

# AtmasukhabodhinIpatrika

Commentary: Atma = ParamAtma, with His blessings, Atma = jIvAtma, for him, Atmasukha = svarUpasukha, inherent innate bliss, bodhini = indicating, compassionately indicating the spiritual practice to be followed, patrika = a letter

“A compassionate letter from Shri Madanuru Vishnu Tirtharu to his students indicating the spiritual practice (adhyAtmasAdhana) of spiritual aspirants (adhyAtmasAdhaka-s) to achieve the FINAL GOAL - LORD's GRACE leading to the jIva's consequent attainment of inherent innate bliss”

The jIva-s, subject to the Lord's Will (bhagavadiccha), (propelled by the) beginningless series of actions (anAdi karma) and covered by the subtlest of material bodies (lingasharIra), arrive in this universe, attain a gross material body (sthUlasharIra), indulge in various activities, indeed also incarnate and meander amongst various species and coincidentally attain this most choicest of births as a human being in this most holiest of lands - the 'bharatakhaNda'.

Commentary: Everything is subject to Sri Hari's Will. Everything is caused by Sri Hari's Will. Even when multiple causes are described, all the causes themselves are subject to Sri Hari's Will only. This is why He alone is Independent and all else depends upon Him. Here, the beginningless series of actions propel the jIva-s subject to Sri Hari's Will, the subtlest of material bodies cover the jIva-s subject to Sri Hari's Will only. The gross material body, the various activities in the material body, the various incarnations and the human birth are all due to His Will only as well. BharatakhaNda and the various holy lands exist by His Will only. Their holiness is due His Will only. Furthermore, Sri Hari's incarnation is according to His Will only, whereas the jIva-s incarnations are subject to the Lord's Will and are to enable the jIva to work out the past karmas. Constant contemplation of this is what enables one to know the Lord's independence and the jIva's dependence on Him.

At that time, to the best of their abilities, (what) their spiritual efforts should be focused on (is, to)

Commentary: Here is where the author begins his spiritual advice

- internalizing through perception (pratyaksha), deduction (anumAna) and scriptures (Agama), that all entities from a blade of grass to the great Chatumukha Brahma are essence-less (asAra) and are transient (anitya)

Commentary: The Lord being Independent is the only essence of this world. Therefore all jIva-s have their essence subject to the Lord's presence in them. All jIva-s have a permanent svarupadeha, but even the great jIva such as Chaturmukha Brahma, who is the longest living jIva in this whole universe has to give up his lingadeha and is therefore anitya only. Sri Lakshmi devi who is nityamukta is dependent upon Sri Hari. The Lord Sri Hari is the only independently permanent entity.

- And thus endeavor to give up the stubborn (excessive) attachment to the material body & personal belongings (aham-mamatadurAgrahatyAga)

Commentary: aham is the ego, it is the feeling of "I-ness", mamakAra is "my-ness". Since everything is temporary and without essence, there must not be an excessive attachment. Everyone is attached to the body and personal belongings it is only the excessive attachment that is proscribed here.

- And to realize that the familial bonds are similar to (that of) relations developed with fellow travellers on a temporary journey

Commentary: On a short journey, the travelers become friendly with their fellow travelers. Sometimes they develop strong bonds, share their stories and even look out for each other. All this is well and good, except everyone realize that the meeting is fleeting and when time comes to part do not suffer excessively.

- And to understand and experience that as destined by the Lord Sri Hari (adRushTaniyAmaka) using this five elemental material body (pAnchabhautikasharIra) just as sorrow so also is joy granted to one without active effort on one's part

Commentary: The five elements of the material body are prithvi (earth), ap (water), tejas (fire) Akasha (space) vAyu (air). The unseen preceding events that lead to a consequence are called adrusta, Lord Sri Hari is the adRustaniyAmaka, since all events whether preceding or succeeding are all subject to His Will only. Therefore what all appears as active effort on part of the jIva is really Lord Sri Hari's doing, and the consequent

attainment of joy or sorrow is Sri Hari's Will only. It is commonly felt that sorrow occurs without active effort on one's part. After all, nobody goes about working with a goal of accumulating more sorrow. It just occurs. The author is encouraging us to have an equanimous view and letting us know that similar should be the case with joy as well.

In this world, all the mundane efforts for sustaining life, must be done with a remembrance of Sri Hari (harismaraNa) and without compromising (being dismissive of) Histotal independence (svAtantrya), and one must be as untainted as a lotus leaf is inwater.

