

நாராயணஹதயம்

{॥ நாராயணஹதயம் ॥}

॥ ம்ரீயை நமஃ ॥

॥ ம்ரீமதே நாராயணாய நமஃ ॥

அதர்வரஹஸ்யே உத்தர கண்டே

॥ ம்ரீ நாராயண ஹதயம் ॥

॥ SHRI NARAYANA HRIDAYAM ॥

INTRODUCTION:- The following abbreviations are used in the comments

that follow. (1) Narayana Hridayam – NH. (2) Laxmi Hridayam – LH

(3) Vishnu Sahasranama with the commentary of Shri Shankaracharya – VS.

(4) Bhagavad Gita – BG. (5) Shrimad Bhagavatham – BH (6) Lalitha Sahasranamam

– LS. (7) Vivekachudamani of Shri Shankaracharya – VC. (8) Katha Upanishad

– KU. (9) Mundaka Upanishad – MU.

Narayana Hridayam stotram is unique in that it is coupled with another stotram

Laxmi Hridayam to form a pair. They are found in the

Atharva Rahasyam. They were given out by sage Bhargava.

They belong to the category of stotram ஸ்தோத்ரம் .

The appellation stotram, stuti and stavam all describe a

hymn only. ஸ்தவஃ ஸ்தோத்ரீ நுதிஃ ஸ்துதிஃ । says Amara, the Sanskrit

lexicon. They all narrate the qualities of a deity. குணஸ்கீர்தநம்

is stotram, says Shri Shankaracharya in his commentary to Vishnu

Sahasranama. The Lord in His true form is described in the scriptures

as having no attributes or qualities such as name, form or qualities.

யத்ததத்ரேம்ய-மக்ராஹ்ய-மகோத்ர-மவர்ணமசக்ஷஃம்ரோத்ரீ ததபாணி-
பாதம் ।

நித்யீ விபி ஸர்வகத் ஸுஸூக்ஷ்மீ ததவ்யயீ யத்பூதயோநீ பரிபம்யந்தி தீராஃ ॥

MU(1-1-5.)

But since such a God will be impossible for a devotee to comprehend and relate with, the scriptures say that the Lord is also available with names and forms. This makes it easy for a devotee to worship Him. The kindly Lord accepts this kind of worship also.

STOTRAM:- Customarily a stotram describes a hymn that is ancient. It is generally found in vedas, puranas or itihasas such as the Ramayana or Mahabharatha. Thus we call Vishnu Sahasranama and the Lalitha Sahasranama as stotras. So also we call Aditya Hridayam as stotram. They were narrated by some sage, but the sage himself is not the author. He had heard it or got it from some one. Thus the origin is not known and is lost in antiquity. Generally the sage who narrates it says something about its glory in the beginning. He also appends a list of benefits one will get by reciting it or using it in some specific manner as in a sacrifice or homa. This is known as phalashruti (பலஸ்ருதிஃ). Thus, we find these parts or components in these two stotras (NH) and (LH). But some hymns composed by great acharyas or saints later on that were outpourings of intense devotion also carry the appellation stotram. The popular Kanakadhara Stotram by Shri Shankaracharya and Hayagriva Stotram by Shri Vedanta Desika are examples of this kind. But the borderline has become grey with the result that nowadays any hymn is being called a stotram.

WHY RECITE STOTRAM? :- Let us briefly discuss as to why should one listen to and recite stotras. Our scriptures repeatedly state that the birth as a human being is very rare and so immensely valuable. Rarer still are the desire for liberation and association of noble souls. They urge us to appreciate the fact and make best use of our birth as humans .

துர்லபீ த்ரயமேவைதத்தேவாநுக்ரஹ-ஹேதுகம் ।
மநுஷ்யத்வீ முமுகூதத்வீ மஹாபுருஷஸீமர்யஃ ॥ VC(No.3)

The reason for saying that a human birth is great should be obvious. Animals may be stronger, faster and have capabilities such as very acute hearing, keen eye sight etc., which we do not possess. Still we claim to be superior to them because we humans are endowed with the power of reasoning and common sense. With these gifts we can plan our future intelligently, set goals and do all that is needed to attain the goals. Our scriptures say that if, after being born as a human being, one fails to exploit these gifts properly and achieve the goals, then that person is no different from an animal.

ஆஹார-நித்ரா-பய-முக்யகாநி ஸாமாந்யமேதத் பஸ,பிர்நராணாம் ।
புத்திர்ஹி தேஷாமதிகோ விபேஷோ புத்த்யா விஹீநஃ பஸ,பிஃ ஸமாநஃ ।

GOALS – The goals may vary from one person to the other and so can be numerous. But our sages have analysed these numerous goals and divided them into four categories. They are (1) dharma, (2) artha or material acquisitions like wealth, house, family etc., (3) kama or sense pleasures that wealth and other material acquisitions mentioned earlier can provide and finally (4) mokSha or liberation. These are known as புருஷார்தாஃ since they are sought after by people. அர்தஃ = goal.

(1) Dharma – Performing actions as prescribed by our scriptures is called dharma. One who wants to move up the spiritual path is enjoined to follow the injunctions, though they may superficially appear to be illogical or inconvenient. Going against them is termed as a sinful act and will lead to one's downfall. Krishna states this clearly in BG (16-23,24).

