

HOW TO EXCEL IN EVERY FIELD

New Year 2004 Lecture by Swami Paramarthananda

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How to Excel in Every Field

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

All the human beings have got three different and distinct personalities. One is the personality called the ‘Experiencer of the world’. Right from birth, we start experiencing a world around us through our sense organs and mind. This experiencer is called a *Bhōkta*. This experiencer experiences varieties of *Bhōgas*, pleasurable and painful experiences throughout the life.

In the scriptures this experiencer is called a Bhōkta, ‘I’ or the Bhōkta, human being. This alone comes in the beginning of life right from the moment of birth. There is a second personality in every human being and that is the *Karta*, a doer of action. Initially as a baby, one does not do deliberate action.

But as the human grows further and as the organs of actions called the *Karmēndriyas* are well developed, the human being is able to plan and do deliberate action. This doer or performer is called a Karta. Thus, a Bhōkta ‘I’ is there in me and Karta ‘I’ is there in me. I am a composite personality.

Not only there is a Bhōkta and a Karta experiencer and the doer but there is a third personality also in every human being and that is the ‘Knower’. Knower is one who is capable of learning or knowing from the world. Every human being is provided with a set of instruments of knowledge by which he can learn things.

The scriptures call this learner or knower *Gnyāta* or *Pramāta*. I will use the word Gnyāta. This is the third personality in us. So the three personalities are Experiencer, Doer and Knower or Experiencer,

Performer and the Learner. All these three personalities are there in every human being. And each personality has got a very vast field to work.

In fact, if you want to be a Knower and learn, there are infinite things to learn. If you want to be a Performer and do things, there are infinite things that you can do. And if you want to be an Experiencer and have Bhōga, there are infinite things for experience. Gnyānam is infinite for the Gnyāta, Karma is infinite for the Karta, and Bhōgas are infinite for the Bhōkta.

The tragedy is that we have got only limited life duration. Naturally, we cannot have all the three do everything because time wise, there is a constraint. *Therefore, the question comes how to prioritize these three personalities? Which one should be given prominence and which one should be subservient?*

Which one should be Angī and which one should be Anga? Who must be the master and who must be the servant? We have to choose among the three. *What are the three?* They are *Bhōkta*, *Karta* and *Gnyāta* - Experiencer, Doer and the Knower. *Shāstra* asks us which one you consider more important, more prominent.

Are you Kartru Pradhāna, Bhōktru Pradhāna or Gnyātru Pradhāna? Or are you Karma Pradhāna, Bhōga Pradhāna or Gnyāna Pradhāna? Which one is dominant, should be dominant in your life? If we go by our nature or instinct, we will choose only one as the dominant one. *Can you guess which one will be the Pradhāna Purushaha if you choose instinctively?*

If you watch majority of human beings, you can easily see that our natural tendency is to keep the Bhōkta at the top. The Bhōkta is kept at the top. The experiencer is considered as the most important person. Naturally, most of the people are Bhōga Pradhāna Purushaha. They are

generally pre-occupied by the type of Bhōga they had, they have or they plan to have.

Majority of humanity is Bhōktru Pradhāna Purusha, or Bhōga Pradhāna Purusha. Bhōga means experiences. Once you keep the Bhōkta at the top as the master, naturally the Gnyāta (the learner) and Karta (the worker) become servant of the Bhōkta. So the whole life has got such an arrangement, such a design that Gnyāta and Karta are serving the Bhōkta.

If you look at our education, 20 years a child goes to college or school. When the education is taken, the courses are taken. *What is the norm that is kept in mind?* We would like to choose such courses wherein, I can get better employment. *What is the consideration or the norm with regard to the quality of employment?* Any work in any part of the world, wherein I can draw the maximum salary.

What is the purpose of drawing the maximum salary? The purpose is that as a Bhōkta, I can order the best infrastructure. *How is the infrastructure determined?* The quality of the infrastructure is determined based on its capacity to give me a comfortable, happy life with all the Bhōgas possible.

And I am considered a successful person if I become the best Bhōkta with the best Bhōgas in my commandment - in terms of the type of the dress I wear, in terms of the ornaments I have, in terms of the brand of the car that I use, in terms of the number of bed rooms that are there in the house (even though only two people are there) and in the terms of the garden or swimming pool or theatre etc.

