

നാരായണഹൃദയം

{॥ നാരായണഹൃദയം ॥}

॥ ശ്രീയൈ നമഃ ॥

॥ ശ്രീമതേ നാരായണായ നമഃ ॥

അഥർവ്വരഹസ്യേ ഉത്തര ഖണ്ഡേ

॥ ശ്രീ നാരായണ ഹൃദയം ॥

॥ 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 സ്തോത്രം .

The appellation stotram, stuti and stavam all describe a

hymn only. സ്തവഃ സ്തോത്രം നൃതിഃ സ്തുതിഃ I says Amara, the Sanskrit

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

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.

യത്തദഭ്യർത്ഥം-മഗ്ദ്ധായ-മഗോത-മവർണ്ണമചക്ഷുഃശ്വരോത-തദപാണി-പാദം

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നിത്യം വിഭും സർവഗതം സുസൂക്ഷ്മം തദയം യദ്ഭൂതയോനിം

പരിപശ്യന്തി ധീരാഃ ॥ 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 (ഫലശ്രുതിഃ I). 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 .

ദുർലഭം തത്രമേവൈതദ്ഭവാനുഗ്രഹ-ഹേതുകമ് ।

മനുഷ്യത്വം മുമുക്ഷുത്വം മഹാപുരുഷസംശ്രയഃ ॥ 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.

ആഹാര-നിദ്രാ-ഭയ-മുഖ്യകാനി സാമാന്യമേതത് പശുഭിരനരാണാമ് ।
ബുദ്ധിർഹി തേഷാമധികോ വിശേഷോ ബുദ്ധ്യയാ വിഹീനഃ പശുഭിഃ സമാനഃ ।

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 പുരുഷാർഥാഃ since they are sought after by people. അർഥഃ = 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).

യഃ ശാസ്ത്രപ്രിധിമുത്സൃജ്യ വർത്തതേ കാമകാരതഃ ।
ന സ സിദ്ധിമാപ്നോതി ന സുഖം പരാം ഗതിമ് ॥ ൨൩ ॥

തസ്മാ-ഛാസ്ത്രം പ്രമാണം തേ കാർയാകാരിയ-വസ്ഥിമിതൗ ।

ജ്ഞാത്വാ ശാസ്ത്രപ്രിധാനോക്തം കർമ്മ കർതുമിഹാർഹസി || ൨൪ ||

(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. ത്യാഗായ സംഭൃതാർഥാനാമ് | 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. ധർമാവിരുദ്ധ ഭൂതേഷു കാമോ/സ്ഥി ഭരതർഷഭ | 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)

തേ തം ഭുക്ത്വാ സ്വർഗ-ലോകം വിശാലം
ക്ഷീണേ പുണ്യേ മർത്ത്യ-ലോകം വിശന്തി ।
ഏവം ത്രയിധർമ-മനുപ്രപന്നാ
ഗതാഗതം ക്രമാക്രാമം ലഭന്തേ ॥

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 പരമപുരുഷാർത്ഥഃ । 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.

ധർമസ്യ ഹ്യാപവർഗസ്യ നാർഥോ/ർഥായോപകർപതേ ।
നാർഥസ്യ ധർമൈകാന്തസ്യ കാമോ ലാഭായ ഹി സ്മൃതഃ ॥

കാമസ്യ നേന്ദ്രിയപ്രീതിർലാഭോ ജീവേത യാവതാ ।
ജീവസ്യ തത്ത്വജിജ്ഞാസാ നാർഥോ യശ്ചേഹ കർമഭിഃ ॥ (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).

നാസ്ഥാ ധർമേ ന വസുനിചയേ നൈവ കാമോപഭോഗേ
യദ്യദ്ഭയം ഭവതു ഭഗവൻ പൂർവകർമാനുരൂപമ് ।
ഏതത്പ്രാർഥ്യം മമ ബഹുമതം ജൻമജൻമാന്തരേ/പി
ത്വത്പാദാർഭാരൂഹയുഗഗതാ നിശ്ചലാ ഭക്തിരസ്മു ॥

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 (അജ്ഞാനം).

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

യം ലബ്ധ്വാ ചാപരം ലാഭം മന്യതേ നാദികം തതഃ |
യസ്മിൻസ്തിഥോ ന ദുഃഖേന ഗുരുണാ/പി വിചാൽയതേ ||

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. മനുഷ്യാണാം സഹസ്രേഷു കശ്ചിദ്യതതി സിദ്ധയേ | 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).

