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श्री स्वामी वागीशानन्द सरस्वती

Śrī Svāmī Vāgīśānanda Sarasvatī

Śrī Svāmī Vāgīśānanda Sarasvatī is a senior disciple of Pūjya Śrī Svāmī Dayānanda Sarasvatī, and has been studying and teaching Vedānta since 1975.

Svāmī jī was in his teens when he became fascinated with mystical poetry and non-dualistic philosophies. In 1975, at the age of 19, he left his home in the United States and traveled to India to study in a traditional gurūkulam. After graduating from a three-year residential course in Vedānta and Sanskrit, he attended four subsequent three-year courses in the United States and in India.

Using the traditional methodology called saṁpradāya, Svāmī Vāgīśānanda 'unlocks' the scriptures of Vedānta, thereby removing the veil of ignorance; the cause of all human suffering. He is a traditional saṁnyāsi (a renunciant who is committed to a life of knowledge and has taken a vow of non-injury). A master of the South Indian Kṛṣṇa Yajur Veda style of chanting, Svāmī jī travels the world teaching Sanskrit, Vedic chanting and Vedānta.

॥ हरिः ॐ ॥

Bhajagovindam

॥ श्रीः ॥

by Śrī Ādi Śaṅkarācārya

Compiled and edited under the guidance of
Śrī Svāmī Vāgīśānanda Sarasvatī

Bhajagovindam

भजगोविन्दं

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Introduction

Bhajagovindam is one of numerous musical compositions composed by the renowned teacher/saint Śrī Ādi Śaṅkarācārya. This simple yet profound text describes the fundamental cause of all human suffering. We will describe this cause of suffering as the 'fundamental problem'. The fundamental problem is that most human beings do not know the essential nature of 'themselves':

"Some people think that the problem is outside. Some people think that the problem is inside. But the problem is neither inside nor outside; the problem is you. If you are the problem, then you alone are the immediate solution. This is Vedānta."

Pūjya Śrī Svāmī Dayānanda Sarasvatī

bhajagovindam bhajagovindam
govindam bhaja mūḍhamate
samprāpte sannihite kāle
nahi nahi rakṣati ḍukṛñkarāṇe
samprāpte sannihite kāle
nahi nahi rakṣati ḍukṛñkarāṇe
nahi nahi rakṣati ḍukṛñkarāṇe
nahi nahi rakṣati ḍukṛñkarāṇe om

भजगोविन्दं भजगोविन्दं

गोविन्दं भज मूढमते ।

संप्राप्ते सन्निहिते काले

नहि नहि रक्षति ढुकृञ्करणे ॥

संप्राप्ते सन्निहिते काले

नहि नहि रक्षति ढुकृञ्करणे ।

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नहि नहि रक्षति ढुकृञ्करणे ॐ ॥

om tat sat iti bhajagovindam samāptam

॥ ॐ तत्सत् इति भजगोविन्दं समाप्तं ॥

Thus ends the text Bhajagovindam

gurucaraṇāmbhuja-nirbhara-bhaktāḥ
saṁsārādacirādbhava muktaḥ
sendriyamānasa niyamādevaṁ
drakṣyasi nija hṛdayasthaṁ devam (31)

गुरुचरणाम्भुज-निर्भर-भक्तः

संसारादचिराद्भव मुक्तः ।

सेन्द्रियमानस नियमादेवं

द्रक्ष्यसि निज हृदयस्थं देवम् ॥ ३१ ॥

On devotee! You have no other refuge except for the lotus-feet (standing in pure knowledge) of the guru/teacher. Evam (in this manner; through all these means; through proscribed disciplines), knowledge is unfolded/unlocked using this text (Bhajagovindaṁ). May you quickly be freed from the condition of saṁsāra. By making choices based upon universal values; with deep devotion to Īśvara carried in-and-through one prayerful day, may you come to (gain clear knowledge of) your nature as full and complete; here and now. Know in your heart of hearts, Devaḥ/Devīḥ (God/Goddess; self-evident; self-existent limitless-being which is 'I', in-and-through all experiences), that this is not a separate experience which comes and goes. (31)

Bhajagovindaṁ informs the seeker again and again how this fundamental problem (Self-ignorance) can never be removed through any form of action or its subsequent results. The attempted removal of the problem by the individual, without any external help, only exacerbates the problem. Self-ignorance, and the lack of appropriate, adequate means of knowledge lead to continuous error. This error manifests in the form of the individual identifying with qualities which are objects of awareness; for example, I am 'fat'; I am 'thin'; I am a 'knower'; I am a 'doer', etc. Logically speaking, the subject can never be the object and the object can never be the subject. They are self-exclusive and as opposed to one another as day is opposed to night. Yet, because of self-ignorance, almost all human beings have mistaken the 'object' to be the 'subject'. This error can never be removed without the individual being awakened to the reality of the error, and subsequently to its cause; Self-ignorance. The appropriate means for removing Self-ignorance is born of śravaṇam (listening to a qualified teacher unfolding appropriate scripture), mananam (analysis of the teaching/clarification through questions) and nididhyāsanam (personal meditation on the teaching of Vedānta pramāṇam, taught by a traditional teacher).

