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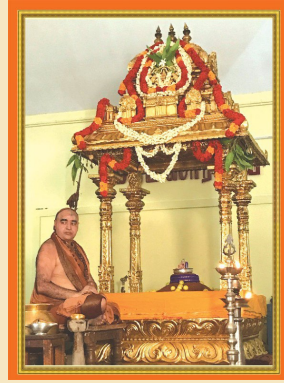
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জয় জয় শঙ্কর



শ্রী-বেদব্যাসায় নমঃ

শ্রীমদ্-আদ্য-শঙ্কর-ভগবত্পাদ-পরম্পরাগত-মূলান্নায়-
সর্বজ্ঞ-পীঠম্
শ্রী-কাঞ্চী-কামকোটী-পীঠম্
জগদগুরু-শ্রী-শঙ্করাচার্য-স্বামি-শ্রীমঠ-সংস্থানম্



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॥চাতুর্মাস্য-বিশেষাঃ ॥

॥চাতুর্মাস্য-সঙ্কল্পঃ ॥

প্রায়েণ প্রাবৃষি প্রাণিসঙ্কুলং বর্ষা দৃশ্যতে ।
অতস্তেষামহিংসার্থং পক্ষা বৈ শ্রুতিচোদনাত্ ।
স্থাস্যামশতুরো মাসান্ অত্রৈবাসতি বাধকে ॥

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নিবসন্ত সুখেনাত্র গমিষ্যামঃ কৃতার্থতাম্ ।
যথাশক্তি চ শুশ্রুষাং করিষ্যামো বয়ং মুদা ॥

চাতুর্মাস্যং যতীনাং তু যঃ কারযতি ধর্মবিত্ ।
স যাতৈহিকমৈশ্বর্যম্ আমুশ্মিক-সুখং মহত্ ॥

ভিক্ষাং সত্কৃত্য যো দদ্যাৎ বিষ্ণুরূপায় ভিক্ষবে ।
কৃত্সং বা পৃথিবীং দদ্যাৎ তেন তুল্যং ন তত্ফলম্ ॥

যতিহস্তে জলং দদ্যাৎ ভিক্ষাং দদ্যাৎ পুনর্জলম্ ।
তদৈক্ষং মেরুণা তুল্যং তজ্জলং সাগরোপমম্ ॥



The importance of Bhikshavandanam

The real purpose of human birth is to follow Dharma, through that obtain mundane wealth and pleasure, but at the end to attain eternal bliss beyond these. However we jeevas bound by ignorance do not know the proper to go about this. Hence, we do need someone - a guru to guide us. What can we do for Him since He does not expect anything in return?

For Guru or God (in fact both are the same) there is nothing we can do. Still, as Bhagavan Krishna said in the Gita—

পত্রং পুষ্পং ফলং তোষং যো মে ভক্ত্য প্রযচ্ছতি ।
তদহং ভক্ত্যপহতম্ অশ্বামি প্রযতান্বনঃ ॥

and as Thirumoolar said— Yāvarkkumām irāivarkkoru paccilai “For anyone a simple leaf to God...”, if one offers a small simple leaf, flower, fruit or water with bhakti, He becomes happy like parents seeing a child offering it. The same sentiment is expressed about offerings in Chandogya upanishad – devas don’t eat or drink; they deem this (offering) to be nectar and are pleased.

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More over it is a primary duty of a grhastha to look after brahmacharis, and yatis. In Manu Smriti it is said in praise that the grhastha is the sustainer of these two. Further, the Bodhayana smrti says the five pranas of a yati are equal to the five fires of an agnihotri. Though all are enjoined to do agnihotra, since these days it has become very difficult, this smrti shows submitting bhiksha to a yati is equivalent to that.

When those of pure mind think of a person “Let good things happen to this person”, it becomes true. Therefore those who want shreyas should do pooja to such jnanis – says Mundakopanishad. Atri smrti says that when a person fortunately has the opportunity to do a bhiksha to a yati, if he fails to do so, all other homa, dana etc are useless.

From all these one can realise the importance of doing bhikshavan-danam to yatis.

