

## The Lesson of the Essence of the Ishavasya

*I bow down to Sree Ganesh*

*I bow down to Sree Saraswati*

*I bow down to the Guru*

*I bow down to the Family Deity*

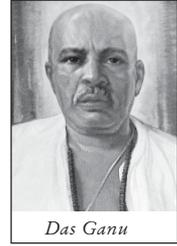
*I bow down to Sree Sita-Ramachandra*

*I bow down to Sree Sadguru Sainath.*

1. Aum. I bow down to the Guru. You are the ‘Manasarovar’ (Lake in Himalayas) for us devotees, the swans. Your sweet words of wisdom are the pearls and your feet are our only refuge.
2. You are our eternal support. You are most benevolent. You feed us the *prasad* of pearls of salvation. You give us refuge and tranquility. You make us escape the cycle of births and deaths.
3. How great is the abode of *Siddha Sai*! Worldly fatigue is removed with mere darshan. When you go nearer, the delusion of the world disappears and when you are in his company, he wards off the weariness due to *karma*.
4. Originally, Sai is without a form. For the sake of his devotees he has taken a form and participated in the drama as an actor, along with the actress *Maya*.
5. Let us meditate on Sai, of those attributes, and go to Shirdi for a while. Let us observe carefully, what happens after the noon arati.
6. After the noon arati, Maharaj would come to the outer side of the *Masjid* and distribute *udi* amongst the devotees with a most compassionate look.
7. The loving devotees, too, would immediately hug his feet, then standing up, they would adoringly look at his face and enjoy the shower of *udi*.
8. Baba also lavishly offered handful of *udi* in the palms of the devotees. With his thumb he would also apply it to their foreheads. Oh, how much abundance of love he had in his heart!
9. “Bhau go and have your meals. Go Anna, go and eat your delicious

food. Go, everyone, go to your own homes.” He would address each one, in this manner.

10. Though to-day it is not possible to behold that, all those past glorious moments could be recaptured at those particular places, at the particular times by means of hard concentration.
11. So be it. Meditating thus, visualising him from his feet upwards to his face, prostrating before him humbly and lovingly, let us continue to narrate the story.
12. At the end of the last chapter, I had told the listeners, that Baba had made a maidservant to clear the doubts about the meaning of the *sbruti*.
13. Ganu Das had started to write the commentary ‘Ishavasya Bhavartha Bodhini’, in which some meaning was obscure, so he came to Shirdi, to his *Sadguru* for elucidation.
14. At that time, Baba said: “When you return, the maidservant at Kaka’s house will clear your doubt”.
15. That is the last point of narration. Now let’s continue from thence. Listeners should listen carefully, so that their attention is not distracted.
16. Ganu Das had started to explain the meaning of every stanza of the ‘Ishavasya Upanishad’<sup>1</sup>, in verse form, for those who did not know Sanskrit.
17. With this intention, he translated the meaning of ‘Ishavasya’ into simple, lucid, Marathi.
18. This ‘Upanishad’ is full of hidden meaning. Though the word-to-word translation was achieved, unless the deeper, implied meaning was clear, he felt dissatisfied.
19. The essence of the four vedas is really the treasury for the ‘Upanishads’. But without the grace of God and Guru it is difficult to understand.
20. One may say that I am learned and I will try on my own to understand the ‘Upanishads’ and explain the meaning exactly.
21. But it is never possible. It cannot be brought into practice till a Guru’s blessings are received. The secret riddles are impossible to solve and at every step one would come across difficulties.
22. But for him who seeks the feet of the Guru, there is not the slightest difficulty. The profound meaning reveals itself very naturally to him.



