

# Vedanshi

The part of the sacred knowledge

*My womb is the Great Prakrit (Mahat-Brahma) into which I deposit the seed (of My Intelligence); this is the cause of the birth of all beings*

Chapter 14, Verse 3; Bhagavad Gita

A Monthly

Newsletter

Issue No 18: May 2015

## Bhakti Yoga

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## Annual General Body Meeting Update

The board put forth an aggressive project schedule where prana pratishtha of the idols will commence on May 8th, 2016. The three idols that were proposed for phase-1 temple were Lord Ganesha, Lord Krishna and Radha and Maata Durga.

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## SHSK Activites in April



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SANATAN HINDU



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## Adi Sankaracharya

One of the greatest philosophers of India, Adi Shankaracharya founded the Advaita Vedanta, which is one of the sub-schools of Vedanta. Adi Shankaracharya whole-heartedly believed in the concept of the Vedas but at the same time advocated against the rituals and religious practices that were over exaggerated. On a closer introspection of the life history of Sri Sankaracharya, we find that he also started the monastic order known as Dashanami and the Shanmata convention of worship. Given here is Adi Shankaracharya biography, which will give you valuable insight into the life of this great poet and philosopher.

Born in a simple Brahmin family approximately in the 8th century A.D in Kaladi, Kerala, he was named as Shankara and is considered to be the incarnation of Lord Shiva. It is said that Shankaracharya's mother Aryamba had a vision that Lord himself told her that he would incarnate in the form of her first-born child. Right from childhood he showed a penchant towards spiritual knowledge. He could easily recite the Puranas and the Epics and mastered the Vedas during his early years in Gurukul. Adi Shankara's teachings were thoroughly adopted by his disciples later on.



Right from childhood, Shankaracharya was interested in Sanyasa and wanted to lead a meaningful life detached from the worldly pleasures. Once, while taking a bath in Purna River, Shankaracharya was attacked by a crocodile. Though his mother wanted to rescue him, she could not and was helpless. Seeing the haplessness of his mother, he asked her permission for letting him renounce the world. She was left with no choice but

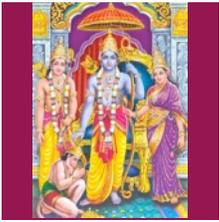
to agree. As soon as he recited the mantra, the crocodile left him. Shankaracharya began his life as an ascetic from then on. He proceeded towards further down south of India in search of a Guru.

One fine day on the banks of River Narmada he met a man named Govinda Bhagavatpada. Since Shankaracharya was much learned about the Vedas and the Puranas, Govinda Bhagavatpada agreed to be his Guru for attaining spiritual knowledge. Under his tutelage, Shankaracharya gained expertise in different forms of Yoga that included Hatha, Raja and Jnana yoga. He then received the knowledge of Brahma. Thereafter he was known as Adi Shankaracharya whose sole purpose of life was to spread the teachings of Brahma Sutras all over the world.

Adi Sankaracharya believed in the philosophy of "non-dualism". He believed in the fact that every individual has a divine existence, which can be identified with the Supreme cosmic power. Though bodies are diverse, the soul is one. The moment someone believes that the concept of life is finite; they are discarding an entirely higher and different dimension of life and knowledge. Self-realization is the key to attain Moksha and connect with God. Though he died young, he left an invaluable treasure of spiritual knowledge for future generations.

[www.culturalindia.net](http://www.culturalindia.net)

