

नारायणहृदयम्

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श्रीये नमः

श्रीमते नारायणाय नमः

अथर्वरहस्ये उत्तर ऋषडे

श्री नारायण हृदयम्

|| 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 स्तोत्रम् .

The appellation stotram, stuti and stavam all describe a

hymn only. स्तवः स्तोत्रं नृतिः स्तुतिः says Amara, the Sanskrit

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

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.

यत्तद्देश्य-मग्राह्य-मगोत्र-मवर्णमयक्षुःश्रोत्रं तदपाणि-पादम्

नित्यं विभुं सर्वगतं सुसूक्ष्मं तद्व्ययं यद्भूतयोनिं परिपश्यन्ति धीराः ॥ 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 (फलश्रुतिः ॥).

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 .

दुर्लभं त्रयमेवैतद्देवानुग्रह-हेतुकम् ॥

मनुष्यत्वं मुमुक्षुत्वं महापुरुषसंश्रयः ॥ 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.

आहार-निद्रा-भय-मुष्यकानि सामान्यमेतत् पशुभिर्नराणाम् ॥

बुद्धिर्हि तेषामधिको विशेषो बुद्ध्या विहीनः पशुभिः समानः ॥

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 पुरुषार्थः since they are sought after by people. अर्थः = 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).

यः शास्त्रविधिमुत्सृज्य वर्तते कामकारतः ॥

न स सिद्धिमाप्नोति न सुखं परं गतिम् ॥ २३ ॥

तस्माच्छास्त्रं प्रमाणं ते कार्याकार्य-व्यवस्थितौ ॥

ज्ञात्वा शास्त्रविधानोक्तं कर्म कर्तुमिच्छसि ॥ २४ ॥

(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. त्याग्य संभृतार्थानाम् ॥ 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 shastras. 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. धर्मविरुद्धं भूतेषु कामोऽस्मि भरतर्षभ॥

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)

ते तं भुङ्क्त्वा स्वर्ग-लोकं विशालं
क्षीणो पुण्ये मर्त्य-लोकं विशन्ति ॥
अवं त्रयीधर्म-मनुप्रपन्ना
गतागतं कामकामा लभन्ते ॥

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 परमपुरुषार्थः ॥ 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.

धर्मस्य ह्यापवर्गस्य नार्थोऽर्थोऽयोपकल्पते ॥
नार्थस्य धर्मैकान्तस्य कामो लाभाय हि स्मृतः ॥

कामस्य नेन्द्रियप्रीतिर्लाभो ज्वेत यावता ॥

ज्वस्य तत्त्वविज्ञासा नार्थो यश्चेह कर्मभिः ॥ (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).

नास्था धर्मे न वसुनियये नैव कामोपभोगे

यद्यद्भ्यं भवतु भगवन् पूर्वकर्मानुश्रमम् ॥

अतत्प्रार्थ्यं मम बहुमतं जन्मजन्मान्तरेऽपि

त्वत्पादाम्भोरुहयुगगता निश्चला भक्तिरस्तु ॥

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 (अज्ञानम्).

Thus, liberation implies settling down in our true or real nature which

is divine and thus be free from problems for ever afterwards. तरति

शोकमात्मवित् ॥ says the upanishad. Because of this reason, Krishna says

there is no gain greater than this. BG(6-22).

यं लब्ध्वा चापरं लाभं मन्यते नादिकं ततः ॥

यस्मिन्स्तथो न दुःभेन गुरुणाऽपि विचाल्यते ॥

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. मनुष्याणां सङ्घेषु

अश्रद्धयस्तस्मिन् सिद्धये ॥ 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).

श्रेयश्च प्रेयश्च मनुष्यमेत-स्तौ संपरीत्य विविनक्ति धीरः ॥

श्रेयो हि धीरोऽभि प्रेयसे वृणीते प्रेयो मन्दो योगक्षमात् वृणीते ॥

Wrong knowledge can be righted only by right knowledge called

jnanam (ज्ञानम्) 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. क्षुरस्य धारा निशिता दुरत्यया

दुर्ग पथस्तत्सवयो वदन्ति ॥ KU (1-3-14). Krishna too says this.

