







A Path to Hindu Heritage

NAVARATRI PUJA Durga, Lakshmi, and Saraswati



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THE MARG FOUNDATION

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A Path to Hindu Heritage

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We also invite our readers to send their comments regarding the *Marg* articles, or about other issues falling within the scope of *Marg*. We reserve the right to select, abbreviate, and edit for clarity submitted materials to conform to the editorial policy of *Marg* and the available space.

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DEVI - THE COMPASSIONATE DESTROYER

By Swami Jyotirmaynanada

Navaratri Puja (Mother - Shakti Worship) is celebrated in India in the bright half of the lunar month of Ashwina (September-October). The Mother aspect of God is worshipped as Durga, Lakshmi, and Saraswati, each for respectively. three nights Navaratri Puja culminates on the tenth day, which is called Vijaya Dashami'—-the final victory of the Devi over the demons. Navaratri Puja depicts the long course of spiritual evolution in your life and reveals the Way in which the Divine Mother leads your soul to the ultimate victory over the asuric and rakshasic qualities (demoniac qualities) that present countless obstacles on the spiritual path.

In one's life, the forces of darkness manifest as anger and hatred, malice and greed, pride and infatuation, craving and conceit, etc. These are the demons within each human being. On the other hand, the forces of light manifest as compassion and magnanimity, humility and charity, purity and universal sincerity, love. nonviolence and peace. These are the gods within each human being. Life is an arena for the battling forces of darkness and light. The essence of the Puja is to enhance the forces of light, to control the senses and the mind, the desires overcome emanating from the lower self, and to realize the Divine Self that shines in the cave of the heart.

In the first stage of Navaratri Puja, the Durga-aspect of the Divine Mother is worshipped for the destruction and sublimation of gross impurities in your unconscious that result from numerous births or incarnations. These malas (impurities of the heart) express themselves in the form of anger, greed, hatred, lust, pride, jealousy, etc.

Goddess Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity, is worshipped in the second stage of Devi Puja. She is symbolic of divine glory or aishwarya. Goddess Lakshmi brings steadiness in the chitta (mind stuff) by



Lakshmi, Saraswati, and Durga

enriching the spirit and removing vikshepa-distraction of mind caused by subtle impressions of impurity in the unconscious. This phase of your spiritual movement is marked by the development of Divine qualities such as compassion, dispassion, purity, renunciation, charity, universal love, unity, magnanimity of the heart, balance of mind, etc. These are rare gifts of spiritual wealth.

In the third phase of the Puja, Goddess Saraswati, the Goddess of Knowledge, is worshipped as She tears the veil of ignorance (avarana) and reveals the splendor of Consciousness. The realization of the unveiled beauty of the Supreme confers upon your immortality.

Throughout this glorious path of spiritual evolution, the grace of the Goddess enfolds the aspirant, guiding a series of destructions that are absolutely essential for the increasing revela- tion of the bliss of the Divine Self within. To an unthinking mind, however, destruction breathes a sense of and melancholy. However, to a mind illumined by the values of transcendental truth, destruction is an inevitable process in the course of construction, and is Blessedness masked with a dark veil. All things of the world change in to present various enjoyments to evolving souls in the course of their evolution. There lies significance in change and meaning in destruction. Even though the mind and senses are subject to change, the very personality of an individual will also change in time.

Changes must occur, and destruction cannot be avoided. Aspirants who are wise should not be wafted by the current of

changes, nor should they feel destroyed by the surging process of destruction abounding in this world. Rather, they must be established in the vision of the Spirit that is the basis of all changes and the substratum of all destruction. Destructions are but passing clouds that are meant to reveal the blue sky in its expansive glory and untainted beauty. Destructions indeed are the removal of obstructions for the emergence of higher states of vision and of consciousness.

Changes bring forth the same wine in new bottles and the same Spirit in new forms of expression. Every individual must let changes occur freely without allowing their inner center to be disturbed, and without allowing themselves to be lost in the outer forms of destruction.

The same is true with nations and human civilizations. Many ancient civilizations have been lost due to their inability to accept changes and understand new meanings and expressions in religion and philosophy. Many nations have perished in the course of time, but those that had rooted themselves in everlasting and unchanging glory of the Spirit accepted changes and studied their meaning. These types of civilizations have even survived the terrible ravages wrought by time and upheavals in What is the role of history. destruction in the lives of aspirants? An aspirant must destroy the lower self-gross impurities such as anger, hatred, greed, pride, hypocrisy, vanity, jealousy, etc., in order to attain higher states of consciousness and realize God. Destruction implies sublimation and transcendence. There is no real destruction. Names and forms are destructible as they are relative and illusory in nature. However, the basis underlying them, Sat-Chit-Ananda, or Existence, Knowledge, and Bliss, as Brahma is indestructible.

Ignorance of your spiritual nature is the root cause of all impurities. It gives rise to innumerable desires that drive the mind to the objective value of an object. By analyzing the mind practicing enquiry, you must find the causes of these negative qualities and remove them with patience. Various methods are adopted in the practice of Yoga. An aspirant should practice pratipaksha bhavana - asserting a contrary positive quality. For example, anger is conquered by the weapon of love, and hatred" by the weapon of forgiveness. The next practice for you to is Kriya Yoga which is the combination of shaucha (purity), swadhyaya (study of scriptures), Ishwara and pranidhana (surrender God). Each of these serves to thin out the negative impressions of your gross impurities.

Avidya (ignorance), asmita (egoism), raga (attachment), dwesha (hatred), and abinivesha (clinging to life) are the ruler impurities that cause various negative emotions and feelings in individuals and also manifest miseries of various types in nations and civilizations. The

impressions of these kleshas or afflictions exist in the following forms:

- 1. Prasupta dormant
- 2. Tanu thinned out or attenuated
 - 3. Udara expanded
 - 4. Vichhinna overpowered
 - 5. Dagdha burned up

By adopting pratipaksha bhavana or unselfish feelings, you out impressions of thin impurities. The opposites of these are udara impressions, and this occurs when you are fully controlled by negative emotions. Afflictions are considered to be vicchinna, or overpowered, when the impressions of both `positive and negative states of mind exist in the form of various subconsciously. encrustations Even though you are ruled by love, if hatred remains hidden within your heart, your loving nature becomes foreign.

The impressions that are thinned out are further destroyed by the practice of meditation on the Self and by the light of intuition. The knowledge of the Self dispels the darkness of ignorance. With the destruction of ignorance that feeds the growth of impure afflictions and impressions, you attain the state of dagdha - burned up state of impressions. These are the type of impressions that exist within Sages.

The ripples of irritability and anger assume the form of righteous indignation in the case of Sages and are like lines drawn in water that are easier to be effaced and transcended. In the case of aspirants who have

attained the state of tanu (the attenuated state of impressions of impurity), those waves of irritability are like lines drawn on wet earth. They can be destroyed with just a little effort by such advanced aspirants. But, in the case of those who have impurities that exist in an expanded state, these impressions are like

carvings in stone - hard to remove or efface.

By the grace of Goddess Durga, the Destroyer, you gradually gain control of your mind and senses, and thin out impurities. By further emergence of the grace of the Goddess, the demon-king of ignorance can be destroyed.

This series of destructions are accompanied by increasing revelations of the glories of higher life, and the course of destruction eventually terminates in the destruction of ignorance that separates the soul from the Absolute. When ignorance is destroyed, the soul merges in the Absolute and the highest goal of life is realized.

