

Vedanshi

The part of the sacred knowledge

O Dhananjaya (Arjuna), if thou art not able to keep thy mind wholly on Me, then seek to attain Me by repeated yoga practice.

Chapter 12, Verse 9; Bhagavad Gita

A Monthly Newsletter

Issue No 19: June 2015

Bhakti Yoga

Sravana is hearing of Lord's Lilas. Sravana includes hearing of God's virtues, glories, sports and stories connected with His divine Name and Form.

Page 2



Hindu Rituals and Routines - Part V

15. Why do we worship the kalasha?
16. Why do we consider lotus as special?
17. Why do we worship tulasi?

Page 3

Ganesh/Krishna Yatra Update

Ganesh Pooja was performed followed by Aarti. About 120 members attended this event in spite of rain prediction, the rain lords waited till the event was complete to open the doors of heaven with rain.

Page 4

SHSK Activities in May



Page 4

SANATAN HINDU



SANSKAR KENDRA
OM TAT SAT ITI

PO Box 80362,
Lafayette, LA - 70598

shskendra@gmail.com,
www.sanatanlft.org

Roots of Yoga

The word Yoga is derived from the Sanskrit word 'Yuj' which means to join or unite. The union referred to is that of the individual self-uniting with Cosmic Consciousness or the Universal Spirit. Yoga is believed to have evolved during the period of the 'Sat Yuga', also called the Golden age. It was not until the discovery of the Indus- valley civilization, the largest civilization: that the knowledge about the origin of Yoga surfaced. One of the earliest expositions on Yoga was written by the Indian sage Patanjali. His work, known today as "Patanjali's Yoga Sutras" is widely available on the net. treasure of spiritual knowledge for future generations.

"Patanjali defines yoga as" Yoga Chitta Vritti Nirodha "- Yoga is the cessation of mental fluctuations." Hence, yoga can be defined as a state of complete stillness of mind. To achieve this goal, Patanjali prescribes the eight limbs or stages every practitioner must master. Today, Ashtanga yoga (which means 'eight-limbed yoga') is sometimes thought to be a particular style or series of postures. But these are really the eight stages described by Patanjali. They are:

1. Yama (moral restraints)
2. Niyama (spiritual practices)



3. Asana (seat posture with spine erect)
4. Pranayama (breath control)
5. Pratyahara (withdrawal of from the organs of sense and the organs of action)
6. Dharana (deep state of concentration)
7. Dhyana (directing attention to the subject of meditation)

8. Samadhi (complete absorption in super consciousness or divine mind)

Four Classifications of Yoga

Yoga works on the level of one's body, mind, emotion and energy. This has given rise to four broad classifications of Yoga:

1. Karma Yoga, where we utilize the body
2. Jnana Yoga, where we utilize the mind
3. Bhakti Yoga, where we utilize the emotion
4. Kriya Yoga, where we utilize the energy

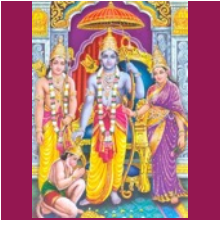
Each system of Yoga we practice would fall within the gamut of one or more of these categories. Every individual is a unique combination of these four factors. Only a Guru (a teacher) can advocate the appropriate combination of the four fundamental paths, as is necessary for each seeker.

Yoga's Forgotten roots has been beautifully captured in the book 'Yoga's Forgotten Foundation - Hinduism's Code of Conduct. "

<http://www.himalayanacademy.com/view/yogas-forgotten-foundation>

<http://idayofyoga.org>

Sita Ram



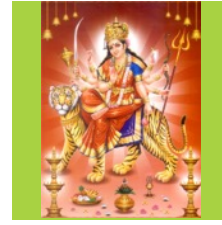
Ganesh



Krishna



Durga



Shiva



Sanatan Hindu Sanskar Kendra

PO Box 80362, Lafayette, Louisiana - 70598

Email: shskendra@gmail.com, Website: sanatanlft.org

Tax Id: 46-2580905

Bhakti Yoga - Part III

by Swami Sivananda

Nava-Vidha Bhakti?

