

Vedanshi

The part of the sacred knowledge

He is truly a yogi who, on this earth and up to the very time of death, is able to master every impulse of desire and wrath. He is a happy man!

Chapter 5, Verse 23; Bhagavad Gita

A Monthly Newsletter

Issue No 40: April 2017

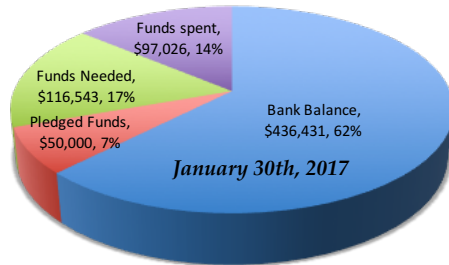
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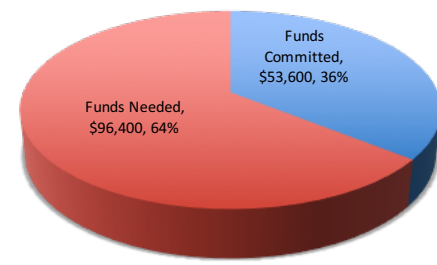


Temple - Fundraising Campaign

Estimated Construction Cost + Deities : \$700,000



Operating Cost Estimate : \$150,000



SHSK Temple Upcoming Events

Annual General Body Meeting - April 23rd

Guru Purnima - July 9th

Krishna Janmashtami - August 15th

Ganesh Chaturthi - August 25th

More details of the event will be emailed

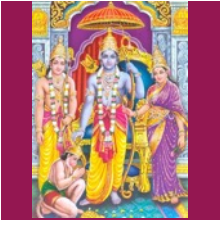
Temple Update

Temple elevation complete, soon to be followed by plumbing and electrical pipe layout and then foundation. Weekly temple updates are posted in Facebook and Whatsapp. We are actively looking for a priest for our temple and hopefully hire the priest by August, 2017. We sincerely request all SHSK supporters to contribute towards annual operating cost and commit the same for few coming years till the temple gets established. You can reach the fundraising committee through shskendra@gmail.com.

Presiding Deities

Balaji, Lakshmi, Shiva Ling, Durga, Ganesha, Radha Krishna, Ram Parivar, Subramaniya Parivar, Saraswati and Hanuman

Sita Ram



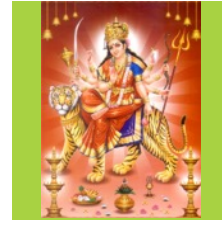
Ganesh



Krishna



Durga



Shiva



The story of Garuda

The race of snakes trace their origins to Kadru, the wife of rishi Kashyapa. Kadru bore a thousand snakes for her sons through the grace of the muni. Kadru also had a sister by the name Vinata, who was also married to Kashyapa. Vinata had a son by the name Aruna, who ended up becoming the Sun's charioteer.

One day, the sisters beheld the celestial white horse Uchhaishrava flying in the sky. They entered into a wager about the color of the horse's tail. Vinata claimed that it would be white, while Kadru bet that the white horse had a black tail. They agreed that the loser of the wager would spend her life in servitude to the other sibling. Deciding to ascertain the color of the tail the next day, the sisters returned home.

At home, Kadru requested her sons (snakes) to seek the horse overnight and attach themselves to the tail so that it would appear black during inspection. The snakes refused. Kadru cursed them and declared that they would be burnt in the fire of the yagna conducted by King Janamejaya. Terrified by this curse, the snakes decided to appease her and attached themselves to Uchhaishravas' tail.

The next day the sisters went to inspect horse. Observing a black tail, Vinata accepted defeat and started serving Kadru.

After a while, Vinata bore a winged son. He was none other than the King of birds, Garuda. The snakes would task Garuda with chores, and Vinata would ask her son to duly oblige. Garuda wondered why he had to bide by the orders of the snakes. He soon learnt that his mother was spending her life in servitude due to a lost wager.

