దానానిధ్యమార్పించినప్రాయ: 2500 వర్షము: పూర్వు కేటగరీవస్సి పరమేశ్వర:-
కాలట్టా శివారు-అర్హమేమౌడు: ప్రతిభి అవతారం । ఇ: కుటుంబ స్వరమేమౌడు:
లోకక్షిరం ప్రాయం అనుబర్తించినవి శ్రీశాంసు వచ్చు అతితత్వాచేయికం: తాపపాపాయనం సరుకు జననం ఖాణు తాత తాత ఆసెటిస్మాచిలే పాదాం సధ్యం:
కర్మ-మిత్ర-శాసనం ప్రదర్శనం: షాంతిసాధనానం, శైవ-శాస్త్రా-కుమార-గణేశ-ప్రధానితయం కార్య విదాయం మహాపురాణ కృతి నిర్మాణ:

అత్యంత స్థాయిపాతిస్స్త్యం మతానిధానిస్త్యం: సర్వవిద్యాబిధిబడి, సర్వాచారిస్త్యం శాసనం ఐశానిషిస్త్యం అవిచ్ఛించితయం ప్రదర్శించితున్న చతురులు దిష్కు మధ్యం
స్థాయిపాతిత్య శ్రీకాశియం సంవయం అధిషాయ సర్వపాఠమాహాంషవహితను: ఇతి
బహుప్రమాణిసిద్ధం వృత్తాన్న:-

తత్త్వ శ్రీకాశియేరామం శిల్ప-ప్రతిష్ఠిష్ఠితమాం మహానుం ముఖనం
వోధేన్దురాడి: వైదికమాపోషం స్వయంసేనం శాసనానం కురంత: అవిచ్ఛించితయం అధ
యాసానంతో అత అవి విదాయసామిభి: "శమ్భోమూర్తిశాసనమును శాసనత్రష్యాంపాం ఇతి వర్తమాప్రోగ: కృత:-

II సానానాధమార్పించినప్రాయం II
परम्परागतमत्वायों पीठाधिपतिवें स्वामित्वाय: अरस्मदुरवः
श्रीचन्द्रशेखरन्द्रसरस्वतीस्वामिज्ञान: व्याजनत:।

पत्र "प्रत्यक्षदैवम्" इत्येव प्रसिद्ध: अरस्मां गुरुः श्रीचन्द्रशेखरन्द्र-
सरस्वतीस्वामिज्ञान: स्वामिये नियोद्धे वयसि काशीकामकोटिप्रथम् आरम्भः। ततः
परं स्वर्य शतवत्सरपर्वतं पीठे स्थिता बेदांर्धार्थशाखाचापपरिणामयाय
असंव्यानि कार्याणि कृतवः।

१. तत्र तत्र बेदपाठशाला: संस्थाप्य बेदांर्धार्थशाखाल्यु छात्राणाम्
अध्यापकानां च विचारिद्वाराय प्रोत्साहनाय बेदकर्मनिधिः-
संस्थाप्याणमू अकार्यः।

२. सन्त्यागुण्याम्, जातकर्म-नामकरणम्-अन्तःप्राशन-चौतोपयनम्-
विवाहाकर्मम्, तदुपयुतमन्त्राणां अर्थोधनाय पूर्वतकर्मस्य
श्रद्धोत्सवानाय "बेदांर्धार्थपरिणामभम्" प्रत्येकायम्।

३. स्वैयस्यस्थित्वपूर्तिपूर्वतन्त्रम् चरुवेद-भाष्याणां प्रचाराय
बेदःभाष्याध्यायन-अध्यापनाय च सच्चांद्वूर्तिसंस्कर्षणां संस्थाये
बेदःभाष्यप्रचारां शास्त्रपद्धितानाम् आर्थानन्वियुष्यां च मार्गदिव्ये सर्वाणि
शास्त्राणि पाठवित्वा प्राचीनशाखाओऽप्रांतां च अकार्यः।

४. भक्तिमार्गश्रसाय तमिल्लं-संस्कृतततोत्तराणि कण्ठस्थिकृतवः
सर्वेयः: वारितोपिशंदे दृश्वतः।

५. कलै मुनिधर्मस्य नामसंकीर्तनस्य विशेषतोधिशुमनाय नामलेखकानां
सर्वां योगसम्मानस्य कृतवा प्रोत्साहितवः।

६. सनातनबैदिकधर्मनुसारां श्रद्धाभक्ति-विकर्धनाय ते तत्र तत्र
बैदिककर्माणां, मन्त्राणां विशिष्टार्थानि प्रवचनरूपेण शाखाबद्धारा
बोधितकः।
7. औपचारिकानुसार अपेक्षित-स्थलभावात् उत्पन्नके दानवत्तीय ज्ञानप्रीयरस्तरलानि निर्माण संरचना स्वर्णपत्तनुमानासारे बढ़कृति बनतः।

महान: अते स्वप्नवाणुम् एव सम्पूर्ण भारतदेशे यात्रां च विधाय
काशीयाम् हृद्वारा भगवत्पारदसमारकाणि दृढ़भवनानि तत्र तत्र
स्थापितवन्तः।

1) मण्डनमिश्र-श्रीरामसंवतः जगद्रसिद्धः विराजते। स च प्रयोगक्षेत्रे
संहृत इति हेतुः तस्मीत युण्यक्षेत्रे तत्त्वारकत्या वैदेवेदाङ्गेदान्त-
त्रिवेणीसंगमक्षेत्रे गंगाधमुतसस्तरावतिसंगमे प्रसिद्धत्रिवेणीसंगमे
संगमस्तरसमन्नतरं दृष्टान्तः प्रसिद्धशंकाविस्मानमिरं रखायमासुः।

2. रामेश्वरक्षेत्रे समुद्रतीरे एव श्रीरामस्थान, मूर्ति च प्रतिष्ठाय स्मारकर्पिं
च कृतवन्तः।

3. श्रीकालिकस्त्रेडः प्रभगत्यात्तानां कीर्तितं च प्रतिष्ठाय अनेक जनेषु
गुरुस्माधम् उत्पादितवन्तः।

4. हम्मिनगरे चतुर्वेदभाष्यश्रेणेजाताः श्रीविष्णुरावर्त-प्राक्षतम् आवासभूमि
कांश्य मासानुपत्तिचा तैय विचारनानां शिलाशासनां श्रोदिकरणम्,
तद्विषये तत्त्वारा प्राचीनसंस्कृतिविवेकः शोधं च कार्यित्वा
प्रकोष्ठकारम्, विचारणश्रीरामणां विष्येव्योक्ते श्रद्धाभिचुत्तादिति
च सर्वनाः शिलाशासनस्तरावतियान् संगृह हृद्वारा पुष्करकानि
मुदायमासुः।

5. काशीपुर द्रष्ट सर्वसाधन सरस्वती देवपुजायाः: अवस्थानकर्त्तव्यत्वम्,
प्राचीनजीविमंदिरेषु पूजाकर्तुष्मानि मासिकं वेतनं प्रदाय प्रजाधारा जनेषु
भक्तिमौल उत्पादितवन्तः।
6. भारते बहुत देवालयांमध्ये जीर्णता प्राचीनता व दृष्टिव तप:शतक्या तत्तत्त्व महिमां ज्ञात्वा तेषां जीर्णोद्वार पुनः प्रतिष्ठा च अकार्थः।

7. नवीनशास्त्रप्रभावे प्राचीनशास्त्रां, अध्येतुर्गां च संस्कृत न्यूनता सम्पन्नति ज्ञात्वा विभेदशास्त्राणि तत्रापि विशेषतः न्यायशास्त्रं सन्न्यासाय काह्यामेव न्यायबिधात्वं रथायायामायुः।

8. प्राचीनशास्त्रप्रणितां मारिके वेतनम् अत्यमिति ज्ञात्वा मत्वा च, तद्वारा कुलसंरक्षणे केशं दृष्टा प्रतिप्रणितं न्यूनतिन्यूनम् आय्यां मारिकसम्भावना भविष्यति स्थवरुपया मुख्यार्थभाप्तिनिमुद्दाय शास्त्रप्रणितानामू आजीविं संस्कृतमिदानीमिपि अनुसूयृत्वया विधीयमानमस्ति।

9. प्रणितां स्वस्थतेष एव सम्भवानं नर्त्ता शिष्यानं तत्रेष सम्प्रेये शास्त्राध्ययनं कारितवन्तः तद्वारा रजीकुर्ता: विधायिन: भारते बहुत विराजते।

10. “देयं दीनजनय च वितम्” इति भगवत्वादसूतीम् अवलम्ब्य के ज्ञ्यसम्बन्धिः वही: प्रतिक्रिया प्रतिग्रामं च संस्कृताय दीनानां विवाहाणिः कार्यसूचि अपरिमितसत्वत्वा धनसाहाय्ये कृतवन्तः।

एवं बहुविश्वायोगकारकारण्यं प्रत्यक्षत्वा परोक्षत्वा वा सहकृतवन्ता तपोमूर्तिः जगद्धर्मां साधारं ईश्वरस्वप्नां महतं पीठारोहणाताब्दी आनामिनियतर्दमू आगमिश्च। तत्सन्दर्भं तत्र भवतं तेषां महतं सम्प्रेयन तद्भीतानं सत्कर्मणं सर्वं परितः अभिवृद्धे नानाविहा: कार्यक्रमाः आयोजनीय: इति बहुम्ब: भक्ते: वाच्छस्यते। ताद्रशमोपहतसकार्यक्रमा: सम्प्लक प्रचलन्तु इति आदास्महे। तत्र च सर्वो आस्तिकार्जना भारं स्वाकृत्व जन्मसामाय्यं लभन्ताम् इति च क्रियते नारायणमृति:।
श्री काश्रीकामकोटिपीठाधीपति
जगद्गुरु श्रीजयेन्द्रसरस्वती
गुरुस्तुति:

श्री काश्री कामकोटि पीठाधीपति
जगद्गुरु श्री जयेन्द्र सरस्वती श्रीपादेः कृता

अपार करणासिन्धुं ज्ञानं शान्तस्तुपिनम् ।
श्री चन्द्रशेखरगुरं प्रज्ञमिनि मुदान्तवहम् ॥

गुरुवारसभाराशास्तिर्भक्ति कृतम्
अनूराधासभारावैद्यसंस्करणां कृतम् ।
मार्गोपीतं मासवरे स्तोत्रपाठप्रचारणम्
वेदधापणप्रचारसं गर्भोत्सवनिधि: कृत: ॥

कर्मकाण्डप्रचारसं वेदधर्मसंभा कृता
वेदान्तप्रचारसं विधायणनिधि: कृत: ।
शिलालेखप्रचारसं उद्धिकितनिधि: कृत:
गोपराह्यपहितार्थ वेदरक्षणगोनिधि: ॥
गोपशाला पाठशाला च गुरुभिस्त्र निमिति
बालिकानां विवाहार्थ कन्यादाननिधि: कृत: ।
द्वारकानाथ साहित्य कल्पनिक निधि: कृत:
बालपुरदातुराणां च व्यवस्था परिसारले।

अनाध्येतसंस्कारात् अथमेघफलं लमेतुः
इति वाक्यानुसारेण व्यवस्था तत्र कलिता।

यत्र श्रीभगवत्यादिः: क्षेत्रपर्यंतं कृतम्
तत्र तेन शिलाभूति प्रतिष्ठाप्य जुभं कृतम्।

भक्त वाध्याभिरसिद्धार्थं नामतारकलेखनम्
राजतं च रथं कृत्वा कामाध्य: परिवाहणम्।

कामाध्यंतारिक्षवांस्य स्वर्णपत्रः: समास्थः
मूलस्योत्सवकामाध्य: स्वर्णवर्णपरिष्कृतः।

ललितानामसाहस्र स्वर्णमाला विराजते
श्रीदेव्या: पर्वकालेशु सुवर्णरथ चालनम्।

चिदम्बर नंदेश्वर सुवैदूर्यकरीकरकम्
करेकभयमेदं पादी कुञ्जित रतभूषणम्।

मुहिष्ठितपुराणात दरिद्राणां च भोजनम्
सुगंधलये भक्त: प्रसादा विनियोजनम्।

लोकश्रीमहितार्थं गुरुः: वहु तत्कृतम्
स्मरनु तद्वन्दनं कुर्वनु जन्मसाफल्यमयुगात्।
सद्गुरुदशकम्
श्री शाकंभविजयेन्द्रसरस्वती श्रीचरणेः कृतम्

श्रुतिस्मृतिपुराणोकथर्मार्गर्तं गुरूम्।
भक्तान्तै स्वते नमस्ये चित्तशुद्धेयै।। 1 11

अद्वैतानन्दभरितं साधूनामुपकारिणम्।
सम्प्रदायो शान्तं नमस्ये चित्तशुद्धेयै।। 2 11

कर्मभक्तिज्ञानमार्गप्रचारेः बुद्धकुक्तम्।
अनुग्रहप्रदाताः नमस्ये चित्तशुद्धेयै।। 3 11

भगवतपादपादविविविविषि

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श्रीचन्द्रशेखरगुरोः प्रसादो मयि जायताम्।। 4 11

क्षेत्रतीर्थकथाभिजः सख्लन्दधनविग्रहः।
चन्द्रशेखरवयो में सत्याध्यात्म सदा हृदः।। 5 11

पोषणे बेदशाहाण्य दत्तचित्तमहर्निमिताम्।
क्षेत्रयात्रार्तं वन्दे सदृगुरूं चन्द्रशेखरम्।। 6 11

बेदशाह वेदभाष्यशान् कर्तु यस्य समुद्रम्।
गुरूर्यत्स महादेवं तं वन्दे चन्द्रशेखरम्।। 7 11
मणिवाचकगोदादिभक्तिबागामृतेभृत्रशम्।
बालानां भगवद्रतिं वर्धिनं सुरूं भजे॥ ॥ ८॥

लघूपदेशेनास्तिक्यभावमदनकोविदम्।
शिवं स्मितमुखं शान्तं प्रणतोडस्मि जगद्गुरुम्॥ ॥ ९॥

विनयेन प्रार्थ्येहं विद्या वोधय मे गुरो।
मार्गमन्यं न जानेहं भवन्तं शरणं गतः॥ ॥ १०॥

viii
INTRODUCTION

Location : Kalavai, a small town in the Vellore District of Tamil Nadu, India.

Date : February 13, 1907.

A young boy of thirteen is chosen to become the 68th Pitâdhipathi of Sri Kânci Kâmakôti Pitam, in the illustrious paramparâ of Ācharyas who adorned the Pitam established by Sri Ādhi Śankarâ more than 2500 years ago.

That boy is none other than His Holiness Jagadguru Sri Chandrâsêkharêndra Saraswathi Swâmigal. To millions of devotees he was simply 'Periyava' — the revered one or Maha-Periyava. 'Periyava' in Tamil means a great person. That term however has acquired a special meaning because it has come to refer to His Holiness. It is a term that at once conveys endearment, reverence and devotion. It would never be mentioned in a casual manner. Mahaswami and Pâramâchâryâ are his other well-known appellations.

The Pâramâchâryâ was the Pitâdhipathi of the Mutt for 87 long years. During this period, Sri Kânci Kâmakôti Pitam acquired new strength as an institution that propogated Sri Ādhi Śankarâ's teachings. The devotion, fervour and intensity with which the Pâramâchâryâ practised what Ādhi Śankarâ had preached, is unparallelled. He lived a spartan life. Throughout his life, the main focus of his concern and activities was rejuvenating Vêdha adhyayana, the Dharma Sasthras and the age old tradition which
had suffered decline. ‘Vēdha rakshanam’ was his very life breath and he referred to this in most of his public discourses and private conversations. His providing regular support to Vēdha Pātāśālās through the Vēdha Rakshna Nidhi Trust (which he founded), honouring Vedhic scholars, holding regular sadhas which included discussions on arts and culture - these led to a renewed interest in Vedhic religion, Dharma sasthras and Sanskrit. His long tenure as Pitāhipathī was the golden era of the Kānchi Kāmakōti Pītam.

Pāramāchāryā was a walking university. Scholars of all sects, not only from all over India but also from countries abroad came to him and deemed it a blessing and a privilege to go back enlightened after meeting him. His regular visitors ranged from the most ordinary village folk to the highest in the land. Presidents and Prime Ministers, Kings and Queens, Highnesses and Excellencies came to spend a few moments with him and seek his blessings.

That the Paramāchāryā was an extraordinary phenomenon can be seen from this incident. When he was in his late eighties he left Kānchipuram and undertook a padha yathra through Karnataka, Maharashtra and Andhra. Before he returned to Kānchipuram he made all arrangements for the construction of an exquisite Nataraja temple at Satara (Uttara Chidambaram). The uniqueness about this temple is the fact that the states of Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry, Andhra Pradesh, Karanataka, and Maharashtra came together to build the 5 doorways to the temple. The state of Kerala supplied the entire wood required for the temple. It was only his grace and moral influence that made this possible.

The Paramāchāryā’s catholicity of outlook was extraordinary. He was the Advaita Ācharya. He was the authentic spokesman of Hindu religion and its Dharma Shastras and of Sanathana Dharma. He even believed that it was Vedhic religion that had prevailed all over the world in ancient times. But, just as he had high regard for the Ācharyas of other philosophical doctrines
like Ramanuja and Madhva and the Nayanmars of Saiva Siddhanta, he had great respect for Jesus and Mohamed Nabi, the Prophet. He could be so considerate as to express the view that those who indulged in proselytisation did so out of their conviction that their religion alone could secure redemption.

February 13, 2006 marks the beginning of the 100th year of the Pāramāchārīyā’s Sanyāsa Swikarana (entering the ascetic order) and Pīṭārōhāṇa (becoming the head of the Sri Kāṇchi Kāmakōti Pīṭam). Sri Kanchi Mahaswami Peetarohana Shatabdi Mahotsava Trust has been specially formed to celebrate this significant milestone in the spiritual history of India.

The main objective of the Trust is to spread the thoughts and the message of the Pāramāchārīyā across the world, not just to his devotees, but even to others who might never have had the opportunity to have his dharsan. With this objective in view the Trust has undertaken on priority the translation into English and other major Indian languages of his discourses in Tamil (upansayam). To begin with, we have chosen ‘Deivathin Kural’ - Voice of God in Tamil. It is a collection of the Pāramāchārīyā’s discourses starting from 1932. There are seven volumes each of about 1000 pages. His talks cover a wide range of topics apart from all aspects of Vedhic dharma and Hindu religion which is the main focus. It is a veritable encyclopedia of Hindu religion and dharma to which people refer for authentic information on these aspects.

‘Deivathin Kural’ is a monumental work by Sri Ra Gānapathy and it occupies a special place among many books written about Pāramāchārīyā. Sri Gānapathy painstakingly collated all of Pāramāchārīyā’s talks, conversations, casual comments, answers to questions etc covering several aspects of our ancient religion, dharma and culture. Sri Gānapathy not only collected the material but also collated and organized under various subjects everything that the Pāramāchārīyā had spoken about a subject over many years, at several places.
The purpose of the English translation is two fold. One is to reach Pāramāchāryā’s thoughts and message to a wider audience. The second is to use the English translation as the basic text for translation into other Indian languages. The original in Tamil portrays in large measure the simplicity and clarity of thoughts and expressions and the unique story telling style of the Pāramāchāryā. It has been our attempt to capture it in English. As readers will know this is not an easy task. In one of his talks, while explaining the need to protect the Vēdhas in their original form, the Pāramāchāryā himself has, in his characteristic style, referred to the limitations of any translation.

The Pāramāchāryā’s observations are a warning to us and we are deeply conscious of our responsibility. Effort has been made to address the average reader through this work in simple language. Since the English version is to be the base from which translation into other Indian languages will be done, suitable diacritical markings have been used for Sanskrit and Tamil words. Wherever necessary the actual Sanskrit words and Ślōkās have been given with diacritical markings and the meanings are also given along with the words. This should make it more convenient for the reader than a separate glossary at the end.

It is usual to share one’s good and memorable experiences with others. When two devotees of the Pāramāchāryā meet, it turns out to be an occasion for sharing of experiences. Entire train journeys could be spent talking only about him and his various qualities. He has indeed created a huge family, truly a Vasudaiva Kutumbhakam. It is the hope and wish of Sri Kanchi Mahaswami Peetarohana Shatabdi Mahotsava Trust that readers will experience the Pāramāchāryā through these pages, which in itself would be an elevating experience.

His talks do more than providing insight into Vedhic Dharma and Hindu religion. There is indeed hope that inspite of the
declining moral values all around, dharma will prevail. It should also be clear that mere wishful thinking will not make that happen. All of us have a duty and responsibility towards making it happen. The many schemes which the Pāramāchāryā introduced are simple and effective. If anything, we have to revive many of his practical ideas and implement them.

The blessings of H.H. Sri Jayendra Saraswathi Swāmigal and H.H. Sri Sankara Vijayendra Saraswathi Swāmigal, the 69th and 70th Ācharyas of Sri Kānchi Kāmakōti Pītam have provided encouragement to this Trust to embark on a project of this magnitude. It is their Sankalpa that the Pāramāchāryā’s message should reach every Indian wherever he may be. We are overwhelmed by the responsibility they have placed on us.

Millions of the Pāramāchāryā’s devotees sincerely believe that He is alive even today and He is guiding us on the path of dharma. It is His spirit that acts as the beacon in these troubled times. It is through His grace that this work is being published.

*Sri Kanchi Mahaswami
Peetarohana Shatabdi Mahotsava Trust
Mumbai
February 13, 2006*
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

His Holiness Sri Chandrāśekharāendra Saraswati the 68th Acharya of Sri Kāṇchi Kāmākoti Pitam, was humility personified. In the words of one of his ardent devotees, he was the greatest ‘mayavi’ — in this that he neither revealed himself as God nor as God’s voice. He has not even hinted as much.

Throughout his public discourses and private conversations he has been meticulous in his expressions. He will always trace his views to the Vēdhas, the Puranas or the Dharma shastras. It was never ‘my opinion or point of view’. His focus was on truth and since it is truth that he has consistently spoken about, the Tamil volumes came to be named ‘Deivathin Kural’ — meaning Voice of God.

In the introduction we have already referred to the Herculean efforts made by Sri Ra Gānapathy to compile the seven volumes of ‘Deivathin Kural’ and have them published. While all of us owe our eternal gratitude to Sri Gānapathy we, in the Trust, have a special duty not just to thank him but salute him, which we do with great pleasure.

We are also grateful to Sri Thirunavukkarasu of Vanathi Publications who has published all the seven volumes of ‘Deivathin Kural’. He has rendered a glorious service for the preservation of Sanathana Dharma. Vanathi Publications have also graciously permitted us to translate the original Tamil works not only in English but also in other Indian languages. We specially thank them
for this. May the blessings of the Pāramāchārya be always with them.

In his preface to the Tamil editions Sri Ganapathy has thanked Kalki and B.G. Paul & Co, a publishing house. He has also thanked several individuals making special mention of Sri Ananthānandēndra Saraswathy Swāmigal, popularly known as ‘Sri Ānjanēya Swāmigal, who spent several years with the Pāramāchārya. He was witness to several conversations and expositions of Pāramāchārya on various topics. It was he who helped Sri Gānapathy to capture the delicate nuances on many subjects, discussed by the Pāramāchārya. In addition, there were devotees who had assiduously taken notes from the Pāramāchārya’s conversations and speeches and gladly shared them with Sri Ganapathy but on strict conditions of anonymity. Such is their devotion and humility.

We approached Sri V. Krishnamachari of Mumbai for taking up the responsibility on the Tamil to English translation work. He readily consented to undertake the onerous task. Sri Krishnamachari who is in his late seventies is a retired official of the Railways. He had developed a flare for literary work very early in his life. He has been a freelance journalist and has also reviewed several books including books on religion. He has especially taken interest in translations and some of his translated works have been published by the Bharathiya Vidya Bhavan. Currently, he is the Executive Editor of Dilip, a magazine devoted to Hindu religion and culture, which was founded at the instance of the Paramacharya and He is also the Secretary of Bombay Tamil Sangham. He has done this English translation as a labour of love and we wish to record our grateful thanks to him.

As in all such projects, there will always be scores of silent volunteers, who do things just for the pleasure of rendering service.
In this case, they have performed this as a yagna because of their unstinting devotion to the Pāramāchāryā. We are grateful to all of them.

It is because of the Divine grace and the blessings of the Pāramāchāryā that we even thought of this monumental project. While we were still thinking of the project, H.H. Sri Jayendra Saraswathi Śrīvijaya and H.H. Sri Sankara Vijayendra Saraswathi Śrīvijaya gave us the much needed encouragement and impetus to plunge into this ocean of nectar in the manner of what Krishna did to Arjuna to spur him into action. We offer our obeisance to the two Ācharyas.

*Sri Kanchi Mahaswami*

*Peetarohana Shatabdi Mahotsava Trust*

*Mumbai*

*February 13, 2006*
GUIDANCE TO PRONUNCIATION OF
NON-ENGLISH WORDS WITH DIACRITICAL MARKING

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<td>E in East, Eagle</td>
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<td>Ō ō</td>
<td>o in open, over</td>
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<td>N ē</td>
<td>n in rent, under, bundle</td>
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<td>L ĕ</td>
<td>l in pluck, click, block</td>
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The word Āchāryā with capital A, whenever appearing, refers to Ādhi Sankara Bhagavadpādā
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MANGALĀRAHMAM
THE PILLAIYĀR SYMBOL

Whatever we begin writing we do only after marking the Pillaiyār Symbol. It need not be a big literary work; whether it is a postcard or a list of groceries to be purchased, we begin after marking the Pillaiyār Symbol. Not only when writing but before commencing any work, we have to bring in ‘Mahāganāpathi’ so that the work gets completed without obstacles. While it is true that no work is undertaken without remembering him, that we remember him in the matter of writing is written proof which is in the form of the symbol with which writing is commenced.

We are first marking the Pillaiyār Symbol (which has the form of half a circle in it) so that the matter we write does not end up in zero.

Even those who start with ‘ŌM’ instead of the ‘Pillaiyār Symbol’ have to start writing the ‘ŌM’ with a semi-circle, whether ‘ŌM’ is written in Tamil or Grantha Script. Not only that, this prañava form itself is Pillaiyār, is it not?

The symbol consists of a curve (part of a circle); it is called ‘Vakram’. The lower part of the elephant’s trunk is curved. For this reason, he has a name ‘Vakrathuṇḍar’. The curve that is drawn for marking the Pillaiyār Symbol if completed, becomes a full circle. The world, the several other worlds, the stars, Brahmāṇḍam which contains the stars are all circular. Andam means egg. The egg is round, is it not?

What is surprising is that the complete form (Pūrṇa Swarūpam) is also the name for cipher! What is full (Pūrṇam) is Pillaiyār. What is śūnyam (zero) is also Pillaiyār. The circle indicates the great truth that whatever is there and is not there is all Paramāthmā only. Inside the mōdhakaṁ in Pillaiyār’s hand, sweet material remains stuffed (This sweet material is called ‘Pūrṇam’). With this Pillaiyār demonstrates his fullness (Pūrṇathva). Such a
Piḷḷaiyār, we symbolize by half a zero. This symbol (half a circle) will make everything whole.

The Piḷḷaiyār symbol which starts with a curve ends in a straight line ( - ) Piḷḷaiyār who is the whole and śūnya is also vakra (bent). The import is that he is also the one who is straight. What is opposite to Vakram is ārjavam (straight or straightforward). Attributes and lack of attributes are all the appearance of one nirguṇa Paramāthmā.

The letter U is the second and the middle letter of ‘praṇavam’ (aum). Praṇava, which is omkhāra consists of three letters. a, vu and ma (A-U-M). Those who have knowledge of this will write this as AUM and not as ŌM. A is srushti (creation); Brahmā; Vu for protection; Vishnu. Ma is samhāra; Īswarā. The Thrimūrthis appeared from one Parāsakthi only. Therefore, She is the form of Praṇava (Praṇava Swarūpinī). However, Praṇavam is not called ‘Dēvi Praṇavam’. It is ‘Umā’ which is called ‘Dēvi Praṇavam’. It is the same alphabets which have changed their positions - (A-U-M) becoming (U-M-A). In AUM the first letter is A, which is the origin of creation; but in Umā the root of protection U is first. That is why it is said that the Praṇavam of Ambāj who protects with love should begin with U and, therefore, ‘Umā’ should be Her Praṇavam.

In AUM what is at the centre, like heart, is U. It occupies the prime place in the Praṇava of Dēvi who protects with great compassion. When only U is there in the Piḷḷaiyār Symbol without A and M, one thing comes to mind. That is He is not just like the mother; He is a step above the mother. How? She is having A of srushti and M of Samhāra on either side of U. But the son does the only act of protecting all the time as Karutāmūrthi and he stops with U only. In Praṇavam, U is of Vishnu’s form. Umā is also Vishnuṣūpinī, Nārāyana Sahōdari, Vīṣṇumāyā Vilāsini, Nārāyanī. At the beginning of the Slokā recited by all people before
commencing any work, the words ‘Śuklāmbaratharam Vishnūm’ occurs (here Vishnū means ‘is omnipresent’). The letter U (pronounced as VU) connects the son of Śiva-Śakthi with Vishnū and brings about reconciliation between Śaivasam and Vaishnavism.

There is a lot of philosophical truth in the Pillaiyār Symbol which consists of a curve and a straight line. When something rotates like a wheel, there should be an axis to it, which is straight. In the idols of Vishnū it would be depicted that he is keeping his finger straight and that serves as the axis for the chakra to rotate. Even for crackers which rotate and produce bright light or sound, there is an axis, which is held in the hand and which is straight. When we say that all the worlds in the universe are having circular motion, there should be an axis which is straight. Even if that axis cannot be seen, it must be there in the form of energy. We show the universe which rotates in a circular manner and the straight line which is its supporting axis as the symbol of Pillaiyār- a circle and a straight line combined.

There is something which comes to mind either read or heard somewhere that energy itself gets produced in the shape of the Pillaiyār symbol. It was mentioned that when tar is poured and electricity is obtained from it, the electrical energy rises from the rotation in a straight line. In the Pillaiyār symbol, the curve is rotation and the straight line represents the energy rising from it. We may also call these two as ‘Nādha-Bindhu’ which is of the form of ‘Śiva-Śakthi’. These are subtle matters.

It can be said that the circle which gets completed at the point where it started represents ‘Brahmam’. The Pillaiyār symbol starts as a circle but after becoming a semi circle it becomes a straight line. It can, therefore, be said that, after symbolically showing ‘Brahmam’ which is one, it also shows the several creations which appeared from it. ‘Brahmam’ is whole (Pūrṇam).
Universe also is whole. At the beginning of the Upanishad we say that from Brahmam, which is whole, the universe which is whole came. The Pillaiyar symbol with its curve and straight line shows that the Universe came from Brahmam - that the curve symbolizes Brahma Pūrṇam and the straight line the Prapancha Pūrṇam (Universe).

I mentioned the words - the curve and the straight line. In a funny manner, both are the names for the Pillaiyar’s ivory tusk. Ėka Dhanthar in Tamil is ‘single komban’. In Tamil, kōdu (straight line) is also another word for ivory. Avvai who prayed to the Child-God and got the old age form even when she was young refers to this Ėka Dhantham and says that it destroys the karmā of our past life (Prārabdha Karmā).
VINĀYAKĀ’S CONNECTION WITH WRITING

The Pillaiyar Symbol which we mark is a token expression of Vignēswara. It does not openly tell us his name. But if we see the old palmyra leaves used for writing, we will find that at the beginning it is clearly written ‘Sri Gaṇāḍhipathayē namah’.

I thought about why, in the matter of writing, special importance is given to Gaṇāpathi, though it is true that, while commencing any work, we have to seek his blessings. I thought about Pillaiyar being mentioned in the beginning, instead of Saraswathi. I also thought why in all the leaves, the name Gaṇāḍhipathi is mentioned and not any other like Vināyakar, Vignēswara, Vakrathurīḍa, Hērambar. I also discussed with scholars and then I could understand it somewhat. Of the several meanings for Gaṇa, there is one which is related to language itself. In Vyākaraṇa (grammar) all words which fall under the same rule have been compiled and given. Gaṇāḍhipathi is the Adhipathi (Chief) of the Gaṇās. Apart from his having the names Gaṇāpathi, Gaṇāḍhipathi, Gaṇēshā, Gaṇānāthan, because he is the chief of Paramēswarā’s army (Būtha Gaṇās), He has got these names also because, he is the chief of the aggregate of words. That is why Gaṇāḍhipathayē Namaha is first written before the matter proper.

If Vināyakar is of the Praṇava form, is not Praṇava the base for all sounds? Therefore, it is appropriate to look to him as the Chief of the aggregate of words and offer obeisance to him while commencing to write.

Another reason can also be mentioned. He himself has been a great writer! If it is asked which is the biggest book in the world, you will say it is only Mahābāratham. When someone keeps dragging on with some statements, we say ‘I do not want all that
Mahābāratham’. Mahābāratham consists of one lakh slōkās. It is called ‘Panchamō Vedhah’ (The fifth Vedha). The other four Vedhās are to be listened to not written, memorized and preserved. Bhāratham, which is the fifth Vedhā has been written down. As Vedha Vyāsa Bhagawān kept on narrating it, Mahāgārṇāpathi Himself kept writing it on the top of Mount Meru. That is how he becomes a writer (A devotee who had taken part in this discussion with Sri Periyavā said that writer will refer to the original author and since Vyāsa alone is the original author for Bhāratham, he can be referred to as copyist. At this, Periyavā continues) If it is argued that Pillaiyār should not be called a writer, he can certainly be called a copyist. In English, the word, ‘writer’ has both the meanings, viz: the original author and the copyist who did the writing. Therefore, if Pillaiyār is said to be the writer, no objection can arise.

Even if he was not an author, but only a copyist, he is still qualified to receive the first obeisance in any (palmyra) book. This is so because those who wrote these leaves (Suvadi in Tamil) were not the original authors either. In olden times, the author would be one person and as he went on narrating another person would write it down. It cannot be said that in those times even those who were well read could write. Just as we talk of calligraphist, there were separate people whose job was to write beautifully. In those days, irrespective of the size of the sāstrās, students did not practise writing and reading. The disciples listened to the guru, repeated what he said and by constant hearing and repetition, they memorised the whole thing. But as a matter of safety, they kept people for copying. It is only fair that these copyists consider as their chief ‘Gaṇādhipathi’ who had written down Mahābāratham.

He had broken his own tusk and used it as pen. The chief pride of an elephant is its ivory tusk. It is because of this that it is said that an elephant will fetch a thousand gold even if it dies. Vignēswara broke such a tusk and used it for writing with the
object that the book dealing with dharmā should be widely known to the world. Mahāganāpathi who is the chief of the gods, who is of the Praṇava form and who is the son of Pārvathi-Paramēśvarā reduced himself in status as a scribe to Vyāsa and wrote the Bhāratham in order to spread Dharmā.

Natarājā himself wrote even as Mānikavāchakar kept singing. There is a story that Krishṇa Paramāthmā came as Jayadevā and wrote a line of Gitā Govindam. But the Swāmi who wrote one lakh slokas without getting weary is only Pillaiyār.

Because of this, whoever starts commencing with the obeisance ‘Sri Ganādhipathaye Namah’ will be blessed with the ability to write continuously without hindrance.

Vyāsa who found it difficult to match the speed with which he was writing, dictated complicated slokas, now and then, to make him pause and think so that in the meantime he could get ready for the next sloka. Such complicated slokas are called ‘Bharatha guttu’. We stand before Pillaiyār and do ‘Pillaiyār Kuttu’ (gently knocking both the temples with our hands as a form of obeisance) but Vyāsa put Pillaiyār himself into ‘guttu’. The word guttu in Kannada means secret. Tamil has absorbed several Kannada words. That is why in Tamil, we say ‘guttu’ has broken, meaning that the secret is out.

But since he is ‘Jnānā swarūpā’, next second, he would understand the complicated sloka and start writing. By commencing with ‘Sri Ganādhipathaye Namah’ and paying obeisance to him, we will get the faith that any complicated matter will become clear in a second and we can go on writing uninterrupted.
Let Us Go Around (Circumambulate)

Valampuri Vināyakar

In worshipping Pillaiyār, knocking the temples with both hands, double-up catching the ears, do pūjā with a special type of grass, offer modhak as nivedhyam, etc. are important. Similarly, going around him, circumambulating is also important. When we mark the Pillaiyār symbol, we start from the left and write towards the right. It is the custom to do a minimum of three rounds. Some people go round twenty one times and one hundred and eight times. If you go around Vignēswara who, with the knowledge that the entire Universe is only Pārvathi-Paramēśwarā went around them and got rewarded, we will also be rewarded. His stomach itself is round like the Universe. Going around him will fetch us the fruit - strength of the body and the mind.

He is also as Valampuri Vināyakar. Although there are lots of difference in the forms of Vināyakā, usually the Pillaiyārs will be twisting the lower part of the trunk to the left. Rarely in some places, he will be having it twisted to the right. Such a Pillaiyār is called Valampuri Vināyakar. Just as we attach special importance to the conch which has its end curved to the right as Valampuri conch. Āgama Śāstrās say that Valampuri Vināyaka has special powers of benediction. When the trunk is curved like this to the right, (this is a curve which Pillaiyār himself draws with one part of his body) if we start at the right edge of his mouth, go up the cheek and the head and go down the trunk and reach the curve at the bottom this will be the outline of ‘ŌM’ in Granthāksharam (Like the Tamil ‘O’). We will not get this Pratāva form in Pillaiyār with the trunk curved to the left.
Among the Valampuri Vināyaka Kṣhēthras, 'Thiruvalanchuzhi' near Kumbakonnaṁ is famous. To show his greatness, I shall tell you something. In Maharashtra, there is more of Gañapathi worship. Pillaiyār who is the Swami at the beginning and Ānjaneya who is the Swami at the end, both are worshipped in a big way. During British imperialism, Tilak found a way of organizing people only through Pillaiyār. By installing huge Gañapathi idols on Vināyaka Chathurthi day and taking them in procession later, he collected huge crowds. Because it was a religious affair, the British Raj did not interfere with it. (It is only after what is called 'our Government' came into being it is happening that the Government can interfere only in matters of Hindu religion and do whatever it wants; that is a different matter). In the days of Tilak, it appears people were gathered like this in the name of Gañesh Chathurthi and leaders used the occasion to make patriotic lectures and enthuse the people to become patriotic. Even now, in places like Bombay, Pillaiyār Chathurthi is a great celebration. In such a Maharashtra, there were large numbers of 'Gāñapadar' in the olden times.

Gāñapadar are those who follow the path of 'Gañapathyam' in which Gañapathi is worshipped as supreme God. There are six branches within the same Vedānta just as there are six ghats in the same river. In these, Gañapathyam lays down the worship of Gañapathi for attaining Moksha. Koumāram prescribes the worship of Kumāraswāmi (Murugan). Sāktham prescribes the worship of Ambāl. Vaishnavam is worship of Vishnu and Saivam is worship of Śiva. Because Ādhi Śankara streamlined the methods of worship in these six ways and established them as orthodox he is known as 'Shanmatha Prathishtāpanāchāriar'.

In Maharashtra, where Gañapathyam has been largely in practise, there are eight kshētras for eight Vināyakā. (Ashta Vināyakar) Of this, the Pillaiyār called Māyuresar and his
kshetra Mōregaon are famous. Mōregaon is the changed form of ‘Mayūra Grāmam’. Around Mōregaon, there are temples for Pillaiyār’s retinue of Dēvthas in the same order in which they are to be around Pillaiyār.

Mayūram has become Mayil in Tamil and Mōre in the northern language. We are thinking that only Subrahmanya has Mōre (Peacock) as his vehicle. According to Puranās and Thanthra Sāstrās, Pillaiyār who we think has only mūshikam (mouse) as his vehicle has a form with Peacock as his vehicle. He is Mayūresar.

In the kshetra Purāna of Mōregaon, Thiruvalanchuzhi of Tamil Nādu has been spoken of highly. The name of the place has been mentioned as ‘Dakshināvartham’. Dakshina means right and āvartham means curve. This Dakshināvartham is Pillaiyār’s capital, it has been mentioned.

This capital of Pillaiyār is a ‘Sannidhi’ inside the Śiva Temple in Thiruvalanchuzhi. Jnānasambandar and Appar have sung the Īswara there. But the name and fame is all for the Pillaiyār. The mandapa in which Pillaiyār is has a lot of architecture. Particular mention must be made of the marble lattice.

In the olden days, the Śilpis (architects) who designed temples, when they gave in writing their acceptance of the jobs, used to mention that excepting five designs, all the rest they would execute. That means that those five are beyond their capacity to execute. The curved cornice of Āvudayār Koil, the compound wall of Gadārankondān, the tower at Thanjavūr, bat mandapam at Thiruvizhimizhalai, are four such as mentioned by the sculptors and they included the lattice at ‘Thiruvalanchuzhi’ as the fifth such wonder.

This lattice has been designed with sixteen holes drilled and with fine architectural design. In accordance with the concept of
Śodasa Gañapathi (sixteen forms of Gañapathi) there are sixteen holes here. Sixteen is fullness. (Pūrṇathvam). It is ‘Śodasa Kalā Pūrṇam’.

It is said that because Devendra worshipped this Valampuri Vināyakar who is of the full Pūrṇa form, Amrut (nectar) came out of ‘Kshīra Sāgaram’ (Ocean of milk). As if made of cream of milk, Pillaiyār is white. Because of the whiteness, the God’s name is ‘Śvētha Vināyakar’. Pūjā should be performed to him without touching him. Although he is like one of the retinue of God in a Śiva temple, Brahmothsavam (a ten day festival) is celebrated only for him and not for Īswarā.

There is another speciality in Thiruvalanchuzhi. Just as the Śvētha Vināyakar is having the lower part of his trunk turned to the right, Kāveri also turns to the right here and flows onwards.

There is close relationship between Kāveri and Vignēswarā. In Kodagu, on the Sahya mountain, Agasthiar was keeping Kāveri within his kamandalu. It was Pillaiyār, who took the form of a crow, toppled the kamandalu and made the holy river run for the welfare of the world. We are duty bound to show devotion in a special way to Pillaiyār who had given Tamil Nādu the Kāveri who nurtures the body and mind.

It is said that Kāveri who crossed Karnataka and flowed through Tamil Nādu, after crossing Kumbakōṇam, disappeared into a ‘bilam’ (cave). Then a Maharshi called ‘Herandar’ sacrificed himself. Immediately, Kāveri came out of the cave surging, went round the Pillaiyār Kshēthram, turned to the right and continued her onward flow.

He who appeared as a black crow in Talakāveri appears here as pure white. Thiruvalanchuzhi has the greatness that in accordance with the saying ‘Prāṇava Swarūpa Vakrathuīda’ the
murthi is Valampuri and the thīrhām (Kāverī) also flows to the right.

Let us make our devotional rounds of Valampuri Vināyakar with the thought that even at temples where he is having his trunk to the left he is Praṇava Swarūpi and be the recipient of all good.
GURU
Generally, we use the words, ‘Guru’ and ‘Āchāryā’ to mean the same. But scholars speak of some difference between the two.

The definition of ‘Āchāryā’

The word ‘Āchāryā’ is related to the words ‘ācharaṇaṁ’ (conduct) āchāram (conduct according to established rules) and ‘chara’ (to move). The words ‘charitham’ and ‘charithram’ mean conduct. We talk of the ‘charithra’ of the country or ‘life charithra’ because several events take place continuously. If instead of standing still, we keep moving on a path in an orderly manner, we tread the path. Following a path like this is ‘charithra’. In Tami, it is called ‘Ozhuguvathu’. When water falls, it falls as a continuous stream. In this manner, to follow the path, according to certain rules, is ‘ozhukkam’ (good conduct). The same word in Sanskrit is ‘āchāram’ based on ‘chara’. It is conduct according to the injunctions of ‘sāstrās’. The rules of conduct as mentioned in literature dealing with ‘dharma’ is ‘āchāram’. To follow them is ‘ācharaṇaṁ’.

To conduct himself according to the rules of conduct and show to others is important to an ‘āchāryā’. There are basic dharmaś is applicable to all people like non-violence, speaking the truth, etc. But in our Hindu religion, several traditions have evolved and have separate sāstrās to follow and separate set of rules of conduct. There is separate āchāra for Vaiṣṇavās, separate for Madhvās, Chaithanyās, Nimbārkars, etc. There are separate sāstrās for saivas. Within Śaiva itself, there are several sects – siddhānthe, Vīra-saivism, Kashmiri-saivism, Pāṣupadams, etc. Within Vaiṣṇavam also there are sub-sects, Ekānthe, Pāncharātra,
Vaikānasa, etc. Each sect/sub-sect has a set of rules to follow. For Advaitis, the rules mentioned in the original Smruthis are there.

Āchāryā is one who himself practises one of the traditions according to Śāstrās and demonstrates it to others.

Some people may have heard of the sloka which gives the definition of the word Āchāryā.

Āchinothi hi sāstrārthān Āchāre sthāpayathyapi
Swayam ācharathe yachcha Tham āchāryāṁ prachakshathē

One who delves deep into the meanings of sāstrā (what is understood here is ‘teaching the same to others’) and makes others conduct themselves according to the rules of the sāstrās (what is understood here is ‘in addition to making others firm followers of some āchāra) and demonstrates such conduct by own example is an ‘Āchāryā’. That is the meaning of the sloka.

This is what we call precept and practise - not just by oral teaching (or by writing books) but he who by his own personal example demonstrates how the rules of a tradition are to be followed is an ‘Āchārya’.

We talk of ‘āchāra - anushtānam’ as twins. Similarly, we talk of ‘Śāstrām - Sampradhāyam’. In Tamil, we use a group of three words for the same. These are all inter-connected. Several traditions have grown due to the codification of rules given in different places in the sāstrās to make them suitable for being followed in actual life. When sāstrās contain different opinions, each type of opinion is taken from them and given a form and by this a tradition starts. In one Vedhīc religion several traditions (Sampradhāyam) have come up; like Śankara Sampradhāyam, Rāmānuja Sampradhāyam, etc. When we talk of Śāstrām and Sampradhāyam in a general way, one other type of distinction is also thought of. It is that ‘Śāstrām has been written down and established in the form of a rule book. But Sampradhāyam even if it has not been established as a set of rules is what is followed by a
community of people including those well versed in sāstrās'. Sāsthram is scripture; Sampradāhāyam is tradition, usage. What is written down as Sāsthram will be common to all people. What has come down as tradition or usage may change from region to region; there could be differences in kulāchāram, dhēsachāram in different places.

When a path is shown with the aid of rules and regulations and when that is practised by the people over a long period, it becomes a custom. When people get used to it, it becomes usage. When an individual observes these, it develops in him good conduct. One who follows in a disciplined manner the sāstrās, Sampradāhāyams and āchāra anushtānā is an āchāryā. He should be one who follows not only the general rules applicable to all people but should also know the sāstrās applicable to a particular tradition and demonstrate them by personal example. One who merely observes all these as far as he is concerned cannot be said to be āchāryā. You all know that if there is an āchāryā there must be a sishya (disciple). In other words he has to take another as a sishya, teach him these dharmā and āchāra and make him follow them. As he is to teach he must be a learned scholar. Then only he can clear doubts and refute opposing views. Only if the sishya has training under him for a long time he can learn all these.

These days in the place of āchāryā there are teachers (school teachers and professors of colleges). But here both in personal life and in teaching, dharmā has no connection.

Even in olden times there were āchāryās who had taught science and arts. Even those like Kripāchāryā and Dhrūnāchāryā, who taught only archery - mere training in weapons - were called āchāryā. But they also were learned in dharmā sāstrā and Sampradāhāyā and were greatly revered not only for their learning but for their conduct (āchāram).
Living with an āchāryā and learning is called ‘Gurukula Vāsam’. There is no such terminology as ‘Āchāryā Kula Vāsam’. When one sees this, it would appear as if the two are same. When it is said Jagadguru Śankarāchāryā, it means that the same person is both Guru and Āchāryā. Because it is like this, one is led to think whether there could be difference.

What is the direct meaning of ‘Guru’? Just as we have seen the definition for āchāryā, what do we say for Guru?

Guru means what is weighty, big. That means he is a person of great merits. It means he is exalted. Do we not refer to big people as ‘Ganavān’ or ‘Mahāgananam’? (the title ‘Right Hon’ble’ is called ‘Mahāganam’). When I referred to big people it is with reference to bigness only. Just as Guru, ‘Brahmam’ also means big. When we say that someone is a big person or he is weighty on what basis should we say this? When we say weighty, does it mean that he is more in weight? When we say he is big, is it on the basis of his size, being well built, etc.? ‘Mahān’ also means big man. He is big in what? You call me ‘Guru’; you call me ‘Periyavā’ (big person). With some more affection, you also call me ‘Mahān’. If you consider weight and the size and shape of the body, there is no justification for saying all these. But when someone is referred to in this manner, it means that he is meritorious because of his intellect, experience and grace. Simply because the name of ‘Bhagvadhpādhā’ is tagged on to mine, you all deceive yourself thinking that I have all these in me and call me ‘Guru’, ‘Periyavā’, ‘Mahān’ and say ever so many sthūthrās which are there.

So one who is a guru must have a lot of inner merit in him. Āchāryā is one who is seen to be learned, be an expert in teaching others and show the right path by his visible conduct. It is his character that shows itself as external conduct. Although it is true
that he does not act as an eminent person in a spurious manner, he is connected with the external world - he has to show by his own example the ideals which he preaches to the world.

What about a ‘Guru’? It is not necessary that he must be engaged in any external activity. He does not also need the usual education (vidvat). He need not have mastered the sāstrās. It is also not necessary that he should, in the manner of an āchāryā, follow without deviation any particular sāstrā or Sampradāhāya. Why, he need not even open his mouth and preach or teach! There have been ‘mouna gurus’ (silent gurus).

Even if a person who had attained fullness and he is sitting somewhere alone those who know his inner greatness, adopt him as their ‘guru’. Just because of that he need not have to teach them sāstrās, yet his power of benediction itself works on those who have adopted him as their guru. He may not have even thought of them as ‘sishyas’ but to those who had considered themselves as his ‘sishyās’ whatever they sought from him materializes.

There are several gurus like this who know nothing of education. There are several gurus who do not teach. Even the ‘Adhi Guru Dakshināmūrti’ does not open His mouth. Several ‘adhivarnāśrami’ who roamed about like mad people, evil spirits, etc., and were not bound by any rules of sāstrās have been gurus. We call ‘Dattar’ who roamed about naked like this with great respect as ‘Avadhūtha Guru’.

An āchāryā observes a system in everything. He has to be the representative of some system (sāstra Sampradāhāya). He should have read its books, heard all that pertains to it systematically and known them. He has to teach them to others systematically. Above all, he has to lead a systematic life and be an example to others.

But a guru is not constrained by any such conditions. He is one who has inner experience. It is because of his experience he is
called a ‘Mahān’. Because of its weight, he is called ‘Guru’. He has transcended character and conduct. Will any of us see how Bhagawān’s character and conduct are? This is also same. Gurus are under no obligation to look to sāstrās and act accordingly. They will be ‘Jñānis’ who would be one with Ātmā or Brahmam: or they will be in touch with such great powers as Bhagawān, Īswara or they would be Yōgis in Samādhi having controlled their mind.

Those who are inwardly like this may also be externally āchāryās with great learning, teaching their sishyās and they themselves engaging in activities according to sāstrās.

In the olden days, all the āchāryās who were imparting learning though they did not go so far as ‘Ātmā sākshāthkāram’ Īswara sākshāthkāram ‘Yoga Samādhi’ etc, were having inner merit. That is why they came to be called ‘Guru’ and going to them and learning came to be called ‘Gurukula Vāsam’. There were ‘Gurus’ who were not bound by any system but they made a lot of preaching on their own and with the aid of sāstrās. After his time, what he preached became a systematised sāstra bearing his name and he came to be considered as the original āchāryā for the same. Āchāryās who were externally following a system were within themselves illustrious gurus; many who were gurus did not come under any system.
EXTERNAL RELATIONSHIP OF ‘GURU’ WITH INNER GLORY

Any ‘Guru’ has had the thought that he should bless even if he did not think of systematic teaching. Even if there is a Mahāthmā who is beyond the thought ‘he has come to me as a sishya, we should bless him’, Īswara thinks ‘we should not let down this person who came to him with faith’ and through him will shower His blessings.

Therefore, a ‘Guru’ even if he does not go seeking ‘guruthva’ (the status of guru) once a sishya comes to him, the relationship with him of blessing him develops in him. This is where another meaning given for guru becomes appropriate.

I have mentioned one meaning: One who does not have external connection but has inner greatness is ‘Guru’. Because it is internal, there is no activity. What is the other meaning? ‘Gu’ is darkness; ‘ru’ denotes removing. ‘Guru’ is said to be one who removes darkness. In Tamil we say ‘gummiruttu’ when it is very dark. Here ‘Gu’ denotes darkness. So the meaning of ‘Guru’ is one who removes darkness. ‘Dēva’ also means one of effulgent form. Darkness means ‘ajñānā’. When we say ‘Thamasō mā jyothir gamaya’ ‘thamas’ (darkness) is ‘ajñānā’, jyothi means ‘jnānā’. It is usual to refer to ‘ajñānā’ as ‘māyā’ darkness and ‘jnānā’ as brightness. It does not necessarily mean ‘āthmajnānā’ and ‘maya ajñānā’. In any matter or learning when it is not understood it is the practice to call it a darkness of buddhi and when it is known it is brightness of buddhi. One who thus lights up the knowledge of a thing is ‘Guru’; importantly he gives the ultimate, the ‘Jnāna prakāśam’. Even if he has not learnt the sāstrās, not acted according to sāstrās or taught the sāstrās, if someone goes to him and accepts him as his ‘Guru’ he will remove his darkness and
bless him with ‘jnānā’. Due to his blessings, other things or learning which he does not know will become clear to him.

When we define ‘Guru’ as one who removes darkness he is involved in the act of removing. His inner greatness now works externally as an act. Instead of being alone he now becomes connected with another by his act. By preaching through word of mouth or through his own life or by mere blessing or even if that blessing is not granted by him consciously but by Īswara, through him somehow his sīṣhya becomes qualified to remove the ignorance of another person (ignorance in small matters or spiritual matters or both).

If in this manner an activity takes place by him or through him on account of the sīṣhya then a link should come about between him and the sīṣhya. If the electricity in the power house lights the bulb in our house there must be a wire connecting the two. If the water in the reservoir comes out of the tap in our house, there should be a pipe connecting the two. In the same way, if through Guru, the sīṣhya’s intellect brightens, there should be a link connecting the two, is it not?

If the Guru explains matters through word of mouth, then the speech becomes the link. If things are made clear by the example of one’s own life, is that not a kind of communication? Therefore, this also should be called a link; whether things are explained openly or just indicated as inner meanings whatever the Guru does to remove ignorance must be treated as upadeśām. Instead of preaching through a lecture, if upadeśām is done through example, then we say that there is no verbal message but his life itself is the message.

Thus, upadeśā serves as a link between the Guru and sīṣhya, either physically or in a subtle form.

In the beginning, I had said that āchāryā is one who has the duty to do upadeśā by word of mouth and by the example of his
own life. I also said that it is not necessary for a Guru to do upadēsā by word of mouth or by the example of his life, the relationship that develops between him and the sishya due to his benediction is also upadēsā. I said so because anything that dispels ignorance and lights up the intellect is upadēsā.

The Guru’s anugraha sakthi flows to the sishya generally through the link of manthra upadēsā. What we observe largely is that even Mahātmās who do not give a lecture and explain things give manthra upadēsā. We read in stories: Many sishyās will be waiting hoping for salvation from a Mahān. One day or the other he will give manthra upadēsā. From that time Jnāna will glow in the sishya. There have been people who had performed penance and even played tricks to somehow obtain manthra upadēsā from the Guru.

Kabīrās desired to have ‘Sri Rama Manthra Upadesā’ from Rāmānandā. He was a Muslim. It is said that he was born Hindu but grew up in a Muslim household as a Muslim. Therefore, he had a fear that Rāmānandā might not give him upadēsā. Therefore, he planned a tactic. What was this tactic? In the darkness of Brahma Muhūrtha* he went to the Ganges, to the ghat where Rāmānandā was to come and lay down on his path. Rāmānandā who went for the early morning bath was inattentive and stumbled on Kabīrās who was lying on the steps. Kabīr took this itself as ‘pādha Dhikshai’ (I shall revert to the topic of Dhikshai later). The moment he stumbled on Kabīrās, Rāmānandā realized it was a human being. If something which is prohibited is done, do we not immediately say ‘Rāma Rāma’ or ‘Śiva Śiva’? His name itself was Rāmānandā; he was greatly upset that he had put his feet on a person. He said loudly ‘Rāma Rāma’. Kabīrās took this itself as

* The muhūrtham before sunrise. The time interval of a muhūrtham is 48 minutes. Still Brahma Muhūrtham is generally thought to be of two hours duration. If the sunrise is at 6.00 am, Brahma Muhūrtham is from 4.00 am.
upadēśā. He thought that if he could make Rāmānandā say the ‘Rāma nāma tāraka manthrā’ on his account that itself would be upadēśā for him. Therefore, deliberately he lay down on the steps so that Rāmānandā would stumble on him and put his feet on him.

The reason why I said this is that even if the Guru does not give upadēśā by word of mouth, mostly even for such people it is through manthra upadēśā that a live link is established with the sishya. This manthra upadēśā is called the ‘word’. In the songs of Tamil saints, such as Thāyumānavar, wherever reference is made to ‘a word’ in the context of seekers, it means ‘manthra’.

Therefore, it has been established that one who gives manthra upadēśā is a Guru. A great soul (Mahān) who has inner glory is called a Guru only when a link comes into place with a sishya. This link is born through manthra upadēśā more particularly. If a Guru gives manthra upadēśā at one time, it is enough. It is then not necessary that he must keep the sishya with him, give explanation and make him practise. Such long term training is the responsibility of an āchāryā. A great Guru may utter a manthra as if it is done all of a sudden and just walk away. Yet, a subtle link will get established between him and the sishya through the manthra and through that the anugraha sakti will start working in the sishya. (It can also be said that the manthra sakti will start working through anugraha).

If the Guru is great or the sishya is highly evolved, even this upadēśā through word of mouth in the form of manthra is not necessary. But I had said that there should be a link in some form. How else will it be seen? If the Guru just has a look at him, it is enough. That itself is upadēśā. That look will start working inside him or if he touches him that touch itself will become upadēśā. All this is not necessary even. If he simply thinks ‘this child should prosper in every way’ that itself is upadēśā link.

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Although I refer to the link that gets established between the Guru and sishya as upadesām, the word used for this in sāstrās is ‘Dhikshai’ (the technical term). In Tamil, it is called ‘Dhikkai’. Initiation is the word for it we use in English. That which starts from the Guru, gets into the sishya and prods him into a path with vigour is called ‘Dhikshai’. Because it is the initial force for making the sishya enter a path, it is said to be ‘initiation’. But that force (sakthi) does not get exhausted after initiating. After initiating, it remains with the sishya throughout his spiritual journey, helps him to move higher and higher and to attain his goal and achieve siddhi.

If, for a moment, a Guru establishes a link with a sishya, either in the form of mantra or a glance or a touch or by blessing him in his mind, it continues to bestow his blessing and will remain a permanent connection – just as the bulb keeps burning once the switch is put on. One’s āchāryā has to keep long term personal contact with the sishya and train him in learning and good conduct. But for a Guru, if personal contact with the sishya exists only for a short time it is enough or even that may not be there, But, the subtle contact that has occurred between him and the sishya through Dhikshai is more than a long term contact. It is life long, Its contact will continue till the life circle and births are over and the sishya attains siddhi.

It is considered that granting Dhikshai in this manner is the chief characteristic of a Guru. It is customary to talk of Dhikshā Guru or Guru Dhikshai. It has been the practice to call as Guru one who gives Dhikshai. A look into the Ithiḥāsas, Purāṇa and old literature will show that father himself had been referred to as Guru. So far as the father is concerned, whether he has or does not have the qualifications of a Guru, is he not equal to God as far as
the son is concerned? He is the God who is first known. In the same manner, the teacher, true to the saying 'the one who taught the letters is God' deserves to be thought of as God. The Vādhās have ordained ‘āchārya dhevō bhava’ after ‘pithru dhevō bhava’. For this reason, he is also extolled perhaps. Another reason for calling the father Guru comes to mind. What is the upadesā given first to anyone? It is only the ‘Gāyathri’. Is it not the father who gives upadesā of that manthra (Brahmopadesām)? That is, ‘Gāyathri Manthra Dhikshai’ is given by the father. Since he is giving Dhikshai like this, calling him Guru might have come into practice.

(Even for those who are not entitled to ‘Gāyathri Upadesām’, there is ‘Aksharābhyāsam’ (starting the practice of writing the alphabets). At that time, it is the father who helps the son to write the first alphabet after giving him upadesā of ‘Ashtāksharam’ or ‘Panchāksharam’. (The eight letter prayer to Narāyana or the five letter prayer to Lord Śiva.)

If one surrenders to the father or teacher, who does not have the weight and greatness of inner experience, thinking him to be Guru, by the very weight and greatness of surrender he can receive Jnānā even from such a guru who lacks the qualification. In other words, Bhagawān who bestows his blessings through a guru who is great in inner experience but does not even think of blessing will appreciate the sishya’s surrender and bless him through this guru. (father or teacher who lacks the power of blessing*). If one is accepted as a guru even if he does not deserve the status, if the sishya with total faith in him, conducts himself in such a manner that he does not talk disparagingly of the guru whatever he may do, will get redeemed even if the guru does not get redemption.

When talking of such a guru bhakthi, an incident comes to mind. Once I asked two boys - young boys - of the mutt pātasālā

* see also the discourse under caption ‘Śaranāgathi only is important’ in part-2.
whether the teacher had come. One boy said he had not come. The other boy said he had come. Later, it came to light that what the first boy said was correct. I asked the second boy ‘why did you tell a lie? Is it not wrong to tell a lie?’ To that question, the boy answered boldly ‘even though the teacher had not come, even after the due time, if I tell that he had not come, it would amount to making public the guru’s mistake. Because I thought that pointing out the mistake of the guru is a greater wrong than telling a lie, I said like that’. I also accepted what he said as correct. I said this to highlight the greatness of guru bhakthi. Irrespective of how the guru is, if we surrender to him, we will get what we seek from the guru as ‘Īswara Prasādam’ (blessing).

When we learn something by reading it ourselves, surrender, the attitude of dedication and the humility involved in surrender are not there. On the contrary, when we try to understand by reading a thing ourselves, there is the possibility of developing ego. Learning, if it is real, must remove ego. That is why in sāstrās, learning by oneself, picking up a mantra by oneself, doing a putya Karma by oneself, have been prohibited and it has been ordained that these have to be done after receiving upadēśā from a guru. It is true that one can learn by oneself; but this knowledge will not be useful for the evolution of the soul (ātma abhivriddhi). This has been brought out by a harsh comparison - ‘this is like begetting a son through a paramour’; although he is a son, he is unfit to perform any vaidhika Karma.

I had said that a guru who is fully qualified - that is he has weighty inner experience - need not have to give any kind of Dhikshai but as a rare exception, dhikshai is given by him also, is it not? In this the dhikshai given through word of mouth is mantra upadēśām, mantra dikshai. Dhikshai given by glance (dhrishti) is ‘Sakshu Dhikshai’ or ‘Nayana dhikshai’. Dhikshai given by touching is ‘Sparśa Dhikshai’ (sparśam means touching).
There are several kinds in this. Guru touching the sishya's head and passing his spiritual energy into him (Āthma sakthi) is called 'Hastha masthaka Dhikshai' (in any form of Dhikshai, the guru makes a sacrifice by passing on to the sishya his own sakthi gained by experience.) Touching the sishya by the feet is 'pādha Dhikshai' (the Dhikshai that Kabīrdās had from Rāmānandā would amount to both pādha Dhikshai and manthra Dhikshai.) Guru touching a part of the sishya's body, particularly the head by the foot is considered a great fortune. In Tamil, it is called 'Thiruvadi Dhikshai' (Thiruvadi means holy feet). We should always meditate as if the holy feet of guru is on our head. Instead of this being mere words or just sentiments, those who have actually experienced the divine feet of Īswara, the Guru of all Gurus, being on their heads and known it are only called 'Pādhar' or 'Sri Charaṇar' in Sanskrit and 'Adiyār' in Tamil. 'Bhagavadpādhar' means one who had the feet of 'Bhagavān' on his head and became itself. Therefore, we have to wear on our head that 'Bhagavadpādhar' himself.

In the highly evolved state, the guru need not have to give direct (by word of mouth) upadesā or by look or touch. He can be somewhere, but if he thinks of someone that becomes 'Smarana Dhikshai' and uplifts that someone.
‘DHÍKSHAIS BESTOWED BY AMBĀL’

Ambāl is Jnānā. We often hear of ‘Sath–chith–Ānandham’. In that, ‘chith’ that is supreme Jnānā is ‘Ambikai’. She is called ‘Chaithanya Rūpini’. In (Lalitha) Sahasranāmam, she is called ‘Śidhēka rasa rūpini’. In Kālahasthi, She is shining as ‘Jnānāmbāl’.

Great souls have by their experience said that it is Ambāl who comes in the form of Guru. (In Navarathna Mālikā), Kālidāsa says ‘Desika rūpēṇa dharṣidhābyudhayām’. It means that Ambāl comes in the form of Guru and shows the charm of her compassion. Desika is another word like Guru, Āchāryā, etc., which means one who guides us to the right path. The founder of the ‘Vadakalai Sampradhāyā’ among Vishnavas is called ‘Vedānta Desikar’. Those of that ‘Sampradhāyā’ refer to him as ‘Desikan’ instead of ‘Desikar’. When respect becomes too high and becomes love the form of address becomes singular. Even Bhagawān is addressed in the singular form and not the plural form which denotes respect. Thōdagāchāriar who was the direct sishya of our ‘Bhagavadpādha’ in his own life time says in his sthōthram ‘Śankara Desika me Charanam’.

It is said that Ambāl comes in the form of Desika and bestows jnānā. It is said that in particular She bestows ‘Sparśa Dhikshai’ ‘Nayana Dhikshai’ and ‘Smarana Dhikshai’, each of these with a different form.

Here, one other thing needs to be mentioned. Sparśa Dhikshai is also called ‘Kukkuda Dhikshai’ (kukkuda is hen). Nayana Dhikshai is called ‘Matsya Dhikshai’ (fish). Smarana Dhikshai is called ‘Kamada dhikshai’ (Kamadam is tortoise).

* It is said that originally the name ‘Desikan’ was given to one who knew all the places in the country and guided others and that the same came to be applied to āchāryās who knew the subtleties of sāsthṛās and could guide others on that path.
It looks funny that Dhikshai is referred to by hen, fish and tortoise. But within this fun, there is a lot of philosophical truth.

If Dhikshai is truly efficacious, the stupid way of life which was there till then would end and one will begin a new life attuned to spirituality. It is like taking a new superior birth. It is in this sense that it is said that when one gets ‘Gāyathrī Dhikshai’ he takes a second birth as a Brahmin and he is therefore called a ‘Dwijan’, one who is born again.

Because of the view that there is a life (janmā) before Dhikshai and another after Dhikshai is not so correct, it is described in another way also. According to this, one who is stupid in this birth and is in a state of ajnānā, inside he is the Āthmā, which is not different from Brahman. But he is not aware of it. Just as the embryo inside the egg is covered by its shell, the jnānā is covered by the shell of ajnānā. Just as the mother bird incubates and brings out the little bird from the egg, the guru through dhikshai makes the shell of ajnānā break and makes him realize his true state just as the bird comes out of the shell and flies away. In other words, two separate births are not involved. Before dhikshai he is in a shrunken state like the embryo inside the egg and after the dhikshai it is like the bird flying out.

Three different types are mentioned in the manner of the bird bringing out its little one. It is here that the hen, fish and tortoise come in. What does the mother hen do? It sits on the egg, that is it sits in a manner that its body is in physical contact with the egg, incubates and brings out the little one. This is sparsa dhikshai - guru touching the sishya and causing the shell of ignorance to break. The term ‘Kukkuda Dhikshai’ is now clear, is it not? The fish lays its eggs in water. In flood, the fish does not remain in one place but keeps moving. The egg also will float on the running water without remaining in one place. The mother fish
does not sit over its eggs and bring out the little ones. What does it do then? I do not know what they say in biology and zoology. I shall repeat what is being said traditionally in śāsthrās and in literature. The mother will have a sharp look at the egg and it appears the little one will come out breaking the egg. That is why guru katāksham (look) which is called ‘Nayana dhīkshai’ is also called ‘Matsya dhīkshai’. What is ‘Kamada dhīkshai’ or the ‘Tortoise dhīkshai’? The mother tortoise will come to the shore, lay its eggs and go back to the waters. The egg is in one place and the mother tortoise is somewhere else. But it will be constantly thinking that its little one should come out of the egg without any problem. By its intense thinking force, the egg will break and the little one will come out. This is the ‘smarana’ or ‘kamada’ dhīkshai. How does Ambāḷ give these three dhīkshais?

Ambāḷ has three different forms in three different kshēthrās, the speciality of the forms being the beauty of the eyes. The forms are Kāmākshi, Mīnākshi and Visālākshi. She is Kāmākshi in Kāṇchipuram, Mīnākshi in Madurai and Visālākshi in Kāsi. Although it is said that in all the three, the eyes are beautiful and her glance has a speciality, it cannot be said that She gives ‘nayana dhīkshai’ in all the three places. Has not the fish been mentioned for ‘nayana dhīkshai’? In the very name Mīnākshi there is ‘mīn’ (fish). For this reason, She only is said to be the guru who gives jnānā dhīkshai by Her very look. This is ‘matsya dhīkshai’. Kāmākshi touches the bhaktha with her feet and makes him a jnāni. The mūrthi praised in ‘Soundharyalahari’ is only Kāmākshi. She has the sugarcane bow, flower arrows, the rope and the goad and has four hands. In that, in one sloka* Āchārya praises Ambāḷ ‘pray, by your grace, keep on my head your holy feet which are held by Vēdhās and Upanishads on their heads’.

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* 84th sloka. Some details of this can be seen in Part-1. ‘Ambal as presented by Acharya’ ae under Devatha mūrthis; incarnations.
Sruthinām mūrdhānō dhadhathi thava yav sēkharathayā
Māmāpethou māthah sīrasi dhhayayā dhēhi charaṇou

Upanishads are Vedhānthā. Āchāryā’s adhvaita jnānā mārgā is called ‘Vedhāntha Sampradhāyam’. Therefore, it appears that Āchāryā looks to Ambāl as ‘Jnānā guru rūpini’ and prays for her ‘Pādha dhīkshai’. In other words, he has prayed for ‘Sparisa Kukuda dhīkshai’. Visālākshi with Her abode in Kāśi thinks of the devotees with a mind to bless and is ‘Kamada Dhīkshai guru’ who gives jnānā.
SEVERAL PATHS FOR THE ONE FINAL BLISS

Thus, there are several kinds of dhikshai. The paths by which sishyās are guided through dhikshai are also many. Although the final destination (goal) is the same, when initiating in the beginning, different gurus follow different paths. It also happens that the same guru initiates different sishyās in different paths. But an āchāryā functions within a system. A guru may initiate the same sishya into different paths at different times depending upon his attitude and progress.

There are several gurus who do initiation into manthra sāstrā, thanthra sāstrā, yōga sāstrā, Dhaivatha, Adhvaita sāstrās etc. Thāyumānāvar talks of his only guru as having been all these and at the end talks of the mouna guru. (guru who is silent) who came in the line of Mūlan (Thirumūlar). Thirumūlar who had authored the ‘Thirumanthiram’ talks of all paths in that book and ends in yōga jnānā. A succession of gurus started from him. Among them one was ‘Śāramāmunivar’ who established a mutt in ‘Tiruchirāppalli’. Mounaguru Swāmi who became the pontiff of this mutt was the guru of Thāyumānavar. Thāyumānavar belonged to the seventeenth century. (After Mounaguru Swāmigal that mutt went under the care of Dharmapura ādhīnam).

Although Thāyumānavar refers to Mounaguru, who was his direct guru, he says that all paths end in silence. By this one gets the impression that he is praising ‘Dakshināmūrthi’ who bestows Adhvaita jnānā through silent upadēśā. He has also sung of Dakshināmūrthi, addressing Him also as ‘Chinmayānanda Guru’.

That silence is our true nature. But we have lost that, the true ‘we’, forgotten it and got entangled in all kinds of troubles. This they say is māyā. They also say māyā is Ambāl. That Ambāl
Herself comes as ‘Jnanambikai’ to drive away that māyā. She comes as guru and teaches jnānā. The Mother becomes the guru and feeds us with the milk of jnānā. She enjoys doing things in different ways. If we take birds, there are several varieties. So is the case with animals, flowers, etc. It is endless in colour, smell, shape, etc. In the same way, there are several varieties of minds. It is only to suit each of these types that the jnānā guru has shown several types of āchāryās, several Sampradhāyā, etc. She shows several types of gurus, from the guru who is engaged in all kinds of talk, debate, writing, rituals, etc., to the mouna guru. But, inside, all these gurus will be having the same ‘Guruthva’. Truth can only be one, is it not?
NON-DISTINCTION BETWEEN GURU AND ĀCHĀRYĀ

On the whole, what I said is: Those who initiate us into Jñānā, we call them guru and āchāryā. On the basis of inner glory, we call one a guru. We call another āchāryā on the basis of his glory in external conduct, learning, training others, etc. One is beyond any system; another is part of the system. One imparts Jñānā mainly through his blessings. The other helps in attaining Jñānā through sāstrās, Sampradhāyā, āchārā, disciplined practices, learning, etc.

Although two names are mentioned like this, if the āchāryā is fully qualified he would be guru himself. In other words, as far as he is concerned, within himself he will be beyond systems and will have the merit of direct experience of ‘Self’ and Īśwarā and will have the power to bless. (Anugraha sakti). Yet being all this, he will excel in learning and external conduct, will live as if he is bound by certain systems and will teach others learning, good conduct, etc. All our āchāryās (āchāryā purushās) have been like this.

If we understand things properly, a true āchāryā cannot but be a guru. If one has no inner merit, how can he be great externally?

If an āchāryā has the feeling that he is bound by a certain discipline and lives subject to a Sampradhāyā, that is a dhārmic system and according to the rules of conduct prescribed for it, then he is really a student not an āchāryā. It is only when right conduct is followed spontaneously and in a natural way and not due to the compulsions of rules and regulations framed for such conduct, it will shine fully. It is only when living a life of right conduct in a natural manner and not due to compulsions, there will be satisfaction and a sense of fullness. We who wander following
the mind must, to begin with, subject ourselves to the compulsions of a discipline. But, as long as such a compulsion is necessary, we are only students, *sishya*. By and by we will begin doing naturally and of our own volition things which we started doing under compulsion. It is only when one makes right conduct natural to him and follows it with pleasure on his own volition, he gains the power (*sakthi*) to make others follow his way of life. It is only if one is in this state and preaches, it will make a deep impression on others and persuade them to follow what is preached to them.

These days the thinking is that it is enough if the teachers who are in the place of *acharya* are intelligent and that their personal discipline does not matter. In the olden times, a person was considered fit for the status of *acharya* only if he was also practising *anushtana*. This *anushtana* also is not the end in itself; this is only external conduct. There is another state in which *anushtana* also attains fullness. That state is experience, experience of ‘Self’. Only when such experience is gained, right conduct will become natural and spontaneous. In other words, the way mere knowledge attains fullness with the support of *anushtana*, *anushtana* too gets strength and becomes full on the foundations of experience. Therefore making a distinction that one who has the inner experience is a guru and one who is a ‘*anushtatha*’ (follows the external disciplines) is an *acharya* is not based on a correct understanding of the matter. An *acharya* cannot be an imperfect *anushtatha*. He is imperfect till he gains the experience - is he not following the *anushtana* due to a compulsion? Where is fullness in this? It will be wanting. Therefore, it follows that the same person who is having the inner experience is also an *anushtatha* and provides an example by his life. One who is the guru with inner experience is also the *acharya* who is *anushtatha*. One who, within himself, is beyond any system conducts himself externally bound by a system in order to bring those who are wayward under a discipline.
Keeping silence internally, he makes a lot of upadesā, discourses, externally. Guru and āchāryā are one and the same. If one is truly an āchāryā he cannot but be a guru. Without correct knowledge we have been talking of the guru and āchāryā as same; ‘but it is not so; those who are knowledgeable point out some differences between the two’, I started telling. I also pointed out those differences. Then I showed clearly that there is no difference, both are same if we go deep into it and not just stop with knowing it.

Since from time immemorial distinction was not thought of between guru and āchāryā, these two words have been used synonymously. In the Upanishad, which is a most important part of the Vēdhās, the word āchāryā has been repeated all over - ‘āchārya dhēvo bhava’, that a ‘dhakshinai’ which is to the liking of the āchāryā should be offered to him at the end of the learning period, that one who has an āchāryā and is therefore an ‘Āchāryāvan’ only attains Jnānā. There is no mention of guru. Yet the arrangement by which sishyās lived with the āchāryā and had their learning was called only ‘GurukulaVāsam’. The term āchāryākulaVāsam has not been heard. The day on which we worship our āchāryā by way of expressing our gratitude is called ‘Guru Pūrṇīma’. In the same way, followers of ‘Rāmānujāchāryā’ ‘Vallabhāchāryā’ ‘Madhvāchāryā’ also talk of ‘Guru Vandanam’.

Ancient Tamil usage fully accorded with ‘Vaidhikam’ (scriptures, pertaining to the Vēdhic way). Therefore the equivalent of the Vēdhic aphorism ‘māthru, pithru, āchārya dhēvo bhava’ is ‘māthā, pithā, guru, deivam’. It can be concluded from this that the āchāryā himself was guru. (In Tamil, āchāryān would be mentioned as ‘Āsān’). Although in Siddhānthā Saivam, the name ‘Āchāryā’ is used as the suffix - Maikandāchāriar, Śamayāchāriar, Šandanāchāriar, Śivāchāriar, etc, their worship on the day of remembrance is called only as ‘Guru Pūjai’.
REGARD THE ‘ĀCHĀRYĀ’ AS ĪŚWARĀ

Therefore, we should practise bhakthi towards āchāryāa realizing that the guru who is not in a state of bondage like us but has got released himself lives subjecting himself to the discipline in order to subject us to a discipline, functions as āchāryā and gives us upadēśā. If we practise bhakthi with the conviction that Īswarā himself comes as guru and āchāryā and blesses us with jnānā, we will be rewarded quickly. Is not Īswarā everything? Even the stone and mud are He Himself. Therefore, what objection could be there for saying that he is of the form of a guru and āchāryā?

If we look at it this way, then the question comes up who we are if not He Himself. The next question is when we ourselves are Īswarā, why should we worship another person as our āchāryā and as Īswarā?

Although it is true that He is everything no one is aware of his own ‘Īswarathva’ (state of being Īswarā)! Are we aware one bit of our own ‘Īswarathvam’? If we are aware, will there be so much desire, anger, fear, weeping, falsehood, sins, etc? So even though He is everything, without realizing that one is He Himself, the perfect, one has put on a make-up. We all put on the make-up of ajnānā and we find it impossible to find the original person. Only an āchāryā does not have this crooked make-up. In him we can locate the original person. Therefore, if we practise bhakthi to him, we can see in him Īswarathva and enjoy the experience. The divinity which we cannot know in ourselves we can easily know in him. The only Īswarā who puts on several garbs has specially come in the garb of āchāryā to make us who are in this stupid garbs, capable. If we feel in this manner and practise bhakthi to him, then He will remove the garb completely and show Himself. Then, then
only He will remove the stupidity of our garb and the garb itself and bestow His blessings on us to know and experience that we are He Himself.

To reach the final stage, what we have to do now is that we should think of āchāryā as Īśwarā and follow his teaching in our conduct.
FOLLOW THE TRADITIONS OF THE CLAN

According to sāsthraḥ, our birth is determined by Īśwarā in accordance with our Karmā of previous lives. Therefore, if we are born in a religion and a sampradhāyam we should take it that it is determined by Īswarā who has linked it to our Karmā. We should welcome it and with that only we should exhaust our Karmā and try to raise ourselves. If each one follows the teachings of the āchāryā who is the custodian of the Sampradhāyā and the practices of the clan in which each is born that is enough. It does not matter if its philosophical truths are imperfect. This imperfect samayāchāram (religious observances) itself will help end the balance of Karmā due to which the jīva is imperfect. Keeping unshakable faith and bhakti in Īśwarā if we leave everything to Him with the appeal, ‘since you have given this kind of birth, I have taken refuge in the āchāryā of this Sampradhāya’ and follow the customs and traditions of our clan, He will never let us down. He will Himself make us aware of the perfect truth in the manner in which and the time at which it is to be done. If we have the faith that the āchāryā is one of the forms of Īswarā, that is enough. To whichever guru we may surrender (saranāgathi), it would amount to surrender to Īswarā and we will receive the fruits of it. This is what is said in the ‘Santhipata’ of Upanishad.

Yo brāhmaṇam vidadhāthi pūrvam
yo vai vēdhāmscha prahinōthi thasmai
Thagnaha Dēvam āthma buddhi Prakāsam
Mumukshurvai saraṇamaham prapadhyē*

* Meaning: The one who had created Brahma in the days of yore and gave him the Vēdhās, that Dēva Dēvā makes our intellect shine. I who desire to follow the path of mukthi surrender unto him.
If we are not subject to a system, disaster will result from the capability of a highly intelligent person. Greater damage will be done by such an intelligent person than by a stupid one. Our Āchāryā mentions this in ‘Upadeśā Sāhasrā’ and says that anyone who does not follow the guru Sampradhāyā is equal to a fool. In other words, guru bhakthi is more important for Jnānā than book knowledge.
GURU BHAKTHI DISPLAYED
BY GREAT SOULS
GODS AS ŚISHYĀS

The Guru bhakthi we have is not up to the level required. But great souls (Mahāns) who were the founding gurus of our Sampradāhyās and other important gurus have displayed boundless bhakthi to their gurus.

The original guru (Ādhi Guru) is ‘Dakshināmūrthi’. He had also felt that he should become a sishyā to a guru, conduct himself with humility and receive upadēśā from him. He who is Paramēśvarā had stood before his own child with humility and received from him ‘Praṇava Upadēśām’.

Ambāl is of the form of Jñānā. She had also become a ‘śishyai’ (a female disciple) to her pathi, Ishwara and received from him Upadēśā. Several Āgama tanthrās (the science of tantras) are those which Ishwara had given to her as upadēśā. Those who know Vishṇu Sahasranāmam will know that the sloka;

Sri Rāma Rāma Rāmēthi, Rame Rāme Manorame
Sahasranāma Thaththulyam Rāma Nāma Varānane

(If Rāma nāmā is repeated three times, it is equal to reciting the Sahasranāmam) which speaks of the glory of Rāma nāmā is what Ishwara gave Ambāl as upadēśā.

In the ‘Sthala Purāṇas’ of seven holy places (Kṣetras) like Jambukēswaram (Thiruvānaikkā) it has been mentioned that Ambāl had received upadēśā from Ishwara.

Mahā Vishṇu during his avatārs as Rāma, Krishnā had gone through Gurukula Vāsam with Vaiṣishta and Sandipani with great

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humility. *Krishna Paramathma* had gone to the forest in heavy rain and thunder along with *Sudama (Kuchelar)* a co-student and brought twigs for the Guru. Rama ruled the State in accordance with *Vasishta*’s advice. When in *‘Chithrakuta Parvatham’* he told *Vasishta* who had gone with *Bharatha*, ‘I will not come back to take charge of the State’ he did so with utmost humility and it was only after getting his consent he executed his decision.

In Guru parampara (tradition) *Dhattatreya* occupies a very high place. But he has narrated (in *Bhagavatham*) that twenty four things, animals, human beings were his gurus and what he had learned from them – from the mud, water, a python, a wasp, a prostitute, a hunter, a child, etc.
ADHI ŚANKARA’S
ĀCHĀRYA BHAKTHI

The moment we say ‘Āchāryā’ it is impossible to describe the
guru bhakthi of our Bhagavadhpādhā whom the entire world
remembers and praises. It is said that in Badrināth he had looked
upon his guru Govinda Bhagavadhpādhā and Parama Guru (Guru’s
Guru) Gowdapādhā as the very form of Dakshināmūrtī and it was
at that time that he had recited ‘Dakshināmūrtī Ashtakam’ and
after each line he prostrated before them. He himself was the
avatar of Dakshināmūrtī. Āchāryā when extolling the greatness of
a guru says in one place, ‘just as Sparśa Vedhi’ converts even brass
into gold if it is said that a guru changes the ‘brass hearts’ of people
and makes them shine brilliantly as gold, it will not be a correct
description. This is because the brass which is in Sparśa Vedhi will
alone become gold. But it cannot become sparśa Vedhi itself and
change other brass to gold. But a sishya who had taken refuge
under a guru not only attains ‘Pūrṇathvam’ himself (Perfection)
but he becomes a guru himself and gives Pūrṇathvam to others.
Therefore the guru is higher than the sparśa Vedhi. When
Paramēśvarā Himself came in disguise as a ‘chändāḷa’ (an
outcaste) before Āchāryā he who had earned the title
‘Jagadāchāriar’ said with utter humility, ‘it is not necessary that a
āṭhma jnāṇī (a realized soul) must be a Brahmin. Even if he is born
as chändāḷa, he only is my guru’. *

* For more details about the Ādhi Śankara’s Guru Bhakthi, please
see the discourse ‘Guru Bhakthi’ in Volume - 2.
RĀMĀNUJĀ’S GURU BHAKTHI

Many of you might have heard that Rāmānujāchāriar discarded the advice of his guru Thirukkōttiyr Nambi and gave upadēśā to all people. But the stories of the lineage of Vaishnava Gurus (Guru Paramparā) talk about the great humility with which he had conducted himself before the same Nambi. Before Thirukkōttiyr Nambi gave upadēśā he made Rāmānujāchāriar walk eighteen times from Srīrangam and only at the end he gave him upadēśā. Without a trace of bitterness, Rāmānujā had walked like this.

It is the practice among the Smārthās that they prostrate before the āchāryā four times. But Vaishnāvas keep prostrating till the āchāryā says enough. It is said that ‘Thirukkōttiyr Nambi’ was standing in the cool waters of the river (or it would have been a mandapam at the bathing ghat). Outside on the river bank on account of the heat of the sun, the sand was burning like fire. On such sand, Rāmānujar kept prostrating unmindful of the bruises he suffered from the hot sand. Nambi who had done this to test his Guru bhakti could not bear it himself and stopped Rāmānujā.

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THE ŚИSHYĀŚ OF ŚАNKARĀ

In the same way (Śankara) Āchāryā’s and Rāmānuja’s direct sishyās, though they were themselves very great, had rare bhakthi for their āchāryās. Thotagachariar, one of Āchāryā’s sishyās has praised him as ‘you are Paramēsvarā yourself’ (Bhava eva Bhavān). You are ‘Vrishabha Dhwajar’ knowing him to be of the form of Īswarā. Another sishyā, Padmapādar exclaimed in the following words when Vyāsar came to Āchāryā in the guise of an old Brahmin and held a debate: ‘What is this! They are debating like this endlessly’. He then meditated with bhakthi and saw ‘Śankarā Śankarās Sākshāth Vyāsā Nārāyaṇa Swayam’ (Śankarar is Lord Śiva himself and Vyāsā is Mahā Vishnu’s Avatār). Vyāsar came in this guise and debated on the commentary (bhāshyam) which Āchāryā had written for Vyāśa’s Brahmasūtram. In the end, when Padmapādā said ‘he is Vishnu and Āchāryā is Paramaśiva’, Vyāsa showed his real form and commended the Āchāryā saying that Āchāryā’s commentary is in accordance with his own views. In later days, Padmapādar himself elaborated on the Āchāryā’s commentary on Brahmasūtra and annotated it. Since only five parts have become available to us we call it Pancha Pādhikā. In that also when Padmapādar pays Guru Vandnam he has referred to Āchāryā as Paramēsvarā, ‘Apūrva Śankaram’.

It is because of the greatness of his guru bhakthi that he got the name Padmapādar. Before that he was Sananthanar. He was a brahmin from Tamil Nādu (belonging to Cholā region). Even when Āchāryā commenced his mission in Kāsi, that is before he completed sixteen, Sananthanar joined him as sishya. Āchāryā wanted to complete all his commentaries by his sixteenth year and with that to end his life’s journey (sātra yāthrā). It was at that time Vyāsā came, debated with him, blessed him and said that it was not enough that he had written the commentary but he should himself
debate with scholars all over the country and establish it and blessed him with another sixteen years of life. Let that be.

When Āchāryā lived in Kāsi, one day he was on one side of Gangā and Sananthanar was on the opposite side. Sananthanar had been drying Āchāryā’s clothes. At that time Āchāryā thought of showing to the world his sīshyā’s guru bhakti. Therefore, he had his bath on the same side where he was, stood with wet cloth and told the sīshyā who was on the other side ‘bring the dried cloth’.

Sananthanar got worked up with a feeling that he must immediately carry out whatever the Āchāryā wanted him to do. He felt very uneasy that Āchāryā was standing with wet clothes on. When there is a surge of love or devotion, all rational thinking will go. Therefore, Sananthanar could not wait for a boat. He could not see the Ganges before him, deep and flowing with waves! So how will he think of the boat? His mind was still only with the thought that the Āchāryamūrthi was standing with wet clothes on and he had ordered him to bring dried clothes. Therefore, he got down into the river as if it was a plain barren hard surface and started walking. He had no thought that he would sink in the deep waters of Gangā or that even if he managed to swim, the clothes would become wet, thus defeating the very purpose of Gurunāthā’s command.

When there was such a great joy born of bhakti, would Īswarā fail to recognize its value? (that Īswarā only was standing in the form of Āchāryā). Therefore, a miracle happened. As Padmapādā kept walking over the flood, Gangā Dēvi kept on sprouting a lotus ahead of him. Sananthanar put his feet on the lotus flower and kept walking. But he was not aware either of the lotus sprouting ahead of him or his stepping over them. Just as it is said that the heat is not felt during the ritual fire walking, he did not feel it cool and soft below his feet.
Even as all people were watching and were wonder struck at the greatness of his guru bhakthi, he crossed the wide river, reached the other side and offered the clothes to Gurumārthi.

Āchāryā asked him jokingly, ‘how did you come crossing the river, my dear?’.

Even at that stage, Sananthanar did not think of looking back at the river and know about the sprouting of lotus. In his mind he was certain that ‘Āchāryā had given the command; when he had commanded how could it happen that it was not carried out? It is his blessing that has rolled me over to this side’.

‘Therefore’, he told the Āchāryā ‘if by just keeping you in mind the ocean of samsāra itself can be crossed with ease, what is great about my crossing the Gangā when you have made the command yourself?’.

It is only after that that Āchāryā himself showed a lotus flower that had sprouted on the river and named him ‘Padmapādar’, since the Padma (Lotus) had carried on them his feet.