If you have got an ideal infrastructure to cater to the Bhōkta, you are considered a most successful human being. Thus, constantly universe is giving that message that Successful human being is successful Bhōkta. And even all the New Year advertisements give us the message that the

successful human being is one who can attend the costly party (999 rupees per night).

I cannot attend because in most of the places, single ones are not allowed. They are called stags. Stag is the single one who cannot be the best Bhōkta. So this is the society and this will be the conclusion that we will arrive at, if we go by our nature and instinct and our scriptures come and say that this is called Materialism.

Definition of materialism is any system in which Bhōkta is worshipped as the most important one in life. All the Gnyānam that I gain, all the Karmas that I do, there are all at the service of the Bhōkta. Even if you study the scientific researches that are going on, most of the researches are only directed towards one goal - *how can you make a human being a better Bhōkta?*

Our Shāstra calls it Materialism. According to Shāstra, Bhōkta can never be the top personality of human being. Bhōkta never should be the Angī, Bhōkta should never be the Pradhāna aspect of our personality. On the other hand, a human being is a human being only when he is either Kartru Pradhāna or Gnyātru Pradhāna.

Only when he is *Karma Pradhāna* or *Gnyāna Pradhāna*, only then, he can claim himself to be even a human being. *Why do the scriptures say so? What is the logic behind it?* Scriptures will never say anything without appropriate reason. *You know what the reason is?*

The scriptures point out - watch all the animals and try to find out how many personalities are there in the animals. We have got three personalities or constituents. *What are they?* - Knower (Gnyāta), Doer (Karta), Enjoyer (Bhōkta). *What about a dog which is walking on the road? How many are there for it?*

If you analyze the animals, you find that animals can never become learners in life. They never attend LKG, Pre-LKG, UKG, Higher Primary, and Secondary. Dogs or any animal for that matter, are not learners. Therefore, Gnyāta is absent in the animals. *What about Karta?* Karta means deliberate Actor, Doer or Performer.

Even Karta is not there in the animals because animals can never plan and do any deliberate action. All the actions of the animals are governed by instinct. They are all programmed to do certain things. And they don't have any choice also to become a deliberate doer. Therefore, Gnyāta is absent, Karta is absent.

In short, free will is absent in them which means animals have got only one personality. They are born only for one purpose. *What is that?* What is left out is Bhōkta. Every animal has got only one personality and that is Bhōkta personality. Life long they have got only one job. *What is that?* Bhōga, Bhōga, Bhōga, experience.

We the human beings, share one personality along with all other animals. *What is that?* That is Bhōkta. That means Bhōkta is the animal in me. It is a very harsh word to use. The fact is that the Bhōkta is the animal in me because it is that part of my personality which is identical with animal.

If I am a human being that personality which makes me unique, which makes me a human being is not the Bhōkta but it is only the Gnyāta - Karta personality. Therefore, if I am going keep Bhōkta as the prominent personality, my life is an animalistic life.

If *I have become the most successful Bhōkta, what does it mean?* I get an award and reward. *What for?* I am the most successful animal. For that, we don't require a human Janma. We have been successful animals before and may be later also. Because the way we lead the life, in future also.

Therefore, a Bhōkta, invoker continues to be an animal, and he will continue to be an animal. Becoming a successful animal is not great achievement. We have certain awards - I read a news item. Just as we have got awards for Best Movie, Oscar Award etc. there are awards for the worst movie also.

I don't know you have noted. They don't put this news on top of the paper but in the bottom - the worst movie, the worst actor, the worst writer etc. *Imagine if a person has been chosen for that award, how should he tell all other people? Should he tell it happily or miserably?*

Similarly, if I have become a successful Bhōkta who can command all the possible advanced Bhōgas in life, I get the award from Bhagawān that you are the most successful animal. It is like getting the award for the worst writer. *Therefore, do you want to be a human being?*

Shāstra says first make the Bhōkta in you less dominant. Let not the Bhōkta you, the experiencer you become dominant in life. Which means don't brood over past experiences, don't brood over future experiences and invoke the Bhōkta in you and complain to all people that, I had such and such miserable experiences, and I want to get such and such wonderful experiences.

Shāstra says down play the Bhōkta in you. *Then what should you do?* Bring to the fore the Karta and Gnyāta in you and learn to become a successful Karta, performer, doer and also a successful Gnyāta, learner in life. What you do, and what you know, makes you a successful and superior human being. Therefore, focus on Karta and Gnyāta.

