

# SEVEN HEALTHY HABITS

**Shivarathri Lecture by Swami Paramarthananda**

**Transcribed by Sri VLN Prasad**

NOTE: Swami Paramarthananda has not verified the transcription of talks. The transcriptions have been done with Swamiji's blessings by his disciple.



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## Seven Healthy Habits

*sadāsiva samārambhām sankarāchārya madhyamām  
asmad āchārya paryantām vande guru paramparām*

Today is the auspicious **Shivarātri** day, during which we worship Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva can be worshipped in several aspects. One of the aspects of Lord Shiva is **Sadāshiva** or **Dakshināmūrthy**, who is the initiator of the entire Vēdic tradition, the author of the Vēdās themselves. We have a Slōka in this regard.

*shivam shivataram shāntam shivātmānam shivōttamam  
shiva mārگا pranētāram pranatōsmi sadāshivam*

**Shiva Mārگا** means the auspicious path or way of life which can give the follower all the four **Purushārthās**. That Shiva Mārگا or the auspicious way of life is nothing, but **Vaidika Mārگا** presented through the Vēdic Scriptures. Lord Shiva is the **Pranēta**. **Pranēta** means the initiator of the Vaidika Mārگا. As this **Ādi Guru**, **Dakshināmūrthy**, we call him **Sadāshivaha**. That is why -

*sadāsiva samārambhām sankarāchārya madhyamām  
asmad āchārya paryantām vandē guru paramparām*

Thus, Sadāshiva or Dakshināmūrthy is the author of, the initiator of **Vaidika Mārگا**. We all take a vow to follow the Vaidika Mārگا when we get initiated into the Vēdic tradition. At the time of **Upanayanam**, a boy is supposed to be initiated into Vēdic tradition. At the time of **Vivāha** or marriage, a girl is supposed to be initiated into the Vēdic way of life.

Thus, both boy and girl in the Vēdic tradition, are initiated into Vaidika Mārگا. At the time of initiation, the boy and girl take a vow that I will follow a lifestyle prescribed by the Vēdās. At the time of Sacred Thread Ceremony, the boy chants - **shrouta smārta vihita sadāchāra nitya karma anushthāna yogyatā sidhyartham, brahma tējō abhivrudhyartham**

[yagnyōpavīta dhāranām karishyē](#). So, at the time of initiation, I am taking a decision to follow the four Purushārthās, the four human goals, as prescribed by the Vēdic tradition.

Thereafter, whether I am pursuing a materialistic goal or a religious goal or a spiritual goal, I take the guidance of the Vēdic teaching. When the Vēdās prescribe a lifestyle for all the Vaidikās, the Vēdic people, generally known as Hindus, it gives certain fundamental conducts which every Hindu should follow.

Hindu means a Vaidika who follows a way of life, prescribed by the Vēda - [Sanātani](#) or [Vaidikaha](#). When the Vēda prescribes a way of life, it gives certain fundamental conducts which every Hindu, every Vaidika should follow. They are the basic rules which should be followed by all the Hindus, males or females, belonging to any Varna or Āshrama.

That basic code is called [Sadāchāraha](#). [Āchāraha](#) means code of conduct or habits, which we should develop or cultivate. [Sadāchāra](#) means healthy code of conduct that I should take up or healthy habits that we have to follow. Whatever be our goal of life, we have to follow that. Sadāchāra is compulsory for every Hindu.

*[sarvāgamānām āchāraha prathamam parikalpatē](#)  
[āchāra prabhavō dharmaha dharmasya prabhurachyutaha](#)*

It comes in [Vishnu Sahasranāma](#). [sarva āgamānām](#) - all the Āgamās, all the scriptural books, whether they are Āgamās belonging to Vaishnava tradition, Shaiva tradition, Shākta tradition, Smārta tradition, all of them start with certain fundamental code of conduct, healthy habits which are to be practiced by all. That is called [Sadāchāraha](#).

[sarvāgamānām āchāraha prathamam parikalpatē](#). [āchāra prabhavō dharmaha](#) - only by following Āchāra, we can lead a Dhārmic way of life. All the other activities like Pūjas, Prayers etc, will become valid only when the fundamental codes of conduct or healthy habits are observed.