Although at one level, the Āchāryā was Īswara Himself he is also thought to be his lotus feet. Therefore, it was quite fitting that Bhagavadpādha’s sishyā was Padmapādar.
Among the sishyas of Râmânujâchâriar also there were those whose Guru bhakthi was so strong that it bordered on frenzy.

Generally, for Vaishnâvâs, 'Naiśya Bhâvam' (thinking very low of oneself) is important. Due to this they will behave with everyone and speak to everyone with a lot of respect. If we (who are non-Vaishnâvâs) address others as just 'you' they would address as 'Dêvarîr'. While introducing themselves to others, they would refer to themselves as 'Dâsan'. They will fall at others feet and prostrate several times. They would refer to elders other than Sri Vaishnâvâs as Swâmi. Those who are older than themselves within their own sampradhâyam, they will refer to as 'Perumâl' (courtesy in speech is very much their way). It used to be said jokingly that even if one is plotting against his own guru, with the intention of taking his place and calls him for executing his evil design, he will address the guru in terms that carry lot of respect.

In the stories of guru paramparâ which Vaishnâvâs hold in high esteem and also recite, we see several guru bhakthi narratives which touch our hearts. If we look in a Perumâl (Vishnu) temple we will find several sannidhis - for Azhwar, particularly for ândâl and if it is a temple of Thenkalai Sampradhâyâ, there will be sannidhis for Azmanavâla Mâmunigal, Pillaiâlâkâchâriar and others and if it is a temple of Vadakalai Sampradhâyam, there will be sannidhi for Vedanta Desikar. What grand manner of worship is being conducted in these sannidhis! In Srîperumbûdûr, which is the birth place of Râmânujâ, Perumâl (the main deity) is only secondary. They call him (Râmânujâ) 'Udayavar' and accord him high status of daily worship and conduct ten day festivals for him only on a grand scale. Above the Udayavar sannidhi, the Vimânam is a golden one. In the same manner, in Srivilliputhur, the importance is for ândâl only. She is being glorified as 'Godhai',
'Godhai Nāyaki'. Just as in Madurai, the temple is Mīnākshi Temple and the importance is for Mīnākshi and Sundarēśwarar gets only the second place, in Srīvilliputhūr, Rangamānnār (Krishňā) is given the second place and the temple is called Āridāl temple. The place where Nammāzhwār took avatar (was born) was originally called 'Kurugūr'. Then because it is the birth place of Nammāzhwār, they changed its name to 'Āzhwār Thirunagiri'. The festival celebrated for him here is very special. In the same manner, celebrations are conducted for every Āzhwār.

In many temples, we find that there are idols of Nāthamunigal, Ālavandār, Manakkāl Nambi, Thirukkachchi Nambi, Kūrathāzhvār, Bhattar, Nanjiyar and others, who were important in the Sampradhāyā and who had appeared before and after Rāmānuja and regular worship of the idols is being done.

It is true that in Śiva temples, such importance is not being given to Nāyanmārs, Mānīckavāsakar, Srīkantāchāriar who had framed the rules and regulations and authored books relating to Śaivism, Maikanda Śivam, Umāpathi Śivam and others!

If we look at (Śankara) Āchāryā and those great personages of Adhvaitha Sampradhāyā, who had come before and after him we should say that idols for them in temples and worship etc is only zero. Only for Āchāryā as a rare phenomenon there is idol in some temples. In Kānchīpuram and places surrounding it, this is prevalent a little more. In places like Māṅgādu and Tiruvotriyūr, there are idols for Āchāryā. Yet, as I mentioned frequently if the influence of a philosophical system is to be determined on the basis of the census of idols in temples, the conclusion will be there is no such religion as Adhvaitham at all!

The reason for this is that adhvaithins are smārthas who do not belong to either Śaivism or Vaishnavam but to some extent

*for a detailed explanation of this matter, please see the discourse ‘Śankara Sampradhāyam’ in Volume-2.
accept both*. What I wanted to tell you is that in Rāmānuja
Sampradāyā great respect is shown to the āchāryās.

The bhakti that the direct sishyās of Rāmānuja had for him is something extraordinary. True to the saying that one is prepared to give his life ‘Kūrathāzhvār’ was ready to sacrifice his life for the sake of Rāmānuja. He belonged to a place called ‘Kūram’ near Kānchīpuram. I had mentioned that Vaishnavaśv who are noted for their respectful way of speaking refer to Vēdhāntha Dēśikar whom they hold in high esteem as ‘Dēsikan’ because of excessive bhakthi. In the same manner, they would call Kūrathāzhvār as Kūrathāzhvān only.

The Chōla King in Rāmānuja’s time was a great Śiva bhaktha. But Rāmānuja was preaching the doctrine that Viṣṇu alone was to be worshipped and not Śiva. Therefore, the king organized a meet of scholars in order to ask Rāmānuja and debate with him, ‘on what authority do you establish that excepting Viṣṇu no other Dēvatha should be worshipped?’ At that time, the Chōla Capital was ‘Gangaikondachōlapuram’. He decided to hold the sadhas (meet of scholars) there and sent a messenger to bring Rāmānujāchāriār. Rāmānuja was at the time camping at Srīrangam.

On seeing the king’s message, Kūrathāzhvār became worried. ‘Raja is a saiva. He has constructed a number of Śiva temples. Our guru says no to Śiva worship. Therefore, the king must be nurturing a feeling of enmity to him. Taking him to his court in the name of Vidwath Sadhas, we do not know what he would do. He is the king and he can do anything. What can we do if he causes danger to our dear āchāryā?’ So he thought with great fear and sorrow.

It was at that time he came forward to sacrifice even his life for the sake of his guru. He decided that he would wear the saffron robe of his guru and go to the king’s court, calling himself Rāmānujāchāriār. ‘If there is any danger, let it come to me. You
should do me a favour of doing this service for you’, he prayed to Rāmānujā and persuaded him to accede to his prayer. Rāmānujā put on white clothes, left the Chōla kingdom and went to Melkottē also called ‘Thirunārāyanapuram’ in Karnataka. There even today a festival is celebrated in remembrance of his having put on white clothes.*

Kūrathṭāzhvār put on saffron clothes and went as Rāmānuja to Gangaikondachōlapuram. The Vidwat Sadhas took place there. He refused to accept the ultimate supremacy of Śiva! Therefore, as he had expected he was awarded punishment. But the king did not decree capital punishment. He ordered that he should be blinded by gouging his eyes.

Kūrathṭāzhvār accepted this punishment with joy in the thought that this cruelty which was to have happened to his guru happened to him.

Later, after the demise of the king, Rāmānujā returned to Tamil Nādu. He felt grieved that his sishyā had lost his eyes for his sake.

Although Rāmānujā lived in Srīrangam in his later years, in the beginning he had lived in Kānchipuram and was rendering the service of carrying water to the temple to be used for the deity Varadharāja Swāmi. Even when he had organized the mode of worship in the temple of Sri Ranganāthar and was living in Srīrangam, he had a special attachment to Varadharāja. Therefore, he now told Kūrathṭāzhvār ‘you lost your eyes for my sake, therefore even if you yourself do not want the eyes to be restored, in order to appease my heart, pray to Varadharāja’. Kūrathṭāzhvār also prayed accordingly to Kānchipuram Perumāl. Really speaking, he had no desire to get back his sight. He thought ‘Sāsthrā says that only if all indriyas (sense organs) are controlled, *More details about this can be seen in Śiva nama mahimai,
we can have God realisation. For me, as a blessing, the eyes have
gone because of royal punishment so that at least this one indriya is
not in a position to see all kinds of things and lead me the wrong
way. By changing the situation and again seeing the world, what
am I going to gain?’ he thought. Yet he had to obey the command
of the āchāryā. ‘He should not be left to be sympathizing for me’
he thought. He then prayed to the Lord, ‘Give me back my
eyesight. But I need not to have to see anything. Give me the power to
see the divine form of my āchāryā and your benign idol’.
Varadarājā, it is said, granted the same prayer.

There is also another story about Ālavandār who was a great
āchāryā before Rāmānuja. His ‘prārabdham’ (previous karmā)
delayed his attaining ‘Paramapadām’ at the end of his life’s
journey. One of the sishyās*, as a great sacrifice, took upon
himself the deadly disease of a cancerous tumor by way of
undergoing the balance of Ālavandār’s previous karmā,
experienced it and exhausted it.

There is another story from Guru Paramparā which is as
interesting as it is humorous. One of Rāmānuja’s sishyās was one
day heating milk inside for the Āchāryā. Outside in the street, the
procession of Lord Ranganāthā was in progress. Rāmānuja called
his sishya, ‘Come, come for dharṣan’. The sishyā did not go but
kept watch over the milk. The Lord’s procession had passed that
place. Rāmānuja went inside and asked the sishyā in a tone of
anger, ‘when Perumāḷ is giving his dharṣan just outside our house,
you did not come out to have the dharṣan. Is it right for you to
behave like this?’ The sishyā replied, ‘it is all right that you had
dharṣan of your Perumāḷ. That of course is what you have to do.
But for that why should I leave in the middle the milk service I am
doing to my Perumāḷ?’ (meaning Rāmānuja).

*He was an outcaste by name ‘Māranēr Nambi’. The sishyā being
referred to in the next narrative is Vaduga Nambi.
Bhakthi has given the strength to bear any suffering with joy for the sake of the Guru. Karna went in the garb of a Brahmin to Parasurama who hated kshathriyas and learnt archery from him. One day when Parasurama was sleeping with his head on Karna’s lap a wasp stung him (Karna). You must have heard the story that Karna bore all that pain without trying to drive away that wasp for fear that he might disturb the guru’s sleep. Then that story takes a different turn.

Even today, we remember the story of Ekalaivā who gladly offered as dakshinā what his guru cruelly demanded as the result of which he was disabled from using the very archery which he had learnt from his Guru. There was one āchāryā by name ‘Madurakavi’. He sang only one set of eleven verses. That was also not on Mahā Vishnu. Yet it has been included in the four thousand verses (Nālāyira Prabhandham) and Madurakavi has been accorded the status of an Āzhwār. It is because of the special nature of his guru bhakthi he had sung about Nammāzhwār. In Rāmānuja Siddhānthā all Āzhwārs enjoy a status similar to an āchāryā. Even among these Āzhwārs, Nammāzhwār occupies a special place and he is called ‘Prapanna Jana Kūtasthar’.

Nammāzhwār was not a brahmin. Madurakavi was a high class brahmin. When he was touring in the northern parts, a Jyothi (effulgence) appeared to him from the southern direction. Following that effulgence, he travelled over a thousand miles and reached Thirukkurugūr (now called Āzhwār Thirunagiri) near Tirunelveli. There, within a hollow in a tamarind tree, the Jyoti disappeared and merged. It was in that hollow that Nammāzhwār was in a state of deep meditation for a long time. The story goes that Madurakavi woke him up from his state of deep meditation and asked him some questions in the language of symbols about atma and Nammāzhwār too replied in the same language. (If I mention that question and reply I have to explain it. It will take a long time. Even then, it is doubtful if it will be understood.
Therefore, I go to our subject which is Guru bhakthi which is above all philosophical concepts). That reply gave Jnānā to Madurakavi as if it was mantra upadesā. He surrendered (saranāgathī) to Nammāzhwār, the Prapanna Jānā Kūtasthar, and started singing in praise of him. In that he almost swears that he does not know any God other than Nammāzhwār. Out of great bhakthi to his Guru, he sang about him with the conviction 'if Nammāzhwār worships Mahā Viṣṇu as Swāmi, let him do that. For me, Nammāzhwār only is the Swāmi (Lord). I will sing about him only. I will not sing about Perumāḷ'.

The great men of this Sampradhāya have included it in the ‘four thousand verses - Prabandham’ and elevated him to the status of Āzhwār. Their logic for so doing is this; ‘what Madurakavi has sung on Nammāzhwār who, in our Siddhānthā, is above the āchārya purushās and is next only to Perumāḷ with great bhakthi is as good as what the other Āzhwārs have sung on Perumāḷ (Arulichcheyal)’.

Just as Madurakavi said ‘I do not know any other God’, Vedantha Dēsikā also has said ‘Āchāryāth iha Devathām Samadhiṁ anyāṁ na manyā mahe’.
GURU BHAKTHI OF THE SIKHS

There are people in all traditions (Sampradhāyā) who are of the view that if they could get an ōchāryā that is enough, there is no need for God and that Swāmi (Lord) Himself is not equal to Āchāryā and practised bhakthi to Āchāryā. When we talk of guru, there should be sishyā and sikshai (teaching). It is on this basis that Sikhism was born. It is said that when Guru Gobind Singh who established the Khālsā said human sacrifice was to be offered, immediately one person stood up and went with him to offer his head. Gobind Singh who took him returned after some time and said that one more sacrifice was needed. When he said this he had with him a blood-soaked knife. Thus he demanded five times. Five persons went with him happily in the thought that it was nothing big to sacrifice for the sake of the guru’s word. Later, he brought back all the five persons to the sabha and said that it was only to test the bhakthi of his followers he acted as if he wanted to offer sacrifice, that he did not kill anyone and the blood on the knife was only that of a goat. He appointed all the five who had thought nothing of their lives and volunteered to be sacrificed, as important persons in the Khālsā.

Thus in all religions, there have been sishyās who have considered the great ones who came in their religion as God. Through this guru bhakthi they have also earned merit equal to the guru. Even after they attained such a spiritual status, they held in high esteem those who had raised them and bowed to them.
THE RULES OF CONDUCT FOR THE SOCIETY AND THE INDIVIDUAL
Is it possible for us, of the modern times, to perform Aswamedha Yāgam?

You may think 'what kind of question is this? Is Swāmigal all right when speaking this?'. We may wonder; ‘in these days! performing Aswamedham! Even in olden times it was possible only for one or two great kshatriyā kings (Maharajas) to perform Aswamedham. When one gets coronated as the king of a country he, with his own might and the might of his four wings of army, would allow a horse to roam about in all countries, gain victory over such countries, do ‘Digvijay’ (conquest of the world) acquire the title of ‘Chakravarthi’ (Emperor) and then he would perform Aswamedham. Now, who amongst us can do it?’ one will think. There may be confusion because I am asking ‘Can all of us perform Aswamedha Yāgam?’ instead of asking ‘can anyone amongst us perform Aswamedha Yāgam?’ (such a question will indicate that it is impossible.)

Let us keep aside the question whether it is possible or not possible. Why should we perform Aswamedham? Is it because it would be indicative of our position and fame? Is it because we may attain the pleasure of Indra Lōkam? If it is for these objects, then there is no need for Aswamedham at all. Position, fame and the gain of Indra Lōkam - all these only increase the ego. These are hurdles which will ensure that not even a little jnānā accrues to us. Then the question arises what for Aswamedham? There is a name (nāma), ‘Hayamēdha Samarchithā’ in Lalithā Thrisadhi. Thrisadhi
is a compilation of three hundred names. This is used for performing archana. *Rudra Thrīsadhi* is in the *Vedhā* itself. *Lalithā Thrīsadhi* even though is not part of the *Vedhās* has acquired a status equal to it. Agasthiyar had *upadesā* of *Lalithā Sahasranāmam* from Hayagrīvar but he could not get peace of mind. Then he listened to this *Thrīsadhi* and became clear in his mind. *Thrīsadhi* also has the merit that Āchāryā himself has written commentary (*bāshyam*) on this. Since both *Lalitha Thrīsadhi* and *Lalitha Sahasranāmam* are like *manthrās*, these have to be protected as secrets according to the rules and regulations laid down for the same.

It is in the *Thrīsadhi* which Hayagrīvar gave as *upadesām*, the *nāmā ‘Hayamedha Samarchithā’* occurs. Hayam means a horse. Hayagrīvar is an avatar of Mahā Viṣṇu with the face of a horse. Hayamedham is the same as *Aśwamedham*. ‘Samarchithā’ means, She who is worshipped in full (*Pūṇam*). ‘Hayamedha Samarchithā’ - She who is worshipped through *Aśwamedha Yāgam*.

In other words, if one performs *Aśwamedham*, it amounts to a special worship of *Ambāl*. For an ordinary yagna the reward is only getting children, acquiring wealth, status, a place in heaven, etc. In addition to these rewards and more important than all these is the great reward of attainment of purification of mind by performing a yagna with one pointed concentration. But when a Yāga becomes worship of *Ambāl*, what is obtained is not in the form of small rewards but the *sakthi* to grant all *purushārthās* (worthwhile objectives) is created. When the Supreme Dēvi Herself, is pleased, what is it that She will not give? If the *Ambāl’s* heart is pleased, She will bestow the supreme *Jñānā*, end to Samsārā and the ‘Moksha sāmrājya Lakshmi’ Herself, (the highest state of liberation), which are far more than position, fame, Indra Lōka, etc. Therefore since *Aśwamedham*, if performed, would amount to worship of *Ambāl* we will get all that is auspicious for
this world and the other. At the beginning, I raised the question, why we should perform Aswamedha. This is the reply to that question.

If for a Sahasranāmam, Thrisadhi, etc, so many regulations have been prescribed, for performing Aśwamedha there are lots of restrictions, thousands of rules and regulations and dos and don’ts. In present times, these are not possible at all.

All right. In that case, should we throw up our hands and say that we cannot perform Aśwamedham at all?

No. A kind of Aśwamedham which is practicable for everyone has been prescribed in Śāsthras. After mentioning the different kinds of help to be rendered to others on the basis of compassion towards life, it mentions one as being at the top of it all and declares that it can give the same reward as what Aśwamedha can give.
"MY DUTY IS TO KEEP SERVING WITHOUT ANY EXPECTATION"

Just now I mentioned two words - 'Jīva Kāruṇīyam' (compassion towards life) and 'Parōpakāram' (helping others). If we think of it, both the words are wrong because:

When we talk of 'Kāruṇīyam' - showing 'Karuṇai' - it implies that the one who shows compassion is a step higher and the recipient of compassion is a step below. The moment we think 'we are in a high position and the one who receives our help is lower than us, we are showing compassion to him' the help we render becomes tainted. By helping others we should develop simplicity, humility, giving up ego, etc. Contrary to this, if we render help with the thought that we are showing compassion to the other man, this gives rise to haughtiness and ego. Instead of elevating the āthmā by helping others, its destruction will come about.

If, instead of using the word compassion (karuṇai, kāruṇīyam), we use the word love (anbu) there will be no indication of high and low. Showing love is what we naturally do to one of us. In this there is no thought of showing pity and there is no ego. Even so, in the beginning, it is not found possible to show love to all, treating them all alike without distinction of one belonging to us or someone else.

As if acknowledging what is natural that Thiruvalluvar too has made a distinction between 'Anbu' (Love) and 'Arul' (compassion). What does he say? He says that compassion is the child of love.

We consider some people as our own and show love. If you go on expanding this concept of 'our people' to the people of our place, our country, and then the world, step by step 'Arul' (compassion) is born from 'Anbu'. Then so far as the person who
shows such compassion is concerned, without creating any superiority complex in him, it becomes love which is natural to him. But the recipients of such love realise that it is not the kind of love shown between friends or relatives but one which has attained maturity and a power which is divine. They call the love with such natural and divine power as compassion.

One gets compassion only when he realizes that ‘all life is one; Īswarā is there in every life’. Such a person instead of being at the level of his own people and showing them love, goes down a step, reduces his own importance and renders service to others looking upon them as Īswarā. Vaishñavās extol this as ‘Naiṣchiyam’. Thinking of oneself as lowly and rendering service to another is ‘Naiṣchiyam’. It is when he lowers himself that love instead of being mere thought or talk, takes shape into appropriate action, which generates the divine power and becomes compassion. When without any sense of ego and the feeling ‘we are big, we are helping’ he shows love to all the beings as worship of Īswarā, that raises him above all beings. His love instead of being mere talk and thought gets the power of compassion, which through action can get the blessings of Īswarā.

The great reward is that he rises in stature by his own compassion to all beings. What one thinks is a help he is doing to another may turn out to be hindrance. Or he may not like to be helped. In other words, as far as the other person is concerned, the service may go waste. But as far as he is concerned such service dissolves his ego and raises him spiritually.

It is for this reason, that I said that just as the word ‘Jīva Kāruiiyam’ is wrong, the word ‘Parōpakāram’ is also wrong in a way. Even if his service is not of help to the other man since it purifies his own mind, we have to call it ‘Swaya Upakāram’ (helping oneself).
If one gets real Adhvaitha view, he will go on serving happily those who undergo sufferings of various kinds looking at them as Iswarâ swarûpa (form of Iswarâ) and that too as a dharmâ, natural to him. In such a circumstance also, the phrase ‘Para Upakâram’ becomes wrong! He does not have anything which is other than himself. This is the stage in which Appar Swâmígal said ‘my duty is to keep serving and just abide in it’.

The duty should be performed with love, enthusiasm and whole-heartedly and not half-heartedly. We in this world, who consist of so many beings, animals, birds, vegetation, etc., live by mutual give and take. We who are humans are able to carry on with life’s journey only by getting help from co-humans, animals, birds and even from inanimate things. It is for this reason that in Vedhic religion, there are several rituals which are in the form of repaying our debt to the earth, water, fire, etc., which we think are inanimate.

It is not that Jagdish Chandra Bose alone had found out that plant world has life and feeling. We have sâstrâs which enjoin on us to look upon them as ‘Vanaspathi’ ‘asvatththam’ etc. having life and feelings and by way of paying back our debt to them to do pûjâs with manthrâs. There are Vedha manthrâs for the worship of the divine power in mud, a certain type of grass, called ‘Mriththika Suktham’ ‘Dhûrva Suktham’ etc. Tharpañam (ritual oblation) is prescribed in the ‘Brahmâ Yagnam’ to be performed daily as an expression of our gratitude to the sensitivity (chaithanya) in animate and inanimate things.

There is a crow. It eats a fruit somewhere and throws its droppings in our garden. The seed of that sprouts in our garden and becomes a tree. That crow has rendered a help to us. The dog keeps watch. We use the horse to draw a carriage in which we travel. The help rendered by Gômâthâ both materially and spiritually is something very big. After receiving help like this from
everyone if we, who have taken human birth, do not repay the help, is it not a sin? Great people like Valluvar (Thiruvalluvar), Manu, Vyāsar and others have asserted the importance of gratitude by saying that there is no salvation for those who forget to pay gratitude.

If we perform rituals through manthras or those which have been in usage among the village folk, the Dēvathās, who are in what we think to be inanimate become pleased. In addition, we should water plants. We should love the animals. We should never indulge in cruelty to them. It is the custom to refer to them as ‘beings which cannot talk’. In olden times, when cattle went out for grazing, people used to dig tanks, not only in the village but also outside where they went. A cow feels itching in the neck. Does it have hands like us? It cannot speak and say ‘it is itching’. Realising their problem, people in olden times had kept stones against which the cattle could rub themselves and get relief from itching. In books dealing with good conduct, this has been mentioned as a dharmā. Finally, when it comes to human beings, whatever problems are there for all other beings in creation are put together and given to each human being. This is what he has earned by his own intelligence! No other being has problems like him. Three-fourths of these are of his own creation. Great souls undertake the task of helping others only to put this right.

Apart from this, if we go to hospitals, jails, poor homes, orphanages, widow homes, beggar homes, etc., we know what all types of hardship people undergo. These can be remedied to some extent even by ordinary people like us and not necessarily by great men. If we visit these places, we will know in what all forms Īśwarā has come and keeps expecting help from even people like us.

If it is asked what we should do, to say it in a word, we should voluntarily go to any place where there is sorrow and make efforts to alleviate it to the extent it is possible for us. It is our duty
to render help by way of money, physical assistance and even through word of mouth to the extent possible.

This is what is called *dharmā*. As I had mentioned in the beginning, by doing this, we can offer no guarantee for the extent to which one’s sorrow will end. We are not responsible for that either. But by acting in this manner, we certainly achieve purification of our mind. In other words, the mind expands. *Thiruvalḷuvar* too when defining *dharmā* says that being pure in mind is the essence of all *dharmā*. 
INNER PURITY IS ESSENTIAL

Thiruvalluvar says that all dharmā consists of being pure in mind, cleansing it of all dirt, that is bad thoughts. What he says is the reiteration of vaidhika Sampradhāyā that each one should follow the religious observances and discipline (Karmānustānam) to cleanse the mind. To start with one has to make oneself pure. If, without this, one goes about helping others doing social service, etc., it is just useless effort.

One has to be humble; he has to render service to the society with the thought that it is service of God. Then only it will be rewarding. Anything done without inner purity would only end up as mere show. Any one who does service like this will only inflate his ego. Service which has to assist in the elimination of ego, if performed, without humility, devotion and love, will only increase the ego. It is like one going for a bath but dipping in slush.

When it is said that ‘all dharmā consists in one becoming pure’ it may be thought that this is selfishness. But, this is not selfishness of the type we talk of in relation to worldly affairs. The wrong kind of selfishness is satisfying the craving of our indhriyas (sense organs) even by subjecting others to hardship. If we are to purify our mind, we have to do good even by suffering hardship.

This helps in rescuing our mind ourselves from the pleasures of the indhriyas and taking it to eternal bliss. Upakāram – will it be enough if it is done to others alone? HereĪswarā has given us a life and a mind and has allowed it to roam about in things good and bad. This life of ours, they call it ‘Jīvāthmā’. Can we remain without helping it? Are we not duty bound to direct the mind towards good things, use our speech and body which Bhagawān has blessed us with, to talk well and do good deeds and take this soul to the path of supreme bliss? All of us will have to give up petty selfishness and make efforts for this great ‘selfishness’.

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Towards this end, deeds meant for the welfare of others greatly help. There is something funny in this - it is only when one’s mind is pure help to others becomes real and is rewarding; if it is said that it is only by helping others (Parõpákåram) that the mind starts becoming pure, does it not appear contradictory? But there is no contradiction. To start with, it is enough if one has the yearning that the mind should be pure. It is true that the mind does not easily come under control. It will keep on thinking of sensual pleasures and running to them constantly. At such a time, if there is a genuine worry, ‘Oh, this must go on the right path’ such a worry itself has a power of its own. With such yearning and with service to others as the rein we should constantly pull back the mind and involve it in public service. There is such a thing as two things helping each other in a complementary manner. Service to others gradually cleans up the mind and as the minds get more and more purified, the service we render also gets gradually purified and starts giving reward with the power of its own. This service to others and spiritual evolution add strength to each other in a complementary manner and grow.

Whatever may be said it is not in our hands to rectify fully the external world. When several people suffer on account of different types of Karmås, it is likely that however much we may help, their karma may come in the way of our service being rewarded. But if we go on doing the service resolutely, it will definitely clean up our karma. It will certainly wash the inner dirt that has collected due to the impressions of our past karma. That is why Thiruvalluvar has said, ‘do not search for proof whether your service has been fruitful. You look inside and examine whether the dirt in your mind has gone. This inner proof cannot be hidden from you by anyone. If you get that proof it would mean that the dharmå you have done has borne fruit’.
These days many people have a wrong notion that ‘the way that Buddha, Jesus and Nabi have spoken about non-violence, love and brotherhood, Vēdhic religion does not speak; that in Vēdhic religion the talk is always about ḫarmānuṣṭāṇam (observance of religious disciplines) - yāgam, yagna, annual ceremonies, tharpaṇam, pūjās on a large scale, festivals, fasting, yōga, spiritual enquiry to attain jañāna etc; there is nothing about compassion to other beings’. It is true that if we look at people who are very orthodox, the feeling we get is that they are always engaged in some dry ritual or the other, try to be aloof for fear of being ‘polluted’ by others and they do not display the enthusiasm of a missionary and involve themselves in service to others.

The truth is that in our sāstrās, before laying down the rites and ceremonies according to ‘Vārīṣṭāram’ eight qualities have been indicated for every one. Certain rules are laid down for conduct in the name of general dharmās (sāmāṇya dharmā), applicable to all. The very first thing in general dharmā is ‘ahimsā’ only. Even sathyam (speaking the truth) comes only next. When defining the characteristics of sathyam, it is said:

’Sathyam bhūthahitham priyam’

This means that sathyam is not just reporting things as they happened but that which is in the interest of the welfare of beings and to their liking. In the same way, of the eight qualities mentioned before the forty ‘samskārams’, (rites and ceremonies) the first is:

‘Dhaya sarva bhūthēshu’

By saying ‘there should be compassion to all beings’ importance has been accorded to compassion.
It is true that if one does not practise love and compassion himself and thinks that Bhagawan should show him compassion, it will be of no use whatever pūjā, yāga, etc., he may do. If he does not have love, consideration, pity, etc., towards others like him, what right has he to expect that Bhagawan should show him mercy? As I have mentioned earlier, service to others and performance of samskārams for spiritual elevation, pūjā, etc., should be carried on together in a manner that each purifies the other mutually.

It was only with the coming of the East India Company and establishment of British rule that the customs and usages of Englishmen entered here, and a kind of division between those who led orthodox life and social service appeared. Before that, even the highly orthodox persons commanded the love and respect of the society and had rendered help to the society. If we study the lives of Appayya Dīkshitar, Gōvinda Dīkshitar, Thiruvisanallur Ayyāvāḷ and other great persons, we will find that they were helping all people including the harijans.

Although for the good of the world, duties were allotted on a hereditary basis and rites and observances were prescribed accordingly and in order that confusion should not arise in these arrangements, which would affect the good of the world, people lived separately, there was no dearth of service to others in those days. These days there is a lot of talk about social service and photographs appear in papers. These were not there in olden times, yet social service was in vogue in a natural way.

Along with the Englishmen came town life which harmed our āchārās and made a mess of everything. When this happened those who were high in the practice of āchārās, became afraid of this kind of invasion and had to withdraw themselves as if they were going away from the society. That is why the impression has been created that those who lead their lives strictly according to sāstrās do not have the attitude of public service.
The old excellent arrangement was; ‘there should not be too much mixing; there should not be total exclusivism either; people should be separate so far as they perform their duties according to swadharma, but everyone should feel one at heart and live in unity as citizens in God’s empire.’ This arrangement went into decay. On one side, the reformers condemned the observance of āchārā, anushtānam themselves. On the other, those who were living a life of āchārā feared the confusion created by the talk of equality and therefore, they started losing social consciousness, keeping themselves away from public service.

When such a situation occurs, there will be loss of feelings of love, unity, etc. It is perhaps due to this that others have started thinking that those who live a life of āchārā lack humaneness. But if our Sanātha Dharma is to be followed in the true sense, development of good qualities is as important as the performance of samskārams. Of these qualities, what is mentioned first is compassion. No other example is needed to illustrate this than ‘Randhi Devan’ who performed a lot of Yāgās and yagnas. I shall narrate a little of his story.


RANDHI DÉVAN

Randhi Dévan was a king of the Chandra (Lunar) dynasty. There is mention in the Mahābhāratha about the large number of Yāgās-yagnas he had performed. Srimad Bhāgavatham narrates the story which brings out the fact that simply because he was deeply involved in Karmānushtānam like this, his compassion for other beings had not dried up.

In old sāstrās, two things to be observed by people are mentioned. These are ‘Ishtam’ and ‘Pūrtham’. Of these two, Ishtam or Ishti means ‘Yāga-yagna’. We talk of Dasaratha having performed ‘Puthra Kamēshti’. That is Puthra Kāna Ishti only, that is a yāgam performed with the object of begetting a son.

Pūrtham is what many people think is not in our religion namely social service. Digging of wells, tanks, laying roads, constructing temples, etc., which are in the nature of public service are called Pūrtham. Only some people are entitled to perform Ishtam. It is very difficult too. There are lots of restrictions and regulations. Pūrtham is not like that. Purtham is to be done by all people joining together from the ordinary people to the highly learned Brahmin without difference of rich and poor or of belonging to this or that jāthi. About Pūrtham I shall tell you more later. Now let us see Randhi Dévan’s story.

This Randhi Dévan performed lots of yagnas and gave away much by way of dakshinai and charity. His treasury became empty. He was not left with a single pie. He had given away so much to whoever came and said ‘dhēhi’ without telling them no.

At that stage, Bhagawān Mahā Vishnu put him to a test. He caused a very severe drought and famine in his country. If things are understood properly, performance of yagnas is only to get rains and plenty of grains. Now, quite opposite to this, a drought occurred.
Even then, *Randhi Devan* went on giving away in charity his personal belongings one by one. Finally, the stage was reached when he and his family did not have means even for one time gruel in a day. But he who was used only to giving did not beg. He starved for forty eight days along with his family members. Then somehow it became public knowledge that the royal family was starving. When a great king who had given so much to his people was starving, someone collected a little wheat somehow and gave gruel and water on the forty ninth day to the king, his wife and the children.

They had starved so much that the gruel came as if it was nectar. The king and his family members were about to drink it eagerly, when a Brahmin came there calling out 'Bikshām dhēhi'.

The stomach was craving for a little food. The king who was used to luxurious food was starving and was undergoing unbearable misery. Finally, when a little gruel became available, here was a person seeking alms as if he had timed it like that.

*Randhi Devan* looked at the alms seeker. How did he look at him? Did he think, ‘useless fellow, why has he come now?’ No, he looked at the Brahmin as Sṛman Nārāyaṇa Himself.

‘It is good that I have not taken this myself. He has come just at this moment. He has saved me from sinning against a Bhāgavathā (a devotee of God)’ and felt happy.

His wife and sons were no less in being very charitable. They gave the Brahmin a fair share of what they had. That was not quite sufficient for them even. But they sent the Brahmin satisfied. When they were about to take what remained, again another person came seeking alms. The one who came now belonged to the fourth varṇa (jāthu). Is there any distinction in the matter of hunger and compassion? Out of the gruel which had already become small in quantity, they kept a little for themselves and gave the balance to the alms seeker. The king saw this person also as Viśnu only.
Out of what remained, the family members took their share. But Randhi Devan alone did not take it but was immersed in thought probably thinking that God had blessed him to be of help to two people.

When he thought of taking the gruel, just then a low voice was heard. Along with the human voice the barking of dogs was also there. One person came along with dogs and stood - he was competing for the gruel!

To Randhi Devan the dogs and the person who came with them looked like Narāyana only. In the Vedhas, in ‘Sṛṇudram’, Paramēśvara has been described as one ‘who is of the form of dog; who is a hunter, keeping a dog’. Randhi Devan in fact saw them as Īswarā.

Just as in Sṛṇudram dog and the hunter are mentioned as Paramēśwarā, in Gītā also Bhagāwān says ‘Ṣuni chaiva swapāke cha pandīthāḥ samadharśanah’. This means that jnānis look at a dog and the chandālā who eats the meat of the dog as Brahmam only.

Randhi Devan had such a view. ‘Narāyana only has come in the garb of the dogs and the person who brought them. He is pretending that he is hungry. To remove the hunger is worship of God’ he thought. Without being perturbed, he kept the whole gruel before them. Just as the Rudram says ‘obeisance to the dog, obeisance to its master’, he paid obeisance to them.

Now all that he was left with was only water. Since it was severe drought there was great difficulty in getting even that water. His condition was that he could survive only if he could take that water at least.

Even now Bhagawān did not stop his test. When Randhi Devan thought of drinking the water and saving his life, again there was a voice ‘Swāmi, thirsty, I am thirsty.'
‘Swāmi, give me at least that water’ so saying a ‘pulayā’ (outcaste) came and stood.

There are two slōkās in Bhāgavatham describing what Randhi Dēvan was supposed to have said at that time. Both are two gems. There is no greater manthra for service to others and for sacrifice. I shall repeat them in his own words. I shall give the meaning in Tamil later.

Na Kāmayē (a)ham gathim Īswarāth parām
Ashtardhi Yukthām apuvnarbhavam va
Ārthim Prapadhyē (a)kila dhēha bājām
Anthasthithō yēna bhavanthyā dhukkah

We may understand ‘ruddhi’ as ‘siddhi’ only. The eight siddhis (powers) which are capable of performing eight miracles are called the eight siddhis or ruddhis. This ashta ruddhi only has become ‘Ashtardhi’. If these are gained, we can do what we want with the world and rule over it. What Randhi Dēvan says is; ‘I do not want from Īswarā these great siddhis. I do not pray to Him to know how to get them.’ If so, does he pray for the state of Samādhi in which all these are subdued and one is peaceful and still - the state of Mōksha? Does he want the mukthi by which there is cessation of repeated births? He says ‘I do not want that too’. Then what does he pray to Īswarā for?

There are so many living beings with bodies - the worm, the insect, bird, animal and human beings. All these beings with body have some suffering or the other. Is it not? ‘Ārdhi’ means suffering, sorrow. That suffering is felt only by the heart in each of these. ‘If somehow I can be inside them, all the sufferings of the living beings will come to me, is it not? Īswarā, I desire to have the sakthi to take upon myself the sufferings of all beings and experience them and I pray for the same. I pray to you for that by which the beings will be free from suffering’ he says.
Sorrow is the result of sinful Karmās. When one takes over another’s sin and experiences it, it is called vicarious suffering. It is said that Jesus took over all the sins of the world and to exhaust the same, he stood on the Cross. That excellent thought of sacrifice is not new to our religion. Randhi Dēvan prayed for this. ‘ākhila dhēha bhājām ārdhim prapathyē’; ‘I take over all the sufferings of all the living beings.’

A word prapathyē occurs in this. In many sthōthrās - specially in Sri Vaishnava literature - you would have heard of ‘Ṣaraṇam prapathyē, Saraṇam prapathyē’. In Durgā Sūktam, which is in the Vedhās also Prapathyē occurs. Prapathyē means ‘I surrender’, ‘I take refuge’. Prapathi is total surrender to one. It means that the person who surrenders must make himself a zero. In such a state that to which he surrenders will take him into its grace and make him full. It is this state in which one makes oneself a zero and surrenders to God is generally called Prapathyē in all sthōthrās. Just as it is said in Vēdha Sūktam ‘I surrender to Durgā Devi’, in other sthōthrās, it will be said ‘I surrender to this Swāmi’ ‘I surrender to that Swāmi’ mentioning the name of the Swāmi. When Upanishad is recited starting with ‘Śanthi Pātam’ it is said ‘I who is a Mumukshu, keen on mokṣhā, take refuge in the Paramāthmā who brightens the intellect.’ Here also we find the word ‘Ṣaraṇam Prapathyē’. What did Randhi Dēvan say? He said ‘Ārdhim prapathyē’. ‘Ārdhim’ means suffering, hurdle, difficulty. Instead of telling, ‘May Paramāthmā take me into His grace’, in a state of supreme sacrifice he says ‘let all the sufferings of the world come to me. I am surrendering to the sufferings of the world’.

Generally, what would all of us want? It is only that we should be blessed with all happiness. Randhi Dēvan says ‘Let the sufferings of all beings come to me’. ‘I will take all the sufferings of all beings and experience them. By this let their sorrows end’ he says.
He says another slōka:

*Kshuth thrut śramō gāthra paribramascha*

*Dainyam klamah sōka vishāda mohāh*

*Sarve nivruththah krupānasya janthoh*

*Jījīvishār jīva jaalārpanāth mē*

Just as when making a gift to great Vēdhic scholars, water is poured along with recitation of manthra. *Randhi Dēvan* recites this *slōka* while he was giving away the water he had with him. What is the import of this? ‘I am giving the water now. Is it to quench the thirst of only this panchama (outcaste)? No. Do I not give away this water, thinking of him as *Nārāyaṇa* who is the indweller of all beings? Because of this, let this water quench the thirst of all beings, end their sufferings’ he says.

If it is asked whether the water given to one person would remove the sufferings of all beings:

Krishna *Paramāthmā* took a small bit of green (vegetable) that was sticking to the ‘*Akshaya Paṭra*’ which Draupathi had cleaned and kept; immediately Dhurvāsar and his retinue of ten thousand *sishyās* felt the satisfaction of having filled their stomachs with a grand feast. Do we not read this? This is also like that. Instead of thinking that ‘this one is some panchama’ when he is understood as the form of *Paramāthmā* Himself and water is given to him, the entire universe which is within the *Paramāthmā* becomes satisfied. What is important is that the attitude should be true. As soon as *Randhi Dēvan*, being at the height of sacrifice, gave to the outcaste the water he had kept to save his own life, the Brahmin who had come first, then the one of the fourth *varṇa* and then the hunter who had come with the dogs and lastly the panchama all showed their real identity of *Vīshṇu*’s messengers.*

He paid obeisance to them and got immersed in the meditation of *Nārāyaṇa*. This illusory life disappeared for him - thus ends this virtuous story in *Bhāgavatham*.
Usually in our Purāṇās or in our dharmā literature, the hero would never die. In our tradition, there is no tragedy. In order to have an auspicious ending the last scene always would be a marriage or coronation, etc. Even in Rāmāyana and Mahābhāratha, although Vālmīki and Vyāsāchārya have concluded their epics with Sri Rāma going back to Vaikuntam and the Pāṇḍavas to Swarga, Harikathā and Upanyas are even today concluded with Rāma’s coronation and Dharmarāja’s coronation and the later part dealing with their last days is not mentioned. Even in the case of Dhruva and Prahlāda and others when Bhagawān appeared before them and they prayed to Him that they should get mukthi, Bhagawān said ‘No’ and He performed their coronation. This is what is said in the Bhāgavatha Purāṇam. But only in the case of Randhi Dēvan instead of telling ‘immediately the famine was over, Randhi Dēvan’s hunger and thirst had gone and he ruled his kingdom for a long time’, it is said ‘māyā itself left him and vanished as if it was a dream’. In other words, what is understood is that he had gone to Para Lōkā or Paramapadam. It appears that in order that his great sacrifice should make a deep impression on our minds the end has been changed in this manner.

* This essay has been compiled on the basis of notes taken by a devotee from Sri Periyava’s conversation. In that it has been recorded as ‘Vishnu’s messengers’. But in Srimad Bhāgavatham it has been given as the ‘Lords of the three worlds’. Since Bhāgavatham would refer only to Brahmā, Vishnu, Rudra as the Lords of the three worlds commentators of Bhāgavatham interpret that the Thrimūrthis gave dharṣan to Randhi Dēvan. But when the Brahmin is mentioned first, then the fourth varīṭa man, then the hunter with the dogs, and the last the outcaste, in all four persons, how would it be appropriate to refer to them as Thrimūrthis is not clear. It is likely that the hunter who came with the dogs and the one who came asking for water may be one and the same. If Sri Periyavā had mentioned Vishnu’s messengers there is no room for doubts of this nature.
The happiness of this world is in any case not permanent. Marriage, coronation, etc., are all temporary happenings only. What is permanently auspicious is to reach Bhagawān. Looked at this way, it is Randhi Dēvan’s story that has an auspicious end.

Like Randhi Dēvan’s story, there is another story narrated in Bhāratham.
THE STRANGE MONGOOSE

As a preliminary to Aswamedha Yāgam, Dharmaputhrā did a lot of feeding. People praised this saying that no one else had done such feeding which filled their stomachs and satisfied their hearts. We can feed every one stomach-full. That is not something big. But, doing it with love which fills the minds of people is of merit. 'This is preliminary to Yāgam. If we do it we will be rewarded' - without such thoughts and not doing it as a reluctant duty, Pāṇḍavās did it with true love and the world praised them. Bhagawān saw this and thought that they should not become proud because of this. If they become proud all the dharma will get destroyed. Therefore Bhagawān thought that in this situation it would be good if they are put down a little. He also thought that it was not enough to just put them down but should be done in such a manner that the world would understand the excellent principle behind giving 'dhanam'. By divine will an incident occurred at that time which would achieve both these objectives.

When a lot of people had gathered and were praising Dharmaputhrā, suddenly a strange mongoose appeared there. What was strange about it was that one half of it was shining like a gold.

After rolling over food that lay scattered in the dining hall, it started speaking in human voice, 'What is this big dhanam? What is this great yāgam? This is not a fraction of what that poor 'Unchavriti Brahmin' did in Kurukshethra'. It spoke in a derogatory manner.

If its appearance as half golden was strange, its speaking in human voice was stranger still. How could a poor Brahmin have done a bigger dhanam than Dharmaputhrā who was the monarch of the universe?
These days people are thinking that ‘unchavrithi’ means begging from house to house and receiving alms by way of grains. In the tradition of bhajan (group prayer by singing) also it has come to be said that going from street to street and receiving grain is ‘unchavrithi’ bhajan. But in olden times according to śāstrās, the meaning for ‘unchavrithi’ was entirely different. According to śāstrās the owner of a land must leave some grains on the thrashing ground instead of mopping up the entire thing. The idea in leaving a little over the ground was that the same would be collected by poor Brahmins who had no other means. ‘Uncham’ actually means collecting what lies scattered.

When the mongoose praised the ‘unchavrithi’ Brahmin sky high, those gathered there asked ‘who are you’? who is the ‘unchavrithi’ Brahmin you have spoken of? What is the great dhānam he gave?’

The mongoose started telling the story. That mongoose was very old. Therefore it narrated the story of what had happened long years back.

That was the time when a severe famine had occurred in Kurukshetra. Even very rich people had to struggle for food. What would have been the state of a ‘unchavrithi’ Brahmin in such a situation? He had with him a little wheat he had collected long time back and it was in a state of decay and it was also emitting bad odour. His people had ground it and kept the flour. There were four members in his family - the Brahmin, his wife, son and daughter-in-law. The wheat flour was just sufficient for the four of them for one meal. They thought ‘now this little flour is available, let us pass this time with this. For the next meal, we have nothing and we will have to die.’ Thus thinking they sat to eat a handful each of them.

Just at that time, a person seeking alms came there calling ‘dhehi’.
The situation was similar to the one in which a person’s hand is pulled out even as he puts it into the pot to take out a handful of food.

Even in such a situation not one in that family was found wanting in hospitality. All the four competed and gave each one’s share to the guest.

‘Adhithi satthkar’ (hospitality) is a social duty. Along with this there is also a domestic duty. There is dharma which lays down the duties for different people in the family. Even when all the four came forward to do the social duty, they pointed out their domestic duty. ‘Will a wife live without the husband? Will I be looking on when you give your share and with that your life? Therefore I will give my share’ the wife said adamantly. The son said, ‘when there is danger to the life of parents who are the gods on earth, can a son just look on?’ so saying he stopped them and was about to give his share. The daughter-in-law also pointed out to her husband the same ‘Pathivrathā Dharmam’ which her mother-in-law had pointed out to her father-in-law and said ‘I only will give my share’.

If something is being given we would compete to take it. ‘First I and then you’. If it is a question of giving, we will step back. But in this poor Brahmin family, all of them competed with one another to offer their lives. It is not as if sacrifice and dhānam are the exclusive privilege of the rich. Even very poor people are capable of it. These people who are absolutely poor are doing the same sacrifice which the family members of Randhi Devan, a king had done.

Finally, the Brahmin silenced the others and said ‘I am the head of the family and it is my duty to protect all the three of you. If knowingly I make any of you starve and subject you to the risk of death I would become a fallen man.’ So saying firmly he gave his share of the flour to the guest with love.
The guest after taking it said his hunger had not subsided. Immediately, the wife gave her share to him with joy. The guest took that also and wanted more. Without any sign of anger, the son also gave him his share. The guest took that also but still expected to have more. Lastly the daughter-in-law also gave her share to him wholeheartedly.

The moment the guest finished eating he disappeared. It rained flowers from the sky on the four people.

'I am Dharma Devathā. It was for testing you I came as the Brahmin, In the test you have come out wonderfully. Nowhere have I seen people like you who practise hospitality even at the cost of their lives. The flour that each of you gave has already reserved a place for each of you in Swarga. All of you may come to blissful Déva Lōkam', said the ‘asarfri’ (unseen voice without body).

(I do not exactly remember whether it was asarfri or the Dharma Devatha came in person. The significance is this.)

Immediately, the dévās came there with decorated vehicle. The members of the family of the ‘unchavrithi’ Brahmin got into it and entered the Swarga Lōkā. When it is said they entered the Swargam, it means that they had given up their lives here. It has not been said that like Kuchelā they got all wealth here. They did not perform the dhānā with the expectation that they would be rewarded with Swarga. They gave up their lives only to uphold the virtue of hospitality. Swarga materialized for them of its own.

The mongoose which narrated the story continued. ‘At that time I was in that house in Kurukshetra. The flour they gave had scattered a little on the floor. When I ran over that, this part of my
body which came in contact with the flour became of golden colour.'

Even now we generally talk of 'golden heart'. In the dhānā given by the family with golden heart and sense of sacrifice this has been proved physically.

Subsequent to this, with the desire that the other part of my body may also become golden if something scattered in another place where dhānā is given in a noble way touches my body, I have been going to big food distribution halls, charity homes, etc. But my other part has not become gold. I came here because Dharmaputhrā has performed a great Yāgā and arranged for annadhānam and rolled over here thinking that my other part will become golden. But it has not happened here also.' said the mongoose.
CHARITY IS THE HIGHEST DHARMA

What is learnt from the stories of Randhi Dēvan and the ‘unchavri’ Brahmin is that charity should be practised without keeping anything for oneself. The principle of sacrifice is highlighted that even at the cost of our life, we should save another life. Another thing that becomes clear is that when one is in difficulty, we should render the help which is within our capacity and help in the removal of distress without going into a research of his caste, religion, etc., or whether he is good or bad, whoever he is, whatever he may be.

Where distinctions are to be made, they have to be made. Whatever distinctions have been laid down in the Śāstrās for the good of the world in distributing duties have to be maintained. But when it is a question of distress, sorrow, we should not practise any distinction at all.

Particularly, when speaking about annadhānam, Thirumanthiram says ‘give to anybody and everybody; no question of this person or that’.

Randhi Dēvan did annadhānam in the faith that ‘whoever it is, he is of the form of Nārāyaṇa (Nārāyaṇa swarūpam). Māra Nāyanār of Ilavānkuṇḍi was suffering from acute poverty. When a devotee of Śiva came to him for alms, he thought that Ishwarā Himself had come to him. In pouring rain, he went to the fields, picked up the paddy that had been sown and offered alms to the devotee of Śiva. The truth is that the devotee was Paramēśwara Himself. This is a story from Periya Purāṇam.

Charitable distribution of food (annadhānam) is the most meritorious of all charity. In Gītā, Bhagawān says ‘he who finds food for himself and eats it will have to experience all his sins.
himself; no one else will share it.’ The manner in which He says this would sound that he who eats alone does not eat food, but sins. The reason why there is something special about *annadhanam* is that it is only by this that one can be fully satisfied. If money, clothes, jewels, land, house, etc., are gifted, the person who receives it will not say ‘nothing more’. It is only when one is given food, however much that person may take, there is a limit beyond which he just cannot take. He says ‘Thrupthōsmi’ (enough, I am satisfied). If it exceeds the limit, he begs ‘please do not serve more’. It is only when full satisfaction is expressed like this, the giver also will reap the full reward.

It is food that keeps body and soul together. That is why the saying ‘one who has given food has given life’. This speciality of *annadhanam* has been mentioned in ‘*Manimekalai*’. It is a Buddhist literature. From the five Tamil epics, it is seen that both Buddhism and Jainism have a mix of *Vēdhic* traditions. *Manimekalai* got ‘*akshaya pāthrā*’ in *Kānchipuram* and with that she removed the hunger of people. Aeons (yugam) before that in the same *Kānchipuram*, *Ambāl* had done the same *annadhanam*. It is said that *Jaganmāthā* ‘with two measures of paddy carried out thirty two types of dharmās’.

Dharmam means all rules and regulations governing human life. But it is ‘dhānam’ which has specially acquired the name dharma. It has secured such a high place among dharmās. We usually talk of ‘dhān-dharmā’ together. Even beggars ask for being given ‘dharmam’. The very word Dharmasālā means a public place where free food is distributed. In Avvai’s sayings which have a status equal to Vēdhic truths it has been said ‘giving is dharma’. Dhānam has been equated to dharmam.

There is something funny about this. There is an aspect which appears mutually contradictory. If a dhānam is given there should be someone to receive it. If there is a donor there must be a
donee. But the same sāstrās which glorify the giving of dhanam consider receiving it as lowly. There is a prayer which says, ‘I should always be a giver, never a receiver: ‘Yāsidharascha nassanthu, mā cha yāchishma kanchana’. Even in ‘āṭhthichūḍi’ immediately after the aphorism ‘never fail to give’ it is said ‘receiving is lowly’. If there is none to take a thing how can any dhanam be made? If there is no alms seeker where is the need for a giver?

There is a sloka.

‘Aksharadhvaya - mabyastham nāsthi nāsthīthi yath purā Thadhēva dhēhi dhēhīthi viparītha-mupasthitham’

One who in his previous birth drove away alms seekers saying ‘no no’ says a two lettered word ‘dhēhi dhēhi’ (please give, give) and wanders for alms. This is the meaning of the sloka. Here we are able to see the glory of giving and the lowliness of receiving. It is said that Bhagawān Himself had shrunk his body to the size of Vāmana out of a sense of embarrassment that he had to go seeking alms and then went to Mahābali.

The reason why receiving alms has been considered lowly is that unless there is absolute need others should not be bothered. Each one has to work with his brain or labour with his body and earn for himself. To meet the expenses of good and bad events in each one’s house each one should save as much as he can. It is only in unavoidable circumstances like unemployment, disease and being forlorn one may seek alms.

For public activities it would be necessary to seek aid. Here even though there may be the individual, the giver, there is no one like alms taker with lowly status. But, even in public activities like building a hospital, renovation of temples, etc., instead of making grandiose plans beyond what is essentially needed and pestering several people in the name of collection, it would be desirable to
plan for what is essential and without much publicity for people to
share the expenses between themselves.

In olden days since Vedhas, yagnas, pujā, meditation, teaching were a twenty four hour occupation for the Brahmin, he
was entitled to take whatever others gave for supporting his
family. A sanyāsi is to do sādhana all the time and also his ego
should go. It was for this reason it is ordained that he should seek
alms. In other circumstances, seeking alms as a means of living is
degrading.

In śāstrās thirty two kinds of dharma have been prescribed.
First is feeding people. Then giving fodder to cows. The list goes on
with putting up gardens, establishing hospitals, digging tanks etc.,
and ends with what can be done with least expense, viz, to arrange
for water booths. Physical strain is also less in this. Even though
the expense and strain is less, to keep water booths where cool
water and diluted butter milk are given to people who come with
thirst and parched throat as if giving them fresh life is great ‘punya’
(virtue). Our elders who have been doing these from generation to
generation – these good things and small subtle dharmās- we have
forgotten.

In Kānchīpuram it is only Ṭhūḷ who has done all these
dharmās and shown us the way. There, in Kāmākshi Amman
Temple there is a Sannidhi for Annapūrṇī. Apart from this,
Kāmākshi Herself has done all the thirty two dharmās. In
Thiruvaiyāru also Ṭhūḷ as ‘Dharmasamvardhini’ nurtured
dharmā.

It is not that only amongst human beings help should be
rendered without looking into caste or the worth of a person.
When Randhi Devan gave water to the panchamā, he said ‘like this
not only humans but all living beings should be relieved of
sufferings’.
Like this there is another *slōka* which is a prayer for the well being of all living beings. Just as Randhi Devan said, ‘may this water remove the sufferings of all beings’ in the other *slōka* it is said, ‘may the effulgence of this dīpa (lamp) contact all living beings and may they prosper’. Instead of saying ‘all living beings’ as a group each kind is mentioned separately. In *Randhi Devan’s slōka* water is mentioned. In the other *slōka*, the brightness of fire is mentioned. That *slōka* pertaining to fire is connected to ‘*Kārthikai dīpam*’. I shall explain that.
THE SIGNIFICANCE OF KĀRTHIKAṆ DĪPAM

Do we not light a large number of mud lamps on the day of Kārthikai festival? In Dharma Śāstrā it has been ordained that when lighting the lamps a slōka has to be recited:

Kitāh : Pathangā : maśakāscha vrukshāh
Jalē sthalē yē niva santhī jīvā
Dhrishtvā pradīpam na cha janma bhājā
Bhavanthi nithyam śwapachā hi viprāh

The meaning of this slōka is this: ‘Whether it is worms, birds or even a mosquito, or trees which we think have no life, any of the living creatures of various kinds in water or the earth, anyone among the humans whether he is a panchamā or a Brahmin, let it be anything or anyone, if they see this dīpam let their sins be cured and may they join the eternal bliss without taking another birth’.

Is it only about beings in water and earth? It is not so. Since in the beginning itself, birds (pathanga) and mosquitos (maśaka - maśakam means mosquito - ‘mosquito’ has been derived from this) have been mentioned it means that it includes birds which fly in the sky. Mosquito even though it flies in air, it lays its egg in water only. Birds come and rest on trees only and lay their egg. The fish remains in water only and the frog will be in water and land. Many animals can live only on earth. Thus the slōka mentions the different types and says that their sins should go and they should cross this worldly life.

What is said is that whichever being sees the Kārthikai Dīpam it should attain permanent good. The word ‘dhrishtvā’ in the slōka means ‘if they see’. How can the tree see? Does it have eyes and the power of seeing like us? Although according to modern science too, it is said that even plants have different types of feelings it is
not known whether they have eyes. Therefore one thought occurs to me. Although in the sloka it is said ‘if they see’ we may understand the sloka like this: ‘Does not matter if it is not seen; it does not matter if like the trees there is no power to see; or even if it is a living being which has the power to see but it does not see, does not the effulgence of the dipam fall on all irrespective of whether it is seen or not? All beings within the radius of this effulgence should get rid of their sins and the cycle of births and deaths and attain permanent happiness’.

Just as the brightness of light falls on all people and all things without distinction of Brahmin, panchmā, worms, birds, mosquitos, trees, creatures which live in water, on earth etc, love from our heart should flow like the light of the dipam and touch everyone. Together with this kind of inner brightness we should light the dipam for external brightness and offer prayer as mentioned above.

Previously a dipam used to be brought from the temple and with that a big fire (called in Tamil ‘Sokkapānai’) is to be lit. Even now on top of the hill at Thiruvanāmalai a huge lamp is lit. What is its import? If a dipam is lit in a small clay lamp, its light will spread only up to a short distance. If it is Sokkapānai the light will be seen far. If a lamp is lit like the dipam on the hill in Thiruvanāmalai (Annamalai Dipam) it will be seen over several places. Our ancestors had established the practices like lighting Sokkapānai and Annamalai dipam etc in order that the brightness of the dipam should fall on creatures within that big radius and they should be rid of their sins. Normally there is preponderance of two-legged and four-legged animals. The wasp has six legs, the spider has eight. If the family of centipede is taken they have legs, which cannot be counted. Just as in the Vedhas, the prosperity of two-legged (dwipadh) and four-legged (chatuspadh) animals is prayed for there are also manthras which are prayers for the welfare of animals like snakes, fish which have no leg.
In Gītā it is said that for the great jnāni there is no difference between a Brahmin and a panchamā. It is only to emphasise that even for us though there are differences in functions there should be no distinction in the love that generates in the heart, that Randhi Dēvan gave water to the Brahmin and also to the panchama. In this manthra relating to Kārthikai dipam also there is mention of ‘Swapachā Viprā’, that is both the panchama and the Brahmin. When we pray for welfare there is no distinction of caste. Even the consideration whether one is good or bad should not be there. Our sāstrās lay down that love and help should be extended even to those who are great sinners and are consigned to hell. About that I shall say a few things.
FOR THE GOOD OF THOSE IN HELL TOO

According to our *sāstrās* help is extended even to those in hell. When we perform annual ceremonies and ‘*tharpanām*’ (offering oblation) these give welfare to our people of earlier generations who are reborn on this earth or somewhere in some form. The ‘Pithru *Devathās*’ help in converting the thil, water, rice balls which we offer to suit them in whatever form and wherever they are born as food and ensure that they get them. Just as there is currency exchange, the Pithru *Devathās* exchange food we offer here as food to suit people of earlier generations who are reborn.

Because this tradition of our country is still in our people’s blood and not completely dried up, even now most people do the rituals meant for ‘pithrus’ (deified souls, manes), annual ceremonies, *tharpanām*, etc., at least in a simplified form. But there is no interest (*sraddhā*) in doing it. The rituals meant for pithrus are called ‘*sraddham*’ only because *sraddhā* is important in doing them. If there is *sraddhā* it will be performed as it should be performed and in an excellent manner instead of in a simplified manner, as a brief affair and doing it after the proper time for it is over. The consequence of this will be seen actually. What it is I shall tell you. Now most people perform the *Karmās* relating to the pithrus as a mere formality. The rest of them have ventured to give it up completely calling it superstitious. I only know the disastrous consequences of this. In many homes there are complaints of mental illness, epilepsy and various types of nervous disorders which were not heard of in earlier generations. They go to astrologers, those who claim to cure by mantras and others and then come to me. The reason for these disorders is in most cases giving up of the pithru *Karmās*. It should be understood that on the
one side if it is said that what we do for the parents (when they are alive) will protect our children on the other what is not done for the parents (after their death) will affect our children. It should not be asked whether parents and ancestors would become annoyed and curse us. Pithrus may not curse us. But the Pithru Devathās will feel that the younger generation has failed to offer thil, water or food to the ancestors through them and will curse. Therefore for us and our succeeding generations to live a good life we have to perform annual ceremonies and tharpaṇam etc for our ancestors. In other words in this there is a confluence of self interest and service to others.

Not all people are reborn on this earth immediately after the death. Are they not giving bonus in addition to increment if we work well? If our performance is extraordinary then we are also promoted to higher position. If we fail to do our work properly, our increment is stopped and penalty is also imposed. If the performance is very bad we are demoted also. In the same manner for those who have earned merit (punya) there is some bonus awarded before they take another birth which is comfortable like an increment. A spell of stay in Swarga is the bonus. If the punya is very much then the promotion to Swarga is permanent. In the same way those who had committed sins have to stay in hell as penalty. Then they will have to be reborn on earth in different situations as if there is no increment. If the sin is too much the stay in hell will be permanent.

The fruits for annual ceremonies, tharpaṇam, etc will accrue only to those who are in worlds other than hell. In swarga too there are several kinds; several worlds. Deva lokam, Gandarva lokam, Vidhyādhara lokam, etc. Similarly there are different kinds of hell also. ‘Thamisram’ ‘Ardhathamisram’ ‘Puth’ ‘Rauram’ etc. The thil, water and food we offer will not go to those staying in these worlds.
When there is conflict situation between two countries, then it is not possible for money exchange between two countries, is it not? In the same manner, the *Pithru Dhēvathās* do not do food exchange for those who are in hell.

Our Rishis, out of great compassion even for these great sinners who are consigned to hell, have laid down that certain things should be given to them also through *manthrās*. We cannot reach to them things which are pure. But *Bhagawān* has ordained that only certain dirty things may become their food. The dirty water that falls when we squeeze our wet dhōtis, the water that flows through our tuft when taking bath etc get converted into food for those in hell and give them some relief. Keeping them in view if we squeeze our wet dhōtis and our tuft with kindness at heart, they will get this benefit. Those who are authorized to do this with *manthrā*, should follow that procedure. After taking food if the water in the hand used for taking the food is dropped to the right side of the leaf with *manthrā*, this helps to quench the thirst of those who have been in the most cruel Rouram for millions of years. People of Andhra do it without fail after ‘Utharabhōjanam’. We should not think how we can offer dirty water, etc to someone. In the state in which they are in hell they will like this only. Do we not see the pigs here?

*Bhagawān*, with great compassion, pardons us our sins. But if he throws someone into the ‘Rouram hell’, the sins of such a person must be most fearful. Our Dharma *Śāstrās* lay down the ways and means of quenching their thirst too.

People who think that in our religion importance is not accorded to compassion as has been done in Buddhism and Christianity should take note of these things.
CHARITY AS EXTOLLED IN 
VEDHA ŚĀSTHRĀS

In addition to the thirty two types of charity already mentioned, a number of other charities have been mentioned in Vēdha Śāsthrās. In Karnataka, in the days of Rāṣṭrakūṭa, there was one person called Hēmādhri who held an important position. He had written a book named ‘Dhāna Hēmādhri’ in which he has compiled the different types of charity. The book which was written seven hundred years back is based on another book ‘Krithya Kalpatharu’ written by Lakshmīdharar two hundred years still earlier. He lived in Kanoj, also called Kanyakubja. There is no charity which is not mentioned in that book. Charity does not only mean gifting material things. Giving education, rendering social service of all types like constructing dams etc., and helping people have all been included as charity in that book.

In Vēdhas too, the greatness of charity has been mentioned all over. Of the Upanishads which are the most important part of Vēdhās, the largest is ‘Brihadhārāntyakam’. Its very name means a very big forest. In such a wide forest of Upanishad there is a story. It is not that only philosophy fills the entire Upanishad. In between there are interesting stories. Through these stories a big philosophical truth will shine forth. There is thus a story about charity in Brihadhārāntyakam.

Dēvas, Asurās and human beings are all the children of Brahma. Paramātmha has to play several divine ‘llas’. He has to make the good and the bad clash with each other and watch the fun. For this purpose, He makes Brahma create the Dēvās, Asurās, human beings and others. Brahma is duty bound to teach them what is good.

Once all the Dēvās went to Brahma and prayed to him, ‘please give us a brief upadesā’.
Brahmā pronounced a single alphabet, ‘dha’ and said ‘this is the upadēśā. Have you understood its meaning?’.

We are aware of our own faults. Therefore if some one points it out even in a subtle manner we understand it immediately.

In the same manner the Dēvās understood the meaning of ‘dha’ as soon as Brahmā pronounced it. The greatest defect with the Dēvās is want of control over the senses. Is not ‘Dēvāloka’ a place of enjoyment?. Therefore they understood that what Brahmā had hinted at was ‘control your senses’.

‘We have understood . The upadēśā you have given us is ‘dhāmyatha’ they told Brahmā.

There are two things namely ‘dhāmam’ and ‘sāmam’. ‘Sāmam’ is control of senses. ‘Dhāmam’ is higher than that. It is controlling the mind itself. Our Bhagavadpādāḥ has named six qualities including ‘sāmam’ and ‘dhāmam’, named them ‘Samadi Shadga Sampath’ and ordained them for the spiritual practitioners. The state in which the senses are controlled is ‘sān thi’. When the mind is also controlled along with the senses it is ‘dhānthi’.

‘Dhāmyatha’ means ‘do dhāma; that is control the senses and the mind’.

When Brahmā said ‘dha’ the Dēvās understood it as abbreviation for ‘Dhāmyatha’.

Instead of telling the full word, if the first letter of the word is alone pronounced it has greater effect. Churchill also gave the slogan ‘V for Victory’ and spread it all over as a mantra.

Brahmā told the Dēvās ‘you have rightly understood’ and sent them away.

Human beings also cherished a desire to have a upadēśā like this.
In ancient times they were also in a position to approach Brahmā. Therefore they went to him and prayed. ‘please give us upadesā’.

Again Brahmā pronounced the same single alphabet ‘dha’.

As the human beings were aware of their fault and it was pricking them inside they immediately understood that it was the most essential upadesā for them.

Brahmā asked them ‘have you understood the meaning?’

They replied ‘we have understood - you have given us the upadesā ‘dhattā’.

‘Dhattā’ means ‘give’, ‘give in charity’. Expressions such as ‘to do dhattam’ or ‘give dhattam’ are generally in use.

Brahmā told the human beings ‘yes, you have correctly understood’ and sent them away.

When Devās and the human beings had taken upadesā, will the Asurās alone keep quiet? They also went to Brahmā and requested him for upadesā. Brahmā, as he did earlier, gave the cryptic upadesā ‘dha’ and asked them ‘have you understood?’.

The Asurās said immediately ‘we have understood. You have given the upadesā ‘dhayathvam’.

Brahmā said ‘yes’.

‘Dhayathvam’ means ‘Have compassion’.

Are not those without compassion mentioned as ‘Asurās’? It is the nature of Asurās to be cruel and without any consideration.

When there is thunder we hear a sound similar to ‘dha dha dha’. These three ‘dha’ are ‘dhāmyatha’– ‘dhatta’ – ‘dhayathvam’.

This is the story in the Brihadāranyaka Upanishad.
When our Śāṅkara Bhagavatpadhā wrote the commentary on this he said ‘Devas’ and ‘Asuras’ mentioned here are not different from human beings. Among human beings those who, despite having good qualities, do not have control over senses are Devas; those who do not have the nature to give anything at all and are miserly are human beings; those who are cruel and inflict violence on others are Asuras. Therefore all the three upādesās are to be understood as being for us’.

Quite true. But, from what has been said here it is clear that miserliness is the exclusive defect of human beings. Human beings can raise themselves by controlling the senses and the mind and without even a bit of cruelty in mind. But even such people are a little backward when it comes to giving something. What is extremely difficult for a human being is to give up the attachment to things. That is why the Upanishad which is at the end of the Vedhās gives the special upādesā to man ‘Dhatta - Give in charity’.

Among us each one receives a manthra upādesā. Some people receive Śiva Panchākshari. Some receive Nārāyana Ashtākshari. Thus (for Muruga) Shadākshari, Rāma Mantra, Kṛishṇa Mantra, Ambāl Mantra etc., there are several. These are received by people according to their liking but for all of us who have taken human birth Upanishad which is the most important part of Vedhās has given us a mantra ‘Dhatta - Give in Charity - Be a good donor’. Without leaving this to our liking or not liking, Vedhās have given us this as an injunction. Other manthrās have to be meditated upon. This ‘Dhatta’ manthra has to be executed in action.

Brihadhāraṇyaka Upanishad in which this upādesā is given is part of Śukla Yajur Vedhā. Of the four Vedhās, the one which is predominantly followed all over the country is only Yajur Vedhā. In Yajur Vedhā there are two branches viz. Śuklam (White) and Kṛishnām (Black). All over North India, Śukla Yajus is mostly
being followed; in South India what is largely followed is *Krishṇā* Yajus. I told you about charity from *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* Upanishad which is part of *Śukla Yajus*. Similarly in Thaithriyopanishad which is in *Krishṇa* Yajus there is mention about charity.

What does it say? 'Charity should be done with Śraddhā'. It should not be given without Śraddhā. When we give Śrī (i.e. money or wealth) our mind also should be filled with Śrī (it should be auspicious and happy). We should give with a good face. Śrēyas is actually the fullness of Śrī. If we give with Śrī in our mind and a happy mind then we are rewarded with Śrēyas. We have to give with a feeling of delicacy, that we are not able to give more. The Upanishad also says that we should give with ‘Hṛi’. ‘Hṛi’ means sense of delicacy. In *Purusha Śūktha* it is said that Bhagawān has two consorts, ‘Śrī’ and ‘Hṛi’. Here also it is said that when we give money or wealth (Lakshmi) ‘Give with Śrī’ ‘Give with Hṛi’. The feeling of delicacy is for two reasons. One is for the reason that we are not able to give more. The second is that what we give as charity should not be known outside. This is an honourable feeling of delicacy. It is not for the reason that if it is known outside, others would also come seeking charity. If others come to know that he is a very charitable person they will start praising him and he will develop ego on that account. That would destroy all the rewards of charity.

After giving charity we may not publicise it in papers. But if the feeling is there within us that ‘Somehow a few people should know that we have given charity’, even that is bad. If those few people praise us for having given charity they would praise ten fold by saying ‘What a great quality! He has given charity without anybody knowing about it’. If within us we have a desire for this kind of praise, this is a greater blemish than publicising in papers. Yet this kind of desire does come up, is it not? What should we do to keep it down? One thing suggests to me. If we develop the feeling that ‘the person who receives the gift is not different from
us, he is our own’, then he will not think of mentioning to others about our charity. When we do something for our children or to our close relatives, do we publicize it? This is similar to that. All are our relatives, all beings are the children of Pārvati-Paramēśvarā. Therefore even mentioning that ‘We are giving charity’ is wrong. We should give with humility in the thought ‘The Lord has made us give this and we have given’. We should have the fear whether even here some kind of ego will show itself. The Upanishad says, ‘BiyāDēyam’. ‘Biyā’ means ‘with fear’. Normally it is the one who receives who will stand with fear. The one who gives will show his authority and give. But really the Upanishad says it is the one who gives who should fear. Finally it ends by saying ‘Give with Jnānā’. It says ‘Give with Samvith’. ‘Samvith’ means Jnānā that is perfect. It is the realization that the one who gives and the other who receives are same.

Just as in the Vēdhās so much has been said about charity, in the Gītā also Bhagawān has said about charity. He mentions three types of charity. One is sāthvik (noble), second is Rājasam (mediocre), third is thāmasam (lowly). The sāthvik charity is what is done without expectation of any return and to the deserving person at the proper place and time. Rājasa charity is thinking of reward that may accrue due to the charity, the help that the receiver may do in return and with some reluctance in the mind because the attachment to the things has not gone. Giving to those who do not deserve and at the wrong place and time and subjecting the receiver to a sense of shame is thāmasa charity. Krishna Paramātma thus makes a distinction between the types of charity.

Even in Purāṇas, wherever one sees, the greatness of charity has been mentioned. A lot has been said that if a charity is done in a particular month, at a particular place to a particular person and a particular thing is gifted, a particular reward will accrue - charity done in the month of Thulā is special like the charity done on the banks of the river Ganges. In Dharma Śāstrās, Thirukkural and
Āthichūdi and other books dealing with right conduct, the greatness of giving has been described elaborately. Giving charity etc. are all service to others.

Therefore the view that in Hindu religion, there is nothing about service to others and it is all about religious observances, pūjās, yōga, spiritual enquiry etc. is totally wrong.
THOSE WHO ARE EXCEPTIONS

It is true that it is not correct if some people concentrate only on Karmā, bhakthi etc. without any compassion for other beings and prove the criticism that they are just orthodox and exclusivist. Even so whether they realize it or not, these Yāgās, annual ceremonies, pūjās and tharpanām (oblation) also are in the nature of social service if their true meaning is understood. The philosophy behind the manthras chanted in Yāgās and rituals etc is to ensure the welfare of all the living beings in the world. Are not our ancestors born somewhere among the living beings in this world? It is only for their welfare, wherever they are born and in whatever form, that we perform tharpanām, annual ceremony etc. for the Pithru Devatās.

Even performing worship of the Lord is only for the welfare of the world. We start our pūjā with a prayer to Sri Krishnā ‘Jagath hithāya Krishnāya’ and then we end it with ‘Lokā Samasthā Sukhinō bhavanthu’ i.e. ‘May the entire world prosper’.

What about the person who sits in a cave and carries on with spiritual practice by way of Yogā, Jnānā etc. completely forgetting people? These days there is a cry ‘Do not give alms to such a person. What is the social service he is doing? He is only a parasite living on the society’. It is true that there may be false sanyāsis and recluses. That is a different matter. But if a person is really interested in spiritual elevation and therefore he lives away from the society and he is in seclusion without doing any other work, does it mean that he is of no use to the society?

Thinking like this is wrong. Everyone should strive to purify his mind and elevate it to the extent of merging it with Īswara. Even the service you render to others if it does not raise them spiritually in this manner all that service will be of no use. Therefore if there is one among us who is striving to elevate himself it should make us
happy. We should be proud of a bold person who does not want to be entangled in worldly life like us but escapes from it. We have to help such a person to keep his body and soul together. Then when he becomes highly evolved or a full Jnāni, he need not have to engage himself in activities in the form of social service. Automatically the power will radiate from him which will remove the distress of the people. There is no greater social service than healing the mental distress of people and create peace in them. This peace and a feeling of being care free that one gets by the dharṣan of a great person though it is temporary is also a great social service. If we look at things deeply, which social service is permanent? Everything is ephemeral only. We establish charitable hospitals and we cure disease by giving medicine. But again the person suffers from another disease. If we organize free distribution of food and give food one time, people do feel hungry again. Therefore in this world everything is ephemeral only.

If a person attains fullness (Pūrṇathva), apart from removing the mental distress of others and purifying it, he will also acquire the power to bless the person in respect of the worldly needs.

Every rule will have an exception. In the same way, those who are pursuing the spiritual path - intense in their practice of bhakti, yoga, spiritual enquiry etc - should not be dragged into social service. They should not be criticized also as being parasites. It is to emphasize this I am saying all this.
GIFT AWAY THE THOUGHT OF CHARITY ALSO

The moment we say Vedhās what comes to my mind first is only Yāgā. Yāgā and th Yāgā (sacrifice) are same. In English too, are they not calling both as sacrifice? It is for this reason that the view that orthodoxy is only selfish is entirely wrong. The very goal of Sanātana Dharmā is to sacrifice selfishness. Here ‘Dharmam’ is itself the religion. When we talk of ‘Vedha Dharmam’ or ‘Hindu Dharmam’ it means the Vēdhic religion or Hindu religion. Earlier I had mentioned that this dharmā is thought of as charity which is one of the social services. Therefore our religion itself is social service oriented.

If our belongings are dropped in the Yāgā fire and sacrificed, the divine powers are satisfied. They bless the world with rain, prosperity, good thoughts etc. A person should drop his belongings in the Yāgā fire and do good to the world.

Keeping all things to ourselves and enjoying them is only temporary happiness. This temporary happiness also harms the spiritual development which alone is permanent prosperity. But if instead of keeping these belongings to ourselves, we give them away that itself gives supreme bliss. It also paves the way for permanent good. That is why in ‘Īsāvāsyam’ which is the first of the Upanishads even in the first mantra it is said ‘Enjoy by sacrificing’. Even Gandhi considered that his entire philosophy is contained in this and glorified this Upanishad.

We have to give. That is sacrifice. This is what the Vedhās emphasize everywhere. When we conclude any Karmā we have to say ‘Simply because I am doing this Karmā, the reward for this may not come to me entirely. The reward should not come to me alone.’ With such a feeling of sacrifice we say ‘na mama’ - ‘Not
Mine, Not Mine’. It is thus that our religion wants us to sacrifice for the good of the world.

After giving away the things, if the thought ‘I have given this’ is kept in mind, this ego will destroy the spiritual elevation obtained by the sacrifice and charity. We have to sacrifice; more importantly, we have to sacrifice the thought that we have sacrificed. Mahābali gave a lot in charity. He gave enormously. But he had not offered to Bhagawān as a sacrifice the ego that he was giving. That is why Bhagawān Himself received from him that ego in the form of alms and as a symbol of destroying that ego, he kept his feet on his head.

Saying that ‘I am doing social service’ and doing all kinds of things without dissolving the ego is of no use to the person and his service will be of no use to the world. Temporarily it may look ostentatious as if some good has been achieved; but it will not shine permanently.

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SACRIFICE BY A DOVE

The *Kural* says that ‘those who love belong to others to their very bones’. People should sacrifice their all in rendering service to others. All of you know the story of ‘Śibi’. He was a great soul who came forward to sacrifice even his life for the sake of a dove. The story of Śibi alone is enough to show the important place accorded to compassion to other lives in our religion. The greatness of this *Bhārat*, the land of the *Vedhās*, is that we are asked to sacrifice not only for the sake of human beings but for the welfare of all other creatures; as the other side of this we find there are events narrated in *purāṇās* which show that due to the greatness of the soil of this land even other creatures have thoughts of service to others and the mind to sacrifice. I mentioned about Śibi’s sacrifice for the sake of a dove. ‘Kapotha Upākyānam’ describes the sacrifice made by doves themselves. *Kapotham* means a dove. *Upākyānam* is a short story. The story of these doves melts our hearts.

There was a hunter. He spread his net in the forest and caught a female dove. Just then it started raining with thunder. He went under the very tree on which this dove and its pairing male dove lived. When the rain stopped, it became very dark. Also it was very cold. The hunter could not leave the place. Shivering with cold he sat down there itself.

The male dove sitting on the tree did not think that the sinner who had caught his female companion should suffer. On the contrary, the culture of hospitality of our country overwhelmed the male dove. It thought, ‘this man has come under the tree on which we live. Therefore it is as if he has come to our house.’ ‘Adhithi dhevō bhava’ - ‘treat the guest as God’ - is the *Vēdhic* injunction’. Therefore it thought that it must render to the guest whatever help it could.
It thought that first of all warmth should be provided to him who was shivering with cold. It dismantled its own nest, took all the twigs and brought them down and placed them before the hunter. It had the noble thought that even if it had to lose its own house (the nest) he should be made comfortable.

There is a stone known as ‘Sikhimukhi’. Sikhii means fire. All that has ‘sikhā’ (tuft) is ‘sikhi’ only. Does not the fire burn with long tongues of flame just as the person opens out his sikhā and dances? Mukham is the mouth. It is a stone which has fire in its mouth. In other words a stone when rubbed emits fire is sikhimukhi.

The dove brought such stones and placed them before the hunter.

The hunter started fire by rubbing the stones together, dropped the twigs in the fire and made himself warm.

When the dove did so much help to him, his cruel attitude changed. His heart melted and he let go the female dove.

The important aspect of hospitality is feeding the guest. The female dove thought, ‘If this hunter having come here as our guest starves we will incur great sin. Our first duty is to remove his hunger.’

For feeding the hunter the dove did not go searching anywhere. It thought why go in search of food when it is there itself. Immediately, without a second thought it happily jumped into the fire and sacrificed its life. Its noble thought was that the hunter should eat its own meat when it got cooked in the fire.

The other dove which was watching the whole thing jumped in the fire too and allowed itself to be cooked.

As the Kural says, the philosophy that we should help others even by sacrificing our lives has been emphasized a lot in all our religious literature.
WHEN YAMĀ (THE LORD OF DEATH) HIMSELF WAS AFRAID

To consider the guest as God and to have fear as if we have wronged God Himself if we ignored the guest are important tenets of our religion. The moment the name of Yamā is mentioned, we all get scared. There is a story in Katopanishad which says that Yamā himself developed mortal fear. Of whom was he afraid? He was afraid of a small Brahmin boy. This boy went to Yamā’s house, remained there for three days without anyone knowing about it and had starved (why he went there is a different story). Yamā himself became afraid because if a guest had been ignored it would amount to a great wrong committed. Yamā who is terror to all the world shook in fear before this youngster and told him ‘you have starved in my house for three days. I prostrate before you in order to ward off any blemish that may affect me due to my behaviour. For every day of your fasting, you may ask for one boon from me’. So goes the Upanishad story.

In all such anecdotes we find that anyone rendering a service to others does not suffer from superiority complex. On the other hand, we see that the giver has so much respect for the receiver, bordering on fear and carries out his act of giving as if he is worshipping God.

In our Dharma we elevate sky high those who are great in giving which is an important form of service to others. Though the donor may suffer from several bad traits we praise him for his philanthropy just as we treat Kanā.
From time immemorial, in Tamil Nādu also there has been the tradition of glorifying such great donors, almost elevating them to the status of gods. There has been special appreciation for seven such people like ‘Pāri’ and Adhiyamān.

All people know the story of Pāri, the great philanthropist, who gave his own chariot for a jasmine creeper to have support and grow. Another person Bēgan, it is said, covered with his upper cloth a peacock which was shivering with cold. Adhiyamān got a fruit of ‘amalā’ which would have ensured for him permanent youth (chiranjīvīthvam). He gifted away the fruit to the saint poetess Avvai with the thought ‘what big things am I going to achieve by having permanent youth? The grand old lady Avvai keeps moving around from place to place doing good to the world and preaching to children. If she remains in good health, it will be for the good of the world, however long she may live’.

One may ask, ‘what Adhiyamān did is intelligent; but what is this giving of the chariot to a jasmine creeper? Will a peacock feel cold? Would anyone cover it with a silk garment? Do these not appear brainless?’ I for one would say that doing acts like this which are not thought of with the intellect and may even appear foolish show true love and sacrifice. When there is a surge of love, it does not go into the right or wrong of the action with the aid of the intellect. Thus, if we look into the lives of Nāyanmārs (Śaiva saints) we will find that one of them had gifted his wife, another had offered his own son as meal. Looking at such acts, we should not say that these are foolish acts which resulted from uncontrolled emotion. What is important is their attitude of
sacrifice. My view is that a sacrifice which is made without a thought about its plus and minus points is a real sacrifice.

Great people who have rendered service to others as if they were prompted and pushed by some spirit into doing it have appeared continuously without a break in our country from time immemorial.
THE ESSENCE OF
SANĀTHANA DHARMA

Five Yāgās called the ‘Panchamahā yagna’ form the quintessence of Vedic dharma. Of these, Brahma Yagnam is study and teaching of the Vēdhās. This alone is real gifting of learning (vidyā dhānam) which is a great social service. Pithru yagnam, as already mentioned earlier, is performing tharpānam for ancestors. Dēva yagnam is worship of the Lord. This is the ultimate object of all charity and observance of other dharmās. Bhūtha yagnam is offering food to birds and animals including dogs and crows.

‘Nru yagnam’ is extending hospitality to guests. When we examine the Panchamahā Yagnās it appears that there is no religion other than ours in which there is an injunction that service must be rendered to others. Panchamahā Yagnam ensures help to all segments of creation. In addition to this, there is a lot mentioned in our Dharma sāstrās about social service in the name of ‘Pūrtham’.
The Sanskrit dictionary, Amaram, says ‘Pūrtham kāthādhi karma yath’. This means that activities like Kātham are called Pūrtham.

Kātham means digging; that is doing service by digging a tank, well or canal. It is because we have forgotten this pūrtha dharmam extolled in sāstrās that we continue to suffer on account of water problem. It is because in the olden days such digging was considered very important that the practice has come into vogue that when someone does not turn up on being called, we say ‘what is he doing there? Is he digging?’ It means that only when he is digging he need not have to come however urgently he may be called.

These days digging has been given up. But filling has become an important work. When taps go dry or the water supplied is dirty, we feel sorry that we have filled up the tank and closed the wells.

In olden times tanks were kept clean with feeder canals and canals for draining. The well is useful only for the humans who can draw water from it but a tank is useful to all creatures including the cows and the sparrows.

Laying pathways is a dharma. Planting trees is another dharma. In addition to planting new trees we have to ensure that existing ones are not cut. What is newly planted should be watered daily and helped to grow into a tree. These days VIPs come and in the name of ‘Vana Mahotsavam’ plant trees. But if there is no one to water them on the next day and they perish what is the use? Such outward show and exhibitionism is of no use for us or the world. Instead, if someone removes the thorns, broken glass
pieces, etc., lying on pathways quietly, it will not only make the pathways clean for others but will also purify the mind.

There are virtuous deeds (*punya Karmās*) which can be performed by a particular part of our body in order to remove the blemish caused by that part. To clean up the mind which is like a garbage bin it is possible to meditate with the same mind. To clean up the tongue which talks all sorts of things it is possible to recite the Lord’s names using the same tongue. To clean up the brain which indulges in crooked thinking we can use it for philosophical research. In the same way do we not commit several wrongs with our body - the hands, legs, etc? That should be cleaned only with the same body. This cleaning which we do by physical effort is *pūrtha dharmā* - service for public good. It is capable of purifying the mind. This is because there is the basic thought in our mind about service to others which induces action.

Compassion is a great quality which must be in everyone’s mind. In order to give shape to that compassion it is very necessary to act with the body. What Vinobha has been describing as ‘*Śramdhān*’ is what our *śāstrās* have laid down as *pūrtha* dharmam. My desire is that at least on one day in the week everyone, whoever he may be, must engage himself in this bodily service. There is a weekly holiday, is it not? On that day, as service to the world, some public work must be done. *Pūrtha dharmam* must be done whole-heartedly.

It is true that each one will have a lot of domestic engagements. Normally, such domestic chores are kept aside for being attended to on the weekly holiday. Yet, along with these, the duty towards the larger family of *Pārvathi-Paramēswarā* has also to be discharged. One should not be given up for the sake of the other. At least for a short time work connected with public service must be done.
Bodily service is an exercise for the body too. Also when it is done as service to others there will be a special joy in the mind. In the end, it will purify the mind.

People should come together and carry out the work collectively. This way it would be possible to render greater help than when each one acts individually.

Moreover, in this Kali Yuga what is done together as a group will only be more rewarding. There is a saying ‘Kalau sange sakthih’. In the earlier yugas, people individually had great physical and mental power. Now that is gone. That is why we see almost everything is a mass movement these days. True to the meaning of the word ‘Kali’ that it means quarrels and bickerings, the power of collective action is being used for processions in which slogans like ‘down with’ are raised, trains burnt, etc.

At least from now onwards we should channelise this collective power for developing social activities.

The qualifications for those who come together for public service: Discipline is very essential. There should be no slackening of the sense of responsibility towards the work undertaken. Like this, truthfulness and inner purity are necessary. They should move with people with love and talk to them sweetly. They should be able to create the confidence that they are absolutely above board in handling money matters. They should not reply in an impatient or irresponsible manner to those who have legitimate doubts. At the same time because some ‘doubting Thomases’ are floating rumours one should not get the feeling ‘why all this for us in helping others’ and give up public service. In other words, they should have the attitude to ignore such things which affect their reputation. If it is a town, people of one sector can come together and work and if it is a village, three or four villages can come together and do it.
There is a saying, ‘Na hi jānapadam dhukkam ēkah sochithum arthathi’. This has been understood to mean, ‘it is no use for one man to get worried about the problems of the place’ (village or town). With such an understanding people say that in our religion there is no social awareness. This is not correct. The real meaning is not this. The most important word here is ‘Ekah’ (one person). Remaining oneself aloof as an individual and joining the others in crying about the problems is of no use. The correct meaning is that several people should come together and involve themselves in the task of removing the difficulties. One is that merely worrying about the problem is no good. But people should get into action. Second, if the people do things individually it will not be adequate. Several people should come together and work collectively.

Generally our tendency is to get our own things done even by harassing others. But when we come together and undertake a work designed for the good of many people, without minding our own difficulties, the pleasure we get out of this is something special. Let us keep aside the consideration about the work progressing or stopping. The coming together of several people with a feeling of love for doing the work is itself joy. That itself is great reward.

When speaking about Pūrtha dharma I specially dealt with charity relating to water. From ancient times digging of wells and tanks in areas where there is water problem has been praised as a great dharma. Is not Rājaputāna which is now part of Rājasthān, a desert area? There wells would have been dug with a gap of seven to eight miles from each other by some king or big man. The wells are very deep. Details of the great donor who has dug the well, the name of the king during whose period it was dug, would be in Sanskrit stone inscriptions. These stone inscriptions which are of great help in determining facts about our history and culture are called ‘Vāpi Praśasti’. Vāpi means a well. Praśasti means words
of praise. Even now Mārwāris who are Rājasthānis and who know very well the water problem are involved in doing the dharmā of digging wells.

In rural areas, all people can join and dig a tank. The existing tanks could be cleared by removing the silt. It is important that everyone joins and does the work without distinction of high or low. Even if he is a millionaire or a big landlord he must actually render physical service. This is what the sāstrās say. There is no place in the sāstrās for foundation-laying ceremonies and for cutting tapes etc. However big he may be he must equally with others do prūtha dharmam with body sweating. This is like in the temple chariot festival (Rathōthsavam) people of all castes together pulling the chariot.
SERVICE TO GOD AND SERVICE TO HUMANITY

It is wrong to advise people to leave *rathōthsavam* and come for social service. We need both. These days people who want that service to God should be given up and instead social service taken up point to Thirumūlar’s Thirumanthiram for support. The Thirumanthiram says ‘the service rendered to people would amount to worship of God’. In *Srīmad Bhāgavatham* also Bhagawān says that looking to the world as God’s form and rendering service is also worship.

