

श्रीलक्ष्मीनृसिंहपञ्चरत्नम्

Shri Lakshminarasimha Pancharatnam

॥ श्रीलक्ष्मीनृसिंहाय नमः ॥

On the occasion of shrI narasiMha-jayantI, I would like to present a short but sweet composition of Shankara in honor of (his family-deity according to some) Lakshmi-Narasimha. This hymn consists of only five verses and, as its name indicates, is truly a collection of five gems of verses.

These verses are addressed to the mind whose very nature is to wander from one matter to another seeking enjoyment just a bee wanders from one flower to another attempting to collect nectar. The hymn asks the mind to stop going after mundane matters and turn itself towards God. Then, the mind-bee can taste the nectar of bhakti instead of roaming about in the desert of mundane matters without ever tasting real nectar.

त्वत्प्रभुजीवप्रियमिच्छसि चेन्नरहरिपूजां कुरु सततं

प्रतिबिम्बालंकृतिकुशलो बिंबालंकृतिमातनुते ।

चेतोभृङ्ग भ्रमसि वृथा भवमरुभूमौ विरसायां

भज भज लक्ष्मीनरसिंहानघपदसरसिजमकरन्दम् ॥ १ ॥

If you desire to please your lord, the jIva, then worship Shri Narasimha constantly. Decorating the reflected object causes the decoration of the reflection. O mind-bee! Why do you roam about without purpose in the desert of joyless mundane matters? Worship (taste) the pure nectar of the lotus feet of Lakshmi-Narasimha!

Notes:

This first verse of the laxmInarasiMha-paJNcharatnam.h asks the mind, whose tendency is to wander from one subject to another, to constantly dwell on God.

The reflection theory of advaita holds that the jIvas or individual souls are reflections of Brahman. Just as the sun may be reflected in many bodies or water, or a face

reflected in many mirrors, Brahman is reflected in many "subtle bodies" (liN^ga-sharIra's) to form jIva's.

If a face is being reflected in a mirror, any decoration applied to the face itself would apply to the reflection.

In other words, by pleasing God, the jIva would be automatically pleased.

Shankara deals with the reflection theory in his commentary on the third chapter of the Brahma-sUtras. An objection is sometimes raised as how the Brahman which is without form, color, or parts, is able to be reflected. As Shankara replies, and also as MadhusUdana SarasvatI replies in his siddhAnta-bindu, it is not necessary for a reflected object to be always with form, color, etc. It may be required for a visual image but not so for others, such as sound which may be reflected from a surface to produce an echo.

AbhAsa eva cha (an appearance or reflection only), and **ata eva chopama sUryakAdivat.h** (therefore the analogy, "like a reflected sun, etc") of the Brahma sutras, and shruti statements such as rUpaM rUpam pratirUpo babhUva (He assumed the likeness of each form) (Br. Up. 2.5.19), lend the basis for the reflection theory.

Some say that the reflection is real. For example, if a face is reflected in a mirror, the image itself is not the face, and therefore not the real face. But the features of the face which are seen in the reflection (after compensating for the effect of lateral-inversion) are also actually present in the face. To that extent, some authenticity or reality may be assigned to the reflection. This argument is called pratibimba-vAda and is put forth very early in Shankara's school by PadmapAda, the author of panchapAdika.

Others, such as the VArtikakAra Sureshvara, hold that the reflection is a mere appearance and is, therefore, unreal. This view is called AbhAsa-vAda. One may easily see that there is no dispute between the two views. When Brahman is reflected as many jIvas, pratibimba-vAda holds that the jIva, although a reflection of Brahman, is in essence the same as Brahman. Understanding of sentences, such as "tattvamasi" which leads to realization of Brahman, involves giving up the limiting factors of the jIva as not real, and accepting the essential nature of jIva as Brahman. As per the AbhAsavAda, the realization that the reflection is itself bondage and realizing that this reflection is unreal or getting rid of this reflection is liberation, as MadhusUdana SarasvatI sums up, "

शुद्ध-चैतन्यस्याभास एव बन्धः तन्निवृत्तिश्च मोक्ष इति."

