

This is the sixteenth part of the serial article, continuation from August 2022 newsletter.

### **Vividiṣā-sannyāsa, renunciation for the sake of pursuing knowledge**

When *vyavasāyātmikā buddhi* or determinate knowledge has arisen, what does one do? Then the person has no other agenda at all. His whole life is devoted only to the pursuit of knowledge. He becomes a renunciate, a *sannyāsī*. That is *vividiṣā-sannyāsa*, renunciation taken for the sake of *vividiṣā*, to fulfill the desire for knowledge. That is the most compatible way of life for the pursuit of self-knowledge. It does not mean that one cannot pursue knowledge otherwise, but if you have a choice, you always choose the most compatible way, just as you choose a place of residence which is most compatible with your nature. There are some who live in the woods and mountains. Why do they invite such discomfort? It is because that is where they feel comfortable; it is compatible with their nature. Again, what kind of job will anyone take up? It would be one that suits his or her particular qualification. Similarly also, a seeker of knowledge will take up that way of life which is most conducive for the pursuit of knowledge. *Sannyāsa* or renunciation is a way of life, wherein there is nothing else to do other than pursue knowledge, *śravaṇa*, *manana*, and *nididhyāsana*. At the most, it could also be serving the teacher, going and getting *bhikṣā* for the teacher, obtaining food for him, and doing things for him. That also is not required these days, anyway. Now the teachers are feeding the students instead! Whatever way it is, *sannyāsa* means a single-pointed pursuit.

Whether one wears ochre colored robes or not might depend upon the situation, because the world might not accept that. India would accept that, but the West would not have sympathy for a life of renunciation because you have to make your living here regardless of who you are. You may therefore not have a choice. In India, that luxury is available because a person in ochre clothes is respected. The *sannyāsī* can get food. If nothing else, people will provide you at least the ba-

sic needs. Or you can always go to Rishikesh, because there are *annakṣetras* where food is given free at least once a day. The devotees who visit Rishikesh and Haridwar have a great value for feeding the *sādhus*. Lots of donations pour into the *annakṣetras*, and so, now and then, there is even a *bhaṇḍārā* or feast.

Normally, the *annakṣetras* provide *dāl* and *roṭī*. As Swamiji says, in the morning it is *dāl-roṭī* and in the evening it is *roṭī-dāl*; *dāl-roṭī*, *roṭī-dāl*! That's what you have. But every now and then, because of the kindness of the devotees, there is a *bhaṇḍārā* or feast. There is some special *sabji*, vegetables and things like that. Once or twice a year, they may also give you an umbrella, because you need that in the rain and heat. Every so often, they give a pair of clothes, a bar of soap, a bottle of coconut oil, things like that. For most *sādhus*, that is quite adequate. They need not waste time looking for all this stuff. At one time, *sannyāsīs* had to spend a lot of time in getting their *bhikṣā*. They were required to go to the hills and that took a lot of time. Therefore, a holy man, called Bābā Kālikambliwālā, set up an *annakṣetra*. Later on, many other *annakṣetras* also came up. Therefore, in India, one still has the luxury of becoming a renunciate because the basic needs will be taken care of and one can remain devoted to study, contemplation, or whatever one wants.

### **The wise person**

*Yatayaḥ* are those whose nature it is to strive hard. They have only one agenda. The agenda is to gain the knowledge and do whatever is required to further that agenda. As part of that, one might perform *pūjā* or worship, do *japa* or chanting, *upāsanā* or meditation, or whatever is considered necessary. One can study Sanskrit or study logic, *nyāya*, if there is a need to be acquainted with the basic texts; one may do whatever is necessary to pursue the knowledge. People have different kinds of needs, and some people do a lot of meditation and worship, in addition to studying the scriptures.

*Śuddhasattvāḥ* are those who enjoy a *śuddha*, pure, *sattva*, mind. Purification of mind happens in two stages. The first happens through *karma-yoga*, which is the worship of *īśvara*, the Lord, through one's *karma* or actions. The second stage of

purification takes place during the pursuit of knowledge. The nature of this purification is the giving up of one's erroneous notions in light of the study of Vedānta. That is the finer process of purification. Here *śuddhasattvāḥ* means the wise, those whose hearts are pure; all their impurities of the nature of false notions have been removed by the knowledge.

What happens to the wise at the time of death?

*Antakāla* means the time or hour of death. This is the term used to denote the death of an ordinary person. The death of the wise person is called *parāntakāla*, because it is death with a finality, once and for all. An ignorant person dies only to be born again, because the desires in his mind at the time of death determine his destination. Until the person gains *mokṣa*, this process continues.

“But suppose, Swamiji, I decide not to desire at the time of death, then what?” The answer to that is that there's no choice in this matter. It's not that one can resolve to desire or not desire; desire simply occurs. Desires are an expression of our needs. Desires will continue to exist as long as we feel incomplete. Therefore, what applies to an ignorant person is *antakāla* or death, which is followed by birth. As the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad<sup>1</sup> says, *mṛtyoḥ sa mṛtyumāpnoti*, he goes from one death to another death. What is the death of the wise person? It is called *parāntakāla*, a death that is not followed by birth; it is not only the death of the physical body but also the death of ignorance and the death of the ego. The word *parāntakāla* has two meanings. Beyond the literal meaning, the implication that applies to the wise person is that the 'real' death has taken place in the wake of knowledge. This is the death of the ego, the sense of individuality, which is caused by ignorance. When ignorance goes, the sense of individuality also ceases.

Those who have become immortal, *parāmṛtāḥ*, having gained identity with *brahman*, abide in *brahman*, *brahmalokeṣu*. *Brahmaloka* means *brahma eva lokaḥ*, the *loka* or abode that is of the nature of *brahman*. Wise people abide in their knowledge of the self as *brahman*.

*To be continued...*

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<sup>1</sup> Bṛ.Up. 4.4.19