



RAMĀ ŚAKTI MISSION

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Brahmacharia, Garhasthya, Vanaprastha and Sannyasa are the four orders of life, 'ashramas'. Though the ashramas are four in number, really speaking, there are only two main orders: Garhasthya and Sannyasa. Whereas Brahmacharia is a moral preparation for Garhasthya, Vanaprastha is a spiritual discipline for sannyasa. An outlook of knowledge, ethical conduct, dharmanishta and spiritual sadhanas should spiritualize all orders. Then only they are worthy of their name, 'Ashram'.

When God is accepted as the Goal and tapascharya as the means to God-experience, all these orders are capable of leading the Jivatman to Realization. By merely abstaining from marital life, one is not a brahmachari; by raising a family, one does not become a Grihastha; by wandering in the wilderness, one does not become a vanaprasthi; and by donning the geruva robe, one does not become a sannyasi. It is observance of Ashrama Dharma, the law of human conduct in specific spheres, which makes one a brahmachari, or a householder, or a vanaprasthi or a sannyasi.

Brahmacharia is the student life of discipline, austerity, zest for study and training under a well-qualified spiritual preceptor, Sadguru. Ancient Gurukulas were institutions of Brahavidya, presided over by Sages of Wisdom, Maharshis, under whose tutelage the wards lived a life of search after God, as Brahmacharis.

The Master loved his disciples as his own sons, watched over their mental propensities and spiritual growth with motherly care, imposed strict disciplines wherever necessary and initiated them into a richer inner life of adhyatmic sadhana. His own hermitage, illumined by his illustrious spouse, a paragon of pathivrathya, served as the school of training for the young brahmacharis.

Members of royal lineage and noble families were often inmates of such Gurukulas. Sages never sold their wisdom. They imparted it to fit students (sadpatras) out of immeasurable love, seeking nothing in return. They instructed on Brahavidya on the basis of their own direct experience. Hence the teaching was effective. The Guru's selfless life, magnetic Personality, magnanimous love and mode of teaching, were a source of constant inspiration, influence and illumination for the novices. The adhyatmic Guru was held in the highest esteem by disciples, society and royalty alike.

The disciples had profound reverence towards the Guru and the Gurupatni (Guru's wife). They were more than parents for them. They served them both with devotion and humility. They would rise up early in the dawn, finish their ablutions, perform japa, sweep the ashram compound, bring fuel from the forest and water from the river, and engage themselves in various allotted duties of the Ashram. During spare times, they would gather round the Sage, receive lessons in the Vedas and the Vedangas, reflect deeply over the teachings and perform daily anushtana in all regularity.

At times, in order to test their inner aspiration and spiritual stamina, the Guru would subject them to several kinds of ordeal. The disciples would willingly undergo such ordeals, convinced as they were, of Guru's perfection and His genuine concern for their spiritual uplift. They would



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not grumble, or murmur, or complain, or get offended or dejected. They knew for certain that the wisdom of the Atman cannot be had anywhere in the world except at the Feet of the Guru.

Gurukula was thus a shelter to such sincere aspirants against alien influences, evil persons and worldly tendencies. Finally, when the students were found to have completed the learning and training, with their minds well under control, the Sage would grant them leave to go and choose either householdership or sannyasa according to their individual inclinations. Those who entered the noble order of Home, continued their tapas, aided by their wives, discharging all duties.

They were never slaves of desire or victims of circumstances. Faith in God, devotion to dharma, power of yogabhyasa and the blessing of the Guru constituted their tremendous spiritual force which was the strongest base of Garhasthya life. With such spiritual power awakened in them, they solved the problems of life courageously and reached the pinnacle of Yoga.

Women were pathivrathas par excellence and also spiritually illumined Yoginis. They were ideal mothers too. They were guardians of domestic peace, social morality and national honour. They were gems of purity and renunciation. They were the presiding deities of hermitages. Husband held wife in great esteem, though wife worshipped husband as her lord. Among women there were great brahmavadinis who debated in the royal courts and who were Gurus for their husbands also.

Some did not enter marital order at all and pursued Wisdom earnestly throughout their lives. In ancient system of social life, women occupied a venerated place. Of all orders, Garhasthya occupied the pivotal position. It was the support for other orders. The cream of society is the product of ideal homes. Children who grow in homes under parental care and adhyatmic culture, become tomorrow's generation of illumined souls, ideal citizens, efficient servants of humanity, the very backbone of the nation, custodians of morality, the princes of tyagis and ideal sannyasis.

If anarchy sets in, if social set-up begins to crumble, if old values are given a go-by by the people in general, the root cause can be traced to the disruption that has entered Home, the pivotal order of society. A peaceful home alone can be a herald of peace in the society. There was a Sage. He lived a life of tapas in a forest retreat, engaged always in anushtana, in the company of his noble wife. Rapt in meditation, the Sage would be often oblivious of his body and surroundings. His wife, a pathivratha, engaged herself in devoted service of her husband. She too was a jnani.