Devotion to God is developed in nine different ways. It is supreme attachment to God through a Bhava predominant in the devotee. Intense love is the common factor in all the nine modes. Exclusive love for God is expressed through various methods. All Bhaktas of this type are above the formalities of the world. They are untouched by the laws of human Dharma and are out and out concerned with God.

Good conduct which is in accordance with perfect moral law is an auxiliary to pure Bhakti and it follows the true Bhakta wherever he goes. One cannot develop true devotion to God if he is crooked in his heart, if he has got objects of love in this world, if he is tempted by charming worldly things, if he wishes to take care of his wife, children and relatives, if he wishes to feed his body well, if he wishes to earn a great name in the world, if he wants to establish a permanent fame on earth, if he does not like to part with the alluring contents of the world. Perfect detachment from all objects is a preliminary to real devotion. Vairagya is the product of real love for God. One who has love for the world cannot have love for God. Where there is Kama, there cannot be Rama and where there is Rama there cannot be Kama. Love for the world and love for God are diametrically opposite things. One has to be renounced for the attainment of the other. This renunciation can be acquired through the nine forms of Bhakti.

In the Srimad-Bhagavata and the Vishnu Purana it is told that the nine forms of Bhakti are

1. *Shravana* (hearing of God's Lilas and stories),
2. *Kirtana* (singing of His glories),
3. *Smarana* (remembrance of His name and presence),

4. *Padasevana* (service of His feet),
5. *Archana* (worship of God),
6. *Vandana* (prostration to Lord),
7. *Dasya* (cultivating the Bhava of a servant with God),
8. *Sakhya* (cultivation of the friend-Bhava) and
9. *Atmanivedana* (complete surrender of the self).

A devotee can practice any method of Bhakti which suits him best. Through that he will attain Divine illumination.

Shravana is hearing of Lord's Lilas. *Shravana* includes hearing of God's virtues, glories, sports and stories connected with His divine Name and Form. The devotee gets absorbed in the hearing of Divine stories and his mind merges in the thought of divinity; it cannot think of undivine things. The mind loses, as it were, its charm for the world. The devotee remembers God only, even in dream.

The devotee should sit before a learned teacher who is a great saint and hear Divine stories. He should hear them with a sincere heart devoid of the sense of criticism or fault-finding. The devotee should try his best to live in the ideals preached in the scriptures.

One cannot attain *Shravana-Bhakti* without the company of saints or wise men. Mere reading for oneself is not of much use. Doubts will crop up. They cannot be solved by oneself easily. An experienced man is necessary to instruct the devotee in the right path.

King Parikshit attained Liberation through *Shravana*. He heard the glories of God from Suka Maharishi. His heart was purified. He attained the Abode of Lord Vishnu in Vaikuntha. He became liberated and enjoyed the Supreme Bliss.

.....continued on Page 4

June & July 2015 Dates

Based on Lafayette, Louisiana, US Time

12 Friday	Yogini Ekadashi
15 Monday	Mithuna Sankranti
27 Saturday	Padmini Ekadashi

11 Saturday	Parama Ekadashi
16 Thursday	Karka Sankranti
27 Monday	Devshayani Ekadashi
30 Thursday	Guru Purnima

For more details please refer DrikPanchang.com



Find us on Facebook and get SHSK updates



Subscribe to SHSK channel on youtube and listen to devotional playlists.

Hindu Rituals and Routines

Why do we follow them? - Part V

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'.

15. Why do we worship the kalasha?

First of all what is a *kalasha*? A brass, mud or copper pot is filled with water. Mango leaves are placed in the mouth of the pot and a coconut is placed over it. A red or white thread is tied around its neck or sometimes all around it in a intricate diamond-shaped pattern. The pot may be decorated with designs. Such a pot is known as a *kalasha*.

When the pot is filled with water or rice, it is known as *purnakumbha* representing the inert body which when filled with the divine life force gains the power to do all the wonderful things that makes life what it is.



A *kalasha* is placed with due rituals on all important occasions like the traditional house warming (*grihapravesa*), wedding, daily

worship etc. It is placed near the entrance as a sign of welcome. It is also used in a traditional manner while receiving holy personages. Why do we worship the *kalasha*? Before the creation came into being, Lord Vishnu was reclining on His snake-bed in the milky ocean. From His navel emerged a lotus from which appeared Lord Brahma, the creator, who thereafter created this world.

