

Guru-pūrṇimā Talk by Swami Sadatamananda

Today we are celebrating the day called *vyāsa pūrṇimā* , otherwise called *guru-pūrṇimā*. This day is called *vyāsa pūrṇimā* because today, *āṣāḍha māsa, śukla pakṣa, pūrṇimā* happened to be the birthday of Sri Veda Vyāsa . Sri Veda Vyāsa represents the entire tradition of *gurus*. Therefore his birthday is celebrated as *guru-pūrṇimā* as well. *Guru-pūrṇimā* means full moon day dedicated to *gurus*.

We are all familiar with the glory of Veda Vyāsa. His original name was Sri kṛṣṇa and he was also called Dvaipāyana – one who was born on an island. So he was called Sri kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana. He was also called Bādarāyaṇa because he stayed in the forest called Bādarāyaṇa . He got the title Veda Vyāsa because he compiled all the vedas which were scattered throughout the country and divided them into various branches, so that different families can protect and preserve the vedas.

विव्यास वेदान् यस्मात् तस्मात् व्यास इति स्मृतः

vivyaśa vedān yasmāt tasmāt vyāsa iti smṛtaḥ

He also composed 18 *purāṇās*. Therefore he has got the title *purāṇamuniḥ*. And he has written the *itihāsa grantha* called Mahābhārata consisting of 100,000 verses. He has written an important text called *brahma-sūtra* which is the book of analysis of the *upaniṣads*. He has also written the Vyāsa smṛti and the *bhāṣyam* on *yoga-sūtra* is attributed to him. Thus he has contributed so much to the vedic tradition. We are very indebted to him and therefore we express our gratitude to him on his birthday today.

He represents the entire *guru-paramparā*. There is a *ślokā* we chant on this day saluting our teachers, where Veda Vyāsa is presented as an important link of the lineage of teachers.

नारायणं पद्मभुवं वसिष्ठं शक्तिं च तत्पुत्रपराशरं च ।

व्यासं शुक्रं गौडपदं महान्तं गोविन्दयोगीन्द्रमथास्य शिष्यम् ।

श्रीशंकराचार्यमथास्य पद्मपादं च हस्तामलकं च शिष्यम् ।

तं तोटकं वार्तिककारमन्यानस्मत्गुरुन् सन्ततमानतोस्मि

*nārāyaṇam padmabhuvam vasiṣṭham śaktim ca tatputraparāśaram ca
vyāsam śukram gauḍapadam mahāntam govindayogīन्द्रamathāsya śiṣyam
śrīśamkarācāryamathāsya padmapādam ca hastāmalakam ca śiṣyam
tam toṭakam vārtikakāramanyānasmātgurun santatamānatosmi*

I salute the lineage of teachers starting from Lord Nārāyaṇa, Vasiṣṭha muni, his son śakti, Parāśaram muni, Vyāsa muni, his son śuka, great Gauḍapada ācārya, his student Govinda ācārya, his student Sri Śaṅkarācārya and his 4 disciples Padmapāda, Hastāmalaka, Toṭaka, Sureśvarācārya also called Vārtikakāra, and finally our own teacher. Since Sri Veda Vyāsa represents *guru-paramparā*, we express our gratitude to our gurus on this day. Gratitude is an important quality in life to remain happy. Gratitude is also important in developing devotion and *śraddha* in *guru*. Therefore we express our gratitude everyday and especially today to our teacher. We express our gratitude by doing *pūjā* to *gurus*, by chanting *stotras* glorifying *gurus*, making offering to *gurus*.

In some big maṭhas like Sringeri maṭha , today they worship *pañcaka-trayam*, three groups each consisting of five.

Sri kṛṣṇa pañcakam — In the center is invoked Bhagavān Sri kṛṣṇa , Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanātana, Sanatkumāra . On either side of *kṛṣṇa-pañcakam*, other two *pañcakams* are invoked .

Vyāsa pañcakam — On the right side are invoked Veda Vyāsa and his four disciples with whom he compiled and divided the vedas – Paila of *ṛg veda*, Vaiśampāyana of *yajur veda*, Jaimini of *sāma veda* and Sumantu of *atharva veda*.