अव्यक्ता हि गतिर्दुःखं देहवद्भि-रवाप्यते ॥ 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. नाविरतो दुश्चरिताज्ञान्तो नासमाहितः

॥ नाशान्तमानसो वाऽपि प्रज्ञानेनैवमाप्नुयात् ॥ KU(1-2-24). So it is

said that one with the desire for liberation, known as मुमुक्षुत्वम् 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).

यत्करोषि यदश्नासि यञ्जुहोषि कृद्वासि यत् ॥

यत्तपस्यसि कौन्तेय तत्कुरुष्व मर्षणम् ॥ २७ ॥

शुभाशुभ-फलैरेवं मोक्षसे कर्मबन्धनैः ॥ २८ ॥

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 an 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. चित्तस्य शुद्धये कर्म ॥ VC(11). and

योगिनः कर्म कुर्वन्ति सङ्गं त्यक्त्वात्मशुद्धये ॥ 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.

शान्ता महान्तो निवसन्ति सन्तः वसन्तवल्लोकहितं चरन्तः ॥
तीर्षा स्वयं भीमभवाङ्गवं जना- नहेतुनान्यानपि तास्यन्तः ॥ 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).

दुर्लभो मानुषो देहो देहिनां क्षणभङ्गुरः ॥
तथाऽपि दुर्लभं मन्ये वैकुण्ठप्रियदर्शनम् ॥

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.

मस्मिता मद्गत-प्राणा बोधयन्तः परस्परम् ॥
उचयन्तश्च मां नित्यं तुष्यन्ति च रमन्ति च ॥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 साधन चतुष्टयम् 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 दैवी संपत् or divine qualities. They are necessarily to be acquired by one stepping on to the path

of liberation. दैवी सम्पद्धिमोक्षाय ॥ 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).

भक्त्या मामभिजानाति यावान् यश्चास्मि तत्त्वतः ॥
ततो मां तत्त्वतो ज्ञात्वा विशते तदनन्तरम् ॥

and again in BG(18-58) मस्थितः सर्वदुर्गाणि मत्प्रसादात्स्थिति ॥

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. किं जपन्मुच्यते जन्तुः जन्मसंसार-बन्धनात् ॥

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. लोकाध्यक्षं स्तुवन्नित्यं सर्वदुःखातिगो

भवेत् ॥ and

अेष मे सर्वधर्माणां धर्मोऽधिकतमो मतः ॥
यद्भक्त्या पुण्डरीकाक्षं स्तवैरर्थेन्नरः सद्य ॥

Shri Shankaracharya, in his commentary to the above line,
explains why Bhishma said this is the "best method". He says

हिंसादि-पुरुषान्तर-द्रव्यान्तर-देशकालादि-नियमानपेक्षत्वं

आधिक्ये कारणम् ॥ 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.

ॐ ह्रीं पुंसस्तपसः श्रुतस्य वा सिवस्य सूक्तस्य च बुद्धिदत्तयोः ॥

अविद्युत्तोर्यः कविमिनिर्ज्ञपितो यदुत्तमश्लोकगुणानुवर्णनम् ॥ 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.

स्व-वर्णाश्रमधर्मेषु तपसा हरि-तोषणात् ॥

साधनं प्रभवत् पुंसां वैराग्यादि-चतुष्टयम् ॥

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

वासुदेवे भगवति भक्तियोगः प्रयोजितः ॥

जनयत्याशु वैराग्यं ज्ञानं च यद्वैतुकम् ॥

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 recitng Shri Rudram will purify one of all sins. यः शतरुद्रीयमधीते, सोऽग्निपूतो भवति, सुरापानात्पूतो भवति, ब्रह्महत्यात्पूतो भवति, कृत्याकृत्यात्पूतो भवति, तस्माद्विमुक्तमाश्रितो भवति।। 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 पुण्यः अेवम् स्मरणान्नि कुर्वतां सर्वेषां पुण्यं करोतीति पुण्यः ।। 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)

यथादर्शं तथाऽऽत्मनि यथा स्वप्ने तथा पितृलोके ॥

यथाऽप्सु परीव दृश्ये तथा गन्धर्वलोके छायातपयोरिव ब्रह्मलोके ॥

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).

