

Vicharasetu

The Path of Introspection

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Spiritual wisdom is aimed at making the mind light, the intelligence clear and the ego extinct, resulting in the dawning of an illumined and expansive personality. Imbued with deep inner strength, freedom and stability, the Knower begins to live and move in the world with benevolence and brilliance. His mind delights in universal fondness and dispossession, which naturally blossom into a life of renunciation – the crowning glory of spiritual wisdom.

— *Swamiji*

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News & Notes

Gurupoornima & Retreat programmes: As announced in May issue the Gurupoornima & Retreat Programmes will be conducted between July 11 and 17.

On 23rd April in the Town Hall at Palakkad, Poojya Swamiji inaugurated the Kerala Br̥hmaṇa Mah̥sammēlana. In his address delivered to over 700 delegates, Swamiji stressed that the supreme treasure of Br̥hmaṇas is their Vedic allegiance and devotional faith. The inner majesty which spiritual wisdom bestows is the infallible strength of Br̥hmaṇas in all times. To express this with the timely collective will in an organized manner, is the need of the day. The scriptures have clearly envisaged this eventuality.

In his address Poojya Swamiji said: "One does not become a Br̥hmaṇa merely by birth. He has to cultivate the Br̥hmaṇa qualities and virtues and express them in his day-to-day life and interactions."

On 23rd April in Paralikkad Shiva Temple, Poojya Swamiji dedicated to the Lord the newly constructed Chuttambalam, Mandapam, Theerthakkinar, Balikkallu, and Deepastambham and addressed a devotional congregation about the significance of the event. Poojya Purushothama Swamiji also spoke on the occasion.

The Temple Welfare Committee working under the guidance of Poojya Purushothama Swamiji had undertaken the reconstruction and also conducted the 11-day rituals related to Nav̥karaṇa (Rejuvenation ceremony). On the concluding day of the ceremony (3rd May) Poojya Swamiji addressed the assembled devotees on what constitutes devotional and spiritual values, and how they enrich, empower and fulfill human life. The Nav̥karaṇa programme concluded with collective N̥masaṅkṛtana Pradakṣiṇ in the evening. The whole event brought devotional awareness and regeneration in the local people.

Poojya Swamiji inaugurated and addressed the Cultural Conference held in Nadathara Mahavishnu Temple near Thrissur on 28th April, marking the Temple Festivals (Utsava). Kochin Devaswam Board President Sri AK Krishnanunni presided. Board Member Sri KK Menon and others offered felicitation.

On Saturday, 13th May Poojya Swamiji's Jayanti was observed solemnly in the Ashram Vijñāana Bhavan. A report about the event as observed in the Ashram as well as in Delhi, Jamshedpur and Pune appears in this issue.

Third Global Tele-Satsang (GTS), commemorating 73rd Jayanti of Poojya Swamiji was held on May 14th. More than hundred devotees from USA (5 centres), UK, UAE, Malaysia, Singapore, Delhi, Jamshedpur and Pune participated in the Satsang. In addition, at Narayanashrama Tapovanam in Thrissur, about thirty devotees seated in Vijñāana Bhavan, participated in the satsang.

In his address, Poojya Swamiji outlined some of the significant aspects of his sannyāsa life, the exclusive s̥dhan̥ he practised after taking d̥kṣā from Baba, and the fulfilling life thereafter as a result of his wholesome love and fondness for spirituality. He emphasized the importance of practising "inner renunciation".

Beginning her talk with the soulful rendering of 'Namo namaste Gurave mah̥tmane..' Maa shared her experiences as a s̥dhik̥, explaining how she "always wanted to be like Poojya Swamiji". She

impressed upon the participants that these Tele-satsangs should not become a mere ritual arranged on special occasions, but the message given by Poojya Swamiji should actually be practised.

Nutan Swamiji said that the practice of inner renunciation will never become true in spirit unless the seeker is aware of the unique importance and value of sannyasa and has the readiness in mind to embrace sannyasa as the culmination of his s; dhan; .

The conference concluded with Ma chanting 'PrabuddhaÆ Vimuktam...'

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Grow Fondness for Sannyāsa
[Poojya Swamiji's message on the occasion of
73rd Jayanti & 50 years of Sannyāsa]

13 May 2006

Dear and blessed seekers and devotees:

Harih Om Tat Sat. Yes, we were getting calls from different Brahma Vidya Centres intimating the special gathering each is arranging for the 13th of May. It is refreshing to know that you have arranged an intense and intimate satsaṅg this day. This time the event has the unique role of commemorating the 50th year of your Swamiji embracing Sannyāsa.

It is very fulfilling to know that one after another 50 years have passed, since I assumed the ascetic apparel, inaugurating the peripatetic life, fostering no special destination in front. The journey on foot began 50 years ago from Wadakanchery, with a wholesome attitude of surrender and dedication, to be greeted by Providence at every step and turn.

By dusk I and my brother Sannyāsin were in Venganelloor about 20 kms away, where we halted for the night in the Temple Refectory. Next morning led us to Chelakkara, where the popular priest of the village greeted and hosted us. His fondness and appeal retained us in the village. He and his friends requested us to deliver the message of Bhagavadgeeta to the village men and women. The Temple Refectory was set up for the purpose and announcements carried the news across the village.

We addressed a receptive crowd next evening on the 3rd chapter of Bhagavadgeeta. It was the first public speech of my life! The great words of our Seers came true – mĒkaĒ karoti vācā lam – the grace of the Supreme renders the dumb eloquent. People apparently found the event inspiring and enlightening.

Strangely enough, the news of the young ascetics' parivrājana mission spread to the nearby towns, obliging our presence in Chelakkara continue, beyond our intention. The wandering mission on foot abruptly changed its character, initiating us into the erudite exposition of the country's immortal spiritual lore.

Before long, I moved to Madras, from where I was taken to Jamshedpur, the premier Steel City of ours. And soon the task of spiritual dissemination took me to other cities in India and abroad. Decades have passed, and now I am on the brink of half a century of dedicated sannyāsa life.

It is very fulfilling to know that such a long time has passed in ascetic dedication, mission and resolve. All this was possible, because the country still has enough like-minded people to welcome Sannyāsins and Saints, with a yearning to listen to their enlightening words.

But wherefrom did the spirit, fervour and dedication spring? Who infused the current so effectively? This is where I want you all to value the intrinsic potential of household life.