Ācārya pañcakam – On the left side are invoked Bhagavān Śaṅkarācārya and his 4 disciples - Sureśvarācārya, Toṭakācārya, Padmapādācārya and Hastāmalakācārya. Then *guru*, *parama-guru* and *parameṣṭhi-guru* are invoked. Like *guru* of Śaṅkarācārya is Govindapādācārya whose *guru* was Gauḍapādācārya who is called *parama-guru*. *Parama-guru's guru* is *parameṣṭhi-guru* , great grand *guru*. Also there are *parātpara-gurus*, *Gurus* earlier to them. All of them are remembered and worshipped today.

So we also today remember our *guru*, *guru's guru* and great grand-*guru* and we express our gratitude to all of them. Pujya Swamiji's *guru's* pictures are here at the altar. He started his vedantic study with Swami Chinmayanandaji. He also studied with Swami Pranavanandaji for a brief period from whom he got a lot of clarity on *pramāṇams*. He studied *brahma-sūtra bhāṣyam* with Swami Taranandaji at Kailash Ashram. Swamiji used to stay in a hut and everyday morning walk to class and study from Swami Taranandaji Maharaj. Such a wonderful mahatma! All of them are worshipped here today.

Swami Chinmayanandaji himself studied Vedanta under Swami Taponanda maharaj. He was initiated into *sannyāsa* by Swami Shivanandaji who was initiated into *sannyāsa* by Swami Vishwananda Saraswati. Taponandaji maharaj studied from various *gurus*. But he took formal *sannyāsa* from Swami Janardhana Giri of Kailash ashram whom he chose as his *guru*. Thus we remember today our *guru* and all their *gurus*.

Of course, we remember Bhagavān Śaṅkarācārya who has written so many *bhāṣyams* and *stotrams*. The *paramparā* is expressed in this verse.

सदाशिवसमारम्भां शङ्कराचार्यमध्यमाम्
अस्मदाचार्यपर्यन्ताम् वन्दे गुरुपरम्पराम्
sadāśivasamārambhāṁ śaṅkarācāryamadhyamām
asmadācāryaparyantām vande guruparamparām

I salute the lineage of teachers starting with Lord Śiva with Śaṅkarācārya in the middle and upto my own teacher.

Always we remain indebted to our *guru-paramparā*. Whenever we are doing *namaskāra* or *pūjā* to our *guru*, we are not doing it only to a person but really we are doing *namaskāra* to the *guru-tattvam* or *guru-paramparā*. Because of that *namaskāra*, we get further commitment, more *śraddha* and more devotion to the pursuit of knowledge. This is one aspect of *guru-pūrṇimā*.

Today also marks the beginning of *cāturmāsya-vratam* of *sannyāsīs*. In olden days, *sannyāsīs* kept travelling. They would not stay more than 3 nights maximum in one place. But during monsoon, travelling was difficult. So before monsoon came, if the *sannyāsī* happens to pass by some village and if the people there are devoted and it will not be a burden to them, then the *sannyāsīs* may express a wish to stay there.

स्थाष्यामश्चतुरो मासानत्रैवासति बाधके
sthāṣyāmaścaturō māśānatraivāsati bādhake

We will stay here for 4 months, if it is not a disturbance.

Or the devotees themselves will request the *sannyāsī* or a swami to stay there and the people of that village or town will say-

निवसन्तु सुखेनात्र गमिष्यामः कृतार्थताम्।
यथाविहित शुश्रूषाम् करिष्यामो वयम् मुदा
nivasantu sukhenātra gamiṣyāmaḥ kṛtārthatām |
yathāvihita śuśrūṣām kariṣyāmo vayam mudā

Please stay here comfortably. We will be very grateful. As instructed, we will serve you.

What a beautiful way it is done! The swami does not thrust himself on them. It is up to the people to say yes or no and they on their side express that they are privileged to serve. Since it is rainy season, people will be relatively free, so the *sannyāsīs* will conduct classes on *upaniṣads*, *brahma-sūtra*, *purāṇā* depending on the capacity of the people. This was the tradition of *cāturmāsya-vratam*. But for *sannyāsīs* this became difficult, so they resorted to some *śruti vākya* - “*pakṣā vai māśāḥ*”, One fortnight is equal to one month. Therefore instead of 4 months they will stay for 2 months. Now a days also many *sannyāsīs* follow this. They don't cross the river at this time. Thus the *sannyāsīs* follow this *vrata*.

