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Sivaratri 2016

Five Features of Traditional Bhakthi

Lecture by Swami Paramarthananda

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Sivaratri 2016 -

Five Features of Traditional Bhakthi



TRUE TRANSCRIPTION ON LECTURE OF
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CHENNAI.

Swami Paramarthananda's Lecture

Five features of traditional bhakti

ॐ

सदाशिव समारम्भां शङ्कराचार्यमध्यमाम्
अस्मद् आचार्य पर्यन्ताम् वन्दे गुरु परम्पराम्
sadāśiva samārambhāṁ śaṅkarācāryamadhyamām
asmad ācārya paryantām vandē guru paramparām

One of the words which is **very widely used** in all religious and spiritual circles is the word **bhaktiḥ**. And this is used by all types of religious groups. And because of this reason, the word **bhakti** has *several shades of meanings*. And different groups understand the word **bhakti** in its own way. And unfortunately, the meaning of the word **bhakti** has changed so much, nowadays that the **popular meaning** of the word has deviated from the **traditional meaning** of the word **bhakti**. Nowadays the word **bhakti** is popularly used in the sense of *blind, thoughtless, obsessive, emotional involvement* - with a particular form of any deity. A blind, thoughtless, obsessive, emotional involvement - with a particular form of any particular deity. And these kinds of **bhaktās** often look for occasions and opportunities to get into an emotional frenzy, in the name of **bhakti**. And therefore, **bhakti** has been misunderstood nowadays as *some kind of an emotional frenzy only*. Since this meaning has come away from, deviated from, the original concept of **bhakti** found in the scriptures, **it is worth knowing the important features of bhakti, as visualised by our scriptures.**

And I would like to mention today five such **important features** of **bhakti**. The first feature is, **REVERENTIAL APPRECIATION OF ĪŚVARĀ OR BHAGAVĀN AS THE COMIC INTELLIGENCE BEHIND THE UNIVERSE; BECAUSE OF WHICH, THERE IS ORDER, HARMONY AND NATURAL FUNCTIONING OF THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE OF THINGS AND BEINGS.** What is the first feature? I will repeat. Reverential appreciation of **Īśvarā** as the comic

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intelligence behind the universe, because of which alone, there is order and harmony and natural functioning of the whole universe of things and beings. And the **vedās** - our original scriptures, define this cosmic intelligence beautifully as, **the eternal, all pervading and inherent intelligence or consciousness principle**. Since **Īśvarā** is eternal and all pervading, there is **NO SPECIFIC FORM** for **Īśvarā**. There is no specific form for **Īśvarā**, which means, **ĪśVARĀ SHOULD NOT BE MISTAKEN AS A PERSON, RESIDING SOMEWHERE, WITH LIMBS LIKE A HUMAN BEING**. **Īśvarā** should not be looked upon as a person, residing somewhere, with limbs like human beings. Such a specific form is not there for **Īśvarā**. **Vedā** defines **Īśvarā** in several places. And in **Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad** [mantrā 1.1.6] the definition given is -

yat tad adreśyam agrāhyam agotram avarṇam acakṣuḥśrotram tad apāṇipādam ।

nityam vibhum sarvagatam susūkṣmam tad avyayam yad bhūtayoniṃ paripaśyanti dhīrāḥ ॥

Bhagavān is the cosmic intelligence **acakṣuḥ śrotram** - for whom, there are no limbs like, eyes or ears; **tad apāṇi pādam** - has no limbs, like hands legs etc. Therefore, **reverential appreciation of this intelligence** not in one place; but, as **inherent in the entire universe**. This is the first feature of **bhakti**. And even though **Bhagavān** in His **original form, original nature, is formless, for the sake of worship and meditation**, scriptures themselves provide **provisional forms**. The scriptures themselves give provisional forms, temporary forms; for the sake of worship like, **abhiṣekam, pūjā** etc. Provisional forms are given. But, we should remember, they are only provisional and *temporary* forms given for us to worship, **to appreciate the formless one**.