Commentary: Mundane activities need to be done to sustain life. Just as the author has pointed out earlier, this human life is a very valuable asset as it enables one to do sadhana. "sharIramAtramkhalu dharma sAdhanam" Therefore there is no proscription of mundane activities such as eating drinking sleeping etc. What is proscribed is making just the mundane activities be the "be all and end all" of life. That would be a very egregious waste of the valuable lifetime. Since everyone must do mundane activities also, the author describes how one must do these activities. They must be done with a remembrance of the Lord Sri Hari. As has been pointed out earlier, one must not be over attached to the mundane and be as untainted as the lotus leaf is in water. Just as the lotus leaf stays in the water, takes its sustenance from the water, enhances the beauty ofthe water but is untainted by the water one must also live in this word, do mundane activities to sustain life, enhance the worls around but be untainted by all this.

Since just the instinctive desire to protect one's body and limb exists even in swines and dogs, if humans also were to only focus on protecting body and limb, how different then, wouldhumans be from swines and dogs?

Commentary: Instinct enables one to protect body and limb. To just stay at instinct is being disrespectful to the faculty of learning and knowledge that enables one to develop learned behavior. The author makes this point strongly next.

For that reason when this great human body and especially when a Brahmin birth with all its faculty of knowledge and reasoningis available, by thorough reasoning one must give up the animal like behavior and with an understanding that (joys from) external objects are all like a mirage (mRugamarIchika - bisilukuduri), control the vigorous flow of the mind towards these and insteadfocus on dispelling the layers of concealment(Avaraka) to liberation (moksha) and do all such things as will enable one to attain it.

Commentary: How must one rise above just the instinct? The author says again by internalizing the impermanence and essenceless-ness of external objects. The analogy of the mirage is not say that the external objects are unreal, rather the analogy is to show that the joys from the external objects are transient and essenceless (asAra). Water is the sAra, the mirage is the asAra. The joys from external objects are without essence and transient therefore the mind should be drawn to the entity full of essence and permanent, the Lord Sri Hari. Dispelling the layers of concealment (Avaraka) refers to the two types of layers over the ling sharIra called the jIvAcchAdika and the paramAcchAdika. The jIvAcchAdika refers to the inability of the jIva to see himself, the parAcchAdika refers to the jIvaunable to see the PramAtma. These layers must be dispelled for obtaining the direct perception of the Lord (aparokshajnana). Aparokshajnana is the prerequisite to Moksha. Therefore the author lays out a game plan towards the attainment of aparokshajnana next.

Though unattainable as it seems, since attainable it is with great effort, one must in the company of saintly people, understand the hierarchy of Sri Narayana, Lakshmi, Vayudeva and others, and understanding that "Sri Hari is the sole essence of all (sarvasAra), superior to all (sarvOttama), full of all auspicious qualities (sarvaguNapUrNa), devoid of all defects (doShadUra), overlord of the liberated and the un-liberated (muktAmuktaprapanchEsha), the master of the eight fold activities (sRushTyAdyaShTakarta) including that of the creation of this world andas the giver of appropriate rewards to the three fold jIva-s including the sattvikajIvA-s (sAtvikAditrividhajIvagatipradAyaka)", develop an intense devotion (bhakti)and love (prema) towards Him and with Him as the sole subject indulge in listening (shravaNa), extolling (kIrtana), remembering (manana), personally serving (pAdasEvana), adoring (archana), worshipping (vandana), befriending (sakhya), serving (dASya) and offering oneself to Him (AtmanivEdana – AtmanivEdana) and pray - "because I am your servant (bhRutya), unlearned (aj~jna) and dependent upon you (asvatantra), you, residing in all of my organs make me perform the good and the bad actions and accept your own actions yourself" - and offer all actions to the Super Soul (paramAtma).