PRAYER FOR MOTHER DURGA



O' Durga, do Thou destroy the impurities of my heart that separate me from Thee. Be Thou gracious in releasing

my soul, from the fetters of karmas. Oh Mother, many obstacles have held my soul down in the mire of the world

process.

Do Thou remove these obstacles,

so that my heart may rest in peace.

Devoid of the agitations caused by Anger, Greed, Hatred, Lust, and Ego.

May my Weaknesses be destroyed,

May my diseases and maladies be eradicated.

May the dark mansion of ignorance

Be destroyed so that the radiant mansion

Of the Soul may be revealed, And the glory of the Absolute will shine forth Through the firmament of my heart.

May Thou destroy the vicious circle of worldly existence, So I may be one with Thee forever and ever!

PRAYER FOR GODDESS LAKSHMI



O' Goddess Lakshmi, smile upon me.

Cast Thy side-long glance unto me.

Let every leaf of my garden turn into gold

And every flower into a wishyielding gem.

I yearn to commune with all, to pour out the riches of life into the hearts of every soul, and thus shall I construct a golden throne out of the substance of faith and feeling, devotion and universal love, for Thee to abide in my heart!

PRAYER FOR GODDESS SARASWATI



O' Goddess of endless knowledge, Shed the luster of Thy beauteous feet In the murmuring brooks of my heart,

And may my heart be an Inexhaustible fountain
Of poetry philosophy, and arts,
Of inspiration and intuitional vision To flood the hearts of men

With the sublime feelings of Heaven,

Oh Compassionate Mother!

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RAISE YOUR VIBRATIONS

Raise your vibrations and enhance your life through positive and uplifting thoughts.

Everything in the universe is of energy. differentiates one form of energy from another is the speed at which it vibrates. For example, light vibrates at a very high frequency, and a rock vibrates at a lower frequency - but a frequency, nonetheless. Human beings also vibrate at different frequencies. Our thoughts and feelings determine the frequency at which we vibrate, and our vibration goes out into the world and attracts energy to us that is moving at a similar frequency. This is one of the ways we create our own reality, which is why we can cause a positive shift in our lives by raising our vibration.

We all know someone who we think of as vibrant. Vibrant literally means "vibrating very rapidly." The people who strike us as vibrant are vibrating at a high frequency, and they can inspire us as we work to raise our vibration. On the other hand, we all know people who are very negative or cynical. These people are vibrating at a lower frequency. They also can be an inspiration because they show us where we don't want to be vibrating. To discover where you are in terms of vibrancy, consider where you fall on a scale between the most pessimistic person you know and the most vibrant. This is not to pass judgment, but rather it is important to know where you are as you begin working to raise your frequency, so you can notice and appreciate your progress.

There are many ways to raise your vibrations, from working with affirmations to visualizing enlightened entities during meditation. One of the most practical ways to raise your vibration is to consciously choose where you focus your attention. To understand how powerful this is, take five minutes to describe something you love unreservedly a person, a movie, an experience. When your five minutes are up, you will feel noticeably more positive and even lighter. If you want to keep raising your vibrations, commit to spending five minutes every day focusing on the good in your life. As you do this, you will train yourself to be more awake and alive. Over time, you will experience a permanent shift in your vibrancy.

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Courtesy: www.DailyOm.com

PROMOTE THE POSITIVE

Sometimes we start out with the best intentions to think and speak only positive thoughts, but the people around us throw us off course.

Not everyone fully understands the power our thoughts and words have, or even if they do, they may be stuck in old patterns of negativity. Much of our habitual communication takes the form of complaining and criticizing, and it can be hard to find a way into certain conversations without lapsing into those old habits.

However, we always have the option not to participate in negativity or to find a way to influence the situation in a positive direction. In the right company, you may even be able to directly acknowledge the fact that things have taken a negative turn, thus freeing yourself and others from the negative pull.

Nineth Gem of Divine Wealth (Gita 16/1-3)

ARJAV - THE SIMPLICITY

Ram Prakash Singhal, Ahmedabad, India

The last (Nineth) gem of divine wealth, described in Gita chapter 16 - shlokas (1 - 3), is described below.

The other (8 gems) Fearlessness, Purification by Righteousness, Situating Self in Pursuit of Knowledge, Charity, Restraint & Control of Senses, Sacred Works, Study of Self and Penance were described in earlier MARG issues.

WHAT IS ARJAV

Arjav is the virtue of simplicity, candidness, explicitness, forthrightness, clarity, candor and rectitude with devoted mind, speech and action in every situation of life with total disregard of self-interest. Arjav inculcates homogeneity, uniformity, perspicuity, lucidity, comprehensibility, openness, naturalness, innocence, naivety, honesty, optimism, credibility, sincerity, honesty, prudence and sensibleness. Simplicity is nothing but natural, uncomplicated character. It is the art of effortlessly acquiring the skill of leading a happy, contented life. Besides a gem of divine wealth, Gita considers *Arjav* as an important trait of Gyani, the knower in 13/7; essential for penance 17/14; in characteristic nature of Brahmin, the knower of The Supreme, in 18/42. Socrates says in utmost simplicity, 'I know one thing; and that is that I know nothing'.

BENEFITS OF ARJAV

Arjav declutters us from complications, confusions and doubts arising out of evils like ignorance, deceit, fraud, trickery, dissembling, hypocrisy, pretense, stratagem, faultfinding, cynicism, artificiality, insincerity, absurdity, craziness, ambiguity, obliquity and intricacy. It liberates us from tension, stress, anxiety arising in various sorrow situations. Sustainable success in every walk of life depends largely on one's ability to be simple.

It empowers us to boldly admit what we are and enjoy what we have as it disentangles us of what we conceal about us from others and what we possess more than The picture of our need. Mahatma Gandhi that always comes to our mind is not the one in the sophisticated attire of a suited-booted barrister but clad simply in half loincloth holding a hand. He staff in was undoubtedly the most sophisticated man among all the aristocrat participants in the Round Table Conference in London. Leonardo da Vinci said, 'Simplicity the is ultimate sophistication'. When Ram wore a simple loin cloth and tied his hair like an ascetic before going to forest, the beauty of his body, hidden until then under royal robe and ornaments, glowed like a jewel concealed under a carpet.

People, equipped with Aarjav, never abandon morality even

when subjected to the most severe situations because they practice Plain living and high thinking'. They always speak what they have in their mind and act accordingly. But complex people hide something in their mind, say something and do things entirely differently. Things usually exist in their simple, natural state but they look complex when we see them through the lens of desire. Hence, complexity is nothing manifestation distorted of unfulfilled desires.

Jonathan Lockwood Huie says, 'Our joy comes from living our own lives simply, never from asking others to live simply; or from ever making whatsoever demands upon others'. Henry Wandsworth opines, In character, in manner, in style, in all aspects, simplicity is the supreme excellence'. Simplicity in thought and conduct opens the complex knots of prejudices, doubts and fears. Then, the mind moves from meanness to greatness, disturbance to peace, impatience to patience, instability to stability. Simplicity pulls us out from chaotic situations and leads from discord to harmony in life. A simple person, whether head of a house or ascetic, always lives in peace and bliss because he is selfsufficient and self-satisfied like a lion in the forest that does not wait for his food like the lion in the zoo. Remember that complex people make simple things difficult, and the difficult ones impossible. A wooden log

flowing along the current of a river easily reaches its destination but the log that flows against, bumps here and there.

