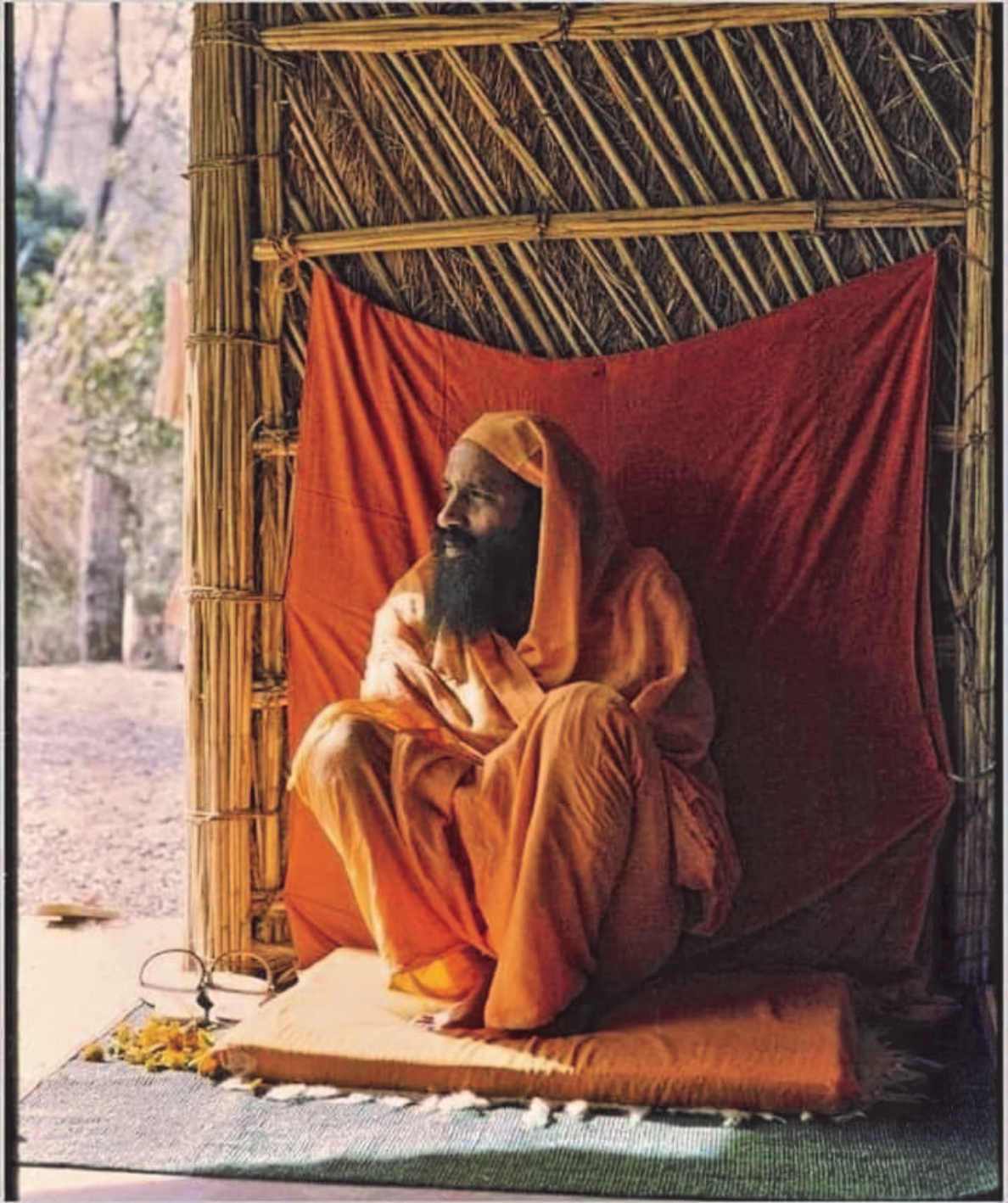




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Sādhana-pañcakam
Pujya Swamiji's transcribed talk

This is the second part of the serial article, continuation from March 2021 newsletter.

KARMA IS COMMON TO ALL

Taduditaṁ karma svanuṣṭhīyatām; may you follow the *karma* enjoined by the Veda. *Taduditaṁ* means the *karma* that is enjoined by the Veda⁷ or the *karma* that is born of the Veda.⁸ This includes *agnihotra*⁹ and so on, as well as other daily *karmas* and duties. When the groups of people, divided by the *śāstra* into *varṇa*¹⁰ and *āśrama*,¹¹ are there, then corresponding duties ensue. This part of the verse refers to the *karma-kāṇḍa*, the section of the Veda that discusses means and ends for achieving human desires in life. May the *karmas*, duties, prayers, and so on that are mentioned in the Veda be followed, *Svanuṣṭhīyatām* means may they be followed well¹². You can say this to any religious person, even a Christian or a Muslim, because any religious person's own scripture is considered as his or her Veda in the sense of this verse.

KARMA AS WORSHIP OF ĪŚVARA

Teneśasya vidhīyatām apacitiḥ;¹³ may you worship Īśvara by performing *karmas* and doing your duty in accordance with the Veda. The word *tena*, 'by means of,' refers to the *karmas* and duties enjoined by the Veda. Originally such *karmas* were performed according to one's *varṇa* and *āśrama*. Let those *karmas* be done. *Vidhīyatām* means *kriyatām*, may it be done. If the *varṇa-āśrama* system is not practiced, then any given situation at any given time calls for a course of action from you, so let

⁷ वेदेन उदितं कर्म

⁸ वेदे उदितं प्रतिपादितं कर्म

⁹ Daily Vedic ritual performed by a householder.

¹⁰ The social groups within Vedic society, of which there are four: *brāhmaṇa* (priest/teacher), *kṣatriya* (warrior/administrator), *vaiśya* (merchant), and *śūdra* (worker)

¹¹ The four *āśramas* are *brahmacharya* (life of a student), *gṛhastha* (life of a householder), *vānaprastha* (stage of life when one is not an active parent or contributor as employer/employee) and *sannyāsa* (life of a renunciate).

¹² सुष्ठु अनुष्ठीयताम् इति स्वनुष्ठीयताम्

¹³ अपचितिः तेन कर्मणा वेदोक्तकर्मणा ईश्वरस्य विधीयताम्। ईशस्य अपचितिः विधीयताम्। ईश्वरस्य तेन कर्मणा तेनेशस्य विधीयताम्
अपचितिः

that action be performed well, *svanuṣṭhīyatām*. We do not look upon any *karma* as secular or sacred. All *karma* is duty alone. Doing anything that is to be done in a given situation is acting in harmony with Īśvara, the Lord.

Therefore, may one perform the *karmas* properly, as they are to be done in a given situation. By doing this, even by doing your daily *karma*, you are doing *īśasya apacitiḥ*, worship of Īśvara. *Apaciti* is a very peculiar word. The root is *cāi* in the sense of fear or loss, and also in the sense of *pūjā*, honouring or worshipping.¹⁴ Here it means the latter. The prefix *apa* is also there. From the same root, we also have the word *apacaya*, which means loss. Here the root *cāi*, *cāiṣ* is substituted by *ci*, therefore it becomes *apaci*, to which we add the suffix *ti*.¹⁵ This suffix is generally used to create a feminine abstract noun, like *mati*, *citi*, etc. Here the meaning is: may Īśvara be worshipped by doing the *karmas* to be done at a given time, not just at the time of doing *pūjā*.

