The Morning Prose of Affirmation

(Translation of Sri Raghavendra Swami’s Pratah Sankalpa Gadya)

Translation: Giridhar Boray

Sri Raghavendra Swami is one of the most revered saints in the Madhwa school of philosophy. Sri Raghavendra Swami has contributed enormously to the treasure of Indian philosophy. Several of his works are commentaries on preexisting works such as the Vedas, the Gita, and treatises on the works of his predecessors (such as Sri Madhwacharya, Sri Jayatheertha etc). He has also composed many independent works expounding on various aspects of Hindu philosophy based on the interpretation of Sri Madhwacharya.

Sri Raghavendra Swami is believed to have authored 44 works and one of the interesting gems in his literary treasure is the Pratah Sankalpa Gadya (The Morning Prose of Affirmation). A common thread among all his works is his minimalist approach to composing where he uses very few, but very powerful words to convey his thoughts. This seems to be consistent with his general nature where he is reputed to be a person of very few words. This minimalist approach in his works is no more evident than in his Pratah Sankalpa Gadya. The entire work which runs into approximately 5 printed pages consists of only one sentence! This sentence contains the summary of the essence of the entire Hindu philosophy as expounded in the Vedas, The Gita, The Upanishads and the works of Sri Madhwacharya. Sri Raghavendra Swami has done a great service to the entire society by giving us all a gift of this concise work which allows one to quickly grasp the essence of the entire philosophy of Sri Madhwacharya. This work is meant to be read during the early morning time before one starts one’s daily activities and is meant to provide a daily guidance to help everyone in conducting their daily activities (A complementary work of Sri Raghavendra Swami, Sarva Samarpana Gadya which teaches everyone to dedicate all their daily activities to the Almighty, is recited in the evenings). It is also interesting to note that many of the references made to Sri Madhwacharya in this work correlates well with the descriptions provided in Sri Sumadhwa Vijaya of Sri Narayana Pandithacharya which is universally accepted as the authentic narration of the life of Sri Madhwacharya.

There are excellent lectures and commentaries on Pratah Sankalpa Gadya in Kannda by Sri Prabhjananacharya, Sri K.V.R. Nijagal etc. This article is an attempt to provide an overview of this superb work. While the work is essentially one long sentence, for ease of comprehension the sentence is divided into about 18 phrases, and a summary of each of these is presented.
The Morning Prose starts with a description of Sri Vayu Deva. The first phrase establishes the fact that Sri Vayu Deva is the foremost among the worshippers of The Almighty, Sri Narayana. The infinite positive attributes, qualities and the methods of Sri Narayana is explained in various Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas etc. The Vedas especially are not composed by anyone, but have always existed. The words of Vedas and indeed all words existing in the universe essentially describe the nature of the Almighty Sri Narayana. Among all the words and hymns found in the Vedas, the supreme hymn is 'Om'. Sri Vayu Deva is the supreme authority on all the hymns in the Vedas and has a complete comprehension of all words and hymns in the Vedas. It is noted that in Sri Sumadhwa Vijaya, Chapter 4, verse 32, it is stated that Sri Madhuvacharya is the supreme authority (Japadhikaari) of the Pranava Mantra 'Om'.

The description of Sri Vayu Deva's attributes continue. Sri Vayu is completely untouched by any sins and is beyond the reach of any demons. He is full of positive attributes such as undiluted devotion to Sri Vishnu. He can be understood only through the scriptures. Other than terms specifically used to describe Sri Vishnu and Sri Lakshmi, it is said that all other words in the Vedas refer to Sri Vayu Deva. He is the primary deputy of the Lord Almighty. He is very kind, very forgiving and very affectionate of his devotees. This attribute of Sri Vayu Deva also finds mention in Sri Sumadhwa Vijaya, Chapter 5, verse 31.