Simplicity is not an option, but the only way to live gracefully. Once, when Albert Einstein was not famous, his wife told him to dress well before going to a conference, he replied, 'Why should I? No one knows me there'. Later, when he became the greatest scientist of the time, she asked him to dress well now, he promptly replied, 'Why should I? Everyone knows me there'.

HOW TO PRACTICE ARJAV:

The biggest impediment in practising *Arjav* is lack of awareness about purpose and priorities of life; what we really need to live a fulfilled, complete, value-based life. Let us drop the imaginary threats posed by not having something and insecurity from unknown future. When someone asked Osho how he can remain fearless in a pandemic, his reply was:

"Your question is wrong. The right question is, 'How to avoid the fear of death due to pandemic. Because it is easy to avoid contact with virus, but very difficult to get rid of the fear of death in the mind of yours and whole world".

People die more from fear than from the pandemic. There is NO virus more dangerous than FEAR. Understand it, otherwise you will become a dead body before your body dies.

Aparigrah i.e. eliminating the non-essentials and gradually

shortening the list of essentials for sustenance and belief in the adage, Excess of everything is bad'. It is the key to entering the house of simplicity. Aparigrah is deprivation but great appreciation of things that are important. As per scriptures, a true ascetic treats his hands as the begging bowl, his belly as the storeroom of food, directions as his clothes, earth as his bed, his arm as a pillow, the sky as a blanket and a wayside tree as his resting place. Charles Dudley Warner thinks 'Simplicity is making the journey of this life with just baggage enough'.

Illustration: A foreigner asked an Indian wearing dhoti (traditional loincloth), 'How many days does it last?' The Indian replied: I wear it for two years. Then my wife makes it smaller so that my son wears it for a year. Then she makes a pillow covers out of it that last for a year and then the worn-out covers become my handkerchief.'

The Englishman wondered, 'Then you throw it away?' The Indian said, "No, I shine shoes with it for six months; then make a ball of it for children to play. And finally, my wife soaks it in some oil to ignite the fire in the oven. But that's not the end, she uses its ash to clean the utensils.'

Let us begin by removing the mess from the worktable, wardrobe, kitchen, bathroom, office, home, car, and mind. An arrow, tied with stones, can never hit the target; a cacophony cannot produce a melody; and running desperately in maize leads

nowhere. Mark Coleman says: Nature teaches us simplicity and contentment because in its presence we realize we need very little to be happy'. Hans Hofmann concurs: The ability to simplify means to eliminate the unnecessary so that the necessary may speak'.

Sometimes, a simple person may be branded as a brainless, outspoken fool, but it should not disturb the seeker of spiritual wisdom. Sheikh Saadi warns:

Focus your eyes on the sky, but do not forget to keep feet on the ground'.

The mind of a simple person should be totally free from the twists of hypocrisy, and knots of idiocrasy. Simplicity is simplest and most soothing key of the piano of life. Make your life simple yet significant because simplicity does not sacrificing elegance, decency and efficiency. He, who rides in the boat of simplicity, is sure to cross the fearful ocean of the world and reach the shore of liberation. Steve Jobs states:

That's been my mantra, SIMPLICITY and FOCUS. Simple can be harder than complex. You have to work hard to make your thinking clean and simple. But it's worth because once you get there, you can move mountains.'

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Ram Prakash Singhal is the author of an exhaustive treatise on Gita titled as 'GITA for GEN A to Z'. The set of three volumes is available online at amazon.com.

HINDU CONCEPTS ON MORALITY

Chandra Sekaran

Socio-cultural-religious factors have greatly influenced a person's moral values. Morality (from the Latin word moralitas that means "manner. character, proper behavior") is the differentiation of intentions, decisions, and actions between those that are good (or right) and those that are bad (or wrong). It is a complex, intriguing, evolving and construct.

In human evolution, cultures that have been just, equal, and moral have been widely accepted and appreciated and promote healthy morals. A person's moral values are also derived from one's environment including parents, teachers, role models, peers, colleagues, and the wider society.

In this article, we shall review the traditional Hindu concepts of morality, the development of one's personality, and their relevance in the current times.

THE HINDU LITERATURE

Vedas, the most important Hindu scriptures, recorded in the four sub-categories viz., Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda, and Atharva Veda contain the earliest concepts of Hinduism. These four Vedas are further divided into two parts, Karmaand Jnana-Kanda. Kanda, Karma Kanda deals with rituals and prayers while Jnana-Kanda deals only with the ontological realities – the nature of the world, consciousness (or self) and God known as Brahman in the Vedas. It logically analyses their mutual

relationship to determine whether these are interconnected or if there is any fundamental difference between them. **Vedanta** refers to the set of teachings that are contained in the **Jnana-Kanda** section, which are the culmination of the Vedas. Their vision is to present what the Vedas want us to know.

Vedanta is not restricted or confined to one book and there is no sole source for Vedantic philosophy. However, it is widely accepted that the three most important constituents Vedanta are the **Upanishads**, Gita Bhagavad Brahmasutras. Upanishads are passages from the Jnana-kanda section of the Vedas. They are the core of Vedic wisdom and are essentially philosophical nature. Though the authorship of many Upanishads is not known, many of them are presented as a set of dialogues between teacher and disciple in logical method trying to uncover the nature of reality. Brahmasutras intended to logically explain the teachings of the Upanishads.[1] They attempt to systematize the various strands Upanishads, which form the background of the orthodox systems of thought.

It is also important to mention that the **Panchtantras**,[7], an ancient Indian inter-related collection of animal fables in verse and prose, are a wonderful example of using social stories to communicate the principles of Dharma (morality) to children. The original Sanskrit work is believed to have been composed in the 3rd century BCE. The Panchtantras continue to be very popular as stories for children.

BHAGAVAT GITA

The Bhagavad Gita, one of the most revered religious texts of the Hindus is considered to contain the essence and spirit of philosophy. Hindu То understand Bhagavad Gita, it is important to understand the context within which it is placed. It forms a part of the great epic, which Mahabharata traditionally ascribed to the sage Vyasa.[8] It revolves around the fight for the throne of the kingdom of Hastinapur. This battle is fought between the Pandavas (five sons of King Pandu) and the Kauravas (a hundred brothers who are descendants of King Kuru) who are related as cousins. Pandavas have the legal right to the throne, but Kauravas take over the kingdom cheating by Pandavas, in a game of dice. The Pandavas have Lord Krishna on their side as their guide, but he has vowed not to use any weapons in the battle. Lord Krishna, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. There are numerous moral dilemmas contained in Mahabharata that make it a very meaningful and interesting read.

The Bhagavad Gita is centered on the **moral dilemma** faced by despondent Arjuna (one of the

Pandavas) amid the battlefield. Krishna Ariuna's Lord is charioteer in the battlefield but essentially his **spiritual** guide. Just when the battle is about to begin, Arjuna is burdened with severe self-doubt about what he is just about to engage in: a bloody war with his cousins over a kingdom! His dilemma is whether it is appropriate for him to kill his cousins Kauravas and other close associates for the sake of the kingdom, despite it being his legitimate claim. It is then that Lord Krishna enlightens him the teachings through together form the Bhagavad Gita. These teachings comprehensively bring out the essence of Vedas, Upanishads, in a primarily language that is less terse than that in the original Upanishads.

