body which is anyway perishable and that with a steadfast mind, one should focus on the Knowledge of Truth for gaining emancipation from bondage. He also decided that such Knowledge can never arise within, without the Grace of a compassionate Guru who embodies that Knowledge.

26. Sages have said that to seek the liberating teaching from a self-styled guru who himself is wallowing in the scorching heat of worldly life is akin to seeking the ripe coconut fruit from a person who is desperately squeezing the sparse juice from the bark of a coconut tree, and is therefore bound to be futile.

27. Suppose there is a person who has studied all the *shastras*, Vedas, *puranas* and other scriptures very thoroughly and also expounds them flawlessly to lay people and guides them well to follow a *dharmic* life. But if he himself is not capable of living according to his own precepts and abiding by the values of a truthful and pure life, then to seek spiritual guidance from such a person, even though most learned, is comparable to seeking guidance from a donkey, carrying sack loads of vermilion powder upon its back, regarding the nature of the vermilion powder.

in accordance with all the Vedic rites duly performed by competent brahmin priests and blessed by great rishis and all the visiting royal dignitaries.

21 – 25. After the wedding, the king of Karunada Desa, in the presence of royal sages like Vasishtha and others, arranged for the coronation of the prince as his successor. The prince was bathed in holy waters brought from the Ganga and, decorated in royal splendour, was escorted to the royal throne of gold studded with diamonds and precious gems, by the king and Vedic priests amidst the chanting of Vedic mantras and duly installed as the new king with a dazzling crown and sceptre as his royal insignia, with the words of blessing, “May you now protect the entire earth that is surrounded by sea waters, with great benevolence and justice!” His father now retired without a trace of sadness, happy that he had now fulfilled all his duties by bequeathing the kingdom and the welfare of his subjects to the care of his capable son.

The young king Maharajan fulfilled the expectations of his father by ruling the kingdom with great competence and flair. He travelled far and wide in all the eight directions with his great army and brought the earth under his single command by conquering everyone who challenged his suzerainty. He ruled over his vastly enlarged kingdom with great justice and compassion and enriched the land with tremendous prosperity, rivalling that of the heavens ruled by Indra. He then enjoyed the heavenly pleasures of human life with his beautiful queen and lived in the great felicity of his mighty achievements. When Suta Maharshi narrated thus the glory of the king Maharajan, the Naimisharanya ascetics who were listening with rapt attention became curious and asked him, ‘After achieving so much, what did the king do further?’ Maharishi Suta then began to narrate the further course of the king’s spiritual evolution.

While living in this contentment, the king Maharajan and his royal queen were paying homage everyday to their parents, and worshipping great yogis and God with regular *upasana*. They were

unconcerned about the welfare of your beloved subjects. Such an attitude does not befit the stature of a wise king like you. Please resume your royal duties immediately.” The king replied to them, “I have no desire anymore to rule over this kingdom; I desire to know only myself in my real nature.....”

32. “...I have eradicated my desires for presiding over this wonderful kingdom as well as the pleasures of this royal life. I would prefer to live in a secluded forest in total solitude and conquer all the movements of my mind, and strive to attain liberation from *samsara*. Having decided thus on my future life, I shall not covet anymore the enjoyment of pleasures or return to my former worldly life. Therefore, please select and anoint another person as your king.”

33. Hearing these words of the king, his ministers and courtiers said, “Your father anointed you as our king at a very young age, pleased with your capability and strength, and you too, by virtue of your ability and valour, have protected this land without any blemish all these years. If such a great ruler as you repairs to the forest, who is there to govern and protect the welfare of our country with justice, wisdom and compassion? Further, your proposed course of abdication of your royal duties in favour of an ascetic life is not in harmony with the nature of this world and our society. Bereft of this opulence and all the luxuries of a royal life worthy for the enjoyment of the human body, what other goal can possibly exist in human destiny.....?”

34. “...further, if you renounce the kingdom and go off to a forest as a recluse, our citizens will suffer without protection and the country will plunge into instability. We will all be terribly distraught and plunged in despair. It is not at all proper for you to leave us in the lurch and seek to live alone in a forest. Please do give us a convincing answer to assuage our grief.” Listening to such entreaties, the king replied, “In people like you who think that this worldly life is absolutely real, however much I may tell you that this world is fleeting and unreal, the wisdom to appreciate the truth will not arise”

35. “.....further, the kingship of this country is pithless in

28. The king thereafter found a great sage living in a verdant forest, who was full of compassion for all beings and devotion to Lord Siva, and also an embodiment of dispassion and wisdom. The king fell at his feet and prayed to him to teach that excellent path, following which he himself could attain eternal bliss and be forever free from the cycle of births and death.

29. The sage then instructed the king with the counsel, “Oh King! Give up the feeling of ‘mine-ness’ towards both the world and the pleasures thereof and turn the mind away from all desires which draw it outward because of long association in the past. Drop all thoughts towards even safeguarding the body without any fear. Restrain your mind, and its four modifications (mind, intellect, memory and ego sense) and eliminate all contacts that rouse in your mind, the six inner enemies (lust, anger, greed, delusion, pride and jealousy) by faithfully following the guru’s instructions. In this manner, you will certainly gain *moksha*, which is your own nature, and the root cause of *samsara*, which is *avidya* (ignorance), will be automatically annihilated. Now keep this royal path in your mind and make haste towards your salvation.”

30. The king then obtained all the clarifications regarding this *jnana marg*a from his guru, and returned to his kingdom and resumed its governance as before for some time with great effort. Then one day, he intensely remembered the final instructions received from his guru in the forest and gave leave to all his ministers and officials from the royal court and retired to his private chambers where he discarded all his royal robes and insignia and remained aloof, in contemplation of *jnana marg*a, ignoring all his kingly duties.

31. Becoming anxious about the king’s indifference towards the royal administrative affairs, his vassal chieftains, ministers, purohiths, Vedic pundits and elders approached the king in his private chambers and beseeched him, “Oh Lord, it is not appropriate for you to completely abstain from your daily duties and sit alone doing nothing,

content and of paltry worth. There is no end to the miseries it brings forth upon oneself. Due to lack of discrimination, you are unable to comprehend this. How can you ever consider that this worldly life is full of happiness? When will you ever come to realise that it is devoid of enduring happiness? Because you lack inquiry into the truth behind the existence of this world, it will appear to you as if it is most enjoyable. It will never occur to you to see the truth of my contrary conclusions....”

36. In this manner, the king expounded in great detail to his ministers and others, the unreality of this world and the glory of attaining the vision of absolute Truth and then ordered them to stop, and not follow him. He then left the opulent, gold-embellished palace, and walked away swiftly along the streets of the capital city. The citizens of his kingdom, seeing the king walking alone, leaving behind all his royal paraphernalia, gathered in great numbers and walked behind him, weeping in disconsolate grief at the sudden turn of events, culminating in the renunciation of their beloved king.

37. The king then addressed his subjects with compassion, “My dear fellow countrymen! According to each one’s karma, each one is born into this world in the appropriate conditions. It is true indeed what the scriptures declare regarding everyone’s happiness and suffering is in accordance with their respective karmic lot, and there cannot be even the slightest deviation in such a divinely ordained scheme of things. If such be the case, who can be the support and succour for whom? Ponder over this deeply. When the body is fit and strong, each one should investigate as to who is the real support in this insubstantial worldly life, and accordingly endeavour to seek the protection of such a one who provides enduring support. Think well whether the temporary support, which you have gained because of your former karmas, can ever be the ultimate refuge?”