Wanting to set her free, Garuda went to the snakes and put forth his request. The snakes agreed to free his mother, provided Garuda fetched them a pot of divine nectar (Amrita) in return.

Garuda then embarked on an adventurous quest. As per the advise of his mother, he first reached an island and fed on Nishadas (a tribe of fishermen) living in that place (Garuda did not have any food sanctioned at that time by the Creator). He then preyed upon a vengeful and monstrous pair of an elephant and a tortoise. In the process, he also saved a group of Valakhilya rishis falling upside down from the branches of a huge banyan tree. During this time, he met his father Kashyapa who was then meditating in the woods and received his blessings.



Later, he proceeded to claim the nectar of immortality from the celestials. A fierce battle ensued, where Garuda defeated Indra, Sadhyas, Gandharvas, Vasus, Rudras, Aswin twins and Yakshas. Garuda then doused a huge column of fire on his path, before entering the place where the Amrita was guarded.

The nectar was guarded by a spinning wheel-like device intended to cut any intruder to pieces. Garuda assumed a miniature form and entered the device. He then came across two fiery snakes, whom he cut into pieces and successfully claimed the pot of elixir.

Garuda, without consuming even a drop of nectar, rushed back to the abode of the Nagas. Observing his selfless act, Vishnu became appeased. He appeared before the bird and offered him a boon of his choice. Garuda asked for immortality and also an eternal position above the Lord (in his flag). Vishnu agreed. Garuda too offered Vishnu a boon in return, and the Lord hence called for Garuda to become his vehicle. Garuda acquiesced, and subsequently took to the skies.

Indra, observing Garuda flying with great speed, hurled his Vajra weapon towards the bird. Garuda, despite being struck with the weapon, smiled and told Indra in polite words, "O King of the Devas. I respect the rishi (Dadichi) from whose backbone this Vajra weapon was made; I respect you too. To honor this, I will shed a single feather. But know that I have not felt any pain due to this weapon". Saying this Garuda dropped a single feather. Beholding this act and seeing the beautiful feather,

all the creatures became excited, and said, "Let this bird of beautiful feather be called 'Suparna' (one of fair feathers)".

Indra, realizing the bird's greatness, sought Garuda's friendship and asked him not to share the nectar with anyone. Garuda replied, "O King, I am taking this to my destination for a reason. Once I deliver this, you can swiftly come and take this away."

Indra agreed, and offered Garuda a boon. Remembering the deceitful acts of the snakes that led to his mother's slavery, Garuda said, "Let the snakes become my food". Indra said "So be it".

Upon reaching the destination, Garuda placed the nectar on kusa (darbha) grass. He told the snakes to take their purifying bath & auspicious rites before consuming the nectar. He also asked them to liberate his mother. The snakes agreed. When they stepped away for their bath, Indra swiftly took back the pot of nectar.

The snakes came back and saw the pot missing. Thinking that drops of nectar may have come into contact with the kusa grass, they started licking the grass. The sharpness of the blades of grass cut their tongues due to which the organ acquired a forked shape. In addition, due to the contact with Amrita, the kusa grass became sacred from that time.

(Source: Adi Parva, Chapters 16 to 34)

<https://jayarama.wordpress.com>

April-May 2017 Dates

Based on Lafayette, Louisiana, US Time

13 Thursday	Puthandu, Mesha Sankranti
22 Saturday	Varuthini Ekadashi
28 Friday	Parashurama Jayanti, Akshaya Tritiya
30 Sunday	Shankara Jayanti
01 Monday	Ganga Saptami
03 Wednesday	Sita Navami
06 Saturday	Mohini Ekadashi
08 Monday	Narasimha Jayanti

For more details please refer DrikPanchang.com

The Concept of Advaita Vedanta

Advaita Vedanta refers to the non-dualistic school of Hindu philosophy, which is derived mostly from the Upanishads and elaborated in detail by eminent scholars like Gaudapada and Sri Adishankaracharya. Dvaita means duality, and Advaita means nonduality. In simple terms, Advaita means absence of the duality between subject and object. In our wakeful consciousness we experience duality, but in deep sleep only nonduality.