Bhajagovindaṁ elaborately shows us the mind-set of one who is deluded by Self-ignorance; 'I am a limited, inadequate individual, suffering in time and space'. This is called the 'disease of becoming' (bhava roga). Cognizant of the condition of Self-ignorance, the aspiring student realizes that the only solution to this problem is to take refuge in the

'Lord', who is to be found in the form of the teacher and the teaching of Self-knowledge; Vedānta pramāṇam. Direct listening to live teaching produces immediate knowledge, which destroys Self-ignorance and all its broods. Listening to Vedānta pramāṇam is a direct means to achieve absolute freedom from saṁsāra (life of endless, vicious cycles of sorrow and suffering; disease, death and rebirth).

**gobhiḥ vedānta-vākyaiḥ vindate
labhyate iti Govindaḥ**

“What is gained [known] through the words
of Vedānta is Govindaḥ
[the truth regarding your real nature]”

Another name for this text is Moha Mudgaraḥ. Moha is the condition of not seeing something clearly; seeing something as other than what it truly is. As an example, one sees a glint of silver far away down a beach. Thinking it something precious, one runs toward it, thinking of little else. As one reaches the shiny object to pick it up only then realizing it is a broken piece of sea shell. Mudgaraḥ is the club (or mace) of strong, clear knowledge/right thinking that shatters moha aviveka (Self-ignorance and the inability for proper discrimination). By discriminative inquiry one removes the error of moha and sees the world as it truly is.

Any time the teaching shows us a defect in our perception of reality it is never just to condemn for condemnation's sake. Nor is it merely to find fault. It is in fact a form of praise by which the teacher is pointing out where we have moha aviveka (ignorance and error; a lack of discrimination

prāṇāyāmaṁ pratyāhāraṁ
nityānitya-vivekavicāraṁ
jāpyasameta samādhividhānaṁ
kurvavadhānaṁ mahadavadhānaṁ (30)

प्राणायामं प्रत्याहारं

नित्यानित्यविवेकविचारम् ।

जाप्यसमेत समाधिविधानं

कुर्ववधानं महदवधानम् ॥ ३० ॥

By practicing prāṇāyāma* (conscious, prayerful breathing disciplines) one helps to relax the mind. Practice pratyāhāra* (consciously withdrawing one's attention from external objects of awareness) to gain insight into the functions of 'mind'. Discriminate clearly between what is permanent and timeless and what is impermanent and time-bound.^ Chant the sacred names of the Lord using the japa mālā until you become absorbed in japa.** Use your will and devote yourself to these and other disciplines. Follow them with deep, devotional awareness.^ (30) *To understand Patañjali's eight-limbed yoga, the aspiring student my wish to explore the text Aparokṣa Anubhūtiḥ by Śrī Ādi Śaṅkarācārya. ^nityānitya vastu vivekaḥ **The repetition of one of the names of the Lord (usually performed using a mālā/rosary). ^^One needs the guidance of a guru (one who removes the darkness of ignorance) in all of these disciplines. One practices in accordance with universal values, never going to extremes or experiencing any form of denial.

arthamanartham bhāvaya nityam
nāsti tataḥ sukhaleśaḥ satyam
putrādapi dhana bhājām bhītiḥ
sarvatraisā vihītā rītiḥ (29)

अर्थमनर्थं भावय नित्यं

नास्ति ततः सुखलेशः सत्यम् ।

पुत्रादपि धन भाजां भीतिः

सर्वत्रैषा विहिता रीतिः ॥ २९ ॥

All relative security is completely insecure.* The truth is, there isn't the slightest ability for it (any object of awareness) to give joy or sorrow.^ Come to see this fact as self-evident.** Even when insanely wealthy, a person can be deathly afraid of one of their brood potentially stealing their wealth. In all places and in all times, this is and has been the universal experience of ignorance and insecurity regarding material wealth. (29) *Can never give one emotional security. ^Being inert, objects of awareness contain no qualities of happiness or sadness, and therefore cannot independently cause these states of mind. **Otherwise you will suffer endlessly.

regarding the nature of 'I' and the nature of 'this'). The teacher is in fact praising our potential freedom from that particular ignorance, delusion or defect of thinking. Any thinking that takes us away from absolute, immediate, unconditional self-acceptance is said to be wrong-thinking. Knowing and understanding our wrong-thinking is right-thinking!

na hi nindā* nindārtham parantu stuthyārthaḥ eva

“Criticism not for criticism’s sake, but applied for the sake of praising a healthy quality (attitude or Dharmic behavior) which is to be cultivated by the student.”

*nindā: To censor; criticism; finding defect; pointing out defective thinking or action.

Over time we may even laugh at our own suffering which we have created for ourselves. This type of self-reflection will deepen our understanding regarding the results of Self-ignorance, which is graphically unfolded in each verse of Bhajagovindam. By becoming conscious of our error, we can choose to drop this silly waste of our will and effort in these 'sorrow-go-round' pursuits and concentrate on solving the fundamental problem. The text repeats over and over the solution to the fundamental problem, calling out in a firm and compassionate voice; “Therefore, oh mudhamatiḥ (indiscriminant intellect), drop this wrong-thinking through Bhajagovindam!” Bhaja in this context means 'to take refuge in the Lord again and again as a devotee' and also 'to take refuge in the Lord manifest as teacher and teaching'. We make this conscious choice in order to understand that the

Lord is actually oneself. By choosing to know the nature of the Lord as you, one gains knowledge of the Self to be full and complete. Knowledge is therefore gained by the student who studies the sacred words contained in the Upaniṣads (the primary scriptures of Vedānta).