The main intention of these teachings is to help humans with the task, which is, perhaps the most difficult, that is, discriminate, choose, and perform actions that are moral and righteous, especially when through one going emotional crisis. One of the of Bhagavad Gita's tenets philosophy is Karma Yoga which translates into "path of union through action". It emphasizes performing selfless actions with an attitude that is not influenced by one's likes and dislikes.

In the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna says:

"tasmad asaktah satatam karyam karma samacara asakto hy acaran karma param apnoti purushah" [9] which translates into "Therefore, without being attached to the fruits of activities, one should act as a matter of duty, for by working without attachment one attains the Supreme".

Arjuna finally decides to fight the Kauravas. However, it was not because he didn't like them for cheating him and his brothers. It was because that was the most logical course of action based on his Dharma (morality) that demanded that by fighting the Kauravas and defeating them, he would ensure that justice had been delivered.

PURUSHARTHAS (HUMAN ENDEAVORS)

The teachings of Vedas and Vedanta focus on understanding of two aspects: ontological The nature existence and Dharma (approximately translates into morality). It is vital to have a clear understanding of Dharma and its various facets that would eventually help to get a more philosophical insight into the nature of reality.

Purushartha refers to a goal, end or aim of human existence. It is a key concept in Vedic tradition that one needs to be clear about. By fulfilling the Purusharthas, man gets fulfillment for life as well as sustains the society. Purusharthas can be broadly categorized into four major categories: **Dharma**, **Artha**, **Kama**, **Moksha**.

Dharma is a concept of central importance in Hindu religion and philosophy. The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions defines Dharma as "the order and custom which make life and a universe possible, and thus the

behaviors appropriate to the maintenance of that order". Dharma embraces every type of righteous conduct, covering every aspect of life, both religious and secular, that is essential for the sustenance and welfare of the individual, society, and creation. It emphasizes the need to perform one's duty with sincerity. Artha and Kama are pursuits of security and pleasure, respectively. Artha means looking after one's material and social needs and translates into earning money, recognition, power, control or its equivalent. The pursuit of Artha gives one a sense of security. Some of these pursuits can also be viewed as Kama because they also give a sense of pleasure although generally, Kama implies pleasure-seeking and mainly refers to fulfillment of sensual pleasures.

In its true sense, Dharma should be the basis for Artha and Kama. If a man pursues Artha and Kama with Dharma at its core, his endeavors will not only help him evolve as a responsible human being but will inevitably benefit the society at large. The Hindu system makes it clear that the ultimate human endeavor is to attain Moksha in the form of total ending from seeking any of the other Purusharthas on its accomplishment. What it would practically mean is that even though one may continue to seek Artha and Kama with Dharma as its core to carry on with life, one doesn't have to be attached to it in any form. Moksha, in other words, refers to the freedom from travails that are associated

with any pursuit, which is only possible through the right knowledge about the nature of one's consciousness (see the section on "Dharma as related to Moksha" for further elaboration of this).

similar Α concept proposed by Maslow. [10,11] He described a "hierarchy of needs" model in which he divided needs into basic human (physiological, safety, love, and esteem) and growth needs (cognitive, aesthetics, and selfactualization). Although this model is conceptually like Purusharthas, there is no concept of attaining Moksha as a human endeavor.

Dharma The concepts of Dharma, as expounded in the Vedas, are based on an intrinsic higher order. They are not only confined to human pursuits but also include nature in totality. Everything that exists on the planet Earth, other planets, the solar system, galaxies, and indeed the entire universe is governed and sustained by the laws of Dharma. Thus, the laws in empirical science would also be a part of Dharma. There are differences between how the laws of Dharma, if one were to call them laws, apply to the universe as compared to human beings and to a certain extent, to the animal kingdom on Earth. Human beings are born with the unique mental faculty of being able to discriminate and choose. This is a blessing indeed, but is also a curse because choices create conflicts, which are moral dilemmas for a conscientious person. One's attitude when making these choices and acting accordingly determines moralistic one is; that is how much one follows the laws of Dharma. So, while the universe naturally may unquestioningly follow the laws of Dharma, human beings may choose otherwise. Whenever Artha and Kama gain excessive importance for humans, they knowingly orunknowingly deviate from the laws of Dharma. This creates conflicts, which are evident both within individuals and in wider society. It gives rise to passions of greed, desire, jealousy, and anger that give rise to all forms of conflicts and social disturbances.

Dharma as selfless action This comes out in the teachings of Karma Yoga in the Bhagavad Gita. It states that one can choose actions, but the individual does not govern the results of these actions. There is emphasis given to selfless action that is not influenced by one's likes and dislikes and without concern for the outcome. The outcome is then accepted as Prasada (gift from God), whether it is desirable or undesirable. This allows the individual to focus on action completely without allowing his mind to be affected by the anxiety and exhilaration invariably associated with its consequences. This also allows actualization of one's full potential.

Dharma as universal moral principles Compassion and empathy form an extremely important part of Dharma. It comes out in various principles of Dharma. In following Dharma, many values and attitudes are

listed in the Hindu scriptures as necessary for a human being, for example, absence of conceit, absence of hypocrisy, speaking truth, harmlessness, accommodation, straightforwardness, and compassion for all beings. Ahimsa (Nonviolence) is often regarded as an absolute Dharma. However, the Sanskrit phrase is Paramo "Ahimsa Dharma. Dharma himsa tathaiva cha" which translates into "Nonviolence is the ultimate Dharma. So too is violence in service of Dharma". In the great epic, Mahabharata, Arjuna's decision

to inflict violence on his cousin

Kauravas was therefore, in

accordance with his Dharma.

Dharma as related to Moksha Dharma assumes significance due is its complex but invariable relationship with the fourth Purushartha, Moksha. Dharma says that there is an inherent relationship between everything in this creation that is built on mutual interdependence based on unseen laws. If these laws were flouted, then the one who is responsible for this would be penalized through ways that do not easily lend themselves to logical scrutiny. Therefore, Dharma involves faith in the intrinsic intelligence of creation and that the world is not as inert as it appears to be. Following Dharma for a sustained period leads to the purification of the mind which becomes free from strong likes and dislikes. A purified mind can fundamental questions of life and can discover the basis of creation called Brahman Vedic in

philosophy. Discovering Brahman as oneself is Moksha. This discovery is of enormous significance as it brings with it a deep sense of fulfillment that is difficult to express in words. It is extremely important understand Brahman understand the meaning of Moksha, as understood by the Vedas. Brahman is the basis of the creation. The Creator or God is both the intelligent cause and the material cause. This means that God is not separate from the world. It is within you and everything. The knowledge that your consciousness is one with God, the Brahman, is called Moksha.

SUMMARY

The Vedic principles have influenced the Indian psyche for many centuries. These principles have underpinned the socio-cultural-religious framework for the development of individual and social-moral principles. As society and the psyche evolve, morality will be challenged. The pursuit of Artha and Kama will be at odds with the responsibility of Dharma. Therefore, reminding oneself of enriching scriptures from our glorious past will provide the basis to help us evolve our psyche to face new challenges. This would benefit the society at large. This article is excerpted from several related articles mentioned below:

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WORDS HAVE POWER

The more conscious we become, the more we deepen our relationship to the words we choose to use.

