

WHAT IS SANYASA

Guru Purnima 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.



Published by :



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What is Sanyāsa?

sadāsiva samārambhām sankarāchārya madhyamām
asmad āchārya paryantām vande guru paramparām

Today is **Guru Pūrnima**. It is also known as **Vyāsa Pūrnima**. This day is important for all spiritual seekers generally, and all Sanyāsis particularly. On this day, Sanyāsis perform a Pūja for the entire **Guru Parampara** especially, for **Vyāsāchārya** who is considered to be an important link in the Guru Parampara.

For orthodox Sanyāsis, today happens to be the beginning of their yearly **Chāturmāsya Vratam** also. They take a vow to remain in one place for either four months or two months. Such a Vratam is called the Chāturmāsya Vratam. For orthodox Sanyāsis, that begins with **Vyāsa Pūja** today.

Since it is a special day for Sanyāsis, I thought I will talk something about **Sanyāsa**. All Vēdāntic students know that for liberation, next to **Gnyānam**, the most important **Sādhana** is supposed to be Sanyāsa. The primary means of liberation is spiritual knowledge. Next to spiritual knowledge, Sanyāsa or renunciation is almost as important as spiritual knowledge.

That is why we have several Mantrās highlighting the importance of Sanyāsa. **na karmanā na prajayā dhanēna tyāgēnaikē amrutatva mānashuhu**. Tyāga means **Sanyāsa** or renunciation. In another well known Mantra - **vēdānta vinyāna sunischitārthāha sanyāsa yōgāt yathayashuddha satvāh**. **sanyāsa yōgāt**, the **Sādhana** of renunciation is highlighted.

In the Bhagavad Gīta, Lord Krishna also has highlighted the importance of **Sanyāsa**. Fortunately, he has given a concession with regard to Sanyāsa. **What is the concession given by the Lord Krishna?** Krishna says - whether a person becomes a formal **Āshrama Sanyāsi** or not, a

person should compulsorily become an internal Sanyāsi. To use the political language, inner saffronization is compulsory.

*anāshritah karma phalam kāryam karma karōtiyaha
sa sanyāsī cha yōgī cha naniragnir nachākriyaha*

*gnēyah sa nitya sanyāsī yōna dwēshti na kānkshati
nirdwandwōhi mahābāhō sukham bandhāt pramuchyātē*

Whether a person becomes a Sanyāsi externally or not, whether a person takes formal Sanyāsa or not, one should take **Āntara Sanyāsa Dīksha**. Āntara Sanyāsa Dīksha means Internal Sanyāsa or inner renunciation which is compulsory. Therefore, every serious spiritual Seeker, whatever is the Āshrama he is in, has to take Āntara Sanyāsa Dīksha by taking a **Sankalpa** to become an internal Sanyāsi.

One should prepare the mind for that. One day or the other, one should become an inner Sanyāsi. Only when **Gnyānam** is supported by **Sanyāsa**, it will fructify into liberation. **Naturally, the question will come as to what should I do to become an internal Sanyāsi? What should I do to become an Āntara Sanyāsa?**

What are the Vratams or disciplines that I should follow to become an Āntara Sanyāsi? To become one Āntara Sanyāsi also, one has to renounce because Sanyāsa means renunciation. So, the question is - **remaining in Grihastha Āshrama, if I should become an Āntara Sanyāsi, what should I renounce?** That is the theme of my topic today.

Based on the Shāstrās, I say that to become a Āntara Sanyāsi, one should renounce three things. Remaining Grihastha Āshrama, one should renounce three things to become an Āntara Sanyāsi. **What are those three things?** The first one is **Sarva Abhimāna Parityāgaha**. The word **Abhimāna** means the sense of ownership and controllership.

The sense of ownership and controllership is Abhimāna. I am an owner of such and such things and such and such people - that is ownership. I can control things and events - that sense is called controllership. From

the scriptures, we learn an important lesson that Bhagawan alone is the owner and controller of everything.

By the study of [Vishwarūpa Darshana](#) in the Bhagavad Gīta, the lesson that we learn is Bhagawan is everything and Bhagawan is the owner of everything. It means that I do not own any blessed thing in life. Bhagawan has temporarily given certain things for my use. Bhagawan has temporarily given certain things for my spiritual growth and use.