By performing the *karma* that is to be done, you are worshipping Īśvara because you look upon a given situation itself as Īśvara. You look upon this action which is to be done, as your contribution. In this great *yajña*, ritual, which is called the process of creation, Īśvara has not gone to sleep after creating the world. The creation is still on, and in that process you happen to be a cog in the wheel. By doing what is to be done at a particular time, you contribute to this *īśvara-sṛṣṭi*. If you can maintain *īśvara-arpaṇa-buddhi*, an attitude that all *karma* is done as an offering to Īśvara, then you will find that it becomes worship. This makes it *karma-yoga*. So the author has already come to *karma-yoga*.

LET GO OF KĀMYA-KARMA

Kāmye matistyaajyatām; *mati*¹⁶ means *saṅkalpa*, intent. May your *saṅkalpa* be given up with regard to *karma* that is considered *kāmya*. *Kāmya-karma* means a *karma* that is prompted by a desire for a particular result. It is something meant to improve your *artha*, security, or your *kāma*, pleasure. If *artha* and *kāma* are kept in view when performing a *karma*, then such a *karma* is called *kāmya-karma*.

Even when you are performing *pūjā*, there is also expectation of a result. No one is going to perform an action without expecting a result. However, if the result is

¹⁴ अपचितिश्च (Pā. 7-2-30- see vārttikam)

¹⁵ स्त्रियां क्तिन् (Pā. 3-3-94)

¹⁶ काम्ये कर्मणि मतिः त्यज्यताम्

antaḥkaraṇa-śuddhi, purification of the mind, and that purification is meant for *mokṣa*, then *mokṣa* is not *karma-phala*, the result of an action.

Mokṣa is already accomplished by you, and therefore it is not real *karma-phala*. The only *karma-phala* in that case is *citta-prasāda*, tranquility or placidity of mind, meaning freedom from the hold of *rāga-dveṣa*, likes and dislikes. All pressures are absent. Having this kind of natural, cheerful, contented mind is not an ordinary thing. To gain this itself is an accomplishment. Whether you gain enlightenment or not, just gaining *citta-prasāda* is good.

Citta-prasāda is like water in a river which contains big sand grains. There is only one or two feet of clean water through which you can see the riverbed clearly. It is like a clean mind, with no fear, anxiety, or any emotional problems. Anxiety and fear about what will happen tomorrow are always a problem. These type of anxiety attacks are taken care of when the mind has a certain placidity. They call this *saralāṭā*, purity and this kind of mind, *citta-prasāda* is achieved by doing *karma*. But it is not so easily achieved. That is why we are talking about it so much. It comes through prayer to Īśvara, and also by paying attention to oneself.

Kāmye matistya jyatām; let the *kāmya-karma saṅkalpa*, 'I want this, I want that', be given up. Wanting something is okay, but wanting it thinking it will enhance your security or happiness is a delusion. You have done this for so many years, and it did not make you secure or happy. So give up *kāmyakarmas*. Then what happens? If you do not have *kāmya-karmas* to do, why should you do *karma* at all? After all, if you want security in the form of money and so on, then you should do *karma*. Or if you want to gain some *kāma*, pleasures then you should create situations where you command some pleasure. If you are not interested in either security or pleasure, then why do *karma* which is anyway not a pleasant thing? Getting up every day and doing *karma* is not a pleasant thing.

The author responds by saying that by doing this *karma*, you are able to eliminate *durita*, difficulties and obstacles. When you do *nitya-karma*, your daily duties, then *durita*, *pāpa* goes away.

NEUTRALISATION OF PĀPA KARMAS

Pāpaughāḥ paridhūyatām; may the *pāpaughā*, the bundle of *pāpas* accumulated in this life and past lives, *paridhūyatām*, be destroyed. *Pāpaughā*¹⁷ means the great

¹⁷ पापस्य औघः समूहः पापौघः

group of *pāpa* that is standing in your account in this *prārabdha-karma*¹⁸ itself. We are not going to eliminate *sañcita-pāpa*¹⁹ right now. This line discusses *prārabdha-karma*. What needs to be neutralised is not only the *prārabdha-karma* with which you have come into being here, but also the *pāpa-karma* that you have done so far in this life. *Apacitiḥ kriyatām*, one must atone for that. The word *apaciti* also means atonement; an atonement that brings about a loss of the bulk of *pāpa*. The reduction process is also called *apaciti*, *apacaya*.

Let this *pāpaugha*, this big bundle of *pāpa* that is *adrṣṭa-pāpa*, be reduced, neutralised, destroyed. *Pāpaugha* includes the original *pāpa* that is there *prārabdha-pāpa*, as well any *pāpa* that is gained during this life. When we say that is to be eliminated, we need not tell you not to do *pāpa-karma*. You are not doing any *pāpa-karma* now. We are only trying to eliminate the previous *pāpa* because every human being is a mixture of *punya* and *pāpa*, good and bad.

SEE THE LIMITATIONS OF SUKHA

Once these *pāpa-karmas* are neutralized, then *bhavasukhe doṣo'nusandhīyatām*; may you constantly see and remember, the *doṣa*, limitation, inherent in *bhava-sukha*,²⁰ experiential pleasure. *Bhava-sukha* is *saṁsāra-sukha*. What is *saṁsāra-sukha*? It starts with ice-cream or a hot bath early on a cold morning. Like this, there are many small *sukhas* called *bhava-sukha*. But *bhava-sukha* has got limitations. *Anusandhīyatām* means; 'May you, *muhurmuhuḥ*, again and again, look into and remember the limitations of *bhavasukha*.'

What are the limitations of *bhava-sukha*? First, it is *anitya*, limited in time. Before the *sukha* is born, there is pain. After the *sukha* is gone, there is pain. While the *sukha* is there, there is also pain because it is going away. Some people are afraid even before the *sukha* comes. They worry it is only going to last one minute, or ten minutes, or an hour, or a day. In this way, *sukha* goes away even before it comes! Even before the springtime comes after the winter, many worry that it is only going to last for two months. Such people are always counting down, 'One day gone, two days gone, three days gone.' You do not look at what is coming, instead you always count down, worried about what is going away.

To be continued...

¹⁸ Results of past actions that are fructifying in the present lifetime.

¹⁹ *Pāpa* collected in previous births but not yet fructified.

²⁰ भवे सुखम् अस्ति

Camp at AVG by Swami Veditatmananda Saraswati
From December 14 to 18, 2019

Value of Values - Part 09

Value 15: *nityam ca sama-cittatvam*

Sameness of the mind towards *iṣṭha-aniṣṭha-upapattiṣu*, desirable, undesirable things when they present themselves before us. Every moment the world presents before us. We constantly come across, the situation that we classify as desirable and un-desirable. When they present themselves, my attitude should be *nityam ca sama-cittatvam*, -sameness of a mind. This is more an attitude than a value.

Desirable – undesirable, how is it possible to have same attitude? The first step is, what is desirable or undesirable. Say, Ice cream, BMW are desirable. Or a snake, scorpion. They are undesirable. Can there be universal brand for something desirable? Understand that desirable, undesirable is my subjective viewpoint and it is not universal. Can desirable or undesirable be said as nature of something? There is no such thing as desirable, or undesirable, as such. It is we, who superimposes these values on them - it's a subjective view point. Whether the things made me happy or unhappy or is my perception about them makes me happy or unhappy? A given thing can become undesirable in one situation and undesirable at different situation, like milk, when I have diarrhea, is undesirable.