लब्ध्वा सुदुर्लभमिदं बहुसंभवान्ते
मानुष्यमर्थमनित्यमपीह धीरः ॥
तूर्णं यतेत न पतेदनुमृत्यु याव-
ञ्जिश्रेयसाय विषयः भद्रु सर्वतः स्यात् ॥

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. स्वबुद्धौ आदर्शवञ्जिर्मल-भूतानां विविक्तमात्मनो दर्शनं भवतीत्यर्थः ॥ 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 (हृदयम्) 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. लक्ष्मीहृदयके स्तोत्रे सर्वमन्यत् प्रकाशितम् ॥ (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. गोप्यमेतत्सद्यः कुर्यात् न सर्वत्र प्रकाशयेत् ॥ 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) दैवी छेषा गुणमयी मम

माया दुरत्यया ॥ मामेव ये प्रपद्यन्ते मायामेषां तरन्ति ते ॥

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. मायां तु प्रकृतिं विद्यान्मायिनं च महेश्वरम् ॥ 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).

गिरामाहुर्देवीं द्रुहिषागृहिषीमागमविद्ये \
हरेः पत्नीं पद्मां हरसहचरीमद्रितनयाम् ॥ \
तुरीयां कापि त्वं दुरधिगम-निस्सीम-महिमा \
महामाया विश्वं भ्रमयसि परब्रह्म-महिषि ॥

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. वागर्थाविव संपृक्तौ

वागर्थप्रतिपत्तये ॥ जगतः पितरौ वन्दे पार्वतीपरमेश्वरौ ॥ 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:

विश्वं नारायणं देवमक्षरं परमं पदम् ॥
विश्वतः परमान्नित्यं विश्वं नारायणं हरिम् ॥
विश्वमेवेदं पुरुषस्तद्विश्वमुपजवति ॥
पतिं विश्वस्यात्मेश्वरं शाश्वतं शिवमच्युतम् ॥
नारायणं महाज्ञेयं विश्वात्मानं परायणम् ॥

नारायणपरो ज्योतिरात्मा नारायणः परः ॥
नारायणपरं ब्रह्म तत्त्वं नारायणः परः ॥
नारायणपरो ध्याता ध्यानं नारायणः परः ॥
यस्य किञ्चिन्नगत्सर्वं दृश्यते श्रूयतेऽपि वा ॥
अन्तर्बहिश्च तत्सर्वं व्याप्य नारायणः स्थितः ॥

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.

॥ ॐ तत्सत् ॥

॥ नारायण हृदयम् ॥

हरिः ओम् ॥ अस्य श्रीनारायण-हृदय-स्तोत्र-महामंत्रस्य भार्गव ऋषिः,

अनुष्टुप्छन्दः, लक्ष्मीनारायणो देवता, नारायण-प्रीत्यर्थं ऋषे विनियोगः ॥

॥ करन्यासः ॥

नारायणः परं ज्योतिरिति अङ्गुष्ठाभ्यां नमः,

नारायणः परं ब्रह्मेति तर्जनीभ्यां नमः,

नारायणः परो देव इति मध्यमाभ्यां नमः,

नारायणः परं धामेति अनामिकाभ्यां नमः,

नारायणः परो धर्म इति कनिष्ठिकाभ्यां नमः,

विश्वं नारायण इति करतलकरपृष्ठाभ्यां नमः ॥

॥ अङ्गन्यासः ॥

नारायणः परं ज्योतिरिति हृदयाय नमः,

नारायणः परं ब्रह्मेति शिरसे स्वाहा,

नारायणः परो देव इति शिष्यायै वौषट्,
नारायणः परं धामेति क्वचाय हुम्,
नारायणः परो धर्म इति नेत्राभ्यां वौषट्,
विश्वं नारायण इति अस्त्राय झट्,
भूर्भुवस्सुवरोमिति द्विबन्धः ॥

॥ अथ ध्यानम् ॥

उद्याद्यदित्यसङ्काशं पीतवासं चतुर्भुजम् ॥
शङ्खचक्रगदापाणिं ध्यायेत्लक्ष्मीपतिं हरिम् ॥ १ ॥

