

HOW TO HANDLE FEAR

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

There is a Subhāshita Slōka in Sanskrit which talks about the avoidance of six weaknesses, if a person has to attain success in any field of his or her activity. It is said that these six weaknesses should be avoided, whether it is material field or spiritual field. The Sanskrit verse runs as follows -

**shad dōshāha purushēna iha hātavyā bhūtim icchatā
nidrā tandrā bhayam krōdhaha ālasyam dīrgha sūtratā**

So, **iha purushēna** - here in this life by a human being, **shat dōshāha hātavyā** - six weaknesses should be given up. **bhūtim icchatā** - if the person is interested in progress in life. **bhūtihi** means progress or prosperity or success. **icchatā** means a person who is desirous of.

In the second of the verse, the six Dōshās are enumerated which are to be avoided by a person. The first one is **Nidrā**. The second one is **Tandrā**, third one is **Bhayam**, fourth one is **Krōdhaha**, fifth one is **Ālasyam** and the sixth one is **Dīrgha Sūtratā**. Of these six Dōshās, the first two and the last two go together as a package.

Nidrā means sleep. **Tandrā** means mental sluggishness. The fifth one is **Ālasyam** which means physical laziness or physical idleness. And the sixth one is **Dīrgha Sūtratā** which means procrastination. So sleep, mental sluggishness, physical idleness and procrastination go as a package.

All these four should be avoided if a person has to succeed in the chosen field. Of these four, we can understand **Nidrā** or sleep. The Shastrā does not say that we should not sleep at all. Lack of sleep also causes varieties of problems. The Shastrā says that sleeping too much and sleeping at wrong time is an obstacle to the growth of an individual.

We can understand what sleeping too much is. **What do you mean by sleeping at wrong time?** For that also, Shastrā gives through another Subhāshitam proverb.

**kuchēlinam dantamalōpa dhārinam
mahāshanam nishthura vākya bhāshinam
sūryodayē cha astamayēcha shāyinam
jahāti lakshmīrapi chakra dhārinam**

Lakshmi Devi will renounce a person who follows these things - **kuchēlinam** - the one who wears unclean clothes. **dantamalōpa dhārinam** - the one who does not wash his mouth early in the morning, in the night and every time after consuming any food. **mahāshanam** - the one who eats too much.

nishthura vākya bhāshinam - the one who uses rude words and **sūrya udayē cha astamayēcha shāyinam** - the one who sleeps at the time of sunrise and at the time of sunset. The one who does all these things, **jahāti lakshmi** - Lakshmi Devi will renounce that house.

And it says, **chakra dhārinam api** - even if Sākshāt Vishnu Bhagawān does all these things, Lakshmi Devi will seek separation from him. Therefore, even Vishnu avoids these things. Therefore, Nidrā is too much of sleep and sleeping at wrong time. Tandrā is mental sluggishness and Ālasyam means physical laziness.

**ālasyam hi manushyānām sharīrasthō mahān ripuhu
nāsti udyama samō bandhuhu krutvāyam na avasīdati**

The greatest enemy of a human being is physical idleness, lack of exercise. Better you join some fitness program, take to some Yoga, Prānāyāmā, some exercise etc. All these are important to remove the **Tamō Guna** at the physical level.

Physical idleness and mental sluggishness have got a connection and Shastrā talks about maintaining the holistic health. **Dīrgha Sūtratā** means procrastination which is the result of these three. The first three

will lead to the fourth one. Therefore, maintenance of holistic health is extremely important for success in life.

I don't want to talk regarding holistic health because in one of the New Year programs, I have given a talk on it. I would request you to recollect the exercises given there. The next Dōsha that is mentioned in this Slōka is **Krōdhaha** or anger. Regarding anger also, I don't have to talk this New Year.

You will get angry because I talked about the problem of anger last year. I hope you remember that anger is the destroyer of three important virtues of a human being. Therefore, one should avoid getting angry.

What are those three virtues destroyed by anger?