ശ്വേതശ്ച പരേതശ്ച മനുഷ്യമേത-സ്തൌ സംപരീത്യ വിവിനക്തി ധീരഃ |
ശ്വേതോ ഹി ധീരോ/ഭി പരേതസേ വൃണീതേ പരേതോ മന്ദോ യോഗക്ഷേമാത് വൃണീതേ ||

Wrong knowledge can be righted only by right knowledge called jnanam (ജ്ഞാനം) 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. ക്ഷുരസ്യ ധാരാ നിശിതാ ദുരത്യയാ
ദുർഗം പഥസ്തത്കവയോ വദന്തി KU (1-3-14). Krishna too says this.

അയക്താ ഹി ഗതിർദുഃഖം ദേഹവദ്ഭി-രവാപ്യതേ 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. നാപിരതോ ദുശ്ചരിതാൻനാശാൻതോ നാസമാഹിതഃ
| നാശാൻതമാനസോ വാ/പി പജ്ഞാനേനൈനമാപ്നുയാത് || KU(1-2-24). So it is

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

യത്കരോഷി യദശ്നാസി യജ്ജുഹോഷി ക്ദദാസി യത് |

യത്തപസ്യസി കൌന്തേയ തത്കുരുഷ്വ മദർപണമ് || ൨൭||

ശുഭാശുഭ-ഫലൈരേവം മോക്ഷയസേ കർമ്മബന്ധനൈഃ | ൨൮ |

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. ചിത്തസ്തയ ശുദ്ധയേ കർമ്മ VC(11). and

യോഗിനഃ കർമ്മ കുർവന്തി സങ്ഗം ത്വക്ത്വാത്മശുദ്ധയേ || 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.

ശാന്താ മഹാന്തോ നിവസന്തി സന്തഃ വസന്തവൽലോകഹിതം ചരന്തഃ |

തീർണ്ണാ സ്വയം ഭീമഭവാർണ്ണവം ജനാ- നഹേതുന്നാൻയാനപി താരയന്തഃ || 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).

ദുർലഭോ മാനുഷോ ദേഹോ ദേഹിനാം ക്ഷണഭംഗുരഃ ।
തഥാ/പി ദുർലഭം മന്യേ വൈകുണ്ഠപ്രിയദർശനമ് ॥

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.

മച്ചിത്താ മദ്ഗത-പ്രാണാ ബോധയന്തഃ പരസ്പരമ് ।
കഥയന്തശ്ച മാം നിത്യം തുഷ്ടയന്തി ച രമന്തി ച ॥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 സാധന ചതുഷ്ടയമ് 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 ദൈവീ സംപദ് or divine qualities
They are necessarily to be acquired by one stepping on to the path
of liberation. ദൈവീ സമ്പദ്വിമോക്ഷായ| 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).

ഭക്ത്യാ മാമഭിജാനാതി യാവാൻ യശ്ചാസ്മി തത്ത്വതഃ ।
തതോ മാം തത്ത്വതോ ജ്ഞാത്വാ വിശതേ തദനന്തരമ് ॥

and again in BG(18-58) മച്ചിതഃ സർവദുർഗാണി മത്പ്രസാദാത്തരിഷ്യാതി।

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. കിം ജപൻമുച്യതേ ജന്തുഃ ജൻമസംസാര-ബന്ധനാത്।

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. ലോകായക്ഷം സ്തുവൻനിത്യം സർവദുഃഖാതിഗോഭവേത്। and

ഏഷ മേ സർവധർമാണം ധർമോ/ധികതമോ മതഃ ।
യദ്ഭക്ത്യാ പുണ്ഡരീകാക്ഷം സ്തവൈരർചേന്നരഃ സദാ ॥

Shri Shankaracharya, in his commentary to the above line, explains why Bhishma said this is the "best method". He says ഹിംസാദി-പുരുഷാന്തര-ദ്രവ്യാന്തര-ദേശകാലാദി-നിയമാനപേക്ഷത്വം ആധിക്യേ കാരണമ് । 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.

ഇദം ഹി പുംസസ്തപസഃ ശുഭതസ്ത വാ സവിഷ്ടസ്ത സുകൃതസ്ത ച
ബുദ്ധിദത്തയോഃ ।

അവിചയുതോർഥഃ കവിഭിരനിരൂപിതോ യദുത്തമശ്ലോകഗുണാനുവർണനമ് ॥
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.