யஃ ஸாஸ்த்ரவிதிமுத்ஸஜ்ய வர்ததே காமகாரதஃ ।
ந ஸ ஸித்திமாப்நோதி ந ஸுகீ பரீ கதிம் ॥ உந ॥

தஸ்மா-ச்சாஸ்த்ரீ ப்ரமாணீ தே கார்யாகார்ய-வ்யவஸ்திதௌ ।

ஜ்ஞாத்வா ஸாஸ்த்ரவிதாநோக்தீ கர்ம கர்த்ருமிஹார்ஹஸி || உச||

(2) Artha – We need wealth and other

material comforts to enable us to lead a worry-free life. Besides, money is required to perform religious duties like, going on pilgrimages, pujas, charity etc. So, seeking wealth, per se is not evil. Kalidasa, in his famous poem Raghuvamsam says (1-7) that the kings of the dynasty of Raghu amassed wealth for giving away to the needy and worthy and not for enriching themselves. த்யாகாய ஸ்பதார்தாநாம் | Working to acquire wealth and saving for a rainy day are recommended. It is not decried as long the means by which the wealth is obtained is legal and does not involve injury or harm to others. (3) Kama – Our scriptures allows one to enjoy the benefits of artha (i.e) wealth earned. They include house, family, friends etc. But, as said in the case of artha above, the enjoyments sought and indulged in should not be illegal or against the dictates of the shahstras. They should not be such that will lead to attachments and moral degradation. Having desire is natural and allowed. In fact, Krishna says that He is behind such "proper" desires in all beings. தர்மாவிருத்த பூதேஷு காமோஸ்மி பரதர்ஷப | BG(7-11). Our scriptures talk of special prayers and rituals by which one can obtain immense riches and pleasures including life among gods in the heavens and even the highest world – that of the creator Brahma. This shows that they allow us to entertain desires as long as they are "proper" as said above. But attachment binds and so is dangerous. Our scriptures warn us to be wary of developing attachment to money, property, relations, people etc. (4) MokSha or liberation – means liberation from rebirth. REAL GOAL – It is to be noted that our scriptures do not consider the first three goals as real goals at all. The logic is this. All actions

produce results. If one does actions that are dharmic he gets the fruits of the actions in the form of merit or punyam. If one acts contrary to dharma, he gets the results in the form of sins or papam. One enjoys these results in this birth or one may have to be born again once or many times for the purpose. The fruits of punyam may be a better and more comfortable birth in this world or higher worlds. The results of adharmic actions may be inferior births as animals and plants or a human birth full of sufferings and misery in the form of sickness etc. Thus one gets entangled in the cycle of repeated births and deaths. Krishna points out that even if one gets a place in the heavens, he should remember that that place is got as the reward for his good deeds. As soon as the stock of punyam is exhausted he will necessarily have to come down to this world and rejoin the cycle of birth and death. BG(9-21)

தே தீ புக்த்வா ஸ்வர்க-லோகீ விமாலீ
கூஷீணே புண்யே மர்த்ய-லோகீ விமந்தி ।
ஏவீ த்ரயீதர்ம-மநுப்ரபந்தா
கதாகதீ காமகாமா லபந்தே ॥

This is awful. So, our scriptures do not consider the three goals as commonly understood as real goals. Only liberation or mokSha is said to be the real goal since after attaining mokSha one escapes the agony of samsara. Therefore it is known as the supreme goal or பரமபுருஷார்தம்^ஃ । Samsara implies being born, growing up, going through the ups and downs of life, growing old and dying only to be born again. Liberation is freedom for ever. So it becomes the duty of every intelligent person to work for liberation and not keep on wallowing in samsara. Keeping the above facts in mind, the scriptures define the purpose of the goals in a very different manner. They ask us to use these three goals for

achieving spiritual progress in order to escape samsara. One should do dharma to earn wealth which should be used to earn religious merit and not for enjoying sensuous pleasures. The goal of dharma should be kept as spiritual progress. The aim of kama should not be taken as enjoying sense pleasures but should just be keeping the body and soul together. The aim of keeping the body and soul together should be to strive and learn about the way to liberation and not strive to attain transient pleasures like the enjoyment in heaven etc.

தர்மஸ்ய ஹ்யாபவர்கஸ்ய நார்தோ஽ர்தாயோபகல்பதே ।
நார்தஸ்ய தர்மைகாந்தஸ்ய காமோ லாபாய ஹி ஸ்மதஃ ॥

காமஸ்ய நேந்த்ரியப்ரீதிர்லாபோ ஜீவேத யாவதா ।
ஜீவஸ்ய தத்த்வஜிஜ்ஞாஸா நார்தோ யம்சேஹ கர்மபிஃ ॥ (BH - 1-3-9,10).

The devotees of the Lord were very clear about the above facts. For example, Kulasekhara declares that he is not interested in the three goals – dharma, artha and kama. He says that let events, good or bad, happen according to karmas he had done. He prays to the Lord to grant him unwavering devotion to His lotus like feet in this and in future births. (Mukundamala).

நாஸ்தா தர்மே ந வஸுநிசயே நைவ காமோபபோகே
யத்யத்பவ்யீ பவது பகவந் பூர்வகர்மாநுரூபம் ।
ஏதத்ப்ரார்தயீ மம பஹுமதீ ஜந்மஜந்மாந்தரே஽பி
த்வத்பாதாம்போருஹயுககதா நிம்ச்லா பக்திரஸ்து ॥

LIBERATION:- Liberation, as said earlier, means liberation from cyclic birth. It is spoken as attaining the lotus feet of the Lord in the puranas. According to upanishads liberation means dropping one's

identification with the body/mind complex and realising his/her divine nature. The scriptures assert that one is distinct from the body/mind complex and is indeed divine in nature and so is not subject to sorrows and rebirth. The wrong identification with the body/mind complex is due to wrong knowledge or nescience known as ajnanam (அஜ்ஞாநம்).

Thus, liberation implies settling down in our true or real nature which is divine and thus be free from problems for ever afterwards. தரதி ஸோகமாத்மவித் | says the upanishad. Because of this reason, Krishna says there is no gain greater than this. BG(6-22).