The third significance of *guru-pūrṇimā* is for non-*sannyāsīs*. During these four months some religious discipline is advised to be followed. From today we may choose to follow some *vrata*. *Vriyate iti vrata*, that which is chosen and followed is *vrata*.

Vrata is of two types - *tyāgarūpaḥ vrata* in the form of dropping something or *grahaṇarūpaḥ vrata* in the form of taking up some new practices. Either way it can be done.

Some examples for *tyāgarūpa vrata* - Some people are very fond of sweet. For 4 months or 2 months they give up that sweet. In *purāṇās*, it is said that the sweet which you gave up, you give to *brāhmaṇas*. Some people give up one fruit which they like or reduce one meal. This gives *punyam*. Or you observe *maunam* which is also a form of *tyāgarūpa vrata* because you are giving up the unnecessary talk. So something you give up for that period.

In modern times we have different forms of *tyāgarūpa vrata*. For four months or 2 months, one can stop watching a particular channel or serial or using anything to which a person is addicted or one can give up certain habits like eating junk food.

I remember in Bangalore we were conducting children's classes and I talked to them about this *vrata* and asked them to follow some *vrata*. One boy Akshaya was very fond of junk food. He got so inspired that he said- “Swamiji I will give up junk food for 2 months.” He really did it and afterwards he gave it up for good. Now every *guru-pūrṇimā* day he calls me and tells me- “Swamiji you told me about it and I gave it up. Now also I don't take it “. I was very impressed by how much determination this young boy of 12 years had to give up his addiction to junk food.

So you follow this *tyāgarūpa vrata* for 4 months or at least 2 months. But

make sure that it is not suppression. It is just to establish my mastery over the body-mind complex. One definition of *tapas* is – willful self-denial to establish mastery over my body-mind-sense complex. With this understanding, I drop something for sometime. This is one type of *vrata*m.

The second type of *vrata*m is *grahaṇarūpam vrata*m. You pick up something positive. Like we do some extra *japa* to whatever *japa* we do regularly. Or everyday chant *puruṣa suktam* in front of Lord *Viṣṇu*, which is very conducive for improving your intellect. Or do daily 108 times *parikrama* of a temple. While doing it we need to remember the Lord's names. Extra benefit of this is we will lose weight also. If 108 times is not possible, then we do at least 11 times daily morning and evening. If not possible twice, then do 11 times *pradakṣiṇa* once a day. This will help us to develop will power and also to invoke the grace of the Lord. Or do some other chanting like *Viṣṇu sahasra-nāmam* or *Lalitā sahasra-nāmam* or any other chanting. Or in *purāṇās* it is said that if one knows vedas and does vedic chanting in front of the Lord everyday for 4 months, it gives lot of *punyam*. That person will remain a scholar forever. Thus one should do something positive called *grahaṇarūpam vrata*m. You can do either *tyāgarūpam* or *grahaṇarūpam*. In fact, I suggest that one can do both of them – one variety of giving up something and one variety of adding something positive.

Many more *vrata*ms are mentioned in *śāstra* to get *punyam*, like sweeping or cleaning the floor of temple everyday or help prepare daily *candanam* or *navedyam* or some extra religious discipline which will give *punyam* and strengthen your will power.

In selecting and following the *vrata*m, certain principles can be followed – It should be conducive to the setup you are in. Like if you take *vrata*m that you will chant loudly at 4 am in the morning. This will disturb the neighbors. So it is not a good *vrata*m. It should be a meaningful *vrata*m which will help create devotion or some positive *samskāra* in you.

Select a *vrata*m in keeping with your capacity, *samartho dharma ācaret* - You should be able to practice the *vrata*m without effecting the health. If you have sugar problem and you decide to semi-fast for 4 months, that is not a conducive *vrata*m. So don't take such *vrata*ms. Do it in keeping with your physical, mental and financial capacity. One good *vrata*m is giving food to *brāhmaṇas*. But you should have the financial capacity. If we are not having sufficient financial resources, then we need not take this *vrata*m. So our

vratam can be in keeping with our capacity. It is not that I feel so exhausted after *vratam*, that after that I cannot do anything.