Once you have decided to become a successful Karta and Gnyāta, to excel yourself as a Karta and Gnyāta (the performer and learner), Shāstra is willing to help you in that pursuit. Shāstra doesn't want us help in becoming best animal. In fact, Lord Krishna strongly criticizes those people in the Bhagavadgita.

*yām imām pushpitām vācham pravadanti avipaschitaha
veda vāda ratāh pārtha nānyad astīti vādinaha*

*kāmātmānaswarga parā janma karma phalapradām
kriyā vishesha bahulām bhōgaisvarya gatim prati*

*bhōgaisvarya prasaktānām tayāparta chētasām
vyavasāyātmikā budhīh samādhau na vidhīyate*

Krishna strongly criticizes the Bhōkta people as good as non-human beings. So the first decision to become a successful human being is - I am going to down play the past Bhōkta, the present Bhōkta and future Bhōkta. As soon as the New Year comes, people run to astrologer. *What does that mean?* It means that I want to dwell upon the future Bhōkta.

It was not there in our tradition at all. All the time looking at the hand, looking at the Guruvu Jōsyam, or looking at the Nādi or looking at the astrology and thinking about what kind of Bhōgas I am going to get. They said forget it; Even if you know, you don't have total control over the Bhōkta, you or Bhōkta I.

Why do you want to dwell upon a Bhōkta over which you don't have much control? Therefore, first lesson is down play the Bhōkta. Don't bother too much about Bhōkta. Don't think too much about Bhōkta. And don't talk to people also too much about the Bhōkta, you. Then the next question is how to excel myself as a Karta.

So, Karta excellence and Gnyāta excellence; Anyway, I will try to do Karta excellence and if time permits, will do the Gnyāta excellence. We will at-least do the Karta excellence. In *Taitrīya Upanishad*, the mantras give us certain tips to excel as a Karta.

Five principles are given or five factors are mentioned for excellence in the field of Kartrtvam. There in the Taitrīya Upanishad, the Karta human being is described as *Vignyanamaya Ātma - karmāni tanu tēpicha. vignyanamaya ātma ēva kartru rūpena yagnyam tanute; karmāni tanute.*

Yagnyam means sacred action; Karmāni means *Loukika Karmāni*, the secular activities. That is called Vignyanamaya Ātma. Concentrate on how the Vignyanamaya Ātma can excel. Forget the Bhōkta. *What are the five limbs or factors or components to be taken care of?*

tasya shraddhaiva siraha ritam dakshina pakshaha, satyam uttarah pakshaha, yōga ātma, mahah puchcham pratishta, tada pyesha shlōkō bhavati.

Five principles for excellence as Karta - If you are conducting management course, you can include that. The first one the scriptures point out is - *Shraddha eva siraha*. Shraddha means reverential love for the action that a Karta undertakes. So the first principle for excellence as a Karta is, never dislike any action that you are doing.

Never do any actions reluctantly, never do any actions half heartedly - any actions you choose to do or you have to do, or you are forced to do; Some actions I choose, some actions fall on my head. Just as for Arjuna, the action of Mahabharata war fell on his head. Several actions fall on your head as a worker in a company, as a head of the family or as a part of an organization.

Any Karma you have to do, whether it is chosen or forced on you by circumstances or people, never do the action reluctantly. Any action you do let there be love. If there is no positive like, at-least first avoid dislike – avoid Complaining, murmuring, grumbling, sulking, criticizing complaining about my Prārabdha, my Shani Dasa etc.

First, stop complaining about the action that you are doing and later, the next stage is learn to love any action you have to do. According to the scriptures, we can learn to love any action we do. It is only a question of developing an appropriate attitude because any action that you dislike, there are many people who are voluntarily choosing that.

Any action you dislike, there are people who voluntarily choose that. If you dislike climbing the mountain (Tirupati), there are Mountaineers who choose that. If you dislike serving a sick person, there are people who voluntarily take to nursing job. So, if I develop appropriate attitude, any Karma can be liked.

If I learn to like any Karma that I do, that Karma itself will give me Ānanda. I need not wait for the Karma Phalam to generate Ānanda. Karma Phalam may be coming or may not be coming or may come in the next Janma (who knows!). Therefore, learn to derive Ānanda from Karma. Replace Bhōgānanda by Karma Ānanda.