ய் லப்த்வா சாபர் லாபி மந்யதே நாதிக் ததஃ ।
யஸ்மிந்ஸ்திதோ ந துஃகேந குருணா஽பி விசால்யதே ॥

DESIRE FOR LIBERATION:- For this reason, liberation does indeed sound immensely attractive. But the sad truth is that it has very few takers. Only a minuscule minority is interested in seeking liberation. Krishna ruefully says this in Gita. மநுஷ்யாணர் ஸஹஸ்ரேஷு கம்ஸித்யததி ஸித்தயே | BG(7-3). Yama, the Lord of death, also bemoans the fact, and says that the dullards are attracted by sense pleasures and so choose the path of mundane prosperity, but the wise choose the path of liberation. KU (1-2-2).

ஸ்ரேயம்ஸ ப்ரேயம்ஸ மநுஷ்யமேத-ஸ்தௌ ஸ்பரீத்ய விவிநக்தி தீரஃ ।
ஸ்ரேயோ ஹி தீரோ஽பி ப்ரேயஸே வணீதே ப்ரேயோ மந்தோ யோகக்ஷேமாத் வணீதே ॥

Wrong knowledge can be righted only by right knowledge called jnanam (ஜ்ஞாநம்) just like darkness can be removed only by bringing in light. The way to gain jnanam is described in a very systematic manner in our scriptures. However, our scriptures never

tire of warning that the path to gain wisdom is extremely difficult.

"The wise men say it is as difficult as walking on the razor's edge"

said Yama to his disciple Nachiketas. கஷாரஸ்ய தாரா நிமிதா துரத்யயா

துர்கீ பதஸ்தத்கவயோ வதந்தி | KU (1-3-14). Krishna too says this.

அவ்யக்தா ஹி கதிர்துஃகீ தேஹவத்பி-ரவாப்யதே | BG(12-5) The reason

that this path is very difficult for most people is that their minds are

sullied by negative qualities like desires, anger, attachments, jealousy

etc. These qualities cloud the intellect and often distort judgement.

Impelled by anger or greed one may turn selfish and indulge in illegal or

immoral acts. Our scriptures declare that people who have such weaknesses,

will always be distracted and so cannot comprehend the subtle spiritual

wisdom. Even after hearing about liberation repeatedly, their minds

will not be excited enough to take a step in that direction. This

is very unfortunate. நாவிரதோ துய்ச்சரிதாந்நாபாந்தோ நாஸமாஹிதஃ

| நாபாந்தமாநஸோ வா஽பி ப்ரஜ்ஞாநேநைநமாப்நுயாத் || KU(1-2-24). So it is

said that one with the desire for liberation, known as முமுகுஷத்வம் is a

rare phenomenon.

The first thing to do for one who desires liberation

is to purge the mind of such distracting traits and steady it. This

is achieved by regular performance of prescribed karma or duties. However

we saw earlier that karmas produce results and lead to rebirth. The way to

escape the results is to blend karma with devotion or bhakti. One continues

to engage himself in all regular activities, but escapes the results by offering

the results to the Lord. The results having been offered to God will not attach

to the performer of the action. Krishna says this in BG(9-27, 28).

யத்கரோஷி யதம்நாஸி யஜ்ஜ,ஹோஷி க்ததாஸி யத் |

யத்தபஸ்யஸி கௌந்தேய தத்குருஷ்வ மதர்பணம் || உ௭ ||

ஸ,பாஸ,ப-பலைரேவீ மோக்ஷயஸே கர்மபந்தநைஃ । ௨௮।

He tells Arjuna: " whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever sacrifices you perform, whatever you give by way of charity, whatever austerities you engage yourself in do it as as offering to Me. By doing so, you will be liberated from the bonds of action that result in good or evil results."

In this way, actions done, but without any desire for results, lead to

purification of the mind. சித்தஸ்ய ஸ,த்தயே கர்ம । VC(11). and

யோகிநஃ கர்ம குர்வந்தி ஸங்கீ த்யக்த்வாத்மஸ,த்தயே ॥ BG(5-11).

ASSOCIATION OF SAINTS:- As the mind sheds its impurities and gets pure, God's grace slowly reveals itself like the full moon emerging from behind the clouds. The kindly Lord arranges for him to come into contact with noble souls, like sadhus or saints. Our shastras describe them as the messengers of God. They move around the world telling people about the weaknesses of the life one normally leads and explaining the need for treading the spiritual path. They do this without any expectations. They have found the source of happiness. They have the noble desire that others too should take to the spiritual path and find everlasting happiness. Shri Shankaracharya says this.

ஸாந்தா மஹாந்தோ நிவஸந்தி ஸந்தஃ வஸந்தவல்லோகஹிதீ சரந்தஃ ।
தீர்ணா ஸ்வயீ பீமபவார்ணவீ ஜநா- நஹேதுநாந்யாநபி தாரயந்தஃ ॥ VC (37).

We, normally will not be able to identify a saint, because he will look like anyone else and will shun publicity and crowds. It is only God's grace that can lead to a meeting with a mahatma and make us listen to his words. Thus, a human birth is a rarity in the first place and rarer still is the meeting with a saintly person. King Nimi says this when he

gets a chance to meet the nine yogis. BH(11-2-29).

துர்லபோ மாநுஷோ தேஹோ தேஹிநர் க்ஷணபங்குரஃ ।
ததா஽பி துர்லபீ மந்யே வைகுண்டப்ரியதர்ஸநம் ॥

As the minds of saints are imbued with devotion, they take delight
in talking about the Lord – who is none other than their inner self –
and not about mundane matters.

மச்சித்தா மத்கத-ப்ராணா போதயந்தஃ பரஸ்பரம் ।
கதயந்தம்ஸ மரீ நித்யீ துஷ்யந்தி ச ரமந்தி ச ॥BG(10-9).

The words of such God intoxicated devotees have great power. They go to
the heart and so can work wonders. As one comes into contact with them
and listen to their nectar like words, they strengthen the devotion.