Even in this, the Jagadguru peetham was established by Adi Acharyal, with our well-being alone as the aim. While there is the adage, that “one can forsake even the world in order to gain atma jnana”, our Guru could have remained a reclusive yati seeking salvation. Yet, the only reason He chose to establish the pooja, matam, institution etc, is the necessity to guide us all.

Our cooperation in many ways is necessary for the smooth functioning of such a matam. In fact, the matam is only also including all of us shishyas who follow the guidance of the Guru! So let us all contribute our share to running the matam. Let us involve ourselves in doing Dharma samrakshanam as per our Guru’s guidance. Let us express our gratitude to our Guru. Bhiksha vandanam is a rare lofty tradition for this. Bhiksha-vandanam means submitting bhiksha, bowing to Him, and following His orders.

There is a tradition of submitting offerings (as money or material) to the matam by the name Chandramaulishvara sambhavanai whenever there is a shubha karyam at home. In the days when travelling was difficult, they used to submit it through the officiating priest (purohita) at home. Today, it is possible to go and have His darshan, gain His benevolent gaze in person easily.

So, let us all follow this hallowed tradition of Bhiksha vandanam and obtain shreyas!



Chaturmasyam

(Sri Anantanandendra Saraswathi Swamigal)

The term 'Chaturmasyam' in Samskrit means four months. Chaturmasya Vrata is a vow to be observed over a period of four months. This commences on the day of Ashadha month, Shukla Paksha Ekadashi and closes on Kartika Sukla Paksha Dvadashi. This Vrata is an important one, to be observed by Grihasthas (householders) as well as Sanyasis.

It is stated in Hemadri, the authoritative text of Dharma Sastra and in Bhavishya Purana that Bhagavan goes into Yoga Nidra (Yogic sleep) during these four months. He wakes up at the close of this period. Hence the day of the start of this Vrata is called Sayana Ekadashi (start of sleep), and the closing day, Prabodha Dvadashi (waking up). On this Dvadashi day in Kartika month, Prabodha Utsava should be celebrated.

In the first month of this Chaturmasya period, one should discard vegetables; second month, curd; third month, milk; fourth month, lentils having Dvidalas (two parts). This rule applies to all. Further it is stipulated that those desiring specific benefits should keep off certain specified materials.

For Sanyasis, Chaturmasyam is an important period. There are special rules governing their conduct during this period. Narada Parivrajakopanishad, which lays down rules of conduct of Sanyasis, states that normally,

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they should not stay in one place, but keep moving. In case they stay for long in one place, they would get involved in mundane activities of people of that place, which is not desirable.

Sage Ashvalayana says:

একরাত্রং বসেদগ্রামে নগরে পঞ্চরাত্রকম্ ।
বর্ষাস্থেকত্র তিষ্ঠেত স্থানে পুণ্যজলান্বতে ॥

“Sanyasi should stay in village for one night; if it is city, he can stay for five nights; if it is rainy season, he should stay in one place where sacred waters are available.”

When Sanyasis keep travelling constantly, they will not get enough time to engage in Brahma Vichara (contemplation on Brahman) or meditation. So, their forced stay in one place during Chaturmasyam helps them to catch up on this.

Further, if they keep travelling during rainy season, they might harm worms etc. which move on ground during that season. When Sanyasis get initiated into this Ashrama, they take 'Abhaya Vrata', vow of granting freedom from fear, that they would not cause any type of harm to any living being; they are hence bound by that Vrata. They should therefore stay in one place during such a period.

Sanyasi should address the people in the place where he intends to stay thus:

প্রায়েণ প্রাবৃষি প্রাণিসঙ্কুলং বর্ষা দৃশ্যতে ।
অতস্তেষামহিংসার্থং পক্ষা বৈ শ্রুতিচোদনাত্ ।
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“During the rainy season, generally living beings keep moving about everywhere on the way. In order to avert harm to them, we intend to stay here for four months as stipulated in Shruti (Veda), in case you have no objection.”

As per the Shruti passage,

“পক্ষা বৈ মাসাঃ” the period of four months is nowadays observed as four pakshas (fortnights). During these four months, Sanyasis can stay in one place along with other Sanyasis or their Gurus and seniors, engage in

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Brahma Vichara and get their doubts cleared. At other times, they should travel alone.