Because it is said in this manner, it does not mean that there is no need for *pūjā* or festival. By giving people food, clothes and other comforts, if they spend all their time in eating and they are allowed to die without their knowing the highest truth some day, of what use is it? Neither Thirumūlar nor Krishnā would hold the view that people should be allowed to die in this manner. Permanent good is to show the way to know the Lord. It is only with the view that man should know Him even when the body is there that it is fed, it is treated when it suffers any disease, it is given education to improve intelligence etc. All social service is intended for man to experience and benefit from temples, festivals, etc. There is an injunction in *ĀyurVedha sāsthrā*, ‘if an atheist is treated and his life gets extended, it would amount to encouraging him to increase his atheistic sin. Therefore, do not treat him’. Therefore all service to people is meant to take them to the Lord only. Therefore, if all people join and do temple renovation work, if they construct a compound wall for the temple by exerting physically, that is great *sramdhān* to people.
There are several types of social services related to the spiritual aspects. It is a great service to print the books of great men, books about great men, Purāṇās, sthōthrās, prayer songs, etc and distribute them to the inmates of jails and hospitals. If the authorities of these establishments permit, religious talks, bhajans, etc can be held in these premises.
THE INTRINSIC WORTH OF SERVICE

We should not ask what big benefits will accrue from these? The squirrel in *Rāmāyanā* is an example for us. Did it think, 'the Sethu construction is a big task. We are insignificant creatures. What assistance can we render?'. The service it rendered may or may not have been of help to *Rāma* but it was of great help to itself. It earned *Rāma*’s grace and the touch by His hands. In the same way, if without thinking, ‘what big thing am I going to do?’ and keeping away, we render whatever service we can, we will have our mind purified as *Īswara Prasādam*, though our service may or may not be useful to others. I always remember two persons who were like the squirrel in *Rāmāyanā* and whom I had come across in my lifetime. (In February 1944) when *Kumbābhishhekham* was performed for *Kāmākshi* in *Kānchipuram* on a grand scale, one person who had a small shop in Tirunelveli sent me a money order for one rupee and wrote to me a long letter in which he expressed his regrets and feeling of sorrow that he had no means to send me more money. Similarly when the first ‘Sadhas’ was held in *Ilayāthangudi* in 1962 in a big way (*Bharatha-Grāmakalā-Vidwat Sadhas*) a person from Madras had sent a money order for five rupees and had requested that his small donation should also be accepted along with big donations. Even if the big donations are forgotten that one rupee and the five rupees have always remained in my mind.

As I have repeatedly said earlier, whether others benefit from our service and charity are not, our ego will certainly go down. By people joining together there will be amity in the society. When we get together and dig a tank we are also digging and removing our ego bit by bit. More than water coming up in the tank the feeling of compassion that gets generated in our heart is
satisfying. This sympathy, compassion and love will be helpful for us to know the Paramāthmā (Paramāthma Swarūpam). If it is said, ‘We should have bhakthi towards God. We should be blessed by His grace’, how will it come? It is only by doing service to others and properly conditioning the mind we will develop real bhakthi. We will also receive Īśwara’s blessings.

If instead of merely talking of love we demonstrate it in action - care of orphans, providing refuge to the poor who have nowhere to go, rearing cows, helping people with food and relieving them of hunger, etc - we will receive Paramēśwarā’s love. The Lord’s grace is everywhere flowing like a flood. If our heart is stony we cannot receive that grace just as water cannot pass through stone. But if we throw a cloth in flowing water it spreads of its own and draws water to itself. If we take the cloth out and squeeze it water flows. In the same way, if we make our stony heart soft like cloth we can absorb the grace that is surrounding us all the time. The biggest help that can be rendered to a person is to get him attracted to the Lord.

It is true that building a school or a hospital, providing water etc are all service. When we talk of social service we think of these only. But all the service will acquire fullness only when they take us to the service of God. It is to make us realize this that service connected with God is called ‘Thiruppatti’ (Patti in Tamil is service. Thiru is the equivalent of Sanskrit Sri. This term gives the meaning that it is the highest of all services.

The large number of huge temples in our poor India were not constructed by people in return for salary. It is true that the kings who built these temples had given them liberally. But those who actually did the job had done so out of service motive. The king, of his own, had given them to provide for their living. The set up and the economy of those times were entirely different. Population was less. There was no problem for food and clothing and a place
to live. Except absolute necessities there was no expenditure on luxuries like cinema etc. The State also had no need to construct factories and dams as in present times. The king had to spend only on maintaining an army and did not have to incur expenditure on many activities which are being carried on these days in the name of welfare state, for the improvement of the society. Therefore, the king had spent a lot on temples everywhere. Building new temples and renovating old temples was a major activity to keep the people engaged continuously and to take care of their needs. Due to this, people who were working on such projects had their minds turned to God, were greatly devoted and were peaceful. The country was prosperous. Instead of being a mere work, it was a holy work (Thirupparai). Therefore there was no quarrel about rights nor did they strike work etc, but toiled whole-heartedly. The work was done properly and even today we see these great temples with tall gopurams (towers) at which the whole world marvels. Today we have a huge population and great advances in engineering, but we are not capable of keeping them in a state of good repair.

Today when we are mouthing the slogan, ‘service to humanity is service to God’ and we do things forgetting the Lord, what do we see? Since work has been divorced from all divine connections, even those which are undertaken with a good objective turn out to be a disaster.

In olden days people of the entire country from Kanyakumari to Kashmir were one in bhakthi. Therefore they did not quarrel about temples being built in the North or the South. But people of the North visited the temples of the South and vice-versa. But toda whatever dam the Government constructs or whatever factory it puts up, people of all States raise a demand that it should be located in their State.

These days the policy is education for all and it is being implemented. This is well intentioned. But the thinking is
‘education should not have anything to do with God; if it is there it will hurt our secularism’. Therefore, the entire education is merely knowledge based. This situation amounts to leading even those people, who would be quiet without education, towards crimes like committing forgery, etc., and misconduct by using their intelligence.

On the one side, hospitals have been established everywhere. At the same time people have been left free to do whatever they want without the restrictions and regulations that religious observances impose. People therefore become bold that they can ‘drink, eat anything, go in for abortion’ etc and they can get themselves treated medically to ward off any ill-effects of their conduct.

When, in the name of social good, banks are opened in village after village and liberal loans are given, it results in driving people to indulge in all sorts of falsehood in order to secure the loans. As it happens, only some people get the loans though so many applied for it. This results in discrimination and corruption on the part of the officials.

Providing service homes with all conveniences to people who have gone errant may only encourage those who have no control over their minds to become further weak in this regard. Therefore, giving up God-related duties and venturing into national service, social service, etc is wrong.

It is Appar Śvāmīgāl who has shown us the way in this regard. He said ‘my duty is to do the work and relax’. What did he do? He rendered service through his devotional songs which would melt the hearts of people and make them reach Paramēśwara. In addition, he had with him a gang with tools for hoeing and used them to clear the growth of vegetation like grass in the temple corridors. Appar’s greatness lies in the fact that he had combined service to humanity with service to the Supreme who is the father
and the mother of the universe and helped people in their redemption.

It is only when we practise bhakthi to the Lord who is father and mother of the universe, following the path shown by Appar and come together and do service, there will be unity without blemish and the attitude to function with enthusiasm, free from quarrels, party fights, cheating and the mere pretence of integration. It will be possible to perform with ease even big tasks. It is in such an atmosphere we will feel the pleasant breeze of happiness. Nothing bad will rear its head there.

Instead of thinking that social service consists in moving more and more away from the rules and regulations enjoined by sāstrās, we should move closer to them keeping touch with God and render service to the country.

Before getting done something for individuals and the society, all people should come together in the service of God. If, for instance, it is Dipāwali when we have oil bath, wear new clothes etc., we should help the poor people also have these. That alone is not enough. All people should get together, go to the temple and begin the celebration by offering oil and new clothes to all the Mūrthis in the temple. In the same manner, if it is Pongal (Sankaranth) not only should we clean up our homes by doing white wash etc., but help those without means to do the same in their homes. All people should get together and clean up the temple precincts by removing wild growth in the corridors (prākāram) clear them and do the small repairs that are needed.

It is the impurity in our minds and the wild growth within us that have taken the form of dirt and thorns in the temple. When we clean up the temple, removing the wild growth and thorns, we will be clearing our own minds. Our minds will then become golden. In that golden theatre (kanaka sabhai) Śivam who is the form of love will come to reside and we ourselves will become temples.
Thirumūlar has said that service to humanity would amount to service to the Supreme. But the same Thirumūlar has also said that first we have to perform ‘archanā’ to Īswarā and give grass to the cow and feed the poor (similar to the scheme of ‘a handful of rice’ about which I have been talking). He then says that even if it is not possible to extend physical help in this manner, we should at least talk sweetly to others. Therefore, there cannot be service to humanity without service to God. It is with the intention that social service and service to God should go hand in hand, those of the sabha which is engaged in printing leaflets on religious matters have been combined with the ‘Mudrādhikāris’ of Sri Matam.

We all yearn ‘Bhagawān should open his eyes and look at us’. Īswarā who is the ocean of compassion is ever keeping his eyes open and seeing. The reason why he does not give us the good things that we want is that we do not open our eyes, see the world’s difficulties and render whatever help we can to remove them. If our heart is filled with compassion for others, Īswarā who is the very personification of compassion will immediately help us. Therefore, it is we who have to open our eyes and not Bhagawān.

We should look at people who suffer on various counts and, to the extent possible, we should redress them. That alone is not enough. Our most important work is to make those who have received help and had their sufferings redressed think of the One who was responsible for giving them relief and realize that reaching Him is more important than these joys and sorrows.

Let us not bother about those who ask whether social service has a place in our religion. What I say is that it is only by service we have to put a fencing around our religion and ensure that no one leaves it. Hindu religion is like a public land without fencing. This situation must change and we have to create the confidence that there are people to take care of our religion. Creating confidence in all sections that they can continue to be in our religion with self
respect is a public service which is to be rendered by everyone coming together. I shall talk to you later about these services.

All Hindus coming together and undertaking service will itself become the fencing for our religion and will ensure that it is not a public land. Since all sections of people will get the feeling that ‘this is our own religion’ the situation that anybody outside our religion can claim them as their own will go. It is not necessary for us to indulge in counter-propaganda and create quarrels to take care of the condition of Hindus and ensure that there is no religious conversion. If our negligence and hardness goes and we undergo a change of heart and include all our people in service to others, religious conversion will stop. This is the peaceful way for protecting the Hindu society and ensuring that it remains intact. Instead of helping others with religion as the ulterior motive, we should do it as fulfilment of love and side by side protect our religion. More than offering ceremonial welcome, garlanding me, etc if Hindus all come together in rendering service and protect our religion that will be the greatest help you will be doing me and the best way of extending courtesy to me.
THE SCHEME OF
‘MUDHRĀDHIKĀRIS’

If one understands Sanāthana Dharma properly and demonstrates it to others by following it, his various religious disciplines and observances and even his earning are not for his own good. But this great philosophy which was not just in the books but was shining in life through practice somehow went into decay in later days. This has to be rejuvenated again. It is with this great desire that from 1940 almost in all villages of Thanjavur District one person was empowered as Mudhrādhikāri by our own Mutt and arrangements were made for people to come together with their efforts and engage themselves in public service. By this arrangement, not only the Pūrtha dharmās like digging tanks and wells were carried out well, but also the God-related activities which give fullness to the Pūrtha dharmās such as protection of temple, reading of Purāṇās on Ėkādāsi days etc., were also taken care of. Removing the plants which grow on temple towers and maṇḍapās, removing from the prākāram wild thorny bushes etc were done to protect the temple.

‘Everyone who is born a Hindu should give at least a handful of grass at least to one cow. Every one who has a garden is to grow in it green varieties which will be useful as fodder to the cattle - these arrangements worked well. A handful of grass is called ‘Go grāsam’. Probably, it is from this that the English word ‘grass’ came. Since green pastures meant for grazing are being converted into housing plots and roads, we may grow the greens for the cattle in a part of our own backyard.

Even for this there has to be some expense, some sacrifice. When we cut vegetables in our house, do we not cut or peel off the skin and throw them away as waste? Instead of being wasted, we made arrangements for collecting these from door-to-door and the waste so collected was given to the cattle. By my constant
prodding this was being followed in many places. Even now it continues in many places.

It is not a big thing to drop some money into a hundi in a mechanical fashion. Moreover, in these days of inflation, anybody can drop something in a hundi. Of course, that is also required to be done. But instead of dropping some money in a mechanical way into a hundi, if the vegetable waste is fed to a cow, watching it eat, will give us a sense of fulfilment which is special. This is an important aspect of service. In service more than money and labour, there should be communication between beings. When those who render service come together there will be direct relationship between those engaged in service but relationship should be established also with those who are the beneficiaries of the service. Is not one Ьswara only the several beings? The essence of service is that by the love we show to other beings and our service we should experience the divinity in them and render the service as worship of Ьswara.

The practice of sending cows for slaughter once they ceased to be milch cows must be stopped and arrangements must be made to take care of them till their life time. This is a duty which is equal to our duty to our mother. In God’s creation, it is the cow that gives to others its milk which is in excess of what its calf needs. Therefore, the cow is mother to all of us.

Even in Islamic countries like Afghanistan, cow slaughter has been banned long back. In our country, the Britishers deliberately created religious enmity in this. If we are firm in our mind that it is our duty to ensure that cows are not despatched to slaughter houses they will be safe whichever Government is in power or whatever rules are in force. In this we have to learn from the people of Gujarat and the Marwāris. It is perhaps because Gopalakrishna had lived in their region, they have a special attachment to protection of cows.
In olden days in our villages ‘Paśu matas’ (shelter for cows) were maintained and cows were taken care of. We have lost interest in this dharma but people of North India maintain ‘Pinjarapole’, ‘Gosala’ etc and take care of cows with the affection of parents to their children.

A law can be made banning cow slaughter. If we do not make suitable arrangements for taking care of cows which have stopped yielding milk and bulls which have become unfit for ploughing they will have to starve and suffer. Gōrakshana is not only compassion to cows. But it is worship of Lakshmi in a big way.

As I mentioned earlier when I went from village to village and emphasised the importance of these activities, there was good response. Particularly, when I saw the digging of tanks, I was greatly pleased. The arrangement was that it should not be work for wages but a labour of love. But we had also made arrangements for food for the very poor among those who participated. But in many places even such extremely poor people brought their own food and worked with zeal. When I saw this I learnt that the poor of our land have not lost their good traits and that we only have failed to channelise it properly. Just as in Rathōthsavam, from the biggest landlord to his lowest servant and from the wife of the most learned Brahmin to the ordinary woman who carries headload of grass for selling, everyone came together and did the pūrtha dharmam, it was a feast for the eyes to watch them in action. I felt ‘let the help resulting from the service come in its time. Now the entire village community has come together, that itself is a matter of satisfaction’. One day it was a full moon night. In that moon light all people joined together and dug a tank near Māyavaram. I was myself present on the spot. What was being dug was a tank with cool water, the moon was shedding its cool light. All those hearts were pouring out love in the form of service. Even now when I think of it, it is so pleasant. Later, what with hundreds of
tasks on hand when I started moving to several places, their enthusiasm started waning little by little. It was my mistake that I had left it and gone away.

In Thanjavūr District alone, we had formed around two thousand groups and we had appointed a Mudrādhikārī and a Upamudrādhikārī and workers. We had made the groups into three kinds - the taluka committee, the committee for a group of four villages and the village group. In cities we appointed a Mudrādhikārī for each street. Mostly, in all villages of Thanjavūr District there would be a piece of land gifted to the Mutt. We entrusted the income from these lands to the Mudrādhikāris and asked them to undertake these dharmās. Nearly five thousand workers came together and were working with a lot of involvement. Even now the scene is very much before my eyes, people having worked from sunrise to sunset and if it is full moon throughout night, all of them repeating the names of the Lord in a chorus.

It is not that just the people of one village came together. It was arranged like this; people of four villages together should dig a tank in one village in one year; they should also clear the silt from the existing tanks. Next year, they should dig a tank in another village; then in the third village and then in the fourth village in the fourth year. This not only generated unity and co-operation between the people of the four villages which remained at least for four years instead of getting dissipated quickly. In Thanjavūr District for four or five months, there will be no water. Therefore, there was great need for the service of digging of tanks (called Kadham). We had also arranged for digging of tanks in Harijan colonies and in the outskirts of the village for the benefit of cattle close to the grazing field. The arrangement worked well. It is a noble deed to provide water for cattle which thirst for water in the heat of summer.
There is a very simple *dharma* mentioned in *sāsthrās* in a subtle way that everyone who goes to the tank for bathing should take out from the tank four handfuls of mud and throw it out. If this simple *dharma* is followed water problem will be mitigated to a large extent.

There was a Brahmin family in 'Kōnērirājapuram'. They would contribute half the expenses for digging a tank anywhere. But they used to lay down a condition that on one side of the tank there should be no steps but the tank should be in a level with the bank. This is because the cattle cannot go down the steps and drink water. My desire is that Harijans and others should, as representatives of our Mutt, dig exclusive tanks for cattle in each group of four villages.

We did like this throughout the district except in Pattukōttai Taluk. In Pattukōttai each house will be like a forest. If only four or five feet are dug up water will come. If it is a big landlord’s house everything including the houses of servants will be within the same compound. Therefore they can get water for their cattle from inside the compound itself. It was for this reason that only there they laid roads instead of digging tanks.

Generally under the *Mudhrādhikāri* scheme reading *Purānās* on two *Ekādāsi* days in a month and digging of a tank once a year in each group of four villages were progressing well.

This kind of service bestows a benefit to the society later; it also purifies the minds of people who engage themselves in this. But, over and above all this, when it was seen that this kind of service brought together several communities and castes without consideration of status as one family, it became clear that people joining together and doing a service is much better than their doing individually. It also became clear that public service without even a tinge of politics is the antidote to communism etc.
Because several people have to come together it should not be made an 'association' with its rules for registration, office-bearers, governing body, etc resulting in quarrels for these posts. The great benefit of destroying the ego by service will itself get cancelled out. Therefore there should be no office in this.
WEEKLY WORSHIP

All of you must be aware of my repeatedly telling that every place must have an association for weekly worship. The object of this is that once in a week people should all collect and worship in the temple. People of other religions are doing this of their own without anyone having to tell them. It is because of the visible power of such prayer that they get many things including a new free State. But, for us, the great respect we had commanded all over the world keeps decreasing day by day. It is only in the thought that, only if our people come together at least one day in a week forgetting their crookedness and dissolve their minds in Bhagawān, something good will happen to this country, I have been asking people to organize weekly worship groups and this has been followed in many places. These people should themselves take up the public service about which I have talked. There is no need for a separate organization.

The ‘Thiruppāvai-Thiruvempāvai group’ in Māyavaram is carrying out several activities like this on a planned basis. The main objective of the group is to conduct conferences on these two Pāvais, distribute free to school children books on these Pāvais, conduct examination for them in these and award prizes to them. In addition to this (1) giving bhakthi literature to the convicts in jails and make them do bhajans (2) distributing prasād and books of prayer (sthothrā) to patients in hospitals (3) sending religious literature to whoever organizes ‘satsang’ (4) arrange for cremation of unclaimed corpses (5) to arrange at least for a shed for Mūrthis which are in the open and light a lamp even if pūjā cannot be performed (6) to look after temple gardens (7) to grow green pastures for the cows to graze (8) to put up stones on which those carrying head-loads and walking on the road can keep them and rest (9) in accordance with the weekly worship I have been talking about, one day in a week to do bhajans and go to a temple in the
place or in a nearby place, go round the temple, observe silence for
some time in front of the temple tower, do meditation, and have
discourses (pravachan) etc.– they do several things like this.

You may ask, ‘a weekly collective worship and also a weekly
public service – how is it possible?’ I am telling that on that one day
in the week you should do both. Service to God and public service
should both be done on Sundays.

People should collect before the temple, worship together,
repeat the Lord’s names together as children of the same
Parāsakthi, go round the temple and then begin the task of digging
a tank or laying a road or maintaining a garden etc. After
completing the day’s work they should all return to the temple and
again pay obeisance (do namaskar) with the thought, ‘by your
grace it was possible for us to get rid of our sins to some extent; it
was possible as a fruit of human birth to render some help’. People
should disperse after doing a short bhajan – even for ten minutes
would do – and a short discourse. If the discourse is on the sixty
three Nāyanmārs or the Āzhwārs or other great religious
personality, the impression will be formed that these men who
were ordinary people like us rose to the state of divinity by their
sacrifice and love.

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SPENDING MONEY-
NEED FOR EXTREME CAUTION

When money is needed for public service there should be no
dependence on rich people only but each one should
contribute something, however small it may be. The rich man also
should do physical labour; the poor also should contribute
whatever little money they can. This is real sacrifice. My view is
that we should not make heavy demands on a rich man. I shall tell
you the reasons.

When I think about it, it appears that the rich man is placed
in a difficult situation. Just for status he has to do many things
whether he wants them or not. He has to pay for these things
unnecessarily. If he has to keep up his appearance as a big man he
has to become a member of several clubs. He has to pay the
subscriptions and incur expenses incidental to such membership.
Then there is need to provide endowments in favour of one or two
schools and colleges for awarding prizes. He has to incur several
indirect expenses for being awarded titles etc. Add to these the
car, bungalow, dress, entertainment, etc. To ensure the smooth
running of his company or farm he has to spend in several ways
some of which are open but some may not be. This in a way
becomes a duty, As if all this is not enough, political parties
approach him for donation. Here too, even if his sympathies are
with a particular party and he feels it sufficient to donate to that
party only, he has also to donate to the other party which may be
in power to ensure that the Government does not give him trouble.
Also marriages at home and other functions and feasts etc involve
considerable expenditure. He has also to pay taxes if he has to
spend or to gift! Ultimately it so happens that where, in his heart of
hearts, he wants to donate liberally he is in a position to give much
less only. Name, fame, business interests, etc assume greater
importance. There is no point in telling, ‘he need not have to be like this’. Even if we ourselves happen to be in that rich man’s position we will also do the same thing. If, in this manner, he has to spend on unnecessary things and he is not able to spend on what is necessary, he will feel guilty. In such a condition, why should we also go to him and harass him? Why should we drive him to a state when he is not in a position to give for what he himself would love to give? - these are my thoughts on the condition of rich men.

When we think of social service there are many of them. But if we try to find out who are the rich people who are patrons for such tasks we will find there are only ten or twelve in a place or a sector. If we keep running to them every time with our receipt books, what can they do? Either they will give reluctantly or they will feel sorry that they are not able to give liberally even though they wish to.

We also start thinking, ‘is that money accounted or unaccounted? If it is unaccounted money can it be used for charitable activities? ’ Such questions arise.

Therefore, social service should not be dependent only on the rich. If they of their own come to know of our activity and come forward with their donation, that can be accepted. I feel we should not go to them and pester them.

There is another point in this. If only a few rich people take on the burden of a large part of the expenses then that will result in their having more rights in the organization rendering service. The others may feel beholden to them. Whatever they say would be final in every thing. This should not happen.

Usually, if there is handling of money, along with it several undesirable things will crop up. Those who venture into public service will have to be extremely careful in the matter of money. Even if we get good financial support we should not become over-
enthusiastic on that account. If we do this, there will be no end to it. Because of this the 'collection thought' will overshadow the love of service to others and the bhakthi of temple related activities. It will result in restlessly wandering with receipt books, trying through journalists to have appeals printed, trying to get advertisements for publication of souvenir, etc. We will have the constant fear about how we ourselves might change if a lot of money is collected and we come to handle it. Not only that. If a lot of money is collected, people in the place will also start having doubts about whether it is being spent properly. In addition to all this, as I mentioned just earlier, taking money from reluctant people by compelling them and later, on account of it, becoming beholden to him will spoil the sanctity of our work. Therefore, whatever good task is undertaken, instead of going overboard, we will have to do just what is necessary and the expenditure should be managed with thrift and care.

It should be understood that the basic strength for public service is not money but minds which unite. Publicity should not be given for anyone who gives money and thus subject him to the loss of the puniya earned by him. When a tank was dug in 'Thiruppûndhurai Ayyanâr Temple' money was collected, wages were paid and in the Kâmakôti magazine, they published the names of the donors too. In the next issue itself, I had the following published in block letters as if expressing in a subtle manner an apology and sympathy; 'we have published like that only to emphasise that hereafter such tasks should not be performed on the strength of money but the strength of the love of the people'.
BOTH WITH MONEY AND BODY

In recent times, there was Śivan who had not a pie to call his own. Yet during the major festivals in the great holy places, he had fed lakhs of people giving them sumptuous food. So much so, the term ‘Annadhāna’ got attached to his name and he came to be called ‘Annadhāna Śivan’. Living a life of utmost sacrifice and going from place to place with a single garment he was wearing, he used to ask rich and the owners of big farms and tell them ‘send so many bags of rice; so many kilos of tamarind’. They took it as a command and their privilege and sent whatever they were told to send. He used to feed sumptuously all those who came to attend the festival. But he himself never touched that feast. He would take a little rice soaked in water and kept overnight. That was why he could remain without being beholden to the rich who gave the things. On the other hand they stood before him with folded hands. I am mentioning this to emphasise the point that when it comes to service it is very necessary that a feeling of superiority is not created on the strength of money.

Our dharma is that the rich should with a sense of sacrifice act as trustees of their wealth and use it only for social service. From the time of Manu and Thiruvalluvar and upto Gandhi this is what is being told. If this is brought into practice there will be no communism or revolution and the whole world will be peaceful and happy. It is not as if they do not know these things. But I said these things because I thought that we should make propaganda only to make the rich develop of their own the feeling of philanthropy and render help with love and that we should not compel them. Of course I have spoken half seriously and half in good humour.

There is also another thing to which I used to refer in a lighter vein. These days people who undertake public activities
make a list of people who are likely to donate liberally and go to them in that order, is it not? In doing like this more often than not there is only disappointment. There is some problem for one whom we think will donate liberally or he lacks the mind to give. Either he says no or he gives a little, most reluctantly. Then we start abusing him. Instead of this what I suggest is, make a list of people who will not donate. Go and see them first. If they say no, we are not going to be heart-broken because we had ourselves expected it. On the contrary, they may give something, liberally too sometimes. If this happens, our enthusiasm will go beyond bounds. We will involve ourselves in the job still more seriously. Those who had followed my advice and gone with the list of those not expected to donate, have come back to me and told me that the procedure gave them immense psychological satisfaction and zeal. There are several ‘tricks’ like this in the art of ‘begging’.

What I intended telling is that every one in the society even if he is poor should contribute a small amount and all people should bear the burden of the expenditure for public activities. It should not be that the rich man only gave money and did not render physical service. It should not also happen that the poor man had given his labour only and did not contribute any money. The rich man giving money and the poor man giving his labour is no great sacrifice. The rich man should stand shoulder to shoulder with the poor man and actually dig the earth. The poor man instead of purchasing a chilly for his gruel should donate a few paisa. That indeed is big. If people have to experience elevation of their mind even when rendering social service, each one should have a share in giving money and labour. The only exception to Śramdhān are the weak persons.

There was a Brahmin whom I had known. He had in the beginning only a small plot with two coconut trees. He worked on it himself. But because of this he did not give up anything that he had to do according to sāsthraś. He used to get up early in the
morning and do ‘Agnihotram’ (the ceremony of offering oblations to the consecrated fire) and puja. Then he will take the tools for working in his plot. After completing work on the plot, he would do his afternoon rituals and then take his food. Working on his plot with his own hands, he developed his plot into a coconut grove. He left this good landed property to his children. Even when he became old when he had reached eighty or eighty five he did not stop going to the coconut grove and doing some physical work on it. Even when he became better off with regard to money and reached a stage when it was no more necessary for him to work, he loved physical labour and did it till his last days in the thought, ‘it is this work which gave me so much prosperity. This should not be given up’.

In doing public service, the sense of fulfilment will be more than what the gentleman had by working on his own plot. You will know this if you do it.

We should engage our bodies in physical activity like digging a tank or putting up a garden in a temple etc at least for some time. Some money has to be spent on such activity. A poor student can be given a slate and a pencil. Gruel can be given to a few beggars or we can serve butter milk at our expense.

Every office or factory has a day’s holiday in a week, is it not? Schools and Courts have two days holidays in a week. We should think that the Lord has given these holidays to us only for rendering public service and get together and do service. If only we have the mind there are ever so many tasks waiting to be done.
SERVICE NOT INFLUENCED BY CASTE FACTOR IS THE NEED

In order to carry out the several public activities I had mentioned money as well as labour is required. In addition we need people who have knowledge related to religion. They should tell others what they know. Those who know bhajans should gather others and make them sing the names of the Lord.

Now there are bhajan groups in every place and every sector. These groups must conduct the weekly worship and undertake activities relating to service to others. It is enough if about ten people can come together whom the society can trust with regard to their integrity in matters of money, that they are clean and can work with interest. Public activities will get done in an excellent manner without any shortcoming.

Among those who join in the task and those who are its beneficiaries there should not be any influence of the caste factor. Just as the rich and the poor, the educated and the illiterate come together, at least in this there should not be any 'communal representation'.

It is only when efforts are begun to make all castes into one, the quarrel starts. With the good intention of developing cordiality, if a beginning is made by saying that there is no distinction between ‘ārya’ and ‘Drāvida’ even then quarrels and debates come up due to objections based on historical and ethnic reasons. Therefore without saying that we are trying to create unity through debates or not even saying that we are attempting for unity if several public activities are undertaken and if they are carried out by all people coming together, unity and cordiality will bloom on their own.
MAKE THE MEANS FOR A LIVING, 
THE MEANS FOR ‘DHARMĀ’

In addition to doing things in groups, individuals also should do whatever help they can. My wish is that those who have for their living some independent means other than a Government or company job should do the same thing free to some extent instead of looking for income. Professionals too should render free service wherever this is possible.

Āchāryā has said in Bhaja Gōvindam…….

Yallabase nija karmōpāththam
viththam ēna vinōdaya chiththam

This means ‘whatever you earn through the work that has come to you, use that (not merely for taking care of your own body but by doing charity) to elevate your mind.’

This is an ideal. This deserves to be followed. Each one’s profession becomes useful for spiritual elevation, but now in today’s situation, blemishes and sins come to affect several jobs which is unavoidable. The blemish of Kali (Kali dōsham) has creeped into the entire social life in the form of corruption. When whatever has been earned is tainted like this if charity is done with the money so earned, will it do? When Āchāryā said with heart full of love ‘do the work that has come to you and earn, there is nothing wrong in it but use your earning for your spiritual upliftment’, he would not have imagined that an element of corruption will taint the earning. I can think of only one remedy for this. Although Āchāryā says that there is nothing wrong in earning from whatever the job they do, in the present set up afflicted by corruption, I feel each one should do some free service for a deserving cause. What I say is that in addition to doing charity with the money earned out of the work done, the work itself should be done without expectation of any earning. I think as
expiation for the blemish of corruption that affects the job, that
job itself should be done free as help and as service and sacrifice to
some extent. Even those who do work which is not tainted by
corruption at all, if they help with their work without expecting
any earning, so much it is punya for them.

Are you a doctor? Your taking fees and doing treatment is
also service to others. But this will not give you self-purification.
Not only that; when in unavoidable circumstances, some people
ask for leave on account of ‘sickness’, you may have given them
false certificate. In the same way, you may also have given false
fitness certificate to some. By all such acts, not only will there not
be self-purification, but fresh dirt would have covered the soul. It
is only service with sacrifice that can clean it. In your lifetime, you
teach at least one person to the extent you can at home what you
have learnt, so that he can use it to whatever extent he can.

Who are you? Oh, you are a lawyer! All right. At least you
choose one case which has justice on its side and the litigant is
deserving of free service. Conduct the case free. In the same way,
try to settle at least one case outside the court. In order that sins
may not accrue by the nature of your profession, help others like
this. Apart from sins being washed, if you continue to do this for
some years in a disciplined manner, you would earn a good name
among the public. The good name thus earned will help in getting
done several public services and you can thus earn punya.

If you are a ‘Sangitha Vidwan’ you can help to raise funds for
a cause by giving a free concert. A writer can write good things and
make them available to religious establishments free of cost. A
book publisher can give books free to poor students; or he can sell
one or two high class books containing noble thoughts at cost price
if not give them free. Leaflets containing good matters can be
printed and distributed free. Thus, whatever work one may do, it
should be done not only for earning but to some extent for spiritual
development.
I hear some one saying ‘I am a mere typist’. Does not matter. Even you can use your expertise to help others more than others. Are not so many boys struggling without a job? Out of them, train one boy every six months to give him working knowledge in typing. Do this free. By this they will be able to find means for a living for a life time. Their gratitude and blessings will protect you in this world and the other.

Thus every one can in some way help others by using their own knowledge of their work. Even if you are not able to help by money or physical labour, at least talk sweetly to others and render the help of consoling in the manner of what Thirumūlar had said ‘a sweet word for every one’.

For those who have retired. Do you say ‘we are old retired people, we have given up our job long back, what kind of help can we render?’ You only can do now more than others and I have been expecting you all this time. Do not think you are all dried up trees. I think, if you have the mind, you are the one who can, like the ‘Kalpaka Vriksha’ (wish fulfilling divine tree), convert this land into Deva loka. If, with faith in the power of God and mental determination, work is done that too not for oneself but for the world, the feeling of weakness connected with old age would go and you can work with more enthusiasm than the young people. I am an old person and I am saying this.

If others can do public service only during the time available beyond their office work, you have the good fortune to be in a position to do social service full time. When you were in service, you had a lot of domestic responsibility. Now you should reduce them as far as possible. Instead of that you should assume responsibility for the public and earn punya. Mostly, for one who is about to retire, he would have discharged his responsibility for the education of his sons, marriage of his daughters, etc. But, even after that if you go on taking over responsibility for the education of a grandson or the marriage of grand-daughter, etc., there will be
no end to this. If people who have retired also talk of family worries and keep crying, others will also think similarly and cry about it meaninglessly. At least after reaching a certain age, should we not practice a sense of discrimination and the determination to give up desires? At least to some extent we should live like those in the 'Vānaprastham' stage (the third stage of life in the Hindu way of life) leaving the household responsibilities to the next generation. Once the regular service comes to an end, we should go in search of the ways and means for self-emancipation instead of trying for extension or thinking of starting a business, factory, etc. I had said that, without helping ourselves, there is no scope for helping others. Therefore, we should learn the Vēdha sāstras, which we had not learnt earlier and follow the religious disciplines (not followed till now) at least from now onwards.

Even if all this is done, there will be enough time after midday. During that time, we should do service to others.

Utilising the available leisure usefully, knowing good things by reading and by asking others and telling others what has been learnt is a great help. In addition whatever job you were doing earlier, teach that free to a poor youth and help him write examinations. If you are one of those comfortably placed with liberal pension, give them also free food in addition to teaching them. It is not enough if wealth is accumulated for one's own family only. Make two others fill their stomach and become happy. If the practice of giving free food for those who have nowhere to go is established, theft etc will become considerably less in society. It is because of want (also due to want of the mind to give on the part of those who have) many become thieves and cheats.
HOW TO HELP PRESERVE THE
TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS
DISCIPLINE (ĀCHĀRĀ)

Although what I say is meant for all people, it is particularly for Brahmin pensioners who are comfortably placed. In other communities, those who are well-to-do have made lot of arrangements to support young people who have no means. It is the Brahmins who lack that spirit. Although right from the time the Communal G.O. came into force Brahmin boys have had to face a lot of difficulty in respect of admission to colleges, jobs, etc., well-to-do persons in the community have not paid attention to this. This is not fair.

There was a time when I felt happy about Brahmin boys being refused admission to colleges, in jobs etc by the Government. Yes, I was indeed happy! The reason is: ‘Is not this English education a cause for his having given up the study of Vedhās, which is legitimate to him and a simple way of living and for pursuing money with single mindedness and getting into bad ways? Even if he does not give up these things on his own, since the Government is denying these to him and driving him away, he will think that there is no other go and return to Vedhās and live a contented and simple life in the village according to what is ordained for a Brahmin’. I was speculating like this and feeling happy.

But what happened was that when he was denied higher education and white collar job, instead of returning to his ancient way of living, he slipped into very bad ways. He started joining the cinema, the army etc and started eating meat etc, joined the hotels and began eating unclean food etc. It is after seeing this that I thought he should be enabled to get English education in a different
way, get a job and along with it make him observe the Brahmin dharmā to the extent possible. It is here that I seek the help of pensioners.

To help Brahmins in particular who have been let down by the Government and who do not also get adequate support from their own community and also the other forward communities, the pensioners of these communities should come together, establish tutorial colleges and teach them different types of jobs and self-employment techniques. It will be better if pensioners work as teachers without salary. Yet, if a college is to be run, there will be so many other expenses, is it not? Therefore, to meet the essential expenses, minimum fees can be collected. Through this, young people of the so called forward communities will be enabled to enter central services, banks, companies, etc. where they have not been discriminated against so much or they can do self-employed jobs. Once they have studied in a tutorial college they can write the examinations of several universities privately. In regular colleges the Government is following the system of reservation and driving these people away. Therefore this suggestion.

Are there not amongst you senior persons who have had experience in several fields, retired and resting? All of you come together and start a tutorial college in which training can be given in mathematics, physics, chemistry, modern sciences, engineering, accountancy, the latest technological subjects, etc - even playing musical instruments could be included. Be a patron and a teacher and earn double punya. Can you not spend two hours every day to teach others what you have learnt and which gave you income all these days and now gives you pension? It will also help in solving a big social problem.

In these tutorial colleges, instead of confining the teaching to a job-oriented one only, a little religious teaching could also be imparted according to the traditions of the different communities.
and also the observance of religious discipline (in this religious teaching those who are forward could make arrangements for those who are backward. For them there is nothing in the arrangement made by the Government to include in them devotion to God. Not only that. They also tend to fall into the clutches of atheist groups who claim to fight for them. Even while raising them in education, position, etc, they are tutored about rights, strikes, non-co-operation, etc, due to which they have lost the natural devotion and humility which they have inherited for generations and are going in the wrong path. Therefore the entire society has the duty to turn them also towards God. Let that be aside.) What I am saying is that, in the tutorial colleges to be established for those who have lost equal opportunity, teaching of religion and religious practices can also be undertaken. When we look to the state of the world today, the fear is that if we make this compulsory people wanting to join these colleges may go down in number. Therefore, this can be made optional. For the simple reason that it is not compulsory many people may, out of curiosity, join this optional class.

To prevent the youth from eating as they like without consideration of cleanliness of food, these colleges can have attached hostels where food can be prepared in the traditional manner and according to śāsthrās.

Cleanliness in food is the foundation for cleaning the ‘self’. That is now in a bad state. There are hotels everywhere to eat anything and everything. In earlier days, hotels were not heard of by the society. According to our śāsthrās keeping a hotel and serving food for money is a sin. That is why almost every place had a dharmasālā for the use of pilgrims. There food prepared was according to śāsthrās and on days of fasting, it was according to the stipulation for such days. In this kind of feeding, those who took food did not suffer any indignity while those who were running the choultries earned puṇya.
More than others it is the young people prosecuting their studies who need to be protected against their going astray due to the problem of age. Therefore the need to have good hostels for them where clean food is served should be kept in mind.

You pensioners who are in the final stages of your life please think for yourselves. Can we just give up our younger generation without their knowing the religious discipline and cleanliness of food, etc which our elders have protected for thousands of years? If you accept we should not, through whom can we do this? In olden days it was the king who protected *dharmā*. Therefore we ourselves have to take the measures needed to protect our ancient *dharmās*. Therefore, you the elderly pensioners, who are learned, had held good positions in many places, have acquired some influence and made some money also and are now having a lot of leisure time, have to take on the responsibility and do what you can in the matter.
ANCIENT ŚĀSTHRĀS ALONG WITH SCHOOL EDUCATION

Even if we make arrangements to teach Vedha sāstrās free, there is no response. This is so not only in the case of Vedha sāstrās. The efforts made by some respectable elders to run free classes for Thirukkural, Divya Prabandham, Thēvāram and Siddhar Śāsthram which were in vogue over a long period and which are now perishing have not met with success. People give up studies of these subjects thinking that the regular studies which would help them in employment are affected. Therefore what I think is that we may start private schools where along with regular school studies Vedhās can be taught to those who are entitled to learn it and other old sāstrās and arts to others. If the school timings are extended by half-an-hour or one hour and the holidays are also curtailed a bit, it would be possible to teach the sāstrās and national arts along with the regular syllabus. If students are trained like this and without loss of time they are sent for the matric examinations, parents will come forward to enrol their children in such schools.

It is not that pensioners alone have to do this. All people can come together and do this. If there is total involvement and it is made clear to the people that we are teaching our ancient sāstrās, bhakthi literatures, books dealing with right conduct, arts, etc without in any manner hurting the chances of students going for diploma or degree course later, they will certainly admit their children in such schools. This is a great help to make the future generation the inheritors of our glorious ancient civilization.

The dharmā which is like watering the roots of the civilization is to make arrangement for those who come forward to learn the Vedhās and those who come forward to teach them for a living without problem.
Although it is general rule that anyone should do any charity that he can afford, the duty of teaching (*vidhyā dhānam*) is particularly for Brahmans and cow protection for *Vyṣyās*.

When we talk of gifting knowledge, first place should be accorded to the *Vedhās* which are the life breath of our nation and Sanskrit which is the important language for our religion. One thought occurs to me. Are not *Kanyādhān* and *vidhyādhān* spoken of as being great? I will talk about *Kanyādhān* later. Those who are devoted to our mutt should purchase insurance policies for these two. For this purpose we are starting the trusts named ‘*Kanyādhāna Trust*’ and ‘*Vedha Rakshana Nidhi*’. The heads of this mutt will have the power to appoint the trustees. The trustees will be accountable to the mutt. The trusts will be autonomous. Devotees of the mutt can take policies indicating the trust as nominees (for receiving the amount). It is not necessary that the entire amount should go to the trust. It is enough if the arrangement is that half the amount should go to the family of the policy holder and half to the trust. Those who have children can take educational (*Vedha vidyā*) policy for boys and marriage policy for girls. The *puṇya* accruing by some girl getting married and some boy having proficiency in *Vedhās* will go to the children of the policy holders. By this the father who actually pays the premium would have done a little expiation for not getting the girl married before puberty and not sending the boy for *Vedha adhyayanā*. For those who have done for their children all that is to be done according to *sāstrās* this *kanyā* and *vidhyā dhānam* will bestow double *puṇya*.
TO EARN RESPECT
WITHOUT A DEGREE

I intended to tell that people who have retired, instead of allowing themselves to rust, should become ‘Kalpaka vruksham’ and provide to the society shade and fruit. If a retired engineer teaches two boys in his house (giving them also free food if possible) it is not necessary that they must secure a degree; if they have a certificate that they had training under the particular respectable person, private contractors will employ them on the basis of the certificate. There will be no room for a forward community to regret that he could not secure admission into an engineering college. Do not *sangīta sābhās* offer concerts to musicians on the basis that they are disciples of a particular guru and not on the basis of their degree or diploma? In the same manner, if young men of forward community, instead of looking to education in colleges, learn a trade under some person, they will get employment in private factories, companies, etc. This great help can be done by retired experienced people who are held in high regard coming together and doing *vidhyā dhānam*. These days there are several courses like C.A. and other technological studies for which private establishments give training and which are regarded higher than university degrees even by the Government. In the same manner this can also be developed.
SERVICE BY LADIES

Ladies can utilize their afternoon leisure to study religious literature by forming a study group and they can also teach other ladies. There are plenty of sthōthrās in Sanskrit and Tamil. Ladies can come together and memorize them. They can make pure turmeric kumkum and supply them to temples and mutts.

(Here is a note about the method of preparing kumkum, detailed by Sri Mahāswāmi himself; take thirty tholas of hard round turmeric and cut them into small pieces. Take lemon juice (filtered and without seed) of equal weight (since juice cannot be weighed at home, quantity in terms of volume will be sixteen ounces of the juice). In this juice dissolve powdered borax and alum each three tholas. Drop the turmeric pieces in this and stir. It is preferable to keep in a vessel which has lead quoting inside. Stir well three times a day. When the juice has been fully absorbed in the turmeric, dry it in shade. Then powder it by pounding. Filter it with a thin cloth. The pure turmeric-kumkum thus obtained should be preserved in a jar with wide mouth. If two teaspoon fulls of pure cow’s ghee is mixed in the kumkum, taking care that it does not get solidified, it will act as a preservative and it will become holy also.)

Pure cow’s ghee can be made at home and given to the temples for lighting before the Swāmi. Akshathā which are whole without the tip being broken can be sorted out and sent. Akshathā means that which is not broken. But these days one finds broken pieces in manthra akshathā. Only when akshathā is whole it will be auspicious. If tinned ghee that comes from somewhere is used for temple dipam, it may be adulterated with fat in which case it will not yield any good. I have heard one thing. If someone were to perform a homam or yajnam, his enemies will do a trick to nullify the good effects of the ritual. They will pretend to be very friendly
to the person who performs the ritual and would tell him ‘we will do the service of supplying ghee’. They would mix a little pig fat in the ghee. That is all. If hōmam is performed with such dirty ghee the person who performs will lose the benefit of the ritual. Not only this but it may also have the opposite effect. The ghee, manthra akshathai and kumkum required for temple lamp and hōmam should be pure. For this, instead of depending on what is obtained from shops, if ladies get together and do it as a service, it will be good.

More than other types of social service, ladies can do such jobs which are related to religion and temples.

If ladies make a vow not to go for silk sarees, diamond and other ostentatious things that itself would be a great help. Once silk sarees are taboo the purīya of not killing lakhs of silk worms will accrue. When those who can afford indulge in such luxuries, those who cannot afford also try to copy them by borrowing money. Desisting from setting a wrong example to such people is itself a great help. If all this luxury goes and if butter milk takes the place of coffee half the expenditure can be curtailed in every home. Those who run their families on borrowed money can run without borrowing.
LADIES AND ŚRAMDHĀN

Ladies can attend to household work which involves exercise in itself. My view is that they should not go for office work. What is meant by my view? I am only telling in accordance with what the dharma sāsthrās say. Now I will end this matter here. What I wanted to say is that if a lady performs the household tasks in a responsible manner (cooking, taking care of children, attending to the needs of the husband, etc) the whole day will be spent on such tasks. A country consists of families. Hence, if ladies do what is required to keep their own houses in order, that itself is service to the country, service to the world and helping others. If they are left with time after doing all these, they may do public service. We still continue to talk of the ‘feminine nature’. Their service should suit their nature. That is it should be such that they can be done with modesty. It should not involve more of physical strain. Ladies can do services like drawing rangoli in temple, clean up the place where bhajans are conducted, wash the vessels, distribute prasād in maternity homes, etc. which are exclusive for females, go to orphanages and give the orphans new clothes, sweets, etc and teach them some sthōthrās and bhajans etc.

With the intention that the entire society should come together I have myself allowed ladies to take part in digging tanks, even though it involves physical strain. Still, śramdhān which involves hard physical labour should be taken up by men only.
HARD WORK AND PROGENY

It is from the time that men started curtailing their physical labour that birth of male children has started decreasing. The result is - as in economics where the price goes up when there is shortage - boys’ people are demanding heavy dowry, presents etc. Giving dowry to the male who is becoming rare has resulted in harm to our religion.

In the olden days the religious observances followed by Brahmins daily and the work done by people of other castes were great exercises to the hip (breaking the hip as it were). In fact that only gave real strength, Moreover, the food in those days was also more nutritious.

It is only later that Brahmins took to white-collared sedentary jobs, sitting under a fan and they thought that such jobs were more respectable. Soon others joined them. Let us leave aside the other misfortunes which resulted from this. The study of Vēdhas, Vēdhic observances, Varnāśramam have gone and a lot of competition, jealousy, inter-caste enmity all set in. For all these, the seed was sown by the Brahmin who, out of his fascination for Government jobs, left the villages. Let us leave aside that great misfortune. Another misfortune which resulted is the loss of manliness due to reduction of bodily labour. Now the food is also not nutritious. Chemical fertilizers may increase the production. But the nutrition in the produce gets very much reduced. As if these are not enough, we have drinks like coffee which affect the health and cause nervous debility. There is work for the brain. The output from pen has increased. If things are to be all right the mind should be pure and peaceful. But the environment forces man into passion, into anger due to politics and several types of agitation and weaken his brain and nerves. At the age of fifteen, boys need spectacles. It is rarely one among
those above forty who is not affected by B.P. On the whole, by doing a sedentary job instead of running about and doing things, manliness is lost.
MANLINESS THROUGH BODILY LABOUR

Developing the strength of the body by physical labour and attaining manliness leads to gaining mental prowess. These days we read newspapers and condemn the atrocities in strong language. But the vehement spirit with which we should get into action with manliness and readiness to give up even our lives for protecting our dharma is gone. Thus when on one side, women are becoming manly, on the other, men are becoming increasingly feminine.

With the exception of those who are interested in good things, education, exercise, bhakthi, pūjā, meditation, etc., for preventing the minds of most people going the bad way it is only bodily labour that is helpful. Supposing we sit on a chair and write something, even then the mind on its own will be wandering. But when we are working with our body, the mind gets involved in that work. Therefore, it does not run towards all sorts of things. I do admit that this is 'negative'. That means although the mind does not run after a bad thing when engaged in bodily labour it does not get involved in good things and positively get noble experiences. But, to start with, we have to take the first step of negative and then go to positive. That is why Āchāryā has given the sequence of steps as observance of religious discipline (Karmānushtānam) first, then bhakthi which is the high state resulting from a purified mind and then jnānā which destroys the mind itself.
THE NEED FOR BOTH PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL ACCOMPLISHMENT

It is true that, if a person engages himself in physical labour like a bull throughout his life and does not know anything about spirituality, bhakthi, meditation etc and dies, his having taken birth is of no use. But when bodily work needs to be done, it has to be done. Generally, in today's worldly life in which there is no maturity, majority of the people have to attain mental purity only by continued physical work.

Does the man who works only with his brain or the pen-pusher get good sleep like the one who works hard physically? If he does not get sleep, the mind wanders somewhere and gathers dirt. The one who goes to sleep after a day's hard labour has sound sleep and his mind does not get into bad thoughts. Because of this he gets physical strength and also mental strength. He does not destroy the nervous system that connects the body and the brain.

A start has to be made with physical labour. But, instead of stopping with the body, even from the early days we have to keep touch with matters relating to God. As we progress, mere touch will not be enough but we have to strive to hold it. There should be greater involvement in matters spiritual. But even if he reaches the pinnacle of spiritual elevation, he should not completely give up his touch with bodily labour. People talk about 'Jīvan Mukthās'. For us it is difficult even to understand that stage. Till that stage is reached in which one has no mind, thought or plan for oneself, we should not deliberately give up service through body. That is why great people say, 'hold on to Īswarā by one hand and use the other for doing work for the world'.

In the beginning there is more of bodily labour and less of the thoughts relating to the soul. Later, thinking of the soul is more and bodily labour is less - that is, in all stages, both would be there.
After that we will know that Ḡswara is guiding us. There have been great Ḡnānis who were in that state but were engaged in work without rest. There were also those who were not aware of the world and were like stones. Till we reach that stage, we have to labour and help others. Excepting those who are weak all must do a lot of bodily service. Those who are weak, should engage themselves in other types of public activity.
CO-OPERATION BETWEEN
HUSBAND AND WIFE

Just like *sramdhān* everyone should do some ‘Sampathidhān’ by way of giving money. However small one’s income may be a few paisa out of that at least must be used for charity. In this there is a lot that ladies can do. It is they who more than men make it difficult for doing charity by their love of jewels, clothes, etc, cinema expenses, dowry, marriage gifts, etc. I am aware that it is only men who indulge in going to races, indulge in drinks, smoking etc and spend money in bad ways. But it is because I feel that it is the women who can help more as mother of all beings and with a sense of sacrifice and be an example, I say this. Husband and wife should co-operate in reducing other expenses and save for charity. Even those who are well off must save these expenses and use the savings for helping others.
CHARITY BEGINS AT HOME
A NEW INTERPRETATION

There is the saying, ‘what remains after one’s own needs is for charity’. I am giving a new interpretation to this. It is only when one does not keep more than what is most essential for one’s life and without which one cannot survive there will be something more than one’s needs which can be used for charity. If luxuries are multiplied for oneself and then the hands are thrown up saying ‘there is nothing more than my needs with which I can do charity’ that is unfair. Therefore, spending the absolute minimum for oneself, living a simple life and saving something, which should be used for charity is actually ‘charity after one’s needs are met’. Charity has to be done. Vedhas say ‘Dharmam chara’ (perform dharma). The saint poetess Avvai also has said the same thing. This means dharma has to be performed. Therefore however small the income may be dharma should be performed within that and for that the expenses have to be controlled and it should be ensured that something remains for charity. This is how the saying must be understood. If this is so understood it would be that everyone must save for some charity. In other words no one will become indebted. This is a great help for oneself.

These days the Government itself is a borrower. If the people follow the same path and make unnecessary things as essential needs, all will have to become debtors only. Not to borrow is itself a great help. The reason is that when we borrow and spend, not only we cannot do any charity but we prod others to borrow and live a life of luxury. Living a life of luxury in a manner that induces in others desires that cannot be fulfilled is the biggest anti-national act. If the simple way of living, which has been talked about from the time of our timeless sāsthrās and upto Gandhi’s time, is followed by those who are well-to-do there will be no Communism
or class struggle. By living a simple life we can save much and help others. That is one side of it. More important than this is that we do not induce desire, jealousy, etc in others and make them debtors. That is the great help. There is the saying of wise men that if expense gets multiplied and income gets reduced that is theft. The borrowed money belongs to someone else, is it not? Will the creditor not be worried about the money being returned to him and feel as if he has been robbed of something? That is why it is called theft. It is a great help to give up the practice of borrowing which causes anxiety both to the creditor and debtor.
THE GREAT CRUELTY OF DOWRY

If our being spendthrifts and inducing others to follow the same way and become debtors is wrong then not spending anything ourselves but putting another person to heavy expenses on our account and making him a debtor is more wrong. We should call it sin. A number of families having fallen into debts on account of dowry and ostentatious marriages is shame to our society. I have been tirelessly telling that importance should be given to Vedic rituals and expenses should be reduced to the minimum and marriages should be conducted without ostentation and in a simple way. But those who listen to me are rare. Parents of boys should develop the feeling that demanding dowry and all kinds of presents is a sin. It is because several thousands have to be spent for a marriage it has come to pass that girls themselves are being sent for jobs. Now this has become a fashion and because of this our Sthridharmā is getting spoiled. It appears to me that so long as several families have been pushed into a situation where they have to borrow over and above their life time savings and celebrate marriages we are unfit to talk about helping others.

In the sāstrās several types of giving have been mentioned and glorified - fan and umbrella in summer; woollen shawls in winter, food during times of scarcity, etc. But, what appears to me to be the biggest charity is to stop taking dowry which is a form of 'begging by command'. The other types of giving are useful only during certain periods. But, dowry affects the person (I am talking of the girl’s father) for his entire life time and our life style according to sāstrās and Sthridharmā for the whole future. Therefore, not taking dowry can be considered a kind of permanent charity.

On one side there are ostentatious marriages. On the other, because there is no money for marriage, girls are being sent to take
up jobs and people falling into debt. This situation is not at all justifiable.

It is for this reason that a little while ago I had mentioned about *Kanyādhān* Trust in favour of which insurance policy is to be taken with the condition that half of the maturity amount would go to the Trust. That amount would be given by the trustees to the poor parents who, as far as possible, want to get their daughter married at a young age. If search for a suitable boy starts only after the marriageable age fixed by the Government, it may take a year or two to find a boy. Then the consequences will be: instead of waiting for marriage the girl is sent to college. Then the search will start for a boy who is educationally more qualified than her with a post-graduate degree or a Ph.D., that would take one or two years; then sending her to a job instead of her remaining at home with high qualification; then again the search for a boy who is a Ph.D., and also holding a higher official status than her. When this goes on, the girl ceases to be a ‘*kanya*’ and becomes ‘māmi’. Instead of this if search for a boy starts at least two years before the age of consent, the marriage can be celebrated at least as soon as she crosses that limit.

When girls remain unmarried beyond a certain age, then there is considerable difficulty in getting them married at all. It is because of this – I find it difficult to say it, whether I, occupying the high pītam of *āchāryā* should say it in this open assembly – they talk about women who have become delinquent or fallen etc. This becomes a big blot on our ancient *dharma*. It may appear that I am asking for substantial amounts by way of grants, insurance etc to enable those without means to get their daughters married in time. But, what should be considered is that if money is spent in this manner, heavy expenses being incurred in running ‘*Sēva Sadhan*’ etc to take care of those about whom I mentioned above, can be saved. We have to show sympathy even to those who have tread
the wrong path. The greatness of Bhagawān is that he is Pathithapāvanan (one who purifies the guilty, the sinner). But what is happening now looks like providing incentives to go wrong - tolerating too much and giving protection in Seva Sadhan, providing lot of comforts and those claiming to be modern writers trying to justify wayward behaviour in the name of humanism, psychology etc. Followers of the Mutt should actually engage themselves in countering these tendencies in the matter of Kanyādhān.

In this and several areas it is the middle class who suffer. When the rich conduct ostentatious marriages they do not suffer any harm. When they start saying ‘we are conducting simple marriages’ society praises them. But, when someone helps a very poor person and he conducts the marriage in a simple manner, the society pities him saying ‘poor man, that is what he can afford’. It is the middle class person who is neither here nor there - he has no means to celebrate the marriage in an ostentatious manner and if he does it in a simple way he faces criticism. If only he ignores criticism and abuse and instead of pretending false status, he decides to be simple everything will become alright.
SIMPLE LIVING

To wish that others should live the same kind of life that we live is a noble thought. But, is it enough if the thought is noble? If we live an ostentatious life and wish that others should live in the same way, is that possible? If that happens and if, as in America, everyone is able to live a luxurious life, is it good? As the worldly comforts go on increasing does not the path for spiritual growth get blocked? Desire is like the fire which consumes whatever is put into it. Desire will never allow us to be satisfied with the available comforts but will make us search for new aids for more comforts. What we see in America is discontent, crime etc. There those who are intelligent have understood that only when aids for comfort are given up there will be peace and have therefore started on the path of meditation, yoga, bhajan etc.

Any help rendered which is opposed to man’s spiritual growth and is done from the point of view of worldly need is not a help but is a hindrance. The more we live a simple life, the greater will be our spiritual good. Therefore, real help is to make others live a simple life. How is this to be done? If we lead an ostentatious life and preach to them, will it do? Therefore we ourselves have to live a simple life and show others by example. Before wishing ‘others should live in the same manner as we live’ we have to decide how we have to live. We should decide; ‘we have to live in the way all others including the poor can live and which is good for spiritual growth, that is we have to lead a simple life’.

Basic needs like enough food, minimum clothes and a small house must be available for everyone. People should not increase their wants and desires. For making others live a simple life we have to lead a simple life.
KINDRED AND RELATIVES

Auspicious events like marriage or sad events like death and connected ceremonies occur in all homes, rich or poor. If we allow someone to run into debts for these, it is a great blemish (dhōsham) on us. It is the great duty of everyone to contribute his little mite towards celebrations or ceremonies in the homes of poor relatives. In olden times, people did it in a natural way. Before we start helping others in the name of public service we have to help our poor relatives with the feeling of bondage. Two generations ago there was no need to say this.

In those days there was no need for old age homes and widow homes. What was the reason for this? It was because they were taken care of by their relatives. Almost every home would have some old aunts or uncles distantly related. These days the very rich too arrange parties and feasts more as a show; or they donate so that their names appear in the papers; but taking care of relatives without means with a feeling of attachment is practically gone.

After the collapse of the Joint Family System even the relationship between brothers is gone. In olden times when it was a joint family, there would be about twenty to twenty five people in a family - parents, uncles, their wives, sons, daughters-in-law, grand children and others. When so many were there in a family, it was not found to be a big burden to keep with them a few relatives who had no means. But now when each one goes away with his wife cutting himself off from the family and sets up a separate family, keeping even one person extra seems a burden. The set up that has existed for thousands of years has, in the last two or three generations, vanished and, with the English fashion coming in, old dharmās have perished.
To start with we have to take care of poor relatives. It is not even necessary that we spend money and travel to attend the auspicious or inauspicious functions. If the expense saved on travel is also added to what is given to the poor relative, it will be so useful to him.

We have to drastically reduce the ostentation and waste in our marriages. Nowadays, in a marriage, we try to be stingy only in respect of ‘dakshinai’ to be given to the orthodox people. We spend without a limit on music concerts, dance, band, procession, etc.
TO HELP THE GROWTH OF VĒDHIC WAYS

In marriages and Upanayana (thread ceremony) apart from giving dakshinai (the remuneration given to the priests) on liberal scale, there should be the mind to help the Vaidhikās (the orthodox) generally. Since this is not followed, we have reached the stage when there will be no one to officiate at vaidhika ceremonies and functions. There is no greater help to the society than ensuring that Vēdhic rituals continue to exist in the world to some extent at least. Now Vinobha talks of Bhūdhān. But, long before him, in the olden times, the kings and the lords gifted their lands to those proficient in Vēdhās.

We have to extend help so that even the poorest of the poor perform the auspicious and inauspicious ceremonies according to sāsthras. It will not cost much to do according to sāsthras and without show.

My list of public service goes on lengthening. In every locality, arrangements must be made for a marriage hall and a place for post-funeral rites (uthara kriyā) which even the poor can use for a nominal rent.
DUTY TOWARDS THE DEAD

Enough has been said that the annual ceremonies for the dead and tharpaifam (offering oblation) are also in the nature of help rendered to others. I have said that the sraddhā ceremonies etc will give satisfaction to the pithrus in whatever form they might have taken rebirth. When someone dies he does not go straightaway to the pithru loka; nor does he take another birth immediately. The soul of a dead person journeys for a year and then only gains the pithru status. As said in our sāstrās, this has been mentioned in other religions also, for example in Greek mythology. Just as we say that the soul has to cross the Vaitharī river and reach the Yama Patnam, (the city of the Lord of Death) they say it has to cross a river (Styx) and go to another world (Hades). Just as we talk of a watch dog in Yama Patnam they also talk of one (Cerberus). It is during the one year the soul takes to reach the other world, we do some rituals every month for its satisfaction. I have heard it said that in other religions too food is to be given to the soul during the period of its journey. (Perhaps this is what Christians call ‘Viaticum’). Just as we offer Pīṇa (rice balls) at Gayā and Badhrināth for those who are dead and had no children, the Christians too conduct a prayer on one day for such souls by the name of ‘All Souls Day’. If such a view, a faith prevails all over the world, it must be true.

We have to provide facilities for the proper performance of uthara kriyā and other rituals meant for pithrus for all communities. In this what comes first is the disposal of the dead body; that is, in accordance with the customs of every community, the dead body is to be cremated or buried. This is a very important Karmā.
A question may arise in the mind. If it is said that performing of sraddhā etc to please the dead is in the nature of service to others it is acceptable but what is the need for a ceremony (samskāram) for a body from which the soul has departed, it may be thought.

One may ask ‘we are not in a position to help people who are living. Why service for a dead body? By the force of custom, if a death occurs in a family, out of fear of deviating from custom some samskāram has to be done for the body. As if this is not enough why should we volunteer to do samskāram for an unclaimed body when the Municipal authorities are there to take care of it? Dead body itself creates a hesitation and fear. When that is so, why should we take upon ourselves something with which we are not connected? Where is the need for help for dead body which is like a block of wood?’

If we examine our sāstrās closely, we will know that even though the soul has departed from a body, the divine aspects of the various Devathās relating to the different parts of the body – the sun for the eyes, fire for the mouth, Indra for the hand, etc – do not immediately go to their original resting place. It is by the samskāram done to the corpse we send them each to its place. A look at the 'Apara manthrās' (mantras uttered during funeral rites) will make it clear.

There is a view that the jīvātma, (the purushā) has sixteen parts, (kalai) that only fifteen of these make the life, that body itself is a kalai and therefore samskār for the corpse is required to be done to dedicate it to Īswarā.
In śāsthras cremation has been accorded a position of merit and is called ‘anthyēṣhti’ – anthya ishti – that is final yagna. In the śāsthras, forty samskārams* have been laid down to be performed right from the time of conception for purifying life at every stage. Samskāram means to make something good. (the language that has been made good is Samskritham).

Upanayanam, marriage etc are all samskāram intended to purify the Jiva at every stage. These forty samskārams are in the nature of ‘āhuthi’ (offering oblations) to Īswarā throughout one’s life as if it is a Yagna. I had said that yagna is ‘Ishti’. When the entire life is like a yagna, the yagna that comes last, the fortieth is ‘anthyēṣhti’ (pretha samskāram). The body with which one had performed other yagnas should be offered to the fire (agni) along with hōمام. That is how it is mentioned in the manthrās for pretha samskāram. Just as articles intended for hōمام are cleaned with ghee, it has been laid down that the body also should be cleaned and cremated. When it is lowered in the earth also, it would amount to dedicating it to Īswarā.

About this, I shall say something more. It is true that some great men have sung that our body is very mean and we should get released from this. But, if we view it from another level, this body is a wonderful machine. In one single machine, each part is doing a particular job. The eyes see the light and the colours. The ears hear the sound. Although what is there is one soul and inside all the parts there is only one life and the eyes and ears are located so close to each other, the eyes cannot hear and the ears cannot see. Close to these is the mouth which can only know the taste. It has also the power to speak. It is possible by adjusting the air-flow through the throat in different ways to sing pleasantly. The hands and the fingers are so designed that they are suitable to catch hold of things. If this arrangement is even slightly different, we cannot

* details can be seen in Volume 2 under the caption 'Forty Samskārams'
do the things which we do now. The leg is so structured that it helps in putting the feet forward and move ahead. The bottom of the foot is having a cup like cavity so that even if we tread on some creatures like the centipede, they will not be crushed but will pass through it. The bones and nerves of the body are such that we can squat on the floor. When we look at each part we are wonderstruck at the subtle imagination with which Parāsakthi has created the body. There is a part to digest what is eaten, a part to convert into blood what is digested, a part for breathing, one for pumping the blood - above all the part which controls and directs every action, the brain - like this the Lord has in a wonderful manner created this body. There is a purpose for everything in the body - the skin, blood, muscle, nerve, bones, etc. Of the millions of cells in the body, each is a wonder world by itself. Thus, not only each part functions as a machine by itself but all of them together act in co-ordination with each other. This is a great wonder. Therefore, even though there may be one in a million who is a jñāni, who has realized that the body is false and the mind is false, all the others with the aid of the wonderful machine that Bhagawān has given, try to live according to the ways of dharma. We have to reach the state of jñānā only from the life based on dharma.

Thinking of it, why should the body be considered as something mean? What harm has it done? It is only the instrument of the mind. If the mind directs the hand and leg and the eyes and the mouth properly, the body will do only good. The hand will help others or it will perform pūjā to the Lord. The leg will go to the temple. The eyes will have the dharśan of the Lord. The mouth will utter sthōthrās or speak pleasant words to all. Therefore it is wrong to call the body as something mean. Is not the body the vehicle for doing dharma? There is a saying sarīram ādhyam kalu dharma sādhanam. We say that this body is the temple for the Paramāthmā who is inside (dhēhō dhēvalayah prōkthō). Appar also
said that the body is the temple. Thirumūlar also says in Thirumanthiram, ‘earlier I thought that this body is mean. Then when I realized that Īswarā resides inside it, I started protecting the body’.

Therefore, when life departs from such a wonderful machine given by Bhagawān, the body should not be disposed of in an improper way. It has to be given as ‘āhuthi’ to Paramēswara who has the cremation ground (smasān) as his abode. The body should be returned to the one who gave it. It is because all over the world people, including the tribals dwelling in forests, have known this, wherever we see disposal of the dead body (prētha saṃskāram) is a big religious ritual.

Even if one does not believe that after death the aspects of Devathās continue to stick inside the body, one thing should be kept in mind. Is not the life which was inside all these days a drop of the Supreme Consciousness’? If, in a small cavity in the wall, an idol has been kept long ago, even now we would like to keep a little lamp there. When that is so, should not the body in which a little of the Supreme Consciousness has stayed, be disposed of with respect and with manthrās?

If a person had rendered a lot of service with his body that body should be treated with respect even after life has departed from it. Even the atheists place wreaths on the perishable bodies of their leaders! Even if someone had used his body in bad ways and he had no realization that it was Īswarā sakthi which operated his body, since we know it we have to pay respect to the body by way of saṃskāram. The saṃskāram should be done with the thought ‘Even though he has not done any good with his body as dedication to Īswarā, to compensate for it and as an act of expiation, we shall offer this body itself to Īswarā’.

According to Śaiva Siddhānta it is Īswarā who gives to the soul Thanu (body) Karāṇa (sense organs) and Bhuvana (the world).
He creates the world and gives the body with its sense organs in order to enjoy the things of the world. Till the Karmās are discharged the things of the world have to be enjoyed which is why He has given all these. Therefore the Thanu which is his prasād must be entrusted to Him, giving it due respect and with samskāra as if it is an offering in yajnas even after the sense organs have become silent.

There is one difference in this. The other yagnas are performed by the person himself. But he cannot himself, after his death, do the anthyēshti of offering his dead body to Bhagawān. Whether an individual had done the other samskāra or not and earned punya or sin concerns him. Others have no responsibility for that. But, prētha samskāra has to be done by others. Therefore the responsibility for the same rests with others. Therefore, if this is not done properly it is we who will incur sin.

At the beginning we raised the question 'We have to help others as long as they are alive; since the life that has departed will also be somewhere it is necessary also to do sraddhā etc; but why samskāram for a body from which life has departed?' But after examining in detail we find 'The body is the wonderful creation of the Lord. Therefore even after life has left it, it has to be treated with respect and has to be reached to the Lord. It is this samskāram done for the dead body which is entirely our responsibility. If we fail to discharge this we will incur great blemish'.
UNCLAIMED CORPSES

If a relative dies we do the apara Karmā (funerary rites) in some form. There may be shortcomings in doing this. But we do not totally neglect it. Even those who have stopped doing tharpānam on New Moon day or sraddhā, excepting atheists, all Hindus do not fail to do prētha samskāram according to the customs of the community.

But what about those who have no relatives and no one to look to and die? What happens to their bodies which are the machines created by the Lord? Śāsthrās say that the society has to arrange for the samskāram.

On this point I am pained about the state of affairs in Hindu religion. After my repeated telling, here and there some arrangements have been made which have lessened my pain. But this is not enough. Previously I was pained more. At that time there was no arrangement at all for doing samskāram of those lying in hospitals or jails or on roads with no one to claim the body. Even now in many places the same situation continues. What is happening is - hospital people themselves after doing post-mortem and whatever they want to do by way of research, bury the body or the Municipal or Panchayat people cremate it. To neglect a body in this manner without samskāram according to śāsthrās is a blot on our society and a sin.

People of other religions have made suitable arrangements for this. The blemish of not entrusting the body to the Lord according to their śāsthrās does not affect them.
HINDU SOCIETY’S BLEMISH

It is the Hindu society which is unregulated that suffers this great blemish. There is no one to take care of our society in the manner of the powerful organizations of other religions. Of what use am I, occupying the position of a Guru, running a Mutt and taking your money? I am unable to create an organization which will ensure that from Rāmeśwaram to the Himālayā wherever any Hindu dies uncared for, proper samskāram will be performed for the body. But since I have the big name ‘Guru’ I am at least aware that my responsibility is greater. What is within my capacity is that I really feel sorry that this is the condition of our society. I shall tell as far as I can, you who, I think, will listen to my words.

If you commit a sin that will get attached to me, if without correcting you, I only claim the name of Guru. Are you not paying obeisance (namaskāram) to me? By that you are entrusting to me the responsibility of removing your sin.

Unclaimed corpses - let that be - when the Hindu society itself is without anyone to care for I have to discharge my duty with great concern and ensure it is cared for and shines in a holy manner according to sāsthrās.

It is for this pretha samskāram of uncared for bodies, I have been asking that in every place an organization should be started by the name ‘Hindu Jīvāthma Kainkarya Sangam’. In many places these have been organized and they have come up well. Importantly, in Kumbakōṭīam this Sangam is functioning very well. This noble service has taken root to such an extent that the hospital, jail and municipal authorities call the people from the Sangam and entrust to them the unclaimed bodies which reach them.
Even if there is no separate sangam for this, the bhajan group in each place should, along with other public service, undertake \textit{prētha samskāram} also. Instead of doing it in a casual manner as just another cause, they should do it with a feeling that it is a noble cause.
THIS IS ĀŚVAMĒDHĀ

When I started my talk on Paropakāram (helping others) I raised the question ‘Is it possible for all of us to do Āśvamedha Yāgam?’ Then I raised the question what for Āśvamedha. Ambāl has a name ‘Hayamētha Samarchithā - one who is specially worshipped through Āśvamedhā. Therefore I replied that in order to receive the grace of Ambāl in full we have to do Āśvamedham. I also raised the question ‘In this Kaliyuga it is difficult to perform Āśvamedhā which has lots of restrictions and regulations and so what can be done’. I answered it myself saying that if some help is rendered to others, the sāstrās say that it is equal to Āśvamedhā and therefore we can get the full blessings of Ambāl. Then I said several things about helping others, service out of compassion for others etc. But till now I have not mentioned that one service which would give as much reward as Āśvamedhā. That service is pretha samskāram for uncared for corpses.

‘Anātha pretha samskārath
Āśvamedha phalam labeth’

This is what the sāstrās say.

By helping another person who died in this manner, we are doing the duty by which we prevent sin accruing to us and just help ourselves.

A doctor asked a question, ‘Unclaimed bodies becoming available are also useful. We can use them for post-mortem and take parts for experiments. Such corpses are useful in explaining anatomy in medical colleges, medical exhibitions etc. If these are also taken away by you people who are doing Jivāthma Kāṅkaryam what would happen to development of medical science?’ I said if that be so doctors if they want, may give their dead bodies for this purpose after their death. Although there is some blemish in this according to sāstrās, since someone makes a
sacrifice whole-heartedly, we can consider that as removing the blemish. Also I had earlier said that each person should render service through his own profession as a sacrifice in order to remove any blemish affecting him on account of the practice itself. He can go one step further and in addition to being helpful to others through his service, in his death also he can render help to the cause of education which was responsible for his profession.

‘People of other religions do samskāram according to their religion to all unclaimed bodies in the hospitals, jails and on the roads. It is only Hindu corpses which are buried by the government men without any samskāram’ - to avoid this sin and shame at least now suitable arrangements should be made in all places.
THE PATH SHOWN BY RĀMĀ AND KRISHNĀ

Sri Rāmachandramūrthi who came to show us how dharmā is to be followed has himself done this prētha samskāram in a special way and shown us. He has done samskāram for Jatāyu, a bird. Not only that, after he killed Vāli and his great enemy Rāvanā he made Angathā and Vibhishanā perform the funeral rites of Vāli and Rāvanā in the proper way with nothing wanting because it was the mind within those bodies which led them to wrong ways. Rāmā took keen interest in doing samskārams to the bodies which are the wonderful creation of the Lord and which, of their own had nothing bad about them and got the samskārams done. Krishnā Paramāthmā also got samskārams done to all people including the Kauravās in Kurukshetrā, took Dritharāshtrā and the Pāndavās to the Ganges and had the tharpaṇā performed by them.

Therefore to remain unconcerned about prētha samskāram for unclaimed bodies is a great blot on Hindu society - unpardonable blot. At least from now on some arrangements must be made for this and we should seek expiation.

If it comes to be known that someone died without any one to care for him, to whichever jāthi he may belong, even if he is untouchable, financial and other help should be rendered to enable the people of his caste to do the samskāram according to their custom. For this several people should contribute money and render service whole-heartedly. Rich people who have the means to help by themselves should realize that it is a great dharmā and help liberally. The Hindu society has established several charitable trusts. They also should extend help taking special interest realizing that such prētha samskāram is a noble service.
THE DISTRESS OF SOME IS A TEST FOR MANY

It used to be said that the reason why some people suffer much is that this is Iswarā’s way of testing whether others are helping them. It may be said ‘Each one is suffering due to his Karmā. Even if we help such people, their Karmā may come in the way of their getting the benefit of our help’. This is also true. But whether by our help the other person’s Karmā is countered or not, making efforts towards this end is man’s dharma. We have to take it that even when Iswarā is punishing someone for his Karmā, He is also making it a test for the others to see how far they are service minded. If he is not benefited by our help and suffers in spite of it, only then we have to take it that it is a punishment for his Karmā. Many times it is also possible to ameliorate the sufferings of others by our service. If this is so, what does it mean? Does it not mean that Bhagawān is testing us to see whether we extend help to him and remove his sufferings?

In the same manner when, as in the case of individuals, a whole community of people are affected by famine, flood, earthquake, fire, volcano etc Bhagawān’s test regarding the service mindedness of others will be also a part. I have not till now talked about such relief measures. It is also not necessary to talk about it specially. If such suffering affects a whole lot of people, everyone should come forward with money, physical help etc to help the affected people without being requested to do so. It is necessary that everyone individually or in groups or in co-ordination with the Government, Red Cross, Ramakrishna Mission and others render service during times of such calamity. These days such calamities are described as natural calamities, Nature’s fury etc. But according to sāstrās these also occur as a punishment that the Lord gives for the totality of sins committed by the whole people.
just as individuals are punished for their sins*. It is not necessary that we should expiate such sins only by getting the punishment and suffering as a result. We can eliminate the balance of our sins by extending our help during such calamities. If, without extending such help we are inactive like a stone, that itself is sin. If today some person receives the punishment as a representative of the whole community of people that punishment will come to us too who sit inactive like a stone.

Thus there is a test for one in the suffering of another. If he passes that test, he will get a prize. Bhagawān tests others when someone dies without anyone to care for and the body is unclaimed. Paramēśvarā sees: ‘Do these people give due respect to this wonderful body which I had created and reach it to me after doing proper samskārams?’ If it is asked what the prize is for passing this test, it is the blessing of the Supreme Dēvi.

The direct meaning for the sloka

\['Anātha pretha samskārāth
Asvamedha phalam labeth\’

is that to the one who does the samskāram for an unclaimed body the Lord gives as much reward as he does to one who has performed Asvamedham. But since ‘Thrisadhi’ says that this Asvamedhā itself is Her worship, the meaning is the reward is got in the form of Her supreme grace.

*The service rendered by the Kanchi Mutt during such calamities in accordance with Mahāswāmi’s wishes are innumerable. As far back as 1924 when there were floods in Kāverī it was our Mutt which was in the forefront of relief measures. Again during the 1961 floods not only did the Mutt render excellent service, Paramāchāryā blessed the organizations which also helped and he expressed his appreciation of the role played by the Dravidian political parties in the relief measures. He had sent aid to Pāli when there was an earthquake there.
The big prize we want is only Ambāl's blessings. We have nothing to gain by going to Deva lōkā or Brahma lōkā a reward for Aśvamedhām. Even if we go there as soon as the punyam gets exhausted - in the manner of money getting spent - we have to return to this world. But if we reach the lotus feet of Ambāl we need not have to return at all. That is the great permanent bliss.

How is that Ambāl? According to Thrisadhi, She is 'Hayamedha Samarchithā'. It means that when Aśvamedhām is performed she takes it as the greatest form of worship for her and bestows her blessings. We have the very easy Aśvamedhām - doing samskāram to unclaimed bodies! If we exchange the fruits of this service with Ambāl's blessings that will be like a currency that does not perish and will save us from being returned to this world. The funeral samskārams we perform to another will help in getting released from the cycle of births and deaths.

Therefore if we are negligent about this samskāram for an unclaimed body it would mean that we are fools. When Paramāthmā gives a simple test and wants to see if we get the reward of Aśvamedhā, Ambāl's grace, if we disregard it, does it not mean that we are fools?

Therefore if we come to know of any unclaimed body irrespective of the caste to which the person had belonged we should arrange for his samskāram in the thought 'we are lucky we got this service to be done' and make use of the opportunity to gain the reward of Aśvamedhā.

Hereafter we should not incur the ignominy that a Hindu corpse was buried by Government agency without any samskāram. Without thinking 'where is the need to give importance to a dead body?' we should take interest in this samskāram with the realization that this is the foundation for all other public service.
Just as there is a name ‘Hayamēdha Samarchithā’ for Ambāl in Thrisādhi, there is the name ‘Varnāsrama Vidhāyini’ in Sahasranāmam. According to this if we ensure that samskāram is done to the bodies according to the customs of the clan we will become fit to receive Ambāl’s grace. By the grace of Śrīmāthā all her children irrespective of Vartia, caste, clan etc mutual feelings of brotherhood should flower between all and through that love, wealth and compassion should grow in the world.
I have talked about what should be done for the body after life has departed from it. There is also something to be done just when life leaves the body. There is no greater service that can be done to another person than this. What is that?

Krishṇa Paramāthaṁā told Arjunā, ‘Even when the body dies the ātmā does not die. Therefore keeping in view a great dharma you have the duty and swadharma to fight. When that is so, to say ‘I will not kill relatives and friends’ and withdraw yourself is not correct.’ That upadeśā is Bhagawad Gītā. All right. The ātmā does not die. But what happens to it when the body dies? Does it immediately become one with Paramāthaṁā? Krishṇa Paramāthaṁā does not say so. He only says that that soul, depending upon its karma takes a new life elsewhere. ‘Those who have earned a lot of puṇya go to swarga loka, enjoy the fruits of their puṇya and, as soon as it is exhausted, return to this world and are born again as humans. Those who are full of hatred and cruelty, I give them repeated birth as Asura’. He says all this. If that be so, is there no rescue from the cycle of births and deaths? It is there. He explains that too.

Bhagawan says that He the Paramāthaṁā will take into Him one who is devoted to him through bhakthi yōgā or jnāna yōgā and not send him back to this world. If a bhaktha becomes a jnāni it is not necessary that only after his death he will become one with the Paramāthaṁā. Even when he appears to others as being of the world, he will be in the state of Moksha. Moksha is a state in which there is relief from all sorrows and there is only bliss all the time. Bhagawan describes the ways of bhakthi mārgā and jnānā mārgā, chapter after chapter. But there will be only one in several millions who will be able to attain the state in this manner. This is also said by Him. ‘Among people one in a thousand only will strive for
siddhi. Out of them also only a rare person succeeds in his efforts and reaches me.’

If this is so what should be done? There is a short cut for everything. Is there not a short cut to get released from the cycle of births and deaths? It looks as if Bhagawān himself has said that there is only one. ‘What a person thinks of at the time of his death he gets it in his next birth. One who thinks of me only and quits the body reaches me’ and adds ‘nāsthi athra samsayah’ (there is no doubt in this) thus giving a guarantee.

We think ‘Appears to be a very easy path; however badly we might have lived through our life, if only at the moment of death Bhagawān is remembered it appears we can escape from the cycle of births and deaths!’

But Bhagawān makes here a subtle point. If it is merely ‘remembering me at the last moment’ He would have said ‘anthakāle mām smaran’. But Bhagawān did not say like that. He said ‘anthakāle cha mām ēva smaran’. By adding the ‘cha’ and ‘ēva’ he has made it clear that the ending of the cycle of samsāra is not that easy. What is the meaning of this cha and ēva? ‘Anthakalē cha’ means ‘Even at the time of death’. ‘mām ēva’ does not mean ‘me’ but ‘me alone’. He only must be remembered steadily at the time of death then only the Moksham.

We know that our mind is like the horse which runs without rein. It will appear as if it has at this moment immersed in Paramāṭhmā. But the next moment it will get detached from it and go to a dustbin. We ourselves will feel surprised and will feel unbearable sorrow – ‘we were in such a peaceful state. How did this cut itself off and run away?’ In English, we talk of ‘fraction of a second’. The mind does not remain steady on one thing even for a sixteenth part of a second. Therefore, ‘mām ēva smaran’, thinking of Bhagawān only is of course very difficult.
First we should know that we are going to die. Then without becoming afraid of it we have to make our buddhi clear. With such clarity of mind even if life were to leave at this very moment we should think of Bhagawān with concentration at least during that moment. If life departs in that moment it is good. When the thought is still on Bhagawān we can quit the body and reach Him. But no one seems to die like this. Even if one were to be shot at, life departs only after five or ten minutes. Is it possible during that long period to forget the sufferings of the final journey and steadily think of Bhagawān and dissolve the life in Bhagawān? If for example, death comes from electric shock and it is instantaneous and at that moment the thought of Bhagawān comes that is enough. But it has to come! If not? Fear should not overwhelm or consciousness lost.

If death does not occur immediately it may drag on indefinitely while it could take place any time. It can drag on for days. During that long interval Bhagawān should be remembered. But even if death is caused in a brief time by something like electric shock, at that moment the thought of Bhagawān must come. Is this possible at a time when one is struggling for life? No. That is why Bhagawān adds a ‘cha’ along with ‘anthakāle’. On this Bhagawān speaks more.
WHAT IS PRACTISED 
THROUGHOUT LIFE WILL COME 
AT THE MOMENT OF DEATH

Only if our mind is deeply involved with something throughout life that will come up and fill our mind at the time when life departs. It is not that we deliberately think of it. It will come up on its own and make us think of it.

Now, according to psychology, it is only those things which were deep in our mind even without our being aware of them surface in the mind of their own. Particularly it is said that when the mind is not engaged in external activity, during sleep these old thoughts come up in dreams. This is not only during sleep. Whenever there is no work and even when we sit for meditation thoughts which were deep inside come up like a cork which we are keeping pressed inside water and which comes up as soon as we leave our grip on it, and get hold of us. Śāstrās refer to these as old impressions (vāsanās) and say that only if these are destroyed mind will become clear and self-effulgence will be reflected brightly. But even if we prod it to go, will it go? The only way to drive it out is to strive our best to keep thinking of good things and the Paramāthmā who is the highest of all that is good. We have to solicit this good impression and give it a place inside. Only then bad impressions will run away finding that they have no place. Sometimes a bad smell does not vanish however much things are cleaned up. But if incense stick is lighted and kept the bad smell disappears. In the end, good impressions also have to go, the mind itself has to go. Those things come at a much later stage.
REMEMBERING THE LORD

What we should do now and at all times - if we have not done till now, at least from now on - is to cultivate the remembrance of the Lord in such a manner that it remains deeply and firmly in our mind. It is only if right through life the mind continues to have a thread of link with Paramāthmā, in our last moment we will remember Him only in the manner of what the Lord said in Gītā ‘mām eva’ instead of all sorts of useless thoughts. Even if life drags on instead of departing quickly the remembrance of the Lord will only remain in the midst of the struggle or even if death occurs naturally and life departs without suffering it will be possible to remember the Lord during those few moments with concentration. Or if a tiger attacks or there is electrocution even then without any fear or shock the thought of the Lord will come promptly. Even great souls like Kulaśekhara express fear: ‘How will it be possible for me to think of you when life starts its long journey and the throat and chest are choked with phlegm? (Prāṇa prayāṇa samaye kapa vāthā piththai). Bhagawadhpaḍhā also has used the word ‘Prāṇa prayāṇa’.

‘Prāṇa prayāṇa bhavabhithi samākulasya
Lakshminrisimha mama dhehi karāvalambam’

He says that to remove the fear that sets in when life leaves the body, Lakshminrisimhamurthi who is the one who drives away all fear should come as support (hold my hand) and protect. In the same manner in Subramania Bhujangam also he says ‘When I, with no one to care for me, start my long journey, Guhā the grace incarnate! You must come and stand before me. (Pryāṇōnmuke mayi anathe). In Thiruppugazh too the same idea is repeated as if it is copied. Those great souls were always immersed in the thought of the Lord or were experiencing the Self. Therefore they really
did not have any fear but they have sung like this keeping us in view and to teach us the prayer.

_Periyāzhvār_ even takes liberty with the Lord and says ‘I have said in advance now what I should say then – when I die I may not think of you. Do not give me up because of that. Now I can think of you. Therefore this thought I now have of you treat it as reserved for that time.’

But if you look at the _Gītā_ the Lord does not consider the smaran (thought) of sometime long back as ‘reserved for the appropriate time’. He says that he must be remembered at the last moment. He adds ‘Cha’ and makes it clear that the thought should also be at the last moment. That is he implies that we should think of Him throughout our life and think also during the last moment. Later after two _slōkās_ he makes things more clear.

_‘Thasmāth sārveshu kāleśhu mām anusmara’_

‘Therefore keep thinking of me always all the time’ he says. It is only when he is remembered all the time his thought will come at the end.
THE THOUGHT AT THE LAST MOMENT - ITS IMPORTANCE

Still why this importance to the thought at the last moment? What is the connection between thinking of Bhagawan during the last moment and the subject I had taken namely helping others?

Bhagawan says in Gita ‘Death does not at all affect the āthmā - it is the body that dies and not the āthmā. If a shirt one wears becomes torn, does he perish along with the shirt? Just as he takes another shirt and wears it, if one body perishes, the āthmā which does not perish, enters another body.’ How many times the āthmā has to wear new shirts like this? ‘Is there no end to it?’ It may be asked. Bhagawan says ‘If a person becomes a jñāni, he can attain Brahma Nirvāṇā and reach me. If he is devoted to me all the time, he can reach me. It is enough if while he gives up life he thinks of me. Then there will be no need to wear another shirt.’

Having said ‘Death is not a big thing, it is like a shirt getting torn if He says ‘If one thinks of me at the moment of death, he can reach me and need not have rebirth’, does this not mean that death is a big thing? That is why the great importance to thoughts that occur at the last moment.

Viewed from the state of āthmā, which is the unchanging truth, the body and death are trifle only; they are nothing. But we are not aware of the fact that we are the unchanging āthmā. What we know is this - the mind and the universe which are ever changing. When death occurs and there is rebirth all our connection to this universe in the present life are cut off and new connections appear. Even if we are born in the original place only and in the same family we will not know. We cannot say that we will be born like this in the same place or family. We may be born
in different surroundings into another religion, tradition and civilization.

Though the āthmā is unchanging that is a matter which we do not know. All we know is the dance of the mind. The evolution of this mind - whether on right lines or on bad lines - is shaped to a large extent by the surroundings. Throughout this life we have grown in a particular surrounding. We have followed particular traditions and got attached to them. When we see that all of them get cut off with death (even though death does not affect the āthmā), do not all these affect us, we who are unable to be the āthmā? Is it not a big question 'What kind of birth will be the next one? In what surroundings will we be born?'. Very great souls have expressed the fear 'If this birth goes who knows what birth will come next'.