23. That knowledge, which is the science of realisation of the Self, is a weapon to destroy the cycle of birth and death. It can be achieved by giving up the ego and attachment; and thus, one should qualify oneself to expound on it.
24. If one takes refuge at the feet of such people, then within moments the meaning is revealed. That imprisoned intellect is liberated and the perplexity of the meaning disappears.
25. While translating the 'Ishavasya' into Marathi, Das Ganu underwent such a plight. But when Sainath blessed him, his difficulties were overcome.
26. He had little knowledge of the Sanskrit language. Even then, he bowed down to Acharya Vidyaranya<sup>2</sup> and at Sai Baba's feet and began to write the verses in the verse form.
27. Ganu Das's language was like the flow of milk to which was added the sugar of Sai *Prasad*. Now, oh listeners, listen to the sweetness resulting from it, for a moment with respect.
28. So be it. You should read the original if you wish to understand fully the implications and the meanings of the Bodhini<sup>3</sup> to which I have referred, a while ago. But the purpose of my narration is different. Bear it in mind.
29. If his devotees come across any difficult passages while reading any book, Maharaj can satisfy him without uttering anything. See how he does it.
30. This is the purpose of narrating this story, so that the listeners should understand the gist. I have only this in my mind. So, now, listen and pay attention.
31. The writing of the commentary in verse form was completed. Scholars approved of it. Ganu Das' aspirations were fulfilled. But, certainly, one doubt remained.
32. He put it before the scholars. They all discussed it at length. But the doubt was not cleared to his satisfaction.
33. In the meantime, for some reason, Das Ganu had to go to Shirdi; and lo! His problem was solved in the simplest of ways.
34. He went to have Sai's *darshan*; held the feet of the Lord at his head; prostrated himself and felt full of happiness.
35. One compassionate glance from a saint, sweet words from the mouth of a saint, the smiling face of a saint – bestow the devotees with good fortune.
36. Even the mere *darshan* of saints is able to wash off all sins. How can

- the good fortune of those be described who are permanently in their company!
37. “Hello Ganu! From where have you come?” inquired Baba. “Is everything alright? Are you happy and contented?”
38. Ganu Das answered: “When you have graced and protected me why should I be unhappy? I am profoundly happy.
39. “You know everything, so why are you making small talk, as a formality. I too am aware why you are asking about my happiness.
40. “You propelled me to start a new venture. When it is in full swing, you have created an insoluble problem which no one can resolve however it may be tried”.
41. Thus ran their mutual exchange, as Ganu Das pressed his feet and asked the question referring to the ‘Ishavasya Bhavartha Bodhini’.
42. “While writing the ‘Ishavasya Bhavartha Bodhini’ my pen has stopped. Many doubts and misconceptions arise in my mind. Baba, please solve them”.
43. He presented the whole matter, from the beginning to the end, at Baba’s feet, with respect, and placed his doubt which was extremely difficult to solve.
44. Ganu Das humbly pleaded to Sainath saying: “All my efforts over this book are going to be futile. You know the whole of the story about the ‘Ishavasya’.
45. Unless the doubt is cleared, the contents of the book will not be clear.” Maharaj gave him his blessings and said: “Be happy.
46. “Oh, what is so difficult about this? When you go back to your place, the maid servant from that Kaka’s house will remove the doubt easily”.
47. That Kaka was Bhausahab Dixit, one of Baba’s loving devotees, who was always engaged in the Guru’s services, fully devoting his mind, body and speech to him.
48. At a little distance from that famous city called Bombay, in a village called Parle, stayed this Haribhau.
49. His real name was Hari, which his parents gave him. People called him Bhausahab and Baba had yet a third name for him.
50. Mahajani was called ‘Bade Kaka’, Nimonkar ‘Matara Kaka’ and Bhausahab ‘Langde Kaka<sup>4</sup>’ or ‘Bambiya Kaka<sup>5</sup>’.
51. The parents give one name; a name is also there according to the



zodiac sign and nicknames are also given. Thus there are many ways of giving names.

