

Vedanshi

The part of the sacred knowledge

He who sees that all actions are performed in their entirety by Prakriti alone, and not by the Self, is indeed a beholder of truth.

Chapter 13, Verse 29; Bhagavad Gita

A Monthly Newsletter

Issue No 17: April 2015

Bhakti Yoga

Apara-Bhakti is for beginners in Yoga. The beginner decorates an image with flowers and garlands, rings the bell, offers Naivedya (food-offerings), wave lights; he observes rituals and ceremonies.

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SHSK Upcoming Event

Second Annual General Body Meeting

April 25, 2015

11:00 am to 2:00 pm
Pizza for Lunch

Lafayette Public Library
South Regional Branch
6101 Johnston St, Lafayette

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God gives you what you ask for

- Short Story

The four wives represent the four types of devotees of God - Arta, Artharthi, Jijnasu and Jnani (afflicted, avaricious, seeker and wise). God gives to each what he wants.

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Celebrations in March-April 2015



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SANATAN HINDU



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OM TAT SAT ITI

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Mahalakshmi Ashtakam

Part - 2

Padma-Aasana-Sthite Devi Para-Brahma-Svaruupinni |

Parameshi Jagan-Maatar-Mahaalakssmi Namostute | 7 |

7.1: (Salutations to Devi Mahalakshmi) The Devi Who is Seated on a Lotus, Who is of the Nature of Supreme Brahman,

7.2: Who is the Supreme Lord and the Mother of the Universe; Salutations to that Mahalakshmi.

Shveta-Ambara-Dhare Devi Naana-Alangkaara-Bhuussite |

Jagatsthite Jagan-Maatar-Mahaalakssmi Namostute | 8 |

8.1: (Salutations to Devi Mahalakshmi) The Devi who is Dressed in White Garments, Who is Adorned with Various Ornaments,

8.2: Who Abides in this Universe and is the Mother of the Universe; Salutations to that Mahalakshmi.

Mahaalakssmy-Asstakam Stotram Yah Patthed-Bhaktimaan-Narah |



Sarva-Siddhim-Avaapnoti Raajyam Praapnoti Sarvadaa | 9 |

9.1: Whoever recites this Mahalakshmi Ashtakam Stotram with Devotion, ...

9.2: ... Will attain all Success and Prosperity, always.

Eka-Kaale Patthen-Nityam Mahaa-Paapa-Vinaashanam |

Dvi-Kaalam Yah Patthen-Nityam Dhana-Dhaanya-Samanvitah | 10 |

10.1: Reciting this Once Every Day will Destroy Great Sins,

10.2: Reciting this Twice Every Day will bestow one with Wealth and Foodgrains.

Tri-Kaalam Yah Patthen-Nityam Mahaa-Shatru-Vinaashanam |

Mahaalakssmir-Bhaven-Nityam Prasannaa Varadaa Shubhaa | 11 |

11.1: Reciting this Thrice Everyday will Destroy Great Enemies, ...

11.2: ... And Devi Mahalakshmi will be Pleased with him and extend Her Boon-Giving Grace and Auspicious presence.

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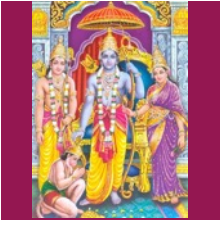


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Sita Ram



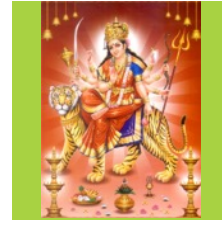
Ganesh



Krishna



Durga



Shiva



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Bhakti Yoga - Part I

by Swami Sivananda

What is Bhakti?

The term *Bhakti* comes from the root 'Bhaj', which means 'to be attached to God'. Bhajan, worship, Bhakti, Anurag, Prem, Priti are synonymous terms. Bhakti is love for love's sake. The devotee wants God and God alone. There is no selfish expectation here. There is no fear also. Therefore it is called 'Parama Prem Rupa'. The devotee feels, believes, conceives and imagines that his Ishtam (tutelary deity) is an Ocean of Love or Prem.