That is why Bhagawān seems to think 'Poor fellow! He gives up life without making sure he will not be born again. If he is born again, he will be entirely in new surroundings and will have to start the process of spiritual evolution right from the beginning. Although it is true that the Karmā of this birth will chase him in the next birth, are not the surroundings of the next birth different? In such surroundings will he discharge his old Karmā and move forward or will he do more bad Karmā resulting in waste?' The Lord therefore takes a lot of pity on him and says 'All right, let him think of me while dying. That is enough. We can take him ourselves without giving him another birth'. Thinking thus Bhagawān seems to have granted a big concession.
REMEMBERING
GOD WHILE GOING TO SLEEP

Whatever dominates a person's thinking throughout life, the thought about that thing only will come up in the last moment. We can test ourselves to see if at the last moment we will get thoughts of the Lord. It is this:

Do we not sleep everyday? Śāstrās say that this is also like death. When we sleep we are like a log of wood without consciousness. That is why it is said like this. Sleep is said to be 'Nithya Praṇayam' (daily deluge). We can practise and see whether it will be possible to 'die' thinking of God. Before going to sleep we should think of our Ishta Devalthā. With that thought only we should go into deep sleep. We should have no other thought. This will look easy when it is said. But if we practise we will know how difficult it is. We may think 'What is the difficulty in thinking of the form of Kāmākshi, Natarājā, Dakshināmūrthi, Venkataramanā Swāmi, Murugan - may be any God - or a Guru who gives us peace and contentment or a great soul?' But somehow the mind will leave such divine thoughts and within a brief time go somewhere else. It will push us into sleep in the same state. But if we get trained not to be cheated like this by the mind, we can gain the confidence that even at the time of death we can think of the Lord. Everything depends upon practice and perseverance. Depending upon our śraddhā (degree of involvement) Paramāthmā will extend his helping hand.
SHORTCUT TO MÔKSHA

Thus, that with which one is strongly attached during life time will only pull him in the last stage. It is only if there is thought of God throughout life it will come at the last stage also. Yes, it will come of its own. If one practises devotion throughout his life, when he is in the last state, the thought of God will be there automatically. Therefore Kríshnā who said ‘Think of me all the time’, need not have added a clause ‘Think of me in your last moment too’. That which is the object of thought throughout life will come of its own at the last moment also.

It is here it appears that a shortcut to Môksha has been indicated. In Gîtā, Kríshnā says very clearly ‘Whatever one thinks of in his last moments that he reaches’.

\[
\text{Yam yam vāpi smaran bhāvam thyajathyanthē kalēvaram Tham tham evaithi kaunthēya sadhā thadhbhāva bhāvithah}
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When he says like this there is room for understanding this to mean that even if a person has not thought of a thing throughout his life and he thinks of it in his last moments he will get what he thought of in his last moments.

It is generally true that only what one thinks of throughout one’s life will come to his mind in his last moments. But if it is not like this and something which was never thought of comes to mind in the last moments? Even then the Lord gives him what he thought of in his last moments. He does not ask him ‘you have not thought of it before’. This is the meaning one gets from the Gîtā slokā.

It appears that Gîtā says that even if much devotion had not been practised during life if one thinks of the Lord just at the time of death, it is enough, and that he can reach the Lord. Is this not very much a shortcut?
But only what has been thought of throughout life will come to mind in the last moments. How can some other thought occur in the last moment? How can this be shortcut? Is the Lord deceitful in saying this?
Here comes the great service which others can do to a person who is in his last stage. It is the noble service of sending the soul to Paramāthmā.

In the natural course a person may get only erratic thoughts during his last moments. Many people have only such thoughts or the person may lose his consciousness. But, at such a time, if those around him chant only the Lord’s names (Bhagawan nāmā) it will pull him back from other thoughts. Even if there is a little consciousness, Īśwarā nāmā may touch the inner consciousness. Even if he does not get the thought of Bhagawān on his own and even if only those things which he was thinking of throughout his life come to his mind during the last moments, others can chant the Lord’s names and enable the suppression of other thoughts and the surfacing of the thought of the Lord.

We go to beach or a cinema. We think of all sorts of things and keep chatting. But if on the way we hear words of prayer like ‘Hara Hara Mahādeva’ or ‘Harē Rāma Harē Rāma Rāma Rāma Harē Harē’ suddenly our erratic thoughts disappear and for a moment the Lord’s names touch our heart and make us melt. The name (nāmā) has such a power. Therefore at the end of the life’s battle if a person is struggling for life and his mind wanders on all sides or he is losing his consciousness if those around him keep chanting Bhagawān nāmā it will be an effective way of drawing the soul to its root, the Paramāthmā. However bad a person might have been throughout his life, in his last moment he will want to escape from the cycle of samsāram and therefore would struggle to reach Bhagawān. If he does not get the longing by himself, if we generate it for him, he will get hold of it. This is what I feel.
In those last moments when one has to leave all his relatives and friends and go he will realize that the Lord alone is his relative. The impressions of Karmā may come in the way of his realizing this and pull in all sides. But at such a time if those around him keep chanting Bhagawan nāmā it may rein in and turn the thoughts of the dying person to Bhagawān. If at that time life departs Paramāthmā has to accept him. He has made such a promise in Gītā. Irrespective of whether he has thought or not throughout His life, He has said the person ‘will attain what he thinks in his last moments’. Hence whatever might have been one’s life, since he has thought of him during the last moment, He has to take him. In addition to the yearning of the helpless soul at the last moments, if we who are around him have the heart-felt anxiety that he should get redeemed and we pray to the Lord and chant his name it cannot go in vain.

More noble than all other services is only to reach a soul to the Paramāthmā. Therefore if by our chanting of the Lord’s names we can make a person think of the Lord in his last moments and by that enable him to be accepted by the Lord, there is no other service equal to it.

Even if the thought of the Lord during last moments does not bring to an end the birth-death cycle it does not matter. Definitely it will wash away the sins to a great extent. There is no doubt about this. When Bhagawan nāmā gets soaked inside, it will definitely wash away the sins. Therefore even if we consider that the person who dies with the thought of Bhagawan nāmā does not get released from the cycle of birth and death he will not again take a sinful birth; he will definitely take a punya janmā.

What does punya janmā mean? Is it money, beauty, high caste etc? No. punya janmā is one in which he will be enabled to continue with the thought of the Lord from where he has left it at the end of his previous life. To enable him to get released from
samsāra in such a new birth by his own effort we have to help in his last moments of this life.

This great dharma, unequalled service, will have to be done by the people of the Sangam about which I had mentioned in the context of rendering service by a group of people coming together.
WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

If it comes to be known that someone in a village or a locality of a town is in his last stages some person/persons from the Sangam should go there. There are cases in which people die in hospitals and jails. Therefore they should keep with them the permission of the concerned authorities for their visit. They should not go empty handed. It is true that Bhagawan nāmā is the cure for all ailments. For that nothing is required. But if a prasādam in a physical form is taken and given it has a power of its own to cheer up; it will be of greater comfort for the departing soul. Therefore they should have a stock with them of Vibhūthi from Śiva temple and Thulsi from Vishnū temple. It may be Kumkum of Ambāl temple or Vibhūthi from Pillaiyār temple. They should have with them in stock at least prasādams of two temples which are of Siva and Vishnū. Gangā water destroys all sins. Therefore they should keep Gangā water also. Depending upon whether the dying person is a Śaivā or Vaishnava the appropriate prasādam should be taken. Gangā water is common to all. Many saivās will not object to Thulsi also. These days even Vaishnāvas do not object to Vibhūthi if it is a prasādam from a Śiva temple. Some Vaishnāvas request for Vibhūthi prasādam from me and take it. But we have to give the prasād according to each one’s desire. At the time of death quarrels about siddhanthā should not be started. Whatever prasād will be pleasing to the person concerned must be taken.

Vibhūthi prasādam must be the one which has been used for abhishēkam (holy bath) performed for Dakshināmūrthi or a Pillaiyār in an independent temple or Subramanya Swāmi. Water used for abhishēkam to Ambāl, the Parāśakthi can be mixed with Ganges water or it can be used as it is if Ganges water is not available. In the same way there must be stock of Thulsi used for archanā of Vishnū after drying it. Water used for abhishēkam of
Vishnu’s pādam (holy feet) can also be given. For Perumāl (Vishnu) there will not be daily abhishekam. Only on certain days they will do Thirumanjanam. Therefore arrangements must be made for doing abhishekam to the Mūrthi’s feet only and keep stock of that water. In any case it is good to have stock of Ganges water.

Everybody is afraid of death. Even one who has been a confirmed atheist throughout his life will not in his final stages fail to become aware that he is in the hands of some great power. At such a time there will be no one who will not get the thought that that power is the only refuge to remove the fear. I think that anyone will wish to die thinking of the Lord. Therefore he will certainly accept our help. His relatives will also welcome this service. The relatives may look with unconcern if we go there saying that we will attempt a cure for a dying old person when the relatives themselves are tired of the old person prolonging. But if they know that we are there for ‘starting the journey’ in the proper manner they may not object. Moreover since we are not making them spend anything they will not object. Therefore if they come to know that we are rendering such service they will themselves call us. Even if they do not call us, we should go. If they are atheists and object we can try to convince them. If still they do not want our service we can return. Even then, without any anger, we should pray for the dying person. On the whole, we should render service to the extent we can, unconcerned about indignities we may have to suffer. If we become concerned about dignity and indignity it is no service at all.

What needs to be done is that we have to go with temple prasād to the person who is struggling for life. We have to give him Ganges water, apply Vibhūthi. Thulsi should be put in his mouth. We have to sit by his side and chant ‘Śiva Śiva Śiva Śiva’ or ‘Rāma Rāma Rāma Rāma’ loudly. Since it is necessary that the sound
should pass through the person’s ears and turn his mind, chanting has to be loud. It is best to chant till life departs. But if a person keeps struggling for hours what can we do? Will we not have other work? Therefore we should arrange for the relatives to do it by turn and we should leave with the thought ‘We have done our duty to some extent’. We have to repeat Śīva nāmā or Rāma nāmā at least 1008 times. We can assume that when many people chant together the sound will enable the person to think of the Lord. But this is only the next best choice. The best thing is that even if we cannot remain till the end and we come away we have to arrange for the relatives to chant the Bhagawan nāmā.
WHY ‘DIVASAM’ (ANNUAL CEREMONY) WHEN SOUL HAS REACHED THE LORD

I have been talking a lot about the services to be rendered to a person who is alive, when he dies and after his death. It should not be asked ‘If because of our service to the person during his last stages he is able to think of the Lord and departs, the soul will reach Bhagawān, is it not? Why should then the funeral rites, annual ceremonies have to be performed?’ Because all that we know is the effort we have made to make the person think of the Lord during his last moments. We are not certain how far our effort was fruitful. We do not know to what extent that person has grasped what we had done – giving Ganges water, Vibhūthi, Thulsi and chanting the Lord’s names. Whether the person’s life departed with the thought of the Lord, we do not know. Therefore, we should not conclude that it has reached the Lord and stop doing the funerary rites and annual ceremonies etc.
PURIFICATION OF BODY AND MIND

I have been mentioning a number of services to be rendered to others. I have included in this long list even services which are not generally thought to be in the nature of service to others.

There is one other thing. Each one keeping his body and mind pure is itself service to others. If, due to bad habits, a person is afflicted by disease how can he help others? Not only this. His disease can spread to others also. So when we contract diseases due to our bad habits and carelessness we do disservice to others too. If affliction is in spite of us, it is a different matter.

About forty to fifty years back people did not fall sick in the way it is happening now. The reason is because many do not have a disciplined mind but have a lot of bad habits. It is said ‘śāsthṛāya cha sukhāya cha’ to live a disciplined life with good habits according to śāsthra will help to have a healthy life. Now since cleanliness is ignored a number of diseases, infectious diseases are spreading. All our unclean habits we consider as fashion.

It is not that only bodily diseases infect others. Thoughts also affect others. Now science also says ‘the brain functioning as thoughts is also an electric current’. Thought power has the potential to affect others. Therefore by keeping our body and mind clean we help others in keeping their bodies and minds clean.

Instead of attempting to clean the mind in a direct way if all or some of the services I have mentioned are done mind will get purified on its own.

If service is to purify the mind there should not be an iota of ego and service should be rendered without ego. We should not have the thought ‘we are big, we are helping’. Even a little thought like that will nullify the fruits of service, namely purifying the mind. Secondly we should not expect anything in return. The highest benefit we get by helping others is the purification of our mind.
A DAY WITHOUT SERVICE IS A DAY WASTED

Every day while going to sleep we have to ask ourselves whether on that day we have done any public service. In Thēvāram it is said that the day on which we do not speak of the Lord is as good as not being born. In the same way if a day passes without rendering public service that day we are as good as not born - equal to having died - and we should feel sorry for it. If a relative dies we suffer personal pollution and we are excluded from participation in auspicious events. If it is something like our own death that is big pollution; on the day we have not rendered any public service we have not gone anywhere near puṇya. We should feel we have become polluted.

However small we may be, it is not as if there are not enough small jobs we cannot do as service. Everyone individually or joining as a group must engage in public service. In a place where there is water problem people can get together and dig a well; if the compound wall of any Pillaiyār temple becomes dilapidated a few people can rebuild it; if in a village temple pūjā has been discontinued for want of resources a few people can raise resources through collection and create a fund to provide for at least one time pūjā a day; put up a stone for the cows to rub against; to tell a few others whatever good things we have learnt or write them for their benefit; singing a few slōkās or brief songs of prayer or the names of the Lord and create the thought of the Lord in others; cleaning up a place - something like this must be done everyday. What is important is that this kind of service should be done quietly.

It is not necessary to leave domestic duties and go for social service. Without giving up those duties we have to do public service considering that also as a duty.
In Western countries public service is rendered by institutions. But without such institutions the tradition of doing service by individuals and by groups of people as a supporting feature of our Vēdhic dharmā has come down from time immemorial. The great merit of not institutionalizing service but people doing it naturally as part of their worldly activities quietly is that there is no scope for ego to set in. If there is institution there will be office bearers, elections, competitions, publicity etc. That is why even when I recommend service being rendered by people coming together as groups I say that there should be no separate organization for this but it should be done under the supervision of groups which conduct weekly worship, groups which do bhajan etc. If I say there is no need for drawing up big plans, no need to collect more than what is needed etc, the reason is that there will be need to seek publicity for the organization which will lead us to self publicity. We will become anxious whether or not we will give the welcome address or vote of thanks or garland important persons or we will be seen in a photo etc. In other words public service which is intended to destroy ego will give rise to ego in a big way. The characteristic of service is that only the service should be seen and not the person who renders it. That is why it is said ‘dharme kṣarathi kṛthanāh’. That is, just as a person’s sins get destroyed if he publicly acknowledges that he has sinned, his puṇya also will get destroyed if he proclaims ‘I am doing dharma’. In Sanskrit it is said in a subtle manner as ‘Dharma Dhwajan’. It means one who holds aloft the flag of dharma. Although this term looks like being an appreciative title, the inner meaning is that he is a spurious dharmawān (philanthropist). The import is that by proclaiming his dharma he is actually losing it. I started talking about institutionalizing. If separate orphanages are run in Western countries, according to our sāstrās there is place in our homes for
orphans and guests. In the homes of westerners a dog will be at the entrance and neither orphans nor guests can enter! Instead of hospitality and care of the orphans being part of people’s blood and life these will be taking place in a mechanical way through institutions. (I do not say that all people in the West are like this. In every country there are philanthropists, noble souls and people endowed with a spirit of service. Similarly there are also selfish people. I have only made a general statement). They are being copied by the people of this country where the motto is ‘adhithi dēvō bhava’ (guest is God) and boards are put outside their houses ‘Beware Dogs’. This pains me. In the homes in villages built according to Vedhīc tradition, there was always a raised platform outside which was meant for wayfarers to take rest. All that is gone now. In the same way in the Vaisvadēva offering a part of the food is given to some low caste person going through the street. When these practices are given up, branding them as superstitious, I feel so sorrowful.

Here too, in the manner of Western countries, the family of an individual has come to be exclusively for himself. With this, as in the West, social services becoming the function of institutions, the Government in the name of a welfare state running orphanages, old age homes etc have become the order of the day. If, in today’s set up these arrangements are not there, the condition of helpless people will be extremely difficult. Yet if we consider the manner in which in olden days people supported those who were helpless in the thought of ‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam’ (the world is a family) what the government is doing officially is only secondary in merit.

In short Vedha dharmā is ‘all the power we have is only a drop of Īśwara’s power. We have to dedicate it to Īśwara Himself. Everything - chanting his name with the tongue, meditating on him with the mind, performing pūjā with the body - should be connected with Īśwara. Pūjā includes the duties and the Karmās to be performed. In Sōpāna Panchakam which Āchāryā gave as his
last upadesā to his disciples he has declared that doing karma is Īswara pūjā. Parōpakāram is a Karma which is part of the general dharmās applicable to all people along with the Karmās laid down for each as his swadharma.

Therefore, in addition to chanting the Lord’s names, we have to talk a few sweet words to others. Apart from meditation, everyday for a few seconds at least we have to think with love that the whole world should prosper. In addition to doing pūjā, namaskāram, going around the temple etc, at least for sometime some public service should be rendered by way of physical work. Money also should be spent a little for charity apart from spending on coconut, fruits and flowers. All these should be dedicated to Īswara. This is the path followed by our ancestors - work pertaining to deity and social work both should be carried out without leaving one for the other.

The wrong propaganda that our religion does not speak of service to others should not be believed. Even during childhood Subhāshitham, Nithi Sāsthra etc used to be taught. These contain sound teachings about service to others. Even at that stage children would be taught that ‘the purpose of this body is to render service to the world (parōpakārartham idham sarīram). There is another teaching also ‘all belongings and capabilities of good people are intended for rendering service to others’ (parōpakārya sadām vibhūthayah). This used to be explained in two ways and impressed on young minds. One: the tree bears fruits only to be used by others (parōpakārartham palanthi vrukshah); cows yield milk only for the use of others. Parōpakārartham dhunganthi gāvah; it is only for the use of others that rivers carry water (parōpakārartham vahanthi nadhyah). In the same way the purpose of the human body is to help others. (parōpakārartham idham sarīram). The other way: what has been said now is told more nicely. The tree does not eat its own fruit. (Kādhanthi na swāthu palāni vrukshāh). The river does not drink its own water.
(Pibhanthi nadhyah swayamēva nāmbah). The cloud does not eat the crops that have grown by its own rain (Payōdharāh sasyamadhanthi naivah). In the same way the capabilities and the wealth of good people (sajjan) are for service to others (parōpakārāya sadām vibhūthayah).

Even during the period of learning the following advice is given ‘think of you as among the dēvās who live for ever and go on learning and earning wealth’ and in the same breath they are told ‘in doing charity do not postpone. Think that Yamā is holding your hair and pulling you all the time’ and do it there and then.

It is said that after Vyāsa completed writing the eighteen Purāṇās his disciples requested him to give the essence of all these in one or two slōkās which they could remember easily. Immediately he said ‘where is the need for one or two slōkās? Not just these eighteen Purāṇās but the substance of all the one crore Purāṇās I shall give in half a slōkā. He said the first half of the slōkā:

‘Slokārdhena pravakshyāmi yadhuktham grantha kōtishuh’

and then he gave the essence of the truth:

‘Parōpakārāh puṇyāya pāpāya parapīdanam’

The truth which is like the very life of all the religions and the books of sāstrās is ‘if you want to earn puṇyā, do help to others. If you want to load yourself with sin then do harm to other lives.’

Religion is there for knowing what is sin and avoiding it, what is puṇyā and earning it. Hence if Vyāsāchāryā who is one of the most important and earliest of the āchāryās of our religion says helping others is puṇyā and not helping others is sin, there is no scope for a debate about whether there is place for service to others in our religion.

A criticism of some people is that ‘the Vēdhic religion contains a lot about what a person should do for elevating his Self
and not about service to others’. But unless he purifies himself - which is in the nature of self-service - the service he renders to others will have no effect. It is for this reason that our religion has tied up this self-help of purifying oneself with helping others, the idea being that with his spiritual power he would render service to others and such social service should improve his own spiritual powers.

Āchāryā who made the Vēdha dharmā glow with life has given Praśnōtra Ratnamāla in the form of questions and answers. In that there is a question ‘Kim manushyēśhu ishtathamam’. What is the highest in what man should desire? The answer is ‘Swa para hithāya udhyatham janmā’ - what is good for oneself, that is helping oneself and along with it helping others. Āchāryā says that the life spent in working for both is the highest a man should desire for. Hence Āchāryā’s answer is a fitting reply to the modern day critics.

In the same work in another place he says that good people are like the rays of the moon. The moon’s rays cool down the heat in the whole world. It is not that the moon desires to help in this manner and therefore has to make effort. It does good to the world in the natural way. In the same manner, good people need not have to specially develop a desire to do social service and do it with publicity. When they conduct themselves in a manner natural to themselves it will be for public good and the good of the world. This is what Āchāryā has said in Vivēka Chūdāmani about Jīvanmukthās who are men of peace and are like the crown of good people. The earlier comparison was to the rays of the moon. In Vivēka Chūdāmani the comparison is with the spring season (Vasantha rithu).

Vasanthavath lōka hitham charanthah

Like Vasantha rithu, the great people, it is said, move about doing good to the world. Is there anything like vasantham visible to
the eyes? At least the moon is visible. The great (Mahān) do not even show themselves like this. But when vasantha rithu sets in the pleasant southern breeze blows. Wherever one sees, varieties of flowers are in full bloom, specially the jasmine. Fruits like the mango become ripe in the trees. In ‘Śīsira rithu’ which is the later part of the period of snowing, the trees shed their foliage. As soon as vasantham sets in tender green leaves fill the trees as if showing a green flag to vasantham. This is how the Jīvanmukthā who has realized that he is Brahman even when he is in his body, creates the good of the world unnoticed and also not being conscious of it himself. Āchāryā who had lived like this has said this, not being conscious that he is talking about himself.

There is a general criticism that there is nothing like service to others in Hindu religion, that particularly in Adhvaithā with its doctrine that the world is an illusion and there is nothing other than the āthmā, space for even a little public service has been blocked. The Adhvaitha āchāryā says that even the person who has attained the state of Adhvaithā moves about in the world only for its good.

Bhagawān (Sri Krishnā) also says in the Gītā that Jīvanmukthās like Janaka and others were also engaged in activity for ‘Lōka sangraham’. Sangraham means guiding others with love and elevating them. He says that though He is the goal to be attained through all spiritual efforts, though there is nothing He has to do and no goal to attain, He is active all the time only to present Himself as an ideal for the world to follow. Bhagawān who is in no need of achieving anything does praōpakārā to others. Āchāryā said the same thing in Prasnothra Ratnamālikā - raising the question ‘What deserves to be achieved? (Kim sādhyam)’ and answers ‘Doing good to all beings’ (Bhūtha hitham).

Adhvaitha Āchāryā who spoke to those at the top level about service to others has said this to the ordinary person too as an adjunct to his progress on the path to the top. He says ‘Do you earn
money? Go ahead, earn it; but if it is spent in dharmic ways that itself will help to cleanse your mind’.

\[ Yallabhase nija karmopaththam \]
\[ Viththam thena vinodhaya chiththam \]

he says in Bhaja Gòvindam. In the same Bhaja Gòvindam, after talking of things relating to the soul and God like ‘recite the Gîtâ, repeat the Sahasranâmam, meditate on Vishnu, the Lakshmipathi, involve your mind in Satsang etc. he ends by saying ‘Do charity to the poor and the weak’ that is, Paropakārām.

\[ Geyam Gîtā nāma sahasram \]
\[ Dhyeyam Sripathi rūpam ajasram \]
\[ Neyam sajjana sangē chiththam \]
\[ Deyam dhīna janāya cha viththam \]

Therefore, Vedha dharmā (including Adhvaithā which says that the world and all life is illusion) prescribes that service to other beings should be done linking it with Iswarā. This should be understood and followed as such. That is the path followed by our ancestors. We should also follow the same path and, looking at all life from the angle of Adhvaithā that they are all of the form of Iswarā, render service and be the recipient of the Lord’s blessings:

\[ Sarve janah sukhino bhavanthu \]
\[ Lōka samasthās sukhino bhavanthu \]
SELF HELP IS THE BEST HELP
PRAISE AND CRITICISM

Today* two different views on the same subject were put forth before me. One was in praise of me. The other was abusive of me. Of course, the abuse was subtle and in a respectable manner. I do not blame them that they abused me. There was something for me to learn and become wise through their abuse.

It is abuse more than praise that does good to the person concerned. Praise leads to pride and does spiritual harm. There is scope for us to realize our mistake only when someone abuses us. It helps us to correct our mistakes and cleanse our soul. Therefore if we are to find out who does good to us it is not the one who praises us, but it is the one who points out our wrongs. It is the common saying 'it is our well wisher who will tell us in a manner which will make us cry and it is the others who make us laugh by their talk.'

I thus received two different treatments - one praising me and making me feel proud and the other condemning me and making me see reason.

What I talked about social service somewhere long time back** is being published now, is it not? Someone who read it thought I was writing on the subject now only and he came and praised me.

Probably to see that I do not become proud because of the praise a couple came as if sent by Ambāl Herself and expressed a

*A day in the later part of 1976

**What is referred to here is Sri Mahāswāmi's discourse on 'jīva Kārutsyām' (compassion to all beings) which appeared in Kalki magazine at that time. It is part of what appears in this book under the caption 'Parāpakāram' (Service to others).
different view about the same subject. Of the two when the husband started the comment the wife joined him. Although I have been referring to what they said as 'abuses', they had kept their emotions under control and without getting worked up they spoke and did not utter a single undignified word. When they were to express their anger they spoke with sorrow only. Still, only if I treat it as abuse I will take it to my heart and think deeply about it myself and, therefore, I say it was 'abuse'.
PUBLIC SERVICE AND DUTIES TOWARDS THE FAMILY

What is their objection to my talking about social service? Their objection was that by my over emphasis on social service I have been responsible for the neglect of self-service and service to the family. Although they did not use the word 'objection' and did not quarrel but went crying, they meant objection. I do not remember what I said and when. I do not know what is now being published. I have never thought that anyone should neglect what he needs to do for himself and his family and engage in social service. I will not give such advice also. But during discourses perhaps I have not laid special emphasis on this aspect. What one does for oneself and his family is natural. It is not necessary for others to talk about it specially. We (the āchāryā Pītāma) are there to tell about what is good for the whole society and plan for it and take measures to do them. Because of this I might have laid stress on social service.
HINDU RELIGION
AND THE INDIVIDUAL

It does not mean by this that we have given a secondary place to the individual and the family. I have repeatedly said before that Hindu religion accords the first place only to cleansing the individual. When other religionists criticize that social spirit is not there in our religion we too should not wrongly think that there is nothing great about our religion and go on the defensive saying, 'it is not like what you think; see how much has been said in our religion about service to others. That alone is important for us'. Because truly speaking the importance to the individual in our religion is more than that to the society my view is that the high point of our religion is that each one should elevate himself by proper observance of the prescribed religious discipline. It is also my view that our religion continues to throb with life from thousands and thousands of years since even before other religions appeared and despite their onslaught and the onslaught of atheism these days, only because of the strength of the disciplines followed by the individuals and the power of their purity.

The high point of the religion of the Hindus is the individual leading a pure life according to his swadharma; the high point of Christianity is service to others; the high point of Islam is discipline - this is my view. Generally, except in Hindu religion people of all religions are very organized. For us, organization is inadequate; here the religion lives only by the strength of the individual.
HOW IT DIFFERS
FROM OTHER RELIGIONS

Buddha by his ‘Śangam Śaraṇam Gachchāmi’ introduced the organization to protect the religion. In Christianity too, it is mass congregation. It is the same in the mosques too. It is difficult to describe the organizational discipline that Muslims have. When you look at the Sikhs and Parsis their organizational discipline is in indirect proportion to the size of their population. Because they want to ensure that their small community does not get splintered they conduct their affairs on the basis of unity based on their religion.

The method of worship in all religions other than Hindu religion is such that it is social based. This is not so in Hindu religion. It is not that individual meditation has no place in other religions. Particularly in Buddhism this has a special place. Yet other than congregational prayers there is no prayer at home in other religions. What is important in other religions is congregational worship and all people following the same religious observances unlike the differences in observances in Vartāsrama. It may be argued ‘if other people are conducting congregational prayers in Churches, Mosques and Gurudwaras, are we not celebrating festivals in the temples by joining together?’ It is true. But it should be noted that we do not offer prayers in the temple as a congregation in the manner of their Mass or Namāz. Although the temples are the backbone of the Vedhic tradition (paramparā) and are protecting the civilization, our religion is such that the blessings of the Lord received through temples have to be nurtured and improved by the observances of the individual.
THE OBJECT OF TEMPLE WORSHIP

It is true that the thapas (penance) of the Rishis is preserved in the temples as a deposit as it were and we draw from it. It is also true that divine blessings are obtained through the Mūrthis. It is true that due to the pūjās performed in the temple with manthrās, we gain spiritual good. Despite all these, temple worship also is only an auxiliary for redeeming ourselves individually and not for the salvation of the community.

When a lot of us join together in the temple and conduct festivals, kumbābhishēkam etc and we dedicate a number of things like gold, flowers, food offerings, music etc the purpose of all this is different. We are not doing all these in the belief that such joint activity in the temple is the be all and end all of our religion. But we do it as a thanks giving of the community. Does not the community get so many things from the Lord? It is to express the gratitude of the community as a whole, physical offerings are made through the same things which the Lord has given to the community - clothes, food etc. That is the purpose of our joint activities in the temple.

To attain salvation, it is not enough if one stops with this. There have been those who by circumambulating the temples, by the grace of the Lord and becoming one with the Mūrthis in the temple by practising deep devotion attained Moksha. Even then that is what they had done for themselves individually. Generally speaking our religion is that the power we get from the temple is developed by individual observance of religious disciplines. By going to the temple regularly and by praying, one can get the power by which one can observe the religious disciplines without flaw and find salvation.
A Westerner who wrote a controversial book* asked me ‘Why is it that in your temples there is so much sound and noise?’ I replied him like this. ‘It is not the objective to offer silent prayer in the temple as in Churches, Buddha Vihārā and Mosques. For us what is important is meditation in solitude. The temple is not meant for congregational worship. Because the king protects us, we give him a palace, ostentation, decoration etc; we pay him tax also. In the same manner it is for community thanksgiving and making offerings collectively by way of gold etc to the Lord who is the king of the whole world and the protector of all times that big temples have been constructed and the method of worship has been prescribed. A peaceful atmosphere cannot be expected here. The temple bell, fire works, music and drums, shouting in joy etc will be there. For doing quiet meditation each home has a pūjā room. There are also the banks of river and tank’.

Because I have told him this, it does not mean that people have been given the licence to indulge in shouting, idle exchanges etc. The sounds which have been permitted by the sāsthrās - ringing the bell, the sound of chanting of Vēdhās, Thēvāram, Bhajans, Music, fire works when the Lord’s procession starts etc- are what I have meant.

These sounds which have been approved by the Śāsthrās have the rare power of inducing one into a state of silent meditation. Even in the midst of such sounds if we close our eyes for a while or sit before Dakshināmūrti to do japam we will be drawn to it.

The high point of Hindu religion is for the individual to purify himself through the observances prescribed for him and by the example of his own life, show the path to others. Except for the time when this is practised in gurukulam in his young age and during the years spent in a Mutt or āśram as a sanyāsi, he has to spend the major part of his time at home as a grahastha. That is why in our Dharma Śāsthrās a lot of things have been said about
his duties for others as grahasthā and the duty towards him on the part of his wife, sons and others. These have been said elaborately and to an extent not said in other religions. Since spiritual development has to take place at home a lot has been said about grahastha dharmam - dharmās for the householder.

* The book ‘Darkness at Noon’ written by Arthur Koestles is referred to here.
REASONS FOR CONTRADICTION

Why do I narrate all this story now? There is a complaint that by emphasizing the importance of social service according to Hindu dharma I have acted in a manner that would spoil the affairs of the individual and his family. There is another complaint quite contrary to this: For our religion the individual (what evolves him and what he evolves) and his family are the linchpins and not the general society. I wanted to show this contradictory complaint. Just as some people who heard me talk about social service formed the impression that I neglected the individual, his duty to himself and the family, there are some others who heard me talk about the duty of the individual, the duty to the family etc got the impression that I neglected the society and quarrelled. It was not quarrel. Just as what I referred to as ‘abuse’ they had said in a respectable way, the quarrel was also in a respectable way. I am also using the word ‘quarrel’ so that I can realize the fairness of what they said.

I do not want to find an escape by saying that newspapermen have not reported all that I have said. I think what I do is that whatever subject I take up at a particular time I lay a little more stress on that in order that those who listen to it may get a good grasp of it. When I say this then also it would appear that I am doing like this keeping others in view and seeking a good name for myself. Therefore instead of trying to justify in all these ways I would admit that whatever subject I take up it drags me and turns my eye towards it.

Let me keep aside what concerns me. Let us see what concerns all. If we look at orthodox religious observances they have at the centre the individual. It is as an auxiliary of this that social service has been mentioned. The object of such social service is for the individual getting spiritually evolved even when he
enables the society to benefit. The beneficiary of this service - a poor person who receives charity, a sick person who gets treatment, the one who gets water to drink and clothes etc - should not stop with just receiving the benefits of the service; he must understand that his worldly problems have been sorted out so that he can be rid of worry on that account and turn to spirituality. If social service stops with fulfilling the worldly needs that will only help to purify the mind of the giver but will not bestow permanent benefit on the recipient of the service.

I have spoken about social service; I have also spoken about religious observances to be followed by the individual. In the field of social service I have talked about various kinds of practical help - *annadhanam*, putting up hospitals, *vidyā dhānam* (including secular education), helping jobless people to get a job, helping the poor to perform marriage etc. These are not directly helpful for spiritual development.

But when talking about religious observances for spiritual development although I had talked generally about Grahastha dharmam, Sthri dharmam etc I had not elaborated on the mundane aspects. With spiritual developments as the aim, I have been talking only about what women and men should do in their individual lives and as members of the family. Other than this I have not for example said 'Earn money for yourself' in the manner of saying 'Give a few coins to the poor'. I have not said 'if you are not well or someone in the family is ill go and show to the doctor' in the manner of saying 'provide treatment to a person who is sick and helpless'. I have said 'Give education to a poor boy and help him find a job'. But it is true I have not said 'Educate your son well and put him in a job where he will earn well'. I would say 'help a poor man to get his daughter married, but not say 'search for a suitable match and get your daughter married'. I would say 'dig a tank for the entire place' and not say 'get piped water supply to your house'.
Why? The mundane help he renders to others helps him spiritually. It helps to purify his mind. But the same mundane things when done for oneself or one’s family there is no spiritual gain. The reason is that what he does for himself or his people is helping himself. That is he only gets the mundane gains. Even when one spends a lot for his daughter’s marriage and even loses money on that account and sends her to a rich and comfortable home, the mundane satisfaction is that the daughter has gone to a good place. If the mundane gain is passed on to someone else it would only be fair that he in return gets spiritual gain. When he himself gets the mundane gain how can spiritual gain also accrue to him?
WHY I DO NOT SPEAK ABOUT ONE’S OWN MUNDANE AFFAIRS

I do not speak about these for the reason that they do not help spiritually. No one who gives upadēsām says such things. Without being told to do each one is already doing these for himself. Those who give upadēsām would say ‘Pray for the good of the world’ and not ‘Pray that you and your people should be well’., Without anyone telling him he keeps praying for his good and the good of his family. Such a prayer would be justified if it relates to the soul. Even in respect of mundane things, if one prays for having the minimum things for his life there is nothing wrong about it. But all people pray for mundane good to the extent of harming the soul; in addition to praying they are continuously making efforts to get them. They involve themselves excessively in this and forget what is dharma and adharma, take to wrong ways and are keen on increasing the possession of mundane things. Because they do not have the time or the mind or the money to help others it is the duty of those like me to tell them to reduce their own wants and the wants of their families and have a thought for the welfare of the society. Therefore it is not just I alone but all those who try to turn people to the right ways do not give such upadēsām as ‘attend to your own affairs, attend to the affairs of your home’. Not only that, it becomes necessary to say ‘it is not enough to go on attending to one’s own affairs; reduce such desires and wants and attend to the needs of your soul and as a part of that serve the society and the world’.

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I HAVE BEEN A BIT
LESS CAREFUL

The couple who came today placed their views before me with sorrow and went (although I call it abuse). This was as if to put me wise to the need to be a little more careful even in advising like this. Either knowingly or unknowingly, due to being less careful when I spoke about service to others I did not add a qualifying clause. For this I deserve to be abused. Because of the difficult situation in which they were placed they should have abused me. But due to considerations of age and my status as a guru, whether I deserve it or not, they told me with respect instead of abusing.

What was the difficulty that they faced? Their son, a bachelor who is employed, on hearing my talk on service to others got involved in it excessively. He was not attending to his own affairs or those of the family. They were afraid whether he was discharging his official duties properly or not. He was continuously busy, it appears, in collecting the handful of rice (under that scheme), peeled off skins of vegetables (for cattle). On another side he is busy with distributions of different things like Prasād in the hospital – like this he is continuously busy without rest.

The gentleman complained ‘He does not even wash his own clothes; she (the mother) has to clean it’. Immediately the lady started in support of her husband. ‘He does not bring the groceries or vegetables required for the house. When we tell him also he does not listen. He (the husband) has to do everything at this age’.

They continued. ‘He does not bother about sun or rain. He is spoiling his health. He spends a lot from his pocket. When we talk about this he gets angry and irritated. We try to control ourselves fearing that he may completely stop coming home. But still are we not humans? We cannot totally avoid telling him. Only you have to advise him’.
Although what they told me was in the nature of a prayer I take it that they meant pointing the finger at me in the thought, 'Are you not responsible for all these difficulties? Only you have to rectify it'.

I do not propose to deliver lectures hereafter. But it is only now there are more people coming to see me and more people seeking my advice. Even if I do not deliver lectures, I have decided that when I tell good things to those who come to me, even while telling them that each one must do some public service I will add a qualifying clause that such public service should be without prejudice to one's own affairs and duties to the family. I am not sure if this decision will come to mind in future and I will mention this qualifying clause or the subject of public service will drag me away. However that may be, at least today on seeing the problems of those parents I have the realization that I must add this qualifying clause.

I have never thought that anyone should venture into social service by making his mother clean his dirty clothes or making his old father do the shopping for groceries and vegetables. Although I have not thought so it is my fault that I have not clearly spoken about it. I do not know in how many other homes I have created problems as those faced by the couple who came today. Would it be possible for everyone to come to me and talk about his problems? Even about mentioning to me many people may think 'Would it not amount to finding fault with Periyava? Can we do it?' - and will be quietly putting up with the problems which I have caused.

What upadesām (advice) have the couple who came to me given me? What I have been mentioning as 'abuse' I could have described as upadesām. I used the word abuse because only if it is

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*This also was not a public lecture but a conversation with some disciples*
abuse it will stir my feelings. I said that by that it would be possible to examine closely and know the truth. But if I take it as *upadesām* I feel it will be still better. Although it is the general rule that a person is engrossed in his own affairs and is unconcerned about public duties I also should not forget that a person could engage himself too much in public service resulting in his neglect of essential personal duties and create problems for people in the family. Therefore even while advising people that: ‘If they are always engaged in their own activities, they will never be able to render public service like the person who waits to have a dip in the ocean (samudra snānam) after the waves subside’ I should qualify my advice thus: ‘But because of that essential duties pertaining to oneself and to the home should not be neglected’. This is the *upadesām* I got today.
FRAUD, HYPOCRISY

If someone passes on his own duties to someone else and takes up public service it is ridiculous and is a fraud. If there are parents, brothers, wife and children and if, without discharging the duties towards them, one were to say that he is doing public service, that will be hypocrisy. If one behaves in this manner and when pointed out he becomes angry and irritated, it only means that he has not improved himself by his public service. The characteristics of one who renders service is ‘to be kind to everyone and move with all in an agreeable manner’. If because of public service one loses his love for his own people at home and exhibits anger to them what does he gain by his service to others? What purification of mind can he get? It should not be like a person who went for a bath and came out full of slush over his body.

Everyone must always be conscious of his limitation. We are born as humans. Because of this we find ourselves shackled in many ways. Desires and wishes may be big. They may be good also. Even if the keenness is there to do good to the world, it should be realized that there is a compulsion to discharge the duties to ourselves and our families and do public service without affecting these duties.

There is a saying ‘Someone did gōdhānam (gifting of cows) when his mother was going about begging with a bowl in hand’. One should first attend to his family. One should never pass on one’s own work to others. This is Šāsthram. Each one should wash his own clothes. During diarchy, when Rājagōpālāchāri was the Prime Minister of Madras Presidency, he himself washed his clothes. (At that time there was no Prime Minister in Delhi. Therefore the top Minister in the Presidency was called Prime Minister. Now the Presidency is State and the Prime Minister is the Chief Minister). It is said that in the same manner many people
who had occupied top positions polished their shoes themselves. There is no indignity in we ourselves doing our work. Leaving them to others is actually infra dig. Is it not infra dig to show to the outside world that we help others in order to earn a good name while at the same time lowering ourselves to the state of being helped by others in the house and giving them trouble?
THE INJUNCTIONS OF THE ŚĀSTHRĀS

In the śāstrās it has been ordained that each should wash his own clothes, should cook for himself (this is called swayampākam) etc. When it is said that ‘Even if it is a torn cloth, wash it and wear it’ not only we will wear it but we have to wash it too. It does not mean that the mother or someone else should be made to wash it (making them feel bitter about it).

When our Dharma Śāstrās lay down the daily duties of a person it has been made clear that whatever pertains to him, he will do it himself. It is said that even for pūjā, flowers and leaves have to be gathered by himself. Even so since it is purīyam to serve one who is in the position of a guru or who is old, parents and others, it has been laid down that those who are like disciples or sons can wash their clothes, get flowers and render service relating to pūjā.

★★★★
THE EXAMPLE OF THE GREAT

There have been those who despite being in the position of an āchāryā had attended to their own needs without leaving them to their disciples. Vedānta Dēsika although he was the originator of a big Sampradāyam had done ‘Uncha vriththi’ (gathering grains from the field by gleaning) himself for his food. Thyāgarāja Swāmi also did it in Thiruvaiyāru. So many people would have been waiting to render any assistance and give them royal treatment. It is said that Prophet Mohammed (Mohammed Nabi) who was the religious head and was also the temporal head and had all the powers of a ruler had himself attended to his personal needs.

Nāmadēvar, Gorā Kumbhar, Thirunīlakanta Nāyanār and other great saints and Śīva bhakthas had discharged their duties to their families by undertaking the jobs of a tailor, potter etc.

Śivaji had offered his empire at the feet of Samartha Rāmadās as Guru dakshina and was conducting the affairs of the state in the name of Samartha Rāmadās. Notwithstanding this Rāmadās was following only ‘Madhugari Bhikshā’.

The reason for this is that they did not want to trouble others for their sake.

Therefore if one earns a name outside as a social worker but at home he gets served by others, it is a humbug.

But even the work pertaining to oneself and his home should be according to sāsthrās. Now the avaricious desires that have

* Madhugaram’ means a honey bee. Just as a bee takes honey little by little from several flowers, to get a handful each from several families, without causing burden to anyone householder, is Madhugari Bhikshā.
caught hold of everyone and his family people cannot be considered as duty. If one thinks that he can take up public service only after attending to all these, public service will never be done. It is not necessary that one should carry out such requests from the people of the house.
MATTERS PERTAINING TO PARENTS

Even then, if one is not able to talk to his parents softly and convince them he should not quarrel with them. He should not also do things overruling them. According to sāstrās any dharma is only secondary to carrying out the wishes of the parents. Therefore, even if they are in the wrong they can be told the right thing in an agreeable manner and we can pray to God to bless them with clarity but nothing should be done overruling them. Matters should be left at that in the thought that the sin or punyam is theirs. Now at this moment when I saw the distress of a mother and father I feel like saying a bit harsh like this.
Matters relating to the wife and children are different. They are lower than us in the family hierarchy. If beyond our legitimate duties towards them they try to involve us in their affairs thus preventing us from doing public service there is no need to listen to them. We have to overrule them and do whatever public service we can. According to sāstrās we have to involve in public service those like wife and sons who are under our control. But there should not be excess either way. We should not set out helping others without attending to wife and children.
ADVERSE EFFECT ON THE
OBJECTIVE ITSELF

Here one psychological aspect should be noted. When someone leaves his own work and the work of his home to others and gets busy with public service, the others begin to dislike social service itself because of their dissatisfaction with him. Their reaction is, 'It is enough. Here is a chap who is busy in public affairs neglecting his own home. We do not want this service'. They will thus try to distance themselves from the whole thing. But if he acts within limits and does public service even when attending to his own home, others in his house will join him and do whatever they can for public service. If it is thought that social service done by one person gets affected because he has to attend to the needs of his house also, now the society will get more service because of other people joining him. When he goes overboard and incurs the dissatisfaction of his people at home he prevents the social service that could come from others thus acting against his very objective.

I shall tell a 'trick' to those who go for social service. The trick is to conduct oneself with love and humility. This is not only towards others but towards people at home also. He should behave with consideration and humility. They will then think 'We are all the time tied up to our house. At least let him help the world and earn punyam for us too' and as far as possible they will themselves do the work pertaining to the house without bothering him.
FIRST THE HOME, 
THEN THE REST

Even if a person is excellently qualified to enter the ‘sanyās Āśramam’ if he is the only son of his parents and if they do not agree, he will not be admitted to sanyāsa āśramam. In the same way if he is a grahasthā and he leaves his wife and children without any support he will not be given sanyāsam however qualified he may be to receive sanyāsam. In other words, when there is no right to someone even to immerse himself in the ultimate bliss, if he has given up his personal duties and the duty to his family, it is not at all acceptable that duties and responsibilities are given up for taking up public service which is but the first step in gaining spiritual knowledge (jnānām).

It is a mistake that I have not till now spoken about this emphatically. But because of that I do not also propose to restart the habit of lecturing. Yet, I think I should talk about this to those who come to me. Even after I thought I should give up everything these things keep coming. It also so happens that whatever I say now - and also what I do not say - gets a lot of publicity! If by this the views spread that one should not go for social service leaving aside our duties and domestic service, let it spread.

It is not for the first time someone like this couple had come and cried. This has happened now and then. I have received letters also. There was a Brahmin who was practising as a lawyer. I had drawn him fully into my own service. I made him go round the whole country, find out what Vēdha Śakhā is prevalent in which part of the country and bring out statistics. I made him go up and down pātasālās. His wife and his only daughter have gone through much difficulty. That young girl practically quarrelled with me. Quarrel is not the right word. I must say she gave me upadesām. This girl used to say ‘Appa has lost his practice, he has lost his
health too. We are also without support. To the extent that I am forgetting my father’s identity, you have taken hold of him and made him wander all over’. But I continued to make him roam about thinking ‘they are worried about themselves, for me it is my job which is important’. After sometime they became quiet, thinking ‘this is our fate’. Although they were annoyed with me they were also greatly devoted to me. Therefore they thought that I was the cause for a number of good things that happened in their home and are grateful to me and show me a lot of respect.

I can explain away my silence in the face of their pleadings by pointing to sāstrās which say that the wife and children have to tolerate the man in whatever state he may be. But now when a father and mother are in sorrow – am I not as Guru only next in order after the mother and father? – I have no explanation to offer. This went into my mind and therefore I am saying all these things.
THE HIGHEST STATE CANNOT BE THE EXAMPLE

During the days when I was lecturing I did often refer to the saying ‘if the neighbour’s child is properly nourished by us, our own child will grow up on its own’. In other words, I have said ‘You may starve your child if necessary but take care of the other children’. There is such a proverb. Nothing that does not state a truth can become a proverb but this proverb must have taken shape looking to those who had reached the highest level of service and became immersed in the attitude of service. It does not mean that they deliberately neglected their child and cared for other children. It is their strong feeling about helping others that must have carried them away like this. Did not some Nāyanmārs (Śaiva saints) in their extreme bhakti act contrary to worldly dharmā? In the same way, this is also done in a state of ecstasy. When they dedicated themselves to the cause of orphans under the force of a power which was beyond them, their own children must have come up well as a blessing from the Lord (or by the Lord’s attention). Therefore, this cannot be an example to ordinary people.

I have heard what someone said humorously about not attending to one’s own children and fondling other’s children. He mentioned a joke about ladies having got into social service these days. A lady from a wealthy home used to go to a Harijan colony spending petrol and there she used to feed a child with powdered milk which had come from some other country. At home, the mother of the child to whom she gave milk in the Harijan colony used to be the ayah and she used to feed the lady’s own child with milk!

In other words, one should not deceive oneself thinking that he is doing social service.
PUNISHMENT FOR FAILING IN DUTY

For all this, if there is basic knowledge that is enough. It is that at no time should one imagine that life in the world goes on because of one's service. The one who planted a sapling should water it. There is one who has created this world and he will protect it. We are only instruments for it. Helping others is only a way of expiating for our sins. If we have the awareness that even if we are not there the world will not miss our help then we will stop within limits. Discharging of previous Karmās and purification of the mind will come about even when the minimum things needed for life both for oneself and the family are done. Those who, by the grace of God, do not have big responsibilities must involve themselves in service to others in a big way and cleanse their mind. For such people this itself becomes a duty. Just as there is domestic duty, there is a social duty also. Whatever the extent of domestic duty that has to be discharged and then only one should attend to social duties. Except those who have heavy family responsibilities, all the rest will have enough time for social duties even after attending to their own. However that may be, there is no use leaving one’s duty to someone else and not attending to the work at home and going for public service. They say that the boy having gone this way gets irritated at the very mention of home. If such anger and irritation are the outcome of the person’s public service, it would only mean that it paved the way for making the mind impure instead of purifying it. That means service to others not only failed to yield the desired fruit but it has resulted in something quite contrary. For having given up a duty laid down in the sāsthrās, even a good thing becomes a punishment like this.
THE QUALITY OF SERVICE - MINDEDNESS

I have mentioned two or three proverbs. Finally, one more occurs to me: 'Self help is the best help'. One’s hand should render service to others but one’s hand not being used for one’s own work and leaving the responsibility for it to others in the house and doing public service is wrong.

If we do public service some people praise us. It is true that people at home will not shower praise on us for doing what needs to be done for the family. One does public service without minding one’s own work and that of his house; if he gets angry to the people at home because they talk against it, he does not really have the mind for service. It means that he does social work only for earning a name.

The characteristics of a service mind are love and humility. Others may extol the glory of one who renders service. But the one who renders service should not have even a bit of the feeling 'I am big'. He should only have a feeling that he is small. If service is to be rendered for earning a name, it would mean making the service itself impure. If there is love and humility no one will oppose the people at home and vent his anger against them and go for public service.

One should take over another’s burden. But if he transfers his burden to someone else it is a matter of shame for him. If everyone who is engaged in public service realizes that he should be of help to others but it is infra dig to expect help for himself from others, complaints like what has come now will not arise. Everything will be all right if the person going for public service takes a vow 'I will manage all my affairs myself and then only I will go for public service'.

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One’s duty will include all that has to be done to the house, the parents, wife, sons, brothers and others. If a prayer is made to the Lord, ‘shower your grace on me so that I will not fail in my duty to myself and my family and I can do whatever I can to your family (Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam) he will shower His grace. That should be our prayer.
Two criticisms are levelled against our religion; on one side we say ‘Ekam Sath - Brahmam is one; this soul is also that only. Since Self itself is Brahman when Jnānā dawns, pūjā to the Lord, devotion etc should be given up’. On another side, there are in our religion any number of Swāmīs not found in any other religion, each having a husband or wife, children and an army of deities, thousands of temples, purānā stories, a festival for each, manthra, austerities, etc. Unlike other religionists who have one Paramāthmā, devotion to him, prayers to him, meditation etc, we who talk so much about Adhvaithā have so many Swāmīs and are struggling. It is only fair if the Christians towards Christ, the Muslims towards Nabi, the Sikhs towards Nānak, as the founders of their religion have bhakthi equal to God himself. It is fair that they have something like Guru bhakthi for having shown them the path to take them to the Lord. In Buddhism and Jainism there is no God at all. But still because Buddha and Jīna showed by their personal life how a person who attains the state of Mōksha according to their philosophy would be the Buddhists and Jains are worshipping them. They will not refer to Buddha and Jīna as the Creator or Swāmī. It is only we who say that Buddha is an avatār but the Buddhists do not say that. They worship Buddha and Jīna as one who had attained total (pūrṇa) jnānā. Although there is no God in these two religions, they believe in the Karmā theory and rebirth. They say that till the state of Nirvāṇā or Kēvalam is attained as long as the world is there, the Karmā bears fruit. They say that so long as the world is there, there are devathās and planets, they bestow their grace with their power. With this belief, they worship them and propitiate them. Just as they do pūjā to Buddha and Jīna they perform pūjā to certain devathās because they have more power than they have and not because they consider them Swāmī.
The first criticism is that only Hindus talk of Swāmi all the time and keep doing Pūjā.

Another: 'This at least (worshipping several gods as mentioned above) can be understood. Rightly or wrongly if there is belief in one or several Swāmis pūjā has to be performed but you Hindus are doing a lot of things which are not connected with the Swāmi. They refer to the ceremonies we perform for pithrus etc. The criticism gives the impression of being valid. In other religions, it is enough if there is devotion to one Swāmi; meditating on him and praying to him are enough. But in our religion, which talks of ‘Aham Brahmāsmi’ and ‘Thath thvam asi’ we are doing several things on a big scale for pithrus which have no relation to the Swāmi or a devathā. One who does not do pūjā for ten minutes, performs annual ceremonies for hours together. We have given so much importance to this that the name ceremony has come to mean what we do annually to the pithrus. It is said that if a reason is to be given for grant of leave, ‘ceremony’ is a convenient one and the people in the office will not raise any objection! If the father or mother dies, lot of things are done for ten to thirteen days, then every month. Till one is alive, tharpanām is performed on Amāvāsyā days, not only for parents but also for their earlier generations till one lives. These have been prescribed. It has also been laid down that long after one has passed away the sraddhā is performed saying ‘grandfather is coming’ ‘grandmother is coming’ etc. These are mostly done for the previous generation. The practice of performing these for siblings or the progeny is not much in vogue.

In addition to this, religion itself has prescribed several things to be done for oneself and his next generation. In other religions, if it is the birthday of someone in the house, it is done in a simple way with candle and cake. Marriage is also a simple ritual. But here, in Hindu religion, elaborate rituals are prescribed for ‘Garbhādhāna’, ‘Pumsavanam’ ‘Śīmantham’ ‘Jāthakarmam’
'Namakaranam' 'Vidyabyasam' ‘Upanayanam’ ‘Ayush HOmam’ every year; if it is marriage, ‘Aupasanam’ for a few days (this has been discontinued for which I the Adhvaitha Guru, am crying). In all these even though there is connection with God, it is not for the sake of God but for praying ‘I should be all right, I should get a good child, that boy should live long, he should study well’ - all these are centred around a small human circle and keeping it in view.

In what is considered the backbone of Vedic dharmā, the Pancha Mahā Yagna,* there is nothing like meditation based on Veda nthā or being deeply engrossed in bhakthi to one Iswarā etc. Even yagnas are like this only. On the whole, what is prominent is the pūjā performed and sacrifices offered to several devathās and the village deities etc, is it not?

Thus, there are two criticisms - one is, ‘Instead of practicing concentrated devotion to one Paramāthmā you are allowing your mind to be scattered over thousands of Swāmis’. The other is: ‘Instead of serving people who are alive - social service and there is no time for it - why sraddhā for people who died long before? Why so many selfish rituals for ‘I should be all right. My children should be all right. My health should improve - therefore Navagraha santhi; the son should study well - Pūjā to Medhā Dakshināmūrthi; obstruction or obstacle at home - offerings to the Kula Deivam or some village deity; bad effects of planets should go - hōnam for Rāhu, Kēthu, Saturn - thil or something else as neivedyam - all these are selfish without bhakthi - it is business; there seems to be bribery in these too, it appears!’

When such questions are raised we also start thinking ‘Our religion has such weaknesses. We do not have the maturity to think

* Brahma Yajnam, Deva Yajnam, Pithru Yajnam, Manushya Yajnam, Būtha Yajnam - these are the five. About these refer to first volume also).
‘There is only one God, let us pray to Him just as other religionists do’. We think we are making a big mixture of all types of gods from the lowest form to the highest *Nirguna* (qualityless Brahman). Those who are knowledgeable or philosophers among us say ‘if we understand our religion properly it will be seen that these are not at all in it. They also say ‘meditation on the supreme or devotion without a purpose to one thing which is all powerful – these are the doctrines of our religion. Just as weeds outgrow the crops in a field and destroy them, unnecessary things and rituals have got into our religion and grown. This has become so particularly because of the vested interests of the priesthood’. When they talk of the vested interests of priesthood it is only a dignified manner of saying that the Brahmin has prescribed all these rituals only for him to take dakshinai at every stage.

I am not going to side with these people and say ‘our religion is high philosophy only. Thousands of gods, ceremonies for pithrus, rituals have entered into it like weeds’.

I am going to join the critics and say ‘In our religion, annual ceremonies for ancestors, different types of hōmams, pūjās, prayers with specific objectives are more than meditation on the one *Paramāthmā* or practising one pointed devotion to our Îswara’.

But I am not going to say this as criticism. But I am going to say ‘this religion is like this. Therefore make offerings to ordinary deities like ‘kätteri’, do Navagraha Santhi, Mrithyunjaya Hōmam, do Pancha Mahā Yagnam, do the annual ceremonies according to sāsthras and elaborately instead of contracting it and doing it beyond its proper time as is being done now, give dakshinai to priesthood (those who are referred to as ‘priestcraft’ in a lowly manner).

Whatever they say by way of condemnation I am not going to say that they are not in our religion. I am going to say
emphatically that they are there. I will not say it apologetically but with pride I will say 'Yes, it is so in our religion, that is the way it should be'.

'Is it not great to think of one God only?'

'Yes that only is great'.

'Is it not great to serve the entire humanity instead of confining to oneself, the children, the pithrus?'

'Yes I agree'

'If that is so how do you approve of all the things being done for their sake, the yagnas and hōmams and all the offerings?'

'Do you know why I support? In all these things too, the underlying current is the worship of the one Paramāthmā. In these also there is service to others, purification of the mind which helps the soul'.

'How is it? Cannot understand at all!'

'Quite so. Even among the Hindus many do these things without understanding them; or because they do not understand them they give them up. If they are understood properly it will be seen that the thought of the one Paramāthmā runs through them; service to others shines in these to an extent not found in other religions.'

How is that?

'It is true that there is one Paramāthmā only. Other than that there is nothing. No other religion says like the Hindu religion that man, animals and even worms and insects are that only. Yet it is not easy at all to know it by experience. Although other religionists talk of one God or Nirvānā or Kaivalyam, ask them 'If it is true that you are meditating on that one only, have you really understood it, have you realized? (have you experienced it). If you tell them that they have to reply true to that one thing and true to their
conscience there will be perhaps one in a million who would say 'I have realized'. It is in our religion in which people are engaged in all these things which have no connection with the soul or God, there have been more realized souls than in other religions. I am not saying this. They themselves praise India as the 'Land of Saints and Sages'. Even today the truth is that while we run to their countries for worldly conveniences, they come to our country and stay here for spiritual development.

What is the reason?

The reason is that there is a remedy for spiritual purification in such things as a variety of hōmams, pūjās etc which appear to be done for one's selfish good. Although everything is Paramāthmā, looking at it pragmatically activities have to be carried on on the basis that jīvās are different from each other. Although all of us are the self-effulgent āthmā, Karmā hides it like a cloud and prevents us from knowing it. We have the responsibility to bring out the soul that has been covered by Karmā. We have not been left alone in this world. We are with wives and children and others. This also is a result of Karmā. On the one side, the impressions of Karmā make the mind impure and prevent us from realizing the soul. On the other, the bondage of Karmā in the form of relations ties us down and makes us do duties. There is body which houses life and then there is the house for that life created by the relatives - unless one discharges the duties to them, Karmā cannot be exhausted. With such a huge left over of old karmā, if it is desired that just now the āthmā or Īswara should be seen, it cannot be seen. It is only after the sinful Karmās are removed by good Karmās, the cloud will move away and sunlight can be seen. This good Karmā is of the form of many duties. It is only for some rare people who go full steam for 'self-knowledge' or Īswara bhakthi, the Karmā would get cut off in a flash. But, for the majority of people, it is possible to eliminate the Karmā only gradually. Just as the Śaiva Siddhāntīs talk of 'equalizing the two Karmās' if the weight of the
sinful *Karma* of several births takes one side of the weighing scale far below, it is only by doing good acts to that extent, the two sides of the scale can be balanced’.

Excepting the very few who are strong willed and are firm and can look at the body and house with contempt, all others have to perform the duties meant for them even when they are in the body and house and by that process only reduce the load of *karma*. Since the *jīva* has to perform good *Karma* and the duties only when it is in the body, to some extent care has to be taken of the body. If it is afflicted by disease it has to be cured; money has to be earned for carrying on the family affairs. Praying for these has to be done although these appear to be selfish. It is true that nothing should be indulged in excessively. But several things ordained in the *sāstrās* which appear selfish are to be done by an ordinary soul as adjuncts to the duties that have to be performed. We have the wife and children as a result of *Karma* and now when we do for them the several things laid down by *sāstrās* and when we are discharging our debts of our previous births by our present duties there is nothing to feel ashamed about or feel it is very selfish.

It should be noted that when the activities are undertaken as ordained by *sāstrās* through *manthrās* they not only confer worldly benefits but purify the mind. If mere action purifies the mind, when it is accompanied by *manthrās*, the power of purification is even more.

Pumsavanam for what is conceived in the womb, Jāthakarmam for the new born child and Upanayana *samskāram* for the child which has grown, are all done only keeping in view the purification of the self.

All the activities one has to undertake to get whatever good things he and others like his wife and children should get in this world in a fair manner and for their self purification, are they not in a way service to others?
If it is thought that this is everything and the problems of the world outside are not taken note of, that is wrong. When these personal activities are carried on within limits it will never happen that time cannot be found for public service.

We have, of course, to help ourselves and our relatives. By that itself we should get released from the attachment to the body and from the attachment to the relatives which has come about due to past Karmā. But at the same time since Īśwarā has left us not only in one body and one house but also in the world, it should not be forgotten that we have a duty to render service to others.

We have our duty not only to this world but also to those in worlds which we cannot see. When a person dies, the soul goes to Chandralōkam, Pithrulōkam, Narakalōkam, they say. We have to do the post funerary rites, annual ceremonies, tharpaṇam etc in order to reach to them what they need, there and then wherever these souls have returned to the world in whatever form. All this is also service to others.

‘Why so many gods?’ they ask. If I say that this is also service to others, you will be surprised. In the worlds which we cannot see, there are, similar to the human beings, the deva jāthi of different kinds. There are bad Devathās, kshudra Devathās (mean, cruel) etc. Although everything is Paramāthmā, just as we cannot know it in our experience, they also do not know it. Īśwarā, Pillaiyār, Vishṇu, Ambāl, Subramanyar, Saraswathi, Lakshmi, Sūryā and other Devathāurthis are aware that they are Paramāthmā but have their own distinctive forms and functions. But other Devathās are not like this. They are like crores of servants of the Lord’s government of the Universe. They manage a little of the vast powers of what we call Nature.

Are there not among humans good and bad people? Among animals too, are there not wild animals and those which are good
and quiet? In the same manner there are good Devathās, bad Devathās and (like most people) those which have the mix of good and bad. There are a variety of deva sākthi like those which do good when worshipped, remain unconcerned and not doing good if not worshipped, those which do bad, those which are pleased by sāthvīk worship, those which are pleased by rajas, thamas worship, those which can be brought under control by manthrās, those which come under the discipline of the pūjāri, etc. There are 'kaththāyi' 'kātteri' 'karuppannasāmi' 'vīran' 'muni' 'iruḷan' 'Ayyanār' etc. Among these some behave as sāthvīk Devathās, to those who are in the sāthvīk stage and as thamas to those in the thamas stage. In neivedyam also there is difference depending upon their quality.

It is selfish only if you worship these for our good. But if we worship these because, only if these are satisfied the village, the region and the world will prosper, such worship will be for the good of the world and will qualify as service to others.

I shall go a step further and tell you. What is rightly or wrongly called polytheism (worship of several gods) does not stop with taking care of the personal good and the good of the world. It also satisfies the needs of those Devathās. Did I not say that most of them have not attained perfection? They are also part of the Lord's creation. Although they have more power than us they too like us have desires and needs. Does not the act of satisfying them amount to service to others?

If other religions say that helping the humans and animals only is service to others, I feel it is our religion which has gone beyond this and has provided for worship of beings which are beyond this world and invisible to us through offerings ranging from Vedhīc hōmās to the offering made by the ordinary pūjāri and has thus extended the limits of service to others. Hōmam, Bali,
Manthrá, Adhyáyanam, Tharpañam etc which are part of Pancha Mahá Yagna will help different kinds of creatures.

Our religion keeps on repeating again and again the fact that the one Paramáthmá only has become so many beings, humans etc. It is to ensure that this thought should never go out of our mind that whichever Devathá is worshipped we deem it to be Sarvaśakthi, Sachidānanda Rūpam etc. The import is that even if the Devathá may not know 'I am Paramáthmá' we should not forget that it is Paramáthmá. It is not 'several gods' - it is the attitude of thinking of one God only as pervading inside each of the forms. Our religion says that even though every devathá is of the form of Paramáthmá and we keep reminding ourselves of these facts, each of them has to be worshipped as an individual devathá according to the form of worship prescribed for it. If it is asked why so, who are humans? Are they not also of the form of Paramáthmá? Even those who have no religious beliefs and who do public service say that service rendered to people is service rendered to the Supreme Lord! Thus even if all are one Īswarā, each has to be treated as an individual and service rendered to each according to his needs. Treatment to be given to the sick person, a particular treatment for a particular disease, job for one who is jobless, providing education to one who is not educated, food for the hungry - thus service to others is rendered in different ways, is it not? In the same manner worship of each devathá has to be done according to what is appropriate to each form. Even then it should not be forgotten that all are Paramáthmá only.

For someone to get the experience that all are Paramáthmá it is a very big thing. Before he gains such experience he should have purity of mind. It is for attaining this purity so many things have been prescribed. Each Devathá and its worship according to what is appropriate to it is a part of this. Apart from this, the Upanishad which describes the principles of Paramáthmá has laid down several activities - 'Yajñéna, Dhánéna, thapasá' Dhánéna is not
only charity done with money but also what is made by the mind, through speech and body.

In the same manner, the same Upanishads which say ‘there is neither father nor son nor devathā nor the one who worships the devathā’ also say ‘Deva Pithru Karyābhyām na pramathidhavyam’ as ‘do not forget and fail to do what needs to be done to the several devathās and the several duties to the pithrus’.

The husbands, wives, sons etc among the devathās are not just symbolic. Several beings of the deva jāṭhi really have such relationships like human beings.

When our goal becomes; ‘we want nothing of the world, we should know only the Paramāthma’, then we have to give up the devathā forms of the Paramāthmā. In the same manner the thought of serving others in the world will also go. That does not mean that one becomes like stone without thought of service to others. If he attains Paramāthma jnānām, either because of his bhakthi to Paramāthmā or due to jnānā, the great help of giving peace to all beings will materialise because of him even without his thinking of it.

That the other religions do not talk about satisfying several Dēvathās and therefore their attachment to one Īswarā would be great can only be said for the sake of argument. But what we practically see is that most of them are struggling without having the experience of Īswarā. It is in our religion a lot of saints (Mahāns) have appeared more than in other religions; even now they are there. This is what the other religionists themselves say. Because of this, a funny thought comes to mind.

What is the biggest satisfaction? What is the greatest good that can accrue to one? Is it not becoming one with the Paramāthmā? Our religion could have kept only the ‘biggest self interest’ in view and made the people think on these lines: ‘There may be any number of devathās and pithrus. I do not want them. I
want you only. Are they not also your creations? It is your responsibility to satisfy their needs. You who have planted the sapling have to water it. Whether you water it or not is your concern. I do not want devathās or pithru. I am getting hold of you only. If because of this they become angry and harass me that will be shame to you. If some petty forces harass me because I have got hold of you, the Supreme, and if you keep quiet, it is derogatory to you only’. But our religion, by laying down several duties towards devās, pithrus and thus causing the concentration on one Paramāthmā to become splintered, has made him sacrifice his self-interest and enabled him to help even the small forces that are invisible. Because he does service like this to others, the Lord in appreciation of the same, blesses him with jnānā, ahead of those of other religions. That is why it appears that it is only in this religion that more jnānīs and great persons and great devotees appear.

If this is to be expressed in another way, it is because of the paropakāra puṇya earned by the majority of those in the society by their ‘sacrifice’ of Paramāthmā and worship of the smaller devathās, the Lord creates several great men who will hold on only to the Paramāthmā in the thought ‘I will not go near petty gods’.

Fun apart, even if we look at it practically, although Īśvarā is the king and the devās and pithrus are only his subordinates, the king will expect that people should go to the subordinates for whatever needs to be done by them. Will He think that they should leave the subordinates and come to him? Although, unlike the kings of the world, Īśvarā has the power to attend to all things Himself, has not He himself as a līlā (divine sport) given a little power to the deva jāthis and made them manage the affairs of the world? Does it not mean that till one is able to transcend the world and Nature he has to worship these subordinates? In Gītā, Bhagawān Himself has made this position clear. What has become very well known is his saying ‘Give up all dharmās. Surrender unto me only’ (18th Chapter of Gītā). But the statement comes only at
the end. Before that (the 7th Chapter of Gītā) He says ‘People worship different kinds of Dēvathās according to their nature and for fulfilment of their desires. At that time I only create firm attachment to that devathā. Even then they should not stop with those devathās, thinking that these devathās are everything forgetting that I am only inside them and activate them. One who thinks like this stops with the fulfilment of small desires which they grant. One who thinks of me constantly and worships them comes to me finally’, the Bhagawān says.

What has been said in the concluding part of Gītā, is possible only for the highly evolved. What has been said in the middle is for the one who is in the middle stage. For those like us, who are in the majority and who have not reached even that stage He does not say in the beginning (3rd chapter of Gītā) that He does everything Himself as ‘antharyāmi’ of the Dēvathās. This is what he says: ‘At the time of creation, Brahmā created both the human species and the dēva species so that they can mutually support each other (parasparam bhāvayanthah - he says) and attain the highest good (sreyah param - is what He says) and created also the yagnas for the humans to worship the dēvās through the yagnas. It is the dēvās who give rain etc which are necessary for life in the world. By satisfying the needs of the dēvās through our yagnas we should get from them in return what we need for our life. The same Krishnā Paramāthmā who talked about ‘Mām Ėkam’ has also said ‘those who eat without doing worship to dēvās through yagnās are thieves; they do not take food but eat sin only’ and has laid down the worship of several gods.

Hindu religion which talks of the identity of the individual soul and Brahman in the end has prescribed the worship of pithrus and Dēvathās in the beginning. This has been done for raising the soul gradually with great understanding about the stage in which people are and with what degree of maturity, what they should do at that stage to attain perfection and whether they would go
further without stopping with whatever they have attained. Those who criticize do not understand this. The majority of people who are born with a lot of the impressions of previous birth can only be raised like this gradually. Instead if attempts are made to reach the higher stage in the beginning itself they cannot attain it but will suffer a fall. It is only as a proof of this that in our religion sadhus and great personages have been born more than in other religions.

Everything will be all right if we have the humility to understand that our power is very small. We should not become proud because our mind can think anything and our intellect can understand things which are baffling. The humans may have a high degree of intellectual brilliance but they cannot show their capabilities to those which are beyond our intellect and gain victory over them. It is not only the sāthvik divine forces of Vedhic orientation. It is because we are subordinate to such deities as ‘kāththavarāyan’ ‘karupparīnan’ who protect us and prevent bad spirits from entering, the practice of even Brahmmins making offerings to village deities, pūjās for which are performed by pūjāris, on some day during the year or on occasions like marriages etc is in vogue. In Smruthi itself (in Dharma Śāstrā) rishis have said ‘What has been stated here in sāstrās is not the end of everything; whatever remains to be done get to know from the women and the people of the fourth varna’. This supports the worship of the village deities.

It is a noble thing to satisfy all the beings in God’s creation, to make those which are quiet and gentle more so, to make peaceful what is severe so that it does not do mischief and give rise to diseases like pox. Because those who have not understood our religion indulge in criticism we should not wrongly think that these practices take the religion to a low level and give them up.

My own feeling is that what they say as criticism is actually giving us a certificate of appreciation. The greatness of our religion lies in the fact that even while talking of Adhvaithā it has
prescribed the *Karmās* for *dēvās* and *pithrus* æ that is why it is a matter of pride that it embraces all who are at different levels. Another greatness is that the concept of service to others is extended so that we make offerings to those in other worlds and through them get what is good for the world.
THRIFT AND SERVICE TO OTHERS
OBJECT OF THRIFT IS SERVICE TO OTHERS

It is possible to extend financial help to others only by being thrifty in personal life. If things which are not required are considered as necessities and following the Western countries, there is constant pursuit of material comfort and luxury, no one will ever be contented; nor can others be helped by way of charity. Just as wanting to have a car when one has a motorbike, then a bigger car, then to make it air-conditioned or convert the cement flooring to mosaic and then to marble, if one goes after greater comfort all the time, he will be dissatisfied and be unhappy. Not only that, however much one may earn that will not be adequate. That is why so many of the rich people are debtors today - they call it overdraft in a dignified way. If he is himself in debt how can he do charity?

The tragedy today is that generally one who is thrifty is stingy and neither enjoys himself nor helps others; the one who spends recklessly is constantly after more and more comfort and therefore he lands himself in debts and he too cannot help others.

If everyone follows the noble policy that he should be thrifty in his personal life in order to help others, so much punyam will accrue, there will be so much peace and so many poor people will be benefited.

Unless one is thrifty, in today’s attraction of enjoyments no one can save. Therefore only if one leads a thrifty life he can do charities with what he has over and above his needs. In other words, one should live as thriftily as possible so that there will be savings and he can do charity.
The term 'Dharmakshêtre' in the first *slokā* of *Gītā* is this body only. If a crop has to be raised in a field, the soil should be good; then there is a season for every kind of crop. Kshêtra means a field. What is the soil for the field of a body? A clear intellect, the sense organs being in a good state and not becoming impure (both the jnānendriyās and the karmendriyās should be sharp) that is the good soil for the body-field. Good season is having the energy to run about and think clearly. Depending on these the crop of *dharma* should be raised in this body and it should be made a *Dharmashēktrā*. Spending more than what is necessary is the weed which prevents the growth of the crop. One being happy at spending for himself on comforts is like looking at a field full of weeds and feeling happy. Just as we are careful in removing the weeds from the field we should cut out the expenses which are more than what is necessary.
DEBT IS HARMFUL FOR ALL

Just as it is said that thrift is not to save more for oneself but for helping others, not borrowing too is not only in one’s own interest but in the interest of service to others. Once in debt, one has to work for clearing it; when that is cleared borrowing will become a habit and it will land us in disaster. If one were to create a situation in which he has nothing for himself, how can others be helped?

Āchāryā has written a work ‘Praṣnōthra Ratna Mālika’. There is a question in it. ‘What becomes a pollution in the world?’

Kimiha āśaucham bhaveth?

Śuṣi is cleanliness. Āśuṣi is what is dirty, which is āśaucham. In sāstrās only the personal pollution caused by death, delivery etc which disqualifies a person from attending to duties pertaining to devās has been referred to as ‘āśaucham’. Here the disciple is asking ‘What is āśaucham’ and the Āchāryā replies ‘rīṇam nruṇām’. Nruṇām means ‘for man’, meaning ‘for all those born as men’. Rīṇam is debt. Āchāryā says that for a man the biggest ‘pollution’ is getting into debts. Why did he say that?

What do we do when we happen to suffer pollution? (These days we do not bother about it. We derisively refer to it as superstition and freely move about spoiling the sanctity of even the sannidhīs (internal premises) of temples and other places. The result is that there is scarcity, new kinds of diseases, accident taking place in very great holy places etc. Therefore I will explain Āchāryā’s statement on the basis of the situation that obtained about fifty years back. Did not the same religious disciplines and concepts of personal purity obtain two thousand years ago, when Āchāryā was there and even several thousands of years before him?) What was done in those days to someone who suffered personal pollution? Others would not come near him at all. Fearing
that he might come in contact with them they would keep physical
distance from him. Do not people run away from someone who is
in debts fearing that he may ask them money? The debtor also will
try to hide himself away from people fearing that his creditor
might ask him to return the money. It used to be said that he would
cover his head with cloth and go about. This was for not being
recognized. Thus he himself keeps away from the community as if
he has been afflicted by some major impurity.

Because of one person getting into the habit of borrowing, so
many people are put to difficulty. Kambar (when describing in his
Rāmāyanā the state of mind of Rāvana when he was facing defeat)
says that his heart was in ‘as much distress as a person who is in
debts’). Thus the one who borrowed will always be in constant fear
of his creditor; he tells lies just to escape. If the worst comes, he
indulges in theft to clear his debt. Just as the borrower is in
distress, the creditor also would be worried whether he will get
back his money or not.

The way modern ideology is holding sway it is those who
lend who have to face lot of problems. Today it is those who have
borrowed that receive all kinds of concessions!

No one objects to help being rendered to the poor people.
But encouraging our simple and humble people to go for
unnecessary luxury and drive them to a state where they become
bold to go against the great dharmā that one must repay what has
been borrowed in the confidence that, in any case, the
Government will support them is bad. It is great harm being done
to them to make them think ‘we are the vote bank’ and make them
lose the strength gained by divine support and the support of
dharmā. I am aware how much hard hearted a creditor becomes
and harasses his debtor. They do indulge in a lot of unjust acts like
collecting usurious rates of interests, crediting whatever is repaid
towards interest and not the amount lent etc. It is because
someone commits the mistake of borrowing that another (the lender) happens to commit sin. In the end he too suffers when the Government intervenes in favour of the borrower. Therefore, everyone should make it a point not to borrow but live within his means.

Indebtedness drives many people to become thieves or spurious sanyāsīs who cheat the people. Now and then we read in papers that a whole family of people commits suicide to save its honour. It is distressing.

As I have mentioned earlier it is not just the lender or borrower but the entire people of a place avoid a person who is in debts fearing that he may trouble them.

It is because such difficulties arise out of the habit of borrowing all over, Āchāryā has said that it is the biggest form of ‘pollution’.

When talking about service to others, should I not talk about how to avoid disservice to others even if no service can be rendered to them. Are not even the Ten Commandments of Christians all negative, saying such and such things should not be done instead of saying what should be done?

Even non-stealing (asthēyam) mentioned as part of the common dharmā and not accumulating wealth (aparigraham), though negative, are part of service to others. If these two are followed, being stingy, being a spendthrift and being a borrower, will go.
SERVICE TO OTHERS IS ITSELF A ‘DEBT’!

I am now going to say something strange. That we have to render help to others is itself a debt we have incurred! We talk of the ‘debt to be repaid to the pithrus’. There are other debts (*rini* *thrayam*); one who is born a Brahmin has debt to repay to the rishis, the *devās* and the ancestors (pithrus). It has been declared that debt to the rishis is discharged by *Vedha adhyayanā*, the debt to the *devās* is cleared by the performance of yagnas and the debt to pithrus is cleared by begetting sons. As part of the *Pancha Mahā Yagna* laid down by *Vedha sāstrās*, apart from these three, ‘nruyagnam’ that is what needs to be done to other people and ‘bhūtha yagnam’ that is what needs to be done to all creatures have been laid down. Therefore whatever we have to do to other human beings, the animals and birds have to be treated as the debt to be repaid.

We may not ourselves do charity to someone. If someone asks for a loan that can be refused. We can say ‘Have you kept your money with me? It is my money. To give it or not is my wish’. But when we are in debt and the lender asks for the return of the money, can we talk like that? Whether it is possible or not one has to find a way of returning it. That is how the *Vedhās* have prescribed the Pancha Mahā Yagna to be performed for those to whom we are indebted. When it is a debt it has got to be returned and we have no right to say that we cannot do it. It is our duty to do the yagnas and return to people like us and the animals and the birds by way of help and satisfy them. It is from the Tamil word ‘Kadan’ that another Tamil word ‘Kadamai’ (duty) has evolved. Even when Īswara made a person to be born in this world and has also arranged that he must receive all the conveniences from the world, He has also ordered through the *Vedhās* that he must render
whatever service he can to all beings and creatures in this world and to the rishis and devās. Therefore this has to be done as if it is the duty of repayment of the debt. It should not be done with the attitude of reluctantly clearing a debt but with love and to think of all those who receive the help as the form of Īśwara Himself.

If this feeling is developed - that service to others is a debt to be repaid as ordered by Īśwara - we will render help to others in however difficult a state we may be. People will ask ‘charity can only be done from what remains after our needs are met, When we are ourselves in difficulty, why are you worrying about others?’. To this the reply should be, ‘If I am now facing difficulty, it only means that this is a punishment for my not having properly carried out Īśwara’s commands in the previous birth. I am now suffering because in the previous birth I had not rendered any service or help to others. For this very reason I now have to help others. The difficulty I am experiencing now is what has come as the balance of the Karmā of the previous birth. It is to clear this I have to do charity. This is what is meant by saying doing charity out of what remains. You have understood it wrongly. It is only if I do charity in spite of my difficult situation, I will be all right at least in the future’.

We should not forget people like Ilaiyānkuḍi Māra Nāyanār who had helped others in spite of their own difficulties. Whatever may be one’s difficulty, if he ignores them and rises above them and helps others, that should be taken as ‘doing charity out of what remains beyond one’s needs’. This is at a very high level. At the lower level, it means that one should live within his means, avoid getting into debt but save only for helping others.
HOW TO SAVE

To stop coffee expenses which are more than the expenses for food; giving up wearing silk garments; entirely cutting out the hotel expenses by resorting to self cooking (*swayampakam*); stop going to pictures - if merely these four are stopped, anyone will be without debts and will be able to render financial help to others to some extent. These concern the daily affairs of a family. Add to this dowry which has become a social problem and ostentatious marriages. If there is no dowry and, if thousands are not spent for the marriages, there will be no financial problem or debt in any family. There will be enough resources for doing public service.

We have to live by discriminating between what is essential and what is non-essential, what were the things even without which our forefathers led a happy life etc and curtail our needs. In the beginning it will be difficult. We will be pulled by our desires. Still, praying to *Ambāl*, the Mother, with Her blessings, we should succeed. Then only it will be realized how much peace there is in simple living. If we go on adding luxury goods as necessities then we have to go for a bigger house; that will increase the rental expenses. If one after the other we bring ourselves to a situation when our income is not sufficient how can help be rendered to others and our *Karma* discharged? If unnecessary things are cut out we can raise ourselves with peace to us and help to others. Just as if there are ten children in a family they are all attached to each other, all of us who are the children of *Ambāl*, the Mother, can live helping each other. It is not necessary to generalise about the kind of help. Each one can render whatever help he can in his own situation and all of us can live happily.
Established Rules of Discipline and Conduct (Āchāram)

Āchāram means following the path followed by our ancestors. It is also called ‘āchāra - vyavahāram’. Vyavahāram pertains to the present. Āchāram is what our ancestors have been doing for a long time as support to good conduct. Since it has been practiced over a long period, it has acquired strength just as a tree which is old develops hardness and strength. Only if we lived our life style on that firm foundation our life will be stable.

If it is asked what all our ancestors have followed, the answer is that they have followed whatever is there in Sāstrās and in tradition. It is because of the merit of their observance of these that our country occupied a top place in the world in spirituality, Jnāna, bhakti and all the arts. If in spite of the decline we have suffered, people of other countries keep coming in large groups to our āśram seeking spiritual guidance, it is the result of the momentum created by the āchāram followed by our ancestors.

These are the āchāras, many of which our reformists have been saying in recent times - about hundred to two hundred years - should be given up. Each reformist in his turn says that a particular aspect is the weed in our religion and if it is removed the crop of religion will be good. If we go on removing according to what each one considers weed, there will be no crop left. Therefore we should only strive to follow fully what has been stated by our rishis who were in a much higher level than us in Dharma Śāstrās, intelligence, compassion and grace. We have to pray to God to give us the strength of mind to do the same. We have to think of another thing. Although so many reformists had come and started so many reformists movements, how many from these we have
been able to get as jñānis and great men? We can say that anybody is a rishi, avatār or messenger of God but the question is whether in reality they have the power to relieve the people of their sufferings. Can we get from these reformists the blessings and self-experience that many people are able to get through the traditional upādesā of a Guru? Can an old order which is like the hardened and strong tree of tradition be felled for the sake of these people who keep saying one thing today and another tomorrow? I am not saying this. Ten or twelve Westerners who have studied a lot and gone through a lot of spiritual practice have come to me and were asking me this.

‘Tradition that is based on sāstrās, gurus who had lived their personal lives according to that, the upādesā etc which come out of their experience with a maturity, these influencing the disciple and purifying him - without these how can there be self-experience? Although several religions and reforms have come, if we do not follow the āchāryās who have a deep experience of the old āchāra, spiritual evolution is rare, is it not?’ they ask.

It is true that there is difference among those who have experienced. That is why, although the great founders of religions are all those who had experienced, the religious customs are different. But, wherever one is born, if he follows the old āchāra of the religion there, his soul will get redeemed. If soul is to be redeemed there is no use depending on the reformists. The view of those Westerners was that all these reformers talk of equality, this and that and try to get a place of pride for people in worldly life, but they are not useful in the world of the spirit.

I do not have any party. If a Judge is asked to which party he belongs, what can he say? Judge is there to look into the law and give his judgement on that basis whatever his own views. I am here to look into the eternal law (sanāthana dharman) to tell people what it contains and to the extent possible conduct myself accordingly. I am a small representative of the Āchāryā and it is my
responsibility to tell you that you have to follow the āchāras laid down in the sāstrās. Whether what I say appeals to you or not would depend on the extent which I myself am able to do things according to sāstrās. Only if I have the power accruing from my own anusṭānam, I will have the power to make you follow the sāstrās.

It is not that there are differences in the āchāras only between religions. Within the same religion, several traditions have branched off and grown and these have differences. Even in Buddhism there are Hinayāna, Mahāyāna, Zen etc. In Christianity there are the Catholic, Protestants and Greek churches. In Islam, there are three sects – Shia, Sunni, Ahamadiya. In Hinduism also, Śaivism, Vaishnavam, Vaidhikam, Tāntric etc are there.

Differences in āchāra develop due to differences between countries. In our own country there are places in the north where during winter water becomes ice. Therefore, the Panda there performs pūjā with his shirts on. Even the neivedya and food habits will change according to the grains available in a particular place.
THE ĀCHĀRA OF THE CLAN IS THE WAY OF REDEMPTION

Whatever these may be, wherever one is born and in whichever religion or a branch of it, he must consider the rules of conduct followed by the ancestors of that religion as his own and follow the same. Thus each one has to follow the path shown by the forefathers; otherwise it is said he degenerates:

Śikhām sūthram cha puṇḍram cha samayāchāramēva cha
Pūrvai rācharitham kuryāth anyathā pathithō bhavēth

How should the sikhā be? (tuft). The Muslims shave off their heads. The Sikhs grow beard and also hair on the head. The Christians have their head cropped. The tuft that the Hindus keep is a manthrā based ritual laid down by sāsthṛās. In this also there are different types like those kept by Šožhiās, the Nambūdhris, the Dtkshīthars and others. Some people tie up at the top (ūrdhva stka); some people tie in the front part of the head (pūrva sikhā). The sāsthṛās say that each one should have a sikhā in the manner in which his clan has been following.

Sūthram mentioned after sikhā does not refer to the holy thread (Yagnopavītham). There are several sāsthṛās which have codified the anushtānam to be practiced under different sūthras namely Āsvalāyana sūthram, Āpasthamba sūthram, Bhōdhāyāna sūthram etc. Out of these one should adopt what has been already adopted by his family.

Puṇḍram is the mark worn on the forehead - Vibhūthi, gōpi, chandan, nāmam, black dot etc. Here also, since there are different kinds, each should wear the mark according to the customs followed by his clan.

Samayāchāram means observing the religious discipline. You follow the tradition which your family has been following
from out of the several traditions of Hindu religion. If you are born
in a particular family, in a particular place, in a particular country,
it is not something accidental. It is Īswarā who has ensured that
you are born in a particular family. He has also considered the
Karmās of your previous birth and planned your present birth in
such a way that even while experiencing the previous Karmās, if
you follow dharma, it is possible for you to evolve spiritually.
Therefore you follow the religious customs of that family.

‘Pūrvaśa acharīthah kuryāth’

This means ‘Do as your forefathers have done’. It means that
in the matter of sikhā, sūthram, pandram, samayāchāram, you
follow your forefathers.

‘Anyathā pathithā bhavāth’

If one does not follow this rule, that is if he does not follow
his forefathers and if he takes to a different path, that is different
life styles, symbols etc he becomes a degenerate.

‘Pathanam’ means slipping, falling down. ‘Pathithā’ is one
who has fallen. It means that instead of following the good path
(sanmārg) he has fallen into bad ways. In the context of
Pāthivrithyam (chastity) a woman who has Deviated and gone the
wrong way is called a Pathithai. Just as she has cheated the
husband, one who has cheated Īswarā, the Parama Purushā and
falls into the lower world and gets a mean birth is a Pathithan.
Similarly one who does not follow the āchāra of his forefathers,
becomes a Pathithan.

The Lord has given us birth in a particular place, particular
society and a clan with its āchāra. What does this mean? It means
that, just as the woman has to follow her husband and get
redeemed, this person also should follow sāsthrās and traditions
which are his by birth and attain merit. If someone says ‘No I will
not follow this āchāra’ it would be a great blemish similar to a
woman spurning her husband. It is more wrong if he were to say 'I will quit this religion and its discipline and take to some other'. It is like deserting the husband and going away with another person. That is why it says 'Pathithôbhavêth'.

It is important for us to save ourselves from such a situation. Because the reformist talks sweet about for betterment of the life we are leading, we should not act according to his world and fall into the poison of hell. òchâra not only protects a person from a fall but will raise him to a higher state and take him to Íswara's presence.
THE WEIGHT OF EXPERIENCE

It is only āchāra that has the weight of experience that has come through generations. It is only when we respect tradition and follow it, discipline develops by which the mind, the sense organs and our activities can be controlled. This only leads to the purity of mind which is the first gate to enter moksha. If an established tradition is not respected and accepted and one goes on questioning ‘why this, how that?’ it will only end in such questioning but it is not possible to establish a new weighty discipline in the place of the existing one. There have been people like Gandhi who were pure in their individual lives, were devoted to God and led a simple life doing physical labour according to old customs. But even such persons, when they gave up some of the old āchāras and introduced in their āśrams some of the reforms they themselves formulated and personally supervised the whole thing, things had gone wrong and they had condemned it publicly and undertook fasts.
DECLINE IN DISCIPLINE
DUE TO REFORMS

The reason is that the moment one thinks of interfering with established śāstrās and āchāras and reforming them to a lesser or greater extent the humility to subject oneself to a discipline becomes a casualty. The moment a reformist leader changes something saying that it ‘cripples individual freedom’ those around him and his followers get the thought that they should break all control including the new discipline imposed by the leader and be totally free. If the leader says ‘I will release you from the restrictions of the old āchāras’ and try to pose as a saviour and a ‘Swayam āchāryā’ (self-appointed Guru), within a short time his followers will say ‘If you have given us release from the old āchāras, we will now release ourselves from the new restrictions you have imposed’.

That is why like those who are part of reformist movements which encourage people to be free without any discipline the followers of the reformers too start doing whatever they want in course of time.
WHAT THE GĪTĀ COMMANDS

It is for this reason that Bhagawān has emphatically said (in the Gītā) that even if one or two practices in the old āchārā are not all right, one should not interfere with it and create confusion in the minds of people majority of whom are ignorant. The knowledgeable leaders of society have to function only according to the sāstrās. Bhagawān says that they must follow the sāstrās and be role models even if they feel that some of the Karmās are not necessary for them, that they are beyond that state, realizing that if they act against the sāstrās others also will lose their discipline, lose their mental balance and become confused.