Advaita school believes that Brahman is the one and only reality and everything else is a mere appearance, projection, formation or illusion. One of the most common examples used to describe the state is momentarily seeing a snake in a rope when it is lying in the darkness. The snake is an illusion, and the rope is the reality. In the same manner the world appears in the mind as a formation over the Self.

The school also believes that Atman, the individual self, has no separate existence of its own. It is but a projection or reflection of Brahman only in each being. A jiva is deluded soul by egoism, desires, and other impurities and thereby experiences duality and separation. Because of it each being is bound to the cycle of births and deaths and the laws of karma as long and remains so until liberation is achieved.

Brahman is real, but the world in which we live is a mere illusion, like a mirage. It appears in our consciousness because of the activity of the mind and the senses. Since we totally depend upon them, we do not perceive Brahman, the ultimate reality, who is hidden in all. When they are fully withdrawn and made silent through detachment, purity and renunciation, one can see the Supreme Self hidden in all and attain liberation.

Advaita Vedanta believes that an enlightened guru, having the knowledge of both the scriptures and Brahman, is indispensable for anyone seeking salvation. Mandukya Karika of Gaudapada is considered to be the first available treatise on Advaita Vedanta, while the monumental works of Shankaracharya constitute its core literature. Successive generations of scholars enriched the school of Advaita through their teachings and scholarly works. Advaita school also forms part of Vaishnavism, Saivism and Shaktism under different names.

A few important concepts of Advaita Vedanta are presented below.

Sadhana Chatusthayam

Sadhana Chatusthayam means the tetrad which are imperative for spiritual practice and liberation. The following four sets of qualifications are considered essential to achieve salvation, which each aspirant is expected to cultivate.



1. **Nityanitya vastu viveka:** The ability to discriminate between what is eternal (nitya) and what is temporary (anitya). The absence of it is responsible for the delusion.
2. **Ihamutrartha phala bhoga viraga:** Disinterestedness in enjoying the fruit of one's actions and sense objects here and here after. This will arrest the continuation and formation of karma.
3. **Sama adi satka sampatti:** Qualities such as sama (control of internal sense organs), dama (control of external sense organs), uparati (abstinence), titiksha (quietness), sraddha (sincerity and faith) and samadhana. They are important for self-transformation and the predominance of sattva, without which one cannot be free from the triple impurities of egoism, attachments and delusion.
4. **Mumukhatva:** Intense aspiration for salvation. It arises mainly due to the good works (karma) in the past. According to the Bhagavadgita only after repeated births a person feels a strong drive to achieve salvation and turns to the path of salvation.

Pramanas

They are the standards of ascertaining right knowledge, truth, or valid knowledge. In this world duality it is very difficult to know which is right knowledge and which is reliable for salvation or to ascertain truth. Advaita Vedanta recognizes six Pramanas, of which three were proposed by Shankaracharya and three by his followers. They are as stated below.

1. **Pratyaksha:** knowledge that comes through perception. This is objective knowledge which is experienced directly either through the senses or in deeper states of consciousness.

2. **Anumana:** knowledge that comes by means of inference. This is speculative knowledge based upon supposition or belief.
3. **Upamana:** Knowledge that comes by means of analogy, comparison and contrasting. This is relational knowledge.
4. **Arthapatti:** knowledge obtained by meaningful assumptions based on common sense and previous experience. This is hypothetical knowledge.
5. **Anupalabdh:** Knowledge gained through negation.
6. **Agama:** Knowledge that comes through study of scriptures. This is pure theoretical knowledge.

Theory of Causation

Advaita Vedanta recognizes two forms of causation, the material cause and the instrumental cause. According to the school, Brahman is both the material and instrumental cause of creation. In other words, Brahman provides not only the will and direction but also the material and energy needed to manifest the things, beings and worlds. Brahman is both Purusha (Self) and Prakriti (Nature). This is in contrast to some schools of Hindu philosophy, which argue that Brahman is the instrumental cause while Prakriti or nature is the material cause.

