GURU PURNIMA – A SPIRITUAL TREAT

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13th July 2022

Guru Purnima heralds the beginning of Chaturmasa, which literally means 4 months, and specifically the four months of rainy season. This period is utilised for sadhana or anushthana-s (the practice of religious austerities such as Japa, Meditation) by sadhaka-s and sannyasi-s. For sannyasi-s there is also another way to observe Chaturmasa, where it is observed for four fortnights, from Ashadha Shukla Purnima (Guru Purnima) to Bhadrapada Shukla Purnima (Seemollangana / Uttaavnche Punnava). As per our Chitrapur Math tradition, our Dharma Guru-s - the Mathadhipati-s observe Chaturmasa of four fortnights (paksha-s) i.e. two months. Chaturmasya Vrata is observed by our Swamiji every year at any one of the Samadhi sthala-s of our previous Swamiji-s, staying for the entire duration at the sacred Kshetra.

For Grhastha-s, this period is doubly advantageous. They get the opportunity to serve their Guru, and also practise sadhana in different ways like Shravana, (listening), Manana (reflection), Nididhyasana (contemplation), Pujana, Bhajana, and Japa, all under The Guru’s guidance and drshti!

During this time, H.H.Swamiji not only perform His own anushthana, but also enlighten sadhaka-s through swadhyaya on topics from the Upanishad-s, Bhagawadgita, stotra-s, or any other spiritual treatise. We also benefit from His Ashirvachana-s during the 2-month period. Pujya Swamiji clears sadhaka-s’ doubts through Paramarsha sessions and also guides them in their spiritual practices. So, we Chitrapur Saraswat-s, observe this period of Chaturmasa for samuhika as well as vaiyaktika sadhana.

The spiritual benefits for sadhaka-s are amplified if they combine their sadhana-s with control during Chaturmasa. The former may take the form of a resolve to do extra mala-s of the ishta-mantra japa or reading of the Chitrapur Guruparampara Charitra. The latter could be a resolve to abstain from certain foods, or a vow to perform tapasya like sleeping on the ground, doing pranayama for a fixed duration of time every day, and so on. The vow, simple or hard, should commence on Ashadha Shukla Purnima i.e. Guru Purnima, (which falls on 13th July this year) and concludes on Bhadrapada Shukla Purnima. (10th September 2022)

The sadhaka expresses his/her resolve by taking a sankalpa and prays before a vigraha or picture of The Lord, “O God, I have undertaken this vrata in Your presence. May I succeed without letting it go, and without any hindrance.” On the concluding day of Chaturmasa, the sadhaka thanks The Lord for His Krpa, for completion of their vrata successfully, and asks for forgiveness for any mistakes in the performance of the vrata.

The vrata is a way of honing our physical and spiritual stamina. It strengthens one’s ability to say NO to certain habits, boosting our determination and confidence, motivating us to take on bigger vows....and thus we slowly but surely progress towards a more intense, fulfilling sadhana.

Our sadhana can commence, progress, and be completed only with the grace of the Guru. We need Upadesha and guidance of Guru at every step, so that we move in the right direction and at the right speed. It is the Gurushakti which helps humans to reach the goal of human birth - Self Realisation - by protecting and guiding them constantly. It is but natural to express our respect and gratitude for all the Brahmavidya-Pravartaka (Guru-s who promote knowledge of Brahma-tattva, Principle of Brahman) by remembering Them; and this Pujya Swamiji does by performing Guru Mandala /Vyasa Mandala Pujana on Guru Purnima.

The day begins with Lord Bhavanishankar Suprabhatam and around 8 am H.H. Swamiji performs Jalabhisheka of the Samadhi-s of our Guru-s of Chitrapur Guruparampara at the Math where Chaturmasa is being observed. Along with Jalabhisheka of Guru Samadhi-s, Swamiji performs Jalabhisheka of other deities also installed in that respective Math.

The Pradhana Archaka then does a prarthana and takes a sankalpa on behalf of the laity with the following words : “May it please Your Holiness to stay here most comfortably. We indeed deem it our good fortune and blessedness. We are grateful to Your Holiness for giving us this opportunity to serve You. We shall serve Your Holiness cheerfully and to the best of our ability.”

After the Samuhika Prarthana, Swamiji returns to His Kutira. At 10 am, H.H. Swamiji arrives for the Vyasa Mandala Pujana. This Guru Purnima Pujana takes nearly 2 hours, and there is always a large gathering of sadhaka-s who witness this sacred occasion.

GURU PURNIMA PUJANA consists of four Puja-s:

1. Shri Mahaganapati Pujana

2. Brahmadi Mandala Pujana

3.Vyasa Mandala Pujana

4. Regular Guru Pujana

GURU PURNIMA PUJANA:

After the Pradhana Sankalpa, Purvanga puja with Manyusukta chanting by our Bhat mam-s, Shri Mahaganapati Puja is performed by Swamiji for completion of Guru Purnima Pujana without any obstacle. This is followed by the Pujana of the Brahmadi (also known as Sarvatobhadra) Mandala of 57 Devata-s.