When I talk about [Sadāchāra](#), normally people will think of certain customs and practices which are followed by some orthodox families in the name of Madi. The moment I say Āchāra, immediately people will remember some of the orthodox customs and practices which are very difficult for us to follow now because of the changed conditions.

Our children are refusing to practice them. In all the families, there are always problems. Whether those customs are practiced or not, there are certain other important habits which are relevant at all times. There are certain customs practiced in the name of the Madi and Āchāra which are controversial things.

Some of them can be practiced and some of them cannot be practiced. For example, they say that in a house, a toilet must be 80 feet away from the Pūja room. Now, in the city flat system, the whole flat itself is 40/40. If you have to follow that Āchāra, you have to go to the neighbor's toilet. The problem is that he will come to our toilet.

Thus, there are so many practices such as - how many times you should wash your feet, how many times you should wash your mouth etc. All those rules and regulations are there. We can practice some of them and we cannot practice many of them. Many of them our children, the modern generation are refusing to practice.

I am not talking about that Madi and Āchāra. But there are certain other important codes of conduct which I consider very important for every Hindu. They are important not in the 17<sup>th</sup> or 30<sup>th</sup> century, but they are important at all the times. We find them mentioned in so many scriptures, but generally we do not pay attention to them.

I am only trying to bring to your notice some of those important healthy habits. We know many of them, but we do not give sufficient importance to them. I am going to talk about seven healthy habits prescribed by our scriptures, to be practiced by every Hindu. The seven healthy habits called [Sadāchārā](#).

The first health habit is a life of Discipline. The word ‘Discipline’ has got several meanings, but in this context, I am using the word ‘Discipline’ in a particular sense. That is, developing the habit of preceding all our actions by appropriate planning and preparation. Our scriptures point out that we should never take to any thoughtless action.

All the actions, whether they are minor or major, secular or sacred, religious or spiritual, must be preceded by advanced planning, advanced preparation. Only after that, every action should be done.

*sahasā vidhadhīta nakriyām avivēkaha paramāpādām padam  
vrunatēhi vimrushyakārinam gunalubdhā swayamēva sampadaha*

All the thoughtless actions will lead to adverse consequences, which will not only affect the performer, but which will affect all the other people who are associated with that. Therefore, thoughtless action is a form of **Himsa** to ourselves and also to others. Therefore, develop the habit of planning and preparing in advance before doing everything.

Recently, there was a News item that our foreign minister in UN assembly or some important place, had to read a speech. Instead of reading the speech belonging to an Indian delegate, he read the one belonging to a Portugal delegate. Imagine the blunder committed by a minister in an august assembly, because of the simple reason of not reading it once before.

Therefore, such blunders will be committed when we don’t plan and prepare. In some important cases, even rehearsal is very important. Lord Krishna gives us that important rule. All thoughtless actions will come under **Tāmasam Karma**. All those actions which are preceded by preparation, planning and rehearsal are called **Sātvika Karma**.

**Tāmasam Karma** is **Durāchāraha** and **Sātvika Karma** is **Sadāchāraha**. Krishna even gives us the clue as to what all factors must be thought about before doing any action. He says you should prepare in four directions.

*anubandham kshayam himsām anapēkshya cha pourusham  
mōhādārabhyatē karma yatattāmasamuchyātē*

First think of the **Anubandha**. Anubandha means the positive benefits that we will derive through any action. **Himsa** - the adverse consequences which will affect us or which will affect other people especially, family members. **Kshayam** - the expenditure involved in that action. Expenditure involved in the form of time, energy and money.

**Pourusham** - our resources, whether they are physical, emotional or time, including financial resources. Consider the pros and cons and our resources. You should consider all of them before every action. Tomorrow, if I have to take a different route and attend another function, before going to a particular program, I should think of that today itself.

I should think whether it is a peak hour or not, whether there are processions or not, whether a particular way is one way or two way or no way. You should consider all those things. Never go by your whims and fancies. Every action must be preceded by the healthy habit of planning, preparation and rehearsal. This is a religious duty prescribed by our scriptures.