1. **Samatvam** - equanimity is destroyed.
2. **Sūkshmatvam** - sensitivity to the feelings of others. Mental sensitivity is destroyed by anger.
3. **Sāvadhānatvam** - the self control required to avoid impulsive action is destroyed by anger.

All these three are virtues required for success in life and this Slōka says, avoid anger. I have given the details in the last New Year talk. You can revise that. I would like to add only one clarification here. Some people asked a question after last year's anger talk. They are - in certain places in scriptures, anger is glorified.

Not only that, but in **Chamaka Mantra** after **Rudram** is chanted, the devotee asks for several blessings from the Lord. And one of the blessings he asked for is - O Lord, give me anger! Somebody, very intelligently asked the following question.

If anger is glorified in some places and anger is a blessing that we ask for, how can you say that anger is an obstacle and you have to avoid that? It is a very intelligent and interesting question. We should remember that scriptures will never contradict.

If scriptures uniformly condemn anger as cause of downfall, the very same scriptures can never glorify anger. Wherever anger is glorified and wherever anger is asked for, the meaning of the word anger must be properly interpreted and defined.

Wherever anger is glorified and asked for, anger does not mean this destructive emotion which will destroy **Samatvam**, **Sūkshmatvam** and **Sāvadhānatvam**. The destructive emotion can never be glorified by the Shāstrās and we cannot ask for that blessing.

In all such contexts, anger must be translated as the capacity to communicate firmly and effectively whenever such a situation arises. Anger as a blessing means the capacity to communicate firmly and effectively whenever such a situation arises and a capacity which I utilize making sure that I don't lose my Samatvam, Sūkshmatvam and Sāvadhānatvam.

When I strongly, firmly and effectively communicate, I make sure that I do it maintaining my Samatvam, Sūkshmatvam and Sāvadhānatvam. Anger as a blessing is nothing, but a communication tool, effective communication tool whenever we have to give a strong message to someone one or even to some country.

India sends a strong message to Pakistan. Strong messages will have to be given. That alone is said as a blessing, but that anger should not be mistaken as a destructive emotion which removes the virtues of **Samatvam** (equanimity), **Sūkshmatvam** (sensitivity) and **Sāvadhānatvam** (self control or restraint).

Thus, of these six Dōshās, four of them will have to be taken care of by following holistic health. I have talked about that. **Krōdhaha** is anger which has to be taken care of based on my last year's anger talk. There is only one (6th one) which I have not dealt with. That 6th one is **Bhayam**.

Bhayam is a powerful emotion which can become a very big obstacle in pursuing any goal and in attaining success. Bhartruhari tells in [Nīti Shatakam](#) -

prārabhyate nakhalu vighna bhayēna nīchaih
prārabhya vighna vihatā vīramanti madhyāha
vighnaih punah punarapi prati hanyamānāh
prarabdha uttama gunā na parityajanti

Because of Bhayam, fear of obstacle and failure, many people don't undertake any venture itself. Even if they undertake, they withdraw in the middle. They plan to go to Badrinath or Kedarnath. Somebody casually asks the question - **are you going to Badrinath?** This person gets frightened by that very question and withdraws.

When a person cannot start anything, where is the question of accomplishing anything materially or spiritually? That person loudly proclaims that I have never failed in life. When asked what he did, he says - nothing. **Then, what is a great thing about that?** Fear is a serious problem which can become an obstacle.

[Bhayam](#) and [Bhaya Nivrutti](#) are discussed in our Shāstrās in several places. Fearlessness as a means, is talked about as [Daivī Sampath](#) in the 16th chapter of the Gītā. Fearlessness, [Āpēkshika Bhaya Nivruttihi](#), relative freedom from fear is an important virtue (Daivī Sampath) and Bhayam is [Āsurī Sampath](#). [chintāmaparimēyān cha pralayāntā upāshritā](#).

Shastrā emphasizes fearlessness not only as a Sādhana and ultimately, even Mōksha is defined as absolute fearlessness. [Ātyantika Bhaya Nivruttihi](#) is talked about as the very definition of Mōksha - [abhayam pratishthām vindatē, athasō bhayamgatō bhavati](#).