In reality we are speaking to our own hearts/minds, helping us to see what 'discrimination of realities' means to the fullest. By this insight we will be blessed with the ultimate power of discrimination; the ability to 'know' the difference between what is sat (un-negate-able, independent existence or truth), and what is asat (not independently real; impermanent and born of ignorance). It is this self-ignorance that keeps us in endless cycles of suffering (saṃsāra). By gaining discrimination and clear knowledge with the grace of a qualified traditional teacher, one is freed from all sorrow. This text, understood clearly, will bless one with the insight of an informed seeker; a jijñāsuḥ (the rare person who understands both the problem and the solution).

This version of Bhajagovindaṃ contains 31 verses (while other versions of this text may contain 33). In essence, Bhajagovindaṃ teaches us nāma smarana (remembering the fundamental relationship between one's Self and the infallible Lord, Govindaṃ). At the same time Bhajagovindaṃ teaches self-knowledge through listening to the scriptures taught by a traditional teacher, which is available to us to help us cross the shore-less ocean of saṃsāra and achieve mokṣa (ultimate freedom from psychological suffering).

Śrī Svāmī Vāgīśānanda Sarasvatī

sukhataḥ kriyate rāmābhogaḥ
paścāddhanta śarīre rogaḥ
yadyapi loke maraṇaṃ śaraṇaṃ
tadapi na muñcati pāpācāraṇam (28)

सुखतः क्रियते रामाभोगः

पश्चाद्धन्त शरीरे रोगः ।

यद्यपि लोके मरणं शरणं

तदपि न मुञ्चति पापाचरणम् ॥ २८ ॥

For the sake of gaining 'happiness'* one becomes obsessed by indiscriminant sexual pleasure, overeating, drinking alcohol, etc.^ 'Aho!', he cries, suffering bodily disease and painful death.** Even though in this world all things resolve in death, still, the indiscriminate person (lost in ignorance and denial) does not free himself from saying and doing inappropriate things that keep causing him more pain and suffering.^ (28)

*Or out of ignorance, what is perceived to be happiness. ^Compulsively (unconsciously) chasing after sense-pleasures. **Screaming in pain and wondering 'why me?'. ^^This is an immutable law 'now-now', and is assimilated with non-resistance by the wise person who makes death their best friend.

geyaṁ gītā nāma sahasraṁ
dhyeyaṁ śrīpati-rūpamajasram
neyaṁ sajjana-saṅge-cittaṁ
deyaṁ dīnajanāya ca vittaṁ (27)

गेयं गीता नाम सहस्रं

ध्येयं श्रीपतिरूपमजस्रम् ।

नेयं सज्जनसङ्गेचित्तं

देयं दीनजनाय च वित्तम् ॥ २७ ॥

(Whoever) constantly recites the verses from the Bhagavad Gītā and meditates upon Viṣṇu* (using '108 names', '1008 names', etc.) is open-hearted and receiving grace.** In this way, meditate on all the glories of Īśvara daily until the devotion is permanent and abiding. Develop interest in satsaṅgaḥ by associating with the wise. This association will help you to think clearly and to see the world as it truly is. Free your mind from possessiveness through active sharing (with the correct attitude) of your wealth with worthy charities. Take delight in maintaining company with the noble and the holy. Stanza attributed to Sumātira. (27) *Infinite-infallible Mother-Father. **The one who brings the 'devotee-up'; who is not in an 'offence-defense posture'; who is relaxed in trust in the infallible Īśvara.

Bhajagovindam

भजगोविन्दं

om atha bhajagovindam

॥ ॐ अथ भजगोविन्दं ॥

bhajagovindam bhajagovindam
govindam bhaja mūḍhamate
samprāpte sannihite kāle
nahi nahi rakṣati dukṛñkaraṇe (1)

भजगोविन्दं भजगोविन्दं

गोविन्दं भज मूढमते ।

संप्राप्ते सन्निहिते काले

नहि नहि रक्षति डुकृञ्करणे ॥ १ ॥

Take refuge in Govinda (Lord Īśvara in the form of the teacher and the teaching). Take refuge in Govinda! Oh, ignorant one! Take refuge in Govinda! Any action, process or result within time will not save or protect you at the moment of death. Only Govinda (self-knowledge born of śravaṇam, mananam and nididhyāsanam of Vedānta pramāṇam, taught by a traditional teacher) will remove self-ignorance and error, freeing you from the disease of becoming (bhava roga). (1)

kāmarṁ krodharṁ lobharṁ moharṁ
tyaktvātmānarṁ bhāvaya soham
ātmajñāna-vihinā mūḍhāḥ
te pacyante narakanigūḍhāḥ (26)

कामं क्रोधं लोभं मोहं

त्यक्त्वाऽत्मानं भावय सोऽहम् ।

आत्मज्ञानविहीना मूढाः

ते पच्यन्ते नरकनिगूढाः ॥ २६ ॥

Through the study of Vedānta, one will have given up (neutralized through knowledge, devotion and prayerful non-resistance) all reactions (lust, anger, infatuation, greed and obsession). Continue your enquiry into your real nature and see (that by understanding the equation tattvamasi – ‘that you are’) that Īśvara and ‘I’ are one. By proper discriminative inquiry, and with the guidance of the guru and the śāstra pramāṇam (scriptural means of knowledge), the student will drop the habit of ‘delusion-superimposition’. Fools are they who are blind to the Self. Those living under the condition of narakāḥ (the indiscriminate human roasting in the fires of hell) suffer endlessly in the vicious cycle of saṁsāra. Stanza attributed to Bharatīvamśa. (26)

śatrau mitre putre bandhau
mā kuru yatnaṁ vighrahasandhau
sarvasminnapi paśyātmānaṁ
sarvatrotsrja bhedājñānam (25)