Any ascetic is born in a household. He imbibes his spirit from his parents, who undoubtedly inherited it from their predecessors. The great heredity is preserved and bequeathed by the householders alone. Be aware of this fundamental fact.

I would like you to know that to be educated, to get married and raise a family constitute only 'one half' of the total human life. Of the four āśramas, the vital two, vānaprastha and sannyāsa,

are still ahead. You will be fulfilling your human mission only when these two facets also find place in your life.

The aspiration to actualize this fact should always adorn your hearts and minds. Sannyāsa is the sweetest, most amiable and fulfilling part of human life. To be a lover of the whole society and universe, to lead a life in pursuit of the overall welfare of the people and the world, is an invaluable choice any time.

Our country creditably has this ascetic culture and persuasion right from the Vedic times. It is this priceless culture that graced some families, their heredity and bequest, resulting in the birth and growth of a sannyāsin somewhere in the land. Understand the mystery and cherish it. If the householders become culturally poor, then the whole society will turn destitute.

We need leaders in every walk of life. Spiritual leaders are even more important, nay indispensable. To grow fondness for Sannyāsa and Sannyāsins, to help in their mission, is religiously, spiritually and socially greatly rewarding. If you find anything useful and benevolent in your Swamiji's life and dedication, be sure the whole of it has sprung from the goodness and dedication of the householders themselves.

All of you, who have been part of my life and mission in one way or another, are greatly blessed, in that you have such a spiritual inclination and ascetic affinity, the greatest gift one can hope to gain upon this earth. I compliment and bless you all for this. May the spiritual legacy continue to grace your friends, relatives and successive generations.

In addition to able governance and democratic values, the society needs multiple spiritual and cultural contributions. The culture of spiritual dissemination, however, constitutes the backbone of the society. I wish you understand the relevance of your pursuit and association in their full perspective and strive to cherish and strengthen it as much as possible.

May the satsaṅg of the day instil deeper thoughts and inspiration, taking you closer to the Imperishable Soul, enfolding you with further inspiration, strength and resolve to intensify your sādhanā and benefit the society liberally. Let your spiritual affinity spread to others also effectively.

Love and ॐrvīd,

Antarītmī, Swamiji

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True Renunciation - An Attitudinal Orientation

Sri Krishna has already set forth his views about the performance of *vaiñña*, *dāna* and *tapas*. He now expounds his thoughts on the remaining, wider range of activities. Our activities and interactions generally fall into two categories: religious and secular. *Yaiñña*, *dāna* and *tapas* constitute the religious and everything else must be viewed as secular. Secular activities can be various. But primarily they are personal, domestic, professional or social.

What is the pronouncement on *tvāga* and *sannvāsa* as related to secular activities? Krishna discusses the subject quite elaborately, with his own distinct notes:

नियतस्य तु संन्यासः कर्मणो नोपपद्यते ।
मोहात्तस्य परित्यागस्तामसः परिकीर्तितः ॥ (१८.७)

Renunciation of action prescribed or otherwise necessary, will not be right. Renouncing it out of delusion or ignorance is clearly said to be *tāmasika* (induced by *tamc-guna*).

Any action, called for on one account or another, related to one's life with all its relevance and context, is **not to be abandoned**, by any standard. This is a very clear statement applying to all activities.

Activities devolving upon an individual are personal, familial and societal. Upkeep of personal hygiene, food intake, exercise, rest and such others are personal. Then come those related to his domestic responsibilities – looking after the welfare of the family members, education, health and providing for their growth and prosperity. To pursue a profession as an essential part of this responsibility forms another important aspect of one's activities. Besides these are such activities, wherein one interacts with the society, its members, in various ways for different purposes. Going to zones of trading, offices of administration, abodes of worship, park, playgrounds or similar avenues of relaxation and other precincts for a variety of needs come under the social group.

In the performance of these secular activities, interactions with individuals and groups or with places and events become necessary. All these activities together make a balanced life. To look after one's own body, to ensure the welfare of the family members and also to help in ensuring the welfare of the society at large – all these should be given due importance.

Whether it is a personal, familial, professional or social act, whatever needs to be done must be attended to and cannot be devalued or neglected on any account. Abandonment of any act cannot be thought of or effected. Abandoning, relinquishing or eschewing work does not fit in with the fundamental proposition set forth by Krishna in the 3rd

chapter – that under the comprehensive hold of Nature none has any freedom to remain inactive. The three *gunas* of *prakṛti* (Nature) are inexorable in their effects on the beings upon the earth.

As Nature enfolds us everywhere, the **question of shunning activities does not arise** at all. Not knowing this fact, nay truth of Nature, one may be tempted to think of a possible relinquishment of activities, as Arjuna did at first. Only in the thought or idea level such a proposition can be relevant. It will not have any bearing beyond.

Arjuna has not left the war-field. But he certainly felt that he must and would leave. He expressed the idea to Krishna, though in the way of a firm decision or resolution. Krishna instantly questioned, disapproved and spurned it, discussing the subject in all its relevance. That is how the dialogue became a philosophical dissertation. Arjuna articulated his intention, stating the factors that made him think in such lines.

He felt that to fight the war was sinful, religiously speaking. It was not in tune with the normal human emotional responses. Religious perception was against it, as the consequences would mean indefinite damnation in hell. It was greed for kingdom and royal pleasures that motivates armies to fight, he felt.

Yes, if it was all this, then Arjuna would have been right in saying and doing what he proposed. But Krishna looks at the whole proposition from all angles – religious and secular – and finds an altogether different vision, assessment. In discussing these, the dialogue has traversed through 17 chapters and has entered the 18th, the last. **“Is there anything called *tvāga* or *sannyāsa* then? If so, what exactly is it?”** These are the final questions in Arjuna’s mind needing clarification.

Krishna provides the answer, viewing the subject of renunciation in the light in which he had explained it in earlier chapters and adding a few more salient thoughts, so that the vision becomes full, comprehensive.

Niyatasva means “prescribed or viewed as necessary in the context of one’s life, with all that it implies.” That is how the personal, familial, professional and social aspects are brought in, to understand the subject. If, for any of these reasons, an action becomes necessary, none should ever think of renouncing or abandoning it.