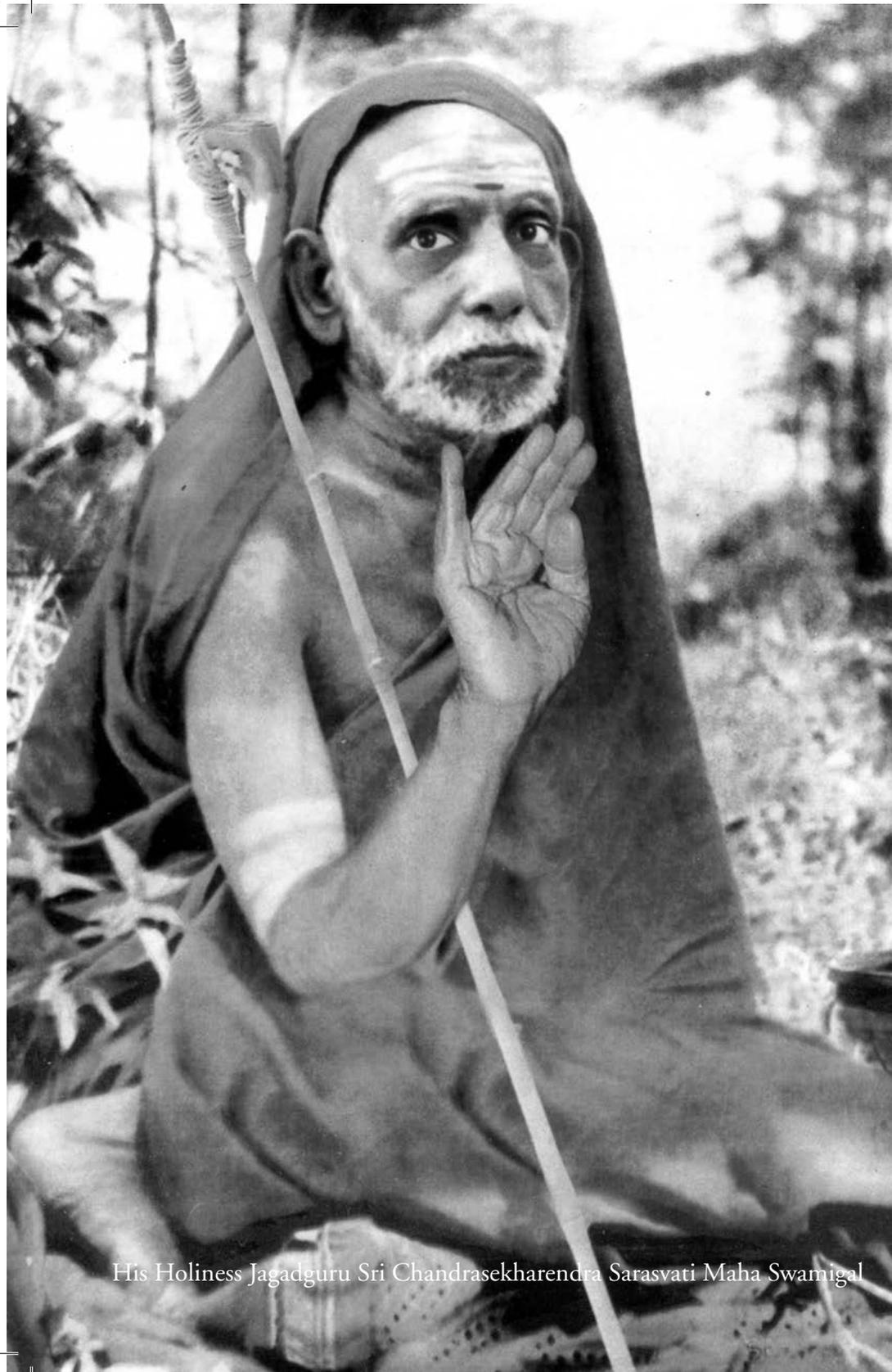
38. “...further, the temporary support that you enjoy at present,

will last only as long as the duration of those karmas which fetched you the same. Once that karma is exhausted, such supports will also leave you. Such temporary associations and their subsequent dissociation is in the very nature of our *prarabdha* karma alone. But the nature of *tattva jnana* (essence of true knowledge) is altogether different. It always bestows enduring support. The fruit of karma that made me your king all these years is no more operative. It has been exhausted. Now I am intent only upon gaining the realisation of the supreme Truth and for that purpose, I wish to enter the forest for performing rigorous penance and to cross over all my karmas. I pray to you to stop here and not follow me anymore.”

39. Saying so, the king left them behind as if he were a stranger and proceeded further. Seeing him so determined in his resolve, the people went ahead of him and wept in grief shedding tears profusely and stopped pursuing him anymore. Then the king’s close relatives approached him again and said, “If today you forsake all of us and retire to the forest, who is there to protect us in the coming days? You are our dearest Lord, it is not fair on your part to abandon us to our fate and proceed without any concern.” To them the king replied as follows:

40. “It is not right on your part to treat me as your relative and pursue me thus. If you truly inquire, it will be clear that for all beings, the only unfailing relative is Self-Knowledge. Lack of that wisdom is the worst foe. Therefore, try to gain that true knowledge which is One and root out the dark ignorance which deludes you always. Know that the Self alone is the eternal companion to each one of us and, giving up your attachment to all the other relatives who are different from that One Entity, remain at peace.” ▲

(To be continued)



His Holiness Jagadguru Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati Maha Swamikal

VEDANTA TEXT TRANSLATION

MAHARAJA THURAVU

Glory of Sannyasa: The Life and
Teachings of the King-turned-Ascetic

SRI KUMARA DEVA SWAMIGAL

TRANSLATED BY SWAMI TANMAYANANDA SARASVATI

(Continued from previous issue....)

The king dissuaded his ministers from preventing his abdication of the throne in favour of seeking Self-Knowledge, by expounding spiritual truths. He then exhorted his grief-stricken citizens and dear relatives not to plunge into unnecessary despair but gracefully accept his renunciation of kingly duties and allow him to pursue his higher calling.

41. Listening to the king's firm words, all the close relatives gave up their hopes and returned home. Now the parents of the king, hearing the determined resolve of their son became distraught and hastened to stop him. They pleaded, "Our dear son, we have become old now; what arrangements have you made for our maintenance and to whom have you entrusted our care? Without attending to your duty of ensuring

Swami Tanmayananda Sarasvati has long been associated with Arunachala and lives at the base of the sacred hill. A regular contributor to the magazine, he is familiar to readers as Sadhu Tanmaya Chaitanya.

our safety, where have your thoughts gone? Dear child, please turn around and show your sweet face. Having begotten you, our bellies are burning, unable to bear the pangs of separation from you.”

42. The king replied, “If one looks at the Self which is pure consciousness, it is clear that there is no father or mother to that eternal Existence. On the other hand, if you look at this body of mine, both of you are not the primary cause for its seeming existence. It appears to exist like a dream object, coming out of the two-fold power of *Maya*, namely *aavarana* and *vikshepa* (the veiling and projection powers). If you investigate objectively, it will be clear to you that there is no one here who has *not* begotten me!* What I said is true and equally applicable for both of you. You lack perfect discrimination in the truth of these matters. Stop here and do not follow me anymore”. Saying thus, the king left his parents and moved on.*[The meaning is that he is a product of the whole cosmos and not just an isolated product of two individuals!]

43. Then his sweet wife who fulfilled the criteria for incomparable beauty outlined in the ancient texts [*chamudrika lakshanas*], realising the steely determination of her husband to live in the forest as a stern ascetic, followed him in great haste and confronted him with much love and a melting heart. She fell at his feet and with tears streaming from her eyes said, “I cannot live even for a moment in this world without your company and I shall die of unbearable grief, no sooner than you leave me”.

