a Tribute to the Motherland

Bharatamata Ashtottaram

(Also Includes Gayatri Mantras and Ekavimsati song)

D.V. Pasupuleti
Acknowledgments

I am very thankful to my gurujii, late Swamy Dayananda Saraswati
for sharing his excitement and enthusiasm when came to know that
I am writing this book; and to all teachers in my life, books like –
A concise encyclopedia of Hinduism (with written permission from
Swami Harshananda of Sri Ramakrishna Math, Bangalore, India, for
whom I am in great debt for using his encyclopedia for the explana-
tions of the Bharatamata ashtottarams). A true history and religion
of India, Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, Brahma Sutras, many
more sacred scriptures and articles.

This book would not have been possible without my wife,
Bhanumathi’s constant support in my endeavors.

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Namaste! This book is about Bharatamata and Hinduism (sanatana dharma). In a nutshell, Hinduism is dharma (universal code of conduct), karma (cause and effect), and punarjanma (rebirth) which is hard-core science and is not based on faith or belief system. Hinduism values are universal and applies to the humanity at large.

Sri Vedavyasa once said, “There is no devotion to GOD without devotion to the mother land.” No human being is considered descent who does not show love towards his mother, mother tongue and motherland; no matter how rich, educated and sophisticated that person claims to be. Patriotism brings harmony and unity among us. We worship gods and goddesses with astottarams and sahasra nāmams, but we have none for our Bharatamata. With devotion and love for our Maatru Bhoomi, and to bring awareness about what real India is, I have made every effort in writing Ashtottaram (108 names), 21 names song (Ekavimsati), and Gayatri mantras, glorifying our Maatru Bhoomi-Bharatamata. Bhoodevi (Bharatamata) is a goddess as per our Vedic tradition and deserve to be recognized and worshipped.

A good idea is worth sharing. A single thought from one person's mind can change the world for good. Nothing gives me more pleasure than sharing these with our Hindus like yourself and it is very important for you and your children to understand the way of our living for thousands of years. Today, Hinduism is construed and misrepresented by other religions and Westerners in the history books and in the classrooms. Knowledge is power, and knowing the facts of our Hindu religion may shed some light on your children's
thinking. With cognitive change only we can reform a person, or country.

India’s wealth and precious jewels were looted and robbed by the foreign invaders, especially the Muslims who destroyed the Hindu temples and built mosques over them, and the British looted valuable diamonds and the most valuable Kohinoor diamond is in the queen’s crown. The foreign invaders include Muslims, Moguls, Mongolians, Greeks, Portuguese, Pharisees, French, and British to mention a few. You cannot imagine how much wealth from India was looted by these invaders who became rich at the expense of India which was left like a sugar cane without sugar after independence on August 15, 1947. Without shame and guilt these Westerners boast how rich and advanced they are and how India is a third-world country. More than one hundred million Indians were brutally slaughtered by these brutal savages over a millennia; just in one day thousands of Indians, including women and children, were shot to death between four compound walls by a British general. Any person with a brain cannot ignore these facts. Where is the outpouring cry by the West about Indians massacre but they only talk about the Jews slaughtered by Hitler and nobody can say anything negative about Jews and immediately it becomes anti-Semitic and the critics harass them on television and social media? If this is not hypocrisy, bigotry, and a double standard, what else is it? India has never occupied any country or looted another nation’s wealth or culture to get rich. It always practiced ahimsa (nonviolence) toward living beings as a virtue. India can proudly declare as the only nation on the earth where millions of Hindus practice vegetarianism.

After independence, Indians rebuilt India with hard work and industrious labor but (a) not by looting other countries wealth by colonization, (b) not by selling oil, (c) not by exporting arsenals and weapons of war to other countries and meddling in their politics with “divide and rule” motto, and (d) not by begging billions of dollars from Western countries in exchange for fake cooperation with the war on homegrown terrorism.

India’s heritage of greatest ancient Vedic wisdom is the key for India’s strength to stand on its legs to become the fastest growing economy in the world, most transparent, democratic and free country on the planet. Also overcoming the bigotry, hypocrisy of the Western countries who constantly try to undermine the rich Hindu heritage and culture with negative propaganda and negative false narrations and spin in their news and ignoring the greatest Hindu religion (sanatana dharma). They mention about Buddhism, which is a small branch and offshoot of Hinduism, and they totally ignore Hinduism because of the fact that all the other religions are borrowed religions and all of them have something in common with Hinduism and probably they feel guilty of plagiarism and bigotry.

My hope and vision is that this will nurture the patriotism in Indians across the globe especially among the children and the younger generations, whose infatuation with the Western culture and materialism is taking them away from our rich culture and sanatana dharma. Patriotism toward our motherland surely will bring unity and harmony among us. In this book I have reemphasized what makes India unique and special among the rest of the 195-plus countries in the world.

Nothing gives me more pleasure, joy, and happiness than presenting this to my fellow Indians across the globe. Please enjoy this book and please share with all of your friends!

Be proud to be a Hindu, Indian and share this message with your families especially with your children, relatives, and friends and ask them to share with other Indians, so on, so on, and so on. Be knowledgeable and successful in life and God bless you! This is a must-have to those who love India and want to share this with the world.

Subham bhooyat (be all auspicious),
D. V. Pasupuleti, MD, FACP, FAANEM
Introduction

Ancient India’s knowledge and tradition were continuous and cumulative. Hinduism and sanatana dharma is not a religion or faith but scientific facts. Hinduism in a nutshell is dharma (universal code of conduct and righteousness), karma (law of cause and effect), and punarjanma (cycle of births and deaths called Samsara). It’s a pity young Indians, especially first- and second-generation youth in India and across the globe know nothing of their vast and rich intellectual heritage. India is perhaps the only civilization of the ancient world that turned knowledge into a goddess. It is not too late to show our bright young Hindu youth that they can still be enriched, stimulated, and inspired.

Hindu youth is infatuated with materialism and Western culture, enjoying the best of both worlds but not the Hindu culture, values, and wisdom. They adopted Western thinking and to do just simple chores at home they are asking their parents “What’s in it for me, what do I gain?” It’s always “me, myself mine and I” type of Western attitude. As children, they obey and follow parents to temples and Indian functions but once they are teenagers, they move away from their own heritage and gets involved with Western ideology.

It’s okay to possess materials, but one should not be possessed by materialism. Science is great for human progress and comforts, but science itself does not give the purpose and meaning of life, which is provided by our Vedas and sanatana dharma.

In Western nations everyone feels proud and loyal to motherland, but sadly patriotism is lacking in Indians. Because of that, India was ruled by foreigners for two millennia and became a house
for Christianity and Islam. Many ancient religions have vanished from the face of the earth because of aggressive proselytization by the Christian and Islamic crusaders. Despite that, our Hinduism sustained because of our ancient Rishis (spiritual scientists) and gurus, who enriched us with wisdom. They have provided us with the knowledge of what humanity is, and through tradition, they passed on the values and virtues from generation to generation, which are universal and apply to every human being irrespective of their race and religion, and these values are eternal and universal.

Knowledge is power (nahi jnaanena sadrusam, nothing is equal to knowledge). With cognitive change only one can bring reform in a society and build a better future.

Our Hindu youth should start feeling proud of their heritage and Hindu wisdom, which promotes values and virtues that are universal.
Sri Bharata Māta Ashtottara
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“Bharata” in Veda mantras, “Bhārata” in Bhagavad Gita are familiar words for every Hindu, which means this word is existent since ancient Vedic times. Our understanding is that the name Bharata varsha came into usage because of the famous ruler Bharata. However, if we look into the history of our country, we realize that there are different legends of how we got the name Bharata.

In Vedas the word Bharat means “ritual fire.” Bharatva ramanatvaaat bharatah means the bearer, sustainer, fire, and who gives pleasure. The eternal dharma in the creation is this fire Agni. This is fire knowledge: Agni.

Bha means light, knowledge, and effulgence; rata means curiosity, relish, and fond of. So Bharata means that we are fond of light and knowledge. That’s why from the ancient times, we offer prayers with water to sun God every morning, before dawn.

A Jnaani and avadhūta by the name of Jada Bharata was the son of Raajarshi-Vṛshabha Yogiiswara. Jada Bharata ruled our land, and in his honor also we might have gotten the names of Bharata Varsha and Bharata Khanda, according to Bhagavata Purana. Prior to that, our land was called Ajanaabha De’sa.
Historically our land was called Bharata because of the youngest brother of Lord Sri Ramachandra, who ruled it for fourteen years.

Last but not the least is the story of famous couple Dushyanta and Sakuntala in Mahābhārata, written by Veda Vyāsa. Their son Bharata (whose original names were Sarvadamana; Douhitra) ruled our country and brought her the name and fame.

As you can see, whatever may be the above reasons, the country we proudly call ours is Bharata Bhoomi.

Ashtottaram 2

Om Veda Bhoomyainamah

(Veda: “that which brings knowledge”)

Vedās were the first bundle of knowledge given to the mankind by God. In Sanskrit, the root “Vid” means “to know.” From this came the word “Veda” meaning “that which provides the knowledge.” Vedās contain humanity, prosperity, progress, protection, and peace. The content in the Vedās is for the whole humanity and is universal. Vedās have no boundaries in regard to place, country, person, caste or creed. Vedās are considered as “Sṛti,” being heard and are divine. Rishis (spiritual scientists), with their intense austerities and during deep meditation, obtained that knowledge and passed on to mankind. Sri Vedavyāsa compiled and codified that knowledge into Rig Veda, Sāma Veda, Yajur Veda, and later addition of Atharvaṇa Veda.

Vedās are truth, light, and air; they provide the way of life for all the humanity. Because they are being heard there is no time period for them and are considered eternal and mother of all scriptures. Vedās are self-revealed to Rishis and don’t belong to one place, person, or religion. Vedās are also called Sṛitis, Āmnayam, Chandhas, Trayi, Swādhyayam, etc.

There are three meanings for each word in Vedās: secular, spiritual, and dhārmic meanings. That’s the reason why the Vedās are also called Trayi, meaning “three.” One who considers Vedās as a means
of knowledge is a theist, and this shows how much respect Vedās earned in our daily spiritual lives.

The former part of the Veda is the ritual portion and the latter part is knowledge portion, which is called Upanishads, and because it is at the end part of the Vedās, it is also called Vedānta. Each Veda has four parts:

1. Mantrās for the worship,
2. Brahmaṇas, ritualistic manuals,
3. Aranyakās, forest treatises used during the contemplative stage of life, and finally
4. Upanishads, vedānta.

The land which has provided us with the supreme knowledge in the form of Vedās is our "Veda Bhoomi."

Ashtottaram 3

Om Jnaana Bhoomyainamah

(Jnaanam: “knowledge about the self, soul, and God”)

Our Brihadaranyakopanishad is instructing us “Om Tamasoma Jyotirgamaya,” every Hindu and Vaidic devotee pray God to lead him from darkness of ignorance to the light of knowledge. “Nahi Jnaanena Sadrusam, Pavitra Mahi Vidyte,” “Jnaanat Eva Mokshah”—these are the words of our vaidic rishis and in Bhagavad Gita, Lord Sri Krishna also said that all yogas are for the sake of Jnaana yoga only and a Jnāani is closest to him. Our spiritual gurus also assert that no power is equal to the power of spiritual knowledge. The actual meaning of “Bharata” is “that one who is very much interested in the knowledge (illumination).” That’s why we, the Hindus, give importance to the knowledge over authority and power. From ancient times our kings and their authority bowed to knowledge and not the other way around.

Wealth that promotes knowledge and knowledge that increases prosperity is the motto of our culture. Our land is the land of knowledge for a Jnāani, for whom there is no fruits of actions and there is no bondage. In Bhagavad Gita, Lord Sri Krishna says that a Jnāani who is a Jeevanmukta (liberated while living) performs his actions without a notion of doership. That means there is no ego involved in his actions like “me, myself, mine and I,” the motto of the younger generations and the Western culture. He performs his actions with
dispassion and detachment. Believing that you are the body, mind, and senses is ignorance and it leads to the cycles of repeated births and deaths, and you change bodies like you discard old and ragged clothes and wear new clothes as long as you believe you are the body and you are the doer. Knowing and experiencing that “you are the divine” is liberation.

The land which is the vehicle and means for the knowledge of the self, “that you are divine and the self is eternal,” is Jnaana Bhoomi, and that is our maatru bhoomi.

Ashtottaram 4

Om Moksha Bhoomyainamah

(Moksha: “liberation from the cycle of birth and death”)

In every religion the scriptures and prophets teach and promise heaven as the ultimate goal of human pursuit. But in our scriptures, it was very clear that going to heaven is only a short stop in the spiritual journey and you enjoy the pleasures and luxuries of heaven till you expend the results of your meritorious actions just like enjoying five-star hotel amenities till you can no longer afford it. According to our sacred texts, getting human birth is the ultimate among the 8.4 million live forms. Our motherland gives opportunity to the human being to work out his good and bad fortunes by following different paths like karma yoga, raja yoga, bhakti yoga, and ultimately jnaana yoga, which exhaust all the karma phala (results of action) as told by Lord Krishna in Bhagavad Gita. So the meaning of liberation means to get out of bondage and the wheel of birth and death, which is the ultimate human pursuit.

The liberated wise jnaani lives the rest of his life like an actor playing his role on the stage. Yogis and rishis helped us through their unselfish service to humanity in removing our ignorance about the true nature of our self and passed on their wisdom and knowledge to us through tradition and heritage. They placed liberation as the ultimate human pursuit and dharma (code of righteousness), artha (wealth), and kama (desire) being the routine pursuits everyone is
after. Mukti, Kaivalya, and Nirvana are the terms used by many philosophers without realizing the true meaning of Moksha. We also hear about the light from the Jiiva (the individual soul) becoming one with the God. All the other paths aid in the purification of the mind, which helps attain that spiritual knowledge.

So, the land which teaches beyond heavenly pursuits and gives the opportunity for liberation is praised none other than “moksha bhoomi.”
There are many meanings for the word “yoga” in Sanskrit. In Sanskrit *yuj samadhau* means “perfect concentration of mind.” If derived from another root, *yujur yoge* means “to unite.” Combining these two sentences, one can say that it stands for concentration of mind which helps the spiritual aspirant to ultimately unite his individual soul (jivatman) with the Supreme Soul (Paramatman). Yoga is a science, however, without understanding its true meaning, this word is often used very loosely for any spiritual discipline, especially in the Western world. The yoga sutras of Sage Patanjali (200 BCE) are world renowned. Based on Svetasvatara Upanishad, Kaivalya Upanishad, Sankhya by Kapila, Ramayana, Bhagavatam, Bhagavad Gita of Lord Sri Krishna, and Uddhava Gita, the Yoga Sastra was written by Sage Patanjali. These are Ashstanga Yoga, eight limbs of Yoga. These are

(1) Yama,
(2) Niyama,
(3) Aasana,
(4) Pranayama,
(5) Pratyahara,
(6) Dhyana,
There are many varieties of yogas. For example,

(a) Abhavayoga,
(b) Amanaskayoga,
(c) Ashtangayoga,
(d) Bhaktiyoga,
(e) Bhavayoga,
(f) Buddhiyoga,
(g) Dhyanayoga,
(h) Hathayoga,
(i) Jnanayoga,
(j) Karmayoga,
(k) Kriyayoga,
(l) Kundaliniyoga,
(m) Layayoga,
(n) Mahayoga,
(o) Mantrayoga,
(p) Nadayoga,
(q) Rajayoga,
(r) Sivayoga,
(s) Sparsayoga,
(t) Tantrayoga,
(u) Tarakayoga, and many more.

In Hindu astrology, the word *yoga* is used in a technical sense to indicate the fourth limb of the *panchanga* or almanac.

Looking at these, we can realize how old and advanced is yoga sastra in our land. When foreigners especially Westerners are learning how to make fire and wrapping animal skins around their loins, Hindus were far advanced in the science of yoga.

*The land which taught the science of yoga to the humanity is deserved to be called “Yoga Bhoomi.”*
where our souls will be tortured in many ways to inflict pain and fear. From ancient times on, Hindus were taught how to be righteous and follow dharma, and there are innumerable ‘sastras and scriptures written about punyam and paapam. The seers and sages spent their lives for the welfare of humanity and encouraged us to perform homams (fire rituals), yajnas, and yagaas (vedic sacrificial rituals) to fulfil our desires like having wealth or children, etc.

There are many swamis, gurus, yogis, saadhus, and aacharyas that walked on our sacred land and lived their lives as an example for us to follow them. Many like Sri ‘Sankaracharya, Ramanujaacharya, Madhvaacharya, Nimbarkaacharya, etc., have restored our sanaatana dharma from the clutches of tyrant and barbaric foreign invaders.

On our punya bhoomi, we have the punya kshetras (pilgrimage temples) like Kaasi, Rame’swaram, Prayāga, Tirumala, Srisailam, Badarinath, Kedaaram, etc; just by visiting them our souls will console with peace and tranquility. Spiritual feelings generate automatically by just glancing at the gods’ images.

So the land which has blessed us with sacred scriptures, temples, and Rishis, to lead us toward good, meritorious deeds resulting in peace and happiness is none other than “Punya Bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 7

Om Tapo Bhoomyainamah

(Tapas: “that which causes suffering”)

The word tapas comes from the root verb tap (santaape, “in the sense of suffering”). Hence, it means any discipline that causes suffering to the body-mind-sense complex. We find the word in the Rigveda; there it is interpreted as penances like krchra and meditation on Hiranyagarbha. It is also used in the Upanishads like the Chaandogya and the Muṇḍaka in the sense of performance of one’s duties and austerities. The other names used for tapas are austerity and penance. Tapas also means following dharma (righteousness) without losing the discipline. The Himalayan Mountains are our lands of tapas. For thousands of years our ancient Rishis performed strict austerities and obtained the knowledge of the self for the welfare of humanity. There is no shortage of Rishis, Yogis, Seers, Sages, Saadhus, Saints, Swaamis on our sacred land which was very conducive to practice tapas. Rishis lived at places like Rishikesh and Haridwaar to fulfill their human pursuits of liberation and achieved their goals and helped the humanity at large without selfishness and greediness which are unfortunately very rampant in the modern world which boasts advanced civilization which is sadly progress in materialism.

The Bhagavadgiita deals with tapas from three angles: ‘sariira (physical), vaanmaya (as pertaining to speech), and maanasa (mental). Honoring and serving gods and holy persons, cleanliness, celibacy,
and nonviolence belong to the first category. Sweet but truthful speech belongs to the second category. Control of mind and purity of emotions are the essential elements of the third.

Because of pollution and contamination mostly by tourists, Rishis are moving deeper and deeper into the forests to perform their austerities. Even though those suitable lands for tapas are still existent, they are becoming fewer and fewer in modern times due to tourism. Hence, thinking that there are no such lands or no such Rishis are existing only shows ignorance on our part. Those such lands are always part of our culture from ancient times. From Himavat and Srisailam mountain ranges to ‘Seshaachalam are a few examples to mention where Sages and Rishis are still living there and performing penances. Because of their power of austerity only our ‘sastras and vanmayas are being protected. The knowledge obtained by these Rishis with their intense austerities is the divine knowledge and they passed on that knowledge to us and it is our responsibility to protect and pass on to the future, younger generations to come.

So our land where Rishis performed intense austerities is deserved to be called “Tapo bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 8

Om Yaaga Bhoomyainamah

(Yaaga: “Vedic sacrifice or ritual; offering”)

You don’t see much difference in between yajnas and yaagas in the Vedas and Upanishads. But during Vedic and Upanishadic times we see detailed descriptions and procedural manuals related to animal sacrifices and yuupa sthambas (sacrificial posts). Later times, nonviolence became the main subject and animal sacrifices were completely abolished in Vedic rituals.

There are many varieties of Yaagas like Aswamedha yaagam, Chatusṭoma, Ukdhyma, Jyothisṭoma, Atiraatram, Abhigidyagam, Viswagidyagam, Aptomyaamam, Rajasooya Yaagam, Maheswara Yaagam, Vaishnava Yaagam, Agnistoma Yaagam, Bahu suvaṃ nakam yaagam, Gomedha yaagam, etc., were mentioned in our scriptures.

It was mentioned in the Ramaaṇam that only a qualified king should perform the Aswamedha yaagam. The whole procedure of this yaagam from the beginning to the end was clearly described in the Krishna Yajurvedam. In ‘Sukla Yajurveda and in Bhaagavatam, it was clearly described what yaagas to be performed and which gods to be worshipped to fulfill particular types of desires.

King Da’saradha performed Putrakameshti Yaagam with intense desire to have sons and was blessed with four children: Rama, Laxmaṇa, Bharata, and ‘Satrughna. Every person who studied Raamaaṇa knows this. It was mentioned in the Vedas that when we
perform the sacrifices, homaas, yajnaas, and yaagas and other rituals with utmost purity of our minds then the gods and deities will fulfill our desires. There are different kinds of verses in the Vedas to praise, to invite, and to worship various deities, gods, and goddesses. We believe that offering oblations and aahutihs to deities, we will be blessed with health and wealth.

Even in this Kali yuga and twenty-first century, we see that in our temples vaidic priests still perform these Vedic rituals like yaagas, yajnaas, and homams to please the gods and goddesses in order to prevent famines and draughts, etc.

_Hence, this is our “Yaaga bhoomi.”_

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**Ashtottaram 9**

**Om Dharma Bhoomyainamah**

(Dharma: “that which supports, sustains or upholds”)

The word _dharma_ is derived from the Sanskrit root verb _dhṛ_ (“to uphold,” “to support,” “to sustain”). As is the case with many other Sanskrit words, it is rather difficult to give an exact translation of the word _dharma_. It has been variously translated as “religion,” “law,” “duty,” “religious ordinance or rite,” “code of conduct,” and so on depending upon the context. There are other names for _dharma_: _Puṇyam, sreyas, sukrutam, Vrsham_, etc. Our scriptures are full of eulogy for dharma. It is the righteousness and universal code of conduct. It is this dharma about which our scriptures and great men have waxed so eloquently throughout our history.

There is a famous quotation in Mahaabhaarata, “Dharma eva hato hanti dharma rakshati rakshitah.” It is dharma that destroys (us) when destroyed; it is dharma again that protects (us) when protected by (us). The other famous sentence by Gaandhaari, “Yato dharmasya tato jayah.” Where there is dharma, there victory also is. Consequently we are advised to accumulate dharma in our lives: “Anityaani ‘sariiraani vibhavo naiva ‘saaśvatah, nityam. Sannihito mtryuh, kartavyo dharma-sangrahah.” (Our) bodies are short-lived, wealth does not last long, death is constantly knocking at our door; (so) accumulation of dharma is a must.
That which upholds this created universe, supports it and sustains it, without which the universe just falls apart, is dharma. Viewed from this standpoint, dharma is none other than God himself. It is what the Upanishads describe as sat or tat, the very essence of one’s being. Dharma has four paadas (legs): sataym, soucham, daya (nonviolence), and tapas (austerity). So dharma is viewed as the foundation of the world and as duties. Whatever conduct our way of life helps us to reveal this fundamental principle in us can also be called dharma, though in a secondary sense. Hence, religious rites, ceremonies, and observances, fixed principles of conduct, privileges, duties, and obligations of a person depending upon his/her stage of life and status in the society, even rules of law, customs, and manners of society—everyone of these can be included under the term dharma.

We belong to the land of Udhishtara (Dharmaraja) who eloquently said, “I don’t follow dharma because it gives me something or I get something from it; I follow dharma because it is my duty.” Hence, what else we can call our land other than “Dharma Bhoomi.”

Vedas are filled with karma kaanda with fire rituals and sacrificial rituals. In Bhagavadgita, Lord Sri Krishna explained about Yajna chakras in the Karma yoga chapter. From the beginning of creation, God advised people to offer oblations to fire God during yajnaas and to the devatas in order to please them so that rains will fall at proper times and cattle will give milk abundantly. He also explained vividly how each one is interdependent on the other. He said, life is born from food, we get food from rains, and rains depend on our svakarmaanushtaana. These yajnaas are based on Vedas and the mantras in the Vedas help the priests to perform these rituals. Vedas are from Bhagavan and God is Vedas. This wheel of Yajnas is also the wheel of the universe (Jagat).

These offerings to the deities is also called Havyam in Sanskrit. The offerings are called Havis. There are four kinds of priests that perform the fire ritual called Hotra, Atharvu, Udgaata, and Brahman. Those four kinds of priests are also called Rutvikkas. The rules and procedure manuals can be found in Mundaka Upanishad and other Upanishads.
However, in Bhagavadgita, Bhagavan Sri Krishna emphasizes that mental worship with concentration and with purity of the mind is superior to the elaborate rituals and external worships. Egoless and dispassionate surrender to God and realizing that “everything is Parabrahman” and seeing God in everything which is the ultimate realization.

No matter what, we perform fire rituals as enjoined by the Vedas for the welfare of humanity at large and our land is deserved to be called “Svakarmaanushaana bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 11

Om Karma Bhoomyainamah

(Karma: “that which is done,” “action and result,” “law of duty”)

*Karma* is one of the most widely used words in Hinduism. Derived from the root-verb *kṛ*—to do, its general meaning is anything that is done. In this sense, it means work, profession, and, duty. However, more often than not, it is used in a technical sense, as an action that binds one to samsaara or transmigratory existence. This type of karma can be accomplished either by the body (kaayika) or by speech (vaachika) or by the mind (maanasa).

The utmost superior life is human being and God gave us the free will with which responsibility also comes. At the same time, this karma associated with free will also produces its fruits that result in either good or bad results based on the type of action you perform. You only have a choice in your actions but have no choice in the results your actions produce. Based on the cumulated fruits of your actions (karma phala) your next life will be determined. All this is built in the law of nature.

Again, this karma with the potential to produce its fruits, can be classified as Sanchita (accumulated over millions of lives), praarabdha (begun to bear fruit in this life), and aagaamii (being performed now and in future). All the dar’sanas or philosophies that accept this theory of karma also concede that: (a) The effect of karmas done in one life cannot be expected to be exhausted in that life itself. Hence,
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rebirth or punarjanma has to be accepted, (b) Jnaana or spiritual wisdom resulting in the realization of one's nature as the immortal soul destroys sanchitakarma completely and makes aagaamii incapable of producing its results like as a burnt seed cannot sprout. However, praarabdha-karma, since it has already started giving its results, has got to be exhausted only through experiencing it.

From another standpoint, karma is of two types: nishiddhakarma or prohibited or sinful actions that must be avoided; vihita-karma or actions ordained by the scriptures as duty, to be performed. The vihita-karma again is of three types:

1. Kaamyakarma (desire-motivated actions),
2. nityakarma (daily duties),
3. naimittika-karma (occasional duties).

Sometimes, karmas or actions are classified according to their nature, good or bad. Actions done without being tainted by likes and dislikes or selfish motives, (but with noble intent) are called saattvika (good). If done with these, they become raajasika (mixed). If they are motivated by evil designs, to harm others, they are dubbed as taamasika (dark or evil). Occasionally the word *karma* is also used to indicate the samskaaras or sacraments.

*The only country on the earth which explains fruits of your actions that bind one to samsara or transmigratory existence is our Hindu nation and it is “karma bhoomi.”*
Ashtottaram 12

Om Dhyaana Bhoomyainamah

(Dhyaana: “meditation,” “contemplation,” “continuous thinking”)

A stable and concentrated mind is a great asset in life. In spiritual life, it is a must. The art and science of concentration has been systematically described in the works on yoga. The yogasutras of Patanjali (200 BCE) is the most standard treatise on this subject. Patanjali describes eight steps to the attainment of yoga, of which dhyaana happens to be the seventh or the penultimate step.

Prior to dhyaana, the concentration is not continuous, and moments of concentration are interspersed with moments of distraction, which is called dhāraṇa. But in dhyaana, it is continuous. In dhyaana, each succeeding wave of the mind is absolutely identical with the preceding wave. For instance, if a person is concentrating on the form of Ganesha, everyone of the mental waves carries the same impression or image of that deity. The mind is then flowing in an unbroken continuous stream like the oil that is being poured from one vessel into another.

Dhyaana is a mental action and there is no free will involved. The amount of time involved in meditation is far less than the time spent in wandering state, which is a natural thing for the mind to do, because mind is nothing but flow of thoughts. It is a common misconception that when we sit in meditation trying to concentrate on a given form, all the time we spend trying to bring our wandering
mind into focus is a waste and not considered meditation. However, this is a myth and every second spent is part of meditation, and many people who have been doing meditation for a long time may not even know this. However, the goal is not to get discouraged and constant daily practice will increase the time of continuous focus on a given form and it is not an understatement and we cannot stress enough the importance of understanding this concept. Dhyaana practiced over a long period leads to Samaadhi—an absolute concentration resulting in mystical experience. It must be understood clearly that the state of samaadhi is just an experience which is only short-lived and it is not moksham (liberation from the cycle of birth and death which only comes with Jnana yoga).

Nowadays, there is no shortage of schools, university courses, and online classes for yoga and meditation and are popping up everywhere like mushrooms, not only because of great interest in this subject but also economic interests. It seems like the Westerners’ interest in meditation is to get relief from their daily mental stress and to achieve happiness which they are not gaining from materialism. Whatever it may be, the credit of this most valuable prakriyaa (method of unfoldment, means of exposition) belongs to our land and hence our maatru bhoomi is “Dhyaana Bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 13

Om Adhyaatmika Bhoomyainamah

(Adhyaatmikam: “pertaining to the Atman”—the soul/self)

Adhyatmikam means “knowing the nature of the self.” In the Upanishads as well as in the Bhagavadgita, the three words, adhibhuta, advidaiva, and adhyatma are frequently met with. The indeclinable adhi has the sense of “ruling over,” “pertaining to.” The word atma is often used in the sense of the body. Hence adhyatma generally indicates the self within the body which resides in it and rules over it. It is also used to indicate Brahman or the Supreme Self. The word is also used as an adjective and in combination with other words like adhyaatmavidya (knowledge of the self), adhyaatmayoga (yoga or meditation on the self). The word atman is used for many like the eternal soul, adipurusha, viraatpurusha, antaryaami, jivaatma, spirit in your body; to name a few. Depending on the circumstance and situation, these different names are used.