Valmiki was an ascetic, a renunciate. Yet, Sri Rama confidently abandoned his wife Seeta near his hermitage, hoping that the compassionate Sage would take pity on her and give asylum. Whether Rama was right or wrong in having thought in this way, is not the discussion here. Valmiki came to know from his disciples that a cultured woman was found in distress near his hermitage. “She obviously needs your attention and care, venerable sir”, said the disciples to the Master. Valmiki instantly went to her and decided to give asylum. It was not an hour’s or day’s involvement, but of decades and more.

To be sympathetic to others and do whatever is necessary in the context is characteristic of any good person, especially an ascetic. In fact, it is this ascetic compulsion that makes the Knowers devote their whole time for *loka-saṅgraha* (social benevolence).

Dissemination of spiritual Wisdom is their mission. They author scriptures, conduct yajñas, tutor disciples, host seekers and organize many an activity to further social welfare. What a tremendous task it becomes! Who except the Knowers can take up such an enlightening mission?

“**Prescribed or necessary**” has thus a broad, even complex, relevance. Individual’s potential, predilection, emotional or intelligential affinity will determine the “necessary activities”. Some activities every one has to perform. What these are alone will differ.

For a Sage, it is the sagely activities. For a fighter and ruler, it is such as are relevant to him. To a Teacher, it will be those related to teaching. For a housewife, it will be whatsoever falls within her orbit. In fact, these individual activities cover a very wide range. Altogether they constitute the complex and comprehensive societal whole.

Spirituality does not permit disregard, laxity or abandonment of any of these. In fact, the earth is itself a great forum in the Universe, where humans as well as non-humans flourish and prosper by their respective activities. The entire wheel of creation has to revolve, helped by every little cog in it. The wheel is not going to stop its revolution any time. This is the truth.

To act is to keep this wheel revolving, to preserve the overall welfare, rhythm and felicity.

Being so, if any one thinks of abandoning his share or role of activity, it can only be **due to a basic delusion** in him (*mohāt*). Delusion can, of course, grip the human mind any time, sometimes in a strange and appalling manner. Such delusional shunning of work also has a place in the scheme of creation. Krishna calls it *tāmasika*, meaning it is demotional, belonging to the lowest level. Like darkness, slush and dirt, it calls for right identification and cleansing.

What does this mean, in effect, in the context of Arjuna and the Kurukshetra war? Any thought, for any reason whatever, of leaving the battlefield and shunning the war, adducing whatever reason for the matter, will be totally a delusional step. Spiritual wisdom will not allow it. It condemns it outright. It is but *tāmasika*, adverse, perverse and anti-evolutional. And yet, *tamc-guna* has also its place – it is part of creation. Laziness is a characteristic of human beings. It does not allow them to work with interest, persuasion and joy. Some will be victims to its hold. Only such victims incur this kind of abuse, violation. With this, the first part of Krishna’s analysis of the subject is over.

He takes up the second part, extending the principle of abandonment to another level, the inner, in which the mind is the primary focus.

दुःखमित्येव यत्कर्म कायक्लेशभयात्त्यजेत् ।
स कृत्वा राजसं त्यागं नैव त्यागफलं लभेत् ॥ (१८.८)

To renounce activities fearing that they cause bodily strain and discomfort would be a *rājasika* step and will not shower the benefit of true renunciation.

Any kind of karma is uncomfortable to start with, primarily because it involves physical and also mental exertion. The senses – *īñānendriyas* as well as *karmendriyas* – have to be sharply engaged with diligence. The tasks could be multifarious. The legs have to stand or walk for a long time. May be, the mouth and tongue are to be engaged to bring out the right words and pronunciation. The reluctance and opposition to all this is so much that it appears easier to escape from the whole ‘persecution’. Any step of this kind is *rājasika*, says Krishna.

By evading actions in this manner, none will get the benefit of *tvāga* at all. Real *tvāga* has a different emphasis. It acts on a different level and plane.

Here also Krishna is clearly against any kind of physical renunciation of any act. Whether you renounce activity out of delusion or finding the exertion unpleasant, uncomfortable or painful, it is renunciation all right, but not the right one to sublimate the mind. Activities are a definite part of human life for the upkeep of bodily life and ensuring the welfare of the society. There is no question of renouncing them at all.

What is *tvāga* then? Is there any *tvāga* at all, possible or actual? Physical renunciation is according to Krishna ridiculous, hypocritical. Naturally, the seeker is obliged to raise his imagination and pin *tvāga* on the higher inner level. The matter becomes quite clear. And this is what Krishna aims at.

The purpose of any discussion is to enlighten man. Ideas, propositions and procedures are all subjected to a very close rational examination. The object is to find out whether they are feasible, proper and useful. Often this kind of evaluative consideration is not taken up.

The senses are consistently outgoing, even with a craze. This irresistibly involves the inner organ, the mind. The intelligence has no occasion to play its role of check and balance. Even if it wants to, the mind is not receptive to it. It is all a plight of confusion and clouding.

Having described the two levels and kinds of renunciation – delusional and reluctance-oriented, *tāmasika* and *rājasika* – Krishna proceeds to reveal the true renunciation and how it should be attempted and actualized. Krishna’s next words in the text are of paramount importance. The two earlier verses serve as a prelude **to know by contrast what is not true renunciation:**

कार्यमित्येव यत्कर्म नियतं क्रियतेऽर्जुन ।
सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा फलं चैव स त्यागः सात्त्विको मतः ॥ (१८.९)

O Arjuna, whichever activity – enjoined by Scriptures or otherwise – when performed as a duty, avoiding *saṅga* and relinquishing result, would constitute *sāttvika* renunciation.

In contrast to the *tāmasika* and *rājasika* relinquishment, Krishna now discloses the *sāttvika* kind. Here, **what is relinquished is not action or activity, but the wrong**

attitude and attachment towards it. No action, as such, can be eschewed. The only thing to be left is the wrong ideas and perceptions about it.

Mind produces wrong as well as right thoughts. If its offshoots are wrong, they should be abandoned and the right ones installed in their place. Thus **dispossessing the wrong outlook and possessing the right one is the *sāttvika*, enlightened process** of dealing with the mind.

Once a task, small or big – be it personal, familial, professional or social – is to be performed for a valid reason, do so wholeheartedly. The motivation is that it is required to be done. We are supposed to be active. When activities are called for and they are unavoidable, why not yoke ourselves to them earnestly?

