



RAMĀ ŚAKTI MISSION

BULLETIN NO: 149

June 4, 1976

The bestowing the sacred thread is a religious rite of profound spiritual significance. It is called the 'yajnopavitha dharana' ceremony. As initiation into a life of truth, self-discipline and higher aspiration, it is 'Brahmopadesha'. In its purely metaphysical sense, it is 'Upanayana'.

Upadesha, upasana and upanayana are terms with deep meanings. These signify stages in the acquisition of Brahma Vidya. In the simple-looking thread ceremony, the truths of all these three phases of spiritual quest are illustrated by symbolic rites and observances.

Beginning from the Vedic days and continuing up to this day, this rite of investing the boy brahmachari with the sacred thread has been preserved as part of a venerated tradition. It has on it the mark and insignia of our great Vedic culture of the Rishis. It is linked to noble patterns of life directed to the supreme purpose, God-realization.

The ancient custom was that the boys were invested with the sacred thread at the age of 8. Thus, right from early days, they became acquainted with the practice of the holy Name, the disciplines of upasana, the norms of moral life and the immortal teachings of the Vedas.

This student life of Brahmacharia is a period of rigorous training in self-restraint, of practices of yoga sadhana and of devout study of the sacred scriptures under a competent and compassionate Guru. Thus the order of Brahmacharia became the strong foundation on which they could build the life of their choice: Garhasthya or Sannyasa. Whatever be the order one chooses, one should become the master of his mind and emotions. Self-mastery is the key to happiness. If one has conquered, his own mind, he has, in fact, conquered the whole world.

By the influx of time and the neglect through centuries, the great truths underlying religious observances have been forgotten, even though the outer form remains as rites and rituals. The regard for Vedic way of life has been eclipsed and people have become involved in outer pursuits and pleasures only.

The observance of 'Sandhya', 'Sandhya Vandana', with the repetition of the Gayatri Manthra, constitutes the upasana aspect of life prescribed for the Brahmacharis at the time of their initiation. Some associate Gayatri japa with the worship of Surya Narayana; others associate it with the upasana of Devi, the Divine Mother of the Universe. Both views are right, because, whatever be the conceptions of God, the Ultimate Reality is one and nondual.

In the Absolute, there is no place for differentiations as masculine and feminine deities. You may look upon God as Father or Mother as you like. But you should be steady, sincere, consistent and pure in your cultivated bhava. God responds to bhava. Truth flashes in the pure mind.



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The term upanayana signifies the mystic vision of the Divine. Upa means nearness, proximity. Nayana means the eye. Upanayana thus signifies immediate and intimate perception of Reality, Aparokshanubhooti. Physical perception and mental perception are not intimate perception of the spiritual order. They are dependent on the nature of the sense organs and the mind. But spiritual perception is an intimate soul perception. It is jnana. It is anubhooti. Mind and senses are transcended in God-experience.

The Yajnopavitha ceremony signifies a new birth, a second birth. Till one is invested with the sacred thread and initiated into Gayatri, one is considered to be a Shudra. He, who is a slave of the sense objects, is a Shudra. He who has deep-seated notions that body is the Self, that body is eternal, that bodily relationship belongs to the Self, is a Shudra. All these notions arise from avidya, the ignorance of one's true nature. Hence 'shudrahood' is the state of ignorance, inner darkness and slavery.

In the ceremony of Upadesha Deeksha, it is father himself who imparts the Gayatri Manthra to the son. Such has been the tradition from Vedic days. Such a system came into force because; ancient Grihasthas were tapaswis and jnanis. By years of anushtana, tapas and upasana of the Deity, they had realized the spiritual truth and developed tremendous adhyatmic force. It was this force that they transmitted through the Manthra to their sons.

Before seeking initiation from his father, the boy first offers pranams to his mother and seeks her blessing. This act is significant, both from the worldly point of view and from spiritual perspective. Emotionally, mother is closer in affinity, because she is the one who nurtures the child in her womb and suffers for it; she is again the one who gives birth to the child with great pain and brings up the child with tender love, constant care and sacrifice. It is she who shapes the character of the boy. She is therefore the first guru. If the mother is noble-minded and devoted to God, the boy will grow into manhood imbibing the spiritual samskara of the mother.

From spiritual perspective, mother signifies the dynamic aspect of Divinity, the Divine Shakti who weilds the deluding power of Maya and is the author of cosmic creational leela. The mother therefore represents Maha Maya, by whose Grace only the jivas can attain freedom from the clutches of Maya. Mother's blessing is the foundation of progress and well being of the boy, both in mundane life and in spiritual endeavours. Even to enter the sannyasa order, one has to take the permission from his mother. Where mother is honoured, there prosperity reigns. She is the herald of auspiciousness to the family tradition.

The boy's appearance in the prescribed robe, with his head covered by a flowery crown and holding a coconut in his hands, is symbolic of the child's emergence to the outer world from its mother's womb. It is thus symbolic of the jiva's embodied state in the realm of samsara. The coconut he holds signifies the fruit or karma. It is karma that leads to 'jnana', rebirth. It is karma that apportions to the jivas the experiences of happiness and sorrow. Each one has to inevitably enjoy the fruit of his own past actions, for every action brings reaction.

Ignorant thinks that others are responsible for his miseries. When knowledge dawns one knows the unerring law of karma and therefore he gets peace, comfort and power to undergo even the bitterest of miseries. When the truth of the Atman is realized, one



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goes beyond the realm of karma. Atman is not involved in action and enjoyment. Until Atman is realized, the jivatwa persists. The jiva is subject to the law of karma. Karmaphala, the reward of the totality of actions, good as well as bad, determines the nature of all empirical experiences.

The Divine as the Guru, as the dispeller of inner darkness, as the masculine aspect conceived in bhava, as the personification of the Moral Law, as the Immutable Witness and as the motionless Consciousness, is signified by the father whom the boy approaches for initiation.

The boy must pray to his father, looking upon him as his Guru: 'I have been a shudra till now. I aspire to Brahminhood. Kindly initiate me into higher life.' Prayer should penetrate the feeling that by guru's grace only one's inner eye will open and the Truth can be revealed. Aspiration, Adoration and surrender mark the mental constitution of the sincere seeker.

Shudra's dharma is seva vritti, the life of self-abnegating service. The seeker, the Shudra aspiring for Brahminhood, should serve the Guru with whole-hearted devotion. Such service purifies the mind of the seeker and makes it competent to imbibe the wisdom of the Guruvakya. Ancient seekers from various walks of life, including even princes, lived with the Guru in the latter's hermitage, engaged in service with the sole desire for getting initiation into the wisdom of Brahman.

Bhagwan Sree Krishna too says in the Gita: Know the Truth from the Sages by surrender, investigation and service of the Guru. The Guru allows himself to be served, not for his personal need, but for the spiritual benefit of the disciples.

Guru is not an individual though He is with a personal form. He is Divine. He is therefore omnipresent. You are ever in the presence of the Guru. Whatever work you do as an offering to the Guru, is the service of the Guru. Discharge your duties meticulously with shraddha and with bhava that you are thereby serving the Guru. Do your duty with the whole mind and with joy. Look upon yourselves as instruments of the Divine.

Service of parents is the duty of the son. He should win the blessing of the parents by serving them. A dutiful son, initiated into Gayatri, should serve his parents by looking upon them as his own guru in twin forms. Thereby he wins the grace of the Deity.