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And therefore, scriptures warn that, NEVER BE EMOTIONALLY HOOKED TO ANY PARTICULAR FORM AND MAKE IT AN OBSTACLE TO DISCOVERY OF THE ORIGINAL GOD. Getting stuck to any particular form and getting emotionally lost in that particular form - **this kind of obsessive, emotional bhakti is never recommended in the scriptures.** Not only it is not real **bhakti**, it is **considered to be an obstacle** to transcend the **FORM**. We start with a *provisional* FORM; but later, **BHAGAVĀN** SHOULD NOT BE APPRECIATED IN ONE PLACE; BUT MUST BE RECOGNISED AS, THE INVISIBLE, INHERENT, INTELLIGENCE THAT IS PERVADING EVERYWHERE. Therefore, the first feature of **bhakti** is, **reverential appreciation of Īśvarā** as cosmic intelligence.

Then, **THE SECOND FEATURE OF BHAKTI IS, REVERENTIAL APPRECIATION OF THE VERY UNIVERSE ITSELF AS THE VERY BODY OF ĪŚVARĀ.** If **Bhagavān** is inherent in the entire universe, pervading the entire universe, the universe must be the physical body of the **Lord**. Just as, 'I' am the **conscious principle** inherent in my entire body, **BHAGAVĀN** IS THE COSMIC INTELLIGENCE INHERENT IN THE UNIVERSE. THEREFORE, THE UNIVERSE MUST BE APPRECIATED AS THE BODY OF **ĪŚVARĀ**. Appreciating the universe as **Viśvarūpa Īśvarā** - not confining Him to an idol or a photo or a particular picture; but, appreciating the whole universe as **Viśvarūpa Īśvarā**. And this **reverential appreciation of the world** is very, very important; because, as even our appreciation of the whole universe - consisting of a mixture of good and bad - when I learn to reverentially appreciate, then gradually, both my attachment and aversion will get diluted. **Viśvarūpa bhakti** is the most important attitude, which will help us in reducing our attachment and aversion. And this is very important for emotional balance and peace of mind. Lesser the appreciation, greater will be my **rāga** and **dveśa**.

That is why, if you read the meaning of **Śrī Rudram**, you will find the whole universe is described as **Rudrā** in **Viśvarūpa**. **Śivā** in the form stones, **Śivā** in

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the form of tree, **Śivā** in the form of noble people, **Śivā** in the form of robbers! Therefore, everything is appreciated as **Viśvarūpa Īśvarā**; so that, I will avoid attachment towards the positives and hatred towards the negatives. Neither attachment nor hatred. The only attitude I have is *reverential appreciation*. **Rudram** is description of **Śivā** as the **universe**. **Puruṣa Sūktam** is the description is **Viṣṇu** as the **universe**.

And if the universe is called **Śivā**; and the universe is called **Viṣṇu**; what is the difference between **Viṣṇu** and **Śivā**? So, the one who has got real **bhakti**, will never, never differentiate different forms as different **GODS**. **WE DO NOT HAVE DIFFERENT GODS AT ALL; WE HAVE ONLY DIFFERENT FORMS, REPRESENTING ONE ĪŚVARĀ**. Whether you call it **Viṣṇu** or **Śivā**, there is no question of comparison.

And so, scriptures say, whichever **bhaktā** compares the deities and claims, 'my **Śivā** is superior' or 'my **Viṣṇu** is superior'; I will go only to **Viṣṇu** temple, not to **Śivā** temple'; the **śāstrā** strongly criticises. "**yo brahma viṣṇu rudrāṇām uttama adhama bhāvataḥ sādhayet udaravyadhiyukto bhavati pūruṣaḥ**" - அர்த்தம் புரியறதோ?? Whoever compares **Viṣṇu Śivā Brahmā** etc and grades them as He is superior - one is gold medal, another is silver/bronze medal etc. the one who argues, **sādhayet**, writes books and books establishing **Viṣṇu** alone is great or **Śivā** alone is great, scriptures say, 'they are committing **sin**, for which the punishment is **udara vyādhi**. **udara vyādhi** means, what? Stomach disease. Therefore, we should be very, very careful.