But in doing so, the *sañga*, attachment or **undue psychological identification**, should be dispensed with. Between an action and its result, anything can come up, interfere. What will and when, none can predict. So leave the course of things to itself. Play your part zealously. Put your mind and attention to the task on hand in all effectiveness. That it is to be done, should be the sole consideration behind the performance.

Who can predict the outcome of the war Arjuna is going to fight? Bheeshma and Drona are unconquerable. So too are many others. To subdue all of them and ultimately to win is by no means an assured outcome. At the same time, the war has to be fought.

On one of the days of the battle, Arjuna was away contending the Samshaptakas. His leadership was not available in the main front. Yudhishtira and the rest were confronted by the चक्रव्यूह (*cakravvūha*) formed by the opponents. None of the elders had the skill to penetrate it. They were at their wit's end.

They called Abhimanyu, Arjuna's son, a valorous and skilled fighter, and told him that he should help them in the crisis. Abhimanyu said: "I shall penetrate this चक्रव्यूह (*cakravvūha*), but if caught inside I may not be able to come out. I do not yet know that skill." Yudhishtira said: "Do not fear. Enter in and we shall follow you. Once we are inside, there is no danger."

Abhimanyu agreed and dashed in. But, before Yudhishtira and his men could get in, Jayadratha sealed the entry point and none could penetrate further. Abhimanyu was trapped inside. All the *Mahārathas* of the enemy surrounded and jointly fought Abhimanyu. He held his ground for long, but was killed in the end.

Any venture, will always have some unpredictable elements, as happened in this instance. Yudhishtira's intention was quite in place. He meant what he said. He was sure that nothing untoward would happen to Abhimanyu. For, along with all the other powerful heroes of the Pandava army, he himself would be there inside the *cakravvūha*. But in minutes the most unexpected intercepted. Yudhishtira and the rest were pitifully kept away, leaving the young Abhimanyu alone inside.

Does this not make it clear that anything may intercept the expected outcome of our efforts? **The only safeguard will be to avoid *sañga* towards the outcome.** Mind should be enriched and empowered to take up and act with poise in any situation. Instead of expecting a sure specific outcome and working in that hope, the mind should imbibe and display a natural note of readiness and poise, without getting seduced by hope or weakened by fear. In this is *sañga-tvāga*. With *sañga-tvāga* also comes *tvāga* of the fruit or result.

Sañga is a product of ignorance, delusion and disharmony. With the dawning of clarity through wisdom, spiritual integration results, leading to the extinction of *bheda-buddhi* (differential outlook). Mind can always swing from bad to good, and also from good to bad. Make it swing to the good. Intelligence can also shift from doubt to clarity and right decision. Make it do so.

This process of **cleansing the mind and making it poised, treating the intelligence and rendering it clear and resolute, is the *sāttvika-tvāga*.** By this is one enlightened, illumined. For this, there is no need to stop or withdraw from any action. Performance of whatever is necessary with a frame of mind that gives peace, poise and enlightenment is what is needed.

The whole process of relinquishment is applicable to the mind. It consists of **abandoning the troublesome note and imbuing the viable, vibrant and luminous one.** Understand the difference very well.

To summarize the discussion:

Physical relinquishment of action is not possible. Such a scope is not provided by Nature.

What is possible and required is inner renunciation. That is, renunciation of the *sañga* (undue identification) towards actions. With this, whatever is necessary should be pursued with poise, persistence and peace. Mind's disturbing elements alone can and should be renounced.

(to be continued)

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Integration of Jñāna and Bhakti - II

Swami Nirvisheshananda Tirtha

[Continued from May issue. Concluding part of the talk delivered by Nutan Swamiji on 28th December 2005 in the 4th Sreemad Bhaagavata Tattva Sameekshaa Satram. – Ed.]

For the Pleasure of the Lord

So, we found that the various names with which the devotee is addressing the Lord, in truth mean the all-pervading Consciousness, the Self or Brahman. And finally he says:

*Prātaḥ-samutthāva tava-privārtham
samsāri-vātrām anuvartavisve*

Waking up in the morning, I get engaged in all the worldly activities, but only for Your pleasure: *tava-privārtham*.

When the so-called worldly interactions are undergone for the pleasure of the Lord, they no longer remain worldly – they become divine. But, how to know what will please the Lord? Whatever we are doing, is primarily for our own pleasure – because we like to do it – and not for the pleasure of the Lord! How to know what the Lord would like us to do?

If we understand well *who* the Lord is, we will also know what He will like. **Because, the Lord will be the happiest when we become like Him.** Is there any doubt about it? Don't we love ourselves most? We will be able to do everything according to His pleasure when we become one with the Lord.

The epithets of the Lord used in the first line of the verse (*May issue of Vicharasetu*) made it clear that He is the One Universal Consciousness that transcends all divisions or contradictions. He is the Source of all. He is infinite and all-pervading. If that is our Lord, then what will be His *priva*? What will give Him pleasure? Will He be happy when we are selfish and small? Will He like to see us behave with a constricted, petty mind – when we are thinking only of ourselves ignoring the welfare of others in His world?

So, “*tava-privārtham samsāri-vātrām anuvartavisve*” means that every moment, while performing anything in our worldly life, we have to identify ourselves with the infinite all-pervading Lord. Then whatever we do will become His *privārtham*.

Well, we may say that complete identification with the Lord is not possible until we become a *Jñānī*, a realized soul. Then **what are we supposed to do as sādhakas?** We have a simple **thumb rule** to follow. We can do it easily and efficiently provided we are sincere about our pursuit and aim.

As ignorant *sādhakas*, we feel we are small – we are limited by our body-mind personality. We have our selfishness; we have our petty desires – strong likes and

dislikes. Throughout the day we are haunted by our possessiveness and ego. But what is our final goal? If we have to identify ourselves with the Universal Lord, we have to grow to that universal dimension. That means: **The real purpose of our spiritual *sādhana* is to take our mind from its present small identity to the ultimate universal identity.** How can the mind achieve this feat? Only through expansion! Whatever expands our mind, can take it towards infinitude.