‘Na bhuddhi bhēdham janayēdh ajnānām karmasanginam
Jōshayēth sarvaKarmāni Vidhwān yukthas samācharan’

(3.26)

Although people talk about Gītā these days all the time, slokas such as these are overlooked. In the same way, in another place He says as a firm conclusion, ‘You have no right of your own to decide what can be done and what cannot be done. Look into the sāstrās. That is the authority. Do what is permitted there. Do not do what is not permitted there’.

‘Thasmāchchāsthram Pramāṇam the
Kāryā kārya vyavasthithow’

(16.2)

Those who want to bring about reforms need Gītā. But they hide the teachings like these or they go one step further and say that such statements in the Gītā are interpolations!

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REFORMIST LEADERS

All reforms have ended in people becoming free of all discipline and behaving as they like. It is true that all leaders who start a reform movement cannot be faulted for the conduct of the people. Although we who are occupying the ‘Sanāthana Dharma Pitam’ do not approve of their having given up the discipline based on sāstrās and traditions we cannot but agree that these people in their individual life follow truth, right conduct, sacrifice, love etc. It can also be accepted that to some extent many of these reformist leaders are educated and knowledgeable and have genuine interest in guiding the people on the right path. But the serious mistake they commit is they think that what appears to their intellect as right is only right and everything else is wrong. Although they are pure and knowledgeable they lack the respectful realization that our rishis who had codified the Dharma Śāstrās on the basis of the Vedhās and Manu and other great men were greater than them in purity and knowledge. One more thing - they do not believe what the sāstrās say about ‘invisible (adhishta) results’ but act for practical and immediate results like the Westerners.

Beyond the realm of practicality and outside its control there is the divine power. It does not show the result immediately in a manner it can be recognized. Instead of the results of our actions and thoughts being seen here immediately it may be seen at some other time, in some other birth or some other world too - that is how the divine power conducts its sport. It is the result not seen immediately which is called invisible results (Adhishta). Most reformers do not believe in this. Their education, outlook etc are on the lines of Westerners. That is why they do not accept that the several differences that exist among the people are due to their Karmās and are intended for them to attain spiritual uplift but keep talking about equality etc and they want to confuse everything. Thus, since they have not understood the invisible results that
accrue in other worlds, they ridicule the yagnas for Devathās, tharpanām and ceremonies to pithrus as mere superstition. They forget that there is Īśwarā who dispenses the fruits in other births or in other world. They think that they control everything, they only do everything and say that the reforms that they desire should come about in their own life time. Some of them, lacking in humility, think that they can achieve anything and draw big plans thinking 'I am going to change the world'. As if showing such persons to the world, Bhagawān says (in Gītā)

‘Idhamadhyā mayā labdham imam prāpsyē manoratham’

(16.13)

He says that they think 'I have achieved this today, I will achieve something bigger tomorrow and become overjoyed by mere worldly actions. Such people will not have any of the āchāra laid down by sāstrās'.

‘Na saucham na api cha(ā) chārah’

(16.7)

He says. The Upanishad also refers to those who think 'I am the one who is intelligent, a great scholar' and those not learning about matters pertaining to the other world, and those who follow them and says that all these are like the blind leading the blind and are just going round and round directionless.
THE LEADERS AND
THE FOLLOWERS

There is a difference between the reform leaders and their followers. Let us consider this. These days a strange distinction is being made between the religious virtues and ethical excellences not related to religion. There is no ethics or morality unrelated to the sāstrās ordained by Īswara. Yet if we subject ourselves to the old discipline according to sāstrās people these days feel that is shameful and beneath their dignity. Because the Westerners say that the sāstrās talk about invisible principles and, based on that, various dharmās and Karmās have been prescribed, these people feel it is all superstition and have a sense of shame to follow them. Instead of understanding our sāstrās properly and making the Westerners wise, these people consider it fashionable to accept whatever they say and want to reform as a fashion.

(For sometime now the Westerners even without our making them wise have conducted researches and experiments and have started praising the very things they have ridiculed. They have started telling there is effect to the performance of hōmam, that the manthras have powers, that there are other worlds etc. Now because of their certificates our people have also started accepting these a little).

Although the leaders of reform make a distinction between religious virtues and ethical conduct and object to several of the first, since they follow the second to a large extent they are disciplined as far as they are concerned. They start new religions (though they do not claim to do it) by combining these disciplines with the reformed old āchārās. That is about leaders. What is the position of their followers? People join the leader in numbers thinking that they are being freed from old disciplines and talk about ways of getting practical benefits even now. They give up the
old religious disciplines thinking that they can freely do whatever they want. The leaders have some commitment to ideology, education, experience, maturity and therefore (even if they give up religious disciplines) they subject themselves to a discipline. But how can ordinary people who follow them have such qualifications? The result is that if the leaders have given up only the religious virtues, the followers give up the ethical virtues also in the thought that they need not be under any restraint.

If the reformist leader says ‘You can break the fencing of religious discipline’ the people who do it and get a taste of freedom to do what they want turn to him later and tell him ‘We will break the moral fencing also which you have laid’. Have you not seen - leaders first taught the people to question why the rituals and temple worship should be conducted only in Sanskrit; later the people turned to them and asked why Hindi alone should be the National Language, resulting in a big movement with people derailing trains, burning buses etc. Whatever like satyagraha, civil disobedience, picketing etc were taught to the people in order to oppose the foreign government on important matters, they now oppose these very people for petty matters. We are having the taste of lack of forethought about rousing ordinary people.

There is a story. A person filed a suit in the court against his debtor. The debtor’s lawyer tutored him like this, ‘You behave in the court as if you are mad; whatever question is asked you go on telling ‘Beh, Beh’ (incoherent meaningless word). The Judge will dismiss the case on the ground you are mad and therefore no case could be filed against you’. The client followed the advice and won the case. On coming out of the court, the lawyer asked his client for the fees. He repeated to him whatever he had been taught by him saying ‘Beh, Beh’. The lawyer asked him ‘Are you doing this for me too?’. The debtor told him ‘It is Beh, Beh to you and your father too’.

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This is how the followers of the reforms behave. When the reformers say ‘No need for discipline enjoined by the śṛṣṭhrās, follow what we are telling you’, the followers, after getting some concession in the society with the help of the leader, bid good-bye to the rules of the reformers also. In such circumstances the leaders who are well behaved as far as they are concerned, condemn these people and expiate by going on fast etc. They feel ashamed before others when their followers desert them. Therefore they carry on, winking at what has happened. Only when it reaches serious proportions they expel them from their organization. By the time they get the courage to act like this those who differed from them will gain strength and will be in a position to start another reform movement. Then they say, ‘Who are you to expel us? We are getting out ourselves’.
I shall refer to something which has been seen again and again in this century. Matters relating to Dharma Śāstrās have remained unbroken over thousands of years. Even when divisions came up as Adhvaita, Visishtādvaita and Dvaita, they did not write new dharma sasthra. Most āchārās remained as of old. For the followers of all Siddhāntas it was only the old Āpastambha, Āswalāyana sūtras, Manu dharma sāstrā etc. A few have given up some and added a few but all within these sāstrās. When the vaidhika āchārā remained unchanged over thousands of years the Hindu reform movement which started in this century itself got split and groups have appeared.

Even political parties which had on their agenda religious reforms split into two or three. This lack of stability is strong proof that their force of Sathyam is less and those who started them (even though they may have been good and had good objectives) lacked the power of penance. It is the truth of the ideology and the power of penance of the rishis that have protected the vaidhika religious disciplines over the aeons. Today when so many reform movements have appeared more than three fourths of our people have not joined them but have continued to be in the original Hindu religion.

Those who talk outwardly against religious disciplines (āchāram) do have within them some fear. In their personal matters they do go by several superstitions! I come to know many such cases. When deposit has to be paid for election however rationalist the person may be he looks to the auspicious day, star etc, I understand.
A SINGLE TEST IS ENOUGH

A single test is enough to find out whether the old āchārās are necessary or the reforms. It is enough if we see whether misconduct, robbery, cheating, murders, prostitution were more when we were superstitious or they are more now when we have become 'enlightened'. If we were to have reformed ourselves only with such evil consequences it appears we would have lived better with superstitions.
The reformers give a very easy reason for discarding several religious āchārās and rituals. They say ‘Is it not enough if the mind is pure? Why rituals? Why all these formalities?’

If the mind is left alone it will of course go the wrong way uncontrolled. It is only for one in several thousands that the mind will be under control even when he is not engaged in activities. For others this is possible only if a work is assigned to them and their mind turned towards God or public service. It is only with this in view that āchāram and anushtānas have been prescribed. It is not only when the mind is left alone; even if it is involved in japa (silent repetition of Lord’s name) or sthōthrās, after sometime it gets detached from this. Therefore following the principle of mind – speech – body combination the rituals have been prescribed by connecting the mind with physical work also. Hōmam being performed while manthrās are recited, reciting the Sahasranāmam and doing archanā etc have been prescribed.

Even if we call out the names, Kēsavā, Nārāyaṇa and Thrivikramā the mind does not get involved in the glory of Bhagawān. That is why our forefathers have laid down the rule: ‘Even when you call out those twelve names of the Lord, draw on your body the twelve nāmams with the Thirumāari (holy earth). It is Thrivikramā who had measured the Universe. The same Thrivikramā took the avathār of ‘Swētha Varāham’ (White Pig) and lifted the earth with the white tooth. The white earth (Swētha mrithigai) is found at the place where the white tooth touched the earth. That mud is Thirumāri. The mud below the thulsi plant is also special like this. It is only when that mud is made into a paste and applied over the body and we call out Thrivikramā, we will get
the feeling in our mind 'Hey Bhagawan! I am applying on my body
the mud that had contact with you'.

In spiritual evolution as we go beyond a stage even speech
and action will be a hindrance to concentrated dhyāna. At that
stage activity, sthōthram, manthram and all else will stop. But
these get eliminated of their own. It is usual to give the example of
the frog. The frog lays its egg in water. For sometime after it has
come out of the egg, it will be in water like the fish. At that stage
the lungs required to live on land do not develop. It will have the
organ like the fish to absorb the oxygen from the water. Later, as it
grows, that part disappears on its own and lungs come up to enable
it to breathe oxygen from the air. In the same way when the higher
stage is reached, rituals, manthrās etc will stop of their own
accord. But in the beginning itself if it is said that all these are not
necessary and purity of the mind alone is enough, it will be like a
frog wanting to have lungs right in the beginning when it is in water
and giving up whatever part it has to draw oxygen from the water.
It will only die.

Only through outward symbols, external activities and
outward differences we can attain the internal state of no symbol,
no activity and no difference. If in the beginning itself one is told to
do dhyāna with the mind without any activity the mind will wander
as it likes. Then either dhyāna will have to be discontinued or we
will be tired and will fall asleep.

Purity of mind cannot be achieved without discipline. There
is no external discipline without rules, formalities, external
activities and differences relating to such activities etc. Though the
moderns may say ‘We will take care only of purity of mind’ one or
two leaders among them may be able to do it but for others it
would mean ‘We will be as we like’. I need not have to cry hoarse
for explaining this. It is well known to every one that, with the
starting of reforms, there is no discipline at all in the country. But
no one has the mind to accept this.
Let us leave aside those who claim to be atheists. They are only very few. What causes great sorrow is the claim of the reformists, ‘Only we understand the spirit of the *Vedhās* correctly and interpret it. We release it from the grip of orthodoxy and make it shine’ and with such a claim under the name of reform they actually deform what has existed in an orderly way for ages. It is a matter of sorrow that they are telling those with a lot of impurities and desires to reach ‘purity of mind’ which is at the top. Just as they themselves are in the state of Thriśanku, they push down others far below the state in which they already were. Even if nothing else is known there should be fear of a *Īswara* and life should be conducted on the path of *dharma* and fairness. People who had followed the path of their forefathers conducted themselves properly and with humility. The reforms have destroyed these. The only thing that the reformists have done in the name of freedom is to make haughty the ordinary people who on their own were humble. They have created a situation in which no one is willing to be under anybody’s control. In the name of rights it is selfishness that has become everything.

Therefore their saying ‘We love Hindu religion; we are the true lovers of Hindu religion; we are for religion’ but indulging in activities contrary to the *sāstrās* and thinking they can do anything against the *sāstrās* what they preach is only irreligion. One who says ‘No need for rituals, no need for *sāstrā*, only mind is enough’ is good for nothing.
MODERN SUPERSTITIONS

Although they do not accept the ‘invisible benefits’ but look only for visible results and discard several things as superstition, they too have created their own superstitions which cannot be explained by reason and follow them. The people raise the cry ‘Jai Hind’. What is the immediate benefit accruing from it? Will the country become prosperous by such shouting? But some big leaders who ridicule manthras call upon their audience at the end of their public speeches to raise the slogan ‘Jai Hind’. They say ‘This is not enough, it should be louder’ and make the people shout three or four times as loud as their throat can.

This is not only in our country. This has happened in every country where faith has been destroyed and replaced by reason (intellectual debate based on rationalism). If one looks at it rationally, what is a flag? Is it not just a piece of cloth? If it is said that if someone spits on it, it is a traitorous act, is it an ‘immediate fruit’ (dhrishta)? But one who does it is jailed. That is the immediate result of his action. If, by use of manthrās, divine power is brought into an idol and such an idol is worshipped, it is ridiculed but what does it mean if it is said that a piece of cloth is the symbol of the nation? Those who question ‘puṭya kālam’ and ‘puṭya kṣethrās’ conduct their celebrations of atheist preachings on the birth day of Buddha or Ambedkar. They say the celebrations will start at Erode or Kānchtpuram. That means they too have belief in some kind of puṭya kālam and puṭya kṣethrā. When I say this I myself feel funny about it. The strangest thing is that while we perform arādhanā on one day in a year at Thiruvaiyāru* or Nerūr* they do daily worship at Samādhīs. Members of legislatures who are atheists may not go to a temple

* The Samādhi of Thyāga Brahmam is in Thiruvaiyaru and the Samādhi of Sadasiva Brahmendra at Nerūr.
before taking oath or even if they go they may feel a sense of shame in making it public but these people** never fail to go to the *Samādhis* in a procession and pay respects there before being sworn in.

If one were to go by mere reason, all people have to do many things which do not accord with reason; then only it is possible to create for ourselves enthusiasm for and involvement in our goal and gather the support of others. For this, symbols and actions have to be there. When wearing black and red or khadi, carrying a placard, doing *pādayāthra* (walking) or a cycle procession or a procession of bullock carts, no one notices how many irrational things are there in such activities. But at the same time when our bhajan group goes around wearing the dhoti as panchakacha with parivattam (cloth tied around the head), with cymbals, singing the Lord’s names (*nāmasankīrthanam*) it becomes an object of ridicule. Due to political interest, labour interest etc which are related only to worldly affairs, when some people discard reason and pour kerosene over themselves and burn themselves they are given the title of ‘thyagi’. If the same thing is done for the sake of the eternal dharmā, religion, people will call such a person superstitious and a fool and look down upon him.

The result of giving up of the *āchārās* is this; ‘we are big; we want status; we cannot be subject to any control; there is nothing beyond what we understand; we cannot accept anything; we may do many things which are not consistent with reason. Yet if the spokesman of the *śāstrās* say something we will not accept it’. With such a thinking there is neither discipline in life in this world nor there is any way of attaining the other world and the entire thing is in a confused state.

These people (reformists) call out to people ‘Awake, Awake’ and try to wake them up. They say ‘You are believing in foolish

** Those who claim to be rationalists.
sāstrās and you are in deep ignorant slumber. Wake up’. But I get a different idea when I see the devil dance. I feel why we should not give them our ‘foolish sāstrās’ like a sleeping dose and make them sleep.

In the name of reform they have made disorderly what was functioning in an orderly manner. When I find that those who had corrected themselves have been drawn into wrong ways, I think that those who had woken up have now being induced into sleep. Really speaking, religion is not opium.* It is the medicine that wakes up people who are deeply engrossed in the anaesthesia of the indriyas thinking ‘the world only is real; there is nothing beyond what we see and experience here’. I think that it is only from the time movements started in the name of reforms that even those who were still awake and were God minded have been administered opium and have been intoxicated.

* It was Karl Marx who said ‘Religion is the opium of the masses’.
As soon as God-mindedness is gone, the touch with dharmā is also gone. There is no use in reformists telling ‘We also believe in God and believe in the soul’. Whether it is God or soul or whatever it is, only when by the inspiration of the divine power, the selfless rishis or the founders and prophets of a religion gave a sāstrā, a Bible or a Koran and the same has been followed by our forefathers and a weighty tradition had been established and the same is followed, there will be dharmā and good conduct. People in every country must understand: This is the path which Īswarā has laid for us. Even though He can be attained by whichever path one chooses or even if it is assumed that He can be attained even without choosing a path, when He who is conducting the affairs of the universe with so much plan and order has ordained that we should be born in such and such a place and such a religion, it is His will that we should follow the sāstrās which have been ordained by Him for that place. (Realising in this manner is real awakening). Having understood this it should be followed. It is this following the path of āchārā of forefathers which has been referred to as:

‘Samayāchāra mēva cha pūrvaḥ ācharithah kuryāth’

If it is not done this way, that is if a different path is followed he suffers a fall. (Pathithō bhavēth).

What does it mean by saying that he falls? He is standing on a particular step of a ladder. There is sāstrā to enable him to go up step by step. If the reformer says ‘If you have to move like this inch by inch, you have to remain in a low state for a long time. You make one jump’ and he breaks the step on which he is standing, he is not capable of going up in one jump but has to fall below wherever he is standing, he suffers a fall. (Anyathā Pathithō bhavēth).
THE DUTY OF A LEADER; WHAT THE GĪTĀ SAYS

Bṛhadāraṇyaka has already cautioned in the Gītā. He says: 'If you act different from the customs and āchārās of the world (although so far as you are concerned you may give them up) you will set a wrong example to the people. Looking at you they will also give them up. You may due to your evolved state be able to follow a higher path than what you have given up. Ordinary people would have only given up what they had followed but will not have the power and samskāra (accomplishment) to hook themselves on to something higher. They will give up what they are holding on too and fall to a lower level'. The following slōkās contain all these ideas.

'Saktāh karmānyavidhvāmsō
yathā kurvanthi Bhāratha
Kuryād vidhvām sthathā (a)
sakthās chikīrshour lōkasangraham’ (3.25)

'Na buddhi bhēdham janayēdh ajnānīm karmasanginām’

(3.26)

People are generally karmasangi, that is they remain bound by work only. There is no use talking to them about the ideal state, the soul and Jnānā etc. Śāstrās have prescribed for them several duties and also indicated the fruits for each whether they materialize immediately or remain invisible and fructify later. Such fruits (benefits) are indicated for the Yāgās and yagnas prescribed in the Vedhās - it will rain and there will be plenty of crops and grains; will bestow a brilliant intellect and the ability to address an assembly; finally swarga will materialize. For performing the prescribed Karmās what has been mentioned as the fruit is only ‘swarga vāsam' in which there is enjoyment through
the sense organs and not *Moksha* in which identity of the *jīvī* and Brahman is experienced. The reason is that if, in the beginning itself *Moksha* is mentioned, no one will go after that. Therefore *Karmās* have been prescribed for securing the enjoyments of swarga. It has been designed this way so that by doing such *Karmās* and by the discipline that results from it he will attain purity of mind even without his knowing or desiring or seeking and he can be turned to the ultimate and the permanent. Later, yagnas as part of religion become less. Yet prescribing other disciplines (*anushtāna*) for worldly benefits continues. ‘Go to *Rameswaram*; go round the pipal tree and you will have progeny; do *Sūrya namaskāram*, eye troubles will get cured, repeat Kanakadārā sthōthram, you will get money – *sāstrās* have prescribed several *Karmās* like these for gaining worldly benefits. Most people do these in expectation of the fruits.

In fact, these are people who are avidhvān, not having gained high knowledge. These are the people to whom Bhagawān refers as ‘Saktah karmanyavidhvamsō’. If you lecture to such people ‘do not go after such petty fruits, think of the highest goal of experiencing *Īswara*’, it will not click. Because they lack *samskarās*, they will have to be raised gradually from where they are, keeping in view the state of their mind. In order to make them suitable, the *sāstrās* have prescribed for them such activities which are not related to spirituality. They are doing these only for fruits. Let them do. By such activities not only do they get the desired fruits but also achieve the bigger fruit of gradual purification of the mind which they do not have in view.

I am now telling that mind gets purified even by activities which are in expectation of worldly benefits. What did I tell you till now? I said that changing religion for the sake of worldly gains like equality and rights will only make the mind more impure. These two are contradictory. Let us consider this.
THREE DIFFERENT IDEOLOGIES

There are three views. One is that religion itself prescribes activities for worldly gains. Another view is that religion must deal with the pure soul for the sake of high goal and therefore rituals, symbols, *Karma* etc should be taken out of it and reformed. The third is improvement in real life, self respect, scientific outlook (this is also called reason, that is it should appeal to the intellect) and since religious disciplines harm these aspects religion should be reformed. That is there are two groups in reform itself. One - this is mostly political - reforms to be done entirely for the sake of worldly life without any connection to spirituality. The other one: reform religion in such a way that the high spiritual experiences are made common to everyone. Both these groups are agreed that in worldly matters there should be no difference between man and man and there should be equality.

Till now when I referred to the reformists I have been talking about both the groups. Because of this there would have been some confusion. As I started talking, things are becoming a little clear to me and I shall try to make things clear to you also.

Although both the groups call for reform of religion and both want social equality, one group wants āchāra to be changed that is, to be given up for the sake of spiritual good, the other wants these to be given up only for worldly goals.
REFORM FOR ACHIEVING WORLDLY GOALS

Those mentioned latter are political leaders. Although what is talked about is labour and student movement, women's liberation etc, all these are in a way political only. It is our misfortune that although they try to make a verbal distinction between social and political, knowingly or unknowingly everything in our country has become political. There is politics in religion too! Let that be. These social reformers eliminate the old āchāras and the traditional activities of the people and create a mad desire for improvement in life style and make them engage in activities meant to secure it. It is as a part of this that strikes, demonstrations, clashes etc have been started on a big scale.

If it is said that these are also activities and those prescribed in sāstrās for begetting a child and for earning money are also activities, how much difference is there between both! The goal of both is worldly. Even so, when an activity prescribed in religion is done only for improvement in worldly life and not for spiritual goal, it has been so designed that there is thought of God when doing it. We carry out these activities by being submissive to Īswara, Devatha, Sāstrās and the elders with devotion and with the faith that the worldly good we seek is granted by a power much bigger than us. In other words (it is a bit strange) that while, on the one hand, it is true that religious discipline is for reaching the power beyond the world with the aid of the things of the world, here in a way we are engaged in activity for the improvement of our worldly life with the help of Īswara sakthi. We do things subjecting ourselves to a discipline according to the injunctions of sāstrā, act subject to these rules and regulations. Thus, by bhakthi to the Lord inherent in this, faith etc and the side effects such as humility, discipline etc, little by little the mind gets
purified even without our seeking it. Only when we go further and further in this, we attain the maturity to realize that religious *anushtānams* have to be done not for petty fruits but for the sake of the Lord Himself.

There is a lot of difference between carrying out activities with the thought of God and interest in the old āchāras etc and acting selfishly only for worldly things without being subject to any tradition or even God. That is why even when doing things purely for worldly life, those related to religion help purify the mind. Doing it in any other manner only increases the dirt in the mind.

I shall give a small example. We perform many rituals only with a view to gaining fruits. But supposing money is not coming as desired or a child is not born what do we do? At that time there is a sense of disappointment. But it is not deep. After all what was done was with faith in the *sāstrā*. What is the philosophy which is the root of the *sāstrā*? It is that things will happen according to *Karmā*. We did something as prescribed by the *sāstrā* in the hope that with the Lord’s blessings, we can make that *Karmā* help us. It did not happen. Even when it does not happen the same *sāstrā* says ‘it is *Karmā*, you have to expiate it’ and consoles us. Though we did something connected with God with some objective in mind we are not in a mood to give up that relationship with God and we continue to follow the *sāstrās* even though that object is not realized. Thus, we are gradually turned to the good path. It is rare that those who became frustrated because their prayers and *hōmams* for the life of near relatives were not fruitful became atheists.

But if such a failure occurs when acting socially or politically (action means only fight these days) what happens? Will anyone keep quiet thinking ‘this is our *karmā*’? Immediately they start a bigger fight and agitation. Hatred increases day by day. Does this not add impurity to the mind?
Even when the action does not result in failure but results in success this difference can be seen. When something is done according to sāstrās and the fruits of that action are achieved one would feel delicate to approach Bhagawān again for the same fruits. The realization gradually sets in; ‘What He has done to me is big’ and therefore ‘I should not keep on worrying Him for more and more benefits but should practise devotion with love and curtail such desires’. To that extent it purifies the mind. What happens when an agitation is conducted and the object of the agitation is achieved? We see that they claim more and more new rights and make more and more demands thinking ‘when we show our strength they are afraid and accept our demands. We shall give out more threats’. When the agitation fails enmity increases and if it succeeds desire and ego increase. This is also impurity.
REFORMS WITH SPIRITUAL GOALS

Till now I have spoken about social reforms. What about the religious reform movements started with the aim of raising people spiritually? These also result in the freedom that anyone can do anything in the name of equality and humility suffers to some extent. When these leaders who talk of orthodoxy and superstition say that tradition can be broken that gives courage to their followers to break everything. It is true that in some places the followers of such movements properly follow the new rules and ‘rituals’ prescribed for the movements in an organized manner. Yet those individuals who are not part of a colony do not come under the new rules and disciplines get lost. There is another fun; when the birthdays or the centenaries of the leaders or founders of these movements are celebrated, leaders in government, the intelligentsia and the newspapers write and speak a lot about such leaders. Releasing stamps and unveiling statues have become big rituals. But if we see how many members are there who have dedicated themselves to these movements and how many are there in Hindu religion which is ‘outmoded’ and unsuitable to the times’ it will be seen that ninety percent are hesitant for some reason to join the new intelligent groups and stick to the old conservative religion.

Even when I talk like this with pride this is one thing which is regrettable and also to feel ashamed about, it appears. People, even while remaining in the traditional Hindu religion, cry ‘Jai’ in support of the new reforms. What does it mean if they are praising the reforms even while remaining here? They are not sufficiently involved in the religion in which they are, nor do they have the courage to go and join the reform movement. On the whole, they have no conviction. Would not remaining in the traditional religion and yet supporting the tendencies which denigrate the āchārās amount to harming the mother religion?
It is not that only ordinary people commit this mistake. Some of those modern day religious heads and leaders to whom people go thinking them to be great and having divine aspects are responsible for this knowingly or unknowingly.
HEADS OF THE MODERN RELIGIONS WHICH HAVE NOT BECOME A SEPARATE SECT

Because I occupy one of the Āchāryā Pītams of Sanāthana Dharma if I talk about this matter, immediately there will be accusations of vested interests. Because it will be dhōsham (blemish) if I do not speak out what I have in my mind, I speak unmindful of any condemnations. Now a number of ‘Swāmiyārs’ have appeared. These people do not make it appear that they have branched off from the parent body, the Hindu religion and started a separate reformist religion. Even if there are institutions or missions carrying their name, they do not show them to be outside Hindu religion in the manner of reformist movements like Bramhō Samaj, Ārya Samāj, Theosophical society etc. These ‘Swāmijis’ call themselves representatives of traditional Hindu religion to which most people are attached and do not have courage to leave it. They deliver lectures on our Vēdantha, Ithiḥāsās etc, bringing out books and do propaganda. They celebrate our festivals. They teach everything from bhajan to yōga. Seeing this one gets the impression that these people do a lot of propaganda for religion more than the religious pītam like ours, and it appears they turn the people effectively towards religion - what is called renaissance. Such a crowd goes to them. Some of these people have the gift of the gab. They talk about spiritual matters beautifully in a manner that people can listen with interest and in an impressive way. Some other people go to some of them because of the belief that they have power to cure diseases etc. There are some who have such ‘siddhis’ (supernatural powers). People who go to them not only get benefited this way, they also begin to follow some religious customs.
Therefore religion is benefited even by the individual ‘Swāmiyārs’ who are not attached to any ancient religious Pitam. If I open my heart and speak at a time when the educated and the leaders of the country have branded the ‘Sanāthana āchārya Pitam’ like ours as old fashioned and conservative and created a prejudice in the minds of the younger generation, it can even be said that these ‘Swāmijis’ are responsible for their not becoming totally atheist but developing some interest in religion. Let it be some supernatural power or any other power. They are providing relief to some people. With that they are inducing in them a sense of fear and bhakthi. We have to think well of them for their talking and writing about spiritual matters and making propaganda.

Some spurious people also might have entered the field thinking it is an attractive field. People may get cheated by them. If in every second place there is a claim that someone is a divine messenger or messiah people begin doubting the genuineness of such claims. Still in their anxiety they run here and there like a desperately sick person trying to find some medicine which will cure him. In the same way even foreigners who, ridicule ‘gurudom’, and ‘Swāmidom’, come to them in large numbers and become disciples.

Simply because there could be some who are spurious, we cannot brand everyone as spurious. Whatever else is spurious or not, when someone goes to a ‘Swāmiji’ and he gets relieved, even though in reality he may not have been responsible for the relief, that he gets relieved of his distress is not spurious. Even if he does not live his personal life in the manner he preaches about it, let that be. Is it not a reality that on hearing him he has become clear in his mind? Let him (the Swāmiji) be in whatever manner he is – this man went to him thinking good. He gave up his ego and prostrated before him. He got benefited also. In the end he got a little bhakthi also and learnt some religious observances too. This is good as far as it goes.
Yet when we consider *samayāchāram* (religious discipline) what happens? These *Swāmijis* give up most of the ācharās prescribed by the sāsthṛās. The majority of them do not support the division of authority. (The divisions laid down by the sāsthṛās on the basis of *varṇa* dharmam and allocating the duties to different people accordingly). They are also those who have given up other disciplines also in the belief that they do not suit the times. Talking of the juice and the waste, the grain and the chaff they consider whatever is convenient to them as the juice or the grain and throw the rest as waste or chaff. They have given up the ācharās and *anushtānās* which are ninety percent of traditional religion telling that in the name of āchāram sanāthanis like us have given up the spirit and clinging on to the skeleton only. Yet they do not get out of the parent body, the Hindu religion, and form reform movements but remain in it and create an illusion to the people that what they follow is true Hindu religion. It is here that I feel that movements which get separated are preferable. If there is difference of opinion it would be good to sort it out by proper thinking and not get out. If that is not possible it is only correct not to go against the conscience but to separate. Continuing to remain in the parent body with difference of opinion, injecting into it views they like and then claim that the original body belongs to them and that those who have been in it traditionally should go out is not at all right. We are not worried about getting out. I am not saying this to protect ourselves either. We do not even cry that traditional religion is lost. I am only sorry that the permanent good of the people and orderly development become the casualty.

As mentioned earlier, the weight that the traditions based on sāsthṛās which have come from generation to generation and got strengthened in bestowing on us permanent good will not be there in the new disciplines formulated by individuals. He may be a great man; may have the power to bless; even then his power can only purify some who have surrendered to him but not all people in the
manner in which the traditional āchārās give purity, though slowly but steadily. What is permanent about individuals? After him how can someone with his powers take his place to guide the people?

In the religious Pitams that have come down from generation to generation the Pitādhāripathi (head of the Pitam) is not important. Whether a Pitādhāripathi comes or goes, what is important is the permanent traditional āchārā and anushtānam, principles and Siddhānthā (philosophy). It is a matter of pride for the Pitādhāripathi to follow this without any deviation. These Pītas talk a lot about āchārās and anushtānam prescribed by the sāstrās taking note of the huge load of Karmā and dirt with which a jīva is born and to purify it. That will be a hard and harsh path. Does not the dosage depend on the disease? If any number of doses become insufficient even surgery may have to be resorted to. In the interest of the people sāstrās do this surgical treatment also. Unless one is put through any number of Karmā and āchārā, purification of the mind will not materialize. The mind which is bent on cutting off and running away has to be stopped by trying over and over again.

The modern ‘Swāmiyārs’ say ‘all that is not necessary; no need for upavās; everything is Īswara’s Prasād only; eat whatever you want; what is there in a dress? What is there in tuft? Īswara takes note of the mind only and not these’ and recommend a little bhajan, japam, meditation etc and dilute the whole thing too much. Let us assume that their love or support or the power to bless or the sincerity of the bhakthi which those who see them show give a helping hand to some extent to those who are here now. But how much this can take care of when each one has a lot of balance of Karmā? It will only end up as a temporary peace or a little more than that. If those who succeed them think that the religion in which everything has been given up is Hindu religion and just as they are easy going in everything, in religion also if they stop with some superficial sādhanās there will be no permanent benefit. ‘It is enough if the name Rāmā is repeated once’, ‘sukārādhya’*
‘sulabāgathi’* (these names appear in Lalitā Sahasranāmam) that Bhagawān is easy to approach etc have been said to enthuse people and prevent them from being dejected feeling that there is no scope for redemption at all. It is true that if Bhagawān wants He can grant the highest blessing even if His name is pronounced once. It is also true that if there is strong faith that He is everything we can easily attain Him. But where does such a faith come? It is only one in a million cases that we see that He is lifting on his own in a moment. The general rule is that to the extent we have done sinful Karmās we have to do sāstrā Karmā to eliminate it. That also is His rule. Things happen as an exception to this rule once in a way. It is wrong to think that this will happen or should happen to everybody and give up the rules.

After giving up most of the injunctions, making people believe that they are the originals of the religion who have understood its spirit and making them also violate the rules will result only in harm however well intentioned it may be. Because of such dilution of āchārā even if people have not become atheists instead of moving up they are only going down. This is crystal clear. Excepting some who are totally atheistic and some who are fully attached to the sanāthana āchāram all others are followers of some Śwāmiji or the other. But what does it indicate if in the world there are more things which are not good?

Those who make a mixture of some of the old āchārās and some of their own views whatever temporary good they may do, in the end people are harmed. What is the harm? If the old āchārās are given up it is said it is ‘Pathitho bhavēth’. What greater harm there is than becoming a Pathithan?

They ask ‘Should there not be catholicity?’ It is true that broad mindedness which embraces everything is required. But that

* ‘Sukārādhyā’ means one who can be worshipped easily. ‘sulabagathi’ means one who can be attained easily.
entirely relates to the mind, is it not? If each activity is not according to the way it is designed to be how will it take place? Where will be order? Will the rule for football be allowed in cricket? They talk of catholicity only for creating confusion in āchārā.

If tradition is to be accepted it should be accepted fully; if they try to give up they should give up entirely. Accepting what they like and giving up what they do not like and still creating the make believe of traditional religion is wrong. If a sishyā is to surrender to the guru in some matters and in other matters he acts as he likes or the wife surrenders to the husband in some matters and acts as she likes in other matters will not people laugh? Is it not sin? Even if the guru or the husband has some shortcoming, if the surrender made by the sishyā or the wife is absolute they are redeemed. In the same manner even assuming that some bad aspects have crept into a tradition if it is believed and one surrenders by dissolving ego there will be redemption. When a tradition is changed on the basis of personal opinion the ego that needs to be dissolved shows up and becomes entrenched. If each Swāmiji has a difference of opinion on different matters, which is to be taken as right, which is to be taken as wrong and which is to be accepted?

They say they too perform yagnas and do Vedic recitation (Vedha pārāyaṇam). I feel it will be better if they do not do these. It is because these things are being done, people get the wrong impression that only this is traditional religion. Otherwise people will keep away thinking that it is a religion which has branched off from the original. Since in their heart of hearts they are afraid to get out of the original religion, they perform yagnas, perform pūjā with all accompaniments, like ringing the bell, doing long recitation (akanda pārāyaṇam). People who see these things think ‘Oh, these are people who are attached to sanāthana Hindu dharmam. We can also join them’ – people feel encouraged to join
them. To cap it all when the modern Swāmijis invite the traditional vaidhikās, conduct a sadhas and honour them, people think ‘these are people who are definitely following the traditional way. These are the people who protect it’.

When one goes near what does one find? It is true yagna, pūjā and pārāyanam are conducted. They are doing it on a scale which we cannot afford. But they do these things violating the rules laid down by the sāsthraś. Importantly in the name of equality they do not pay attention to purity (samskār) and create confusion and remove the severe restrictions and make it convenient. Although they perform what the sāsthraś say they do not perform it according to the rules and regulations laid down by the sāsthraś. When an experiment is to be conducted in a laboratory, there are regulations, ‘it has to be done in this manner, these are the instruments necessary, temperature should be this much, the person must wear this dress, metal should not be used, the person should wear rubber etc’. Only if these are followed the experiment will be successful. Will any one change these according to one’s own opinion? The Karmās laid down by sāsthraś are also like this.

The person who works in the laboratory does so with the fear of the regulations. If he violates them the instrument will break or he himself may get hurt. When the Karmās prescribed by the sāsthraś are done contrary to regulation, since the bad result is not immediately seen one feels encouraged to do as he likes. This is the difference between science and sāsthraś. Science gives the result immediately (that the experiment has gone wrong). Sāsthraś show the ‘invisible’ results about what has gone contrary to expectation only later and it can only be guessed and understood. It is said that Īśwara is the invisible player. With so many yajnas, pārāyanams, archanās being performed in lakhs and crores, violence and disturbances are on the increase in the world. From this we can guess. This is proof that if anything is done against the āchārās, it will not give the desired fruits.
THE MODERN VEDANTHIS

There are some who are of a different type. They do not go out of the religion in the name of reforming it but make a claim that they are its custodians. They talk of Vedhantha and say that excepting philosophy all that are ‘Karma’, are only chaff fit to be thrown away. Really speaking we cannot do without Karmās for improving the quality of the ordinary person. That is why even those who have given up the orthodox anushtānas insist on people being engaged in working on the charka, making handicrafts etc. Because I feel what I have been saying again and again is not enough I repeat it. There is no scope for purifying the mind without doing Karmā and tireless work.

Sāstrās have prescribed Karmās considering the mind of the individual for the sake of benefits to be obtained here and in the heaven which means the pleasure of the senses. But by merely doing these Karmās the pull of the senses gets reduced gradually, the mind gets purified and is trained to meditate without work. What would happen if it is said there is no need for work and merely Vēdanthā is talked about? I shall answer this in Krishnā Paramāthma’s words rather than in my words.

‘Karmendhriyāṁī samyamya ya āsthe manasā smaran
Indhriyārthāṁ vi mūdāthmā mithyāchāra sa uchyatē’ (3-6)

It means ‘Is there Jñāna in work? All that is not necessary’ – If with such a thought the sense organs (motor organs) are left without work and attempt is made to get into meditation directly what would happen? Does that mind think of the Paramāthma? No.

Indhriyārthāṁ manasā smaran

The mind thinks only of the mean pleasures of the sense organs. When the sense organs are not purified by Karmās, the
mind also will not get rid of its dirt and will not rise above. Even though outwardly he may be called a philosopher or even a rishi (nowadays when there are a large number of newspapers everything is exaggerated) and however much he may shine through books and lectures, when he is having dirt in his mind, Bhagawan calls him 'vimūḍātmā' - a great fool. One who is praised by the people of the world as 'an intelligent person who has saved us and our religion from those who without any sense insist on tying ourselves with Karmās' the Bhagawan calls the same person 'vimūḍathmā'. He says something more than that.

mithyāchāra

'Mithyā' means what appears to be true but which in fact is a make believe which would be found to be false. He calls the Vedānti who says that āchārās are not necessary, a mithyāchārā. He has given up Karmās 'Is not the purity of the mind everything?' he says. But his mind is impure. For the outside world he pretends to be a Vedānti. Since he is something inside and different outwardly, he talks of high ideas and has mean conduct, he is called 'mithyāchārā'. The correct word for mithyāchārā is a hypocrite. Being lazy to engage in work, an aversion to feel bound by a discipline - it is for these they talk of Vedānthā separating it from sāsthrā Karmā. If we have a look inside - I feel sad to say this - since they have gone out of all discipline a lot of lapses* are noticed.

Those who follow the āchārās - let them be fools, let them be a bundle of selfish people, let them be merciless people- but such lapses are not found in them, is it not? That is the power of discipline.

* It appears that Periyavā deliberately used the word 'lapses' because he thought that saying it in Tamil would have sounded very harsh.
NET RESULT

Thus if we consider in brief the several reforms of āchārā: If the old discipline is replaced by a set of new ones, people now used to violating the old codes would violate the new ones also and be without any control. Their activities are all for selfish ends.

They are all meant to inflate the ego. If āchārās are relaxed because they are tough and made fashionable, the fruits will also slip away. Purification of the mind does not materialize. If he says 'there is nothing in doing things, it is all Vedānta' he becomes a lazy person; in such a state not only does the mind not get purified but it adds to itself more dirt losing whatever purity it may have. It is just the opposite of āchāram. Since the discipline involved in āchārās is gone, he indulge in misconduct - eating anything, drinking, carrying tales and committing several big sins. On the whole, it is hypocrisy which will increase.
THE ONE WHO KNOWS AND THOSE WHO DO NOT KNOW

_Bhagawān_ warns _Arjunā_ that all people should not be let free to fall into the flood of a _dharma_. I started with this. Then I had strayed into other subjects but all of them connected with _samayāchāram_. People do desire for the fruits of their actions. I told what _Bhagawān_ had said namely that, in the state in which they are, ‘_Nishkāmyam_’ ‘_Naishkarmyam_’ ‘_Dyānam_’ ‘_Jnāna_’ will not appeal to them. I also said that these people have been described as ‘_Avidhvāmsa_’, those who have not gained the correct knowledge.

All right, what should a _vidhvān_ who has gained correct knowledge do? Are they to reduce the _Karma_ and make it easy in the manner of the reformists? Are they to advise, ‘All _Karma_ is useless. Purity of mind is what is important. Therefore come to _jnāna_’ In the end _Bhagawān_ preaches the giving up of all _Karmās_ and dissolving them in _jnānā_ but that is only at the end, not in the beginning. What does he say that a _vidhwān_ should do in the beginning?

‘..._avidhvāmsō yathā kurvanthi Bhāratha_

_kuryāth vidvāṁ sthathā_’

Addressing Arjuna as Bharatha He tells him ‘_yathā avidhvāmsah kurvanthi thathā vidvān kuryāth_’. He speaks in a strange way. The world generally says that the _avidhvān_ (anjāni) should do things the way the _vidhwān_ (jnāni) does. But the meaning of what _Bhagawān_ says is quite the opposite.

_Yathā_ - in whatever manner

_Avidhvāmsa_ - the ordinary people who are _anjānis_.

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Kurvanthi - do
thathā - in the same manner
Vidhwan - the jnāni also
Kuryāth - must do

He clearly says that a jnāni must act in the manner of the ajnāni.

The ajnāni is attached to the fruits of his desires; It is for that he does the Karmās prescribed by sāstrās. Bhagawān says ‘the same sāstrā Karmās the jnāni also should do, my dear’. If it is asked, ‘Can a jnāni have such desires and attachment?’ He says ‘Did I say like that? I only said that the jnāni also should do Karmā but I did not say that he must do it for gaining the fruits of his desires. If you have a doubt I will just now add a qualifying clause’ and then adds the word ‘asaktha’ (kuryāth vidhwan thathā asaktha). Asaktha means one who has no attachment. In the beginning when he talks of the ajnāni the very first word used is sakthah. He started with saying ‘those who have attachment’. He says that the same Karmās which the ajnānis perform because of their attachment to the fruits of their desire should be done by the vidhwan but without attachment.

What for? Jnāni means one who has attained jnānā. There is nothing beyond jnānā which he has to get. When he is not in need of the fruits also what for these Karmās?’ ‘Oh, that one? Did I say that he must do for his sake?’ But if it is asked why then he should do -

‘Śikīrshur lōka sangraham’

Sangraham means getting hold of something firmly. That is get hold and protect. ‘Lōka sangraham’ means to hold the world with love and protect it - to guide on the good path. Lōka means only the anjāni. Jnāni is one who has moved beyond the world.

‘Śikīrshur’ - desiring, wishing

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'Loka sangraham śikirshur' - wishing to take the world on the noble path.

It is true that a jñāni should not have desire. Still Bhagawān Himself makes his heart melt with compassion and desires to save the world; ‘Poor people of the world! They have gone the wrong way and are suffering; they are to be saved’. That means it is for raising the people that jñāni also has to perform the sāsthra Karmās like them and demonstrate to them. It is precisely for taking them to his own high state he has to come down the ladder, give them a helping hand, hold their hands tight (sam-āraham) and raise them up.

Whatever sāsthra Karmās the ordinary people have to perform have to be performed by the jñāni also. He should be a role model to them and make them also perform them. It is only after that he has to give them his jñāna and bhakthi. At this stage they will have no taste for these. Therefore, for them to do the sāsthra Karmās, even the jñāni who has transcended these (jñāni includes the devotee) has to perform them and encourage them to do these. To make them become like him, he has to first become like them. He who is in the high state and has really no attachment to Karmā has to act like that (it is contrary to this that these days even people who are not steadily attached to Vēdānthā pretend to be so!)

If that be so, will not the blemish of mithyāchārā affect the jñāni?

No, it will not. The reality is that for him there is nothing like inside or outside! The state in which one is not attached to anything is jnāna. In such a state how will a blemish get attached to him? There is one other explanation: Does he, in the manner of the one who pretends to be a Vēdānthi, act like this with the bad desire that the world should think high of him? If the one pretends to be a jñāni because temperamentally he does not like to perform
the **Karmās**, does not this one who can remain peaceful in the actionless state of *jnānā* show himself to be lower than what he is, taking upon himself *Karmās* which are not at all necessary for him just out of compassion for the ordinary people? This can only be a sacrifice. How can it be *mithyāchārā*?

All right, why should he perform these *sāsthra* *Karmās*?

The world thinks of him to be noble. People have the innate desire to conduct themselves in the manner of those who are in a superior state.

‘Yad Yad ācharathi sṛeshtah thath thath eva itharō janah

While they have such desire, if the conduct of the *sṛeshtas* is of a high level, they cannot follow them, cannot practise them and they will meet with failure; in order to hide their failure they will pretend. That is why one who is a *sṛeshtā* comes down to the level of the ordinary people and shows by his own example the discipline of that level. Although it is low level for the *jnāni*, for the ordinary man it is higher than what he can do. It is only if he gives up this level of the *sāsthra* *Karma*, he will go down still further and get spoiled. If ordinary people get immersed in the slush of activities related to sensual pleasures yielding to the pull of the senses, later on it will become impossible even for a *sṛeshtā* to lift them up. The *sṛeshtā* must, without a trace of attachment, perform and show the *sāsthra* *Karmā* - a *Karma* which even while giving small benefits at one level does not allow the senses to go out of control and give them the fruits they like but at the same time control them and purify them. People who see him and want to follow him will be able to practise them. *Karma* is not like *dhyānā* and self enquiry which are difficult to engage in. All will do the *Karmās*. Since the goal is not moksha or cessation of the cycle of birth and death which do not appeal to them but something that they desire to have they will perform these *Karmās* putting up with the difficulties and disciplines. Because they perform the *Karmās*
undergoing hardship and subjecting themselves to a discipline the Karmās will not only give the fruits which they desire but also a fruit which they have not thought of namely clearing up their internal dirt and reducing desires and attachments. Then they will continue with the performance of sāstrā Karmā not for the fruits of this world but for the proper conduct of the society, the family, and for the individual to be disciplined and steadily develop himself. This is nishkāmya Karmā. The path to it is doing the sāstrā Karmā not for the fruits of this world but for the proper conduct of the society, the family, and for the individual to be disciplined and steadily develop himself. This is nishkāmya Karmā. The path to it is doing the sāstrā Karmā with fruits in view. What is done with desire for the fruits is kāmyam.

Bhagawān commands that one who is at the top level – who is called a sreśhtā – has to perform the sāstrā Karmā without desire or attachment in order to show it to the ordinary people and make them do the Karmās, subjecting themselves to sāstrā āchārā, at least for the sake of fruits. What he said that the ordinary people should do it as ‘saktha’ is kāmyam; for the vidhwān to do it as asakthā is nishkāmyam.

Even if the vidhwān does not do and show to the ordinary people they will be doing some Karmā or the other – with desire for fruit. ‘I want this, I want that’. No one keeps quiet even for a moment without doing some work.

‘Na hi kaschith kshañamapi jāthu thishtath – yakarmakrith’

This is because the prakriti which is māyā ties him with sathva, rajā, thamō qualities without his knowing and makes him keep doing something or the other.

‘Kāryathē hyavāsa karma sarva prakriti jair gunai’

Therefore even if the vidhwān does not perform as an example and show, ordinary people will keep doing something or the other to satisfy their desires. What the vidhwān does is to induce them by his own example to do the same thing within the bounds of sāstrā. Even though the objective of the Karmā is
kāmyam (to obtain some fruits) when the means to it is changed according to the sāstrās instead of the way one wishes to follow, its quality gets changed. What is of a low or poor quality is changed to a noble one. Even if the Karmās are performed to fulfill one's wishes, once it is to be done according to sāstrās there are so many regulations as one has to be up from bed at a particular time, must have a bath, have food of sātvik quality after such and such time, hōmam to be performed with the body sweating etc. Instead of doing according to sāstrās when these are done according to one's own wishes, these restrictions are not there. Because they are done without a discipline, desire and dirt increase. When the same thing is done according to the rules of discipline, peace and purification start materializing. When it is done according to one's own wishes only ego increases. There is no place there for fear or bhakthi. When it is said that it is only Īswara who gives the desired fruits and that by praying to Him the desired thing should be obtained fear and bhakthi are created and he gets purified.
SUGAR - COATED PILL

The sugar-coated pill can be given as an example to show the people the way of sāstrā Karmā for obtaining the desired fruits and make them follow the right path. It is the desired fruit that tastes sweet to the person. He is ignorant like the child. Just as the child does not know that sugar is not good for the body he does not know that the comforts of this world are bad for the ātmā. The rishis who had authored the sāstrās had compassion towards this child also. That is why they want to give it the peppermint it wants. Although the child thinks it is peppermint there is medicine inside. Medicine had been kept inside and sugar coating has been given. There is a lot of medicine inside which will bring down the heat of the body. It is only outside there is a little sugar coating which will increase the heat. This is sāstrā Karmā. Outside it is sweet - satisfaction of the desire. Inside there is medicine of viveka which will make it clear that all these desires are only hardship and bind the person to the right discipline. The child takes the sweet not knowing that there is medicine inside. Because of that will the medicine not have its effect?

Another thing: Although Bhagawān talks of kāmya Karmā here, when it is done according to sāstrās certain other Karmās have also been prescribed which are nishkāmya. It is not stated that by performing Sandhyāvandanā such and such a benefit will accrue. But we have been made to perform it by creating the fear that if it is not done it is sin, blemish. In his desire for fruits, he does one or two nishkāmya Karmā also along with the kāmya karmā. This helps him further in cleaning up the mind.
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THOSE TIMES AND THE DETERIORATION OF THESE TIMES

What some reformists say these days is that all people including the ordinary ones must involve themselves in philosophical enquiry like a jnāni instead of sāstrā Karmā; what Bhagawān and sāstrās say is that even the jnāni should do the sāstrā Karmā and observe āchārā and anushtāna like the ordinary person and show to others.

To find out which is correct it is enough if history and the practical situation are considered. History provides evidence that so long as we were following what Bhagawān had said, our country was a model to the world in respect of truth, dharmā, bhakthi, jnānā, culture and civilization and order in the society. Now when people have started acting according to the reformists we know what the condition is. As the Gītā says so long as the man at the higher state performed the Karmās as all people have to do and showed himself to be an example to those below, all people moved up. Now with those who are in the lower state pretending to have reached to the top, all of us are going down. The country had attained a glorious state not only in the spiritual field but science and arts and commerce (people had gone overseas and traded) only when the jnāni who had given up every thing and was in an absolutely free state did Karmās according to sāstrās and made others do the same. There is absolutely no basis for the view that we remained backward in science and economics because we were only talking of āthmā and considered the world as an illusion. The Hindu society became subdued and became backward in these only due to Muslim and British rule and not because of the religious āchārās and the philosophy*.

* regarding this see the second volume Vidyāsthānam - conclusion and the chapter ‘Vādika religion that has spread all over the world’
Now when the ordinary people who can get spiritual purification only if they are under a discipline and control have been allowed a free run without control we are going down in everything. One may say ‘You can say that spiritually we are going down but in science and commerce we have progressed. We have thoroughly mastered atomic research, electronics etc. But when people of other countries, who have till now been praising our country as the country of dharmā have started telling that we have gone down in moral standards what is the use of our progressing in these? Although we claim that we have progressed in commerce we feel ashamed when we hear what importers of other countries say. They say ‘The sample that these Indians show is of a particular quality; what is being sent is different; they are not honest’. It is heard that in the matter of development of science they do not seem to trust us for mutual exchange of information and joint research.

In olden times it was on the strong foundation of dharmā evolved through regulations that science, commerce and everything else progressed well and gained good name. Without a strong foundation what is now said to be progress will not be permanent.

It is sad that the people have been told with ease that the old āchārās are not necessary and they have been made to believe this as Vēdhic truth (accepting as Vēdhic truth the statement that the Vēdhic way is not required). There is no need for much debate to decide whether it is required or not. What I have spoken all along is also not necessary. This can be decided on the basis of a small matter. Is a debate necessary to decide whether a sick person needs medicine or not? If we see what happens when medicine is given and when medicine is stopped, is that not enough? As long as medicine is given the disease shows signs of coming down and if it is stopped it goes up. This is seen practically. Therefore does it not mean that medicine is necessary? So long as the old āchārās
prevailed there was progress on all fronts and more than that there was unity and good conduct. Once we started driving them away these are also being driven away. From this we have to understand that without that medicine the āthmā will become sick. If we do not take one meal and become tired we know we have to take food. What can be done if we do not realize that, after giving up the old āchārās, peace in individual life and social life has gone and therefore the old āchārās are necessary? Those who are at the helm do not want to realize this.

While it is difficult to admit that we have erred, at least when we have reached such a stage that everything is being lost, should we not admit the mistakes, come out and take other people also out? Even now everything is not lost. That is why I am saying this and you are all listening to what I say. It is not enough if you just listen. It is not enough merely to hear the forecast of a storm. We have to take measures to ensure that it does not affect us. What is weather-proof, the protector of dharmā and its armour is only the samayāchārā of our forefathers. Therefore the proper response to having listened to this is to try to act according to what has been heard.

’Sikām sūthram cha puńdram cha samayāchāram ēva cha Purvaih ācharithāḥ kuryāth anyathā pathitho bhaveth’

We all call Bhagawan ‘Pathītha Pāvanan’. Due to Gandhi at least ‘Pathītha Pāvana Sīthārām’ has come to stay (it is prevailing in the country). That Rama did everything according to sāstrā. Instead of giving Him the work of making us pure (pāvana) after we are slipped from the path and fallen, let us pray to Him to raise us to the path followed by our forefathers and protect us.
A NARROW PATHWAY

Our āchārās have come down without any indication about who established them and when. Rāmānuja, Madhva, Chaithanyakar and others whose names we know established traditions at different times. Most of these traditions and the āchārās followed by those belonging to these traditions are like this, without any information about who established them and when. It can be said of other religions that a particular person established the āchārā at a particular time. The same cannot be said of our religion.

Those religions are like a tar road of which it can be said that it was laid by a particular engineer in a particular year. But what about our religion? This is like a narrow pathway on which only one can walk and which has been formed by people using it over a long time. Can we say who laid that track? Not possible. In a superficial manner it can be said that a tar road is superior. But if we think about it, the narrow pathway seems to be better in several respects. The tar road needs to be repaired every year as people go on using it. But the pathway becomes better as it is used more and more. Accidents take place on the tar road but we do not have accidents on a narrow pathway. Some tar roads end up in a blind alley since there is no way ahead. Will any pathway end up like that? It is a pathway which is open. It has got softened by our forefathers walking over it in large groups, a way on which there is no accident. Although it lacks the glamour of a tar road, it is the pathway, our old āchārās, which will comfortably and slowly reach us to the Paramāthmā. If it is said that one can travel by a car over the tar road and reach quickly we can walk on the pathway which is a short cut and reach in the same time without accidents.
MENTAL DISCIPLINE RULING OVER NATURE'S LAWS

Mental discipline results from āchārā. It is entirely wrong to think that āchārās belong to the external. It is because of the āchārās that the mind develops noble qualities and high level of discipline grows. If a man’s mental discipline is good his power is not ordinary. It not only controls and rules over the passions of his indriyās which is his nature but it controls and rules over the external Nature. The old saying in Tamil is that if a Brahmin follows the āchārā of Vedha adhyayanā there will be one rain for it out of three.

In the same way it says that for the conduct of the chaste woman it rains once. The same thing is said by Thirukkural which even the rationalists praise. If the king’s rule is just it will bring one rain. As the reverse of this if these people conduct themselves the wrong way Nature also will behave in an erratic way.

Valluvar also says: If the king deviates from the path of justice, the Brahmin also will forget the adhyayanā which is his āchārā. He warns that if any one person goes the wrong way the others also will go the wrong way. It is not only that when man loses his mental discipline there is the chain reaction of the evil effects. If the king gives up his āchārā, availability of milk will be affected. This is what Thiruvalluvar the ‘divine poet’ says. Rationalism cannot counter this.

Even the forces of Nature which are said to be unalterable are subject to man’s mental discipline.

It is the one Īswarā’s form of dharma (dharma swarūpam) which has become two - the great order and discipline found in Nature (external) and the man’s mental discipline based on āchārā. In this it is only man who can consciously create the dharma of the
mind and bring into it Īśvara's presence (sān nidhyām). It is by that divine power it is possible for him to control and rule over external Nature.

It is discipline that has kept the sun, the moon, the mind and gravity in a particular order. It is not just physics. Only if the mind is good these will also be good and will be helpful to the world. Charaka Samhitā says that if people's mind is spoiled then the disturbances in nature will also increase. We read in stories and Purāṇās what all miracles were performed by those who were great in conduct. Just as it is said that if a chaste woman says it should rain, it will rain, there is also a similar saying about fire which the story of Kannagi tells. In the same Madurai when the mutt in which Jnānasambandhar was staying was set fire to by the Jains and when he prayed to Īśwarā that the fire should affect their supporter, the Pāṇḍian king, (as initial punishment to bring him to the right path) the fire affected the king in the form of leprosy.

Newton's law that action and reaction are equal and opposite is not only based on the karma theory relating to all activities, it is also based on the reaction to thoughts and the power mental discipline has not only on other minds but also on natural forces. What our religion has said as applicable to the mental plane, the metaphysical plane and the physical plane is what Newton's law says only with reference to the physical plane. When he said the reaction is opposite it will not mean that the reaction to good will be bad or reaction to putiyam will be sin. The reason why he said 'opposite' is: If a ball is struck against a wall it rebounds with the same force in the opposite direction. Since all reactions in the physical plane are like this the way our putiyam spreads outside it returns to us from outside; what is bad (sin) is also like this. That is its meaning.

Scientists themselves say that if the inert external nature has been contained only in the physical plane the sun would have
become cold long before. They say that somehow heat keeps generating in it and they try to guess the reasons for this. The original reason is Īśwara’s power only. It is that which keeps feeding the sun with heat so that heat remains constant for the sake of ‘prapancha dharmā’ (for the orderly behaviour of the world and for the sake of life in the worlds). Even though scientists keep questioning and find out reasons, ultimately they get stuck against the origin for which science cannot give reason. Great people like Einstein say that that is Īśvara sakthi and bow to it. Since mental discipline and the orderliness of human life are another form of dharmā which has the same sakthi it is mental discipline which makes Nature too favourable or unfavourable.

In the ‘Phalasruthi’ (what is usually said at the end of sthōthrās as the benefits accruing due to the recitation of such sthōthrās) of Vishṇu Sahasranāmam (the thousand names of Vishṇu) it has been beautifully stated that Bhagawān is the origin of the dharmā relating to the inert world and the Nature and dharmā based on religion which creates mental discipline. What supports is dharmā. In one of the slokas it is said that the personification of dharmā which supports in a subtle way the stars, the earth which hang in space and ensures that the water in the ocean does not fall off is only Bhagawān.

‘Dhyau sa chandrārka nakshathrā kam
dhiśo bhūr mahōdhadhīh
Vāsudēvasya vīryēṇa vidhruthāṇi Mahāthmanah’

Saying first that it is Vāsūdeva’s power that supports the entire universe and the ocean of the earth in their place it then describes that man who is the conscious universe and all that relates to him, the senses, mind, intellect, individual qualities, effulgence, strength, courage, the body which is the kshēthra (the field) and ātmā which is kshēthragna in the form of intelligence – all these are Vāsudēva only.
‘Indriyāṇi mano buddhīḥ sath thvam thejō bhalam dhruṭih
Vāsudevāthmaṅkān yāhu kṣethram kṣethragna eva cha’

Bhagawān Himself holds the insentient things of the universe together and keeps them on the path of dharma.

The next sloka makes it clear: In the conscious living universe of life He has given the mind, He has given it freedom so that it wanders in all ways and has given the sāstrās and āchārās within them as the first to enable man to discipline the mind. This sloka is the grand finale of all that I have said till now about āchārā.

‘Sarvāgamānam āchārah prathamam parikalpathe
Āchāra prabhavō dharmō dharmasya prabhu - racyuthah’

Āchārā has been determined as the first of all sāstrās which are called āgamās. What flows from āchārā is dharma. What the sloka means is that the Lord of that dharma is Achyuthā, the Bhagawān. Achyuthā means one who is not shaky but remains steady. Should not that dharma which is the path of righteousness be steady?

The way of dharma which comes out of the āchārās of the universe of life and consciousness and the orderliness of the inert universe have been combined and given. That means it is only by our āchārās that not only our life and our social life but the life of the world will be on the right track. That Bhagawān Achyuthā, Vāsudēvā should shower His grace so that those with modern attitude understand this. Since dharma is born out of āchārā Bhagawān who is the Lord of dharma should bless so that sadāchārā thrives.
THE INTERNAL DIVISION OF
RELIGIOUS ĀCHĀRĀ
(MADHĀCHĀRAM)

(This is an explanation of the earlier talk*)

Sikam (the tuft) Puṭṭram (mark on the forehead) sūthram (the Sāstrās) belong to Hindu religion. These are not there in other religions. Therefore it is very clear that the divisions within Hindu religion itself have to be accepted and those born in this have to follow the āchārās followed by their forefathers.

Then a question arises. Hindu religion is Vēdhic religion. The original base for it are the Vēdhās otherwise called Śruthi. The next base is Dharmā sāstrā which is based on the Vēdhās and which explain what has been said in it indirectly and as hints. Thus Vēdhās are the very breath of this religion. Several divisions have evolved within this on the basis of the interpretation of the Vēdhās. One person establishes what is called Dhwaiṁtham, another Adhvaṁtham. Some others say it is neither but it is Viśisṭādhvaṁtham, Śuddha Dhvaṁtham, Dwvaṁthadvaṁtham etc. One person says that in the Vaidikha religion all gods are only Paramāthmā. Another says Viśnu only is Paramāthmā and others are not. Someone else says similarly about Śiva. Everyone says that whatever he says is the correct interpretation of the Vēdhās. Even though we give the names Dwaiṁtham, Adhvaṁtham etc these are all only sub-titles and the title is that we belong to the religion of the Vēdhās.

* This is what Periyavā delivered in continuation of the previous talk. He had ended the previous talk as if he had concluded it. But he continued as if something occurred to him. Since the way the previous talk was ended gives the impression that he had concluded it, this is being given separately but as a continuation
The question arises from this: Is it wrong if one were to leave the *Vedha* religion and go to another religion? Does he become fallen? Or if a person goes from one division in the Hindu religion to another division, does he suffer the blemish of becoming a pathithan?

In the *slōka*, *sikam*, pundram and *sūthram* which are part of the *Vedhic* religion only have been mentioned. It says that in all these one should follow his forefathers, otherwise he becomes a pathithan. Therefore it is not all right to ask whether one can move from one division in Hindu religion to another in the same religion. But such a question cannot be dismissed either as just being for the sake of argument. It appears that what is being asked is just. Therefore it has to be listened to, well thought about and then a reply given.

What is the argument? 'The other religions are those which do not have the *Vedhās* as the authority. Their basic religious text is one of these - Bible, Koran, Thripitakam, Zend Avastha, Granth Sahib, Old Testament. Therefore it is wrong for those of us who are born into the *Vedhīc* religion, to go to one of them. But if we continue to be in the *Vedhīc* religion and go from one division to another how does it become wrong? How was it before these divisions came about? What have you yourself said about this? The *Vedhās* at one stage provide room for different views and philosophies of Hindu religion. Even before the divisions such as Dhvaitham, *Visishtādvaitham*, Adhvaitham, *Śaivam*, *Vaishnāvam* etc came about if one was at a particular stage of maturity, depending upon that he was at the philosophical level a Dhwaithi, Adhvaithi or something else and in the matter of worship he was a *Śiva bhakthā* or *Vishnu bhakthā* or *Ambāl bhakthā*. If we look into *Śruti* - Smruthi it will be seen that no conclusion has been reached about a particular god common to all. Therefore he followed the philosophy about which he had conviction, worshipped a god that appealed to him and continued to be Hindu following the same
tradition without getting separated. All people followed the same samskārās and āchārās according to dharma sāstrā. Even in the same family different members followed different systems of philosophy and some were worshippers of Śiva and some were worshippers of Viṣṇu. They were performing the ‘Śrouta Smārtha Karmās’ (What follows Śruti is sroutham. What follows Smruthi is smārtham) namely the Pancha Mahā Yagnās, the forty samskārās, sandhyāvandanam etc without any difference. It is only in later days that divisions came up on the basis of philosophy and worship of different gods. This is what you have said. Therefore if someone is born a Dхаithi can he not become an Adhvaithi out of conviction? If someone in a family in which only Śiva pūjā was always being performed, has bhakthi towards Viṣṇu, is it wrong if he gives up what has been practiced at home and takes to Viṣṇu pūjā? Since such freedom existed during the times before the divisions developed, even now if without going against the Vēdhic religion, he gives up the āchārā of his clan and according to his conscience he acts differently, how can that be wrong?’

The question goes beyond this. I am being cornered on the basis of whatever I myself had said. ‘Śankarāchāriār did not consider those who followed his philosophy as a separate branch of the Vēdhic tradition (Sampradhāyā) nor did he treat them like that. As proof of this the common name smārthā which was prevalent for Hindus till then continues to be the name of those who have adopted him as their āchāryā. The followers of Śankarā have the name smārthā only which means those who follow the Dharma Śāstrās common to all Hindus unlike the followers of Rāmānujā who are called Vaishnava, the followers of Madhwa who are called Madhwa etc. He had only established the āchārā, anushtānās and samskārās prescribed by the śāstrās before his time but did not make any change. It is only when other āchāryās came, they gave different names for each of their traditions,
although they too largely followed the ancient Dharma Sāstrās in the matter of āchāram, anushtānam and samskārā. Along with these they introduced something more as a mark of identification of their new division (Samāsrayaṇam, Mudhrādharaṇam etc). They also made a few changes by reducing the importance to Śrouta Smārtha Karmās and giving greater importance to Purāṇās etc. In the matter of pundram also (wearing the symbol on the forehead) they made some changes’ - I said all these, is it not? On the basis of this, they ask ‘From what you have said it appears that the later day āchāryās had acted contrary to the kulāchārā (the āchārās followed by the clan). If that be so, how does it matter if someone while remaining as a Hindu goes from Smārthā to Vaishīavā or from Mādhwā to Smārthā?’ - the argument goes thus.

Although this argument looks justified, I should only say what the view of sāstrās is on this. Having advised you that we should follow our forefathers I cannot say something contrary to their views. Therefore I say that everyone should follow the āchārā of the clan in which he is born. If sāstrās are to be believed then argument has no value. However fair the argument may appear to be, we have to accept that when sāstrās say a thing there must be something in it which is fair but of which we are not aware and act accordingly. When we talk of faith, does it not mean that it cannot be understood by the intellect alone? What can be conclusively understood by the intellect we will understand on our own, so what is there in it for faith? We have to have faith only in a thing not known. If it is said that the mike is in the front what is there in it for faith? Therefore since there are phrases such as religious faith, faith in sāstrā, faith in God etc, - religion itself has the name faith - it would only mean that explanation for everything in it cannot be had by intellectual arguments.

But instead of leaving it at this I shall give reasons also why people from different divisions of Hindu religion should follow the āchārā applicable to the clan of their birth.
The first question: Because of conviction in a philosophy can one change from Dhvaitham to Adhvaitham or Adhvaitham to Visishtadhvaitham and, for this, whether the kulāchārā can be given up.

Conviction in a philosophy is entirely the personal concern of an individual. If the conviction is not because of just holding on to something in a casual manner as the mind goes but is gained by deep thinking or by internal experience it has to be accepted. Conviction should not be superficial. It should be deep. One should be able to give reason why he likes that philosophy. If it is a strong liking but without a reason, it could be due to the special nature of the samskārās. What cannot be explained by the intellect will show itself by experience. However that may be, if the liking for a philosophy is strong and not superficial, there is no scope for anyone objecting to it or to say that he cannot change. But - what I am going to say now is a very important point - because one has deep faith in a philosophy different from that of his forefathers he need not at all have to change his kula āchārās.

One may think, 'What is this? We can accept changing from one philosophy to another but there should not be change in religious āchārā! It is confusing'. If we consider this in detail, it will be seen that there is no direct relationship between the internal experience of the philosophy and āchāram, anushtānam which are external activities, external symbols. Although there is no direct relationship there is relationship in a round about way. I do not join the reformers who ask 'Philosophy is a matter of experience; where is the need for ritual which is external and āchārā?' They are under the wrong impression that there is no relationship at all between external activities and symbols and internal experience. I have all along been telling what is wrong in their thinking.

What I say now is that there is not much direct connection between many of the āchāra anushtanas and the philosophy. I have repeatedly talked about the need for performance of Karmā and
samayāchāram. Did I not say that it is for the purification of the mind? I did not say that he should perform the sāstrā Karmā as a direct means to attain the final goal, the practical experience of the truth of a particular philosophy. Whether it is Kṛśṇa Paramāthmā or the āchāryās - Śankārā, Rāmānujā, Madhva - whatever they said as āchāra anushtānam in the form of Karmās and external symbols is only for purification of the mind and not for experiencing the final goal of thatthvā jñānā (knowledge of the truth). (What I say as jñānā here will also indicate the correct understanding of bhakti in Bhakti Siddhāntā). Whatever siddhāntā it is if one should get the maturity to understand its true import it is possible only if the mind is free from impurity. So long as the mirror of mind is dirty and shaking, the truth of no philosophy will be reflected clearly or in a stable manner. Therefore even if the philosophies are different, before realizing it, attaining purity of mind is common to everyone. What has been repeatedly said is that āchāra anushtāna are for acquiring purity. In other words the Karmās in the form of āchāra anushtānas have been prescribed not as a direct means to the final goal of becoming accomplished in philosophy but as a means to accomplish purity of mind which leads to the final goal. There is no direct relationship between philosophy and activity.

If we think of it we all know there are several philosophies in the world but the activities relating to them are more or less the same. If we perform ārathi (doing worship by moving a lighted lamp or burning camphor in a circular manner before the idol) another person lights a candle; if we observe ‘Santhrayana vritham’ another person undertakes Ramzan fast. In the temple of the Buddhists and Jains, pūjās are conducted in the same manner as in our temple. Even if we consider within ourselves, when wearing symbols by stamping with a heated stamp of the symbol are there different experiences of Dhvaithā and Visishtādhvaithā? As the Vedānthis say in their lecture there should not be any
āchārā anushtānam for Adhvaithā. But in accordance with what the adhvaitha āchāryās and their mutts have prescribed, the followers of Adhvaithā also do the Karmās like bathing, pūjā, pilgrimage, annual ceremonies etc. The Vaishnāvas do the pūjā in the same way as the Saivas. Sālagramam and Lingam may be different. The neivedyam may be different. If the Vaishnava fasts and keeps awake on Vaikunta Ėkādaśi day the Šaiva does it on Śivarāthri day. All in all, the activities are the same. In the same way some kind of symbols must be there on the forehead - may be a dot, Thirumana or Vibhūthi. The ladies may wear the sari in different styles but the basic feature of both the styles is the same. Even when one becomes a sanyāsi there must be some symbol - Ėka dhandam or Thridhandam.

Performing the same sandhya vandanam, doing the same kind of pūjā and bhajan, fasting, pilgrimages, annual ceremonies etc yet trying for siddhi through different siddhānthās - what does it mean? One is that whatever may be the siddhānthās, these are necessary. Second is since the observances are the same for different Siddhānthās, āchāras and Siddhānthās are not directly connected. Without āchārā, knowledge of the truth or siddhi through a Siddhānthā will not materialize. All the āchārās of all the traditions aim at giving a person plenty of Karmās to clear the load of old dirt. Therefore instead of saying that a particular thing is to be done, if whatever is done is done properly, it will help him to experience the Self through the philosophy which he likes. Therefore for the reason that one has conviction in a truth which is contrary to what is held by the family in which he is born, he need not have to give up the religious āchārā. He need not violate the command ‘Pūrvair ācharitha kuryāth’ and become pathithan.

If that be so, it might be asked whether he will not become a pathithan by taking to the Siddhānthā different from his forefathers. It is to be said that there is nothing wrong in it.
In the *sloka* ‘Sīkām .... pathitho bhaveth’ Śīkām and *Pūndram* refer only to external symbols. *Sūthrās* refer to the *Śroutha Smārtha Karmā* and says these should be what the forefathers have followed ( *samayāchāramēva*) but it does not talk about the faith in the particular philosophy.

If the truth is to be experienced as a first step the mind should be prevented from wandering and it should be controlled by some discipline. Whatever *kulāchāram* you have inherited according to your birth that itself will do. Therefore do not give it up; do not become a *pathithan*.

If it is pointed out ‘In some religious practices they are lenient and they make the *āchārā* *anushtāna* a little easy it is only by severe fasting *Karmā* will go, only if the stomach is empty *prāṇāyāmā* and *dhyānā* can be performed well. But in some temples sweet puddings and different types of rice preparations are distributed; since it is *prasād* if we say no to it, it will be a blemish’. ‘Does not matter! You take it. *Bhagawān* knows your mind. *Swāmi* knows that even if you have no desire to eat, even if you feel that it is not required you are only taking it because you want to subordinate yourself to the path shown by great men who had come specially for us as ordered by *Bhagawān*. He will appreciate that attitude and will give the same fruits which he will give for *dhyāna* done with empty stomach. The *prāṇāyānam* that you do on your own will be done by *Bhagawān*’s grace. Or take the *prasād*, do not eat it immediately, take it home and eat it after you have finished your *dhyāna*. If there is firmness that the old *āchāra* should not be given up things can be somehow adjusted.

It need not be known to others that you had given up the philosophy of your forefathers. You just carry on with that internal matter by the strength of the *samskārās*, studies, experience and the grace of *Bhagawān*. So far as the outside is concerned you do things according to your *kulāchāram*. Purify
your mind through this and go deep into Siddhāntā. Even after
that, do not give up the old āchārā. Once purity of mind is attained
and Siddhāntā also is experienced, so far as you are concerned
āchārā whether old or any other is not required. Yet in order to
show the path to others in the world continue doing the āchāra
anushtānā of your forefathers. This is Bhagawān’s commandment.
(Gītā).

Is it a mere possibility that one can remain in the āchārā that
has come to him by birth but progress through a different
Siddhāntā? Can it be shown in practice? It can be shown. There is
a person by name A.V. Gopālāchāriar (He is now no more.) He
does everything according to Vaiśhnavā Sampradāhāyā. He is
rendering a lot of service to Vaiśhnavā Siddhāntā also. He is a
great scholar. He conducts vidwat sadhas. Yet he is greatly
attached to our (Sankarā) Āchārya Bāshyam (commentaries) and
Adhvaitā. Although closely associated with Ramakrishna
Mission, ‘Amma’ does his anushtānās according to Vedhic āchārās
only. If you look at Westerners who keep coming now they keep
going to the Church; they have great devotion towards Christ. Yet,
they are greatly attached to Adhvaitha Vedānṭā. Conversely,
there are those who follow well the āchāra anushtānā laid down by
the Śankara Mutt, having great regard for me and devotion to
Āchāryā but tell me, ‘whatever you may say, we like bhakthi more
than Adhvaitā, we like only pūjā to Ambā; even if She were to say
that She will unite us with Her (in Adhvaitā) we feel like saying
‘No, we want only bhakthi to you’. This also proves that no
religious āchārā acts in a way harmful to the philosophy of an
individual.

I am bound to reply to another question. Till now I talked
about Thathvām without linking it to the worship of a particular
god. But in our religion along with the philosophical truths, the
theological aspects of worshipping a Mūrthi is combined. Here too,
if one were to follow the old āchārās which have come to him by
birth, there will be greater clash, it appears. The *Visishtād hvaithī* does not merely say as his philosophy ‘It is the *Paramāthmā* who is common to every one who as the *Antharyāmi* of the *Jivāthmā* controls and operates from inside and operates from outside as *Īswara*. The jīva even after attaining mukthi, instead of becoming one with it, realizing that he is a spark of it remains with devotion as a separate entity under its suzerainty. But he does not stop with mentioning the *Paramāthmā* in a general way. He says ‘That *Paramāthmā* is *Vishnu* only not *Śiva*; His colour is this, He has so many hands, He has to be decorated well and worshipped’ etc. In the same manner the *Śaiva Siddhānthi* also talks of another philosophy. Although it is closer to *Adhvaithi* than to *Visishtād hvaithā* there is no *Adhvaitha* unity in it. He too, true to the name of the *Siddhānthi*, instead of talking about the *Paramāthmā* in a general way, says ‘He is *Śiva*, not *Vishnu*; He is like this. As a form of worship He should be given continuous holy bath’.

Although according to the Adhvaithi the *Paramāthmā* should be worshipped in all *Mūrthis* without distinction, the fact is in the *smārtha* (*Adhvaithā*) families, for generations, it has been the practice to perform *Śiva pūjā*, *sālagrāma pūjā* for *Vishnu* and Sri *Vidyā pūjā* for *Ambāl*. Now the question I have to answer is ‘you have said whatever philosophy it is, you follow it according to the faith, but do not for its sake change your kula āchārā. All right. For us worship of a *Mūrthi* and a personal deity are important. In our religion since so many gods have been mentioned and there is a *Purāṇa*, *sthōtrā* and *kṣēthṛā* (particular holy places considered important for a particular deity) each one develops attachment to one of these. Even though I am born a *Visishtad hvaitha Vaishnava* I have attachment to *Adhvaithā* and *Śiva*. If I think that according to your *upadesā*, I should not give up the age old āchārās of *Visishta dhvaitha*, this clashes with my bhakthi form of worship. Even though my natural bhakthi is towards *Śiva*, I have to perform
puja to Vishnu. How can I perform Vishnu puja thinking in my mind that it is Siva puja? What is the answer to this?

Or if one who is born a Saiva asks a similar question what should be the reply? Or a smārtha says ‘there has been only Siva puja in the family. But my interest is in Sri Chakra puja only or bhakthi to Murugā only comes of its own. What should I do?’ How to answer this?

Shall we change the rule that it has to be done according to the āchārā of the forefathers? Otherwise these people will feel very much and be in distress. They are not becoming atheists. They do not say that they do not want to do puja. They only desire to worship one of the gods mentioned in our religion itself. If they are to be compelled to do according to what the ancestors in their family had been doing because Īswarā had given them birth in that family has not the same Īswarā created great bhakthi for him in another of his Mūrthiś? Can we reply like this: ‘Of the three namely, Karmā, bhakthi, jnānā, do the other sāsthrā Karmās according to traditional āchārām (Purvachāram). But as far as bhakthi Karmā is concerned, you perform puja to the deity of your liking. I have already spoken about jnānā which relates to Siddhānthā’.

This too is not satisfying. Have not all the Karmās been put together in an inseparable manner with the result we cannot talk separately of bhakthi, Karmā and sāsthrā Karmā? Even in sandhyavandanā which is common to all, during sankalpam if one says Paramēśwara Prithyartham another, because the word Īswarā reminds him of Šiva (even though Īswarā and Bhagawān both refer to one Paramāthmā) thinks he should do the sankalpa for the satisfaction of Mahā Vishnu and says ‘Bhagawad’ in the place of Īswarā. If one who is born as a Saiva wants to do bhakthi to Vishnu he may have satisfaction only if he wears nāmam reciting the names, Kēsavā, Nārāyaṇa etc. If he is told that he must wear only
Vibhūthi he has to wear it only by repeating Siva Panchāksharam. Along with sīka and sūthram, since wearing the pundram also is to be done according to one’s pūrvāchārā and that there should be no change in the deity also, it is a handicap to natural bhakthi. Thus even in external symbols and other Vedic duties which are not part of devotional worship, some god who has been established in the traditions of the ancestors has been linked!

Therefore, can I say, ‘I am withdrawing all that I have said till now. No need for Pūrvāchāram. In any case, you have faith in God. You are also keen that you want to worship him in a particular form. Therefore, He himself will take care of you. Do not worry about the āchārās of the forefathers’.

This also does not satisfy. The worry is : Today people want to be free to do anything and they are after sensual pleasures and are becoming atheists. When such is the case if we free from the customs of the clan those who are keen about some dharmā, bhakthi and spiritual truths, although they may seek freedom now for a good goal, having got used to the freedom if they start being free and act without control in other matters too what would happen?

In many places it has happened this way. Other people who have the desire for bhakthi, dharmā, thathvā etc will look to those who are giving up the āchārās of their clan and will feel encouraged to give them up themselves. When we consider all this what did Bhagawān say? Has He not said almost in an inconsiderate manner? I think we should also say in the same manner that the kūla āchārā should never be given up.

To Arjūna who thought how all the relatives and friends like the Pithāmahāh can be killed in war to uphold kula dharmā and put down his bow, did not Bhagawān say this ‘The sāstrās have given you only this swadharmā. Will I tell the Brahmin that he should go and fight a war? Has not Īśwarā created you as a Kshatriyā? If that
is so it only means that you have to act according to kūlācchārā appropriate to the kshatriya. There is no use your crying, ‘if I act that way the clan will be destroyed, the noble ladies will suffer a fall’ and remaining obstinate. Do not look to the fruits. If Īśvarā has given this kind of birth whatever way the sāstrās show for such a birth must be followed. Do not consider that you are causing distress to others or even if you have any amount of difficulties or mental worries or guilty conscience do not consider all these’. After talking in this manner finally he says ‘Above all these, are you going to lose your life? Let it go. If one conducts himself according to swadharmam, it is better if he loses life in the process of acting according to it’. He says conclusively ‘Swadharme Nidhanam Šreyah’.

After saying, ‘Even if your Swadharmā that is the dharma of the clan which is yours by birth lacks in good aspects and another kula dharma is superior in its practices, you should not go for it, it is only Swadharmā which is good’ He says

Šreyan swadharmo vigungah paradharmāth swanushtithāth

and further He says more severely ‘Even if one is to meet with death, remaining in one’s kula dharma is great.

‘Swadharme Nidhanam Šreyah’

‘The dharma of another will end up terribly’ He says.

‘Paradharmo bhayāvah’

All right. If I think that however harsh it may look, since Bhagawān Himself has said there is nothing which will give greater good, I can also say it finally, that is also not possible.

Why? It is not possible because a reply has to be found to those who ask whether Purvāchāram can be given up. This is also cornering me with what I myself had said.

What our ancestors had been following over the last eight or ten or twenty generations we call Purvāchāram and we say that the
same should be followed. But if we see what the ancestors of our ancestors had been doing it is found that our ancestors had been doing slightly differently. Some have been dropped and some new things have been added. It is what I have said earlier: Till about one thousand years back what prevailed as common to everybody was only one āchāram and that was Smārtha āchāram. It was only later that new traditions appeared and changes, additions, reductions have been made in the āchāra anushtāna. Then the new āchārās (not totally new; more than three fourths are Vaidhika āchāram only; a quarter may be different) prescribed by the āchārīyās of the new sects have also come down through several generations and they have also become established samayāchāram. ‘Now you say that we should not violate this samayāchāram also. That is all right. But did not the new āchārīyās make changes in the then prevailing common smārtha Sampradhāyam and thus made changes in the pūrvachāra? Does it not then mean that they themselves had not acted strictly according to pūrvvāchāram?’ I can be cornered further also. ‘Why do we want to change the āchāras of the forefathers? It is only for worshipping our Ishta Devathā. We are not becoming atheists. We are only asking whether we can change either for the sake of Siddhāntham or Ishta Deivam. You have given reasons why āchāram should not be changed for the sake of siddhāntham. Now what remains is the question of Ishta Deivam. You are wanting to say that in this also we have to follow the Pūrvvāchāram only. But if we consider it, making a distinction between our immediate ancestors and their ancestors, it is seen that our immediate ancestors had differed from their ancestors. It is also very clear that in the matter of Ishta Deivam right from Vedhict times upto about thousands years back the pūrvvāchāram is supportive of us either in Vedhās or in Smruthis. It has not been established that a particular god is higher and therefore he is the ultimate. It talks of all gods as Paramāthmā and provides space for the worship of Ishta Deivam according to one’s liking of a particular Mūrthi; it is also said that if one has liking for a
particular Murthi he should not talk in a derogatory manner about other gods. It is for this reason Panchāyathana pūjā is prescribed so that even if the Ishta Deivam is the main in it the others are also worshipped and an attitude of reconciliation is developed - all these have been told by you during upanyāsam. Therefore when the āchāryās who came later said that Śiva is higher or Viṣṇu is higher and that has come to us as kulāchāram what is wrong if we change this kulāchāram which is different from the ancient Vēdhic dharmās and go the ancient way in the matter of worship? It would be wrong if, like the reformers, we say that the karma kāndam of the Vēdhās, the Śrouta smārtha sūtras, dharma sāstrās should be given up and that only Vēdānṭha is the essence and the rest is chaff. We accept all these and say ‘Worshipping Ishta Deivam is consistent with these; further, elevating a single god only to ‘Parathvam’ is not according to the original sāstrās. It is for this reason that we seek freedom from the kulāchāram which makes it mandatory to practise bhakthi to a particular god only. How can this desire which is not at all against the Vaiđhika sāstrās be rejected?’ Such a question could be raised.

When it is said that ‘Swadharme nidhanam śṛṣṭayaha’ the kuladharmā which we have now is itself somewhat different from what it was in ancient times. Therefore if it is changed to the original swadharmā how can that be a blemish? Bhagawān said that a kṣāthriya has to fight a war for the sake of dharma. This was according to the swadharmā which was there from ancient times and upto that time. How can that be appropriate when kulāchāram was changed from what it was from ancient times?’. If someone asks such a question what will I do? I have to keep silent, unable to reiterate what Bhagawān said (the reply that even if one were to meet with death the kulāchāram has to be followed).

The fair argument that no fresh easing of discipline should be allowed as if what has been done already is not enough also places a restraint on me.
Therefore I feel like making a compromise. Since there is no alternative I give a compromise suggestion.

Do according to the *kulāchāram* that has come to you. Add to it whatever is to your liking but which is not contrary to the Vaidhika āchāram. Perform Śiva pūjā or Vishnū pūjā as your father and grandfather were doing. With that you add your Ishta Dēvathā. If it is possible, do Panchāyathana pūjā. If you like, do more ārchānā, more decoration and abhishekam to your Ishta Dēvathā. Whatever it is, do not give up the *kulāchāram* that has come to you. Do not fail to respect it and protect it. Do not condemn the āchāryās who had brought about changes in the age old practices; do not talk about them in a disrespectful manner; do not group them with the modern day reformists. The new reformers want that ninety out of hundred of the old practices should be given up; but the āchāryās of the different *Sampradhāyas* who had come in recent times, although they had gone the way of reforms to a little extent they have accepted ninety of the hundred of the age old practices and they have made their followers accept them and practise them. Importantly, they have accepted in full the Vaidhika Karmās like the daily Karmānushtānam. They have accepted the VarnaSrama dharma which is the backbone of sanāthana dharma and the differences in the authority arising out of it. In these too, some have displayed the reformist attitude. Even then it will be noted that they had only supported the individual who was not observing any distinction because of love, humility and sense of equality but never said that there should be no such divisions in the society and did not discard them. If the question is raised why they made additions to or reductions from the sāstrās prevailing before them, it is likely that some others might have gone too far against the pūrva sāstrās in a different way. In such a situation (these āchāryās) might have thought that only if they countered it with a little more force they could stand the onslaught and therefore made such changes. If someone established the philosophy that Vishnū is the true god,
someone else at that time might have attacked *Vishnū* in a derogatory manner. There was Appaiya Dīkshithar. He was a great Adhvaithi. That means he not only delivered lectures on *Adhvaithā* but he had experienced it (*anubhūthi*). He had written that *Īswāra, Ambāḷ and Mahā Vishnū*, each of them is *Paramāthmā Swarūpam*, that they are ‘Rathna Thrayam’ (Three gems). Even he, wrote more about *Paramēśwarā* than other gods and established the glories of *Śīva* (*Śiva Mahimā*). The reason is that at that time the influence of staunch *Vaishnava* was beyond limit. It is only for countering it he had to do more relating to *Śīva*. Thus it is possible that during the time of each *āchāryā* there was a move very much against the *pūrvāchāram* and therefore they too might have felt compelled to go differently. Just because they thought that their god was superior and downgraded another and vilified you do not behave that way. You do not vilify them also. It is clear that the fact that people who had great devotion to the old arrangements, unlike people of these times who without fear or humility violate the restrictions of *sāstrās*, thousands of them had followed those *āchāryās* who had slightly deviated, would show that they had the power of Sathyam. Definitely they were great and were men of good conduct, far better than the present day reformers. Not only that. Now if the original founders of reform movements were men of good conduct, later it is rare to see such persons in that movement. The greatness of our religion is that from time immemorial great men (*Mahan*) and *Siddhās* have appeared in large numbers here only. It is only in our country that *āchāra anushtānam* is being followed with great discipline and in a manner not found anywhere else in the world. From the very fact that great men have appeared in such large numbers as not seen anywhere else in the world it is clear that it is this *āchāra anushtānam* which is the reason for the noble conduct. The fact that in the movements in which *pūrvāchāras* have been discarded, men of exemplary conduct have not appeared in large numbers strengthens this view. But when we look at the *Sampradhāyās* in which *Vaidhika sāstrās*
are being largely followed and other things have been changed we find that even after the first āchāryā of the Sampradhāyam, a large number of great men with high qualifications, those who were direct recipients of Bhagawān’s grace, and others who had the power to bless those who followed them have appeared. Even today we find that there are a large number of them who follow the anushtānās strictly. Instead of just stopping with mere talk the power of thousands who practised strict anushtāna have come through generations from the time of their āchāryā and have strengthened it. Just as the aerial root of a banyan tree becomes a tree by itself and gets strengthened, in all these Sampradhāyams the samayāchāram relevant to them has become strong and with substance. Without thinking about personal conviction or its absence if one thinks, ‘To think on these lines is itself sin. When we are born to a father and mother we worship them as god irrespective of how they may be. Since we are born in this sampradhāyam, this is like god to us: With faith and with the attitude of sacrifice if these are followed, the power of anushtānam of the forefathers will protect those who follow them.