First thing that my mind does is, to categorize things in desirable, undesirable and accordingly automatically our response changes. Two persons get married. To starts with, "I love you " and sooner or later " I allow you, I allow you". What I call desirable, it creates in me response of happiness and unhappiness. What happens in my mind is not determined by me but by the world. I am dancing to the tune of the world. We need to look at the habit of mind of branding things. Not knowing the true nature of things, I call it desirable, undesirable. If I knew that *pūṛnatvam* is my nature, then nothing is desirable. It is something that adds something in me, and undesirable is that which takes away something from me. This happens when I am subject to growth and decay. Look at the ocean ! *āpūryamanam acalapradiṣṭham*. Whether rives bring waters or not it doesn't affect their fullness.

What is the nature of *ātmā*? It is infinite, limitless. Nothing can bring about growth or decay or for that matter any bit of change to *ātmā*. That is called fullness. That is my nature.

When can something add value to me? Only when I am limited. Basic problem is, I look upon myself as limited being. Therefore there is a need to become free from limitedness. Ignorance causes identification with limited body, and hence my feeling is that I am limited being. It is not a right feeling. But life goes on like this feeling and based on that I judge 'this is desirable and this is undesirable'. Thus I lose the *sama-cittatvam*. superimpose limitedness on myself and happiness on things and categorize them desirable or undesirable. All of this is based on ignorance and ignorance based superimpositions. *nit-yam ca sama-cittatvam*, is the fundamental way of approach. Accepting everything as gift/ *prasāda* from *īśvara*.

Desirable or undesirable - only way this can be looked at equal if we develop *prasāda-buddhi*, take it as *karma-phala* - result of my own action, given by *īśvara*. The moment it is called *prasāda*, the attitude changes. Laddu from shop is offered, you say no, I am diabetic. But when it is from Tirupati and came as *prasāda*, it changes my attitude. We become happy cheerful when *prasāda* comes to us. Situations doesn't change, but my response changes and that decides the state of mind. One is by recognising the fundamental oneness that is there and second level looking at it as *prasāda*, which will help to maintain the sameness or equanimity. This is the type of mind required for pursuit of knowledge. That kind of mind is created by these values.

People, situation, objects, present them before us and we are constantly confronted with. That situation can be classified as *iṣṭha* and *aniṣṭha*, success or failure, desirable or undesirable. This is how life is made of pairs of opposites are. We are required to constantly confront with these pairs of opposite which invokes different response from us. To desirable I respond with joy to undesirable it invokes a different response, I become sad. So my mind goes like a seesaw- elation, depression-elation, depression. So the *samatvam* is necessary to enjoy sameness of the mind. *Ātmā* is the same and if we meditate upon it the mind needs to have the same status as that of *ātmā*. *samaṁ sarveṣu bhūteṣu tiṣṭhantam paramaśvaraḥ*. Lord prevails equally among every being. That is where we want to abide and mind needs to be in tune with that. Only that mind will be able to understand. *pañḍitāḥ samadarśināḥ*. Those who see the *samatvam* are the wise people. So Lord Krishna prescribes sameness of the mind, the mind which is conducive. For that the attitude called *prasāda-buddhi* is required.

Look at success, failure, honour, dishonor as *prasāda*. Easier said than done though. Suc-

cess, honour, praise we can take as *prasāda*, but failure pain, dishonour, taking them as *prasāda* is a tall order. We often hear this expression- 'Why me?', when something painful happens. Why did this happen to me that question always arises in our mind. Swami, god is not fair. He doesn't deserve our prayers. There is no way to determine what happens, why it happens to us. Generally we can say it is the result of action. Who knows which action of which life -- that area is locked and god has kept the key. How do I know the past birth? Thank god we don't remember it. If I see the same people again with whom I had trouble in past birth, better we keep away from them. When something good happens we never ask 'why me?' We feel that I deserved it. Whereas pain, loss, failure are very difficult to accept. That is where our test, our commitment to *prasāda*-buddhi, accepting that as a *prasāda*, that is where we are challenged. It only required total faith in *īśvara*. that *īśvara* is fair, not unfair. *īśvara* does not have *raga-dveṣā*, no favoritism. *samoham sarveṣu bhūteṣu*, no partiality, no cruelty to anyone. It is a matter of faith until we discover it ourselves.

There is no reason for *īśvara* to have any *raga-dveṣā* - attachment and aversion, to be partial, cruel to somebody. Such things always emerges from an incomplete being. Someone who is lacking, a needy person. When fulfilling my needs becomes an objective of my life, it is the need in me that creates these likes, dislikes, partiality. *īśvara* is not needy, and wholeness, completeness is the nature of *īśvara*. *Satyam jñānam anantam brahma*. All inclusive there is no lack of anything in *īśvara*. There cannot be any demand from *īśvara*. It arises always from lacking incomplete being, not from *īśvara*. *īśvara* has no agenda to fulfil. Ultimate truth of life is where there is no agenda. *Raga-dveṣā* can not go along with *brahman* and *īśvara*, when we ask this question why me, because we feel that *īśvara* is unfair, he seems to be cruel. When you are punished by parents do you complain? Look upon it as a punishment, it is also my interpretation. In the scheme of things, how do we know that a given event is right or wrong? We don't know what is happening today will have what impact after five years. With the extremely limited knowledge we have, there is no ways to know the future. *īśvara* is impartial, benevolent. From fullness only benevolence can come no partiality can come. When we look at the creation it is evident that *īśvara* is benevolent. There is care for every creature that *īśvara* has created. Whatever creature need any time is provide for. When we look at the creation we see there is care concern and benevolence, there is harmony everywhere. Spirit of *yajñā* - offering everywhere. There is a law of offering called *yajñā*, it can come only from full-

ness, benevolence. *Suhṛtam sarvabhūtanām*, one who helps without being asked. When this is the understating of *īśvara* then *prasāda-buddhi* is possible. Accepting painful as *prasāda* is possible only when we have this infinite trust. Even in what apparently looks like punishment, some well-being of mind is involved. It is this trust or *śraddhā* in *īśvara*.

īśvara pervade the entire universe as blessing. If this understanding of *īśvara* is there, we keep that in mind and live our life accordingly. Then only it is possible to maintain some degree of poise even in unfavourable or painful situation. Before you fight this battle may you maintain state of equanimity says *bhagavān* to Arjuna. We are not fighting for happiness, gain or victory. We are fighting for a cause, *dharma*. For, the *dharma* is our duty. Cause should be there in life and dedicate life to the cause, *dharma*, then these things become unimportant. A very keen understanding of *īśvara* is required. We say this is coming from *īśvara*, who is dispensing the our own *karma-phala*. More we understand, it will be easier for us to maintain equanimity.

Lord Krishna prescribed this value because the sameness is the nature of *ātmā* and to know that *ātmā*, mind needs to develop that state. Pujya Swamiji used to say you cannot attain love through the path of hatred. Mind should be ready, when I am sad and teacher says you are *ānanda*, you become more sad. Maintaining that poise of the mind, cheerfulness of the mind may be a tall order, but at least we don't become devastated in the process, incapable of doing anything. Some impact are so much that we cannot recover from them.