Thus several years passed. Once there arose in the pure mind of the Rishi's wife, a desire for a son worthy of great heritage, for the perpetuation of the family link. When the Sage emerged out of his meditation, she expressed this desire to him. The Sage said: Beloved, you know I am a tapaswi. You are a great pathivratha. The son, who would be born of us, will be a tapaswi by birth and will have on him both the lustre of knowledge (tejas) and the radiance of brahmacharia (ojas). Will you like to have such a son?

The wife replied: My lord, I do not want a child engrossed in samsara and ignorance. Our son should be worthy of you and our ancestral eminence. The Sage was pleased. Thus, in course of time, as divinely ordained, a child was born to them.



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The child was a prodigy. The mother, herself an illuminated soul, brought him up without any attachment, but with great love and tender care. Pleased with the boy's uncommon intelligence, thirst for wisdom and habitual love for meditation, the Sage taught him the vedic lore and initiated him into Yoga. The boy became eight years old. His spiritual impulse became irresistible for him. One day he prostrated before his father and expressed his desire for repairing to the forest seclusion intent on tapas.

The Sage was pleased to see the spiritual urge of the child and directed him to his mother for permission and blessing. See, what respect the husband used to give to his saintly wife in ancient times. Without her blessing, tapas will not come to fruition. Bowing down to his mother, the little boy said: O mother, this world is unreal. I long for the vision of God. All thy instructions are fresh in my mind and now, O mother, will you not let me go to seclusion for tapas? Kindly bless me. Which mother will willingly permit the pupil of her eye, her only son, to leave her and go to unknown seclusion of a forest?

But the mother in our story was not a samsari. She did not intend to bind her son to the wheel of births and deaths. But nevertheless, her maternal instinct, prompted her to say: Dear son, this is a forest calm and quiet. In this peaceful hermitage no one will disturb your tapas, no one will stand in the way of your spiritual quest. Where then is the need for you, O dear one, to leave us and go?

The intelligent boy replied: O mother, what you say is true. Tranquility prevails in this forest. I can carefully meditate in this hermitage under your love and protection. But, listen, O dear mother, after all I am a son to you. It is indeed difficult to snap this bond of Maya. Such is the nature of attachment. Therefore kindly permit me to go and bless me. In the mind of that understanding mother there dawned at once the truth of her sons's wise utterances. And she said: Son dear, you are indeed a soul who has come in the form of my son in order to awaken me. Yes, attachment in any form is contrary to the spirit of dharma. I bless you fully. Go thou and attain fame.

On the eve of boy's departure, the Sage gave him the parting advice: Son, you are going for tapas. May success attend you. Beware of anger and tendency to pronounce curses. Both these are great obstacles to tapas. God bless you. When anger arises and overpowers the Sadhaka, he is sure to depart from rectitude. This is because, anger clouds understanding (buddhi). Clouded intellect loses the sense of proportion and the man does not know what he does.

One should never yield to this dire enemy of man. If there is no anger, where is a chance for uttering words of curse? A tapaswi should be intensely mindful of what he speaks. If harsh words, words of curse, fall from his lips, great harm comes to him as well as to others. Antidote to anger is patience. Patience should become natural to you. Develop fortitude.

Bear with whatever comes to you as ordained by prarabdha. Keep the mind tranquil under all conditions. Learn to live with all in amity and co-operation. The One Divine Being dwells in everyone. This truth should be always remembered. But at the same time do not go to associate yourselves with evildoers. In the state of Enlightenment, giving vent to anger, pronouncing curse, getting upset, these have no scope to flourish at all. Jnana is grand. It is firm and steady. In it, there is neither activity of the mind nor the operation of karma.



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According to Vedanta, there is no mind. When ignorance and ego are liquidated in Jnana, mind disappears and Jnana alone shines forth. But until Jnana dawns, there is mind for the ignorant. If mind were not there, where is samsara? Where is the need for tapascharia, upadesha by the Guru etc? To know that there is no mind, one should purify the mind by tapas and invoke divine grace by surrender. Then the mind will be transformed into Jnana. Then alone you will know God alone is the Reality.

Every aspect of your life should be governed and guided by a deeper religious sense, by devotion to God. When devotional outlook comes to the mind, motivations are bound to change. You will find that it is not leaving home and retiring from activity that leads you to yogic state, but renunciation of attachment to persons, things and fruit of action. When bhava and bhakti arise, God is uppermost in one's mind. In that state there is no place for agency and enjoyership. When agency and enjoyership are transferred to God, the load of samsara is lifted off from your head. Then you will experience the fountain of bliss within.