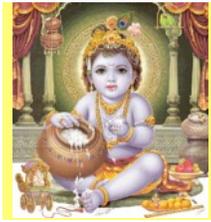
Sita Ram



Ganesh



Krishna



Durga



Shiva



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## Bhakti Yoga - Part II

by Swami Sivananda

### How to cultivate Bhakti?

It would be a gross mistake if you consider Bhakti as merely a stage of emotionalism, while it is actually a thorough discipline and training of one's will and the mind, a sure means to intuitive realization of God Almighty through intense love and affection for Him. It is a means to thorough apprehension of the true knowledge of Reality, beginning from the ordinary form of idol worship right upto the highest form of cosmic realisation of your oneness with Him. You can achieve this by following the eleven fundamental factors which Sri Ramanuja had prescribed. They are *Abhyasa* or practice of continuous thinking of God; *Viveka* or discrimination; *Vimoka* or freedom from everything else and longing for God; *Satyam* or truthfulness; *Arjavam* or straightforwardness; *Kriya* or doing good to others; *Kalyana* or wishing well-being to all; *Daya* or compassion; *Ahimsa* or non-injury; *Dana* or charity; and *Anavasada* or cheerfulness and optimism.

People put a question: "How can we love God whom we have not seen?"

Live in the company of saints. Hear the Lilas of God. Study the sacred scriptures. Worship Him first in His several forms as manifested in the world. Worship any image or picture of the Lord or the Guru. Recite His Name. Sing His glories. Stay for one year in Ayodhya or Brindavan, Chirakut or Pandhapur, Benares or Ananda Kutir. You will develop love for God.

Every act must be done that awakens the emotion of Bhakti. Keep the Puja(worship) room clean. Decorate the room. Burn incense. Light a lamp. Keep a clean seat. Bathe. Wear clean clothes. Apply Vibhuti (sacred ash) or Bhasma, and Kumkum on the forehead. Wear Rudraksha or Tulasi Mala. All

these produce a benign influence on the mind and elevate the mind. They generate piety. They help to create the necessary Bhava or feeling to invoke the Deity that you want to worship. The mind will be easily concentrated.

Practice of right conduct, Satsanga, Japa, Smarana, Kirtan, prayer, worship, service of saints, residence in places of pilgrimage, service of the poor and the sick with divine Bhava, observance of Varnashrama duties, offering of all actions and their fruits to the Lord, feeling the presence of the Lord in all beings, prostrations before the image and saints, renunciation of earthly enjoyments and wealth, charity, austerities and vows, practice of Ahimsa, Satyam and Brahmacharya - all these will help you to develop Bhakti.

### Bhavas in Bhakti?

When the devotee grows in devotion there is absolute self-forgetfulness. This is called *Bhava*. Bhava establishes a true relationship between the devotee and the Lord. Bhava then grows into *Maha-Bhava* wherein the devotee lives, moves and has his being in the Lord. This is *Parama-Prema*, the consummation of love or Supreme Love.

There are five kinds of Bhava in Bhakti. They are *Shanta*, *Dasya*, *Sakhya*, *Vatsalya* and *Madhurya* Bhavas. These Bhavas or feelings are natural to human beings and so these are easy to practice. Practice whichever Bhava suits your temperament.

In Shanta Bhava, the devotee is Shanta or peaceful. He does not jump and dance. He is not highly emotional. His heart is filled with love and joy. Bhisma was a Shanta Bhakta.

Sri Hanuman was a Dasya Bhakta. He had Dasya Bhava, servant attitude. He served Lord Rama whole-heartedly. He pleased his Master in all possible ways. He found joy and bliss in the service of his Master.

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## May & June 2015 Dates

Based on Lafayette, Louisiana, US Time

14 Thursday	Apara Ekadashi,
	Trishabha Sankranti
17 Sunday	Shani Jayanti
27 Wednesday	Ganga Dussehra
29 Friday	Nirjala Ekadashi
<hr/>	
01 Monday	Vat Purnima Vrat
12 Friday	Yogini Ekadashi
15 Monday	Mithuna Sankranti

For more details please refer [DrikPanchang.com](http://DrikPanchang.com)



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# Hindu Rituals and Routines

## Why do we follow them? - Part IV

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'.

### 10. Why do we fast?

Most devout Indians fast regularly or on special occasions like festivals. On such days they do not eat at all, eat once or make do with fruits or a special diet of simple food.