Brahmadi Mandala, also known as the Sarvatobhadra Mandala

A design (like the one shown above) is drawn on a board with colourful Rangoli powder and has a fixed place for each Devata of our Universe. Each Devata is invoked with mantra-s that pronounce their names. Among these are Brahman, Soma, Indra, Agni, Ashtavasu, Kashyapa, Atri, Chamunda, Varahi, Gada, Trishula and Ganga. Shaligrama-s are used to represent each Devata, and after placing them in their respective positions on the Mandala, they are offered Gandha, Akshata and Flowers.

After the pujana of Brahmadi Mandala, the pujana of Vyasa Mandala / Guru Mandala begins.

A sketchof a Guru or Vysasa Mandala

The Guru or Vysasa Mandala prepared for Pujana

Vyasa Mandal is represented as a flower with eight petals around a small circle in the middle, drawn in a square on the board. The petals and circle in the middle are filled with colourful grains and the parts outside the flower are filled with coloured Rangoli.

H.H. Swamiji invokes Gurushakti on Vyasa Purnima in a systematic way as prescribed by our own Math Sampradaya. Gurushakti, down the ages, has manifested through innumerable forms of Guru-s. It is impossible to list them. So Panchaka-s (The Guru and his four main shishya-s) of nine Guru-s are invoked by Swamiji with great reverence.

The 9 Panchaka-s (group of 5 each i.e. The Guru and His main 4 shishya-s) are as follows. The directions here are in relation to Dakshinamurti Panchaka.

1.Dakshinamurti Panchaka in the middle

a) Sanaka b) Sanatana c) Sanatkumar d) Sanandana

2. Brahma Panchaka in Uttara (North)

a) Atharvangirasa b) Shvetashvatara c) Bharadwaja d) Narada

3. Vasishtha Panchaka in Ιshanaya (Northeast)

a)Yajnavalkya b) Dattatreya c) Shvetaketu d) Parashara

4. Vyasa Panchaka in Purva (East)

a) Sumantu b) Jaimini c) Paila d) Vaishampayana

5. Krshna Panchaka in Ajneya (Southeast)

a) Bhishma b) Shuka c) Gaudapada d) Govindapada

6.Bhashyakara Panchaka in Dakshina (South)

a) Vishwarupa (Sureshvaracharya) b) Padmapada c) Hastamalaka

d) Totakacharya

7. Dravidacharya Panchaka in Nairutya (Southwest)

a) Vivaranacharya b) Vidyaranya c) Anandagiri

d) Anubhutiswarupacharya

8. Guru Panchaka in Pashchima (West)

a) Parama Guru b) Parameshthi Guru c) Paratpara Guru

d) Samasta Brahmavidya Sampradaya Pravartka

9. Atma Panchaka in Vayavya (North West)

a) Antaratman b) Paramatman c) Sarvatman d) Brahmatman

In the Mandala, The Guru and His four shishya-s are placed in their respective positions of the petals and are worshipped. Here too, Shaligrama-s are used to represent the Guru-s and shishya-s.The circle in the middle is a place of Shri Dakshinamurti, the Guru form of Shiva, often depicted as sitting under banyan tree, with four hands holding Rudrakshamala, a book, Amrta Kalasha and one hand with Chinmudra. Pujya Swamiji places His Sphatika Shivalinga and Devi Rajarajeshwari Vigraha in the circle. So, totally nine Guru-s and their 36 shishya-s are worshipped on this Mandala by offering them Gandha, Akshata and flowers with the respective mantra-s.

After Guru Mandala Puja, Swamiji commences with the regular Guru Pujana. During this Pujana, the devotees who are present there, repeat after Swamiji the shloka-s, prarthana-s, and Ashtottarashata Namavali-s. Swamiji performs Guru Ashtottarashata Namavali by offering Bilvapatri-s and during Vedavyasa Ashtottarashata Namavali, by offering Tulasi.

At the end of the Puja, H.H. Swamijii recites Shri Vedavyasa Ashtaka, full of bhakti and all others repeat it after Him. Swamiji also explains the meaning of this Vedavyasa Ashtaka in which Guru Vyasa is praised with all his Guna-s. The morning session culminates with Shri Paduka Pujana and Tirtha Vitarana by H.H. Swamiji.

In the evening a Dharma Sabha is held, and all who have gathered for Guru Purnima await eagerly to listen to H.H. Swamiji’s Ashirvachana. The whole day of Guru Purnima is devoted to the Guru and Gurushakti smarana. Morning has been spent remembering the 45 Guru-s. Evening is the time to remember the 11 Guru-s of our glorious Chitrapur Guruparampara by chanting the Dipanamaskara. Guru Purnima celebrations culminate with Ratri Mangalarati followed by Ashtavadhana Seva of our Aradhya Devata, Lord Bhavanishankar.

Thus, all the different ways of Upasana like Pujana, Bhajana, Japa and Shravana of Swamiji’s valuable Upadesha, makes our Guru Purnima Day spiritually rich! Sadhaka-s get fully charged to do their sadhana throughout the Chaturmasa and the year ahead. Only our sincere efforts in our sadhana makes our Guru prasanna. Intense sadhana leads to achieving chitta ekagrata and eventually to the ultimate goal of human birth - Self Realisation or Moksha which is the purpose of the Guru’s Avatara.

Prasannostu Guru sada” our earnest prayer.