

Talk 1

A man was talking to his friend and said, “my grandmother at the age of 60 was advised by her doctor to walk 2 miles per day. She is ninety years old now and we don’t know where she is.” Wonderful is the grandmother, of course, but wonderful is that grandson too, who never bothered to find out where she is!

This is our story too!

How? That lady went for thirty years, but janma after janma we are going away from our home and we don’t know where we are! Our sense organs are made to see the whole world of sound, taste, colour, touch and form. Our mind (manovṛtti) goes with them like the grandmother. The intellect is like the grandson, who never enquires – O mind, where are you and what are you doing?

Isn’t this our case?

The world of objects is so fascinating and enchanting, glamorous and glittering that we go on and on.... whereon? No idea!

These modern gadgets, like cell phone, internet and applications like Twitter, Facebook etc..., they are not helping our case at all. The industrial, political and economic world is taking us further and further away. It has reached a point where many people have lost touch with Reality. When someone becomes a mental patient, we say that he is hallucinating or deluding himself etc.,

Are we any better?

We want to remain in touch all the time with this world and with our relatives/friends/business circle and we can’t afford to miss a single call on the phone. If we can’t use our cell phone on the flight we feel miserable. **We want to remain in touch with the world while we are losing touch with the Reality and the reality of our own Self.**

Another thing has come up. Virtual reality. We are not even living in the empirical world of reality, but in a virtual world. Little children onwards, everyone is lost in these virtual games to the point of becoming an addiction. Variety of these video games are there. An old man was sitting next to me on the plane and I thought that he may be reading something on Kindle etc., but I was surprised to see that he was actually playing a game; some kind of race car game in which he was completely absorbed.

Virtual reality, artificial intelligence, robot! We don’t want to do anything. Our minds are empty and we don’t know what to do with the time we have. Do you know, **time moves in one direction and our memory in the other direction**! We don’t know what to do with our time and we don’t know



what to do with our faculties, talents, opportunities because we are lost in some world. Many times, we don't even realise we are lost. If we realise we are lost, at least we can enquire....!

One man was driving with his wife. He was going on and on and didn't want to admit that he was lost. His wife suggested taking help from someone to find the way. But he refused and said that he would figure it out. This is called male ego. He feels that his wife doesn't know anything...That means she knows better, but he won't listen. Presently, he reached a crossroad. Finally, he decided to ask a man he spotted sitting under a tree. He enquired, where does this straight road go to..... The man said he did not know. He then queried as to where the other road led to and the answer was again in the negative. What about left, he persisted. The man said, I left it long ago, I don't know where it leads to now.

The man became irritated and snapped : "you are a fool!" He said "maybe, but at least I am not lost! You are very wise and intelligent, but you are lost, I am not lost"

If we realize we have lost the way, at least we can enquire. But our case is such, we don't even know where we are, so that we can enquire how far we are from home.

The upaniṣad also has such an example, where the person is lost and it is said, ācāryavān puruṣo veda. He has to enquire and some teacher has to guide and give many signposts. If you follow that, you can reach home.

Therefore, this series of talks is called '**journey back home**'. Nowadays, we have a device called GPS – global positioning system. I call it 'Guru's positioning system', because only the guru can guide us. If you are lost in the outside world, it can give you directions. Here it is a different journey inside. Where are we?

Journey back home with the help of the GPS of Sādhanā Panchakam of Bhagavan Adi Shankaracharya. Our great Guru!

It is possible only when we realize we are lost.

Sometimes we tag behind the car in front when we are unsure of the way. But that car has a bumper which says, do not follow me, I am also lost!

Who can take us back home? It is not just a billion-dollar question, nay it is priceless, as we have to reach home.

When we reach home, we will say 'Home sweet Home'. What is that home?

Here is this beautiful small booklet, because there is some commentary too. People have to take directions, see the map.... now GPS makes it easy as far as the outer journey is concerned. Find your way just sitting!



This small booklet is called **sādhanā pañcakam** (pañcakam = a bunch of five verses).

Suppose a person asks, what does Vedanta teach, what are the spiritual practices, what do I have to realize....etc., and suppose someone gives huge books with commentary on the Bhagavad Gitā and all ten Upaniṣads and Brahmasutra says - "now read!"

The sādhaka, who has just started his enquiry will have no idea at all and given such books, he will just faint.

Bhagavān Ādi Śaṁkarācārya knew people will get intimidated and thus instructed us in this set of five verses exactly what the beginner needs to know and do.