Thus the two approaches, namely pratibimba-vAda and AbhAsavAda, have the same objective, establishing that Brahman/Consciousness is the only reality.

शुक्तौ रजतप्रतिभा जाता कटकाद्यर्थसमर्था चे-

दुःखमयी ते संसृतिरेषा निर्वृतिदाने निपुणा स्यात् ।

चेतोभृङ्ग भ्रमसि वृथा भवमरुभूमौ विरसायां

भज भज लक्ष्मीनरसिंहानघपदसरसिजमकरन्दम् ॥ २ ॥

If (illusory) silver perceived in the nacre (oyster shell) is capable of producing ornaments such as bracelets, etc, then your sorrowful cycle of birth and death may be capable of giving you liberation. O mind-bee! You roam about without purpose in the joyless desert of worldly matters. Worship (taste) the pure nectar of the lotus feet of Lakshmi-Narasimha!

Notes:

This verse points out that as the illusory silver seen in the nacre cannot be used to make real ornaments, such as a bracelet, etc., the never ending cycle of birth and death, that a jIva seems to be caught up in, cannot yield liberation. Simply because the jIva may have spent millions of lives does not guarantee that it will be liberated. There is no "seniority-based promotion" of the jIva to a liberated state! Promotion only results from "merit", where this merit is the removal of avidya or ajnAna!

The Vedaanta paribhaashhaa of dharmaraaja adhvarin defines these three orders of reality (satya):

यद्वा त्रिविधं सत्त्वं पारमार्थिकसत्त्वं ब्रह्मणः व्यावहारिकं सत्त्वमाकाशादेः
प्रातिभासिकं सत्त्वं शुक्तिरजतादेः ।

The reality of Brahman is paaramaarthika satya, the reality of the objective world, which includes space etc., is vyaavahaarika satya, and the illusory appearance of silver in nacre (oyster-shell) is praatibhaasika satya.

According to advaita theory of anirvachanIya-khyAti, the silver perceived here and now in the nacre is explained as something caused by ajnaana associated with the substratum nacre. This ajnaana hides the real nature of the substratum (nacre) and projects the appearance of silver. Once the nacre is recognized as nacre, the illusion disappears. The silver that is perceived in the illusion is not real, because it is sublated by the knowledge of the nacre. Yet it cannot be unreal because it is perceived during the illusion phase; what is unreal is something fictitious or purely imaginary, such as the horns of a hare. So the illusory silver cannot be defined as either real

or unreal, and it cannot be both real and unreal, which is a contradiction. The illusory silver is, therefore, called anirvachanIya or indefinable.

It is also pointed out that any illusion has to be based on a real substratum. The silver seen in the nacre is a superimposition (adhyaaropa or adhyaasa) on the nacre, the substratum (adhishhThaana). It is impossible to have an illusion which is not based on an underlying substratum.

The above argument was made from the standpoint of the vyaavahaarika reality. A similar argument may be made from the standpoint of the paaramaarthika reality to show the dualistic world (jagat) is also indefinable (anirvachaniiyaa). Before the removal of ajnAna, the dualistic world is perceived. It is not a purely fictitious entity. Again, after ajnAna has been removed, there is no duality. So the dualistic world cannot be categorically stated to be either real or unreal. It is anirvachanIya or indefinable.

If the dualistic world is an illusion just as the silver in the nacre, it must necessarily be a superimposition on a real "something" as the substratum. This "something" is indeed Brahman.

The VishhNusahasra naama contains the words adhishhThaanaM, which Shankara describes as Brahman, and aadhaaranilayaH, the support or substratum of all supports.