Anything that makes our mind expand, takes us closer to the Lord; and anything that constricts our mind, takes us away from the Lord. So, whatever we do, speak or think throughout the day, if it is accompanied by a **feeling of expansion within**, it takes us closer to the Lord. **This is the thumb rule.**

Truly, it makes us more and more Lord-like. This feeling of expansion will also be associated with a feeling of great internal strength, because real strength comes from the Lord, the Soul – “*Ātmanā vindate vīrvam*”.

If we look into our own mind, we will know what makes us expanded and what makes us constricted. The judgment will rest on us, not on anybody else. This is a field where nobody can deceive us except we ourselves. While doing anything, while taking any decision or making any choice, we have to look within and find out whether by our chosen action the mind will feel expanded or shrunk, whether the choice will make us feel stronger or weaker within. Accordingly we will know whether what we are doing is “*tava-privārtham*” or not.

The *śloka* says that if we are **devoted** to the Lord, then we have no other way. We have to do everything for the pleasure of the Lord. And the **pinnacle of our devotional pursuit** will be, when the ‘I’ in us gets identified with the Lord – the One infinite, universal Consciousness. Then we don’t have to say *tava-privārtham* any more. Whatever we do will naturally become for His pleasure, because we are unified with Him.

Jñānī tu ātmaiva me matam – says the Lord in Bhagavadgeeta. “The *Jñānī* becomes verily My own *Ātmā*, he becomes Myself”. Then there is no question of *tava-privārtham*. The duality goes. As long as the duality is there, the devotee has to feel: *tava-privārtham*. But when the duality goes, all the actions naturally become divine. They become a small part in the Universal activity of the Lord, a part of His Universal Yajña.

I shall try to give some illustrations. I am speaking here. Suppose I think: “I will become a great exponent of scriptures. I will have a lot of fame through public speaking.” Then, although I am speaking about the Lord, is my action becoming for the pleasure of the Lord – *tava-privārtham*? It is not, because my attitude is selfish making me unlike the Universal Lord. If we look within, we will find that such an attitude makes our mind small and weak.

But, suppose I think: “I have got this *Brahmavidyā* from my Gurudev, through our *Guru-paramparā*, for which I feel grateful and blessed. This supreme treasure has come down to us from time immemorial through the austerity of countless generations of Knowers and

their disciples. Should I not try my best to keep it alive and make it available to the future generations?

“Whatever we know, whatever we have experienced, should we not try to share with people who are interested in it? Some may get benefited. Some may get inspired and pursue their enquiry sincerely. Today if we are blessed with even a spark of this eternal knowledge, should we not feel grateful to the lineage of the Masters and try to ensure that this *Jñāna-pradīpāh*, this flame of knowledge, does not get extinguished – rather, it is made available to the entire humanity?”

If this is the attitude, then the aim becomes impersonal and universal. If we look within, we will find that this attitude makes our mind sky-like. Will it not then be for the pleasure of the Lord?

If whatever we do, transcends the boundary of our personal, selfish motives and desires, then our activity becomes a part of the Universal Yajña of the Lord. The moon goes around the earth relentlessly; so does the earth around the sun. The sun and the galaxies move at fantastic speed. So many things are happening in the Universe! Our body too has been born as an infinitesimal part of such incessant activities in Nature. And with that body, as the flower blossoms with its beauty and fragrance – without even thinking whether anybody will see it or not, whether anybody will appreciate its beauty or not – we too can blossom naturally with whatever qualities and virtues we have.

When we make our life such a **desire-free blossoming**, all our actions become part of the Universal Yajña of the all-pervading Lord. Whatever we do, be it small or big, becomes an offering to the divine Yajña.

Our Gurudev, Poojya Swamiji generally writes to devotees who are going to get married: “In begetting children, be aware of the fact that you are going to play the role of *Brahmā*, the Creator. You are going to introduce a *Vamśa* (lineage) in the human society which will adorn this world – how long we do not know.” Are we conscious of our responsibility towards the society before giving birth to our children? Or, it is only our selfish aim of having a son and having the joy of spoiling him! Generally when we get attached to the son, we spoil him. We spoil him to the extent we are attached to him. The best possible blossoming of the son does not take place because of our attachment.

The comprehensive, universal attitude we miss. So we miss the Yajña. We miss the divinity in all our actions. If we are conscious of this universal dimension, then that will make every moment of our life divine. That will make each action of ours a Yajña – for the pleasure of the Lord.

The Grand Integration

The four *ślokas* I chanted makes it clear that *Jñāna* attains its pinnacle with the association of bhakti and bhakti also cannot attain its pinnacle without *jñāna*. I would just like to add what Bhagavadgeeta has to say on this subject. In the 7th chapter, Krishna says:

चतुर्विधा भजन्ते मां जनाः सुकृतिनोऽर्जुन ।
 आर्तो जिज्ञासुरर्थार्थी ज्ञानी च भरतर्षभ ॥ (७.१६)
 तेषां ज्ञानी नित्ययुक्त एकभक्तिर्विशिष्यते ।
 प्रियो हि ज्ञानिनोऽत्यर्थमहं स च मम प्रियः ॥ (७.१७)

Four kinds of noble people worship Me: *ārtah* (one in distress), *jijñāsuh* (an enquirer), *arthārthī* (one with worldly desires) and *Jñānī* (the Wise). Of the four, the *Jñānī* is the best. A *Jñānī* is extremely fond of Me and I too am fond of him.

What kind of *Jñānī*? *Nityayuktah* and *ekā-bhaktih*. A *Jñānī* who is always integrated with the Lord and whose “**Bhakti**” is one-pointed. His focus is always on the Supreme. He does not care for anything else in the world. If we consider Lord to be the Supreme, then why are we getting affected when something goes against our desire? Lord knows everything. Whatever He has given us should be for our good. We are not able to remember that because our bhakti is not one-pointed. That is why we get affected.

It means, although we are saying that the Lord is Supreme, we are not giving Him the supreme position in our life. We are not ready to leave any of our desired possessions for the sake of the Lord. We want to cling to our petty desires. Having everything in the world, if Lord comes **additionally**, we are happy. Otherwise not.

We all have our preconceived ideas about the Lord. If the Lord comes in His own manner, we will not like His coming. This is not the Lord ***I wanted!*** This is not the way ***I expected*** Him to come! So, we have our choices based on **our desires, likes and dislikes**. These have the supreme position in our life. **We have not given Supreme the supreme position in life.**

But, a *Jñānī* will be *ekā-bhaktih*. He will give *Jñāna* the supreme position in life and his whole mind will be one-pointed towards this *Jñāna*. Nothing can divert him, make his mind swing or swerve. That is why, amongst the four, *Jñānī* is the most favourite of the Lord. But mark, the “*Jñānī*” is Lord’s most favourite for his one-pointed “**Bhakti**”.