The knowledge about the self is the blessing of our Vedas through our ancient rishis who taught us that the self is self-effulgent, eternal, and self-manifested. The means of knowing the self is called self-knowledge (knowledge of Brahman). The wise person who knows this knowledge is referred as Brahmavit. Knowing the relationship between the body and the soul is knowledge. The human body is the field and the soul is the fielder. Just like the sunlight illuminates everything it falls on, the self is the same in every being and knowing
that is self-knowledge. Adhyatmikam teaches that the inquiry about the soul and self should be the goal of everyone and once you realize this, it then should be part of your life all the time.

We should feel proud and fortunate to be born in the land which we call Bharata bhoomi, which is the only one that teaches about the self and atman and makes it as one of the human pursuits and leads us toward liberation. Hence, we can proudly call our motherland as "Adhyaatmika Bhoomi."

Ashtottaram 14

Om Ahimsaa Bhoomyainamah

(Ahimsa: “nonviolence”)

Ahimsa or nonviolence has been a highly extolled virtue throughout Indian history. In fact, it is as old as the Rigveda itself. Even during the Vedic period, when animal sacrifices existed and the animals were believed to attain heaven, the animal meant for immolation was made unconscious before being killed, so that it did not suffer. Prayers were offered and expiations were done to ward off the effects of the sin of killing the animal which was inevitable in the sacrifices. In the Upanishads it was referred as an ethical discipline and emphasizes the need for cultivating compassion, the corollary of ahimsa. The Mahabharata often calls ahimsa the highest dharma (ahimsaa paramo dharma). The puraṇas and dharma sastraas extol it in glowing terms. It is even termed as sanaatanadharma (the ancient religion) by some puraṇas and also described as the gateway to dharma. The Yogasutraas of Patanjali lists it as the first virtue to be cultivated by the aspirant for yoga.

Ahimsa means not injuring other living beings in thought (manasa), word (vaacha) and deed (kriya). This is the ideal to be relentlessly pursued by those who have dedicated their lives to the realization of the atman (the self). For them it is a mahaavrata (great vow). Inimical thoughts that one harbors against others harm both.
This is a fact whether one concedes it or not, as all minds being parts of the one cosmic mind are interconnected.

Ahimsa can never be practiced perfectly without its complement, love. They are two sides of the same coin. Anyone who has practiced it effectively radiates a wonderful atmosphere of peace. We have kicked out the British Empire from our native land without using any weapons and only with the power of ahimsa. In Rigveda Samhita the mantra: Maa vo ghnatam maa ‘sapatam prati voce deva yantam, meaning “Return not blow for blow, nor curse for curse, neither meanness for base tricks. Shower blessings instead.” Tit for tat and eye for an eye were not our attitude and were never taught by our ancient rishis, seers, and sages. They not only emphasized the physical noninjury but also to practice verbal or mental nonviolence. They claimed this ahimsa, nonviolence, is our eternal law of righteousness.

Martin Luther King (MLK), being the disciple of Mahatma Gandhi and was inspired by Gandhi’s writings, fought against racial and color discrimination by Americans toward his black people and he brought social reform and justice to black people in USA.

This shows how ahimsa, as part of our culture and dharma, brought independence to our country without wars or violence and stands as a pinnacle virtue for Hindus. Hence, our land is ‘Ahimsaa Bhoomi.’

Ashtottaram 15

Om Sanaatana Bhoomyainamah

(Sanaatana: “ancient,” “eternal”)

In Sanskrit, the word sanaatana means ancient and eternal. Our Vedas are eternal; and our culture and values are ancient. Hence our way of life is Sanaatana Dharma. It was neither started by a prophet nor an organization. It’s been there for eternally and, hence, cannot be comparable with other faiths or religions. The word Hinduism, for the way of our life it represents, is of very recent origin. This religion had no particular name since the most ancient days other than our way of life, because there existed no other religion from which it had to be distinguished. Some scholars of present-day Hinduism like to call it Sanaatanadharma. However, this word does not refer to a specific religion, but, only to ancient practices of eternal value.

Our lifestyle, the rituals we do, and the values we nurture, not only ancient but for the welfare of the entire humanity, for the present, past, and the future generations to come. Hence, our values and virtues are eternal. The ambitions and goals of our ancient rishis and seers were quite clear that they have sacrificed their lives for the spiritual progress of the entire humanity rather than for their own glory, name, fame, or selfishness, which is the case now in every religion and culture. Today, the experts claim that this generation of people are suffering from self-absorption syndrome. No matter of what age, country, culture, and religion they are, it’s their nature
to say “me, myself, mine and I” and “what’s in it for me if I do something for you?” Comparing the values of current generations and cultures, just observing our way of life, we can easily grasp the roots which have originated from our ancient rishis and seers and the values are eternal and universal and applicable for each and every human being.

Sanaatana means eternal and God is eternal and hence, we can equate our values being eternal, and are godly. Spiritually also anybody can easily realize the eternity of our way of life. All our rituals, worships, and traditions center around dharma (righteous, universal code of conduct) which has to be ancient. Even today, if not all, at least some of the Hindus still carry on the daily rituals like Sandhyaavandanam (water offerings to sun god at the dawn), fire ritual, pooja, etc. You don’t have to do any research or experiments to discover that our values and traditions are ancient because you don’t see the words like Dharma, Sanaatana, etc., in any culture or religion.

*The land which has the eternal virtues and values as the way of life is none other than the “Sanaatana Bhoomi.”*
Om Omkaara Bhoomyainamah

(Om: “sound vibration of the universe,” “name of God”)

Omkaaram is Parabrahman, name of the God, sound vibration of the universe, eternal and represents all the three spheres of time: present, past, and the future. It is the combination of the letters A, U, and M which represent the three states of our being, i.e., awake, sleep, and dream states. If you reverse these alphabets, it’s UMA—the mother Goddess Parameswari representing the cosmic energy; which is the female personification of Iswara. Modern science, after exhaustive research, has come to realize the fact that the universe is nothing but energy. Our ancient Rishis and seers have realized this profound knowledge through deep meditation and, without selfishness, passed on this sacred knowledge to us through oral tradition from generation to generation.

The Sanskrit root for Om is Ava. Om is avati rakshati iti Om, “that which protects us.” It symbolizes the Infinite. It also represents Hindu Sanaatana Dharma. When we worship God with ashtottaram or saha'sranaamams, each mantra starts with Om and ends with namah. To give an example, “Om Keśavaaya namah,” meaning “Oh Kesava! My salutations unto you! There is no worship in Hinduism that does not start with Om.”

When we worship Shakti, the energy, which is the female personification of Lord, teaching us that there is no gender difference
to God and this was taught by only our Sanaatana Dharma. Manifest and unmanifest form of Lord is realized only by our ancient Rishis and they passed on that to us by tradition and through Vedas. Hence Omkaaram has no gender difference. So, any Hindu can worship God in whatever form he chooses to and it is unique only to our land and religion, and you do not see anywhere or in any other religion on the Earth. When we hear from space and under the water, the sound vibration is om.

There are volumes written about Omkaaram. There was this legend about Om is that once there was a poet walking with several bullock carts full of bundles of writings written on palm leaves to offer to the king of that kingdom and then he was stopped and asked by a passing-by merchant, “What are those bundles?” The poet replied that they are verses about Om, and the poet claims that they were only a small portion of his whole writings on Om. This only illustrates how vast the knowledge about om there is. Hence, there are infinite meanings to Om, which represents and is also the name of the Lord!

The land which declared that the sound vibration of the universe is Om is called none other than “Omkaara Bhoomi.”
When we come across elderly or respectable people like our teachers, automatically we salute them with our both hands kept together. No one has to teach you that because it’s our culture and tradition. The sanskrit root verb nam means “to bow.” Namaskaaram means to bow our heads in front of the person. By doing that we not only are showing respect to them but also showing our humility with obedience. That means we are not showing ego or arrogance toward them. There is also very deep spiritual meaning when we combine both hands to salute others, reminding them monism from duality. Not only with hands but we greet them verbally, “namaskaaram.” There are many symbolic meanings to offer namaskaaram. One of them being, “I pray to the God within you.”

Unfortunately our Indians are following Western culture to the core. When they see elders and respectable people they are greeting them by saying hello, sometimes even worse and say hi and shake their hands. By doing that they feel cool and great thinking that they are stylish and cultured. When we look at this fashion of shaking hands there is a possibility of getting their hand germs. This is only one of thousands of examples to show how our younger generations are Westernized.
Our aagama sastraas, dharma sastraas, and puraanaas have mentioned many ways and means on how to show respect to elders. However you may greet them, symbolically, they all mean to show respect to them. There are many ways one can perform namasakaaram, and it varies from one situation to the other. There are different names like Abhivandanam, Pranaamam, and Anjali, etc. For God, teacher, spiritual guru, and parent we offer prostrations. We also circumambulate in clockwise around a temple.

When we traditionally greet elders, usually they offer their blessings saying “swasti,” “vardhasya,” “subham bhooyat,” or “aayushmaanbhava,” etc. If it is a newlywed couple, the elders bless them with “putra pautraabhivruddhirastu.” If it is a woman, “deergha sumangaliibhava.” Hindus strongly believe that the blessings of the elders are nothing but God’s blessings to them.

The greatness of endowing this honorable word and symbol of namasakaaram to the world belongs to our nation and it is “Namaskaara Bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 18

Om Tattvamasi Bhoomyainamah

(Tattvamasi: “you are that,” “equating the self with Brahman”)

“You happened to be the one you are looking for all along” is the meaning of tattvamasi. Tattvamasi was described in Chaandogyopanishad and Saamaveda samhitam. Even though it sounds so simple, sometimes lifelong learning from Vedas and Upanishads may not be enough time to understand the deeper spiritual meaning of this statement of instruction. It is a mahaavakyam (great declaration). Just like looking for your eyeglasses everywhere, not realizing that they have been there on your forehead all along. Same way, the God you are looking for everywhere in temples, etc., happened to be yourself. This is also the teachings of the rishis, seers, and gurus (spiritual teachers).

In Tattvamasi mahaaavyam, tat means “that” (that Parabrahman you are looking for) and tvam means “you” and asi means “are” (happened to be). This is self-knowledge (knowledge about Atman-Parabrahman). We all know that Nobel Prize recipient and physicist Albert Einstein’s famous equation, E=mc\(^2\), has changed the world for good in terms of human material progress and it’s just three letters and one number. Similarly the mahaaavyam tattvamasi carries life-changing spiritual meaning in terms of self-knowledge that leads to liberation from samsaara (cycle of birth and death). This statement reveals that the eternal soul (atma), which is self-manifested, self-effulgent, which is Brahman, happens to be none other than yourself.
and it is the root cause of everything. It is smaller than the smallest and bigger than the biggest and is everywhere and in every being.

Separate from the three bodies (gross, subtle, and causal), apart from the five sheaths of the body (panchako‘saas) and the witness of the three states, alert, sleep, and dream states; Atma (self) is Satchidaananda (existence, awareness and bliss), which is Brahman. It is present in all three spheres of the time, past, present, and future. Vedas, Upanishads unequivocally declare “you are that” (tattvamasi)! The ancient Rishis of the land which declared “you are that” is “tattvamasi bhoomi”!

Ashtottaram 19

Om Aachaarya Bhoomyainamah

(Achaarya: “preceptor”)

In ancient India, education, the panacea for all maladies and problems of life, was imparted more by personal contact than by lectures and discourses. The student learned more by observing the teacher’s life than by hearing his teachings. Hence, the teacher had to “be” that, which he wanted to “make” of his student. First “be” and then “make.” It is this philosophy of education that is reflected in this word aachaarya. It is only he who successfully gathers (aacinoti) the essentials of dharma and wisdom from all sources and practices them (aacarati) in his own life that deserves the appellation aachaarya. The word is also frequently used as an honorific to men of great erudition and learning. The term is also applied to an adviser or preceptor guiding sacrificial rites. As you can see, there are many meanings to the word aachaarya. The wife of an aacharya is called achaaryaṇi. From this, we can infer the existence of women preceptors also.

In strict sense, the title aachaarya applies to the one who follows the vaidic scriptures, traditions, and values in his life and becomes an ideal to the fellow beings and the society who follow his ideals. Nowadays this title is given to anyone who has political and financial influence. But in olden days during the times of oppression by the foreign invaders and proselytizers, teachers like Sri Sankaraacharya, Sri Ramanujaacharya, Sri Madhvaacharya, Sri Vidyaranyaswaami,
Sri Dayaananda Saraswati, and many more a'chaaryas reformed the society and brought fame and glory to the word aacharya. They have participated in debates with the opponents of vedic religion like Carvaaka schools (materialism that denied the existence of all nontemporal objects) and cults which propagated unethical and abominable practices in the name of religion—everyone of these was trying to shake the foundation of Hinduism. With their vast spiritual knowledge these aacharyaas have reestablished sanatana dharma. Even now, there are many 'aacharyaas who try to accomplish the task of restoring the balance of vedic values facing the stiff opposition from several quarters like Christianity, Islaam, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism to name a few.

The aacharyaas are constantly protecting the vedic values from the cruel hands of opponents who want to ruin and crush our values and spread their religion and ideology in our land. If it isn't for these aacharyaas, our sanaatana dharma had been wiped out from the face of the Earth as it happened to many other cultures like Mayan, Inca, Aztec, Roman, Greek, and many more.

The land on which the aachaaryas and aachaaryanis walk is our land “aachaarya bhoomi.”

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Ashtottaram 20

Om Sadaachaara Bhoomyainamah

(Sadaachaara: “good conduct,” “good behavior”)

Sadaachaaram means “good conduct,” “behavior,” and “response to the world.” Dharma (righteousness) is the principal basis of Hinduism. Its entire value system depends on the former. The four sources of dharma are Vedas (Srutis), smritis (secondary scriptures not opposed to the Vedas), sadaachaara (conduct of good people), and atmanah priyam (what is sanctioned by one’s pure conscience).

Sadaachaara is generally defined as the aachaara or conduct of ’sishtas or satpurushas or good persons. These satpurushas have purified themselves by practicing the virtues ordained in the holy texts and by eschewing the arishadvargaas (the six enemies of human being like lust, anger, greed, delusion, ego, and jealousy). Whenever there is a doubt about one's conduct in a particular situation in life, one should look at the conduct of these satpurushas and follow them (Taittiriyya Upanishad). There is Manusmriti as a reference text as an authority on rules of conduct. It engages in the human behavior, conduct, virtues that are not only considered ethical and moral to human race but also for the society at large. It explains the benefits of good conduct and warns the downfall of humanity if those rules are broken.
The dharmasastraas mainly talk about these three:

(1) Aachaaras (practice of sanctities),
(2) Vyavahaarah (conduct), and
(3) Praaya’schitta (expiation, a firm resolve).

Our rishis claim that the dharma has its roots in the aachaaraas. In Anu’saasana parvam chapter of the Mahabharata, it was said that “Aachaara prabhavo dharmah,” meaning “Dharma came from aachaara.” Those people who perform the daily rituals like bath, cleanliness, worshipping sun god at dawn, japa, deity worship, etc., on a daily basis without fail no matter what; whether rain or shine, doing their daily rituals are called sadaachaara sampannas.

Our land is the “sadaachaara bhoomi,” where daily rituals are still performed by many Hindus, despite the modernization, the materialism, and Westernization unfortunately having a great influence on the youth.

Belief in the sanctity of the cow has been a basic tenet in Hinduism since the ancient days. Though sacrifice of a cow or a bull and eating its flesh were present in the remote past, even by the time of the ‘Satapatha Braahmaṇa its sacredness had been recognized and eating its flesh prohibited. The Rigveda calls the cow aghnya (not fit to be killed) and praises it highly. The fact that the bull and the cow were the very center of the agricultural society of the Vedic Seers and that milk and milk products were used in sacrificial rites must have been largely responsible for this prohibition.

The epics and the puraṇas have showered high encomiums on the cow and gifting it (godaana). Cows on the earth have been described as the daughters of the celestial cow “Surabhi” or “Kaamadhenu.” All the gods are said to reside in its various limbs. The cow is considered so pure that in certain religious rites, the performer has to live and sleep in the cow pen for a specified period. Panchagavya (a mixture of the five products of a cow, for example, milk, curds, ghee, dung, and urine) is considered holy and is consumed during certain religious rites, especially of an expiatory nature.

The earth has often been compared to a cow. In the mythological works, whenever any serious trouble arises on earth, she is said to assume the form of a cow and approach its saviors, either God or a
great king Pruthu, an incarnation of Vishnu and a great king, is said to have milked the cow of this earth and obtained from it corn, vegetables, and other items of food (hence the name pruthvi, daughter of Pruthu, for the earth). Association of Lord Krishna with the cows is well-known to all students of Hindu religious literature. This has further enhanced their sanctity, especially in the minds of the masses. The Brahmavaivartapuraana describes in great detail the Goloka (cow heaven), the abode of Lord Krishna, far above the Brahma-loka (the abode of Brahma) itself.

As part of the funeral rites, a cow is gifted away or let off. It is called anustaranii (that which helps in crossing). It is believed the dead person crosses the fetid river Vaitara, flowing between the human world and that of Yama, the god of death.

Hindus worship Lord Krishna as Gopaala, Govinda and we also call cow as Gomaata (mother cow). It shows the respect and honor we give to the cow and our land is “Gopuja bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 22

Om Rushi Bhoomyainamah

(Rushi: “a man of wisdom”)

Derived from the verbal root ṛṣ (to know), the word rushi means any person who has attained expertise and proficiency in any field of knowledge. Hence, a rushi need not be a person of religious, philosophical, or spiritual bent of mind. In this sense, an expert in any field of knowledge, like Charaka, Suśruta, or Bhaaskaraaadharya, can be called a rushi.

However, in a more restricted sense, only a person of spiritual wisdom, who has transcended samsaara or transmigratory existence, can be termed a rushi. Being a man of perfect chastity, with tremendous self-control and deeply devoted to truth. Rushis could have been born in all the castes, because they attained that state by dint of their self-effort. The general belief is that the number of rushis may be around forty-eight thousand. Sometimes, the rushis are classified into several groups. For instance, the group of seven famous sages of the present age are Vis’vaamitra, Jamadagni, Bharadvaaja, Gautama, Atri, Vasishtha, and Kaśyapa. Another mode of classification is devarshi, brahmarshi, raajarshi, maharshi, paramarshi, śrutarshi, and kaandarshi.

Apart from the saptarshis mentioned earlier, the following are a few of the several great rushis mentioned in the Hindu scriptures: Naarada, Kanya, Garga, Vaalmiiki, Vyaasa, ‘Suka, Agastya,
Vaamadeva, Ashtavakra, Bhrugu, Lomaśa, Durvaasas, Dhaumya, Sanaka, Maarkandeya, Maudgalya.

Nowadays, even before inventing something people are getting copyrights, and imagine how selfless, kind, and generous our ancient rishis were who imparted their knowledge to humanity without expecting anything in return. That is the nature of our rishis, and they always thought of humanity and human welfare before their own comforts. They worked very hard and followed strictest practices in order to attain purity of the mind and clarity of the knowledge. We owe a lot to our ancient rishis for their sacrifices and efforts.

_During these modern times also we have Ramana maharshi, Sri Rama Krishna paramahamsa, swami Vidyaranya saraswati, and swami Vivekananda, and many more. Hence, our land is deserved to be called “Rushi Bhoomi.”_
which itself has been highly venerated as the fifth veda (Panchama Veda). The teacher of the Giita is Sri Krishna, who is regarded by the Hindus as an avataara or incarnation of God himself. An ideal friend, a great statesman, an invincible warrior, a wise preceptor and a yogi \textit{par excellence}, he harmonizes in his life the various conflicting activities of life. It is precisely this that makes him the fittest person to preach such a religious, spiritual classic. Arjuna, the recipient of the teaching, though himself a great warrior, is a typical representative of humans, easily liable to be upset or confused during periods of crisis. Hence, his predicament very much represents ours in a similar situation. The questions, doubts, and misgivings he raises and the solutions that Sri Krishna offers are not only relevant but also valid even today to every human being irrespective of race, religion, and creed.

The teachings of Sri Krishna covers all fields of spirituality including devotion, meditation, contemplation, law of action and result, and liberation from the cycle of birth and death (samsaara) through self-knowledge. He also teaches the nature of the individual soul, the goal of human life, and the means of achieving it. Sri Krishna explains that what really binds one is not work itself, but the selfish desire for its fruits. Though taught on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, urging Arjuna to fight, it has nothing to do with wars or battles or bloodshed, but only with the discharging of one’s sacred duties of life, however unpleasant they may be. If the \textit{Mahaabhaarata} can claim to be an encyclopedia of Hindu religion and culture, the \textit{Bhagavadgiita} can as well claim to be its quintessence.

\textit{The land on which Lord Sri Krishna taught the nectar of self-knowledge is the “Giiatamrutabhoomi.”}

\textbf{Ashtottaram 24}

\textit{Om Sannyaasatva Bhoomyainamah}

\begin{flushright}
(Sannyaasam: “renunciation,” “dispassion”)
\end{flushright}

There is a natural misunderstanding among Hindus that sannyaasam means leaving everything and sit in a cave with eyes and nose closed. But the actual meaning is dispassion toward materials and relationships which become bondage and the cause for samsaara. It is okay to possess materials, but one should not be possessed by them. Of the four stages of life, technically called the aasramas (brahmacharyam, gruhastham, vaanaprastham, and sannyaasam), it is the fourth stage of life. In saadhana chaatu\textshfit{sh}tam (fourfold of spiritual discipline) also, sannyaasam is the second one. It’s natural for the wise with enlightenment to feel dispassion about the material world, and it comes with self-knowledge, which leads to liberation.

There are four types of sannyaasam:

(1) Vairaagyam (dispassion),

(2) Jnaana sannyaasam,

(3) Jnaana vairaagyam, and

(4) Karma sannyaasam.
In vairaagyam, again there are three types: Kartrutva tyagam, sanga tyagam, and phala tyagam. In sannyaasi's, there are six different ones:

(1) Kutiichaka,
(2) Bahudaka,
(3) Hamsa,
(4) Parama hamsa,
(5) Turiiyata, and
(6) Avadhuta.

During Kurukshetra war, warrior Arjuna showed vairaagyam to kill his family members, relatives, friends, and teachers and Lord Sri Krishna taught him the Karma sannyasam, which was Bhagavadgita. For Arjuna's doubt, whether doing one's karma is greater or sannyasatvam is greater, Sri Krishna answered to him that “one should perform according to his mental maturity, own duty and circumstances; and that one path doesn't fit all.” Many pundits wrote commentaries on Bhagavadgita in thousands of different ways based on their own understanding and sometimes based on political, social, and other agendas just as in the case of Max Muller, an European Indologist who was paid heavily by the British government, whose writings intentionally smeared and construed our sacred scriptures with an agenda to ruin and demean our culture.

Sannyaasatvam teaches that the external world we see which has form and name are bound to be destroyed in time and nothing is eternal except our self (soul) which happened to be Parabrahman and the one who recognizes that reality can take sannyaasatvam no matter what stage of life he is in. The ochre wardrobe the sannyaasis wear is merely symbolic, and it represents and reminds constantly the dispassion for that person who took that oath. Because the body is the temple and it is the only vehicle we have to accomplish that goal of liberation, the sannyaasis take food only enough to sustain their bodies. We see these saadhus wearing orange clothes in every village, town, and city throughout India; especially places like Hrushikesh, Kasi, and Haridwaar. People offer food to them with utmost respect knowing that these sannyaasis have renunciated their families and every material thing in order to pursue their goal of liberation through vairaagyam.

Our motherland, which practices dispassion and renunciation, is none other than “Sannyaasatva Bhoomi.”
In *Srimadbhagavadgita*, Lord Sri Krishna said, “The utmost dharma is performing your own duty” and Hindus worship God according to their own way and method and there are no absolute steadfast rules or regulations or creeds, and hence, it makes the worship sweeyaaraadhana without any religious overtone, which makes it amata (without any religion). Up until recently for Hindus it’s the way of life following eternal dharma (universal code of righteousness). However, since the foreign invasions, brutal killings of Indians, robbing their wealth, looting the diamonds and jewelry from the temples and demolishing the temples; and erecting mosques and churches in their places, raping women and all kinds of atrocities against Indians and started calling them the Hindus and the way of life as Hinduism. But some scholars define Hindu as someone who rejects untruth and accepts only reality.

The reason our way of life is not a religion one, because it is not started by an individual or group of individuals claiming to be the children of God or God directly spoke to them and forced their ideology against the will of the people by any means including rape and barbaric killing until people accept their ideology. These religions have a supreme leader, central authority, and creeds converts have to follow otherwise face the deathly consequences. They also waged wars and battles against nations and killed people mercilessly using swords and bombs, raped women and established their religions by inflicting fear. They also have actively targeted poor people in other nations like India, and proselytized them into their religion by fear, rape, or offering food, clothes, schools, and medicine. This still goes on around the world with major religions and they are called missionaries.

In contrast to the above, Indians worshipped deities, gods, and goddesses according to their own will and understanding, and there is no one to impose rules and regulations up on them how to worship God! There is no single prophet who claims to be the messenger of God and no one forces an Indian what sacred text to read or to recite. On the contrary, all the other religions criticize and ridicule Indians that we have three crores of gods and goddesses; and we worship trees and animals. It only shows ignorance and idiotic thinking on the part of those critics, not realizing that God answers your prayers in whatever form or language you worship him. This reality is known to every Indian from a scholar to a street beggar. That is the beauty of our Sanaatana Dharma, which is not a religion (amata) but a way of life.

_Hence, our motherland is “Sweeyaaraadhana Bhoomi.”_
Ashtottaram 26

Om Suphala Bhoomyainamah

(Suphala: “good fruit,” su means “well,” “good,” “auspicious; phala means “fruit,” “result of an action”)

In every school in India, in every morning, every student stands in front of the national flag pole and sings the national song “Vandemaataram, maataram vande maataram, sujalaam, suphalaam, malayaja seetalaam, sa’ya syaamalaam, maataram, vande maataram,” which was written by Bakim Chandra Chatarjee in 1876. The meaning of this national song is “The land which flourishes with flow of tasty waters, heavy with sweet fruits, cool breezes, and green farming lands; to my motherland, my salutations! The land which shines under white moonlight, trees with blossomed flowers, with happy smiles and sweet talks comforting us, oh, Bharatmaata, salutations unto you!”

Similarly, Nobel Prize winner Ravindranath Tagore wrote our national anthem in 1896 and in that song, he hails our motherland with “Jayahe, Jayahe, Jayahe” and “Jaihind,” which we sing on every occasion. Our motherland provides us with continuous flow of sacred waters like Ganges waters and these waters fertilize our farms, trees, and provides us with food and sweet fruits. For example, if you look at mangoes alone, there are hundreds and thousands of varieties Indians enjoy and nowhere else you can see that many varieties in the world. Every poet and writer describes in so many ways our motherland with ecstatic joy how rich in fertility of rice and paddies and fruits.

We are also the only one who appreciates water as one of the five basic elements of the nature and we pray to rivers like Ganges and worship them with utmost devotion and sacredness. Our ancient rishis realized that without water there are no fertile lands without which we have no food which provides our sustainable energy. We are also blessed with varieties of fruits in abundance and we always offer our gratitude to God for his blessings in providing us with food in the form of variety of fruits and the climate suitable to grow this many varieties of fruits. So, our motherland is “Sujala-Suphala Bhoomi.”
Ashtottaram 27

Om Gangaa Pavitra Bhoomyainamah

(Ganga: “one who descended to this earth”; Pavitra: “sanctified,” “purified by performance of ritual acts”)

Ashtottaram 27

Om Gangaa Pavitra Bhoomyainamah

(Ganga: “one who descended to this earth”; Pavitra: “sanctified,” “purified by performance of ritual acts”)

Ganga also means knowledge. The rivers of a country are its lifeline. Hindu India has always looked upon its rivers, not as just physical or natural objects but as divinities, goddesses of prosperity. Of all the rivers of India, no river has captivated the minds and the hearts of the people more than the river Ganga. For many a Hindu, a bath in it is a lifetime ambition. No religious act can be ceremonially complete without its water being in some form or the other. A few drops of its water poured into the mouth of a dying person will remove all the sins. Immersion of the ashes of a dead person’s body in it will give him liberation.

Though the river Ganga has been mentioned in the Rigveda only once, it is the first in the list. There are references to it in other places also such as Rigveda, the ‘Satapatha Brahmaṇa. the Raamayana, the Mahaabhaarat, and many puraṇas such as the Padma, the Naaradiya, the Agni, and the Matsya contain hundreds of verses eulogizing the greatness and the sanctifying power of the Ganga river. In the Bhagavadgītā, Sri Krishna identifies himself with it among all the rivers. Almost all the well-known rivers (undivided) of India have a dual form and have been described in the mythological literature as deities and goddesses. Iconographical works even ascribe to them specific forms and give detailed descriptions. As per the account in the Mahaabhaarat, the river goddess Ganga was cursed to be born as a human being in our mortal world. The river Ganga is said to have been born out of the left foot of Vishnu in his incarnation as Vaamana-Trivikrama (hence the name Vishnupadii). It was then confined to the celestial region only. The other names of Ganga include Bhagavati, Bhaagirathi, Jaahnavi, Daksha, Pruthvii, Vibagaa, Amrutaa, ’Siva, Kshema, ’Saanta, and so on.

Geographically speaking, the river Ganga takes its birth near Gangotri in the Tehri Garhwal district of Uttar Pradesh. The total length of the river is 2,500 kilometers (1,557 miles). It breaks into a number of branches near the sea. A good number of pilgrim centers are situated on the banks of the Ganga and its branches. The biggest bathing festival connected with the river Ganga is the Kumbhamela, held once in twelve years and millions and millions of people take a bath in the river on these occasions. The Hindus call Ganga as mata (mother) and that is why a popular saying has identified it with one of the three legs of the tripod upon which Hinduism stands, the other two legs being the Gītā and the Gāyatī. On the banks of Ganges, Sri Veda Vyasa wrote the great epic Mahaabhaarat.

Thus, it is seen that the Ganga has been one of the major aspects of Hindu religion and culture that has helped it to be not only alive but vigorously active. Hence, our motherland is “Ganga Pavitra Bhoomi.”
Ashtottaram 28

Om Saarasatva Bhoomyainamah

(Saarasatva: sampradaaya, “that which is given or handed over,” “in succession;” saara: “best,” essential, highest, genuine; satva: “inner disposition,” “guna,” “tradition”)

Sampradaaya or tradition, where in a knowledge or a way of life is handed over from a guru (teacher) to a disciple or a group of students, has a very important place in Hinduism. Many a time, a guru does not impart all that he knows to his disciples. From among those who live with him and serve him, he may choose one or two as the fittest to receive that knowledge he has kept back. It is this that often matters, more than the open teaching or the books. Because of this reason, saarasatva or sampradaaya is all important.