44. Hearing her words, the king then said, “Oh slim-waisted beloved, listen to me carefully! Within each one of us, the Great Lord who is God Himself, is shining as the innermost Self. He is the true consort to each one of us. He is within you as well and He is your true husband and protector. Without looking within and staying firmly holding onto His feet, why do you delude yourself into thinking that this perishable body of mine is your husband and Lord? The supreme God alone is the incomparable Lord to all of us. Seeking that Lord

only, I am going away leaving behind everything.” Hearing this, the queen objected, saying:

45. “It is alright for you to say that God alone is the Lord for all and accordingly you renounce all for His sake; however, the wisdom of the scriptures is common for all of us, including both men and women. So, all of us should accept their verdict in the matter. The sacred texts enjoin renunciation for a man only when his wife is an obstacle for his spiritual pursuit. Do those scriptures declare that I should renounce you, who are my dearest Lord? The *shastras* dealing with renunciation do not contain any such injunction that is applicable to me. For a wife, the husband alone is the Lord and refuge according to such texts. Following their injunction, knowing that there is no refuge to me other than you, being at your feet is my only solace.”

46. The king then addressed her with the words, “You have clearly and correctly stated what the scriptures enjoin. You are really blessed with ripe discrimination. However, I have arrived at a stage where I have no desire left to continue to live in this impermanent world nor have I any more interest in pampering the body with comforts and pleasure pursuits. You have been my beloved and sweet consort. You have been my chaste wife and therefore it is not righteous on your part to obstruct my words and disobey my wishes. Therefore, do return to the kingdom, leaving me free to pursue my calling.” Saying thus, the king finally renounced her too and left that place as if he were an indifferent stranger to her.

47. *Even though a woman can be very learned in all spiritual texts and can gain much wisdom thereby, it is extremely difficult for a very young wife to live in separation of her husband.* The grieving queen seeing her beloved husband leaving her behind like a stranger, could not bear the agony of her separation and wept bitterly cursing her own *prarabdha* karma which caused her sudden isolation. Utterly disconsolate, she reached a lonely spot where no one could see her, cried in great anguish and fell down in exhaustion and despair.

48. The noble queen lamented, “Oh beloved king! Even after being separated from you, has the great Lord ordained me to continue to live in this world? Has the former *prarabdha* karma that brought us together in felicitous house-hold life in this birth, finally exhausted itself this day? When will I ever see you again, my Lord, who lived with me happily for so long and is now going away from me forever?” Grief-stricken she slowly wended her way back to the city and reached the residence of her maternal uncle to live under his care.

49. The king Maharajan then renounced everybody and left that city as well as his country, repaired to a deep forest and sought the refuge of *jnanis* who were ever abiding in the repose of the Self; he then sought from them clarifications on the *mahavakya upadesa* imparted to him by his former *guru*, and dwelling constantly on their import, eventually gained the clarity of Vedantic knowledge and became capable of overcoming the delusion of *Maya*.

50. Whenever hungry, he went into the town and approached the houses of the residents and begged for food; whatever was offered to him, he cheerfully accepted in his hands serving as a vessel and ate with relish. Some worldly men jeered at him derisively as if he were a ghost-possessed being. Unmindful of such taunts and without feeling ashamed or embarrassed, he wandered all alone without any desires and cravings of this world or the hereafter.

51. This king of ascetics had decided that if he were to settle down in one place, attachments in the form of ‘I’ and ‘mine’ would encrust his soul in bondage and so he always moved about alone in unfettered freedom. He endeavoured to focus his attention on the Self wherever he happened to stay by never turning towards the worldly things. His mind was ever intent on Self-abidance (*atma-nishta*), though physically he was on the move, without remaining to any one place.

52. Ever facing the Self thus and ripening the mind in such *samadhi nishta*, the ascetic king enquired into the origin of this manifest world (*drsya jagat*) as to wherefrom it appears and ascertained

that it arises solely from thought*; he further pursued the enquiry as to wherefrom thought itself originated and saw that thought has the Self (*svarupa*) alone as its source. He therefore concluded that since the world cannot exist without thought and thought cannot appear independent of the Self, namely Consciousness, all things manifesting as name and form are thus reducible to the Self and hence to one’s own Consciousness, which pervaded the entire creation.

*This verse, along with the next verse, can be considered the heart of Maharaja Thuravu. It perfectly anticipates the core teachings of Bhagavan Ramana, confirming that the highest Truth is absolutely the same, as it transcends all limitations of space, time and climes that separate the phenomenal existence of mystics and seers through the *millennia*. The words in the Tamil verse have perfect alliteration and cadence and since it captures in a cryptic style the essence of Bhagavan’s teachings, it is appropriate to present the verse in English transliteration to enable the aficionados of Tamil literature to savour the richness of the original composition. This verse in its style and content is reminiscent of Bhagavan’s verses.

Thondridum ulagam engae thondridum enna nokki
Thondridum ninaivil endrae, thondriya ninaivu tha anum
Thondridum idatthaip paarthu, thondridum sorupatthu endrae
Thondridum porulgal ellam sorupame endru kannnaan!

53. Thus the king reasoned from his own experience that all manifest objects owe their existence (*asti*), effulgence (*bhati*) and lovability (*priyam*) only to the *Svarupa* when viewed bereft of their name and form (*nama-rupa rahitam*) and therefore they are essentially the Self alone which is shining as *sat-chit-ananda*. Thus he inferred that this entire creation appears upon the Self, like a snake superimposed on the rope and, devoid of an independent existence, it is ephemeral and unreal (*mithya*) whereas the Self is the changeless substratum which is his own Reality and thus attained, the stillness of unshakeable peace.

(Note: This verse reflects faithfully the teaching given in *Dakshinamurti Stotram*, verse 3, commencing with: *yasyaiva sphuranam sadatmakam asat kalparthakam bhasate!*)

54. Of all kings wearing crowns, this king [being the foremost by virtue of his unrivalled dispassion] wished to examine whether his vision was abiding in the Self under all circumstances and so went to many other cities and countries. He wandered all over the earth and affirmed to himself that the above-said vision of seeing only the immanent substratum of *siva svarupa* — in and through all manifest objects — remained unchanged; he became tranquil in mind, undisturbed by hunger and disease and attained the clarity that he is ever the undecaying Self. Seeing his own body and intellect as mere appearances upon the Self, he shone brilliantly as the embodiment of liberation, without the slightest taint or attachment to anything whatsoever.

55. Thus the king of all kings, who wore the crown of *moksha*, realised that he was of the nature of all-pervasive consciousness and therefore concluded that there was no other king in any direction who was superior to him; he identified the *jiva-bodha* (finite individuality) as merely an imagined superposition on his own *siva-svarupa atma* and purified it by *maha vakya vichara* through dissociation of all *upadhis* from the Self; thus he saw himself pervading all objects of the entire creation as pure *sat-chit-ananda* and abided as the self-effulgent form of Consciousness.

56. Then the king saw himself as the supreme Self which is different from the three bodies (gross, subtle and causal) and also as the witnessing consciousness for the three alternating states (waking, dream and deep sleep); he understood that nothing really appears which is apart from the Self and independent of the Self and therefore this world is comparable to a lightning bolt, being insubstantial and fleeting, a mere appearance imagined due to the power of Maya; just as no golden ornament exists truly without gold and in fact is nothing but gold, in the same way he ultimately discovered that nothing exists apart from himself and that he pervaded every object as its very existence (*satta*).

57. Thus the youthful king ascertained that bondage is nothing but seeing the world as different from oneself and *liberation results the moment one understands the world to be one's own infinite form (sarvatma bhava)*; all the objects that appear distinctly before one's eyes are mere appearances in mind and cease to exist in the absence of thoughts; all attachments to objects drop off when known to be mere thoughts, which are again not apart from the Self. Gaining this vision, he remained in the great stillness of peace without any sense of differentiation (*bheda drshti*).

58. Then the king understood that by virtue of this supreme knowledge, the suzerainty of the entire earth and all the resultant wealth and pleasures appear as unworthy as a blade of straw [and is fit to be discarded without a second thought]; ruling over this world of *tattva jnana* by employing his subtle intellect to grasp the truth pointed out by the *upadesa* of his *sadguru*, the king attained the *moksha samrajya* and became a fulfilled soul (*krtakrtya*) who has accomplished all duties and has nothing more to achieve in this world or hereafter.