52. Maharaj gave different names and these were used many a times. That name itself became like a title which was lovingly held.
53. Sometimes, he was called ‘Bhikshu,’<sup>6</sup> sometimes ‘Kaka’; Baba stamped him with this and Kaka became famous in Shirdi by that name only.
54. Ganu Das was surprised and all others were astonished also. How could Kaka’s maidservant resolve the doubt?
55. A maidservant is after all a maidservant. How much education could she have had? How learned could she be? Everything seemed strange!
56. To discover the meaning of the *sbruti* is far beyond the intelligence of a maidservant. “Maharaj is just joking” – people spoke thus.
57. All thought that Maharaj was only indulging in humour. But Baba’s words, even though uttered jocularly, were accepted as truth by Ganu Das.
58. Having heard those words of Sai, people thought that those words were said casually but for Das Ganu those words were the real truth.
59. Though Sai had spoken casually, all the people were anxious to experience the outcome of those words.
60. Whether they may or may not be uttered jokingly, they could never be meaningless, because in every word that Baba spoke there was a store of profound meaning.
61. Whatever Baba said, these were not mere words but the seals of destiny. Not one word would ever be futile. It would accomplish its task at the proper time.
62. This was Das Ganu’s firm belief, whatever may be the feelings of others. According to the measure of one’s faith, the fruits are received.
63. One gets fruits according to one’s devotion. One has the strength according to one’s belief. A loving heart determines the extent of purity of experience.
64. He was the crown jewel amongst those who were learned. His words were never untrue. He had pledged to fulfil the desires of his devotees. That was his creed.
65. The Guru’s words are never in vain. Listen to this story attentively. All the miseries of the world will disappear and you will take to the spiritual path.
66. Ganu Das returned to Parle and went to Kakasaheb Dixit’s house,

wondering eagerly as to how Kaka's maidservant was going to help him.

67. The next day, in the early hours of the morning, while Ganu Das was still in bed enjoying those moments of perfect contentment after a sound sleep, a strange incident happened.
68. A young peasant girl was singing in a melodious voice in a tune that touched Ganu Das' heart.
69. The song was sung with long drawn notes. The composition was appealing. When he heard it, he was carried away and he listened attentively.
70. Suddenly he was fully awakened. His attention was caught by the meaning of the song. He listened to it with rapt attention and was thoroughly pleased.
71. 'Whose daughter is this child who sings seriously and melodiously? She has fully explained the enigma of the 'Ishavasya', he mused.
72. 'Hope that she is the same maidservant. Let me go and see who she is, who has through her simple language revealed the meaning of the *shruti*'.
73. When he went outside, he saw that she was really a peasant girl, cleaning the utensils in Kaka's backyard at the particular place assigned for such work.
74. When he inquired, he discovered a surprising fact that this girl was the sister of a male servant called Namya, who was serving at Dixit's home.
75. He was certain that she was that maidservant. Her song wiped off all doubts. What can the saints not do? Even a buffalo recited the *Vedas* at the command of one!
76. Thus the song sung by this girl became the means of Das Ganu's satisfaction. All the people understood the implications and the greatness that lies behind Baba's jocular words.
77. Some said that Ganu Das was sitting and doing his puja in the temple room in Kaka's home at the time when he heard the song.
78. Whatever it was, the conclusion is that you should mark how Maharaj taught his devotees in different ways.
79. "Sit wherever you are and ask me. Why do you wander from place to place? I will satisfy your curiosity. Have this much faith.
80. "I fill the space. There is not a place where I am not. I appear anywhere where there is devotees' deep devotion".
81. Be it so. That girl was eight years old and wearing torn rags and was singing sweetly about the description of a beautiful orange *sari*.

82. “How lovely is the *sari* with its brocade work; how beautiful is the border; how wonderful is the ornamental end”, was the burden of the song which engrossed her.
83. With scarcely enough to eat, her body barely covered by the rags she wore, yet she appeared to be happy singing about somebody’s orange *sari*.
84. Seeing her poverty and her romantic nature, Ganu Das felt pity for her and he said to Moreshwar<sup>8</sup>.
85. “Look, her body is barely covered. Why don’t you give her a *sari*? God will be pleased and you will also be performing a meritorious deed”.
86. Moreshwar was a kind-hearted person, by nature; so, at the request of Das Ganu he bought a nice *sari* and happily presented it to the girl.
87. The girl was very happy when she saw the *sari*. It was like a person who subsisted usually on coarse and unsavory food and is lucky enough to get a feast.
88. The next day she wore that *sari*, whirled and danced about, excelled all the other girls as she was very pleased with the *sari*.
89. The day after she put away the new *sari* in a box and wore her old torn *sari* but did not look disheartened.
90. Though she did not wear it and had kept it aside, Ganu Das felt that her previous longing had disappeared because of the different attitude.
91. She kept her new *sari* at home and came along wearing the torn one again. Still she did not look forlorn on account of the deficiency of a *sari*.
92. To wear tattered clothes because you are incapable of wearing anything else is a different issue and being capable of possessing and yet doing the same is different. The latter is known as being contented. Thus happiness and unhappiness depend on one’s attitude.
93. This way Ganu Das’ riddle was solved. He discovered the essence of the ‘Ishavasya’ and the meaning was clear to him, then and there.
94. When God has completely pervaded the whole of the universe, how can anybody think that there could exist a place without the presence of God?
95. That is Perfect and this too is Perfect. This Perfect comes out of that Perfect. If something is taken from that which is Perfect, the remaining will also be Perfect.