The mind slowly turns away from the world and towards the Lord. The
worldly attractions and worries gradually lose their hold. Mind becomes
calm and peaceful. It acquires qualities required to for spiritual
progress. These qualities are said to be four in number and are known
in the vedantic parlance as ஸாதந சதுஷ்டயம் or four means of
attainment. They are described in texts like Viveka Chudamani and Tattva
Bodha. They are more elaborately described by Krishna in chapter 16 of
Bhagavat Gita. He calls them as தைவீ ஸீபத் or divine qualities
They are necessarily to be acquired by one stepping on to the path
of liberation. தைவீ ஸம்பத்விமோக்ஷாய் says Krishna. BG(16-5).
It is difficult to acquire these virtues by practice. But one need
not despair and refrain from making any attempt in this direction. Our
shastras are aware of this problem and provide an attractive solution

to the seemingly difficult problem. They say that one who worships the Lord regularly and practises devotion to Him gets over the difficulties with His grace and acquires the qualifications as by-products. He will, therefore progress without much effort on the spiritual path. Krishna makes this assurance. BG(18-55).

பக்த்யா மாமபிஜாநாதி யாவாந் யம்சாஸ்மி தத்த்வத்ஃ ।
ததோ மரீ தத்த்வதோ ஜ்ஞாத்வா விஸுதே ததநந்தரம் ॥

and again in BG(18-58) மச்சித்தஃ ஸர்வதுர்காணி மத்ப்ரஸாதாத்தரிஷ்யதி।

The easiest methods of worship are listening to His glories as described in stotras, puranas etc., or chanting stotras or repeating His names by way of doing japa. That is why in the introduction to Vishnu Sahasranama we find Yudhistira asking Bhishma for a simple method that will give one freedom from samsara. கீ ஜபந்முச்யதே ஜந்துஃ ஜந்மஸஸார-பந்தநாத்। Bhishma answers that the best and also the simplest method to tide over all kinds of sorrows, including samsara, is reciting the hymns that sing the praise of the Lord. லோகாத்யக்ஷி ஸ்துவந்நித்யீ ஸர்வதுஃகாதிகோ பவேத்। and ஏஷ மே ஸர்வதர்மாணீ தர்மோ஽திகதமோ மதஃ । யத்பக்த்யா புண்டரீகாக்ஷி ஸ்தவைரர்சேந்நரஃ ஸதா ॥

Shri Shankaracharya, in his commentary to the above line,

explains why Bhishma said this is the "best method". He says

ஹிஸாதி-புருஷாந்தர-த்ரவ்யாந்தர-தேஹகாலாதி-நியமாநபேக்ஷத்வ்
ஆதிக்யே காரணம் । That is, this method does not involve causing injury to other beings as in animal sacrifices, does not require help from another person, or money, or depend on a particular time as Ekadasi or Amavasya or travel to holy places such as Kasi or Rameshvaram. It can

be practised by any one irrespective of age, sex, status in society etc.

The sage Naradha emphasises the importance when he told Shri Vyasa that reciting the hymns which enumerate the virtues of the Lord is the abiding purpose of doing austere penances, rituals, recitation of vedas etc.

இதீ ஹி ப்ஸஸ்தபஸஃ ப்ருதஸ்ய வா ஸ்விஷ்டஸ்ய ஸுக்தஸ்ய ச
புத்திதத்தயோஃ ।

அவிச்யுதோர்தஃ கவிபிர்நிருபிதோ யதுத்தமப்லோககுணாநுவர்ணநம் ॥

BH(1-8-22).

The reason is, that by practising devotion to God one gets the four qualifications necessary to progress on the spiritual path that culminates in wisdom or jnanam as by-products. Shri Shankaracharya says this in his Aparokshanubhuti thus.

ஸ்வ-வர்ணாப்ரமதர்மேண தபஸா ஹரி-தோஷணாத் ।
ஸாதநீ ப்ரபவேத் ப்ஸரீ வைராக்யாதி-சதுஷ்டயம் ॥

Shri Bhagavatam also says this. BH(1-2-8).

வாஸுதேவே பகவதி பக்தியோகஃ ப்ரயோஜிதஃ ।
ஐநயத்யாம, வைராக்யீ ஜ்ஞாநீ ச யதஹதுகம் ॥

Thus, it is necessary to perform our prescribed duties and in addition, make listening to and reciting stotras an essential part of our daily routine to intensify the devotion. The scriptures contain hymns that narrate the qualities of God with name and form. Shri Rudram is a well known example of a vedic

hymn. The Kaivalyopanishad says that reciting Shri Rudram will purify

one of all sins. டஃ மதருத்ரீயமதீதே, ஸோக்நிபூதோ பவதி,

ஸுராபாநாத்தூதோ பவதி, ப்ரஹ்மஹத்யாத்தூதோ பவதி, கத்யாகத்யாத்தூதோ
பவதி, தஸ்மாதவிமுத்தமாப்ரிதோ பவதி ॥ In addition, we have

hymns in puranas. Our acharyas and other devotees have also contributed many hymns. The recital of such hymns is the easiest and best method of worshipping Him and acquire purity of mind by purging it of sins. Because of these reasons, the Lord has the name புண்யம் ஏவம் ஸ்மரணாதி குர்வதர் ஸர்வேஷர் புண்ய கரோதீதி புண்யம் । VS(925) Thus reciting hymns or just listening to them is eminently suitable for people in this modern age as they are pressed for time.

SUMMARY: To summarise the above,

we should first realise that the human birth is an invaluable asset.

Our scriptures say that one gets it after many births as other beings as birds, beasts, plants etc., depending on our karma stock. So, we should grab the opportunity with both hands and work assiduously for liberation.