സ്വ-വർണാശുഭ്രധർമ്മേണ തപസാ ഹരി-തോഷണാത് ।
സാധനം പദ്രവേത് പുംസാം വൈരാഗ്യാദി-ചതുഷ്ടയമ് ॥

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

വാസുദേവേ ഭഗവതി ഭക്തിയോഗഃ പത്രോജിതഃ ।
ജനയത്യാശു വൈരാഗ്യം ജ്ഞാനം ച യദഹൈതുകമ് ॥

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. യഃ ശതരൂഢീയമധീതേ, സോ/ഗ്നിപുതോ ഭവതി, സുരാപാനാത്പുതോ ഭവതി, ബഹ്വഹത്യാത്പുതോ ഭവതി, കൃത്യാകൃത്യാത്പുതോ

ഭവതി, തസ്മാദവിമുക്തമാശ്రిതോ ഭവതി। 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 പുണ്യഃ ഏവമ് സ്മരണാദി കൂർവതാം സർവേഷാം പുണ്യം കരോതീതി പുണ്യഃ । 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 punya 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)

യഥാദർശേ തഥാ//ത്ഥനി യഥാ സ്വപ്നേ തഥാ പിതൃലോകേ ।
യഥാ/പ്സു പരീവ ദദൃശേ തഥാ ഗന്ധർവലോകേ ഛായാതപയോരിവ
ബ്രഹ്മലോകേ ॥

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).

ലബ്ധ്വാ സുദുർലഭമിദം ബഹുസംഭവാൻതേ
മാനുഷ്യമർഥമനിത്യമപീഹ ധീരഃ ।
തൂർണം യതേത ന പതേദനുമൃത്യു യാവ-
ന്നിശ്ഠേയസായ വിഷയഃ ഖലു സർവതഃ സ്യാത് ॥

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. സുഖബുദ്ധ്യൗ ആദർശവർണിർമല-ഭൂതാനാം വിവിക്തമാത്മനോ ദർശനം ഭവതീത്യർഥഃ | 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 (ഹൃദയം) 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. ലക്ഷ്മീഹൃദയകേ സതോത്രേ സർവമന്യത് പ്രകാശിതം | (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. ഗോപ്യമേതത്സദാ കുർയാത് ന സർവത്ര പ്രകാശയേത് | 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) ദൈവീ ഹ്വയേഷാ ഗുണമയീ മമ മായാ ദുരത്യയാ || മായേവ യേ പപ്രദ്യന്തേ മായാമേഷാം തരന്തി തേ ||

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. മായാം തു പക്രൂതിം വിദ്യാന്മായിനം ച മഹേശ്വരമ് | says the Svetasvatropanisad (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).

ഗിരാമാഹുരഭേദവീം ദൃഹിണഗൃഹിണീമാഗമവിദോ\
ഹരേഃ പത്നീം പദ്മാം ഹരസഹചരീമദ്രിതനയാമ് |\

തൂരീയാ കാപി ത്വം ദുരധിഗമ-നിസ്സീമ-മഹിമാ\
മഹാമായാ വിശ്വം ഭൂമയസി പരബ്രഹ്മ-മഹിഷി ||

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. വാഗർഥാവിവ സംപൃക്തൗ വാഗർഥപത്രിപത്തയേ ജഗതഃ പിതൗ വന്ദേ പാർവതീപരമേശ്വരൗ || 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:

വിശ്വം നാരായണം ദേവമക്ഷരം പരമം പദമ് ।
വിശ്വതഃ പരമാന്തരീത്യം വിശ്വം നാരായണാഹരിമ് ।
വിശ്വമേവേദം പുരുഷസ്തദ്വിശ്വമുപജീവതി ।
പതിം വിശ്വസ്യാത്മേശ്വരഃ ശാശ്വതഃ ശിവമച്യുതമ് ।
നാരായണം മഹാജ്ഞേയം വിശ്വാത്മാനം പരായണമ് ॥

നാരായണപരോ ജ്യോതിരാത്മാ നാരായണഃ പരഃ ।
നാരായണപരം ബ്രഹ്മ തത്ത്വം നാരായണഃ പരഃ ।
നാരായണപരോ യയാതാ യയാനം നാരായണഃ പരഃ ।
യച്ച കിഞ്ചിജ്ജഗത്സർവം ദൃശ്യതേ ശ്രുതേ/പി വാ ।
അന്തർബഹിശ്ച തത്സർവം യാപയ നാരായണഃ സ്ഥിതഃ ।

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.

