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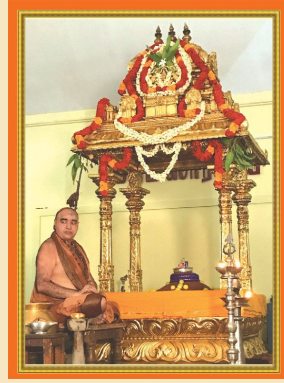
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જય જય શકુર



શ્રી-વેદવ્યાસાય નમઃ

શ્રીમદ્-આધ-શકુર-ભગવત્પાદ-પરમ્પરાગત-મૂલામ્નાય-
સર્વજ્ઞ-પીઠમ્
શ્રી-કાઞ્ચી-કામકોટિ-પીઠમ્
જગદ્ગુરુ-શ્રી-શકુરાચાર્ય-સ્વામિ-શ્રીમઠ-સંસ્થાનમ્



૫૧૨૭ વિશ્વાવસુઃ / શાકુર-સંવત્સરઃ ૨૫૩૪

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॥ચાતુર્માસ્ય-વિશેષાઃ॥

॥ચાતુર્માસ્ય-સકુલ્પઃ॥

પ્રાયેણ પ્રાવૃષિ પ્રાણિસકુલં વર્ત્મ દૃશ્યતે
અતસ્તેષામર્હિંસાર્થં પક્ષા વૈ શ્રુતિયોદનાત્
સ્થાસ્યામશ્ચતુરો માસાન્ અત્રૈવાસતિ બાધકે॥

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નિવસન્તુ સુખેનાત્ર ગમિષ્યામઃ કૃતાર્થતામ્
યથાશક્તિ ય શુશ્રૂષાં કરિષ્યામો વયં મુદા॥

ચાતુર્માસ્યં ચતીનાં તુ યઃ કારયતિ ધર્મવિતા
સ ચાત્યૈહિકમૈશ્વર્યમ્ આમુષ્મિક-સુખં મહત્॥

ભિક્ષાં સત્કૃત્ય યો દધાત્ વિષ્ણુરૂપાય ભિક્ષવે
કૃત્સ્નં વા પૃથિવીં દધાત્ તેન તુલ્યં ન તત્કલમ્॥

યતિહસ્તે જલં દધાત્ ભિક્ષાં દધાત્ પુનર્જલમ્
તદ્ભૈક્ષં મેરુણા તુલ્યં તજ્જલં સાગરોપમમ્॥



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—

પત્રં પુષ્પં ફલં તોયં યો મે ભક્ત્યા પ્રયચ્છતિ
તદહં ભક્ત્યુપહતમ્ અશ્રામિ પ્રયતાત્મનઃ॥

and as Thirumoolar said— Yāvarkkumām iraivarkkoru 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.

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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:

એકરાત્રં વસેદ્ગ્રામે નગરે પચ્ચરાત્રકમા
વર્ષાસ્વેકત્ર તિષ્ઠેત સ્થાને પુણ્યજલાવૃત્તે॥

“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:

પ્રાયેણ પ્રાવૃષ્ણિ પ્રાણિસઙ્કલં વર્ત્મ દૃશ્યતે
અતસ્તેષામહિંસાર્થં પક્ષા વૈ શ્રુતિયોદનાત્ ।
સ્થાસ્યામશ્વતુરો માસાન્ અત્રૈવાસતિ બાધકે॥

“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,

“પક્ષા વૈ માસાઃ” the period of four months is nowadays observed as four pakshas (fortnights). During these four months, Sanyasis can stay in

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one place along with other Sanyasis or their Gurus and seniors, engage in 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:

નિરૂપિતો બાલક એવ યોગિનાં
શુશ્રૂષારો પ્રાવૃષિ નિર્વિવિક્ષતામ્
ઉચ્છિષ્ટલેપાનનુમોદિતો દ્વિજૈઃ
સકૃત્સ્મ ભુઝે તદપાસ્તકિલ્બિષઃ॥

જ્ઞાનં ગુહ્યતમં યત્તત્સાક્ષાત્ ભગવતોદિતમ્
અન્વવોચન્ ગમિષ્યન્તઃ કૃપયા દીનવત્સલાઃ॥

”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.

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3. Vyasa Panchaka - Vyasa at the centre, and Sumantu, Vaisampayana, Jaimini and Paila around.