If someone wants an introduction to Vedānta and all the sādhanā mārga, this booklet is very good. For those who start following the journey back home, these sādhanās are like signposts. We might have some doubt in between whether we are on the right track. This can happen. Whenever directions are given we sometimes wonder if we are going in the right direction? When that happens, we should refer to this. And if you are following the directions, then you are safe, and you are on the right path!

Therefore, for the beginner who does not know anything, this is a great introductory book. For someone doing some sādhanā and has some doubts, then if he refers to this book it would be very helpful to that person.

And for students who study in great detail, sometimes they also need something which will summarise the whole thing. Because you cannot keep reading big books all the time. Therefore, advanced students also can refer to this and know, since everything is given in a nutshell!

This Vedantic booklet, **sādhanā pañcakam has** five ślokas giving spiritual **sādhanās** or signposts or the way back home. Follow this and you will reach home, 'The Real Home'! It is a sādhanā path. The beauty of this book is that Bhagavān is not speaking the language of commandments – Thou shalt do this and thou shalt not do that! That is called ādeśa or order or command. The sādhanās are pointing out the way. It is a book of instructions or upadeśa. Therefore this book is also known as upadeśa pañcakam. People are not ordered or commanded here. But here people are very nicely advised that if you really want to reach home, you should do this and then you should do this. People normally don't like it when they are ordered. There is a natural tendency to revolt.

Bhagavan (Ādi Śaṁkarācārya) has beautifully said it in Vivekacūḍāmaṇi

mokṣasya kāṁkṣā yadi vai tavāsti
tyajātidūrādviṣayānviṣaṁ yathā |
pīyūṣavattoṣadayākṣamārjava
praśāntidāntīrbhaja nityamādarāt || 82 ||



In the above verse, he neither commands nor orders. It is a gentle advise – if you want mokṣa then follow this, but if you don't want it, then live as you are living. There is no compulsion or force.

This is sometimes also called **sopāna pañcakam**. Sopāna means steps. mokṣa or mukti is a lofty goal, and therefore we need a staircase...or stepping stones, but steps which are easy to climb. **Anyone can follow these steps to realization** or pathway back to your home or advise for spiritual seekers.

There are five ślokas and each śloka has 8 sādhanas or instructions to follow and thus total 40 instructions. There are 40 steps or sādhanas to reach home.

To follow these instructions, a Guru is required.

The sādhanā is required when there is a sādhya to be accomplished. We know that no goal can be achieved without the proper or right means (*sādhanaṁ vinā sādhyaṁ na prāpyate*). sādhyaṁ means goal or whatever we want to accomplish. And it cannot be accomplished without the means. But any and every means cannot take you there. Appropriate means have to be adopted according to the goal. It is true that without sādhan, the sādhya (goal) cannot be reached. But the nature of the sādhan (meams) depends upon the nature of the goal. But there has to be a person aspiring to reach that goal. There is a goal pointed and the means pointed, but if there is no one then it is pointless. There has to be a third element called the sādhakaḥ, a spritual seeker, who wants to reach that goal, of reaching home, the real home. The means are given here. But we also have to make use of these means (sādhan) and that is called sādhanā. We have to do sādhanā with the sādhan that is given.

For example, if I want to become a great violinist, a violin is required. A mere possession of the violin, can at best make me a violin carrier or owner of the violin but not a violinist without the sādhanā or practice. The means to play the music is there and the practice of the means is sādhanā.

If this text was called sādhan pañcakam, then it would be giving the means. But when you practice, then it is called sādhanā. The seeker is making use of the sādhan (means) and then reaches the goal.

These instructions are given in this small booklet so that none may get frightened. A huge book will only serve as a pillow.

Bhagavan Śaṁkarācārya thus knows what should be given.

The forty steps or instructions might appear too many....for a seeker, these can be reduced.

In our spiritual life, to reach our home, or realization of the Self or attainment of *mokṣa*, the two most important qualities are: purity of mind (*cittaśuddhi)* and clarity of knowledge (*tattvajñānadṛṣṭi* or vision of truth).



Our goal is that vision of Truth, where purity of mind and clarity of knowledge come together. Then **real**ization of that absolute **Reality** takes place and that is our **real** home.

When you read these forty instructions, you will find that they are either dealing with how to gain that purity or how to gain that knowledge. Thus, when we are told that there are only two steps to reach the goal, we feel very motivated. Purity and Clarity...! How to get purity and clarity? There are the instructions (sādhanā).

When did he write this? We do not know. It is said that once his disciples requested that Bhagavān should give all instructions and sādhanā in brief for everyone. He was karuṇālayam and has given us this.

Param pūjya Gurudev has also written a very brief commentary on this sādhanā pañcakam; his commentary is brief, but when mahatmas write, that brief also has depth.

Tomorrow we will begin the ślokas.