त्रैलोक्याधारयुक्तं तद्गुपरि कमठं तत्र चानन्तभोगी
तन्मध्ये भूमि-पद्माङ्कुश-शिखरदणं कर्णिकामूत-मेरुम् ॥
तत्रत्यं शान्तमूर्तिं मणिमय-मकुटं कुण्डलोद्भासिताङ्गं
लक्ष्मी-नारायणाभ्यं सरसिज-नयनं संततं चिन्तयामः ॥ २ ॥

अस्य श्रीनारायणाहृदय-स्तोत्र-महामन्त्रस्य ब्रह्मा ऋषिः,
अनुष्टुप् छन्दः, नारायणो देवता, नारायण-प्रीत्यर्थे ऋषे विनियोगः ॥

ॐ ॥ नारायणः परं ज्योति-रात्मा नारायणः परः ॥

नारायणः परं ब्रह्म नारायण नमोऽस्तु ते ॥ ३ ॥

नारायणः परो देवो धाता नारायणः परः ॥

नारायणः परो धाता नारायण नमोऽस्तु ते ॥ ४ ॥

नारायणः परं धाम ध्यानं नारायणः परः ॥
नारायण परो धर्मो नारायण नमोऽस्तु ते ॥ ५ ॥

नारायणः परो देवो विद्या नारायणः परः ॥
विश्वं नारायणः साक्षान् नारायण नमोऽस्तु ते ॥ ६ ॥

नारायणाद् विधि-र्जातो जातो नारायणाद् भवः ॥
जातो नारायणाद्विन्दो नारायण नमोऽस्तु ते ॥ ७ ॥

रवि-नारायण-स्तेजः चन्द्रो नारायणो महः ॥
वह्नि-नारायणः साक्षात् नारायण नमोऽस्तु ते ॥ ८ ॥

नारायण उपास्यः स्याद् गुरु-नारायणः परः ॥
नारायणः परो बोधो नारायण नमोऽस्तु ते ॥ ९ ॥

नारायणः इलं मुष्यं सिद्धि-नारायणः सुभम् ॥
हरि-नारायणः शुद्धि-नारायण नमोऽस्तु ते ॥ १० ॥

निगमावेदितानन्त-कल्याणगुण-वारिधे ॥
नारायण नमस्तेऽस्तु नरकार्णव-तारक ॥ ११ ॥

जन्म-मृत्यु-जरा-व्याधि-पारतन्त्र्यादिभिः सद्य ॥
दोषै-रस्पृष्टरूपाय नारायण नमोऽस्तु ते ॥ १२ ॥

वेदशास्त्रार्थविज्ञान-साध्य-भक्त्येक-गोचर ॥

नारायण नमस्तेऽस्तु मामुद्धर भवार्णवात् ॥ १३ ॥

नित्यानन्दमहोदर परात्पर ऋगत्पते ॥

नारायण नमस्तेऽस्तु मोक्षसाम्राज्य-द्वयिने ॥ १४ ॥

आभ्रह्मस्थम्भ-पर्यन्त-मभिलात्म-महाश्रय ॥

सर्वभूतात्म-भूतात्मन् नारायण नमोऽस्तु ते ॥ १५ ॥

पालिताशेष-लोकत्रय पुण्यश्रवण-कीर्तन ॥

नारायण नमस्तेऽस्तु प्रलयोदक-शायिने ॥ १६ ॥

निरस्त-सर्वदोषाय भक्त्यादि-गुणद्वयिने ॥

नारायण नमस्तेऽस्तु त्वां विना न हि मे गतिः ॥ १७ ॥

धर्मार्थ-काम-मोक्षाभ्य-पुरुषार्थ-प्रद्वयिने ॥

नारायण नमस्तेऽस्तु पुनस्तेऽस्तु नमो नमः ॥ १८ ॥

॥ अथ प्रार्थना ॥

नारायण त्वमेवासि द्दहराभ्ये हृदि स्थितः ॥

प्रेरिता प्रेर्यमाणानां त्वया प्रेरित मानसः ॥ १९ ॥

त्वद्वज्रां शिरसा कृत्वा भजामि ऋण-पावनम् ॥

नानोपासन-मार्गाणां भवकृद् भवबोधकः ॥ २० ॥

भावार्थकृद् भवातीतो भव सौभ्यप्रदो मम ॥

त्वन्मायामोहितं विश्वं त्वयैव परिकल्पितम् ॥ २१ ॥

त्वदधिष्ठान-मात्रेण सा वै सर्वार्थकारिणी ॥
त्वमेव तां पुरस्कृत्य मम कामान् समर्थय ॥ २२ ॥

