The teachings of the guru dispel even the densest of darkness (ignorance) just as the rising moon. Just like the onset of old age (maturity) converts the darkness of the hair white (whiteness stands for purity), so also the teachings make the turbulent sense organs pure by making them calm. They constitute a bath sans water that washes away all the (internal) impurities; they confer maturity (respectfulness) without the grey hair and other such disfigurements that mark onset of the old age; they make one weighty without the defect of obesity; they are adornments to the ears not made of artificial golden ornaments; they illumine without light; they awaken without disturbing or upsetting one. Now let us study the verses proper.

गुरुव्यङ्कमः ।
शरीरः सुरुषः तथा वा कल्त्रः यशश्वारः विश्व सन्तानः मेलुत्यः ।
मनस्त्रसः लगने गुरोरित्रश्चः तत: कि तत: कि तत: कि तत: किम् ॥
शरीरः = the body. सुरुषः = handsome. तथा वा = as also. कल्त्रः = the wife (beautiful). यशश्वारः = fame. चार्च विश्व = agreeable and pleasing. सन्तानः = wealth. मेलुत्यः comparable to Meru the golden mountain. गुरोरित्र = guru’s. अझिप्रशी = lotus like foot. मनस्त्र = the mind. न लगने वेः = if not attached. तत: किम् = then what is the use? तत: किम् = then what is the use? तत: किम् = then what is the use? तत: किम् = then what is the use? Meaning of the verse. One may be blessed with a handsome body, beautiful wife, great fame and immense wealth. But what is the use of these things if one’s mind is not attached to the lotus like foot of the guru? The implication is that they are of no use. The repetition of the question “what is the use?” four times stresses the point. The second line is the same in all the eight verses.

कल्त्रः धनः पुरुप्रोचादिसः सर्वं गृहं वान्वः: सर्वं मेलुत्यः जातः ।
मनस्त्रसः लगने गुरोरित्रश्चः तत: कि तत: कि तत: कि तत: किम् ॥ ॥
कल्त्रः = wife. धनः = wealth. पुरुप्रोचादिसः = son, grandson and all that. गृहं = house. वान्वः: = relatives. सर्वं एतिधः = all these that are available. Second line is same as in verse No. 1. Meaning of the verse. One may be having wife, wealth, son, grandson, relatives etc. But what is the use of these things if one’s mind is not attached to the lotus like foot of the guru? In the above two verses wife (husband included), children and money have been mentioned twice. This is because one is strongly attached to them. Attachment follows desire. Desire is for something one does not have. One desires to have something because one feels that thing will give happiness, comfort or security. Such things include wealth, family, friends, house etc. Having got them one holds on to them. This is called attachment. The utmost attachment is, of course for one’s body. Every one wants the body to remain ever young and to last for ever - knowing very well that this wish is unnatural and so can never be had. Scriptures talk of three attachments; one towards the husband/wife, one towards the children and lastly the one towards wealth. The attachment, when it grows strong and becomes intense clouds one’s judgement and makes one to act in unpredictable ways. Prahlada had talked about attachment. He said that it is impossible for a person who has not got control over his senses to free himself from the attachment to his home. BH(7-6-9).

The attachment to money, for example, can make one to sacrifice even one’s life for it. He had given three examples - of a thief, a soldier and a merchant.

The thief will not hesitate to commit a murder or risk his own life to get at money. He may try to snatch a
gold chain from the neck of a child and if necessary be ready to strangle the child to take the chain. For him a golden chain is more valuable than the life of a child. Next, a solder goes to the battle and stakes his life - only to earn some money in return. Lastly, a merchant will take many risks and go to strange far off places to earn money.