Words carry energy, and this gives language its power and its potential to heal or hurt. Most of us can remember a time that someone sent a word our way, and it stuck with us. It may have been the first time we received a truly accurate compliment or the time a friend or sibling called us a name, but either way, it stuck. This experience reminds us that what we say has weight and power and that being conscious means being aware of how we use words.

The more conscious we become, the more we deepen our relationship to the words we use so that we speak from a place of feeling what we are saying. We begin to recognize that words are not abstract, disconnected entities used only to convey meaning; they are powerful transmitters of feeling.

SARVE BHAVANTU SUKHINAH.... MAY EVERYONE BE HAPPY....

Sarve bhavantu sukhinah (May everyone be happy)
Sarve santu niramayah (May everyone be free from all diseases)
Sarve bhadrani pashyantu (May everyone see goodness in everything)
Ma kaschit duhkha bhaag bhavet (May noone be suffering or distressed)

This is a very simple prayer applicable to one and all. Millions and millions of Indian Hindus have been offering this prayer for last five thousand and odd years. The prayer is so simple that one can easily remember the simple meaning as 'May all be happy and healthy'. As we go into the depth of its meaning there is lot more to understand about the psyche of the sages who offered this universal prayer, which is wholesome, all encompassing, purely socialistic and highly spiritual. It brings out the uniqueness of a spiritual master who develops enormous love for the entire creation so that he not only does whatever best he can do for others and also offers prayer to the higher forces that are beyond one's control.

Thus, this prayer is not just a simple prayer but becomes a mantra, a goal for a sadhaka (spiritual seeker) to meditate upon and move on in the path of spiritually to achieve universality. Let us dwell on these thoughts in. Today's satsang (It is a snaskrit term - derived from two words: (1) Sat that means "true" and (2) Sangha that means community or company. Thus, "Satsang can be translated as "being in the company of truth."

SARVE BHAVANTU SUKINAH

The first sentence of the shlokas mean:

"May Everyone be Happy" Everyone here refers to the entire creation, to all sensuous beings including plants, animals and human beings. Although this prayer is in Sanskrit and though this is given in the so-called Hindu scriptures, when the sages say "sarve..." they do not exclude non- Hindus, as it means everyone in the universe. The prayer does not say, I pray God to give happiness only to Hindus. and you do not deserve my prayers if you are not a Hindu!

Sometimes the religious institutions can be so narrow that the God you believe in may be the same, the heaven and hell are the same, and the prophet also is the same, but you cannot pray for the wellbeing of people of other sects. One of my Christian friends was saying that when she was a young girl, the church school she was going to, taught her that they are supposed to pray only for those who go to that particular church and those who are associated with other churches do not deserve their prayers. She realized the shallowness of this when she grew up, but for many of her friends this remained a belief for lifetime! Religious

fundamentalists in every religion have been responsible for creating such illogical unhealthy beliefs and even wars have been waged for protecting such doctrines. This is rampant even today when we are in this 21st century of science and technology, when man is dominated by logical thinking. Thus, we see that Hindu Dharma prayers shall reach every one, every human being, every one belonging to all religions, all castes, all creeds, all races, all animals and all plants not only on this planet but to all living beings on any planet in the galaxy. Then a question arises as to why we should pray for the protection and wellbeing of bad people? Is it not important that we protect the good and destroy the bad? Does it not appear very logical that we pray only for the protection of the good.

SPIRITUALITY IS SEEING GOOD IN EVERYONE

You start a great spiritual journey when nurture these spontaneous expressions that are inbuilt into our system and make it a Sadhana that you will consciously dwell on this thought that' everyone is good'. You don't have to be defensive. The very thought everyone is good irrespective of gender, religion, color or creed, brings out the feeling that everyone belongs to me. You start recognizing that everyone is 'my own. And there is no need to be defensive about the people and society around you... This simply paves way to peaceful coexistence. It will add strength to your personality and makes you feel secure. When you think of goodness all the time, then all good aspects of your personality such as love and compassion, sharing and caring become visible and you get controlled by these good qualities... On the other hand, when you become defensive you start looking at all the wonderful qualities in a person with suspicion. When we assume a positive attitude, the world becomes a heaven the same world appears to be a hell if you look at this with a negative attitude. Just because you want to look at things with a positive attitude does not mean that you could be careless and reckless. Chanakya says you lock the house not because the people around you are thieves but let your unlocked house not tempt people to become bad. We don't require to be policing the so-called bad people all the time. On the other hand, when you approach them with love, care and concern and pray for their well being, there are better chances that they change to become good people.

Another question that you may ask is, if everyone is good, then why do we have bad people around us? Why do we have criminals all over? To start with, a person was made good, but when he could not cope up with circumstances, he must have felt that he has exhausted all the fair means of overcoming the intense distress and was left with only one choice to take to wrong means. He did not know that he had yet another choice. He is stuck with the wrong notion that the cause of his unhappiness is the world around him and the people around him. With this wrong notion, when he faces difficult situations

and cannot come out as a successful happy person, he decides to take revenge on the society that caused the problem by torturing or disturbing or creating unhappiness in others. Generally, this tends to show up as torture for the innocent and the gentle ones in society. Do you think he would have turned out to be a bad person if he did not have to face such difficult situations? There is Another option that could have helped him to continue to be good. What is this? This is the notional correction; a cognitive correction; a correction at the level of perceiving the situation in an entirely opposite way; i.e. to recognize the inbuilt freedom to change your perception of the situation and correct the wrong notions about happiness and unhappiness itself. To understand this and find a permanent solution requires a small twist in the question. This shift in the question provides the answer. It removes the root of all distress and unhappiness. What is that shift? Ask yourself 'what is unhappiness?' instead of 'what makes me unhappy?' Or ask 'what is happiness? Instead of asking "what makes me happy?

SARVE SANTU NIRAMAYAH

Next sentence in the prayer is Sarve Santu Niramayah meaning 'May everyone be free from sicknesses.

In Sanskrit we have a very interesting word for health. It is Swastha or Swaasthya, which means 'to stay in oneself' or 'being oneself'. It implies that when you are Swastha, you are in total harmony with yourself which means that

you have realized your original nature that 'you are made of the stuff called happiness'. Thus, if health can be defined as being in oneself, then it is obvious that sickness or unhappiness is, being away from oneself. Thus, our original nature is to be blissful, and unhappiness is something that comes and goes like the violent waves on the surface of an ocean. We cannot think of an ocean without waves. The waves are soft sometimes (happy mind). They may be violent sometimes (distressful). The nonmoving stable unperturbed water is not visible on the surface. We tend to conclude 'an ocean is made of only the waves. Life appears to be made only of these waves of happy or unhappy moments. But what one needs to realize is that it is all water. The waves on the surface and the nonmoving deep waters underneath are both made of the same stuff, the water. The entire stuff of our existence is the quiet nonmoving blissful awareness that forms the background or the screen on which all experiences happen.

