

Taitreya Upanishad, Class 18

Greetings All,

Chapter # 1, Anuvakaha # 11, Shloka # 1:

Having taught the Vedas the preceptor enjoins the pupils, “ Speak the truth, do your duty, never swerve from study of the Vedas, do not cut off the line of descendants in your family, after giving the preceptor the fee he desires. Never err from truth, never fall from duty, never overlook your own welfare, never neglect your prosperity and never neglect the study and the propagation of the Vedas.”

We are in Anuvaka # 11. It talks about Brahmacharya Ashrama. This ashrama has two steps in it.

First step: In Vedic times chanting of Vedas was not written down. It was handed from the mouth to the head in the Karna Parampara. In effect the mantras were chanted and committed to memory. This chanting is called Svadhyaya Yagna and this sadhana is used to purify the mind of the chanter as well as the people listening to the chant. In this process, even the society and nation also benefited. Veda Ghosha, Vedic chanting loudly by a big group, was also performed for benefit of others. This chant is supposed to purify even the environment. Even plants grow better after this chant. This process of Vedic chanting is also called Adhyayanam.

Second step: Study of Veda Mimasa consisting of understanding the meaning of Vedas in context of Karma Kanda. Here the purpose was not to understand Vedanta rather it was to understand Dharma Shastra also called Veda Poorva Mimasa. The Dharma shastra is condensed in Anuvakaha # 11.

(Note: The differences were that the Mimamsa school developed and emphasized *karmakaṇḍa*, or the study of ritual actions, using the four early Vedas, while the Vedanta schools

developed and emphasized *jnanakaṇḍa*, the study of knowledge and spirituality, using the later parts of Vedas like the Upanishads.)

The Anuvakaha # 11 consists of:

Satyam vada: In various religions God is considered divine while world is considered secular. Thus, there is a division. Vedas do not create division between God and the world. They say the universe has born out of the divine. So Vedas see everything as divine. There is no division between divine and secular. So, one has to cultivate the bhavana of seeing the divine in everything. This is a lifelong effort. This bhavana is called Satyam.

Dharmam chara:

Do not criticize rituals. They are important. Values are important as well. There should be a balance between rituals and ethics. Both are important.

Svadhyaaya: We listen to scriptures and then forget their teachings. Hence continuous learning of scriptures is important to be reminded of the teachings. Do not neglect scriptural studies.

Guru Dakshina: You have to give the guru his dakshina. A Guru, however, should not insist upon it. Even without asking the shishya should give dakshina. Teaching obtained without dakshina has negative consequences. It is called Adakshina. It is also called Runam (debt). A mind with Runam is considered an impure mind. So, give dakshina.

Be a part of an ashrama: After leaving the Gurulkula, a man still has to be a part of one of the four ashramas. Without an ashrama your duty cannot be identified. One can become a permanent Brahmachari so long as he is initiated as a Naishtika Brahmachari. Such a Brahmachari has to serve his teacher. One can also choose Grihasthashrama, Vanaprashtha or

Sanyasa. If he chooses Sanyasa he has to go back to ashrama and study Vedanta. Generally, most people opt for Grihastashrama. Only grihasthashrama has the infrastructure for Karma Yoga. Other three ashramas cannot have money. Only Grihastha has money. In Grihasthashrama one can perform the Pancha Maha Yagna as well as fulfill worldly desires, in a legitimate manner.

Do not neglect commitment to values. Satyam in Dharma shastra means speaking the truth. In Vedanta, satyam means the ultimate reality or truth.

Do not neglect religious way of life. Thus getting up early before sunrise to pray to the Sun god. The day starts with prayer. Applying religious marks on forehead is important. Namaskara with both hands is also important.

May you not neglect your own well being. Do not neglect your personal interests. Take care of the body. Make sure it is fed and rested. Serving society is part of your own growth. It is for Chitta Shuddhi. Only after moksha can one neglect the body. Being selfish in this context is not wrong. It is your duty.

Do not neglect acquisition of wealth. It is very important. Only through Laxmi can one reach Saraswathi. More earning is not enough. One should also give a proportionate share to the deserving. One should keep in mind that the other three ashramas depend on the Grihastha. The Ahavanti Homam is performed for acquisition of wealth. Money is meant for noble service through Pancha Maha Yagna. Through this one obtains Chitta Shuddhi that in turn leads to Gyanam and then Moksha. Bhutyaha in shloka means Prosperity.

Study of scriptures is very important. Anything that stagnates can be sickening. Even money, if it stagnates, can create problems. Scriptures encourage giving.

Chapter # 1, Anuvakaha # 11, Shloka # 2:

Never swerve from your duties towards gods and towards the departed "souls" (manes). May the mother be, to thee, a god. May the father be, to thee, a god. May the preceptor be to thee, a god. May the guest be, to thee, a god.

Worship of God is important. Just as you nourish a tree by pouring water at its root, similarly the whole universe is a tree with many needy people. The reality is you cannot help every needy individual. Therefore, Vedas prescribe that one contributes to the root of the universe. This root is Ishwara. Therefore perform puja to God and ask his blessing for the welfare of all people. This blessing will go to all people including needy ones. Unfortunately we cannot see the blessing reaching the deserving. So, Deva Yagya helps many. It is also a two fold Karma as it benefits the deserving as well as it purifies your own mind.

Pitr Yagya: is worship of ancestors. This worship reaches even if they are re-born. My general offering goes to all ancestors, not just mine. This also purifies my mind. Keep in mind this offering is for my growth not God's. So, Pancha Maha Yagna is mentioned. Ethics via Satyam also has been mentioned. Now attitude is discussed.

Attitude towards one's mother: Treat your mother as goddess herself. While a mother is not a goddess, irrespective of the character of the mother, she deserves worship. Hence, namaskara is performed to her. The namaskara is to the Goddess within the mother.

Develop reverence towards father: Despite his limitations one should worship the father. Don't judge him. Often a father's problem is one of Parampara, that is habits transferred from his father to son. Never find fault with parents.

Consider the Acharya a God. In our early years our first contact is with mother and then with father. Then comes the teacher. The teacher contributes to the psychological growth

of the child. Brihadaranyaka Upanishad says if mother, father and teacher are good the child will have a healthy attitude in life. In our society kula, gothra etc. are very important for a marriage. Katho Upanishad says a mature human being is one who has good relationship with all the three. So, look upon teacher as a God.

Atithi Devo Bhava: Look upon a visitor as a God. This was an important value in Vedic times. It is not important anymore. In Vedic society, when people travelled, they had to stay somewhere. In that society food was not sold. There were no restaurants. So one took shelter in some house in a village. That family usually gave food and shelter. Being a pilgrim he was not known to the family. He also arrived without prior notice. When things happen, unplanned, like arrival of such a pilgrim, it was considered God's will. So, God has sent the Athiti, so we have to feed him, was the thinking. He also did not stay more than a night. So, he was treated like a God. Nowadays with con artists and such, this approach is difficult to practice.

With Best Wishes,

Ram Ramaswamy