Any *vratam* should not contradict with my main pursuit. Like if you say I cannot attend Vedanta class for 4 months because I have taken so many *vratams*. *Vratam* can be such that it should be conducive to my main pursuit. Like if you are studying Vedanta and you take *vratam* to chant *upaniṣad* or *suktams* daily, it will be helpful. Also one does not do *vratam* to show-off to others. Like I am doing this difficult *prajāpatya vratam*. In fact as far as possible, we do not talk to others about the *vratam* we are taking.

One more thing, by chance if we could not follow this *vratam* then we need not have any sense of guilt. We try our best to follow. Before you start your *vratam*, you declare in front of the lord –“O Lord, give me the strength to follow this *vratam* for 4 months or 2 months” as you decide. By chance some health issue or unforeseen travel happens, then without guilt you can let go.

Vratam is not meant for creating guilt. *Vratam* is meant for strengthening you, not weakening you. At the same time there should be no looseness or casual approach. There has to be alertness and there is prayerfulness, but without guilt. If we follow our *vratam* prayerfully, then it really helps as a *sādhaka*. Of course, for people whose life is already full of religious and other disciplines and they don't waste time for other things, then they need not take up any special *vratam*. But those who have some scope for improvement in their discipline, these *vratams* will be useful.

If you have already outgrown all these things, then you need not take gross *vratams* like giving up junk food, etc. You can take some subtle *vratams*. Like *satya vratam*, *ahimsā vratam*. For *cāturmāsa*, I will be very alert and extra careful for this particular value. If required have some provision for *prāyaścittam* in case you break the *vratam*. Or you can do *kṣānti vratam*. For 2 months I will accommodate everybody, not react. Or *anindā vratam*, I will avoid criticism and speak good about others or *aparigraha vratam*, not buy anything for 2 or 4 months.

In Chāndogya *upaniṣad* for *sāma upāsakas*, some *vratas* are talked about. It is a very beautiful description. In the second chapter, where *sāma upāsana*s are talked about, for different *sāma upāsakas*, different *vratams* are given.

Upāsana and *vratam* go together. For one type of *sāma upāsakas*, *vratam* given is - महामनाः स्यात् तद् व्रतम्, *mahāmanāḥ syāt tad vratam* - may one become broad-

minded.

महत् मनः यस्य सः महामनाः , *mahat manah yasya sah mahāmanāḥ* - Means not being a narrow minded person.

अयम् निजः परः वैति गणनालघुचेतसाम् उदारचरितानाम् तु वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम् ॥

ayam nijah parah vaiti ganānalaghucetasām udāracaritānām tu vasudhaiiva kuṭumbakam

“This is my own, This is not mine, he is outsider.” Such consideration is only of narrow-minded people. For broad-minded people, the whole world is his family.

We could see that in Pujya Swamiji . He did not have any such boundary that he will only help tamilians because he was born in Tamil Nadu. He helped anybody he saw. If he sees something happening in some part of the country, he was concerned about it and he wants to do something about it. Anywhere he was ready to help. He used to work for preserving ethnic cultures in different parts of the world. It was not that only his culture should be preserved. He wanted every culture to be preserved.

That is *mahāmanāḥ* – let me not have narrow consideration. Let us take this *vratham*. Further it is described – how will you develop this *mahāmanāḥ* ? Sruti says –

तपन्तम् न निन्देत् , *tapantam na nindet tad vratam* - when sun is scorching too much, do not criticize that why is it so hot.

वर्षन्तम् न निन्देत् , *varṣantam na nindet tad vratam* - don't complain if it is raining.

ब्राह्मणाम् न निन्देत् , *brāhmaṇām na nindet tad vratam* - don't criticize *brāhmaṇā* .

लोकान् न निन्देत् , *lokān na nindet tad vratam* - don't criticize any place .

After doing all this, final *vratham* is -

सर्वं अहम् अस्मि इति उपासीत तद् व्रतम् , *sarvaṁ aham asmi iti upāsīta tad vratam*

May you meditate that I am all. Let it be your *bhavanā* first. Afterwards it can become your understanding. This is the third significance of the day.

So on this day, we express our gratitude to all the *ācāryas* of our *paramparā*. We seek their blessings for the success in our pursuit and if possible and if required we take some *vratham* to develop mastery and earn grace.

Om Tat Sat

** Transcribed and edited by students of Swamiji **