Thus, blissful awareness whether you have realized it or not is the basic swastha - the healthy state of being. Look at every child. They are naturally blissful. They don't need anything to be happy. The only thing that happens with them is that they sometimes go away from the happiness and there is a reason for that. Those situations which bring them away from their nature called happiness are only hunger, thirst and sleep. Some children are very conservative. They come away from their very nature only at the last

second. Until that time, they are happily playing and when the situation occurs that they cannot stay any longer without food then suddenly they start crying. Mothers tell the children "Wait my baby, don't cry. Why don't you give me two minutes so that I can fix your food?" But if there was one more minute's time the child would have been blissfully playing! The same way the child gets irritated when they feel sleepy, and they fall off to sleep within a minute. They are playing until the last second of their wakeful state. Once they get up again, they are blissful. Thus, the baby comes away from happiness when the basic needs bother the original nature. As adults these basic needs of drinking and eating are no longer guided by thirst or hunger, but we have made it a habit to go on and on with eating and drinking incessantly. We need to have bed tea and then a small breakfast, followed by another tea and then a little munching and another small tea etc. This sequence of repeated tea and munching goes on and on. Especially on a holiday when you are not doing anything then the requirement goes on multiplying.

When we grow to become adults, it is not only the physical needs of thirst, hunger and sleep that take us away from our natural state of bliss, but the wants are at subtler levels of our personality, the mind. Our needs are now completely at the level of intellect and emotions that take us away from our natural state. Hunger, thirst and sleep no longer give us an alarm because all other things at a subtle level have silently taken over.

These keep us so preoccupied that we get lost in the ocean that is full of waves and waves alone and forget to see the bed of non-moving layer of water. The events of life that result in a multitude of reactions including distress, agitation, depression, fear, excitement etc. occupy all our wakeful hours. We wake up with problems and sleep with problems. We wake up to violent waves of activity and keep our mind and body active until the last second before we go off to sleep. Thus, what was a natural state of happy blissful swastha healthy state as a baby now became a state preoccupied with worries and unfulfilled desires. We have forgotten our basic blissful true nature. But remember you have not lost everything. You have not lost anything, although you feel that you are always miserable and unhappy. The fact is that this state of bliss, whether we recognize it or not, is still the background screen on which all this drama of unhappy violent waves can exist.

The unchanging vast blissful existence and consciousness is always the base like the water under the waves. It is the background blissful awareness that is reporting to you whether you are happy or unhappy. It provides the basis on which we experience suffering or joy.

Note: Yoga practices take us back to our nature consciously!

Since deep inside our true nature is this blissful awareness, which is the basis of spirituality, we need to nurture the spiritual attitude consciously as much as possible. This requires constant

awareness and regular practice. "May all see things good and auspicious!"

SARVE BHADRANI PASHYANTU

"May everyone see goodness in everything"

This requires again our own awareness. There is so much comfort in looking at everything as auspicious and good. Several people are of the opinion that if we do not look at the defects, then we can't improve ourselves or help others. This is not true. Appreciating the goodness in others does not disturb growth. On the other hand, the growth that takes place by a positive feeling is the real spiritual way of growth. In fact, if you appreciate the work done, your employee will put his heart and soul into functioning better each time. Seeing the good and treating everyone as a manifestation of divinity helps you to develop a positive attitude towards life and be happy under all circumstances. This also helps the people around you to unfold their innate ability to keep growing continuously.

MA KASCHIT DUKHA BHAGBHAVET

And finally, the sage says 'Ma-kaschit duhka bhag-bhavet!' What a universal prayer. He has no enmity towards anyone in the entire creation. This is the true wish of a great master who has seen the unity of existence. By saying this prayer, the sage is leading us through the real spiritual journey which will lead us to the realization that our nature is bliss. Life is

full of events. Some events lead to happiness, and some are unfortunate and can make us miserable. Here the sage is giving us this spiritual lesson that even these difficult moments of life triggered by unfortunate events need not make us miserable. He is hinting that you have the inner freedom to accept them without any complaint.

Once again let us recollect that a prayer is complimentary to hard work. It is not something someone can give us without putting in our effort. It is also not something which can reject the unseen higher force behind any activity. Prayer is to give additional inner strength that can give us confidence to work with full energy. When we pray, you are tuning yourself to the un-manifest good forces in the web of universal consciousness that can help you to get the desired results. It tunes you to the natural laws. Many a times when your prayer was very deep and heartfelt it worked wonders, is it not? The results were so rewarding, you got more than you expected. You wonder and say 'Oh God, thank you so much. Your grace is so great. Things are too good. 'I' could never have planned it this way, thank you my Supreme-Father!!

Let us remember that all this process of spiritual Satsang is useful and meaningful only if we recognize that 'peace within us is the basis of establishing peace in the entire globe here and now!'

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Success introduces you to the World. But Failure introduces the World to you

SWAMI RAMANANDA OF VARANASI

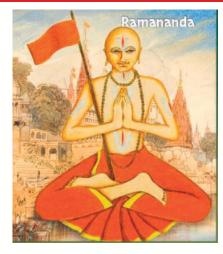
Lakshmi Chandrashekhar Subamanian

Sanatana Dharma (Hinduism) has given rise to a plethora of poet-saints, immortalized by tradition. Their devotional songs have lived long after their physical passing, carrying on the spirit of their soulful love and longing for God. The seven North Indian saints in this Insight are:—Lal Ded, Swami Ramananda, Narasinha Mehta, Ravidas, Surdas, Dadu Dayal and Tulsidas—they sang the universal language of bhakti in five Indian tongues: Kashmiri, Hindi, Gujarati, Braj-bhasha, and Avadhi.

Swami Ramananda is often hailed as the guru of a galaxy of saints. He played a crucial role in the cultivation of poet-saints and the propagation of bhakti in late 14th- or early 15th-century North India.

As with countless Indian saints, little is known with certainty about the life of Swami Ramananda, including year of birth and death. His biography has been derived from mentions of him in secondary literature. The most accepted version holds that Swami Ramananda was born in a Brahmin family at Prayaga (Allahabad) about late-14th-century, and died about mid-15th-century.

In his youth, he became a disciple of Swami Raghavananda, He gave him the "Ram Mantra" and initiated him as Ramananda. According to legend, as a youth Ramananda went on pilgrimage to South India and returned as a follower of Sri Vaishnavism in the line of the renowned philosopher and theologian Ramanujacharya, though he disagreed with that tradition's strict ritualistic guidelines and caste exclusivity. Some Ramanandis (Disciple Swami Ramananda, such as Rupkala, disassociate their founder from the South Indian Vaishnavas. Another influence in



Ramananda's teachings is that of the Nathpanthi ascetics.

Many people thought after his travels, Ramananda settled in Varanasi, on the banks of River Ganga, to preach in local dialects his liberal ideas of egalitarianism, selfless devotion, and making bhakti truly accessible to all people. However, per George Greirson, Swami Raghavananda, who was well versed in Vedanta and Vatakalai (northern, Rama-avatar) school of Vaishnavism, was from the South, and after much wandering had settled at Varanasi. There, and not in the South, he had Ramananda as his disciple."

Α famous story details Ramananda inadvertently weaver-saint Kabir on the banks of the lorth India, the parent of numerous Ganga in Varanasi. While walking up the Jbgroups. Ramanandis who choose to get ghat steps one morning, he tripped over litiated in additional vows of austerity Kabir who lay prone on the step, waiting ecome for Ramananda. As he Ramananda exclaimed the name of the tringent Lord, "Ram!" Kabir took that as his soughtafter initiation. From then on, Kabir, like his guru, sang the glories of the Lord Ram. In another version, Kabir goes to meet Ramananda and requests initiation. The guru initially sends him away; but later, once convinced of Kabir's sincerity and wisdom, he initiates the persistent seeker. Scholars over past decades have questioned the historicity of relationship due to the conflicting dates attributed to the two poets, Ramanandis and Kabir Panthis retell the story often, valuing it as an important puzzle piece in their enigmatic biographies. Stories narrate that another poet-saint, Ravidas, a leatherworker of Varanasi, also received his spiritual mantra from Ramananda, while other versions say that Ravidas's guru may have been Kabir. In any case, several of the well-known North Indian bhakti saints are considered spiritual descendants Swami Ramananda.