Fasting in Sanskrit is called *upavaasa*. *Upa* means "near" + *vaasa* means "to stay". *Upavaasa* therefore means staying near (the Lord), meaning the attainment of close mental proximity with the Lord. Then what has *upavaasa* to do with food?

A lot of our time and energy is spent in procuring food items, preparing, cooking, eating and digesting food. Certain food types make our minds dull and agitated. Hence on certain days man decides to save time and conserve his energy by eating either simple, light food or totally abstaining from eating so that his mind becomes alert and pure. The mind, otherwise pre-occupied by the thought of food, now entertains noble thoughts and stays with the Lord. Since it is a self-imposed form of discipline it is usually adhered to with joy.

Also every system needs a break and an overhaul to work at its best. Rest and a change of diet during fasting is very good for the digestive system and the entire body.



The more you indulge the senses, the more they make their demands.

Fasting helps us to cultivate control over our senses, sublimate our desires and guide our minds to be poised and at peace.

Fasting should not make us weak, irritable or create an urge to indulge later. This happens when there is no noble goal behind fasting.

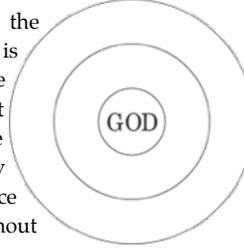
The Bhagavad-Gita urges us to eat appropriately - neither too less nor too much - *yukta-aahaara* and to eat simple, pure and healthy food (a *saatvik* diet) even when not fasting.

### 11. Why do we do pradakshina (circumambulate)?

We cannot draw a circle without a center point. The Lord is the center, source and essence of our lives. Recognizing Him as the focal point in our lives, we

go about doing our daily chores. This is the significance of *pradakshina*.

Also every point on the circumference of a circle is equidistant from the center. This means that wherever or whoever we may be, we are equally close to the Lord. His grace flows towards us without partiality.



### 12. Why is pradakshina done only in a clockwise manner?

The reason is not, as a person said, to avoid a traffic jam! As we do *pradakshina*, the Lord is always on our right. In India the right side symbolizes auspiciousness. So as we circumambulate the sanctum sanctorum we remind ourselves to lead an auspicious life of righteousness, with the Lord who is the indispensable source of help and strength, as our guide - the "right hand".

Indian scriptures enjoin - *matrudevo bhava, pitrudevo bhava, acharyadevo bhava*. May you consider your parents and teachers as you would the Lord. With this in mind we also do *pradakshina* around our parents and divine personages.



After the completion of traditional worship (*pooja*), we customarily do *pradakshina* around ourselves. In this way we recognize and remember the supreme divinity within us, which alone is idolized in the form of the Lord that we worship outside.

### 13. Why do we regard trees and plants as sacred?

The Lord, the life in us, pervades all living beings, be they plants or animals. Hence, they are all regarded as sacred. Human life on earth depends on plants and trees. They give us the vital factors that make life possible on earth: food, oxygen, clothing, shelter, medicines etc.

Hence, in India, we are taught to regard trees and plants as sacred. Indians scriptures tell us to plant ten trees if, for any reason, we have to cut one. We are advised to use parts of trees and plants only as much as is needed for food, fuel, shelter etc. we are also urged to apologies to a



plant or tree before cutting it to avoid incurring a specific sin named *soona*.

Certain trees and plants like tulasi, peepal etc., which have tremendous beneficial qualities, are worshipped till today. It is believed that divine beings manifest as trees and plants, and many people worship them to fulfill their desires or to please the Lord.

### 14. Why do we ring the bell in a temple?

Is it to wake up the Lord? But the Lord never sleeps. Is it to let the Lord know we have come? He does not need to be told, as He is all knowing. Is it a form of seeking permission to enter His precinct? It is a homecoming and therefore entry needs no permission. The Lord welcomes us at all times. Then why do we ring the bell?



The ringing of the bell produces what is regarded as an auspicious sound. It produces the sound *Om*, the universal name of the Lord. There should be auspiciousness within and without, to gain the vision of the Lord who is all-auspiciousness.