In the next verse (7.18), Krishna says: “All the four kinds of devotees are noble but a *Jñānī* is verily My own Self. Because, he fixes his mind on Me considering Me as the Supreme Goal.”

Let us go to the 18th chapter and look into the verse where Krishna is defining *paraā-bhakti* – **the Supreme Devotion**. While explaining the supreme consummation of Knowledge (*nisthā iñānasva vā parā* - 18.50), He says:

ब्रह्मभूतः प्रसन्नात्मा न शोचति न काङ्क्षति ।
 समः सर्वेषु भूतेषु मद्भक्तिं लभते पराम् ॥ (१८.५४)

"The *Jñānī* who has identified himself with Brahman, becomes *prasanna-ātmā* – serene and placid within. He neither grieves nor desires. Through *samā-darśana* – the vision of One Reality in all beings – he attains *parā-bhakti* (the supreme devotion) unto Me."

How do the Knowers always remain *prasanna-ātmā*? Because they have become identified with Brahman, they see the same one reality in both *sukha* and *duhkha*. Both *sukha* and *duhkha* they may experience in ample measure. But, because of their *samā-darśana*, they will neither be elated in *sukha*, nor be depressed in *duhkha*.

It is wrong to think that a *Jñānī* will not have either suffering or happiness. A Guru will certainly be happy if his disciples are good, disciplined and pure-hearted. Will not the Guru have *duhkha* if his disciples are selfish and intolerant of each other? But, he will never be afflicted or depressed by the *duhkha*. There is another subtle point here. A Guru will be happy, even when he sees a good brahmacharin belonging to some other Ashram. The sight of a pure hearted seeker will give him great joy even though he may not be his own disciple.

This is because he is free of desires. This **dissolution of desires** is the key to *samā-darśana*. That is why we find that although the scriptures start with the concept of God or Brahman, concept of the Soul, and they present so many models of creation and dissolution of the world, towards the end, all of them converge to desirelessness.

So, the *Jñānī* attains *parā-bhakti* (supreme devotion) through the vision of the One in everything. And then?

भक्त्या मामभिजानाति यावान्यश्चास्मि तत्त्वतः ।

ततो मां तत्त्वतो ज्ञात्वा विशते तदनन्तरम् ॥

(१८.५५)

Through this '*parā-bhakti*' he comes to 'know' who and what I am in reality. And through this realization (*tattvato jñātvā*) he forthwith enters Me; he becomes one with Me.

See how beautifully Bhagavadgeeta is interweaving *bhakti* and *jñāna* to clarify that the ultimate realization in spirituality is brought out by a grand unification of the two. **Consummation of both *bhakti* and *jñāna*** is in actualizing the identity of our Self with the all-pervading Lord, the undifferentiated Consciousness or Brahman. Even saying "all-pervading" is wrong. The consciousness is not pervading any "all" which is different from it. The "all" appears on this consciousness. Everything is nothing but consciousness.

That is why Shankaracharya in *Vivekacūdāmani* has defined *bhakti* as: "*svā-svarupā-anusandhānam bhakti-ityabhidhīvate*" – *bhakti* is the one-pointed introspection to realize the real nature of our own Self.

Nārada Bhakti Sūtra defines *bhakti* as: "*sā kasmai cit paramā-premā-rūpā* – that is in the form of **supreme love**". Now, supreme love is not like the usual love we see in the worldly life. The love we are used to is almost a caricature of the supreme love, because we expect love in return. If I love someone and he does not love me, then I am affected. I

may even start hating him. That is not love; that is business. I give you something and I want something in return!

Supreme love does not wait for anything. The love wells forth from within, irrespective of the existence of any second. That non-dependant, non-expectant love can come only from *parī-bhakti*.

Jñāna makes our devotion deep, refined and vast. It makes the devotee natural and poised, freeing him of all eccentricities. *Bhakti* on the other hand, intensifies the *jñāna-sādhana*, makes it wholesome and one-pointed. It makes the Knower humble but intensely powerful. It makes his love embrace the whole universe.

Well, we shall conclude.

namo namo vāi-manasāt-bhūmave
namo namo vāi-manasaikā-bhūmave |
namo namo anantā-mahā-vibhūtave
namo namo anantā-davaikā-sindhave ||

Harih Om Tat Sat. Jai Guru. Jai Guru. Jai Guru.

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142 Functional Relevance of Spirituality

17 May 2005

Harih Om Tat Sat. There is a lot of talk about the Self among Vedaantic students and seekers. There is also a traditional recognition that *Ātmā* and *Ātma-jñāna* – Self and Self-realization – alone constitute the religious and spiritual fulfillment of human life.

In spite of all this, I have always found that people have a psychological difficulty in placing the Self and Self-realization as a functional proposition in life. I was very touched when R asked a question yesterday: “Swamiji, how to apply this enlightenment in actual work? You had said that whoever does an act without any sense of doership, and whose intelligence does not get tainted by what he has done, that person is not bound by his actions. What is the meaning of this? Does it remain a detached statement in our life or does it have a functional relevance?”

This is an important question. That is why I answered it in detail. At one point, someone observed that the discussion is becoming too subtle. Instead of becoming subtle, it should become very practical and should have direct relevance to your daily life.

Here is a verse from the second chapter of Bhagavadgeeta:

विहाय कामान्यः सर्वान्पुमांश्चरति निःस्पृहः ।
निर्ममो निरहंकारः स शान्तिमधिगच्छति ॥ (२.७१)

Leaving all desires, the man who lives and moves about without any expectations, possessiveness and egoism, attains peace and ‘quietitude’.

It does not talk about a person who is mute, who keeps quiet. It is about one who **moves about** (चरति). Now, tell me. Is not this *spiritual*-formula applicable to living, moving and acting in this world? In fact, only when you move and act in this world with this formula, you will have peace. Others will not have peace!