शत्रौ मित्रे पुत्रे बन्धौ

मा कुरु यत्नं विग्रहसन्धौ ।

सर्वस्मिन्नपि पश्यात्मानं

सर्वत्रोत्सृज भेदाज्ञानम् ॥ २५ ॥

Do not waste your efforts to win the love of, or to fight against friend and foe; children and relatives. May one come to see one's limitless self in everyone, as everyone (and everything). Through this knowledge of 'infinite-self', the seer-seen bhedah (division/duality/disturbance) is bādhita (resolved). This division is understood to have no independent reality apart from ātmā (limitless self). See one's Self in everything and give up this perception of duality completely*. Stanza attributed to Medhātithira. 'Bodham bodham bodham pratibodha viditam matam amrtattvam hi vindate.' ** (25) *The experience of seer-seen division duality continues but the knowledge of 'I' as the reality of both negates that condition. 'I' remains uninvolved and unaffected by this 'as-though' dual perception. **From the Kenopaniṣad: "In every experience, which is every thought, ātmā (immediate 'I') is recognized as self-existent, self-evident fullness. By this immediate knowledge is death-less-ness attained".

mūḍha jahīhi dhanāgamatṛṣṇāṁ
kuru sadbuddhiṁ manasi vitṛṣṇāṁ
yallabhase nijakarmopāttam
vittam tena vinodaya cittam (2)

मूढ जहीहि धनागमतृष्णां

कुरु सद्बुद्धिं मनसि वितृष्णां ।

यल्लभसे निजकर्मोपात्तं

वित्तं तेन विनोदय चित्तम् ॥ २ ॥

Give up (through proper discrimination) your delusion and compulsion to amass wealth (for emotional security, happiness, etc.). By listening to Vedāntic scriptures, unfolded by a competent, traditional teacher for a length of time, one will eventually see oneself as 'the-secure'. All of the attendant cravings (the 'wantings to become') are destroyed by the knowledge that 'I am absolutely secure here and now'. Devote your heart/mind to bringing your awareness to sākṣi* (what is immutable). This will increase your clarity as to what is sat (un-negate-able self-existence). By 'owning' this infinite-given-grace, develop gratitude and contentment with what you have now-now (which is always enough). (2) *I' as witness to the presence and absence of thought modification.

nārīstanabhara nābhīdeśam
dr̥ṣṭhvā māgā mohāveśam
etanmāmsavasādi vikāram
manasi vicintaya vāram vāram (3)

नारीस्तनभर नाभीदेशं

दृष्ट्वा मागा मोहावेशम् ।

एतन्मांसवसादि विकारं

मनसि विचिन्तय वारं वारम् ॥ ३ ॥

May you not get lost in delusion or obsessive and compulsive behavior (believing that unconditional happiness is achieved through the sense pleasures). Seeing a women's (or a man's) bare chest or navel, be objective.* These objects of perception are nothing more than modifications of flesh, bones and blood (they have no intrinsic ability to cause one happiness or sadness).** Clearly discriminate and reflect on these objective realities again and again in your heart/mind (to escape this delusion). (3) *This should not be misconstrued to mean that the human body (or any object of perception) is profane. Everything is Īśvara/God and therefore looked upon as sacred (neither one god nor many gods; simply **God**). **The technical term for this in Sanskrit is śobhana-adhyāsa; the unconscious superimposition/error that a sense object or object of awareness can actually be responsible for giving one true happiness (or unhappiness).

tvayi mayi cānyatraiko viṣṇuḥ
vyartham kupyasi mayyasahiṣṇuḥ*
bhava samacittaḥ sarvatra tvam
vāñchasyacirādyadi viṣṇutvam (24)

त्वयि मयि चान्यत्रैको विष्णुः

व्यर्थं कुप्यसि मय्यसहिष्णुः ।

भव समचित्तः सर्वत्र त्वं

वाञ्छस्यचिराद्यदि विष्णुत्वम् ॥ २४ ॥

In me (as me), in you (as you) and in everything (as everything), only one, limitless, non-dual Viṣṇu* dwells. Your anger and impatience are simply impediments to gaining self-knowledge. If you wish to know your Viṣṇu-ness now-now, cultivate samacittavam** at all times and in all situations. Stanza attributed to Medhātithira. (24) *Īśvara (the Lord) appearing (in this stanza) in the form of Viṣṇu. In this context, Īśvara as Viṣṇu may be understood as the all-pervasive one who is uninvolved and unaffected by any event. **Samacittavam is the attitude of graceful acceptance of all 'results'. This divine acceptance is born of the knowledge that all results are the grace of Īśvara (the Lord/infinite-being). With this attitude, one cultivates non-resistance and receives all actions as they are with little or no reaction or resistance. This freedom from reaction; this equanimity; this 'heart-mind of blessedness' (holding deep gratitude for the infinite-given) allows one to remain ever-calm in-and-through all pleasant and painful situations. This is samacittavam, which lives in the heart-mind of the student fit for the study of Vedānta. This student understands their nature to be as one with Īśvara.

kastvaṁ kohaṁ kuta āyātaḥ
kā me jananī ko me tātaḥ
iha paribhāvaya sarvamasāram
viśvaṁ tyaktvā svapna vicāram (23)