॥ ഓം തത്സത് ॥

॥ നാരായണ ഹൃദയമ് ॥

ഹരിഃ ഓമ് ॥ അസ്മയ ശ്രീനാരായണ-ഹൃദയ-സ്തോത്ര-മഹാമന്ത്രസ്മയ ഭാർഗവ
ജഗ്ഷിഃ,

അനുഷ്ടുപ്ചരന്ദഃ, ലക്ഷ്മീനാരായണോ ദേവതാ, നാരായണ-പ്രിയർഥേ ജപേ
വിനിയോഗഃ ॥

॥ കരന്യാസഃ ॥

നാരായണഃ പരം ജ്യോതിരിതി അങ്ഗുഷ്ഠാഭയാം നമഃ,
നാരായണഃ പരം ബ്രഹ്മേതി തർജനീഭയാം നമഃ,
നാരായണഃ പരോ ദേവ ഇതി മധ്യമാഭയാം നമഃ,
നാരായണഃ പരം ധാമേതി അനാമികാഭയാം നമഃ,
നാരായണഃ പരോ ധർമ ഇതി കനിഷ്ഠികാഭയാം നമഃ,
വിശ്വം നാരായണ ഇതി കരതലകരപൃഷ്ഠാഭയാം നമഃ ॥

॥ അങ്ഗന്യാസഃ ॥

നാരായണഃ പരം ജ്യോതിരിതി ഹൃദയായ നമഃ,
നാരായണഃ പരം ബ്രഹ്മേതി ശിരസേ സ്വാഹാ,

നാരായണഃ പരോ ദേവ ഇതി ശിഖായൈ വൌഷട്,
നാരായണഃ പരം ധാമേതി കവചായ ഹുച്,
നാരായണഃ പരോ ധർമ്മ ഇതി നേത്രാഭയാം വൌഷട്,
വിശ്വം നാരായണ ഇതി അസ്തത്രായ ഫട്,
ഭൂർഭുവസ്സുവരോമിതി ദിഗ്ബന്ധഃ ॥

॥ അഥ ധ്യാനമ് ॥

ഉദ്യാദാദിത്യസങ്കാശം പീതവാസം ചതുർഭുജമ് ।
ശങ്ഖചക്രഗദാപാണിം ധ്യായേൽലക്ഷ്മീപതിം ഹരിമ് ॥ ൧ ॥

തരൈലോക്യാധാരചക്ര തദുപരി കമഠം തത്ത്വചാനന്തഭോഗീ
തന്മധ്യേ ഭൂമി-പദ്മാങ്കുശ-ശിഖരഭൂത-കർണികാഭൂത-മേരുമ് ।
തത്ത്വം ശാന്തമൂർത്തിം മണിയ-മകുടം കുണ്ഡലോദ്ഭാസിതാങ്ഗം
ലക്ഷ്മീ-നാരായണാഖ്യം സരസിജ-നയനം സംതതം ചിന്തയാമഃ ॥ ൨ ॥

അസ്യ ശ്രീനാരായണാഹൃദയ-സ്തോത്ര-മഹാമന്ത്രസ്യ ബ്രഹ്മാ ജഃഃ,
അനുഷ്ടുപ് ചരന്ദഃ, നാരായണോ ദേവതാ, നാരായണ-പ്രിയർഥേ ജപേ
വിനിയോഗഃ ॥

ഓം ॥ നാരായണഃ പരം ജ്യോതി-രാത്മാ നാരായണഃ പരഃ ।

നാരായണഃ പരം ബ്രഹ്മ നാരായണ നമോ/സ്തു തേ ॥ ൩ ॥

നാരായണഃ പരോ ദേവോ ധാതാ നാരായണഃ പരഃ ।

നാരായണഃ പരോ ധാതാ നാരായണ നമോ/സ്തു തേ ॥ ൪ ॥

നാരായണഃ പരം ധാമ ധ്യാനം നാരായണഃ പരഃ ।

നാരായണ പരോ ധർമ്മോ നാരായണ നമോ/സ്തു തേ ॥ ൫ ॥

നാരായണഃ പരോ ദേവോ വിദ്യാ നാരായണഃ പരഃ ।
വിശ്വം നാരായണഃ സാക്ഷാൻ നാരായണ നമോ/സ്തു തേ ॥ ൬॥

നാരായണാദ് വിധി-ർജാതോ ജാതോ നാരായണാദ് ഭവഃ ।
ജാതോ നാരായണാദിൻദ്രോ നാരായണ നമോ/സ്തു തേ ॥ ൭॥