A peculiar trait of Hinduism is that all sciences and arts are often traced to God himself as the originator. Sometimes it may be a great rishi or sage also. Sampradaaya may also mean the body of the founder, teachers and their immediate disciples. There are different sampradaayaas and saarastvas in each of the sciences or arts or fields of wisdom. It is strongly believed that those veda mantras which are not handed down through a sampradaaya are useless and hence do not produce their results. Some works like the Saktisangama-tantra give long lists of sampradaayas such as Vaikhaana, Raadbhavallabhii, Paancharaatra, Viraavaishnava, Bhaagavata, Nimbaarka, and Vrundaavantii.

As time passes by, there are many divisions that occurred in these traditions like Vaikhaanasa, Vaalakhilya, Samprakshaalula, Mariichakula, Asmakuttula, and so on. In the guruparampara tradition, in vaishnava sampradaaya the list of aachaaryyas start with Sri Ramaanujaachaarya to current Tridandi Jeeyar Swamis; in saiva and advaita tradition, from Sri ‘Adi Sankaraachaarya to current pontiffs of the mathaas. My guru, late Sri Dayananda Saraswati, belongs to this tradition.

We see the same traditions and aachaaras handed over from family to family, generations down in different forms including food habits, dressing, worships, daily rituals, and so on.

In the land where, for thousands of years, practicing our daily rituals without giving a second thought is none other than “Saarasatva Bhoomi” (Sampradaaya Bhoomi).
Ashtottaram 29

Om Strii Gaurava Bhoomyainamah

(Strii: “woman,” “female,” “lady”; Gauravam: “respect”)

The only country which worships woman as a mother (maatrur murty, maatrudevata) and as goddess is India. Swami Vivekananda said, “Whatever form it may be, the woman occupies the highest pedestal, and the only country that worships the dirt also in a motherly form is my country, it puts a woman as a mother on the high pedestal and worships her.” If the estimate of the excellence of a civilization and culture depends upon the degree of excellence of its women, then, the women of the Vedic age and the epic period proved it beyond all doubt. Vedaanta has declared in unequivocal terms that man and woman are two aspects of one and the same divinity. In the Rigveda itself about thirty women sages like Visvavara, Apaala, Ghosha Kaakshivati have been mentioned as the seers of hymns. Gargi and Maitreyi were mentioned in the Upanishads as the seekers of Truth.

It is a matter of great pride and satisfaction that even during these dark Middle Ages, many eminent women like Ketalaadevi, Naayakaadevi, Abhyaabai Holkar, saints like Miraabai appeared on the country’s horizon keeping the ancient spirit of India alive. With the advent of political freedom and reform movements within Hinduism, the condition and status of women have improved a lot. Over the centuries, the position and status of women has seen several changes. Freedom during the Vedic and the epic ages, the insecurity brought about by the frequent foreign invasions by Muslims, Portuguese, Dutch, French, and British forced the Hindu society to subject women to many restrictions including prepuberty marriages. Horrible practices like polygamy and self-immolation were abolished totally and monogamy has been enforced after independence from British in 1947.

In our wedding ceremonies, the mantras indicate that the woman is the saamrajni (queen). In the Sakuntala story of Mahaabharata, Sri Vedavyasa said, the man who insults a woman even with one vulgar word stays eternally in hell. The widower loses the right to perform sacred rites like Yajnam, Homam, etc. He mentions many positions, titles, and roles a woman plays in her husband’s life and she is responsible for husband’s respect in the society. He goes on and on about the special role a woman plays in a man’s life and in essence, everything a man enjoys is due to a woman as a mother, wife, sister, friend, etc. Our Vedas say that for any difficulties a man faces, the only remedy is if his wife is next to him. This shows how strong our marriage relationship is. In Ramaayana and Mahaabharata, the role of women was portrayed as strong, brave, self-confident, wise, and loving.

The ancient and eternal ideal of the perfect wifehood and the perfect motherhood is still demonstrated in some Hindu women and by their role-playing alone, they keep our land as “Strii Gaurava Bhoomi.”
The only land on the planet which worships the female energy of the God as a goddess is our Bharatabhoomi. Siddhis like Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa literally worshipped his wife Saaradaa Devi as Shakti (goddess of energy). Our vaedic goddesses are the only female deities worshipped by every Hindu irrespective of age and gender, which you see nowhere else in any culture or religion. Actually in some religions worshipping female saints or goddesses is not only completely prohibited; if anybody does it, they will be punished severely including torture and death sentence.

In our Hindu religion, Sri Lakshmi is worshipped as the goddess of fortune, wealth, and beauty; Sri Saraswati as the goddess of education and knowledge; and Sri Durga is perhaps the most widely worshipped aspect of Shakti, as the personification of the goddess of power and bravery. These three female goddesses are actually the three major manifestations of the One Supreme Power Mahe’svari, according to the three gunas (tamas, rajas, and sattva). Each goddess is worshipped with 108 or 1,000 sacred mantras (sacred formulas) praising their powers, beauty, and leelas (pastimes). They are worshipped in every Hindu household with flowers, turmeric,
and vermilion, especially by young ladies yet to be married and by women that are married. It is highly venerated that every verse of it is considered to be a mantra of the goddess and its repetition is believed to confer whatever boons the votary prays for. The Shakti is worshipped as the mother of the universe, she is the personification of tender love, when supplicated. She is also the personification of Maayaa, the mysterious power of Lord Vishnu.

It is important to note that the various gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon, including Shakti, are various manifestations of only God Parabrahman. The omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient power of God is well understood by each and every Hindu, and nobody finds it odd for someone praying to trees or animals except for non-Hindus who believe in prophets and son of God only must be prayed to and this shows only ignorance on their part.

We see female goddesses as mangala meaning “auspicious.” Various manifestations of these three goddesses are worshipped in temples throughout India, especially in south India. Festival days like Deepavali, Dasahraa, and Navaratri are celebrated at a grand scale every year.

Our land which worships all the gods and goddesses is none other than 'Sarva Devataaraadana Bhoomi.'

Ashtottaram 31

Om Purushaarthav Bhoomyainamah

(Purusha: “human”; Artha: “pursuit,” “wealth,” “principal goal”)

Purusha means “the one who sleeps in the city of nine gates or the body.” In common usage, the word purusha means a man. In the Upanishads the word has often been used to indicate the Jiiva (the self) as also the Paramaatman (the Supreme Soul or God). Purushaarthaas are the ends to be striven for by human beings. Recognizing the basic needs and cravings of a human being, the ancient sages of Hinduism have given a fourfold ideal to be striven for by everyone. This is called the purushaartha or the ends to be striven for in life. They are four: dharma (righteousness), artha (wealth), Kaama (desires of the flesh), and moksha (liberation from transmigratory existence, which is samsaara). Notice that the artha and kaama are in the middle and dharma in front of them. The rishis have placed in this order to emphasize to us that we can have artha and kaama but should be earned and enjoyed in a right way. The moksha was placed at the end because after enjoying artha and kaama in a dhaarmic way, one should think of liberation from samsaara and work through in attaining that goal.

Ordinary enjoyments of the world are centered around artha and kaama. However, in this world of cutthroat competition, unless some higher norms and standards, the right rules for a good and a fair game are set up, the big fish will eat up the smaller ones and
the jungle law will prevail. It is these rules that are indicated by the omnibus term *dharma*. Every person is free to pursue the path of artha and kaama, comfort and pleasure, but always within the perimeters of dharma.

However, life teaches everyone, at least the more cultured and refined ones, that neither artha nor kaama can ever be satiated; and, that there must be a much higher goal to be sought after. This is moksha or total liberation from the transmigratory cycle of birth and death (samsaara), and, being reinstated in one’s original state, the state of eternal bliss. This can be attained through spiritual evolution under the guidance of expert spiritual masters.

Sometimes, the first three (dahrma, artha, and kaama) are grouped as one unit called trivarga and the last (moksha) as apavarga (that which is beyond the three).

*The only land that taught us and to the world that the final goal and pursuit of human beings is moksha and hence our bhoomi is “Purushaarththa Bhoomi.”*

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The theory of Karma and punarjanma or rebirth, is a basic tenet of Hinduism. The principle behind it is, “As you sow, so you reap.” Punarjanma is regulated by praarabdhakarma (karma that has started giving the results). Hinduism accepts the regression of a soul into animal bodies, but only to exhaust the bad karmas, before being born again in a human body.

In the famous song *Bhajagovindam*, Sri Sankarabhagavadpaada told us about “punarapi jananam, punarapi maraṇam” (the repeat cycle of birth and death). When the Jiiva (soul) leaves this gross body, according to our karmas, the causal body transmigrates into different body. In *Bhagavadgita*, Lord Sri Krishna also states that at the time of death we leave this body and enter another new body just like we discard an old shirt and put on a new one. Why and how the life force enters a gross body was described in detail by our ancient sages with examples. So much was written in Vedas and Upanishads about the rebirth. We have the life force from head to toe and the Atma (soul/self) which pervades the whole body including the mind and the thinking faculties as awareness and consciousness.
So many Westerners and research scholars from many countries have done research on this topic and wrote books about it as being scientific in basis rather than a belief system. Young children between the ages of two to four years had accounts of their previous lives with proofs like their birth places, important incidents, and instances, previous parents’ names, descriptions, etc. Their claims were proven to be true by the researchers to their astonishments. There were incidents where a three-to-four-year-old child played Bach, or Beethoven’s symphony on the piano which can only logically be explainable by the fact that the child had knowledge of his previous birth. According to Vedanta sastras, rebirth is not mere belief but a fact. They claim that the bondage is the root cause of rebirth and we are caught in the cycle of birth and death due to our actions and results; and the only way to get out of it is realizing that Atma is eternal and getting rid of our ignorance about our true divine nature.

Our land which revealed the transmigratory nature of the Jiiva is “Punarjanma Siddhaanta Bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 33

Om Bodha Bhoomyainamah

(Bodha: “teaching knowledge, wisdom, and values”)

Bodha is that which is conducive to well-being. There are different ways one can educate the others: conduct, social, philosophical, spiritual, and political, etc. It is very common in India that teachers, parents, relatives, friends, and sometimes even neighbors teach children good conduct, manners, and behavior if they happened to see the child behaving rudely, inappropriately, or disrespectfully. Elders don’t have the attitude of “Why should I care, it is not my child.” In the society each and everyone plays a role in a child’s upbringing. They do not have the fear of lawsuits like Westerners do. They all chip in, in advising the child not to speak vulgarly, and teaching them how to behave properly and respectfully.

Swamis are the preceptors who teach self-knowledge and remove one's ignorance about his/her true nature of bliss. Guatama Buddha of Buddhism has experienced enlightenment under a Bodhi tree and is hence called Bodhisattva. His teachings are available as fables and tales to humanity to take their journey in righteous path. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa and Swami Vivekananda contributed to the world in general and to India in many ways through their bodhanas (teachings). Swami Vivekananda restored the national self-respect of the Indians by reeducating them in their past glory, advised them against blindly imitating the West, but also exhorted
them to learn best from it, in which we have been deficient. He effectively pointed out that religion in the sense of spiritual evolution is the soul of India and that all developments or reformations should be done only through that.

Lord Sri Krishna did Gita bodha to Arjuna on the battlefield, the Bhagavdgita, which is a household book at every Hindu’s home. Vishnu ‘Sharma taught political neeti (conduct, rules, and regulations to be a king) to the princes of a king and these bodhas are well-known to Indians as Panchatantra. These tales and fables about conduct are very useful at this time for everyone around the world. We have swamis like Sri Ramana maharshi, Sri Vidyaranya swami, Sri Dayananda Saraswati, and many more teachers spent their lives in teaching us the code of conduct, spiritual knowledge, and self-knowledge to pave our lives in a righteous path.

The motherland which has teachers that teach us the right path and values is “Bodha Bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 34

Om Kaarunya Bhoomyainamah

(Kaarunyam: “compassion,” “empathy,” “understanding,” “kindness”)

Words like dayaa, daakshinyam, karuna are in our culture eternally. Showing dayaa or compassion to all the living creatures and not harming them has been a basic moral discipline enjoined on all in Hinduism. These words have been defined in various ways: (1) the desire that arises in one’s heart to mitigate the sufferings of others by putting forth the necessary effort, and (2) the desire to do good to others even as one wishes that others should do toward oneself. The Devibhaagavatam describes kaarunya (dayaa) as one of the eight female companions accompanying the Devi (divine mother). The word is also used as an appellation for goddess Laksmi, the consort of Vishnu, since she is the very personification toward all living beings who are her children.

Our society shows immeasurable respect irrespective of their socioeconomic status on those who show kaarunya on all living beings including animals. Our culture venerates people with the divine qualities like dayaa, kaarunya in their speech and actions. This is deep-rooted in our society. The way we show respect to sadhus, swamiis, and sannyasis reveals this fact. These swammis are invited by Indians abroad and treat them like demigods.
In our puraṇas and epics we see these qualities are portrayed and highlighted in the characters like Sri Ramachandra Murty. There is a legend that Lord Sri Rama gently strokes with love and gratitude with utmost dayaa on the back of a squirrel when it shows its devotion to Lord Rama by dipping her back in sand and shaking it in the ocean when monkeys were helping Sri Rama to build a bridge to cross the ocean. Even today, we see these three lines on the back of a squirrel. In these dark and selfish times also we see some Indians in India and abroad live their lives with these qualities of karuṇa and dayaa in their talk and actions toward every living being. They may not be a lot, but still there are a few left. At the same token we see people in other religions killing people in a terroristic style in the name of religion and missionaries proselytizing other religious people in the name of love. However, Hindus mind their own religion and try their best to be kind and show karunyam toward fellow beings.

In Bhagavadgita, Lord Sri Krishna taught that dayaa (kaarunyam) as one of the divine qualities one should practice. Possessing these divine qualities is considered as a wealth by some Hindus and they not only enjoy peace but also spread it to others as opposed to the demon qualities like killing others with terrorist attacks.

Our motherland and our ancient sages taught and practiced dayaa and karunyam toward other living beings, and hence, our land is "Kaarunya Bhoomi."

Bhakti or devotion or love of God is one of the most widely recognized religious sentiments in all the major religions of the world. In Hinduism, its origins can be traced to the Rigveda itself. Praise of God, hearing or recitation of his names as also surrender to him, filial affection toward God, that he seeks his devotees, that he is our dearest and nearest—these are some of the aspects of bhakti found in it. The 'Svetaa'svatara Upanishad actually uses the word bhakti and clearly states prapatti (self-surrender) also. In Bhagavadgita, as also in the epics and puraṇas, bhakti has been dealt with extensively. Bhakti has been defined as parama-prema (intense love) or paraa-anurakti (extreme attachment) to God, thus excluding or transcending all other kinds of love.

Bhakti can be categorized according to the guṇas as saatvika bhakti, raajasa bhakti, and taamasa bhakti. According to the mind of the votary, as bhakti of the aarta (the afflicted), of the arthaarthi (the one seeking worldly gains), of the jijnaasu (an inquirer of truth) and of the jnaani (the enlightened one) is another method. One who aspires after cultivating bhakti is expected to adopt certain moral and spiritual disciplines in life. Avoiding evil company and cultivating holy company, detachment toward worldly things, taking recourse to lonely places conducive to devotion, giving up evil actions and
actions motivated by selfish desires, performing one’s duties as an act of worship of God, practicing fortitude and dependence upon God are some of the disciplines recommended.

Sri Vedavyaasa said there is nothing easier than path of bhakti in this kali yuga (age of darkness). Our Vedas said you can worship God in any form you desire and no hard and fast rules to worship him and which is quite opposite to the other religions which have strict rules and regulations to follow and oppress their creed if done otherwise. There are great devotees like Annamayya, Tyagaayya, Ramadas, Tukaaram, Miiraabai, and Purandaradas and many more who sang thousands of songs and kiirtans on God and inspired devotion among ordinary people from younger to old folks alike. Even today, those kiirtanas are very popular and became household songs passed on from generation to generation.

With their pure eyes and divine vision, many devotees had dar’sanam (seeing or experiencing) of God dear to oneself (ishṭa devata) either with or without attributes and form.

*The land which is the home of utmost devotees like Sri Sankaraachaarya, Sri Ramaanuja, and many more, is “Bhakti Bhoomi.”*

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### Ashtottaram 36

**Om Tyaga Bhoomyainamah**

(Tyagaam: “renunciation,” “sacrifice,” “giving up”)

Tyagaam or giving up is an important concept found in the Hindu scriptures. It has two aspects: giving away something to someone who needs it more (daana); and giving up an object feeling that it is not a necessity or even an obstacle to the way of life one has chosen (renunciation). Daana has been prescribed as a duty for the householder. Vairaagya is an essential qualification for the one who aspires after sannyasa or monostic life. The *Manusmruti* forbids a householder from giving up his parents, wife, and sons who depend upon him. The *Bhagavadgiita* gives a general definition of tyaaga as giving up the fruits of all actions. It then categorises the tyaaga into three types: saattvika, raajasa, and taamasika. The *Bhagavadgiita*, however, unequivocally declares that works like yajna (sacrifice), daana (giving gifts) and tapas (austerities) should not be given up, but must be performed. They always have a purifying effect.

Swami Vivekananda said, “A person born on the Bharata land which knows tyaagam and dharmam, does not have to go anywhere else.” There were many Indians who sacrificed their lands and lives during the freedom movement and independence struggle with British who came for business and trade with us and sneakily and with force occupied our land for a millenium. Independent fighters like Chatrapati Sivaajii, Alluri Sitaraamaraju, Raani Rudrama Devi,
and many more fought for our independence and sacrificed their lives. Gaandhi was famous for his civil disobedience movement (satyaagraha) against British rulers and following nonviolence as his weapon in the freedom movement and sacrificed his life for India’s independence.

There are many tales and fables about tyaagam in our puraaṇas and itihaasas. One of those stories is where, a male dove falls into fire and becomes a meal to the guest who comes under her nest in a tree and Sibichakravarti, king of Kaasi, cuts flesh from his thigh and offers it to a hawk as a meal in order to keep his oath that he would protect anyone who took refuge in him and protect a pigeon from the hawk. There were many women in Indian villages who sacrificed everything they had for the protection and welfare of the villagers. These sacrificers are deified, and worshipped as the village protectors, and goddesses by the villagers. People celebrate their birthdays annually with fireworks and decorations. This is just a glimpse of what Indian culture used to be, where tyaagam ran in the blood of many Hindus. Even today, you see parents in every house, street, town, or city in India, who sacrifice many things and pleasures in their lives in order to provide better education and better lives for their children. It is almost like taking it for granted this type of sacrifice among parents in India unlike in Western cultures the children are on their own when they reach eighteen years of age.

_The land we call as our maatrubhoomi is the home of sacrifice and is “Tyaaga Bhoomi.”_

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**Ashtottaram 37**

**Om Krutajnataanugerha Bhoomyainamah**

(Krutajnata: “expression of gratitude”; Anugraham: “help,” “acceptance,” “kindness”)

“If someone helps you, how small it may be, you should remember that for the rest of your life” is the teaching of our parents, teachers, elders, and well-wishers and we have been following that advice all our life. Maharshi Vaalmiiki, the celebrated author of the great poem Raamaayanam, before he wrote this, he was told by Brahmarshi Naarada about the sixteen great and noble qualities (shoḍaśa kaḷalu) that go to make a perfect man, that is Lord Sri Rama. Born as a human being and ruler, Lord Sri Rama stood as the symbol of Dharma (righ-teousness) and if somebody showed a kind gesture to him, Rama always remembered that and talked about it all the time, and on the other hand if somebody harmed him or hurt him with unkind words, he would forget that right away and never talked ill of that person. That is the virtue of Sri Rama and he stood as an example of what gratitude should be. We are very fortunate to be born on the land which was purified by the touch of Lord Sri Rama’s lotus feet.

If somebody does a good deed to a Hindu, he looks forward anxiously to reciprocate something better deed to that person. I cannot definitely say that this is happening nowadays in India but
at least it used to be a norm in olden days. Now everyone is infatuated with Western culture, especially our children who do not even move a stick when asked to and they have the attitude that “What is it in for me if I do it for you?” Even grown-ups are showing the same attitude. However, it became a fashion to say thank you for everything which is very mechanical and just a lip service, and there is no emotion or sincerity in that expression. Sometimes, pet animals like dogs are far superior than humans in showing their gratitude and affection toward its master and it protects the one who feeds and cares for them. When an intruder comes it barks and alerts the household, and even attacks the stranger.

Our parents, teachers, and elders teach us from childhood onward how to be grateful and thankful to people who are kind to us in time of need and to show gratitude toward those who are helpful to us and reciprocate them with similar gestures and actions. Those who listen good advice will always follow that path. Even today in India, we still come across those kind of people in our life.

_The land which teaches us to show the gratitude and to be thankful throughout our life, to those who are kind to us, is “Krutajnataanugraha Bhoomi.”_

Great devotee Sri Ramadas sang many keertanas (devotional songs) on Lord Rama. One of the famous ones is “Taaraka mantram korina dorikenu, dhanyudanaitini Orannaa” (“I got the taaraka mantram and I am blessed”). Our maatru bhoomi has blessed so many of saints and devotees with vedaantic and spiritual knowledge. We also use the word _dhanyavaad_ to thank someone. In terms of aadhyaatmi-kam, jnaanam, mantra-m, yogam, daivikam, upaasananam, bhaavam, yajnam, loukikam, like this in so many angles our ancient sages analyzed any situation of our lives and imparted that knowledge to us to help us advance spiritually. That is the uniqueness we find in our puraanaas and itihaasas like Ramaayanam and Mahaabhaaratam. At the peak of spiritual height, in a state of bliss a devotee utters, “I am blessed” (I have attained dhanyata).

It is not an exaggeration in saying that we have done good karma in our previous lives in order to be born as a human being, that too in India, and that too as a Hindu. Because the knowledge of Brahman in Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavadgita, Brahma Sutraas, and Dharma saastraas are available to us in order to accomplish the ultimate human pursuit of moksha (total liberation from the cycle of transmigratory existence of birth and death). That’s why, every
Hindu feels that his life has attained that dhanyata. God himself incarnated as Lord Sri Krishna on our Bharata Bhoomi and imparted us the essence of Vedas, Upanishads, and the Brahma Sutraas in the celestial song Bhagavadgiita and blessed all of us and the generations to come with spiritual knowledge. He taught the humanity Karma Yoga, Raja Yoga, and Bhakti Yoga, in order to purify our minds, and Jnaana Yoga, in order to burn all our karmas present, past, and cumulated ones in order to attain moksham. In that aspect also, we are being blessed (dhanyulam).

Our ancient sages, rishis, and seers performed religious austerities (tapas) in deep, thick forests with very strict and disciplined lifestyles for the welfare of humanity and for our auspiciousness. They heard the Veda mantras during their deep meditations and passed on to us through teaching lineage (guru paramparaa). Without their kindness, selflessness, krupa, kaarunyam, and daakshinyam, we wouldn't have been blessed with the vast, infinite, and eternal knowledge of the Vedas.

We can proudly say that our motherland is “Dhanya Bhoomi.”

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Om Samataananda Bhoomyainamah

(Samata: “equality,” “benevolence,” “fairness,” “impartiality”)

Samataananda, samataa drishti, samataa vaada, and many more Sanskrit words have the same meaning “equality and fairness.” “Tattvam and aadhyaatmikata (spirituality) is no one person, society, culture, and/or one country’s property and it belongs to the entire humanity” is the teachings of Hinduism and it is our Sanaatana Dharma. No other country can claim this statement. Hinduism shows utmost tolerance to other faiths and religions and treats everyone with equality and fairness. You don’t hear or read in the history that Bharata Bhoomi ever conquered other countries or robbed their wealth or proselytized them into our way of life. We always exhibit impartiality and benevolence when it comes to other religions. We don’t treat other faiths as infidels or terrorize them or kill them in the name of religious fanaticism. We do not teach, or train our children how to be martyrs; instead, from childhood onward we teach our children how to be tolerant and understanding toward other faiths. It’s ingrained in their blood.

Just like “a frog in the well” attitude, we don’t claim that “our religion is the only true religion but no one else’s, and we are the only ones that go to heaven and people in every other religion will go to hell with eternal damnation.” When others criticize us that we worship idols, we don’t fight back or engage in a war or terroristic
activities. Instead, we let it go, thinking that everybody has to pay for their actions one day or the other (karma siddhaantam).

We try to learn the greatness of every culture and try to understand their point of view and show respect for their opinions. This was taken as our weakness and irresolution by the foreigners who used violence in order to invade our land and rob our wealth. The only country on the planet which kept its dignity by not doing those barbaric atrocities is our motherland. This happened only on the basis of understanding of fairness and equality (samatam). If we did not show samataanandam, samataabhaavam, and samattadrishti, we would have never won our independence from British with nonviolence and without using a sword or gun. We made the British feel ashamed of themselves and made them leave our country with shame and guilt. We have also provided shelter for people of religious oppression like Jews and Christians and they live happily in our country without fear of being killed.

No matter how much atrocities and barbaric invasions we have encountered including threat to our way of living by proselytizers, still we maintain our religious tolerance and equality and our land is “Samataananda Bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 40

Om ‘Saanti Bhoomyainamah

(‘Saantih: “peace,” “calmness,” “repose,” “tranquility”)
have incorporated ‘Saanti mantras in our daily prayers, and religious services.

We say three times, “Om ‘Saantih, Om ‘Saantih, Om ‘Saantih” at the end of our worship. If we look at this deeply and spiritually, we can understand the meaning and purpose behind this. The first “Om ‘Saantih” is in desiring peace to that individual and to his family, friends, relatives, and the community he lives in. The second time when we pray “Om ‘Saantih” is wishing for peace to the entire country. The third and last time when we pray “Om ‘Saantih” is wishing for peace to the entire world. When we are praying for global peace to the entire humanity including animal kingdom it shows our intense desire for the global peace in contrast to other religions and nations which engage in wars and terrorism. We can also see this in different angle. First time for mental peace, second time for peace from nature’s calamities like earthquakes, hurricanes, tornados, famines, and fires, etc., and the third time for bad omens, diseases, etc. Whatever it may be, we pray for world peace and we include everyone irrespective of race, creed, religion, or country and we do not exclude even an insect.

So, in many ways we pray to God for peace and we can proudly say that our land is the “Saanti Bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 41

Om Aa’sråma Dharma Bhoomyainamah

(Aa’sråmam: “dwelling place of religious devotees,” “each of the four periods of Vedic religious life,” “place of resting”)

Every person has the responsibility of performing his prescribed duties to himself, family, society, country, and the world. It also includes the duties to be done that are age appropriate. In modern world, with socialism on the rise, no one performs his duties but expects a lot from family, society, country, and even the world. There is an old saying that “before you demand something from your country, you have to ask yourself what you did for your country,” but nowadays, nobody cares about that anymore.

According to the value system propounded by Hinduism, moksha or spiritual emancipation is the ultimate goal of life. However, emotional infirmities like attachment and aversion or lust, greed, and anger always raise their ugly heads to thwart a person’s spiritual progress. With an uncanny insight into human psychology the ancient sages of India have prescribed a way of life which affords scope and opportunity for the fulfillment of all the legitimate desires, while keeping them under a healthy check. The concept of the four purushaarthas, when looked at from this angle, is a unique contribution. The philosophy behind this concept aims at the gradual
sublimation of the human instincts by first allowing them to find a healthy expression. The method of achieving this is the aas’rama system.

According to this Vedic system, the life of the individual is divided into four aas’ramas or stages of life:

1. brahmacharyam (studenthood),
2. gaarhasthya (married state),
3. vaanaprastha (the state of the forest recluse, contemplation), and
4. sannyaasa (monkhood, renunciation).

Though these four aas’ramas were intended to be adopted successively, exceptions were allowed in special cases, so that persons could take to sannyaasa even from the first or the second stage. The word aas’rama, in a nontechnical sense, means “a place of resting,” “a hermitage of sages.” Such aas’ramas were generally built in places of natural beauty and quietness, like a forest, banks of rivers, foot or top of a hill, and so on. They were earmarked for simple living and high thinking, for austerities, contemplation, and spiritual studies. By practicing these stages of life, our ancient Hindus brought our nation to the spiritual heights in the history of mankind.

The people of the land which practiced the four stages of life according to the Vedic system is none other than our “Aas’rama Dharma Bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 42

Om Deva Bhaashaa Bhoomyainamah

(Devah: “a god or deity”; Bhaasha: “language,” “speech,” “common vernacular,” or “dialect”)

How a language—any language for the matter—could attain the present degree of sophistication and artistry, starting with a physical sign language and inarticulate babble, is a mystery. It is a mystery that linguistics or phonetics or etymology or philology will never be able to solve! Hinduism, however, has easily “solved” the same by attributing the origin of all languages and sciences to God himself! An interesting verse in an ancient work called Nandikes’varakaarikaa declares that all the alphabets of the Sanskrit language (and hence its grammar) have evolved out of the fourteen sounds made by Lord ‘Siva through his ḍamaru (a small drum held in hand for making sounds) at the end of his cosmic dance. Sam means “completely,” “fully,” and krit means “done.”

Though Sanskrit is called devabhaasha, daiveevaak, and deva-naagari bhaasha—the language of the gods in heaven—in practice it is divided into two categories: the vaidika (Vedic) and the laukika (secular). The Vedas, the Vedaangas, the Upavedas and allied literature belong to the first group. All the other literature—from the itihaasas and puraaṇas right up to the modern Sanskrit literature—falls under the second group. The earliest form of Sanskrit is that of the Rigveda. Since the language of the Vedas was archaic and the concepts were
slowly becoming obsolescent, explanatory works became necessary. This resulted in the production of the six Vedaangas (limbs or subsidiary works). There was a gradual evolution of the Sanskrit language from the archaic form of the Samhitaas to the classical form, first through the Brahmaṇas and then through the epics.

The Sanskrit language has been the repository of India’s history, culture, religion, sciences, and sociopolitical values for several millennia. It is in the best interest of Indians to learn it, preserve it, and propagate it. It is highly gratifying to note that several countries of the world—both in the east and in the west—are encouraging a study and research of Sanskrit through their centers of learning. Once upon a time, Sanskrit used to be the world language, like English now. It is but meet to declare that India, the motherland of Sanskrit, should in no way lag behind.