कस्त्वं कोऽहं कुत आयातः

का मे जननी को मे तातः ।

इह परिभावय सर्वमसारम्

विश्वं त्यक्त्वा स्वप्न विचारम् ॥ २३ ॥

Who are you (in truth)? Who am I (in truth)? From where (in truth) do you come? Who (in truth) is your mother? Who (in truth) is your father? Ponder these questions and come to know that the source and essence of everything is 'That You Are'!* The seen-gone universe has no independent existence. Through self-knowledge one sees this manifest-creation as essence-less. With this knowledge, one dispenses with the delusion that this life-less material (the body-mind complex) can give one absolute-fullness. Enquire deeply into the nature of this dream**. Stanza attributed to Surendra. (23) *Ātmā āre! Dṛṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyaḥ mantavyaḥ nididhyāsitavyaḥ'. Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad; 2.4.6: To gain this knowledge, one has to systematically engage oneself in listening to Vedānta śravaṇam, mananam and nididhyāsanam. **Enquire into exactly what the nature/essence of the dreamer-dream-dreaming manifestation really is. With this knowledge, one can effortlessly (through immediate cognition of limit-less-being) relax in the knowledge of 'That You Are'.

nalinīdalagatajalamatitaralaṁ
tadvajjīvitamatisayacapalam
viddhi vyādhyabhimānagrasthaṁ
lokaṁ śokahataṁ ca samastam (4)

नलिनीदलगतजलमतितरलं

तद्वज्जीवितमतिशयचपलम् ।

विद्धि व्याध्यभिमानग्रस्थं

लोकं शोकहतं च समस्तम् ॥ ४ ॥

The entire life of a human being is as ephemeral as a raindrop falling (seen-gone) off a lotus leaf. Understand clearly that the objective nature of the whole world* (anything that is 'accomplished' within the confines of time and space) is fraught with these painful facts: That by gaining these accomplishments, one will experience old age, disease and death, and the subsequent sorrows brought about by the effects of these pursuits.** (4) *Lokyate/anubhūyate: That which is experienced; any and all fields of experience; the entire seen-gone universe. There are 14 lokas in the Vedāntic model, all of which are possible fields of experience for the jīvas/saṁsāris to exhaust the results of their actions. It is important to recognize the defects inherent in all fields of experience. These defects, called ṣaḍūrmis (the six painful waves), include hunger, thirst, sorrow, delusion, decay and death. **Attempting to reconcile one's sense of alienation (due to lack of proper inquiry) by accomplishing relative (limited) pursuits is as insane as trying to put out a fire with petrol/gasoline.

yāvadvittopārjana saktah
tāvannija parivāro raktah
paścājjīvati jarjara dehe
vārtām kopī na ꣳcchati gehe (5)

यावद्वित्तोपार्जन सक्तः

तावन्निज परिवारो रक्तः ।

पश्चाज्जीवति जर्जर देहे

वार्ता कोऽपि न पृच्छति गेहे ॥ ५ ॥

A person will receive the affection of his* family members and friends so long as he is healthy and able to gather wealth and prestige. But when the body is old and decrepit (incapacitated due to disease, old age and senility), no one, not even their own household, will care to give him the time of day. (5) *The pronouns he and him (as well as she and her), used throughout this text should be considered universal pronouns and not gender specific.

rathyā-carpaṭa-viracita-kanthaḥ
puṇyāpuṇya-vivarjita-panthaḥ
yogī yoganiyojita cittaḥ
ramate bālonmattavad eva (22)

रथ्याचार्षटविरचितकन्थः

पुण्यापुण्यविवर्जितपन्थः ।

योगी योगनियोजित चित्तः

रमते बालोन्मत्तवद् एव ॥ २२ ॥

There is no shortage of clothing for a renunciant so long as there are rags cast to the side of the road. Freed from Dharma and adharma (virtue and vice), puṇya and pāpa (pleasure and pain), she follows the pathless path (like the wind). The yogiṇī who is effortlessly reveling in immediate self-knowledge (freed from any sense of doer-ship and enjoyer-ship; freed from the condition of guilt and angst) is ever-content in her heart/mind. Pure and uncontaminated, she is ever like a child* or one who is a mad-person.** Stanza attributed to Nityānatha. (22) *Child-like-ness in simplicity; freedom from arrogance and lack of doer-ship and enjoyer-ship (as in the manner of a one-year-old). **This refers to the 'hilarious' mad-person, conveying the idea of happiness for no reason.

punarapi jananaṁ punarapi maraṇaṁ
punarapi jananī jaṭhare śayanam
iha saṁsāre bahudustāre*
kṛpayāpāre pāhi murāre (21)

पुनरपि जननं पुनरपि मरणं

पुनरपि जननी जठरे शयनम् ।

इह संसारे बहुदुस्तारे

कृपयाऽपारे पाहि मुरारे ॥ २१ ॥

Dying again and again...being born again and again...born to enter and painfully suffer in mother's womb again and again: It is very difficult to cross the boundless/shoreless ocean of saṁsāra. Oh, Murāri!** (Govinda) Oh, Lord, slayer of all deamons (ignorance and delusion); you, being an infinite ocean of compassion; please protect and bless me (show me how to gain self-knowledge). The ultimate protection is the knowledge that there is no 'other' to protect myself from. This is the only form of absolute protection. Stanza attributed to Nityānatha. (21) *Since it is impossible to escape the clutches of saṁsāra by oneself, one needs the grace of someone who does not need help. One intelligently seeks help from the infallible Īśvara/Govinda. **Murāri: 'Mura' is a daemon (a metaphor for ignorance and error). 'Ari' means 'the enemy'. Murāri (Kṛṣṇa) is the destroyer of all enemies; self-ignorance, error and all its saṁsāra broods.