The greatest advantage in Karma Ānanda is that it is instantaneous. As even I do, I get pleasure in doing that. And this Ānanda that I derive by loving the action that I do is free from all obstacles also. Even Prārabdha cannot obstruct the Ānanda that I derive through Karma.

It is because, Prārabdha is Karma Phalam and it can affect a Bhōkta by obstructing him from enjoying his pleasure. Prārabdha can create problem for a Bhōkta. Karta will never be affected by Prārabdha. Unobstructed by Prārabdha, I can derive Karma Ānanda i.e. excellence. Therefore, *Shraddha eva siraha*;

The word Shraddha (reverential love) is used to indicate that you will develop the reverential love if you dedicate that action to the Lord also.

*yat karōshi yat asnāsi yat juhōshi dadāsi yat
yat tapasyasi kaunteya tat kurushwa madarpanam*

When the Karma is dedicated to someone you love and respect (may be the very nation, may be the parents) - The other day one man was telling, Swamiji, my mother is old and I have to do most of the work for her because she is partially invalid. Initially I found difficult to take care of her and later I started enjoying.

I have to take care because my brothers are not willing. Therefore, now I enjoy bathing her. I look upon it as Abhishekam and I chant Rudram while I bathe my mother. People are praising me that you are serving your mother very well. I don't feel like receiving any praise because I enjoy what I am doing.

So that means, if I do anything with love and dedicate it to someone that I revere (may be parents or may be the nation or the lord himself), I can love and I can derive Ānanda. *What is the first principle of excellence in Karma? Love what you do and even if you don't love, at-least don't dislike what you do and what you have to do.*

Then the second principle of excellence in Karma is *ritam dakshinah pakshaha* - whatever you have to do, learn about it thoroughly. Learn what to do, when to do, how to do, how much to do, where to do. So learn all about the Karma and its consequences. Never be ignorant of what you have to do.

Therefore, *ritam* means proper knowledge regarding the actions that you have to do. Sankarāchārya writes in his commentary - *yathā shāstram yathā kartavyam gnyānam*. I do *Prātasmarana Stōtram* in the evening, *Suprabhātam* in the evening. I don't even have the minimum knowledge that Prabhātam means morning.

Any religious activity I do, I should know what it is and I should know what its role is, and how long it should be done, is there something else that I have to graduate to later. Anything I practice, I should have the

knowledge. That is why scriptural study becomes very important for every religious person.

Your religious activities will never be excellent and proper unless you know what you are doing. Therefore, study well about what you are doing. Not only regarding sacred religious activities but also about worldly activities. Whatever I do, I should have a clear knowledge. Therefore, study well and be informed.

If I am not informed, not only the Karma will be poor in quality and as a Karta also, I will be diffident and there will be tension. Just as, if I don't prepare for the exam I will be diffident and go through a lot of tension. So, anyone who is not informed and prepared cannot be a good Karta and cannot do a good Karma. Therefore, thoroughly know what you have to do.

And if you are a teacher, thoroughly know what you have to teach. Otherwise, through Parampara, ignorance and wrong thing will be coming. Not only you have to do, but also every role that I play in life is also a Karma. If a person is going to get married, he is going to play the role of a husband or wife. He must thoroughly know what the job of a husband is.

Otherwise, he will become miserable and he will make the wife more miserable. Or she will make the husband more miserable. And if a person is going to get the children, let that parent thoroughly know what is proper parenting. Otherwise, the children will be terrible children. And we will be letting loose such children into the society.

There is no greater disservice to society than creating brats and letting loose. I should know this. When I am playing different roles simultaneously in the family, every interaction is affecting three generations. Parents are there (if parents are there) and the contemporary wife or spouse is there, and children are there.

Every action I do, every word I utter, is giving different messages to the different generations. When I treat the spouse to a particular manner, indirectly I am giving message to the children also. If a husband ill-treats the wife, the children are definitely going to ill-treat their spouses. A father or husband must be every moment aware of that fact.

That is called *ritam* - knowledge regarding every role that I play. It is called *ritam* - *yathā shāstram gnyānam*, thorough knowledge. This is the second factor. *What is the first factor? Love what you do. What is the second factor? Thoroughly know what you do, what you have to do.*

There is no limit to knowing because if we have to a job repeatedly, the learning process continues because you learn from the mistakes. If you commit mistakes in bringing up the first child, for the second child you don't commit the same mistake. New mistakes you will be commit but you won't commit the same mistake.