What is the meaning of *nirmamaḥ* (non-possessive) and *nirahaṅkārah* (non-egoistic)? When you do something without any *mamatā* – even if you are doing a creditable job – you should not feel “I have done it and I have to be credited”. And then again, may be the work done is substandard – then too you should not be tainted by the feeling that you have done something detestable.

Yesterday there was a discussion about packing books and sending them to Pune. The discussion went on and on – it was rather unnecessary. They had decided to send more than 100 copies each of three different books. So it came to 300 or 400 books. When the books were packed, the ladies who were going to take them to Pune found that it was not possible to take all the packets along with them.

An intelligent approach would have been to find out beforehand how much they could carry and make arrangements accordingly. Nothing of this sort was done. Instead, there was last minute hurry and unpleasant arguments. Finally B said: “If you wanted to intervene in this matter, you should have done it earlier!”

This is where *mamatā* comes; this is how *ahañkāra* dominates. Are we not concerned about the collective performance of an action? Some books are being sent from the Ashram. Should it not be done well? He could have asked others: “If I do it alone, it may not be all right. Sometimes I am less thoughtful. Please come and help me. How are we to send? Let us send it in a proper manner.”

It is here that spiritual enlightenment becomes functional. If somebody else comes forward and participates in it – even if at the end – and finally when the job is well done, should we be happy about having done it well or should we start thinking with a narrow mind about “I did, you did” etc? See, this is how *mamatā* and *ahañkāra* delude us. This is what I wanted to tell you. And I think there is a lot of application in what I say. When are we going to understand this point? The mind should become catholic enough, with a lot of sublimity and expansion. That is the purpose of spirituality.

In addition to this, the approach could also be: “Why is it that I did not think about it? Could it have been done better?” These **reflections and retrospections make you efficient** for the next time. For whatever has taken place, sufficient **catholicity and accommodation** in your mind should be there.

Now please tell me. Is this not enlightenment in a functional manner? Only with spiritual enlightenment, the expected flexibility and catholicity will come. If it comes by other means, well and good. You can then keep spirituality away. If it doesn’t come, please understand that **spirituality is meant to bring** about these.

Not only that. In as much as all of you are spiritual seekers here, understand it well that your seeking means this kind of a functional elegance, sublimity and expansion. As long as you don’t have it, you cannot be called a spiritual seeker.

I am not interested in the theory of Vedanta. I am not interested in the theory of God-realization. I only want to know how to live in this world with peace, composure and effectiveness as an individual, as a societal man and as a universal man, accommodating different types of interactions and enabling effective performance under all circumstances. If spirituality does not have a relevance of this kind, I think I have no need for it.

Harih Om Tat Sat. Jai Guru.

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73rd Jayanti Celebration

Narayanashrama Tapovanam

Rima Sehgal

Preparations had been going on for weeks. The most significant of all days finally arrived: Our beloved Swamiji's 73rd Jayanti, also being observed as the 50th Anniversary of His embracing Sannyasa.

The Ashram was a beehive of activity well before dawn. Suddenly the intercom in the Annakshetra rang. It was Swamiji. "What about the boiler?" he asked. "It seems to have gone out! Does Nirmal have to check?" Brahmacharin Nirmala Svaroopah had already fired the boiler at 3 a.m. and the first phase of boiler related work was already over!

A little later Swamiji appeared in the Annakshetra, glowing with a deep lustre like the Poornima moon. There is no sign of the weary pallor that had shadowed his beloved countenance for the past few months of post-operative recovery. As long as anyone can remember, on all function days, Swamiji's presence in Annakshetra was a familiar sight. Solving the problems of lighting the firewood ovens, inspiring the cooks, stirring the *pāvasam*, overseeing the grating of hundreds of coconuts, he would move around like lightening, returning periodically throughout the day. In this new Annakshetra commissioned in 2000, Ashram brahmacharins, devotees and cooks seem to have mastered the steam cooking system, high pressure gas burners and mechanized coconut scraping machine to Poojya Swamiji's satisfaction, leaving him more or less free to attend to other matters.

This year being the 50th Anniversary of Poojya Swamiji's embracing Sannyasa, many devotees wished to be present for the Jayanti day. Devotees in their eagerness to reach the Ashram assembled from far and wide, braving ill health, heat, and unconfirmed tickets. Last minute announcement of arrivals called for repeated juggling of accommodation, as required only during the Gurupoornima and Retreat.

Soon, it seemed that it would be almost like a Gurupoornima gathering. Guesthouses overflowed beyond capacity and arrangements to sleep on the floor were put into place. With power cuts of long duration and inclement weather, Maa became concerned that devotees would have difficulty. It was decided to provide a generator for Kananam and Tapovan Vihar guesthouses for a few days.

Entering the main Ashram compound, arriving devotees found the old Ashram building was no longer there. The flooring can still be seen distinctly: the red oxide flooring of Poojya Swamiji's, Nutan Swamiji's and Maa's rooms, the brown tiles of the kitchen area, the patterned tiles of the old dining hall. Initially it might be disorienting. But, after a while one realized there is a great sense of space and openness. Yet a little later, the aura of sacredness enveloping the whole space overwhelms one. The residential portions of the new *Prajñāna Dhām* as well as the Annakshetra, never visible clearly before, are suddenly revealed in their austere saattvik glory.

The mind gladdens with joy as we see our beloved Swamiji residing in a building that does not leak or have white ants, with ample space and ventilation, and is able to work without being hemmed in by computers and accounts tables.

The Jayanti programme took place in the *Vijñāna Bhavan*, which, decorated with fragrant garlands and intricate *kolam*, appeared sublime. This year there was an addition to the programme. Ashram inmates wished to offer bhajans at Poojya Swamiji's holy lotus feet. Although very busy with preparations, they gathered for practice every afternoon in the week preceding the Jayanti function, and were able to place two compositions at Swamiji's feet.

The Paada-pooja was performed by Smt Ambika and Dr Damodaran from Malaysia. Ambikaji despite grave ill health, sat valiantly throughout the programme at Poojya Swamiji's lotus feet.

After the paada-pooja, Poojya Swamiji narrated how over the past 50 years he grew up with sannyaasa from the early age of 23. For all of us devotees, Swamiji is an inseparable part of our very being. And when, in the midst of his inspiring message on sannyaasa, Swamiji hails us, his beloved devotees, as part of the very blood that flows in his veins, the heart is flooded and many eyes start shedding. What is this holy state of renunciation that has led to Swamiji owning our hearts and minds – one wonders!