Bhakti is the slender thread of Prem or love that binds the heart of a devotee with the lotus feet of the Lord. Bhakti is intense devotion and supreme attachment to God. Bhakti is supreme love for God. It is the spontaneous out-pouring of Prem towards the Beloved. It is pure, unselfish, divine love or Suddha Prem. There is not a bit of bargaining or expectation of anything here. This higher feeling is indescribable in words. It has to be sincerely experienced by the devotee. Bhakti is a sacred, higher emotion with sublime sentiments that unites the devotees with the Lord.

Mark how love develops. First arises faith. Then follows attraction and after that adoration. Adoration leads to suppression of mundane desires. The result is single-mindedness and satisfaction. Then grow attachment and supreme love towards God.

In this type of highest Bhakti all attraction and attachment which one has for objects of enjoyment are transferred to the only dearest object, viz., God. This leads the devotee to an eternal union with his Beloved and culminates in oneness.

Types of Bhakti?

Bhakti is of various kinds. One classification is *Sakamy* and *Nishkamya* Bhakti. *Sakamy* Bhakti is

devotion with desire for material gains. A man wants wealth with this motive practices Bhakti. Another man wants freedom from diseases and therefore does Japa and offers prayers. A third one wants to become a Minister and does Upasana with this aim. This is *Sakamy* Bhakti. Whatever you want the Lord will certainly give you, if your Bhakti is intense and if your prayers are sincerely offered from the bottom of your heart. But you will not get supreme satisfaction, immortality and Moksha through *Sakamy* Bhakti.

Your Bhakti should always be *Nishkamya* Bhakti. God has already given you a good position, a good job, wife and children and enough wealth. Be contented with these. Aspire for *Nishkamya* Bhakti. Your heart will be purified and the Divine Grace will descend upon you. Be in communion with the Lord, you will become one with the Lord and you will enjoy all the Divine Aisvaryas (Divine attributes like wisdom, renunciation, power, etc.). All the Vibhutip (Special forms in which the Lord manifests) of the Lord He will give you. He will give you Darshan. He will help you to dwell in Him. At the same time He will give you all the Divine Aisvaryas also.

.....continued on Page 4



On Page 4: *Apara Bhakti, Para Bhakti, Gauna Bhakti and Mukhya Bhakti* are explained.

In next issue more about *How to Cultivate Bhakti and Bhavas in Bhakti - Part II*

April & May 2015 Dates

Based on Lafayette, Louisiana, US Time

14 Tuesday	Puthandu, Mesha Sankranti
20 Monday	Akshaya Tritiya Parashurama Jayanti
24 Friday	Ganga Saptami
25 Saturday	SHSK Annual General Body Meeting
27 Monday	Sita Navami
29 Wednesday	Mohini Ekadashi
02 Saturday	Narasimha Jayanti
04 Monday	Narada Jayanti

For more details please refer DrikPanchang.com

SHSK Upcoming Events

Second Annual General Body Meeting
April 25, 2015 (Saturday)

11:00 am to 2:00 pm
Pizza for Lunch

Lafayette Public Library
at South Regional Branch
6101 Johnston Street, Lafayette, LA 70503

Hindu Rituals and Routines

Why do we follow them? - Part III

Hinduism is not a religion but a way of life. Unlike other religions, Hindu dharma has many specialties. This is not known as a religion, it is known as the dharma; Sanaathana Dharma. Sanaathana means, according to Bhagavath Geetha, which cannot be destroyed by fire, weapons, water, air, and which is present in all living and non living being. Dharma means, the way of life which is the 'total of all *aacharaas* or customs and rituals'.

6. Why do we not touch papers, books and people with the feet?

To Indians, knowledge is sacred and divine. So it must be given respect at all times.

Nowadays we separate subjects as sacred and secular. But in ancient India every subject - academic or spiritual - was considered divine and taught by the guru in the gurukula.

The custom of not stepping on educational tools is a frequent reminder of the high position accorded to knowledge in Indian culture. From an early age, this wisdom fosters in us a deep reverence for books and education. This is also the reason why we worship books, vehicles and instruments once a year on Saraswathi Pooja or Ayudha Pooja day, dedicated to the Goddess of Learning. In fact, each day before starting our studies, we pray:



Saraswati namasthubhyam

Varade kaama roopini

Vidyaarambham karishyaami

Sidhirbhavatu me sadaa

O Goddess Saraswati, the giver of

Boons and fulfiller of wishes,

I prostrate to You before starting my studies.