Values 16: *bhaktiravyabhicāriṇī*

Devotion to me -- what is the meaning of it here? As given in chapter 11, it is meant for cosmic form of *īśvara*, others would say Arjuna was scared of cosmic form and request for a form with four hands and further reduce himself to human form two hand. So, there are three forms. When third chapter talks about mediation *vedāntī* will say cosmic form, *viśiṣṭa-advaitī* will say meditate on Naryana, *dvaitī* would say meditate on Krishna etc. Focus is on *avyabhicāriṇī bhakti*, unswerving devotion to me, *īśvara*. In chapter 7 Krishna says *mattaḥ parataram nānyat* (7:7). There is nothing other than me, all there is myself. What was the need for Krishna to say this? For anything two factors are required one maker and another is material. For creating the universe also we would imagine that there is a maker and there is material. Maker is conscious and material is *jaḍam*. Other than Vedanta all the traditions are based on taking maker as different form the

materials. Creator and creation different. Krishna says there is no material other than me, I am the material cause and the efficient cause. That is how the *advaitā* is established.

Ideally worshipping *īśvara ananyayogena* - worshipping with the attitude of non-duality. Worship always involves duality, but *ananyayogena*, where worshiper is no separate from the worshipped. This is the *bhakti* that Lord Krishna prescribes, what is *bhaktā's* dedicated effort? Here the effort is to know the *īśvara* as non-dual that is *bhakti*. The same *bhakti* can then manifest as worship, *pūja*, offering all of these. Ultimately *bhakti* is worshipping *īśvara* as my own self. That happens only when myself doesn't remain and what remains is *īśvara*. What creates division with *īśvara* is my *ahamkara*, sense of individuality that creates apparent distance between me and *īśvara*.

That's how the *karma-yoga* started, accepting what comes as grace of *īśvara* as *bhakti*. Performing action to *īśvara* is also *bhakti* - worship to the lord. That culminates in to the arrangement given in all the 18th chapters. It is the three section of six chapters each, first six focusing on *karma*, second six on *upāsana* meditation and last six on *jñānam* and it is all *bhakti*. You can say Gita is the text of *bhakti*. *Bhakti* is erasing distance between the worshipper and the worshipped. First step to that is *karma-yoga*, Lord Krishna says perform your actions like a *yajñā*. *Yajñā* means worship, offering. And also about the way to accept result as *prasāda*. Attitude of *karma* and *karma-phala* is first level of *bhakti*. Then we graduate to next level, *upāsana* or meditation on the *īśvara*.

They talk about what is the nature of *bhagavān*, what is the nature of *bhakti*. *Ārtaḥ* – on distress they come to me, find them at the time of examination, *arthārti* – he wants to fulfil some materials desire. *Jijñāsu* – for knowledge, *jñānī* – wise person knows the oneness- *vāsudevaḥ sarvam iti*. That is the vision of *īśvara* that Bhagvad Gita presents. Worshipping *īśvara* here is worshipping of the nature that is presented in Gita. That includes me also. I am Hari, I am also same *īśvara* that is the ultimate thing. One need to abide that in. One need to be part of that commitment that is *avyabhicāriṇī bhakti*, unswerving devotion to me, the *īśvara*.

Understand that we are devotees by nature, every moment we are worshipping something. I am committed to what is the most important to me. It may be wealth, power, values, purity of mind, *mokṣā*. Whatever is most important to me I am devoted. What is most important is *īśvara*. Drop all your agenda and make me your agenda. If you come to

me to fulfil the desire, I will give you that. If everyone needs *mokṣā* why don't *īśvara* give it to them? But they need to value it or they will just throw it out. Child wants candy and cannot appreciate the gems. The convictions has to arise, that is what is most important in *mokṣā* and knowledge is the means of *mokṣā*. If *mokṣā* is not the existing fact, I have to become liberated. Then efforts required. Then *karma* becomes important. That's why people think that *upāsanā* (*upāsanā* is also *karma*) is more important. I am already *pa-ramātmā*. It is the ignorance that makes me think I am *jivātmā*, limited entity immersed in *samsāra-cakram*. Knowledge only can solve the problem, Knowledge only can liberate.

Ignorance is the only problem and knowledge is the only solution. This should be the conviction. Once this is clear to me I will become *avyabhicāriṇī bhakta*, a mature devotee. All I am devoted to, is nothing but *īśvara*. *Bhakti* here becomes a commitment, dedication which comes from *viveka* or understanding. Proper understanding created *bhakti* and *bhakti* creates knowledge, and it is based on the non-duality. *Yame eṣaḥ vṛṇute*, - one who chooses this *īśvara* / *ātmā*, attains the *ātmā*. It is like *svayamvarā*, where princesses choose their suitors. You cannot choose more than one. In life also lots of choice and *īśvara* is also one among them. Whoever we chose, should be only for *īśvara*. Sometimes it's not that easy. Nala Damyanti story. She wanted to marry Nala. Father organised *svayamvarā*. *Devatās* also wanted to marry Damayanti. Along with human princes, they assumed the form of Nala and came for *svayamvarā*. There are four Nalas. How does she choose now? *Devatās* don't blink eyes. So among other four Nalas three had non blinking eyes. She was advised by a friend to exclude other three and only choose the human Nala. In this way one need to choose the *ātmā*. For that committed devotee, *ātmā* reveals itself. When the person does not have other agenda, out of compassion, I reveal myself to him, *ananya devotion*. *Mayi ca ananyayogena bhakti avyabhicāriṇī*. To get that focus, Krishna says the goal should be very clear and the means also should be clear. *śravaṇam*, *kīrtanam*, *karmayogā*, *upāsanā*, *ātmavicāra* all these are *bhakti* but one thing is *ananyayogena bhakti avyabhicāriṇī*, the only object of worship and nothing else.

To be continued ...

This page is sponsored by Dr. Amritha Murthy, Brindavan Paradise, Coimbatore

A Ritual to Go Beyond Rituals

Every human being gets an identity immediately after his or her birth. A person is born into a religion, a cultural group, a nationality, or race. This identity is given by the people around. Vedanta calls it a superimposition on the otherwise free being. Probably this is what Rousseau, who was also influenced by the Upanishads, meant when he reflected, 'Man is born free but everywhere he is bound in chains.' The identity becomes a baggage which the person cherishes, protects, or even fights and dies for it. Some individuals shake off this identity at some point of time and assume a different identity such as a religion, a creed, or ideology. But we do not normally think of a situation in which a person shakes off all identities, rises above all the identities created by man and stands on par with the Supreme Divinity.

Such a situation is envisaged in the *sanātana dharma*. It is also a highly revered stage in a person's life. I was an eager witness to this ritual a few days ago. On the 31st of March and the 1st of April, 2021, at the sacred banks of the river Godavari in Rajahmundry in the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh witnessed a two-day long ritual in which two seekers obliterated their identity and entered identitylessness. Swami Tattvavidananda Saraswati of the Arsha Vidya Gurukulam, a sage who is already established in such stage, inducted the two seekers to attain such stage. Of the two, one is an elderly person, an active politician turned into a serious student of Vedanta. He discharged his duties as a *grhastha* and *vānaprastha*. The other is a *brahmacārī*, a student of Vedanta, in his thirties who is already leading a semi-recluse life in an ashram in Uttarakasi. The two persons got a new identity and emerged as Swami Sivaramananda Saraswati and Swami Sthitaprajnananda Saraswati respectively.

