

Prasnothara Rathna Malika
(Garland of gems of questions and answers)
By
Adhi Shankara Bhagawat Pada
Translated by
P.R.Ramachander

(Here is the eternal and perennial wisdom of the great savant called Adhi Shankara, in the form of searching questions and pithy answers. Some people(Digambara jains) are of the opinion that *Prashnottara Ratnamalika* is written by Amoghavarsha I in his old age when he had distanced himself from the affairs of the state and yet others(Svetambara jains) are of the opinion that it is written by Saint Vimalacharya. But I choose to follow the great Paramacharya of Kanchi who has written about this great work being that of Adhishankara. The work is so great that I feel that any one in this world reading this would become wise.

I have consulted the Sanskrit version of this great work, which is in the form of poem but have fashioned this work based on a book by Sri .P N.Parasuraman in Tamil in the form of question and answers contained in the poem. My pranams to him.)

Ka Khalu nalankriyathe drushti drushtartha sadhana Pateeyaan,
Amuya Kanta sthithaprasnothara rathna malikaya.

1

Who among all those people capable of attaining salvation in this world and in the world above, have not become wiser by taking in to their mind, this “Gem of garlands of question and answers.”?

1. What should be accepted?

Guru’s advice should be accepted

2. What should be avoided?

Bad acts should be avoided.

3. Who is the Guru?

He who knows the truth and thinks of the good of his students.

4. What should be done speedily?

Attain salvation by avoiding repeated birth and deaths.

5. What is good for you?

Dharma is good for you.

6. Who is learned?

He who is wise is learned.

7. What is poisonous?

Disregarding advice of elders is poisonous.

8. What is the ultimate of ordinary life?

The ultimate is thinking about the ultimate.

9. What should men yearn for?

They should yearn for the good of themselves and others.

10. What makes you tipsy like alcohol?

Desire (attachment?) makes you tipsy like alcohol.

11. What is the climber in domestic life?

Desire is the climber.

12. Who is your enemy?

Laziness is your enemy.

13. All people are afraid of what?

All of them are afraid of death.

14. Who is blinder than the blind?

Man with desire is blinder than the blind.

15. Who is valorous?

He who controls his mind is valorous.

16. What is the nectar which can be eaten by our ears?

Advice by great people is such nectar.

17. What is the root for recognition?

Not asking for favours from any body is such a root.

18. What cannot be measured?

The damsel's gait cannot be measured.

19. Who is wise?

He who is not deceived by women is wise.

20. What is sorrow?

Being not satisfied is sorrow.

21. What is debasing?

Being forced to beg from a debased man is debasing.

22. What is hi-fi life?

Living a life without faults is hi-fi life.

23. What is ignorance?

Not getting trained in anything is ignorance.

24. Who is awake?

Wise man is awake.

25. What is sorrow?

The foolishness of all living beings is sorrow.

26. What is transient like the water on a lotus leaf?

Youth, wealth and life span are transient.

27. Who are similar to the rays of moon and do good to others?

Good people

28. What is hell?

It is being in the control of others.

29. What is being all right?

It is forsaking everything.

30. What should be achieved?

You should try to good to all people.

31. What is dear to all animals?

Their soul is dear to all animals.

32. What leads to wrong results?

Pride leads to wrong results.

33. What leads to pleasure?

Friendship with good people leads to pleasure.

34. Who is expert in removing all sorrows?

He who forsakes everything is such an expert.

35. Which is equivalent to death?

Being a fool is equivalent to death.

36. Which is invaluable?

Giving anything at the time when it is required badly is invaluable.

37. What hurts till you die?

The sin committed in secret hurts you till death.

38. For what should you take effort?

To learn, to be healthy and to give in charity.

39. What should be disregarded?

Bad people, other's wife and other's wealth.

40. What should you think of always during day and night?

You should think that there is no meaning in life and not about women.

41. To what should you get attached?

To mercy towards sad people and towards friendship with good people.

42. Whose soul cannot be reformed?

Bad people, doubting Thomases, people with an ever sad face and ungrateful people.

43. Who is good man?

The one with good character is a good man.

44. Who is debased?

The one with bad character is a bad man.

45. Whom will Gods worship?

Gods will worship those who have mercy.

46. Seeing which, should we be afraid?

Seeing the forest of domestic life, we should be afraid.

47. Who can control all living beings?

He who tells truth, speaks pleasantly and has humility can control all beings.

48. For getting things that we see and things that we cannot see, where should we stand?

In the path of justice.