Let us use some FORM for worship; but, we should remember, **BHAGAVĀN IS NOT CONFINED TO THIS FORM. THE WHOLE UNIVERSE IS MANIFESTATION OF THE LORD ONLY**. This is the 2nd feature. 1st feature is, reverential appreciation of **Bhagavān** as the cosmic intelligence, invisible behind the universe. The second is, reverential

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appreciation of the very universe itself as the பெருமாள்! we are all சின்ன ஆள்: **Bhagavān** is பெரும் ஆள், with the universe as the **śarīram**. In the **rudram dhyāna śloka** says - "**brahmāṇḍa vyāpta dehā**". This is the second definition, feature of traditional **bhakti**.

Then, what is the third feature of traditional **bhakti**? **REVERENTIAL APPRECIATION OF ĪŚVARĀ AS THE SOURCE OF THE VEDĀS, OUR PRIMARY SCRIPTURES**. Reverential appreciation of **Īśvarā** as the source of the **vedās**, our primary scriptures. **bṛhadāraṇyaka upaniṣad** says, "**asya mahato bhūtasya naśvasitam etad yad ṛg-vedo yajur-vedaḥ sāma-vedo 'tharvāṅ girasaḥ**". - all the **vedās** - the primary scriptures - are like the breathing that came out of the **Lord. bhagavān**, along with this creation, has given out the scriptures also. And this appreciation is very, very important for a **bhaktā**. **Without the scriptures, we have no way of knowing GOD himself**. Because, all our instruments of knowledge - including modern scientific equipments and any amount of search or research they do - they are not able to come across or discover **Īśvarā**, indicating that, **Bhagavān** is not accessible for the human beings and the human instruments. Therefore, if I have to know **Bhagavān**, **the only source is the scriptures**. And I am grateful to **GOD**, because **GOD** has given the scriptures to know **Bhagavān**. In the absence of scriptures, the very existence of **Bhagavān** is unknowable. And in the absence of **bhagavān**, where is the question of **bhakti**? In the absence of **bhakti**, where is **bhaktā**? The very survival of **bhaktā** is because of the scriptures only. Therefore, I SHOULD KNOW TO APPRECIATE **BHAGAVĀN** AS THE SOURCE OF THE SCRIPTURES. **vedānta kṛt veda videva ca aham**.

Again, **śvetāśvatara upaniṣad** [6.18] says -

yo brahmāṇaṃ vidadhāti pūrvaṃ yo vai vedāṃśca prahiṇoti tasmai |

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**taṃ ha devaṃ ātmabuddhiprakāśaṃ mumukṣurvai śaraṇamaḥam
prapadye ॥**

That is why we chant **Dakṣiṇāmūrti stotram**. **Bhagavān** as the source of **scriptures** is called **Dakṣiṇāmūrti** or **Sadāśivā**. Therefore, for a **bhaktā**, the third feature is, **REVERENTIAL APPRECIATION OF BHAGAVĀN AS THE SOURCE OF SCRIPTURES**. This is the third feature.

And the fourth feature is, **REVERENTIAL APPRECIATION OF THE SCRIPTURES THEMSELVES, AS A GIFT FROM THE LORD**. Reverential appreciation of the scriptures themselves, as a gift from the **LORD**, which is very, very important for a **bhaktā**, as a guide map for his life. A **bhaktā** is one who uses **Bhagavān's** scriptures **as a guide map for his life**. And if I have to use the scriptures as my guide map, I should **have full faith and trust in the validity of scriptures**.

And that is why, for developing this reverence, daily they had **brahma yajña**. **brahma yajña** means, worship of the scriptures themselves. A **BHAKTĀ** SHOULD NOT CONFINE TO THE WORSHIP OF **BHAGAVĀN** ONLY; BUT, HE **SHOULD WORSHIP THE SCRIPTURES THEMSELVES** AS A GIFT FROM THE LORD. As GPS. GPS do you know? In the cars they use. When I am in an unknown place, I require a guideline. In my life's journey also, **Bhagavān** has given **GOD'S POSITIONING SYSTEM**. GPS means, God's positioning system, he has given. I will use scriptures as my guide. When you say **Brahma yajña**, it means **veda yajñaḥ**. **Brahman** means, **vedaḥ**.