59. [To illustrate how he was deemed to have performed all his duties without a blemish] the king ascertained that in reality there is neither bondage nor liberation at any time* and that what exists eternally is only that supreme *vastu* which is *Brahman*; people smitten by evil *karma* alone without knowing this truth are deluded and imagine [by the power of their own *sankalpa*] notions of bondage and consequent liberation, and suffer as a result of their own imagined delusory concepts; further, he concluded that the supreme *Brahman* which is beginningless and endless, which is neither created nor ever destroyed, is nothing other than the *svarupa* of his own Self, and by ever fixing his gaze upon the Self [aided by *sruti*, *yukti* and *anubhava* that is, scriptural testimony, reasoning and experience respectively], the king verily became that *Brahman* himself. *[Compare Bhagavan Ramana's teaching in *Upadesa Undiyar* v.29 & *Ulladu Narpadu*, v.39.]

MOUNTAIN PATH

60. Thus the king, in the wake of his knowledge of the Self, recognised that he was the whole (*purnam*) without the slightest lack whatsoever, and became extremely cool in mind, and reposing ever in the Self, he became free from all misery and was filled with deep inner joy; he had no home anywhere and found his abode in his status as the all-pervasive *Brahman*.

61. The king now became the sovereign emperor of the all-pervasive kingdom of *Brahman* by virtue of gaining *Brahma-vidya* and recognised himself as existing everywhere and in every object; without any obstruction in such understanding, he became immaculate. When asafoetida is kept in a closed vessel for a long time, it retains that smell even after the spice is removed; in the same way, the mind soaked in the three *gunas* (*tamas*, *rajas* and *sattva*) upon enlightenment retains the *sattva guna* characterised by tranquillity while completely getting rid of *tamas* and *rajas* characterised by delusion and restlessness respectively. The ignorant mind under the sway of all the three *gunas* is called the 'formful mind' while the enlightened mind resting only in *sattva guna* is called the 'formless mind'. In this way, the king held on to the formless mind by recognising his real *svarupa* and became blissful in nature and remained consolidated in his ultimate wisdom.

62. Of these two types of mind, only the formless mind subsists in the *jivanmuktas* as *atmajnana* destroys the formful mind composed of the three *gunas*; when the *jivanmukta* sheds his mortal coil and attains *videha mukti*, the formless mind rich in *sattva sampatti* also dissolves without residue in *Brahmasvarupa*. Thus the king, who became a *jivanmukta*, lived happily retaining only the formless mind and remained unswervingly in *kaivalya nishtha* by the grace of his *sadguru*.

These verses, depicting the life of the king-turned-ascetic in the fullest bloom of enlightenment, remind us of the celebrated works of Sri Sankaracharya, namely *Kaupeena Panchakam* (also called *Yati Panchakam*), *Praudaanubhutihi* and also Nerur Sri Sadasiva Brahmendral's *Atma Vidya Vilasaha*, which revel in the pinnacle of Realisation.

(To be continued)



VEDANTA TEXT TRANSLATION

MAHARAJA THURAVU

Glory of Sannyasa: The Life and
Teachings of the King-turned-Ascetic

SRI KUMARA DEVA SWAMIGAL
TRANSLATED BY SWAMI TANMAYANANDA SARASVATI

Prelude as a Brief Link with the Earlier Story

Sannyasa is of two kinds according to scriptures: i) *vividisha sannyasa*, 'renunciation of the seeker'; and ii) *vidvat sannyasa*, 'renunciation of the knower'.

The first is primarily a means to gain knowledge *about* the Self (*paroksha jnana*) by the systematic exposure to scriptural knowledge (*shastra vichara*) under the guidance of a competent guru. *Vividisha sannyasa* means 'desiring to know (*vettum icchaa*), one renounces'. The catalyst for such renunciation arises out of intense aversion towards all worldly pursuits, coupled with a driving desire for the saving knowledge. To facilitate this one-pointed pursuit of *brahma vidya*, the seeker sheds all the encumbrances of worldly life such as a career and family life. He seeks refuge with a guru and listens to his teachings based on

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the Upanishads. Scriptures strongly advise that ‘after renouncing the world, one must pursue listening (*sannyasya shravanam kuryaat*)’. This is followed by contemplation (*manana*), meditation (*nididhyasana*) till one eventually gains the vision of the Self.

The direct recognition of the Self (*pratyabhijna*) now transforms the ‘renunciation of the seeker’ into ‘renunciation of the knower’. The purpose of *vividisha sannyasa* is fulfilled upon *atma sakshatkaram* and the *jignasu* (seeker of knowledge) is transformed into a *jnani* — a true *brahmana* in the Upanishadic sense, that is, a knower of *Brahman*. However his sadhana does not end here but intensifies and shifts gears to a higher, exalted dimension. In the ‘knower’ stage of *vidvat sannyasa*, he should endeavour to consolidate his illumination by constant Self-abidance (*nididhyasana*) till he attains cessation of mind (*manonasa*) and complete effacement of desires (*vasanakshaya*) which characterize *turyaga*, the seventh plane of *jnana*.

There have been instances of seekers who, due to some obstacles, could not take *sannyasa* early on in life, but while remaining in any one of the earlier stages in life (*brahmacharya*, *grahastha* or *vanaprastha*) and correctly following the scheme of studies, reflection and meditation, they could attain *jnana*. When such a person finally enters into the formal order of *sannyasa*, for protecting his *jnana nishta* until it becomes *sahaja*, it comes under the category of ‘renunciation of the knower’. Yajnavalkya is a celebrated example for such *vidvat sannyasa* in the Upanishadic lore.

In summary, the primary objective of *vividisha sannyasa* is to gain direct knowledge of the Self (which at the least ensures *kramamukti*) while that of *vidvat sannyasa* is to attain ‘liberation while living’ (*jivanmukti*). The transcendence of *vidvat sannyasa* is expressed forcefully by Sankara in *Upadesa Sahasri* (4.5), as “the direct knowledge of the Self is so firm and natural to a *jnani* in the same manner as *dehatmabuddhi* is to an *ajnani* and thereby attains *jivanmukti*, even if he does not want it”!

In the *Srimad Bhagavatham*, Lord Krishna declares to Uddhava, “Among the four stages of life, I am the fourth ashrama” (*ashramanam aham turyah*) and “amongst all dharmas, I am renunciation” (*dharmanam asmi sannyasah*). *Sannyasa* is thus described as the special glory (*vibhuti*) of the Lord and is characterised by total renunciation

(*samyak nyasa*). An *atyashrami* in this context, is one who has transcended all the four ashramas as did Bhagavan Ramana, Shuka Brahma, Vamadeva, Rishabhadeva and Sadashiva Brahmendra (by the sheer power of vichara and *anubhuti mahima*), where no rules whatsoever bind them in the least. (*nistraigunye pathi vicharatah ko vidhibh, ko nishedhab?*)

With this background, we can see that the king in the present text *Maharaja Thuravu*, is a person who renounced an enviable life like the Buddha, purely in order to know Truth and not out of any frustration or failure in life. This is called *jignasu vairagya* and he graduates from *vividisha sannyasa* to *vidvat sannyasa* by the power of his penance and enquiry. His life and spiritual journey of renunciation culminating in *jivanmukti* were described in the preceding 62 verses. The rest of the text deals with his teachings to a devoted minister regarding the glory of *sannyasa* (as a means) and Knowledge of Truth, which we shall see presently.

— Translator

63. Among the king’s former council of ministers, there was a wise minister who learnt the king had attained enlightenment and was wandering as a perfected sage. He desired to trace the king’s whereabouts and seek answers to some questions troubling his heart. He soon found him and bowed in great humility and reverence before his former master.