Therefore instead of grouping these with the reformists religions of recent origin, those born in the Sampradhāyams which accept the śruthi, smruthi, purāṇām etc must not give up the observances of such Sampradhāyās. More than that, they should also include what they accept and like out of the original Vēdhic traditions. In this, to the extent possible, personal likes should be given up as a sacrifice and each one should follow his samayāchāram. As a reward to such a sacrifice Īśwara will bless us with the desired fruits. We have to develop as far as possible the thought: ‘We do not know what Karmā we had done that Bhagawān has given us birth in a kulāchāram which we cannot accept wholeheartedly; therefore let us go through it and exhaust the Karmā’. It is the first duty of all those who call themselves āsthikās to take note of the disastrous situation that has developed in the country after control and discipline have broken down and
decide not to add to it but as far as possible keep aside personal
goals and desires and stick to the discipline.

Those who want to practise devotion contrary to the
traditions of their clan which had taken shape sometime in the
middle without much deviation from the old path, if they
remember that Vaidhika āchāram not only gives room for the
concept of Ishta Deivam but the essence of our Sanāthana religion
is its conciliatory approach in which there is no distinction
between gods, everything will be all right. With such a thought, for
a Vaishnava who has Śiva bhakthi the inclination will not be there
to wear Vibhūthi instead of Thiruman. He will have the maturity to
think that Paramēśwarā who makes his presence felt due to
Vibhūthi will come in this Thiruman also. In reciting the names
Kēsavā, Nārāyaṇa etc while applying the Nāmam over his body,
even if he does not have the joy of pronouncing the Śiva nāmā, he
will have no aversion in pronouncing the other names. He will do
all that is to be done as a Vaishnava, imagining his Īśwarā in all
that, he will do more bhakthi to Śiva separately. If he is thus broad
minded the family members will not object if he keeps a Śiva
Lingam along with Sālagrāmam in pūjā. Even assuming that they
object, one should not quarrel with them opposing their faith. Poor
people, they know neither Śiva nor Vishnu. Therefore even if it is
an inimical attitude towards Śiva it is not what they have created
on their own. They think ‘this is our kulāchāram’ (whether it is
right or wrong is a different matter). Therefore they feel they
should not go against the tradition and show enmity because of
fear and devotion. We need not destroy that. We can try and
explain to them in a nice way. We may pray to that Īśwarā for this
purpose. Even after they become convinced because of our
explanation if they say ‘Still in our home, in our jāthi, we do not
perform Linga pūjā’ we should respect such a feeling of social
togetherness and accept it. In the pūjā being done at home, it is not
necessary also to add something which is not there. We can
mentally recite sthōthrās of Śiva and worship; we can go to Śiva temple, there we can have dharṣan of Śiva to our hearts’ content and do namaskār to Him; we may associate and involve ourselves in upanyāsam concerning Śiva. If the elders at home say that even this should not be done one need not listen to their objection. But one need not also quarrel.

At home it is worship of Murugan. You have bhakthi towards Ambāl. Because of that if you want to invite some learned person and have Sri Chakra pūjā performed, first perform Shashti pūjā or fasting on Kārthikai day or take Kāvadi - whatever is usually done at home - and then make arrangements for Sri Chakra pūjā. You are a Vaishnava. You have liking for Adhvaithā. You desire to render service to āchāryā; therefore if you want to offer Bhikshai to me you are welcome; by all means welcome. But before offering Bhikshai to an Adhvaitha Mutt, offer Bhikshai to the Jeer (Vaishnava āchāryā) who is your āchāryā according to your birth and then come here.

Follow the kulāchāram to the maximum. Over and above that do what is in accordance with your own internal experience and attitude. What is important is that what you do like this over and above the observance of kulāchāra should be acceptable to the original Vaidhika āchāram and not something part of the modern day reforms which have deviated from the original.

There is an error in the argument ‘Are we not desiring to do something which is closer to the original Smruthis rather than the kulāchāram which came about in between? How can this be wrong?’ It is in the original Smruthis that it has been stated

‘Śīkām sūthram cha puṇḍram cha samāyāchāram ēva cha
Pūrvaḥ ācharithah kuryāth anyathā pathitho bhaveth’

That means the original Smruthis say, ‘We have given the general rule. With this formation each should particularly follow the rules regarding Śīkā, Sūthram, Puṇḍram etc according to his
kulāchāram. Therefore it does not appear that Smruthi itself approves of dēviating from the kulāchāram and going closer to the original Smruthi. Even Bhagawadhpadhā who rejuvenated the Smruthi tradition and established it, when asked ‘Which is that which has to be protected as something greater than life?’ says in ‘Prasnōthra Rathna Mālika’ ‘Kula dharmam’. Instead of saying ‘Vēdha dharmam’ or Smārtha (on the path of the Smruthis) dharmā he says ‘Kula dharmam’.

‘Prānādh api kōramyah?’

‘Kula dharmah’
THE GREAT ONES
WHO ARE EXCEPTIONS

We should not consider as role models the great ones who, when in a state beyond their control, had violated their kulāchāram. It is with the authority of their extraordinary inner experience they did like this ignoring all oppositions. We should not be under the illusion that we are in such a state of experience.

There have been instances when those who cannot win an argument based on philosophy have on the basis of their extraordinary experience acted differently from kulāchāram.

That was how Mīrābāi who belonged to Rajput clan which worships 'Raṇa Chandigai' practised Krishṇa bhakthi that too in the ‘Nāyika bhāvam’ it was a deviation from the Sthṛt Dharmam pertaining to the society. Although Pāthivrithyam is important for the entire Bhāratha Desam, the Rajput women were extreme in observing it. When the Rajput warriors fought the Muslims and died on the battle field, the wives of the Rajput warriors gathered in large groups, lighted a fire and immolated themselves in the fire. It is in such a country that Mīrābāi not only went against her husband’s opinion but sang in ecstasy, imagining that she was the wife of Giridhara Gōpalā. Poison too did not affect her. We hear that she took it laughingly. If we too take poison like that and we are not affected we can also act like her. She did not drink with a challenging attitude ‘even poison will not affect me’. She did not also pray to Giridhara Gōpalā that He should save her from the poison. Those who like Mīrābāi had in a state of being possessed acted differently from āchāras are not role models for us.

There have also been great men who were well versed in Siddhānthā, could debate and establish in addition to this kind of experience, in a state beyond their control had deviated from their
kulāchāram. One who was born a Vaishnavā in Kanjanūr and who later occupied an exalted place in Śaivism as Haradhatha Śivāchāriar held in his hand a red hot iron to establish the glory of Śiva and became a Śaivaite. There is this story that Thirumazhisai āzhwār had the name ‘Śiva Vākyar’ and as a Siddhā he sang on Śiva. Yet later he became a great Vīshṇu bhakthā to the point of becoming one of the twelve Āzhwārs. These are not general rules but exceptions. If we take these as our examples, then exceptions will become the rule.

There was Kumārila Bhattar. In a particular situation, when he had to be with Buddhists and live like them, he was secretly performing the essential daily (Vaidhika) Karmās. When a Pāndian king became a Jain his wife Mangayarkarasi used to apply Vibhūthi secretly within her clothes. Even though they had total conviction in our religion, due to force of circumstances they had to pretend to the outside world that they were following another religion. But, later, these very people were responsible for Hindu religion getting rejuvenated. Kumārila Bhattar was chiefly responsible for the decline of Buddhism in the North. He was of the form of Kumāraswāmi. In the same manner in the South it was Jnānāsambandhar who was an avathar of Subrahmaṇya, who was responsible for the decline of Jainism in the South and the rejuvenation of the Vēdhic religion. It was Mangayarkarasi who had called him to Madurai. She was responsible for his attaining greatness. She has been included among the sixty three Nāyanmārs. That means both Kumārila Bhattar and Mangayarkarasi were far above our level. But if Kumārila Bhattar left the Hindu religion and followed for sometime the āchāras of the Buddhists it was only for knowing their Siddhāntās fully and then to counter them and establish Hindu religion, that is the kulāchāram, more firmly. He thought that what he had done was also a sin although done with good intention. So in later years he, the avathār of Subramaniā did prāyaschitham by remaining inside.
a heap of husk, then setting fire to the husk died a slow death. The lesson for us in this is not that he had left *kulāchāram* in the middle but that instead of becoming a pathithan he thought it was better to die that kind of cruel death. It was only because the wife should not go against the husband’s ways, Mangayarkarasi did not boldly and openly follow the *kulāchāram* and not because she wanted to behave as she liked.
THE DUTY OF RELIGIOUS ENTHUSIASTS

Supposing we do not have a sense of fulfilment in the kulāchāra which is ours by birth and we get it in another āchāram of the Vēdhic tradition, even then, we should outwardly follow our kulāchāram and try to keep within us the worship we like in the manner of Kumārila Bhattar and Mangayarkarasi. If our attachment is strong and true we will also come out victorious like these two persons and a day will come when we can boldly act according to our conviction.

I may be asked: ‘Can we not till then act according to our conviction? Is it for advising us to be something inside and act differently outward, you claim to be an āchāryā? Is this not hypocrisy?’

Why do we say that a certain thing is wrong? It is only when a thing is done for selfish ends it is wrong or when a harm is done to benefit another. In this, there is no such mistake. I am saying like this for the reason ‘No one should be spoiled. We who are attached to our religion should not strengthen those who, in the name of freedom, are getting out of the kulāchāram. We should not spoil anyone. What we like we may rather let go’. Am I not saying on the basis of such a sacrifice? There is nothing wrong in it.

But instead of thinking that it is wrong only if we give up the Vēdhic āchāras and go to another religion but there is nothing wrong in changing from one sampradhāyam to another within the Vēdhic āchāram everyone should strive to follow the kulāchāram as far as possible. It may be asked ‘will the rule that one who has given up the religion of his birth becomes a pathithan apply to him? After giving up his Sampradhāyā he does not become an atheist but only goes to another Sampradhāyam within the Vēdhic āchāram.'
Although, as far as he is concerned, he gives up one good path and goes to another, in this age of freedom others will see him and become bold only to give up the kulāchāram but instead of going to another āchāram they will only go the wrong way, is it not? In other words he encourages others to become pathithan. Will the blemish of becoming a pathithan spare such a person?

‘Already controls have disappeared in the world and therefore things have gone bad. We should not be party to this or we should not encourage such developments’ - this is what all those who value religion should consider as the highest dharma and their duty. Thinking like this, if we pray to Bhagawān who has created in us a liking for something different from our kulāchāram with the faith that He Himself will satisfy our desire, if the kulāchāram is followed, Bhagawān will ensure the welfare of the world through us and in the end he will bless us to have fulfilment in the way our mind will experience it.
MATTERS RELATING TO ĀCHĀRAM
THE CHARACTERISTICS OF ĀCHĀRAM

When we talk of *samayāchāram* or *madhāchāram* the word *āchāram* refers to all the rules and regulations of a religion. But in general when it is said that one is a person of *āchāram* we understand it to mean that he wears clothes which are washed and dried everyday and keeps a distance from others so as to maintain his personal purity, keeps sikā, wears the dhothi in the prescribed manner, wears the symbol on his forehead (punīdram), when he wants to do something he refers to the almanac and is guided by what are good and bad times and days, does not eat in hotels, does not eat in steel plates etc - we consider him to be a person of *āchāram*, orthodox.

Thus although all the regulations of a religion are considered *āchārām*, it generally refers to the conduct of external activities according to religious regulations, to wear external symbols etc prescribed in it. But if it is thought that *āchāram* relates exclusively to the external matters, it is wrong. *āchāram* is that which helps internal improvement, improvement of the mind through the external. Matters pertaining to the internal and the rules of day-to-day conduct in life are also dealt with in the *sāstrās* relating to *āchāra*.

The Tamil equivalent of *āchāram* can be called ‘Ozhukkam’. The path of *dharmā* which we should consider higher than our life and protect is *āchāram*. Thiruvalluvar also echoes the same idea when he says that ‘ozhukkam’ is valued higher than life and is to be protected and nurtured. Does not *dharmā* cover all aspects, both internal and external?
In English a person's qualities which are internal are referred to as character and how he acts externally is called conduct. Both āchāram and 'ozhukkam' are composite words which refer to both character and conduct. This does not deal merely with morality and ethics which relate to life in this world but talks of the rules and regulations (what can be done and what should not be done) relating to various activities and samskārās which are helpful for the other world.

Although āchāram appears to pertain to the external it has been so designed by our forefathers that it helps also the internal and not only for the present but also for the other world.
Talking of the external, if we look at it in a highly philosophical
way and as Vēdanṭha, the body is external to everything. Of
the five ‘Kośam’ (sheaths) the body which is Annamaya Kośam is
farthest from the ātmā. Great jnānis have remained unconcerned
about it. We hear about several great men (Mahān) who were lying
somewhere on garbage, eating rotten things and applying over
their bodies dirty things, not cleaning their teeth and not taking
bath. Contrary to this, lot of things have been said in the sāsthṛās
about how one should maintain personal cleanliness, how the food
should be clean, what aspects of cleanliness are essential at the
place where one lives, etc. These āchāras have been prescribed
because in the state in which we are only if we are particular about
external cleanliness we can one day reach the state of those jnānis.
It is with the world of soul’ (ātmā lōkā) as the ultimate goal that
sāsthṛās have prescribed āchāras, starting from personal
cleanliness, cleanliness of the home and its surroundings etc. What
the present day Vēdanthis say that these do not lead immediately
to self-knowledge is true. But if we want to become true Vēdanthis
at sometime in the future it will be possible only if we start with
our body, family and society to which we have attachment and pay
attention to purifying these by āchāram and then do them. Trying
to attain the wealth of spirituality without āchāram will only result
in preventing us from reaching that ideal state at any time.

Āchāra hīnam na punanthi Vēdhāh – It means that however
much one reads the Vēdha, without āchāram Vēdhās will not
purify him. It is said in the sāsthṛās ‘one who has no āchāram,
however well read he may be in Vēdhās and Sāsthṛās his vidya
will be useless.’ It is in Sāsthṛās that it will be useless for him and the
world – just as however holy a water may be it will be useless if it is
brought in the skull bone and just as however good is cow’s milk, it will be useless if it is kept in a pouch of dog’s skin. Simply because some persons deliver lectures on Vēdhās and Upanishads, do a lot of research and write books that does not mean they have attained purity. Because these people have given up the āchārās, their telling others also to give them up has no value. Only the life of those who are pure and what is preached by their own personal example have value. It is because a number of pure men have followed the āchāram for several generations that it has come to be known as Sadāchāram and Šishtāchāram. What is followed by those who are ‘sath’, that is who are good and noble is Sadāchāram. Šishtās are those of noble character and who lead blemishless life. Such people have been following the āchāram according to the sāstrās, what the modern people discard saying ‘These are not related to the soul’. Although it may be said, ‘getting the experience of the self through ānāna and getting the experience of Īswarā through bhakthi are both internal and all āchāram relating to Karmā, symbol etc concerns the external’, there is no way that these goals can be attained if āchāram is given up.
ORDINARY DHARMĀS IN ĀCHĀRAM

It appears that āchāram has for its important component the external cleanliness - soucham. It is true that soucham is important in this because purity is important in āchāram. Soucham is the fourth in the five ordinary dharmās (sāmānya dharmā). Manusmruthi has prescribed five sāmānya dharmās as common to all people, of all jāthās. Of these, what is said first is ahimsā, the second sathyam, the third astheya (non-stealing) the fourth soucham and the fifth is the control of the sense organs. Although it may appear that āchāram largely comes under soucham, close examination of the sāsthrās will show that āchāram embraces all the five dharmās. Let us see how.

When āchāram talks about cleanliness of food, it prohibits meat eating. This means that āchāram talks of ahimsā which is the first dharmā. By the statement ‘Sathyān nāsthi parō dharmah’ Sathyam has been elevated to the top of dharmā. Therefore, Sathyam also becomes āchāram. I shall give another example also to show that āchāram is inclusive of Sathyam. If one were to be punished by the King and he goes to jail he becomes affected by blemish. The rule of āchāram is that unless he undergoes prāyaschitham (expiatory ceremony) he should be excommunicated. When there was dharma rājyam - in the days of sāsthra it was like that - it was only the person who was really guilty of an offence would go to jail. Offences are of two kinds as civil and criminal. Civil suits are usually on account of cheating etc. It is on account of asathya one goes to jail in civil suits. So if according to āchāram and sāsthrās one were not to go to jail, he has to follow Sathyam which is another of the sāmānya dharmās. Acting contrary to sathyam like cheating will be only for illegally
taking possession of another person’s property. Not returning a loan, creating false documents and claiming someone else’s money, not paying the lease rent - all these come under Asthēya which is the third in the sāmānya dharmā. In criminal cases, punishment is meted out for indulging in violence, murder etc. Since physical clashes and killings are prohibited, these come under ahimsā implied in āchāram. Robbery etc come under asthēyam. Since dishonouring women, prostitution etc come under civil or criminal offences, the rule of āchāram prohibiting going to jail also explains the fifth sāmānya dharmā namely control of the sense organs. Apart from this, the system of āchāram has excluded those of bad conduct as unfit for any kind of sāstrā Karmā. In the same manner in the literature dealing with āchāram, there are different laudatory references to sathyam, compassion, sacrifice, absence of miserliness, ahimsā etc in addition to the rules regarding soucham. In several places it would be said: ‘One who does not observe a particular āchāram will incur the sin that would accrue for going back on one’s promise, for telling thousand lies, for inflicting cruelty on other creatures, for stealing gold, for thinking of another person’s wife etc. If we see the list of sins mentioned here, it is clear that āchāram which appears to come mostly under soucham establishes the other four sāmānya dharmās, namely ahimsā, sathyam, asthēyam, and control of sense organs.

For one who goes through the period of learning (vidhyābyāsam) Brahmacharyam has been prescribed for that entire period (that āśrama itself has been named Brahmacharya Āśramam). After marriage there are rules of āchāra to be followed regarding the days the husband and wife can have union, prohibited days like the pithru days, days of austerities (vratham) etc. From this it will be seen that in the matter of control of senses, āchārās lay special emphasis.
Ultimately all these āchāram have for their goal cleansing of the mind. The way to remove the dirt in the mind is to bring the senses under control. Since āchāram is meant to bring under control the senses that wander as they like it is the same as ‘Indriya Nigraham’. Thus all dharmās are covered by āchāram.
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DHARMAM AND ĀCHĀRAM

It is also expressed in another way - for the medicine called dharmā the food restriction is āchāram. For the disease to be cured, is it enough if merely medicine is taken? Restrictions regarding diet etc., are also to be observed. When there is high fever what will happen if along with medicine cold food of the previous day is taken? Will not the medicine lose its effect? In the same manner, the medicine which is dharmā based on character and conduct will not be effective without the āchāram like external cleanliness, symbols etc. (really speaking cleanliness as an aspect of āchāram is not only external cleanliness but also internal purity. But because of popular conception I said like this). I shall give an example to clarify how āchāram will be like the dietary restriction for the medicine of dharmā. Performing pithru tharpanam is a dharmā common to all jāthis. The medicine for discharging our debt to pithrus is to remember the forefathers, recite Vedha manthrās or a manthra of the form of sloka and offer thil seeds and water. When doing this one should take bath, wear the dhothi in the orthodox style and do it facing South. The sacred thread should be on the right shoulder. These rules of āchāram are like the dietary restrictions for taking medicines. If bath is not taken or if the sacred thread is not on the right shoulder and if it is performed facing North it will have no effect.

Āchāram is a part of dharmā. Dharmā itself is āchāram. It is from āchārām dharmā is born (āchāraḥ prabhavō dharmah). Thus dharmā and āchāram are intertwined. Only those who follow dharmā are called Sathpurushā or Šisṭā. That is why we refer to āchāram as Sadāchāram, Šishtāchāram. The non-observance of āchāram is anāchāram; acting against āchāram is dhurāchāram. Just as we say what the ‘sajjan’ follow is sadāchāra’ we may say that what the dhurjan follow is dhurāchāram.
CONTAINING EVERYTHING

Just as all ordinary dharmās are covered by āchāram several other matters are also in it. Matters relating to health, hygiene, medical treatment, psychology, modern science, morality, love etc are all included in āchāram. Its great merit is that it elevates all these to the spiritual level.

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REWARDS -
SEEN AND UNSEEN

Accepting the āccharās which accord with the science we understand and the ethics we like and discarding others as superstition is wrong. What we understand and what we like give results which we can see. If the teeth are not brushed, there is foul smell and teeth are also afflicted by disease. This is seen practically. We see that drinking spoils the mind and there are serious consequences to the family. Therefore we accept what the sāstrās say that the teeth should be cleaned and we should not drink. But if it is said that only if all the āccharās are proved to be useful in practical life they can be accepted, it is wrong.

Because apart from fruits of actions which can be practically seen, puniya and sin also arise from our actions and give us fruits which cannot be seen now. (adhishta phalam) (adhishta here does not mean luck. It means what is not visible to the eye, what cannot be understood by our poor intellect). āccharā also talks of fruits of our action which fructify in this life or in another life or in uniting us with Paramāthmā. These are called adhistha (unseen) fruits.

Prāthah snānam prāsamsandhi drishtādhrishta phalam hi thath

This is what Śāsthram says. Here what is said is that both the kinds of fruits become available by taking bath early morning and therefore prāthah snānam is praised.

Prāthah kālam is eigthy eight minutes before sunrise. This is also called Arunādhayam. In olden times, taking bath in cold water was called Prāthah snānam, whether bathing was in a tank or river or at home by taking water in a handy vessel and pouring it over the body. Water should be poured on the head also. (It is not necessary for ladies to have complete bath everyday. Excepting on days of vratham or pithru day, it is enough if they sprinkle
turmeric water on the head). Generally the bath should be had early in the morning in cold water from head to foot. The direct benefit of this is seen by the body getting cleaned. Also taking bath at that early hour removes sleepiness and laziness, creates enthusiasm and makes us active. The mind also becomes clear. Even according to medical science, the bath taken at the early hours strengthens the whole nervous system and many nervous ailments affecting people these days will be cured. There is also the psychological effect that it cools down emotions and creates calmness.

More important than these hygienic, medical and psychological value is that if bath is taken early morning, reciting manthrās according to sāstrās and chanting Gōvinda nāmā, the bath will not only clean the bodily impurity but will be useful in cleansing the soul. Bodily dirt getting cleaned and mind becoming cool are effects felt immediately. The strengthening of the nervous system will be felt over a period of time. Internal purification (of the ātmā) will be known only very slowly. When the early morning bath is taken with chanting of manthrās and repeating the names of the Lord according to the rules, the effect of the puṇya gained by it will materialize later without our realizing that it is the result of bathing. It may materialize not in this birth and not even in this world. The goal of āchāram is such a reward which is not seen and recognized immediately. Whatever benefit may be obtained immediately and which can be seen is only secondary.

The invisible fruits are those which we are unable to link to a particular action. Such results are according to the will of Paramēśwara. He puts a screen over everything and indulges in play. To create māyā in this manner is his job. Such a ‘māyāvi’ (juggler) himself, with great compassion, opens his heart a little to the rishis and great people. That is why certain truths which are secret to us are known to them. With great compassion they have written them in sāstrās for the benefit of the world. This is how
they have given us rules of āchāram regarding matters which give invisible results. It is not a sign of intelligence to ignore them thinking that there is no direct proof or scientific basis or that it is not according to our social ideology. What does not occur to our buddhi could be in the great buddhi of Īśvarā. It is necessary that we must have the faith that these can be given to us by the great ones who are united with Him. Āchāram is not mechanically observing a certain routine. It is important that in this, along with bodily austerities, devotion and interest of the mind is also combined. Otherwise there will be no fruitful effect.
RELATING ALL ACTIVITIES TO ĪŚWARĀ

Manthrās have been given so that even when doing the austerities the mind can be involved with Īśwarā or the several Devathās who are His agents.

When the early morning bath is taken to make it spiritual, a little grass (special kind of grass used for the worship of Vināyakā) and a little mud should be kept on the head. At that time it should be realized that the grass is an aspect of Īśwarā sakthi and with devotion the manthrā called ‘Dhurvā Sūktham’ should be chanted. It is the sūktham by which the Vedhās praise as Īśwarā’s aspect what we consider as worthless grass. Similarly the mud which we think low should be considered as Bhudevi, the consort of Nārāyana, keep it on the head along with the grass and repeat Mrithika Sūktham. Then we should begin the bath. There is a prayer called ‘Aga marshaṇa Sūktham’ which is to be recited while taking the bath. These are manthrās which cleanse the mind while the body is cleaned. The dirt on the āḥma is our sin. ‘Agam’ is sin; to rub and remove is ‘marshanam’. Those who are not qualified to recite this Sūktham should repeat the name ‘Gōvinda, Gōvinda’. It is said ‘Gōvindhēthi sadhā snānam’. Gōvinda nāmā itself is bathing the soul with the holy water.

Because it is said that Gōvinda nāmā itself is holy water, it should not be perversely argued that after merely repeating the name Gōvinda we can have food without taking bath. In fact if one has to get released from the enormous Karmās he has done and if the load of sins is to be eliminated the body has to be subjected to severe squeezing and a lot of good activities need to be performed. That is why the sāstrās have prescribed hundreds of activities and rules with which one has been bound. Still the same Bhagawān instead of being merely a strict judge, is also our compassionate
father and mother. Therefore the following guidance has been given: ‘When we make sincere efforts to act according to sāstrās and we strictly observe the āchāra anushtubānam, if at times it becomes difficult for us, then – only then – instead of such strict regulations or difficult austerities it would be enough to think of Him, repeat His names and He will liberalise the āchāra anushtubānam and shower His grace in the thought ‘ we can pardon this child which has done so much’. If this is taken as an excuse and one says ‘I will be without any āchāram, it is enough if I do bhajan Harē Rāmā, Bhagawān will not get deceived by such a lazy one who is indisciplined and will not bless him. It is true that if one were to sincerely repeat Harē Rāmā whole-heartedly and gets lost in it, he is not in need of any āchāram and Sāsthrām. It is true that there have been persons who, by repeating the names of the Lord, have performed miracles but we ourselves know whether we are in that state or not.

Those who have the responsibility to protect the Vēdhā manthrās so that they do not lose their power and have more of intellectual work need to have work and also the discipline of āchāram. That is why they are required to do so many anushtubānas with manthrās. For people of other jāthi, who with their bodily work help the society and discharge their Karmās and attain purity of the mind, this kind of severe āchāram is not prescribed. Instead of manthrās, it is enough if they repeat Bhagawan nāmā or sthōthrās. What I have been saying is that the āchārās prescribed by Sāsthrās are meant to get spiritual benefits which are not immediately visible with benefits. It is wrong to accept what out of these are visible and leave what is invisible.
THE SUBTLETIES OF SCIENCE IN ĀCHARAS ŚĀSTHRĀS

I find that for sometime now there is a more respectable approach to our āchāram than it was in the earlier generation. Previously those who were English educated thought that all our āchāram is meaningless talk. But for some time now I have been noticing something funny - even though science and spirituality appear to conflict with each other, as science progresses and new discoveries are made they express the wonder ‘What is this! This is wonderful. The Indians of yore whom we thought were backward had found out these scientific truths without our laboratories and instruments and have mentioned them in their sāstrās!’ You must have seen in the papers sometime back. The Russians are Communists and atheists. When we say ‘What is this hōmam, the house being filled with smoke and irritating our eyes’ Russian scientists have praised our hōmam saying that several kinds of pollution including atomic radiation can be countered by the smoke of cow dung cakes. Like this, doctors have said earlier that the spread of the smoke of several twigs (samith) burnt in hōmam helps as antiseptic. They also say that there is sound basis either medically or scientifically for several things we use in our pūjā and other activities laid down by sāstrās like ‘dharbam’ (a kind of grass) Thulsi, Bilvam etc. When it is said that during the time of eclipse ‘dharbam’ should be laid on everything, people used to ridicule it. They made fun of it saying ‘They say a snake is eating the sun and to cut its tongue they have laid dharbam’. But now people are noting that during the period of eclipse in the atmosphere and other spheres above it also lot of contamination and radiation occurs, that even a child in the womb is affected and therefore the prohibition on eating during eclipse due to pollution has a lot of meaning and the dharbam has the power to counteract it.
There is a view that if all are taught all sciences, it will only end up in every one making an atom bomb and it is to prevent such a situation we have been given only what should be done and the reason for it has been given to ordinary people in the form of stories that ‘Rāghu snake swallowed the Sun’. I will not accept that this view is entirely correct. It is true that they thought that if scientific truths are known to everyone it will end in disaster. But it is not correct that it was for that reason that they fabricated stories. We have to take it that such stories are also true. What all might happen in the Lord’s līla (sport) which we feel are not practicable! How do we know?

Some people make the accusation that it was out of selfish interest that their knowledge should not spread beyond their limited circle our ancestors had hidden everything in such stories instead of stating the scientific truth. This is very wrong. Giving knowledge to those whose mind is not under control will end in disaster. Majority of people will be those who have not controlled their mind. Are we not seeing in practice that when science is reaching all people and is progressing dharma is suffering a set-back in inverse ratio in the world? This has been stated by Bhōjan (King) several centuries back in his ‘Samarāṅgaṇaśūthram’. In that he has talked about aeroplanes too under the title ‘Vyōmayānam’ but has given a little of its theory and says ‘because I have not explained the procedure for making it, do not think that I do not know it. I know it very well. Still if it is written in a work in a manner that everyone will come to know, it will result in more bad than good to the world’. The truth of what he had said we have seen practically. Instead of wars being fought only in battle fields did not the air raids result in bombs being sprayed all over during World War? These days when samayāchāram has declined and science alone is progressing, we see that if the intellect alone develops before the heart gets purified, it is disaster. That is why our ancestors had reserved several matters only for those who were good and cultured.
I have said that for sometime now educated persons have started showing respect to our sāstrās since they have come to know that in several respects they accord with science. When science had developed a little, they ridiculed. Now, when it has developed substantially, they have started praising some aspects of our sāstrās. As science keeps progressing they will find that more and more aspects of sāstrā have scientific basis.
NOT SUBORDINATE TO SCIENCE

But what I say is that while this is a matter for feeling happy as far as it goes, to think that all our āchāram and anushtānam should be brought under the scanner of science and proved on that basis, is not correct. My view is that the very idea that our sāsthraś should agree with science or our social ideology or anything else is wrong. The truth of sāsthraś is its own authority. That is a super science given by rishis (superior science which is beyond our science). It is the authority for everything else. It will be topsy-turvy to say that this should be acceptable on the basis of other things. While we should change our social concepts born out of our little brains according to sāsthraś it is wrong to think that sāsthraś should bend to suit our social concepts.

It is true that there is a lot of science in the sāsthraś. Just because of that it does not mean that it should entirely agree with science. From the fact that what was ridiculed earlier have been found to have meaning we should have the humility to think that what we ridicule today may be found later to have meaning. Along with what we see is also what we cannot see. It is by following the sāsthraś which talk about this adhishta (unseen) our ancestors were high in bhakthi and jnānā and were praised by the world. We should realize that it is after giving it up that we are going astray without a sense of fulfilment despite considerable progress in science and economic condition. We should have the belief that all that has been said in the sāsthraś is true.

If it is said that āchāram is only for reasons of science and medicine that we know then we may think why we should not change the rules of sāsthraś according to these. Supposing we think that the cow dung which we use for cleaning a place serves only as antiseptic then one may ask why our pūjā room, the place of Yāgā (Yāgāśālai) cannot be cleaned with phenyle or carbolic
acid. If we think that sitting on a wooden plank to perform *Vaidhika Karmās*, is only to prevent the electrical energy of the *manthrās* from escaping from us then we may have to logically accept that we may sit on a rubber cushion or instead of a pavithram (what is made of dharba grass and worn on the ring finger before commencing any *Vaidhika Karmā*) we can wear gloves.

When talking on this it is a matter of surprise that our ancestors had known everything including electro-magnetic theory. The entire world is filled with electricity. Scientists have discovered only now that electric current flows through our body, even thoughts. But several thousand years back, those who compiled our *sāstrās* knew it and therefore prescribed the use of things and instruments which are bad conductors and those which are good conductors etc. Just as the seat is to be the wooden plank, the big spoon used in homam should be of wood, a bad conductor. Copper vessels, copper idols, silk clothes, etc are good conductors.

There is a proverb that however affluent one may be he should not keep his head to the North while lying down. Twenty or thirty years back, this was criticized as superstition but now scientists say that the origin of the electro-magnetic waves in the body is the brain, the origin of the electro-magnetic field in the world is in North Pole and therefore if the head is kept to the North, the low magnetic power of the brain and the big magnetic power of the Pole will clash and affect the brain. At the same time, to do japam or *dhyānam* it is said that to sit facing the North is good. In sleep the mind and buddhi are not under our control and we are overcome by sleep which makes us flat. At that time buddhi is tired or since it is not under our control, it creates all sorts of dreams. At such a time if this small magnet is held before the big magnet, things will become irregular. But when doing japam and dhyāna we want to control our mind even if we may not be able to
do it. Īśwarā is not only the electricity which can be experienced in a scientific instrument but he also knows our objective and showers His grace for that. Therefore He also sees to it that during dhyāna the same magnetic power gives us good power. Do we not achieve many good things with the help of electricity which gives shock? In the same way, although life force flows through the body, there is great difference between the state of lying down and sitting in dhyāna. Apart from that, by doing japa, facing North, we can easily attract the waves of anugrahā of the yogis and jnānis who are in Mēru. Now the spread of someone’s internal qualities, love etc and telepathy which is two minds getting connected without a mike and a phone are being accepted on scientific basis.

There is so much meaning for doing something facing North and not doing another facing the same direction!

But in sāstrās they might have left out mentioning about electro-magnetism. If you look into the purāṇās there will be a story for it. Someone who had lived extremely well lay down with his head towards the North, therefore, his greatness declined – this is what the story would be but not the scientific principle behind it. As mentioned earlier, just as a knife which is very useful should not be given to a child, the scientific truths and the ways of using them should not be told to ordinary people – it is for this reason they have done like this.

The view of āsthiķās is that even the above purāṇā story should be taken as real. Śasthraṃ includes science which is known to the world, principles which it does not know, the truth (sathyam) established by Purāṇās and stories.

Now, when science finds out the truths which were not known earlier, it starts praising several āchāras which it had ridiculed earlier. Having bed coffee without cleaning the teeth; not taking daily bath; covering the body all the time with thick cloth by wearing shirt and suit – educated people have started telling that
these do not suit the climatic conditions of our country and power of digestion related to it. They say all these will lead to sweating, accumulation of dirt on the body.

But Śāsthram is not merely to ensure prevention of disease. It should not be forgotten that it is the medicine of punyā which will cure the disease of Karma. If it is thought that āchāram is only for the sake of health and other reasons, in case it appears that a particular āchāram will not help health, one will be inclined to give it up. If we are accepting the āchāram of bathing because of being in the midst of the congested gathering of people including those afflicted by infectious diseases, there is the other āchāram which says that when we return home after drawing a temple car (rathōthsavam) along with a huge crowd, we should not take bath. The latter āchāram will clash with concepts of hygiene. If āchāram is taken to be only for health, some of the āchāram may have to be given up - like a bath is a must in the holy tank of a temple even if it looks greenish, even if the feet of a great person are dirty the water with which his feet are washed should be sprinkled on the head, one has to roll over the leaves on which great devotees have taken food etc. But it must be clearly understood that āchāram is for punyam and that punyam cannot be perceived by science and our religions.

There was one Dr. King. He was a member of the IMS (All India Medical Service like the IAS) and was Sanitary Commissioner. He had written highly lauding some of our āchārā, like not having too much physical contact with others, not eating anything in a home where there is death, because of pollution, having bath because of pollution and washing our clothes etc and had said that these greatly help in preventing diseases. He had lauded like this on the basis of scientific knowledge that was then available like genes, virus, bacteria etc. But subsequently, psychology, parapsychology etc have developed much. According to these scientific developments there are waves and aura which
differ from man to man. These make it clear that if in the name of equality everyone has physical contact with others like touching etc and are not concerned about bodily pollution etc the type of development which is particular to each will be affected. One should not lie down on another’s bed, should not wear another person’s clothes, should not drink from the vessel used by another person - all these have been prescribed only for protecting the personal magnetism of individuals.

We talk of periods for women. During that period women are kept secluded. In doing this if lack of cleanliness is one part which is scientific, there is another which is not known to science. This relates to sin and puṇya. It is said that a part of Indra’s sin due to Brahmahathi (killing a Brahmin) goes out as the women’s menstruation. This is not visible even in aura or wave.

When talking about what modern science says about each one protecting his mental power without allowing it to escape one thing comes to mind. Is it not prescribed that the dhoti or sari should be worn in a manner that a part of it remains within the two legs? Someone had written about this. If the end of the cloth protrudes outside, the waves of mental power escape out, he has said. He says that if it is worn with ‘kachcham’ (taking the lower part of the garment through the legs and tucking it at the waist) these do not escape. He has also mentioned that perhaps because the Muslims are aware of this they join the two extremes of the lungi and wear it.

Day by day, we are able to understand the inner meanings of āchārās on the basis of science. Therefore we have to accept all the other rules of sāstrās the meaning of which we do not understand now or science may not understand at any time.

People who had conducted research on the Ganges water have given this report: ‘These Hindus worship Ganga with great reverence. When we conducted research to find out what exactly
is the Ganges water, we were surprised. We took water from the Ganges from the very place where the dead body of a person who had died of cholera had been disposed of and tested it. As if by some magic, not a single cholera bacteria was found in that water’. This is happy news. But we worship Ganga not because she destroys disease causing bacteria but because she destroys sin, destroys the cycle of samsārā. Sins and puṇya, moksham and hell will not come under the theory of scientists nor can they be tested in a tube.

If we understand this, we will not think that because we have found a scientific remedy, the blemish of anything is removed. I say this in the context of stainless steel which is being widely used these days. Almost everything today is made of stainless steel including the dipam used in the pūjā room and the pot used as kalas. Even those who had been following the sāstrā rule that iron vessels should not be used have started using stainless steel vessels now. These people say, ‘The reason why iron was prohibited is that it will rust. This could be a health hazard. But when iron has been processed as stainless steel, it will not rust at all. Therefore there is no health hazard. Since the defect of iron has been remedied we can use stainless steel’. It is their guess that because of rusting, iron has been prohibited and want to make stainless steel acceptable to sāstrā. But sāstrā prohibited iron not because it will rust or not only for that reason. It is sinful. Śāstrās have prohibited its use because they are capable of attracting evil forces and the power of virulent planets like Saturn. This defect cannot go away from stainless steel.

In the same manner materials used in hōmam are meant to drive away evil forces and draw divine forces more than cleaning the atmospheric pollution. That is why even if we can find an anti-pollution chemical which is more powerful than cow dung cakes and samith (twigs of the pīpal tree) they cannot be used as material for hōmam.
They say that several rules of sāstrā can be appreciated from the psychological point of view. They also say that it is psychologically satisfying to worship the cow as Gômāthā, which gives milk, ghee, curd, dung and urine all of which are good. That is also true. But the divinity of the cow is beyond psychology. Importantly it is because of this divinity she is worshipped. We are proud that our forefathers had known not only the use of milk and ghee like the people of other countries but also the purifying properties of the cow’s dung and urine. But when these five are mixed as panchagavyam (‘Go’ is cow; gavyam is what is connected with the cow;. Panchagavyam means the five which are connected with the cow) and given for being taken in, it is not only for the physical purification of the body but for the purification of the soul – panchagavyam has the power to remove sins and generate punyam. Because it is taken along with recitation of manthrās this power increases. It should be noted that it is in the context of ‘punyāhavāchanam’ that taking panchagavyam has been prescribed.

If our ancients had known the subtle truths of physics, chemistry, medical science, psychology, etc without the aid of instruments and laboratories, how was it possible? It is because of the mental power they had acquired as Īswara prasād. Looking to their thapas and disciplines (niyamam) Īswara Himself had made known to them many things which do not come under the purview of science. It is possible He had appeared before them and given them the knowledge; or He might have facilitated their knowing them intuitively or instinctively. They had attained siddhi by using these and keeping up their thapas and niyama. Whatever they had said after attaining knowledge of everything, some are such that modern science wonders at them and some are such that modern science is unable to accept. What satisfies our intelligence and what appears to be superstitions and not accepted both are there. From the fact that, whatever we have been able to know through
our research using instruments great men of yore had known with much ease should put us wise to the fact that divine secrets do not end with our intelligence. It is folly to brand as superstition what is said by those who had known those secrets. It should be clear to us that this is our superstitious faith in our small intelligence.
I have been talking about the cow. If turmeric is applied on its face with a dot of kumkum, the horn is decorated, a garland is put around its neck with bells it will be beautiful to look at. Just as there is psychological satisfaction in adoring the cow which is of help to us in many ways, we get artistic satisfaction in decorating the Gômâtha. Yet if we want to do archanā to the cow it has to be done at the rear near the tail, whether we like it or not whether there is any reason for doing like this or not - there is no place for such questions. Would the rishis who had formulated the rules of āchāram for which we come to know the reason one by one have said ‘Don’t do pūjū to the face of the cow but do it to the rear; there only Lakshmi resides’ without reason? We have to do it with faith. Then we will become aware of Lakshmi who resides there. Whether we get satisfied psychologically or otherwise or not, we have to subject ourselves to the sāstrâs and act accordingly. Sāstrâs and their āchārâs are there only for spiritual satisfaction rather than all other kinds of satisfaction. That is the satisfaction for all times. Others will disappear the next minute and would result in dissatisfaction. If āthmā is to achieve perfection and feel satisfied it is possible only if sins are wiped out and purīyam is earned.

We go to the temple. Sister has had confinement in a maternity home on the way. There will be the desire to see the child. Sister also will be happy. If we consider psychological satisfaction and human affection, one has to go to the maternity home. But only if a bath can be had after coming out of the maternity home, we can go to the temple. But without having a bath we should not go to the temple carrying with us the pollution with which we are afflicted due to the confinement. If there is
something special in the temple and we must go there and if there is no facility for taking bath after visiting the sister, we have to go to the temple without seeing her. We have to make that sacrifice. It is not fair to blame the sāsthrā saying that it has no human values. If such an accusation is made then we have also to blame the medical science that is being practised in the maternity home. Why? Would they allow us inside the operation theatre? Someone who is very close to us is undergoing an operation in a serious condition and supposing we say that we cannot wait outside in a state of suspense for two to three hours and therefore we want to be inside the theatre, will the doctors allow? We accept what the doctors say in the interest of the life of a person, respect their good intentions and we do not go into the theatre and thus sacrifice our psychological satisfaction. In the same manner we have to accept what the sāsthrās say in the interest of the welfare of the soul that unless there is facility for having a bath after our visit we should not go.

There is no point in asking such questions as ‘Do people in other countries have such concepts as personal pollution due to a delivery? Do they observe rules like ours for periods? Do they follow our other āchārās and samskārās?’ The only answer to such questions is: People of other countries themselves admit that in spiritual knowledge and those who have acquired such knowledge, their countries lag behind our country very much. If we are keen to have permanent sṛēyas and acquire knowledge of the Self we should act according to sāsthrās without talking about other countries, those days and these days and then only we will attain siddhi.

Apart from this in the whole world Īswarā has designated only this Bharātha Dēśā as Karma Bhūmi. If there is a house, are there not separate rooms for cooking, pūjā, sleeping etc? If there is a factory, is there not a separate machine room, the administrative office, canteen etc? Can what is to be done in one room or area be
done in another? In the same way, since Bhagawān has kept Bhāratha Bhūmi for Vaidhika Karma and anushtānam, so many sāstrās and acharās have evolved only in this country.

In these even what appears severe has also been prescribed with compassion keeping in view our permanent welfare. Śāstrās do allow the pleasures of this life so long as they do not harm the permanent welfare of life beyond. Several acharās have been prescribed with the object that people should live free from disease, they should live in cordiality, they should not get involved in wrong doings etc which are benefits of this world. Śāstrās are not inconsiderate as some people think but are liberal in many places both psychologically and otherwise.
THE DIVISION OF ĀCHĀRĀ :  
THE VERDICT OF KURAL

Thus it is that so many āchārās have been prescribed for the Brahmin jāthi. Without understanding this some people say that there is partiality. If those who framed these sāstrās had been partial, they would have reduced the burden of rules for their community and given them licence and would not have bound them with more regulation.

What is the opinion of Thiruvalluvar who has been accepted by all including the reformists and rationalist as the foremost among those who spoke of dharma in Tamil Nādu? He is definitely of the view: There is individual kulāchāram and not one ācharām for all; there is more for the Brahmin; the Brahmaniyam (the quality of being a Brahmin) of the Brahmins is the result of his kulāchāram.

Good conduct is ācharām that includes the internal qualities, external conduct and external symbols, I had said. Thiruvalluvar has given parate chapter of ten verses (Kural) about following this ācharām. He starts by saying as if it is applicable to everyone. In the first Kural he says that good conduct is what elevates a person and therefore it should be considered more important than life itself and protected. Then (in the third Kural) he says one who is of high conduct is the one of noble birth, of higher jāthi, one who is of bad conduct is of low birth. If we consider this, it would appear that what he says is in accordance with the present day talk of equality and that jāthi depends on a person’s quality and conduct and not based on birth. Just to show that this is not so, he says in the next Kural

If a Brahmin forgets the scriptures he can relearn them

But if he falls from virtue he loses his status.
The original Tamil verse is

Marappinum őththukkolalāgum pārpān
Pirappozhukkam kunrak kedum

Pārpān means a Brahmin. Because he is able to see Sathyam with (Jnānā dhrishti) he is Pārpān (one who sees). Rishis being called Seers in English is also for the same reason. Ĭththu here is Vēdhām. That which is practised as Adhyāyanā is Ĭththu.

The meaning of this Kural is: If a Brahmin forgets the Vēdhās it does not matter. He can do adhyāyanā again and learn it. But if he deviates from good conduct, that is āchāram, his birth as a Brahmin will go waste (the greatness of being born as a dwijanmā, meaning twice born, will be lost). The modernists say that there is no need at all for āchāram, that it is enough to lecture about Vēdhās and Upanishads and all those who do this are Brahmins. But Thirukkural says, ‘It is of no great consequence if the Brahmin forgets the Vēdhās; he can learn it again; but if he suffers a fall in āchārā, he loses his Brahmanyam’. The great soul who gave Kural, also called the Tamil Vēdhā, accurately echoes the view of sāstrās which is

Āchārāhīnam na punanthi Vēdhā

However much one might have studied the Vēdhās, if he gives up āchāram he will have no gain from the Vēdhās. Just as the little bird flies away as soon as it gets its wings without even looking at the shell from which it came, the Vēdhās or Vēdhānthās studied by one who has fallen in conduct will, instead of reaching him to punyāloka, go away without even turning to him, these are the words of Dharmasāsthra which Thiruvalluvar has briefly stated.

First he says in a general way that only by right conduct one gets a higher status. Immediately he talks specially about the right conduct of the Brahmin. By this he makes it clear that he is not one
of the moderns who talk of equality. It is only by admitting that
more than all others it is the Brahmin for whom āchārā is
important he talks separately about him.

‘Pirappozhukkam kunrak kedum’ can be understood in
another way also. That is if the Brahmin slides down in conduct
appropriate to his birth the world will become the worse for it.
Some poet, talking about the evil that will befall a country instead
of an individual says that the Brahmin (Shad karma niradhar) will
forget their Vedhās. Therefore it is seen that Thiruvalluvar is of the
view that by the Brahmin giving up his Vedha adhyayanaṁ or
committing any other wrong, not only he and his clan will suffer
but the world itself. Having said in another place that the Brahmin
forgetting the Vedhās is bad for the world says here that it does not
matter even if he forgets the Vedhās but the greater harm is if he
gives up his kulāchāram, the conduct appropriate to his birth. He
does not belong to those who say Vedhās are not necessary and
conduct is enough. He is of the view that if Vedhās go, it is bad for
the world. He is not one of those who say that it is enough if
Vedhās are memorized, books are written and lectures are
delivered. Nor is he among those who say that āchāram is not
necessary. He says both are required. Of the two, he says giving up
āchāram creates greater difficulty than giving up adhyayanaṁ. If we
look at it closely it will be seen that he does not accept that
adhyayananam can be given up completely. He only says if the
Brahmin temporarily forgets and does not say ‘loses’ or ‘given up’.
If Vedhās are given up, it is very bad for the world. Does he say, ‘It
does not matter if he forgets. Let him be in that state. It is enough if
the Brahmin lives following his āchāram?’ No. He says that the
Brahmin who has forgotten the Vedhās must learn them again. He
says Vedhās can be learnt again. Thiruvalluvar’s advice is entirely
according to sāsthras and the rules of sāsthra dharmā that a
Brahmin who has forgotten the Vedhās must continue to follow his
āchāram and learn the Vedhās again.
From this we can understand what he said in the beginning namely that one’s status of birth depends on one’s high standard of conduct according to śāstrās and not the concepts of socialism. There is nothing in the śāstrās which says that any caste is high or low. The rationale for Varnāśrama Dharma is that in a society different kinds of functions need to be apportioned properly. This is a great thought. In this arrangement any jāthi if it carries out the functions meant for it and follows the rules of conduct appropriate to it, it is great. One who does like that is great. It is with this thought that Thiruvalluvar has also made the Kural (which appears to echo socialistic equality).

What he really means is that it is the conduct appropriate to his jāthi that gives him the high place in it and if he falls from that conduct he becomes a person of low birth. Only if it is understood this way then as a logical consequence we can appreciate that although āchāram appropriate to each one is important to him, for the Brahmin it is very important, and, therefore, special āchāram have been prescribed for him and the appropriateness of the Kural under discussion can be realized and enjoyed.

He proceeds like this and gives out the idea: ‘Right conduct is not only that which gives immediate fruits which can be seen; in an invisible way right conduct itself becomes purīyam and does good sometime later. Bad conduct will become sin and will produce evil all the time. ‘Good conduct is the seed of virtue. Bad conduct ever leads to grief.’
Our sāstrās have not prescribed the same type of āchāram to all people. But what the sāstrās have prescribed is related to the function that one has inherited appropriate to his jāthi and the stage in which one is, namely whether he is in the early stage learning or he is a family man or he is about to attain the ripe state by giving up these or he is in the still higher state in which he concerns himself only with the dhyānam on Paramāthmā and not desiring anything else. Varna dharmam is related to the functions to be performed in the society; the āśrama dharmā is related to the stage in which a person is in his life. We say that āchārās have evolved by a combination of what relates to varna and āśrama that is Varnāsramam. There is no invidious discrimination in this. It is only for raising each one from his own state and to develop the whole society in a proper manner these have been prescribed through sāstrās by the rishis than whom no one else is greater in intelligence and compassion for all beings.

Sāstrās have not tied down the toiling classes with a lot of āchārā but have left them somewhat free. But they have ruled that the Brahmin has to sacrifice a lot and observe a lot of regulations based on āchāram and he should demonstrate by his example the ideal conditions as far as possible.
THE IDEAL STATE AND
WHAT IS PRACTICABLE

Our sāstrās have understood that if ideal dharmās are prescribed for all sections of a society it will only result in no one following it. We actually see this happening in other religions. Therefore our sāstrās have laid down rules differentially.

It is the people of the religion which prescribed as a general rule for all like: ‘If someone strikes you on your cheek, show him also the other cheek’ have fought more wars, extended their rule over countries and continents and gone upto the atom bomb, more than the people in our religion which has prescribed war as the dharmā for kshatriyās and ahimsā as the dharmā for Brahmins. Although we ourselves raise the question, ‘where have our great religious leaders talked about love and ahimsā like Christ and Buddha?’ the historical truth is that we only have been highly peaceful and have embraced people of all religions. Even now we proudly say that it is only by the path of ahimsā that we sent out the ‘atom bomb people’ and got our freedom. It is only because the ideal is prescribed only for particular people they protect it with care and pride. By their noble example even people who have not adopted their ideal as a rule have voluntarily followed it and made the spirit of it shine in the whole society. That is why our society has been an example of the dharmā way of life right from the olden days more than others.

For example it is in Buddhist religion which prescribes ahimsā as an ideal for all people there are more non-vegetarians today than among Hindus. That is the position even when there is no rule that like the Brahmins all others also should not eat meat. But we see that in other countries among the followers of Buddhism all people including Bikshus are meat eaters.

I started with saying because of the consideration that too much of āchāram should not be made applicable to all people
engaged in carrying out different types of tasks they made it applicable in a differential manner. It is good that it led me to Thirukkural. It was possible to understand that Thiruvalluvar was a great vaidhika person.

If the āchāram applicable to the Brahmins is made applicable to the person who toils in the field and he is told ‘Do not eat more than so many morsels of food, do not take before such and such a time or fast on Ėkādaśī day, take bath thrice etc how much hardship will he not undergo? What has been prescribed in this differential manner with good intention is taken to mean that if there is more āchāram for the Brahmin, he only can go to punyalokam and that this is partiality. ‘You say that ahimsā helps to purify the mind but you say that ahimsā is mandatory for the Brahmin and not for others. In that case it only amounts to saying that it is enough if the Brahmin alone attains purity of mind. Does this not mean partiality?’ After saying ‘As is the manure so is the crop; as is the food so is the life’ if it is said that vegetarian food is a must for the Brahmin only and for others meat eating is permissible, what is this if not discrimination? one may ask such a question.

Vegetarian (non-killing) food has been generally prescribed for the purification of the mind because the sathva guṇā gets improved by it. But as part of Bhagawān’s līlā, activities based on rājasā and thāmasa guṇās have also to be performed for the sake of protecting dharma. One who commits a wrong has to be punished. Was it not for fighting a war and killing people for the sake of dharma that Bhagawān preached Gītā to Arjunā? This is rajo guṇā. For the sake of social welfare, ploughing, digging etc have to be done. Those who work very hard must have very sound sleep. This is thāmasam. But since these people who, according to Iswara’s will, have to do these works which came to them by birth for the sake of the welfare of the world, their undertaking Rājasa or thāmasa works will not affect them in any way. Because they are
doing it for the society that very act of sacrifice earns them *punyā*. Even other drawbacks like bad effects of taking non-vegetarian food, eating old food etc will be offset by the *punyām* of their service to the society.

‘As is the manure, so is the crop’. Life is also like a crop. Therefore in the matter of food lot of care is required. Life does not merely mean the body continuing to breathe. A person who does not have a high mind is as good as dead even if he has life in him. It is all right to say that the high state of one’s mind is his real life breath. But the high state of mind has to be directed into the body and a lot of work has to be done for the society. One person has to take the sword and fight for the protection of *dharma*; protection of *dharma* is a high state of the mind. But when it becomes its function it has to be violence like war. Yet, he has the high objective of ensuring that *dharma* is not destroyed in the society. ‘Kṣathāh kila thrāyathē’ – Does he not protect the society from destruction by the wicked? For that very reason, he is called a kṣathriya. Since he is fired by this high ideal, the *sāstrās* have said ‘Let him eat meat and drink in order that he will have good physique and will have enthusiasm to fight’. All this will not affect his spiritual growth.

But even among kṣathriyaś there were great men who had observed *ahimsā* and other *dharman* and earned praise as ‘Rāja Rishis’. When we talk of *ahimsā* the two names that come to mind are Buddha and Mahavira. Both of them were kṣathriyaś. When we look into *Purāṇās* and *Ithiḥāsās* it is seen that many kings in the olden days entrusted their kingdom to their sons and went to the forest to do thapas. At that time they must have had only vegetarian food. The reason for this is that since an ideal was not made the general rule for all people and was made applicable only to one section of people, it must have flourished among others also on its own.
Should there not be economic prosperity in the country? For this some people have to engage themselves in agriculture, trade, protection of cows etc. It may be necessary to cross the seas for the purpose of trade. Then only economic development of the country will be possible. Although the Vedhic religion gives priority to ‘Arul’ (love and compassion) it has not forgotten ‘Porul’ (money/wealth). It has given it whatever space it deserves. In the four Purushārthās there is artham. It is an unjustified criticism that Hindu religion ignores worldly life. In our religion, one varṇā (of people) has been exclusively kept for generation of wealth. The one who carries out the function related to growth of wealth is the vṛṣya. The root for all the words ‘vis’ ‘visvam’ and ‘vṛṣya’ is the same. He has to go all over the world and bring home wealth. The dharma ‘cross the seas too and earn wealth’ is the dharma for him. The Kings who were kshatriyās earned glory by helping him to increase sea-trade. Is it practicable if it is prescribed that one who has to travel across the seas for several days has to be vegetarian? Considering his functions and his environments, the rule is generous that he can be a non-vegetarian instead of compelling him to be vegetarian. The help that the society gets from him offsets the dhōsham of his being a non-vegetarian. Even so, what do we see? The baniyas of several Northern states who are vṛṣyās, the Telugu kōmuttis and the pure Saivas among the Tamil Nādu Chettiārs are all vegetarians. What do we understand from this? Even the Vṛṣyās who had gone overseas long back and returned and settled here in their old days voluntarily adopted vegetarianism which was followed by the Brahmins as an ideal. They did not go to the forest in their old days like the kings. They were in the family. Therefore their younger generation which was living with them took to vegetarianism even from birth. Then vegetarian food became the custom of the jāthi. It is in the same way that vegetarianism has not been made a rule for those of the fourth varṇa who have to toil with their body and help the society. But with the passage of time many of this varṇa have come out of
physical labour and have taken to trade, agriculture etc and attained growth. They have on their own taken to vegetarianism. In the North as well as in the South in Thanjavur and Tirunelveli districts, many Vellalárs and Pillais are staunch vegetarians to the extent of excelling the Brahmins in this.

The reason why that some have voluntarily opted for vegetarianism is that it has been made compulsory for the Brahmins. Because he has to do Vēdha adhyayanā and teach to others and has to protect the Vēdhās, he has been prohibited from eating non-vegetarian food, keeping in view the ‘manthra sakthi’. The rule prescribed for him is that he should not cross the seas and earn money. What sāstrās have enjoined on him is only poverty. He should not go to other countries. If he goes he will become a brashtā (will become liable to be excommunicated). Why? It is for the reason that it will become the cause for spoiling the purity of Vēdha Rakshaṇa. If he goes to other countries, he will cultivate the customs of those places; the custom appropriate to his swadharma will go. When he returns from other countries, he may mix the customs of the other countries among the relatives of his jāthi and will spoil their support to protection of Vēdhās. It is for this reason he has to be excommunicated. Many āchārās, vrathās and austerities which have been made compulsory for him attract others too who, after a certain stage, adopt them of their own.

It is in the same manner, (that is the division of Karmās), the division of āsramās has been made for the Brahmin. A youngster cannot be made to fast and therefore there is no regulation on the quantity of food the Brahmachāri can take. It is only in quality, not in quantity. He too must take only pure vegetarian food but instead of observing vratham, upavāsam etc he can eat well. His dharmās are related to learning (vidhyābyāsam) and the gurukulaVāsam which he has to undergo. The grahamāthā (householder) has several dharmās. The rules for the sanyāsis are different from these.
Taking care of the children, protecting the chastity of the wife and the honour of the family etc are among the duties of a grahasthā. He has also responsibilities towards the society. He only supports the *sanyāsis* who have no earning or property. When he takes care of others like this, he may have to fight in the process. That is why *ahimsā* has not been made a strict rule for him. Although food based on *ahimsā* has been prescribed, he has been permitted to punish the wicked, kill insects etc. Since he has to perform yagnam for the welfare of the world, he has been permitted to make sacrifice in yagnam.

The position of the *sanyāsi* is different. He has no family. He has no worry about the society. He has no responsibility towards the world whichever way it may go. Since he is always in the thought of *Paramāthmā*, the grace of *Paramāthmā* who is of the form of love will flow through him of its own accord to all people and do good. But he need not have to engage himself in activity for the sake of the society. The help that he renders to the society is that he reaches the *Paramāthmā*. That is why such duties as punishing the wicked, yagnam have not been prescribed for him. What is prescribed for him is complete *ahimsā dharma*. According to Hindu religion, it is only the *sanyāsi* who has to be a complete *ahimsā* man without even plucking a leaf.

Because *dharmās* have been segregated on the basis of *varṇa* and *āśramās*, large number of people of our religion have preserved, for ages since, very high principles without being destroyed, something the people of other religions could not. But today some of our people who accept the teachings of other religions but are not as spiritually oriented as the great men of those religions talk mostly with political objectives that ‘all are equal, all people can do everything’. Starting with this they make the people give up one by one the great *dharmā* and are creating confusion.
There is the saying that 'if there is one good person, for his sake, it will rain for all'. In this there is the great truth that great dharmā is enjoined on some one person. If it is expected that all people should be good, that is not practicable. The proverb is that even if there is one good person because of him it rains for everybody. In the society even if one section follows the highest dharmē, it is enough. The fruits of it will become available to all sections. Varnāśrama division has been designed in such a way that a the anushtānam of a few people will rain dharmā love and Lord’s grace for all people.

Dharmam and āchārās will depend upon each one’s function. Everyone should do his duty without excessive desire, anger etc. If things are done this way, even one whose function (swadharma) appears to be violent, will in due course start following ahimsā and other dharmās, will get interested in good principles and good character. We have practically seen this happening in our country.

According to Gītā and other sāstrās, men have attained the highest siddhi by doing each one’s duty diligently; Maturity should come in the natural course and then one can adopt the higher dharmā. But however great may be another’s dharmā, trying to adopt it in a state of immaturity will not do good. It is in swadharma there is sreyas. It is said that it does not matter even if one were to die doing his swadharma.

'Svē svē karmanyabhirathah samsiddhim labhathe narah
Śreyan swadharmao vigunah Paradharmāth swanushtithāth
Swadharme nidhanam sreyah

Our sāstrās are firm that each one should follow the dharmās that have been established on the basis of four varnas according to functions and the four āśramās.

On a superficial observation, it may appear that those who codified the Hindu sāstrās had no compassion and it is only those
like Buddha and Jesus who had prescribed the same *dharmā* for everyone were compassionate. But if we see in practice those following the noble *dharmās* they had prescribed to all people are in large numbers in Hindu religion only and that many of those in other religions have given them up. If you see the results and the good that world has gained we have to say that it is only rishis and others like Manu who were the authors of the *sāstrās* who were compassionate.
THE DRAWBACKS OF NOT DIFFERENTIATING FUNCTIONS

It is only those who had not differentiated the functions that have given cause for many of their followers to become guilty. I shall tell you how. First of all: since all the ordinary people cannot follow the strict rules and regulations they deviate from them and become guilty of having given up the principles of their religion.

I have mentioned the example of ahimsā. I shall tell you one another like that. Even in the matter of sathyam, our sāstrās approve of the difference in circumstances. Our sāstrās say that if telling the truth will harm a person who has not done any wrong then more than truth in speech it is love which does good to others which is a greater sathyam. For example if ten rowdies chase a girl and if she takes shelter in our house and if the rowdies ask ‘Do you know where that girl has gone?’ they should be told ‘I do not know’. That is our religious doctrine. Those who follow a religion which says that all people should speak the truth all the time, may have to betray the girl. Otherwise they will incur the sin of violating their religion.

It happens that for reasons of diplomacy the State has to hide or distort several facts. If that is not done country’s interests will be harmed. Or within the institution of government which is to administer the law a crack will develop. Although people like Gandhi might say that even these are wrong, once we got freedom it has become necessary to follow the practice of diplomacy which does not conform to Gandhian sathyam. Even now people consider Gandhi higher than even the great religious leaders. But what is being done is contrary to his principles. This is hypocrisy. Many foreign countries which had gone down to the meanest level of diplomacy during war time had violated the principle of sathyam of their religion. In our country, Artha Sāstrā which deals with
Statecraft, has permitted diplomacy where necessary. So when the kings had to hide the truths due to force of circumstances, they did not incur the blemish of hypocrisy or that of acting against sāstrā. Since our sāstrās have clearly indicated the circumstances in which exceptions to sathyam could be made the kings acted according to that and in every other circumstance they had followed sathyam. In countries where such exceptions to the rule of sathyam have not been provided, kings had acted contrary to sathyam not in a few cases but in many matters and therefore there was change of governments, agitation, revolution, etc. A look into history will make this clear. But we see that without considering this aspect Chānakyā who had written the Artha Śāstrā has been branded as cunning, unscrupulous and deceitful!

There is another drawback in making the ideal rule applicable to everyone. The followers who act against the principles of their religion, interpret the basic principles to suit their convenience in order to show that they are not acting against their religion. When Hindus asked the Buddhists how they could eat meat, it appears they twisted the principles of their religion and said 'The ahimsā dharma preached by Buddha is that we should not cause harm directly to any animal. Without causing any harm when we eat only what is sold by the butcher, there is no violation of the principles of ahimsā'. When many people say like this over and over again, acting against the basic principle of a religion itself becomes its principle. In other words the very form of the religion gets distorted. This is a blemish bigger than anything else.

By segregating the functions and differentiating the dharmās our religious sāstrās have saved us from all such blemish and are protecting the noble dharmās without distortion. We say that it is not necessary to differentiate the functions and that all are equal. We also say that the basic principle of our religion is what we like, namely the concept of equality, that there is no discrimination based on jāthi and give it ‘good name’! This is also a blemish like
acting against the original religion and showing that what is distorted is the original.

There is no one to point out these things and speak about them. If it is done people will understand. At least one in a thousand will agree. According to the principle ‘even if there is one good man’ about which I spoke earlier I have said all these only in the thought that I may feel satisfied to this extent.

‘If each one performs his duty with total involvement he attains the highest siddhi. Any Karmā done according to one’s swadharma becomes an offering to Īswara and gives him siddhi’ - this is what Bhagawān has conclusively said in Gītā. Even people who have attachment to religion have forgotten this and talk of reforms. Since āchāram changes according to one’s Karmā (duty), Karmā here is inclusive of āchāram.
ABSENCE OF EXCEPTION -
THE CONSEQUENCES

The reason why exceptions have been provided for some rules in śāstrās is to improve it with adaptability with an understanding of the attitude of people. Our śāstrās have provided relaxation of even great dharmās and principles like sathyam, ahimsā etc for the sake of a sathyam higher than these in a compelling situation. Even if, for outward appearance, it looks like relaxation if we look deep it will be seen that this is what saves dharmā not only in letter but in spirit. For example, to provide for a situation in which a helpless woman is saved from some rascals an amendment is made to speaking mere sathyam (sathyam bhūthalitham) - that which does good to the beings is sathyam. Thus focus is made on the spirit of sathyam and written as Śāsthram.

There is an exception to everything. Without considering this if someone tries to enforce a rule rigorously later on he himself may face an exceptional situation in which he has to act contrary to it and he will feel embarrassed.

Gandhi was all for ahimsā. But he himself permitted the mercy killing of a calf which was painfully struggling for life. Because earlier he had preached ahimsā of extreme form, many people now say that he has committed ‘go hathi’ and condemn him.

He did another thing also. Once there was a severe famine in the country. At a meeting to discuss the situation the representatives of all the provinces sought more food assistance from the Central Government. Gandhi too happened to be present at that meeting in an advisory capacity. When Gandhi saw that representatives of Madras Province were also seeking more assistance, he observed, ‘People of U.P. and M.P provinces which
have no access to the sea are crying. Should you also cry when your province is surrounded by three oceans on all the three sides? ’ What he meant was: There is plenty of fish in the sea. Why don’t you eat them?’

After the passing away of Gandhi, Nehru said ‘I already have with me Bapu’ s permission to invade Pakistan in case there is aggression from that country’.

What we see is that the very people who allege that the rules of śāsthrā are discriminatory and made common rules for everybody started with a lot of commitment to such rules without any flexibility but ended up relaxing the rules to suit circumstances very much in the manner of the śāsthrās. Or if they do not relax the rules their followers have to completely give them up. It is to explain this I took the example of Buddha and Gandhi. It is even said that Gandhi is an avatār of Buddha!

Because it is not practicable to make everything common to all people, the dharma āchārās have been differentially prescribed according to Varnāśrama. Since nothing can be common to everyone under all circumstances, exceptions have been made and relaxation bas been done in the form of ‘āfat dharma’, yāthra dharma etc. I have given the example of these two persons just to show that even if rules are changed with the best of intentions, it does not work out well in practice. It does not mean that I have blamed them. All that I have shown is even when these two persons who were great ‘thyagis’ and were concerned only about the welfare of all people, deviated from Vaidhik traditions and acted, things did not happen the way they wanted and they themselves could not implement their principles in a serious way. It was not for examining whether what they as individuals did was right or wrong. If that was so, the question will arise whether what I say is right or wrong. Therefore the consideration here is not about individuals. That is not necessary either. I have given what these two men have done as example only to show that if an assessment
is made whether the distinctions made in the śāstrās on the basis of functions and the related āchārā and anushtana are right or wrong and a change is brought about it is not practicable to implement what is newly formulated. It was only to underline the greatness of the śāstrās that I have said that what was done by these two persons endowed with great intellect, loving heart and total absence of selfishness did not work out well in practice and not to find shortcomings in them. I have taken these two as example because if I take any other name the person may not be so well known to all people.

If the communities are small and compact like the Parsis and the Jains we find that even if the rule is made applicable to all people, they are able to stick to it and follow it. Even though the rules regarding ahimsā are stricter for Jains than for the Buddhists we find that they do not deviate from them. As different from this, our religionists comprise a very large society in terms of size. Yet, for thousands of years, they have been people of much nobler qualities than those of other religions. The reason for this is that our śāstrās have provided both for the ideal rule and what is practicable for the ordinary people and the ideal has been made compulsory only for some people and through them others are also influenced so that it spreads widely but in an optional manner.
FLEXIBILITY IN ĀCHĀRAM

Just as there are different dharmās like Varna dharmā, āśramā dharmā, Āfat dharmā, Yāthrā dharmā etc., sāsthrās have made relaxation in respect of regions also (how much difference is there between the Himalayan region and the desert region of Rajasthan!). In this vast country, in each region, there has been the influence of the customs of other countries over the centuries. Allowance has been made for this and therefore some differences have grown in the ācharās followed in different regions. We call this 'dhesa ācharām'. Although it is basically one sāsthrā, differences have developed in some respects in different regions and these have come to say. Even the great men in these regions (the sishtās) follow only the regional ācharām.

For all males all over India the style of wearing the dhothi is only 'pancha kachcham'. The Bengali leaves it loose at the end instead of tucking it at the hip, but it is only a small difference. But if we look at ladies, even in Tamil Nādu, there is difference between the Iyers and Iyengars in the style of wearing the sari. It is different in Karnataka. It is yet another in Maharashtra. But in all these styles, there is kachcham. But in the North the ladies do not wear in kachcham style. In Gujarat, U.P., Kashmir and Bengal the style of wearing saris is different. Even in the South, in Kerala, they wear mundu without the kachcham. These are all respected as the 'dhesa āchārā of each region. What has not appeared recently but has come as a tradition over a long period and has been followed by the masters of sāstrās in these regions has the approval of sāstrās.

In the same manner, there is such a thing as kulāchārām. In this we find customs differing between families. Usually, this can be noticed during a marriage. It will be said, 'this is the custom in the boy's house and they wanted it to be done in the same way.
Nāndhi, Vratham, Kanyādhānam, Pāṅigrahaṇam, Māngalya dhāraṇam, Sapthathi, Praveśa Hōmam, Aupāsanam, etc will be mostly the same. Even in this, there may be differences depending upon the ‘sūthra’ but all the rituals having these names are common. But excluding these, there will be differences in many respects. Even in the food prepared for sraddhā there are differences between families according to kulāchāram regarding what can be included and what should be excluded.

I have mentioned in between about āfat dharmā and Yāthrā dharmā. These have been allowed out of sympathetic considerations. Relaxation has been given by sāstrās permitting āfat dharmam and Yāthrā dharmam in certain circumstances when it is not possible to strictly follow the rules of sāstrās.

In Yāthrā dharmam, it is said that when one goes to other places even if it is not possible to observe all the āchāram, it is enough if what is possible is observed. It is even said that although when in one’s own place and home all the āchāras are to be observed when going out to other places it is enough if half of these are observed. In these days when one resides in distant suburbs and goes to the city for work or is on constant tour, I am afraid to tell them these lenient rules. It should not happen that I myself become responsible for others giving up what little āchāram they are following. When sāstrās thought about travel and the need to stay in other places, they did not have in view travel on account of employment and earning. Only travelling on account of pilgrimage or to attend a marriage or some other event and similar reasons were kept in view and not travelling daily for earning.

If complete fasting is not possible, fruits and milk can be taken. The drawback from which cooked food suffers when left over is not there for fried food. If it happens that water has to be accepted from someone who is a little wanting in personal āchāram, sprinkling a little butter milk in it will be remedial – all such exemptions have been given only out of great consideration
and compassion (*dhākshanyam*). It is out of compassion for the weak, *vratās* and upavasām have not been prescribed for them.

In the same manner at a time of great danger the restrictions of *Āchāram* are relaxed and *Āfat dharmā* has been allowed. Even then only when it is absolutely impossible, *Āchāram* can be relaxed and wherever possible they have to be followed. The *Upanishad* (Chandogya Upanishad) narrates a story to illustrate this.
The Kuru Desh was facing destruction due to heavy rains. People were suffering for want of food. There was a rishi by name Sākrāyanā Ushasthar. After much wandering he and his wife reached a village where mahouts were living. Grains used to be kept stored for elephants. A small part of the elephant’s food is enough for man. Therefore grain was available in the village to some extent. One mahout was eating a grain called ‘gulmasham’ (I think it is horse gram). In order to save his life the rishi sought alms and obtained a little of that grain according to ālat dharmā. The mahout gave him a little water from what he himself was drinking. Ushasthar refused to accept the water saying that he would not accept ‘Uchchishtam’ (what is left behind after one has consumed), quoting sāstrās. The mahout asked him ‘Is not the gram also Uchchishtam? You accepted it’. Ushasthar replied ‘If I had not taken and eaten it I would have died. Since saving one’s life is a greater dharmā I gave up the lesser Uchchishta dharmā. Now my life will not go even if I do not drink water. It is true that after taking food water will be tasty. Still If I take water from you and drink it will be only for pleasure of tasting it and not for the dharmā of protecting my life according to sāstrās. Therefore I do not want the water’.

We talk of the four - Dharmā, artha, kāma, Moksha. āchārā covers arthā and kamā, and the good things of this world. But more than that it considers dharmā as important and gives Moksha as the goal.

Śāstrās say that it is enough for ladies to sprinkle water mixed with turmeric on their heads except on some special days. This is out of the consideration that they need not undergo hardship by making their heads wet everyday. It also says that
when a woman is pregnant, once the foetess becomes full grown, whatever vratham she undertakes will not be fruitful. This is also out of compassion that she should not in that state subject her body to suffering by vrathás and upavāsās. It is also laid down that a brahmāchārī can take sāthvik food as much as he wants and vrathams and upavāsās are not prescribed for him. This is because in childhood and adulthood one should have healthy growth. Exceptions have been made to many rules for the sick person also.

This does not mean that just for consideration or compassion, principles have been given up. The underlying principle is that however much we may have faith in āchāra anusṭātanam, when it becomes very difficult to follow them, Bhagawān himself, out of compassion, will overlook it but when the period of hardship is over, we have to follow them. Simply because some āchārās have been relaxed for specific periods, that should not be made a regular practice. If something is difficult, a substitute would have been mentioned. That is called 'kautam'. Observing the kauta āchāram all the time, instead of the main rule will not be in order. What is important and main is the general rule. Kauta rule is subsidiary. Sometimes observing the main and along with it the kautam also is considered special. Even after taking bath from head to foot, we can have kauta bath by applying Vibhūthi all over the body. When we take bath we have to dip into water to remove the dirt on the body but when one is not well, it is enough if he takes bath upto the neck. If he has fever, it is enough if bath is had upto the hip. If that too is not possible it is enough if the body is wiped with wet cloth. If the fever is high, even that is not necessary. Śāstrās have provided the flexibility that if Vibhūthi is applied all over the body it is considered as having taken bath. But when one is in good health, he should not restrict himself to Vibhūthi bath.
Types of Bath

Five types of bath have been mentioned. Of these when we say snānam, it is bathing with water by taking it in a mug etc and pouring it over the body. It is Varuṇam - related to Varuṇa Bhagawān. Only if we dip into water (avakāham) it will amount to main snānam. Keeping water in a vessel, taking from it in a container and pouring it over the body, is only secondary. Kauṇa snānam that is taking bath upto the neck or the hip is still lower in merit.

Vibhūthi snānam is called Agneyam. It means it is connected with Agni. Since Vibhūthi is made out of ash it has come to be called basma. Instead of adding water to Vibhūthi and making it a paste if it is applied as dry powder, we call it ‘basmōṭhūṭhulanam’.

The dust that flies from the hoofs of cows when they walk is said to be holy and called ‘Gōthūl’, Balakrishna with his blue black colour was ‘Gōthūli dhūsarithan’ (dust covered) due to the gōthūl covering his body as if it was sandal powder. When a herd of cows moves, because of their large number air circulation is more in that area and dust from below the hoofs gets thrown up in a big way. If we stand in the vicinity of such a place and the gōthūl falls on us it is a kind of snānam called ‘Vāyavyam’ – the meaning is that it is connected with Vayū. Is it not due to wind that the dust flies?

Does it not happen that even when there is sunshine there is rain? That rain water is equal to what comes from Devalokam. Therefore it is called Divyasnānam. When occasionally, it rains when the sun shines, we should go and stand in that rain.

We sprinkle water that has been sanctified by manthrās. We sprinkle it only with the finger instead of pouring it over the body. When performing sandhyāvandanam after taking the main bath we sprinkle on our head the manthra water repeating ‘Apōhishta’. In pūjā, hōمام, yāgam etc a kalās is kept, manthra japa is done and
at the end of the ritual the purōhīth sprinkles the water from the kalas with a bunch of dharba grass on all people. This is also one of the five snānas. This is called Brahmam. Brahmam means Vēdhā; and also manthra. Therefore sprinkling of the water sanctified by the mantras is called Brahmasnānam. I have already said that for those who are not qualified to chant manthrās there is Bhagawan nāmā. All Bhagawan nāmas are manthrās.

In a way all snānam is Brahmam only. Have not all the āchārās been prescribed only to do whatever is to be done with manthra, thinking of Iśwara and offering the work done to Iśwara. Invoking Varuṇa or any other devathā in a kumbam and then sprinkling the water from that kumbam on the head is called Brahram. For those who are unable to do Varuṇa snānam in any manner due to the state of health, sprinkling of this mantra thīrtham itself become kauṇa snānam.

When we consider the five elements (Pancha Bhūthas) together with the five types of snīnam, Varuṇām is Appu, Āhnēyam is Thēyu, Gōthuli (also called Vāyavyam) is Vāyu. In addition to these, I mentioned Brahmam and Divyam. Out of the Pancha Bhūthas, Prithvi and Akāsh have been left out. Manthrās are spread in akāsh. Rishis have seen them through their yoga sakthi and given them to us. When it is said that each of the Pancha Bhūthas is support to one out of Sabdha, Sparśa, Rūpa, Rasa, Gandha, Akāsh is for sabdham. Here Sabdham is Vēdha manthram. Therefore Brahma snānam can be said to be related to akāsh. Divyam also is in a way considered to be connected to Akāsh since it is believed to come from Dévalākam. What is left out is Prithvi. Vāyavyam means we are standing in Gōthuli. It is called Vāyavyam because it falls on us due to wind. In reality what bathes us is the dust (mud) from below the hoofs of cows. In Varuṇa snānam (which is the general rule) also what is applied for cleaning is Mriththika that is mud (mud from ant hill) - Prithvi. Thus, there are five types of snānas in the form of Pancha bhūthas. In the end,
whatever has been prescribed is all for cleaning the āthmā of its sins.

It is not that snānam only is of five types. Within that the important snānam that is bathing by dipping in water itself consists of five parts.

_Sankalpas sūkṭapatanam mārjanam cha (a)kamarṣhānām_  
_Dēvathā tharpānām chaiva snānam panchānga ucyathē_

First of all 'sankalpam' should be done. We should begin all Karmās with sankalpam that is ‘I am doing this as prayāśchitha for my sins and for Paramēśwara’s satisfaction (prīthi)’. Reciting the Vedha sūkṭhas is Sūkṛtha Patanam. Mārjanam is sprinkling water on the head along with manthrās such as ‘āpohishta’. It is only after that we have to dip into the water and do snānam. Remaining in water, japa should be done of akamarshano sāktham three times. This is the agamarshanam appearing in the above slōka. If the time is too short to do it, Gāyathrī should be repeated as japa three times - once padam by padam, second time half and half and the third as full. If it is very urgent and even this cannot be done, it is enough if praṇava is repeated three times. But that should not be made a daily practice. That will only lead to laziness and disobedience. It is only during urgency and in serious situations if āchāram is observed on a reduced scale as kaurām but with the intense feeling ‘I am not able to do this fully according to āchāra, how sad!,’ Bhagawān appreciates that feeling and gives full reward. But if it is done during normal times, he will not pardon. As soon as snānam is over, even while remaining in water, tharpānām has to be performed for Dēvās, Rishis and Pithrus. This is the fifth part of the snānam

For what looks so ordinary as bathing there are so many rules and qualities! It is so for everything.

All worldly activities have been spiritually oriented without treating them as small or big or spiritual or worldly – starting from
brushing the teeth, producing a child, disposing off a dead body etc.

If one thing - snānam - is taken I have talked so much about it. I had said earlier that at the start we have to apply dhruvā grass and mud. There are more rules for taking bath. If bath is taken only for external cleanliness it will be enough if the body is properly rubbed to remove the dirt. Since it is intended for internal purification also, we have to follow what the rishis have given us as rules which we may not understand or even like. For example when we take bath in a river we have to stand facing the direction of flow of the river and then bathe. When bathing in a tank we have to stand facing the sun and bathe. If we happen to take bath after sunset as in the event of eclipse, death, etc how is it possible to face the sun? Those who had framed the sāstrā rules have thought of such situations also and have laid down that in such circumstances if we take bath in a tank during night we have to face the east or the west. Those who take bath at home in such circumstances, either at the well or by taking water from a container, have to face the east. The most suitable for all Karmās is east but for pithru Karmās it is south.

Which direction to face while performing something, how to sit (during dhyanam it is padmāsanam; other Karmās are done sitting in the normal manner of squatting, when doing āchamanā, sitting without the bottom touching the ground, how to keep the hands (during sankalpam, on the thigh with right palm over the left palm; during pranāyāmā the nose to be held at a particular place with a particular finger; during āchamanā which finger is to be folded and which to be held out); a specified quantity of water for each (for āchamanam it is that much of water in which a black gram will sink; for thrpaṇam as much as a cattle horn can hold (gōsrunga pramāṇam) these have been prescribed; how many darbha grass to be held between the fingers, how many to be kept below our seat, how much thill for thrpaṇam, what is the quantity
of ājyam (ghee or havis) for a hōmam what things are to be kept, facing which direction - all these have been laid down by sāstrās in an elaborate and minute manner, which will become easy if practised. If we keep thinking whether all these are possible we will never be able to do it. If a car is to be driven, how many parts like the switch, the brake, the gear have to be operated and these are done easily. If it is observed how experienced Śrauthis arrange everything quickly according to sāstrā rules during yagnās, it will be clear. If there is involvement, everything is possible.
INVOLVEMENT AND FAITH  
(ŚRADDHĀ)

Involvement and faith are like two eyes. We generally understand śraddhā to mean doing a thing with interest and care. If there is lack of attention to a matter we say that the person is showing ‘asraddhā’. The main meaning of śraddhā is belief, faith. In what can be established rationally and what gives immediate visible results there is no place for faith. But faith is very necessary in matters which are ‘adhishta’ (not seen) and spiritual in which our ancients found out the truth and gave us the āchārā and anushtena. Bhagawān says (in Gītā) ‘Śraddhāvān labathē jnānām’ - it is the one who has śraddhā who gains knowledge of the soul. Śraddham (which is wrongly pronounced as Śrārdham) is what is done with Śraddhā. Faith is needed without asking why. If āchārās are to be accepted only because they are consistent with science or psychology or conducive to health etc, with today’s growth of knowledge we may not be able to show any reason for many āchārās. If because of this we are to give them up, then the whole thing will end up in anāchāram only. Accepting some and rejecting others will be like the story of the person who crossed over half the well.

The present age (yugam) is said to be an age of non-belief, lack of faith. People ask ‘how to believe what cannot be seen?’ We have seen earlier that Rishis had somehow grasped the subtlest of scientific principles which we cannot see and have framed the rules of āchārā. They had known everything without the aid of laboratories and instruments which are available today. That means they had supersensory powers to know things which were secret and they have given the āchārās which do not come under science. In āchārā the truth that is seen is evidence that even those which are not seen must be true.
I shall give another reason why it has to be believed. All sāstrās say that sathyam is the greatest dharma. Śāstrās also say that speaking untruth is a great sin for which lot of suffering will have to be undergone in hell. Could those who said this have falsely said in the name of adhishta that ‘this is sin’, ‘this is puniya’, just to escape by saying something and writing down as rules? Those who framed the sāstrās have said ‘Sathyān nāsthi parō dharmaḥ’ (there is no dharma superior to sathyam). Such people would not have framed any rules unless they had a revelation due to some grace (grace of God) or sathyam had occurred to them deep within their heart by intuition.

We should not think that the rules of sāstrās are so many and not intelligible. If I turn the pages of this book, I myself feel somewhat giddy.*

I feel whether it is possible for me to do all these. I am a Matadhīpathi having all the conveniences to observe them. You yourself have provided the conveniences. Still, if I feel whether I can do all these what to say about you who are caught in town life? Yet each one should make utmost effort. We should intensely feel that we are unable to do the rest. A determination, a vow should be made that at least after retirement you will do more. Then Paramēśwara will take note of the āchārās which we observe sincerely and our sincere feelings that we are unable to observe them fully and the sraddhā we have in sāstrās and will give us a helping hand and raise us.

* Sri Periyavā is turning the pages of a Dharma Śāstrā book and is saying this and also what follows. The name of the book is not known).
SOME RULES OF ĀCHĀRAM

Without any demarcation of what comes under āchāram and what does not, all matters are covered in this. (The book Periyavā is having in his hand) Some of this will make the moderns have a hearty laugh! (even as Periyavā is turning the pages this way and that).

Fire should not be blown directly by mouth

A male member should not put out a dipam

A woman should not break a pumpkin

For the first rule the reason may be given that if fire is blown directly by the mouth, either ash or kerosene fumes may enter the mouth but for the other two no such reason can be found. Even for the rule that fire should not be blown with mouth directly, the sāsthra reason is that saliva may contaminate Agni Bhagawān and thus cause offence – spoiling the sacredness.

(Still looking into the book). Shaving can be had only on such and such days.

Oil bath can be had only on such and such days.

If you go in search of reasons for all these, we will not be able to find any.

(Still reading the book); the nail should not be peeled off.

We should not allow saliva to come into contact with anything.

These are all personal hygiene.

(Again the book). Should not indulge in gambling.

Alcoholic drink should not be taken.

In these, ethics, health, the good of the family and all else come in the form of āchārām.
Except on occasions of marriage and during yathrā, husband and wife should not take food together.

Milk should not be taken during day time (afternoon). Curd should not be taken during night. Buttermilk does not matter.

It has been stated here that these are accepted by doctors too.

(Looking into the book) ‘Nārmadi’ (A kind of silk like cloth woven from the fibres of certain plants). silk, shawl etc even if they are not washed can always be considered to have ritual purity and used. But if they have been used several times and have become soiled due to sweat etc, they can be washed on Amāvāsyā day in water mixed with gruel prepared out of green gram. By this the clothes will not lose their ritual purity.

Here, I must tell my opinion about silk. You must be already knowing it. For making about one foot length of silk, hundreds of silk worms have to be killed. Because of this the great āchāram ‘ahimsā paramō dharmah’ suffers. Apart from this, since silk costs much and because of the craze for silk sarees family finance is seriously affected. Since those who do not have the means try to copy those who have the means they run into debt. For these reasons, I have been talking against the use of silk. If it becomes very necessary, either when we are in other places or, due to continuous rain, it is difficult to dry the washed clothes and clothes of ritual purity should always remain handy, clothes made of ‘ahimsā silk’ that is what are made of silk obtained without killing silk worms can be used. It is true that ‘ahimsā silk’ does not have the smoothness and shining of silk. But keeping in view compassion to all beings and creatures this only has to be used.

Food should not be taken without feeding a guest; we have to stand outside and look through the entire street to see if anyone is coming for food and then only take our food.
There are two types - 'adhithi' and 'abhyāgathan'. Adhithi is one whom we have invited for having food. abhyāgathan comes of his own accord. Both have to be given food.

Here humanism is in the form of āchāram. Not giving is not only a wrong according to ethics but it is also anāchāram.

Only after cleaning the leg with water and wiping it one should go to sleep.

There are rules about the number of times we have to gargle after brushing the teeth in the morning and after having food.

There is a foot note that gargling like this helps secretion of the glands, in the neck and throat and keep them healthy after we get up in the morning and after we have taken food.

Taking bed coffee without cleaning the teeth is the worst form of anāchārām. It is most unhealthy. Instead of keeping a single brush for several days we should use twig (mostly of banyan or babul) everyday and throw it away. Since these twigs are specially suited for the teeth there is the saying in Tamil ‘āl’ (banyan) and ‘veḷ’ (babul) strengthen the teeth.

The same sāstrā which says that the teeth should be cleaned well, gargling should be done till belching comes up says that, on certain days like sraddhā days, teeth should not be cleaned with twigs but it is enough if the mouth and the teeth are just wiped with the finger and then gargling done. We should not think that having said āchāram is cleanliness, this is unclean. We should understand that there must be some reason for this which we do not know because this has been said in the same sāstrā which lays down a number of rules for snānam etc on sraddhā days. The person who has published this book has said that there is also a reason which we can know. That is if the teeth are cleaned well and the tongue is wiped and then gargling is done, all bile will come out. On other days it needs to come out like that. But if the bile comes out we will
start feeling hungry. On other days, we can have buttermilk or milk or gruel. But on sraddhā day one has to starve completely. The ceremony has to be commenced after 1.00 pm and food can be taken only after it is completed. In order not to feel hungry till then this relaxation regarding cleaning the teeth. This is what he has written. This will also be one of those which āchāram has prescribed out of consideration.

(Turning the pages of the book): How many days or for what duration personal pollution is to be observed when relatives having different degrees of relationship die? If the news of the death itself reaches after some time or some days, what is the prāyaschitham for not observing pollution till then - rules for these and also for what period different relatives have to observe personal pollution when a child is born - are given over several pages. There is difference between these two types of personal pollution. The pollution for the duration of eclipse is still different from these two. If japa should not be done during the period of other types of pollutions, japa performed during eclipse has greater power; it will be very beneficial.

The same Sāsthram which has laid down such severe pollutions especially that connected with death also says that if a boy (bridegroom) has done his sankalpam and has his kankartam tied at the commencement of marriage, till all the rituals are completed upto the time of Śesha hōmam he does not suffer any pollution even if his own father or mother dies.

Thus there are several rules which are very strange.