This is a ritual going back to Vedic times, in which persons who reflected on the ephemeral nature of the world, who contemplated on the nature of one's real self and thus weakened their worldly bonds, chose to leave home and became identityless. A very ancient example in our books is the sage Yajnavalkya in the Brihadaranyaka *Upanishad*, who took leave of his wife Maitreyi and entered this stage. This is a living tradition despite the assaults by marauding cultures on the Vedic dharma.

What is so unique about this ritual? What is its nature?

Advaita talks of two levels of renunciation – the renunciation of the fruit of action and renunciation of action itself. It is the latter which is discussed in the present context. The

Vedic seers evolved a ritual to renounce the normally unbreakable bonds. The ritual is probably to reinforce a person's conviction to renounce the life-long bonds and obligations. A person in social life has three obligations – to the gods, to sages and to forefathers. For that he must perform several duties. However, it is recommended that a person has to call it a day and renounce the three-fold obligations. There is a ceremonial renouncement of this.

Sanātana dharma has devised a lifelong timetable of duties to be performed by a worldly person. One has to worship the deities, the sages, and the forefathers through several rituals. One well known ritual is the annual *śrāddha*, performed for the departed parents or elders. We offer *tarpaṇam* (water with sesame) to sages on certain occasions. One worships deities with devotion (*śraddhā*) as a matter of duty for various worldly desires. Whatever is performed with *śraddhā* is *śrāddha*. The ritual of renunciation talks of the eight different types of revered persons to whom he was offering respect in various forms. Now, in the new level, the renunciant goes beyond the eight duties. Hence for the last time, he performs the rituals – almost with the spirit of renouncing bondage with the deities (thus renouncing worldly desires), with the sages and with the forefathers.

On the first day the two interns performed eight different *śrāddha*-s to eight revered groups. The list of revered ones is impressive.

1. The first is the trinity – Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara.
2. The divine sages like Nārada, the brahmarṣi-s such as Vasiṣṭha and the rājarṣi-s such as Bhishma to whom the *gṛhastha* used to offer *tarpaṇam*.
3. The three types of deities – Vasu-s, Rudra-s and Aditya-s. All gods are worshiped at an empirical level, for fulfillment of desires. They are now given up.
4. The sons of Brahma – the sages Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatkumara and Sanatsujata
5. The five elements and their evolutes – the senses and mind (signifying transcendence from sensual desires)
6. The paternal forefathers
7. The maternal line in a similar manner
8. One's own self, which was identifying with the body-mind-complex (BMC).

The last *śrāddha* is a farewell to his former self. A person offers *pinda* to his own former self. He is liberated from the bonds of the BMC now.

After these *śrāddha*-s on the river bank the two interns came back to the ashram where we all halted. They were on a vow, *dīkṣā*, and so they observed fast all through the day

and kept awake till the next morning, chanting Gayatri for the last time.

The second day started with a fire ritual called *virajā*-homa at 0530 am on the banks of Godavari. It was interesting to see that when the purohit was fumbling with the mantra-s, Swami Tattvavidananda, a scholar in Yajur Veda, helped him out by reciting them from the Maha-Narayanopanishad. These mantra-s, as the name *vi-rajā* indicates, are to affirm removal of rajas, the impurities of the mind.

This is the final ritual performed by a person who would be a *sannyāsī*. During this, the would-be *sannyāsī* is given a twig of the pippala tree. The pippala, also called as the as-wattha tree, symbolizes *saṃsāra*, as we know. The two interns invoke *agni* (symbolizing rituals) into the twig and get ready for the final step of renouncing the rituals.

The next step is a physical action by the Swamiji. He personally removed the sacred threads and cut the *śikhā*-s with a scissors and handed it to the interns. After this, the two interns and the Swamiji got into water. The Swamiji administered certain oaths to the two interns. The oaths related to *sarvātma-bhāva*, the vision of Brahman in all things in the universe. When you see Brahman in all things, it is natural that you love the other as your own self. It is an unconditional love. The newly graduated *sannyāsī* declares non-injury towards all living beings – those which are moving beings (humans, animals or insects) and stationary beings such as trees. They had chanted Gayatri on the earlier day but now it is given up and a new *sannyāsa* mantra is given to them by the Swamiji.

‘What is the contribution of such renounced persons to society?’, the lay persons ask. The *saṃnyāsī* is a moral compass to the people around him or her. Patanjali describes his state as the *dharma-megha*, a state which showers *dharma* on people around. There is an infectious flow of *dharma* from such person. He is a moral and spiritual mentor, a guide for universal peace.

This is the logical culmination of the teaching of the *Advaita* Vedanta. It is an illustration of walking the talk. The snapping of worldly bonds happens mentally, as the seeker advances in his philosophical reflections. The ritual is a solemn pledge to oneself.

Dr. Aravinda Rao K (Retired Director General of Police)

Date: 04-04-2021

The Book of Enlightening Laughters

Swami Dayananda Saraswati

Collection of Stories & Anecdotes From the Talks of

H.H. Sri Swami Dayananda Saraswati

POSITIVE THINKING

If you look at yourself as a person not acceptable then you have to relook at yourself that you are a person to be accepted. Positive thinking will not help here. Right thinking will help. 'Positive thinking' is a way of looking at things. "The rose is beautiful, but it has thorns" - this is the complaining way of looking at a rose. "In spite of thorns, the rose is beautiful" is a positive way of looking at it. But this cannot solve the problem of self non-acceptance because where there is positive thinking, there must be a fact that makes it a factual positive thinking. If this is so, there is going to be another fact forming the basis for negative thinking. I always tell this story for 'positive thinking'.

This person was doing his Ph.D. He was writing his thesis, it was not coming out well and then in the meantime he took up a job as a lecturer in the local State college. He liked the job but his Ph.D. was still incomplete. He also got married, was happy and well settled in life. Everything was okay until his friend, who was also doing Ph.D. with him, got appointed as the Head the department. All the feelings of 'being happy and well-settled' vanished. The person started feeling 'I am a failure, I should have finished my Ph.D., I did a wrong thing, I should have done it'. People around him also contributed to making this a firm conviction. He became very depressed. Nobody could really help him out of it. He went to a therapist. The therapist who thought he is a very positive person had one type of therapy 'positive thinking'.

Then he asked him, "Hey, how many blind people are there in the world?"

"There are millions".

"Are you a blind?"

"No. I have got twenty by twenty eye sight".

"Should you not be grateful for having a great sight?"

"May be, I should be grateful".

“Are you a deaf and dumb?”

“Not at all”.

“Do you know how many people are deaf and dumb?”

“Yes I know”.

Don't you feel you are a lucky fellow? Just imagine the lot of those people who cannot speak, who cannot hear. The whole world is gone. Not hearing means one fifth of the world is gone. And it is a good part of the world. It is gone. And if a person does not have sight means, my God! all the colour that the world has is gone. Naturally those people are definitely unfortunate. Don't you feel fortunate for what you have?

“Yes, I should be”.

“Are you on a wheel chair?”

“No. I am standing on my own legs”.

“Should you not be grateful? So many people are on wheel chairs”.

“I think so”.

“Are you not educated?” Don't you have a good parentage?

“Yes”.

“Should you not be grateful? There are millions of people who are not educated, who cannot read, who cannot write. You have done your post-graduate. My god! What a qualification you have got! There are so many orphans who do not even know their parents. You are fortunate to have a good parentage”.