The water in the *kalasha* symbolizes the primordial water from which the entire creation emerged. It is the giver of life to all and has the potential of creating innumerable names and forms, the inert objects and the sentient beings and all that is auspicious in the world from the energy behind the universe. The leaves and coconut represent creation.

The thread represents the love that "binds" all in creation. The *kalasha* is therefore considered auspicious and worshipped. The waters from all the holy rivers, the knowledge of all the Vedas and the blessings of all the deities are invoked in the *kalasha* and its water is thereafter used for all the rituals, including the abhisheka.

The consecration (*kumbhaabhisheka*) of a temple is done in a grand manner with elaborate rituals including the pouring of one or more *kalashas* of holy water on the top of the temple. When the asuras and devas churned the milky ocean, the Lord appeared bearing the pot of nectar, which blessed one with everlasting life.

Thus the kalasha also symbolizes immortality. Men of wisdom are full and complete as they identify with the infinite Truth (*poornatvam*). They brim with joy and love and respect all that is auspicious. We greet them with a *purnakumbha* ("full pot") acknowledging their greatness and as a sign of respectful and reverential welcome, with a "full heart".

16. Why do we consider the lotus as special?

The lotus is the symbol of truth, auspiciousness and beauty (*satyam, shivam, sundaram*). The Lord is also that nature and therefore, His various aspects are compared to a lotus (i.e. lotus-eyes, lotus feet, lotus hands, the lotus of the heart etc.).

The lotus blooms with the rising sun and close at night. Similarly, our minds open up and expand with the light of knowledge. The lotus grows even in slushy areas. It remains beautiful and untainted despite its surroundings, reminding us that we too can and should strive to remain pure and beautiful within, under all circumstances.

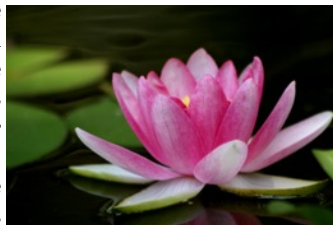
The lotus leaf never gets wet even though it is always in water. It symbolizes the man of wisdom (*gyaani*) who remains ever joyous, unaffected by the world of sorrow and change. This is revealed in a shloka from the Bhagwad-Geeta:

*Brahmanyadhaaya karmaani
Sangam tyaktvaa karoti yaha
Lipyate na sa paapena
Padma patram ivaambhasaa*

He who does actions, offering them to Brahman (the Supreme), abandoning attachment, is not tainted by sin, just as a lotus leaf remains unaffected by the water on it.

From this, we learn that what is natural to the man of wisdom becomes a discipline to be practiced by all *saadhakas* or spiritual seekers and devotees. Our bodies have certain energy centers described in the Yoga Shaastras as chakras.

Each one is associated with lotus that has a certain number of petals. For example, a lotus with a thousand petals represents the Sahasra chakra at the top of the head, which opens when the yogi attains Godhood or Realization. Also, the lotus posture (*padmaasana*) is



recommended when one sits for meditation. A lotus emerged from the navel of Lord Vishnu. Lord Brahma originated from it to create the world. Hence, the lotus symbolizes the link between the creator and the supreme Cause.

It also symbolizes Brahmaloaka, the abode of Lord Brahma. The auspicious sign of the swastika is said to have evolved from the lotus.

17. Why do we worship tulasi?

In Sanskrit, *tulanaa naasti athaiva tulasi* - that which is incomparable (in its qualities) is the tulasi



For Indians it is one of the most sacred plants. In fact it is known to be the only thing used in worship, which, once used, can be washed and reused

in pooja - as it is regarded so self-purifying.

As one story goes, Tulasi was the devoted wife of Shankhachuda, a celestial being. She believed that Lord Krishna tricked her into sinning. So she cursed Him to become a stone (*shaaligraama*). Seeing her devotion and adhered to righteousness, the Lord blessed her saying that she would become the worshipped plant, tulasi that would adorn His head.

Also that all offerings would be incomplete without the *tulasi* leaf - hence the worship of *tulasi*.