न मे त्वदन्यस्त्रातास्ति त्वदन्यन्न हि दैवतम् ॥
त्वदन्यं न हि ज्ञानामि पालकं पुण्यवर्धनम् ॥ २३ ॥

यावत्सांसारिको भावो मनस्स्थो भावनात्मकः ॥
तावत्सिद्धिर्भवेत् साध्या सर्वद्व सर्वद्व विभो ॥ २४ ॥

पापिना-महमेकाग्रो ध्यालूनां त्वमग्रणीः ॥
द्वनीयो मदन्योऽस्ति तव कोऽत्र जगत्त्रये ॥ २५ ॥

त्वयाहं नैव सृष्टश्चेत् न स्यात्तव ध्यालुता ॥
आमयो वा न सृष्टश्चे-द्वौषधस्य वृथोद्वयः ॥ २६ ॥

पापसङ्ग-परिश्रान्तः पापात्मा पापज्ञ-धृक् ॥
त्वदन्यः कोऽत्र पापेभ्यः त्रातास्ति जगतीतले ॥ २७ ॥

त्वमेव माता य पिता त्वमेव त्वमेव बन्धुश्च सभा त्वमेव ॥
त्वमेव विद्या द्रविणं त्वमेव त्वमेव सर्वं मम देव देव ॥ २८ ॥

प्रार्थनादशकं चैव मूलष्टमथःपरम् ॥
यः पठेच्छृणुयाञ्चित्यं तस्य लक्ष्मीः स्थिरा भवेत् ॥ २९ ॥

नारायणस्य हृदयं सर्वाभीष्ट-फलप्रदम् ॥
लक्ष्मीहृदयकं स्तोत्रं यदि चैतद्विनाकृतम् ॥ ३० ॥

तत्सर्वं निष्कलं प्रोक्तं लक्ष्मीः कुर्वति सर्वदा ॥
अतत्सङ्कलितं स्तोत्रं सर्वाभीष्ट-फलप्रदम् ॥ ३१ ॥

जपेत् सङ्कलितं कृत्वा सर्वाभीष्ट-मवाप्नुयात् ॥
नारायणस्य हृदयं आदौ जप्त्वा ततःपरम् ॥ ३२ ॥

लक्ष्मीहृदयकं स्तोत्रं जपेन्नारायणं पुनः ॥
पुनर्नारायणं जप्त्वा पुनर्लक्ष्मीनुतिं जपेत् ॥ ३३ ॥

तद्ब्रह्मोमाधिकं कुर्या-द्वेतत्सङ्कलितं शुभम् ॥
अतं मध्ये द्विवारेण जपेत् सङ्कलितं शुभम् ॥ ३४ ॥

लक्ष्मीहृदयके स्तोत्रे सर्वमन्यत् प्रकाशितम् ॥
सर्वान् कामानवाप्नोति आधिव्याधि-भयं हरेत् ॥ ३५ ॥

गोप्यमेतत् सदा कुर्यात् न सर्वत्र प्रकाशयेत् ॥
एति गुह्यतमं शास्त्रं प्रोक्तं ब्रह्मादिभिः पुरा ॥ ३६ ॥

लक्ष्मीहृदयप्रोक्तेन विधिना साधयेत् सुधीः ॥
तस्मात् सर्वप्रयत्नेन साधयेद् गोपयेत् सुधीः ॥ ३७ ॥

यत्रैतत्पुस्तकं तिष्ठेत् लक्ष्मीनारायणात्मकम् ॥

भूत पैशाच वेताण भयं नैव तु सर्वदा ॥ ३८ ॥

भृगुवारे तथा रात्रौ पूजयेत् पुस्तकद्वयम् ॥

सर्वदा सर्वदा स्तुत्यं गोपयेत् साधयेत् सुधीः ॥

गोपनात् साधनाल्लोके धन्यो भवति तत्पतः ॥ ३९ ॥

॥ ईत्यथर्वरहस्ये उत्तरभागे नारायण हृदय स्तोत्रं ॥

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