രവി-ർനാരായണ-സ്തേജഃ ചൻദ്രോ നാരായണോ മഹഃ ।
വഹ്നി-ർനാരായണഃ സാക്ഷാത് നാരായണ നമോ/സ്തു തേ ॥ ൮॥

നാരായണ ഉപാസ്തഃ സ്താദ് ഗുരു-ർനാരായണഃ പരഃ ।
നാരായണഃ പരോ ബോധോ നാരായണ നമോ/സ്തു തേ ॥ ൯॥

നാരായണഃ ഫലം മുഖ്യം സിദ്ധി-ർനാരായണഃ സുഖമ് ।
ഹരി-ർനാരായണഃ ശുദ്ധി-ർനാരായണ നമോ/സ്തു തേ ॥ ൧൦॥

നിഗമാവേദിതാനന്ത-കൽയാണഗുണ-വാരിധേ ।
നാരായണ നമസ്തേ/സ്തു നരകാർണ്ണവ-താരക ॥ ൧൧॥

ജൻമ-മൃത്യു-ജരാ-ധ്വംശ-പാരതന്ത്ര്യാദിഭിഃ സദാ ।
ദോഷൈ-രസ്പൃഷ്ടരുപായ നാരായണ നമോ/സ്തു തേ ॥ ൧൨॥

വേദശാസ്ത്രാർഥവിജ്ഞാന-സാധ്യ-ഭക്തയേക-ഗോചര ।
നാരായണ നമസ്തേ/സ്തു മാമുദ്യര ഭവാർണ്ണവാത് ॥ ൧൩॥

നിത്യാനന്ദ മഹോദാര പരാത്പര ജഗത്പതേ ।
നാരായണ നമസ്തേ/സ്തു മോക്ഷസാമ്രാജ്യ-ദായിനേ ॥ ൧൪॥

ആബ്രഹ്മസ്മിദ്ബ്രഹ്മ-പര്യന്ത-മഖിലാത്മ-മഹാശയ ।

സർവഭൂതാത്മ-ഭൂതാത്മൻ നാരായണ നമോ/സ്തു തേ ॥ ൧൫ ॥

പാലിതാശേഷ-ലോകായ പുണ്യശുഭ്രണ-കീർതന ।
നാരായണ നമസ്തേ/സ്തു പപ്രയോദക-ശായിനേ ॥ ൧൬ ॥

നിരസ്ത-സർവദോഷായ ഭക്ത്യാദി-ഗുണദായിനേ ।
നാരായണ നമസ്തേ/സ്തു ത്വാം വിനാ ന ഹി മേ ഗതിഃ ॥ ൧൭ ॥

ധർമാർഥ-കാമ-മോക്ഷാഖ്യ-പുരുഷാർഥ-പദ്രായിനേ ।
നാരായണ നമസ്തേ/സ്തു പുനസ്തേ/സ്തു നമോ നമഃ ॥ ൧൮ ॥

॥ അഥ പരാർഥനാ ॥
നാരായണ ത്വമേവാസി ദഹരാഖ്യേ ഹൃദി സ്ഥിതഃ ।
പ്രേരിതാ പ്രേര്യമാണാനാം ത്വയാ പ്രേരിത മാനസഃ ॥ ൧൯ ॥

ത്വദാജ്ഞാം ശിരസാ കൃത്വാ ഭജാമി ജന-പാവനമ് ।
നാനോപാസന-മാർഗാണാം ഭവകൃദ് ഭാവബോധകഃ ॥ ൨൦ ॥

ഭവാർഥകൃദ് ഭവാതീതോ ഭവ സൌഖ്യപദോ മമ ।
ത്വന്മായാമോഹിതം വിശ്വം ത്വയൈവ പരികൽപിതമ് ॥ ൨൧ ॥

ത്വദധിഷ്ഠാന-മാതരേണ സാ വൈ സർവാർഥകാരിണീ ।
ത്വമേവ താം പുരസ്കൃത്യ മമ കാമാൻ സമർഥയ ॥ ൨൨ ॥

ന മേ ത്വദന്യസ്തത്രാസ്തി ത്വദന്യൻന ഹി ദൈവതമ് ।
ത്വദന്യം ന ഹി ജാനാമി പാലകം പുണ്യവർധനമ് ॥ ൨൩ ॥

യാവത്സാംസാരികോ ഭാവോ മനസ്സ്മോ ഭാവനാത്മകഃ ।

താവത്സിദ്ധിർഭവേത് സാധ്യാ സർവദാ സർവദാ വിഭോ || ൨൪ ||

പാപിനാ-മഹമേകാഗ്രോ ദയാലുനാം ത്വമഗ്രണീഃ ।
ദയനീയോ മദനയോ/സ്തി തവ കോ/തൃജഗത്ത്വേ || ൨൫ ||