Thus, fearlessness as a means and as an end, is often discussed by psychologists also when they study the human psychology. And it is talked about in Shastrā also. Therefore, I thought I will share some thoughts regarding fearlessness as discussed in the Shastrā.

That seems to be relevant now because the global meltdown has caused a lot of fear in many people. Already, there are several problems - people losing jobs. They say that the real impact is going to come hereafter only, frightening us more. Of course, there is a terrorist strike that the media is talking about. There seems to be an atmosphere of fear.

Therefore, what do scriptures talk about fear? One thing that we notice is that, by our sheer observation, we find that fear is common to all human beings, young and old. In-fact, it even extends to animals and plants. Therefore, we see that fear is an instinctive and a natural emotion which is provided by God in all living organisms.

Whatever is instinctive and natural, we cannot totally condemn or criticize. Since it is instinctive, since it is natural, and since it is provided by Bhagawān himself, it must have some purpose and function. Therefore, we should ask the question - **what is the function of the instinctive fear that is found in all living organisms, including animals and plants?**

The psychologists say and it is true also that fear is a part of defense mechanism. Fear is required as a warning signal to alert the living organisms whenever there is a threat from outside. Whether it is an actual threat or a perceiver's threat, the organism should have to be alerted.

It is a messenger, a warning signal so that we can take precautionary measures to save ourselves. It is just as physical pain is an instinctive thing so that we are warned of some health disorderliness in that part of the body. Pain is not a curse, but it is drawing attention to some problem so that we will give necessary treatment.

Just as physically we have pain, fear is also a psychological response and it is meant to alert so that we will take precautionary measures. It is a warning signal. Not only that, but when fear comes, certain biochemical changes take place physically and we have got enhanced

capacity so that we can have a fight or flight response. In psychology, they call it fight or flight. Flight means running away.

We will find that, in fear, we have got some extra strength. The one who cannot normally get up, we will see that he can perhaps, run faster than Carl Lewis. It is because some enzymes are secreted and we temporarily get activated. Even sensory powers are activated in animals and human beings.

Therefore, per say, if there is fear in our system, we need not feel bad about it. Existence of fear is a blessing. We need not feel guilty or we need not have regret if fear comes now and then. Then the next question is - **if fear is an instinctive and a natural mechanism, then why should the scriptures and even psychologists talk about fear as a problem to be avoided?**

In this Slōka itself, **Bhayam** is said as an obstacle. **What is the significance?** What the scriptures say is that fear as a messenger is a blessing and the fear has to come and alert us giving us the information regarding the threats that are there so that we can take appropriate steps or precautions. As a messenger, it comes and gives the message.

If it goes away after giving the message, that fear is good. Whereas, if the very same messenger fear decides to stay in us as a guest, and after being a guest for sometime it decides to become a resident refusing to vacate from the system. Fear as a guest and fear as a resident is a problem. Fear as a messenger is a blessing. Fear as a guest and fear as a resident is a problem.

When the courier person comes and rings the bell, we happily welcome. **And what do we expect from him?** He has to give me what he has to give and we don't expect him to say that he wants to stay with us. **Where will we go if every courier man comes and stays in our house?** Therefore, when we welcome the courier man, what we expect is that he should give the necessary signal or message and he has to go away.

Similarly, fear that is continuing is dangerous. A person will have to avoid that. This resident or guest fear is an obstacle for growth and therefore, Shastrā says that **Bhayam** is **Tāmasa Gunaha**. It is an obstacle. May you remove it. Now, the next question is - **how to eliminate the fear? What type of fear?** - Chronic fear which disturbs me all the time.

From the Shastrā, we can find four methods. They are not presented in one place, but they are strewn all over. The first method is **Yōgābhyāsaha**. **Yōgaha** is defined as **Chitta Vrutti Nirōdhaha** - the capacity to weed out unhealthy thought patterns. I weed out unhealthy thought patterns by training the mind.