(Turning the pages): It is said that if tender coconut water is kept in a bronze pot, it will be equal to toddy. Researchers may say that the reason for this may be some chemical reaction. But it is not necessary that it should be the only reason.
KARMĀS LAID DOWN BY ŚĀSTHRĀS AND SYNTHETIC MATERIALS

In the context of ‘chemical’ I shall say something that occurs to me. These days synthetic materials are made through chemical process which serve the same purpose as natural things. It is possible that materials used for sāsthra Karmās may also be made through chemical process but such synthetic materials should not be allowed to be used in sāsthra Karmās. When it is said that both the materials have the same use, they are only referring to results that can be seen. But the more important unseen benefit accrues by the use of materials mentioned in sāsthraś and not others. Even among the natural materials, a substitute should not be used unless it is permitted in the sāsthrā itself as a substitute. Simply because the results we can see are same will the two materials become the same? Sugar candy and alum look alike. But are they same? Those who framed the sāsthraś had found out that even things which are similar are actually different according to physics and therefore laid down what can be used and what cannot be used. Though the two vegetables, namely, field beans and beans look alike, it is said, that beans should not be used for sraddhā but field beans can be used. Although chilli and pepper are both pungent, pepper is permitted for sraddhā but not chilli.

(Looking into the book) : During days of personal pollution whatever vratha is observed will not bear fruit. Still if Ėkādasi falls during that period, upavāsam has to be observed.

One eighth of the duration of Dwādasi is called ‘Harivāsaram’ and food has to be taken during that slot. For this purpose relaxation has been made that Mādhyānhikam and Vaisvadēvam etc can be performed early on Dwādasi days. But if sraddhā falls on a Dwādasi day, it should be done between 1.12 pm and 3.36 pm.
Such importance has been accorded to *sraddhā* which is to be performed with *sraddhā*. Did I not say that even on days of personal pollution, *Ekādaśī upavāsam* has to be observed? But if *sraddhā* falls on a *Ekādaśī* day, it has been laid down that full meals has to be taken as ‘*pithru sēsham*’ (what remains after being offered to the pithrus). *Madhwās* who accord great importance to *Ekādaśī* do not perform *srāddham* if it falls on *Ekādaśī* day.

(Looking into the book): In the food taken on *Dvādaśī* day the special kind of greens and berry which have been prescribed have to be taken and instead of tamarind lemon and amla should be taken. It is also indicated here that according to dieticians this kind of food helps the secretion of digestive juices after the previous day’s fasting.

(Again looking into the book) : Brahmins should never take onion and garlic. Others too should not take this on the days of vratha. This additional restriction applicable to the Brahmins is due to the protection of *manthrās* being kept in view. In the same manner, a particular kind of greens mentioned here, if taken, it becomes easier to control sense organs relatively easily. This has been found by experience.

*Sāstham* itself, out of great compassion, has permitted taking of medicines in which garlic and other things which are normally prohibited are added. But it is also said that after that, purification has to be done by taking panchagavyam and doing *punyāhavāchanam*.

(Turning the pages) : Here is one *āchārā* which shows great compassion. If someone who is hungry is standing outside the house and if those in the house take food such food is equal to meat and the water taken by them is equal to toddy.

There is a lot said about how a woman should be during the days of her periods.
THE EVIL THAT BEFALLS DUE TO PERSONAL POLLUTION

Because the effects of personal pollution and the benefits of ‘madi’ (personal cleanliness in respect of body and clothes and avoiding contact with others) are not visible, people call this superstition. But now we see with our own eyes all that sāstrās say will happen due to mixing with ‘polluted’ persons, are happening. We see that with the increase in activities in contravention of the rules of ‘madi’, sickness of individuals, accidents even in holy places of pilgrimage, natural calamities, the fury of Nature, drought, quakes, all are on the increase. Even then if it is not admitted that this is the cause of all these adverse effects, to me it appears to be a big superstition.

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Among āchārās matters which are sentimental and prick the mind are also mentioned. When we happen to trample on someone’s foot or on a book, we get a feeling of guilt. When elders come and we happen to be sitting or lying down or stretching our legs towards them, we feel we have offended them. If a lady who is a ‘Sumangali’ with a pleasant personality comes when we are about to commence a work or we see her when we are starting out, we get a mental satisfaction. All these become sāstrās too.

At the same time the rules (in this book) are very harsh in respect of widows such that they are kept aside and they feel it. The same sāstrā also says that if a single Brahmin comes opposite it is bad omen. According to this even if a pundit well versed in Vedhās comes it is a bad omen, is it not? Therefore these are not within the orbit of our rational explanation.
ACTIVITIES TO BE CONDUCTED WITH THE THOUGHT OF GOD AND WITH MAN thrās

Āchārās have evolved by combining the thought of God in the mind, recitation of manthrās and activities with the body. It is no use performing any action without a manthrā or Bhagawan nāmā. Many of the activities performed by human beings are also done by all other beings. From an insect onwards, every being eats. If man also were to do the same thing, what is the good of having taken human birth? That is why sāstrās have laid down that he must do ‘pranāhuthi’ and then take food even while reciting Gōvinda nāmā. The fish also always remains in water. Would it mean that it has taken a bath and is observing ritual purity? Only a bath taken with recitation of manthrās or repeating the name Gōvinda, Gōvinda or the name of the ‘Ishta devathā’ will be real bath. Thus, it is only when it is not a mere action but the mind and speech are turned towards Īswara along with action it is āchāram.

Since I mentioned about fish, something funny comes to mind. In the same sāstrā which has laid down strict guidelines for observing ritual purity, certain things have been spoken of highly as fit for pūjā although they would be considered anāchāram. Honey is actually the honeybee’s saliva. Silk is the saliva of the silk worm. We milk the cow after the calf has sucked with its mouth. Even in holy waters fish live but we use all these in our pūjā to Īswara.

Thus even in the sāstrās there are relaxations to general rules. Just because these exceptions are there, we should not take the liberty of adding to them.
Even when there are common āchārās based on sāstrās different traditions and kula āchārām have evolved within those. Somehow, over a long period, traditions which are in addition to the original and different from it in some minor aspects have evolved and they are being followed by many including the sishtas.

I have said that these observances which differ from each other have been accepted as kula āchāram or dhēsa āchāram by later day dharma sāstrās and since such changes had been made even during the time of people who were devoted to sāstrās we have to assume that they had acted under a certain divine command to make these changes and, therefore, we can also follow them. That does not mean that each of us can go on making changes as we want. It is not enough if the changes satisfy what these days is being talked about in a big way as conscience. We should be definite that it has Paramēśvara’s approval also.

I have said that there is nothing wrong in following what has come to us through generations as kula āchāram or dhēsa āchāram although they may in some aspects be different from the original sāstrās. But these days some who are scholars in sāstrās have started saying boldly that although in matters like siddhānta and anushtānam and symbols arising out of them the kulāchāram can be followed, in matters which are not very subjective it is not correct to go against the original and the same has to be strictly followed. Their view is also not without substance. Now I feel it will be better if I add a sub-clause to dhēsa āchāram and kula āchārām about which I have spoken. Even if some customs unrelated to a siddhānta and contrary to the original sāstrā have
been observed as a tradition over several generations, I think it will be better if these are corrected in accordance with the original.

Śāstrās say that only if an elder who is common to three generations is not there, marriage can be contracted among relatives. Even those who consider consanguineous marriages from the point of view of health say that this sāstrā stipulation is correct. But in the South, for a long time, even in orthodox families, marriages have been contracted between the maternal uncle’s daughter/son and the paternal aunt’s son/daughter, that is when the grandfather is alive, which is against the śāstrās. In some cases, they go a step further and maternal uncle marries his own niece (sister’s daughter). People in the North look at this with disbelief and disapproval. Although due to extreme cold in the North and due to the influence of Muslim rule for centuries, the people there are less concerned about āchāram - the pūjārī wears a shirt and even sādhus smoke hukka - but in matrimonial alliances they are more particular than us in following the śāstrās.

In certain other matters too, they are more orthodox than us. There are even now some in the North who can teach me āchāram. I shall tell you something which happened recently.* Kalyāṇa Kalpataru magazine is being published from Gorakhpur. The people of the Gītā press had come on a pilgrim tour in a group. They were about 400 to 500. They came to Kānchīpuram also. That day happened to be the day of silence for me. I was sitting underneath a mango tree. They came to have dharṣan. I gave them sugar candy as prasād. It appeared to me that many of the men accepted it with some hesitation. I kept on giving. But one lady did not take it. Promptly she told me ‘This is of no use to me, please give me another prasād’. Immediately I understood why the others were accepting it with hesitation. Previously in sugar factories animal bones were being used to purify sugar and to make sugar candy. For that reason it was not used as prasād in the North. When I went on pilgrimage to the North (1934-36) I came to know
of this and I also stopped using it as neivēdyam and *prasād*. But some years later the mill owners made it clear that use of bones had been discontinued and some other method is being used for purification. From that time, I started using sugar candy again. The group which came from the North could not accept it because of the background of the use of bones. Still since they thought it would be disrespectful to me if they refused they accepted it reluctantly. But this lady considered āchāram more important than āchāryā and flatly refused (āchāryās keep coming one after the other, it is āchārām which is permanent and is basic to all the āchāryās). Since it was silence day I did not explain anything. I have narrated this incident to show that the people of North observe sāstrās more strictly than us.

In the same way, it is only in the North that people start wearing the dhothi with kachcham even during Brahmacharyam. Once ‘Samāvarthanam’ (*Vēdhic* rite on return of a disciple from GurukulaVāsam) is over after completing the studies, the sāstrās say that the person should wear the dhothi with kachcham whether married or not. Although now GurukulaVāsam has disappeared, somewhere a few students are doing adhyayanā in pātasālās. Such boys also in the South wear without kachcham till they are married. It is not only now. I know it was so even in the previous generation. When in other regions, people of all varṇas do not wear dhothi without kachcham it is only in Tamil Nādu and Kerala that people including Brahmins wear it in the cylindrical manner.

It appears that for a long time now, certain things are being done contrary to sāstrās in the name of being inauspicious. For example, if those whose parents are alive put the yagnopavītham on the right shoulder, it looks inauspicious. Because of this even though the sāstrās say that during Brahmayagnam except for the three ancestors of the three direct generations, even those whose parents are alive must wear their yagnopavītham on the right shoulder when offering tharpanām to the rishis but in practice this is not done.
When there is an unmarried elder sister, Upanayam should not be performed for the younger brother; there should not be three Brahmachāris in one house’ - these are excuses offered for crossing the age limit strictly prescribed by the sāstrās for upanayam. It will be good if such practices which are against the spirit of vaidhika dharmā are changed.

When defining sadāchāram it is clearly said that it should not contradict the fundamental rules laid down in śruti, smruthi.

Yasmin dhēṣe yadh āchāraḥ pāramparya kramāgathah Śruthi Smruthi yavirōdhena sadhāchārassa udhyathē

Even when giving a broad minded definition that sadāchāram is what has been followed by the noble ones over generations in different centuries or in different regions of the country, it also says that it should not be contrary to the original śruthi, smruthi: Śruthti Smruti yavirōdhēna.

When following sāstrās we can deviate only where exceptions have been provided for them in sāstrās. Otherwise the originals have to be followed. It may or may not be possible to do so in today’s lifestyle. But at least the thought should be there that the rules of the sāstrās are the authority and to the extent possible we should try to do so.

* This was probably some time in 1956.
Śāstrā itself has declared that once the bride and bridegroom have gone through the initial rituals for marriage and the marriage rituals have commenced with the two having tied the kankānāṃ, no personal pollution will contaminate them even if it is due to the death of someone very near. It is the same for the Vēdhic pundit who has commenced the rituals at a yagna. Śāstrā thus grants exemptions to its own strict rules of ritual purity. When drawing the temple chariot during rathōthsavam, irrespective of the others with whom we come into physical contact - whatever jāthi to which they may belong or whatever diseases with which some of them may be afflicted - ritual purity of a person is not affected. Therefore the sāstrās say that after pulling the chariot one should not take a bath on returning home. In the North too, the same concept is there regarding holy celebrations. If it is assumed that the sāstrās had laid down rules keeping only cleanliness in view, we should go for a bath on return from rathōthsavam due to sweating etc. That would be wrong. Simply because some of the āchārās have cleanliness in view, it does not mean that all āchārās are meant for cleanliness only. People in the West also say that cleanliness is next to godliness. Since our āchārās have the chief aim of relating us to divinity, if the āchārās say that in some context cleanliness is to be overlooked, it has to be followed as such. Whether it appears to us to be clean or not since the āchārās have the ultimate view of purifying the soul, to attain that goal whatever it lays down has to be followed. By so doing even if it results in uncleanliness or harm to health or it looks uncivilized according to modern concepts or it does not conform to science and rationalism they have to be followed unquestioningly.
GIVES WORLDLY BENEFITS TOO

Generally, āchārās are such that they ensure external cleanliness, health, cordiality in the society, discipline in the family etc. In other words, they ensure the well being in worldly life. That is why it is said ‘sāsthrāya cha sukhāya cha’. It means that living a life of āchāram takes care of both the sāsthrā and well being. There is a saying of sāsthrā that for those who observe āchāram all good will accrue.

Āchārāth labhathe hyāyuh āchārāth īpsithāh praṇā
Āchārāth dhanam akṣhayyam āchārōhanth yalakṣaṇām

By observing āchāram, one gets long life, the kind of progeny one wants and undiminishing wealth. It removes even ugliness. Thus material benefits have also been indicated for āchāram. For those who follow āchārā and anushtānam a certain personal effulgence (ṭhējas) develops with the result irrespective of the formation of facial features, they command respect and affection even at first sight.

If it is said that undiminishing wealth accrues due to āchāram, it can be understood in two ways. It can be said that bhakthi, jnānā, vivekam, vyṛāgya, etc which are wealth in the spiritual sense, can be said to be the wealth that does not get reduced at any time. Or, looking at it materialistically, it can be said that āchārām will help to ensure that there is no want of money at any time.

Instead of construing that there will be lot of wealth, it can be understood in another way. Will there be prosperity simply because income is more? We see that because lot of money is available people take to wrong ways and get into difficulties. We see people who earn very well spend more than their income and struggle due to debt, overdraft etc. We also see that it is largely among the rich that people take to drinking and going to races and
spoiling their health and their family life. Therefore the prosperity that we want will not materialise by increase in income. Prosperity means keeping the expenses within the income.

Whatever other benefits may or may not accrue from āchārāṁ, it is certain that there will be frugality. Drinking coffee and going to hotels, is anāchāram. Cinemas etc are against sāstrās. No mosaic flooring can equal ordinary flooring which can be cleaned with cow dung; minimising tours to other places because they come in the way of āchārā anushtana - if these are observed and life led according to sāstrās so much expenditure will be curtailed. Even if someone who observes all the āchārās develops taste for these anāchāras and goes to a hotel or cinema, with his tuft and panchakachā dhothi, people will ridicule him and make him return. Taking dress alone how much expenditure is incurred on account of laundry to fall in line with the style of Englishmen. If we have just a dhothi and towel how much can be saved!
In this democracy if all people are firm that they would attend office without shirts, the Government has to accept it. All expenses towards tailoring, laundry etc can be saved. Did not Gandhi go with a four cubit dhoti and towel to the King Emperor? If swadesi dress comes to be used and people also give up their fascination for silk, as I desire it, so much will be saved. If the clothes are not washed, there will be no ritual purity. Can a suit be cleaned daily? Although it may look clean, is it not full of sweat and is it not anāchāram? (Someone near him said something in between. After talking to him Periyava continues.) Now several artificial cloth have been invented. This person is telling that these clothes can be used, even trousers can be washed daily. It will dry up quickly and even if it is squeezed, it will not get cramped and therefore no need for laundry. But such artificial cloth is not permitted by sāstrās. It should be cotton or silk. But I have been pleading against the silk and trying to save that expense too. Now several things manufactured out of coal tar - plastic is included in this - are very popular. To wear such clothes on our bodies is blemish on āchāram. (when the person who first intervened said something)- This person himself says that air does not pass through such cloth, that it is not suitable to our climate. In the South when for most part of the year, it is hot and sultry there is no need for shirt at all. It is enough if the body is covered by a towel. A shawl does not attract any blemish in respect of āchāram. We can cover with shawl. If it is said that we have now become used to wearing shirts, that habit is also only about one and half centuries old. If people with one voice want to change any usage that can be changed. Those in the Government and companies in administrative positions can be made to change the rules.

It is not only in the matter of dress but in some other matters also they say ‘office will not permit, office regulations will not
permit this. You want us to fast on Ėkādāśī day. Will office grant us leave for this? How to fast and work in the office? If on Amāvasyā day, tharpanam is to be performed at the prescribed time only, we will be late to office’ - such questions are asked. This is my reply: If we have real interest and courage, we can have anything done. Even during British rule, did not people like Sir T. Muthuswami Iyer function in high positions including as judges even when observing the highest form of āchārā? Even today if someone remains pure and a sishtā with faith, people do respect him however much they themselves might have deviated from the right path. If someone is a keen observer of āchārā, takes a bath and appears with vibhuthi or Thirumāṇi and comes, he commands more respect than others however well dressed they may be. Āchāram creates an attraction and it makes others bow down.
LET US ALL BECOME ORTHODOX
(VAIDHIKAM)

It is only if all people observe āchāram, it can be sustained. If only a few orthodox persons observe it, they will be treated as if they are a separate jāthi and sāstrās would be deemed to be applicable only to them. Therefore all people should try to follow the āchārās appropriate to them. Importantly, a lot of āchārās have been prescribed only for the Brahmin. Therefore those who are born as a Brahmin should try to follow the āchārās well. If it is thought that only those who conduct vaidhika Karmās and receive dakshiṇai are vaidhikas, then it would mean that vaidhikam exists for the sake of dakshiṇai. Thus, if they have to observe āchārās just for earning a living, the purity of anushtāna or its power or the thejas which would attract others cannot be expected. That is why they become objects of ridicule. It should not be thought that I am finding fault with them. In fact, we have to be grateful to them because they are the ones who accept a small dakshiṇai which householders reluctantly give as the last item of their expenses (when other jobs fetch more income) run about doing purūhitham and ensure that Vedha Karma does not completely disappear from this land. Even so irrespective of the nature of the job, when it is done purely to earn a living it loses its potency. That is why it becomes difficult for the purūhiths who conduct the vaidhika Karmās to command the respect that others who have the merit of following the āchārās command. It becomes just the opposite. I do not refer to all purūhiths. It is not that there are not here and there purūhiths who are sishtās who follow the anushtānas, are thejasvi and command the respect of the society. But generally, it is only the purūhiths who conduct the rituals and their assistants or those who merely receive dakshiṇai or those who take food at sṛaddhā ceremony have come to be considered vaidhikas. Vaidhikas suffer from inferiority complex.
Therefore everyone should follow sāstrās for its own sake, observe āchāram for its own sake and be vaidhika for the sake of vaidhikam and not necessarily for the sake of earning. If I am following the sāstrās, it has a purpose. Otherwise, I cannot survive in this position. Those who do purōhitham are also in the same position. It cannot be said that all these are genuine. Only if everyone follows sāstrās not for other reasons but for the purification of the Self it will be true. It is only then that the power which obtained for us glory from all the world will be effective even now. All the people in the country should become a orthodox community. Particularly, the jāthi which is meant for Vēdha rakshanam must become vaidhikas. Thus, if sadāchāram and anushtiānam appropriate to everyone prevails there will be nothing like high and low and anger and discontent will disappear. These days there is a lot of talk about emotional integration. But if it is election or college admission or a job, jāthi only is considered contrary to integration. But I am of the view that all this talk about emotional integration will be just illusive and will not be fruitful. Integration is not possible through emotion. Integration must come about by sadāchāram. It is only when all people feel bound by sadāchāram which is the way of dharmā, they will become a disciplined and well knit society.
WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE URGENTLY

It may be asked, ‘If everyone is asked to be Vaidhika, is it possible in these times? What is the use of talking about something which cannot be done?’ I will tell something which is practicable. At least this should be started immediately. I am saying this one thing to change the situation in which there is a small group of vaidhikas who remain aloof in the society and suffer from inferiority complex. Let others allow their children to go to school and college instead of making them follow the orthodox way completely. Let them also go for a job or conduct their own business or industry (so long as it is not very much of dhur āchāram) but they should make arrangements for the boys to gather at a common place in each sector in the evening. After having a bath, wearing the mark on the forehead etc they should practise Vedham and learn sthōthras. Even for those who are not entitled to practise Vedhās other arrangements should be made for creating a liking to religion, devotion to God etc. Reciting Thēvāram, Thiruvāchakam, Divya Prabhantham etc could be made a routine. It is necessary that boys should develop a liking for religion even at a young age. Sanskrit should be taught to children of all jāthis. Are not many of the sāstrās in that language? Therefore all the children of our religion should learn Sanskrit so that they can study the sāstrās and know what they contain.

Even if youngsters are not to follow fully the vaidhika religion, they can, without considering it inferior, have respect for it and follow some āchārās so that in the next generation at least some boys will come forward to become full-fledged vaidhikas without feeling ashamed about it. The Purōhiths who think that purohitham should end with them will come forward to train their children in purohitham.
If, in this way, the practice of bathing, doing adhyayana, reciting *sthothras* in Sanskrit and Tamil, all people going to the temple together for *dharSan*, doing bhajans etc are started, bad āchārās will get reduced on their own. If we merely order them ‘do not go there’ ‘do not eat this’, etc they will revolt and go exactly there and eat exactly that and their mind will go the wrong way. Instead of disciplining by force if they are engaged in God related activities, they will feel bad to go to the prohibited places for fear that people there will ask, ‘you too have come here, doing like this!’ Discipline should come by practice and not by pressure.

What is said for boys is applicable to elders also. They too should reduce their frequenting cinema houses etc and try to learn God related matters and follow āchārās as far as possible. At least after retirement people should not think of extension, re-employment, own business etc and try to follow the āchārās and lead life according to *sāstrās*.
BENEFITS OF BEING BOUND BY DISCIPLINE

One should not be afraid that śāstra would bind one to too much discipline. We have been talking of ‘the age of freedom’ but what have we achieved by freeing ourselves from all discipline and doing things as we like? Now and then, in the midst of the dark sorrow that keeps weighing down on the mind as a heavy load, a streak of happiness may show itself and disappear just as the sun rays pass through the little gaps between leaves when a branch of a tree moves due to wind but we have not been able to secure for ourselves permanent happiness or peace through this freedom or scientific discovery or economic progress. Do freedom and science have the capacity to go into the root of sorrow and remedy it? Can they expiate for our sins? Did not our forefathers lead a peaceful and contented life by following the śāstra ācārās and removing the sins and sorrows? If we think of this we will know that what we consider freedom today is in fact bondage. Has not this prevented us from going towards permanent happiness, towards punyam and tied us down to sorrow and sin?

In the same manner, śāstrās which appear to be difficult are, in fact, not so but what pave the way for moksha which is real freedom. In a magic show, a pole dancer will be tied by several rounds of rope to one of many poles. In that position, they will hide him by a screen for a brief time. Within that time he will not only untie himself from the poles but will tie himself in the same manner to another pole. He knows such a trick. When he is first tied to the pole, he will keep his hands and legs a little wide. When he is hidden by the screen, he will contract his body by bringing the hands and legs to normal position. Then the rope will get loosened. Before it falls down he will go to another pole and tie himself in the same manner. The restrictions of śāstrās are also like the contracting of the body by the pole dancer. Śāstrā ties
ego from outside. These ties are meant for us to bind ourselves internally. When a bundle is tied so tight that it cannot be untied, what is done is to tie another rope more tightly. But it will not be tied in knot. By doing this the bundle will shrink. Then even without untieing the knot, the first rope can be removed. Then the second rope can be thrown away. Then the thing will become free.

The mind which is ego has tied us and the attachment to samsārā is like a fine knot. If in this state we tie ourselves more tightly with the discipline of āchārā then both the ties will go and we will gain the true freedom of the Self.

Whether it is karmā or bhakthi or jnāna yōga, all the sādhanās have control of the mind as their goal. Everything in life has to be done keeping an eye on āchāram. It is not only in the matter of pūjā etc but even in small matters like cleaning the teeth if we do according to the rules of sāsthrā even without our knowledge we would be bringing the mind under a control.

Here too the point arises that āchāram helps thrift. Do we not now spend in several ways to satisfy the desires of the mind? We feel like eating anything and everything. Do we not spend to satisfy the desire for dress, cinema etc? Do we not take up any job however anāchāram it may be or in whichever country, to earn more to satisfy these desires? If we look into the sāsthrās and think 'Oh it is sin to eat this, it is sin to do this' etc and curtail our desires, there is no need for so much expense. We can do a job wherever we are which will give just enough to lead a simple life. Since unnecessary entertainment and running about will not be there, more time will become available to think of God and for self-enquiry. If a change is needed and we feel like seeing the outside world we can go on pilgrimages. If people go on pilgrimage in a group that will give a joy which cannot be had from anything else. It will be found that the happiness obtained from bhajan, harikathās, festivals etc is greater than what is got from cinema and novels.
BOOKS ON ĀCHĀRĀS

Over the last two generations, āchārās have been on the decline. Therefore you may say ‘if we have to do things according to sāstrās, elders in our home do not know them and cannot guide us’. You can know them from your purōhith or a srouthi (one who is well versed in sāstrās). There will be in each jāthi elders who know the dharma āchārās of their jāthi. There are books. There is Vaidhyanātha Dhīkshathiyam in which everything is given in detail. If you do not need such a big book, you can refer to Sōmadeva Sarmā’s book. One Muthuswāmi Iyer also has written a brief account of dharma sāstrās. A number of Tamil books are available on Hindu samaya āchāram.

In ancient Tamil literature too, a lot of things have been said about Vaidhika Samaāchārās. Works like Thirukkural, Nanneri, Aranerichāram etc while talking generally about dharmās indicate āchārās to be followed in daily life. There is a book called ‘Nīthi Venbā’ which is an exact translation of the Dharma Sāstrās. When we read about the ancient kings of Tamil Nādu, in books of purārās or in some stone inscriptions, we find it said that the king had followed the Manu Nīthi and the Vēdhic Varīśramā and ruled well. The book Āchāra Kovai, not only talks of Vaidhīka sāstrās in a general way it gives in detail how the daily routine has to be carried on according to sāstrās. There are eighteen books in Tamil which are held in high esteem. One of these is Thirukkural and the other is Āchāra Kovai.
THE GREATNESS OF THOSE DAYS AND
THE FALLEN STATE OF THESE DAYS

Our forefathers led a healthy life with bright intellect, thejas and āthma śānthi and were appreciated by everyone. We should understand how much we have fallen from that position and realize that this is due to our having given up śāsthra āchārās thinking that they are difficult. We should begin following them at least from now onwards. Although it may be difficult in the beginning, once we get used to it we will realize that our śāsthrās are intended for our welfare and happiness and not to create difficulty for us. Getting up two hours before sun rise, bathing, offering argyam early in the morning (Arunōdayam), doing Gāyathri japam till sun rise, then doing aupāsanam, pūjā, mādhyaṇikam, vaisvadēvam, entertaining guests, then having food - in the evening having a bath, offering argyam again as the sun sets, then doing Gāyathri japam till the stars become visible, agniḥōthram, going to temple or listening to good stories etc. — If such a daily routine is followed life will be so satisfying. Instead of looking dirty with a crying face, we will look bright and active. Instead of getting tired by doing unnecessary things and still not being satisfied and not being able to sleep properly and getting up at 7.00 or 8.00 in the morning, since the essential karmās are done, there will be good sleep and we will be able to get up early in the morning and actively attend to the day’s routine. It was only with the strength of āchāra anushtānam that our forefathers lived a healthy and satisfying life.

They had taken so much care about personal purity and with that made the society also pure. We do just the reverse. We have neglected our personal purity and claiming that we have only social concerns and feeling of brotherhood, we have been making ourselves impure and spoiling the society too - wearing for days
together the same clothes which have been laundered, spoiling personal purity by travelling by buses and trains, not taking bath regularly, eating anything in any hotel, spending our time in cinemas and reading novels which are against dharmā. Although by living this way, we imagine that ‘we are modern by giving up superstitious sāstrās’ if we think about it we will know the practical state. What is the practical state? It is that as compared to our ancestors, we are going down in health, monetary well being, satisfaction, attainments, respect, divine experience etc. Before we fall into a state beyond rescue, we should at least now wake up and start following the sāstrās. Our forefathers have laid down an excellent path, stronger than the concrete road and without pot-holes. Let us go on the path of āchārā and protect ourselves instead of going in the path of destruction thinking that ‘we are doing something new’. By going the wrong way, we do not stop with ourselves. In addition to spoiling ourselves we are also spoiling the coming generations. By providing encouragement to the younger generation, we show them the way to ignore us and go their own way with all freedom, more than how we discarded our forefathers. We are in the stage of one who tries to do Sūrya namaskāram after losing his eyesight. But still there is some hope just as people who are sinking are revived by oxygen. We should start giving such oxygen aid. We should have the good sense to get out of the state in which we are. If we copy other countries and suffer like them, it is greater shame for us because their forefathers had not passed on to them āchāram in the manner our forefathers have given us. It is not a great thing that āchārās have been written down in books. What is great is that, for thousands of generations, they had lived according to it and shown us that it is practicable.
SĀSTHRĀS WHICH EVOLVED
BY THE EXAMPLES OF
THOSE WHO PRACTISED

I

t is necessary for me to explain further what I have said now. I
have said two things – demonstrating by actual living and writing
books. There are a lot of books for our āchāra anushtānā. But what
needs to be observed carefully is the question whether people
started following the sāsthrās after the authors of the books on
sāsthrā wrote down the rules. It is not so. The āchāra anushtānas
were being observed by the forefathers of those who authored the
books. It is only what was in practice that had been written down
for the benefit of the succeeding generations. That means life was
not lived by looking to the sāsthrās. What was followed in life was
written down in the books. Whichever you see – Manu Smruthi,
Āswalāyana Sūthram or Āpasthamba Sūthram etc or other books
in which dharma sāsthrā rules have been put together – the authors
namely, Manu, Āpasthambar, Āswalāyanar and others do not
claim that they have made a single rule. It is very clear that only
those rules which were being observed were reiterated.

Here is a big wonder. Quite appropriate to the word
Sanāthana Dharmam, much before books came our dharma āchāra
way of life was already in existence. Who first started this pancha-
kachcham? Who inaugurated the way of wearing the mark on the
forehead? Did anyone organize an inaugural function for any other
thing like the way the āchamanam is commenced? It is difficult to
say anything. They have been doing like this long, long, long ago.
Because our ancestors were always in constant touch with the
great power that has created this world, they knew what was good
for worldly life and which can also release us from it and take us to
permanent bliss, lived according to it and these have come down as
dharma āchārās and anushtānas through sāsthrās.
Who was it that laid the path for the *Sanāthana Dharma*? We cannot name anyone. We cannot mention anyone in particular. But we can see that there is a path. That is why Hindu *dharma* is called the pathway that gets formed by people walking that way continuously. We can clearly see such a pathway. But can we say who made that pathway? If it is a metal road or tar road we can say that. One can say that such and such a councillor planned it, so and so commissioner sanctioned it, such and such a contractor took up the job and so and so workers carried out the job. But this cannot be said of a narrow pathway that gets formed over a period. That is not one which has been planned or done to measurement or by paying workers. It is formed by a number of people walking over the same way. Normally, a road is laid and people walk over it. But this track gets formed because people walked! It is not a lifestyle evolved through books and rules. The book of rules came up because there was a lifestyle.

The *āchārās* of other religions and rules and regulations of establishments were thought of, planned and prescribed by some person. One may get the impression that it looks good like a tar road and say 'we can drive fast on that road only, but is it possible on your natural pathway?' But annual repairs need to be carried out only for that road which appears good. Otherwise pot-holes get formed. Have you ever heard of the natural pathway being repaired? If the tar road deteriorates as more and more people use it, the pathway becomes stronger and brighter with more and more people using it. That is when people show by actual living, it cannot be matched by the path planned by someone. This is how the old Greek, Hebrew, and Confucius religions disappeared. But our *āchārās* based on *śāstra* are shining more and more as people keep following them. May be on this path we may not be able to reach fast, as by a car; the goal will be reached only slowly by evolving step by step. But the goal will definitely be reached. But when a car runs fast on a tar road, it is doubtful if it can reach the
goal at all. Because it runs fast, it may meet with an accident particularly if the road is bad with pot-holes. On the natural path, there will never be any accident.

Another thing is also to be noted. The tar road takes a circuitous route to avoid ups and downs, narrow passage, etc. But the pathway is a shortcut. So, we can reach by the pathway quicker than by the circuitous route by the car. Even if we accept what the modern researchers say, at least for five thousand years, (they say Vēdhic civilization is 3000 B.C) hundreds of generations have followed the path. But we have given up that path and spoiled not only ourselves but also the future generation. If the people do not walk at all, the pathway will disappear, is it not? The compassionate Lord only should stop us from committing the serious mistake of blocking the pathway of sāsthrā for the future generations. May the Lord give us the good sense to think of these things and follow the path of our forefathers, observe the āchārās and anushtānas and gain merit.
ACHĀRAM AND THE FOOD WE TAKE

There was a king who had a guru who was great (a mahān). He used to go to the palace frequently and give upadēśam. On one such day as he was dealing with a long subject, it became noon. The king requested him to have his food in the palace itself assuring him that food will be separately cooked for him, observing due āchāra. The guru could not reject this request and therefore took food there only. By the time he finished taking his food, the day became hot. Moreover, since he had taken rich food and was also tired, he took rest there itself.

In the room where he was resting, a garland made of pearls was hanging on the wall. The guru saw it. That was for the king’s use and was of high value. Although he was a strong willed person and one who denied things to himself, for some unknown reason, that day he developed a strong desire to take that pearl garland. Since no one was there near him, he took it and hid it in his cloth. Even if ordinary people commit a theft, it is offence and a sin. But the mahān who was Rājguru did this without his conscience pricking him and went away. After sometime it came to be known that the pearl garland was missing. There was a lot of commotion. They searched everywhere. They checked everyone without exception. But no one suspected the guru who was in fact responsible for the missing of the garland because he was such a pure person.

A lot of enquiry and investigation was done without sparing anyone. The day passed. That night the guru could not sleep well. It was not because his conscience pricked him. It was because, in addition to what he had done during the day, he started having other bad thoughts during night. Because he did not sleep the whole night he suffered from indigestion. When he woke up in the
morning, his stomach was uneasy, he had several loose motions and became extremely weak. The day became hot also. But even as the body was becoming weak from the morning, his mind started becoming clear. The bad thoughts and desires of the previous day started disappearing gradually. With his body becoming very weak and thoroughly exhausted, his usual noble mind returned to him.

Even in his weak condition and the heat of the day, he went to the palace with the pearl garland. He met the king and gave it to him. He told the king: ‘I do not know why from yesterday afternoon my mind was spoiled. I am the one who committed this great sin in that bad mental state. I am a sanyāsi. I have taken the food offered by my sishya and robbed him of his belongings and committed a grave sin. Punish me in the way you will punish a thief. Also give me additional punishment for my having been the cause for your suspecting others and punishing them. Only then my sorrow that so many innocent persons suffered on my account will go.

The king laughed and said, ‘Because I am your sishya, by your blessings I have gained some mental clarity and I am able to find the truth. It could never have happened the way you are telling. Because of your great compassion, you are telling a story like this. The real thief who was afraid of punishment must have surrendered to you and sought your protection. Because of compassion that one who surrenders must be protected, you gave him protection and now you say that you have committed the theft. Even if you admit your guilt, I will not accept what you say’.

The guru strongly refuted the king and beseeched him, ‘I am a thief by my own act. By your rejecting what I say and also saying that I am telling a lie, you are making me guilty in another way. Please don’t do that. Punish me. That only will appease my mind. Is it not the dharmā of the sishya to act according to the guru’s words and make him happy?’ the guru said.
The king thought about it and then said. ‘Although I feel extremely delicate to say it, since you are adamantly sticking to what you say, I will assume that you had only taken the garland. But the sāstrās for dispensing justice lay down different types of punishment depending on the reasons for which the crime was committed. Judgment has to be given after considering who did a thing, in what circumstances and with what objective. (Is it not even now the position that judgment should be made keeping in view the circumstance and motive?) So if a mahān like you had done this without knowing why you did it I am not going to punish you. Sāstrās also provide that if a person who committed a crime for the first time admits it and surrenders what has been stolen, he need not be punished.

The guru said ‘By all this talk you should not leave me without being punished. Since you have been ruling in the just way for so long, you only will have to find out the reason and give the appropriate punishments irrespective of its severity because I cannot say how I got this mind to rob’.

The king said ‘when a mahān like you says that he is not aware of the reason in a personal matter, how can others probe into it and find out? The only way is that you yourself will have to think deeply and then tell me. The guru said ‘All right. Let me pray to the Lord who made my mind clear and gave me the thought that I should seek punishment for my conduct and see’ and did dhyāna on Iswarā.

After sometime he said, ‘Yes. It is only now that I am able to get some idea about the reason. If I see whether anything contrary to the usual had happened yesterday, I find it is only that I had taken food here which you had lovingly offered and pressurised me to take. It is only after that my mind went the sinful way. In addition to that my mind was bad during that night also. But after the stomach upset and the loose motions, my mind started becoming clear. I can now guess the reason for it too. So long as
the food I had taken remained in the stomach, the mind was bad. Today, by God’s will since the food got out of the body I think the mind is rid of bad thoughts. From this it is to be guessed that as mentioned in śāsthrās, it is some fault in the food that affected my thoughts. In order to confirm this guess, you may, if you like, check from where the rice and other things used for yesterday’s cooking came’.

Food is not merely protein, carbohydrates, vitamin etc. The traits (including the bad traits) of the one who cooked, one who gave the material including vegetable etc get into the person who eats it in a subtle manner. If these people suffer from blemish, it will affect also the person who eats. This is what is called ‘Anna dhōsham’.

The king immediately sent for the person in charge of the stores and ordered him to find out from where the rice used on the previous day for the guru’s food had come. The stores-in-charge made enquiries and gave the following information: Some days back a big thief had stolen high quality rice bags from a big grocery shop but was caught by the police. The rice bags were also taken away with him. He was then punished. But for whatever reason the owner of the rice bags did not come to claim the bags even after the due date. Therefore according to the law, the seized goods were appropriated to the palace stores. The same rice which was not used till yesterday was used for cooking food for the guru in the thought that it would be like neivēdyam to him and the rest all will become prasād.

The king conveyed to the guru whatever was told by the stores-in-charge.

It became as clear as saying two plus two is four how the mahān got the bad mind. Although according to Rāja dharmā the seized and unclaimed goods belonged to the king, since it is against the sathvik sanyāsa dharmā, it affected the guru. But still since he
had not committed the crime of taking the afflicted food consciously and his previous history was pure Bhagawan himself created the indigestion due to which the food did not get absorbed into blood but was purged out.

The guru told the king ‘See this is why I had observed the sāstrā rule that king’s food should not be taken. You were adamant and I relaxed and therefore all this disaster’. He said ‘Just as infectious bacteria from a sick person spreads to another who comes in contact with him, if one who prepares something with bad thoughts or the things used for the preparation have a blemish their traits get into the person who consumes them in a subtle manner. When we see what the rice involved in theft which got into my system had caused this is proved’.

The king who said that punishment is to be given after finding out the reason for a crime now said that for his failure to ensure the quality of food cooked for the mahān the guilt is his. He absolved the guru. Guru pardoned him because he had not done anything intentionally but with good thoughts and guru bhakthi.
FOOD AND ALL THOSE CONNECTED WITH IT

That is how the story goes. What we should note in this is that the qualities and blemishes of those who are connected with the food affect the person who eats the food. Like that guru we may also be taking food with which people with blemish are associated. Someone calls you for taking food; or you eat in a hotel or a canteen something cooked by someone and served by someone. In these cases, it is not possible to know the qualities and blemishes of those people. But if we are eating like this, we should not think that Bhagawān will pardon us and give us the right mind as He did for that mahān. Even such a mahān tripped for a whole day due to the blemish in the food. When even he committed the sin of stealing the sishyā’s property, we who are not like him but are ordinary people, can imagine what our state will be.

It is true that we commit several wrongs unknowingly. But there are sāstrās to inform us, why not refer to them? Although Īswara has kept us blind to several things, He has also given sāstrās through mahāns to open our eyes. If we who do several things and read all sorts of things, do not want to refer to the sāstrās which elders have given us as the command of Īswara to know what can be done and what cannot be done and then ask ‘how will Bhagawān punish us for our doing something without knowing which is dharma and which is not?’ it is not fair.

Even if you had not known till now, from what I have told you now, you have understood how good qualities and bad traits are caused by food, is it not? Therefore, (he has a hearty laugh even as he talks) even if Bhagawān had pardoned you till now for your non-observance of purity of food, hereafter he will not!

There is another argument also. If we move with someone who suffers from an infectious disease without knowing about it,
will the bacteria which caused the disease spare us because we are not aware of the fact? If such bacteria cannot be seen by the eyes but can be seen by the microscope, there are super atoms of the mind - the external forms of the good and bad thoughts - which cannot be seen by the microscope also but can be seen only by jnānis. These are also like bacteria. They also spread whether the person knows it or not. That is the argument.

Pure food depends on two factors. One is the thing itself which becomes food - grains, vegetables etc. These have to be pure by themselves. That is they should not be like onion or radish, which spoil the mind. About this I shall speak later. The second is that till that food comes to our leaf (plate) all people connected with it have to be pure. It is for emphasizing the second factor I narrated the story of the king and the guru which is of course an old one.

It may be thought that this story was written because only if a thing is spoken about in an exaggerated form people will pay attention to it to the extent necessary. In the story, the servants of the palace who had cooked the food and served were the ones who had the first (immediate) connection. Then it was the king who thought of offering food to the guru. The connection of the thief comes as the third. If it is said that his thought had stuck to it, then there are others like the grocery shop owner, the peasant who produced the grain whose merits and faults also would have been reflected in it. If we are to go deep into all these, it looks as if we have only to starve. Just as it is said about ‘rishi mūlam’ (origin of rishi) ‘nadhi mūlam’ (origin of river) can we be making research how and where the rice and vegetables we take have been cultivated and by whom and how they were brought to the market?

It is of course not possible. That is why the sāstrās say that we should mind the blemish in the thing used for the food and also
those who are immediately connected with it, leaving all others. Let the rice (in raw form) other grains and vegetables etc come from anywhere. Since we purchase them by paying the price we are making a sacrifice and therefore the super atoms of the mind of others that are sticking to them will not affect us or if these are cultivated in our field or garden, we spend for growing them and engage in physical labour. We spend our thoughts and attention on these. Therefore we can assume that when they are raw they will not affect us. But look to the person who cooks it and makes it fit for eating and the one who serves it. Only if these two are good (sāthvīk) it will do good to the mind, says the sāstrā. We can think of it this way - more than the thoughts of the peasant and the trader that may not get impressed on the raw grains and vegetables, it is the thought of the cook and the server that may get impressed well on the cooked, soft food!

It is also true that good also happens depending on those connected with the food just as bad. In olden times that is before the Brahmins started going to jobs, they were getting everything as charity. They had no means even to purchase rice. But since those who had gifted the grain did so with respect and love that had neutralized any blemish that had affected the materials already (the good and the bad neutralize each other).

The king in this story also offered with love but why did that food spoil the mahān’s mind? Although according to Rāja dharmā what is not claimed by anyone goes to the king even if it is not purchased it will not be consistent with the dharmā of good people (sath Purushā) who have neither property nor rights. There is one other thing in this: Right from the owner of the land, the peasant and upto the one who actually serves, all will be with qualities and traits and blemishes of ordinary people. As said earlier, we can take it that in these the good and the bad will neutralize each other. But in the story, is not the big blemish of theft associated in which not everyone ordinarily indulges? That cannot be neutralized by
the king’s good thoughts even. Even the penance of the guru had become subordinate to it at least for half a day.

In olden times, ordinary people were mostly good. Even when it was so, to rule out any blemish to the purity of food, rules have been made that we should look to the purity of the people connected with the food.

These days - I feel sorry to say this - having given up *sāstrās* when we have become bold to do anything as the mind goes, if the good and bad are weighed, they will not neutralize each other. It has to be said that bad will be more. Therefore, if we have the intention to go the right way, we have to be careful about food. We have to be careful to purchase even raw things from people who do not indulge in wrongs more than the normal. What is smuggled or what is sold in black market are prohibited.

It is very necessary that we should be particular about the person who cooks and the person who serves. What is generally indicated is that if a mother or wife cooks and serves, it can be taken as *sāthvik* food fit for eating. Even if she is generally of bad temperament she will, out of love for the husband/son, be keen that he should be well and therefore what is cooked and served by her can be taken to be *sāthvik*.
THE THREE QUALITIES (GUNĀ)

I had mentioned a word ‘Sāthvikam’. Since food is not only for taking care of the body but should be fit for taking care of the mind also, sāstrās prescribe several rules regarding food. In āchārās matters pertaining to food are given an important place. The essence of this is that food should be such that it develops sathvāguna. Sathvāguna or Sāthvikam is being free from anger, lust and desire, being un-agitated but at the same time not being dull or lazy, being peaceful and loving with good ability to think and the energy to act. Rajō guna or rājasa guna is being in an agitated state, being victim of desire, lust and anger etc. Thamō guna is being lazy with a dull mind. Rājasa guna is becoming over emotional and acting in a haphazard manner. That is one extreme. The other extreme is being dull, lazy and being incapable of doing anything. What is in between in a balanced manner is sathva guna.

The surge of the mind is rajō. The low state of the mind is thamō. The balanced state is sathva. There is a state which is higher than the sathva which keeps thought and action under control. In that state one completely transcends the mind (thought) and body (action). If thamas is the low state of the mind, this is the state in which the mind is absent. In thamas he will sleep. In this he will experience the state of Samādhi. The difference is that the person who sleeps does not know himself. The person in the state of Samādhi, although outwardly appears to be sleeping, he knows himself very well. He will also know all that exists is he himself. One who is like this has not thought of the ‘I’ about which all of us talk and for which we undergo all suffering and as the instrument of Īswara, he will think and act more than the person of rajō guna for the welfare of the world. What we do with involvement and suffering, he will do without involvement. Sathvam - rājās - thamas are called the three guṇas and the state in which these are transcended is called ‘Gunādhītha sthīthi’. It is the
one who is ‘Guntadhithan’ who is in the state of sathya. Matters concerning this have been mentioned a lot in ‘Sankhya sāstrā’. In Gītā, Bhagawān also talks about the three guṇas and tells Arjuna ‘nisthraigunyō bhavah’. Transcend the three guṇas and go beyond. There is a chapter ‘Guṇa thraya vibhāga yōgam’. In that he discusses the nature of sathva rajō thamō guṇas. Then in the chapter ‘Daivasura - sampath vibhāga yōgam’ that follows, the description he gives for Deiva guṇam is all sathva and guṇadhistham and asura guṇas are in the nature of rajō and thamō. Then in the ‘Sraddhā - thraya - vibhāga yōgam’ He elaborates on the three types of sraddhā. People are divided into three on the basis of sraddhās and He says that it depends upon the guṇa which is predominant. When He talks about the yagnas, thapas, dhyānam they do, he says which of it is sathvam, rajō, thamas and in between He deals with the food that they take.
FOOD AND QUALITIES
(GUÑA)

Here He talks about the kind of food that a person of sathva guña takes to develop the sathva guña. Similarly, He talks about the characteristics of rajo and thamo guña food. In what Bhagawān says in Gītā about food there is no talk about the person connected with the food. He only says how the food should be.

In order to make clear to you what Sāthvikam is I started talking about the three guṇas. Of these, the highest is sathvam that is the state in which the mind is not agitated, is under control and is peaceful and kind. Although there is a fourth state which is higher it is beyond our reach. We have first to become of sathva guña and then become mature and reach the state beyond guṇas.

All that refers to sathva guña is sāthvikam. When I talked again and again about clean food I did not mean only what is prepared in a hygienic manner and served in plates. Clean food means sathva food. It should be food that creates sathva guña.

Food becomes sāthvik by the love of the person who cooks and the one who serves it. Although generally it is said that what is cooked and served by the mother or wife ranks high, several questions arise in this. Even though they generally love the son/husband, do they have this love in mind when they cook and serve? They may have been thinking of something, abusing someone, feeling irritated and weary. In such a case, will its effect not show itself? In the story the king and the servants in the kitchen arranged for the food with love and the person who took the food was a great person. Still because the quality of robbing of the person from whom the rice came, got reflected in the food. This means that we have to be careful about the persons directly involved in cooking and serving even if they are the mother or the wife.
A woman has to recite the names of the Lord (Bhagawan nāmā or some sthōthrā), from the time she cleans the rice, cuts the vegetables, till the whole thing is cooked and served. The person who takes the food also has to say 'Govinda, Govinda' as he takes the food. Elders have said that only if food is served and taken in this manner, six types of taste of the food mingled with the taste of Bhagawan nāmā will remove whatever blemish is there in the food.

It is true no other thing has a power that 'nāmā' does not have. It is true that it is the remedy for all blemish and cure for all sins. Yet, it is important with how much concentration one respects the nāmā. Because of repeating it daily, instead of the mind being involved, it should not become mechanical.

If we think on these lines, it will be confusing. One may think, 'we thought that Swāmīgal would say that we should avoid hotel or canteen food, but he has gone a step further and has talked about blemishes in the food prepared and served even by people at home!'

I cannot approve of club, canteen, hostel, mess, none of these. I only repeat what śāstrās and śāstragnas say. I repeat what the śāstrās permit. It is doubtful if there is hygiene in club or hostel. It may be neat and clean outside. We do not know how dirty it may be inside. Even assuming that it is all clean, the purity of the food and that of those who prepared it will not be there. We will not get anything good from the food cooked and served by someone who has no loving thought about our welfare, no thought of Bhagawān or āchāra anushtāna. Since the person comes to take up this job because he cannot get any other job, he will not be intelligent either. He will be very much interested in money, cinema and politics which have caught hold of most people. Therefore, the food that he cooks and serves will not only not do any good but will do bad.

Where is the scope in hotels and mess for āchāra which combines both purity of mind and the external cleanliness? It is all
spit. Every day one has to take food in some plate. Can we think of the place (of eating) being cleaned with cow dung? (Before eating, water is sprinkled on the rice with manthrā and offered to the five prāṇa Devathās). Will the server serve ghee on the rice before doing prāṇa āhūthi? If it is just eating something and nourishing the mass of flesh and satisfying the taste of the tongue, no rule of sāstrā is required. But is it for this that Īswara has given this birth with six senses (the rational faculty)? If that were so, creation could have been stopped with animals!

I have said so much about the purity of those who prepare the food. Before that the purity of the materials used for cooking is important. There is a general rule about what can be eaten and what should not be eaten. Then there are other rules regarding what should be cooked on pithru day, in what manner upasvāsam is to be observed on days of vratham and what should be avoided during certain months etc. Such purity of the material cannot be imagined in hotel and mess.

It is not that difficult to ensure the purity of materials at home. If we can control our tongue, this can be easily ensured. It is not as if our sāstrās do not permit anything to be eaten and wants us to starve. Even if it is one meal a day and one time tiffin, there are many varieties which are tasty. There are lots of vegetables which are not prohibited. These help gain bodily strength and also sathva buddhi. There are varieties of preparations other than regular meal, not to speak of sweets and savories. There are sweets for each festival day like Janmāshtami, Sankarānthi, Dīpāvali etc. In fact Narakāsurā had obtained a boon from Kṛishṇa Paramāthmā that on the day of Dīpavali, all people must eat a variety of sweets and salted preparations. For pūjās like Navarāthri, on Sri Rāma Navami day, for Śivarāthri etc various types of preparations are to be made. In accordance with sāstrās, if from early morning to noon, all karmās are done and then such healthy food is taken, it will agree with the body system. Even if srāddhā is completed
after 3.00 pm, a variety of preparations are to be taken. On normal days one need not have to remain with empty stomach. Milk, butter milk, fruits etc can be taken. If this is practised as a routine, we can comfortably have one meal during daytime and have tiffin during night time.

Eating frequently is neither good for health nor for the soul. Of the five kōsam (sheaths) ‘Annamayam’ is the first. From that one should go to the fifth namely ‘Ānandamaya kōsam’ and not stop with the first (the five sheaths mentioned in ‘Thaithriyopanishad’ are Annamayam, Prānāmayam, Manomayam, Vignānamayam, Ānandamayam). Because it is also a kōsam it should not be neglected nor should it be abused. Upanishad itself says ‘Annam should not be abused. Produce more food’. But that does not mean that one should eat all sorts of things given by anybody and everybody at any time. There is a saying ‘One who eats once is a yōgi, one who eats twice is a bhōgi (one who enjoys) and the one who eats three times is a rōgi (one who is afflicted by disease). Just as people go to hotels and eat times without number, diseases have also become uncountable.

True to the ‘Republic Yugam’ in which quantity is more important than quality it has happened in the matter of food also. Hotels have come up everywhere and the desire to eat something or the other has been created but there is no concern about the quality of what is eaten there.

The quality of food is not just a matter of taste alone. What determines it are the sāthvik quality of the materials used for the cooking and the person who cooks. When talking about those who cook the food I mentioned that if food is prepared by the mother or wife, it is all right. But immediately I also said something in the nature of a veto namely that what they cook will be all right only if they have the thought of God even while cooking. We who eat may say ‘Gōvinda, Gōvinda’ and eat but how can we compel the ladies
who cook to do it with the thought of God? Talking like this, I have made you wonder, ‘What does Swāmīgāl want us to do? Does he want us to starve?’

The question is what if ‘no hostel and no food prepared by people at home’.

My main idea is to answer this question. It is that each one should cook his food himself. About this I shall speak later. Now I shall talk about the purity of materials used for cooking. Till now I have touched on this subject here and there.
shall speak on what Bhagawān has said in Gītā about what is sāthvik, rājasam and thāmasam in food: -

Āyus sathva balārōgya sukha prthi vivardhanāḥ
Rasyās snigdhas sthirā hridhyā āhārā sāthviṣa priyāḥ (17-8)

The food which is to the liking of sāthvik people will be such that it will improve buddhi, strength, health, comfort, happiness. It will be juicy and pasty. That means it will be soft instead of being dry. At the same time it will have such consistency that it will not flow away like water. It will be attractive to look at and to eat.

How will the rājasa food be?

Kat vamlalavaiśyushā thīkṣhā rukṣha vidhāhināḥ
Āhārā rājasasyēśta dhukha sōkhāmaya pradhah (17-9)

Rājasa food will create sadness and disease. It will be bitter, soavour, saltish, pungent like chilli, astringent. If food is taken very hot, rājasa guta will increase. When there is burning sensation in the stomach said to be due to ulcer, also caused by rājasa food, Bhagawān refers to this as vidhahinah.

One may wonder, ‘of the six types of taste, excepting sweetness, Bhagawān has grouped all the remaining five as rājasam. Can we eat without salt and tamarind? Astringency is good for health. It is said that bitter taste will improve jnāna’. What we should understand is that Bhagawēn says that of the five, nothing should be taken in excess but can be taken moderately. Although when one progresses towards jnāna and vairāgya, it will be good to omit salt, tamarind and chilli completely. Since Gītā raises even the ordinary people from where they are, we should take it that salt, tamarind, chilli, astringent and bitter things can be taken in moderate quantities. Bhagawān has spoken here as elsewhere that there should not be extremes but there should be
moderation. We should not eat too much at a time; we should not
starve either. We should not sleep for too long; we should not keep
awake throughout night too; there should be moderation in every
action. Such a person only can become a yógi, He says (Gītā Ch-6–
16, 17). Applying the same principle to food we can take it that
chili, tamarind (sourness) should be moderate.

In Rājasa food sweet is not mentioned. Although even in
sāthvik food, sweet is not mentioned since it is said it is juicy, we
can take it that it refers to sweetness since that only brings out
salaiva as soon as it touches the tongue. But on that account it
should not be thought that it will be sāthvik if sweet is taken all the
time, because when mentioning the other characteristics of sāthvik
food, he says that it gives health, long life and strength. It is seen in
practice that too much consumption of sweets causes diabetes and
T.B. Also since Gītā’s philosophy is moderation in everything, it
could not have said that only sweet should be taken. But if it is
asked why in rājasa food excepting sweet all the other five are
included, one reason occurs to me. We eat sweets only on festival
days and on other days we mostly eat things which have the other
five tastes. Because of that the five might have been indicated.
Apart from that those who eat sour, saltish and pungennt food
excessively cannot take sweet in the same manner.

Milk, buttermilk, butter and fruits give strength to body and
help the purification of the mind even when taken in small
quantities. These are sāthvik.

Whatever is taken if it is very hot, it is rājasam, he says. Very
hot food gives rise to emotions, nervous problem, palpitation, etc.

If what is very hot increases rājasam, he says that which has
been allowed to cool down too much, increases thāmasam. The
characteristics of thāmasa food He gives are:

Yātha Yāmam gatha rasam pūthi paryushitham cha yath
Uchchishtamapi chāmedhyam bhōjanam thāmasa priyam (17-10)
‘Yāmam’ means a jāmam that is a three hours duration. Food that is kept for more than three hours after cooking is ‘Yātha Yāmam’, that is it is beyond its time and is thāmasam. Since water is not added it will lose its taste and will become ‘gatha rasam’. Fruits which are dry also belong to this category. If water has been added, it will be like the rice soaked in water and kept overnight, the flour grounded for idli etc., which will become sour. This is what is mentioned in the slōka as ‘pūthi’. Anything that is decayed including fruits is ‘pūthi’. Anything which is overheated and gets charred or things which start emitting bad odour when kept for a long time are ‘paryushitham’. Uchchishtam is what remains after those who are younger than us in age or lower in varṇa āśrama have taken. These days as a fashion people sip and drink or eat. That is also uchchishtam and these create thāmasam.

Uchchishtamapi chāmēdhyam - we understand ‘amēdhyam as excreta only. The direct meaning is that it is a thing not fit for yagna, that is not fit to be offered as neivēdyam in the pūjā done to Īswara. Will we offer as neivēdyam what has been kept overnight or toddy - why even soda, ice cream, biscuit, ovaltine etc.? Something tells us that these are not fit to be offered as neivēdyam and stops us. All that is amēdhyam only. Here one is prompted to think about rice made with tamarind and chillies (tamarind rice) and similar things which are of the rājasa type being offered as neivēdyam without a sense of guilt. Thāmasam is a step lower than that.
DISTINCTION IN THE RULES

Although all these are stated in a general way, food that is kept overnight, watery food etc though classified as thamasam are not excluded for the peasants who toil in the field. For people who are sick also, certain prohibited foods are permitted. Śāstrās even say that for those who are less than eight years old and above eighty, there is no need for much restriction in food. But looking at it fairly, people above eighty should themselves be strict about food because of reduction in their digestive power and their desires. It appears that they have been exempted like this more out of sympathy in the thought ‘these people who have not given up their petty desires and taste for food are not going to have redemption. Therefore, why put restrictions on these old people in their last days and give them trouble?

The reason why our religion has survived from olden times to these days is that instead of prescribing all rules for all people, exceptions have been made, different sets of rules have been made of varying degrees according to the Varnāśramā dharma. In the matter of food also the type and extent of regulation prescribed for the Brahmin are not there for others. Even drinks, eating meat, old food etc have been allowed for kshathriyās and the people of the fourth varṇa upto a limit. What is important is that they should observe the limit.

Śāstrās have prescribed that the one who labours hard should not be troubled by severe regulations regarding āchāram but should be allowed to be a little free but the Brahmin has to be under strict discipline in regard to āchāram, sacrifice his comforts and show others the ideal state.

Because only some people practise total vegetarianism and other regulations in our country, others look to them and avoid drinks, meat, etc on days of pithru, vrathā etc. People of many jāthis after they reach sixty or seventy years, become pure vegetarians.
WHEN THE IDEAL AGREES WITH THE PRACTICAL

It is only if we go to the practical without giving up the ideal, both will stay; in the end when maturity is attained all people will reach the ideal. If ideal is sought to be enforced on all people, it would only result in giving up the ideal completely.

In our country, āchārās have been prescribed and are being followed in a manner that people of other jāthis would feel ‘the ideal is sāthvik. If not now at least towards the end we have to follow the ideal’.

Since the ideal of vegetarianism is only a kulāchāram, others of different kulāchāram also out of their own liking follow it, without the compulsion of sāstrā due to which this ideal spreads more and more in practice. When we see people saying with a sense of pride ‘We are vegetarian for the last two generations’ does it not mean that those before the two generations were non-vegetarians who had developed of their own accord a respect for the rules regarding food and became vegetarian? Some other people say ‘Other people at home take non-vegetarian but I do not touch it.’ This shows how when an ideal is prescribed for some people only, it encourages some among others to follow the ideal of their own.

The more anything is spoken about, less it is practised. As if to justify what is not being done, it all ends in mere talk and writing and what should be done is not done. Right from the time of Gandhi, so much is being talked about non-violence. But it is only now there is increase in all types of violence in the country. Even the practice of Brahmin boys whose families were vegetarian for generations together eating other thing has started now only.

In Buddhism in the very beginning it was forcefully preached that no harm should be done to any life by thought, word or deed.
The doctrine of *ahimsā* is good to hear but the question is whether it can be practised by all people in general. Later when Buddhism spread wide and deep in China, Japan and other countries, people started eating frogs and snakes which non-vegetarians in our country would not touch. When one hundredth of what went to the butcher’s shop was sacrificed in yagnas, Buddha wept and abused, ‘What is this, this is horrible’. There was none in his time, perhaps, to make him understand that yagnas were only for pleasing certain forces in the interest of the welfare of the world. We see with our own eyes that the Brahmins who did the yagnas have remained vegetarian from generation to generation. It is also seen in practice that Buddha’s followers eat even what is worse than meat.

I shall tell you something which is interesting. When Buddha preached the *dharma* of *ahimsā* for everybody, his followers started eating non-vegetarian food. In our religion, excepting the Brahmins, non-vegetarian food is allowed for others but *sanyāsis* should be strictly vegetarian. But in Buddhism everyone is required to follow the *ahimsā dharma* but in practice even their *sanyāsis* (Bikshus) started eating meat. This is not a recent development. In the satire that Mahendra Pallavan wrote one thousand three hundred years ago - a comedy named ‘*Maththa Vilāsa Prahasanam*’ (Prahasanam can be understood as a farce or satire), he has ridiculed this but has said it very clearly. In the drama, there is a scene in which the begging bowl of a *kāpālikā* is found missing. Speculating on the disappearance of the bowl, the *kāpālikā* says ‘That bowl contained cooked meat, is it not? Therefore either it must have been carried away by a dog or a Buddha Bikshu must have stolen it’. Then in the drama, a Buddha Bikshu himself comes. When he talks to himself in a joyful mood, he says ‘What a great bhikshai (offering food to *sanyāsi*) the merchant Dhana Dāsan gave me! What a food which was so tasty and pleasant smelling and colourful made of fish and meat!’
When Buddhists were living in Kanchipuram in large numbers, the ruling king there had written like this in his drama. Does it not portray the custom prevailing then?

In our religion in which there is no over emphasis on *ahimsā* as in Buddhism, the *sanyāsi* cannot think of meat even in his dreams. If this was the state of affairs in which the *sanyāsis* of a religion which spoke sky high about *ahimsā* were eating meat, would the Hindus keep quiet? Would they refrain from ridiculing them? ‘You talk of *ahimsā*. But you are doing like this’, they asked them. They used to give a very ingenious reply, ‘Our Buddha only said that animals should not be killed. He never said anything about food. We are exactly following him. We do not kill any animal. We only purchase the meat which is sold by a butcher or hunter and others who had killed the animals. Therefore, the blemish of causing cruelty to animals does not affect us’.

It appears that *Thiruvalluvar* has given the following Kural, keeping such people in mind.

> If there is no slaughtering for food
> There will be no one to sell meat.

Do not these Buddhists escape by talking as if they are taking the meat from the butcher and eating it because he is running the business of slaughtering and he must also live! Is that the fact? Do they eat meat because someone has slaughtered? Does not the butcher slaughter because these people eat? - *Thiruvalluvar* must have thought on these lines. He has added this *Kural* in his great work to convey the idea, ‘the business of slaughtering and selling meat for a price has come about because there are people to purchase and eat it. If people were not eating meat, there would be no butcher shop’. He indirectly conveys the idea that even if they do not kill and eat, since some others kill and these people eat, the sin of causing cruelty to animals will get attached to those who eat it.
Notwithstanding what wise men like Thiruvalluvar have said, the Buddhists continued with meat eating saying that they were not killing but were eating only what someone else had killed. Because of this when Buddhism disappeared (from India) and spread to Burma, Ceylon, Malaya and other countries, there was a strange development. We have been having connection with these countries for a long time through the sea route. Because of this, in later days, Muslims began settling down along the eastern sea coast from Nāgapattinam to Rāmanāthapuram. They thought of a plan: 'The Buddhists of Burma, Ceylon are in need of people who will slaughter animals since they would not cause cruelty to animals. They are on the look out for some people who will kill and sell meat. Why not we start this business?' Thus they went to those countries, opened butcher shops and returned with a lot of money. It used to be said that it was only after listening to their reports about those countries, the Nagarathār who were close to Rāmanāthapuram and Kīzhakkaraṇai went there as money lenders. Since Koran prohibits charging of interest, the Muslims did not start money lending business in these countries.

Even in our country, it is in States like Bihar and some parts of U.P. where Buddha and Asoka have lived and Buddhism was being practised in a big way, non-vegetarianism is widely prevalent. In Bengal, where during six months of the year, the rivers including the Ganges are in floods and the gardens growing conventional vegetables get destroyed, people of all jāthis take, out of necessity, fish which becomes available in plenty calling them 'jala pushpam' (water flowers). But the Bengali Brahmins and others who, of their own accord, follow their āchārās do not take meat and other non-vegetarian stuff. It is not so in Bihar and its surrounding areas. It does not mean I justify even the Brahmins of Bengal taking fish. But in certain cases even if we cannot justify them, we may show some consideration. But, if in some places all people are eating meat without necessity or compulsion, the
reason can only be that in these places *ahimsā* must have been
made a general rule applicable to everyone when Buddhism had
flourished there. In any matter if an extreme position is taken, the
opposite of what is intended will happen.

What is practical is to begin with what can be done keeping
in view the realities and then gradually progress towards the ideal
and make it possible to be achieved.

The ideal condition is that materials used for cooking and
those who cook them should both be *sāthvik*. All people should
achieve this ideal gradually. In order to create in them eagerness
and zeal in this matter, Brahmins should, from their birth and all
the time, practise these ideals and demonstrate to others. Is not
‘*adhyāpanam*’ (teaching others) one of the functions of the
Brahmins? This teaching does not stop with his learning all the arts
and sciences and teaching them to others; what is more important
is for him to follow the different ideals, become a *thyāgi* (one who
sacrifices) and by his own example teach others the difficult ideals.
Instead of appreciating the fact that the *sastrās* have enjoined
only on the Brahmins this heavy social responsibility, it is being
wrongly said that they have been given privileges and comforts and
accorded a high status.

Since the Brahmin has to preserve and protect the *Vedha
manthrās*, rules have been laid down that drink, meat etc should
not get into his body.
the matter of food, when we keep in view the purity of the materials used for preparing the food, what is ideal is ahimsā food. It is vegetarianism. This is what has been emphasized in Thirukkural (in the Chapter ‘Pulāl maruththal’, that is avoiding meat) and other literature.

The reason why vegetarianism has come to be called ‘Saiva’ food is that among those who are not Brahmins it is the Śaivas (followers of Śaivism) who were mostly vegetarians. It is not only exclusion of meat. They will not include in their vegetarian food things that are not helpful for the purification of the mind. They are said to have rejected three ‘kāyams’. Kāya means the body. Here, it does not refer to the three bodies like the physical, subtle etc., but to three materials used in cooking which have their names ending in kāyam - venkāyam (onion), ullikkāyam (garlic), perunkāyam (asafoetida). Even though these do not belong to the meat category, because these also cause rājasa and thāmasa guṇas, the Śaivas exclude them from their food. Since kāyam also means the flesh, meat, there is also a pun here.

Here is something funny. In the South, if it is Śaivam, it means vegetarianism. But in the North, only if it is Vaishnavam, it means vegetarianism. It is only in the South, Śiva and Ambāl are worshipped in the ‘Sowmya and Śantha rupam’. In the North they are worshipped as ‘Roudhra or Kāla Bairavar and Kāli, Durgai. Apart from this, great people like Vallabhāchariar, Rāmānandā and Chaithanyā, who enjoyed great prestige, though they cannot be said to belong entirely to Rāmānuja Siddhāntā are mostly close to that in philosophy. Also when it is Ishta Devathā, they had spread the worship of Viṣṇu. The Jains of the North who were great votaries of ahimsā, when they returned to their parent religion on account of these āchāryās became Vaishnavās and continued their
ahimsā food. Therefore it is Vaishnavā food which has come to be known as vegetarianism.

In the South, the philosophy is 'Love is Śiva'. Not only that. It was Jnānasambhandamūrthi of Śaiva sampradāhāya who had brought back the Jains to Hinduism. That vegetarianism is itself called Saivam is appropriate here.

In the North, it was in Vallabhāchāriar's time that there was large scale mass conversion of Jains to Hinduism (In the Kannada (Karnataka) region it was due to Rāmānujā's influence, Jains including the Jain king became Vaishnavās. The followers of Vallabha siddhānthā are called 'Pushti Mārgis'. Around Gujarat, the Vysya Jains who had converted to Vallabha siddhānthā are called Pushti Mārgi Baniya. Vānijyan or Vāniyan (in Tamil) is the same as baniya in the North. These people wear nāmam with saffron. They invariably wear thulasi māla. Gandhi was one of them. It was because of his Jain tradition, he went all out for ahimsā.

In the chapter 'Avoiding meat' Thiruvalluvar asks how there will be compassion in a person who kills a life and eats it in order to fatten himself;

How can one cherish compassion who
Fattens himself on other beings' flesh?

If he has no compassion in him, how will Iswarā show him compassion? Merely talking of compassion and love and eating non-vegetarian foods is paradoxical. It is only one Iswarā who is the father and the mother. When all of us (not only human beings but animals and birds) are his children, then when a person eats an animal or bird, is it not 'Brārthru Hathyā'? (killing own brother). If non-vegetarianism is supported, then universal brotherhood loses all meaning.
IS THERE NOT VIOLENCE INVOLVED IN EATING VEGETABLES?

When we say like this, they (non-vegetarians) ask ‘why only animals and birds? The trees, plants, creepers, crops are also Īśwarā’s children. They too have life and feeling. Jagdish Chandra Bose and others have said this. Therefore what is vegetarian food also involves killing’.

I have to reply to this. Ages before J.C. Bose, the Vēdhās and Śāstrās have declared that the vegetable kingdom has life. But in Īśwarā’s creation, there is a mixture of things – the good and the bad, pleasure and pain. It is the law of Īśwarā (Īśvara niyathī) that instinctively and according to the formation of their body, animals like lion, tiger etc have to kill other animals and survive. It is only in the case of man, Īśwarā has given him the intellect to enable him to think and then take a decision. Therefore, in this Universe, which is like a drama, although Īśwarā has tied down man to Nature, so that he cannot have everything that is entirely good and everything that is entirely pleasurable, at least within the radius of the rope, (with which he is tied) he is in a position to discard what is bad as far as possible and have what is good and remove hardship and get enjoyment. He has to eat something. Otherwise he will die – Nature has kept him like that. Excepting one in a million, who can discard worldly life itself, all others have to fall in line with the reality and cannot challenge it. All right, if he has to eat something, what is the type of food which he can eat without creating pain. This is what has to be considered. Among what is available, what causes least cruelty is only taking vegetables.

We are taking the grain only after they have become fully ripe and the plants fall, that is they have reached the end of their life. Because we are plucking the vegetables, we do not destroy the plants themselves. When we pluck vegetables, the plants will have
just as little pain as what we feel when the nail is cut or a hair is removed. Since the sensitivity of the plants is less than humans and animals, the pain felt will also be less. In the same way we pull out certain types of greens or roots as otherwise they will themselves perish. Keeping these aspects and our necessity in view if we compare with other types of food, it will be seen that it is the vegetarian food that involves the least cruelty. Therefore, we who are born as humans have to adopt this.

Since total ahimsā has been enjoined on sanyāsīs it has been laid down that even vegetable should not be plucked for their sake causing pain to the plants but they should eat only fruits and leaves which fall off the tree. This is what is called 'Jīrṇā parrāsinah kvachith'. Jīrṇā parrātam means the dried leaf. Asinah means one who takes food. Even grains sprout, is it not? Therefore it is understood they bear an embryo. If the sanyāsī takes it, it is destroying a pregnancy, it is cruelty. The ideal for him is very severe. When a sanyāsī takes even a fruit, like orange etc (which has seeds inside) he has to take care that he does not swallow any seed. He must remove the seeds and then eat the fruit. The fruit meal which Maharshis had taken is true palahāram. ‘Phalam’ is fruit. Nowadays we just exclude only cooked rice (annam) and eat the rice in all other forms, like idli, dosa etc along with a variety of side dishes and call it palahāram. Real palahāram will create sathvam and sāntham. Kāmam (what people call sex) will be under control. There will be no need for separate family planning.

It is in this there is another argument to counter the question whether we can cause cruelty to the vegetable kingdom. The earlier arguments were based on how we affect the vegetable kingdom, when we pluck the vegetables etc, how the plants are not destroyed in the manner of killing the animals, and how their sensitivity is low and how they do not experience even the pain that animals experience. Now I shall base my argument on how non-vegetarian and vegetarian food affects us. Non-vegetarian
food does not help in the purification of the mind and in creating sathva *guna*. The body may become stronger but in practices like *dhyāna*, it does not help. When compared with this it is vegetarian food which is conducive to spiritual development.

Although there are several things which have to be excluded from vegetarian food keeping in view spiritual development, vegetarian food only is better than non-vegetarian food.

Let us consider whether our mind accepts it. Do we have the same reaction in our mind when we pull out some greens as when a goat or bull is killed and it is crying with pain? There is some importance to this psychological factor. For thinking that the meat of some animal can be taken and of some others cannot be taken, the reason is nothing but psychological. The non-vegetarians among the Hindus will show aversion on their face ‘Oh, it’s pig’s meat?’ But in other countries that is also taken. In the same manner our non-vegetarians express aversion about people in China eating crab etc. Then there is gradation in meat eating! There are some people who say we take only eggs* and fish but we do not touch non-vegetarian stuff.

Whatever else they take somehow they have excluded horse meat as being lowly. During war, when there was scarcity for everything people of Germany started eating horse meat. For this, non-vegetarians of other countries, ridiculed them.

It appears that vegetarians can ridicule all the non-vegetarians in the same manner. The non-vegetarians of our place take liberty to make fun of the Brahmin that they are ‘Dhall eaters’. The implication of what they say is that these Dhall eaters may look fleshy but are not really muscular in body. But people of other countries in all seriousness ridicule our people who go there

* Paramāchārya does not use the Tamil equivalent of eggs but says ‘What we call the cypher’
'what! you are all eating only vegetables? So much meat is available in your country. You have wasted all that and you yourselves are puny'. There are also those who say that it is because there are more vegetarians among Hindus that they lost their strength and surrendered their country to the Muslims and the Englishmen. I shall deal with this later. I shall now tell you how you can counter the non-vegetarians. It is like this: 'You who are non-vegetarians ridicule others who eat certain kinds of meat. Not only that all non-vegetarians are one in ridiculing the ādivāsis who live in forests some of whom eat human flesh as cannibals. If you think that you are all higher than the cannibals, should not we who do not eat any meat think that we are superior to you? How are you justified in ridiculing the cannibals on the one side and the vegetarians like us on the other?' – They should be asked on these lines. 'You say that if all Indians start taking meat there will be no food scarcity. Does not scarcity occur sometimes in your countries also? Therefore - you are all capable of preserving anything - why do you not preserve the dead and the useless old......' – one may think on these lines also.

It is true that when fruits get decayed they emit foul smell. But this foul smell is nothing when compared to the bad smell that is emitted when non-vegetarian food is cooked which creates uneasiness in the stomach. In case they become spoiled, the foul smell is still more. (Here one other thing has to be mentioned. This provides the reason why we say 'English vegetables' like cabbage, beet etc are not to be taken. When these are cooked or when the water in which they are boiled are poured out, the bad smell is the same as in the case of non-vegetarian).
THE VIRTUES OF VEGETARIAN FOOD

It is not that non-vegetarian food does not agree to the nose only. It does not suit the stomach and the digestive system of the human being. This is what many people have pointed out at the World Vegetarian Congress (held in Chennai in November 1957). They have put forth several reasons why the digestive organs of the human being are not meant to take non-vegetarian by comparing them with those of animals like the lion and the tiger.

Among the animals those which have a constitution that does not suit non-vegetarian food, do not go anywhere near non-vegetarian because they do not have our ‘intelligence’. Will the goat, the deer, the cattle or the elephant ever eat meat even by mistake? But it is man who has been blessed with the sixth faculty of intellect who does not understand what should be taken and what should be avoided and takes both vegetarian and non-vegetarian. Among animals just as there are some which do not eat anything but meat, there are also some which have completely discarded meat. It is only some animals like the dog, cat, crow and the sparrow that take both. Shall man be at the level of these?

In this Bhagawan also enjoys some fun. Although experts in vegetarian science say that man’s digestive organs are not suited for meat, Bhagawan has not made them totally unfit for digesting meat. If that were not so, he will not take meat at all, is it not? Now does he eat stone or iron? In the same manner, he would have avoided meat. Giving him the power to digest meat although with some difficulty and at the same time having given him the faculty to consider which type of food will be conducive to sathvaguna, Bhagawan enjoys the fun by making both these clash. In this if man were to allow the tongue to win and his buddhi to lose, there cannot be a greater fool.
I now come to the point that it is only meat eating that gives strength. When we want to refer to strength, we do not say ‘the strength of a lion’ or ‘the strength of a tiger’ but we say ‘the strength of an elephant’. The elephant has the strength that other animals do not have. Does it have the strength by eating meat? The elephant will not even look at non-vegetarian things. There is the saying of Bharthruhari, ‘Śushkais thrunair vanagajā balinō bhavanthi’. ‘Śushkam’ is what is dried up. When adhrak gets dried we call it in Tamil ‘Śukku’. It is Śushkam which has become Śukku in Tamil. When a person keeps all the money for himself without a heart to give we say such a person is Śushkan (with ‘dried heart’). Here Śushkam thrunair means grass that has dried up. What is meant here is that just by eating grass and the fibres of the outer shell of the coconut, the elephant is stronger than other animals. There is another thing which is notable. Although endowed with so much strength, it is peaceful and not ferocious like the tiger or the lion. It has got also buddhi and memory along with strength. In Kerala and Burma, it is the elephant which carries huge trees. Therefore it is seen that with vegetarian food, we can acquire bodily strength, buddhi and helpful attitude etc.

_Sarpāḥ pibhanthi Pavanam na cha dhurbalāsthē_
_Śushkais thrunair vanagajāḥ balinō bhavanthi_
_Kandaih phalair munivarāḥ kshapayanti kālam_
_Santhōsha ēva purushasya param midhānam_

(The snake which has for its food the air is not weak. The elephant of the forest which eats dried grass is very strong. The rishis who eat only fruits and roots have conquered death and lived as Chiranjīvi. Therefore what is important for a man’s health is the mental satisfaction. It is not food. (That it is not food remains understood in the slōka).

It was a time when I was young. There was one Prof. Ramamurthy. He used to be called ‘Ramamurthy sando’. He
was a Telugu man who was running a circus company. He was not only running the company but he himself performed wonderful feats. I shall tell you one thing: He used to tie to his hip with ropes a Ford car one on each side and start both the cars. People used to look on with great anxiety fearing that the car would pound him down. But this man used to stop both the cars from moving with one palm on either side. When his company was camping at Kumbakonam, he requested me very much that I should see his circus. When I told him that it would be against the tradition of the Mutt, he arranged a small camp on a ground behind the Mutt and along with some people, demonstrated some of his feats. I wondered whether someone would have that much strength. The reason why I narrate the story is that such a strong person was vegetarian. Even Anjaneya who was the personification of strength was a monkey, a vegetarian.

Even though doctors prescribe meat and related things for certain diseases like T.B, for all stomach ailments, blood pressure, heart diseases etc doctors prohibit meat because it contains more fat. Doctors used to say that with whatever diseases the non-vegetarians are affected, they do not get cured quickly.

I shall give one more reason to show that vegetarian food is not without the strength giving properties. You take any carnivorous animal like the lion or tiger and you will find that the animal on which it preys will be vegetarian. Lion and tiger eat only the cattle, goats and other animals which are vegetarian. They will not eat another carnivorous animal. The lion and the tiger may fight with each other and kill each other but one will not eat the meat of the other. From this, is it not clear that even the carnivorous animals get their strength from the grass, grains and fibre which they eat through the animals they kill and eat.

Although so much is said in support of vegetarianism in practical life, on the plea of taste, body strength etc, non-vegetarianism has been practised for a long time. Scholars say that
originally there was a more important reason for this. 'In olden times, the communities of people did not have settlements but were constantly on the move. Unless they remained at one place for six months or a year, no crop could be raised and produce harvested. In those days, they were not aware of agriculture. Therefore, they had to use their bows and arrows, hunt animals and eat them. Since it became part of man’s nature over a long period, even after they established agricultural settlements, meat eating continued'. I do not know if this is correct or not. I do not have that much research knowledge. But all over the world, non-vegetarian food has continued to be there. It is by accepting the ground situation, those who gave us the sāstrās have said that from this we should go to the ideal state and therefore laid down who can eat non-vegetarian and who should not in the Varnāśramā division. Simply because they have permitted some people to eat meat, it does not mean that they should go on eating like that permanently but that, as they become older in age, they should give it up and start taking the sātvik vegetarian food and for this they have laid down the path.
ANCIENT CUSTOMS AND THE PRACTICES OF KALI YUGA

We have heard people say, ‘In olden times, Brahmins were non-vegetarians; the rishis have taken non-vegetarian food’. They say this by looking into the sāstrās and point to the names of certain things which they say are non-vegetarian. Actually, those who are great followers of āchāra and have faith in sāstrās say that the names of things which are being mentioned as non-vegetarian are actually the names of different types of vegetables, herbs and grains. There are people in Gorakhpur who are publishing the magazines called Kalyāt and Kalyāna Kalpatharu. They write a lot on this subject and they have been arguing that our sāstrās never approved of non-vegetarian food. They have also written that what we think to be the offering to the fire namely the different parts of a horse, part by part in Aswamedha yāgam, are all names of parts of particular herbs.

Let us assume for the sake of argument that in olden times all were non-vegetarians. Even then in sāstrās it has been laid down that some of the customs of the olden times are not applicable to people of the kali yugam (age) who have become weaklings and therefore the Brahmin among the varṇas and the sanyāsīs among the aśramās should take only vegetarian food. We have to follow this injunction only.

From what āchāryā has said in one place in his commentary on Upanishad it is seen that there is a lot of difference in the strength of the men of the previous yuga and ourselves. In Brahadhāraniyaka Upanishad ‘many among the devas realized the truth of ‘Aham Brahmasmi’ and became such. Among rishis also there were those who were like that. For example, what Vāmadevā said, ‘I am the one who was Manu; I am the one who was his son’ etc are all born out of this experiencing of Brahman. It
is not that it was only the rishis and devas of olden times who could experience ‘Aham Brahmasmi’. Even now in the present time one of those who are among us can realize ‘Aham Brahmasmi’. He also becomes like them. His glory cannot be reduced even by the devas. There are manthrás which give this meaning. Āchāryā in his commentary shows that what has been mentioned as ‘even now’ in the Upanishad days was applicable to Āchāryā’s time and will be applicable to all future time. Therefore, he says that attaining Brahma Jnānam is possible even for those of the present time who have become weak. When saying that he clarifies ‘this manthra has been given so that people who are in our yugam because they are very weak may think that by the practice of Brahma Vidhyā they will not be able to attain siddhi. So far as Brahma Jnāna is concerned, there is no difference between men of great strength (Mahā Viryavān) like Vāmadēvar and others and the weak people of our times’. Thus even when he says that there is no difference in achieving ‘āthma sākkshāthkāram’ he refers to men of the previous yugas as ‘Mahāvirya’ and those of the present as ‘alpa’ or ‘hīna’ viryavān. From this it is clear that in respect of strength those of the present times are less than those of the olden times. That is why he said that we should not follow certain practices of the people of those ages. Because a healthy person has a feast, can a sick person also eat a feast? Even if we assume that the rishis of the olden times ate meat (I am merely saying this as an assumption) they had the power to digest it in a manner that the food did not create in them rājasa and thāmasa qualities. They not only digested the food in the stomach but they could also digest it in their minds. We should understand that we who do not have such power should not indulge in it. In those yugas, people lived for a thousand or ten thousand years. They went to other worlds with their physical bodies. We read that with their mental power, they had done many wonders. If we have such powers we too can have food etc as they had.
An example used to be quoted. There was a forest. Near the forest there was a big river and a small pond. A forest fire flared up. Simultaneously, there was also heavy wind due to which the burning leaves, twigs and mud which were blown off by the wind, fell into the pond and also into the river. The mud and the leaves filled up the pond and the pond disappeared. But what fell into the big river though they were burning were washed away and vanished into the sea. The garbage blown away by the wind made the pond disappear. But the river made the garbage disappear. In the same manner, some of the customs which appear to us to have blemish when they touched those of the previous ages who were very strong got destroyed due to their power. But if we who are weaklings follow those customs, they will destroy us. Since we do not have their strength, we have to submit to their rules about how we should conduct ourselves in Kāli yugam. The dharmā appropriate to us is that ultimately all of us should endeavour to go in for ahimsā food only.
TO PROGRESS STEP BY STEP

Even if perhaps our people had taken meat in olden times, we should not adopt that as the ideal. At the same time, those other than Brahmins who due to their habit over a long period and kula āchāram have been taking meat should not be forced to give it up right now. Ultimately, meat is to be given up; but to achieve that there should be no compulsion. A habit cannot be given up in one go. Trying to do that will create a lot of difficulty. Total abstinence cannot be achieved in a day. It has to be achieved stage by stage. We have to do propaganda and provide encouragement for the same.

Let others (those other than Brahmins) first decide that on particular days like festival days, days of austerities (vratham) or thithi, when tharpana is performed they will not take meat. Then let them give it up on some days in a month, may be on the first of the month, on the days of their birth stars or the birth stars of their children. Like this if it is given up gradually, no hardship will be felt in giving it up completely.
Vegetarian Food is of Greater Need Now Than Before

In olden times all people had faith in sāstrās, bakhti to and fear of God. Therefore, they were afraid to commit wrong. Because of this, people of all jāthis were more disciplined than at present (even in keeping the indriyās under check). In their time, there was no cinema, drama, novel etc which in the name of freedom have allowed people to go the wrong way. Feeding the senses and their desires was not as at present. Because of that even those who took drinks or meat observed a limit and discipline. Unlike people of these days they had laboured hard with their body and therefore whatever they ate did not affect them physically or mentally. Since the attitude and method of working etc have changed and the environment has become spoiled it is good if people gradually take to vegetarian food. It is also good to give up drinks like toddy.

Moreover, these days whether at home or in office people of all jāthis have to move more closely with each other. Till now other people were trying to adopt the āchārās followed by Brahmins. But now the situation is that the Brahmin is trying to copy what others do. Since vegetarians are moving closely with non-vegetarians, there is a fear that they may also take to non-vegetarian food. Now and then we hear of such a thing happening in some places. But still the situation has not gone out of control. If in India people of all jāthis become non-vegetarian - it is painful even to think of it - the world would lose a great ideal. Then it will not be possible to set it right at any time in the future. If even today there is something for us to be proud of it is that in the whole world the largest community of people who are vegetarians are in this country. There is a good opinion widely prevalent in the world even now that Hindu means a votary of non-violence (ahimsāvādhi).
The name Hindu has been given to us by foreigners. We cannot find that name in our sāstrās. But later on, this name came to be understood by our people as if it originated from a Sanskrit root namely ‘Himsayām Dhuyathē yah sa Hindu Ithya bidhiyathē’. The meaning is one who feels great sorrow when cruelty is inflicted. Although this is an ingenious way of saying it, is it not because Hindus are a non-violent people it is possible to give such a definition? If this great pride which is ours is not to go in these days, when all people have to mix with each other more than before, it will be good if even those who are used to non-vegetarian food become keen to adopt vegetarianism.
PROHIBITION

If things which have to be excluded from our food according to Śāsthrās spoil our mind only over a period of time, we see that drinks spoil and degrade a person immediately. Therefore, this should be given up first.

It has to be admitted that since the mind is spoiled immediately by drinks getting into the body, other things too which are to be excluded gradually start getting into the body and spoil the mind. It is therefore beyond doubt that there is relationship between the food we take and the mind.

Drinks should not be taken. It spoils not only the mind but destroys the family. It will be good if even those who had been permitted to have drinks, give it up in the present set up. It is for this reason that the sabha of the Mutt engaged in charity and service has issued a statement supporting prohibition which is being propagated by Gandhians.

We, religious Tamils, follow the Vedhās and the āgamās, which are born from the Vedhās for temple worship. Both Vedhās and Āgamās prohibit drinks. Therefore we printed leaflets saying that even according to our religion we are duty bound to avoid drinks and we distributed the leaflets. Gandhians consider drinks as a social, economic and family problem. We in the Mutt accept these reasons but added weight to the whole thing by including religious feeling. We also said that people should send us chits agreeing to follow our appeal. We also arranged to send the prasād from the Mutt to those who send such chits.

(The following is the appeal to which Sri Periyavā made a reference:

‘Vedhās loudly proclaim ‘Do not take alcoholic drinks’. Āgamās when speaking about ‘Dhikshai’ lay down avoidance of
drinks as the first *dharmā*. Therefore, in accordance with Thiruvalluvar's saying 'Vēdhās and āgamās are truly divine', every Tamilian who has come in this tradition of Vēdhās and Āgamās should take a vow that he will not take drinks. To those who make such a vow and send it to the Mutt, *prasād*, either *Vibhūthī* or *ThulaSi* will be sent. A guide which explains the procedure for wearing *Vibhūthī* or *Thirumart* will also be sent.

A declaration to be sent by those who read this: 'According to the injunctions of our Vēdhās and āgamās I will not from today touch toddy. I give this promise to Ādhi Sankarāchāryā')
SMOKING : AN ANTI-SOCIAL ACT

Sāstrās have treated the use of tobacco in the raw form or for smoking as anāchāram and have discarded it. Medical science says that it is bad for health. Dharma Sāstrās have prohibited it because it is anāchāram and spoils the mind. If there is something bad about meat and in drinks there is a different kind of harm in smoking. When someone exhales the smoke, it affects those who are around him. One may say, ‘I can do whatever I want even if I spoil myself. Who can prevent me?’ But no one can say ‘I will spoil the other man, I will spoil the air that he breathes’. So, for the good of the society, cigarettes and bidis should be considered enemies and should be banned. But it is not known why in the name of prohibition they talk so much about prohibition of drinks only and are not prohibiting smoking. It is said that some of those engaged in prohibition propaganda themselves have the smoking habit. While there is stigma attached to drinking, in the case of smoking, not only there is no stigma but it is considered a sign of fashion. If care is taken only in respect of food but the habit of smoking is continued, there is no use. When we talk of sāthvik food, we have to exclude drinks and tobacco too.
COFFEE AND OTHER
SOFT DRINKS

Usually, it is such prohibited things that have the power to take hold of the mind. With a feeling, ‘Oh, I cannot do without it’ people cannot concentrate on any job and as if they have become mad and with that heaviness in the mind they get headache, indigestion etc. They become slaves of such things. They become addicts, it is said. Instead of stopping at a limit, the mind always desires for that thing. Persons who drink, chew or smoke tobacco, are like this. Things like ganja, make them mad after it.