96. The girl's poverty was an act of God; even her ragged clothes were a part of it. The donor, the donee and the donation also belonged to destiny. God pervades all.
97. 'Me and Mine' – should be completely given up. Act without pride and enjoy the pleasure with an outlook of non-attachment. Have no desire for anything.
98. Such were Baba's words that they never failed to have the desired effect. Many people had experience of it. He never left Shirdi till the end; but he could appear in front of people even in the remotest places.
99. He appeared at Machchindargad for the sake of a person; or for someone else he would appear in any city like Kolhapur, Solapur, Rameswar, at his will.
100. To some he gave *darshan* in his usual dress and form, to some he appeared in dreams or when awake, be it day or night. He would satisfy the wishes of his devotees.
101. Such incidences were not a few. How many of them could be described? Though he stayed in Shirdi, there was not a place he could not reach.
102. Just take the case of this girl, a mere stranger, an ordinary, poor maidservant, who sang the song describing the orange coloured *sari* very casually.
103. That a doubt should arise (in the mind of Ganu Das) and it should be placed before Baba; that it should be answered by the maid who stayed at Kaka's! Is this not *Maya's* chimerical handiwork?
104. How did Baba know that there was such a maidservant there? and that she would sing a song sometime? and that it would explain the meaning of the *shruti*?
105. But it did happen and certainly it did! Ganu Das was amazed. His doubts were cleared and he understood the meaning of the 'Ishavasya'.
106. The listeners may wonder why all this was contrived! Why did Baba himself not clear the doubts, then and there only, with his own lips?
107. Couldn't he have done it there? But then the greatness of it all would not have been understood. Baba showed that the girl was encompassed by God<sup>o</sup>.
108. The elucidation of the reality of the *Atman* is the subject of all 'Upanishads'. This is in itself salvation, without any doubt. This is the precept of the Gita also.

109. The beings are different but the *Atman* is one. The *Atman* is incapable of enjoyment and also action. It is not impure and is not bound by sins or merit of good deeds.
110. 'I am a high-bred Brahmin by caste, and all others are low caste.' Till such conviction of discrimination exists, there are necessarily the bonds of *Karma*.
111. 'I am formless and everywhere. There is nobody besides me. I am in all creation' – is the expression of a self-realised man.
112. Man has fallen from the highest state of *Brahman*-hood. His definite determination should be to retrieve that lost position again, somehow, in some way.
113. The *shrutis*, *smritis* and the *Vedant* philosophy also propagate this. This is surely the ultimate aim that the fallen may be lifted back to his original state.
114. 'God resides in every being' – till such time that this consciousness is not attained, enlightenment cannot be granted even by Lord Hrishikesh<sup>10</sup> himself.
115. By performance of one's duties, the mind will be purified. The concept of the oneness of the *Atman* will be clear; and this knowledge will protect, like a shield, against the dualities of passion and miseries of the material world.
116. That Almighty God, who envelops all the three worlds, along with the organic and the inorganic beings is Inactive, Blemishless, Beyond the Material Nature, Formless.
117. God pervades the world of names and forms, from inside and outside. I alone am that all-pervading Spirit, devoid of any particular shape.
118. That which in reality is without a form appears to possess a form because of illusion. For a covetous person only this material world exists; but the very same world is meaningless for a non-attached person.
119. This ordinary material world of beings, movable and immovable objects, should not be taken into account at all. You should have full faith in God, who is the Supreme One.
120. If you cannot comprehend this concept about this world and its nature, then at least try and give up the passion for accumulation of wealth and gold etc.
121. Even if this is impossible to practise, then remember that you only have a right to action. Perform duties as long as you live, even if it be for a hundred years.