Training the mind to remove the fear thought continuing in the mind is **Yōgābhyāsaha**. **What is the principle behind this?** The fear thought can arrive and it does arrive without our will and without our permission either because of instinct or because of **Vāsanās**. Therefore we can never avoid arrival of fear thought because of instincts or **Vāsanās**, because it is not based on my will and it doesn't with my permission.

It just arrives. And let it arrive, we are not responsible. But what Shastrā says is that after its arrival, continuation of the fear thought requires the support of my will. No thought pattern can continue in the mind unless my will is supporting. Going over and over - **what will happen to my son? Will he loose the job or what will happen if he loses job?**

Thus, I go on dwelling and imagining the condition and supporting that fear. That is the problem. Therefore, what Shastrā says is, don't encourage or support that fear pattern because after the message has been received, fear has no business to continue in mind. Fear is useless in solving the problem.

Fear is obstructive in solving the problem and fear is harmful for our physical and mental health. Therefore, I tell my free will that fear is useless, fear is obstructive, and fear is harmful. I have got the message and I am taking the precautionary measures, but I don't want the fear

thought to continue. Therefore, whenever it comes, I deflect the attention of my mind by giving the mind constructive and healthy occupation and activity.

Even as the fear arises, I should give an auto suggestion that as even it arises, my mind tells by Abhyāsa (practice) that fear is useless, fear is obstructive and fear harmful to my health. Therefore, I won't encourage it. I will use that time and energy to work for better future and avoid the threat.

This practice of deliberate avoidance of fear thought by non-cooperation movement of Gandhiji is called [Yōga Abhyāsaha](#) which is said in [Pantanjali Yōga Sūtraha - Abhyāsa Vairāgyābhyām sannirōdhaha](#) - Weeding out unhealthy thought pattern. This is method one. The second method is [Bhakti Abhyāsa](#). **What is this?** This method is based on a principle.

Whenever fear arises in the mind, the impact of fear is inversely proportional to the self confidence that we possess. If I don't have much self confidence or I lack self confidence, then the impact of fear is much more. Often, rational fear is converted into irrational fear and we will become highly creative in imagining negative things.

We will become highly creative in projecting all kinds of things. Thus, lesser the self confidence, greater the impact of fear and greater the impact of fear, wilder the imagination. Wilder the imagination, weaker the self confidence. Thus, we get into a vicious cycle - fear destroying the self confidence and that improving the fear.

Thus, very soon, fear gets converted into a panic attack and so many things happening in the stomach even though I am imagining about 2009 April 1st (I am using the word very deliberately). Therefore, lack of self confidence makes the impact of fear more. Therefore, the second method is weakening the impact of fear by improving self confidence that I do have the resources to confront when threats come in life.

I do have the inner resources and I am confident that when it comes, I will successfully face. I improve the self confidence thought by **Sankalpa** that I have enough resources. Not only can I build up repeated auto suggestion, but also by reading the biographies of people who have faced their situations with courage and who have conquered and became victorious.

Association with such people (**Satsanga**) will build up self confidence. The more self confidence I have, lesser the impact of fear. And one of the methods of building up self confidence is **Ēshwara Bhakti**. Remembering the basic teaching that fundamentally, we are all related to Bhagawān; **Ēshwara** is **Jagat Kāranam** and we are all products. **Jīvās** are **Kāryam**.

Whether we are related to other human beings or not we are all fundamentally related to **Ēshwara** just as every wave is related to the Ocean. In-fact, beneath the wave is the mighty ocean. Similarly, behind every one of us, there is **Ēshwara - ēshwara sarwa bhūtānām hruddēshē arjuna tishtati**. The ocean of **Ēshwara** is behind everyone.

Ēshwara is called Bhagawān, the one who has got six virtues in infinite measure. And one of the virtues of Bhagawān is courage. From Bhagawān, I can draw infinite courage and after drawing, I tell myself - now I have got self confidence. Let anything happen, I will be able to face it. In-fact, those issues will become insignificant in front of my strength. The best example is **Ānjanēya** in **Rāmāyana**.