The Vedas have six members that help in gaining liberation. Brahtruhari also says this in his Vairagaya Satakam. He asks what is the use of studying Vedic words, the skill in expounding the scriptures, and likewise erudition - these may bring in some money or fame and as a result some joy to the scholar; but they are of no use in gaining liberation. Works prescribed by the scriptures when properly done lead to the purification of the mind.
Knowledge can be had only by enquiry under the guidance of the guru. Sri Sankaracharya says: VC(11) चिन्तन्यत्म शुद्धे कर्म न वस्तुपालये। वस्तुसिद्धिविविधान न फिरित्कर्मकोटिदिनः॥

Meaning of the verse. One may be respected in his own country as well as in other countries. He may also be known to be a follower of duties as prescribed by tradition. But what is the use of these things if one’s mind is not attached to the lotus like foot of the guru?

क्षामामध्ये भूपर्मालबृद्धे: सदा सेवित यस्य पादार्थविन्दम्।
मनस्च लगनं गुरुरारिद्रिष्टाय ततः: कि तत: कि तत: कि तत: किम्॥ ५॥

क्षामामध्ये = in this great globe/earth. भूपर्मालबृद्धे = by many kings and rulers. सदा सेवित = always served, attended. यस्य पादार्थविन्दम् = whose lotus foot. Second line same as in verse No.1. One may be very great and exalted. Kings may wait at his feet. But wise men do not attach any importance to such a person if he carries only a crown and not knowledge of Self on his head. Sri Vedanta Desika refers to kings who are puffed up with pride with contempt in his Vairagya panchakam. He says a king never rules over the entire world but only a small portion of it. But even this is enough to make him proud. Sri Desika says he does not care for them but is determined to worship the Lord who, in return for a handful of pounded rice, made Kuchela rich as Kubera himself.

श्रीयोक्षोथतांपालन-कलाद्विरागवर्णन-श्रृंखलानर्मन्म चाँटुर्चना धन्यानं न मन्यामहे।
देव सेवितेव निषिद्धमहे योद्धो दयालुः पुरा
दानामुक्क्तमुच्च कुचलमुनये दत्ते स्म वितेशताम्॥

Bhartruhari says the same thing in his Vairagya Satakam. This verse is addressed by a yati or sanyasi (one who has renounced the world) to a king. The yati speaks of the vanity of the king’s possessions, and declares that a yati is greater than a king. The reason is that a king may be rich in wealth but the yati is rich in wisdom acquiring at the feet of his preceptor.

तवं राजा वर्माल्पासितगुरुमुद्धसामानीन्द्रता:
स्मातत्वं विभवेष्यासि कवयो दिशु प्रतन्यन्ति न।
दत्तं मानवनातित्रमुभूतोपर्यावृत्तां
यवस्मातु पराभुक्तदेवस्य वस्मयकालातो स्मृहाः॥

The yati says that if the king chooses to be cold towards him, he too is perfectly indifferent towards the king! Meaning of the verse. One may be very powerful and kings may wait at his feet. But what is the use of these things if one’s mind is not attached to the lotus like foot of the guru?

यो ते गतं दिश्य दानप्रतापाः जगहसतु सर्वं करेन यत्त्वसादाः।
मनस्च लगनं गुरुराऽरिद्रिष्टाय ततः: कि तत: कि तत: कि तत: किम्॥ ६॥

यो = my fame. दानप्रतापाः = by the glory of the gifts. दिश्य = in all directions. गतं = gone or is spread. यत्त्वसादाः = by whose favour or condescension. सर्वं जगहसतु = all the things in this world. करेन = in hand. Second line as in verse No. 1. The same idea as in the previous couple of verses is restated for emphasis. Meaning of the verse. One may claim that by his charities and gifts his fame has spread in all directions and nothing in this world is not obtainable by him. But what is the use of these things if one’s mind is not attached to the lotus like foot of the guru? So far the poet has been talking of a person who has attachment to wealth, home, family, fame etc. In the next two verses he says that what is said is equally applicable to one who claims to have shed such attachments.