If we fail to do so, then the loss is immense since we do not know what our next and subsequent births will be and when we will get another birth as a human being again and will be able to work our way up. At this point there may be an argument. One may say that he will do lot of good karmas, earn plenty of merit or punyam and as a result gain birth in higher worlds. This may be in the world of gods such as Indra and may be even in that of Lord Brahma the creator. There one can have a great time, full of enjoyment and also work for liberation in such a wonderful environment. This is not a wise argument, say our acharyas. The upanishad says that the vision of the Self can be had clearly in the mind, as in a mirror, only in this world. It cannot be had clearly in the world of Gandarvas, manes and gods like Indra. These worlds are meant for enjoyment of pleasures got as a result of many good karmas. The mind that is behind the senses will, therefore, be pulled in many directions. The image of the Self will consequently be scattered like the reflection on the surface of water that is agitated by the wind and so not clear. One will be unable to

concentrate on the spiritual progress. KU(II-III-5)

யதாதர்ஸே ததாஸ்த்மநி யதா ஸ்வப்நே ததா பிதலோகே ।

யதாஃஸு பரீவ ததமே ததா கந்தர்வலோகே சாயாதபயோரிவ
ப்ரஹ்மலோகே ॥

If one misses the chance to attain liberation in this world, then he can get a chance to get vision of the Self clearly only in the Brahma Loka. But that world is the highest one and very difficult to attain. It can be reached only by numerous special kinds of rites and meditation. Therefore one should leave no stone unturned to attain liberation in this world itself. Krishna tells Uddhava that, sense-enjoyments can be had in any body, but realisation can be had only with the human body. So, keeping in the mind the fact that the human body is fragile, one should make haste and strive for liberation here itself. BH(11-9-26).

லப்த்வா ஸுதுர்லபமிதீ பஹ,ஸீபவாந்தே
மாநுஷ்யமர்ததமநித்யமபீஹ தீரஃ ।
தூர்ணீ யதேத ந பதேதநுமத்யு யாவ-
ந்நிம்ரேயஸாய விஷயஃ கலு ஸர்வதஃ ஸ்யாத் ॥

Shri Shankaracharya, in his commentary to the above verse quoted from the KU (II-III-5) makes a subtle observation. The upanishad says that the vision of the Self may be had distinctly, as in a mirror, in our intellect in this world. The idea, he says, is that the reflection will be distinct in a mirror, only when it is spotlessly clear. Similarly, the mind, in order to be able to reflect the Self clearly, should first be made absolutely clear by the performance of prescribed duties, prayers, meditation etc. ஸ்வபுத்தௌ ஆதர்ஸவந்நிர்மல-பூதாநீ விவித்தமாத்மநோ

தர்மநீ பவதீத்யர்தஃ । Then, with the guidance of a guru and following his instructions one can progress towards liberation.

NARAYANA HRIDAYAM AND LAXMI HRIDAYAM:- Narayana Hridayam (NH) and

Laxmi Hridayam (LH) form a pair of very valuable and sacred hymns. NH is the

shorter one. It consists of only 37 verses. LH is longer and consists of 108

verses. The word (ஹதயம்) hridayam is popularly taken to mean the

heart. The word also is used to mean secret, true or divine knowledge.

Being hymns found in the Veda the Narayana Hridayam and Laxmi Hridayam

Stotras are highly efficacious. They are sanctifying as was said

of Shri Rudram earlier. They also contain recondite vedantic truths

which may be found in the upanishads, puranas, Bhagavad Gita etc. These

truths are also to be seen in other stotras and in the hymns of later

acharyas. லக்ஷ்மீஹதயகே ஸ்தோத்ரே ஸர்வமந்யத் ப்ரகாஸிதம் । (NH - 33).

So, to describe them as hridayam is very apt. They are, therefore,

very precious. For these reasons they are considered very sacred and

therefore secret - not to be easily given out. கோப்யமேதத்ஸதா குர்யாத்

ந ஸர்வத்ர ப்ரகாஸயேத் । says Narayana Hridayam (34) in its later

part. Because of this restriction these stotras were handed down from a

worthy guru to deserving disciples only. They were not freely available

like Vishnu Sahasranamam.

Only some noteworthy features of this stotram (NH) could be mentioned

in this brief introduction. The reader is requested to read the comments

given to the LH also (available in this site under the heading Laxmi in

the category DEVI) as these two stotras are linked.

The Narayana Hridayam stotram contains sixteen verses in the beginning

that narrate the glory of the Lord. Verses No. 1 and 2 describe the Lord

with form. This is suitable for meditation. This form is to be retained

in the mind when reciting the NH.

But there is another form of the Lord which needs to be known. This is the form that Krishna discusses in Chapter 7 of BG.

The Lord says He has two aspects. The "superior" one has no attributes. It is the very soul of all beings and sustains the universe. The other, namely, the "inferior" aspect is divided into eight categories and from that the universe of names and forms evolves. This is said to be "inferior" aspect since people get snared in names and forms and overlook the Lord behind them who sustains the universe.

A familiar example is that we go to a theatre and watch a movie. We get absorbed in the movie and forget to notice the screen. It is the screen that is behind the movie and sustains it, but this fact is overlooked.

Similarly we are absorbed in the world of names and forms and fail to notice the Lord who bears all the names and forms.

They, thus get caught in samsara. This aspect is known as Prakriti or maya. Krishna says that His maya is very powerful and difficult to cross over without His grace. BG(7-14) தைவீ ஹ்யேஷா குணமயீ மம மாயா துரத்யயா || மாமேவ யே ப்ரபத்யந்தே மாயாமேஷீ தரந்தி தே ||

The supreme Being, known as Brahman, when associated with maya is known as Ishvara or Maheshvara and becomes the cause of the universe through the agency of Maya. மாயா து ப்ரகதீ வித்யாந்மாயிநீ ச மஹேஸ்வரம் | says the Svetasvataropanisad (4-10). Everything is born of Prakriti. Maya, in Sanskrit, is of feminine gender. So, it is spoken of as the consort of the Lord, Mother Goddess or Lalitha, LakShmi etc. Thus, though they are spoken as two items, they are indeed one indivisible Brahman only.