May you always fulfill me?

7. To touch another with the feet is considered an act of misdemeanor. Why is this so?

Man is regarded as the most beautiful, living breathing temple of the Lord! Therefore touching another with the feet is akin to disrespecting the divinity within him or her. This calls for an immediate apology, which is offered with reverence and humility.

8. Why do we apply the holy ash?

The ash of any burnt object is not regarded as holy ash. **Bhasma** (the holy ash) is the ash from the homa (sacrificial fire) where special wood along with ghee and other herbs is offered as worship of

the Lord. Or the deity is worshipped by pouring ash as abhisheka and is then distributed as bhasma.

Bhasma is generally applied on the forehead. Some apply it on certain parts of the body like the upper arms, chest etc. Some ascetics rub it all over the body. Many consume a pinch of it each time they receive it.

The word bhasma means, "that by which our sins are destroyed and the Lord is remembered." *Bha* implied *bhartsanam* ("to destroy") and *sma* implies *smaranam* ("to remember"). The application of bhasma therefore signifies destruction of the evil and remembrance of the divine. Bhasma is called *vibhuti* (which means "glory") as it gives glory to one who applies it and *raksha* (which means a source of protection) as it protects the wearer from ill health and evil, by purifying him or her.



Homa (offering of oblations into the fire with sacred chants) signifies the offering or surrender of the ego and egocentric desires into the flame of knowledge or a noble and selfless cause. The consequent ash signifies the purity of the mind, which results from such actions.

Also the fire of knowledge burns the oblation and wood signifying ignorance and inertia respectively. The ash we apply indicates that we should burn false identification with the body and become free of the limitations of birth and death. This is not to be misconstrued as a morose reminder of death but as a powerful pointer towards the fact that time and tide wait for none.

Bhasma is specially associated with Lord Shiva who applies it all over His body. Shiva devotees apply bhasma as a tripundra. When applied with a red spot at the center, the mark symbolizes Shiva-Shakti (the unity of energy and matter that creates the entire seen and unseen universe).



Tryambakam yajaamahe

Sugandhim pushtivardhanam

Urvaa rukamiva bhandhanaan

Mrytyor muksheeyamaa amrutaat

"We worship the three-eyed Lord Shiva who nourishes and spread fragrance in our lives. May He free us from the shackles of sorrow, change and death - effortlessly, like the fall of a rip brinjal from its stem."

9. Why do we offer food to the lord before eating it?

Indians make an offering of food to the Lord and later partake of it as *prasaada* - a holy gift from the

Lord. In our daily ritualistic worship (pooja) too we offer *naivedyam* (food) to the Lord.

The Lord is omnipotent and omniscient. Man is a

part, while the Lord is the totality. All that we do is by His strength and knowledge alone. Hence what we receive in life as a result of our actions is really His alone. We acknowledge this through the act of offering food to Him. This is exemplified by the Hindi words "*tera tujko arpan*" - I offer what is Yours to You. Thereafter it is akin to His gift to us, graced by His divine touch.

Knowing this, our entire attitude to food and the act of eating changes. The food offered will naturally be pure and the best. We share what we get with others before consuming it. We do not demand, complain or criticize the quality of the food we get. We eat it with cheerful acceptance (*prasaada buddhi*).



Before we partake of our daily meals we first sprinkle water around the plate as an act of purification. Five morsels of food are placed on the side of the plate acknowledging the debt owed by us to the Divine forces (*devta runa*) for their benign grace and protection, our ancestors (*pitru runa*) for giving us their lineage and a family culture, the sages (*rishi runa*) as our religion and culture have been "realized", maintained and handed down to us by them, our fellow beings (*manushya runa*) who constitute society without the support of which we could not live as we do and other living beings (*bhuta runa*) for serving us selflessly.