“Do you know how many have terminal diseases like cancer and AIDS? There is no way of getting out of that and they know it. Do you have any like that?”

“No. Not to my knowledge”

“Now tell me, don't you think you are grateful for all this?”.

The person began realizing. “Yes, yes, I think I should be grateful”.

“Are you not married?”

“Yes I am married”.

“Should you not be grateful?”

“For what?”

“That she still thinks that you are wonderful”

“Ah, I think I should be grateful for that”.

“And you have a job, should you not be grateful?”

“Yes, I think I should be grateful. I think, I think wrongly”.

“Why do you have such a low image of yourself? You have so many positive things about yourself. Think positive.”

The person was really convinced. He felt so good and admitted, “There is really nothing to complain about. I am very happy now, no more depressed”. He walked out smiling after paying him a handsome amount. Just then a new Mercedes car stopped in front of him. It was glistening in the sun making it evident that it was a new car. He saw the man getting down from the driver’s seat talking to his wife. He was standing on his legs. He had eye sight because he was driving the car and did not wear even glasses. He was not deaf and dumb because he was answering his wife’s questions. He had got everything plus a Mercedes! All positive thinking was gone. The man was depressed again.

Do you know why? Because there is a fact. That he wants a car is a fact. Let us say, he has an old dilapidated ambassador car whose spare parts you can hear! Except the horn every part is heard. When he goes to his car and opens the door he needs one more person to open it. How can he retain his positive thinking when what he does not have is also a grinning reality, a teasing reality? It is a reality that makes him feel ‘you have not made it’. All positive thinking evaporates.

We need thinking. We need objective thinking. What you do not have is a truth. What you have is also a truth. In fact the reality is, in spite of what you do not have and what you have, you are somebody who is to be reckoned by you as a person. It is not positive thinking but just thinking of what is. Recognizing what is. That is our wisdom. We have it all completely, totally.

Om Tat Sat

THE SPECTRE OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Swami Dayananda Saraswati

The recent Papal contention that there is prohibition of religious freedom in India is an allegation to be taken seriously by the State as well as the Indian people. Addressing the Bishops of India during their *ad limina* visit to the Vatican, the Pope charged that the “free exercise of the natural right to religious freedom” is prohibited in India. A similar concern was registered in the latest report of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), which declared India as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC).

Both the Vatican and the U.S. Commission have cited the introduction of “anti-conversion” bills in some Indian States as the basis for their conclusions. To those who care to read these bills, however, it is clear that they do show a clear intent to make “the use of force or allurement or fraudulent means” unlawful in conversion activities (Tamil Nadu Ordinance No. 9 of 2002). What just-minded person would not applaud a State’s efforts to prohibit the use of such means, especially in the sphere of religion? Is it not, then, an embarrassment to those involved in religious conversion activities that the state finds it necessary to issue an ordinance specifically prohibiting these means on their behalf?

Christian Missionaries have always assumed complete freedom to evangelize and convert any non-Christian society. And history has shown that they have felt entitled to do so by any means. They honestly feel that it is not only their right, but their solemn duty to convert, not just individuals, but entire nations. Their scripture enjoins them, and the current Pope repeatedly reminds them to “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations (Mt 28:20).” This perception of religious freedom needs an objective examination inasmuch as it engenders deep hurt and attracts bitter opposition from the adherents of other religions.

In my perception there is religious freedom in any country wherein one is free to live one’s religious life without being inhibited by State legislation or being subject to organized persecutions from the people of any religious, political, socio-economic or ethnic community. One would think that all those who desire freedom of religion would find this a reasonable and accurate perception. But this freedom is not adequate for some; it does not include the freedom to evangelize and convert.

I want to be clear about what I mean by ‘evangelize and convert’. I do not mean that one should not have the freedom to “manifest one’s religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance,” as stipulated in Article 18 of the United Nations Universal Dec-

laration of Human Rights. This is an inalienable right, a sacred right, of all human beings that is to be cherished and protected. However, one who considers oneself subject to a religious mandate to convert people of other religions to one's own has a world-view that does not permit religious freedom. His/her inner religious landscape does not have any legitimate place for the practice of religions other than his/her own. Thus, as a person, one does not have the inner space to grant freedom to people to pursue other religions. It is not possible, either religiously or psychologically.

When the practice of one's religion involves evangelizing in order to bring outsiders into one's fold of believers, one is bound to become blind to a certain truth. One cannot, under these circumstances, recognize that one is intruding into the sanctity of the inner religious space of others. The blindness is evident when, in the same address, one can make a passionate appeal for evangelization, and also, for a democracy to support it that has "respect for religious freedom, for this is the right which touches on the individual's most private and sovereign interior freedom" (Address of Pope John Paul II to the New Ambassador of India, 13 December 2002 cited in address to Bishops of India, May 2003). While recognizing an individual's religious freedom as "most private and sovereign," there is, at the same time, an exhortation to invade this private, sacred space. In other words, to trample upon the very freedom one allegedly wishes to preserve. The contradiction reveals obtuseness in the extreme, a double standard, or a form of religious arrogance that is commonly known as fundamentalism.

I have no intention of disparaging any religion here, but rather, to be very clear about certain realities. Integral to a converting religion is conversion. And a commitment to conversion involves certain unavoidable assumptions. Even when there is no visible attempt to evangelize and convert at a given time and place, the lull is not due to any newly discovered tolerance towards other religions. The underlying assumptions and commitment do not allow for that. The lull is only a strategic wait, biding time for the moment when there is the desired "religious freedom".

Ethnic religions the world over do not now, nor have they ever evangelized. Why? In the minds of the people given to these traditions there is total absence of religious intolerance. The tenets and mores of those traditions have allowed the people who hold them to naturally grant total freedom to others to practice their religion. It is never an issue. But this unquestioned granting of religious freedom has given the initial thumb-space for the aggressive traditions to evangelize, convert and erase indigenous religions and their cultures from many countries, and even some continents. This is a crucial fact that, if overlooked,

can, and has distorted the perception of the situation. It is so important to understand that today, an objection to conversion from any indigenous religious leadership is an urgently necessary and long-overdue *assertion*, not a violation, of human rights. In all fairness, such an objection could not be further from being a violation of human rights, much less religious fundamentalism.

I know that a Hindu is free from any malice toward any form of religious practice. I also know that there is no religious mandate in the Hindu Dharma to bring other religionists to the Hindu fold. Therefore, a Hindu is fundamentally accommodative in terms of religious pursuits. And it is common knowledge that, because of this, India has been the historical refuge of the religiously persecuted and disenfranchised. Yet, if a Hindu wants his or her religious privacy respected and not intruded upon, immediately the spectre of “religious freedom” is raised at all possible levels of legal as well as public forums. This extends well beyond our domestic borders and has far-reaching consequences for our quality of life. The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom recommends that its Government utilize various tools, such as economic sanctions, to exert pressure on Countries of Particular Concern (CPC), like India, in order to ensure adequate “religious freedom” for their evangelism and conversion programmes. A deeper analysis of the facts reveals that such measures are clearly unjust.

