

LIVING IN THE PRESENT

New Year Lecture by Swami Paramarthananda (1994)

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.



Published by :



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Living in the Present

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

We celebrate New Year for two purposes. First of all, we offer our prayers to the Lord for whatever Lord has given us. We could live so long and we could accomplish whatever we could accomplish because of Lord's Grace and therefore, it becomes an expression of gratitude to the Lord.

In addition to that, we also seek Lord's grace for the future, for the coming year so that we can accomplish whatever we want to accomplish in our life, whether it is **Dharma**, **Artha**, **Kāma**, or **Mōksha**. Thus, it becomes an opportunity to offer our gratitude to the Lord as well as seeking the blessings of the Lord through **Pūja**.

Secondly, the New Year gives us an opportunity to make a small pause in our life and just take stock of the situation. Otherwise, we go through life mechanically. Five or six days we go to the office, no time to think at all. We get one or two holidays and those two holidays we get busy or we are more tired. That is why we call it 'Weakened'. Weekend means not only it is a weekend but we are weakened also.

Therefore, five days we have no time to think, and two days we can't afford to think. Thus, life goes on like a machine. Therefore, we never stop and ask a question - **kastvam kōham kuta āyāsaha kāmē janani kōmē tātaha**. **Why am I here? In what way I am different from animals? Because of my superior faculty of free will and intelligence, am I accomplishing something greater?**

Is my life a meaningful one? Am I validating my human birth? Can the Lord be proud of giving me a human birth? Thus, we can take a stock of our life, look at the past and if we required, we can have a new direction in life. If we are in the right direction, as they say any function, we re-

dedicate. If we happen to be in a right direction, we can continue. If it is not, we can change our direction.

If some acceleration is required, we can accelerate because every New Year we are growing older, which means the rest of the life is becoming shorter. Therefore, the duration available for accomplishing our goal is becoming lesser and lesser. Which means, perhaps our pace has to become a little bit faster. Thus, New Year is an opportunity to take stock, to look back, to look forward and do whatever is required.

Therefore, any New Year is good enough to do the job, whether it is the Tamil New Year or Malayalam New Year or Telugu New Year or Kannada New Year or Maharashtra's New Year or Sikh New Year. But we take this English New Year, not because we are English people, but because there is uniformity in that. Otherwise, we would have so many New Years in one Year itself.

Therefore, for convenience, we take the English New Year as a standard. Not only that, but whether we like it or not, our life is governed by the English New Year only. Our Calendars give only the English dates prominently. Malayalam or Telugu dates are pushed to either right side corner or left side corner. **How many of us know what the name of the Sanskrit New Year or the Sanskrit Month is?**

How many of us remember Tithi or Nakshatra? When we write letters, what do you write in date? We always write only the English date. So, whether we like it or not, our life is governed by the English calendar. Therefore, we thought that we will choose the English New Year. For praying to the Lord, any day is a good day and therefore, it is fine. **Now, what is our prayer?**

We should make 1994 a successful year, a beautiful year and what can we do for making 1994 wonderful. **What can we do?** I want to share what I think or what I proposed to do. Of course, one thing as I said, through prayer itself we seek the Grace of the Lord, so that ours New

Year will be wonderful and beautiful. [bhadram karnēbhihi shrunuyāma bhadram pashyēma.](#)

But what I feel is Lord's grace itself is not enough, we should also work for a successful New Year. It is because Lord's grace cannot be a replacement for self-effort. Lord's Grace can be only a booster, a support for self-effort. Therefore, what I feel is that we should also do a lot to make the New Year a successful, beautiful one.

I will tell what all things that we can do or I proposed to do. It is because my Guru, Dayānanda Swamiji says, never advice people. Therefore, I don't believe in that. Therefore, I tell what I proposed to do. It is for you to take it, follow it or not. 1994 is preceded by 1993 and it will be followed by 1995.

Therefore, what we do with 1993 and what we propose to do with 1995 is also very important to make 1994 a successful thing. Of course, 1993 is gone and all our experiences are gone. But even though the past year is gone, the past year can influence our present life. This past life and past experiences can influence us either positively or negatively.