Prasaada bhojan was offered to about 400 devotees and villagers in an atmosphere made sacrosanct by the sight of Nutan Swamiji and Ma moving around in the Annakshetra, lovingly caring for everyone. Under their guidance, the Ashram team of brahmacharins and devotees have over the years, grown the dimension to feed everyone lovingly and also efficiently, as is the wish of our Poojya Swamiji.

These days one can feel a sense of harmony and cohesion between the Ashram brahmacharins and inmates in most aspects of functioning, whether it is making arrangements for devotees' stay, or serving in the Annakshetra, or looking after the gardens and the cows. This facet is also reported in varying degrees from Swamiji's devotee-groups in many other cities.

It is true that most of us are not able to imbibe his message wholesomely and attain the great heights of renunciation. But his constant inspiration, exhortations and endless love for all of us have somehow initiated a slow melting of hearts and minds that is glimpsed sometimes when we experience the peace and joy of expansion.

CIRD - Delhi

Sanjay Chakravarthy

The 13th of May dawned. It was a very special day for us. For nearly a week, we the devotees of Poojya Swamiji, had been waiting for this day, planning all the activities meticulously. This time, with the Jayanti falling on a second Saturday, we expected a good number of people to join in making the arrangements.

But, there were only a handful of volunteers present on Friday. Somehow we could manage to set up everything. A big floral *Omkāra* welcomed the devotees just outside the satsang hall. Quite remarkably, the marigold flowers were extremely fresh and vibrant. Perhaps, they too were celebrating the 50th year of Poojya Swamiji's sannyasa, by donning the ochre colour in full measure.

With the "Song of the Soul" playing in the background, the programme commenced as scheduled. Amidst the chanting of the Guru stotras, followed by अष्टोत्तरशतनामावली (108 names of Poojya Gurudev) Sri Sudhir Arora and his wife performed अर्चना on behalf of all of us.

Poojya Swamiji's message was read out in both English and Hindi. His exhortation on sannyasa reinforced the latent thoughts we all had. In our minds, we kept revolving the reasons for the lack of will power to pursue the path as directed by our Gurudev. He has been urging us for 50 years, but we just do not seem to have the correct evaluation of the treasure that lies on the path.

Thereafter, we requested Saadhvi Haripriya ji to speak a few words. The next 5 minutes, Mataji kept us spellbound with her words soaked in bhakti. We, along with the Sunday school children, whom we had invited specially for the occasion, received *prasāda*, distributed by Saadhvi Haripriya ji.

Jamshedpur

Rumni Sengupta

13th May morning, 8:30 am. Fresh flowers decorated the hall and the platform on which Poojya Swamiji's photograph was kept. While the tables were arranged and the seating arrangement was being made, a thought crossed our minds. The work was being done much more smoothly and with greater warmth and enthusiasm than before – the magic charm of '*Guru-krpa*'!

At 9 am, with the chanting of OM and the auspicious sound of the conch, the programme began. On behalf of all the devotees, two of our sisters, Tapaswini and Indira, offered flower petals during the गर-अर्चना (*Guru Arcanā*).

The hall was filled with nearly 230 recipients of the *dāna*, their children and a large number of devotees. It was heartening to see quite a few new faces too. Amidst the chanting of '*Paropakārāva phalanti vrksāh*', the long queue of *Daridra-Nārāvana* slowly came forward and received the packets of *prasāda* and *dāna* offering. A feeling of joy filled our hearts. By the end of the function, the sun had decided to break free from the clouds. But our hearts were too full to feel the heat.

Pune

Prafulla Chandran

May 13. We assembled in the residence of one of the devotees. Holding the photograph of Poojya Swamiji and a lamp, chanting ‘*Om Namah Sadāśivāva Om Namō Nārāvanāva*’ in chorus, we proceeded towards the lawn where we had made arrangements to conduct the programme. For the first time, the divine mantra reverberated in this new colony, purifying and sublimating the surroundings. The programme started with chanting of the ślokas ‘*Janmānekaśataih....*’ and ‘*Pūrnāranda rasānubhūti....*’

A *Dāna Satra* was also arranged on the occasion. We had invited nearly 30 families of workers who had come along with their children to receive *dāna*. They sat on the lush green lawn witnessing the proceedings. *Ārati* was shown to them with the chanting of ‘*Natatra sūryo bhāti...*’. They were given one saree, 2 kg of rice and a packet of sweets each. The children were given a slate and a packet of sweets. Slate-pencils, a black board and a chart showing Marathi alphabets were handed over to their teacher to help her conduct the classes.

The function was held in a sublime manner and all the devotees felt fulfilled.

Jai Guru.

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Back to Eternity

Swami Ramananda Tirthaji Maharaj

Swami Ramananda Tirtha (78) attained *Mahāsamādhi* on April 26 in Vyasa Tapovanam, Wadakanchery. One of the Founder Trustees of Hind Navotthana Pratishtan (HNP), established over 20 years back, Swamiji was also its Treasurer. At about 8:30 am Swamiji took tea, went back to his bed and lay there. He uttered loudly “Harih Om”. With that the life forces left his body. Saraswati, who had been there for the daily cleaning services alone was present at the time.

As soon as Ramanandaji’s *pūrvāśrama* relatives from Bangalore, who wished to be present on the occasion, arrived, the body was carried with the chorus chanting of “**Hara Hara Shankara, Shiva Shiva Shankara**” as also the 15th chapter of Bhagavadgeeta, and committed to flames at about 6:30 pm in the peaceful thickly wooded environments of Vyasa Tapovanam. Swami Purushothama Tirthaji oversaw the arrangements. I also attended the function. In the *Yat-pūja* conducted by Vyasa Tapovanam on May 8, over 40 sannyasins participated.

Swami Ramanandaji was very close to Swami Purushothama Tirthaji Maharaj for the past 40 years. Embracing sannyasa 20 years back, he became an inmate of Vyasa Tapovanam. Till the body fell, Swamiji took active part in HNP’s multi-pronged spirituo-social activities. Interested in the welfare of the poor, Swamiji was liberal in extending support wherever needed.

A life-long celibate, Swamiji was given to moderate speech. He was austere in his ways. Swamiji’s departure leaves a gap, difficult to fill.

– *Swamiji*