So, the first **Sadāchāra** or healthy habit is the discipline of preparation, planning and if necessary, rehearsal. Remember Lord Krishna, who prescribes this rule in the 17<sup>th</sup> chapter of the Gīta. The second healthy habit is - any amount of planning and preparation will never lead to success. Any amount of planning and preparation are not enough.

Planning and preparation are extremely important, but it is always incomplete. It should be supplemented with hard work in which I implement whatever plan and preparation I have made, preferably in a written form of a time-table. Time-table is extremely important. Whatever time-table I have chalked out, I have to implement. Implementation means hard work.

*udhyamē nahi sidhyanti kāryāni na manōrathaihi  
nahi suptasya simhasya pravishanti mukhē mrugāh*

**kāryāni** - All our undertakings will never be successful. **manōrathaihi** - by mere planning, by mere writing, they will never be successful. It should be followed by **udhyamē na sidhyanti**. **udhyamaha** means hard work or effort. **nahi suptasya simhasya mukhē mrugāh pravishanti** - the prey will not automatically enter into the mouth of a sleeping lion.

If the lion wants to catch its prey, it should explore and it should chase. Until that prey is captured, the lion has to put forth effort. Obstacles will be many, but until success is achieved, hard work and perseverance is compulsory. Krishna says -

*dhṛityā yayā dhārayatē manah prānēndriya kriyāh  
yogēna avyabhichārinya dhṛiti sa pārtha sātṛiki*

All forms of success, material or spiritual require **Dhṛiti**, hard work, perseverance. Whatever undertaking we have, obstacles are bound to come. We have to cross all the obstacles with will power.

*prārabhyatē na khalu vighna bhayēna nīchaih  
prārabhya vighna vihatā viramanti madhyāha  
vighnai punah punarapi pratihanyamānaha  
prārabhya uttama gunāh na parityajanti*

A person of hard work will never be cowed down by any obstacle. Whatever plan you have, all the people around will discourage. Encouraging people are always rare. You will find that for any undertaking, people around will discourage. You have to put them aside. Even when obstacles come, never turn back. Until you attain, hard work should continue.

In our Purānās, we have two stories to prescribe this second healthy habit of hard work. **What are the two most popular stories of our Purāna?** One story is **Samudra Mathanam**, churning the ocean to bring out Amrutam. There were many struggles and many problems, but lot of



hard work went into that to get Amrutam. The second example is [Bhagiradha Prayatam](#).

Bhagiradha wanted to bring Ganga to save his ancestors. He had many obstacles. Hard work alone could give success. Therefore, the second [Sadāchāra](#), the second habit is hard work for completing the project. Not only completing the project, but completing the project perfectly; There must be perfection or at least, an attempt for perfection, whether it is a small job or big job.

Swami Chinmayānanda says that attempting perfection is a spiritual trait. He says that even when you are pasting a stamp on an envelope, don't do it in a careless way. That is not the perfect job. It is a sloppy work. Even pasting stamp and even writing the address over the envelope, we have to do perfectly.

Great people are not those who do extraordinary job, but they are those who do ordinary job extraordinarily well. Therefore, look for perfection in every job that you do. That is another trait of [Vaidika](#). **What is the second healthy habit?** It is hard work for completing the job and completing the job perfectly.

Then, the third healthy habit is - our Vēdic tradition always values aesthetic excellence. You not only do a job, but whatever the job we do or whatever thing we handle, we should have value for aesthetic excellence. Somehow, we have missed that in time. If you look at the streets we have and the houses we have, we don't seem to give importance to aesthetic excellence.

Aesthetic excellence consists of three things. One is that every place and thing that we handle should be extremely neat and clean. Every place that we make use of, whether it is house or office must be spic and span. Not only the drawing room, but every room in the house, including the toilet, must be spic and span. So, neatness is one component of aesthetic excellence.



Neatness of every object and every place we use, including our own body and dress. Lord Krishna repeatedly uses the word [Shoucham](#). Even temples must be an embodiment of neatness and cleanness. The second component of aesthetic excellence is orderliness with regard to everything we handle in our house or in our working place or any place, for that matter.