Shri Shankaracharya says this in his Saundaryalahari (sloka No.97).

கிராமாஹ,ர்தேவீ த்ருஹிணகஹிணீமாகமவிதோ\ ஹரேஃ பத்நீ பத்மீ ஹரஸஹசரீமத்ரிதநயாம் |\ துரீயா காபி த்வ துரதிகம-நிஸ்ஸீம-மஹிமா\

மஹாமாயா விம்வீ ப்ரமயஸி பரப்ரஹ்ம-மஹிஷி ॥

He says that wise people who are well read in the scriptures say that You are Sarasvati the consort of Brahma the creator; again they say You are Laxmi the consort of Hari and also You are Parvati the consort of Siva. You are beyond the three and are the limitless One who is very difficult to reach. You are the Maya who makes the entire universe go round and round.

Thus, Ishvar and Maya are inseparable and are known as the parents of the universe. This concept is depicted in our shastras as Ardhanariswara in whom both Siva and Parvati share half of one body.

The poet Kalidasa says this in the invocatory verse to his immortal classic Raghuvamsam as follows. வாகர்தாவிவ ஸ்பக்தௌ வாகர்தப்ரதிபத்தயே। ஜகதஃ பிதரௌ வந்தே பார்வதீபரமேஸ்வரௌ ॥ He

salutes Parvati and Parameswara who are the parents of the Universe and who are (inseparably) united like the speech and its sense. Prakriti or maya named variouly as Parvati or Laxmi is the creative power of the Lord. He indeed is the causeless cause of everything that are the products or effect. It is to be noted that the properties of the cause will be there in the products. Thus, ornaments made of gold will have the properties of gold. Gold has no form but the ornaments are many and have different forms and names. Same is the case with vessels made of clay and so on. In the same way, Lord is the cause of everything. The visible universe contains numerous items, right from Brahma the creator to insignificant insects and inanimate things. But they are all manifestations of the Lord only, but they all bear different forms and names. This is brought out in verse No. 3 to 18. These verse say that there is nothing apart from Him and all were His manifestations only. For this reason these verses are very significant.

The words used herein will sound familiar since they are same as the verses in the Narayana Suktam said along with the Purusha Suktam.

The verses are:

விஸ்வ் நாராயணீ தேவமகூஷீ பரமீ பதம் ।
விஸ்வதஃ பரமாந்நித்யீ விஸ்வ் நாராயண ஹரிம் ।
விஸ்வமேவேதீ புருஷஸ்தத்விஸ்வமுபஜீவதி ।
பதி விஸ்வஸ்யாத்மேஸ்வர மாவ்ஸத மிவமச்யுதம் ।
நாராயணீ மஹாஜ்ஞேயீ விஸ்வாத்மாநீ பராயணம் ॥

நாராயணபரோ ஜ்யோதிராத்மா நாராயணஃ பரஃ ।
நாராயணபரீ ப்ரஹ்ம தத்த்வீ நாராயணஃ பரஃ ।
நாராயணபரோ த்யாதா த்யாநீ நாராயணஃ பரஃ ।
யச்ச கிஞ்சிஜ்ஜகத்ஸர்வீ தம்யதே ம்ருயதே஽பி வா ।
அந்தர்பஹிம்ச தத்ஸர்வீ வ்யாப்ய நாராயணஃ ஸ்திதஃ ।

These verse are eminently suitable for meditating on the Lord who is described as being the cause of the universe. From Him only even the creator Brahma and other gods were born. HE is every thing. There is none greater than Him. He is the goal and He is the one who can confer the supreme goal of mokSha and other goals spoken of earlier. So, He is the one to be meditated upon. These verse are followed by ten verses by which one surrenders to the Lord and seeks His grace.

The final part says that this stotram is to be recited first, to be followed by the recital of Laxmi Hridayam and again the recital of this stotram. This is not to be recited separately as a single piece.

This is to stress the fact that Lord Narayana and Laxmi are indeed one though spoken of as two different deities.

CONCLUSION. It will be evident from what is said here that both the NH and LH are valuable hymns and like veritable mines of precious gems.

An interested reader will be able to find more gems if he digs deep into them.

The greater benefit will be, that by reciting them regularly, one will develop devotion to Divine Couple, Lord Narayana and Goddess Laksmi, and reap their abundant grace.

Now follows the NARAYANA HRIDAYAM stotram.

॥ ஓ தத்ஸத் ॥

॥ நாராயண ஹதயம் ॥

ஹரிஃ ஓம் ॥ அஸ்ய ம்ரீநாராயண-ஹதய-ஸ்தோத்ர-மஹாமீத்ரஸ்ய பார்கவ
ஷிஃ.