It can be a pushing, accelerating force or it can be a dragging, burdensome decelerating force also. Therefore, what we do with the past, I consider very important. Now, the past can pull us down if the past has given certain negative emotions in our mind. Many of us might have gone through a lot of pain, bitter experiences because life is a mixture of both.

Everyone might have gone through painful experiences. These painful experiences are over alright, but these painful experiences have left in our mind, varieties of feelings like hatred, bitterness, anger, frustration, guilt. Each one of these negative feelings can become like a huge iron ball tied to our feet. We want to go forward and like an iron ball, each one of these feelings can drag us down. Therefore, the first thing that we have to care of is, removing these burdens which are pushing us down.

What can we do to remove these pains (guilt, hatred etc)? If you try to find out the source of these pains like hatred etc, you find that when we go through some painful experiences, our tendency is to find that it is because of somebody's mistake. Any pain that we suffer, according to us (it is true also), is because of the mistake done by somebody.

Either I blame my neighbor or I blame my wife and children or I blame my officer or I blame the Government. If no one is available, there is the Lord, poor scapegoat to receive all the blame. So, every painful experience creates a tendency in us to blame other people. This blaming alone gets converted into hatred or anger.

If I find fault with an inferior person, it gets converted into anger. If I find fault with a superior person, it gets converted into hatred. If I find fault with myself, it gets converted into guilt or frustration. Therefore, all the negative feelings are because I find fault with either the world or the God or with myself.

As long as I am not ready to accept the mistakes of others, the burdens in the form of hatred, anger, guilt, frustrations etc. will be there. Therefore, I feel the only and best method to remove all these is, one medicine and that medicine is, forgive everyone in your life. Forgive every person who is involved in life uniformly.

So, whichever person has hurt you, because of whichever person you had set back in life, because of whichever person you were harmed, all those people you forgive uniformly. In countries, on certain days, they have some kind of amnesty, general pardoning. They release all the people in jail. Sometimes, they release even those people who are waiting for capital punishment.

Therefore, what I do on this New Year's day is, I mentally picture all the people involved in my life. Of course, I need not forgive those who have done good to me - you have done good to me, I forgive you. That means I don't deserve. There is no problem because they are not a

burden. But the burden is those people who have done harm directly or indirectly.

Mentally, I visualize them and mentally, I forgive them and I say that I don't reject you, I don't hate you, I forgive you totally. Imagine this person and smile at him. I tell you, even smiling at the imaginary person is difficult for us because the every thought of that person burns up our deep most heart. Therefore, just imagine.

You need not go to that person directly, but mentally imagine and say that I forgive you. Thus, this one universal forgiveness from deep most heart, I consider as one important step so that the past will not burden you. You try this after going from here. Sit for ten minutes and give a universal pardon to all the people. In fact, we hate some people even though they are dead and gone.

Therefore, universal forgiveness, I consider as one important step so that 1993 or 1992, all the past will not drag us down. Now, the second thing I consider is this. By forgiving all the people, 1993 is not going to pull me back. It is not going to be a decelerating force. Now, what I have to do is to convert 1993 into an accelerating force.

Instead of pulling us down, let us convert it into a pushing force. **How do you do that?** We can do that by learning lessons from past experiences and then improving ourselves. We can mentally go back to the 93 and take all the mistakes that I have committed. And I decide that I will change myself and I will not repeat those mistakes once again.

Not only at the business level but I mean, even in my transaction with the people. If I have been using rude language, or if I have been a little bit lazy or if I have not been punctual, anything from smallest mistake to biggest mistake, I decide to learn and change those mistakes. Remember that when I dwell upon the mistakes, we should not create guilt. Then, it will become a burdening force. I should take care of that first because the same mistake can work positively or negatively.

If you dwell upon mistakes and develop guilt it is pulling down force. If you dwell upon the mistake and take vow that I will not do again, it becomes a pushing force. When I dwell upon the mistakes, I will certainly be remembering the mistakes of other people also. At that time again hatred, anger, etc. will come, but I should make the sure that I have forgiven all the other people for their mistakes.