49. Who is blind?

The learned man who does evil acts.

50. Who is deaf?

He who cannot hear good words.

51. Who is dumb?

He who cannot speak comforting words at appropriate time.

52. What is wisdom?

Giving without asking is wisdom.

53. Who is a friend?

He who prevents us from doing sin.

54. What is beautiful?

Good character is beautiful.

55. What are beautiful words?

Truth is the most beautiful word.

56. What is as transient as the lightning?

Company of bad people and friendship with women.

57. Who do not slip from obeying rules of the caste?

Learned people.

58. What is difficult to get in this world like, chinthamani-the wish giving gem?

The good four (chatur pathram)

59. What is Chatur pathram (the good four) which drives away the darkness of ignorance?

1. Charity coupled with sweet words.
2. Knowledge without pride.
3. Valour with patience.
4. Wealth with sacrifice.

These four rare things are called the good four.

60. What should be pitied?

Miserliness.

61. What is fit to be praised when one has wealth?

Philanthropy.

62. Who is fit to be worshipped by the wise?

He who has natural humility.

63. Like the lotus shines on seeing the sun, on seeing whom will a clan shine?

On seeing its members with good characters coupled with humility.

64. Who can make this world as his slave?

He, who speaks sweet words, holds conversation which leads to good, and observes Dharma can make this world as his slave.

65. What attracts the mind of the wise man?

Good poems and a wise lady.

66. Who will never face danger?

He who obeys the advice of elders and also has humility.

67. Whom will the Goddess of wealth love?

She will love a person with active mind and just conduct.

68. From whom would the Goddess of wealth run away?

She will run away from lazy people and those who insult teachers and Brahmins (learned people).

69. Where should we live?

We should live near good people.

70. From which country, we should go away?

That country which is ruled by a miserly tyrant.

71. How can man become without sorrow?

By having a wife with humility and stable wealth.

72. In the world what type of man will always be sad?

He who has wealth but does not give it to anybody will be sad.

73. What leads to worst words about a man?

His begging from debased people.

74. Who is valorous than Lord Sri. Rama?

That man who does not lose his stability in spite of arrows from the God of love.

75. What should occupy your thought day and night?

The feet of God and not this life.

76. Who are blind even though they have eyes?

Atheists.

77. Who would be called lame in this world?

He who goes to go for pilgrimage when he is old.

78. What is most scared water?

That which removes dirt from the mind.

79. What should be spoken by men?

The name of "Hari"

80. What should not be told by a wise man?

Lie and ill about others.

81. What should man earn?

Knowledge, wealth, strength, fame and Punya (result of good deeds)

82. What wipes away all good characters?

Miserliness.

83. Who is the enemy?

Time.

84. Which ministry should be avoided?

The ministry without wise and old ministers.

85. In this world, in what should man be sincere?

In government service.

86. What is dearer than the soul?

Dharma of our caste and company of good people.

87. What is like the ever perennial banyan tree?

Charity given to the proper people.

88. What is the weapon for everybody?

The capability of proving with just deeds.

89. Who is the mother for everybody?

Cow.

90. What is the army?

Courage.

91. What is like God of death?

A careless life.

92. Where is poison?

With bad people in this world.

93. What is an unclean (untouchable) state?

The time when one takes loan and cannot repay.

94. What is the state of fearlessness?

Absence of desire for everything (Renunciation)

95. What is fear?

Money.

96. What is rarely obtained by man?

Devotion to Hari.

97. What is sin?

Troubling others

98. Who is the darling of God?

He who does not suffer himself and also not cause suffering to others.

99. How do you achieve things?

By austerity.

100. Where is wisdom?

With Brahmins (wise men)

101. What is real wisdom?

In approaching great people and serving them.

102. Who are great people?

They who know the codes of good conduct.

103. Which is more sorrowful than death for a famous man?

Notoriety

104. Who leads a pleasant life in the world?

He who has wealth.

105. What is wealth?

That which fulfills one's desires.

106. What is the reason for a pleasant life?

Punya (compensation for good deeds)

107. From where does suffering originate?

It originates from sin.

108. Who will get wealth?

Those who worship God with devotion will get wealth.

109. Who would attain progress?

He who has humility will attain progress.

110. Who would loose?

A proud man will loose.

111. Who should not be believed?

He who always tells lies.

112. When is telling lies not a sin?

Telling a lie to protect Dharma is not a sin.

113. What is Dharma?

That which has been considered as Dharma in our community by our ancestors.

114. What is the strength of good people?

God.