Bhagawan can take away anything from me, at any time, without seeking my permission and without even giving an advance notice. Therefore, Bhagawan can give anything to me at any time and Bhagawan can take away anything from me at any time, whether it is tangible things like people and property or intangible things like name, fame, honor, prestige, health etc.

Both tangible and intangible things belong to Bhagawan. He is the owner. If I claim ownership of anything, I am misappropriating Bhagawan's property which is a serious spiritual offence. Misappropriation is a serious spiritual offence for which the punishment is imprisonment in [Samsāra](#) jail.

Every time I claim ownership of anything, which is called Abhimāna, I am committing an offence of misappropriation, for which the punishment is [Samsāra Kārāgruha Vāsaha](#). [Kārāgruha](#) means a jail. Therefore, I should understand that ownership is a spiritual offence. Therefore, I renounce all the sense of ownership. In my heart of hearts, I always have a [Vrutti](#) that I own nothing. Therefore, I have nothing to lose.

What is the constant Vrutti which is cultivated and nourished? I have nothing to own and therefore, I have nothing to lose. It should not come from the lip only, but it should go deep into my heart. I not only should renounce the sense of ownership, but I have to renounce the sense of controllership also. I do not control anything or any event in the world.

Everything and every event is controlled by Bhagawan, according to the Laws of Karma, which involves several unknown and known factors. I don't even know what are the factors involved. **Where is the question of me controlling anything?** I am only a contributor. I do have a free will and I do have a choice.

With my free will and choice, I can become a contributor. That too, I become one of the contributors. Based on my contribution and based on several other factors, Bhagawan controls events. Even when I take medicine for a health problem, taking medicine is my contribution only. I can never control my health through that.

Bhagawan will decide whether after ten days of medication, I should recover or I should cover and go. Medication is my contribution, health is controlled by Bhagawan. Therefore, I don't have ownership. I don't have controllership. I have got only contributor-ship. Therefore, I renounce the notion of ownership and controllership.

Ownership and Controllership together is called **Abhimāna - Sarva Abhimāna Tyāgaha**. This is the greatest form of **Bhakti** called surrender. **Ātma Nivēdana Rūpa Bhakti** which is otherwise called surrender. Krishna talks about this in the words of **Nirmamaha** and **Nirahamkāraha**. Therefore, the first renunciation is **Sarva Abhimāna Tyāgaha**, renouncing claims of ownership and controllership.

This is the first renunciation. Then, the second renunciation is **Sarva Chintā Parityāgaha**. **Chintā** means anxiety or worry. If we analyze our mind, we can find that all our worries are centered around only those things and beings where we have **Abhimāna**. If you analyze, all our anxieties and worries are only centered on those things and beings where we have got **Abhimāna**.

Where there is no **Abhimāna**, which we generally called third party, with regard to those people and things, we do not have any worry - **Chintā Nāsti**. Therefore, it is very clear that the psychological law is that

every Abhimāna is associated with worry and ever worry is associated with Abhimāna. **Abhimāna** and worry are interconnected.

Therefore, they reinforce each other. Greater is the Abhimāna, greater is the worry and vice-versa. The more I worry, the more I am reinforcing my Abhimāna in the object of worry. Therefore, an **Āntara Sanyāsi** recognizes that worry promotes Abhimāna. Therefore, if I should become an **Āntara Sanyāsi**, not only I should renounce all the Abhimāna, but I should renounce my support for all forms of worry.

The arrival of worry is the most natural thing because we have developed the habit of worrying. Therefore, we cannot avoid the arrival of worry, but by becoming an **Āntara Sanyāsi**, I use all my resources to disengage the mind from all forms of worry. The moment any form of worry comes, the red signal should burn.

Worry means **Abhimāna**. **What am I doing through my worry?** I am nourishing Abhimāna. Abhimāna means spiritual offence and spiritual offence means **Samsāra Kārāgruha**, extended by a few more years or Janmās. Therefore, an **Āntara Sanyāsi** should strongly reject all forms of worries.

As even they arrive, we should use all the resources and skills. The aim is I don't allow the continuation or nourishment of any blessed form of worry. Therefore, the second renunciation is **Sarva Chintā Parityāgaha**. The first one is **Sarva Abhimāna Parityāgaha**. Then, the third renunciation is **Sarva Vishēsha Prārthana Parityāga**.