64. The minister saw the king radiant in his happiness, enjoying the plain earth as the flower-bed, with the sky as the canopy; the sun and the cool moon as his lamps; the natural breeze serving as a hand fan; the renunciation (of all attachments) attending on him like a faithful wife and his majestic solitude conferring upon him consummate bliss.

(Note: *Earlier while ruling over a kingdom with a finite identity, all his luxuries and comforts were also finite and the pleasures fleeting and petty but now in keeping with his immeasurable status of sovereignty over the all-pervasive empire of Brahman, his creature comforts also acquired cosmic dimensions. After all, everything is in the mind!*)

65. The king was earlier accompanied by all royal insignia of chariots, an army of elephants, cavalry and soldiers who protected his frontiers. He was seated on a golden throne adorned with diamonds and priceless gems and dressed in the dazzling splendour of royal robes with a shining crown and sceptre and commanding love and respect from his subjects, ruled over the kingdom. Now he stood majestic in conspicuous isolation as a sage, clad in a single loin-cloth. He was unrecognizable, smeared all over the body as he was with the holy ashes, with loose unkempt hair on his head.

66. The king now went on foot everywhere without mounting an elephant or a chariot, and sought alms not from a single fixed house but from different houses. After renouncing all the royal paraphernalia, the king had gracefully adopted the austere lifestyle of a wandering ascetic. Moved by this heart-melting sight, the minister addressed him with the following words.

67. “Oh, king! There was no other king more exalted than you in glory or power. After giving up such a powerful position, for what earthly purpose did you assume this dreadful mode of stern self-denial and roam about everywhere? Your strong, youthful body is meant to luxuriate in regal pleasures but by assuming the rigorous lifestyle of an ascetic, what are the new states worthy of conquest that are still to be attained by you? Please be gracious enough to answer my doubts in this regard for my edification and solace.”

68. The minister continued, “If one desires to gain a heavenly abode after death, one should first take up the life of a householder and live in perfect accord with the requirements of *grahastha dharma* and be a role model for society. If, on the other hand, one desires the highest attainment of human life, liberation (*moksha*), one should choose the right course of enquiry for the Truth, to gain the vision of the Self. For either of these legitimate pursuits, it is neither necessary nor desirable to choose the punishing mode of a mendicant’s life. Which goal of life then do you desire by becoming such a self-denying, stern ascetic? Please do illumine my sorrowing mind.”

69. The king took pity on the pleading minister and replied:

“Oh virtuous Minister, you were foremost among my council of ministers. You have suitably approached me and asked me to clarify the doubts that assail your mind. Now I shall answer your queries. You should listen patiently with one-pointed attention without allowing your mind to run into worldly matters even for a moment. You have rightly said that there is no king greater than me in this land who can surpass my glory.

70....When you said that, for one desiring heavens after death, a well-led householder’s life in harmony with *dharma* is the appropriate means, it is quite true. You rightly also said that *moksha* is attainable by receiving the right vision of the Self through self-enquiry. But if a person derives pleasure being mired in the unending burdens of a householder’s life, pray tell me, how can the vision of the Self ever occur?

71. ...the mind can focus its attention upon only one thing at a time [be it the sense of sound or touch or form or taste or smell, as these alone constitute the so-called world of perceptions]; it cannot attend to two subjects simultaneously. You may have a doubt that people skilled in *ashtavadhanam* have specialised in performing eight different jobs at one time but you should remember that such feats appear to take place simultaneously only because of the rapidity with which the mind functions in such gifted people. But really even for them, the mind functions as a series-processing unit and not simultaneously. Such amazing capabilities are, however, possible only for an extroverted mind, which leaps speedily from one thing to another. But *moksha* is possible only for a tranquil mind, which is capable of a steady inward gaze. The bondage of a house-holder’s life exists only for an outward-oriented mind and never for the renunciate. I shall clearly explain to you the differences between the predilections of these two types of mind. Listen carefully.

72. For those who are living south of the Ganges, can they ever have a dip in the Ganges by travelling further south instead of going northwards? In the same way, those who are desirous of *moksha* should

pursue the inward journey of *jnana marga*. *Moksha* is never possible for those who follow extroverted pursuits. Kings ruling over great empires, besides being busy with their family life, have necessarily to confer with their ministers in private regarding matters of administration to ensure the wellbeing and safety of their citizens. With such an extroverted attitude in life, it is not possible for them to pursue *jnana marga* undisturbed and attain *moksha*. With proper discrimination, you should investigate and realise this truth.

73. If a person sees clearly that attachment to a secure family life is inimical to the pursuit of *moksha*, will he be ever again infatuated by worldly life and cling helplessly to them? *People with mere bookish knowledge of scriptures which proclaim that attachment to worldly life is bondage, will not assimilate that knowledge but waste their time mouthing quotations that 'everything is pervaded by the supreme Lord'.* Though possessed of scholarship and eloquence, they are incapable of renouncing in their hearts greed and desire.

74. Some Vedantic texts do say that renunciation is superfluous to attain *moksha*, which has no beginning or end; one can remain in householder's life and yet gain the exquisite Self-Knowledge that ends the transmigratory cycle of birth and death. *Understand that such mild teachings are addressed only to the immature (manda adhikaris) and that scriptures never give compromised, diluted instructions to intense aspirants (uttama adhikaris), who thirst for Self-knowledge and are willing to renounce everything for its sake.*

75. I shall now expound the nature of all manifest objects in this creation and the nature of *Brahman* which is the material cause (*upadana kaarana*) as well as the intelligent cause (*nimitta kaarana*) behind this manifest creation. Listen carefully so that it eradicates all the misery born of delusion. All manifested objects in creation are products of *Maya* and are tainted with the defects of transience and impurity. They are riddled with misery. On the other hand, *Brahman*, which makes them manifest [being the first cause of this *Maya*-born world], is free from these defects and shines as the eternal, pure and everlasting source of bliss.

76. When we are born into this world, we are first children. This will quickly vanish and is replaced by boyhood which too is evanescent. The lovely phase of youth that follows adolescence quickly slips away. Later, inexorably comes the sorry state of senescence when bent with age, the old man leans on a stick. Then Yama, the Lord of death enters; he is our final visitor. He beckons us to his abode. When he takes us away, all the near and dear relatives of our temporal life grieve; they forget our honourable name, and call our body by a new, universal name, 'corpse' and promptly take it to the cremation ground. Know that this sequence is inevitable for every being born into this world.

77. Moreover this body is subject to death even when it exists as a foetus; after it is successfully delivered into the lap of the mother earth, it can die as a new-born child. There is no guarantee of its survival when it grows up into boyhood/girlhood either. The body can perish when it enters the phase of a strong youth. In old age, when every limb of the body trembles in weakness, it can die at any moment. Thus we see that the nature of this body is such that in all the stages of life, it is fit to be devoured by death — such is the inherent instability of human life right from conception.

(Note: *Sri Sankara sings in Bhaja Govindam: Life is so delicate and unstable like the water drops tantalizingly poised on a lotus leaf which can roll off any moment.*)

78. Even the five elements like space, are subject to dissolution. The sun, moon and all the stars, are perishable when the creation is swallowed up in *pralaya* (cosmic dissolution). The evil-minded *asuras* also will die. Even the heavenly realms will perish one day and the celestial gods Indra, Brahma and Vishnu will face extinction at the end of their allotted span of sovereignty. The supreme abode of *moksha*, which is *Brahman*, is alone imperishable and truly immortal.

79. Further, this body is merely a material manifestation of the seven fundamental humours (*sapta dhatus*) — skin, blood, bone, fat, vital fluids, nerves and brain tissues. Everything that it consumes is absorbed into itself. But a person lacking subtle discrimination fails to

see the material body as an assemblage of parts which are perishable and impure by nature. He is deluded by the belief that it is an enduring source of enjoyment. He does not realise that *moksha*, which is the supreme abode of bliss, is alone pure and eternal.