அநுஷ்டுப்சந்தஃ, லக்ஷ்மீநாராயணோ தேவதா, நாராயண-ப்ரீத்யர்தே ஜபே
விநியோகஃ ॥

॥ கரந்யாஸஃ ॥

நாராயணஃ பரீ ஜ்யோதிரிதி அங்குஷ்டாப்யரீ நமஃ,
நாராயணஃ பரீ ப்ரஹ்மேதி தர்ஜநீப்யரீ நமஃ,
நாராயணஃ பரோ தேவ இதி மத்யமாப்யரீ நமஃ,
நாராயணஃ பரீ தாமேதி அநாமிகாப்யரீ நமஃ,
நாராயணஃ பரோ தர்ம இதி கநிஷ்டிகாப்யரீ நமஃ,
விஸ்வ் நாராயண இதி கரதலகரபஷ்டாப்யரீ நமஃ ॥

॥ அங்கந்யாஸஃ ॥

நாராயணஃ பரீ ஜ்யோதிரிதி ஹதயாய நமஃ,
நாராயணஃ பரீ ப்ரஹ்மேதி ஸிரஸே ஸ்வாஹா,
நாராயணஃ பரோ தேவ இதி ஸிகாயை வெளஷ்ட்,

நாராயணஃ பரீ தாமேதி கவசாய ஹம்,
நாராயணஃ பரோ தர்ம இதி நேத்ராப்யரீ வெளஷ்ட்,
விஸ்வீ நாராயண இதி அஸ்த்ராய பட்,
பூர்புவஸ்ஸுவரோமிதி திக்பந்தஃ ॥

॥ அத த்யாநம் ॥

உத்யாதாதித்யஸங்காஸீ பீதவாஸீ சதுர்புஜம் ।
ஸங்கசக்ரகதாபாணீ த்யாயேல்லக்ஷ்மீபதி ஹரிம் ॥ க ॥

த்ரைலோக்யாதாரசக்ரீ ததுபரி கமட் தத்ர சாநந்தபோகீ
தந்மத்யே பூமி-பத்மாங்குஸ-ஸிகரதளீ கர்ணிகாபூத-மேரும் ।
தத்ரத்யீ ஸாந்தமூர்தீ மணிமய-மகுட் குண்டலோத்பாஸிதாங்கீ
லக்ஷ்மீ-நாராயணாக்யீ ஸரஸிஜ-நயநீ ஸ்ததீ சிந்தயாமஃ ॥ உ ॥

அஸ்ய ஸ்ரீநாராயணாஹதய-ஸ்தோத்ர-மஹாமந்த்ரஸ்ய ப்ரஹ்மா ஷிஃ,
அநுஷ்டுப் சந்தஃ, நாராயணோ தேவதா, நாராயண-ப்ரீத்யர்தே ஜபே
விநியோகஃ ॥

ஓ ॥ நாராயணஃ பரீ ஜ்யோதி-ராத்மா நாராயணஃ பரஃ ।

நாராயணஃ பரீ ப்ரஹ்ம நாராயண நமோஸ்து தே ॥ ட ॥

நாராயணஃ பரோ தேவோ தாதா நாராயணஃ பரஃ ।
நாராயணஃ பரோ தாதா நாராயண நமோஸ்து தே ॥ ச ॥

நாராயணஃ பரீ தாம த்யாநீ நாராயணஃ பரஃ ।
நாராயண பரோ தர்மோ நாராயண நமோஸ்து தே ॥ ரு ॥

நாராயணஃ பரோ தேவோ வித்யா நாராயணஃ பரஃ ।
விப்ஸ்வீ நாராயணஃ ஸாக்ஷாந் நாராயண நமோஸ்து தே ॥ கூ॥

நாராயணாத் விதி-ர்ஜாதோ ஜாதோ நாராயணாத் பவஃ ।
ஜாதோ நாராயணாதிந்த்ரோ நாராயண நமோஸ்து தே ॥ எ॥

ரவி-ர்நாராயண-ஸ்தேஜஃ சந்த்ரோ நாராயணோ மஹஃ ।
வஹ்நி-ர்நாராயணஃ ஸாக்ஷாத் நாராயண நமோஸ்து தே ॥ அ॥

நாராயண உபாஸ்யஃ ஸ்யாத் குரு-ர்நாராயணஃ பரஃ ।
நாராயணஃ பரோ போதோ நாராயண நமோஸ்து தே ॥ சு॥

நாராயணஃ பலி முக்யீ ஸித்தி-ர்நாராயணஃ ஸுகம் ।
ஹரி-ர்நாராயணஃ ஸு,த்தி-ர்நாராயண நமோஸ்து தே ॥ க௦॥

நிகமாவேதிதாநந்த-கல்யாணகுண-வாரிதே ।
நாராயண நமஸ்தேஸ்து நரகார்ணவ-தாரக ॥ கக॥

ஜந்ம-மத்யு-ஜரா-வ்யாதி-பாரதந்த்ர்யாதிபிஃ ஸதா ।
தோஷை-ரஸ்பஷ்டரூபாய நாராயண நமோஸ்து தே ॥ கஉ॥

வேதஸாஸ்த்ரார்தவிஜ்ஞாந-ஸாத்ய-பக்த்யேக-கோசர ।
நாராயண நமஸ்தேஸ்து மாமுத்தர பவார்ணவாத் ॥ கங॥

நித்யாநந்த மஹோதார பராத்பர ஜகத்பதே ।
நாராயண நமஸ்தேஸ்து மோக்ஷஸாம்ராஜ்ய-தாயிநே ॥ கச॥

ஆப்ரஹ்மஸ்தம்ப-பர்யந்த-மகிலாத்ம-மஹாப்ரய ।

ஸர்வபூதாத்ம-பூதாத்மந் நாராயண நமோஸ்து தே ॥ கரு ॥

பாலிதாமேஷ-லோகாய புண்யம்ரவண-கீர்தந ।
நாராயண நமஸ்தேஸ்து ப்ரலயோதக-மாயிநே ॥ கசு ॥

நிரஸ்த-ஸர்வதோஷாய பக்த்யாதி-குணதாயிநே ।
நாராயண நமஸ்தேஸ்து த்வரீ விநா ந ஹி மே கதிஃ ॥ கஎ ॥

தர்மார்த-காம-மோக்ஷாக்ய-புருஷார்த-ப்ரதாயிநே ।
நாராயண நமஸ்தேஸ்து புநஸ்தேஸ்து நமோ நமஃ ॥ கஅ ॥