**gōshpadī kruta vārāsim mashakī kruta rākshasam
rāmāyana mähāmālā ratnam vandē anilātmajam**

For **Ānjanēya**, ocean became a pool of water. Not that the size of the ocean changed. It is because of his inner confidence due to Rama Bhakti, the ocean became a pool for him and all the **Rākshasās** became mosquitoes. **And to destroy a mosquito, do you have to take a deep breath?** All these things are not required. You give **Mōksha** to several

mosquitoes while listening to the talk. Thus, let global meltdown and all those problems come.

We will all face them together and we will certainly be able to tide over, whether it is at the micro level or macro level. Thus, like Ānjanēya, the Rama Bhakta, I will draw strength from the Lord. This is called **Bhakti Abhyāsa**. **What is the principle?** - Greater the self confidence, lesser the impact of fear.

The third method is called **Vairāgya Abhyāsa** (more Shāstric). **Vairāgya Abhyāsa** is based on a very important teaching in our scriptures, a unique teaching of Vēdic religion. **What is that?** Vēda looks upon the entire universe as the body of the Lord. We have the **Dhyāna Slōka** -

bhūh pādaḥ yasya nābhir viyad asura nilah chandra sūryaou cha nētrē karnā vāsā shirō dyauhu mukha mapi dahnō yasya vāstēya mabdhihi ..

The whole cosmos including the **Pancha Bhūtās** is the body of the Lord, the universal person, the **Vishwa Rūpa Ēshwara**. **antastham yasya vishwam sura nara khagagō bhōgi gandharwa daityai..**All the living beings, all our bodies also are within the body of the Lord. Therefore, everything belongs to the Lord.

Therefore, the important message is that God alone is the owner of everything. God alone is the controller of everything. We, as individuals, do not own anything and cannot control anything. Whatever we claim to own is a temporary gift from the Lord. Bhagawān has given as he willed and Bhagawān can take away anything at anytime, without giving advance notice.

Name can be taken, fame can be taken, profits can be taken, our own body can be taken, health can be taken, hair can be taken and teeth can be taken. Bhagawān can give anything at will, according to the Law of Karma and Bhagawān can take away anything. I am never an owner of anything. I am only a user of things.

I am never a controller of anything, but I am only a contributor. Even my own physical body, how many years it is going to live I do not know. I do not know how it is going to live. How terrible or wonderful old age might be, I have no way of learning. Therefore, I should remember that nothing is mine.

Mamakāra is a spiritual offence. Mamakāra, claiming ownership and controllership is a spiritual crime, a delusion or **Mōha**. The moment Mamakāra comes, attachment is bound to come - my son, my daughter, my husband, my parents etc. Once Mamakāra comes, then attachment comes and once attachment comes, fear is inevitable.

Ignorance causes Mamakāra. Mamakāra means the feeling that I own things. Mamakāra causes attachment and attachment causes fear. Therefore, Shāstra says that fear is a punishment given by the Lord for misappropriating his property. Fear is whip lashings given by Bhagawān for trespassing into his property.

Every time you say my house, my business, my wife, my children, my grand children, that very thought is a spiritual crime or offence and we are misappropriating Bhagawān's property. We are trespassing into Bhagawān's property and Bhagawān has written a note - trespassers will be prosecuted.

What is the prosecution? Anxiety is one whip lash, fear is another whip lash, and tension is another whip lash. Therefore, the only real remedy is to remove the cause of fear, remove the ownership idea. Daily morning, you declare to the Lord - I don't own anything. O Lord, I have no family. The so called family belongs to you.

Coming Sunday, we are going to see in the **Nava Yōgi Samvāda**, Bhagawān says - offer all your family members to **Parasmai Nivēdanam**. Remember that the concept of family is not to develop ownership. The concept of family is only to decide the area of my service.