80. Listen to me, Oh minister, I shall now recount all the miseries that emanate from this body. In this vast world, the three great activities namely creation, maintenance and destruction constantly take place in an apposite sequence, maintaining balance and order in the phenomenal life. At the time of birth, the foetal *jiva* experiences as it emerges into the world the five great afflictions in the womb while at the time of death, the *jiva* experiences an agony which is eight-fold worse. Between birth and death, the *jiva* goes through the afflictions of youth and old age.

81. In old age, the troubles that one faces are endless. In youth, one faces twice as much afflictions and restlessness! All youth can be classified into three stages, namely childhood, boyhood and adolescent youthfulness. In childhood, one suffers from utter ignorance and as a consequence, absolute dependence.

82. In teenage-hood, one faces constant admonitions and reprimands from one's parents and teachers and thus one lives in fear of disapproval and tongue lashings. In the best phase of youth, one suffers the devouring pangs of hunger and lust; to neutralise these afflictions we appease them, by seeking a job to earn money and in the process one engages in work day and night without respite — thus one is incessantly tormented in youth.

83. Suppose, on account of meritorious deeds, we acquire wealth. In its wake, there ensues the angst of safeguarding it from thieves and evil-minded, greedy relatives. If one happens to be a king, he will invite the wrath and jealousy of a more powerful king and its consequent troubles. Even if one is an emperor ruling over the entire earth, still one will be haunted by fear of disease and death and the anxiety of his lot in the next birth.

84. If you examine if there is at least unalloyed happiness in the heavens, we are told that *devas* are plagued by the enmity of *asuras*;

they also alternately go through spells of joy and despair. Even their celestial bodies are subject to illness and are further afflicted by the arrows of Kama [the god of Love]. Desires torment them. They are also immersed in sensual pleasures which entail consequent pain. They also suffer extinction when the creation undergoes dissolution. With such buffeting between pleasures and pains, what lasting happiness or peace can one find even in celestial domains?

85. Thus upon examination, one finds only aggregates of pain and misery in the lives of human beings and celestial gods. But there is no comparison to the sufferings in the existence of lower levels of beings such as animals and the plant kingdom that are constantly subject to the cruelty inflicted by the higher race. Such being the case of life upon earth, what to say of the endless agony and unspeakable torture *jivas* are put through in the hells that follow after death? Discriminating deeply, one must conclude that there is nothing but pain and suffering in being born as a *jiva*. *Moksha* alone confers endless bliss.

86. Oh, dear minister! Think well and see for yourself. This worldly life which is driven by *Maya* is perishable, unreal and fraught with all kinds of misery. The immortal *Brahman* alone is truly real. Which of these two will be rejected by the wise people who are endowed with sharp discrimination, which will they wholeheartedly cherish and pursue? You should arrive at the logical conclusion yourself by proper, intelligent analysis.

(Note: *The purport of the verse is that wise ones will discard the sorrow-laden worldly life as Maya and shall always nurture and nourish the life that is replete with knowledge of Brahman.*)

87. After ascertaining that this *maya-prapancha* is false, will they ever again have any attachment towards it, in the form of 'I' and 'mine'? After appreciating that *Brahman* alone is real and hence worthy of attainment through right knowledge, is there anyone who will not strive to gain it? Dear Minister, can there be any doubt in this regard? Those who cannot discriminate and do not know the means to get out of this bondage of *samsara*, will continue to wallow in this world

of *Maya*. They cannot discard the delusion of 'I' and 'mine', which bind them to this false world.

88. In the absence of the knowledge of Truth, people believe this unreal world to be real and ignore the truly real *Brahman* as if it were non-existent. Thus they suffer endlessly all the travails of *samsara*. On the other hand, wise seekers, by the Grace of the enlightened Guru, come to understand that this phenomenal life is insubstantial and devoid of reality. They will always focus on *Brahman* which is understood as the only reality and will obtain release from the afflictions of bondage.

89. Dear Minister, if any one develops the discrimination that sees a house-holder's life is a terrible yoke to burden oneself with, it is natural for him, whatever his position, to immediately renounce family life and live in solitude and contemplation to gain the bliss of the Self. If, on the other hand, a person has the notion of happiness (*sukha buddhi*) and sense of reality (*satya buddhi*) in the lifestyle of a householder, he will develop a great liking for it and will never find it worthwhile to renounce it for a higher pursuit. Tell me, then, how can such people pursue the contemplation of *Brahman* and gain the knowledge of the supreme Truth?

90. Oh Minister, once a person realises the contemptible nature of this false world, whoever he may be, he has no other option but the pursuit of the superior *Brahmavidya*. Conversely, if one does not realise the ghastly nature of this unreal world, he can never aspire to attain the liberating knowledge of *Brahman*. If a person is under the sway of evil qualities such as anger, vanity and desires, one wonders how many ages it would take for such a person to understand the utter worthlessness of worldly life. Please do ponder over this and arrive at the right conclusion yourself through proper reason and analysis.



(To be continued)

MAHARAJA THURAVU

Glory of *Sannyasa*: The Life and Teachings of the King-turned-Ascetic

SRI KUMARA DEVA SWAMIGAL

TRANSLATED BY SWAMI TANMAYANANDA SARASVATI

(...The enlightened king-turned-ascetic continues his teachings to his former devout minister...)

91. The proponents of *bheda vaada*, namely the dualists, assert that the triad of world, soul and God (*jagat, jiva and Isvara*) are eternally distinct entities and enjoy independent reality. If we accept such a proposition, this creation which deludes us, will never relinquish its hold over our minds and we will be subject to all its miseries. One should develop the vision of wisdom and see the entire creation as a superimposition upon the substratum of Self, like the snake superimposed on a harmless rope. This purifying vision of wisdom enables one to renounce all attachments to this delusory phenomenal life governed by Maya. A life of holy renunciation alone is exalted and bestows all good to the soul. When such renunciation blossoms in our heart, all the heat of transmigratory life will leave

Swami Tanmayananda Sarasvati has long been associated with Arunachala and lives by the western foothills of the sacred mountain.

our bosom and our mind will become cool like the full moon and be filled with great peace and joy.

92. Oh minister, you admonished me that one can remain wherever one is, and while engaged in performance of one's duties of householder's life, one can still attain *moksha* from bondage. A householder, however courageous and discriminating he may be, still has to mentally discard all the burdens of family life and seek a solitary place to conquer his mind by dropping all thoughts of 'I' and 'mine'. It is almost impossible for a person who is constantly caught up in the cares of a demanding family life to accomplish this tremendous task. Amidst all the distractions of worldly life, he cannot engage in the whole-hearted sadhana necessary to attain the bliss of the Self.

93. Great souls who had completed all jnana sadhana practices (such as *shravana*, *manana* and *nididhyasana*) in many previous births and attained true knowledge in this last birth might be leading a householder's life now, living amidst their relatives as part of their residual *prarabdha karma*. But such *jnanis*, even while leading an ordinary family life will never swerve from the non-dual vision of 'all this is filled with Siva'. If such be the case, then can someone who has realized the truth of the Self and abides in the knowledge of "I am Brahman", ever nourish an attitude of deriving happiness from the world? For a person travelling from the southernmost coastal town (say, Tuticorin in Tamilnadu) by a ship towards Jaffna (a Sri Lankan town on its northern coast), slowly the vision of the former town disappears completely and is replaced in turn by the sight of Jaffna approaching. In the same way, for a person who has steadily given up the conviction of reality and happiness in worldly life, there will inevitably rise in his mind the non-dual knowledge of total identity with the all-pervasive Brahman.

94. Suppose a mighty king picks up a person from a small town and makes him, out of affection, the ruler of a province carved out of his own empire. The new governor would then leave his native town

and rule his province from its capital. Can he again function from his native place? In the same way, a person who has gained sufficient *vairagya*, and therefore renounced the family life, can never again revert to the lifestyle of a householder. Enlightened sages established in the knowledge of Brahman will never again fall into the delusion of treating this world as real and experience its sufferings.