This phrase sets up the foundation for the reasons behind the incarnation of Sri Vayu Deva as Sri Madhuvacharya on the earth. Many years ago, due to passage of time, true knowledge of the scriptures was lost. Pious people desirous of learning the scriptures were not able to receive proper guidance. This prompted dieties such as Brahma, Rudra etc, to pray to Lord Vishnu on behalf of the people thirsty for true knowledge. Sri Vishnu directed Sri Vayu Deva to adorn the role of a human being on the earth with the principal purpose of spreading the true meaning of the scriptures. Sri Vayu Deva, with utmost humility wore the Lord's wishes as one would wear an ornament on the head and incarnated as Sri Madhuvacharya and established the dualist school of philosophy on a firm foundation. This fact is also described in Sri Sumadhwa Vijaya, Chapter 2, verses 1-4.
Sri Madhwacharya was blessed by the Lord Almighty and was also designated by the Lord to be worthy of worship by everyone. Sri Madhwacharya is also described to be full of auspicious attributes and indeed possesses all the 32 superior characteristics (lakshanas). *It is interesting to note that Sri Sumadhwa Vijaya, Chapter 7 and verse 5 also makes a reference to Sri Madhwacharya possessing the 32 lakshanas*. One of the important characteristics among these 32 is the ability of Sri Madhwacharya to clear any doubts in the minds of his disciples with regard to philosophical issues. After all Sri Madhwacharya himself is devoid of any doubts in this matter.

Sri Madhwacharya possesses complete understanding of the 7 crore major hymns from the scriptures and is continuously praying to the various forms of Lord Almighty. He is further aware of all the various forms of the Lord Almighty some of which are described in scriptures such as the Vedas, the Mahabharatha and also forms which are not described in any scriptures. Sri Madhwacharya also knows the Lord Almighty as having limitless forms and each of these infinite forms possessing limitless auspicious, complete attributes. *It is interesting to note that Sumadhwa Vijaya, Chapter 12, verse 52 also describes Sri Madhwacharya as constantly focused and praying on the Lord’s infinite forms.*

Sri Madhwacharya is continuously focused on worshipping the infinite attributes of the Lord Almighty as described in the scriptures. In addition to worshipping His attributes, Sri Madhwacharya also prays on the infinite forms, infinite ornaments and indeed the infinite activities of Sri Maha Vishnu. Sri Madhwacharya is most compassionate, most forgiving and most affectionate of his devotees. *An example of Sri Madhwacharya’s compassion towards his disciples is illustrated in Sumadhwa Vijaya, Chapter 14, verse 10.* With a view to move his devotees away from traversing in the wrong direction and to put them on a solid path towards salvation, he addresses the Lord thus - Oh, My Lord, please have pity on these tired, poor, depressed, orphaned souls and guide them on the right path.
Sri Madhwacharya is the supreme preceptor of knowledge among all teachers and he is the force powering the activities of all teachers. He is singularly focused on meditating upon the Lord and has no interest in any activity devoid of divinity. Sri Madhwacharya knows and prays the Lord as characterized by the following attributes. That the Lord is Always Omnipresent, has infinite forms, He is the creator, sustainer and destroyer of all things in the universe and He alone instigates, encourages and arbitrates all activities in the universe. Every word, sound describes only Him. He is devoid of any defects. He is supreme and is different from anyone and anything in the universe.

Sri Madhwacharya is also devoid of any defects. He is capable of removing any defects or deficiencies in his devotees. His constant meditation of Sri Lakshminarayana frees him from nature's bonds. His purity and completeness allows him to cure any deficiencies in his devotees. Sri Madhwacharya is the original teacher for all of us.