But still I go back to their mistakes. **Then, what do I do?** I don't take a decision to change them. So, learning and improving is only improving myself. I make sure that I have no agenda of improving other people. It is because of two reasons. One reason is that I can never change another person. Nobody can change another person.

It is an impractical, impossible, illogical, frustrating, burdensome experience. If you have any doubts, look back into 1993. **What did you feel?** The husband has not changed, he makes the same mistakes. Therefore, it is illogical. The second, more important reason is that when you feel that the other people should improve, the other people feel that they all are in very fine condition, only you have to change.

While the husband feels the wife requires some improvement, remember that the wife feels husband requires improvement. When Guru feels that Sishya requires improvement, Sishya feels that Guru has to know how to treat all the people alike or what all improvement in teaching Guru should make. Therefore, remember that everyone is trying to improve other people and everyone is miserably failing and life is getting bitterer.

Therefore, my aim is not improving other people, but if the other people commit mistakes, I want to take precautions and safeguard myself against other people's mistake which is in my hands and it is what I do with myself. Let the other person continue to commit the mistakes, it doesn't matter because I can't decide. Perhaps, he doesn't know his mistake because something very close cannot be seen.

I never see my eyelids because they are so close. You cannot see that which is very close. Similarly, our deep weaknesses we never see while the other person sees very clearly. That is why we find that everybody has got this problem. In fact, I see that when everybody comes to me, they have got so much to talk about the other people's weaknesses, but I find that nobody talks about his own or her own weakness.

That means I am to infer that the talker is a man or woman of perfection. **What else can I understand?** Because every time they meet me, they have to talk about the mistakes of everybody else. Therefore, it is very very difficult to improve other person because the other person doesn't know what he has.

Therefore, either he is ignorant or he is immature. Suppose a person is good to all other people, then understand that your Prārabdham is getting exhausted through that person. If a person is nice to all people and he is not nice to me only, there can be only one reason. It is that my Karma, my Pāpam is getting exhausted through that person.

Therefore, I safeguard, I take precautions to protect myself against the continuing mistakes of other people. So, do some R&D (Research and Development). **What do manufacturing companies do?** You would have seen the plastic mug. You know that it has got a handle. **What is the purpose of the handling?**

Many people do not understand. It is not for taking water at all because the handle is a flimsy one. When the mug is empty, you have to put it somewhere. But many people do not know. **Therefore, what do they do?** They take the handle and take water. Naturally, because of the weight of the water, the handle cracks.

You go to most of the houses and you will find that it will be a cracked mug. According to me, it is not the mug that is cracked but it is the people who do not understand that the handle cannot hold the weight. The mug lasts three generations if you do not hold it using the handle

while bathing. Now, even though it is our mistake, you can see that manufacturers are trying to do more innovation.

They are trying to make that handle wider etc. **What is that method?** Even though our people are committing mistake, they are trying to produce a mug which will survive in-spite of other people's mishandling.

Similarly, what New Year decision I take is – when other people handle me, they may not know how to talk to me, they may insult me, cheat me. My job is not to correct them, but my job is how I can toughen myself in-spite of their misbehavior. If they are a few people who want to learn and who ask for guidance from you, you guide such few people.

But I tell you, the majority of people does not want guidance from you because they think that without your guidance, they are better off. On the other hand, they want to guide you. You talk to the children. The children come and talk that the parents are immature. They are not grown up now and they don't know the present day conditions.

Therefore, invariably all the children feel that parents require guidance. They come and tell me Swāmiji, please advise my father. Therefore, we cannot guide other people. So the second lesson is that I improve from past mistakes. Improving means that I avoid my mistakes and I toughen myself for not getting affected by other people's mistakes.

If you do these two things, 1993 will not be a burden, but it will be a pushing force. Now, let us come to 1995. 1995 can also be a problem. If I don't know how to look at 95, it can become an obstacle for me. On the other hand, if I have got a proper attitude towards 95, it can suck me upwards or it can pull me in. 95 can obstruct me or 95 can pull me.

What 95 does to me depends upon what my attitude is. **What can I do for that?** The future, whether you like it not, is unpredictable. However much you work hard, however much you take precautions, whatever you do, the future is unpredictable. Not only that, the future is often out

of my control because the future depends upon not only on me but depends upon so many factors.