Thereafter the Lord, the life force, who is also within us as the five life-giving physiological functions, is offered the food. This is done with the chant

**praanaaya swaahaa,
apaanaaya swaahaa,
vyaanaaya swaahaa,
udaanaaya swaahaa,
samaanaaya swaahaa,
brahmane swaahaa**

After offering the food thus, it is eaten as *prasaada* - blessed food.

- Swami Chinmayananda



Celebrations in Lafayette, LA in March-April 2015: Holi Festival, Sri Rama Navami, Hanuman Jayanthi

God Gives you What you Ask for

... Short Story

A rich man used to go to various places on business trips. He had four wives. One of them was always sick, the second had a craze for costly clothes, jewels and articles of worldly pleasure and the third had great interest in reading spiritual books. His fourth wife was however always engaged in the performance of her duties and serving her husband. Whenever she found time in between the performance of her duties, she spent it in chanting the Name of God.

Once the rich man went to a foreign country. After finishing his business engagements, he decided to come back. Before returning, he wrote a letter to his wives: "I am coming back soon. If you write to me what each one of you wants, I will bring that."

The first wife described the details of her ailments and asked for effective medicines to cure them. The second wife wrote to him to bring clothes of the latest model. The third wife asked him to buy for her some good books on spirituality. The fourth wife wrote thus: "Swami, I do not want anything. My only desire is that you should come back safe and sound. I am waiting for you."

The rich man came back after a week or so. He sent to this three wives the articles they had asked for to their respective residences, and himself went to the residence of his fourth wife to stay there. At this, his three wives came to him and protested, "Oh dear one! Is that what you have done good? You have returned after spending so much time in a foreign country. Should you not spend some time with us"? The husband replied, "Look! I have given



to each one of you what you desired from me, but she desired only me. So, I am staying with her".

What is the inner meaning of this story? The rich man in the story stands for God. The four wives represent the four types of devotees of God - Arta, Artharthi, Jijnasu and Jnani (afflicted, avaricious, seeker and wise). God gives to each what he wants.

... Santhana Sarathi

Bhakti Yoga... Continued from page 2

Another classification of Bhakti is *Apara-Bhakti* and *Para-Bhakti*. *Apara-Bhakti* is for beginners in Yoga. The beginner decorates an image with flowers and garlands, rings the bell, offers Naivedya (food-offerings), wave lights; he observes rituals and ceremonies. The Bhakta here regards the Lord as a Supreme Person, who is immanent in that image and who can be propitiated through that form only.

He has no expanded heart. He is a sectarian. He dislikes other kinds of Bhaktas who worship other Devatas. Gradually, from *Apara-Bhakti*, the devotee goes to *Para-Bhakti*, the highest form of Bhakti. He sees the Lord and Lord alone everywhere and feels

His Power manifest as the entire universe. "Thou art all-pervading; on what Simhasana shall I seat Thee ? Thou art the Supreme Light, in whose borrowed light the sun, the moon, the stars and the fire shine; shall I wave this little *Deepa* or light before You ?" - thus the devotee recognizes the transcendental nature of God. *Para-Bhakti* and *Jnana* are one. But every Bhakta will have to start from *Apara-Bhakti*. Before you take your food, offer it to God mentally; and the food will be purified. When you pass through a garden of flowers, mentally offer all the flowers to the Lord in *Archana* (offering flowers in worship). When you pass through the bazaar and see a sweetmeat shop, offer all the sweetmeats as *Naivedya* to the Lord. Such practices will lead to *Para-Bhakti*.

Bhakti is also classified into *Gauna-Bhakti* and *Mukhya-Bhakti*. *Gauna-Bhakti* is the lower Bhakti and *Mukhya-Bhakti* is the higher type of Bhakti.

Go from stage to stage. Just as a flower grows in the garden, so also gradually develop love or Prem in the garden of your heart.

The enemy of devotion is egoism and desire. Where there is no *Kama* or desire, there alone will Rama (the Lord) manifest Himself. The enemies of peace and devotion are lust, anger and greed. Anger destroys your peace and your health also. When a man abuses you, keep peaceful. When blood begins to boil, it is impoverished. You lose vitality if you become a prey to fits of temper.

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Thank you for your support and blessings.
Srinivasan Ambatipati, Editor