Commentary: In this section, the author elaborates of the game plan towards attaining aparokshajnana.jIvas are known by the company they keep and the books they read! Therefore the author begins by prescribing sajjanasahavAsa. All else flows from there. The eight fold activities of the Lord alluded to here are shrishti (creation) sthiti (sustaining), laya (destruction), niyamana (controlling), jnana (giving of knowledge),

ajanana (giving of neiscience, bandha (bondage) and moksha (granting of liberation). The three fold jlvas are the sAttvika (good souls), rAjāsika (indifferent souls) tAmāsika (bad souls). The author entreats folks to practice the navavidha bhakti, the nine fold bhakti that is enumerated above. Since the author has already stated that the jivas efforts and activities are subject to Sri Hari's Will already, the author is now providing a template for the prayer incorporating this very important concept. The Lord is omnipresent. He is present in all of the Jivas organs as well. Subject to His Will and with his impelling, the jlva does various activities. All activities whether good or bad are all subject to Sri Hari's Will in accordance to the jlvas nature and previous activities. Some people are wont to think that the good activities are done by Lord's Will but the bad are done because of their own efforts, such is not the case. Since everything is subject to the Lord's Will all activities be they good or bad are subject to His Will ONLY. The prayer then is to internalize this, understand the Lord's independence, the jlvas utter dependence.

Thus remembering and meditating upon Sri Hari's lotus feet always, with deep devotion attaining direct perception of the Lord (aparokshajana), and then later with the Lord's grace appropriately enjoying one's own inherent innate joyful nature (svarUpasukhAvirbhAva) is the exalted (vaibhava) state of liberation (mukti).

Commentary: The author now explains that the result of the internalization of the Lord's independence generates deep devotion and leads to aparokshajana or direct perception of the Lord. This epiphany will dispel the veils of jlvAchchAdika and paramAchchAdika mentioned earlier. With the Lord's grace one leaves the lingadeha and attains to Mukti. Mukti is the state of liberation and the joy available there is the inherent innate joy, not the joy due to the external objects. This joy is praised as an exaltation (vaibhava), having criticized the joys due to external objects as the mirage (mrigamarichika earlier).

If the time is spent in the remembrance of the Lord, this lifetime, birth, activities and time are all worth it and do not lead to further bondage.

Commentary: Having talked about liberation, the author now talks about the nature of bondage.

Otherwise, being just a consummate householder and being interested just in material things if one forgets Sri Hari Himself, one commits treason to Sri Hari, who has given one the very material body and all reasoning organs therein, leading further to the consequent treason (on) to oneself which will most definitely lead one to eternal darkness (andhantamas) only. There is no worse damage than this.

Commentary: Devotion to the Lord results in the upliftment of the jlva and to mukti. Treason to the Lord leads to eternal damnation only. What could be worse?

- There is no worse danger (vipattu) than the danger of forgetting Sri Hari (harivismaraNa).
- There is no greater benefit (sampattu) than the benefit of remembering Sri Hari (harismaraNa).
- The benefits and dangers in this world are not the real benefits and dangers.
- Remembering Sri Hari (harismaraNa) is the foremost prescription (vidhi), forgetting Sri Hari (harivismaraNa) is foremost proscription (niShedha).
- Whatever land (desha), time (kAla) or state (sthiti) enable one to have a contented mind (manahprasanna) conducive to remember Sri Hari, that land, that time and that state must be experienced and embraced.

Commentary: Hari Smarana and bhakti are a state of mind primarily. Having an unagitated mind is indeed a great blessing and to be treasured. What a blessing it is really to have a human janma and an unagitated contented mind! Truly this state of mind enables one to make great progress towards the Lord. "Embrace it" says the author.

If this were not followed, then holy pilgrimages to places such as Prayaga, auspicious time such as the vasanta, and various religious austerities and observances (vrataniyama) become just for public display (lokaviDambana) and just result in much physical discomfort (shramajanaka).

Commentary: PrayAga, the present day Allahabad is also called the tirtha raja. It is the mystic confluence of the Ganga the Yamuna and the Saraswati. Without constant harismarana a mechanical following of the vrataniyamas is a lot of physical hardship without much of the spiritual benefit.

Study and preaching of the scripture without the bhakti mentioned before, become just dry disputations (kevalavAkyArtha) and are without any spiritual benefit whatsoever.

Commentary: A profound understanding of the various branches of philosophy, but without the devotion to Sri Hari could qualify one to be an academic indologist(maybe) but that type of study does not result in much spiritual benefit.

This is the essence of all holy puranas and Holy Scriptures such as SrimadBhagavata.

Commentary: "Practice before you preach". The author of this note is a prolific author and is also the author of "bhAgavatasArodhdhAra". The author is also known as "adaviacharya" and was a viraktashikhAmani and led a pious and ascetic life given to devotion to the Lord.

All good people should take a moment and reflect upon this.

Commentary: This note conveys its message forcefully even at a first glance, but there is enough material in it and is worthy of deep contemplation.

Thus Bliss (iti sham).