We are blessed and very fortunate to have Sanskrit as our mother language and our land is “Deva Bhaasha Bhoomi.”
Aayurveda is the science of life. The Vedic Aaryans believed in a vigorous life, a life of health, strength, and vitality. They paid as much attention to the culture of the body and the arts of war as to the science of the mind and the spirit. This gradually resulted in the Aayurveda or the science of life, the elements of which have been found even in the Rigveda. However, it is in the Atharvaveda that a more detailed—and to some extent, systematic—treatment of the subject is found.

Though the word Aayurveda appears to limit its scope to purely physical health alone, it is not so. Its approach to the science of health is holistic and includes not only the physical but also the mental and spiritual aspects of health in the context of man’s interaction with his environment. While doing so, it deals with several subjects which may be categorized briefly as follows: philosophical speculations about matter and life as also general ethics; biological theories which includes embryology and genetics; physiology and pathology; food, nutrition and diet, general rules of health and longevity, diagnosis and treatment of diseases; poisons and their antidotes.

Aayurvedic medicine is based on the tridosha siddhaantam where the material bodies of human beings are composed of dosha (impurities, humours), dhaatu (component matter), and mala (elimina-
The three *dosha* are *Vaata* (wind), *Pitta* (bile), and *kapham* (phlegm). The diseases are said to be the result of the imbalance of the three *doshas* or humours. During the medieval period, *naadii-vij-naana* (the science of pulse) came to be a major means of diagnosing the condition of the three *doshas*. The seven *dhaatus* (component matter) which sustain our body (*sapta dhaatus*) are mentioned. They are:

1. *rasa* (chyle),
2. *rakta* (blood),
3. *maamsa* (flesh),
4. *medas* (fat),
5. *asthi* (bone),
6. *majja* (marrow), and
7. *sukla* (semen).

Classical texts of the *Aayurveda* by *Charaka* and *'Sus'ruta* are well-known, and most of the standard texts of the *Aayurveda* deal with the subject under eight topical headings and hence the appellation *Astaanga*.

There is evidence to believe that *Aayurveda* had influenced the medical works of Greece. Translations of several well-known *Aayurvedic* texts into Arabic prove the spread of the science in the Arab countries. Evidence is also not wanting to prove its dispersal in Central and Southeast Asian countries. Today, there are many *Aayurvedic* colleges and universities in America teaching our age-old *Aayurvedic* medicine.

*Millennia ago, our motherland has given the knowledge of medicine to the world and is "Aayurveda Bhoomi."*
The old adage “Kalasivunte kaladu sukham” meaning “there is happiness and joy in living with unity and harmony,” was first started in our motherland when other countries were engaged in wars and killing one another. Whether in books like Pancha Tantram, teaching moral fables about unity, or in schools, in movies, and movie songs—wherever you see in India, living with unity and harmony is emphasized. Unfortunately because of a few Indians, the Arabs, and the British ruled India for a millennia using the dirty trick of divide and rule. Because of their selfishness and greed, some Indians fell for it and we lost our independence for a thousand years. However, with unity and strong will, we have won back our independence in 1947. We may have encountered many barbaric invasions and proselytizations by the foreigners, but our unity kept us together and our culture. Our Sanaatana Dharma is ever alive and active, ever than before in India and abroad. Our swamiis, and discoursers are revitalizing our values and our way of life. Our media is working very hard in reestablishing our Hinduism on TV and some TV stations are completely dedicated to religious programs and millions of Hindus
participate in Hindu festivals, religious worships, and programs. This shows our unity in keeping our values and culture.

Even in puraṇas, itihaasas, and epics, there are many stories that teach us unity, friendship, harmony along with morals and ethics. For example, in Mahaabhaaratam, when King Duryodhana was captured by a Gandharva (a class of deity), his cousin brother Bhima fights with the Gandharva and releases his cousin Duryodhana. This also teaches us that no matter what differences we have among ourselves, when time comes we should stick together against an enemy.

Many Hindu Indians show tireless effort in order to pull away many poor Indians from the clutches of proselytizers who come to India on missionary trips and target our poor citizens. These missionaries show pseudo-love in the name of their religion and give them food, clothes, medicines and tell them to change their Hindu religion to theirs. Some others do it by violence and crime. It is clear that our way of life is strong morally and ethically and has been withstanding and fighting back conversion attacks by these foreigners. We cannot accomplish that without unity and harmony among us. It also shows the strength of our commitment. Even Hindu-Indians abroad are building temples, performing religious rituals faithfully, celebrating our Hindu festivals with greater enthusiasm than ever before. They are conducting classes in Indian languages and Baala Vihaar, Sunday schools for the children, in order to keep our Hindu heritage. This shows that whatever adversities we may have among us, we always try to maintain our unity when it comes to keeping our religion, culture, and way of life.

Our motherland, which taught us to be together and united is “Samaikya Bhaava Bhoomi.”

During Vedic times, our ancient sages and seers established four categories of people based on their virtues, guṇas, and their aptitude for the type of work they are inclined to do. This varṇa vyavastha is unique to our country only. Very few Indians understand this, and unfortunately this was construed by the British with their wicked agenda of divide and rule, which was like pouring oil into fire. The Varṇa vyavastha has transformed into a caste system, which is deep-rooted in today’s India and brought shame and degradation to our social system across the globe. It has grown as wild weeds and British has created a monster called caste system for Indians before they left our country and thanks to them that disease has spread like a wildfire in India and in Indians abroad. The Indian parents make sure that their children know their superior caste heritage rather than the Vedic India and Bhagavadgītā.

In Bhagavadgītā, Lord Sri Krishna said, “Svadharmo paramo dharmaḥ,” meaning “There is no greater dharma than following your own dharma.” Vedas said, “Janmaṇaḥ Jaayate Suudraḥ, Brahma Jnaanaat Eva Mokshah,” meaning “Everyone is born as a ṣuudra (ignorant) and with knowledge of Brahman alone one is Braahmin.” Unfortunately, very few Indians understand this and those who
understand this still show off superiority of their caste over fellow Indians especially toward backward castes for their own power, selfishness, and greed. They don’t mind subserving foreigners with utmost obedience, but when it comes to fellow Indians they don’t mind snaring at them with an attitude. The sad part is that they don’t realize that it only shows their insecurity and low self-confidence.

The ancient Hindu scriptures have divided the society into four varṇas or groups, i.e., brahmana, kshatriya, vaiśya, and ‘suudra. This division was based upon the allocation of duties and responsibilities as per their nature (guna) and nurture. The brahmanas were the custodians of knowledge. They had to learn and teach, not only spiritual wisdom, but also other branches of sciences and arts. The kshatriyas governed the state and performed its executive functions. The vaiśyas generated and wielded economic power through trade. The ‘suudras merely assisted in the discharge of essential functions by contributing manual labor. In national calamities or emergencies change of work was permitted.

The varṇa system gradually got fossilized into the jaati (caste) system and Indians (especially, the upper caste) totally forgot their duties (svadharma) and hung on to their caste and sub caste. They ignored the fact that the ancient sages and Vedic rishis established the varṇa system for the progress and welfare of the society in mind, but the hypocrites transformed it to a shameful caste system.

Despite all the above short comings, the ancient rishis, sages and seers have tried to establish a system based on individual’s aptitude rather by birth, and hence, our motherland is “Varṇarabita Bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 46

Om Nitya Sevita Bhoomya namah

(Nitya: “daily,” “that which exists always”; Sevita: “service,” “homage,” “worship”)

The word nitya is generally used in the Hindu scriptures in two senses: what is eternal, daily. That which is beyond time, space, and causation, and hence unaffected by them is called nitya. Only the atman (the self or the soul) and Brahman (the Absolute or God) fit with this definition. As applied to karmas or prescribed rites, nitya (or nityakarma) refers to the obligatory duties to be performed daily, such as the sandhyaa, gaayatrijapa, and pancha-mahaayajnaas. They gradually lead to chitta-suddhi or purity of the mind which is the stepping stone toward Jnaana Yoga. Practicing any yoga should be preceded by the performance of nitya and naimittika karmas (occasional, but compulsory, rites).

In India, especially in South India, when you visit temples like Tirumala, you see devotees in thousands and thousands visiting the Lord on a daily basis. They don’t mind waiting in the long lines with small children for hours and hours to get a glimpse of Lord Sri Venkateswara Swamy. On festival and religious auspicious days the devotee number is in more than hundred thousand per day. The temple executive committee has expressed their concern over waiting times exceeding twenty-four hours and is working very hard to find ways to reduce that waiting time. The temple doors are always open
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twenty-three hours per day and it still is not enough time for the devotees. The daily worships start early in the morning before dawn and continue throughout the day, 7 days a week, and 365 days per year.

On the other hand, churchgoers, especially the younger generations, are declining on a daily basis in Western countries, especially in America, and the studies show that the number of churchgoers are less than 20 percent compared to ten years ago. Even at Vatican, Christians flock around the pope’s place only during Christmastime. This comparison is only to show how important daily worship in a Hindu’s life is. Majority of the Hindus worship gods and goddesses on a daily basis at homes. They get up before dawn and take shower and perform pooja (worship) at least a few minutes if not elaborately. Especially, the household wives do daily worship without fail. Laborers and workers who do not have that luxury, when going to work on their way when they see a temple, they stand in front of the temple and pray to god for a second and proceed. Of course, there are some who perform ritualistic worships for hours including *sandhyaa vandanam* (praying to sun god with water before dawn) and *agnihotram* (worshipping fire god), on a daily basis and especially we see that in retired Hindus. They pursue devotional path very vigorously.

*So, it’s natural for Hindus to worship gods and goddesses on a daily basis and our motherland is “Nitya Sevita Bhoomi.”*

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**Ashtottaram 47**

**Om Maatru Bhoomyainamah**

(Maatruh: “mother,” “one who is honored or worshipped”)

The land that gave us the birth is our maatru bhoomi. Just like one of the five elements of the nature, our bhoomi gave us our gross body and that’s why with love and affection, we call our bhoomi *bhoomata*. We worship her as goddess *bhodevi*. Kaliyuga god, *Sri Venkateswara Swamy*, kept her on his chest along with *Sri Laksmi*. *Bhoomata* has the same tolerance and forbearance like our own mother who gave birth to us. She bears all our mistakes and provides everything that is necessary for our livelihood from food to fruits. We stand on her, step on her, urinate on her, and throw garbage on her and do so many unmentionable things to her, but still she does not keep any grudge, anger, or hatred toward us. We build skyscrapers on her and she stands still without shaking except when there are earthquakes due to movements within the earth’s crust and then the buildings collapse. We do not realize that nature has its natural built-in phenomena and we cry over the natural calamities. With greed and selfishness we dig and drill the earth for oil, gold, diamonds, and valuable minerals and despite that our maatrubhoomi provides us with *annam*—the food without which we cannot survive and keep our lives together.

Our ancient seer and sages recognized and realized the sacrifices *bhoomi* makes for our survival just like our mother and praised her with hymns and mantras. Even today, as soon as we get up from
the bed and before we put our feet on the ground, some of us pray to bhooodevi with a hymn “Samudra mikhile devi, parvata stana mandalii, Vishnu patneem namasthubhyam, paada spar’sa ksham-avsame,” meaning, “Having ocean up to your waist and mountains up to your chest, Oh wife of Vishnu! My salutations to you; Oh Bhoodevi, please forgive me for putting my feet on you.” On the face of that bhoomaata we spit, urinate, and evacuate our bowels, kick her with our feet, but still with so much patience she is carrying us on her chest, and she is our bhoomaata!

That’s why in schools, even today, before they start their regular classes, children offer the morning prayers to our bhoomaata with “Vande maataram, maataram . . . vandemataram” meaning, “Oh mother! Our salutations unto you . . . our salutations” and “jaihind.” Nowadays, this may not be happening in every school in India but when I was a child, this was my daily practice at school.

The only land in the world which treats the earth as Bhoodevi, Bhoomaata, is our motherland, and hence, it is “Maatri Bhoomi.”
It was a profound statement when Swami Vivekananda said, “Naa Bhaarat Bhoomi-Amara Bhoomi,” meaning, “My Bharataland is eternal land.” It is crystal clear that it is our fortunate to be born on this land but is not accidental. This is the land that showed tolerance, nonviolence, kindness to foreigners and became vulnerable for their invasions and lost all its wealth to their barbaric, brutal, shameless, and inhumane behavior and robbery. Despite that, when we hear the heroic, brave patriotism by our freedom fighters like Sivajii, Khadga Tikkana, Raṇī Rudramadevi, Alluri Sitaramarju, Ajit Singh, and many more who stood against the foreigners and lost their lives to their guns. Mahatma Gandhi, Vallabhail Patel, and Javaharlal Nehru and others with their political skills and nonviolence without touching a sword or gun have kicked out the British rulers from our maatrubhoomi.

There are many movies and patriotic songs about our motherland in every Indian language. The most famous one of all is “Mother India.” I remember a couple of movie songs in Telugu sung by the great singer Ghantasala. One was an army soldier, while coming home sings, “Naa Janma Bhoomi Ento Andamaina Desamu, Maa vooru andulona kammanii pradesamu, Naa saami Rangaa,” meaning, “My birth land is very beautiful country and in that my village is...
a sweet place.” And another was a song by Alluri Sitaramaraju, to awaken patriotism in people, “Telugu veera levaraa, deeksha pooni saagaraa; Desamaata swecha kori tirugubaatu cheyara,” meaning, “Wake up Oh Telugu warrior! Proceed with courage and fight to bring independence to our motherland.” Like this there are so many songs in every Indian language to inspire patriotism. When we hear these songs we immerse in deep unexplained joy and the hair raises straight on our skin.

There are so many foreign scientists, writers, and scholars who came to our motherland in order to get spiritual inspiration and also pay tribute to our culture and way of living. There were some physicists who never went to bed every night without reading a verse from the Bhagavadgita. For example, Nobel Prize winner Albert Einstein claimed that “Without ‘Zero’ invented by the Indians, there is no worthwhile scientific progress in the world.” Similarly famous American writer Mark Twain visited India several times and had spent days and weeks near the banks of the Ganges. In his own words he said, “If there is another life for me, I would rather born as a beggar on the Ganges shores.”

“Jananii Janma Bhoomischaa, Swargaadapi Gareeyasi”—there is nothing fulfilling than being born as a Hindu and as an Indian and that is the wish even for the foreigners who know and appreciate the rich culture of our motherland. I am a proud Hindu, that Bharata Bhoomi is my “Janma Bhoomi” and I owe a lot for this opportunity. “Jananee Janma Bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 49

Om Aalaya Bhoomyainamah

(Aalayam: “temple,” “house of God”)

The temple is a link between man and the God, between the earthly life and the divine life, between the actual and the ideal. As such it has got to be symbolic. History of mankind has shown that man cannot live without God. “If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent Him,” declared Voltaire, a French philosopher and writer. Recent polls suggest that even scientists, 60–75 percent of them, believe in God and attend their churches. Atheists, by not believing in God, also opinionate that there may be some higher power than humans. Belief in God, in a cosmic power or cosmic law, in a superhuman spirit or being, is basic to all cultures. It is as it were, in the very blood of mankind. Once this fact is recognized, it becomes irrelevant whether this belief has been brought about by man’s awe, wonder, and fear of the powers of nature, or by the teachings of god, men who are supposed to have had mystical experiences of that God.

Man is human and not divine! This is so, at least, as long as he is conscious of his frailties and impulses. It is exactly because of this that he turns toward the divine in times of need. Though the divine transcends all temporal limitations, man, the human, needs a temporal setup that can help him to visualize the divine or establish contact with it. This is precisely where a symbol or an image or a place of worship comes to his rescue. All religions have their
sacred places, places of worship. All words that denote such places of worship, etymologically speaking, mean more or less, the same thing. Devaalaya means “a house of God.” Temple and Synagogue mean a “building for religious exercises” and a “house for communal worship.” A church also means the same thing. A masjid is a “place of prostration before God.”

Temples do not seem to have existed during the Vedic age. The view that yaagasaala of the vedic period gradually got metamorphosed into temples. Considering the vast size of our country, it is remarkable that the building of temples has progressed more or less on a set pattern because there is a basic philosophy behind the temple. The architecture and the style of the temple symbolically represents our gross human body as the saying goes, “Deho devaalanaya,” meaning, “Body is temple.” The temple also represents the subtle body with the seven psychic centers or chakraas. Innermost sanctum sanctorum, the indwelling Lord. Broadly speaking, the temples are northern and the southern styles. These are naagarag (northern), draavida (southern), and vesara, which is combination of the two. There is a comprehensive text called the Vaastu Sastra laying down the formal architectural styles, has its sources in the suutraas, puraanaas, and aagamaas and Bruhat Samhitaa. The temple helps us as a means of crossing the ocean of samsaara (transmigratory existence).

Thus, the temple was all in all in the social life of our country for centuries and is “Aaalaya Bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 50

Om Haindava Bhoomyainamah

(Hindu: “that who rejects the untruth”)
itself from! Actually, the origin of the words Hindu and Hinduism is geographical. The land of river Sindhu (Indus) and the people inhabiting it came to be known as Hindu among ancient Persians, in whose language the S of Sanskrit became H. And this name somehow stuck. Looked at from this angle, all religions of Indian origin—whether it is Jainism, Buddhism, Sikhism, or tribal cults—become different facets of Hinduism. However, in practice, the term is applied specifically to the religion dependent on the Vedas. Also, in Sanskrit Hṃ means asat (untruth) and ḍ means reject. In other words, Hindu is the one who is after sat (absolute reality). The word Sanaatana Dharma (the Ancient and Eternal Religion) is sometimes applied to Hinduism by its more orthodox followers.

Hinduism does not have a single founder, a single book, a single church, or even a single way of life. Its strength has been able to withstand all the onslaughts of time or the barbarous invasions and external aggressions from outside, nor internal upheavals have destroyed it and showed power of resilience and survival. Hinduism is not idolatry, not fatalism though it preaches through the theory of karma that one reaps what one sows, not the caste system and its hierarchies. Hinduism does not preach or uphold untouchability. Hinduism is not responsible for the occasional stagnation of the Hindu society.

Hinduism is both ancient and modern and has survived the vicissitudes of history and onslaughts of time and still standing as “Haindava Bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 51

Om Priyamvada Bhoomyainamah

(Priyam: “desired,” “pleasing,” “truthful,” “satyam”)

In Sanskrit, there are many meanings for the word Priyam meaning “pleasing” and “desiring.” The same with the word satyam which means “not to lie,” which is pleasing to the other person when you are sincere and speaking the truth. When you speak the truth, it does not have to be rude and harsh, rather soft, kind, and non-hurtful but pleasing. Upanishads proclaim, “Satyam vada, dharmam chara,” meaning, “Speak truth and follow dharma.” Satya or truth has been accorded the pride of place among the virtues recommended to be cultivated by man. The Hindu as well as Jaina and Buddhist works wax eloquently over it. Its fundamental definition is “that which is unaffected by time, place and causation.” This means that satya stands for God, the Absolute. In fact, several sahasranaamas (thousand names of God) use this word to denote God. As an extension of this meaning, anything that helps a man’s progress toward God is satya.

In a more practical sense, satya is speaking the truth, consonance of thought and word. One should avoid speaking falsehood, partial truths, and unpleasant truths. Truth should be spoken in a sweet and pleasant way. Unpleasant truths, when spoken must be spoken, should be presented in a palatable and pleasing manner. Asatya stands for all that is opposed to satyam. It is what untrue, unreal, evil, and crooked.
Every Hindu knows about Lord Sri Rama who went to forests to uphold truth and is worshipped by everyone. There is no village in India which does not have a temple of Sri Rama or any house without a picture or statue of Sri Rama who is embodiment of satya and dharma. In the lineage of Sri Rama, his ancestor Harischandra, who lost his kingdom, wife, and his son in order to keep the word he gave and to keep satyam. Since then, he was revered as Satya Harischandra and his name live eternally as long as the sun and moon shines on the earth. Upanishads declare that “Satyam, Jnanaam, Anantam, Iti Brahma,” meaning, “Satyam is Brahman.” A person who always tries to speak the truth gets honored wherever he goes and his word is considered more than a promissory note and everyone trusts his words. He is respected among any group or society.

The land which conveys and teaches us to speak the truth in a pleasant and pleasing way without hurting the other is “Priyam (Satyam) Vada Bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 52

Om Panchaseela Bodhita Bhoomyainamah

(Pancha: “five”; Seela: “conduct”; Bodhitam: “that which conveys,” “reveals,” “teaches”)

Ancient seers and sages have established Yama and Niyama for human progress and advancement. Yama (don'ts) are ten and Niyama (dos) are ten in number. But out of these twenty, only five are considered very practical and can be observed by anyone without feeling of restraint to live by. These five are called Pancha 'Seela, meaning five rules of conduct. They are (1) Asatyā (non lie, truthfulness), (2) Ahimsa (nonviolence), (3) Asteyam (non-stealing), (4) Daya (compassion, empathy), and (5) Kshama (enduring). These not only improve our individuality but also helps to co-live in the society. Children are taught about these by their parents, teachers, relatives, and even by elders in the neighborhood.

Didactic compositions are a special feature of Sanskrit literatures. Two of the more well-known works of such a type are the Panchatantra of Vishnusarma and the Hitopadeśa of Naaraayana. The Panchatantra (100 BCE) is the most celebrated and interesting work in Sanskrit literature, classed under the didactic fable group. It comprises five books or sections (pancha, five), each dealing with one particular tantra or rule of political conduct. It was taught by a
wise teacher, Vishnu'sarma by name, to the idle and stupid sons of a king at his request. The princes very soon became well-educated and well-behaved, due to the marvelous effect of the tales they heard from their preceptor. The Panchatantra is one of the most translated works in world literature and as a child growing up I have read the fables in this book about friendship, results of inconsiderate actions, acquisition of friends, etc., and they help you develop your character.

The five rules of conduct are self-explanatory and especially the Asteyam, which probably is the reason why we never occupied or robbed another land or culture in the history of mankind because it teaches us from the childhood onward not to take anything that does not belong to us or somebody else’s properties or precious stones like the British queen did that did not belong to her. When we were children, it starts with watching pictures in monthly children books and it cultivates a habit by reading so many fables with morals as the theme. We can proudly say to the world that we are the only Bhaarateeyas who followed Asteyam enjoined by our ancient seers and sages, and also our Vedas and Upanishads and so many other sacred scriptures taught us the five rules of conduct to follow throughout our lives.

The land which taught us the morals and rules of conduct is our motherland, the “Panchaseela Bodhita Bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 53

Om Paramata Sahana Bhoomyainamah

(Paramata: “other religions”; Sahana: “tolerance”)

One of the Niyamaas in Vedic scriptures is kshama (tolerance, forbearance) and is tolerance toward any person, religion, or situation. Since childhood we are taught to show tolerance. It’s not wise and safe to get into fights for every little thing or difference of opinions, especially when it comes to the religion, is our teachings. Religion is a faith and there are no proofs for everything they claim in religions especially the topic of going to heaven. When we are taught from the childhood onward to show tolerance to other religions and their belief systems and it comes natural to us to have an open mind to different faiths. If every religion teaches sahanam (tolerance) toward other faiths no matter how much disagreements they have, there would not be any wars or killings, barbaric invasions, and forceful conversions by the religious zealots.

Centuries ago Muslims, Christians, Portuguese, French, British and Dutch countries have occupied our sacred land and waged so many wars and invaded our country and ruled it over a millennia. They have demolished, destroyed, and crushed our temples, stole the jewelry from the idols, raped women, taxed us as dhimmies (nonbelievers), infidels, and treated us as secondhand citizens in our own country. They showed the utmost intolerance to our religion and our spiritual wisdom and tolerance. They took for granted our tolerance
as a weakness and frailness. Their attitude toward other religions with different views as threatening and showed more aggression toward our culture. “Our way or highway” and “we are the chosen ones” and “our way is the only way to heaven” is their attitude and they send missionaries to foreign countries to target poor people for proselytization. This is all due to narrow-mindedness, ignorance, arrogance, and stupidity on their part and most of all intolerance to other faiths and religions. As a matter of fact, children are taught from childhood onward to hate other religions and encourage suicide bombings and when they blow up themselves during suicide bombings, they are mortified. In Hinduism, we don’t have those kind of demonic teachings and suicide is considered very sinful.

Our Vedas and Upanishads teach us to be tolerant and proclaim verses like “Ahimsa paramo dharma” meaning “The utmost duty is nonviolence.” They taught us that there is “only God” and you can worship him in whatever way or form you desire and all kinds of worship ultimately leads to moksha (liberation). If we did not show tolerance to other religious aggressions, there would have been much more bloodbath on our Bharat-land. There is nothing to be surprising in showing tolerance to other religions when we were taught to see God in every being!

The land which shows tolerance to other religions is our motherland, “Paramata Sahana Bhoomi.”

Vedas say that “Janmamaa Jaayate Suudrah, Brahma Jnaanaat Eva Iti Braahmanah,” meaning, “Everyone born as ignorant and the one who knows Brahma Vidya is considered as Braahmin.” The one who studies saastraas and lives his life accordingly is considered as Braahmin. In Hindu dharma and Veda saastraas, the restrictions and duties that are imposed on braahmin varṇam are not present in any other varṇam. For example: sandhyaavandanam, vegetarianism, reading Vedas on a daily basis and to live a virtuous life, and so on. In the life journey of every Hindu, there are sixteen samskaaraas (sacraments) to be fulfilled starting from birth to death, we need a brahmin to conduct the puja and the rituals. Indians are not satisfied unless their marriage is performed by a brahmin priest. Even those who do not follow Hindu traditions and festivals, when it comes to the last rites of their parents, they want a brahmin to perform the rites. When we visit the temples, who does ashtottarams, sahasra naamams? Who does homams? Who does vigraha pratistaapanas?

To be a brahmin is not that easy; we are here talking about a sat-braahmana who adheres to strict vegetarianism, daily vedaad-
hayanam, sandhyaavandanam, Gayatri japam, agnihotram, and so on, so many daily duties enjoined by the Vedas. Memorizing very difficult Vedic mantras is not an easy task, and they start at a very early age and practice correct pronunciations for many years under the guidance of a guru. Brahmmins used to advise the kings how to rule the country and they used to care about the welfare of the community. They used to hold minister positions in kingdoms. They used to be experts in the literature, and kings used to grant them acres of fertile land and gold. Later on, there was gradual moral and ethical decline in the sat-brahminism.

Nowadays, very few are sat-brahmins, and in the current generations, the modern brahmmins do not follow any enjoined duties, and some of them even eat meat, but, first thing they boast about themselves is their brahmin caste! So, it’s just serving the purpose of boosting their egos and prejudice against fellow Indians. Maybe it’s the effect of kaliyuga and Western civilization, whatever it may be, we may find only a handful of authentic brahmin varṇam, but many brahmmins as swamiis, gurus, preceptors and getting honored by the Indians here in India and abroad. The brahmin caste continues, but we find only a handful of sat-brahmins who follow Vedic life and enjoined duties. But still we honor them and respect them and made them part of our life for the fulfillment of prescribed sacraments in life.

So, our motherland is “Brahmaṇa Poojana Bhoomi.”

The tallest mountains in the world are the Himalayaas. Like the Ganga among the rivers, the Himalayaas among the mountains have become an integral part of the Hindu religion, culture, and ethos. Even the Rigveda mentions it as reflecting the greatness of God. Over the centuries, the mountain range has been all things to all beings. Its presiding deity is Himavaan. His wife is Menaa, a daughter of the pitrudevaas or manes. Mainaaka (mountain) is his son. Aparṇa (Paarvati), Ekaparṇaa, and Ekapaatalaa are his daughters. These three were married to ‘Siva, the sages Asita and Jaigisavya respectively. Mount Meru is said to be situated in the Himalayaas.

The Himalayaas are the source of many rivers such as Bhaagirathii (Gangaa), Yamunaas, Sarasvatii, Viśokaa, and Vitastaa. They are considered as devatiirtha (divine rivers) and hence sacred. Many places of pilgrimage are situated in the Himalayan ranges. Some of them are Amaranaatha, Kedaaranattha, Badarinaatha, Devaprayaaga, Gangotrii, Yamunotrii, and so on. Badarikaaśrama, where the twin sages Nara-Naaraayana performed severe austerities, is situated here. Vedavyaasa is said to have composed all his works here only. The Paandavas passed through the Himalayaas in their maha-prasthaana or final journey to heaven.
It is the repository of many rare medicinal plants. The Raamaayana mentions the famous sanjivanim herb, which was secured by Hanumaan from here.

The Himalayan Mountains consists of parallel ranges, 2,500 kilometers (1,500 miles) long and 250 kilometers (150 miles) in width. There are 114 peaks, which are over 6000 meters (20,000 feet) in height. Seventy-five of them are higher than 7,200 meters (24,000 feet). All these are perpetually snow clad and shrouded in mist. Fierce winds and avalanches are quite common. Many mountaineers attempt to climb these mountains and feel gratified, achieved, and accomplished, only after they finish their expedition. Northern located, these mountain ranges are God-given natural boundaries for our country protecting us from the other countries which are always waiting to invade like the vultures sitting on the treetops, looking for the prey. They are protecting us eternally, as though Lord ‘Siva is sitting on the mount Kailaasa and looking after us.

With such a great historical significance, these mountain ranges are the beloved children of our Bharatmata. Our land is “Himalaya Bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 56

Om Triveṇi Sangama Bhoomyainamah

(Triveni sangama: “confluence of three rivers”)

Visiting places of pilgrimage, especially the important ones, at least once in a lifetime, has been prescribed as a sacred duty for every Hindu by the dharmaasstras and the puraanaas. One of the very few pilgrim centers, a visit to which has been considered extremely auspicious, is Triveni of Prayaaga (the modern Allahabad in Uttar Pradesh). It has been designated as Tiirtharaaja (the king of pilgrimage centers) also. Since the three rivers Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati merge here, the place is called Triveni. The actual confluence is known as Trivenii sangama and is 2.4 kilometers (1.5 miles) from the city.

Religious rites strongly recommended to be performed here are bath at the Trivenii sangama, tonsure of the head (sometimes recommended even for women as prayashchitta or expiation), performance of snadha to ancestors, and daana (giving gifts). Vennipradaana (offering two to four inches of their braid of hair into the confluence by married women) is another rite which is popular among the pilgrims even today.

A bath in the Triveni, in the month of Maagha (generally in January), is considered as extremely auspicious. During this period, many pilgrims assemble on the banks of the rivers and camp there, sometimes for three to four weeks. It is again during this month, once in every twelve years, that the famous Kumbhamela festival is held.
here. It is the biggest religious festival in the world, drawing more than thirty million people, including thousands of saadhus (religious mendicants and leaders) who all manage a dip in the rivers within the time span of twenty-four hours!