॥ அத ப்ரார்தநா ॥
நாராயண த்வமேவாஸி தஹராக்யே ஹதி ஸ்திதஃ ।
ப்ரேரிதா ப்ரேர்யமானாநரீ த்வயா ப்ரேரித மாநஸஃ ॥ கசு ॥

த்வதாஜ்ஞரீ ஸிரஸா கத்வா பஜாமி ஜந-பாவநம் ।
நாநோபாஸந-மார்காணரீ பவகத் பாவபோதகஃ ॥ உ௦ ॥

பாவார்தகத் பவாதீதோ பவ ஸௌக்யப்ரதோ மம ।
த்வந்மாயாமோஹிதீ விம்வீ த்வயைவ பரிகல்பிதம் ॥ உ௧ ॥

த்வததிஷ்டாந-மாத்ரேண ஸா வை ஸர்வார்தகாரிணீ ।
த்வமேவ தரீ புரஸ்கத்ய மம காமாந் ஸமர்தய ॥ உ௨ ॥

ந மே த்வதந்யஸ்த்ராதாஸ்தி த்வதந்யந்ந ஹி தைவதம் ।
த்வதந்யீ ந ஹி ஜாநாமி பாலகீ புண்யவர்தநம் ॥ உ௩ ॥

யாவத்ஸரீஸாரிகோ பாவோ மநஸஸ்தோ பாவநாத்மகஃ ।

தாவத்ஸித்திர்பவேத் ஸாத்யா ஸர்வதா ஸர்வதா விபோ || ௨௪||

பாபிநா-மஹமேகாக்ரோ தயாலுநர் த்வமக்ரணீஃ ।
தயநீயோ மதந்யோஸ்தி தவ கோ஽த்ர ஜகத்த்ரயே || ௨௫||

த்வயாஹி நைவ ஸஷ்டம்சேத் ந ஸ்யாத்த்வ தயாலுதா ।
ஆமயோ வா ந ஸஷ்டம்சே-தௌஷதஸ்ய வதோதயஃ || ௨௬||

பாபஸங்க-பரிம்ராந்தஃ பாபாத்மா பாபரூப-தக் ।
த்வதந்யஃ கோ஽த்ர பாபேப்யஃ த்ராதாஸ்தி ஜகதீதலே || ௨௭||

த்வமேவ மாதா ச பிதா த்வமேவ த்வமேவ பந்தும்ச ஸகா த்வமேவ ।
த்வமேவ வித்யா த்ரவிணீ த்வமேவ த்வமேவ ஸர்வ மம தேவ தேவ || ௨௮||

ப்ரார்தநாதமகீ சைவ மூலஷ்டகமதஃபரம் ।
யஃ படேச்சணுயாந்நித்யி தஸ்ய லக்ஷ்மீஃ ஸ்திரா பவேத் || ௨௯||

நாராயணஸ்ய ஹதயி ஸர்வாபீஷ்ட-பலப்ரதம் ।
லக்ஷ்மீஹதயகீ ஸ்தோத்ரீ யதி சைதத்விநாகதம் || ௩௦||

தத்ஸர்வ நிஷ்பலி ப்ரோக்தீ லக்ஷ்மீஃ க்ருத்யதி ஸர்வதா ।
ஏதத்ஸங்கலிதீ ஸ்தோத்ரீ ஸர்வாபீஷ்ட-பலப்ரதம் || ௩௧||

ஜபேத் ஸங்கலிதீ கத்வா ஸர்வாபீஷ்ட-மவாப்நுயாத் ।
நாராயணஸ்ய ஹதயி ஆதௌ ஜப்த்வா ததஃபரம் || ௩௨||

லக்ஷ்மீஹதயகீ ஸ்தோத்ரீ ஜபேந்நாராயணீ புநஃ ।
புநர்நாராயணீ ஜப்த்வா புநர்லக்ஷ்மீநுதீ ஜபேத் || ௩௩||

தத்வத்தோமாதிக் குர்யா-தேதத்ஸங்கலித் ஸ,பம் ।
ஏவ் மத்யே த்விவாரேண ஜபேத் ஸங்கலித் ஸ,பம் ॥ ௩௪ ॥

லக்ஷ்மீஹதயகே ஸ்தோத்ரே ஸர்வமந்யத் ப்ரகாமரிதம் ।
ஸர்வாந் காமாநவாப்நோதி ஆதிவ்யாதி-பய் ஹரேத் ॥ ௩௫ ॥

கோப்யமேதத் ஸதா குர்யாத் ந ஸர்வத்ர ப்ரகாமயேத் ।
இதி குஹ்யதம் ஸாஸ்த்ரீ ப்ரோக்தீ ப்ரஹ்மாதிரிஃ புரா ॥ ௩௬ ॥

லக்ஷ்மீஹதயப்ரோக்தேந விதிநா ஸாதயேத் ஸுதீஃ ।
தஸ்மாத் ஸர்வப்ரயத்நேந ஸாதயேத் கோபயேத் ஸுதீஃ ॥ ௩௭ ॥

யத்ரைதத்புஸ்தகீ திஷ்டேத் லக்ஷ்மீநாராயணாத்மகம் ।
பூத பைஸாச வேதாள பயி நைவ து ஸர்வதா ॥ ௩௮ ॥

பகுவாரே ததா ராத்ரௌ பூஜயேத் புஸ்தகத்வயம் ।
ஸர்வதா ஸர்வதா ஸ்துத்யீ கோபயேத் ஸாதயேத் ஸுதீஃ ।
கோபநாத் ஸாதநால்லோகே தந்யோ பவதி தத்த்வதஃ ॥ ௩௯ ॥

॥ இத்யதர்வரஹஸ்யே உத்தரபாகே நாராயண ஹதய ஸ்தோத்ரீ ॥

This should be chanted with the complementary Laxmihridayam Sanskrit text.

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