**What do you mean by orderliness?** Everything we handle should have its own specific position, which we deliberately allocate. If we want to keep a pen which is not writing, we should allocate a place for it. We should allocate a specific place for everything small and big that we are handling. Not only everything should have a place, but everything should be only in that place when it is not use.

This is a very important [Sadāchāra](#) prescribed by our scriptures. So, cleanliness is the first component and orderliness is the second component. Not only that, but everything must be attractive also. We should have value for beauty or attractiveness. Therefore, [Alankāra](#) or decoration is an integral part of Hindu way of life.

Alankāra is not glamorous exercise, but it is a part of aesthetic excellence, which is part of Sadāchāra. In the village, when ladies get up early in the morning, they sweep and wipe, light the lamp and put the Rangoli. Rangoli and the lamp are the cheapest decorations available. In the kitchen also they put Kolam on the stove.

Rangoli is the value for beauty, aesthetic excellence. Alankāra is done for the house and Alankāra is done for Pūja room. After Snānam, Alankāra is done in the form of Vastram, Chandanam, Kumkum, Mala etc. That is also an integral part of aesthetic excellence. Therefore, an eye for neatness, orderliness and attractiveness, is put together called esthetic excellence.

In our tradition, cleaning, arranging, and decorating are looked upon as invocation of Lakshmi Devi. We look upon esthetic excellence as an

expression of Lakshmi Devi. Only where these three are valued, Lakshmi Devi will be present. A house where all these things are absent, Lakshmi Devi will vacate. In that place, her elder sister is supposed to come.

*kuchēlinam danta malōpadhārinam  
mahāshanam nishthura vākya bhāshinam  
sūryōdayē cha astamayē cha shāyinam  
jahāti lakshmirapi chakra dhārinam*

**kuchēlinam danta malōpadhārinam** - The one who doesn't wash his mouth every time after eating something. **mahāshanam nishthura vākya bhāshinam**; **sūryōdayē cha astamayē cha shāyinam** - The one who does not get up early and clean the house and himself. Where there is no neatness, orderliness and attractiveness, **lakshmi jahāti**. On the other hand, wherever they are there, Lakshmi Devi will run towards them. In fact, there is a humorous Slōka also.

*kim vāsasānēsi vichāranīyam  
vāsah pradhānam khalu yōgyatāyāh  
pītāmbaram vīkshya dadou swakanya  
charmāmbaram vīkshya visham samudraha*

After Samudra Matanam, Samudra Raja got two products in the form of **Lakshmi Devi** and **Hālāhala Visham**, along with so many other things. Samudra Raja wanted to gift them to someone. He was looking for someone to whom he can hand over Lakshmi and someone to whom he can hand over Visham. He handed over Lakshmi to whoever was very beautifully decorated.

Lord Vishnu enjoys Pitāmbaram, Kaustubha Ratna and all those things. Seeing the beautiful, attractive Vishnu, Samudra Raja gave Lakshmi to him. Paramēshwara was wearing only the skin and applied ashes all over and was not keeping the hair well combed. Therefore, Samudra Raja gave him Visham. Therefore, dress up well, clean yourself and also keep the house neat and orderly. Lakshmi Devi will come.

**Therefore, what is the third healthy habit?** Neatness, orderliness and attractiveness, which are together called aesthetic excellence. **If we were following this value, do you think our Indian streets will be like this?** Unfortunately, we have got a very bad name. Indians are considered to be dirty and messy. We have become butt of jokes everywhere.

I do not know whether it is true or not. People say that you can find out an area where there is an Indian settlement in any country. They say that whichever place is dirty and messy, that will be the place where there are Indians. What a shame! Somehow, we have missed that value of neatness, orderliness and attractiveness.

At home also, we want to keep only the drawing room clean. Swāmi Chinmayānanda used to inspect the rooms of Brahmachāris regularly in his Āshram. Without any advance notice, he used to suddenly inspect the rooms of the students who come for **Gurukula Vāsa**, to find out whether everything is kept clean, including the bathroom.