**oṃ namo brahmāṇe, namo astvagnaye, namaḥ pṛthivyai, nama
oṣadhīpyaḥ | ... ṛg vedam tarpayāmi | yajur vedam tarpayāmi | sāma
vedam tarpayāmi | atharvaṇa vedam tarpayāmi | itihāsa purāṇam
tarpayāmi | kalpam tarpayāmi | vyākaraṇam tarpayāmi | ...**

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Even **vyākaraṇam** [grammar] which we use to study the scriptures - all of them we reverentially appreciate. Nowadays, the importance of scriptures is coming down. **TRADITIONAL BHAKTI INCLUDES WORSHIP OF SCRIPTURES AND USING THE SCRIPTURES AS A GUIDE MAP.** This is the fourth feature.

Then the **fifth** - the final and **the most important feature** of traditional **bhakti**. If I have to use scriptures as a guide map, I will have to - can you fill up the blank? If I have to use the scriptures as the guide map, I will have to - '**STUDY THE SCRIPTURES SYSTEMATICALLY**'. Just as I go through a educational system for worldly knowledge, so too every **bhaktā**, if he wants to be a **bhaktā** in the traditional sense of the term. Every **bhaktā** who wants to be a **bhaktā** - in the traditional sense of the term - will have to go through *two fold educational systems*. One educational system I need not tell. Already there is a big line, because March has come! Big lines in front schools for LKG or pre-kg or pre-pre-kg or pre-pre-pre-kg admission. Even at the time of conception, you have to plan the school! That educational system we are very, very careful. So also, if we want to practise **bhakti** and if we want to be a **bhaktā**, the fifth and most important feature is, **systematic study of the scriptures** - so that, I can follow the lifestyle as well as the code of conduct given by **Bhagavān** in the scriptures. If **Bhagavān** has to address the **bhaktā**, how does He address? **Bhagavān** addresses the **bhaktā** *through the scriptures*, prescribing a lifestyle as well as the code of conduct. Only if I go through and try to follow the lifestyle and code of conduct, I can be called a **bhaktā** worth the name; otherwise, it becomes a mere **veśam** for some time, to get into an emotional frenzy. That is not the real one.

Bhagavān Himself says elsewhere, **śruti smṛti mamai vāgye ullaṅge tena karhicit āgñyā laṅgī mama dveṣī matbhaktopi hyavaiṣṇavaḥ**. **Bhagavān** says, 'I have instructed all the **bhaktās** to follow a particular lifestyle and a code

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of conduct through the scriptures, and I expect the **bhaktā** to follow that. If a **bhaktā** does not study the scriptures and does not follow those instructions, 'I look upon him as my very enemy'. Very strong word He is using! **mama dveṣī**. And even though he claims to be my **bhaktā** - by putting பட்டை or நாமம் - **mat bhaktopi** he is only a **veśa bhaktā saḥ hyavaiṣṇavaḥ** - he is neither a **Vaiṣṇavā**, a **Viṣṇu bhaktā**; nor a **Śaivā**, a **Śivā bhaktā**. Therefore, the fifth feature of **bhakti** is what? **Systematic study of the scriptures. Brahma yajñah**. One of the **pañca mahā yajñah**.

But, if I have to study the scriptures, we do face a difficulty; because, our scriptural literature is very vast. **Vedās** themselves are very big; and later, many secondary scriptures have come, which expound and elaborate the **vedic** teaching. They are called **smṛti granthās**. And so, we have got a very vast literature. And we do not have time to study the whole thing. Therefore, **bhagavān** in **kṛṣṇa avatārā** - through **arjunā** - **condensed** all the scriptures. **śaṅkarācāryā** says, **samastha vedārtha sāra saṅgrah bhūtam idam** - **Bhagavad Gītā Bhagavān Kṛṣṇā** has given, as a *condensed version* of the scriptures. Therefore, a **bhaktā** - who wants to be a true **bhaktā**, *will have to study the scriptures and follow the instructions given*.