122. That should be practised always in accordance with the doctrines prescribed, by the scriptures, for example *agnibotra* etc. in the proper fashion, as per the caste and creed to which a person belongs, till the intellect becomes pure.
123. This is one way of inner-purification. The other is renunciation. But without practising either, only mundane knowledge will be collected and one will have to undergo all suffering as destined, which will chain you forever to the cycle of life and death.
124. This Knowledge of Self-realisation and the ‘Upanishads’ was not imparted unless the worth of the person is realised. The doctrines of the ‘Upanishad’ remain only superficial till the sense of oneness is not developed within.
125. If the seeker demands it initially it has to be given. Therefore, Baba sent Das Ganu back, saying that the maidservant would clarify.
126. If Baba himself had imparted that knowledge then the subsequent incidence would not have occurred. ‘I pervade everything and there is nothing without ME’. This understanding about Baba would not have been realised.
127. “That Kaka’s maidservant is none other than myself. I have given this indication and explained the ‘Ishavasya’”.
128. Without God’s Grace and the blessings of the Guru, it is impossible to penetrate the Knowledge of Self-realisation. Thus, a first hand lesson from a *Siddha* is essential.
129. Whatever knowledge that lends to the understanding of the *Atman*, only that should be learnt. Actually all established knowledge is Myself and nothing exists beyond Myself.
130. When the clear understanding of the Knowledge of the Self comes about and the doctrine of oneness in duality is realised, that is ‘I am one with the Supreme Soul’ then God is pleased with such a person.
131. Thus when the nature of the Self is understood and the path of Self-realisation is strictly followed, when one has undaunted faith in the transcendental, then the Ultimate will be reached.
132. In the next chapter, stories about Vinayak Thakur and others are going to be narrated. Let the listeners listen with respect and it will lead to the divine path.
133. These stories are also very pleasing. When the listeners hear them their desires to have a glimpse into the life of a great person will be gratified and the devotees will be blessed.
134. Just as darkness is dispelled when the sun arises, similarly by partaking the nectar in the form of these stories, illusion will disappear.

135. Inconceivable is Sai's skill. Who else but he can relate the stories? I am only an instrument. He himself makes me speak.

May there be well-being. This is the end of the twentieth chapter of *Sree Sai Samartha Satcharita*, written by the devotee Hemadpant, impelled by Saints and virtuous people, called "The Lesson of the Essence of the *Ishavasya*".

This is offered to Sree Sadguru Sainath.

May there be auspiciousness!

### Notes :

1. Famous out of the eleven important *Upanishads*. Consists of eighteen *mantras*, which are very important. Chinmayananda says: "The Spiritual Presence vitalises the world of matter around man, only to bring about ultimately an evolutionary self-development in the student. The very core of this *Gita* philosophy is the theme that is indicated in the opening stanza of the *Ishavasya Upanishad*. The Infinite Truth pervades everything in the world, and, therefore, renouncing all the multiplicity, enjoy the Infinitude and covet not anybody's wealth.
2. Author of '*Panchadasi*', a well-known book in Sanskrit of *Vedanta*.
3. *Ishavasya Bhavartha Bodhini*, Das Ganu's book.
4. He had fallen down in London and hurt himself, so he limped.
5. He was fat and plump.
6. Dixit was well off and had a good status in society. But to teach him humility and egolessness, Baba sent him to beg alms; and purposely called him a *Bhikshu*, i.e. a mendicant, before others.
7. Dñyaneshwar made a he – buffalo do this.
8. Moreshwar Vishwanath Pradhan, famous advocate and member of Bombay's Legislative Council.
9. This illustrates the main principle of the *Ishavasya* that God pervades everything.
10. Lord Krishna.



Kaka Mahajani