

SRI VISHNU SAHASRANAMAM

(Translated from speeches delivered by His High Holiness Sri Sri Jeeyar Swamivaru)

Our elders teach us that Sri Vishnu Sahasra Na:mam (VSN) is more than a stho:tram. It is actually an intense and great mantram, a Maha Ma:la: manthram. Although in Sri: Mahabh:aratham, only one person recited it, Sri Bhi:shma Pitha:maha, our elders teach us that originally each word of VSN was realized by the sages through intense penance and uttered as pure sound. It was only later that Ve:da Vya:sa compiled into the VSN that we know today.

Each of the 1000 na:mas of the Lord that are included in VSN are like 1000 rays of the Sun, and can provide enrichment and illumination to one and all. The na:mas are related to the Lord not because of some interpolation or in some indirect way. Instead each name of the Lord is directly related solely to Him in a fixed way.

In Sanskrit there are two different types of words, *yo:gam* and *ru:ddi*. Those that can apply to several other objects/references, and those whose meaning apply to only one object/reference. To understand the difference between these let us take the word "pankajam". That which is born in Panka, murky waters, is called Pankajam. So, from the standpoint of *yo:gam*, any object that emanates out of murky water can be potentially called Pankaja, including insects, weeds and mildew, as well as the lotus. But, if one takes only the *ru:ddi* meaning of "pankaja", there is no doubt that it only refers to the lotus. So, when one praises a lady as Pankaja:kshi, we are not comparing her eyes to the murky waters, but to the petals of a lotus, and the comparison ends there.



Each and every word in Sri Vishnusahasrana:mam applies both *Yo:gam* and *Ru:ddi* when describing the Lord. Hence the words called "Na:mas". It should be noted that *na:ma*(noun) is different from *sarvana:ma*(pronoun). *Sarvanama* can relate to any person in general, but *na:ma* always applies only to one person, in this case, *Sri:man Na:ra:yana*.

The very first *na:mam* in VSN is "Visvam". A great sage experienced *Parama:thma* as expanding throughout the universe with qualities that are filled throughout the universe. The sage expressed his joy in a vernacular form - "Visvam", which when expanded is "Visathi avayava:n ithi". *Avayava:n* is everything you see in the world around you. We call the world around us "Visvam", because everything we see and experience in this world is pervaded with the Presence of God. How is He really present? We are sitting or standing in a particular place at a particular time, therefore we are present in *swaru:pam*, physical form. If people elsewhere are thinking about us, we are present there too, in a way, in their heart and mind. Therefore, it can be said that we are present there too, but in just another form known as *swa:bha:vam*. Similarly, if you are physically present in one place, and your mind starts day-dreaming about some other person or visiting some other place, in a sense you are present in that other place or with that other person, not in a physical form, but with your qualities, your *guna*.

We are all called "Ji:vas", our *swaru:pa* is extremely small. However, our *Jna:nam*, our wisdom, spreads beyond us. The extent to which it is spread differs from person to person. Just like the light of a

lamp, light gets diffused with distance. The lamp is guni:, the element, and the light which it emanates is called Gunam, or quality. Qualities can't be independent of the element. Even Jna:nam follows a similar pattern.

Interestingly, despite of our wisdom, we know very little about ourselves. We show a lot of zeal to investigate about Air, Water and other elements but have to look up to Sa:sthras to get a deep understanding of our own self. Thats because our true self, our a:thmas are so subtle that they are indiscernible even with the greatest of scientific devices. The same holds true for Jna:nam, it too is so subtle that its source can never be fully known or explained through science.

In describing the nature of A:thma in the second chapter of Githa, Sri Krishna says:

*A:scharyavath Pasyathi Kaschide:nam
A:scharyavath Vadathi thatthaiva cha:nyaha!
A:scharyavachhaina manyas sruno:thi
Sruthva:pye:nam ve:da nachaiva kaschith !!*

Inspite of detailed explanations and exposure, inspite of the time spent on the subject of *A:thma thathva*, it always raises an expression of exclamation and surprise. When you express surprise at any object in the materialistic world, the expression of surprise numbs with time until it becomes ordinary or mundane. However, with *A:thma Thathva*, the surprise never fades away. That's because its not possible to understand or comprehend *A:thma thathva* in total, ever.

Jna:nam is one of the qualities of *A:thma*. We are humans who have this *Jna:nam*. Flower is different from the incense, *A:thma* is inseparable from the *Jna:na*. To explain this phenomenon, our Upanishads have given the analogy of a crystal of sugar and salt crystals.

*Yada: rasa ghanaha,
saindhava ghanaha !*

If you cut a crystal of salt, you will always end up with a smaller lump of salt, there is never a particle within a lump of salt that is foreign. If you put a lump of sugar in water, it completely dissolves and loses its form. It gives up its quality of sweetness to the water. So also the *A:thma* and its knowledge. The difference here with *A:thma* and sugar or salt is, that *A:thma* won't get dissolved in any way.

Then, what is true *Jnanam* and how do we increase it within ourselves?



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Answers for Quiz on Page 11

1. 2nd chapter, 12th sloka
2. *sa:nkhya* means "Clear knowledge to understand that the soul is eternal". *sa:nkhya yo:ga* is taught by Krishna in the second chapter of Bhagavad Githa
3. The Sun God (*Vivasva:n*)
4. 2nd chapter (*stthithaprajna* is a man of firm wisdom who has renounced all desires of the mind, and is satisfied in himself with himself)
5. Leave the doership either to the Nature or to God. Do not have any attachment to the activities you are doing
6. Second Shatkam (7th - 12th chapters)
7. *Jna:na yo:ga*
8. The key message in the 18th chapter is that Krishna instructs us to renounce all the ego and ownership on other means of salvation except Himself, and surrender to Him
9. In the fourth chapter
10. *Gi:tha:rttha sangraha* by Sri *Ya:muna:cha:rya*, *Gi:tha: Bha:shya* by Sri Ramanuja and *Tha:thparya Chandrika* by Sri *ve:da:ntha de:sika*.