Vishēsha Prārthana means all forms of special prayers, vows etc, which are meant for special purposes. If you study the psychology of special prayer, we will note that we offer special prayers only with regard to the things and the people where we have Abhimāna. We are not going to do any special prayer when the thing or object is outside the precious Abhimāna circle. Only those things and people which fall within the Abhimāna circle have **Visēsha Pūja**.

Therefore, *yatra yatra abhimānaha tat tatra vishēsha pūja. yatra yatra vishēsha prārthana tatra tatra abhimānaha*. Just as worry is integrally connected to Abhimāna, all special prayers are also integrally connected to Abhimāna. Therefore, they reinforce each other. More the Abhimāna, more will be the special prayers.

More the special prayers, I am nourishing and increasing Abhimāna fattening process. More the Abhimāna, greater is the spiritual offence. Greater the spiritual offence, *Samsāra* is more perpetuated. Therefore, every spiritual seeker should know that special Prārthana will nourish Abhimāna.

Therefore, as even there is a tendency, one has to drop or reject that. This is the third renunciation - *Sarva Vishēsha Prārthana Parityāgaha*. **What is Āntara Sanyāsa?** It is nothing but *Sarva Abhimāna, Sarva Chintā, Sarva Vishēsha Prārthana Parityāgaha*. For easy remembrance, I have coined a word - CLASP rejection.

‘CL’ stands for claiming ownership and controllership. ‘A’ stands for anxieties, worries and fears. ‘SP’ stands for special prayer, special Prārthana. ‘CL’ is for *Sarva Abhimāna*, ‘A’ is for *Sarva Chintā* and ‘SP’ is for *Sarva Vishēsha Prārthana*. CLASP rejection is *Āntara Sanyāsaha*. Therefore, every serious spiritual seeker should one day or the other, take Āntara Sanyāsa by taking a *Sankalpa*.

We should prepare and choose one day. For a formal *Sanyāsi*, the Sanyāsa day becomes CLASP rejection day. For a *Grihastha*, there is no formal Sanyāsa. Therefore, he should choose one day and has to take a *Sankalpa*. **What is that Sankalpa?** From today onwards, I reject CLASP. This is Āntara Sanyāsa.

Suppose a spiritual seeker decides to take Āntara Sanyāsa. If a person decides to take *Āntara Sanyāsa Sankalpaha*, he should remember some of the facts. Some important facts regarding this Āntara Sanyāsa must be remembered. **What are they?**

When a Grihastha chooses to renounce **Abhimāna**, **Chintā** and **Vishēsha Prārthana**, he need not feel guilt at all because these three things do not come under the duty of a Grihastha. Abhimāna is not a duty of Grihastha. Worry is never the duty of a Grihastha. **Vishēsha Prārthana** or **Kāmya Karma** is never the duty of a Grihastha.

Since all these three do not come under the duty of a Grihastha, if he chooses, a Grihastha can happily renounce all these three without feeling any guilt or regret. This is the first point to be remembered. The second fact is - Lord Krishna in the 16th chapter of the Gīta, includes all these three (Abhimāna, Chintā, Vishēsha Prārthana) as **Āsuri Sampath**.

I am not entering the 16th chapter and quoting those verses. You can go and refer. In one place, he says - **dambō darpō abhimānas cha**. In another place, he says - **chintām aparimēyām cha**. In another place, he says - **kāma māshritya dushpūram**. You can thoroughly go through the 16th chapter.

In the Uddhava Gīta, while enumerating the three Gunās, we can see that all these three come under **Āsuri Sampath**. Krishna boldly says **daivī sampad vimōkshāya nibandhāya āsurī mata** - all these three will retard spiritual growth. That means, Vēdāntic study will benefit more only when this **Āntara Sanyāsa** is taken.

Without **Āntara Sanyāsa**, Vēdāntic study will give benefit, but it will be very limited. It is like walking with three iron balls tied to the leg. When you have got the three iron balls tied to the leg, you can walk, but it is dragging. Similarly, spiritual journey will be heavily slowed down and retard, as long as this threefold spiritual offence, threefold **Āsuri Sampath** is preserved and promoted.

Therefore, **Āntara Sanyāsa** will promote spiritual growth. One should remember this. **What is the first fact?** One need not feel guilty. **What is second fact?** This renunciation will promote spiritual growth. **What is the third fact?** Even after renouncing these three, a Grihastha can

continue all the other activities and contributions which will come under the duty of the Grihastha, based on the family designation and based on the organizational designation.