Invariably, bathroom will have broken buckets and mugs. Therefore, if we are real Hindus, our homes and our entire country must be fragrant, but we seem to be far away. The result is that Lakshmi Devi will not come here. We are very religious people. If we even look at our temples, many people will visit them and they throw the containers in which Naivēdyam is served all over the place.

Look at the walls and pillars of the temples! It is a very important **Sadāchāra**. Somehow, we have forgotten the Sampradāya. We know this, but somehow we don't follow. So, the third Sadāchāra is aesthetic excellence. We should follow this which is the invocation of Lakshmi Devi. These are three disciplines or Sadāchāra associated with individual.

It is a personal habit - Discipline, Hard work and Excellence (DHE). Then, I will talk about three healthy habits from the standpoint of a group. We are not only individuals, but we are also part of different

groups. Family itself is a small group. Various companies in which we work are also groups. Whole society is a group.

With regard to our family and social life also, very important habits are prescribed. I will talk about three healthy habits there also. The first one is Honesty or integrity. We, as human beings have got a free will, because of which we can use the free will properly or we can also abuse the free will.

Because of the abuse of free will, we many violate several healthy values, out of selfishness. When we tend to abuse the values, we harm ourselves and others. There must be some method to avoid this problem of abusing our free will, out of selfishness or narrow mindedness. This cannot be done by somebody else supervising us, because that some other supervisor also may violate the value.

Therefore, you require another supervisor to supervise the supervisor. For him, you require another supervisor. The problem is when all the human beings abuse their free will, how is it to be handled. It is like we have a country in which police is corrupt and not reliable, ministers are not reliable and even courts are not reliable.

**How to handle the corruption caused by the abuse of free will?** Bhagawan has created an in-built solution for that. That is in the form of Conscience. Bhagawan has given all of us a [Manassākshi](#) or conscience. Conscience, as the inner voice will report to us every time we violate a value because conscience works according to the Universal principle.

The Universal principle is - what I don't want others to do to me, I should not do to the others. It is a very simple principle. Our conscience knows this. Therefore, whenever we violate this principle, conscience pricks us. It is called guilt.

Bhagawan has given such a conscience and that conscience, the inner voice, will prick us in the form of guilt. Whenever we feel guilty, we are

given a message. **What is the message?** We are violating a value because of selfishness. The moment that guilt pricks me, I have to restrain myself and correct my behavior.

This is Internal Self Control, by being answerable to our own conscience. Therefore, our scriptures say always listen to your inner voice. In most of the cases, our inner voice will prick us whenever we violate a value. At that moment, restrain yourself and do not go according to your natural tendency, which is selfishness, but go according to the scriptural values.

Therefore, the fourth **Sadāchāra** is being honest to ourselves, being answerable to our own inner conscience, being accountable to our own inner conscience. Internal control alone will last longer. By external control, you can never avoid corruption. All corruptions can be avoided by internal control, by being answerable to our own conscience.

When we ignore our conscience and guilt, after sometime, the inner voice will be suppressed. Once that inner voice is blunted, we are no more human beings. Once we have lost that humanness, thereafter the entire life is wasted - **buddhi nāshāt pranashyati**. Therefore, may you always keep the inner voice loud and clear.

May you restrain yourself whenever the inner voice says 'no'. This is honesty. This is the fourth Sadāchāra. Then, the fifth one is Obedience. Obedience is a very important Sadāchāra. In our scriptures, we talk about two types of obedience. The first obedience is the obedience with regard to the instructions given by the seniors who are supposed to be the models of Sadāchāra.

Since the seniors are the models of Sadāchāra, their instructions will be very useful to us. **yadātē tatra vartē ran, tadā tatra vartē thā**. But there is an important note. This will work only when the seniors are the models of Sadāchāra and they command obedience. When the seniors are not

the models of Sadāchāra, and they began to demand obedience, it will not work. There will be problem.

Shāstra says seniors must follow Sadāchāra and juniors must follow the seniors and their instructions. Then, we will have a wonderful society. The current generation becomes the model and the next generation will have ideal guide. [Manu Smruti](#) says -

*abhivādana shīlasya nityam vruddhōpa sēvinaha  
chatvāri tasya vardhantē āyur vidyā yashō balam*

A society in which seniors are models of Sadāchāra and juniors will obey the seniors. Seniors may be in form of parents or in the form of Guru or in the form of Raja. [yathā rāja tathā praja](#). Now, even the Chief Justice of India is in trouble. How our society is becoming! Therefore, seniors should command obedience and juniors should obey.