When I choose to learn from Karma, and learn about Karma, the greatest advantage is that I avoid boredom. Because I often have to repeat a task again and again, unless I have open learning mind, I will have to face boredom. The best method to avoid boredom is to use every performance for your Research & Development for the next performance. This is the second principle.

The third principle is *Satyamuttarah pakshaha*. Satyam is - whatever you have learnt about Karma is not for learning alone but you have to put into practice - *yatha gnyanam anushtānam*. So I have to do, I have to implement whatever I know. The knower and doer should not be split. I should not have a hypocritical personality. I know how to do but I won't do it.

In-fact, if you study major disasters, they will have an enquiry commission. For anything, they form an enquiry commission. Most of you enquiries commissions they discover that the officers in-charge,

know what they should do, but because of sheer laziness, they don't do. They know but they don't do and often, there are serious disasters and negative consequences. Therefore, the Shāstra says you implement what you know.

Therefore, Satyam means that the knower - doer split should not be there. When there is no such split first of all, I avoid all the negative consequences. And secondly, there is a total satisfaction also because I have done a thing well. I derive the satisfaction based Ānanda. *What is the third factor? Satyam - Love, Learn, Implement.*

Then the fourth factor is *Yōga Ātma*. Yōgaha means focus. Convert every action into a meditation. A Karta, if he is doing the Karma with focus, that very Karma becomes meditation. *sa sanyāsi cha yōgi cha na niragnir na chākriyaha*. Krishna praises a Gruhastha who performs his duties with focus.

He might not get time for elaborate meditation, but convert every action into meditation by totally applying yourself, dying to everything else, dying to the past and dying to the future also. Cent percent application is focus or *Chitta Samādhānam*.

The greatest advantage of focus is that every action becomes deliberate. There is no mechanical action. When I do mechanical actions, I don't know what I have done, and what I have not done. I buy the same books again and again because I don't know what books I have bought. After coming to the class, I don't know whether I locked the house properly or not.

Or whether I switched off something properly or not because of mechanical actions and everything I have to search also. It is all because I don't know what I do or where I keep what. Thus, it saves lot of time, lot of energy, lot of strain, lot of waste.

Therefore, convert every Karma into the *Dhyānam*. Greatest the advantage is that it will be useful for Vedanta later. When you come to Vedantic class, Shravanam itself will become meditation because you are used to that. *Otherwise, what will happen?*

At home, I think of office and at office I think of home and at the Vedanta class, I do anything other than listening. Convert *Shravanam* into *Nidhidhyāsanam* - *yōgaha ātma*; ātma means that is the central thing.

Finally, *mahahpuccham pratishta*. Mahaha means *Hiranyagarbhaha*, the total Karta. Later, the Upanishad says, the individual Karta should learn to identify with the total Karta which means, I have to learn to expand. Which means when I do any Karma, let it benefit as many number as possible.

Expand your outlook; don't merely ask the question what I will get. Ask the question, how many people will benefit out of the action. Maximum the number of benefactors, the more I am closer to Hiranyagarbha. Therefore expand your outlook whatever Karma you do. This is otherwise called *Parōpakāra*. This is the fifth and final principle.

What are the five principles? They are *Shraddha*, *Ritam*, *Satyam*, *Yogaha* and *Mahaha*. In English - *Love*, *Learn*, *Implement*, *Focus* and *Expand* or have an expanded outlook. If you follow the five principles, you will excel in anything that you do. That excellence itself will give joy that you need not look for a Bhōkta to enjoy.

You don't require a Bhōkta at all because as a Karta you get Ānanda. If you learn how to excel as a Karta, later certainly, you will excel as a Gnyāta also (knower also) which will help you in gaining spiritual knowledge.

I am not going enter into spiritual knowledge path. Let us first learn to excel as a *Karta* human being, rather than *Bhōkta* animal. I wish that this New Year will be a life of Karta excellence rather than Bhōkta concentration. With this I conclude my talk and I wish all of you a happy 2004.

*Poornamadah Poornamidam Poornaath Poornam Udachyathe
Poornasya Poornamaadaaya Poornameva Vasishyathe*

Om shanti shanti shantihi



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