आकृतिसाम्याच्छात्मलिकुसुमे स्थलनलिनत्वभ्रममकरोः

गन्धरसाविह किमु विद्येते विफलं भ्राम्यसि भृशविरसे ऽस्मिन् ।

चेतोभृङ्ग भ्रमसि वृथा भवमरुभूमौ विरसायां

भज भज लक्ष्मीनरसिंहानघपदसरसिजमकरन्दम् ॥ ३ ॥

Due to similarity in form, you mistake (mistook) the flower of the cotton tree for a lotus (having the attributes of lotus). Do you have any sense of smell and taste? You roam about in this extremely dry place without success. O mind-bee! You roam about without purpose in the joyless desert of worldly matters. Worship (taste) the pure nectar of the lotus feet of Lakshmi-Narasimha!

Notes:

It is futile to strive for worldly pleasures, for they come and go just like misery. PrahLAda, one of the greatest bhAgavatas, makes the following observations in the bhAgavata (7th Skandha, Chapter 6):

यथा हि पुरुषस्येह विष्णोः पादोपसर्पणम् ।

यदेष सर्वभूतानां प्रिय आत्मेश्वरः सुहृत् ॥

सुखमैन्द्रियकं दैत्या देहयोगेन देहिनाम् ।

सर्वत्र लभ्यते दैवाद्यथा दुःखमयत्नतः ॥

तत्प्रयासो न कर्तव्यो यत आयुर्व्ययः परम् ।

न तथा विन्दते क्षेमं मुकुन्दचरणांबुजम् ॥

A person should strive only to worship the feet of BhagavAn ViShNu, for He is the dear Self (Atman) of all beings, their Lord and friend as well. The pleasures related to the senses, O Daityas, are easily obtained without any special effort due to destiny (karma) by all embodied beings, simply by virtue of possession of a body, just as sorrow or pains are obtained (without actually striving for them). Therefore, no effort needs to be made towards obtaining pleasures, as that would be wasting one's life, and would not lead to the attainment of well-being of devotion to the feet of Mukunda.

The wordly pleasures are just an illusion and a wise person should not pursue them. Such pleasures and pains come and go without the need for any special effort. Illusion or superimposition goes by several names such as adhyAropa, adhyAsa, bhrama, etc.

Shankara, in his introduction to the commentary on the Brahma sutras, gives a definition of superimposition:

अध्यासो नाम अतस्मिन्तद्वृद्धिः (adhyAso nAma atasmintadbuddhiH),

superimposition is the cognition of something as something else.

Superimposition may be of two types. 1) An object is mistaken for something else as a rope is mistaken for a snake. 2) An attribute of something else is mistakenly cognized in an object. For example, a colorless crystal placed in the proximity of a red flower appears as if the crystal itself is red.

The common superimposition is that the dualistic world is superimposed on Brahman. The body is superimposed on the Self. Also, attributes that are not found in the Self are superimposed on It. As Shankara says, for example, a person thinks, "sthUlo .ahaM", (I am fat), "kR^isho .ahaM" (I am lean), "gauro .ahaM" (I am fair complexioned), etc. Thus attributes of the body are mistaken as being present in the Self.

The question can now be raised: Why does everyone commit the mistake of superimposing something else on the Self? How does one get rid of this superimposition?

Answers Shankara in his introduction to the sUtra bhAShya:

नैसर्गिको मिथ्याप्रत्ययरूपः कर्तृत्वभोक्तृत्वप्रवर्तको अध्यासः सर्वलोकप्रत्यक्षः ।
अस्य अनर्थहेतोः प्रहाणाय आत्मैकत्वविद्याप्रतिपत्तये सर्वे वेदान्ता आरभ्यन्ते ।

adhyAsa (superimposition), which is natural (to everyone), is a false notion that impels one to do things and enjoy or experience the results of actions. This adhyAsa is experienced by the whole world. In order to remove this cause of evil, and to realize the One Self, all (study in) vedAnta (upanishhads) is begun.

