

Vedanshi

The part of the sacred knowledge

From sheer compassion I, the Divine Indweller; set alight in them the radiant lamp of wisdom which banishes the darkness that is born of ignorance.

Chapter 10, Verse 11; Bhagavad Gita

A Monthly Newsletter

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Bhakti Yoga-Part IV

Knowledge or wisdom will dawn by itself when you practice Bhakti Yoga. Bhakti is the pleasant, smooth, direct road to God. Bhakti is sweet in the beginning, sweet in the middle and sweet in the end. It gives the highest, un-decaying bliss.

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SANATAN HINDU



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The Life of a Master - Swami Sivananda

One of the greatest Yoga masters of the 20th century, Swami Sivananda, is the inspiration behind the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres. The teachings of Master Sivananda are summarized in these six words:

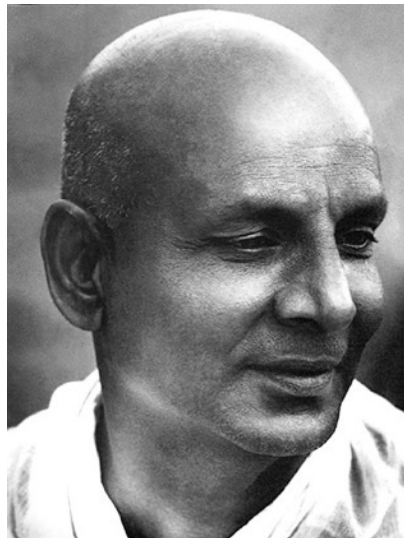
Serve, Love, Give, Purify, Meditate, Realize.

His Early Life

Born in 1887 in Pattamadai, Tamil Nadu, South India, Swami Sivananda whose name was then Kuppuswami, was a brilliant boy at studying as well as gymnastics and naturally inclined toward spiritual and religious practices.

His parents were very devoted to Lord Siva and Kuppuswami was eager to join them twice daily for worship (Puja) and Kirtan (Mantra chanting).

His natural selfless spirit lead him to a career in the medical field. His amazing eagerness and ability to learn and assimilate his studies earned him the respect of his professors who invited him to attend surgeries while still in his first year of medical school.



Dr Kuppuswami

The young Dr. Kuppuswami felt a strong urge to go to Malaysia where he felt there was great need. In a short time he was given the responsibility of running a hospital. During these years Dr. Kuppuswami was renowned as being both an excellent doctor and a true humanitarian. Very often he waived consultation fees for patients too poor to afford his services and on many occasions provided medicine for free to his neediest patients.

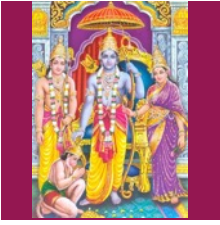
One day Dr. Kuppuswami had the opportunity to cure a wandering Sannyasin (renunciate or Monk) who then gave the doctor instruction on Yoga and Vedanta. From that day on his life changed, and gradually Dr. Kuppuswami became more introspective and could not stop pondering the great questions of life. Now he felt the need to help people on a more profound level, not just healing their physical body, but helping them to find a cure for all suffering.

The Great Sannyasin

Filled with a tremendous desire for spiritual growth and enlightenment Kuppuswami went to North India in search of his Guru. After spending time in Varanasi (Banaras) he travelled north to the Himalayas. There in the holy town of Rishikesh (which means "the abode of the sages") Kuppuswami discovered his Guru who gave him Sannyas (a monk's vows of renunciation). After taking these vows, Swami Sivananda Saraswati, as he would be known henceforth, started an extremely intense daily Sadhana (spiritual practices) and Tapas (austerities) for the next 10 years or so. By the end of that period many co-Sadhus felt drawn to Swami Sivananda for his instruction and his spiritual inspiration.

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Sita Ram



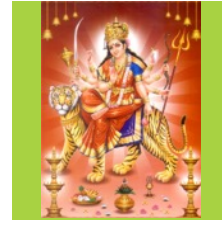
Ganesh



Krishna



Durga



Shiva



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Bhakti Yoga - Part IV

by Swami Sivananda

Nava-Vidha Bhakti?

Vandana is prayer and prostration. Humble prostration touching the earth with the eight limbs of the body (Sashtanga-Namaskara), with faith and reverence, before a form of God, or prostration to all beings knowing them to be the forms of the One God, and getting absorbed in the Divine Love of the Lord is termed prostration to God or Vandana.

The ego or Ahamkara is effaced out completely through devout prayer and prostration to God. Divine grace descends upon the devotee and man becomes God.

Dasya Bhakti is the love of God through servant-sentiment. To serve God and carry out His wishes, realizing His virtues, nature, mystery and glory, considering oneself as a slave of God, the Supreme Master, is Dasya Bhakti.

Serving and worshipping the Murtis in temples, sweeping the temple premises, meditating on God and mentally serving Him like a slave, serving the saints and the sages, serving the devotees of God, serving poor and sick people who are forms of God, is also included in Dasya-Bhakti.