Even while doing the ritualistic *aarati*, we ring the bell. It is sometimes accompanied by the auspicious sounds of the conch and other musical instruments. An added significance of ringing the bell, conch and other instruments is that they help drowned any inauspicious or irrelevant noises and comments that might disturb or distract the worshippers in their devotional ardour, concentration and inner peace.

As we start the daily ritualistic worship (*pooja*) we ring the bell, chanting:

*Aagamarthantu devaanaam  
gamanaarthantu rakshasaam  
Kurve ghantaaravam tatra  
devataahvaahna lakshanam*

I ring this bell indicating the invocation of divinity, So that virtuous and noble forces enter (my home and heart); and the demonic and evil forces from within and without, depart.

- Swami Chinmayananda



SHSK - 2nd Annual General Body Meeting in Lafayette, LA on April 25, 2015

## Annual General Body Meeting Update

We had a successful Annual General Body Meeting on April 25th, 2015. Thanks to all the members who attended and supported the event even in pouring rain at the time of the event. More than 80 members attended the meeting. SHSK volunteering board presented the goals and objectives of steering the phase-1 operation of Lafayette Temple. It included the architectural layout of phase-1 temple, the cost estimate of temple construction and operating cost of temple along with fundraising plan to raise funds for constructing the temple and plan to raise funds to cover the operating cost. The board put forth an aggressive project schedule where prana pratishtha of the idols will commence on May 8th, 2016. The three idols that were proposed for phase-1 temple were Lord Ganesha, Lord Krishna and Radha and Maata Durga. The entire presentation given at the General Body Meeting can be found in our temple website. Along with the pledge forms for donation and volunteer sign up forms. During the meeting, the members of SHSK voted to elect three trustees to join the board of trustees. The three trustees elected were Pradeep Mallenahalli,, Geeta Dalal and Ramakrishna Kasindula.

... Srinivasan Ambatipati

## Bhakti Yoga... Continued from page 2

In Sakhya Bhava, God is a friend of the devotee. Arjuna had this Bhava towards Lord Krishna. The devotee moves with the Lord on equal terms.



Arjuna and Krishna used to sit, eat, talk and walk together as intimate friends.

In Vatsalya Bhava, the devotee looks upon God as his child. Yasoda had this Bhava with Lord Krishna. There is no fear in this Bhava, because God is your pet child. The devotee serves, feeds, and looks upon God as a mother does in the case of her child.

The last is Madhurya Bhava or Kanta Bhava. This is the highest form of Bhakti. The devotee regards the Lord as his Lover. This was the relation between Radha and Krishna. This is Atma-Samarpana. The lover and the beloved become one. The devotee and God feel one with each other and still maintain a separateness in order to enjoy the bliss of the play of love between them. This is oneness in separation

and separation in oneness. Lord Gauranga, Jayadeva, Mira and Andal had this Bhava.

*A Caution:* Madhurya Bhava is absolutely different from conjugality of earthly experience. One should not be mistaken for the other. Earthly conjugality is purely selfish and is undertaken only because it gives pleasure to one's own self. But in love for God it is because it gives pleasure to God and not for the sake of the devotee. Divine love is not selfish. It is born of sattva. But earthly lust is born of rajas and attachment to bodies. Earthly conjugality is the outcome of egoistic self-regarding egoistic feeling, while divine communion is the outcome of other-regarding feeling devoid of egoism. Strong selfishness is the root of worldly passion; divine love is the product of loss of egoism. This is the greatest difference between lust (kama) and divine love (prema). The two are related as darkness is related to light. No development of earthly affection, however perfect it may be, can lead one to supreme joy of divine communion. Lust lurks in the heart due to the passion that burns in the core of things. Divine love is unknown to the man of the world, however religious he may be. The secret of divine love cannot be understood, and should not be tried to be understood, so long as man is only a man and woman only a woman. The austere transformation of the human into the divine is the beginning of true love for God.

.....[www.dlshq.org](http://www.dlshq.org)

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