Scriptures talk about **sat karmāṇi** - appropriate actions, in the form of **pañca mahā yajña**. I am not going into the details. The students will be remembering what are the proper actions and what are the proper values to be observed. In the 16th chapter of the **Gītā**, right values to be followed, the wrong habits to be given-up - **daivī sampatti** & **āsurī sampatti** - they are all described. **sat karmāṇi**, **sat guṇāḥ**, **sat bhāvanāḥ**, healthy attitudes - all of them a **bhaktā** has to know; and he should attempt to follow. Merely doing **nāma saṅkīrtanam**, in the name of **bhakti**, is not traditional. Traditional **bhakti**

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involves taking instructions from **bhagavān**, through the scriptures, and **Bhagavān** will be happy if one follows those. The best way - in the **Gītā** 12th chapter **Kṛṣṇā** says, 'the one who follows these instructions, they are dear to me'. **adveṣṭā sarva bhūtānām**. First virtue **Bhagavān** says is, **bhaktā** must be one who cannot afford to hate anyone. Hatred must be abolished. Like that, every value **bhagavān** gives in the scriptures we have to follow them.

Therefore, what is the fifth feature? Reverential study of the scriptures. And not only it will help me become a true **bhaktā**, it will remove several misconceptions regarding **bhakti** and **bhaktā**, which are very, very prevalent now, because people do not study scriptures. When it is not **informed bhakti**, there will be several misconceptions.

And one of the widely prevalent misconceptions is that, **bhaktā** will never have problems in life. **Bhagavān** will take away all our **puṇya pāpā**; or at least all our **pāpa karmā**, and therefore, we will not have headache, stomach ache problems, everything will be fine. *This is a very, very big misconception.* The scriptures never make such promise. Whether one is **bhaktā** or non-**bhaktā**, the **prārabdha karmā** *will have to be experienced*, by everyone. You should not ask the question, 'why he is getting into problem? He is doing lot of **pūjā**. So, why problem?' This is *as though pūjā* means, no problem. Such a promise is never given. Promise for **bhakti** is, *inner peace and strength to confront the problem with courage, confidence.* **Bhakti** will give inner balance and inner strength, which will help me confront my **karmā** with courage and confidence. One **bhaktā** says, 'Oh Lord, **yadyad bhavyam bhavatu bhagavan, pūrva karmāṇu rūpam**. 'According to the law of **karmā**, whatever I have to face, I do not want to dodge or escape. I should reap the results of my own actions. I am ready for that, oh lord. You send whatever is my **karma phalam**; but, keep my

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bhakti intact, so that I will have confidence and courage that - with your grace - I will be able to confront and conquer them'. Therefore, let it be clear, **bhaktā** or **abhaktā**, **karmās** are going to come.

And the **second**, widely prevalent misconception is - [and these are all promoted all over in several **bhakti** programs. There is a channel itself - **bhakti** channel. Everywhere, what they promote is this] - that **a bhaktā can get anything just by sending an application to Bhagavān. He is exempt from all effort.** And they say, **Bhagavān is bhakta parādhīnaḥ. Bhagavān** is a slave of **bhaktā!** And therefore, the moment you send the application, what will **Bhagavān** do? Instantaneously, He will do one miracle! That is why, all the channels will be full of miracle stories only, trying to point out, '*you need not do anything; only send an application!* You can write on a piece of paper and keep it in **Bhagavān's pādām.** TRADITIONAL **BHAKTI** OR TRADITIONAL SCRIPTURES, NEVER SAY THAT. Whether you are **bhaktā** or **abhaktā**, goals can be accomplished **only by following the appropriate effort in the appropriate direction.** All goals can be achieved by hard work only.

And, for a **bhaktā**, two types of **karmās** are available. He can do worldly activities also, and parallelly, he can do **vaidika karmā** also - **laukika karmā** and **vaidika karmā**. But, he only have to put forth the **effort.** Prayer is not - தட்டுங்கள், திறக்கப்படும்; கேளுங்கள், கொடுக்கப்படும்! It is not just you go and say, 'GOD, give me one million rupees.' And the next day it is there. No. That would not work. We have to work. **bhakti is not a replacement for karmā or hard work. bhaktā** must do **karmā** with **bhakti**, for fulfilling the goals of life, whether it is **dharma, artha** or **kāma**. And, if this is not understood, and I keep on praying to **Bhagavān**; and still, things do not happen. I keep on sending applications; but, nothing happens. I expect **Bhagavān** will do **some**

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miracle. But, miracle is not something which will *regularly* happen. Why? If it **regularly happens**, it will not be a miracle! Just because **draupadī** got dress, suppose you go and ask for that! அப்படி எல்லாம் நடக்காது!