yāvātpavano nivasati dehe
tāvāt pṛcchati kuśalaṁ gehe
gatavati vāyau dehāpāye*
bhāryā bibhyati tasmin kāye (6)

यावत्पवनो निवसति देहे

तावत् पृच्छति कुशलं गेहे ।

गतवति वायौ देहापाये

भार्या बिभ्यति तस्मिन् काये ॥ ६ ॥

As long as one is still breathing, their family members enquire kindly about their welfare. But when that person has breathed their last, even the once-devoted wife is frightened by the lifeless corpse. (6) *The Sanskrit root (dhātu) for dehaḥ (body) is diḥ. Depending on context, diḥ can be unfolded to mean 'the action of expansion and contraction'. Other definitions include (but are not limited to) 'the action of addition and subtraction' and 'the action of anointment' (as with perfume, etc.). Diḥ is a synonym of śarīram; the body-mind complex (that which is imprisoned by time and undergoes time-bound modification).

bālastāvat krīḍāsaktah
taruṇastāvat taruṇī saktah
vr̥ddhastāta cintāmagnaḥ
parame brahmaṇi kopi na lagnaḥ* (7)

बालस्तावत् क्रीडासक्तः

तरुणस्तावत् तरुणी सक्तः ।

वृद्धस्तात चिन्तामग्नः

परमे ब्रह्मणि कोऽपि न लग्नः ॥ ७ ॥

Time spent during one's childhood that might have been used for gaining (relative) knowledge gets wasted through attachment (to unconscious playtime). In teenage years, precious time is wasted through angst, parties, obsession concerning appearance and socializing. Middle- and old-age pass by with the mind worrying over regrets due to perceived omissions and commissions. Pray, tell me, who is awake to the fundamental problem? Who is absorbed in Vedānta? ** Who is in deep contemplation of 'I' as Brahman (existence-awareness-fullness)? (7)

*bālastāvat krīḍāsaktah
taruṇastāvat taruṇī saktah
vr̥ddhastāvaccintāsaktah
pare brahmaṇi ko'pi na saktah (alternate stanza)

**Having the scriptures unfolded by a qualified teacher for a length of time.

bhagavad gītā kiñcidadhītā
gaṅgā jalalava kaṇikāpītā
sakṛdapi yena murāri samarcā
kriyate tasya yamena na carcā (20)

भगवद् गीता किञ्चिदधीता

गङ्गा जललव कणिकापीता ।

सकृदपि येन मुरारि समर्चा

क्रियते तस्य यमेन न चर्चा ॥ २० ॥

That person who studies even a few verses of the Bhagavad Gītā under the guidance of a qualified teacher; that person who sips just a thimbleful of Gaṅgā (Ganges) holy water (drinking the nectar of self-knowledge); that person who surrenders in complete trust to the infallible Lord Murāri (Govinda) just once; that person will have no argument with Lord Yama (the lord of death). They will have no fear of death, for they will have gained the grace* of the Lord. They will have gained knowledge of themselves as death-less-birth-less-being. Stanza attributed to Dr̥dhābhākta. (20) *Implying that through earned grace, one will come to a traditional teacher. Through listening to the teaching, one will 'realize' mokṣa.

yogarato vā bhogarato vā
saṅgarato vā saṅgavihīnaḥ
yasya brahmaṇi ramate cittam
nandati nandati nandatyeva (19)

योगरतो वा भोगरतो वा

सङ्गरतो वा सङ्गविहीनः ।

यस्य ब्रह्मणि रमते चित्तं

नन्दति नन्दति नन्दत्येव ॥ १९ ॥

One may become obsessed with aṣṭāṅga yoga* or become attached to all kinds of bogaḥ (pleasurable experiences of extraordinary subtleties). One may be a sybarite or live as a naked, wandering mendicant. Only for those wise people alone whose minds ever-revel now-now in the knowledge of Brahman as 'I'; they alone are content in themselves, by themselves and for themselves (for no reason). This condition of contentment is sustained no matter the experience of any degree of pain or pleasure. They enjoy absolute fullness whose hearts/minds steadily delight in Brahman**. Stanza attributed to Ānandagiri. (19) *See stanza 30, first footnote (in reference to Patañjali's 8 limbs of yoga). **Indicating 'I Am Brahman' (cognitively identified with limitless-being).

kā te kāntā kaste putraḥ
saṁsāroyamatīva vicitraḥ
kasya tvam kaḥ kuta āyātaḥ
tattvam cintaya tadiha bhrātāḥ (8)

का ते कान्ता कस्ते पुत्रः

संसारोऽयमतीव विचित्रः ।

कस्य त्वं कः कुत आयातः

तत्त्वं चिन्तय तदिह भ्रातः ॥ ८ ॥

Who (in truth) is your wife/husband? Who (in truth) is your son/daughter? Indeed, an exceedingly strange wonder is this saṁsāra.* To whom do you (really) belong? From where have you (really) come? Oh sister/brother; wake up and come to know oneself as the ultimate truth! Do not stay lost in these incidental attributes and material experiences. Truth is known through Bhajagovindam. (8) *'Strange wonder' indeed, in that this saṁsāra is an endless-beginning-less cycle of 'death' and 'birth' that 'I' have taken to believe has any independent, intrinsic reality. This infinite cycle of 'self-ignorance/desire/action/result/rebirth' cannot be defined as self-existent or non-existent. If one has the temerity to ask 'why' as to its nature, answers will not be forthcoming. Only the question prefaced with 'what' will allow one to gain self-knowledge. The answers to 'what' become self-evident when one studies the scriptures under the tutelage of a qualified teacher for a length of time.