Next few phrases describe the attributes of the Lord Almighty, His relationship with the universe and provide a summary of the workings of the universe. Sri Raghavendra Swami refers to the Lord as residing in Sri Madhwacharya and identifies the four main forms of the Lord among His infinite forms, each full and complete in itself. The four forms of the Lord are - Pradyumna, Aniruddha, Sankarshana and Vasudeva. The Lord takes on the form of Pradyumna during the creation of the universe and His consort Sri Lakshmi performs Her duties in the form of Kriti during this period. During the sustenance period of the universe, the Lord dons the form of Aniruddha and is accompanied by Shanthi, and at the time of the dissolution of the universe, the Lord takes on the form of Sankarshana and is assisted by Jaya. During these periods, the four-faced Brahma and Sri Vayudeva assist the Lord.
तथा स्वस्तसम्योग्यतामिक्षनरमानुश्रुहृध्रीलभुत्वष्टीर चतुरं बार्ति सदरुपदिश्चत्स्वस्तयोग्यभग्नवृय-गुणोपासनया साधारस्वस्तयोग्य भगवद्वृपिभावद्वर्धीमोहाभ्यां विद्याधिष्ठात्रिस्तिप्रार्थङ्करणः, स्वस्तयोग्यतानुसारण सम्पूर्णाधानानां, पूर्वजने भ्रामण सह विरजनसियानिन व्यक्तिज्ञानां, तथा विद्याधिष्ठात्स्तीप्रार्थङ्करणः, प्रलयकाले भगवद्वर्धीमात्रा。

This phrase describes the process that salvation bound souls undergo at the end of the dissolution of the universe. In order to reach salvation, individual souls need to be completely devoid of any Karma (effect of deeds) accrued during the course of many lives. Salvation bound souls rid themselves of accrued negative Karma (Anishtha Sanchita Prarabha Karma) by meditating on the Lord and indulging in positive activities. The Lord Almighty, utilizing the services of great teachers such as the four-faced Brahma teaches them the way of meditation. Such souls after ridding themselves of accrued karma and distributing the unspent fruits of accumulated good deeds to other deserving souls (Ishta Prarabha Karma), bathe in the Viraja river and are led by Brahma and take refuge in the Lord Almighty. At this stage, the salvation bound souls do not possess any physical body and are preparing to experience complete bliss in cosmic form.

आनन्दमात्रवर्यु तदनुभवसहितान्त, स्वस्तयोग्यभग्नवृयपविशेष्यानन्ततानां, सुषिकाले भगवद्वर्धी-भ्रामणानां श्रीवेदेतांदोर्डः निमित्तिकुश्य प्राधानांमर्णन्त्रथांस्त्रां स्वस्तयोग्यप्राधानांमर्णन्त्राय- शतश्रृंखलाभोधनमाक्षायपालितिधित्यां सुहासनात्मकः।

Salvation bound souls who have taken refuge in the Lord Almighty during the period of the dissolution of the universe are completely focused on meditating on the Lord, but have not yet experienced eternal bliss. As the cycle of the creation of the universe starts, the Lord in the form of Sri Vasudeva who is assisted by Sri Lakshmi who dons the role of Maya, takes these noble souls to view the Shweta Dweepa (The White Island – abode of the Lord). At this stage, these salvation bound souls enter the final abode and start enjoying eternal bliss. The state of souls who have achieved salvation are described in detail in Chapter 11 of Sri Sumadhwa Vijaya.

लक्ष्यात्मक प्रलयाधिष्ठ्याधीर्ष्टप्राधान्यायाधी श्रीसुरास्थनाभिनिवेश्याधारवाद्वृद्धाद्वेष्ट्रिविभाषेयः-संसारात्मकुपवातपतिताभावाभावेद्व-श्रीमूर्तिहितकालादे: चैकेक्षप्रायायावेश्यकालालयव- सृष्ट्यादिकृत्त्वेष्यानायर्प्रमुक्तानायिनायानि: निरंरजार्थस्तुपात्मकाय - तीनामाधकुरकंद्रछिन्द्र्रस्तियोङ्कस्रुतिप्रवेषणक्यास्तु-प्रवृह-खृतीरः।