115. Who are great people?

Those who are always happy are great people.

116. What is God?

The good deeds done are God.

117. Who does good deeds?

He who is praised by Good people.

118. Who is the friend for a family man?

His wife.

119. Who is the family man?

He who does sacrifices.

120. What are sacrifices?

That which are indicated in the Vedas which leads to one's upliftment.

121. To whom will religious duties give benefit?

He, who is religious, has knowledge and good character.

122. Who is disciplined?

He who considers Vedas as his basis of life.

123. Who is equivalent to a dead man?

He who does not do his duties.

124. Who is lucky?

He who has renounced everything. (Sanyasi)

125. Who is fit to be worshipped?

He who is well read and is learned.

126. Who should be served?

Philanthropist

127. Who is Philanthropist?

.He who satisfies the man who begs.

128. What is the greatest luck for one with a body?

Absence of diseases.

129. Who would get benefit?

He who tries hard.

130. Who does not have sin?

He who chants the name of God always.

131. Who is contended?

He who has good sons.

132. What is difficult for a man to do?

Keeping his mind under control always.

133. Who is a Brahmachari (unmarried lad doing austerities)?

He who avoids contact with women and is safe from such contacts.

134. Who is Paradevatha?

It is Goddess Parvathi who is personification of knowledge.

135. Who is the Lord of the world?

Sun God (He feeds the world)

136. Who is responsible to keep beings alive?

Rain.

137. Who is brave?

He who saves those who are afraid.

138. Who is the teacher of the world (Jagatguru)?

Lord Shiva is the Jagatguru.

139. Wherefrom one gets knowledge?

We get it from Lord Shiva.

140. Wherefrom can we get salvation?

From devotion to Lord Mukunda

141. Which is Lord Mukunda.?

He who makes us cross Ajnana.

142. What is Ajnana (ignorance)?

Forgetting of the soul is Ajnana.

143. Who does not have sorrow?

He who does not have anger does not have sorrow.

144. What is pleasure?

Contentment is pleasure.

145. Who is king?

He who pleases the people is the king.

146. Who is dog?

He works under a man with downright bad habits is a dog.

147. Who controls illusion?

Parameswara (The Supreme God) controls illusion.

148. What is magic?

This world is magic.

149. Which is similar to dreams?

What happens when we are awake is similar to dreams.

150. What is truth?

Parabrahma (Supreme conceptual all pervading God)

151. What is a lie?

That which is destroyed by wisdom is a lie.

152. What is silly?

Horn of a rabbit etc

153. What cannot be classified as truth or lie?

Maya (illusion)

154. What is taught by Maya (illusion)?

Dwaita (Concept of duality i.e. God and beings are different)

155. What is fit for real wisdom?

Advaita (Concept of non duality)

156. Wherefrom is ignorance born?

There is no beginning to it. (It has no birth place.)

157. What acts like a tonic to the body?

Praptha Karma (Actions already done)

158. What gives food?

Life.

159. Who is fit to be worshipped by the Brahmin?

Gayathri, Sun God, Fire and Lord Shiva who is within all these.

160. What does Gayathri, Sun, Fire and Lord Shiva have?

It is the principle.

161. Who is God whom we can see?

Mother

162. Who is the teacher, fit to be worshipped?

Father

163. Who is personification of all gods?

A wise Brahmin who does all his Karmas

164. Who is responsible for destruction of a clan?

He who creates sorrow in the mind of good people.

165. Whose words would become true?

He observes penance of truth, penance of silence and patience.

166. What is the cause of birth?

Attachment

167. Which is the next birth?

Son

168. Who cannot be avoided?

God of death

169. Where should we keep your feet?

Should be kept in places which look clean to the eye.

170. Who is fit for giving food as charity?

It should be given to he who is hungry.

171. Who should be worshipped?

Incarnations of God.

172. Who is the Godhead?

It is Maheswara the combination of Shiva and Vishnu.

173. What is the result of devotion to God?

Being able to see him everywhere.

174. What is salvation?

Death of ignorance.

175. From where were Vedas created?

From the letter "Om".

Ithyesha Kandastha Prasnotharathnamalika yesham,

They mukthabharana idha vimalascha banthisathsamajeshu.

All those who wear this “Garland of gems of question and answers “ in their neck would shine in the assembly of learned elders as if they are wearing a garland of gems(salvation)

Ithi Srimad Shankaracharya virachitha Prasnothara rathna malika Sampooranam.

Thus ends the Gem garland of question and answers written by Sri Shankaracharya..