satsaṅgatve nissāṅgatvaṁ
nissāṅgatve nirmohatvam
nirmohatve niścalitattvaṁ
niścalitattve* jīvanmuktiḥ (9)

सत्सङ्गत्वे निस्सङ्गत्वं

निस्सङ्गत्वे निर्मोहत्वम् ।

निर्मोहत्वे निश्चलितत्त्वं

निश्चलितत्त्वे जीवन्मुक्तः ॥ ९ ॥

By satsaṅgaḥ^ (association with wise people) comes objectivity**, emotional maturity and prayerful freedom from resistance to facts one cannot change. Objectivity releases one from the chains of delusion. This freedom from delusion allows one to relax in contentment. One is now free of the shackles of binding likes and dislikes. By consistent Vedāntic study (śravaṇam, mananam and nididhyāsanam) one 'becomes' the jīvanmuktaḥ (the living liberated); free from guilt, hurt and all forms of suffering. (9) *When one is freed from the ignorance of saṁsāra (all possible emotional disturbances), mind is understood to be mithyā (having no independent existence). ^Sat(puruṣaḥ)saṅgaḥ: They who 'understand' sat (truth, in both relative and absolute contexts); association with those who understand and embrace Vedic and universal values (dharma-adharma); association with saintly people. **Vairāgyam: burning interest in the nature of the experiencer and not the experienced; dispassion toward worldly gain.

sura-mandira taru-mūla nivāsaḥ
śayyā bhūtalamaḥjanam vāsaḥ
sārva-parigraha-bhoga-tyāgaḥ*
kasya sukhaṁ na karoti virāgaḥ (18)

सुर-मन्दिर तरु-मूल निवासः

शय्या भूतलमजिनं वासः ।

सार्व-परिग्रह-भोग-त्यागः

कस्य सुखं न करोति विरागः ॥ १६ ॥

By all means, take up residence in a holy temple or at the base of a sacred tree. Wear deerskin for clothing and sleep on Mother-Earth. Give away all your possessions and renounce all comforts. None of these actions will compare to the fullness of causeless-happiness. This knowledge is born of absolute vairāgyam; complete objectivity toward the infinite-given; unconditional acceptance of what is; dispassion towards worldly, material gains. Stanza attributed to Nityānanda. (18) *Indicating saṁnyāsaḥ: The renunciation of all other pursuits aside from śravaṇam, mananam and nididhyāsanam (for the one who has mastered the disciplines of karma yoga and upāsana yoga). The ability to let go of anything without feeling a loss, born of the clear understanding that these objects of awareness have no subjective value.

kurute gaṅgāsāgaragamanam
vrataparipālanamathavā dānam
jñānavihīnaḥ sarvamatena
bhajati na muktim janmaśatena (17)

कुरुते गङ्गासागरगमनं

व्रतपरिपालनमथवा दानम् ।

ज्ञानविहीनः सर्वमतेन

भजति न मुक्तिं जन्मशतेन ॥ १७ ॥

One may choose to fast for long periods of time. One may go on a pilgrimage to bathe where the Gaṅgā (the Ganges) meets the ocean. One may magnanimously give away all their riches to charity! Yet (according to traditional teaching), devoid of jñānam (knowledge that leads to liberation), none of these actions will give one mokṣa (freedom from psychological suffering). Even if one gives away billions of dollars to charity and performs billions of rituals throughout untold numbers of lifetimes, mokṣa will not be forthcoming. All of these actions are useless without self-knowledge*. Stanza attributed to Sureśvara. (17) *Jñānāt eva tu kaivālyam': Knowledge alone (which destroys self-ignorance) results in immediate, absolute freedom. That knowledge is not 'true' knowledge unless it has been consciously freed from vagueness, doubt and error.

vayasi gate kaḥ kāmavikārah
śuṣke nīre kaḥ kāsārah
kṣīṇe vitte kaḥ parivārah
jñāte tattve kaḥ saṁsārah (10)

वयसि गते कः कामविकारः

शुष्के नीरे कः कासारः ।

क्षीणे वित्ते कः परिवारः

ज्ञाते तत्त्वे कः संसारः ॥ १० ॥

What good are overwhelming sexual desires when your youth has dissipated? What use is a waterless lake? Where will your friends and relatives be when your youth is long behind you? When the essence of 'I AM' is clearly known without vagueness, doubt or error, where then is the problem? Where is saṁsāra when the 'truth'* is you? (10) *Clearly understood that 'I' am absolute-truth.

mā kuru dhanajanayauvanagarvaṃ
harati nimeṣāt kālaḥ sarvaṃ
māyāmayamidamakhilaṃ hitvā
brahmapadaṃ tvaṃ praviśa veditvā (11)