स्रक्कन्दनवनितादीन्विषयान्सुखदान्मत्वा तत्र विहरसे
गन्धफलीसदृशा ननु तेऽमी भोगानन्तरदुःखकृतः स्युः ।
चेतोभृङ्ग भ्रमसि वृथा भवमरुभूमौ विरसायां
भज भज लक्ष्मीनरसिंहानघपदसरसिजमकरन्दम् ॥ ४ ॥

Considering that garlands, perfumes, women, etc., yield happiness, you wander about seeking pleasure (from them). Surely, those will, after (transitory) enjoyment, bring only sorrow to you, just as to the Priyangu creeper. O mind-bee! You roam about without purpose in the joyless desert of worldly matters. Worship (taste) the pure nectar of the lotus feet of Lakshmi-Narasimha!

Notes:

In this verse, a reference is made to the Priyangu creeper which is said to produce flowers if touched by women (strINAM sparshAt.h priyaN^gurvikasati). But more often than not, the flowers so produced are plucked by the women who may use the flowers for decoration. This leads to the sad condition of the creeper.

The BhagavadgItA has a relevant verse:

ये हि संस्पर्शजा भोगा दुःखयोनय एव ते ।
आद्यन्तवन्तः कौन्तेय न तेषु रमते बुधः ॥

O Arjuna! Enjoyments arising from contact with sense objects are only causes of sorrow and they have a beginning and an end. The person of discrimination (vivekin) does not delight in them.

The commentary of Madhusudana SarasvatI on this verse is illuminating. A few remarks drawn from the gUDhArtha-dIpikA:

हि यस्माद्ये संस्पर्शजा विषयेन्द्रियसंबन्धजा भोगाः क्षुद्रसुखलवानुभवा इह वा
परत्र वा रागद्वेषादिव्याप्तत्वेन दुःखयोनय एव ते ते सर्वे ऽपि ब्रह्मलोकपर्यन्तं
दुःखहेतव एव ।

Those enjoyments arising from the contact of sense and their objects are experiences of trivial and infinitesimal joy either in this world or the world beyond. Being associated with (pervaded by) attachment and aversion, they all are causes of sorrow indeed (in all worlds) up to BrahmaloKa.

तदुक्तं विष्णुपुराणे

Therefore, the ViShNu purANa says:

यावतः कुरुते जन्तुः संबन्धान्मनसः प्रियान् ।

तावन्तो ऽस्य निखन्यन्ते हृदये शोकशङ्कवः ॥

As many as a jIva (individual soul) creates associations (with sense objects) that are pleasurable to the mind, so many are the arrows of grief that pierce his heart.

एतादृशा अपि न स्थिराः किं तु आद्यन्तवन्तः आदिर्विषयेन्द्रिय-

संयोगो ऽन्तश्च तद्वियोग एव तौ विद्येते येषां ते पूर्वापरयोर-

सत्त्वान्मध्ये स्वप्नवदाविर्भूताः क्षणिका मिथ्याभूताः ।

Even being so, those (enjoyments) are not permanent but have a beginning and an end. The beginning is when the sense organ and its object come into contact, and the end is the separation of the (sense organ and the object). Both those two (ie. beginning and end)

are thus known in those (enjoyments). Those (enjoyments) are nonexistent (or unreal) before and after (the contact of the sense organ and the object) and they are manifest just like a dream in the middle phase (when there is contact). (So) they are fleeting and unreal.

तदुक्तं गौडपादाचार्यैः:

Therefore, AchArya GauDapAda says (GauDapAdakArkika- vaitathya-prakaraNa -6):

आदावन्ते च यन्नास्ति वत्मनि ऽपि तत्तथा इति ।

That which does not exist in the beginning and the end does not exist in the present (middle) also.

The summary of the argument above is as follows.
Enjoyments derived from contacts of sense organs with their objects are, besides being only causes of grief, fleeting and transient. There is no enjoyment before contact and the enjoyment stops after separation. Whatever enjoyment is felt in the middle is unreal like a dream. So the person of discrimination should not be engaged in seeking such transient enjoyment.