All the Karmās such as [Kāyika Karmāni](#) (contribution to the family and company), [Vāchika Karmāni](#) and [Mānasa Karmāni](#) can continue, leaving aside these three factors. When I say all the other duties can continue, all the regular worship of the Lord also can continue. [Vishēsha Prārthana](#), [Kāmya Pūja](#) alone is banned. All the [Nitya](#), [Naimittika Pūja](#) can and should continue.

Then, a person will ask - [if I become an Āntara Sanyāsi and do my Nitya, Naimittika Pūja, what should I ask the Lord?](#) You are banning [Vishēsha Prārthana](#) and you are asking me to do [Nitya, Naimittika Pūja](#). [What should I ask as an Āntara Sanyāsi? Some people ask Swāmiji, when you do Namaskāra, what do you ask?](#)

This is based on the biggest misconception that we should do Pūja only if we have to ask something to the Lord. We have concluded that Pūja is complete only if we ask for something. Remember that we can happily do Pūja for reinforcing our surrender to the Lord. We can convert every Pūja into a reinforcement of the [Āntara Sanyāsa](#).

O Lord, I intensely remember that you are the owner and controller of everything. I don't want to claim any ownership or controllership. I express the surrender of this ownership and controllership in the form my [Namaskāra](#). I need not ask anything. Pūja can be converted into a reinforcement of our surrender and thanking the Lord for whatever he has given.

Therefore, I convert every Pūja in the form of thanksgiving and reinforcement of [Ahamkāra Mamakāra Arpanam](#). If I do such a Pūja, automatically it will give mental strength for facing life. This [Āntara Sanyāsa Sahita Pūja](#) or [Nishkāma Pūja](#) will strengthen the mind, will strengthen the [Sanyāsa](#), will strengthen the [Sādhana Chatushtaya](#)

Sampatti, will strengthen the **Gnyānam** and will strengthen the **Gnyāna Nishtha**.

These are all automatic for **Nishkāma Pūja**. Thus, **Āntara Sanyāsi** can go to temples, can do Pūja, can do Namaskāra. **What is there in his mind?** O Lord, I own nothing and I have nothing to lose. You are the owner and controller of everything. Therefore, the third fact to be remembered is that **Nitya Nishkāma Pūja** need not be and should not be stopped.

Vishēsha Prārthana renunciation does not mean ending the Pūja. In fact, that should be both more now because we have to remind our **Āntara Sanyāsa**. This is the third fact to be remembered. The fourth important fact to be remembered is this. When I disclaim my ownership and controllership with regard to everything, that everything includes my own body and mind.

This is the toughest part of renunciation. Disclaiming ownership and controllership with regard to everything in the creation means it includes my own body-mind complex. Therefore, with regard to my body also, I have to renounce these three things - **Dēha Abhimāna Parityāgaha**. **What does it mean?**

O Lord, I am neither the owner nor the controller of the body. You are the decider of the type of condition of my body after five years. I can contribute to the health of the body by taking nutritious food, by going for walks etc, but I am not the controller of the bodily condition. Therefore, with regard to the physical body also, **Dēha Abhimāna Tyāgaha**.

Not only that, the second one is **Dēha Chintā Tyāgaha**. This is the toughest part. Everybody will begin to worry about the body once he or she crosses forty or fifty years. This worry is the most natural habit. **Āntara Sanyāsi** should practice active and deliberate renunciation of worry about the future condition of the body. So, **Dēha Chintā Parityāgaha** is included.

Still tougher one is **Dēha Vishēsha Prārthana Parityāgaha** - performing all types of special things for the Dēha. An Āntara Sanyāsi should renounce even that. He should do whatever is needed to maintain the body in a healthy condition, but no Pūja or prayer should be done for the Dēha.

If I do a **Vishēsha Prārthana**, through the Vishēsha Prārthana, I am nourishing **Dēha Abhimāna**. Nourishing Dēha Abhimāna is misappropriation. Misappropriation is a spiritual offence. Spiritual offence means next Janma. Therefore, **Sarva Dēha Vishayaha Chintā Pratyāgaha, Sarva Dēha Vishaya Vishēsha Prārthana Parityāgaha**.