To follow the words of the scriptures, to act according to the injunctions of the Vedas, considering them to be direct words of God, is Dasya Bhakti. Association with and service of love-intoxicated devotees and service of those who have knowledge of God is Dasya Bhakti. The purpose behind Dasya Bhakti is to be ever with God in order to offer service to Him and win His Divine Grace and attain thereby immortality.

Sakhyā-Bhava is the cultivation of the friend-sentiment with God. The inmates of the family of Nandagopa cultivated this Bhakti. Arjuna cultivated this kind of Bhakti towards Lord Krishna.

To be always with the Lord, to treat Him as one's own dear relative or a friend belonging to one's own family, to be in His company at all times, to love Him as one's own self, is Sakhyā-Bhava of Bhakti-Marga. How do friends, real friends, love in this world? What an amount of love they possess between one another? Such a love is developed towards God instead of towards man; physical love turned into spiritual love. There is a transformation of the mundane into the Eternal.

Atma-Nivedana is self-surrender. The devotee offers everything to God, including his body, mind and soul. He keeps nothing for himself. He loses even his own self. He has no personal and independent existence. He has given up his self for God. He has become part and parcel of God. God takes care of him and God treats him as Himself. Grief and sorrow, pleasure and pain, the devotee treats as gifts sent by God and does not attach himself to them. He considers himself as a puppet of God and an instrument in the hands of God.

This self-surrender is Absolute Love for God exclusively. There is nothing but God-consciousness in the devotee. Even against his own wishes, the devotee shall become one with God and lose his individuality. This is the law of being. The highest truth is Absoluteness and the soul rises above through different states of consciousness until it attains Absolute Perfection when it becomes identical with God. This is the culmination of all aspiration and love.

The nine modes of Bhakti are the ways in which a devotee attains the Supreme Ideal of life. A devotee can take up any of these paths and reach the highest state. The path of Bhakti is the easiest of all and is not very much against the nature of human inclinations. It slowly and gradually takes the individual to the Supreme without frustrating his human instincts. It is not direct assertion of God, but a progressive realization of Him.

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July & August 2015 Dates

Based on Lafayette, Louisiana, US Time

27 Monday	Devshayani Ekadashi
30 Thursday	Guru Purnima
09 Sunday	Kamika Ekadashi
19 Monday	Nag Panchami
25 Tuesday	Shravan Putrada Ekadashi
27 Thursday	Onam
28 Friday	Varalakshmi Vrat
29 Saturday	Raksha Bandhan

For more details please refer DrikPanchang.com



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

Hindu Rituals and Routines

Why do we follow them? - Part VI

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'.

18. Why do we blow the conch?

When the conch is blown, the primordial sound of **Om** emanates. **Om** is an auspicious sound that was chanted by the Lord before creating the world. It represents the world and the Truth behind it.

As the story goes, the demon Shankhaasura defeated devas, and the Vedas went to the bottom of the ocean. The devas appealed to Lord Vishnu for help. He incarnated as *Matsya Avataara* - the "fish incarnation" and killed Shankhaasura. The Lord blew the conch-shaped bone of his ear and head. The **Om** sound emanated, from which emerged the Vedas.

All knowledge enshrined in the Vedas is an elaboration of **Om**. The conch therefore is known as *shankha* after Shankasura. The conch blown by the Lord is called *Paanchajanya*. He carries it at all times in one of His four hands.

It represents dharma or righteousness that is one of the four goals (*purusharthas*) of life. The sound of the conch is thus also the victory call of good over evil.

Another well-known purpose of blowing the conch and the instruments, known traditionally to produce auspicious sounds is to drown or mask negative comments or noises that may disturb or upset the atmosphere or the minds of worshippers.

Ancient India lived in her villages. Each village was presided over by a primary temple and several small ones. During the *aarati* performed after all-important poojas and on sacred occasions, the conch used to be blown. Since villages were generally small, the



sound of the conch would be heard all over the village. People who could not make it to the temple were reminded to stop whatever they were doing, at least for a few seconds, and mentally bow to the Lord. The conch sound served to briefly elevate people's minds to a prayerful attitude even in the middle of their busy daily routine.

The conch is placed at the altar in temples and homes next to the Lord as a symbol of *Naada*

Brahma (Truth), the Vedas, **Om**, dharma, victory and auspiciousness. It is often used to offer devotees *thirtha* (sanctified water) to raise their minds to the highest Truth. It is worshipped with the following verse.

Twam puraa saagarot pannaha
Vishnunaa vidhrutahakare
Devaischa poojitha sarvahi
Panchjanya namostu te

Salutations to Panchajanya
the conch born of the ocean
Held in the hand of Lord Vishnu
and worshipped by all devaas

19. Why do we say shaanti thrice?

Shaanti, meaning "peace", is a natural state of being. Disturbances are created either by others or us. For example, peace already exists in a place until someone makes noise.

Therefore, peace underlies all our agitations. When agitations end, peace is naturally experienced since it was already there. Where there is peace, there is happiness. Therefore, every one without exception



desires peace in his/her life.