The Chitrakuuta hill of the Ramaayana fame is situated at a distance of about 100 kilometers (60 miles) from here.

Tiirtham means “that which is auspicious water.” That may be the sanctified water offered by a priest in a temple or the river water. Taking a bath in sacred water is considered not only to wash away one’s sins, but also gain upper tiers after death and this is a firm belief to every Hindu and also prescribed by the Hindu dharma’saastras and the puraaenas.

Hence, our motherland, home of the confluence of three sacred rivers, is “Trivenii sangama Bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 57

Om Paapavinaa’sa Bhoomyainamah

Belief in a Supernatural Being or Power, generally called God, is ingrained in the human psyche. The words of a scripture and/or of the men of God, are considered as sacrosanct and hence, inviolable. Not following them or going against them has always been regarded as paapam (a sin) resulting in grave consequences. The Hindu scriptures have designated such sins by various names paapa, paapman, vrujina, durita, and so on. The concept of paapam is as old as Rigveda where in prayers have been offered to the deities like Aaditya, Mitra, and Varuna for redemption.

The question as to what causes sin and how it is committed has been discussed in the dharma’saastras. Some of the earliest dharma’saastras like those of Gautama and Yaajnavalkya and the Gita declares that Kaama (lust), krodha (anger), and lobha (greed) are responsible for a person to perpetrate evil deeds, thereby accumulating sins. In the course of time, the list has grown to include many more like himsa (violence), speaking untruth, neglect of prescribed duties, committing deeds declared as evil by the saastras. But the dharma’saastras prescribed remedies to avoid the consequences of these sins. They are paapanivedana (confession), pa’ascaattaapa (repentance), praanyaama (restraint of breath), tapas (austerity),
homa (sacrifice into a duly consecrated fire), japa (repetition of Vedic passages or prayers), daana (giving gifts), upavaasa (fasting), and tiir-thayaatra (pilgrimage).

We are not told repeatedly that we are sinners and God’s son was crucified and died for our sins. We are not cursed eternal damnation. On the contrary, we are taught the opposite. In Hinduism, people worship gods and goddesses at their homes on a daily basis to get rid of their sins and perform expiatory rituals.

Ultimately, it can be safely declared that the following disciplines are the best means of overcoming or attenuating the evil effects of sin on one’s life: since repentance, resolving not to repeat the sinful deeds, repetition of God’s name, earnest prayer, and the company of holy persons. For the welfare of humanity, without selfishness, our ancient sages and seers performed severe strict austerities and passed on their knowledge and wisdom in the form of dharmasastras and vaajnayanas. For the paapavinaasanam, they have prescribed various means and because of that we have temples, punya tiirthas, and so on.

The famous place in South India is Tirumala Sri Venkateswaraswami temple and nearby waterfalls known as paapanaasanam and on daily basis thousands and thousands of devotees attend these places. During auspicious days and festivals, the number of attendees are in millions. During Kumbhameḷa time, forty million people take bath in holy rivers in a given day.

Our land does not condemn sinners and offers expiatory rituals to amend a wrong either of commission or omission and is “Paapavinaasat Bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 58

Om Trivarṇa Pataaka Bhoomyainamah

(Trivarṇa: “three colors”; Pataaka: “flag”)

Our Indian national flag is tricolored. It’s trivarṇa pataakam. Those three colors are ochre (brownish red) on the top, white in the middle, and green at the bottom. In the middle of the white color there is dharma chakra (wheel of righteousness). The three colors are horizontal stripes of equal length and width. The length and the width of the flag is in 3:2 ratio. Our national flag was made based on the national congress flag designed by Sri Pingali Venkayya. On July 22, 1947, our national government has officially accepted the tricolored flag as our Indian national flag.

The top color ochre symbolizes sacrifice and renunciation. That’s why we see saadhus and swamis wear ochre clothes to represent sacrifice and renunciation, and also to remind themselves that they took an oath of renunciation, so that they don’t get tempted by the worldly desires. In our Hindu literature we see the word tyaagam a lot in fables, and ithihaasas like Ramaayana. Having the quality of renunciation is one of the great human qualities. We see that quality in Lord Sri Rama, who is worshipped by every Hindu on the continent, not because he is God, but for his supreme qualities which are very hard to possess as an ordinary human being. India is blessed with many people like that who sacrificed their lives for the humanity and some during the freedom movement. These great
people showed utmost selflessness and sacrifice which, unfortunately, we don’t see anymore. Sadly, now everyone is full of selfishness and greediness, especially the politicians.

The middle color is white, which symbolizes purity, peace, and truth. Hindu scriptures give importance to thought, speech, and bodily action and preach to be pure and honest in all the three aspects of an action and just not the one or the other. In the word Hindu lies the meaning “that who rejects untruth” (meaning “who desires the truth”). Hindus are peace-desiring people. That’s why in our worships, we use “saantih” (meaning “peace”) three times and we end our prayers with “saantih.” We pray for peace to all beings everywhere, and not just to us. The wheel in the middle of the white stripe symbolizes dharma and progress.

The third color in our tricolored flag is green. It symbolizes green harvest, which is a wealth to the Indian farmer. The crop, the farmer, the plow, and the sickle have greater importance in Indian culture. The farmer and the cultivation are the backbones of India. We have stamps honoring the farmer and the cultivation, because in most of the villages, cultivation is the main source of income and living which represents 65–75 percent of the GPI of our country.

Our Bharata bhoomi, having three colors as sacred symbols in our national flag, is “Trivarṇa Pataaka Bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 59

Om Dharma Chakra Bhoomyainamah

(Dharma: “virtue,” “duty,” “code of conduct”; Chakra: “wheel”)

In the middle of our national flag is a wheel which is dharma chakram, symbol of progress and dharma. It has twenty-four spokes. This is also called Dharma Chakra of Asoka who was one of the emperors of India. It reminds us to be dhaarmic in every minute of our life. Our scriptures are full of eulogy for dharma. Dharma is “that which upholds or supports.” What is this dharma about which our scriptures and great men have waxed so eloquently throughout history! As is the case with many other Sanskrit words, it is rather difficult to give exact translation of the word dharma. It has been variously translated as “religion,” “law,” “duty,” “religious ordinance or rite,” “code of conduct,” and so on. It can mean any one or more or all of these, depending upon the context.

The wheel also symbolizes as the wheel of samsaara (transmigratory existence, cycle of birth and death). It reminds us not to get caught in the wheel of birth and death. This wheel is the wheel of time in which the twenty-four spokes represent twenty-four hours of the day, progress to weeks, months, seasons, and years, and rolls on as the time moves on. There is so much to know about the progress. Anciently, our land has shown advancement in every field of secular as well as spiritual knowledge, and ancient sages have explored every aspect of life in every angle for the advancement of humanity and
human progress. When ancient Western people are wearing animal skins and struggling to make fire, our seers were performing yaagaas, yajnams, and homams (fire rituals and offerings) to please the gods, goddesses, and the Prakruti (goddess of the nature). As far back as in Rigveda, the wheel was symbolized for the sun god, because sun represents the moving time. Sri Vishnu holds a discus in his right hand called Sudar'sana Chakra, which has six spokes representing the six seasons.

By placing the wheel at the center of the flag, we are reminded constantly to move forward in all spheres of life including spirituality. Death has no movement and is jada meaning “motionless”; however, life is full of chaitanyam meaning “awareness.” So, we can see this meaning also in the wheel. It tells us that we must get rid of our stupidity, idiocy, nonsensical senselessness, and move forward with open-mindedness, enthusiasm, tolerance, and hard work. If you look at it from another different angle, during the freedom movement, to protest the British rulers imposing taxes on the fabric produced by our own cotton, in our own mills, by our own people, to show that injustice to our people, Gandhi started spinning the fabric thread on a spinning wheel. As a reminder of that freedom struggle also, the wheel may have been included in our national flag!

From so many angles, our national leaders thought of including a wheel in the center of the flag and our land is “Dharma Chakra Bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 60

Om Kaḷatra Rahita Bhoomyainamah

(Kaḷatram: “defective,” “contaminated”; Rahita: “absent,” “devoid of”)

Kalatram is opposite of purity, meaning, impure, contaminated, and defective. The word is used in several senses such as defective, fault, sin, dosham, vice, crime, disrespect, abuse, evil, and contamination. However, it is used in a technical sense too, in certain fields of knowledge. In our Vedic literature we see words like Pavitram, Pavitrata in the opposite sense of kaḷatram, both carrying the same meaning and implications. We, as Hindus, see everything as pure and equate with God in an implied meaning that every atom at microscopic level is part of the Supreme Power (Bhagavaan) and to be qualified as God, he must be omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent. Having this knowledge and understanding, the Hindus see the presence of God in living as well as nonliving objects and have a “pure kaḷatra rahita bandham.”

In Vedas and Puranas, we have epics portray Lord Sri Ramachandra Murty without any defects and his marriage relationship with Sita was described as kaḷatra rahitam. He was glorified as the one who strictly observed the Eka patnii Vratam meaning, “one wife as life partner” and the reason being that as a king he is allowed to marry as many women as he can, but even when Sita was abducted by the demon, Raavaṇa, and he kept her in his palace for a year, and
Sri Rama did not look at another woman. The same credit goes to his consort and wife, Sita, who came out of Agni (pyle of fire) as a shiny diamond proving her chastity and kalataraahitam to the world. Our sacred literature is full of these incidents, and our dharmasaastraas enjoin what to be kalatram that bring defection to one's purity. They advise purity in our thought, speech, and actions showing the strict rules of a Vedic person.

There are many relationships we have as an individual. Some are pure and kalataraahitam, as opposed to other relationships, like with another woman who is not your wife. Relationship between husband and wife, brother and sister, father and daughter, parents and children, between siblings, the teacher and the student, among the friends, and last but not least, between a devotee and his desired, beloved, and personal god are considered kalataraahitam.

As a country, in the history of mankind, we have never waged war against another country with the intention of occupancy and robbing their wealth, or forcefully convert them to our religion. We do not have that kalatram on our hands or in our hearts.

Our land is “Kalatra Rabita Bhoomi.”

With how many names you call him, worship him, and praise him with hymns the only God, who is omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent, they are going to fall short before him. The chanting of the naama or the divine name has an important place in the disciplines prescribed by the Bhakti schools of Vedaanta like those of Raamaanuja, Madhva, and Caitanya. In fact, this tradition goes so far as to declare that the naama (the name) and the naamin (the one who is named, i.e., God) are identical. This adoration of God by the divine name assumes two forms: japa and stotra. In japa, the name of God (or even a long formula) has to be silently repeated. The stotra, however, is invariably uttered aloud. It may consists in chanting verses conveying the glory, pastimes, and attributes of God and to reflect many aspects of the divine. The sahasranaamastotras belong to this group and are extremely popular.

The word sahasranaama literally means “thousand names of God.” According to the Vedic tradition, there is only one manifesting sound (sabda) indicative of the Supreme Being (Parabrahman). And, this is called Prajaiva or Om. Its recitation, along with puujaa or
ritualistic worship, is said to be an easier method to control the mind than *japa* and meditation. These thousand names can be used in ritualistic worship also offering flowers or *tulasii* leaves (holy basil) or *bilva* leaves (Aegle marmelos) or even *kumkum* (vermillion powder) with each name. Hindu tradition often considers that some of the names of the *sahasranaamastotras* are potent with powers and that their repetition can result in the fulfillment of one's desires.

Though a *sahasranaamastotra* comprises only the names of the deity, these names have been so ingeniously composed as to reflect many aspects of the divine. Just as that one *Parabrahman* is adored as manifesting in the form of many deities, the one named *Om*, indicative of him, also takes the shape of innumerable sound forms representing divine attributes and other excellences. A very large number of *sahasranaamastotras* are now available in print. They occur mostly in the *puranaas* and are addressed to several deities of the Hindu pantheon. There are thirty-three *sahasranaamastotras* that have been printed so far, only three, Vishnu, *Siva*, and Lalitha, are extremely popular and constantly in use. At the end, it is the normal practice to recite the *phalas'ruti* or eulogy of the hymn also.

As ancient sages said, “Ekam Sat, Viprah Bahuda Vadanti,” the land which worships God with thousand names is our motherland “Sahasranaama Devaarcita Bhoomi.”

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**Ashtottaram 62**

**Om Moksha Saadhaka Bhoomyainamah**

(Moksha: “liberation,” “not returning to samsara”; Saadhaka: “seeking,” “spiritual discipline”)

*Moksha* is liberation from transmigratory existence and from the cycle of birth and death what we call *samsaara*. The topic of *bandha* (bondage) and *moksha* (liberation) has been widely discussed in all the systems of Hindu philosophy. It is the last pursuit of the human goals in life. The synonyms for *moksha* are *mukti*, *kaivalya*, and *nirvaaana*.

Man is essentially the *atman*, the pure spirit, of the nature consciousness, but has somehow forgotten it and has identified himself with the body-mind-senses complex. As a result, he is constantly undergoing transmigration, the cycle of birth, death, rebirth, and so on. Whatever suffering a man undergoes is due to this identification with the body and the mind, and consequent transmigration brought about by karma. This cycle of transmigration, called *samsaara*, can be ended by the realization of the *atman*. This again is achieved by the destruction of *ajnaana* or *avidyaa* (ignorance) and through *jnaana* (knowledge). Once this is done, *moksha* is attained.

Of course, there are other schools which advocate *nishkaama karma* (action not motivated by selfish desires) or *bhakti* (devotion)
to God resulting in his grace) as the means to moksha. It is posited as the final purushaartha, the ultimate goal of life.

Some works like the Sutatasambitaa describe four kinds of mukti or moksha as follows:

1. Saalokya (living in the same world as God),
2. Saaruupya (having a form similar to that of God),
3. Samiipya (living near God),
4. Saayujya (getting identified or united with God).

These ideas seem to have existed in the Vedic literature itself.

Bharata bhooomi is conducive for the practice of one or all the paths enjoined by the Vedas, i.e., Karma yoga, Raja yoga, Bhakti yoga, and Jnaana yoga. To pursue these paths, we have thousands and thousands of temples, puṇya tiirthas, discourses by swamiis, and gurus and many other. We have Vedas, Upanishads, Purāṇas, Brahmasuutraas, and aagamas and many more sacred texts and literature for answers and clarifications. Not only showing the paths for liberation, but also how to be liberated while living and one cannot ask anything better than that. We also have prayers from Upanishads like “Asatomaa satgamya; tamasomaa jyotirgamaya,” meaning, “Lead me from unreality to reality and from darkness to light.”

The land which teaches us to worship God with “karmaphala tyagam, nishkaama karmam, Isvaraarpaṇa buddhi” and attain moksham and hence our land is “Moksha Saadhaka Bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 63

Om Jiivitaardha Bodhaka Bhoomyainamah

(Jiivita: “life”; Ardh: “meaning”; Bodhaka: “that which teaches”)

What is born has to die. Anything that has form and shape has to degrade over time. The question is, how one has lived his life rather than how long he has lived? The vanity toward their bodies, their desire for longevity, and material indulgence the Westerners have, you don’t see anywhere else on the planet. The struggle and time they spend on a daily basis to improve their bodies and beauty is astonishing and mind blowing. Even elderly, very old women with wrinkles on their face go to beauty parlors, get their hair perm regularly, and they put tons of makeup on their faces, and people in their old age do not wear clothes according to their age and they wear shorts and tight jeans like youngsters do. However, in Hindu philosophy, it’s quite opposite to that. When someone dresses inappropriately to their age, irrespective of their gender, they get criticized and ridiculed not only by the family members but also from the neighbors and the outsiders alike.

Our scriptures and sacred texts teach us that there are 8.4 million species born and every living being that is born indeed dies, and human life is the highest species because of the highest awareness and has the opportunity to redeem himself or herself in this
life with the free will given to them. We have the faculties of power of action, power of free will and power of knowledge. These faculties make humans to be different than all the other animals, which are programmed to eat, procreate, and sleep. Our ancient spiritual scientists (sages and seers) educated us to think about the temporary nature of our bodies, which we take for granted that we live forever, and even when we see people around us and our own family members pass away, still, we live in a delusional thinking that we don’t die and live happily ever after. But our rishis constantly remind us that we should work toward liberation while living in this body (jeevanmuktah).

Only our sacred texts like Vedas and Upanishads can answer the deep philosophical questions like, what is the purpose of our universe, reason for our lives, meaning of the life, and purpose of our life. You do not find answers for these questions in any other religion, but in our religion. Our philosophy does not stop at going to heaven after death, but discusses very thoroughly about karma, rebirth, and liberation, in depth. Our Vedas discuss how to get out of the wheel of birth and death (punarapi jananam; punarapi maram). They laid dharmasuutras (dos and don’ts) for us to live by. They clearly explain about heaven (if you believe in and desire) and the journey jiiva (pure spirit) takes after the death of the gross body, based on the results of our actions while alive. Vedas have established the four purushaars-thaas (dharma, artha, kaama, and moksha), the human pursuits as the goals of life. Vedas are the means of knowledge for Hindus and living by the knowledge enjoined by the Vedas is the goal of a person who wants to live a Vedic life.

Hence, our land is the one which teaches the ends to be striven for by human beings and is “Jiivitaardha Bodhaka Bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 64

Om Prakruti Poojana Bhoomyainamah

(Prakruti: “nature,” “origin,” “source”; Poojana: “worship,” “service to a deity”)

This is one of the most widely used words in Sanskrit literature as also in the Hindu scriptures. There are many meanings like “the natural,” “original principle,” and “that which produces effects.” In the most basic sense, it means nature or a natural quality.

In Vedic sacrifices, it means a model yaaga—like the Dar’sa or the Puurvanaasa—others based on it being called vikritis. In grammar, it represents the basic form of a word. In the Saankhya Dar’sana, it represents pradhaana, the basic material cause of the universe, comprising the three gunas-sattva, rajas, and tamas. This concept has generally been accepted by almost all the schools of Vedaanta. In Advaita Vedaanta it stands for Maaya at the cosmic level and avidyaa (ignorance) at the individual level. In Visishtaadvaita Vedaanta it is called acit (the unconscious principle) and accepted as a permanent reality, but under the control of Ii’svara or God. The Dvaita Vedaanta considers it as having two aspects: the citprakruti (conscious entity same as Lakshmi, the divine consort of Vishnu) and the acitprakruti or the unconscious basic material cause of the world.

In the ’Saktatantras prakruti is the Divine Mother who appears in five forms. They are Durga, Radha, Lakshmi, Sarasvati, and Saavitri. These five goddesses are responsible for creation.
In the *Aayurveda* (health sciences) it stands for the general condition of the body.

The *Bhagavadgita* describes *prakruti* as representing two aspects of the Lord's power, the *apara* (lower) and the *paraa* (the higher). The former comprises eight unconscious material objects and the latter, the conscious *jiiva* (individual soul).

In political science, the word stands for the seven *naijaangas* or constituents of the state. In Sanskrit poetry, it is the name of a particular meter with twenty-one letters or syllables per line.

*Parabrahma* is beyond the three *gunaas* and *prakruti* is comprised of the three *gunaas* with which it is the cause of the material world. Every matter that is created including the human beings are the combination of these three *gunaas*. Just like our mother, who brought us into this world and nourished us, *prakruti* is the mother of everything in this universe because the five basic elements of the universe: space, air, fire, water, and earth constitutes the universe. For giving us everything without asking, what else can we call *Prakruti* other than Mata (mother)? For that reason, every Hindu worships her as mother in the form of goddess *Durga*, *Lakshmi*, and *Sarasvati*.

That's why our motherland is "Prakruti Poojana Bhoomi."

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**Ashtottaram 65**

*Om Advaya Brahma Bhoomyainamah*

(Advaya: “non-dual,” “without a second”; Brahman: “the truth of everything,” “the absolute,” “the reality”)

*Advaita* means “non-dual,” “one without a second.” The Indian philosophical system derives this nomenclature from the fact that it recognizes Brahman (the Absolute) as the only reality and denies permanent reality to the world as also to the individual souls. The entire edifice of *Advaita* metaphysics is built up on the foundation that Brahman is the only reality, *brahma satyam*. This premise is based firmly on the famous Upanishadic statement "*Sadeva somya idamagra aasiiit, ekamevaadvitiyam,*" meaning “Dear ('Svetaketu), in the beginning (before creation) Reality (or Brahman) alone existed, the One without a second.” However, the world of multiplicity is a matter of our day-to-day experience. Hence, it becomes necessary to offer an explanation as to how Brahman, the one without a second, appears as this world of multiple names and forms. The explanation offered by *Advaita* is *Anirvachaniyakhyataa*; it’s theory of erroneous cognition, which defies logic. Perceiving silver in nacre in moonlight or snake in rope in insufficient light are stock examples given by the *Advaitins*. In both cases there is an erroneous perception brought about by the impressions of silver and snake from an earlier idea of the same, now superimposed on nacre and rope under conditions favorable to the error. This superimposition called *adhyaasa* or *adhya-*
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aropa is responsible for the mithyaajnaana (false knowledge) that the object perceived is silver or snake.

The basic cause of this erroneous perception is termed ajnaana or avidyaa (ignorance), which is said to be bhaavaruupa (existent) and is endowed with two saktis or powers, i.e., aavaraṇa’sakti (veiling power) and vikshepa’sakti (transforming power). It veils the true nature of nacre and rope and shows up silver and snake in their place by apparently transforming them. Since this avidyaa (ignorance) does not make the nacre and the rope completely disappear from view, but only makes them appear as something else, it is described as bhaavaruupa or existent.

Maayaa is avidyaa at the cosmic level. Brahman is as small as ṛtu (atom) and as large as bruhaat (infinitely big) and is the ultimate reality, one without a second. Brahma associated with maayaa is Saguna Brahman (Brahman with attributes) or Iśvara (Lord of creation, God). It is this aspect of Brahman that is responsible for creation, preservation, and annihilation of the world. As for the actual order of evolution of the created world, the descriptions given in the Upanishads are accepted.

Before other religions were started by the prophets, our Vedaanta was teaching about “Eko Brahman,” meaning there is only Brahman, nothing else. Only land on the earth which teaches about only God is our motherland and is “Advaya Brahma Bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 66

Om Poorṇamadah Bhoomyainamah

(Poorṇamadah: “infinite,” “full,” “endless”)

In Iśa or Ishavasyopanishad, which belongs to Yajurveda samhita, the glory of the divine cosmic soul or the knowledge of the supreme self is deliberated. This is also referred to as the Jnana Kanda. The book starts with an invocation, recited as Mangalacharan (the auspicious inception) to sing the glory of the Supreme God “Om poornamadaha poorna-midam . . . Poorna- mevaavashishyate,” saying that “Parabrahma (Supreme Divine Cosmic Soul) is embellished with all the qualities tangible and intangible.” It is through this Supreme Divine Cosmic Soul that this universe is evolved. Because this universe has evolved from the one complete and total, the universe also is devoid of beginning and is infinite.

This total or complete is so significant that even if one literally decides to deduct or remove the cosmos and universe from that complete or total energy, it shall remain constant, i.e., total. Even if this universe does not remain, the divine cosmic energy is devoid of beginning and is infinite. The knowledgeable person who sees God in all creatures and see all the creatures in God becomes happy and experiences incessantly the beauty of God. If we realize God, we get liberated from all the miseries and attachments that continually plague us.
The Vedas are the holy commandments of the gods for mankind. The entire universe or cosmos is pervaded by that Supreme Cosmic Energy. He who is all pervasive, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, unchanging is one for all. Even the gods and the sages have not realized him in reality. The energy gods possess is just one fragment of the divine cosmic energy. They cannot do anything without divine inspiration and intervention. He is the source of all the contradictory features and natures. Even if he is devoid of birth, he takes birth, even being formless, assumes form, and even being devoid of characteristics, assumes a nature. He is very far from us, yet, very close to us. The entire world is embellished with this cosmic energy inside out. The person who performs all his duties according to the scriptures and their directives, indirectly worships God in reality. Those who work selflessly are not caught in the bondage of actions or karma. There is no way that one can escape the chains of karma.

He who is always absorbed in the divine cosmic energy attains the blissful state. He gradually loses the self and merges into the divine cosmic energy.

The land and its Vedic scriptures which taught us the knowledge of the Total Cosmic Energy is “Poornamadah Bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 67

Om Bhaagya Bhoomyainamah

(Bhaagyam: “wealth,” “happiness,” “luck”)

*Bhaagya* has many meanings including “wealth,” “luck,” “ prosperity,” and many more. There is no one in the world who doesn’t want wealth and happiness. If possible, everyone wants to enjoy pleasures and wealth without working for it and it is especially true in America. They want to enjoy and indulge in materialism without hard work and hardship. That’s why many jobs are being sourced out to other countries like China, India, Philippines, and Mexico. They sue anybody, everybody including their own family members and parents to make a free buck. Their philosophy is that it’s somebody else fault and they don’t want to accept responsibility for their actions. They enjoy vacations and recreations all the time and attend sports, watch TV twenty-four hours a day, and eat humongous amounts, and that is their *bhaagyam*.

*Bhaagyam* can be in many forms and not necessarily the money. People who lack something dear to them, and getting that is their utmost *bhaagyam*. For example, a rich and wealthy couple may feel that they are not lucky and fortunate that they don’t have any children to enjoy and they feel utmost joy and happiness when they conceive a baby; at the same token having health is wealth for someone who was told he/she is going to die from a terminal illness. There is a *sukti* called aarogyame maha bhaagyam meaning “having health is wealth.”
We can go on and on with many life examples what bhaagyam means to someone.

Hindus worship goddess Sri Lakshmi, the divine consort of Lord Sri Vishnu. They pray to her for wealth and also worship her in eight different forms. Especially Indian married women worship Lakshmi every Friday and it has been a tradition and culture for millennia. Our ancient sages assigned an entire month for Indian women to worship Lakshmi and one special day for a strict religious observance called Varalakshmi Vratam. In addition to praying and worshipping, observing religious rituals and festivals, Hindus work very hard and try their best to be prosperous and happy, unlike Westerners and other cultures looking for easy money with litigations and invasions.

Of course, there is always some exceptions to everything and we cannot generalize. To answer the question frequently asked by the Westerners about India that “why there are so many beggars on the streets,” I always answer that

1. We don’t have entitlements from government in the form of food stamps, medicaid, social security, disability,
2. Our politicians are getting richer and richer by taking bribes and enjoy their power, perks, prestige, privileges at the expense of the citizens and voters,
3. It’s also individual’s praarabdham (the doctrine of karma), contributing to their poverty.

Despite all this, we have the spiritual wealth and our land is “Bhaagya Bhoomi.”

(Prapancham: “world,” “visible universe,” “manifestation”; Khyaati: “renown,” “a name”)

Not only do we respect other religions, faiths, and cultures, we have earned a respectable place in the world. In the past, it was our wealth and spiritual knowledge attracted many foreign countries, but now it’s only our knowledge that is keeping us in a respectable position. In many fields the West looks at our country for spiritual knowledge, nonviolence, vegetarianism, mathematics, and computers, to name a few. The words like karma and namaste are popular in Western world and we see that in TVs and Hollywood movies.

But the most notable ones are

1. Regaining our independence back from the British without wars or using guns and swords and by simple dharma of nonviolence. We made the British feel ashamed of their behavior by showing our values and dharmic nature,
2. The advances we made in mathematics and many branches of sciences which helped for the human progress, like inventing “Zero” decimal system and “infinity” and famous scientists like Albert Einstein made a comment
that “there is no worthwhile scientific progress without Indians and their knowledge.”

Even though we were invaded and ruled by Muslims and British, we stood on our feet after independence and within seventy-eight years, with hard work, we have shown the world that we are capable people and made the world astonished with our progress especially in computers and such technologies.

The Indian migrants in other countries are doing very well with their hard work and entrepreneurship. In medical field also our Indian physicians got recognition. We kept our dignity by not expecting handouts from the other countries like USA and rebuilt our economy with industry and intelligence. Once again, countries like China, Pakistan, and neighboring countries have been trying so hard to invade us and we showed them our courage and strength and made them think twice. We have developed our nuclear weapons as a defense and only to protect our country from the neighbors who are waiting like vultures to occupy our land. With all those invasions and religious conversions, we did not get lost or lose our roots and culture which has been Sanatana Dharma and kept our respect on the international stage. We have inspired many cultures, religions, and spiritually across the globe. Our swamiis, and gurus, with their discourses, are keeping our way of life and dharma. Our father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi, was well-known all over the world for his nonviolence and passive resistance against British, and Martin Luther King was his follower who brought civil independence to his black people.

The land which is respected by the international scientists, writers, philosophers, and many more is our motherland and is “Prapancha Khyaati Bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 69

Om Maanasopachaara
Poojita Bhoomyainamah

(Maanasopachaara: “offering services to God mentally”; Poojita: “being worshipped,” “deities, gods, and goddesses”)

We serve and treat nicely when a guest comes to our house. How much gratitude we have to show and how much we should serve the almighty who has given us life and the atmosphere sustainable for our lives? Throughout the history of mankind, human beings have been seeking—whether they know it or not—unalloyed happiness or bliss. Freedom from suffering and attainment of eternal peace and joy have been the universally acclaimed goals of life.

From time immemorial, a firm belief in the existence of a supernatural being, omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent, seems to have been ingrained in the very nature of man. By somehow establishing a contact with this being, often called God, one can get whatever one wants in life. This is the conviction resulting from this belief. Hinduism proclaims that this God is both niraakaara and nirguna (without any particular form or attributes) as also saakaara and saguna (capable of assuming any form and attributes at will). An illustration can make this point more clear. Water can exist in three states: ice, liquid water, and vapor or steam. Once this is acknowledged, the necessity for and the role of rituals in this path of bhakti
can easily be recognized and appreciated. Performance of rituals, worships, and poojas is one of the easier means to achieve the purity of mind. However, they should be done meticulously with a proper knowledge of the spirit behind them. If the symbolical meaning and significance of the icon is understood properly, the icon itself will become an actualized form of the ideal.