95. It is natural for a householder to find pleasure and comfort in the felicitous company of his wife and children, as also in accumulating wealth. Deprived of these comforts, he is prone to feel disheartened. For a normal householder, there will be at least a minimum level of desire for enjoyment of pleasures and he will make all efforts to facilitate his gratification. If there is a rare soul, who while leading a family life becomes devoid of such hankerings, then it is best for such a ripe soul (aspiring to devote himself to the pursuit of spiritual enlightenment through *shravana* and *manana*), to renounce the life of a householder without hesitation and embrace the life of a *sannyasi*. This alone is the prescribed course of action for a fully committed seeker.

Note: The *Jabala Upanishad* says that the day one feels *vairagya* for the world, that very day he should resort to renunciation and quit worldly life! — *yadahareva virajet, tadahareva pravrajat*.

96. Loathing the householder's life which is beset with evils and distractions, when a person seeks the bliss of realisation of absolute truth, and accordingly embraces spiritual practices, then any lingering indulgence in worldly pursuits will pose a setback, causing obstacles in his *sadhana*. When he begins to experience that incomparable bliss of the Self, all worldly joys would appear to him as trivial. Therefore sages say that, without renunciation, the wisdom that one can attain while remaining in household life is deemed to be *ajnana* only.

97. Further, even if the householder saint attains the impeccable knowledge of the Self, it will not appear in splendid glory, verily like a precious gem embedded in a crude ornament made of iron. On the other hand, when the supreme knowledge resides in a person who

has given up family life and embraced total renunciation, it dazzles like a diamond set in a shining golden ornament. Thus for a sage revelling in Self-abidance, family life muffles his lustre and ill-befits his stature.

98. The discriminating householders, dreading the miseries of transmigratory life and desiring to put an end to the same, eventually take recourse to renunciation as a *means* for gaining Self-knowledge. Thus for everyone the life-style of a householder is a natural, and often necessary precursor to attaining *vairagya* in the form of *sannyasa*. Remaining in the family life itself, there have indeed been cases of rare seekers who have done great sadhana and attained liberation. Sometimes when such illumined souls continue to remain as householders even after realisation of the supreme truth, other people in family life will argue with renunciates, raising the query why they also cannot attain liberation similarly, even while remaining as householders. However, such deductions are totally flawed and unwarranted. Will anyone who has renounced all attachments in worldly life, ever say that family life is superior to a life of immaculate renunciation? Dear minister, the life-style of a householder does not bring any merit or effulgence to a *jnani*. Please ponder over this.

99. The sages who have attained the supreme *jivanmukti sthiti*, have transcended the three states of waking, deep sleep and dream, and by the luminous weapon of *tattva jnanam*, dispelled the darkness of *ajnana* completely and roam about like an innocent child, or a mad man or even like a ghost-possessed soul. Having effaced the ego, they will cheerfully perform menial jobs too, in the houses of ignorant town folks, as if they were daily wage earners!

100. When a deep foretaste for Self-knowledge sprouts within a discriminating seeker, he will regard with equanimity the effects of both good and bad deeds performed in the past and be indifferent to them. If at that time, the pleasures of family life appear disgusting like food that has been vomited, he will quickly renounce family life for good! Will it be right to say that, *after* attaining the knowledge of



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the Self and revelling in the bliss of supreme truth, he will once again covet and engage in the petty pleasures and comforts of householder's life? Think well and tell, Oh minister!

101. Even those who have a taste for habitual sensual indulgence, will feel like renouncing worldly joys when they listen to eloquent and inspiring expositions about the supreme bliss of Self-knowledge. If such be the case, can those who have actually experienced the beginningless and endless bliss of the knowledge of Truth, ever revert to the thoughts of the contemptible worldly life? Will not people laugh if they hear such drivel?

102. Dear minister, you may see some exalted householders and quickly conclude that they are enlightened sages and hence freed from all attachments. If they are truly free from all attachments, why would they stick to family life? Suppose you advance the reason that it is because of their residual *prarabdha* karma, then is it not a fact that such a karma will produce at least an iota of desire in them and make them enjoy the pleasures and comforts of household life? Can sages who have realized the Self entertain even the slightest desire for such worldly objects of pleasure? For such exalted *jnanis*, the endless bliss of *samadhi* alone is worthy of ceaseless abidance. The least break (*pramada*) from such a *nishta* will promptly remind them that this phenomenal world is only a mirage-like illusion and such remembrance will drive their mind inward again and restore their abidance in *samadhi* of Self-awareness.

103. Those who pursue a worldly life under the delusion of obtaining permanent happiness thus, will over a period of time, slowly develop discrimination and realize the hollowness of such a pursuit; they then give up the pursuit of worldly objects of pleasure and try to attain release from *samsara* through the teachings of an enlightened guru. If such be the case for even genuine seekers, would those who have *actually* attained the goal of everlasting happiness, through the Grace of the guru after doing proper sadhana following his teachings,

ever come to think once again that a worldly life is full of sweet joy and worth going after? Only if the sages, ever revelling in the bliss of the Self, once again start believing that a worldly life indeed gives enduring happiness, can they work towards fulfilling worldly desires such as acquiring land and a house. Such a possibility can never arise, dear minister! Think deeply and tell me.

104. If a flower creeper is uprooted, it will quickly wither away. It will be an impossible miracle for that dried up creeper to once again sprout forth leaves, flowers and fruits. In the same way, it would be equally impossible for sages, who have realized Brahman as their very Self and thus completely rooted out all desires from their bosom, to once again develop an interest in the perishable life of worldly pleasures and indulge in household life.

105. Normally a person, who is sunk in the deep well of ignorance, takes himself to be the body; for the upkeep and happy maintenance of the body, he seeks to acquire land, house and other creature comforts and also exerts himself for their maintenance, finding fulfillment in such mundane pursuits. When he stumbles upon the desire for *moksha*, which is absolute release from all suffering, he adopts the means of renunciation to achieve that final end and thus he will eventually climb out of the deep well of Self-ignorance. For, by means of a steadfast adherence to renunciation, he would gain the knowledge of Truth through the Grace and teachings of a *Sadguru*; his finite individuality will be lost and his mind will forever be immersed in the blissful, limitless *svarupa* of the Self and there is no possibility of his desiring again the life and petty pleasures of a householder. *If at all he develops the desire for a worldly life and reverts to the enjoyments of a family life, please know for sure that he is not a knower of Truth* (having swerved from its abidance and lost his knowledge of the Self).

Note: The above verse echoes beautifully the following famous verses of the Upanishads: *jnanamrtena trptasya krtakrtyasya yoginah, na ca asti kincit kartavyam, asti cet na sa tattvavit*. "The yogi, who is fulfilled with the ambrosial knowledge and thereby has accomplished

all his tasks, has no more duties to perform. If he has any, then he is not a knower of Truth.” (Jaabaala Darsana Up. 1.23) And, *atmanam cet vijaniyat ayam asti iti poorushah, kim icchan kasya kaamaaya sariram anusanjvaret?* “Upon knowing the Self in direct experience, desiring what and for whom, would a person trouble his body?” (Brhadaranyaka Up. 4.4.12)

106. Everyone knows that all the objects of the dream-world are unreal; in the same way, all the sights that appear in the waking world are also equally unreal and only a dream-like illusion. Like the illusory snake superimposed on a rope, all objects of the world beginning with one’s own body and the senses are also mere superimpositions imagined upon the pure *caitanya svarupa* of the Self. Those who investigate the reality of the waking world and conclude that it is as illusory as one’s own dream-world, will never get infatuated with this worldly life and its fleeting joys. A *jnani* who has realized the truth of himself as pure *sat-cit-ananda svarupa* through direct experience in *nirvikalpa samadhi*, knows that this entire waking world is but a ‘play of mind’ (*maya*) upon the screen of Self, as even the dream world is nothing but an illusory projection upon his consciousness. He will be forever free from the delusion that this world is a source and repository of joy.