This unpredictability of future and uncontrollability of the future can create tension, anxiety and fear. If it causes tension, anxiety and fear, it becomes a big obstacle for me in moving forward. Therefore, if the future should not be an obstacle, what I have to do is to surrender. With regard to the future, if it should not be an obstacle, we have only one method and it is surrender to the Lord.

By surrender, what I mean is that I pray to the Lord - O Lord, future is unpredictable, future is totally not controllable which means, the future may be favorable or unfavorable. O Lord, give me the strength to accept whatever future is going to come because I know what you give me is just. The lord will never do injustice. The lord will never try to harm me.

Whatever Lord does is justice alone. If I am not prepared to face that, it is my problem. Therefore, Lord, I surrender to you. Give me the strength to accept the future. Even though, we pray that some people should die, may not die. In-fact, they grow stronger. Therefore, I call the third preparation as Surrender.

The fourth preparation I call as Planning. As I said, the future is not totally dependent on fate. The future depends upon my effort also. If I don't put forth proper effort, taking the future into account, then I should blame me also. Therefore, planning and implementation or effort I consider as another important thing.

If you put forth proper effort, the future will have to be better. So, the effort becomes or inspiration for effort becomes a pushing or pulling force. Therefore, Forgive, Learn & Improve, Surrender then, Plan & Work hard. Lastly, I will tell one more point and stop. When we are taking care of the past and future, we often commit a mistake that we

are all the time preoccupied with past and future that we miss the present.

As somebody nicely said - we live our whole life in absentia. I like this very much. It is true. We live our whole life in absentia because when we are brushing our teeth, we think about breakfast. When we are having breakfast, we think about office, when we are in the office, we think about going back home, etc. So, whenever we do any job, we are not there.

Either we are in the past or in the future. **Then, what happens?** We are not able to enjoy the most wonderful gift of life. We have got the most wonderful body with seventeen faculties. As we have seen in **Tatvabōdha - sapta dasha kalābhi saha yat tishtati**. We have two eyes to see, but we are never aware of this wonderful gift. Perhaps, we have to go to a blind school to see what gift we have got!

Similarly, many people are not able to hear properly, but we are able to hear. Many people are not able to walk. In fact, take each faculty and see that these faculties are with me. Therefore, I should be able to spend some time just to enjoy all the faculties that have been given to me. Therefore, spend some time just listening to music without bothering about what will be the result of it.

Similarly, spend some time hearing something, smelling something, eating something. Therefore, above all, we have to live. So, forgiving is wonderful, effort is wonderful, but most important thing is living. By living, I mean, being alive to the wonderful faculties we have. **Otherwise, what will happen?**

When we grow old, one or two faculties slowly go away. Suddenly we find - O Lord, you had given me these wonderful faculties. When they were there, I never appreciated. Now, the value increases and I feel that life was too short and I really blew it. Similarly, we feel that before we could enjoy life, Bhagawān says Jaragandi as in Tirupati.

Therefore, when Bhagawān says Jaragandi, we should feel that I have really felt this beautiful eye, really enjoyed the faculty of thinking, eating. In-fact, I enjoyed every organ. If I am able to move the hand like that, it is a blessing. You go to a hospital and see. People are not even able to move the hand or not able to stop moving the hand.

Now we have got all the faculties. **Shouldn't we appreciate that? Shouldn't we appreciate the creation that is in front?** We have got oxygen, we have got water. Therefore, live which means, be alive to every faculty you have got and the wonderful creation that is around. If you do that, 1994 will be wonderful, 1995 will be equally wonderful, and 1996 also will be wonderful.

When we have to go away, we also feel we had a full, beautiful life. At that time also, we might have committed so many mistakes. We die forgiving ourselves - **kimahagm sādhu nā karavam, kimaham pāpa makaravamiti, sayayēvam vidvānētē ātmānag sprunūtē.** Even at the time of death, we are ready to forgive us for all the mistakes and we are ready to forgive the whole world. Therefore, let us follow these:

- Forgive
- Learn
- Surrender
- Plan & Act
- Live

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

Om shānti shānti shāntihi



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