Worship of God can be either internal or external. Internal worship called maanasapooja is actually meditation (contemplation) or ritualistic with all the ingredients, but all done mentally. Our ancient sages have thoughtfully developed various steps involved in an actual pooja or worship which can be done externally or mentally (maanasopachaara) with a bhaavana (concept, notion, attitude, idea). They have described pancha upachaaraas (five services), or da’sa upachaaraas (ten services); both are common for daily worship, and ‘shoḍa’sa (sixteen services) or more elaborate one with shaḍa-sachaturdha upachaaraas (sixty-four services). The ingredients are water, sandal paste, flowers, lighted lamp, and incense sticks and food offering. All these can be done with mental notion, concept, and attitude. When understood properly and performed meticulously, they lead to inner purity and concentration.

The land which offered to the world, mental contemplation, and meditation as a part of worshipping God is our motherland “Maanasopachaara Poojita Bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 70

Om Guru Paramparaa Bhoomyainamah

(Guru: “remover of ignorance”; Paramparaa: “lineage”)
his guru as if he is God himself. However, the Hindu scriptures also warn the people against false gurus.

The word *guru* has been used widely in the Sanskrit works in several other senses such as “father,” “mother,” “husband,” “name of a planet,” “the teacher of the gods Bruhaspati” and any teacher in any field of knowledge and God himself.

We go back in time with regression analysis and realize that the first guru is God himself who is omniscient. From him the lineage continued and the knowledge is imparted. With this in mind, we show utmost respect to a guru and start our prayers with the hymn, “Guru Brahma, Guru Vishnu, Gurudevo Maheswarah; guru saakshaat Parambrahma, tasmai sri gurvenamah!” meaning “Guru is Brahma, Vishnu, Maheswara and is none other than Parabrahman and my salutations unto him!” Lord Sri Krishna—who himself is the Vedas—had Saandiipani as his guru and Adi ‘Sankarrachaarya—who was believed to be the incarnation of Lord Siva—had gurus like Govinda Bhagavdpada. Guru, once upon a time was a student himself, and that lineage and tradition continues without a break in that line.

We don’t see this kind of guru lineage in any religion, culture, or country. On the contrary, if a teacher tries to discipline a student, that teacher will be fired right away and the parents, the community, the media; and everyone turns against the teacher for disciplining that student.

The land where the students, who not only are gaining the knowledge from a guru, but passing on that knowledge as a guru himself to other students, and keeping that tradition going and we are very fortunate and can proudly say that our motherland is “Guru Paramparaav Bhoomi.”

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**Ashtottaram 71**

**Om Trikaala Sandhyaanuṣṭhita Bhoomyainamah**

(Trikaala: “three periods of the day”; Sandhya: “obeisance to sun god during dawn and dusk”; Anuṣṭhita: “practice,” “performance”)

The word *Sandhya* refers to that time when night passes into day and day passes into night. They are dawn and dusk. The ritual of one’s obeisance to God during these periods is known as *sandhya-vandanam*. Doing three periods of the day—dawn (*praatassandhya*), midday, noon when the sun is right above our head (*madhyaahnasandhya*), and dusk (*saayantrahsandhya*)—is known as *trikaala*.

The *vatu* who has undergone the *upanayana* ceremony, as also the householders (except the working class) are expected to perform this *sandhya* ritual three times a day, as a sacred duty. These three, the *praatassandhya*, the *madhyaahmasandhya*, and the *saayantrahsandhya* have many steps in common. However, in practice, only the first and the last have survived. The scriptures have provided for this modification.

After taking bath and wearing the traditional religious dress (dhoti and chadar or uttariiya) one should apply the religious marks (like the *vibhuuti* or the *uurdhvapundra*) as per one’s family traditions, on the forehead, and sit on the seat (kept aside and to be used only for such religious purposes). Though there are differences in the
procedure and the various steps to be followed, as per differing traditions, the six steps common to all and the detailed procedure has to be learned from the family priest or the elders in the family.

These six steps are:

1. **Aachamanam** is the ceremonial sipping of water from the right hand cupped in the shape of the ear of a cow (gokarnam) to the appropriate mantras. This aachamanam is a general purificatory act that precedes every religious undertaking.

2. **Praanaayaamam** is control of the praanic energy through the regulation of the breathing process as detailed in the works of yoga. Praanaayaamam helps in the control of the mind also.

3. **Maarjanam** literally means cleansing or purifying. It consists of sprinkling of water on specified parts of the body with a mantra. This process will make the body ceremonially pure and fit the ritualistic act.

4. **Arghyapadana** is the offering of water taken in the two hands cupped together, by repeating the Gaayatriimantra and addressing the sun god. This is just to show our gratitude to the sun god who is our primary life support.

5. **Gaayatriijapa**, the goddess Gaayatri within the orb of the sun is the deity here.

6. **Suuryopasthaana**, repeating the prayer addressed to the deity Gaayatri (in the orb of the sun) in the standing posture, facing the sun, is Suuryopasthaana. This is the last rite of bidding farewell to the goddess after having invoked her and satiated her through japa.

Hence, our land which worships the sun god, who is our primary life support, three times a day is known to be “Trikaala Sandhyaavandanushti Bhoomi.”

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Ashtottaram 72

**Om Kshamaa Bhoomyainamah**

(Kshamaa: “enduring,” “forgiving,” “proper,” “competent”)

*Kshama* is a divine quality. In Sanskrit the word is *kshaanti*, which means “forgiveness” and “to endure.” When you show this quality toward others, they feel less apprehensive and less fearful of you and they feel relief. This quality of *Kshama* occupies the top place in our culture and way of our life. No matter how cruel the other person is, and how much he tries to harm you, there are quite a few Hindus who forgive them by saying that the law of karma (action and result) will take care of that person. In the world, in any religion, or culture, we don't see this divine quality. In some religions, they hang the criminals, cut their limbs, stone them to death even for simple petty theft. Not only that, they conduct mass killings by suicide bombing for simple disagreement about their religion or saying against their religion. This shows how much our religion and culture are different from others, and gives importance to humanity and human values.

Hats off to our culture, and values where we teach our children from infancy to be tolerant and show kshama, and kindness toward fellow human beings. You not only see this in our daily lives but all our doctrines, sacred texts are full of incidents highlighting these divine qualities in the form of fables and moral stories. Our scriptures do not teach us to show endurance in the name of religion and for the purpose of proselytization (religious conversion). Our saastras
proclaim that kshama is a divine quality, and we should show that toward any living being irrespective of the race, religion, culture, or species. To be divine, we have to practice kindness and forgiveness toward fellow beings similar to God does toward every creature in the universe. It's a fact that if we practice to control the six enemies of our mind (shadvargas), it is possible to show kshama toward others.

In the great itihaasa Ramaayaṇa, sage Vaalmiiki portrayed the sixteen virtues of Lord Sri Ramachandra as an example to us humans to cultivate those qualities. One of them was kshama. When praising that quality in Lord Sri Rama, sage Vaalmiiki states that Rama’s kshama was so great that he never remembered anyone has insulted him, hurt him or accused him, but if anyone did any small good deed, Rama always boasted about that act and that person. This is the poster quality of Sri Rama. This illustration by our sacred texts is to show us how to be a divine person in cultivating and showing kshama toward fellow living beings.

The land which shows the divinity in the kshama quality is “Kshamaa Bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 73

Om Nityaagnihotra Bhoomyainamah

(Nityaa: “performed daily”, “perpetual,” “will always be”; Agnihotram: “oblation to Agni,” “maintaining and offering to the sacred fire”)

Agnihotram means “in which libation are poured into Agni” (fire). Yajna or sacrifice links the human beings with divine beings. When these divinities or devataas are propitiated through Yajnas, they reward the performers with whatever they desire for. These yajnas may be nitya (obligatory, performed daily), naaimittika (occasional) or kaamya (motivated). Again, depending upon the materials used they may be classified as paaka-yajna, havir-yajna, and somayaaga. If cooked food is offered in paaka-yajna and soma juice in somayaagas, milk and ghee are the materials normally used in havir-yajna.

Agnihotra is one of the most common and important sacrifices, which is classed among the havir-yajnas and considered to be nitya. It is performed more as a daily worship than for the fulfillment of any specific desire. It should be started from the very evening of the day on which agnyaadhaana (establishing the Vedic fire ceremonially) is done. It is obligatory to perform it daily till death or old age or samnyaasa. All the dvijas (the twice born, the men of the first three varṇas) are entitled to its performance. It must be done twice daily at dawn and dusk, along with the wife. Wife, son, or pupil can perform it on his behalf in emergencies. The main part of the rite consists in
heating and offering cow’s milk in a ladle into the *gaarhapatya* fire with appropriate mantras. Surya (sun) and Prajaapati are the deities to whom offerings are made in morning, and Agni and Prajaapati in the evening.

Instead of with milk, the rite may be performed with gruel, cooked rice, ghee, or curds when specific fruits or results are desired for. The performer of *Agnihotra* is obliged to rear a cow. The milk vessel, which must be an earthen pot with a straight brim, is called *agnihotra-sthaali* and the ladle *agnihotrabhavani*. If and when the *yajamaana* (performer of the sacrifice) goes on a pilgrimage along with his wife, he can carry the *gaarhapatya* fire with him or can ceremonially put it out and perform *punaraadhaana* (reestablishing the fire) on his return. When he dies, the various wooden implements used by him for *Agnihotra* should be kept on various parts of his body as prescribed and the body cremated with the *gaarhapatya* fire.

“Something was prescribed in the Vedas, and hence we are doing it” is not the attitude; instead, we perform the daily oblation to Agni with great understanding of the importance of it spiritually and secularly and our land is “Nityaagnihotra Bhoomi.”

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Ashtottaram 74

Om Maatrudeva Poojita
Bhoomyainamah

(Maata: “mother”; Poojita: “one who is honored or worshipped”)

Hinduism has given the highest place of honor to the mother. In fact; the very etymological derivation on the word *maataa* is *maanyate puujyate yaa saa*, meaning “one who is honored or worshipped.” The Taittiriya Upanishad advises the outgoing student of the gurukulam (forest academy run by the rishis or sages) to look upon his mother as if she were God himself. In this series of pithy teachings, she is placed above the father and the Vedic teacher. In fact, the status of motherhood has been raised to the highest level by depicting even God as the Divine Mother in later religious literature like the puruaṇas and the tantras. It is the bound duty of the son to protect her and maintain her at all costs even if she were a sinner, reduced to the level of an outcaste.

One of the smrutis (the Sankhalikhita) gives an interesting piece of advice to a son that he should not normally take sides when the father and the mother are quarrelling. If at all, he should side with the mother! The epics and the puruaṇas are full of eulogy of the mother and of instances (like that of the Paandavas) where the sons have served their mother devotedly. They also warn that if a mother is deeply hurt and utters a curse, it can never be averted. Even during
the historical period there are several instances where the mothers inspired and shaped the character of their sons and the latter's gratitude toward them.

There are many movies and movie songs in India about the motherhood and the love of a mother toward her children sacrificing herself for them. No matter how old her son or daughter might be, for a mother they are her children. She carries the baby for nine months and goes through the labor to bring the child into this world. Baby’s first food is the mother’s milk which provides immunity also to the child. She feeds the baby and quenches its hunger even if she has to starve. We see that not just in humans but in animal kingdom also. Every female doesn’t back off in protecting its babies from the predators and willing to die in the fight. There is no unlucky person than losing his/her mother and nobody can replace her and hence, our sacred texts describe the goddess Durga, teacher’s wife, the earth and the wife of an elder brother as mothers and is no exaggeration. In Western countries, once a year, they have Mother’s Day, and on that day children go and visit their mothers in the nursing homes or take the mothers to restaurants. For Hindus, the mother is honored and worshipped as goddess and they serve them in their old age.

_Our nation, which honors and worships the mother, is “Maatrudeva Poojita Bhoomi.”_

Ashtottaram 75

Om Pitrudevaarchita Bhoomyainamah

(Pitaa: “father”; Archita: “one who is honored or worshipped”)

In Sanskrit, the word _pita_ means “one who protects.” The Taittiriiya Upanishad declares that the father is only next to the mother and should be honored like a god and without the father, you don't exist. This is proper since he gives birth, education, and culture to his offspring. According to the _smruti_ it is the father who performs the _upanayana_ sacrament and imparts the sacred _Gaayatrii mantra_ to his sons. According to some _dharma’astra_ works the following are _pitaas_ or fathers: _anna daata_ (one who gives food), _bhayatraataa_ (one who protects from dangers), _‘sva’sura_ (father-in-law), _Janitaa_ (father), _upanetaa_ (one who performs _upanayana_).

Only in Vedic tradition we equate the father with god and honor and respect him. He is responsible for your birth and without his _dhaatu_ (sperm) you don’t exist. He also provides food, shelter, roof on your head. He is providing the worldly knowledge for you to survive in the world. Without a father, you don’t have a wife or mother because without him, they also don’t exist either. One of the debts we don’t make and every human being—according to Hinduism—is said to be born under three _ruṇas_ or debts. Among these is the _pitruruṇa_. This _ruṇa_ can be paid by marrying according to dharma and having a son who will perform _‘raaddhas_ to the _pitrus_ or departed ancestors thereby appeasing them.
once a year, they have Father’s Day and on that day children go and visit their fathers in the nursing homes or take the fathers to restaurants. For Hindus, the father is honored and worshipped as god and they serve them in their old age.

From the Vedic times till the beginning of Kaliyuga, even today for generations in some places; there are children who follow the father’s occupation and keep the family business or tradition. From fathers we inherit some traits, gotram, and family name (last name or surname). Father has also the burden and responsibility to maintain his life style according to dharmasastras because his children are going to look up to him and imitate him. In the great epic Mahabharatm, Yaksha (semi-divine being) asks Yudhishtara, the eldest brother of the Pandavas that what is the atman (soul) for the father? And Yudhishtara replies that “Putraatmaa manushyasya,” meaning, “The son is the atman for the father.” He also says that the father is higher than the sky!

Our motherland has the culture of honoring and worshiping the father, and is “Pitrudevaarchita Bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 76

Om Nityaachaaryya Sevita Bhoomyainamah

(Nitya: “daily”; Aacharya: “preceptor,” “a teacher”; Sevita: “service”, “homage,” or “worship”)

In ancient India, education, the panacea for all maladies and problems of life, was imparted more by personal contact than by lectures and discourses. The student learned more by observing the teacher’s life than by hearing his teachings. Hence, the teacher had to “be” that which he wanted to “make” of his student. First “be” and then “make.” It is this philosophy of education that is reflected in this word aachaarya. It is only he who successfully gathers (aacinoti) the essentials of dharma and wisdom from all sources and practices them (aacarati) in his own life that deserves the appellation aachaarya. In a more technical sense, the aachaarya is the one who performs the upanayanam ceremony of the novice and imparts the Vedas to him, along with the accessories known as the Vedaangas.

Great stress was laid on the qualifications which the aachaarya has to possess. Birth in a family known for its erudition and piety was always required to teach was expected as a matter of course. A pure and sinless life, serenity and composure, active interest in imparting knowledge were the other qualifications looked for in the aachaarya. The word is also frequently used as an honorific to men of great
erudition and learning, especially if they are the initiators of new schools of thought or the revivers of old ones, like 'Sankaraachaarya, Raamaanuja, Madhva, Nimbaka, and others.

The term is also applied to an adviser or preceptor guiding sacrificial rites. The wife of an aachaarya is called aachaaryaanii where a woman preceptor is designated aachaarya. From this we can infer the existence of women preceptors also like Gaargi. The aachaarya is one of the pancha pitas (five fathers) and he also takes care of the student, feeds him, protects him, and also imparts worldly knowledge along with the spiritual knowledge until the student graduates from the gurukulam (house of guru). The students also show utmost respect and honor toward the aachaarya in return. Adi Sri 'Sankaraachaarya dedicated his Bhajagovindam to his guru Govinda Bhagavadpaada’s honor. The aachaarya has the capacity to change and turn around his student’s life completely. Our 'sastraas say that when a student is ready for his teachings with pure heart and mind, the aachaarya will show up in front of him. This happened in my life also. I was very skeptical about gurus, swamis, and aachaaryas all my life because of bad experiences and my observation of them and one day I was in front of the late Swami Dayananda Sarasvati in 1998, and I was his follower ever since then. He exactly knew what was in my mind and my quest for knowledge and guided me through very passionately.

Aachaaryas are the ones who not only just preach but practice dharma in their life and become an example to the students and the society. Our country is blessed with many aachaaryas, and we respect and honor them. Our land is “Nityaachaarya Sevita Bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 77

Om Aatidhya Dharma Bhoomyainamah

(Atithih: “guest,” “visitor,” “traveller”; Dharma: “virtue,” “duty,” “custom,” “practice”)

In Sanskrit, the word atithi means “one who has no fixed day for coming.” In all cultured and refined societies, honoring a guest is considered as an important duty of a householder. The Hindu scriptures have extolled a guest as God himself (Taittiriya Upanishad). Out of the five daily sacrifices (panchamahayajnaas) a householder is ordained to perform maanushya-yajna, the fourth one, which concerns the feeding and the taking care of guests.

The word atithi has been variously defined. The literal meaning is “one who comes suddenly as a guest without any regard to the tithi (a day of lunar calendar).” Sometimes the word is defined as referring to any unknown person who arrives in the evening seeking food and shelter for the night. The master of the house was expected to meet the guest, welcome him, wash his feet, and honor him by giving a seat. Waving a lamp before him, giving him food and other things he may need to appease his hunger and thirst, and objects like a bed to rest, etc., were also recommended. These ‘shoda’sopachaaraas (sixteen services) are the same ones we offer to God during the worship.
Brahmacarins and samnyasins as also learned brahmanas of pure character got precedence over others. Honoring them and feeding them were considered extremely meritorious. When the guests left, the master of the house was expected to send them off by going part of the way with them. If heretics and sinners came as guests, they were not entertained. However, out of human consideration, they could be given uncooked food articles. In Bhagavata puranam, Lord Sri Krishna treats a guest who was his childhood friend at his palace with services he gets himself as a God. This illustrates him being an example for us on how to treat a guest.

It was mentioned in the puranas that during the epoch of Satyayuga (Krutayuga), householders were eager to serve the guests unlike today, where Hindu traditions have been sliding down drastically in the name of Westernization and modernization. Up until a few decades ago, there used to be shelters for the travelers, dharma'saalas, water coolers with water and buttermilk to quench the thirst for those traveling in hot weather, and householders used to leave a big clay pot with cool water outside on their porches for people to drink. Nowadays we hear movie songs like “Bahu doorapu baatasarri, itu ravoyi, okkasari,” meaning, “Oh, traveler, come and stay at our house to night and get rested.” Only songs are left now! You need an appointment nowadays to visit somebody, otherwise, they feel inconvenienced and disrupted with their daily routine.

Despite the above, once upon a time, we were the land which used to honor the guests and treated them like they would do to God! Our land is Aatidhya Dharma Bhoomi.”
In Hindu culture and tradition \textit{poor\=nam} signifies completeness, sacredness, and fullness. Based on the \textit{poor\=nam} the \textit{sunna} (zero) was recognized and written in our \textit{Ganitasastram}. This \textit{poor\=nam} (zero as a symbol) has changed the world with the invention of computers based on binary code for which the zero and the one are the numbers used. That’s why famous scientists like the Nobel Prize winner Albert Einstein once said, “If it isn’t for India, without which, no worthwhile scientific progress would have been made possible.” Our ancient seers and sages realized the \textit{Parabrahman} as full, complete, infinite, and \textit{poor\=nam}.

We recite the santi mantram from the Isavasyopanishad—“\textit{Om! Poor\=namadah, poor\=namidam, poor\=nat poorna . . . poor namevaava-sishyate},” meaning “This is \textit{poor\=nam} (full), that is \textit{poor\=nam} (full), and whatever here is \textit{poor\=nam}. When you add or deduct from the full, what remains is full.” The infinite nature of the \textit{Parabrahman} was explained in this hymn. That infinite has no beginning or end. The \textit{jiiva} is also full and is nothing but \textit{Parabrahman}.

That \textit{Parabrahman}, which is \textit{poor\=nam}, is symbolized with a circle, that which we recognize as zero. When you place a zero in front of a number, the value of that number increases. The more zeros you add to that number, the bigger the value is. On the other hand, when you
place a zero before a number, no matter how many zeros you add, the value is going to diminish. If you multiply any big number you want with a zero, the value is going to be zero. What a wonderful concept our ancient sages thought of which has revolutionized our world. The fullness and auspiciousness of that *poornatvam*, came to their realization during deep meditation or tapas. Today, everyone knows how the computers have revolutionized our world. From a child to an old person, there is no one in this world who is not dependent on this technology in their daily lives from the time they get up from the bed in the morning, till they go back to bed at night. Thanks to our *poornam* (zero)! Even Western philosophers and psychologists came to our country and learned about the *poornam* and wrote books, and started teaching in prestigious universities about our concept of *poornam* as a graduate and postgraduate research material. Only those who understand the deeper meaning of *poornam* can appreciate its depth of knowledge.

We use *poornam* as an auspicious *poornakumbham* in rituals, festivals, marriages, and temple activities. When someone is honored in a function, priests receive them with *poornakumbham*.

The land, which recognized the fullness of Brahman as *poornam*, is our “Poorna Bhoomi.”
on the streets, and turn our face to the other side. This is not an exaggeration but a fact and I have experienced this many times in America. This is very sad and pathetic behavior of our Indians, and this is another reason why I have worked three to four years to write ashtottaram on our motherland to reeducate the Indians, especially the younger generations in India and abroad not to fall for those infatuations and learn the past glory of our country and bring that glory back!

Our seers and sages have thoroughly studied and gave us in-depth knowledge about all the sixty-four branches of science. The knowledge from cooking to atoms to Ayurveda, they have imparted the complete knowledge to us. We were the first one to build mega ships that can carry thousands of passengers, pushpaka vimaanams, astrology, archery, and you name it, they have explored them and provided us with that knowledge. Saadhus and Siddhis have shown miracles. We are the first ones to claim that the sun is the center of our solar system, and not the earth. We did this way before Copernicus claimed the same, centuries later.

*Our land is “Mahimaanvita Bhoomi.”*

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**Ashtottaram 80**

**Om Sahaja Siddha Bhoomyainamah**

(Sahajaa: “natural,” “innate,” “inborn”; Siddha: “gained,” “established,” “proved,” “accomplished”)

Once upon a time, *Bharata Varsha* and *Bharata Khandam* were vastly spread in the world more than what it is now today. During the great war of Mahabharata in 3139 BCE, countries like Nepal, Bhutan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and before our independence in 1947, Pakistan, and many more other countries were part of India. After the great war, many countries have separated from *Bharata Varsha* and *Bharata Khandam*, and declared their independence. After our independence from British in 1947, Pakistan also has separated from India. Looking at today’s conditions and terrorism across the globe, we should feel happy that it happened only for our good, and otherwise we would be the one in the news all the time as a terrorist country.

If we look at our boundaries now, we have Himalayan Mountains on the north, Indian Ocean on the south, Bay of Bengal on the east, and Arabian Sea on the West, and they are all our natural boundaries. We cannot help think that Lord *Parameswara* himself is sitting on the *Kailaasa* mountains and protecting us from the invaders who are waiting like vultures to occupy our land. In our national anthem “*Janaganamana*” the author of that song, Nobel laureate Ravindranath Tagore, had included the natural boundaries
also. Like our Vedas promulgate that “Dharmo rakshati rakshitah,” meaning, “If we protect dharma, in turn, dharma will protect us” and our sanatana dharma will always protect us from the enemies and the bordering countries like China and Pakistan which are always looking for an opportunity to occupy our land with crooked ways. Unfortunately, even though we are protected by our natural boundaries, we were invaded by Muslims and we were ruled by them for centuries and had forceful conversions into their Muslim religion, and treated by them as secondhand citizens in our own country, it did not happen because our borders failed us, but because our own Indians helped the Muslims to conquer us. Those Indians did not follow our dharma-sastras, and their own selfishness, jealousy, and greed made them stoop that low. The slavery we went through did not teach those Indians a lesson, and again, we were succumbed to the British cunningness and their “divide and rule” tactics; once again, we had lost our land to them for two centuries. Because of the Muslims and the British, we have Islam and Christianity religions in a Hindu nation. Looking at our past history and current status of our country and my anguish have inspired me to write the ashtottaram, ekavimsati song and Gayatri mantras on our Bharatmata! As long as we have our dharma sastras which proclaim dharmameva jayate (dharma is always victorious) as our pramaṇas (means of knowledge) and as long as we have the sun and the moon in the sky, our natural boundaries will always protect us from the enemies and we are thankful to Lord Iswara, who has blessed us with those boundaries.

Our land is “Sabaja Siddha Bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 81

Om Pancha Bhutaaraadhana
Bhomyainamah

(Pancha Bhutaas: “five fundamental elements of creation”; Araadhana: “worship,” “service”)

One of the more widely used terms in the Indian Hindu philosophical systems, the word bhuta refers to the five fundamental elements, pancabhutas, are pruthvii (earth), ap (water), tejas (fire), vayu (air), and a’k’sa (ether/space), the permutations and combinations of which result in this physical universe. These bhutas have two aspects, the primary and the secondary. In the primary aspect they are su’kshmabhutas or tanma’tras. They arise from the Atman associated with ajna’na or nescience and are called so since each one of them contains only that quality. For instance, the primordial element a’ka’sa has only ‘sabda (sound or vibration) as its characteristic and hence called the sabda tanma’tra. The other primordial elements are spar’sa-tanma’tra (vayu or air), ru’pa-tanma’tra (agni or fire), rasatanma’tra (ap or water), and gandha- tanma’tra (pruthvii or earth).

When these primordial elements combine among themselves by the process of panc’karaṇa or quintuplication, they produce the secondary elements, the gross ones, more commonly called the ‘maha’bhutas or sthu’la bhutas. Further creation takes place out of them, associated, of course, with the Atman.
There are different meanings for the term *bhūta*. The word *bhūta* is also applied to all the living beings as a general term. Another meaning is “spirits, ghosts, and goblins.” One of the eight sections of *Ayurveda*, the science of health and longevity, is also designated as *Bhūtavidya*.

With their power of tapas (austerities) and divine vision, our ancient sages realized that these fundamental elements are not jad. am (inert objects) and they have power and energy. And they are the manifestations of the almighty (Parabrahman). The rishis gave them the ru’pas (forms) and imparted that knowledge to us, and gave us the hymns to worship these five fundamental elements-panchabhu’tas. To date, every Hindu worships Ganges (water), Agni (fire), earth (as deity Bhoomaata). We offer prayers and worship them daily. In the ‘Panca’kshari’ mantram, all these panchabhu tas are embedded. When there is famine or drought, and for the welfare of the humanity, our priests perform homams (fire rituals). Sada’c’a rasampannas (dha’rmic and ritualistic Hindus), as soon as they get up from bed at the dawn, before they even touch the ground with their feet, they recite a hymn to the earth goddess, asking her permission to walk on her. That’s the kind of respect and understanding we have about the panchabhu’tas.

*Our land is “Panca Bhutaaradhana Bhoomi.”*
D.V. PASUPULETI

(3) *sañīpya* (living near God), *sañīyaya* (getting identified or united with God). These ideas seem to have existed in the Vedic literature itself (*Taittiriya Samhita*; *Aitareya Brahman*; *Brähadāraṇyaka Upanishad*; *Chandogya Upanishad*).

From time immemorial, our land is blessed with so many devotees who not only pursued the path of utmost devotion and love toward God, but also helped the ordinary people and householders to cultivate the same devotion toward God! They wrote and composed hundreds and thousands of devotional songs in simple words and easy style for common folks to sing along. They have incorporated very tough and difficult *veda ntastras* in those songs. They have been helping us for centuries to achieve our final goal of liberation through the *bhaktiyoga* (path of devotion). For *jñayoga* (path of knowledge) our rishis, sages, and saints gifted us with Vedas, Upanishads, *Brahmasūtras*, *Bhaṭṭya-s*, *aṅgamas*, *puraṇas*, *itiha-sas*, and many more! Depending on each person’s interest, they have provided with so many avenues and so much literature.

In modern days, there is no shortage for swamis, sadhus, gurus in our country to teach us the ways to attain the moksha. These swamis are going to foreign countries and every swami wants to travel abroad as a status symbol and get donations in dollars.

*The land which has been an instrument shows means and is also responsible for us to pursue the ultimate goal of liberation is our motherland “Moksha Karaka Bhoomi.”*

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Ashtottaram 83

Om Sadsatlakshaṇa Bhoomyainamah

(Sadsatlakshaṇa: “having attributes or qualities,” “aim”)

The word *Lakṣaṇam* means quality, attribute, the chief one, and many other meanings in Sanskrit language. Ordinary people use this word a lot when describing the attributes of a young woman or man. When a person has nice qualities, when the family or relatives talk about him or her, they praise the qualities especially when they are trying to match up a girl with a boy. What it means is that in our country, we give importance to a person’s qualities more so than to the money or the beauty. Sometimes they match up a bride and groom based on their good qualities. This has been our culture and tradition for eternity. Our *dharmaśastras*, especially the *Manu Dharmasūtram*, describes the qualities and virtues for elders, women, and children and also on how to behave according to their age. In modern times, these qualities are becoming rare to find. With the freedom of speech, children talk to their parents, teachers, and elders however they please and if somebody tries to discipline them, lawyers and media are ready to attack that person. To avoid those headaches there is no one there to tell the other person that they are not supposed to talk, dress, or behave improperly. We see the implications of that in every society especially in the Western countries, where kids address elders with their first name and nobody would correct them.
In olden days, elders used to discipline if somebody behaves badly and try to teach them good manners. Grandparents, parents, and teachers used to teach children good qualities like speaking the truth, not stealing or taking something that does not belong to them, addressing the elders with respect, not cheating, dressing properly, keeping hair properly, taking a bath regularly, eating healthy and limited, playing outside and exercise, reading regularly, and showing respect to teachers, kindness toward animals, tolerance, humbleness, humility, not to be jealous, and forbearance. They taught men to treat every woman with respect as his sister or mother. They also taught them to be kind, gentle, and loving toward his wife. The neighborhood would criticize anyone who dressed inappropriately to their age. Now we see even very old women with shorts, handbags, lipstick, and too much makeup, and behave like teenagers but nobody would dare to tell them because of legal repercussions. There are no rules or regulations, because everyone claims it's a free society.

It may look like all these behavioral practices are very strict and interfere with personal freedom and freedom of speech; however, if we look at the world, and the turmoil with terrorism and killings, and problems in the societies, we should thank our dharmastras and our sages for giving us these duties and codes of conduct. Because children follow the footsteps of elders, sages have prescribed honorable behavior to the parents, women, and elders.

So, the land which insists on virtues and good qualities for the welfare of the society at large, our land is "Sadsatlakshaṇa Bhoomi."