ത്വയാഹം നൈവ സൃഷ്ടശ്ചേത് ന സ്യാത്ത്വ ദയാലുതാ ।
ആമയോ വാ ന സൃഷ്ടശ്ചേ-ദ്രൗഷധസ്യ വൃഥോദയഃ || ൨൬ ||

പാപസങ്ഗ-പരിശ്രാന്തഃ പാപാത്മാ പാപരുപ-ധൂക് ।
ത്വദന്യഃ കോ/തൃപാപേഭ്യഃ ത്വതാസ്തി ജഗതീതലേ || ൨൭ ||

ത്വമേവ മാതാ ച പിതാ ത്വമേവ ത്വമേവ ബന്ധുശ്ച സഖാ ത്വമേവ ।
ത്വമേവ വിദ്യാ ഭവ്വിണം ത്വമേവ ത്വമേവ സർവം മമ ദേവ ദേവ || ൨൮ ||

പ്രാർഥനാദശങ്കം ചൈവ മുലഷ്ടകമഥഃപരമ് ।
യഃ പഠേച്ഛൂണ്യയാൻനിത്യം തസ്യ ലക്ഷ്മീഃ സ്ഥിരാ ഭവേത് || ൨൯ ||

നാരായണസ്യ ഹൃദയം സർവാഭീഷ്ട-ഫലപ്രദമ് ।
ലക്ഷ്മീഹൃദയകം സ്തോത്രം യദി ചൈതദ്വിനാകൃതമ് || ൩൦ ||

തത്സർവം നിഷ്ഫലം പരോക്തം ലക്ഷ്മീഃ കൃധ്വതി സർവദാ ।
ഏതത്സങ്ക്ലിതം സ്തോത്രം സർവാഭീഷ്ട-ഫലപ്രദമ് || ൩൧ ||

ജപേത് സങ്ക്ലിതം കൃത്വാ സർവാഭീഷ്ട-മവാപ്നുയാത് ।
നാരായണസ്യ ഹൃദയം ആദൗ ജപ്ത്വാ തതഃപരമ് || ൩൨ ||

ലക്ഷ്മീഹൃദയകം സ്തോത്രം ജപേൻനാരായണം പുനഃ ।
പുനർനാരായണം ജപ്ത്വാ പുനർലക്ഷ്മീനുതി ജപേത് || ൩൩ ||

തദ്വദ്യോമാധികം കുർയാ-ദേതത്സങ്ക്ലിതം ശുഭമ് ।

ഏവം മധ്യേ ദ്വിവാഭേണ ജപേത് സങ്ക്ലിതം ശുഭമ് ॥ ൩൪ ॥

ലക്ഷ്മീഹൃദയകേ സ്തോത്രേ സർവമന്യത് പ്രകാശിതമ് ।

സർവാൻ കാമാനവാപ്നോതി ആധിപ്യാധി-ഭയം ഹരേത് ॥ ൩൫ ॥

ഗോപ്യമേതത് സദാ കുർയാത് ന സർവത പ്രകാശയേത് ।

ഇതി ഗൃഹ്യതമം ശാസ്ത്രം പരോക്തം ബ്രഹ്മാദിഭിഃ പുരാ ॥ ൩൬ ॥

ലക്ഷ്മീഹൃദയപരോക്തേന വിധിനാ സാധയേത് സുധീഃ ।

തസ്മാത് സർവപ്രയത്നേന സാധയേദ് ഗോപയേത് സുധീഃ ॥ ൩൭ ॥

യത്നൈരത്പുസ്തകം തിഷ്ഠേത് ലക്ഷ്മീനാരായണാത്മകമ് ।

ഭൂത പൈശാച വേതാള ഭയം നൈവ തു സർവദാ ॥ ൩൮ ॥

ഭൃഗുവാരേ തഥാ രാത്നൈ പുജയേത് പുസ്തകദ്വയമ് ।

സർവദാ സർവദാ സ്തുത്യം ഗോപയേത് സാധയേത് സുധീഃ ।

ഗോപനാത് സാധനാൽലോകേ ധന്യോ ഭവതി തത്ത്വതഃ ॥ ൩൯ ॥

॥ ഇത്യഥർവരഹസ്യേ ഉത്തരഭാഗേ നാരായണ ഹൃദയ സ്തോത്രം ॥

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