This is one type of obedience. The second obedience is obedience of all rules and regulations, which are important in any form of group existence. Any group can survive only when there are rules and regulations. Family should have its own. If there is a colony in which they are some flats, there will be some rules and regulations.

If there is a corporation, there are rules. If there is a society, there are rule. Rules and regulations are important for the harmony of any group. The rules are called [Dharma](#). Whether they are religious rules or secular rules of the society, whatever instructions are given, our Shāstra says always follow the rules. At the end of this program, if I give you some instructions, the group should follow.

If everybody wants to jump up and to come to the Lord, there is crowding. Nothing will work. We may be great devotees, but that is not enough. Being a Hindu of Sadāchāra means always be disciplined. Therefore, always follow rules and regulations, under all conditions, whether they are secular or sacred. If there is a simple form to fill up, fill it up properly.

This is obedience Sadāchāra, which is our Shāstric instruction. This is the fifth one. Then, the sixth one is Consideration for others. Always remember that we are never alone in the family or in the society. Therefore, before doing anything, keep in mind whether others will be benefited or not, whether others will be affected or not. Keep in the mind the other people's existence.

Bhartruhari talks about different types of people. **Uttama Purusha** is one who sacrifices his Self Interest and considers other's wellbeing. **Madhyama Purusha** is one who takes care of his Self Interest and also other's wellbeing parallelly. **Adhama Purusha** is one who takes care of only his Self Interest at the cost of the wellbeing of others.

Always expand your mind to accommodate your neighbors. **sarva bhūta hitērathāha** is the idiom Krishna uses. Even if you don't sacrifice your own wellbeing, while you take care of your own, take care of the others also. When you park the car, see whether you are doing it properly. See whether some other car or some other's house is obstructed.

I should always be aware of the cosmic infrastructure. This is called consideration, **Hitatvam**. This is the sixth value. This is the third group value. So far, we have seen Discipline, Hard Work, Aesthetic Excellence, Honesty, Obedience, and Consideration of others. Now, I will briefly mention the last one which is very important. It is Sincerity.

Sincerity with regard to the implementation of the previous six rules because it is not that easy to do that. **Otherwise, what will happen?** At the end of the talk, you will just admire Swāmiji saying that it was a wonderful talk. Thereafter, sympathize with Swāmiji saying that he told all those idealistic things. Who can follow all these six things! It is never possible in India or in Kali Yuga.

You just dismiss the whole talk as an idealistic talk or utopia. We will not progress at all, if this is the case. There should be a sincere attempt to follow all these things. Laziness is a very big obstacle. We should



follow this, not only for our own wellbeing, but for the wellbeing of the society. Otherwise, as a society, we will be a dirty and messy society.

Whole India and Indians will be known only for dirtiness and messiness. Not only that, but people will criticize India and they will say - this is what Indians learn from Hindu religion. They not only will criticize Indians, but they will say that Hinduism is teaching Indians such a way of life. Therefore, the religion itself is not a worthy religion.

Therefore, when we don't follow these disciplines, we are letting down our Nation and our religion. Our next generation will never be proud of India. Especially, the next generation abroad, will never be proud of India or proud of Hinduism. If they should be proud of India and Hinduism, our life should show.

All these should start at the end of this talk itself. The last one is Sincerity, by which I mean avoid giving excuses. Try to implement as much as possible. This is the **Sadāchāra** prescribed not by me, but by our scriptures. These seven are valid in all stages. On this auspicious Shivaratri day, let us seek the grace of Lord Shiva, so that we will follow these seven Sadāchārās as much as possible, from tonight itself.

***Pūrnamadah Pūrnamidam Pūrnāth Pūrnamudachyatē.  
Pūrnasya Pūrnamādāya Pūrnāmēvāvasishyatē..***

*Om shānti shānti shāntihi*



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