However, peace within or without seems very hard to attain because it is covered by our own agitations. A rare few manage to remain peaceful within even in the midst of external agitation and troubles. To invoke peace, we chant prayers. By chanting prayers, troubles end and peace is experienced internally, irrespective of the external disturbances. All such prayers end by chanting *shaanti* thrice.

It is believed that *trivaram satyam* - that which is said thrice comes true. For emphasizing a point we repeat a thing thrice. In the court of law also, one who takes the witness stands says, "I shall speak the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth".

We chant *shaanti* thrice to emphasise our intense desire for peace. All obstacles, problems and sorrows originate from three sources.

Aadhidaivika : The unseen divine forces over which we have little or no control like earthquakes, floods, volcanic eruptions etc.

Aadhibhautika: The known factors around us like accidents, human contacts, pollution, crime etc.

Aadhyaatmika : We sincerely pray to the Lord that at least while we undertake special tasks or even in our daily lives, there are no problems and the problems are minimised from the three sources written above.

May peace alone prevail. Hence *shaanti* is chanted thrice.

It is chanted aloud the first time, addressing the unseen forces. It is chanted softer the second time, directed to our immediate surroundings and those around, and softest the last time as it is addressed to oneself.

20. Why do we offer a coconut?

In India one of the most common offerings in a temple is a coconut. It is also offered on occasions like



weddings, festivals, the use of a new vehicle, bridge, house etc. It is offered in the sacrificial fire whilst performing *homa*. The coconut is broken and placed before the Lord. It is later distributed as *prasaada*.

The fibre covering of the dried coconut is removed except for a tuft on the top. The marks on the coconut make it look like the head of a human being. The coconut is broken, symbolising the breaking of the ego. The juice within, representing the inner tendencies (*vaasanas*) is offered along with the white kernel - the mind, to the Lord.

A mind thus purified by the touch of the Lord is used as *prasaada* (a holy gift). In the traditional *abhishekha* ritual done in all temples and many homes, several materials are poured over the deity like milk, curd, honey, tender coconut water, sandal paste, holy ash etc. Each material has a specific significance of bestowing certain benefits on worshippers. Tender coconut water is used in *abhishekha* rituals since it is believed to bestow spiritual growth on the seeker.

The coconut also symbolizes selfless service. Every part of the tree - the trunk, leaves, fruit, coir etc. Is used in innumerable ways like thatches, mats, tasty dishes, oil, soap etc. It takes in even salty water from the earth and converts it into sweet nutritive water that is especially beneficial to sick people. It is used in the preparation of many ayurvedic medicines and in other alternative medicinal systems.



The marks on the coconut are even thought to represent the three-eyed Lord Shiva and therefore it is considered to be a means to fulfill our desires.

- Swami Chinmayananda



Swami Ashwini Prajnaa on Yoga and Anger Management in Lafayette, LA on June 14th, 2015

Bhakti Yoga..Continued from page 2

Fruits of Bhakti

Bhakti softens the heart and removes jealousy, hatred, lust, anger, egoism, pride and arrogance. It infuses joy, divine ecstasy, bliss, peace and knowledge. All cares, worries and anxieties, fears, mental torments and tribulations entirely vanish. The devotee is freed from the Samsaric wheel of births and deaths. He attains the immortal abode of everlasting peace, bliss and knowledge.

The fruits of Bhakti is Jnana. Jnana intensifies Bhakti. Even Jnanis like Sankara, Madhusudana and Suka Dev took to Bhakti after Realization to enjoy the sweetness of loving relationship with God.

Knowledge or wisdom will dawn by itself when you practice Bhakti Yoga. Bhakti is the pleasant, smooth, direct road to God. Bhakti is sweet in the beginning, sweet in the middle and sweet in the end. It gives the highest, un-decaying bliss.

Kindle love divine in thy heart, for this is the immediate way to the Kingdom of God.

Pray to the Lord. Sing His glory. Recite His Name. Become a channel of His grace.

Seek His will. Do His will. Surrender to His will. You will become one with the cosmic will.

Surrender unto the Lord. He will become your charioteer on the field of life. He will drive your chariot well. You will reach the destination, the Abode of Immortal Bliss.

.....www.dlshq.org



Swami Sivananda...

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World Teacher

From that time Swami Sivananda became one of the most prolific Yoga teachers who has ever existed. Although he rarely left the little town of Rishikesh (with only 2 India tours and no visits abroad) Swami Sivananda's teachings spread quickly throughout our entire planet. He personally wrote - by hand, no computers at the time :-) - more than 200 books on topics connected to Yoga and Philosophy. He wrote in a style that is very direct and bursting with dynamic, spiritual energy. As a result many who read his books felt their lives deeply touched and transformed and so came from

all of India, all of the world, to learn from him directly, and to bask in his holy presence.

In 1957, Swami Sivananda sent his devoted and industrious disciple, Swami Vishnudevananda to the West where he then established the International Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres.

[-www.sivananda.org](http://www.sivananda.org)



Swami Ashwini Prajnaa speaks on Indian and Western Philosophies, Yoga & Meditation, Personality Development and Holistic Health etc. He is a capable and influential orator. His lectures are in simple and practical language while maintaining a personal touch with humor to make it interesting and inspiring.

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