

RELIGION*Means for salvation*

CHENNAI: Realisation of the Absolute Truth is not to be attained through rational terms, for this lies beyond the reach of human mind and senses with which one understands the finite universe. Scriptures offer the means of realisation of this Truth not in the method of science that relies heavily on cause and effect, but by the method of philosophical discussions that deal with the subtle aspects of the human soul and its eternal relevance to the Creator. The crux of all Vedantic teaching centres on the basic distinction between the Atma (Self) and Anatma (that which is not the Self, non-Self), said Sri Goda Venkateswara Sastri in a lecture on Nrisimha Tapini Upanishad.

The term Upanishad in one sense means that which helps to destroy ignorance in spiritual matters and hence is considered a reliable and valid guide in the quest for salvation. In an allied sense it also helps to remove the obstacles that lie in the way of self-realisation. In this Upanishad the sacred Nrisimha Mantra, known as the King of all Mantras (Mantra Raja) was instructed by Brahma to the celestials, who sought relief and peace from the

vicissitudes of life. This mantra is capable of offering solace to those afraid of death, sins and family life.

All the Veda mantras pertain to the awareness of one's Atma and it is believed, they have the power to destroy the sin of ignorance that has settled on the Jivatma. Unless the veil of ignorance is removed, it is not possible to reach the realised state. To remove this enveloping veil, scriptures enjoin the performance of worship by engaging in prayer (Puja), meditation (Japa) or sacrifice (Yagna). All these are called Upasanas that help the Jivatma think of the Supreme Being who is the cause of the entire universe, sustaining and protecting it at all times. Constant meditation on this thought and the purpose of human life is advised. By doing so, one gradually gains the Jnana that the Jivatma is a micro version of macro universe, for it is the Supreme Soul (one who dwells in the body, Purusha) that is animating every object, animate and inanimate. He has to be meditated upon for Jnana.

In Kali Yuga, continuous contemplation on the Atma is the best way to reach salvation.