Widely used, the word kaërya has several senses. As associated with the word kaëraṇa (cause), it means the effect. For instance, if clay is the kaëraṇa, pot is its kaërya or effect. Some of the other senses in which it is used are work, conduct, utility, profession, and duty. The word is also used in a more technical sense in astrology and legal works. To fulfill the prescribed duties in life, one must have the sense of responsibility. Lifestyle is different from the goal in life. As the Vedas proclaim that "Sāri ram khalu idam dharma sa’dha-nam," meaning, “Your body is the vehicle to practice dharma.” Of all the birth, human form is the utmost precious because it is the only means to attain moksha through the path of jna nam. Even the devatas enjoy their life in heavens till the results of their meritorious acts are exhausted. No other life-form is suitable for achieving moksha.

That’s why ancient sages and householders also practiced strictest dharmic duties, austerities, and daily rituals in order to reach that goal of moksha. They have promulgated that every human being has to have a goal in life and work hard toward achieving it. We wish we see the same attitude among the people in present times, but unfortunately that became a rare thing among modern lives. Our sages lived in forests, wearing deerskin as loincloth, eating fruits, roots, and vegetables, performing their daily rituals without fail, engaging
in meditation and japa most of their lives, maintaining perfect chastity, with tremendous self-control and deeply devoted to truth and helping humanity to achieve their goal of moksha with hymns and mantras, which help for japa and meditation. They insist that every human must have laksyam (goal) and ka’ryadakshata (able to perform the duty) and, no matter how many hurdles and obstacles one faces, must focus on the goal and practice toward reaching that goal.

In our puran as, epics, and itihasas, there are many heroes like Ekalavya, Karna, Dhruva, Pandavas, Hanuman, and many more stood as an example of ka’ryadakshata. Our rishis were satpurushas, parahitas, akruras, have daya and dakshin yam as virtues, practiced nonviolence, performed punya karmas, dharmavettas, lived their lives as per dharma sastras in order to achieve the ultimate goal of life of moksham. In those sages, rishis, and seers, there were householders who also carried their duties and obligations as husbands and wives. This illustrates their ka’ryadakshata (able to perform the duty).

Then the question comes that those are good old days and who can practice those rigid rules in modern times? That’s why we have our satgurus, swamis, and religious discourses to teach us and constantly remind us to follow in that path.

Our land teaches the ultimate goal and pursuit of human life as a duty and is “Karya Dakshata Bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 85

Om Sukha Vardhana Bhoomyainamah

(Sukha: “happiness,” “contentment,” “pleasure,” “comfort”; Vardhana: “growth,” “increase,” “educating”)

The Yogasutras of Patanjali (200 BCE) describes santosha (sukha) as part of the second step of yoga, i.e., niyama. It is defined as being contended with whatever one gets and not desiring more. The contentment comes with cognitive knowledge than from materialism. Also understanding the underlying reality and truth of that subject matter. When we have all the negative emotions rising from discontentment, greed, selfishness, and anger, the life is going to be miserable no matter how much one has or from intolerance toward other faiths, beliefs, and religions, what is going on now in the world globally with terrorism, flag burnings, barbarism, brutality, and horrific killings. From the inception of those religions, hatred toward other religions, proselytization by any means is taught, and ingraining the ideology of intolerance against other religions and the attitude of “our way or highway” and “all other religious people are going to hell” is further flaming the hatred. These teachings come from the top authorities and religious leaders of those religions and we see that in every day of our lives. With those beliefs as the foundation, how can one have happiness or contentment?

From time immemorial, our ancient sages taught us tolerance toward fellow religious people even if their doctrines differ from
ours. Rishis taught us that “there is only God and we can worship him whatever form or method.” That’s why we have millions of gods and goddesses and every one and every family has their own ishtadevata (desired deity). In our schools, in history classes and textbooks, they teach the reality and satyam (the ultimate truth). In our schools, students of different faiths sit next to each other and play together. I always had Christian and Muslim friends and they used to come to my house, ate with us, and we played together. That’s because of our teachings and we did not have hatred toward each other because we practice different religions. Same thing with temples, churches, and mosques in India. They are all side by side and people go and worship peacefully in respective places. This comes from contentment and tolerance. We may have few quarrels, fights here and there due to disagreements, but not as a routine occurrence.

Our spiritual teachings are toward tolerance, contentment, and how to live without hatred, selfishness, and jealousy. Ours is a land of “Sukha Vardhana Bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 86

Om Saadhu Samdoha (Saadhvinii Vrata) Bhoomyainamah

(Saadhu: “good,” “virtuous,” “excellent,” “right,” “a virtuous (holy) man,” “a religious mendicant”; Samdoha: “assemblage,” “multitude”; Saadhvini-: means-A chaste woman, holy woman; Vrata: means-Religious vows)

Though the word sa_dhu actually means “a good person,” in common parlance it is used to indicate a samnyaasin or a religious mendicant. In common, in our societies we praise people with good, soft, qualities. It’s our nature and culture. Even in animals, we consider a cow as a sa_dhu animal. That the Hindu society has given the highest place of honor to the sa_dhus and sannya_sins, it has also prescribed the highest standards of morality, ethics, and spiritual values. The dharma_sastras are replete with many injunctions and prohibitions which may not appear to be relevant in the modern context. Every Hindu understands a sa_dhu being a kind, nonthreatening, soft-natured person who is in the pursuit of liberation during this lifetime and tries to help the society with his knowledge of spirituality and wisdom. The greatness of our country is that we not only have sa_dhus but also sa_dhvinimanis (female renunciates and monks). Showing nondifference between men and women in any field is the utmost attribute of our sanatanadharma.
There are different kinds of sadhus. We call sannyasins, yatris, and bairagis also as sadhus. The ochre clothes they wear are symbolic for renunciation. Wearing them reminds the sadhus about their oath and dispassion toward materialism and selfless service to the community and humanity at large. It also reminds them their duty to practice their strict spiritual injunctions and prohibitions. The attire also assures the community that their actions are nonthreatening to humanity. Some shave their heads, but most of them leave their hair grow into matted with long beards. People also show their respect toward sadhus and offer them food. Usually, the sadhus wander constantly and do not stay at one place for more than three days, unless it is a rainy season. Some sadhus spend most of their time in the caves or under big trees like banyan trees. Some carry a dandam (staff), kamandalam (water pot), and wear pa dukas (wooden sandals). They apply ashes all over their body as a mark of vairagym, reminding themselves and us that no matter how long we live, at the end we are all going to be ashes after cremation. This also has very deep and heavy meaning that we come from the mother earth and at the end we return to her.

Those who are immersed in constant meditation are called munis and those who control their senses are called yatris. We have these munis and yatris from ancient times and in abundance. Rigveda, the oldest Veda, mentions about these munis and yatris. Our Vedas and Upanishads placed them on the highest pedestal because of their tapas, renunciation, sacrifice, celibacy, and many more other virtues. Sri Ramaṇa maharshi, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, and Sri Vivekananda swami belong in these categories.

Our land is “Sa ḍhu Śaṃdoha” and “Sa ḍhvini Vrata Bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 87

Om Sahrudbhaava Bhoomyainamah

(Sahrud: “good hearted,” “kind”; Bhaavam: “attitude,” “reflection,” “perception,” “notion”)

Showing love and compassion in the name of religion to proselytize the others into your religion, versus having nonviolence and religious tolerance as the central core of our religion (sanatanadharma) are like the big difference between day and night, or between the earth and the sky. Having yama and niyama as foundation, every Hindu born on our Bharata- bhoomi, having compassion, kindness, kshama (forbearance), and love toward fellow human beings is natural, rather than based on religious motives. With the understanding and attitude that every soul is part of Parabrahman, we Hindus show sahrudaya bhaavana toward anyone irrespective of their race, religion, or creed. We don’t have that exclusive brotherhood feeling like some religions do.

In sanatanadharma, greater importance and stress was given to ahimsa (nonviolence) and that’s why there are so many vegetarians in Hinduism and it is spreading like a wildfire among the Western countries and they are advising their people to eat more vegetables than meat. Scientific studies have confirmed what our ancient sages have prescribed thousands of years ago that vegetarianism is quite healthy. You are what you eat applies to all and with soft food you will have soft thoughts and soft behavior which the sanatanadharma
describes as *sāttvic*, meaning gentle, soft, and endowed with virtue. There is nothing great about showing kindness toward your fellow race, creed, and religion, but it shows your character and virtue, when you show those qualities across the board toward any human being. That is our religion and our *sanatanadharma*. There is political and religious motives behind, when the so-called powerful nations send food and money to financially backward countries.

People with pets, like dogs and cats, pour so much love on them, but at the same time they eat every animal that moves. How can that be *sahrukṣa bhaavanā*? They laugh at Hindus for worshipping cows and treating them like our mothers, calling them *mata* (mother). They ridicule us that we are starving when there is so much food roaming on the streets, meaning cows and pigs. But a Vedic-Hindu rather starves, than eat cows and pigs like the demons in the *puranic* epics. Our sages ate roots, leaves, vegetables, and fruits in the forests and wore the animal skin as a loincloth from those animals that died of natural causes.

Our land is so blessed with those kind of sages like the above, who not only have lived a *sāttvic* life but showed us that path. Our land is “Sahrukṣa Bhaavanā Bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 88

**Om Aushadhii Guṇa Bhoomyainamah**

(Aushadhih: “plant,” “herb”; Guṇam: “attribute,” “quality”)

Agriculture is our nation’s symbol. It is the backbone of our culture. It is the backbone of India. No matter how much infatuation our Indians have toward materialism, money, and technical progress, the breath of our nation is agriculture. Imitating the foreign cultures and jumping up and down that we are progressing is not a useful thing for the nation. Anywhere we travel across the countryside of our nation, either in a bus or a train, we see green fertile lands on either side and is so pleasant to watch that scenery. We see people on bullock carts with their crops, sugar canes, and some carrying hay bundles on their head, especially during Sankranti festival time, and it looks so pleasant to watch. We see all kinds of tall trees especially the palm trees, coconut trees, standing tall and it looks like they are waving at us saying goodbye on our journey. You have to have a mind-set to appreciate the nature and you don't have to take vacations to enjoy these sceneries.

People who live a busy life in big cities don't have the luxury of enjoying our countryside agriculture. So, they have no personal experience of this. Our main staple is rice in the south and wheat (roti) in the north. But still we depend on our agriculture for our main food. In olden days, they used to estimate somebody's wealth based on their fertile land, their cattle, and other produce. Because
everything we get from the cattle is useful for our household starting from the milk in the morning, rice, vegetables, and all our snacks and sweets are based on flour, sugar, and ghee (clarified butter). We feed our cattle with hay, grains, and the lentils. Without farmers, farming, cattle, and plants, our life comes to a halt. From morning till night we depend on our farmers and agriculture; we don’t thank them or treat them right which is a shameful thing because the energy we get to move around comes from our food which comes from the agriculture. We used to use plants and herbs in so many ways and our grand- and great-grandparents know that very well.

During Vedic times, farmers and farming were given the utmost respect and importance and now with pseudo-Westernization, every Indian thinks it’s “cool” to dress and behave like Westerners, but they don’t realize how pathetic that is! To worship God with leaves, flowers, fruits, and even to perform abhishekam (ceremonial bath to the gods) other than the water, we use milk, ghee, sugar, honey, fruit juices, and they all come from agriculture, from our cattle and paddy.

Our nation’s backbone is our agriculture, and every Indian must realize this and my effort here is to reeducate the past glory of our wonderful land and stop the infatuation with pseudo-Western culture.

The land whose back bone is agriculture is our Bharata bhoomi, “Aushadhi Guna Bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 89

Om Karshaka Poojita Bhoomyainamah

(Karshaka: “farmer”; Poojita: “honor,” “worship,” “respect”)

When we hear the slogan “Jai java’n, Jai kisa’n,” it automatically reflects the respect and affection every Indian has for the soldiers and the farmers. Bhoomata takes care of the farmer as her child (raitu bidda). From dawn till dusk, our farmers spent their life on the paddy fields and they are the backbones of our Bhoodevi. Our Vedas and also Lord Sri Krishna declared that “annam Parabrahma svaroopam,” meaning “food is Parabrahman.” To keep our life force, we eat rice and food three times a day, and is happening only because of our farmers. Even our Indians living abroad, when they come home after work, they eat rice and curry at dinner and that’s the only food that satisfies them, even though there are a variety of ethnic foods available at restaurants. That shows how deep our habits are and thanks to our farmers, we are used to Indian food no matter how old we are and how long we have been living in other countries. This is because we grew up with rice, curry, chutney, and yogurt as our main meal. We consider the rice, wheat, and other crops as wealth and based on that, we celebrate Sankaanti every year. We have many movies, songs, and many more, celebrating the importance of our farmers and agriculture. The farmer’s attire of his loincloth, traditional shirt, and head scarf represents our agricultural tradition and culture.
Many political parties use the farmer as their mascot along with a sickle and hammer as their party flag and symbol. Some politicians use the cow, and the calf, as their party symbol. Our government has released stamps with the farmer and paddy on them. When we have drought and no rains, our priests perform homams and yajnas to help the farmers, and that has been a tradition in Hindu culture. Surprisingly, many times, right after those rituals, we had rainfalls that helped our farmers and the paddy fields. However, we must also note that we always pray to gods and goddesses not just for ourselves, we pray for the entire humanity, globally at large. During the election campaigns, our politicians promise our farmers that they have five-year plan to help the agriculture and it’s always part of their election campaigns.

During our festivals, especially during Sankrānti festival, our farmers decorate their oxen and bullock carts with various colors, flowers, and paper-mache and carry processions on the streets. The importance we give to agriculture and farmers is unmatchable to any other culture or country. The farmers are portrayed in many movies to remind us that they are the backbone of our country and culture. *The land which treats the farmer as its child is our motherland and is “Karshaka Poojita Bhoomi.”*

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Ashtottaram 90

Om Ruṇa Vimochaka Bhoomyainamah

(Ruṇam: “debt”; Vimochanam: “free,” “liberation”)

Every human being—according to Hinduism—is said to be born under three *ruṇas* or debts. The idea of *ruṇatraya*, the three debts under which every human being is born, has been hinted at, even in the *Rigveda*. However, it is more explicit in the later Vedic literature like the *Tātātirīya Sambhita* and the *Satapatha Brahmaṇa*. These three *ruṇas* are deva *ruṇa* (debt to gods), pitru *ruṇa* (debt to the manes, forefathers), and rushi *ruṇa* (debt to the sages).

The first is repaid by the performance of *yajna*s or Vedic sacrifices, the second by begetting sons and doing *śra ddhas* or obsequial ceremonies, and the third by sva *dhyāya* (study of the Vedas) and tapas (practicing austerities).

*Deva ruṇa* may be repaid by worship of gods like Sūrya, Praja pati, and Indra, the usual daily sacrifice offered in a consecrated fire, fasting and other types of austerities also, if one is unable to perform *yajna*s. Since they give us rain, crops, and prosperity they have to be satiated through these oblations.

*Pitru ruṇa* (by *Pitruyajna* or sacrifice to the manes, forefathers) consists in offering rice balls (called *pinda*) and water (arghya). By this offering they are satisfied and bless their descendants who are performing this sacrifice.
Rushi ruṇa (debt to the sages), also called Rushiyajna or Brahmayajna (Brahma, meaning the Vedas), is sacrifice to the rushis or the sages. Since they have the knowledge of the Vedas to mankind, it is the householder’s duty to recite the Vedas and also teach them to his children and disciples. This itself is the yajna by which they are pleased.

Sometimes two more ruṇas are added, as follows: brahmaṇa ruṇa (repaid by giving gifts to brahmaṇas) since they perform many religious rites for us), atma ruṇa (debt to the jīvātman, repaid by taking care of the body-mind-sense complex properly).

The Maha bhrārata (Adiparva) mentions an interesting aspect of debt, aṃśaṃya (not being cruel to other living beings, nṛyajna and bhūtayajna), since we can live here only by the goodwill of others. These are actually feeding the hungry human beings that may visit the house as also the domestic and other animals. By performing these daily sacrifices, the householder is actually repaying his debts to the divine beings and the society, from whom he has received help and sustenance. They also help him offsetting the sin he commits (unknowingly and unwillingly) while using these implements in his house like the pestle and mortar, domestic fire, grinding stone, etc., wherein violence is perpetrated on life through the killing of ants, worms, and so on.

The only nation on the planet reminds us about the above debts is “Ruṇa Vimochaka Bhoomi.”
Hindu scriptural works declare that there is a close relationship between the body and the mind. In fact it is the mind, as the repository of karma, that creates the future body since it survives the death of the physical bodies till the attainment of the \textit{moksha} (liberation). Hence the body and the mind act and react on each other. In this context a\textit{ha\-ra} or food assumes great importance. The quality of food affects the quality of the mind as the old saying goes, “You are what you eat.” In fact the \textit{Chandogya Upanishad} goes to the extent of declaring that purity of food leads to purity of mind which results in the excellent retention in memory of all that is heard and studied from the preceptor. The resultant wisdom leads to freedom from all bonds. This is because the subtle part of the food that is eaten sustains the mind, whereas the gross part of it nourishes the body.

In \textit{Bhagavadgita}, a\textit{ha\-ram} is classified into three groups:

\begin{itemize}
    \item (1) \textit{sat{\textit{tvika}},}
    \item (2) \textit{ra{\textit{jasika}}, and}
    \item (3) \textit{ta{\textit{masika}}.}
\end{itemize}
Sattvika food contributes to longevity, health, strength, and happiness. Rajasika food generates passion leading to sorrow and suffering. Tamasika food produces dullness, indolence, and drowsiness. The various scriptural works mention long lists of food articles coming under these three categories. There are regulations with regard to the quantity of food to be eaten and elaborate rules regarding the time, place, and also company in which it should be taken. Moderation in eating is always the rule. Hindu medical works recommend that half the stomach should be filled with solid food and a quarter with water leaving the rest of the space for the movement of the air. They have also categorized the food we take into four types:

1. **Bhakshya**: solid food we eat by crushing with teeth,
2. **Bhojya**: liquid food we drink like rasam, sambar, soups,
3. ‘Chos’ya: food we suck like juicy mango, and
4. **Lehya**: food we lick like honey.

One is advised to avoid partaking of food before performing spiritual practices. Places to be avoided for eating include temples, public places, moving animals, and vehicles, which makes lot of sense. Offering the food to God before eating destroys the impurities like ja tidosha, nimittadosha, and asrayadosha. Even though it’s a very small number, we still have pure vegetarians in our nation.

The nation which prescribes a logical, reasonable, and healthy food is our motherland “Yukta ha ra Sampanna Bhoomi.”

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**Ashtottaram 92**

Om Ekapatnii Vrata Bhoomyainamah

(Ekapatnii: “one wife,” “life partner”; Vratam: “oath,” “religious vows”)

One wife, one word, and one arrow—these words bring only Lord Sri Rama to our mind. In the world where there is no chastity to speak of, people get divorced left and right, man and woman living together for years before getting married (which we see in the Western world), we are blessed to be born in the land where Sri Rama walked around, who is the embodiment of dharma and chastity. The word vrata (religious vow) is one of the most widely used words in the Hindu religious and ritualistic literature. Derived from the verbal root vr (to choose), it indicates a set of rules and discipline with which one voluntarily binds oneself over a particular period of time, during which period he undertakes the performance of certain rituals in order to propitiate the deity and secure from it what he wants. This whole process, however, should be undertaken with a sankalpa or religious resolve, on an auspicious day and time, fixed as per the dictates of the Hindu religious almanacs. All this applies to humans, and, however, Lord Sri Rama practiced this vrata for the sake of dharma and to stand as an example to humans. He set an example in dharma, satyam, and ekapatnii vratam to his people.

The question always remain, what is so special about Sri Rama when his brothers—Lakshmana, Bharata, and ‘Satrughna’—also prac-
ticed ekapatnī vratam? In the case of Sri Rama, it was unique in the sense that his wife Sīta was abducted by demon king Raṇa, and 'Suṛpaṇakha (Raṇa’s sister) came to Sri Rama with lust, but he rejected her, and last but not least being a king, Sri Rama can marry any number of women he wanted to. But he practiced ekapatnī vratam and became the embodiment of dharma and showed his par excellence. He was the embodiment of all sixty-four virtues, even though it is humanly impossible to have all the sixteen virtues. Yet, he was humble, affectionate, and easily approachable. He rejoiced like a father in the happiness of his subjects and felt grieved at their sorrows and sufferings. Above all, he was deeply devoted to satyam (truth). He spoke nothing but truth and, once word was given, he would keep it at all costs. He was the protector of satyam and dharma, he would exercise his adamantine will and show that no sacrifice was too great to preserve these principles.

Another question frequently raised is about the gods and goddesses we worship, that they have more than one wife? For those who read and understand the spiritual meaning of the purāṇas, and itihāsas, it is very clear that the female consorts are nothing but the aspects of the Bhagavan (Parabrahman)!

In the entire world, it is not a norm to observe the ekapatnī vratam, but as Hindus and descendents of Sri Rama, it is a norm rather than an exception to observe the ekapatnī vratam in Bharatavarṣa, with a caution of note that we cannot say the whole nation is, but the majority of the Hindus! Our marriage ceremony has a tremendous meaning in every mantra and ritual, with so much sanctity and sacredness and purity. Our dharmasastras ingrain and emphasize the morality in our marriages.

Hence, our land is “Ekapatni vrata Bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 93

Om Sarvam Brahmaarpaṇa Bhoomyainamah

(Brahman: “that one is big or great”; Arpaṇam: “offering,” “oblation,” “a gift”; Sarvam: “everything”)

The whole nature is wealth. Providing light to us in the form of the sun and the moon; in the form of life force in humans, and staying behind our senses to let us see and understand the world; all are that Parabrahman only! He is everything and everything is himself. Similarly for those who seek Atma tattvam (Brahma vidya), he is the A’di Guru and he is that jnaṇam (knowledge).

The Parabrahman created the five fundamental elements: space, air, fire, water, and earth; and with their combination 8.4 million species and provided everything to us free without being asked for our sustenance. From the birth till death, he maintains our wonderful physical bodies and the necessary materials in the big bazaar (supermarket) for you to use and enjoy. Beautiful sceneries in the nature for your eyes to enjoy, music to your ears by the waterfalls, ocean roars, and chirping sounds of the birds, sweetest fruit juices for your taste, sweet fragrances to smell from the flowers, and the cool breezes for your skin to enjoy are all created by him. He gave you the five senses to enjoy, and imagine if we lack any one of them and how incomplete our lives would be. I do feel sorry for the blind and deaf...
people and my heart goes out to them. Open your eyes and you see his creation, and close your eyes and look within yourself and you see God! The real blind person is the one who doesn't see the beauty of the nature and the deaf person is the one who doesn't hear the glory of Bhagavan (God).

If somebody does a small favor to us, we thank them a million times and show our gratitude. If that is the case, the one who gave us the life, water to drink, air to breathe, and food to eat, and all the other things in the nature without being asked, without charging any fees and without advertizing himself or having patent on everything he has provided, how can you not thank him? How can you not show gratitude toward his generosity? Instead, many scientists, scholars, and pundits claim everything is accidental and anyone who studies medicine would know how complex and complicated human body is. I have studied medicine, specialized in medicine, studied every religion we have on the earth in depth and studied physics, astrophysics, and quantum mechanics, TOE (theory of everything), and the more I read and the more I understand, I realize and appreciate the generosity of God!

That’s why our sages taught us and showed us how to be thankful to the God (Paramahmna) from dawn to dusk and thanking him for giving us this wonderful body as a means to liberation. In Bhagavagita, Bhagavan Sri Krishna said, “Whatever you offer to me with devotion, either a leaf, fruit, flower or water, I gladly accept that.” How beautiful his advice is!

The nation which offers everything to Bhagavan with gratitude before using, is our land “Sarvam Brahmaarpana Bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 94

Om Mantra Bhoomyainamah

(Mantram: “that which protects when reflected upon”, “to repeat in mind,” “the sacred formulae”)

One of the most widely used words in Sanskrit religious literature is the word mantra. It is, etymologically speaking, defined as that which protects (tra, “to protect”) when repeated and reflected upon (man, “to think,” “to reflect”). This word has two meanings: the poetical part of the Vedas, and the names and syllables used to indicate or propitiate deities. The former is Vedic and the latter is ta ntrik. The Vedas are generally divided into two broad divisions: The mantra part of the first three Vedas is again classified as Ruk, Yajus, and Saman. The Brahmaas are in prose, dealing with the details of sacrificial rites and quoting the appropriate mantras (sacred formulae) to be used in the rites.

In the Mantra section, a fourth category, the nigada, is sometimes added. Nigadas are, strictly speaking, not mantras but instructions uttered loudly by one priest to another during a sacrificial rite. There are several rules in the ‘Srauta sustras about the recitation of the Vedic mantras. The most famous of all the Vedic mantras which is very popular and very much in vogue even today is the Gayatri mantram. The latter kind of mantras appear in the earlier paraaus. They extol the greatness of the pancakshari- or sa skhar (mantra of five or six letters, nama’s’siva and Om nama’sivya), ashtakshari (of
eight letters, *Om namo nara'yanaya* and *dvad'asa'ksharī* (of twelve letters, *Om namo bhagavate va'sudeva'ya*) mantras and few others. Mainly people who had thread ceremony (*upanayanam*) and some other spiritual seekers perform *sandhya vandanam* (offering water to sun god) before the dawn with *Gayatri mantram* on a daily basis and then start their daily activities.

Priests who do daily rituals in the temples and offer worship to gods on behalf of the devotees usually learn the rules and regulations and the techniques involved in the rituals and spend twelve to fourteen years under supervision, learning *Yajur Veda* (either *Sukla yajurveda* in North India or *Krishna yajurveda* in South India). They not only memorize the mantras but also correct pronunciation.

However, it is the tantras or *S'akttagamas* that developed the art and science of the mantras, both extensively and intensively. Various types of mantras for the various deities of the Hindu pantheon along with different *bijaksharas* (the seed letter) and their usage have been dealt within the well-known works like the *Prapanc'as'ra*, *S'ada'tilaka*, and *Maha'nirvan'atantra*.

There are many books and sacred texts explaining the meaning of these mantras and their influence and power when recited properly with devotion and ‘sraddha’.

*Our land, which taught the mantras for the redemption of humanity is “Mantra Bhoomi.”*

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**Ashtottaram 95**

**Om Kartavya Bodhaka Bhoomyainamah**

(Kartavyam: “what to be done,” “duty”; Bodhaka: “that which preaches,” “conveys”)

Swami Vivekananda once said, “In whatever circumstances you are in, if you remember your duty (svadharma), things will be done automatically.” Our father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi, said, “Nobody can degrade your self-respect without your consent.” Like this many great men of India conveyed us the messages about our duty. Great people with duty as their virtue have walked on our land and sanctified it. They not only did their duty to the country but they have preached us those duties. From the Vedas to the sacred texts, from *Rama'yan* to *Srimad Bhagavadg'ita*, whatever book, text, scripture or doctrine you read, they all preach our duty as human beings, especially as a Hindu. Our *San'atana dharma* teaches us that being born as a human we not only should eat, drink, and propitiate like animals, but every human has a goal and duty in life. There are so many quotes, like “We cannot become just clay dolls and with effort, ambition, devotion, commitment, and focus; we can become ‘Brahman’ and ‘with krushi (effort) and ‘srama (hard work) man can become a sage, seer, and rishi.”
In *Srimad Bhagavadgītā,* on the battlefield, Lord Sri Krishnā did deliver the same message about one’s duty to Arjuna, the warrior. He said that if one fulfills his own duty, he is automatically qualified as the one who followed the dharma. From a person who eats dog’s meat to the person who performs *soma-yaga* and *soma-yagam,* both are qualified dharmaic people as long as they perform their prescribed duties. In Lord Sri Krishnā’s view they both are equal to him and both are his favorites. This shows how much significance is given to one’s own duty (svadharma).

Our scriptures, sacred texts, brahmasu tras, and dharma sutras explained in detail one’s duties according to dharma; the dos (niyamas) and don’ts (jamas) and also the knowledge of the *Brahman.* It taught us the knowledge of *sādhaṇa catuṣṭhayam* along with the *anubandha catuṣṭhayam.* It also taught us the discriminative knowledge useful for the *sādhaṇa* (spiritual practice). According to our qualities and attributes, we can choose the path of karma or path of jñāna, whichever suits our lifestyle. That is the beauty of our *Sāṃśaṭhāna dharma,* which we cannot find in any other religion. There are no mandates or doctrines to follow, and the sāstras leave it up to the individual and his ambition. Our land has blessed us with the gurus, swamis, and sannyāsins as guru parampara to convey us the message of duty (svadharma).

*The land which preaches our duties as humans is our land and it is “Kartavya Bodhaka Bhoomi.”*
In later dharmāstra literature, the four Vedavratas were omitted and the following four were added: Karnavedha (piercing the earlobes), vidyarambha (same as akṣara-bhyāśa, learning the alphabet), vedārambha (first study of the Vedas), kes'anta (cutting the hair or shaving the beard).

Samskaras like upanayanam are performed in certain varnās only like brāhmaṇa varṇam. The actual meaning of upanayanam is “to take the person to the guru (teacher).” Nowadays, many brahmins are performing this sacrament to their boys only for the sake of showing off to others that they are the brahmins and to let their children know about their superiority. In reality no one is truly a brahmin without practicing all the duties as prescribed by the Vedic scriptures with all the restrictions imposed to be a true brahmin. Forget about abroad, the brahmins in India even do not follow all the Vedic injunctions but they have no problem in showing off to everybody that they are brahmins.

The samskaras help to purify our mind and refine our attitudes and prepare us to achieve the ultimate life goal of moksha (liberation). It’s like climbing the steps to reach the top and every little bit helps and we cannot reach high without climbing one step at a time. The ancient sages always kept the common man in mind and showed equanimity toward humanity and worked very hard with strict observations. Unfortunately, just like anything else in the world, because of selfishness and greed, the noble varṇavyāvastha has disappeared and the so called kulavyāvastha (caste system) has deep-rooted in our society which is the culprit for the decay of our social system.