Family belongs to God and I want to serve the family part as my offering to the Lord. Therefore, my aim is not to form attachment and worrying about children and grand children. If that is the aim, Shastrā would not have kept [Sanyāsa Āshrama](#).

The very concept of Sanyāsa is - enter the family, serve the family and hand over the family to Bhagawān. You don't have a wife, you don't have a husband. I am safely sitting here and that is why I am telling. Otherwise, I know that you will beat me. I have got diplomatic immunity now. You don't have anyone.

Renounce everyone, serve everyone and handover everyone to the Lord. This is called [Vairāgya Abhyāsa](#). As even you practice that, you can see fear coming down. Let Bhagawān decide what should happen. I will keep doing my duty to my corporation, my family etc. 'My' here means area of service, not possession.

I do my duty, but I am not going to worry because that is the job of the owner. **Who is the owner?** Bhagawān is the owner. Therefore, let him worry. Therefore, the third method is called [Vairāgya Abhyāsa](#). The first method is Yōgābhyāsaha, the second method is Bhakti Abhyāsaha, and the third method is Vairāgya Abhyāsaha.

These three methods will help in reducing the fear heavily - FIR reduction. **What is FIR reduction?** 'F' is the frequency, 'I' is the intensity and 'R' is the recovery period. All these three will heavily come down and we will get [Āpēkshika Bhaya Nivruttihi](#) by following these three methods.

All these will only reduce, but can never totally remove fear. **How do you get Ātyantika Bhaya Nivrutti which is the destination?** For this, Vēdāntic teaching is required. I will only tell you the essence of the message. Vēdāntic students can relate and others can just note it for future study. **What is that?** It is a corollary derived from the previous methods.

In [Vairāgya Abhyāsa](#), we said that nothing belongs to me and Bhagawān is the owner of everything. And we should remember that we are not the owners of our own mind also. Mind is also [Anātmā](#) material which belongs to the total creation. Even my mind is a temporary gift from the Lord.

I cannot have total control over my own mind. Many emotions that happen in the mind are determined because of instincts. Many are determined by [Vāsanās](#), many are determined by [Pūrva Janma Karmās](#). Very many factors are there which I don't even know. Where is the question of controlling!

Therefore, the final step in Vēdānta is - I am not owner or controller of even the mind. I dedicate that also to Bhagawān. Therefore, I am free from the identification with the mind also. Therefore, whatever happens in the mind belongs to Bhagawān. **If mind also doesn't belong to me, then who am I? Am I emptiness?**

Vēdānta says - I am someone different from the world, the body and the mind. I am the [Sath Chit Ānanda Ātma](#). Claim that higher [Sachhidānanda Ātma Swarūpam](#) which is absolutely free from fear even though the mind does have some fear, I reduce the fear now and then. By the first three methods, I reduce the fear from the mind. By the fourth method, I hand over the mind itself to Bhagawān.

adrushyē nātmīyē niruktē nilayanē abhayam pratishthām vindatē, athasō bhayam gatō bhavati, yadāhyē vaishayē tasmin udara mantaram kurutē, athatasya bhayam bhavati, tatvēva bhayam vidushō manvānasya, yatō vāchō nivartantē, haprā āpya manasā saha, ānandam bramhanō vidvān, na bibhēti kutaschanēti

So, this fourth method is called [Gnyāna Abhyāsa](#) where in, you handover mind also to the Lord and claim your higher spiritual nature. Thus, four methods - [Yōgābhyāsa](#), [Bhakti Abhyāsa](#), [Vairāgya Abhyāsa](#) for relative freedom from fear. [Gnyāna Abhyāsa](#) ([Anujwara Nivrutti](#)) is

the absolute freedom from fear. This is the Shāstra method. On this New Years day, I invoke the grace of the Lord on all of you so that you can fearlessly pursue your chosen field of activity.

*Pūrnadah Pūrnamidam Pūrnāth Pūrnāmudachyatē.
Pūrnasya Pūrnāmādāya Pūrnāmēvāvasishyatē..*

Om shānti shānti shāntihi



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