RAMANANDA TRADITIONS TODAY

A pioneering force of bhakti in North India, Saint Ramananda is also the behind inspiration the Ramananda Sampradaya, an ascetic Hindu order. Its sadhus (saint-practitioners), often called Ramanandis or Vairagis, adhere to vows,

Swami iscipline and austerities. They are initiating ansidered the largest monastic order in (renunciates), Tyagis stumbled. lahatyagis, undertaking more Disciplines include vows.

> restrictions in food, clothing and lifestyle choices. With bhakti as the core of all Ramanandi practice, two wavs interacting with the Divine emerged: one that savored "saguna" (God with form) worship towards Lord Rama and His consort Goddess Sita, and the other "nirguna" (formless Divine), deeming Rama as the ineffable supreme Reality. Poetsaint Tulsidas extolled the saguna philosophy with his Shri Ramcharitmanas, a devotional text at the heart of the Ramananda tradition, while Kabir was a leading voice of devotion to the formless divine with his dohas and bhajans (couplets and songs) Today, Ramanandis live throughout western and northern India, predominantly in the states of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, the Ganges basin, the Himalayan foothills and Nepal.

TESTIMONY FROM Dr. RAMDAS LAMB

"Swami Ramananda opened up Ram bhakti to the masses like no one else. During my time as a vairagi in India, it was always so refreshing to be in satsang with those for whom devotion was both the means and the goal, the process as well as the product. Swami Ramananda played a pivotal role in the individualization and

personalization of the bhakti tradition. One of the sayings commonly heard within his order with respect to who is qualified to follow the path is: "Jati pati puchhe na koi. Jo Hari ko bhajan, so Hari ka hoi." He taught anyone who had an interest in learning the path of devotion, including females and males. Hindus and non-Hindus. those of any caste, rich and poor, educated and uneducated. Living at a time when Sanskrit was considered by many as the religious language, he encouraged his followers to sing, write and teach in vernacular languages that listeners could understand and relate to. Undoubtedly, his best-known direct disciple was Kabir, and by far the best known of the members of his lineage is Tulsidas. For both, love of God transcends all limitations (jati pati).

"In the contemporary world, far too many seek to emphasize our differences with each other, whether it be caste, class, ethnicity, ideology, physical appearance or ability. However, those differences are so temporary and thus so meaningless. For Ramananda, and ideally for all his followers, Ram and Sita

together are the essence and the manifestation of all reality. Thus, seeing and serving that Universal Divinity in all should be the ultimate goal for all of us. Tulsidas presents this idea and approach to life in the two verses from his manas (presented in the sidebar at right)."

Guru and God are both highly regarded in Hinduism. Ramananda's fame spread due to his illustrious disciples, especially poetsaint Kabir. A popular couplet of Kabir, translated by Linda Hess:

"Guru and God are before me.
Whose feet should I touch?
"I offer myself to the guru
who showed me God."

Learn more: (1) Discover Ramananda practices in "Monastic Vows and the Ramananda Sampraday" by Dr. Ramdas Lamb, scholar and former Ramanandi Sadhu, in the book *Dealing with Deities: The Ritual Vow in South Asia* (2) Vasudha Paramasivan's PhD dissertation, "Between Text and Sect: Early Nineteenth Century Shifts in the Theology of Ram"

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SWAMI RAMANANDA'S SHABD IN THE "ADI GRANTH"

Translated by Sant Singh Khalsa

One Universal Creator God.

By the Grace of the True Guru.

Where should I go? My home is filled with bliss.

My consciousness does not go out wandering.

My mind has become crippled.

One day, a desire welled up in my mind.

I ground up sandalwood,

along with several fragrant oils

I went to God's place, and worshiped Him there. That God showed me the Guru, within my own mind.

Wherever I go,
I find water and stones.
You are totally pervading
and permeating in all.

I have searched through all the *Vedas* and the *Puranas*.

I would go there, only if the Lord were not here.

I am a sacrifice to You,
O my True Guru.
You have cut through
all my confusion and doubt.



ADVICE FROM A TREE

Stand Tall and Proud -- Sink your roots deep into the Earth, Be content with your natural beauty, drink plenty of water.

A story from Mahabharata

DRAUPADI'S SWAYAMVARAM

While the Pandavas were living in disquise as brahmins at Ekachakra Pura, news of the swayamvara of Draupadi, the daughter of King Drupada of Panchala, reached them. Many brahmanas of Ekachakra Pura planned to go to Panchala in the hope of receiving the customary gifts and to see the festivities and pageant of a royal wedding. Kunti, with her motherly instinct, read her sons' desire to go to Panchala and win Draupadi. So she told Yudhishthira: "We have been in this city so long that it is time to think of going somewhere else. Let us therefore go to Drupada's kingdom which is reputed to be fair and prosperous."

The marriage hall was beautifully decorated and built amidst a finely laid out group of new questhouses designed to accommodate the swayamvara suitors and quests. Attractive sights and sports had been arranged for public entertainment and there were glorious festivities for fourteen days continuously. A mighty steel bow was placed in the marriage hall. The candidate for the princess' hand was required to string the bow and with it shoot a steel arrow through the central aperture of a revolving disk at a target placed on high. This required almost superhuman strength and skill, and Drupada proclaimed that the hero who would perform this feat would win his daughter.

Many valiant princes had gathered there from all parts of India. The sons of Dhritarashtra were there as well as Karna, Krishna, Sisupala, Jarasandha, and Salya. Besides the competitors there was a huge concourse of spectators and visitors. The noise that issued therefrom resembled the uproar of the ocean and over it all arose the auspicious sound of festal music from hundreds of instruments.

Dhrishtadyumna, Draupadi's brother, rode on horseback in front of his sister seated on an elephant. and entered the swayamvara hall. Garland in hand, and coyly glancing at the valiant princes, who for their part looked at her in speechless admiration, she ascended the dais.

The priests recited the sacred mantras and offered oblations in the fire. After the peace invocation had been chanted and the flourish of music had stopped, Dhrishtadyumna took Draupadi by the hand and led her to the center of the hall. Then he proclaimed in loud and clear voice:

Hear ye, O princes seated in this assembly, here is the bow. There is the target and here are the arrows. He who sends five arrows in succession through the hole of the wheel and unerringly hits the target, if he also be of good family and presence, shall win my sister.

Many noted princes rose one after another and tried in vain to string the bow. It was too heavy and stiff for them, and

they returned to their places abashed and ashamed. Sisupala, Jarasandha, Salya, and Duryodhana were among these unsuccessful aspirants.

There was great clamor and angry talk, some even saying that it was an impossible test put up to shame the kings. Then all noises were hushed, for there arose from among the group of brahmins a youth who advanced towards the bow. It was Arjuna who had come disguised as a brahmin. When he stood up; wild clamor burst forth again from the crowd. The brahmins themselves were divided in opinion. Some being highly delighted that there should be among them a lad of mettle enough to compete, while others more envious or worldly wise, said what impudence it was for this brahmin to enter the competition when the mighty heroes and valiant princes had met with failure. But there were others again who spoke differently as they noted the noble and shapely proportions of the youth. And they blessed him.