तव हितमेकं वचनं वक्ष्ये शृणु सुखकामो यदि सततं

स्वप्ने दृष्टं सकलं हि मृषा जाग्रति च स्मर तद्वदिति ।

चेतोभृङ्ग भ्रमसि वृथा भवमरुभूमौ विरसायां

भज भज लक्ष्मीनरसिंहानघपदसरसिजमकरन्दम् ॥ ५ ॥

If you desire joy always, I will say something that is beneficial to you. Whatever is seen in a dream is unreal; remember (what is seen) in the waking state is likewise. O mind-bee! You roam about without purpose in the joyless desert of worldly matters. Worship (taste) the pure nectar of the lotus feet of Lakshmi-Narasimha!

Notes:

As GauDapAda says, "svapnajAgaratisthAne hyekamAhurmanIshhiNaH", the waking and dream states are said to be alike by the wise. The ground of inference or hetu in this case is the property of "being perceived" which is present in objects of the dream and waking states alike.

The SarasvatI-rahasya-upanishhad states:

अस्ति भाति प्रियं रूपं नाम चेत्यंशपञ्चकम् ।

आद्यं त्रयं ब्रह्मरूपं जगद्रूपं ततो द्वयम् ॥

Existence, Consciousness, Bliss, Name, and Form - of these five, the first three belong to Brahman, and the other two form the world (mAyA).

Whatever is perceived either in dream or in the waking state falls into the category of nAma-rUpa, is mAyA and, therefore, not real.

Whatever is perceived either in dream or in the waking state is not perceived before its birth (creation), is perceived from birth until its destruction and again, it is not perceived after destruction. Therefore, the reality that can be assigned to objects in the waking and dream states is similar to the illusory reality of the silver in nacre, i.e. a prAtibhAsika satya. These do not exist either before or after the period of cognition. This leads to what is called dR^ishhTi-sR^ishhTi-vAda in advaita.

In fact, MadhusUdana SarasvatI points out that verse 2.28 in the GIItA accepts this dR^ishhTi-sR^ishhTi principle.

अव्यक्तादीनि भूतानि व्यक्तमध्यानि भारत ।

अव्यक्तनिधान्येव तत्र का परिदेवना ॥ २।२८ ॥

Part of MadhusUdana's commentary :

आदौ जन्मनः प्रागव्यक्तानि अनुपलब्धानि भूतानि पृथिव्यादिभूत-मयानि शरीराणि मध्ये जन्मान्तरं मरणात्प्रागव्यक्तानि उपलब्धानि सन्ति । निधने पुनरव्यक्तान्येव भवन्ति । यथा स्वप्नेन्द्रजालादौ प्रतिभासमात्रजीवनानि शुक्तिरूप्यादिवन्न तु ज्ञानात्प्रागूर्ध्वं वा स्थितानि दृष्टि-सृष्ट्यभ्युपगमात् । तथा च आदावन्ते च यन्नास्ति वर्तमाने ऽपि तत्तथा इति न्यायेन मध्ये ऽपि न सन्त्येवैतानि । नासतो विद्यते भावः इति प्रागुक्तेश्च ।

In the beginning, before birth, (these) bodies that are made of the elements such as earth, etc., are not perceived. In the middle, after birth and before death, (they) are perceived. Upon death, they again are not perceived. Because dR^ishhT-sR^ishhTi is admitted, (these bodies), like the (illusory) silver in the nacre, do not exist either before or after cognition, (but) exist only as an illusion, just as a dream, the trick of a magician, etc. And by the logic of the (statement of the mANDUkya kArikA), "That which does not exist in the beginning and the end does not exist in the present (middle) also", these (bodies) do not exist in the middle too (ie. during the period of cognition). Furthermore, by the (GIItA statement), "the unreal can never come into existence", (it is shown that these bodies cannot exist in the middle too).