If Pope John Paul II could heed his own words in his recent address to the Bishops of India on their *ad limina* visit to the Vatican, the interests of peaceful coexistence of religions, and of people of good will everywhere would be well served. On that occasion, the Pontiff said to the Bishops of India, “To love the least among us *without expecting anything in return* is truly to love Christ.” In the current climate this appears to be a tall order for evangelizing religions. Hindus in India, on the other hand, have been accommodating religions of all stripes with extraordinary grace for centuries, and if allowed, will continue to do so for centuries to come. This in no way, however, should be construed as a license for abuses such as those prohibited in the conversion ordinances. Nor could a protest against such abuses be construed, by decent people anywhere, as a violation of any kind of human right.

Om Tat Sat

Compiled by Swamini Agamananda.

This is the sixth of nine articles based on Pujya Swamiji’s talks on the said subject matter.

Understanding Secularism

Swami Dayananda Saraswati

The aspiration of those who, through a Constitutional amendment, have called India a secular nation, is a noble one. Secularism, as it was originally conceived, embodies basic principles that implement and nurture universal values. Thereby, it fosters a state that is harmonious and, in harmony with the Lord. However one may understand this Lord, one knows, or is taught, that the Lord and ethical behavior are inextricable. The essence of such behavior is captured in a single guideline that is found in all religions—the ethic of reciprocity, popularly known as the golden rule. Do to others as you would want them to do to you. This has been a guiding maxim throughout human history, traceable to ancient religious traditions all over the world. Why is it so pervasive? It is based on a special human endowment, empathy, the capacity to sense the pain of another being and act appropriately. And the extent to which this empathy is honed is a mark of one's evolution as a human being, as one who is in harmony with the Lord.

This principle of reciprocity based on empathy is embedded in a key component of a secular state—all citizens are equal, including equal before the law. Nothing helps to bring about the stability, growth and unity of a nation more than the implementation of this single idea. It instills in each and every individual a basic sense of security and confidence that there is order, there is justice in this world. You can go ahead; the laws will protect you and guide you. This is no less true at the national level. Equality before the law is a potent corrective to corruption, and positions a nation to assert itself effectively in the world.

Equality is also extended, explicitly, to religion. Each individual in a secular state is granted freedom to practice his or her religion. Though this has been made a Constitutional right in India, it was originally part of the fabric of this country. The proximity of religious structures of different traditions, such as the Ellora caves, the long history of vigorous, public debate of different views, the Ashoka edicts, and the religiously persecuted communities who found refuge in India all testify to this.

This twofold promise of secularism—equal citizenship and religious freedom for all—depends on the fulfillment of a condition, which is the most defining feature of secularism. The separation of the sphere of influence and operation of the state and religion. Separation of state and religion means that the state and religious bodies do not interfere in each other's affairs. There is neither interference of the state in religious matters, nor the influ-

ence of religion in the affairs of state. The prohibition of religious interference in matters of state is a corollary of and safeguard to equality before the law. It is evident that if there is to be equality, one group cannot be privileged over another by the state. This separation is what allows for, and at the same time, safeguards both freedom of religion and equal citizenship. It is the single condition that preserves the integrity of both. If this separation is not achieved, it will be impossible to avoid state interference in religion, inevitably violating the religious freedom of individuals and groups. And there will also inevitably be discrimination by the state against the individual's rights and privileges as a citizen. The result can only be a discordant, fragmented nation, or nations.

The Constitution goes a long way to ensure this required separation by the prohibition of religious instruction in state schools, and of taxes to support any particular religion. And, importantly, there is no provision for an official state religion. On the other hand, its mandate to ensure religious freedom breaks down in the constitutional sanction for state interference in religious affairs. This has resulted in state administration of temples and maths, state appropriation of temple lands and donations, even legislation of who should be admitted into the temples. More troubling is the unequal application of this sanction. In dealing with a minority religion, there are political constraints, which restrict the interference. But in legislating matters concerning the religion of the majority, there are no such constraints. As a result, the state has taken over places of worship and collection of revenue from offerings of the majority religion, but not others. Moreover, such revenue can be redistributed for other purposes, including maintenance of institutions of other religions, even those which are opposed to the majority religion. This has also led to the discriminatory modification of personal religious laws. The religious laws of some minority religions supersede parliamentary laws, while for the majority religion, parliamentary law has been enacted to supersede religious laws. This unequal treatment of religions by the state has created legitimate grounds for discord. And different civil or criminal laws for different groups, religious or otherwise, is the antithesis of secularism. If secularism is the aim, it is, therefore, necessary to find an alternative to the current relationship between the state and religion. And whether it is called secularism or something else, such change is necessary if there is to be unity, and at the same time, religious freedom in this country.

Non-interference of the state in religious affairs is sound, because it recognizes an important fact of human existence. Though the universal values, which form the basis for equality before the law, are connected to religion, there is another dimension of the religious life of a human being, so intimate, so sacred, that interference of any kind is experienced as violence. This is in one's understanding of and relationship to the Lord. It is here that pro-

tection is required. It is the responsibility of the state to ensure that no individual or group, including the state itself, interferes in religious expression. To do so is to violate sacred space, individual and collective, and sow the seeds for dissent and fragmentation. If national unity and harmony are to be secured, the jurisdiction of the state can only be in framing and enforcing criminal and civil laws. Conventions, religious or otherwise, are outside its scope, unless they transgress the criminal and civil laws. Because of this, framing the laws is a matter of great responsibility and complexity in a religiously and culturally diverse society.

In India, separation of religion and state has been unfortunately interpreted to mean equality of all religions in the eyes of the state. This has come to mean both that religious laws are binding on the state, and that the state has equal participation in all religions. While perhaps a benevolent ideal, we see that it has not been possible to uphold. It is important to understand that there can never be a perfectly secular state, because the core of a person, the place from which one lives one's life, knowingly or unknowingly, is his or her understanding of his/her relationship to the total. But in a religiously plural nation, secularism is the best option we have for preserving religious freedom and securing unity and harmony.

There are certain realities in any society which are unique. India is no exception. This is not an issue. The issue, for a governing body, is being in touch with those realities, all of them, and responding appropriately. This is sane. What is sanity but being in touch with reality? We are a religiously and culturally diverse nation and if we are to function as a homeland for every Indian citizen, and as a contributor in this global era, we must be sane. And to be sane, we must be united and fair. We cannot afford to marginalize or privilege any group, religious or otherwise.

If sanity is being in touch with reality, our religious traditions have something more to say about this. In all traditions, that reality is the Lord, and the ethical laws are intrinsic. Thus, the more ethical one is, the more one is in touch with the sacred reality, and, whether as an individual or a nation, the more sane one is—free of conflict, productive, in harmony with the universal order. This is our heritage, this is what India was, and can be again. Together we can claim this heritage. It is our duty to do so—our duty to our ancestors, to our neighbors, local and global, to our children and their children, and to our own integrity.

Om Tat Sat

Compiled by Swamini Agamananda. This is the seventh of nine articles based on Pujya Swamiji's talks on the said subject matter.