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 Adishesha.

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: Bhadrpada 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.

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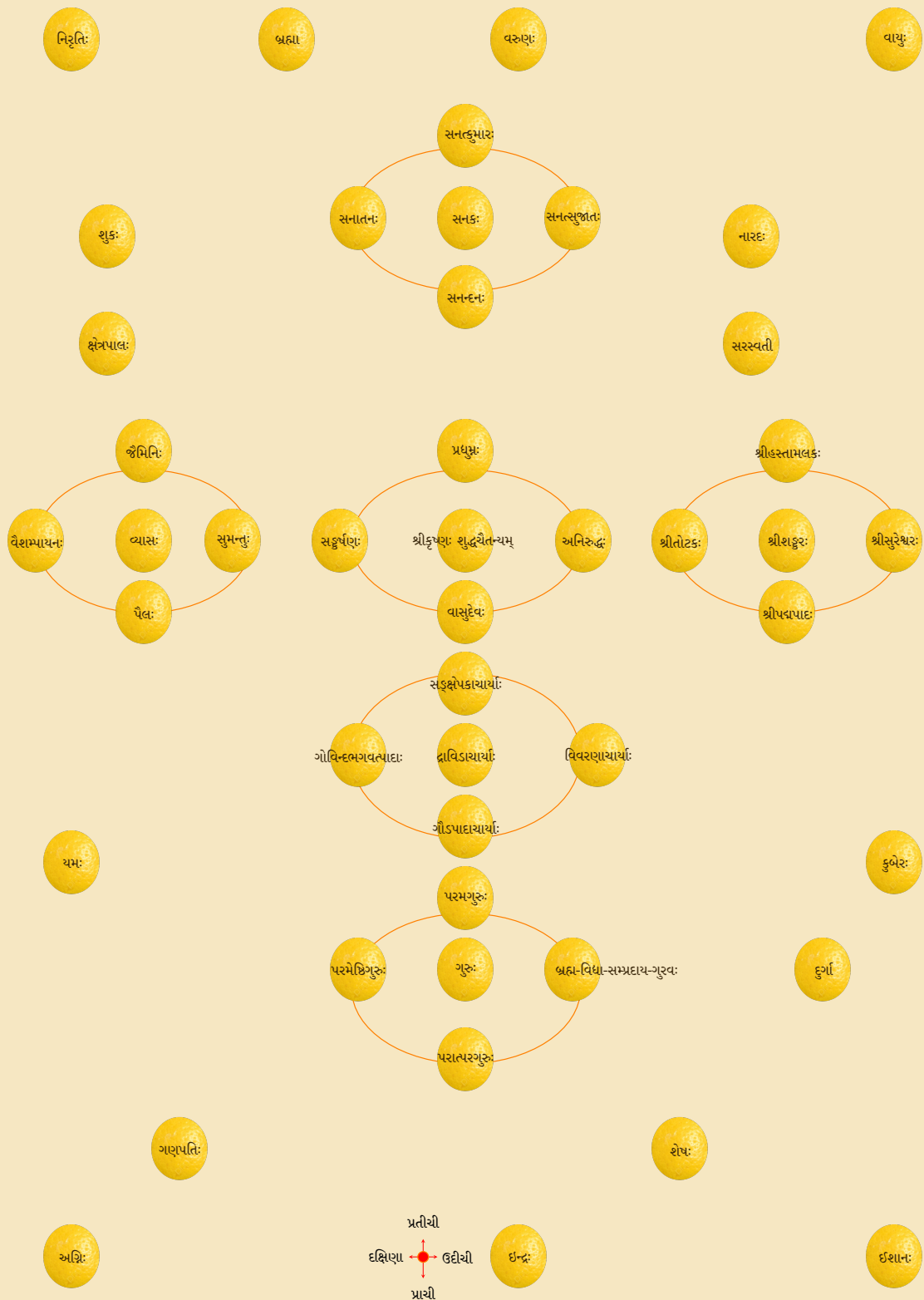
During Chaturmasya, animals like horses, bulls etc. should not be subjected to heat treatment.” These inscriptions also show that certain caves were prepared for housing Sanyasis during Chaturmasya period; they spell out details of how this should be done.

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).


॥व्यास-पूजा-युक्तम्॥




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