At the time of the dissolution of the Universe, the Lord takes on the form of Anantha Padmanabha and will be lying on the Adi Sesha (the Original Serpent). The entire universe of souls would have taken refuge in the Lord. Salvation deserving souls will be in the upper chambers of the Lord's stomach, the eternal Samsari's and those who have not yet attained salvation will be in the middle part of the Lord's stomach and the evil souls will be in the lower chamber. At this stage, the Lord will be the embrace of His consorts, Sri and Bhoo Devi. All the other deities such as the four-faced Brahma, Sri Vayu Deva and others will be worshipping the Lotus feet of The Lord who creates and sustains the concepts of Time, Space and Universe.
The Lord also goes by names such as – Shunya, Kala, Kevala, Brahma etc, and all these names and forms are non-different from His original form. These forms are like of pools of energy, which are limitless. Likewise, the infinite forms of His consort, Sri Lakshmi are also full of limitless energy. The Lord is also known through the six types of the prayer hymn – Gayatri. The Lord is present in all life forms, in Sri Lakshmi and in Sri Vayudeva. The four quadrants of the prayer hymn, Gayatri (including the root syllable Om), indeed describe the four major forms of the Lord (Pradyumna, Aniruddha, Sankarshana, Vasudeva) responsible for the workings of the Universe. The Lord is residing in abodes such as Vaikunta, Ananthasana, Sweta Dweepa and indeed in all life forms.

In this phrase, Sri Raghavendra Swami sets the stage for starting daily activities by praying to his favorite diety, Sri Seetha Ramachandra, whom he describes as full of compassion, always forgiving his devotees, and tolerates the errors unknowingly committed by his devotees. All sentences in the universe refer only to the Lord Almighty, who is Absolute and second to none. He is worshipped by His consort Lakshmi in all her eight forms such as Sri Devi. The Lord appears with four hands, one hand carrying the conch, another carrying the wheel, the third hand held out to grant the wishes of His devotees and the fourth hand ready to protect His devotees. The various hymns such as Gayatri, the eight lettered hymns such as Narayana Mantra etc, all refer to Him only. At this stage, Sri Raghavendra Swami prays to Lord Lakshmi Narasimha who removes all obstacles in daily lives and goes on to pray to Sri Ramachandra, the consort of Sri Seetha, whose feet are worshipped by Sri Hanuman, and who is the brother of Lakshmana, Bharatha, Sastrugna and who is the foremost in the Surya dynasty and is a gem among the kings in the lineage of King Raghu.


text in sanskrit
Sri Raghavendra Swami starts praying to Sri Vayudeva and addresses Sri Seetha Ramachandra thus - My Lord, by your order, by your grace, as ordained by you, to please you and meditating on you, I pray to Sri Vayudeva, who by your order resides in all life forms and controls the workings of the universe. Sri Vayudeva is known by four names - 'Vayu' as he controls the existence of life forms, 'Prana' as he controls every activity in the universe, 'Dharma' as he grants power of memory to life forms, and 'Bhakti' as he takes deserving souls towards salvation. Sri Vayu Deva is most compassionate, most forgiving, most affectionate, and tolerant of errors committed by his devotees. He is also goes by the name of Prabhanjana, as he is the destroyer of demons in our minds.

Every second of every day, Sri Vayudeva purifies our intellect, performs all activities and gets all activities performed by all life forms. He is the owner of all activities and submits all activities to the Lord. He consumes the fruits of all activities and distributes the fruits of relevant activities to the life forms. He indeed encourages performance of activities, teaches right activities to be performed, purifies our activities, grants us the mastery of activities, grants us commitment in the activities and is the ultimate witness to all our activities and prays to the Lord in the relevant form based on the activity.

Sri Vayudeva is a witness to all activities performed by all life forms at all times. He worships the Lord's form of Kapila. Sri Vayudeva is also full of infinite, auspicious attributes and is devoid of any defects. He completely understands the intent of the Lord and carries out His orders and is always blessed by the Lord. Sri Vayudeva is also aware of the limited capabilities of individual souls. Sri Vayudeva, who is worshipped by Sri Rudra and other deities, powers all my activities in all conditions and I will perform my duties as ordained by him.

Oh Lord, as I wake up thinking about you and meditating on you, let me conduct the day's activities appropriately to the best of my abilities and means, consistent with my place, time, situation and offer them to you. I will also encourage my family, my disciples and my subordinates to do likewise.
Thus concludes the Pratah Sankalpa Gadya (The Morning Prose of Affirmation) appropriately composed by Sri Raghavedra Swami and may it please the Lord Almighty (Madhava) and Sri Vayudeva (Madhwa).