In this context, the statement of sage Narada about himself, as told to Vyasa in Srimad Bhagavatham, Skandha 1, Adhyaya 5, is worth noting:

নিরুপিতো বালক এব যোগিনাং
শুশ্রূষণে প্রাবৃষি নিবিবিক্ষতাম্।
উচ্ছিষ্টলেপাননুমোদিতো দ্বিজৈঃ
সকৃত্স্ব ভুঞ্জে তদপাস্তকিল্বিষঃ ॥

জ্ঞানং গুহ্যতমং যত্তত্সাক্ষাত্ ভগবতোদিতম্।
অন্ববোচন্ গমিষ্যন্তঃ কৃপয়া দীনবত্সলাঃ ॥

”In my previous birth I served some Sanyasis in my childhood during Chaturmasya; they permitted me to eat their left-over food; that destroyed all my sins; when they were leaving that place, they, out of compassion, taught me Brahma Vidya.”

Sanyasis perform Vyasa Puja on Ashada Purnima day at the start of Chaturmasyam. This day is also known as Guru Purnima. Sanyasis of Advaita Sampradaya perform Vyasa Puja, which actually includes Puja to all Brahma Vidya Acharyas.

It is seen that Brahmanas perform Upakarma on Sravana Purnima day and restart Vedic study. (Vedic study is stopped on Pushya Purnima day). During Upakarma, they first perform Puja to Rishis and then start to study Vedas. In the same manner, Sanyasis offer Puja to Brahma Vidya Acharyas before starting on Brahma Vichara. During this Puja, Acharyas are worshipped in six Panchakas (groups of five).

1. Krishna Panchaka - Krishna at the centre, and Vasudeva, Sankarshana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha to his East, South, West and North.
2. Sanakadi Panchaka - Sanaka at the centre, and Sanandana, Sanatsu-jata, Sanatana and Sanatkumara around.
3. Vyasa Panchaka - Vyasa at the centre, and Sumantu, Vaisampayana, Jaimini and Paila around.

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4. Shankaracharya Panchaka - Shankaracharya at the centre, and Padmapadacharya, Hastamalakacharya, Totakacharya and Suresvaracharya around.

5. Dravida Panchaka - Dravidacharya at the centre, and Goudapadacharya, Govinda Bhagavatpadacharya, Sankshepa Sarirakacharya and Vivaranacharya around.

6. Guru Panchaka - Guru at the centre, and Paramaguru, Parameshti Guru, Parapara Guru and other Brahma Vidya Acharyas around. Worship is also offered to Suka, Narada, Dikpalakas, Brahma and Adisesha.

Before starting to read the Bhashya texts of Shankaracharya, it has been in practice to chant Shanti mantras, after covering the body. These Shanti mantras are compiled from many Upanishads. These mantras end with chant of 'Shanti' thrice. After chanting the Shanti mantras, it is the practice to chant Dakshinamurthy Ashtakam of Shankaracharya, prostrate to Dakshinamurthy, and then worship Guru Parampara starting from Bhagavan Narayana and going up to the present Guru. After the reading of Bhashyas is over for the day, this procedure has to be repeated.

This Chaturmasya is observed by Jains also. For them, it starts on Ashadha Suddha Chaturdashi and ends on Kartika Purnima. During these four months, Jain Sadhus do not travel beyond the local limits of the place of their stay. For them, two days are very sacred: Bhadrapada Dvadashi and Vinayaka Chaturthi. On these two days, they engage in sacred acts, including visit to temples, observing fast, listening to discourses etc.

They specially give alms to the poor. Their fast starts at noon and goes on during the day and night. They drink hot water during the day. At night they do not eat anything. They also stay in one place during rainy season in order to avert harm to living beings, which move about.