मा कुरु धनजनयौवनगर्वं

हरति निमेषात् कालः सर्वम् ।

मायामयमिदमखिलं हित्वा

ब्रह्मपदं त्वं प्रविश विदित्वा ॥ ११ ॥

Why brag about one's wealth, friends, youth, power, etc.? All these accomplishments are ashes in the blink of an eye (crushed in the jaws of all-consuming time). May you come to clearly know the mithyātvam* (the ephemerality of the seen-gone universe) of all objects of experience. May your heart/mind relax in aham Brahmāsi (I am Brahman). Having gained clear-knowledge (born of consistent Vedātic study), may you effortlessly revel in this stateless-state (nothing but immediate knowledge): I am self-evident, self-existent, limitless-being: I am liberated from this 'illusion of the world' (of māyā): I have 'attained' timeless truth. (11) *Like a 'ring' made out of 'gold'; 'ring' being dependent on 'gold' for its existence. 'Ring' is 'gold', but 'gold' is not 'ring'. 'Gold' is uninvolved, unassociated and unaffected by any attributes of 'ring'.

agre vahniḥ pṛṣṭhebhānuḥ
rātrau cubukasamarpitajānuḥ
karatalabhikṣastarutalavāsaḥ
tadapi na muñcatyāśāpāsaḥ (16)

अग्रे वह्निः पृष्ठेभानुः

रात्रौ चुबुकसमर्पितजानुः ।

करतलभिक्षस्तरुतलवासः

तदपि न मञ्चत्याशापाशः ॥ १६ ॥

Aho! Behold the wonder! Here sits a person who has renounced all comforts, performing frightening tapas (spiritual austerities). At high noon on the hottest summer day he sits in front of a blazing fire with the full sun on his naked back. At night he shivers in the freezing cold gripping his knees to his chest. With cupped hands he eats what is given to him by passersby. When he sleeps he does so beneath any tree available. Still, his mind constantly burns with the longing to 'become'. Unfulfilled passions plague his waking and dreaming states. He rarely sleeps well. What is gained from such suffering? What is gained by performing such painful austerities? Stanza attributed to Subodha. (16)

aṅgaṁ galitaṁ palitaṁ muṇḍaṁ
daśanavihīnaṁ jātaṁ tuṇḍam
vrddho yāti grhītvā daṇḍaṁ
tadapi na muñcatyāśāpiṇḍam (15)

अङ्गं गलितं पलितं मुण्डं

दशनविहीनं जातं तुण्डम् ।

वृद्धो याति गृहीत्वा दण्डं

तदपि न मुञ्चत्याशापिण्डम् ॥ १५ ॥

Old woman/man! Strength has left your body. All your limbs are weak and flabby. Your head is now losing its hair. Your (rotting) gums are toothless. You painfully walk stooped over (on the verge of collapsing) leaning on a single walking-stick. Even though you have lived a full life, still, binding likes and dislikes keep you in a constant state of mental reaction. Futile desires for you to be different from what you really are cloud your mind. Stanza attributed to Hastāmalaka. (15)

dinayāminyau sāyam prātaḥ
śiśiravasantaḥ punarāyātaḥ
kālaḥ krīḍati gacchatyāyuh
tadapi na muñcatyāśāvāyuh (12)

दिनयामिन्यौ सायं प्रातः

शिशिरवसन्तौ पुनरायातः ।

कालः क्रीडति गच्छत्यायुः

तदपि न मुञ्चत्याशावायुः ॥ १२ ॥

Day to day; dusk to dusk; winters to winters (all spinning cycles come and go). Time (seemingly maliciously) plays (like a cat with a mouse) and all life (all that is manifested in this field of space-time) ebbs away. Even then (we discover that without self-knowledge) the wandering winds of desire never cease (never leave one's mind in peace). (12)

kā te kāntā dhana gatacintā
vātula kiṃ tava nāsti niyantā
trijagati sajjanasamgatiraikā
bhavati bhavārṇava tarāṇe naukā (13)

का ते कान्ता धन गतचिन्ता

वातुल किं तव नास्ति नियन्ता ।

त्रिजगति सज्जनसंगतिरैका

भवति भवार्णव तरणे नौका ॥ १३ ॥

Oh, madman! Why this obsessive behavior? Why this constant struggle to amass wealth and the attendant worries regarding its loss? Is there no one to guide you? There is only one thing in the three worlds (all realms/the universe) that can save you from the shoreless ocean of saṃsāra (self-ignorance/denial/suffering). It is this and this alone: You must (make the choice to) climb into the boat of satsaṅgaḥ (reverential association with the teacher and the teaching of Vedānta) immediately. Stanza attributed to Padmapada. (13)

jaṭilo muṇḍī luñcitakeśaḥ
kāṣāyāmbara bahukṛtaveśaḥ
paśyannapi ca na paśyati mūḍhaḥ
udaranimittaṃ bahukṛtaveśaḥ (14)

जटिलो मुण्डी लुञ्चितकेशः

काषायाम्बर बहुकृतवेषः ।

पश्यन्नपि च न पश्यति मूढः

उदरनिमित्तं बहुकृतवेषः ॥ १४ ॥

There are many colorful varieties of sādhus (wandering renunciants/saints) who wear their hair in matted locks. Many have clean-shaven heads. Many have chosen to painfully pluck their hair out by the roots. Some are clothed in saffron; others in various vestures. All of these outer trappings (saṃnyāsa-liṅgaḥ)* may only be (a ruse) to fill the belly (the saint is actually an imposter). Even though these mendicants see the value in leading the life of a renunciant, still, the indiscriminant ones do not understand what renunciation** truly is. Stanza attributed to Totaka. (14) *Indicative marks that the person is a dedicated renunciant, and is therefore dedicated to self-knowledge. **Self-knowledge alone is renunciation. This knowledge removes the sense of doer-ship and enjoyer-ship, thus removing all guilt and fear and therefore all sorrow. The outer vestures or roles one plays in life have nothing to do with gaining self-knowledge (mokṣa).