Swami Dayananda Ashram, Rishikesh
KUMBHABHISHEKAM
of Sri Haimavati Sameta Sri Gangadhareswara Swami Temple



Arsha Vidya Pitham

Monday 17th May 2021

5.00 am to 9.00 am

Caturthakala Puja, Maha Purnahuti and Maha
Diparadhana

9.00 am to 9.45 am

Muhurta

9.00 am

Yatra Danam, Ghata Udvahanam, Kumbha Sahita
Alaya Pradakshinam

9.20 am

Vimana Kumbhabhishekam

9.35 am

Mulasthana Kumbhabhishekam and Maha
Diparadhana

10.30 am

Sankara Jayanti Puja

11.15 am

Anugraha Bhashanam

12.30 Noon

Mahaprasadam



Swami Dayananda Ashram
Rishikesh

Cordially invites you to the
Auspicious

KUMBHABHISHEKAM

of

Sri Haimavati Sameta
Sri Gangadhareshwara Swami
Temple

on MONDAY, 17th MAY 2021



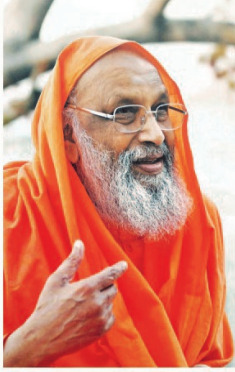
ARSHA VIDYA PITHAM
Swami Dayananda Ashram
Sw. Dayananda Nagar - Munikireti
249137 - Rishikesh - Uttarakhand



Venue:
Swami Dayananda Ashram
Swami Dayananda Nagar, Rishikesh
Email: dayas1088@gmail.com



Situated on the banks of holy Ganga is the temple of Sri Gangadhareswara at Swami Dayananda Ashram, Rishikesh.



The main deity is a svayambhu linga discovered in 1968 under a sesam tree near Ganga and Puja was performed by Pujya Swamiji himself for a few years.

The temple was later consecrated in 1975, 1996 and 2014 with expansion and renovation works.

The current renovation work was necessitated due to a damage to a murti in the main tower and loosening of ashta bandhanam of a shrine. Along with this work we decided to cover with ceiling the open part of the temple so that pujas can be done in proper way during rainy and winter seasons. The floor level of the temple too required to be raised to avoid rain waters entering the temple.

With the blessings of Haimavati Sameta Sri Gangadhareswara Swami and Pujya Sri Swamiji, all the activities of the ashram including long term course are going on well. There is great demand from many devotees around the year for special pujas to be performed for the Lord and Pujya Swamiji as these pujas give instant results for the devotees. We request all the devotees to get the blessings of the Lord and Pujya Sri Swamiji through special pujas on days that are significant in their life like birthday.

Program Schedule

Saturday 15th May 2021

6.00 am to 8.00 am

Anujna, Vighnesvara Puja, Dhana Puja and Gaja Puja

9.30 am to 11.30 am

Go Puja, Maha Ganapati Homam, Mahalakshmi Homam, Sri Navagraha Homam, Rakshoghna Homam, Vaastu Santi, Mrit Sangrahanam, Prasannaabhisheka Yagasala Alankara

6.00 pm to 10.00 pm

Vighnesvara Puja, Ankurarpanam, Rakshabandhana Kumbhalankara, Kalakarshana, Yagasala Pravesha, Prathamakala Puja and Puranahuti, Diparadhana.

Sunday 16th May 2021

8.00 am to 12.00 noon

Dvitiya Kala Puja, Purnahuti and Diparadhana

11.45 am

Sadhu Bhandara in Annakshetra

4.00 pm to 5.30 pm

A thematic dance presentation on Lord Sri Gangadhareswara by Kalaksetra Foundation

5.30 pm to 9.00 pm

Tritiya Kala Puja, Purnahuti and Diparadhana

“Look back; when you do so, you are in the now. Look ahead; while doing so, again you are in the now. Look at present, aren't you in the now? “Now” is the soul of time in which you have your soul.” - Swami Dayananda Saraswati

AVG Anaikatti Report

Four day new year Tamil Retreat, April 10th - April 14th

This was the first retreat in 2021. The text selected was “Kailvalya Navaneetam” which is an advaita classic in Tamil written by Tandavaraya Swamigal. The text has two parts. The first part along with the opening prayer slokas called Payira and Tattva villakka padalam with 108 verses was taken up in this retreat.

The retreat was initially conceived as the first residential retreat after the pandemic.

But the pandemic condition continued, so by popular demand it was converted into an E-retreat with restricted resident participants.

There were about 28 registered participants for the E-retreat which was conducted on Zoom and about 9 participants came to the gurukulam to participate directly. The classes were taken by Swami Jagadatmanandaji, who is very well-read in Tamil literature and in Vedanta. He has the ability to bring the class alive and explain in a way which is understandable to all levels of participants. There were 2 classes in the morning and two classes in the evening since Swamiji had to cover 108 verses. But Swamiji did it with ease. The retreat was well appreciated by all the participants.

On April 14th, Tamil new year day, all the retreaters participated in the morning abhisekham and Puja at Lord Dakshinamurthy temple which was made available on our YouTube channel.

As per the gurukulam tradition, a vishu kanika was given by the chief Acharya, Swami Sadatmanandaji as blessings to all at the gurukulam, including the residential retreaters.

The morning ended with a special abhisekham and puja organised by Swamiji at Lord Kalyana Subramaniam temple on the hilltop followed by a special bhiksha, lunch.

Some reviews from the resident and E-retreat participants –

Sri Ravi Subramaniam- Coimbatore- E rereater.

The e-retreat on Kaivalya Navaneetam conducted by Swami Jagadatmananda Saraswatiji was truly a spiritual treat especially for people like me with very little knowledge on the basics of Vedanta.

The simplicity and clarity with which Swamiji effectively explained the subtle concepts made it even more engrossing. Coupled with this was the beauty of the text in Tamil which presented these concepts in brief verses (but packed with the essence of Vedanta) which

could be understood only after each verse was expounded to reveal it's true inner meaning (saaraamsam) by Swamiji. In addition to the above, the talks were a veritable audio- visual treat which enabled me appreciate and comprehend the poetic form of the Tamil language in its pristine state.

My pranams to Acharya Swami Sadatmananda Saraswatiji who suggested that I attend this e-retreat and that Vedantic principles are best understood in one's own mother tongue. My pranams to Swami Jagadatmananda Saraswatiji for giving us these precious insights of Vedanta as we stepped into the Plavavarsham with the take away message on Ishwaraar-pana bhavana, Prasada buddhi leading to the ultimate knowledge of “Aham Brahmasmi”.

To sum up - this e-retreat was a real blessing to me given the difficult times we are all going through. I look forward to listening and benefiting from more of such talks by Swamiji in Tamil in the future.

My humble pranams to Guru parampara and sincere thanks to Arsha Vidya Gurukulam team for organising this E-retreat.

Om Sri Gurubhyonamah.

Deepa Ajay, Chennai – the youngest residential participant.

Namaskarams to Swami Jagadatmanandaji for skillfully teaching and guiding us into the profound and heartfelt work of 'Kaivalya Navaneetam' as beautifully expounded by Shri Tandavaraya Swamigal. This special treatise in Tamil encompasses all of Vedanta and I deeply benefited from participating in this retreat and plan to revisit notes and recordings again to study and revel in the teaching. Looking forward to attending many more such camps in the future.

Dhanyavadham to Pujya Swamiji's beautiful 'Arsha Vidya Gurukulam' for hosting us for this retreat, Pranams to resident Swamis, Swaminis, Brahmacharis, students and special thanks to the loving and caring 'Gurukulam ground staff' for making us feel comfortable and totally at home.

Prayers to our Gurukulam's Lord Dakshinamurti, to guide all of us on our path to moksha

Om Tat Sat



AVG Anaikatti - Four day new year Tamil Retreat, April 10th April 14th 2021

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AVG Anaikatti, Veda-Bhagavan Puja Photos