She also symbolizes Goddess Lakshmi, the consort of Lord Vishnu. Those who wish to be righteous and have a happy family life worship the *tulasi*.

Tulasi is married to the Lord with all pomp and show as in any wedding.

This is because according to another legend, the Lord blessed her to be His consort. Satyabhama once weighed Lord Krishna against all her legendary wealth. The scales did not balance till a single *tulasi* leaf was placed along with the wealth on the scale by Rukmini with devotion.

Thus the *tulasi* played the vital role of demonstrating to the world that even a small object offered with devotion means more to the Lord than all the wealth in the world.

The *tulasi* leaf has great medicinal value and is used to cure various ailments, including the common cold.

*Yannmule sarvatirhaani
Yannagre sarvadevataa
Yannadhye sarvavedaascha
Tulasi taam namaamyaham*

I bow down to the tulasi, At whose base are all the holy places, At whose top reside all the deities and In whose middle are all the Vedas.

- Swami Chinmayananda



SHSK - Ganesha/Krishna Yatra to Temple Location in Lafayette, LA on May 31st, 2015

Ganesh/Krishna Yatra Update

Lord Ganesha and Lord Krishna Yatra to the temple location was organized on May 31st, 2015. The beautiful moorties arrived in a fully decorated caravan. Ganesh Pooja was performed followed by Aarti. Thanks to the Pooja Committee for the caravan decoration and performing the pooja. About 120 members attended this event in spite of rain prediction, the rain lords waited till the event was complete to open the doors of heaven with rain. We hope with the arrival of Ganesh ji to the temple location all our efforts to build a home for him will be taken care of without any obstacles. Food Committee lead by Punitha Vallalar had delivered tasty food along with yummy dosas made on-site. Event Committee lead by Senthil Thavamani as usual made arrangements to suit the event needs. Thanks to Shravan Ramaram for taking the event pictures. This Yatra raised about \$6000 in donations for the temple which will be used for phase -1 construction. We thank all the members for their generous donations and renewing their annual membership dues on this day. We finally would also like to thank all the volunteers for their time and effort to make this event successful.

... Srinivasan Ambatipati

Bhakti Yoga... Continued from page 2

Kirtana is singing of Lord's glories. The devotee is thrilled with Divine Emotion. He loses himself in the love of God. He gets horripilation in the body due to extreme love for God. He weeps in the



middle when thinking of the glory of God. His voice becomes choked, and he flies into a state of Divine Bhava. The devotee is ever engaged in Japa of the Lord's Name and in describing His glories to one and all. Wherever he goes he begins to sing and praise God. He requests all to join his Kirtana. He sings and dances in ecstasy. He makes others also dance.

Smarana is remembrance of the Lord at all times. This is unbroken memory of the Name and Form of the Lord. The mind does not think of any object of the world, but is ever engrossed in thinking of the glorious Lord alone. The mind meditates on what is heard about the glories of God and His virtues, Names, etc., and forgets even the body and contents itself in the remembrance of God, just as

Dhruva or Prahlada did. Even Japa is only remembrance of God and comes under this category of Bhakti. Remembrance also includes hearing of stories pertaining to God at all times, talking of God, teaching to others what pertains to God, meditation on the attributes of God, etc. Remembrance has no particular time. God is to be remembered at all times without break, so long as one has got his consciousness intact.

Padasevana is serving the Lord's Feet. Actually this can be done only by Lakshmi or Parvati. No mortal being has got the fortune to practice this method of Bhakti, for the Lord is not visible to the physical eyes. But it is possible to serve the image of God in idols and better still, taking the whole humanity as God. This is Padasevana. Padasevana is service of the sick. Padasevana is service of the whole humanity at large. The whole universe is only Virat-Swarupa. Service of the world is service of the Lord.

Archana is worship of the Lord. Worship can be done either through an image or a picture or even a mental form. The image should be one appealing to the mind of the worshipper.

Worship can be done either with external materials or merely through an internal Bhava or strong feeling. The latter one is an advanced form of worship which only men of purified intellect can do. The purpose of worship is to please the Lord, to purify the heart through surrender of the ego and love of God.

.....www.dlshq.org

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