Chaturmasyam is mentioned in Emperor Ashoka's 5th Sthambha inscription, 2nd Para: "Fish should not sold or killed during Chaturmasya. During Chaturmasya, animals like horses, bulls etc. should not be subjected to heat treatment." These inscriptions also show that certain caves were

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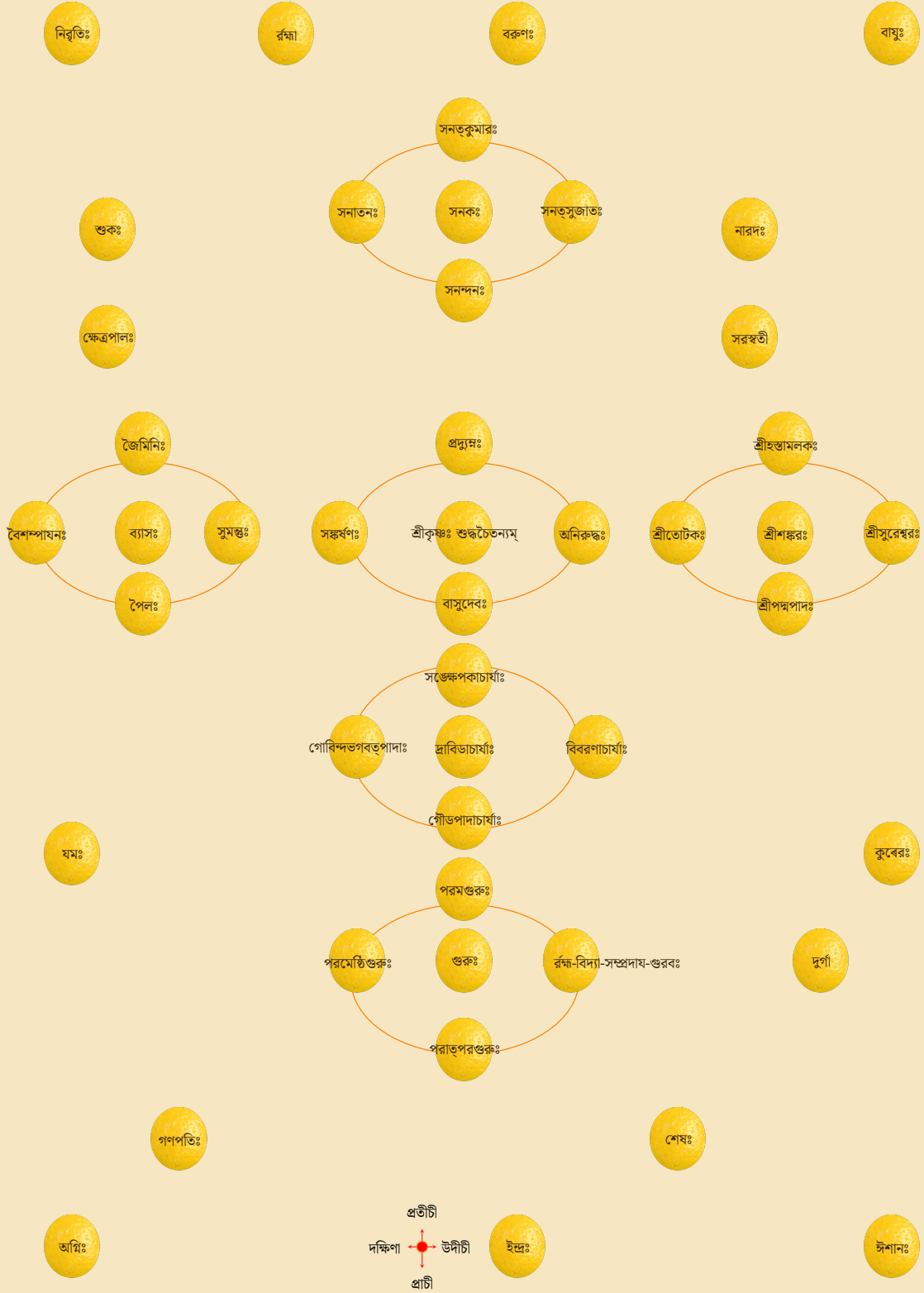
prepared for housing Sanyasis during Chaturmasya period; they spell out details of how this should be done.

May all Grihasthas and Sanyasis observe this Chaturmasya Vratam, be the recipients of Bhagavan's grace and spread peace in the world.



Translators: Brahmashri Thanjavur Venkatesan (Telugu),
Shri P R Kannan (English).

॥ব্যাস-পূজা-চক্রম্ ॥



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