न भोगे न योगे न वा वाजिराजी न कन्तामुखे नैव विचेषु विचत्तम्।
मनस्च लगनं गुरुराऽरिद्रिष्टाय ततः: कि तत: कि तत: कि तत: किम्॥ ७॥

चित्तं = (my) mind is not in enjoying sensuous pleasures. न वा वाजिराजी =not in either
horses or in being a king. न कान्तामुखे = not in (looking at) my wife’s face; (ie), not having attachment
to wife, child, and other members of the family. नेत्र विलेपु = never in wealth. Even if one makes such a
claim; which implies that he has got detachment, what is the use of this if one’s mind is not attached to
the lotus like foot of the guru?

Meaning of the verse. Even if one has developed intense aversion to worldly possessions and relations,
such a detachment is of no use if one’s mind is not attached to the lotus like foot of the guru?

अरण्ये न वा स्वस्य गेहे न कार्यं न देहे मनो वतते मे त्वन्यायं ।
मनवेश्य लगन्म गुरौर्भिप्रभे तत: क्ष मत: क्ष क्ष मत: किम् ॥ ५॥
मे मन: = my mind. न वतते = does not dwell on. अरण्ये = (living in the) forest or वा स्वस्य गेहे =
(living in) my own house. न कार्यं = not in indulging in prescribed activities. न देहे = or my body. तु अनंताः = not in invaluable or priceless things. Second line as in verse No.1. Meaning of the verse. Even
if one claims that his mind is not attached to forests, or house, or his own body or even wealth such a
detachment is of no use if one’s mind is not attached to the lotus like foot of the guru? Now the poet
concludes after mentioning the पितामही: or benefit of reciting the poem. They are stated so that one
will develop deep interest in studying the poem, mull over the contents and in due course accept and act
on them (ie.) develop devotion to his guru. This devotion will, in due course bear fruit.

गुरोप्रणयं य: पठेऽपृथावेहि यति पुरुषोपरिक्षित्राधाराय च गेही ।
वाच्यं ज्ञानितताय पदं ब्रह्मसंस्कृतवक्ये मनो स्वस्य लगन्म ॥ ९॥
गुरो: अश्के = the composition consisting of eight verses on the guru. पुष्पपेन्द्री = one who has done
meritotious deeds. य: = if he reads. यति: = be he a sanyasi (ascetic). भूषण: = a king. ब्रह्मचारी =
a student studying under a teacher. च गेही = or a householder. He will लभेतु = get. वाच्यं =
desired goal. ब्रह्मसंस्कृतवक्ये = in the teachings of the guru. स्वस्य = whose. मनः = mind. लगन्म = is attached. Meaning of the verse. Any one whose mind dwells on
the teaching’s of his guru, be he a king or an ascetic or a bachelor who is studying or a householder reads
these verses regularly he will, by the grace of his guru, get his wishes fulfilled in this world and also attain
the highest goal known as moksha.

CONCLUSION. The human birth is rare. One gets it after many inferior births as birds, animals, insects etc. Such inferior births are meant solely for reaping the consequence of their past deeds. One who has
got such a birth cannot make any conscious effort to gain spiritual progress. Only the one who has
been blessed with a human birth has the discrimination to distinguish between what is good for him and
what is not; what is temporary and what is permanent. Having found this, he alone (not the animals,
insects or birds) can set his goal and make efforts to get at it. In this the Lord has been very kind to give
us scriptures that discuss about the goals. He has also sent us many acharyas who, out of immense mercy,
talked at great length on this subject and answered every possible question one may have. It is upto us
to study them and make the best of the precious human life. If we were to miss the chance we cannot say
with certainty what our next birth will be. The Kenopanishad (2-5) says that if one fails to make a sincere
attempt to attain the goal of life he makes a grave error. The loss is inestimable.

इन्द्र चेरवेदीदयथ सत्यस्मस्त च चेतिश्रवद्यवेदिमात्रति विन्यंशः ॥

Thus the only way to make our life meaningful (that is to avoid sorrow and miseries) is to pursue
the spiritual path in this life itself with the guidance of a guru. One has to hold on to his teachings with
absolute faith and serve him sincerely knowing he is the very personification of the Lord.

॥ ३५ तत्तत् ॥

Written and encoded by N. Balasubramanian bbalu at satyam.net.in