So, when you expect miracles, and miracles do not happen, many **bhaktās** **begin to question the efficacy of bhakti.** Many **bhaktās** - uninformed **bhaktās**, who do not study the scriptures, they question the efficacy of **bhakti.** They question the fairness of **GOD.** I am doing **pūjā**; but, I am not getting; whereas, my neighbour does not do **pūjā**, and still he got! That is more sorrow. I did not get it, it is okay; but, neighbour - who never does **pūjā** - he got it! And therefore, I question the fairness of **GOD.** And such **bhakti** becomes so fragile and shaky, that **many bhaktās question the very existence of GOD!** **Uninformed bhakti** - mere emotional obsession; without, proper scriptural study - **will be fragile and shaky.** At any time, **nāstikā** thought will come. Out of mere fear, we may not express that. பகவான், கண்ணைக் குத்திடுவார்! So, out of the fear **we may not ask openly.** But, the question comes - 'all these are really true or not?!

Therefore, **bhakti** must be **informed bhakti**; which means, [a] study of scriptures is a must; and, [b] effort is required for achieving our goals. Mere **bhakti** cannot help achieve the goal. **Bhakti, with appropriate karmā alone,** will achieve the goals of **dharma, artha** and **kāma.**

If I need **mokṣā** [many people are not interested in it; but, *by chance* if a person wants **mokṣā**] by merely sending an application to **Bhagavān,** a **bhaktā** cannot get **mokṣā.** For **mokṣā** also, an appropriate effort is required. And what is that appropriate effort also, the scriptures talk about. And the appropriate effort is, **spiritual knowledge alone.** That means, knowing the real nature of **GOD,** real

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nature of world and real nature of myself. The truth behind **GOD**, world and me, that truth - **tattva jñānena, tattva bhodena, mokṣaḥ bhavati**. Scriptures make it very clear. **Bhaktā** must do **karmā** for worldly benefit. **Bhaktā** must gain **jñānam** for **mokṣā**.

And the **upaniṣad** says that, 'without spiritual knowledge, *you can get mokṣā*, under one condition'. **upaniṣad** is cutting a joke. 'Under one condition, you can get **mokṣā**, without **jñānam. tattva jñānam**'. And you know, what is that condition? **Śvetāśvatara upaniṣad** [6.20] says -

yadā carmavadākāsaṃ veṣṭayiṣyanti mānavāḥ |
tadā devamavijñāya duḥkhasyānto bhaviṣyati ||

- you have to role the sky like a carpet. You should go to one end of the earth and start rolling the sky. And you should role from one end to other, and submit it to **Bhagavān**. Then, **Bhagavān** will give **mokṣā**, without jñānam! So, what does it mean? You *cannot* role the sky; therefore, you *cannot* get **mokṣā**, without **jñānam**! And so, how does **jñānam** come? For **jñānam** also do you just send an application? **Lord**, give me **jñānam**! And then, does **Bhagavān** drill a hole in the head and inject **jñānam**? அந்தக் கதை எல்லாம் நடக்காது! Just as the worldly goals require **effort**, any **jñānam** also requires effort. Whether it is physics or chemistry or economics, any knowledge, requires a systematic study. Spiritual knowledge also requires a systematic study. **guru śāstrā upadeśa**. Because, scriptures alone talk about 'THE TRUTH BEHIND GOD, WORLD AND THE INDIVIDUAL'. Therefore, **guru śāstrā upadeśa**, we have to go through. I call it, a **spiritual education program**. So, a traditional **bhaktā** works for **mokṣā**, by scriptural study into the **tattvam** of the all these three [GOD, WORLD AND THE INDIVIDUAL]. And without that systematic study, **jñānam** is not going to come.