107. It will be a disgrace for the sun if darkness can survive in its presence. It will be a disgrace for a person with good eyesight to fall into a pit in front of his eyes. It will be shameful for a valiant knight to flee the battlefield out of fear and it will be stupid for a gourmet to pine after a tasteless coarse porridge, after enjoying cupfuls of delicious sweet-milk preparation (*payasam*) made with ghee, honey and sugar syrup. Similarly it will be disgraceful if an enlightened *jnani* allows his mind to run after the objects of the world. [The meaning implied is: A knower of Truth can never be deluded to pursue a desire-ridden worldly life, as a means of gaining happiness.]

108. For sages revelling in the vision of truth, there are no *vasanas* (desires in the form of mental impressions) left over as a residue.

Oh minister, do not ever entertain the idea that, just as there is the lingering smell of asafoetida in a vessel which had contained asafoetida for a long time, there would be weak, residual *vasanas* even for *jnanis* (like *deha vasana*, *shastra vasana* and *loka vasana*)! Sages can perform many actions for the good of the world without even a vestige of such *vasanas*. It is their very nature to work for the upliftment of the world without getting bound or affected by it because they have no hankering for the fruits of their actions. It is similar to the case of a person who has gained control over fire by the power of mantras and therefore can handle fire without getting burnt by it. But do *not* imagine that when ignorant people are driven to perform actions by their selfishness and attachment to rewards of actions, they will not be tainted by likes and dislikes, and desires and frustrations.

109. The actions of a *jnani* do not bring any blemish upon him as his actions are always meant for the upliftment of the world. When peevish people speak ill of a *jnani* and his actions, they only bring disgrace upon themselves. Only ignorant people perform actions for selfish ends and get caught in bondage and suffering as a consequence of their karmas and are fit to be censured as evil. There is no blemish at all either for a *jnani* or for his *jnanam*, just because ignorant fools cannot understand the depth and significance of his actions. After all, a person is deemed to be a *jnani* only when he has attained *jnanam* [by adopting the proper means of gaining that knowledge of Truth] and not otherwise.

110. A woman in advanced pregnancy can be distinguished from a woman suffering from the illness of *mahodaram*, which is indicated by a swollen abdomen, by observing carefully the characteristic features of the women that mark out the healthy from the sickly. *In the same way, one can distinguish the genuine jnani*, who through proper self-enquiry has attained the direct knowledge (*aparoksha jnanam*) of the Self in *nirvikalpa samadhi* by the Grace of the Guru, *from the self-proclaimed, pseudo-jnanis who pose as enlightened gurus* in order to win cheap popularity and material prosperity through cultivated

practice of hypocrisy. If you ask how, the distinguishing mark of a true *jnani* is utter desirelessness while a pretender is easily exposed by the display of his gross and crude desires for self-aggrandisement.

111. Lord Krishna taught the *Bhagavad Gita* to his friend and disciple Arjuna, and the royal sage and preceptor Vasishtha Muni taught the *Yoga Vaasishtha* to his disciple and heir prince Lord Rama, according to their vastly different ripeness of mind and competence in discrimination. Oh minister, you have not grasped the essential message of that truth, which is the same in both the teachings. Knowledge of the Self alone is to be gained primarily through the study and contemplation of these texts. The historical accounts and the contexts of the teaching are secondary and incidental. Renunciation of the desire to earn wealth for the sake of enjoying all worldly pleasures and comforts, and abidance in a pure, truthful life steadfast in the wisdom of the Self are the marks of a true *jnani*. On the other hand, a house-holder's lifestyle dwells on priorities that are wholly contrary to the characteristic features of the *jnani* and his way of life. Dear minister, you should develop the courage of conviction to analyse this matter in an objective way and accept the truth of this conclusion."

112. In this manner, the king Maharajan who had become an adept *rajayogi*, expounded to the minister in various ways, the essence of all the teachings elaborated in sacred texts. Finally, he decided to withdraw himself into *yoganishta* and accordingly in a minute's time, stilled himself in *sukhasana* posture and restraining the breath and lapsing into *mounam*, he detached his mind from all objects of the world around him and attained the void space of consciousness where there is no appearance of names and forms, which is extolled as *nama-rupa rahita nirvikalpa samadhi*. The minister, who observed this spontaneous accomplishment of the king in a short time right in front of his very eyes, was struck with wonder and exclaimed, "This state of *samadhi* is a novelty and astounding indeed!"

113. The astonished minister thought to himself, "This experience of Truth has not arisen in me. What knowledge do I have that can help me remain in this presence?", and wended his way back to the capital city of Mapuram. He stayed with the close relatives of the erstwhile king and narrated to them in detail the great attainments of their former ruler, in the realms of yoga and jnana.

114. Listening to the minister's eye-witness account of their beloved king, all the close relatives of the king exclaimed in wonder that such an exalted *rajayogi* and *jnani* is the rarest to behold in this world, and with an intense longing to have his *darshan*, they journeyed to his abode and fell at his feet in great devotion. The king's parents and his former queenly consort too followed suit and prostrated before him, though they were smitten with sorrow [because of his renunciation]. Looking askance at all this, the saintly king smiled in amusement and unshaken in Self-abidance, remained in blissful silence.

115. Seeing his unmoving repose in *mounam* and his disinterest in talking to anyone among the assembled near and dear, they said among themselves, "We are all still having much attachment to this world. Even if our saintly king bothers to talk to us, what can we make out of his words of advice or teachings, given from such lofty heights?" and with heavy hearts all of them returned to their dwellings. The king who was a great *tapasvi* and *yogi* continued to remain in *nirvikalpa samadhi* for a number of days and then spent his remaining days of life in *sahaja nishta* and finally attained *videha mukti*, the supreme state of being, where there is no admixture of any of the pairs of opposites such as pleasure and pain, likes and dislikes, merit and sin, virtue and vice.

Thus ends the narration of the life-story of the king Maharajan and his renunciation *nonpareil* by the famed exponent Suta Maharishi. The ascetics of the Naimisharanya forests, who listened to this absorbing and ennobling account praised and thanked Suta Maharishi for his enlightening narrative and after prostrating to him in deep devotion,

they took leave of him and returned to their humble abodes and ashrams, with elevated minds and joyful felicity.

116. *Phala Shruti* - Benefits of Reading this Sacred Text

Those who study this history of the great king and *mahayogi* Maharajan and the manner in which he attained the final emancipation and appreciate the truth of his supreme attainments through renunciation will surely renounce all thoughts of this world and become blemishless *sannyasins* themselves and realize the true nature of their own Self as the birthless, immortal and immaculate Brahman. Praise be unto the most charming goddess and our Guru, the divine Mother Parvati, hailed as Perianayaki in the holy Vrddhachalam, who redeemed us by Her loving Grace! Long Live our Divine Mother forever!!

[As the author Sri Kumaradeva Swamigal was an ardent Devi Upasaka (worshipper of the Divine Mother), he expresses his gratitude to Her Grace which prompted and enabled him to complete this work with smooth felicity and hails Mother Perianayaki as the supreme goddess of Self-Knowledge.]

117. THE GLORY OF *SANNYASA*

Among all human accomplishments, there is no greater or rarer attainment than *perfect renunciation* as a means for *moksha purushartha*, the goal of human life. If the great sage who had adopted this supreme means of renunciation and dispassion, and thereby gained liberation and final beatitude, for some strange reason abandons this renunciation itself in order to become the emperor of this world, and then rules over the whole earth with a dazzling crown adorning his head, and thus fritters away the priceless treasure of the power of the Self, it is equivalent to exchanging in barter a most precious gem or diamond stone for no more than a paltry oil cake residue for cattle-feed!

OM TATSAT!
SRI RAMANARPANAMASTU!