Arjuna approached the place where the bow lay and asked Dhrishtadyumna: "Can a brahmin try to bend the bow?" Dhrishtadyumna answered: "O best of brahmins, my sister will become the lifemate of any one of good family and presence, who bends the bow and shoots the target. My words stand and there will be no going back on them."

Then Arjuna meditated on Narayana, the Supreme God, and took the bow in his hand and strung it with ease. He placed an arrow on the string and looked around him

with a smile, while the crowd was lost in spellbound silence. Then without pause or hesitation he shot five arrows in succession through the revolving wheel right into the target so that it fell down. The crowd was in tumult and there was a blare of musical instruments.

The brahmins who were seated in the assembly in large numbers sent forth shouts of joy, waving aloft their deerskins exultation as though the whole community had won Draupadi. The uproar that followed was indescribable. Draupadi shone with a fresh beauty. Her face glowed with happiness which streamed out of her eyes as she looked on Arjuna. She approached him and placed the garland on his neck. Yudhishthira, Nakula, and Sahadeva returned in haste to the potter's house to convey the glad news immediately to their mother. Bhima alone remained in the assembly fearing that some danger might befall Arjuna from the disappointed princes.

As anticipated by Bhima, the princes were upset and mad with anger. They said: "The practice of swayamvara, the choosing of a bridegroom, is not prevalent among the brahmins. How can a brahmana marry her? We should oppose this marriage and prevent it so as to protect righteousness and save the practice of swayamvara from the peril which threatens it." A free fight seemed imminent.

Bhima plucked a tree by the roots, and stripping it of foliage, stood armed with this formidable bludgeon, by the side of

Arjuna ready for any event. Draupadi said nothing but stood holding on to the skirts of the deerskin in which Arjuna was clad. Krishna, Balarama and others sought to appease those who had created the confusion. Arjuna proceeded to the house of the potter accompanied by Draupadi.

As Bhima and Arjuna were taking Draupadi to their temporary abode. Dhrishtadyumna followed them at distance, and unseen by them, closely observed everything that took place there. He was amazed and delighted at what he saw, and returning, he secretly told King Drupada: "Father, I think they are the Pandavas. Draupadi accompanied them, holding to the skirts of the deerskin of that youth and she was not at all abashed. I also followed and I saw all five and a venerable and august lady who, I have no doubt, is Kunti herself."

Invited by Drupada, Kunti and the Pandavas went to the palace. Dharmaputra

confided to the king that they were the Pandavas. He also informed him of their decision to marry Draupadi in common. Drupada rejoiced at knowing that they were the Pandavas, which set at rest all anxiety regarding the enmity of Drona. But he was surprised and disgusted when he heard that they would jointly marry Draupadi.

Drupada opposed this and said: "How unrighteous! How did this idea get into your head, this immoral idea that goes against the traditional usage?" Yudhishthira answered: "O king, kindly excuse us. In a time of great peril, we vowed that we would share all things in common and we cannot break that pledge. Our mother has commanded us to do so." Finally, Drupada yielded, and the marriage was celebrated.

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BE AWARE OF YOUR THOUGHTS

Few people enjoy the company of individuals whose attitudes are persistently negative. Yet, many of us tolerate the critical chatter that originates in our own minds.

Since we are so used to the stream of self-limiting, critical consciousness that winds its way through our thoughts, we are often unaware of the impact these musings have on our lives. It is only when we become aware of the power of such thoughts that we can divest ourselves from them and fill the emptiness they leave with loving, peaceful affirmations.

When we take notice of involuntary thoughts in a nonjudgmental way, we initiate a healing process that allows us to replace intimidating and upsetting self-talk with positive, empowering thoughts.

PERFECT PEACE

There once was a King who offered a prize to the artist who would paint the best picture of peace. Many artists tried. The King looked at all the pictures, but there were only two he really liked, and he had to choose between them.

One picture was of a calm lake. The lake was a perfect mirror for peaceful towering mountains were all around it. Overhead was a blue sky with fluffy white clouds. All who saw this picture thought that it was a perfect picture of peace.

The other picture had mountains too. But these were rugged and bare. Above was an angry sky from which rain fell, in which lightning played. Down the side of the mountain tumbled a foaming waterfall.

This did not look peaceful at all. But when the King looked, he saw behind the waterfall a tiny bush growing in a crack in the rock. In the bush a mother bird had built her nest. There, in the midst of the rush of angry water, sat the mother bird on her nest -- perfect peace. Which picture do you think won the prize? The King chose the second picture.

Do you know why? "Because" explained the King, "peace does not mean to be in a place where there is no noise, trouble, or hard work. Peace means to be in the midst of all those things and still be calm in your heart. That is the real meaning of peace."

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BRAHMAN

न चक्षुषा गृह्यते नापि वाचा नान्यैर् देवैस् तपसा कर्मणा वा ज्ञानप्रसादेन विशुद्धसत्त्व: ततस्तु तं पश्यते निष्कलं ध्यायमान: ॥

Na chahshushā grihyate nāpi vāchā Nānyair devais tapasā karmanā vā. Jnann-prasāden vishuddh-satvah tatastu tarn pashyate nishkalam dhyāyamānah -- Mundaka Upanishad

Brahman or God cannot be experienced by the limited mind and senses. However, when 'sattva' or purity is enhanced in the mind, the intellect becomes intuitive. It is by the intuitive function of the intellect that one attains realization of the Self.'

By the study of scriptures under the guidance of a Guru, an aspirant gains intellectual insight into the unreality of the world and the Reality of the Divine 'Self'. By practicing profound meditation on Brahman, he gains the intuitional revelation, "I am Brahman", and becomes liberated from the cycles of birth and death.

HINDU CALENDAR 2024 (VIKRAM SAMVAT 2081)

September-2024 (Bhadrapad - Ashwin)		October- 2024 (Ashwin - Kartik)		November - 2024 (Kartik - Margashirsha)				
02	Mon	Amavasya	01	TUE	Amavasya,	02	SAT	Bhaiya Dooj
07	SAT	Shri Ganesh Chaturthi			Sharadh Ends	12	TUE	Dev Utthana Ekadashi
14	SAT	Parsva Ekadashi	02	WED	Mahatma Gandhi	13	WED	Pradosh:
15	SUN	Pradosh			Jayanti	15	FRI	Purnima
16	MON	Kanya Sankranti	03	THU	Navartri Begins	26	TUE	Utpanna Ekadashi
17	TUE	Purnima	10	THU	Durga Ashtami	28	THU	Pradosh
18	WED	Sharadh Begins	11	FRI	Navratri Ends	30	SAT	Amavasya
27	FRI	Indira Ekadashi	12	SAT	Dussehra			-
29	SUN	Pradosh	13	SUN	Papankusha Ekadashi			
			14	MON	Pradosh			
			16	WED	Purnima			
	*	28 1	20	SUN	Karva Chauth			7 28 4
	1		27	SUN	Rama Ekadashi			
	6		29	TUE	Pradosh, Dhanteras			
	धम	र्ग रक्षति रक्षितः	31	THU	Diwali Lakshmi Pooja			धर्मो रक्षति रक्षितः



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