Cause and Effect:

Adi Shankaracharya proposed that each cause was hidden in its every effect, whereas the opposite was not true. In other words, the seed is hidden in the tree that produces it. While a cause is not different from the effect it produces, the same cannot be argued in case of effect in relation to its cause. A cause is always part of the effect, hidden within it and so is not different from it. Brahman is the cause of all creation. So the world is real only because Brahman, who is its cause, is hidden in it and inseparable from it. From this perspective the world becomes an illusion because it disappears when the Self or Brahman is withdrawn from it. The world exists when you, the cause, are present in your mind. When you, the cause, withdraw from it, the world disappears. Shankaracharya propounded the theory of causation (vivartavada). According to it an effect is an outward projection of cause and hence not real. This is in contrast to the parinamavada concept according to which an effect is an evolution or transformation of cause and hence as real as the cause itself.

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<http://sanatanift.org/shsk-library/>



Hanuman Jayanti Celebrations in Lafayette - April 9th, 2017

The Concept of Advaita Vedanta - Continued

The World

According to Advaita, the world is unreal, not because it does not exist, but because it exists only so long as the Self is present in the awareness as the subject. When the Self is withdrawn from the consciousness, the world disappears. Besides it is ever changing, unstable, impermanent and subject to destruction and decay. It is an appearance, projection of God, like a mirage, or a mistaken reality. Our senses take it for granted whereby we mistakenly consider it real and permanent. The world exists because of our perception of duality and will disappear when we enter the state of non-duality or pure subjectivity, which is the state of the Self. When we overcome the illusion and develop detachment from the sense objects we enter that state of pure awareness where the duality between subject and object, or the knower and known simply vanishes and the Self alone remains.

Maya

According to Advaita Vedanta the world is an illusion or maya, which is caused by the veiling power of Brahman. It is unreal or illusory in an absolute sense. Since it is a projection of God's consciousness, it disappears when it is withdrawn. The veiling is called avarna and the projection viksepa. Followers of Advaita argue that maya is neither real nor unreal, but indeterminate or indescribably (anirvachaniyam) because it cannot be both at the same time.



Brahman and Atman

Brahman is the supreme, absolute and eternal reality. It is the only truth, the cause of all, and the only stable and permanent reality. Atman is Brahman, perceived as individual self, the hidden reality, in all aspects of creation. There is no difference between the two. When the Self overcomes its veiling, it experiences non-duality (Advaita anubhava) of existence and realizes its non-difference from the Absolute. Brahman in his absolute state is without qualities and attributes. However, in our relative state we perceive him to be having certain attributes and refer to him as Isvara, the lord of the universe. In the ultimate sense, Isvara is also not the cause, but only an effect or a reflection of Brahman in the quality of Sattva.

Jayaram V

www.hinduwebsite.com

Adi Shankaracharya Jayanti

April 30th (Sunday), 2017

1229th Birth Anniversary of
Adi Shankaracharya

Adi Shankaracharya Jayanti is observed as birth anniversary of Indian Guru and philosopher Adi Shankara. Adi Shankara was born in Kalady which is situated in Kerala during 788 C.E. and he was disappeared at young age of 32 in year 820 C.E.

Adi Shankaracharya Jayanti is observed on Panchami Tithi during Shukla Paksha of Vaishakha month and currently falls between April and May. Shankaracharya consolidated the doctrine of Advaita Vedanta (अद्वैत वेदान्त) and revived it at a time when Hindu culture was on decline.

Adi Shankara, along with Madhava and Ramanuja, was instrumental in the revival of Hinduism. These three teachers formed the doctrines that are followed by their respective sects even today. They have been the most important figures in the recent history of Hindu philosophy.

- www.drikpanchang.com

Thank you for your support and blessings.
Srinivasan Ambatipati, Editor