The land which has provided the sacraments for our spiritual progress is none other than our “Susamskarā Bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 97

Om Matonmaada Rahita Bhoomyainamah

(Matonmaadam: “religious fanaticism,” “religious frenzy”; Rahita: “separated from,” “deprived of,” “abandoned,” “deserted”)

Unma dam (fanaticism) is a dangerous physical and mental disease. A fanatic not only can bring danger to himself but also to the society, country, and even to the world. When the dharmic spiritual mind progresses, it helps that person as well as the community. When the religious madness grows as a virus in a person or group of people, it will lead to the destruction of the mankind. That’s why our ancient rishis have included the santi mantras (peace hymns) in our daily prayers and by constantly reciting those mantras, our minds will be peaceful. They have also preached tolerance and nonviolence against other religions and religious followers. They taught us to nurture the sattvic virtue in us, out of the three qualities (sattva, rajas, and tamas). They have also conveyed detailed instructions about our diet which promotes that sattvic quality in us, so that we can live in harmony with people of other faiths and religions.

Of all the fanaticisms, religious fanaticism is the most dangerous one and we see now what’s happening to the world the terrorism and the chaos across the globe due to religious fanaticism and extremism. Everyone has religious beliefs of his or her own and is taught by the
religious authorities that their religion is the only true religion and theirs is the only one that guarantees heaven. These are all ignorant talks and they really don't have an understanding of what the real meaning of religion is, *that is to be realized*. God is to be realized and not to be believed in. So, we can see the fundamental problem in other religions, which preach supremacy, and hatred against other religions.

Because of tolerance of other fellow religions, we were invaded by every major religion and we lost our wealth, independence for centuries, and many of our patriots had lost their lives to get our freedom back in 1947. We are still recovering from that loss and are trying very hard to prosper economically. Because of our religious tolerance, we have invited Islam and Christianity to our Hindu land. The other dangerous quality these religious fanatics have is proselytization. The missionaries go to other countries which are economically at disadvantaged positions, and they target the poor people and offer them food, shelters, schools, health care, and convert them into their religion, thinking that they are going to heaven for sure.

From the ancient times, our rishis are very open-minded and preached us religious tolerance and to avoid religious fanaticism and zeal. Our land is "Matonma da Rabita Bhoomi."

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Ashtottaram 98

Om Karma Siddhaanta
Bhoomyainamah

(Karma: “that which is done,” “action from free will,” “certain consequences of action,” “duty”; Siddhaanta: “a proved fact,” “the demonstrated conclusion”)

*Karma* is one of the most widely used term in Hinduism. Derived from the root verb *kr* (to do), its general meaning is anything that is done. In this sense, it means work, profession, and duty. However, more often than not, it is used in a technical sense, as an action that binds one to *samsara* or transmigratory existence. This type of karma can be accomplished either by the body (*kayika*), or by speech (*vachika*), or by the mind (*maṇasa*). Again, this karma with the potential to produce its fruits, can be classified as *sancita* (accumulated over several lives), *prarabdha* (begun to bear fruit in this life), and *agami* (being performed now and in future).

All the *darsinas* or philosophies that accept this theory of karma also concede that:

1. The effects of karma done in one life cannot be expected to be exhausted in that life itself. Hence *punarjanma* or rebirth has to be accepted.
(2) Jnāna or spiritual wisdom resulting in the realization of one’s nature as the immortal soul destroys sancitakarma completely and makes agamī incapable of producing its results even as a burnt seed cannot sprout. However, prarabdhabhakarma, since it has already started giving its results, has got to be exhausted only through experiencing it. From another standpoint, karma is of two types: nishiddhakarma or prohibited or sinful actions that must be avoided, vibita-karma or actions ordained by the scriptures as duty to be performed. The Vihita-karma, again, is of three types: karmyakarma (desire-motivated actions), nityakarma (daily duties), and naimittikakarma (occasional duties).

Sometimes, karmas or actions are classified according to their nature, good or bad. Actions done without being tainted by likes and dislikes or selfish motives (but with noble intent) are called sattvika (good). If done with these, they become rajasika (mixed). If they are motivated by evil designs, to harm others, they are dubbed as tamāsika (dark or evil). Occasionally the word karma is also used to indicate the samskāras or sacraments.

The disparities in the birth, their qualities, pleasures, and sufferings in life, type of birth, the place, the creed, and race, all are explained by the karma siddhāntam (action and result). This is the only principle that can explain the disparities and discrepancies in everyone’s life. Scientists or other religious authorities cannot explain, except saying, “It’s all a mystery.” If you think logically and with open-mindedness, karma siddhāntam makes a lot of sense. Even the famous physicist Newton’s laws of motion dictate that “for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction.”

The only nation that could explain the actions and their results, with logic and common sense, is our motherland “Karma Siddhānta Bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 99

Om Satchidaanandaatmaa
Bhoomyainamah

(Sat: “existence”; Chit: “awareness,” “consciousness”; Aananda: “bliss”; Atma: “the self”)

The two words sat and asat are frequently mentioned and discussed in Indian philosophical and religious works. If sat stands for existence, unchanging reality, truth, or the good, asat represents all that is opposed to it: the nonexistent, the transient, falsehood, evil, and so on. However, the word asat is sometimes used in the Upanishads in the sense of the unmanifested state (Taittiriya upanishad) before creation, and the word sat to denote its manifested state.

The Sanskrit word chitta means “that through which one knows.” It is one of the general names given to the mind in the Indian philosophical systems. The word manas is, of course, more common. Patanjali (200 BCE) considers chitta or mind stuff as a physical material made up of three guṇas of sattva, rajas, and tamas, but with preponderance of sattva. It is capable of reflecting the power of pure awareness (consciousness) of the purusha or the individual soul. It is also capable of modifications. It is the modified chitta with the pure consciousness (awareness) reflected in it that is responsible for cognition, thinking, doubts, or drawing definite conclusions. Hence it is also called by such names as antahkaran a (the internal organ), manas
(the mind), and buddhi (the intellect). The modifications themselves are called cittavrittis.

The word a nanda means complete bliss. This term is generally used to indicate unadulterated perfect bliss, got by the realization of God or the self (Atman). In fact one of the three basic terms used to indicate the nature of God is a nanda, the other two being sat (existence) and chit (consciousness). The second chapter of the Taittirīya Upanishad designated as A nanda Vallī shows by a calculation of its own that brahma nanda or bliss of Brahman is infinitely superior to the greatest joy that a human being ideally situated in life can ever hope to get. This word is also used as a suffix in the name of samnyasins (monks). Earlier samnyasins like Sri Sankara cha rya have not used it.

Brahman, the most widely used terms in the Hindu religious literature, which has several senses like Vedas, the Absolute and Supreme God and Soul, the one without a second; and the sages of the Upanishads called it Parabrahman, the absolute reality is the sum of sat, chit, and a nanda ("satyam jnaanam, anantam iti Brahman"). Brahman, the Absolute, is unique and different from all that we know and experience here. This should not mislead us into thinking that it is a nonentity. And it has an essential nature of its own: sat or being, chit or consciousness (awareness), and a nanda or bliss. These are not its characteristics, but are different phrases for the same being: self-being, self-awareness, and self-bliss.

Our land, which imparts the knowledge of the Brahman and Atman, is “Satchidaanandaatma-Bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 100

Om Iswara Medhaa Prasaada Bhoomyainamah

(Iswarah: “the Lord”; Medha: “intelligence,” retentiveness”; Prasaadam: “what one partakes of with an attitude of acceptance after offering to the Lord”)

If somebody offers a sweet and you happened to be a diabetic patient, your immediate reaction is “Sorry! I am diabetic and I cannot have sweets, my doctor said I cannot have sugar.” On the other hand, if that sweet laddu is from Tirupati, Sri Lord Venkateswara’s prasa dam, immediately you take it with bhakti (devotion) and eat it. Everything is bhavana (attitude, notion, perception) toward an object. The reason you take that laddu right away is because you know it is the prasa dam from Bhagavan and that changes your attitude 180 degrees. Same way, anything we offer to God, either a fruit, flower, leaf, or water, becomes sanctified because we do not look at that as a normal ordinary object because of our devotion toward the Supreme!

The five gross natural elements that have undergone the process of quintuplication (pancheekaran am) are space (ether), air, water, fire, and the earth. Without any one of them we cannot survive a minute. Our own gross body is made up of these five subtle elements. The solid part is related to earth, the liquid part to water, body temperature to heat, breathing in and out motion is air, and body is occupied by
space. Thus these five elements are grossified to form into our body, which we are enjoying without thinking of it. However, any person who stops and thinks for a second realizes the grace of God, who has provided us all these without being asked. He has also provided to us the power of free will, power of action, and power of creation. He gave us the mind and discriminative knowledge. We take everything as prasadam from the Lord.

Because of the free will power, and discriminative knowledge, our actions will become ‘karma’ as opposed to the animals, which act by instinct. Hence, our actions have results and will become meritorious and sinful actions. According to those results and their fruits cumulated for millions of births, we entangle ourselves in the cycle of birth and death and rebirth (we call it samsara). We are responsible for our own actions and have to experience the fruits of those actions in one way or the other during this lifetime or in future births. That’s why a jnani (spiritual, wise person) stays neutral toward pleasure and pain. He neither jumps up and down, nor becomes dejected, and stays humble. He performs all his actions without selfish motives (nishka makarma) and offers his actions to the Lord (Bhagavan). At the same token, everything he partakes of with an attitude of acceptance after offering to the Lord.

Our land preached us not to show anger toward God for our miseries and take our successes as our greatness, but should take everything as the fruits of action from Iswara and him alone as the karmaphaladatta. Our nation is ‘Iswara Medha Prasa da Bhoomi.’

Ashtottaram 101

Om Paraakramaṇa Rahita Bhoomyainamah

(Paraakraman: “occupying someone else’s land that does not belong to you”; Rahita: “abandoned,” “deserted,” “deprived of,” “separated from”)

When we were living with religious tolerance, and practicing asteya (non-stealing) as a yama (restraint), when we have welcomed the foreigners for trade with open arms, they took our pious and soft nature as a weakness and occupied our land with aggression and violence. They not only have showed inhumane brutality toward us, they raped our women, and treated us as secondhand citizens in our own nation. They have treated us like slaves, robbed everything we got, ruined our temples, and stole the ornaments from the statues of the deities decorated with valuable diamonds and other precious stones. They have built mosques and churches over the demolished temples. The Christian missionaries took our religious tolerance for granted and have started proselytizing our poor Hindus into Christianity. Now we have churches and mosques in every street and at everywhere. All this is because we are tolerant people and do not go and declare wars against other countries, cultures, or religions. Our ancient sages taught us to see paramatma in every soul and every being.
The *yogasūtras* prescribe a graded discipline comprising eight steps, called the *astāṅgas* of yoga. Of these eight, the *yama* (restraint) consists of *āsteya* (non-stealing) and most of the Vedic Hindus observe this. Hence, in the history of humanity, our nation is the only one that did not occupy any foreign land even when we were the mightiest nation and were three times larger than the current land. We don’t practice *proselytization* with the delusional thinking that the people of other faiths and religions are going to hell and we have to save them. We don’t believe in converting other people into Hinduism so that we can go to heaven. We have never shown barbarism, and brutality, or conducted crusades against other countries or robbed their wealth. We don’t have that kind of dark history on our shoulders and thanks to our ancient seer, gurus, sages, and rishis! One might argue that there are some instances where we had to defend ourselves against other religious terrorisms and extremisms.

Because of these *astāṅgas* we practice as ordained by our sacred scriptures and texts, we are always able to cultivate personal purity and social harmony. These are not only ancient, but also very practical. Modern psychologists too are discovering their utility in guarding or in regaining mental health. Methods and techniques of yoga are becoming quite popular all over the world. The first two steps—*yama* and *niyama*—can contribute to the well-being of the individual as well as of the society.

*We can proudly say that our land is “Para-kramana Rabita Bhoomi.”*

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**Ashtottaram 102**

**Om Ratna Bhoomyainamah**

(Ratna: “precious stones”)

Not only during the periods of *Bharata Varsha* and *Bharata Khanda*, during the Vedic, *Upanishadic*, *Purānic* times, and as recent as a few centuries ago, our land was famous for diamonds, gems, and many precious stones throughout the world. Even today, our nation is one of the topmost countries in exporting the diamonds. British came for trade business with us and established their centers in Kolkata and eventually took over our country with *divide and rule* tactics, and they are the culprits for the putrefaction of Hindu society by caste system. They claim that the most precious and invaluable Kohinoor Diamond was a gift from us to the queen of England and God only knows the truth behind that. Nobody could put a value on that big diamond and it still sits in her crown. That diamond stone indeed is the crown jewel of India.

All the foreigners, especially Moguls, Pharisees, Turkish, Portuguese, French, Dutch, and British, everybody came to India for trade business because India was the richest country on the planet and they all wanted a piece of it. Their greed was so bad, they have settled in India, and started robbing our wealth and made us beggars. They took all our precious stones and jewelry to their countries and built monuments with them. Prior to them looting our culture and wealth, merchants used to sell diamonds on the streets.
though the foreign nations justify themselves that they came for our spices, which may be true to some extent, their intentions were to rob our country and to establish their own religions, i.e., Islam and Christianity. Otherwise, we would not have Christians and Muslims in a Hindu nation.

They did not satisfy with their greed, and they changed the names of our cities from Chennai to Madras, Kolkata to Calcutta, Mumbai to Bombay, Visakhapatnam to Vizag, to give a few examples. Leaders like Alexander attacked our country as part of his victory battle but was astonished with our culture, spiritual wisdom, and wealth. As Gandhari said in Mahabharata that “yato dharma yata Jayah” (where there is dharma, there is victory), ultimately victory was ours, because dharma was on our side and eventually we got our independence back in 1947. Since then on, having infatuation with the Western culture and materialism, especially the younger generations, being not aware of the past glory of our nation, slowly, we are showing decline in our social values and culture including the women.

For what they did to our nation, religion, and culture, we see every day on the television what’s happening to those countries and religions with terrorism and extremism. As the old saying goes, “Parula sommu-papu koodu,” meaning, “Others’ wealth is always a dirty meal” and everyone is responsible for their own karma (actions).

*Our land is and will always be “Ratna Bhoomi.”*

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**Ashtottaram 103**

**Om Daakshiṇya Bhoomyainamah**

(Daakshīṇyam: “politeness,” “kindness,” “honesty,” “talent”)

Even though there are many meanings to da kshinyam in Sanskrit, when we say someone has daya and da kshin yam; we are referring to that person’s kindness, honesty, politeness, and the willingness to take care of other’s needs. Our land is the birthplace of many great people with these noble qualities and they have used them for the welfare of others and humanity without selfish motives. Those who are familiar with the stories in Mahabharata, the famous Kasi king Sibi comes to our mind. He has cut his own flesh from his thigh and offered it to a hawk in order to protect a pigeon as a prey to the hawk. His sacrifice and da kshin yam he has shown toward a bird lived eternally in our history.

In today’s world where everyone thinks of themselves and their families with an attitude that “what do I get from it, if I help you?” or “what is in it for me if I do something for you?”—we still have a few people with da kshin yam, who help others without expecting anything back from them in return. This is not because the doctrines command them to do, but with compassion toward humanity, without any strings attached for their help. This is our Sanatana dharma and it used to be our way of life in our Bharata Varsha and Bharata Khanda for thousands of years, up until recently. If you look at our ancient history, we see many Hindus with daya and da kshin.
yam irrespective of their varnam, socioeconomic status or their vrtti (occupation). We used to see all these sattvic qualities in almost each and every one of them and we wonder what happened to those qualities in our people now?

The difference in showing dakshin yam toward fellow human beings is entirely based on selfish motives in other religions. The teachings of Christianity is to show love and compassion and convert people with other faiths into Christianity to attain heavenly rewards. So their missionaries target poor people in other countries and show compassion, love toward them with materials, money, food, shelters, medicines and proselytize them into Christianity. The missionaries show that dakshin yam toward non-Christians is in the name of religion only!

Our land, which shows kindness, politeness, and helping nature as a way of living, is called “Dakshyna Bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 104

Om Maataa Pita Sama Bhaavana Bhoomyainamah

(Mātah: “mother”; Pitah: “father”; Samabhaavana: “equal attitude”)

How can you answer if someone asks you whether you like your right or left eye? Without both eyes working, you lose your depth perception. You don’t favor one eye over the other and you feel the pain when either eye hurts. If someone asks you who is your favorite, your mother or your father, what will be your answer? Can you choose one over the other? Forget about the top pedestal for a woman. In some cultures, countries, and religions, women have no rights and have to be escorted by men when they go out. They have to cover their whole body with a black cloth except the eyes, and women are treated like slaves. Without the mother carrying you in her uterus for nine months and providing the nutrition through her blood, you wouldn’t be here today. Same way, the father goes out every day and works hard to make money to provide you food and shelter, and if he doesn’t, where would you be? What about the security he provides you till you can stand on your own? It’s like the bullock cart with two oxen carrying the cart; one without the other, you cannot move forward with the cart.

In Western countries, when parents get divorced, they live separately and they share the time they spend with the children. The
parents either get married again with some other person or live with a boyfriend or girlfriend. The children get stuck in the middle and they have to go and live with their fathers over weekends. Can you imagine the mental trauma the children have to go through? When they grow up, they also have the same lifestyle of the divorced parents. In the USA, every other marriage ends up in a divorce. It's like the saying from a wife to her third husband, “Honey! Your children and my children are quarrelling with our children.”

A person's stability of mind and happiness depends on his upbringing with his/her parents, in turn on the friend's circle, the society, the values, the culture, the religion, and the nation. In every part of their life, there is society around them that has direct or indirect influence. That person can be productive to the society or can become dangerous, depending on the mental instability and can even be dangerous to the whole world like Hitler. Those children who are brought up with parents' love, affection, care, and guidance will turn out to be very productive to the society and to the world at large. The grown-up children put their old parents in the nursing homes and have somebody else care for their parents instead of serving them by themselves. Unfortunately, nursing homes are now popping up slowly in India also, imitating the Western culture.

That's why Hindu culture gave so much importance and significance to both the parents and there are many stories in our sacred texts illustrating the importance of worshipping the parents and taking care of them at all times, until they pass away.

At least, once upon a time, before the infatuation with the Western culture has infested our younger generations, our land was the land of "Maa Pita Sama Bha'vana Bhoomi."
equipped with the body, mind, and intellect faculties (kārya karan a sanghata), which helps us in the spiritual practice and it is surprising to learn that even the deities don't have that opportunity and they have to come back from heaven and higher tiers once their punyam (results of virtuous deeds) is exhausted. A theist is defined as the one who takes the Vedas as pramanās (means of knowledge), Vedas are the Brahmā, and Brahmā is the Vedas. The ‘sruti’ says that “tat antike,” meaning “you are the atma tatvam.” It wants you to realize the omnipresent nature of the atma and declares “Iśāvasyam idam sarvam,” meaning everything is Lord Parameswara’s form and nothing is outside of him. The sugar dolls may have different forms, but they all taste sweet and if you eat a candy at the center or the edge, it tastes same. Similarly, whatever name or form you perceive, there is only Brahmā. This is tata jñaanam, meaning spiritual wisdom. In Srimad Bhagavadgītā, Lord Sri Krishna says that there is no difference between him and the Jña’nī.

As you can see, all our scriptures, sacred texts, and the Vedas declare that you happened to be the Brahmā and because of the veil of ignorance about our body, we do not recognize that truth. No single doctrine of ours says that you are a sinner, as the other religions deliberate and ingrain the minds of their followers.

As opposed to the teachings of the other religions, which claim that you are a sinner, our Sanatana Dharma declares that human birth is utmost superior to all the other living beings, and hence, our land is the “Maṇavottama Janma Prakatita Bhoomi.”

In Western countries, people love their pet dogs and cats more than they love their families and friends. There are many instances where some people leave all their wealth in their personal will to their beloved cat or dog, which sometimes could be in millions of dollars. At the same time, they eat beef, pork, and every animal meat you can think of including seafood! They justify that kind of diet as the food chain approved by the God! If I ask you as a parent, who is your favorite child? Can you pick one child over the other? As a parent, if you cannot show favoritism one child over the other, how would you expect God to love one of his creation more over the other and tell the humans to go ahead and eat every animal? Logically it does not make any sense at all.

That’s why our ancient sages and Yogasūtras prescribed a graded discipline comprising eight steps called the āstāṅgas of yoga. The yamas (restraints) and niyamas (observances) are part of these eight. Ahimsa (noninjury) is one of the yamas. The yamas contribute to social harmony and the niyamas to personal purity. Not only the seers and the rishis, but in Bhagavadgītā, Lord Sri Krishna also gives

Ashtottaram 106

Om Sarva Bhootaanaam Bhagavatsamaana Bhoomyainamah

(Sarva Bhootaanaam: “in all beings”; Bhagavat: “Bhagavan,” “Lord,” “God”; Samaana: “same,” “equal”)
his esoteric wisdom by which the jiiva or the individual soul of every living being is an important aspect of this creation. With his direction that prakriti (the nature) gives birth to all beings and things. He is the sole origin and place of dissolution of this universe. The whole universe is supported by him even as the beads of necklace are supported by the string on which they are strung. As Avyakta or the Unmanifest, he has pervaded the whole universe. That is why he is the essence of all in this creation.

Hindus are taught about the all pervasiveness of the Parabrahman as Antaryāmin and not as a belief or faith but as a sīndhānta (proven tenet) and if you read micro- and macrophysics about atoms and bosons, you understand that what these scientists are telling us in the twenty-first century was already expounded by our ancient sages thousands of years ago without using microscopes or the Hubble telescope. It infers us that the sūtis are being heard by our sages and they gave that knowledge to us as Vedas. If you cut a wooden trunk from a tree, and in a sculptor's hand it can become a beautiful doll, and if you consecrate and put it in a temple, it becomes a god or goddess deity. That statue has always been there in the tree until you discovered it. This is a deep spiritual philosophy, but every ordinary Indian Hindu is aware of this fact and sees that Prāmaṇam in every being including an animal, tree, or a stone and worships him in that. There is this much deeper meaning hidden in our daily prayers, worships, and actions. A person who can see God in everything is a jñāni (spiritual wise person).

The land, which sees and treats everything as Prāmaṇam, is our land and it is “Sarva Bhūtaaanaam Bhāgavatsamaana Bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 107

Om Sarvepi Mangālaanīssantu Bhoomyainamah

(Sarvepi: “all beings”; Mangalam: “blessing,” “auspiciousness,” “good fortune”; Santu: “being,” “existence,” “truth,” “Brahman”)

Every Hindu heard mangalam, subhamangalam. We use this word almost every day, on every occasion either marriage or birthday, religious rites, or during prayers. We have songs, bhajans, kirtans (songs with praise) with mangalam, subhamangalam. Group singing sometimes is called San kirtans. At the end of prayers and rituals also we sing mangalam, subhamangalam as a closure. Traditional Hinduism has always considered certain objects and living beings as mangalam or auspicious. Coming across them by chance, seeing them, receiving them as gifts, giving them as gifts or honoring them—all these (depending on the type of object) have been deemed to produce auspiciousness. Even our panchangam (the almanac which has five limbs) has subha lagnam, at certain times considered as auspicious based on the astronomical position of stars and planets. Thus evolved the science of Hindu almanac called panchangam.

At the end of the prayer, we offer camphor light to the gods and goddesses as benediction with slokas (verses) pertaining to that god or goddess. We pray at the end that each and everyone including the animal, and plant kingdoms to be safe, prosperous, and auspicious.
We are not like other countries where they wish for their country to be blessed; for example in USA, after every speech, even the president of the country ends with the slogan “God bless America” and they don’t include others in their prayers. It does not show inclusiveness but selfishness. It shows their selfishness and self-centeredness, which they teach to their children. We perform homams, yajnas, and yagas for the welfare of the entire humanity.

In our prayers and worships we call the goddess mangalapradayini. Married women wear mangalasutra (the auspicious thread), which is expected to be worn as long as her husband is alive. The planet Mars, one of the nine planets mentioned in the works on astrology, is also known as Mangala; it is also one of the days of the week, Tuesday. For every function, vrata, sacrament, we look at the panchangam for an auspicious time and day to finish that without obstacles and to be blessed by the gods and goddesses. This became part and parcel of our daily living and culture. If you look at it individually, communally, socially or nationally, we Hindus offer peace mantras ending with mangalam to everyone and every being, irrespective of their race, religion, country, or creed and include everyone in our daily prayers and pray to the God to keep all of us safe and auspiciousness with the word asman bhavati.

Hence, our land is “Sarvepi Mangala-nissantu Bhoomi.”

Ashtottaram 108

Om Sarvepi Sukhissantu Bhoomyainamah

(Sarvepi: “all beings”; Sukham: “happiness,” “pleasure,” “comfort”; Santu: “being,” “existence,” “truth,” “Brahman”)

Sarvepi sukhissantu, meaning “all be happy,” is the Vedana dam. In all our Veda mantras, at the end of each section, there are santi mantras like “sarve janaa sukhino bhavantu,” “om santi,” “om santi,” “om santi,” “om santi,” and we finish our worship or ritual with these. In USA, people, politicians, and even the president at the end of their speech, says, “God bless America.” What does this mean? Why only them? What about the rest of the world? What is so special about them that God has to bless them only and the rest of the humanity will be underprivileged, so that America can show their superiority and charity to others, especially to the so-called third-world countries? There is a big difference between having patriotism versus asking God to bless them only. Not only does it not look nice, but it looks inhumane. On the other hand, if we look at our Sanatana dharma and our way of life, and if we look at any corner of our nation, in any temple, at the finish of any speech, what do we hear? Statements like, “sarve janaa sukhino bhavantu,” “samasta sammangala nisantu,” “loka samasta sukhino bhavantu,” “asma’n bhavati,” and we always wish for the safety and auspiciousness of every being in our prayers.
If we go on thinking and analyzing the logic behind this, we realize the genius minds and wisdom of our ancient sages. They have realized that, if one person or community is happy and enjoying the luxuries and the other communities are struggling to their ends meet, it is not good for the country and it has a domino effect on everyone and eventually there will be instability in the society. The same thing is true in between the countries also. We are not talking about socialism here. Now, we see that very clearly in the world, which is going through turmoil and nobody can travel freely without worrying about one’s safety and security. The way we live our lives and wish for comforts and luxuries, we should think of others’ happiness also and then everybody can have a peaceful and content life. It does not mean that we have to give away all our earnings to charity. It’s a matter of common courtesy to wish for others’ happiness too along with ours.

That’s why with their selflessness and kindheartedness, our sages and seers have incorporated the s’anti mantras along with the Veda mantras at the end of our daily prayers. It became an automatic nature for us to recite these peace mantras and we teach our children to continue with that tradition, which has been passed on to us for millennia from generation to generation. At home, at schools, at temples, and public speeches we utter those prayers.

“\nOur nation, which not only wishes for the happiness of our people, but the entire humanity and living beings, and is “Sarvepi Sukhissantu Bhoomi.”

Om S’anti S’anti S’antih!

‘Sri Bharatamata Gayatri mantras

Most of the gods and goddesses have Gayatri mantras. I have also humbly attempted to compose few Gayatri mantras for our Bharata Mata. Please pardon for any grammatical errors in this.

1) OM Veda BhumyaischaVidmahe
   BodhaBhoomyaischaDhimahi
   Tanno’ BhaaratPrachodayaat

2) OM Dharma BhumyaischaVidmahe
   Karma BhoomyaischaDhimahi
   Tanno’ HindPrachodayaat

3) OM JanmaBhumyaischaVidmahe
   MaatruBhoomyaischaDhimahi
   Tanno’ DharaaPrachodayaat

4) OM YaagaBhumyaischaVidmahe
   Yoga BhoomyaischaDhimahi
   TannoBhaaratPrachodayaat

5) OM PuṇyaBhumyaischaVidmahe
   DhanyaBhoomyaischaDhimahi
   Tanno’ BhaaratPrachodayaat
Ekavimsati Song

(with twenty-one names of Bharatamata Ashtottaram)

Ekavimsati means twenty-one. Our body has twenty-one tattvams, and we can also base this on 3 x 7 Trayi Sapta Samidha Kritaha as a symbolic meaning of offering twenty-one sticks of firewood in a homam. I have composed this song with very simple lyrics so that it’s easy to hum and sing by every Indian, from a rickshaw puller to a college professor, housewives and children making it catchy and as a household song, constantly reminding us the glory of our motherland. According to Hindu culture, the earth is considered to be a mother. Bhoomi is the Hindu goddess Mother Earth.

1) Veda Bhoomi, BodhaBhoomi
Dharma bhoomi, Karma bhoomi
Bharatabhoomi—asmadiyamaatrubhoomi—
Bharatabhoomi—asmadiyajanmabhoomi—(repeat—)

2) YajnaBhoomi, YaagaaBhoomi
Yoga bhoomi, Bhaagyabhoomi
Bharatabhoomi—asmadiyamaatrubhoomi—
Bharatabhoomi—asmadiyajanmabhoomi—(repeat—)

3) Pu nyaBhoomi, DhanyaBhoomi
DhaanyaBhoomi, Dhyaanabhoomi
Bharatabhoomi—asmadiyamaatrubhoomi—
Bharatabhoomi—asmadiya - janmabhoomi—(repeat—)
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4) OmkaaraBhoomi, TapoBhoomi
   Gopujabhoomi, Gitaamrutabhoomi
   Bharatabhoomi—asmadiyamaatrubhoomi—
   Bharatabhoomi—asmadiyajanmabhoomi—(repeat-----)

5) SujalaBhoomi, SuphalaBhoomi
   Susamskaarabhoomi, Namaskaarabhoomi
   Bharatabhoomi--- asmadiyamaatrubhoomi-----
   Bharatabhoomi---- asmadiyajanmabhoomi------ (repeat -------)

Iti Vaidyasri Pasupuleti Devakinanda Vithal Raja Virachitam
‘Sri Bharata Mata Ekavimsatihi’
D.V. Pasupuleti, MD, FACP, FAANEM, is a physician specializing in treating neurological diseases. He is a professor of medicine at Michigan State University and Central Michigan University, USA. Teaching is his lifelong passion and has received many teaching awards from his students. He has contributed in the field of neurology, like “Pasupuleti Sign,” “Tetrad of Pasupuleti,” “Sun Rise Sign of Pasupuleti,” and has published many articles in medical journals and magazines. He is very enthusiastic in sharing his knowledge for the welfare of mankind and authored two books, Happiness for Everyone and A Neurologist Guide to Happiness. He stands strongly against bigotry, hypocrisy, prejudice, discrimination, violence, sectarianism, and fanaticism. He tries his best to help humanity in his own philanthropical way, and his daily worship to God always conclude with a prayer toward world peace and prosperity for all living beings.