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'na vedavin manute tam bṛhantam' - without scriptural knowledge or 'a vedavid bṛhantam na manute' - cannot know **Īśvarā** or the truth of all these three. **muṇḍaka upaniṣad** clearly says - **tadvijñānārthaṃ sa gurumevābhigacchet samit pāṇiḥ śrotriyaṃ brahmaniṣṭham.**

In **Bhagavad Gītā** [4-34], Lord Kṛṣṇā says, **tadviddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā I upadekṣyanti te jñānaṃ jñāninas tattva darśinaḥ** ॥

Therefore, be a **bhaktā**. But, what should you remember? For achieving worldly goals, **bhaktā** will have to work; **karmā** is required. For attaining **mokṣā** goal, **bhaktā** also will have to go through systematic study of the **vedāntic** scriptures which reveal the truth. If this is not understood, I will say that, 'I will not require **karmā**. I do not require scriptural study. That is all for intellectuals only. I am following **bhakti mārgā**'. [A separate name is also given]. 'I am in **bhakti mārgā**'. So, by claiming 'I am following **bhakti mārgā**', they think they do not require **karmā**. They do not require **jñānam** also, **they** think! Remember, there is no **bhakti mārgā** separated from **karma** and **jñānam**. **Bhaktā** will have to do **karma**, following all the code of conduct etc.

This is traditional **bhakti**, we should remember. It is not an emotional attachment to a finite **Bhagavān** in the form of a person. It is not an emotional obsession; but, it is a proper approach, with the help of the scriptures. Thus, the five features of **bhakti** every **bhaktā** should remember. What are the five features? I will enumerate and conclude.

[1] Feature number one. **Reverential appreciation of GOD as the cosmic intelligence.** Cosmic, invisible, intelligent principle, behind the universe; because of which, there is order, harmony and natural function of the entire universe. In simple form, REVERENTIAL APPRECIATION OF GOD AS THE COSMIC

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INTELLIGENCE. FORMS ARE ONLY TEMPORARY. FORMS ARE NOT FINAL. From the forms, we have to go to the formless, which is everywhere.

[2] The second feature is, **REVERENTIAL APPRECIATION OF THE VERY VISIBLE UNIVERSE ITSELF AS THE VERY BODY OF THE LORD.** For this **bhaktā**, where is **Bhagavān**? **Bhagavān** is *everywhere*. 7th chapter of the **Gītā** [7-8], **Kṛṣṇā** says - **raso'hamapsu kaunteya prabhāsmi śāśisūryayoḥ**. Sunlight is **Bhagavān**; moonlight is **Bhagavān**; **Pañca bhūtās** are **liṅgams**. Today [on **Śivarātri**] they will go and see **pañca bhūta liṅgams**. All those things. They say **Pañca bhūtās** are **Bhagavān** and then, they stand in queue, *in a particular place*. If **Pañca bhūtās** are **Bhagavān**, where is He? Do you understand the meaning of **Pañca bhūta**? Do not think I am referring to ghost. The five elements are **Bhagavān**. Even though we have representative in Kalahasti, Kanchipuram etc., the idea is, FOR ME, THE WHOLE UNIVERSE IS HIS **VIŚVARŪPA**. So, the second feature is, **REVERENTIAL APPRECIATION OF UNIVERSE AS THE BODY OF THE LORD.**

[3] Number three is, **REVERENTIAL APPRECIATION OF ĪŚVARĀ AS THE SOURCE OF THE SCRIPTURES.**

[4] Fourth one is, **REVERENTIAL APPRECIATION OF THE SCRIPTURES AS A GIFT FROM GOD**, as a GPS for navigation in my life's journey. This is the fourth feature.

[5] And the 5th feature is what? **REVERENTIAL STUDY OF SCRIPTURES** so that, I can understand the lifestyle of the **bhaktā** and the code of conduct for a **bhaktā**, as prescribed by **bhagavān** in the scriptures, which I can attempt to follow.

ONLY WHEN I HAVE ALL THESE FIVE FEATURES, I AM A BHAKTĀ IN THE TRADITIONAL SENSE OF THE TERM.

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With these words, I conclude and today we have done **śivarātri pūjā** wherein we see **Śivā** as the source of the scriptures and **bhakti**!

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात् पूर्णमुदच्यते ।

पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥

ॐ शांतिः शांतिः शांतिः ॥



[NOTE: Transcription by M/s T.Śrīnivāsan & P.Bālasubrahmanyam. Please communicate corrections to balusha74@gmail.com]

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