Remaining in Grihastha Āshrama, one day or the other, one has to take this Sankalpa and follow that from that day. **Can others do Pūja for me?** As long as you don't ask them to do, it is ok. Next one is - with regard to the mind also, **Mind Abhimāna Parityāgaha, Mind Chintā Parityāgaha** and **Mind Vishēsha Prārthana Parityāgaha**.

With regard to the mind also, I do whatever is required to keep the mind fit. That is duty, but worrying about the mind is not a duty. That will come under one of these three spiritual offences. Vēdānta doesn't accept any form of worry. Similarly, worrying about the mind after death - will it have **Vidēha Mukti**, will it travel and take another body etc.

Worrying about the mind also will come under **Mind Abhimāna**. Abhimāna is spiritual offence. Spiritual offence means certainly no Vidēha Mukti. I do my duty to the mind, but I don't worry. Thus, **Sarva Abhimāna Tyāga + Sarva Chintā Parityāgaha + Sarva Vishēsha Prārthana Parityāgaha** is **Āntara Sanyāsa**.

An Āntara Sanyāsi should remember all these four facts. Lastly, before conclusion, I will discuss one more topic and conclude. **Is this Āntara Sanyāsa compulsory or not?** If you ask that, we say inner renunciation is compulsory if **Mōksha** is the goal. It is not compulsory today. We can postpone it, but we can never avoid that.

Therefore, **Āntara Sanyāsa** is compulsory. **What about Bāhya Sanyāsa? Is External Sanyāsa, Āshrama Sanyāsa, Vaidha Sanyāsa, formal Sanyāsa, Kāshāya taking Sanyāsa compulsory or not?** This is a technical topic of academic interest. Therefore, I will briefly discuss this and conclude.

Is formal renunciation, which is taking to monastic order compulsory or not? There are two types of views with regard to this. Generally, when we discuss this, invariably the topic will be centered on Janaka. Janaka will be the example taken for finding whether external Sanyāsa is required or not.

When we read the scriptures, we find that whenever Janaka is mentioned, it is clearly said that Janaka is an Āntara Sanyāsi and Janaka is a liberated person. We clearly see that in the Bhagavad Gīta. Also in Ashtāvakra Gīta, we find that Janaka is a Grihastha and he is an Āntara Sanyāsi and he is liberated. We have to note that.

Based on this instance, the question comes whether external Sanyāsa is required or not. **Generally, what do we interrupt?** Janaka became a Gnyāni and Janaka became liberated, remaining a Grihastha. **From this, what is the conclusion that we make?** Two conclusions are made. One group of people say - from this it is clear that external Sanyāsa is not compulsory.

It is because in the case of Janaka, he is not an external Sanyāsi. He is a Grihastha and he is liberated. Then, there is a second group of people who say - external Sanyāsa is not required in this Janma. If Janaka has practiced **Āntara Sanyāsa** and got liberation, it only proves that he was an external Sanyāsi in the Pūrva Janma.

Therefore, their argument is - in the **Pūrva Janma**, Janaka had taken external Sanyāsa. But because of some reason, he couldn't gain **Mōksha**. Therefore, he became a **Yōga Bhrashta**. In this Janma, because of the **Sanyāsa Vāsanās**, he became an Āntara Sanyāsi. Therefore, their

argument is that every **Āntara Sanyāsi Grihastha** has been an external Sanyāsi in the **Pūrva Janma**.

Therefore, external Sanyāsa is also part of liberation, either in the Pūrva Janma or in the current Janma. Therefore, if you all successfully practice **Āntara Sanyāsa** in **Grihastha Āshrama**, you have taken **Bāhya Sanyāsa** in **Pūrva Janma**. Therefore, they conclude that both Sanyāsās are there. Therefore, both Sanyāsās go with **Gnyānam**.

Anyway, we need not bother whether Bāhya Sanyāsa is taken in the Pūrva Janma, in the present Janma or in the future Janma. We focus on **Āntara Sanyāsa** like Janaka. Therefore, all serious spiritual seekers should prepare the mind for becoming **Āntara Sanyāsi**, one day or the other. Thereafter, **Gnyānam** and **Sanyāsa** put together will give both **Jīvan Mukti** and **Vidēha Mukti**. With this, I conclude the Sanyāsa topic.

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

Om shānti shānti shāntihi



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