आनन्द-हुदली-प्रणीताङ्गलभाषानुवादटिप्पणीसहितलक्ष्मीनृसिंह-

पञ्चरत्नं समाप्तम् ।

॥ श्रीलक्ष्मीनृसिंहार्पणमस्तु ॥

॥ श्रीलक्ष्मीनृसिंहपञ्चरत्नम् ॥

त्वत्प्रभुजीवप्रियमिच्छसि चेन्नरहरिपूजां कुरु सततं

प्रतिबिम्बालंकृतिकुशलो बिंबालंकृतिमातनुते ।

चेतोभृङ्ग भ्रमसि वृथा भवमरुभूमौ विरसायां

भज भज लक्ष्मीनरसिंहानघपदसरसिजमकरन्दम् ॥ १ ॥

शुक्तौ रजतप्रतिभा जाता कटकाद्यर्थसमर्था चे-

दुःखमयी ते संसृतिरेषा निर्वृतिदाने निपुणा स्यात् ।

चेतोभृङ्ग भ्रमसि वृथा भवमरुभूमौ विरसायां

भज भज लक्ष्मीनरसिंहानघपदसरसिजमकरन्दम् ॥ २ ॥

आकृतिसाम्याच्छाल्मलिकुसुमे स्थलनलिनत्वभ्रममकरोः

गन्धरसाविह किमु विद्येते विफलं भ्राम्यसि भृशविरसे ऽस्मिन् ।

चेतोभृङ्ग भ्रमसि वृथा भवमरुभूमौ विरसायां

भज भज लक्ष्मीनरसिंहानघपदसरसिजमकरन्दम् ॥ ३ ॥

स्रक्कन्दनवनितादीन्विषयान्सुखदान्मत्वा तत्र विहरसे

गन्धफलीसदृशा ननु तेऽमी भोगानन्तरदुःखकृतः स्युः ।

चेतोभृङ्ग भ्रमसि वृथा भवमरुभूमौ विरसायां

भज भज लक्ष्मीनरसिंहानघपदसरसिजमकरन्दम् ॥ ४ ॥

तव हितमेकं वचनं वक्ष्ये शृणु सुखकामो यदि सततं

स्वप्ने दृष्टं सकलं हि मृषा जाग्रति च स्मर तद्वदिति ।

चेतोभृङ्ग भ्रमसि वृथा भवमरुभूमौ विरसायां

भज भज लक्ष्मीनरसिंहानघपदसरसिजमकरन्दम् ॥ ५ ॥

tvatprabhujivapriyamicchasi cennaraharipūjām kuru satataṁ
pratibimbālaṅkṛtikuśalo bimbālaṅkṛtimātanute |
cetobhṛṅga bhramasi vṛthā bhavamarubhūmau virasāyām
bhaja bhaja lakṣmīnarasimhānaghapadasarasijamakarandam || 1 ||

śuktau rajatapratibhā jātā kaṭakādyarthasamarthā ce-
dduḥkhamayī te saṁsṛtiresā nirvṛtidāne nipuṇā syāt |
cetobhṛṅga bhramasi vṛthā bhavamarubhūmau virasāyām
bhaja bhaja lakṣmīnarasimhānaghapadasarasijamakarandam || 2 ||

ākṛtisāmyācchālmalikusume sthalanalinatvabhramamakaroh
gandharasāviha kimu vidyete viphalam bhrāmyasi bhṛśavirase 'smin |
cetobhṛṅga bhramasi vṛthā bhavamarubhūmau virasāyām
bhaja bhaja lakṣmīnarasimhānaghapadasarasijamakarandam || 3 ||

srakcandanavanitādīnviṣayānsukhadānmatvā tatra viharase
gandhaphalīsadrśā nanu te'mī bhogānantaraduḥkhakṛtaḥ syuḥ |
cetobhṛṅga bhramasi vṛthā bhavamarubhūmau virasāyām
bhaja bhaja lakṣmīnarasimhānaghapadasarasijamakarandam || 4 ||

tava hitamekaṁ vacanaṁ vaksye śṛṇu sukhakāmo yadi satataṁ
svapne drṣṭaṁ sakalam hi mṛṣā jāgrati ca smara tadvaditi |
cetobhṛṅga bhramasi vṛthā bhavamarubhūmau virasāyām
bhaja bhaja lakṣmīnarasimhānaghapadasarasijamakarandam || 5 ||