

Sādhana Pañchakam – Class 2

Sankarachariyar is discussing the grand scheme of ashrama avastha – the four stages of life. The first stage is called Brahmacharyam where a student learns chanting of vedas, learns auxiliary sciences veda anga vichara and veda artha or mimamsa. If he is shathriya he learns dhanu sasthram, if he is Vaishnava he learns vedic studies.

Having understood the scheme in Brahmacharyam, one has to go to the next stage gragasthasrama where he implements the scheme.

The first stage is karma anushtanam, following the karmas prescribed in the vedas. The ten samanya dharmas should be implemented by all – the five do's and don'ts – yama and niyama. In addition to these universal values, one has to follow vishesha dharma or specific duties which is called svadharma which will vary from brahmana to shathriya, shathriya to vaishya etc. This karma or the vedic duties can be classified into three:

1. Nişkāma karma: Those compulsory actions which do not depend on your like and dislikes. These are based on vedic commandments and are meant for spiritual growth and refinement of mind.
2. Sakama Karma: These are based on our desires; they are not compulsory and are optional. These are meant for material well-being.
3. Nişiddha karma: These are prohibited karmas and must be renounced; like harming, telling lies etc. These are obstacles for spiritual growth.

Do the nişkāma karma properly without fail. Lord Krishna uses the word svadharma throughout Bagawad Gita. In the scriptures, the svadharma is determined by varna and ashrama.

However, the varna and ashramas are not alive today. So, we need to interpret svadharma with present day need. This should be practicable by all. This is panca mahā yagya, which is svadharma of all people.

1. Deva Yagya: Worship of the lord. Just offering flowers, chanting slokas, going to pujas etc. It does not matter what way you worship, but it must be done. If this is done for material benefit, then it will not be niṣkāma karma, but it will be sakama karma.
2. Pithur Yagya: Worship of forefathers; Vedas have prescribed certain rites; it doesn't matter how we express our gratitude towards forefather, but it must be expressed.
3. Brahma Yagya: Worship of vedas and rishis, in the form of ritual. We do our best to preserve and propagate the scriptures.
4. Manuṣya yagya: We are indebted to every other human being. All we use and consume is because somebody has worked and is working; therefore, I am indebted to entire humanity. One of the best manuṣya yagya is anna dhānam. All social services will come under manuṣya yagya.
5. Bhudha yagya: Worship of so-called inferior living beings; animals and plants. Feeding the animals, insects and birds is bhudha yagya.

What are sakama karma? Sakama karma are actions for material wealth. May you gradually give up actions meant for material wealth – artha kama. In those days, everyone did their duty (svadharma), whatever the other person voluntarily gives, I live on that. When everybody does their svadharma, it works. However, now svadharma based society is gone and payment-based society is evolving. Everybody's svadharma became automatic payment of other's svadharma. Lord Krishna says gradually reduce kama karma. How do you reduce the kama karma?

Kama karma increases because of the increase of raga dwesha. As the kama increases, kama karma increases. As we reduce raga dwesha, kama karma will also be reduced. Svadharma anushtanam will reduce kama raga dwesha. Raga dwesha is called pavam because whatever obstructs spirituality is pavam. Raga dwesha obstructs spirituality, therefore raga dwesha is pavam. Raga dwesha makes mind extroverted. This bundles of raga dwesha should be neutralized. May you repeatedly see the following three defects of worldly accomplishments, worldly pleasures:

1. It is mixed with pain, pain in acquisition, maintenance and departure.
2. It will never give satisfaction, the more I have, more I want more.
3. They make a person a slave of them, we will get addicted to them.

Through the refined mind, one can discern the defects and become viveka or mature. Eventually kama karma will become less and less. It is not enough that we just understand this, we should also remember this all the time.

If all material benefits are defective, is there a defect free ananda? The answer is atma; atmananda, is free from all the three defects. Turn the direction from material pleasures to spiritual fulfilment.