Although coffee and tea do not go to the extent of toddy or ganja in spoiling the mind, since they also cause addiction, they are bad. Even though they cannot be classified as intoxicants since they are stimulants they have to be avoided. Stimulation may give a momentary cheer and a feeling of exhilaration. But in the end the nervous system which gets stimulated artificially becomes weak. There is general agreement that caffeine which is in coffee is a poison.

Tea is also anāchāram. Since it is not as bad as coffee, those who want some drink to become active can have a small quantity of tea. Because I say this, it should not be taken that ‘Periyava is asking us to take tea’. Those who feel that it is impossible for them to be without coffee or tea, may take a little tea and gradually give it up also.

There is no need to mix these things in milk which is good. Plain milk can be taken in the morning. During day time buttermilk can be taken. Gruel with buttermilk can be taken. Because I feel that it is not enough if you say that you will give up coffee, cinema and silk, I asked you to swear before Chandramoulsvarār that you will give up these three. Why so? However poor a family may be,
does it not spend more for coffee than for food? As if drinking at home is not enough, it is making people drink three times, four times in whichever hotel they see. Taking coffee as soon as one gets up – bed coffee – or cleaning the teeth with the coffee powder (which remains after extracting the decoction) and swallowing it also – thus it has gained control over our mind ‘as if there is no life without this’, is it not wrong?

It is because of such power, some sanyāsīs of today, even if they do not have dhanḍam and kamandalu, must have a stove. Are we not seeing sanyāsī who are not to go near fire or cook, if they have to get up in Brahma muhūrtham, before that they themselves light the stove and make coffee because they feel they cannot be without it? This is the kind of ‘Swayampāka niyam’ that is prevalent today! It is because people become such slaves of this habit I strongly condemn coffee.

We do not know what all things are there in the various kinds of drinks that come tinned and are neat to look at. In these and also in things like biscuits, bun, cake etc which are also packed neatly and are nice to look at, there is doubt that one thing* must be there. Yet, winking at it, even those who follow āchāra keep taking them. There are also those who argue ‘Even if that thing* is there, it does not matter. There is no life in it’. Irrespective of whether there is life in it or not, it will do us harm. According to their argument, meat of any animal that dies of its own can be taken and it is not wrong. It is said that Nilakanta Dikshithar, a great Mahān, when he relinquished charge of his Ministership with Thirumalai Naicker, asked of him: ‘It is enough if you give me a little land at a place where there is no noise of the frog’. He took the land on the banks of Thāmirabharani and established an agrahāram named ‘Pathamadai’. We should not cause blemish to that ahimsā

* There is no doubt that Sri Periyavā is referring to eggs.
tradition. What all things are mixed in those which are prepared in a bakery which are out of our sight! Because it is not physically handled and machines make it and pack it, it cannot become āchāram. These can be taken by people who are sick or those who are recuperating after sickness. Then these must be stopped and we should get purified by taking panchagavyam. Āchāram is drinking the gruel which is made out of flour ground in our homes.
MILK BASED PRODUCTS

There are some who hold extreme views about milk saying 'Is not milk like blood? Therefore milk, curd, butter, ghee, all of which come from milk are non-vegetarian' and they exclude them. But since sāstrās are our authority, we find in them that milk and products coming from it are said to be sathva food and we need not exclude them. There are two reasons for excluding a thing. One is related to causing cruelty to animals. The second is that it is capable of harming our mind. By milking a cow, we do not cause any cruelty to it. In Īswarā’s creation, it is only for cows that the quality has been given by which it generates more milk than what is needed for its own calf. If the calf takes all that milk, it will die. Bhagawān created it like this, so that it can give milk required for yagnas and for providing bodily energy to people. To us also, the cow is mother. That is why we call the cow Gōmāthā. We do not talk of ‘Asvamāthā’ (Mother horse) or Gajamāthā (Elephant mother). Taking mother’s milk cannot be considered non-vegetarian food. There is nothing wrong in milking the excess milk after the calf has been allowed to suck to its fill. There is no cruelty caused to the cow in this. If it is not milked, the udder will become heavy and the cow will cry. What has been said as the second reason, namely causing harm to the mind is not done by milk. It has been said that milk and all its products are sāthvik. It is not just it has been said to be so. Great sāthviks are those who have taken these. Bhagawān who talked about food which are of three types Himself stole butter and became ‘Navanītha Chōran’. Śāstrās tell us to do abhishekan to Īswarā with pots and pots of milk and witness it. If it is a bad thing, will the sāstrās say this?

Therefore, there is no need to exclude milk and other things derived from it. We have to take them in proper quantities. It should not be so much that it increases fat or causes dullness.
What is wrong is preventing milk from reaching those who need it. There are many poor children, weak people, sick people who struggle to have milk. The milk that should go to them is made into ‘coffee poison’ and people take it three times or four times. This is wrong. Coffee not only disturbs the mind but becomes the cause for denying milk to those who need it and it amounts to causing injury to other beings. It will be great purifyam if people decide to stop taking coffee and start giving the milk to poor children or weak people.
CHEWING PAN

Just as some people feel like drinking or smoking all the time there are several people for whom chewing pan is a habit and they become addicted to it. This affects the sensitivity of the tongue and hunger gets suppressed. This should not be allowed. It is neither dignified nor is it in tune with āchāram, to keep pan in the mouth and speak with the juice sprinkling on others and flowing out of the mouth etc in a manner which one would hate to see. Spitting wherever one goes is against civic sense.

There is nothing wrong in family people (grahasthās) specially ‘Sumangali’ ladies eating pan. Giving pan (thāmbulam) is considered part of hospitality. In pūjā also, thāmbulam must be offered. It is a symbol of all prosperity (Sowbhāgyam). Apart from this, it has digestive property and cleans up blood. Even so it is not considered sāthvik. That is why it is not allowed for brahmachāris and sanyāsis. Since family people have to attend to worldly affairs, they must have some rājasa guṇa also and therefore thāmbulam has been allowed for them. Just because it is allowed, it should not be taken all the time as if rājasa guṇa alone should prevail. Whether things eaten are good or bad one should not get habituated to eating it all the time. Nothing should be allowed to take us into its control instead of our being in control of ourselves.

Sweets, ghee etc which are sāthvik creates a sense of cloy when more than a certain quantity is taken and this way they do us good.
THE GOAL OF PEACE
SHOULD NOT BE SPOILED

I have been telling a lot of things to bring home to you the importance of the purity of materials used for preparation of food. The specialty of vegetarian food is that apart from helping us to develop sathva guṇa it prevents cruelty being caused to other beings. As this ideal spreads more and more in the world, murders will become less and peace will grow. If we look at murder cases, we will find that rarely if ever the murderer will be a vegetarian.

Thus if peace should spread in the world, we should become men of peace. For this, our life style should make us people of sathvaguna. Living is based on eating. Therefore, among all these habits, importance is given to food. If this is understood, we will see that our sāstrās have laid down rules regarding food, keeping in view not only the growth of the body but of the mind too. If we see the characteristics laid down for the things used in making the food and those who are associated with making it, it can be concluded that food can only be vegetarian. Many great persons (Mahān) have converted their entire environment into love by their practice of ahimsā. If we look at their asram, we will see ‘A lioness will be giving milk to an elephant calf; a tiger will guide a calf and take it on the proper way; the cat will be taking care of the rat; the peacock will spread its feathers over a young snake to protect it from the heat of the sun’ - this is what we read in epics. If we are not to destroy the tradition in which the mutual enmity of others was removed by spreading love, it will be possible only if we develop commitment to vegetarianism. Even in vegetarian food, things which are sour or pungent are also rājas; food kept overnight is thāmasa. Garlic, onion, radish, drumsticks are opposed to sathvaguna.
QUANTITY IS IMPORTANT

Even if it is a highly sāthvik food, quantity is important. It is good to limit eating to one meal and one palahāram. Or if it is to be two meals and one tiffin, just as many people follow these days, the food intake each time should be moderate. Both according to medical science and Dharma Śāstrās, eating should be only up to half the stomach. Water should be taken for a quarter of the stomach and remaining quarter should be left for air. Even if the normal routine is two times food and one time tiffin, on Saturdays, Mondays, Thursdays and on Amāvāsyā days (for those who do not have their parents) then depending upon Kula Deivam of each family on Shashti, Krithikai, Chathurthi, Pradōsham etc, it should be one meal and one palahāram. On Sundays, no food is to be taken after sunset. Therefore, after taking food in the afternoon, palahāram should be taken before sunset. Once in fifteen days, it should be total fasting (langanam), that is upavās on Ėkādaśī days. About this, I shall speak later. On other days also, food intake should be moderate.

Hunger is like a disease. Do we not take medicines for diseases according to dosage? Food should be taken in the same manner as a cure for the disease of hunger. This is how Āchāryā has given upadēsam* ‘Kshuth Vyādischa Chikithsyathām’ - that is, do not eat just for the sake of taste; do not go in search of tasty food – ‘Swāth vannam na thu yāchyathām’; be satisfied with whatever you get according to destiny – ‘Vidhivasāth prāpthena santhouseyathām’ – he has shown us the right path.

It is only when we eat for taste, the intake becomes excessive. If we eat to satisfy hunger we will not exceed the limit. We will not also suffer from indigestion and mental impurity.

* This is in Sādhana Panchakam, also called Sopāna Panchakam
There is one other thing related to purity of materials. Depending upon the season, some even among the sāthvik things are to be excluded. Milk and curd are sāthvik but curd should not be taken during night. It can be made into buttermilk and taken: Milk should not be taken during afternoon.

Something like horse gram, toor dhal, bhendi (ladies finger) pumpkin etc which are taken on normal days are prohibited for srāddhā food. Even bitter gourd of the long variety only is allowed and not the small variety. In the same manner there are rules regarding food during Chāthurmāsyam.
CHÂTHURMÂSYAM AND RULES FOR FOOD

There are four months called Châthurmâsyam. Before going into this subject it will be necessary to speak about two types of Panchâng, namely 'Souramânam' and 'Chândhramânam'. Souramanam is related to the movement of the sun. This is what is observed in Tamil Nadu. According to this, when the sun enters 'Mesh' Rishabha etc. râsis, it is Chaithra, Vaikâsi etc. months. When sun enters Mesham again it is New Year. In most other parts of the country, Chandramâna month based on the movement of the moon is followed. From Prathamai thithi which follows Amâvâsyâ and upto the next Amâvâsyâ it is a Chândramâna month. According to this, when our (that is Tamil Nâdu) Phâlguña Amâvâsyâ is followed by Prathamai, their Chaithra will be born. The Telugus and the Kannadigas celebrate it as Yugâdhi. In Kerala, it is the same custom as in Tamil Nâdu. They celebrate the new year as Vishu. They call the first month as 'Mêtam' instead of Chaithra and Vaikâsi as Edavan. They refer to each month by the name of the sign for that month. Although ours is Souramânam, when we call the month Chaithra, Vaikâsi etc it is with reference to the star in which full moon rises in the month.

When our Amâvâsyâ in Chaithra month is over Vaikâsi will be born, according to Chândramanam. In the same way, on Prathamai following each of our Amâvâsyâ, the next Chândramâna month will be born. According to this calculation, one fortnight of waxing moon and one fortnight of waning moon make a month. This is in fact a little less than a month. For this reason, a year according to Chândramâna will not take 360 days. But really speaking 365¼ days make a year - that is the time taken for the Earth to go round the Sun. To adjust this difference in Chândramânam, once in three years they add a month called
‘Malamāsam’ or adhik mās and make that year of thirteen months. In that extra month, no auspicious function (subhakāryam) is undertaken.

This talk about Souramāna and Chāndramāṇa came because I wanted to speak about Chathurmāsyam. When our month of ‘āni’ is over, the Āshāda month, according to Chāndramāṇa is born. On the Ēkādaśi falling in the Šukla Pakśa of Āshāda, Bhagawān, Kshīrabdhīnāthan starts sleeping. He keeps sleeping through Śravāṇa month, Bhādrapadha and āswina and wakes up on the Ēkādaśi day falling in Šukla Pakśa of Kārthikai month. The four months falling between Āshāda Ēkādaśi and Kārthikai Ēkādaśi is called Chathurmāsyam. (The Pourṇīmi of Āshāda month is Vyāsa Pūrṇimā or Guru Pūrṇimā. The general view is that Chathurmāsyam commences on Vyāsa Pūrṇimā day. To put it correctly, it commences on the Dwādaśi falling before the Pūrṇimā).

It is in this period of Chathurmāsyam all important festivals fall, like Gokulāśhtami, Pillaiyar Chathurthi, Navarāthri, Dīpāvali, Mahā Shashti, Kārthikai. Yet if marriages, upanayanam, Kumbābhishekam and other auspicious functions are performed during these four months falling in Dakshināyam they will not be fruitful. Although festivals which are celebrated by all people fall during these four months, this period is not suitable for festivals relating to a particular place or a temple. During the period, everyone should observe Chathurmāsyam vratham and perform pūjā. Regulations regarding food are important in this.

Even some of those food articles which are accepted as pure during other months are prohibited - one type each month. Instead of observing this from Āshāda Ēkādaśi to Kārthikai Ēkādaśi, it is the custom to observe it from Šravaṇam and upto Kārthikai. During the entire Šravaṇa month, no vegetable should be taken. Even in sāmbār, vegetable should not be added. We have to manage it with pāpad, fried chips etc. During the entire Bhādrapada
month, curd and buttermilk should be avoided. During Åsvin, milk is excluded. During Kārthikai, ghee, udid dhal, toor dhal, horse gram and other pulses should not be taken. Along with rice or chapathis vegetables can be cooked and taken.

It is only the Madhvās who are observing these regulations of Chāthurmāsya regarding food to some extent. Even if these regulations are not followed by them in daily cooking at home, if srāddhā falls during Chāthurmāsya, they exclude all that is to be excluded in that month. Others do not bother about anything. Only we, the sanyāsīs, who are in the Āchāra Sampradhāya are following the regulations but these days taking sanyās is also not according to sāstrās and its ways are inexplicable.
AVOIDING SALT

Even what is considered essential has to be excluded during certain times. It has been prescribed that at a certain stage, the householder should give up all his Vaidhika karmás and take to sanyās. The same sāstrās which have prescribed the ways of taking food accompanied by manthrās also have laid down that during certain periods, food should be avoided and upavās undertaken. Even if food is not to be avoided entirely, the sāstrās say that particular things should be avoided during particular times. Of these, I have mentioned a few. One of these is ‘alavaṇam’. Not adding salt to food is ‘alavaṇam’. On the one hand it has been said that anything without salt is only fit to be thrown into the dustbin but on the other it has been laid down that salt should be avoided at certain times. Salt causes emotional upsurge. Do we not ask ‘Do you not have a sense of shame? Don’t you eat salt?’ When pursuing the spiritual path vigorously all these emotions like shame, pride, etc should go. That is why sanyāsis and some others should eat without salt. If doctors prohibit salt intake for some reason, sāstrās do the same for some other reason. When performing certain japam like Varuṇa japam, if those engaged in it add salt to their food, their japam will not be fruitful. If, on the other hand, they avoid salt we can see even today that it rains. On days connected with Murugan - Tuesdays - Shashti and Krithikai - the regulation regarding ‘alavaṇam’ is being followed.

These are all examples to show that in addition to rules regarding general purity of materials used for food even certain materials normally permitted are excluded during certain times.

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I have spoken about the purity of persons connected with preparation of food. I said that even if we cannot go into the purity of the farmer and the trader from whom the grains come, we should certainly consider the quality of people who cook the food and serve. That is why I spoke against taking food in hotels and hostels. About food prepared at home, I said, it is considered that the food cooked and served by the mother or wife is all right. But even here, since one cannot be sure whether those who cook at home will do it with the thought of God in mind, I said everyone should cook his own food without expecting the service of others. This has been accorded a special place as *swayampākam*. I am now going to take this as the important topic.
SWAYAMPĀKAM, A NEW TUNE

Swayampākam means each one cooking his own food. Pākam is cooking. (It is not Bhāgam).

Having taken swayampākam as the topic, I am going to sing a tune different from what I usually sing namely that ladies, instead of going to college, office etc, should remain at home and do the cooking. The new tune is that men should also learn cooking and become swayampākis.
There are several reasons why I speak about swayampākam. It is only when we do the cooking ourselves it would be possible to repeat Bhagawan nāmā or sthōthrās throughout the time cooking is done. By this it will be possible to ensure that the food becomes sāthvik due to the kind of materials used and not affected by bad thoughts but becomes more sāthvik.

It is not necessary that we should be near the fire, keep watching the food getting cooked and repeat the nāmās or sthōthrās. Once the vessels are set up on the fire, we can do japam or pārāyarām. This is the rasa that will mix with the ‘Anna rasam’. Then after fifteen minutes or half an hour, we can remove the vessels from the fire and do the rest of the cooking. But we should not be doing the japam ‘whether the food would have been properly cooked or not’. Although in the beginning, such a thought will come, in course of time, we will develop time sense and we can remain concentrated on japam for a quarter of an hour or half an hour.

The food which is pure because of the purity of the materials used and the repetition of Bhagawan nāmā which accompanies the cooking should be made still more pure by offering it to God. While taking the food, it should be accompanied by the chanting of Gōvinda, Gōvinda. The rule is that we should not talk when eating ‘Mounēna bhokthavyam’. Not talking means that we should eat what is served without asking ‘serve this, serve that’. Food should thus be taken along with the silent repetition of Gōvinda nāmā. The food that gets inside as Gōvinda rasam will be digested by Him who is of the form of Jādarāgani and will bless us with bodily strength and mental purity. This is what He has said in Gītā:
Aham vaisvānaro bhūthvā prānīnām déham āśrīthah
Prānāpāna samāyukthah pachāmyannam chathurvitham

Food is of four types (Chathurvitham). What is soft like cooked rice is ‘Kādhyam’. Fried things which are crisp are ‘Sōshyam’. That which is like ‘Panchāmirtham’ and for which there is no need to bite and can be swallowed is ‘Lēhyam’. What can be drunk is ‘Peyam’. All these four are digested by the Vaisvānaro Agni which is in the stomach. The food which has been digested with the help of five prānās is sent all through the body by the Vaisvānaro Šakthi. Of the five prānās, the prānā which is ordinary breathing and the air that goes downwards called ‘apāna’ the Lord calls prānāpānam. ‘I am the one who is as Vaisvānaro in all bodies’, He says.

Those who are entitled to repeat the Vedha manthrās before commencing to eat do ‘pranāhuthi’. This āhuthi is done after gently dropping water around the annam and sprinkling over it and purifying by Vyahruthi and Gāyathri. Just as in yagna, havis is offered as āhuthi, Vedhās have made eating also a small yagna in which the food is offered to the fire inside.

The import of this (thāthparyam) is that with the thought that it is the Īswara sakthi which is inside which has blessed us with this food this hour, we should pray to Him - to shower his grace so that the food nourishes the body and purifies the mind.

Neivēdhyam is what is offered to Īswarā; that food is also Īswarā; the fire in which it falls is also He, the one who does the āhuthi, that is the one who eats is also Īswarā, the goal attained by this is also Īswarā.

Brahmārpaṇām Brahma havir Brahmāgnau
Brahmanāt hutham Brahmaiva thēna ganthavyam

- Thus the entire thing relating to food should be dissolved in the divine rasa.
When one has to cook one's own food, the tendency will be to reduce the work for himself and therefore he will not think of preparing several side dishes. That is, because of taste he will not eat excessively and avoid spoiling the purity of mind. When cooking is done repeating Bhagawan namā and it is offered as neivedhyā, one will not think of cooking food which is rājasa and thāmas and also meat etc. That means vegetarianism will become the habit on its own. When 'other things' (meat and other non-veg) take a longer time to cook, one who cooks for himself will think that he will not cook it. Not because Dharma Śāsthrās or Yōga Śāsthrās say it, but to save time and work the system of swayampākam will bring into practice vegetarianism. What does it matter, whichever way it comes into practice? It will give the punyam mentioned by Dharma Śāsthrās and the mental purity mentioned in yōga śāsthrās.

Because (in swayampākam) the varieties get reduced, expenses also will come down. Thus it is economical too.

There is one other point: When someone else cooks and serves, we are keen about taste and start commenting 'This is salted more, this is pungent'. This creates dissatisfaction for us and a feeling of sadness for those who cook the food. When we cook our own food in whatever manner we have cooked, the food will taste like 'Devamrutham'. When we take the food, we will take it with satisfaction. Because of this very thing, the food will get into the digestive system properly and purify the mind.

Thus there are several benefits. More than all these, swayampākam will be of great help in avoiding jāthi quarrels.

In this there is no scope for any talk about higher jāthi or lower jāthi, which jāthi can take food prepared by which jāthi etc. To whichever jāthi one may belong, each one cooks his own food; when one makes it a rule that he does not eat food prepared by his own people, even mother or wife, the question of eating food prepared by someone else does not arise at all and thus a point for jāthi quarrel will get eliminated.
THOSE TAKING FOOD WITH US

When I want to talk about this I recollect one thing which I forgot to tell. I should have mentioned about those who eat with us in addition to those who cook and serve.

When we take food the subtle aspects of the good and bad qualities of those who eat with us stick to us to some extent. Those who are very pure are called ‘pankthi pāvanar’ - that is by their sitting in the pankthi, they purify the entire pankthi. If we take food along with them, the food that gets inside will purify our mind. In the same manner, it is also mentioned about ‘pankthi dhūshaka’ that is by their sitting in the pankthi, the entire pankthi will become impure.

Not only this, it is necessary to keep in view the Varnāśrama division also. If someone who is to take only vegetarian food sits with another who is permitted to take non-vegetarian, what will happen? He may develop a desire for the ‘other thing’, is it not? There will be room for violation of rules. In the name of bringing about equality through ‘sama pankthi’, if a sanyāsi who is to eat only roots and fruits is made to sit in a pankthi where there is the smell of onion and radish which will create a desire in him, will it not harm his great ideal? When a person of one jāthi or one āśrama gets spoiled like this, it is not that he alone is affected; by this whatever he has to do gets spoiled and the good that is to accrue to the society is lost. Reformers should think about this.

‘Sama pankthi’, common mess in hostel, cooking both vegetarian and non-vegetarian in the same kitchen and in the canteen - thus the atomised aspects of the two getting mixed up - these are only bringing all people down in the name of equality - a reform by which equality is supposed to be brought about.

When they are asked about this they say that unity can be brought about only by doing these things. I feel like laughing.
When we hear that by serving food to all, not governed by any regulations, unity will be achieved, one thing comes to mind. The countries which went to war during World War and involved all countries in the war causing great destruction to humanity as a whole, sat together till the day prior to the declaration of war and had raised toast to each other. Next day each attacked the other’s country without any distinction of military and civil population. Despite this they preach that unity can be brought about by having 'sama pankthi bhōjanam'. These tea parties, get togethers, mixed eating etc may give some petty satisfaction but these have not brought about unity or amity. This is clear from the fact that although these practices have been there for a long time, social conflicts are on the rise. It is for self interest like getting a title that these feasts etc are being arranged. It is deceiving. It would not matter if things stop with this. Since these modern feasts are getting farther and farther from Dharma Śāstrās, they create a great spiritual loss also.

The way to permanent unity is not eating together; it is rendering service by joining together. As I have said on many occasions, it is by people getting together without consideration of jāthi and undertaking service that benefits all people that unity will grow. By introducing politics, they are not allowing this kind of service to be done in a pure manner. By mixing up political theories of equality with matters connected with food which are concerned with āchārās and sāstrās they are spoiling dharmā.

In addition to each one cooking his own food, it is also better if he eats alone so that subtle aspects of the qualities of others do not stick to him. Even those who do swayampākam, if they are more than one, if they eat together there will be a tendency for each to ask the other about what he has prepared and this gives room for weakness of the tongue. Therefore what is cooked separately should be taken separately. It would be enough if equality and socialism are brought about in other areas.
Reforms introduced by way of common cooking and sama pankthi have only increased cruelty being caused to animals. If some who have been vegetarians for generations have become non-vegetarians, the so called reform is responsible for it.

Even in countries where people have been non-vegetarians for a long time, ten or twenty people here and there continue to remain vegetarian with difficulty and are making efforts to propagate vegetarianism. What they are trying to do is something new. Crores of people among us have had it as a tradition. Yet we are destroying that great asset by which we showed the way to the world and we are making reforms. Those who are born as human beings have linked their status to something unrelated to it namely food and due to the equality they want to create a lot of animals are losing their lives. They say that Gandhism has in it this equality and ahimsā!

I have been talking about the advantages of each one cooking food for himself. I shall tell you also another advantage in it which cannot be expected.
THE WAY TO NURTURE 
VÊDHIC LEARNING

By swayampâkam learning of Vêdhas will grow. One may wonder what relationship the two have. I shall explain that. When I went to the North, I have seen in Orissa, Bengal, U.P. and other places that even though there are no Vêdha Pâtasâlâs, there were Sanskrit Pâtasâlâs. In Tamil Nâdu, it is doubtful whether thirty or forty Pâtasâlâs are functioning with strength. There the Pâtasâlâs were hundreds in numbers. These Pâtasâlâs are being called ‘Tol’. In Assam where we think it may be backward in this respect, the Governor* said that there were two hundred of them. Another funny thing is while our Pâtasâlâs have substantial capital, the Pâtasâlâs in the North do not have it.

Even though we are thinking that we are higher in respect of âchâram, sampradhâyam etc and our Pâtasâlâs have substantial capital, why is it our Pâtasâlâs are declining day by day? I could not understand how in the North, so many were functioning with good strength. Later I could understand why.

I asked them ‘You say that there is no capital. How is it so many of you are here?’

They asked a counter question. ‘What is the need for capital if students are to be here?’

I said ‘Vidyârthis will come only if at least free food is given’.

‘Yes, food has to be given but why is capital needed for that? There is the Baniya who is a grocer or a Marwari. If we go and tell them that we are studying Sanskrit, they give âttâ and butter. Students use that, make their own rotis and eat. That is all! It does

* In April 1958 the then Governor of Assam Shri Vishnurâm Medhi had dharâsan of Sri Periyavâ and conversed with him.
not matter if we do not get butter. We are used to taking dry *rotis* (without ghee). We do not even need the hot plate. If the *āttā* balls are thrown into burning twigs, they will get cooked in that fire and we eat them. If it is convenient, we will make a little dhal also. A lot of groceries are there. The grocers do not hesitate to give *āttā* etc to the students’. They thus gave a detailed reply.

Here in our place if we are to establish a *Pātasālā* we need a kitchen, bronze pot, a frying pan, vessels, rice bag, tamarind etc etc. A person to manage it and a watchman are also required. Whatever capital has been kept, in the present inflation and rising cost of living the funds are not sufficient even to meet food expenses and then there is the salary to be paid to the teachers, stipend for the students etc. It is for these reasons that we have to close down *Pātasālās*.

It is from what they said I understood that the reason for the decline of our *Vedha Pātasālās* is the way we prepare food for the students, that for the sake of taste, we have cut the roots of our religion, namely the *Vedhās*.

It is not good for the *brahmachāri* to eat so many varieties, pungent, sour things etc. If he is told, ‘you cook your own food’, he will not be cooking elaborately. Since he has to study, do *anushtānam*, he will himself make some *sāthvik* food as is being done in the North and be satisfied. Once the large corpus of funds becomes unnecessary for *Pātasālās*, learning of *Vedhās* will grow better than now.
BIKSHAI AND SWAYAMPĀKAM

It may look that this (that the student should cook his own food) is contrary to my saying that brahmachāris should do Bhikshāchariyam (seek alms and eat). In present day conditions, I do not expect that a brahmachāri would live on bikṣā throughout his period of learning, nor will I compel it. If someone were to do that I will be very happy. But rarely if ever someone can do it. What I say is that generally all students should do bikṣācharyam at least for a year and do Gurukulavāsam. For the rest of their period, each one can cook his food.

A Brahmin who is a householder, when he teaches others and receives dakshinai for the same, can receive it only as grains, raw vegetables and not cooked food. But the sanyāsis and brahmachāris have the right to receive cooked food as bikṣā. The rule says:

Yathischa Brahmachārischa Pakvānna Swadhīnow Upau

This does not mean that brahmachāri is under compulsion like the sanyāsi to seek bhikṣā and eat that food only. The reasons why it has been laid down that they should seek bikṣai are different for each of them. Since the yathi should engage himself in Āthma Vichāram, he should not worry himself with a kitchen and therefore the rule of bikṣai is laid down for him. If he is to take food from one or two particular persons, he will become obliged to them. Therefore, it has been laid down that he should go from house to house each day, so that he will receive bikṣai from the entire society. The object of not giving this responsibility to any particular person but distributing it over the entire society is also implied in this. Apart from that, he should not have any connection with fire. The moment he takes to sanyāsa āśramam, all agni karmās, like Aupāsanam, Agnihothram etc stop. Can cooking be done without fire? If he cooks and if some insects fall in that fire
and die, it is harmful to his great dharmā of ahimsā. It is for this reason that it has been laid down that he should get his food through bikshā.

The prescription of bikshā for the brahmachāri is for a different reason. He must develop humility. It is only then his learning will be fruitful and therefore it is laid down that he must go from house to house and seek bhikshai. Another reason is that he may not trouble the Gurupathni to cook for him. There is no rule prohibiting any connection of brahmachāri with agni as in the case of the sanyāsi. The Samithādhānam which he has to perform twice in a day is lighting a fire and feeding with samith.

Therefore when it is seen to be not practicable for the brahmachāris to seek bhikshai for his food throughout the period of his learning, he should do it at least for a year and then do swayampākam. That is my view. Whatever corpus fund is created for the pātasālā, it is not sufficient and if the situation in which the Vedha Pātasālās have to be closed is to be changed, the students will have to adopt simple food habits and for this swayampākam will be of great help, I think.
THE SUPERIOR CUSTOMS OF
THE NORTHERN PARTS

Those in the Northern parts of our country whom we think are more anāchārā than us are really better followers of the śāstrās in many matters. After freedom, people say that there is decline there also. But till recently, as far as I have come to know, there were several good aspects in them. One of them is related to food. They do not use so much tamarind, chilli, asafoetida as we use here. These are all classified as rājasam.

In this, particular mention may be made of Bengal. If you think that it is the place of Mathsya Brahmins (Brahmins eating fish) that is due to a compelling situation as I mentioned earlier.

When we had been to Bengal, they had made arrangements for our food. At that time our camp was large. They also tirelessly brought all that was required for food for five hundred people. But there was no tamarind in it. How can we take food without tamarind? For them wheat and dhal are enough. Although Bengalis are rice eaters, they do not eat it with rasam and sāmbār. Therefore they do not need tamarind.

We asked for tamarind. Immediately, they went four or five miles and brought from there raw tamarind straight from the tree. That was too small for cooking sāmbār on a large scale.

‘What can we do with this small quantity? We require a large quantity’ we said.

Immediately they asked ‘Are you all taking rice or tamarind?

In Rajasthan, Gujarat, Sourashtra, Kutch, Madhya Pradesh where there is no fish like Bengal, there are lots of people of all jāthis who are vegetarians. In places like Dehra Dun, a Brahmin coolly will carry a Whiteman on his back. But it is said that on the
way he will not touch even water. After reaching the destination he will have a bath and then cook his own food.

It is the custom in the North that even dharwan and servant maids, though they slog in the master’s house will not take food in that house. Here, we think ‘What if a higher jāthi person takes food in a lower jāthi person’s house?’ and confuse everything and think that is reform. There even the ordinary servant does not take food in the house of his master who is higher in status. Thus if it is not related to jāthi but to the rule of swayampākam there will be no quarrel.

In the North people will take food even in the ‘sambandi’s’ house only one day in their life time; that is on the day of marriage.

If each one tries to keep himself pure, it is good for everyone. Each one cooking his own food is only a part of the care taken to prevent one’s own purity being contaminated by the radiation from others. In the matter of food, there is no place for any talk of jāthi. For the so called equality, let us not make people eat the food by whoever it may be cooked and spoil the purity. They started with the slogan ‘No Jāthi’. But they are bringing in jāthi in matters totally unconnected with it and without knowing the facts; they feel it is more important to establish the argument of equality.

When one eats what another cooks, if we look into the sāstrās, it is something; what reformers say is something else. If with wrong notions of ‘higher jāthi and lower jāthi’ a distinction is made by saying ‘you can eat, you cannot eat’ it is difficult for some people. For those who think ‘There is nothing like high and low; for the purpose of ensuring that each one’s job is performed properly, the rules and regulations have been made differently to suit each type of job. If this difference is removed, there will be confusion’, following what is called equality becomes a problem. That is if it is said that whoever cooks the food all can eat, it is a
problem for some. If it is said that such food should not be eaten, some others find it a problem. This problem becomes a quarrel.

Jāthi is for the purpose of doing the job. Is it for quarrelling? That too if it is a quarrel about food, it is painful. It appears that the only solution for all this is swayampākam. Giving no room for any talk about the high and low jāthi, if the discipline is adopted that even if a person of the same jāthi cooks it will not be taken or even if the mother or wife cooks, it will not be taken but each one will cook his own food, that will be the solution.

So long as such questions are there, namely, ‘When it is touched by such and such a person, can we take? When it is seen by such and such a person, can we eat? With whom can we eat?’ Sāsthram will be something and reform will be something else. Therefore without anyone touching, anyone seeing and anyone joining us in eating, the best course will be for each one to cook his own food and take it by himself without being seen by anybody. If according to the saying that ‘crows collect the other crows before eating’ people want to eat together they can take fruits and soft drinks together. Materials can be provided for other people to cook. That itself is extending hospitality.

Till now, in the South, it was considered that we can accept food from people who have stricter kulāchāram or those who are personally more pure and eat it. In the North, even this should not be done. Whether he is a peasant or a pundit, the rule is that each will cook his own food. There is a good aspect in this also. Once it is said that we can accept from those who are more pure than us, we are giving room for not making efforts to reach that state of purity. It is only when we practise swayampākam and our own impurity gets into us through our food more and more, we will realize that we should not spoil ourselves like this and will make effort to make ourselves pure. ‘The purity of the person who cooks gets into the one who eats it. We have to become pure and at the
same time if we have to cook our own food, will we not strive to make ourselves pure?

We have to make it swayampākam except for the prasādam of Swāmi or Guru.

By this a discipline also develops because instead of sitting idle or going to cinema or playing cards or indulging in useless talk etc, one is tied down to cooking. Since he is preparing it himself, he feels that variety is not necessary and therefore a discipline develops in this. Doing Nāma japam while cooking in order that food should have sathva rasam is an added discipline. The dharmāchāram of cooking for oneself which looks unimportant has so many benefits.

Those who are males need not get worried about how to learn cooking. Once the thought comes that ‘we have to be like this’ it can be learnt easily. Do not young girls of even less than 12 years learn to do much of cooking which involves grinding, mixing etc? If without variety it is a curd bath or pongal or chapathi, it can be learnt in a few days. My view is that men should learn to cook something that can be made in fifteen minutes, make it and eat it.

★★★★
COOKERY IN
THE SCHEME OF EDUCATION

Is not food basic to living itself? Therefore, first place should be accorded to this swayampākam in Basic Education, both to men and women. Yes. I, who have been saying that the secular education should be changed in order to give knowledge of religion, now say that before anything else, they should be given the knowledge of cooking. Since the qualities and attitude depend upon the food, even for developing a liking for religious knowledge, it is necessary to teach the know how of cooking.

In education, they talk of the ‘three Rs’ – reading first, writing second and rithmatic third. I say that basic to all these, three, swayampākam must be taught.

The authority for our religion is only the Vēdhās. Upanishads are on top of the Vēdhās. A Upanishad that talks of philosophies like ātmā, Brahman etc which we cannot understand, has indeed made our religion the kitchen religion.

Nārada goes to Sanathkumārā and seeks upadēsam of ātmā vidhyā. Sanathkumārā starts upadēsam with ‘Āhāra suddhau sathva suddhi’. This is in the Upanishad itself. ‘Start with pure food; that is the way to purify the guṇas. It is only after purity of mind is achieved, step by step, Īswara smaranān and the free state of mōksha can be attained’ – Sanathkumārā himself starts with kitchen religion.

Therefore I say that teaching of swayampākam should be included in what they call Basic Education because it is the basis for good qualities. Political leaders and social leaders also say that cooking must be included in Basic Education. But they say that all boys should join together and cook and all of them should eat together. There is nothing in this for the development of good
qualities. Since it is possible that something bad may result from such an arrangement, I say that each of them should cook his own food and eat. This is a dharma which has to be performed to save the society through personal purity.

It is not only Basic Education. They are also talking a lot about Adult Education. In that also they should teach a much simplified version of cooking.

Do not the leaders of the society say that the education scheme should be such that it will enable each to do his own job? Therefore what should be taught first is what is basic to life, namely, the ability to prepare one's own food. If these people say that reform means cooking for all people together, without distinction of jāthi and all people served food together, the more important reform than this is each one being able to cook his own food. They talk of social reforms having in their minds all sorts of things. Does not that society consist of several individuals? Therefore is not reforming the qualities of individual basic to everything? Therefore in Basic Education itself, swayampākam should be taught.

Śāsthrās themselves support the view that the old among men too must know cooking.

There is the sāsthra saying

Panchāsath vathsarāth ūrdhvam na kuryāth pāṇi pītanam

Pāṇi Pītanam means Pāṇigrahānim, that is marriage. Panchāsath means fifty. The meaning of the saying is that one should not marry after the age of fifty. If the first wife dies, those who marry even if they are above fifty, do so because there is no one to cook. If such a person knows swayampākam, the ugly situation of one returning to Dāmpathyam at a time when he has to take to Vānapraśtham will not arise. The blemish of violating the sāsthrās will not also be there. In the same manner, there are some
bachelors who want to remain unmarried. Till they reach their middle age, during which they run about, they have food cooked by the mother or take hotel food. When the mother dies and they find that hotel food does not suit them anymore they want to get married for the sake of food. (Marriage is not for sahadharmam but for the stomach, the tongue). If swayampākam has been practised, this ugly situation will not arise.

Today when people fly like birds to any place in the world, where they can get a job, unlike in olden times when they were confined to their villages, swayampākam becomes very necessary. Also one need not suffer from ulcer etc even in young age by taking badly cooked hotel food. If each one can prepare pongal, small rōti or easier still if balls of wheat flour are cooked in fire and these are taken there will be no disease. These days there are countless diseases.
TRUE REFORM OF FOOD PREPARATION

We have to change the practice prevailing in our place that cooking means we should have ten or twenty things. This is reform. We think as if it is a compulsion that everytime we must prepare sāmbār, rasam, vegetables etc. Because we make so many things, there is the anxiety whether the tamarind would have become more or salt would have become more or whether something is boiled well, when we should stop while frying a thing, etc etc. Without these unnecessary problems, we should make the food light. If we make pūrī and take it with milk, we can keep it for even ten days without getting spoiled. The stomach will become full and there will be no disease. It is good for the body. Even when we travel, we can carry these pūris or ‘sathu flour’. Rice is to be soaked in water and then dried. It should be roasted to a reddish colour and then ground. This is ‘sathu flour’. This is so called because it gives sathu (energy) to the body and induces sathva guṇa. We can add buttermilk or milk to it and take it. Even if we take a little, it will be filling and will satisfy the hunger.

Cooker is also not necessary. It may be possible to prepare easily and quickly four or five varieties with the help of a cooker. But it does not help in our efforts to control the tongue and not going for food which is not sāthvik. If there is cooker, it will lead to cooking of food that is too sour or too pungent etc. This not only affects the mind but is bad for the body also leading to sickness, then medicine etc. We should also think of the expenses. If lot of materials are used, it means more expense for medical treatment.

Therefore one should take a life’s vow that he will just cook for himself sathva food and ‘madhura’ food (as told in Gītā) with just one or two materials.
Because the *Gītā* talks of ‘snigdham’ it does not mean it should be soaked in ghee. It only means that it should not be too dry but soaked in milk or buttermilk or a very thin coating of ghee. ‘Madhuram’ also does not mean that it should be too sweet. Rice, wheat etc have their own sweetness. By over cooking things with tamarind and chillies, they lose their natural sweetness. So it means that things should not lose their natural sweetness and they should be taken.
HOW TO EXTEND HOSPITALITY

If everyone has to cook his own food, how to extend hospitality to guests (adhithi sathkāram) which has also been enjoined as a dharmā? The answer is that the guests should be given the materials for cooking. That itself is sathkāram. Even now the very few swayampākis who are still there when they go to other places get materials from the others (hosts) and cook their own food. This also has been mentioned as adhithi pūjā only. Giving like this flour, sugar etc to pilgrims is called ‘sadhāvrithi’ in the North. They will not accept cooked food but will take only this ‘sadhāvrithi’. They do not eat in our Mutt also. There are several pilgrims who will accept only materials like flour, ghee etc and cook their own food. Therefore, it need not be thought that because of swayampākam, hospitality cannot be extended.

But if some people have the sentiment that their guest should take what is given to them, milk or buttermilk and fruits can be given. In olden days, if rice with milk was given even to a thief, he would not indulge in theft again. Milk nurtures good thoughts. Now I say that instead of giving rice with milk, fruits and milk can be given.

Those who go to school, or office, retired people and others - I refer to men - should learn what can be cooked in fifteen minutes and eat it.
It is important that what we eat is shown to Bhagawān. Even if pūjā is not done on a big scale, nivēdhanam of the food which we have prepared to God who has given us the hands and the mind to cook the food ourselves, should remove what little blemish may still be in the food.

In the Telugu region, even if there is a grand feast for a thousand people together they will, before doing prāntāhuthi, think of their Ishta Deivam, do nivēdhanam and then only eat.

Even if a Mūrthi or idol is not there, nivēdhanam should be done at least to the Sun, who is the visible God (Prathyaksha Bhagawān).

If men remain without learning to cook because the mother or the wife cooks, if they happen to be out of town or even when at home there is some inconvenient situation, they get into the habit of eating all kinds of things. Once one gets used to swayampākam, then he will not like the food prepared by others. The thought will never occur of touching bad food. There will be a sense of pride in cooking our own food. Now the tongue desires to have all kinds of things but with swayampākam it will not desire anything but those which are sathva.
The essence of all that I have been saying till now is: A number of benefits accrue by the small effort of swayampākam. One is that the mind gets purified. Second is bodily health. The third is reduction in expenses. Fourth there will be no room for inter-jaṭhi quarrels. Fifth, it becomes possible to follow the sāstrā injunction that one should not get married after the age of fifty. Sixth, helping the growth of Vedha Vidhyā which is the root of our dharmā, seventh, reducing the cruelty meted out to animals. Eighth showing to others the ideal of sāthvik food. There is no greater good than spreading peace in the world. There are thus so many benefits. More than anything else, we will receive the grace of Īswara who will think ‘This child is following the sāstrās. He is controlling his tongue and making all people practise swayampākam’. As a beginning everyone whether going to school or office once a week on a Sunday should practise swayampākam.

By all that I have said, at least some among you, may have developed the faith that swayampākam is indeed good. Once faith is developed in something and that is also feasible, it should be practised. That really would be great.
THE IMPORTANCE OF FOOD IN THE ENJOYMENT OF SENSES

Food does not mean only tasting by the tongue and eating. All the five indriyas, each has a food of its own. We see many sceneries. That is food for the eyes. We listen to different kinds of songs and talks which are food for the ear. Whatever we experience is all food to us. In this everything must be pure. We should not look at scenes that spoil the mind. We should not listen to talks that will spoil the mind. Whatever we experience should help in God realization. (Īswara Sākṣhāṭkāram)

Although it is stated like this in a general way, of all foods that are enjoyed by the sense organs since what is taken through the mouth is important, so many rules and regulations have been laid down for the food we eat. This is what physically gets into our body and spreads through the entire body and affects the mind. On the one side if food is not taken, man cannot live. But, on the other, if it is not taken with moderation, it is bad for the body and disturbs the peace of the mind. By eating continuously there is loss of materials used for food and it is difficult to do work. But the greatest loss is that the mind cannot engage itself in dhyāna. There is a saying about the human body that it is a vessel fabricated out of food. For this vessel and the mind in it to grow in the proper manner, the methods shown by rishis should be followed. I pray to Paramēśvarā that all may understand its importance.

In Christianity also, the prayer is ‘Give us this day our daily bread’. At the same time, the Bible says ‘Man shall not live by bread alone’. The meaning of this is that man leads the life of a man only by bhakthi, jnānā, noble qualities and noble culture. Our sāsthrots show that it is food that helps the development of the good qualities.
Āchāryā prayed to Ambāl for the annam which gives not only strength to body but also jnānā and vairāgya. I shall repeat the sloka and pray on behalf of all of you.

Annapūrṇē ! Sadhāpūrṇē ! Śankara prānā vallabhe
Jnāna vairāgya siddhyartham bikshām dhehī cha Pārvathi
Does it mean eating twice on Ekādaśī day?

Ekāḍhaśyām thu karthavyam sarvēśhām bhōjana dhwayam

This is the first part of the sloka. What is the meaning of this? ‘Ekāḍhaśyām thu karthavyam sarvēśhām’ means ‘In this manner it has to be done by all people’.

What is to be done?

The answer we get is ‘Bhōjana dhwayam’. Do you understand the meaning? Dhwayam means two. Bhōjana dhwayam means taking food two times. One gets the meaning ‘All people have to take food two times on Ekādaśī day’.

What is this? If it is Ekādaśī day, it is said that nothing is to be taken, not even water. But here it is said that we should eat not once but two times?

This is a sloka in which there is a strange play on words. In this the word ‘Bhōjana’ will have to be split into two – Bhō and janā. Then only we will get the proper meaning.

‘Bhō’ means calling someone ‘Hey’.

‘Bhō’! ‘Janā!’ means ‘Oh People, listen’, calling all people thus.

The meaning for the half sloka which I stated is ‘Oh People, on Ekādaśī day, there are two things which deserve to be done by all people’.

It is not two meals but two functions.

What are those two functions which all people have to do?

That is said by the second part of the sloka.
Suddhōpavāsah prathamah sathkathā śravaṇam thatah

The first is upavāsam. The second is listening to Bhagawad kathā.

Ěkādhasyāṁ thu karthavyam sarvēshāṁ bhōjana dhwayam
Suddhōpavasah prathamah sathkathā śravaṇam thatah

All people should observe complete fasting on Ėkādasi day and listen to the glories of Īswarā.
THE NEED FOR UPAVASAM

All of you may know that 'Suddha upavasam' means complete fasting. Upavasam means 'living near'. Upavasam is remaining close to Bhagawan. Only if we do not eat anything, we can remain close to Him. If the mind is to be with Him only, the stomach must be empty. If we take food, there will be uneasiness in the stomach. We cannot do work. The mind also cannot be focussed on anything. Only if the stomach is empty one can do proper pranayamam, purify the mind and concentrate. Even if the breath is not controlled for long (kumbakam) only if breathing can be done without interruption, the mind will remain in dhyana. When the stomach is heavy, one cannot breathe freely. That is why the sasthras have laid down that body should be kept trim, breathing should be done freely and, for engaging in Iswara dhyana, the food is to be light and once in a fortnight complete fasting should be undertaken.

It is because we think that we are this body we spend all our time in taking care of it and remain unconcerned about the athma about. This thought that the body is we ourselves should go. That is why the sasthras have prescribed upavas which gives discomfort to the body. If we get used to this and ignore it, does it not mean we are giving up the attitude of considering the body as important and the attachment to it?

Sasthras have prescribed vrathas and upavasas for this reason. 'Even if you feel hungry, get habituated to fasting; even if there is pleasure in idle talk, observe silence; even if you are dragged by sleep keep awake throughout night and do something connected with Iswar. By doing all these, the thought that this body is 'I' will go. Whatever the condition of the body, the mind will be with Paramathma. If we do not get used to it now itself, when 'marata yadhana', the great suffering comes at the time of death how can we turn our mind to Paramathma?'
Food is essential for living. But if it is taken a little more, then it causes diseases. The food which is the cause of health, will become the cause of disease.

Machines are also being given rest now and then because, if they work continuously, they go under repair. In the same way, if rest is given to the stomach it is good for health.

If we take the body as a whole, if it works for six days, one day rest is given. But within this body, the stomach and other organs are working continuously! Of these, we cannot give rest to the heart and the lungs. We can and must give rest to the stomach because it works a lot to receive all things, grinds them, dissolves them etc. Just as an instrument that works continuously goes under repair, the organs of digestion also become bad if they work continuously. It is only food that becomes blood and gets pumped to the brain. The brain is a very subtle part. Therefore, now and then we have to reduce the weight of the blood flow. Upavāsam helps all these.

Although it may appear that health will be affected by upavās, the truth is that it is upavās which is a great remedy for diseases. The Vaidya Śāstrā says ‘Langanam parama aushadham’.

Do you know why we have understood ‘langanam’ as fasting? The direct meaning of this word is ‘jumping’. If we miss a meal that is if we skip it we call it langanam.

The langanam prescribed by Vaidya Śāstrā is also prescribed by religious literature. Thiruvalluvar also has said this. It is only if we fast part of a day or whole day now and then, we can be sure that whatever we have taken has not remained undigested. Thiruvalluvar says that if one takes food only after clearly knowing that what he has already taken has been digested, he needs no medicine.

If food is taken only after the previous intake has been well digested, the body needs no medicine.
Although we may think that health is ensured by food, I shall tell you something to show that it is a close friend of disease also. When we get fever, what is the doctor’s first advice? ‘Stop food, take gruel or take such and such a drink’. Whatever disease it may be, the fact that different foods are prohibited for different diseases makes it clear that the basis for disease is food.

Fasting which is good for health does greater spiritual good.

Although many kinds of food give strength to the body, they make the mind impure. Even if we take sathva guṇa food, when it reaches the stomach, it does not allow the mind to remain light but makes it heavy and drags it down.

When fasting, the mind tends to go spiritual and towards God-related matters. That is why on days when there has to be special meditation on the Lord, fasting for the whole day or part of the day has been prescribed.

Gandhi too went on fast frequently saying that he was doing it for self-purification; he has said that during such periods, he got a clarity in buddhi and purity in the mind.

Our ancients have prescribed fasts combining bodily health with the health of the soul. Moreover if fasting is observed by all people, there will be no food shortage.

Even though it may be difficult in the beginning, by practice, we can manage it. With the strength of bhakthi and with determination, if it is commenced, by realizing the benefits day by day, the involvement in the discipline of fasting will get strengthened.

Even though bodily discomfort poses a problem it should be tolerated keeping in view the great joy that will come later.

Vrathopavāsa niyamaṁ klesīthā sukham aṣnūthē
Ikṣu klesāth yathā (ā)nandam thathā prāpnothī thath sukham
Just as juice can be had only by crushing the sugarcane, internal happiness can be had only by subjecting the body to hardship.

The trader gets goods by first spending what he has with him. Then he sells it and earns more money. In the same way, the body should be ‘spent first’ and then bigger earning should be had for the āthmā. Upavāsam is meant for this.

Even on the days when you take food, do Bhagawadh dhyānam. On upavāsā days, when you are not eating, do dhyānam. You will yourself find the difference. You will realise that for that gain, we can undergo this hardship. Rather than my speaking a lot about this, if you do it practically, the need for and the greatness of upavās will become clear.

On the days of fasting if the mind is fed with ‘dhyāna amruth’ (the nectar of meditation) it will be known which is greater happiness.

To the mouth that has no food, what is more tasty than food - His nāma amruth, lilā amruth, japa, bhajan, sthōthrā, pārāyanī shall be given. As amruth to the ear, we have to hear kīrtan, harikathā. Reading the Ėkādaṇi purāṇam is of great merit.

Basic to all these is fasting. Only if fasting is undertaken, the full benefits of these will materialise. That is why in the slōka mentioned in the beginning, complete upavās (suddhopavās) has been mentioned as the first and sathkathā śravaṇam has been mentioned as second.
UPAVĀSAM AS DEALT WITH IN THE UPaNISHADS

In Upanishad itself, there is mention of fasting and vrathā (Brihadhāranyaka 4 – 4. 22). When saying that for self realization, a Brahmin has to do adhyayanam, yagnam, dhānam, thapas, observe Upavāsam, it talks about Upavāsam. In the Upanishad Upavāsam has been referred to as ‘Anāsakēna’. ‘Asanam’ means food. Asah means eating. Anāsakēna means ‘by not taking food’. The Upanishad says that by not eating and by observing upavās, they try to attain the ātmā.
MODERATION, THE RIGHT WAY - 
ĀCHĀRYYĀ AND KRISHNĀ

Āchāryā has made a highly philosophical commentary on this. 'When it is said 'remaining without food’, it does not mean giving up food. If merely food is given up, only life will pass out but āthma jnānā will not be attained. Therefore, asanam (food) that is mentioned here only refers to enjoyments. This manthrā only says that enjoyment through kāmam should be given up’.

But, for this kind of desire to be got rid of, observing vratham by fasting helps. Not that Āchāryā does not know it. He is the one who rescued our religion when other religions were about to overpower it. Not that he retrieved only jnāna mārga. He gave new life to our pūjā, temples, festivals, vratham etc. If today we are observing Ėkādāsi vratham, the credit for it goes to him. True to the saying ‘Purāntānām Ālayam’, he who was the abode of all purānās would never have said that Ėkādāsi vratham was unnecessary - a vratham which purānās glorify.

What he means here is not total fasting once in a fortnight like on Ėkādāsi days, but refers to people saying ‘I will not take food at all hereafter’ as a kind of achievement. Taking such an extreme position is of no use. Fasting now and then for part of a day or for a whole day will be helpful. But ‘fasting unto death’ is going against Nature. In that case, Nature also will take revenge. It will subject the body to extreme suffering. Thinking of that suffering, the mind will be on how to tackle it and will not concentrate on the goal. It is because Āchāryā does not approve of methods by which one puts himself to much suffering, he has said like this. Krishna Paramāthmā also does not approve of extremes.

Nāthyaśnathasthū yōgōsthi na chaikāntha manaśnathah (vi-16)
and

\[ \text{Yukthā hārvihārasya yukthachēshtasya karmasu} \]
\[ \text{Yuktha swapnāvabōdhasya yōgō bhavathi dhukhāḥ} \]
\[(vi-17)\]

‘A glutton cannot achieve yōgā; yōgā will not be possible also for one who starves. It is only the one who eats in moderation who can achieve yōgā which will remove his sorrow’.

Fasting for several days together does not have the approval of our sāstrās. That will result in extreme tiresomeness and instead of purifying the mind, it will land the person in madness or failure of memory. It will not help in concentrating on Bhagawad smarāṇam. But fasting for part of a day, now and then, and fasting fully once in a fortnight as laid down in sāstrās will purify the mind and will strengthen the thoughts of the divine. (Dhīvya smarāṇam).

If upavās is observed in a severe and forced manner, the whole thing will get splintered and become useless. Therefore it is the view of our Āchāryā and Gitāchāryā, the Bhagawān, that we should proceed gradually. In the context in which they said it, they had to be emphatic, giving the impression that they rejected it outright.

It is because extremes are not to be resorted to, Āchāryā has said rather emphatically that there is no use in fasting.

If it is said, ‘Mere yagnōpavītham does not make a Brahmin but it is only right conduct’, can we understand this to mean that upanayana samskāram should be stopped? If something is good and another is better than that, it is usual to talk as if the first is of no use just to emphasise the importance of the second. It is only to drive home a point. It is to emphasise the fact that even though yagnōpavītham is important for the Brahmin, more important is right conduct. It is said, ‘Does not matter if yagnōpavītham is not there, what is important is right conduct’. In a similar manner
Thirukkural says that not inflicting cruelty is nobler than performing thousand yagnas. In Gītā, in another place, in order to emphasise the importance of one āchārā, Bhagawān talks deridingly of another. ‘Simply because a person has given up agni (that is agni karmās) he does not become a sanyāsi; simply because a person gives up karma, he does not become a sanyāsi’ says Bhagawān.

Sa sanyāsi cha yōgī cha na niragnir na chākriyah (vi-1)

A sanyāsi does not have to perform Agnihōthram, Aupāsanam, Yāgam etc. He does not even have other pūjās and social duties. This is the dharma for sanyāsa āśrama established by all sāstrās. When that is so, how will it be right to say that the one who has given up agni and one who does not have karma, does not become a sanyāsi? For this we have to see the first line of the slōka.

Anāsrithah karmaphalam kāryam karma karōthi yah (vi-1)

He says. Bhagawān’s view is that doing whatever work comes one’s way, without the feeling ‘I am doing it’ and being totally unconcerned about the fruits of the work are the true characteristics of a sanyāsi. That is what he has said in this line. First he says that one who does the karma unconcerned about its fruits is a sanyāsi, such a person is a yōgī - sa sanyāsi cha yōgī cha. Then only he says in order to strengthen the statement, ‘na niragnir na chākriyah’ not the one who has given up agni or karma.

If this is understood properly, it would mean that Bhagawān said ‘If one who is in sanyāsa āśrama says that he has given up agni and karma but he keeps working for selfish ends that is not sanyāsam at all’. He has to give up agni. He has also to give up doing karma with the thought that he is the doer (karthā). But more important is that whatever karma falls to his lot he should do without expectation of fruits and without attachment to anything.
‘Anāśakēna’ mentioned in the Upanishad also means giving up food. But the more important meaning is to give up satisfying the desires of the sense organs.’ It is to emphasise this view, Āchāryā says that giving up food is not important here. Stopping food now and then is good for the body and the mind. That is why in the rules for taking food even while stipulating that it should be sāthvik food, rules for vrathās and Upavāsam to be observed on certain days have also been laid down.
While some holy festivals have been prescribed, observing some vrathas have also been prescribed. Festival days are those when we dress ourselves well with good clothes, jewels etc, decorate Bhagawan also, do pujā and have a good feast as his prasād. Vrathā days are those on which we do not eat a feast, do not take even normal food, observe upavās and do pujā. There are several days stipulated for observing vrathas - Krithikai vratham, Shashti vratham, Sravana vratham, Chathurthi vratham, Rishi Panchami vratham, Pradōsha vratham, Payō vratham etc. More than all these is the Ėkādaśi vratham observed by all people. All religions have feasting and fasting.

- On other vrathā days, taking food (palahāram) at least once after pujā is permitted. But on Ėkādaśi days it should be complete fasting.

The other vrathas are mentioned by purāṇas and āgamās. What is said by the purāṇas and āgamās which are Śiva related will not be observed by Vaishnavas. What is said in Vaishnava literature will not be observed by Śaivas. But Ėkādaśi is mentioned not only in the Purāṇas and Āgamās of all sects, it has been mentioned in the Dharma Śāstrās which are common to all Hindus. That is why I said that this vrathā is observed by all people.

There is a story in Pādma Purāṇam. According to this, the genesis of Ėkādaśi is as follows: When Viṣṇu was asleep, an asurā was indulging in violent activities in the world. In order to kill the asurā, a Śakthi came out of Viṣṇu’s body in the form of a woman, killed the asurā and returned. Bhagawan who woke up named the Śakthi as Ėkādaśi and established the Ėkādaśi vrathā. Since the
day on which ‘Amrutha mandan’ was done in Kshirābdhi, when Vishṇu took avatars as Kūrma, Dhanvantri and Mōhini was Ėkādaśi we generally connect Ėkādaśi with Vishṇu but the Śaivas say that because Paramasivā took the poison which first came up in the manthan, no one should take food on that day.

Thus Ėkādaśi is not only accepted by the Vaishnāvās and Śaivas but Dharma Śāstrās which have laid down the rules of life for all Hindus, irrespective of jāthi and Ishta Deivam has also prescribed Ėkādaśi vratham. This is its glory.

I shall tell you about the days of Upavāsam mentioned in Dharma Śāstrās. On Ėkādaśi day, which comes every fortnight, total fasting should be observed. On Sundays, Amāvāsyā, Pournāmi days, food should be taken only during day and there should be fasting during night. During every fortnight on Ashtami and Chathurthi, no food should be taken in day time and should be taken only during night. Rāma Navami, Gōkulāshtami and Śivarāthri have also been mentioned as complete fasting days. But in practice, it is only on Śivarāthri days the rule is being followed to some extent. On the other two days, food is being taken after the pūjā. (Since Krishṇa Jayanthi Pūjā is done during night time, palahāram is taken - lot of sweets will be included in this).

Fasting on Thursdays is widely practised.

In the South, what is more in practice than others, is vrathā on Saturdays. Many people do not take food on Saturday nights. This vratham has been started by way of worship of Venkataramaṇaswāmi (Kalau Vēnkatanāyakah) - in accordance with this the vratham on account of Him is being observed since long although it is not in Dharma Śāstrā.

In the same manner, fasting on Mondays is followed largely by Jains and Smārthās. In the North without any distinction between Śaiva and Vaishnāvā, all people observe fast on Mondays.
That is why Lal Bahadur Sastri said that all people should fast on Mondays when there was food shortage. State dinners were stopped on Monday nights.

From the fact that at the Government level, fasting has been prescribed, it is now seen that apart from the benefits for fasting mentioned in sāstrās, it also helps tackle food shortage. If all people observe upavās according to sāstrās, we will have surplus food which we can export and earn considerable Exchange.

There is a vratham called ‘Sānthrāyanam’. Even though the principle is that the body should not be subjected to too much suffering, sāstrās have laid down that in the case of those who are unable to attain purity of mind despite many sādhanās, they should realize that their previous karma is more than others and that is what is taking revenge and in order to expiate they should follow some practices by subjecting the body to suffering. This is called ‘Kruṣram’. For those who cannot bear to do Kruṣram it has been laid down that they have to do so many thousand Gāyathris in lieu of Kruṣram. Since a substitute for Kruṣram has been permitted, we have been making a series of substitutes for substitutes, taking it to Gōdhanā, then the cost of a cow as dakshināi, then that dakshināi reduced to a ridiculous amount, it has come to giving a Brahmin six and quarter annas as Kruṣram.

Sānthrāyaṇa vratham is meant for subjecting the body to suffering and expiating the sins. Sānthrāyaṇam is adjusting the number of handfuls of food according to waxing and waning moon. Depending upon the thithi on which it is started, this is of two types. In a lighter vein, we may call one the ‘black ant way’ and the other ‘wheat way’. How is the black ant? The head is big. Then in the middle it is thin. Then again the rear portion goes on increasing in size. Thus if Sānthrāyaṇam is started on Pourṇīmi day, on that day fifteen handfuls should be taken. Next day it should be fourteen, then thirteen and so on and on Amāvāsyā day it should
be total fasting. Then on the next day (*Sukla Pakṣa Prathamai*) one handful and so on and on the *Pournāmi* day, fifteen.

How is the wheat? It starts with a small tip, then the middle is big and again ends in a small tip. In the same way, if *Sānthrāyaṇām* is started in *Śukla Pakṣa Prathamai*, it will begin with one handful and end in fifteen handfuls on *Pournāmi*. Then it goes on reducing during *Krishṇā Pakṣam* and ends in *Upavāsam* on *Amāvāsyā* day.

During *Sānthrāyaṇām*, except on the days of total fasting, on other days, food is to be taken only once and that too according to the quantity stipulated for each day.

Ordinary people (in *Tamil Nādu*) refer to vratha days as ‘Oru pozhudhu’ (meaning one time). By and large, people think that taking regular food (with annam) during days and taking idli, *dōsa* etc during night is observing vratham. According to sāstrās, eating other forms of food stomach-full like this is not *upavās*. As the sāstrās say *palahāram*, eating only fruits is real *Upavāsam*.
HIGH STATUS OF ĖKĀDAŚI

Ekadasi is the highest of vrathā upavāsās.

Na Gāyathriyah paramanthinah na māthuh para deivatham
Na Kāsyah paramam thīrtham na Ėkādaśyah samam vratham

‘There is no manthra greater than Gāyathri; no God higher than the Mother; no place holier than Kāsi’. At the end it is said ‘There is no vratham equal to Ekadasi’. For other things since it is said there is nothing higher, it means that there can be something equal. But in the case of vrathams, not only there is nothing higher but there is nothing equal to Ėkādaśi. Thus Ėkādaśi is glorified.

Ashta Varṣadhikah mardhyah aprīnāsīthi vatsarah
Ēkādaśyām upavasēth Pakṣāyōṭh ubhayō rapi

This is what Dharma Śāstrās say. This means that all humans who are between eight and eighty years of age, have to observe Upavāsam on Ėkādaśi which occurs in both the fortnights. Without reference to any particular sampradhāyam or jāthi, male or female, it says ‘mardhyah’ that is that all those born as humans should observe Ėkādaśi Upavāsam. It is with great compassion that it has made exceptions of children below eight and the old persons above eighty. It does not mean that they should not observe upavās. If they can, they may also observe upavās. If they cannot they need not. That is the meaning. In Maharashtra and other places, there are mothers who will not feed their little babies with milk. It is said that because of their faith those children are also well. Those who framed the Dharma Śāstrās did not expect such extreme discipline nor did they make such rules.

With the faith that Bhagawān will help, it should be commenced with full niyamam (discipline). But if it is not possible, it is not necessary to starve and get into bodily and mental suffering. On upavās days, other than Ėkādaśi, one time in the
whole day, palahāram can be had. (I do not refer to palahāram according to sāstrās but things like idli, dōsa etc.) Another time the palahāram according to sāstrās namely fruits, milk etc can be had. Those who cannot do that too can have food one time and take palahāram like idli, dōsa as the second food. But efforts should be continued to change this to the full discipline.

During Ekādaśi if even water is not taken, it is very meritorious. It is very difficult. Alternatively, sāthvik drinks can be taken. Next taking fruits with milk, then saththu flour (nutrition flour) or pūri one time, and for the second time fruits and milk can be taken. Going down still further, cooked food like idli, dōsa, pongal, upma can be taken one time and then fruits and milk for the second time.

One should not go below this level. That is regular food should not be taken even once. Ėkādaśi should not be reduced to the level of other upavāsās when food can be taken once and fruits and milk for the other time. If cooked food is taken on Ėkādaśi day, there is no prāyaschitham for it, it is said. Sick and weak persons who cannot digest anything other than annam, can take a little cooked rice without draining the water from it, without salt or chilli, or sour, on Ėkādaśi day. This relaxation is only for those who are very weak and not for others. If someone eats on that day it has been said in a harsh manner that he will be eating sin equal to the dog’s excreta.

Prathigrāsam asau bhunghṭe kishbhisham śwāna vitsamam
UPAVĀSAM AND HARD WORK

If it is asked ‘There is no holiday on Ėkādaśī, how to do work’? This can be answered in two ways. If all people observe Ėkādaśī upavāsam and appeal to the Government they will grant holiday. Second is that by not eating on one day in a fortnight, there will be no loss of energy. There may be the sentimental feeling ‘we have not taken food today. We will not have the energy’. By such a thought one may feel weak. But, if the mind is detached from the body on that day, there will be more energy and enthusiasm. Work can be done on that day in a better manner. If there is a will, there is a way. Although the body has several blemishes, it has one great quality. It will behave as we train it. Therefore we can get used to Ėkādaśī Upavāsam without affecting the office work.

Even if total upavāsam cannot be observed on all Ėkādaśī days and palahāram is taken once in the day, at least on one Ėkādaśī day total fasting must be observed. At least on Vaikunta Ėkādaśī day, this should be observed. Bhīma could not bear hunger. Therefore he was not able to observe upavāsam on all the Ėkādaśī days. He secured a boon from Vyāsa that if total upavās is observed on one Ėkādaśī that itself will give him all the benefit. But Bhīma Ėkādaśī and Vaikunta Ėkādaśī are not one and the same.

In our country, whatever may happen to anything else, we should see to it that the greatest of vrathās, Ėkādaśī, is continued as anushtānam. This great dharma which was greatly cherished has been lost in the last two generations. Even today because somewhere two old Mādhvā ladies observe total upavās, it is raining.
Although Madhvas, Vaishnavas and Smarthas observe Ėkādaśī vratham because it has been laid down by Dharma Śāstrās, it is only the Mādhvās who follow it very strictly.

Ordinarily, in religious observances priority is accorded to the karmās which are performed by directly using Vedha manthrās. The Vedās are the basic texts of our religion. Also as between Pithru karmā and Deva karmā priority should be accorded to Pithru karmā and then only Deva Karmā should be performed. Ģrāddham is performed using Vedha manthrās. In addition, it is also Pithru karmā. In Ėkādaśī upavās there is no place for Vedha manthrās. Nāma japa, bhajan etc are only purāṇā and thāntrik related. In pūjā, there will be some Vedha manthrās. Yet, even though this has been prescribed as a Upavāsam by Dharma Śāstrās, it has not been prescribed as a Smārtha Karmā (Karmās to be performed according to scriptures) like Ģrāddha. Moreover, Ėkādaśī is a Deva ārādhana which comes after Pithru ārādhana.

Ĝrāddha is a very orthodox (Vaidhika) Smārtha Karmā. One part of it is taking food after the completion of Ģrāddha as ‘Pithru Śēsham’ (what remains after being offered to Pithrus). After performing ģrāddha, if Pithru Śēsham is not taken, it is wrong.

What to do if ģrāddha falls on Ėkādaśī day? Ģrāddha has to be performed and after that Pithru Śēsham has to be taken because however important Ėkādaśī may be, greater importance has to be given to Ģrāddham which is a Vaidhika karmā - this is what Smārthas and Vaishnavas think. We think that there is nothing wrong if Ėkādaśī upavās is not observed on that day because we are acting according to Vedhīc injunction that no wrong will vitiate our action and therefore we take food after performing ģrāddha.
Mādhvās do not perform srāddhā on Ėkāḍasi day. They think that the observance of Ėkāḍasi vratham is more important and observe Upavāsam. If srāddhā falls on Ėkāḍasi day, they perform it on the next day, that is on Dwāḍasi day. Then also because of the purāṇīk injunction that on Dwāḍasi day food should be taken very early, the srāddhā which is to be performed in the afternoon is performed by them very early in the morning.

People of all sampradhayās are agreed that even during periods of personal pollution, Ėkāḍasi upavās has to be observed. In the case of other upavāsams, since they will not yield fruit when observed during such periods, the rule is that these upavāsās need not be observed during such periods. But for Ėkāḍasi it is an exception.
EXALTED STATUS ACCORDED BY PEOPLE OF ALL DIVISIONS

What the kings enjoyed used to be called Rāja Bhōgam. Kings were entitled to eat well including meat and drink. But they had strictly observed Ėkādaśi Upavāsam. The two kings who come to our mind in the context of Ėkādaśi are Ambarīsha and Rukmangathā, both of whom were Kshatriyas.

There is a slōka about great Bhāgavathās who have to be remembered as soon as one gets up in the morning with a peaceful mind and to whom namaskāram has to be done.

Prahlādha Nāradha Parāsara Pūтdarīka
Vyāsa (A) mbarīsha Śuka Šaunaka Bhīshma dhālbyān
Rukmāṅgatha Arjunā Vasīshta Vibhīṣhaṅadhīn
Pūtīyān īmān paraṃa Bhāgavathān smaraṃi

The reason why Ambarīsha and Rukmangathā have found place in this slōka is that they were observing Ėkādaśī.

Rukmangathā made all his subjects observe Ėkādaśī. Therefore the Nāradha Purāṇam says they were not only high up in bhakthi and jnānā but enjoyed good health and long life.

Not only kings but an untouchable by name Kaiṣikan also attained greatness by observing Ėkādaśī upavāsam. Vaishīnavās observe a particular Ėkādaśī as Kaiṣika Ėkādaśī.
THE NAMES OF EKĀDAŚI

There are three hundred and sixty five days in a year. Therefore there will be a few days more than twenty four pakshās (fortnight). Due to this in some years there will be twenty five Ekādaśī. In the Uthara Kāndā of Pādma Purāṇam names have been given for each of these twenty five Ekādaśī. The method of observing these, the stories of those who were benefited by these etc are also given in detail.

The names start with the Krishiṇa Pakṣa Ekādaśī of Dhanurmāsa (Mārgaśirsha) which is called Uthpaththi Ekādaśī. The next is the well-known, Vaikuṇṭha Ekādaśī which comes in the Šukla Pakṣa. In Pādma Purāṇam, the name Mōksha Ekādaśī is given to this. That was the day when amruth was taken out after churning. Because that was also the day on which Krishiṇa Paramātmā churned the Upanishads and gave us the ‘Jnānamruth’, some people celebrate it as Giśā Jayanthi. The third Ekādaśī comes in the month of Poush in Krishiṇa Pakṣa. This is Sapalā. Fourth comes in the same month in Šukla Pakṣa which is Puthṛathā. Coming fifth in Māģ in Krishiṇa Pakṣa is Shadthilā. Sixth in the same month in Šukla Pakṣa is Jaya. Thus, in an order through the various months, the Ekādaśīs have the names Vijaya, Āmalaki, Pāpa Mośanikā, Kāmadhā, Varūthini, Mōhini, Apara, Nirjalā. The only one Ekādaśī on which Bhima had observed upavās was on the Nīrjalā in Jyeshta Šukla Pakṣa. Fifteenth is in Ashada Krishiṇa Pakṣa - Yogini. Next is Ashada Šukla Pakṣa - Sayani - the day on which, I have said, Mahā Viśnu commences his slumber. Then Samika, Puthṛathā (already there is one Puthṛathā, but this is repeated) Ajā, Padmaṇābha, Indirā, Papānkusā - in these six Ekādaśīs and in Ramā which is in Kārthik Krishiṇa Pakṣa, Bhagawān continues to sleep. On the twenty fourth which comes in Kārthik Šukla Pakṣa when Chāthurmāsyam ends, Mahā Viśnu wakes up. Therefore it is called Prabhōdhini.
The twenty fifth which comes as extra is called Kamalā. All people should observe the vratham on Ėkādaśī day which has been accorded an exalted position in our religion. Fasting should be combined with ‘being near’ (i.e. prayer to) God (Upavāsam). For this, we should repeat Bhagawan nāmā either as japam or bhajan as much as possible. We should do Bhagawad dhyānam as long as possible. On that day, sathkathā śravaṇam or pārāyaṇam or both should be done. The life stories of great Bhāgavathās or Bhagawān should fill our ears. By doing this, from good health, people should be the recipients of bhakthi, jnānā and vairāgya.
LET US HAVE THE SENSE OF FULFILMENT

If even on days like Vaikuṭa Ekādaśī, Mahā Sivarāthri, Gōkulāśhtami, Rām Navami and other special days, we do not control our tongue and the craving of the stomach, it will be demeaning for us who are born in this country. Fulfilment is that of the mind even if the stomach is empty. Bhagawān should bless everyone with the strength of determination to do so.

Food should be taken in measured quantity to satisfy hunger just as medicines are taken for disease. I have referred to Āchārīya saying that food is for satisfying hunger and not taste. There is a difference between other diseases and this. If you take medicine for headache, the pain goes. Then it may come some time later. It is so with fever also. But this disease of hunger, even if it is cured now, it again comes without fail. Īswara is watching the fun by prodding Nature like this. He is testing us. Only if we pass it, it is creditable for us. If we have faith in His compassion and we are firm in our determination, He will extend His hand of help, make us pass and give us good health, spiritual development etc as a prize. What is important is our mental determination. We go to some place. They extend hospitality and offer us food which is prohibited for us. At such a time, either out of consideration for them or with a feeling that we may be mistaken we should not eat it. Principles should not be given up.

We should look at how severely the widows in Bengal observe Ekādaśī vratham and try to emulate them a little. The Brahmins of Bengal are Mathsyā Brahmins. Yet if it is Ekādaśi the widows observe it with greater involvement than others. They observe vratham without having even a drop of water. Even during summer when there is hot breeze and even the mouth gets dried up and the tongue almost sticks to the mouth, they never used to take
even a drop of water. They used to be so firm in observing the vratam. By this many people who could not bear the heat died. People thought that such a situation should not be allowed to continue. Therefore, they convened a sadhas of pundits to find out if there is a way in the sāstrās to relax the severity a little. But the widows, it appears, said that even if the sāstrās allow some kind of drink they would not take it but rather they would die. Then the pundits went deep into the sāstrās and said, ‘All right. Water need not be taken through the mouth but let some water get into the body through the ear’. The observance of Ekādaśi vratam is so severe there.

We should never allow the tongue to have its way saying that we cannot control it. They say it is by eating the apple that Adam had his fall. Like the forbidden fruit we should not take any food that is forbidden by sāstrās. If we violate this injunction, it will only push us down. Whenever there is a temptation like this, we should ask ourselves, ‘Even though we take it now thinking that it has a great taste, does the taste remain in the tongue after five or ten minutes? Is it going to remain in the stomach and ensure that we do not feel hungry again?’ - we should thus control ourselves. I again pray to Bhagawān that we should all get such good sense.
MOUNAM (SILENCE)
TO REDUCE WORK FOR THE MOUTH

The senses (jñānendhriyas) make us aware of what is outside. The eye sees what is outside. The ear hears the sound. The nose smells. The skin has the feel of touch and is able to know whether a thing is strong, rough, soft etc. The mouth informs us of taste. Thus there are five. There are five sense organs (motor organs) which instead of telling us of what is outside, act on their own - the hands, the legs and the organs of excretion.

What do we see in this? It is only the mouth which is a jñānendhriya and also a karmendhriya. To taste a thing and tell us what it is, speaking, singing, laughing - thus it is only the mouth which does both the jobs.

Even when it functions as jñānendhriya it has more work than other jñānendhriyas. For seeing and hearing, the eyes and the ears do not have to strain themselves. The mouth does not stop with knowing the taste of a thing. It bites it, chews it, dissolves it in salaiva and then swallows. (Instead of taking only the tongue which finds the taste I am taking the mouth with teeth and the lips and talking of it as the jñānendhriya). Therefore it must be Parameswarā's intention that the mouth should reduce both these activities. When we say 'control the mouth, control the stomach' the idea is that eating and talking must be controlled. But we do just the opposite. We are giving it more of these activities than necessary and it is over worked. We are always eating something or the other, drinking etc. and indulging in useless talk. We have to drastically reduce both. The sāsthras say 'Do not eat all sorts of things and invite trouble; take only sāthvik food and that too a limited quantity; avoid that also now and then and undertake fast'. In the same manner, after saying 'Do not go on talking whatever
comes in the mouth and by that do not spoil others; talk of matters related to God; do bhajan', just as saying that during Upavāsam, even sāthvik food should not be taken, our elders have said ‘Now and then keep your mouth shut without talking even about God-related matters and even without doing kīrtans etc’.

These days it is talk wherever one sees. There are many ‘speakers’. There are meetings with loudspeakers. Even in marriages and other celebrations there is loudspeaker and noise. When we see this trouble, it appears that silence, apart from doing good to the one who observes it, is a service to the society itself.

All arguments and counter arguments are due to talking only. If silence is observed, at least on that day there will be no quarrel. (Mounam kalaham nāsthi). This is also a social service.

Not only does silence prevent quarrels from coming up, it can also do good. Since it has the power to achieve all the Purushārthas, there is the saying ‘Mounam sarvārtha sādhanam’.

As a means to control the mind, we should practise controlling each sense organ. We should control the mouth both in respect of food and in talking. Silence is the means to control the itch to keep talking and keep expressing ourselves all the time. If this is achieved, controlling the mind will become easier gradually.

&Mupi
Muni is one who has controlled his mind. That which is the quality of a Muni is silence. That is the meaning of the word ‘mounam’. Since the general view is that the greatest of the qualities of a Muni is not talking, mounam has come to means ‘not talking’. Even if it is the quality of one who has controlled his mind, that helps people like us too who have not controlled our mind to reach that stage.

The Upanishad says that the Muni who is a Brahmajnāni, gives up both the states of remaining silent and not remaining silent. First he learns, becomes a pundit (scholar), debates a lot and gets to know the truth. Then he gives up talk and his scholarship and goes into ‘Nishtā’. Then when he becomes a Brahmajnāni, he gives up mounam and absence of mounam also, says the Upanishad. If it is said like this, how is it possible? Either one should give up mounam and speak or should give up talking and observe mounam. How is it possible to give up both? We will know it only when we reach that jnāni’s state. He will not have something like the mind at all. Therefore, he will have no thought or desire that either he should talk or should not talk. Even if he happens to talk by way of upadesam, he will not think he has spoken. Even if Parāsakthi makes him sit in a more silent state like Dakshināmūrthi, he will not think he is observing mouna vratham. This is the state which is said to be one in which mounam (silence) and amounam (non-silence) have been given up.

That is a goal which is far distant for us. In practice, we should observe mouna Upavāsam for sometime.
DAYS SUITABLE FOR MOUNAM

Like the *Upavāsam* for the stomach, Dharma Śāstrās have prescribed time for this. You must have heard of the saying ‘*Mounena bhōkthavyam*’. It means we should not talk while eating. When we are eating we should not give the mouth another work. With this rule, it would mean that taste is also controlled. We cannot say ‘I want this or put some salt in this, drop some ghee in that etc’.

Mounam can be observed on Mondays, Thursdays and *Ekādasi* days.

Since people have to go to office on Mondays and Thursdays, silence can be observed on Sundays. It can be observed at least for half a day.

Gandhi had a lot of work to do. If one is the father in a house, how much work will he not have? He is called Father of the Nation. Even then he was observing silence on one day in the week. He is an example to counter those who say that it is not practicable to observe silence.

If silence and fasting are together, that is when the mouth does not have both the functions, we can know by experience that our mind will get involved with spiritual matter. Therefore, when people fast on *Śivarāthri* or Shashti days etc, according to their Ishta Deivam, they can also observe silence. Those who do *upāsanā* of *Ambāl* observe silence throughout *Navarāthri*.

By talking indiscriminately, elaborating on bad things, abusing people etc, we show discourtesy to Saraswathi who is the *Vāk Devi*. As a *prāyaschitha* for all this, it is the practice to observe silence on the day when the star is *Mūlam* which is Saraswathi’s star.

Everyday we should do silent *dhyānam* for at least half an hour.
KEEPING AWAKE

Along with the rule that on days when the mouth is not opened for food it should not be opened for speaking also one more used to be added. The rule is that on the day when the mouth should not be opened, the eyes should not be closed. One should keep awake throughout night and spend the time meditating on Bhagawān, in kīrtans etc. By keeping the mouth closed, one would get mental involvement and there will be enthusiasm. Keeping awake throughout the night on Vaikunṭta Ekādāsi and Śivarāthri days we consider as important. The practice has come to be prevalent that people spend their time by seeing cinema and instead of earning putīya, they pack it off. This rule is mentioned for every Ekādāsi. What is to be done on Ekādāsi day is not 'bhōjana dhwayam' but 'bhōjana thrayam' - Upavāsam, bhajan and jākarantarām, that is keeping awake throughout the night.

In Gitā it is said, one who starves cannot achieve yōgā and one who does not sleep, cannot achieve yōgā.

Nāthyasnathasthu yōgosthi jāgratho naiva chārjuna

Even then to aid the general rule, fasting should be done on specified days, not sleeping but keeping awake and doing Īswara smarat - this is what the sāstrās say. Although this is contrary to the general rule it is to aid the same. Krishna Paramāthmā also has said that sāstrā is the authority (thasmath Śāsthram pramāṇam the).

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THE BEGINNING AND THE STATE OF ENDING

Mounam means one should remain without expressing his opinion in any manner. If one keeps his mouth shut but keeps communicating through signs, it is of no use. If something is very essential it may be written and shown. During ‘kāshta mounam’, which is commenced with the sankalpam to remain like a log of wood, no communication should be done through sign or writing.

In the beginning, to remain silent giving up all work and the flight of thoughts would indeed be difficult. In that state silence will have to be commenced even with showing signs or writing if it is necessary. However much one may write or show signs, it will not be anything like talking unnecessarily. We keep under check on that day the tongue which feels the itch all the time. To that extent it is good. Beginning like this one should gradually give up the dance of the mind, realise that mounam means great peace and remain like an ocean which is still without waves. Even with some shortcoming, it has to be commenced somewhere. By practice, the shortcomings will keep reducing and the perfect state will be reached; true mounam will be achieved.

The mounam that is started now is a means to worship Īśvarā. Later when perfection is achieved, the same mounam will shine with effulgence with the goal ‘Īśvarā is not separate, there is no need for separate worship for Him’. Apart from not speaking, the eyes should not see, the ears should not hear and more than all that no thought should arise in the mind - that state is true mounam.

Even when we are in deep sleep if an ant moves over us we just crush it; if chill wind blows, we pull the sheet and cover ourselves; we turn sides and sleep. When we get up in the morning
we do not remember any of these things. That means we would have done all these without our being conscious of them. Since attachment to body is there, even in sleep, we have done these things to protect the body. Whatever action it may be it is done by the nervous system according to the direction of the brain. So much of attachment to the body is soaked in it. Without our desire, that is without voluntary effort the nerves of their own carry out several activities. When something touches the neck or the hip that feeling causes laughter. If there is fear, one feels like urinating. If one faces a great sorrow, he feels the churning of the stomach. If one person yawns, others also yawn. These are all the involuntary acts of the nerves.

How will it be in true mounam? Even if a python were to pass over the body, it will not be known. There will be no reflex. Cold or heat, nothing will be felt and the person will be in nishtā (fully engrossed state). Since the thought of the body has completely gone, there will not be even the involuntary feeling to protect the body. Such a person is a jītendriya who has conquered all the senses.

If we train ourselves in true mounam, all the human emotions and attitudes will go. The spark inside is the spark of Paramāthma Jyothi. The spark which lies as if covered with ash in our state of living with sense organs, will begin to shine through mounam. It will go on becoming lighter and lighter to go towards the Paramāthma Jyothi from which it came and will become that itself. As one progresses like this, the fire-like surge of the indriyās will become subdued and will get gradually put out. In the end as a single jyothi, ‘Nivādha Dīpam’ as it is called, the āthmā alone will shine like a lamp kept in a place where there is no wind – a state in which there is no difference between the jivāthma and Paramāthmā – that is the final state of mouna.

If we keep on stirring water, how will a pearl inside it be seen? It is because we are stirring the mind with several thoughts,
we are not able to see the pearl inside, the ātmā. True mouna is arresting all thought waves. The mouna with the mouth closed is the aid to that. Āchāryā has said in *Vivēka Chūdāmāni* that the very first gate for entering 'yoga sāmrājya' is mounam only.

*Yogasya prathamam dwāram vāngnirōdhah*
ARRESTING THE THOUGHTS

Sāstrās say that along with mounam for sometime daily at least we should stop the flow of thoughts by not thinking of anything. ‘Thūṣhmīṁ kinchith aĉinthayeth’. It is difficult to achieve this. If we sit for doing this ‘How not to think of anything?’ the thought that we should not think of anything keeps coming – this is the thought that will come up. When the mind thinks that it should not think of anything, that itself is an activity of the mind. That is why it is said that it is very difficult to control the mind and remain quiet. Yet if with total involvement and untiring efforts one begins to act, by the grace of God, that goal will gradually materialise. All we can do is to make the efforts. The fruit will have to be given by Īśvarā. With a keen desire to sit without any thought if we continue the effort, one day or the other, He will bless us with achievement.

When practising to remain without any thought, at some stage for sometime, the mind will become empty and no thought will arise in it. Yet it will not be the experience of the Self but it will be Śūnya. Even if the run of the mind stops, the effulgence of the āthma jyōthis will not be seen. This is a state without jnānam. Experience of the Self is the state of Pūrṇa Jnānam. I said Āthma Jyōthi. If so, will it have a form like agni? No. It is jnānā, which is referred to here as jyōthis. Even in English, it is the attainment of jnānā, which is called enlightenment or illumination. This intelligence is not what will do research and know another thing. It is without a second and just knowing itself. Even without such experience of jnānā, in deep sleep, a kind of state in which the buddhi becomes blank may be experienced for a short time. There is no need to be afraid of it. It is only a temporary state. Without giving up the keen desire or the yearning to know Īśwarā or āthmā, if we sit and continue the effort, we will reach the stage of the remaining stable in Īśwarā or āthmā even from the state of Śūnya
(blankness) - from no thought to God thought. There will be awareness but it will not be as at present about the harassment by the *indriyās* but it will be of *Īswarā* without any tinge of sorrow. Then in the state in which *Īswarā* is not separate, the state of *jnānā*, all thoughts and their root, the mind will get dissolved and full mounam will materialise.

Parabrahmam cannot be held by speech or mind. The mounam in which mind and speech become a nullity explains that.

*Mouna vyākyā pragatitha parabrahma thathvam*

Mounam becomes the language to explain Parabrahmam which cannot be approached through explanations by words.

Now it is all kinds of thoughts; practising mounam to change this, the state of *Śunya* in which there is no thought, then the thought about *Īswarā* only, in the end instead of thinking of Him from outside becoming He Himself, which is the state of perfection (*Pūrṇathva*).

If from the beginning itself we are careful that the *Śunya* state should not stop with that everything will be all right. We can reach the state of perfection. The *Śunya* which appears in the beginning is called ‘Layam’ and the perfection achieved in the end is called ‘*Samādhi*’.
THOUGHT OF ĪŚWARĀ

In between the two, I have brought Īśwarā. When the mind stops its agitation and becomes empty, Īśvara smarātam is again creating thoughts, is it not? When practice is begun to attain the state of no thought and it is reached it is the state of Śūnya but not an experience of joy. If we try to change this and begin to think of Īśwarā, what to do if the mind drags us away into bad thoughts? We may think, ‘Let not the state of perfection or permanent happiness be reached. Let it be the state of Śūnyam only. It is enough if bad thoughts of the mind are not there’.

There is no need to get worried about Īśvara smarātam which is to be practised after the mind becomes steady to some extent and gets conditioned to the thoughtless state. After that, the mind will not generate bad thoughts at all. Once a person has surrendered his mind to Īśwarā after arresting the thoughts by much effort Īśwarā will not allow him to go the wrong way. Although Īśwara bhakthi and love are also functions of the mind after this the mind will not go after bad things; it will only go to mounam in which it will dissolve itself completely.

We call the police because we face danger from some rogues. After tackling the rogue will the police threaten us and punish us also? Or will he come with us and stay in our house? After rescuing us from danger and reaching us to our house, will he not go away? In the same manner, we think of Īśwarā in order that bad thoughts should go. This smaran will drive away the bad and will reach us to moksha and will itself go away. The bhakthi which is started with the mind will reach us to jnānā in which the mind will be destroyed.

The association with ‘sajjan’ (good people) is also like this. It will take us to the state in which all relationship will end. If we are to be without any kind of attachment that is not possible
immediately. Therefore, we should eschew bad company and be in sathsangam. This is also relationship. Just as a fruit drops off on its own when it becomes fully ripe, this relationship will end one day. It will reach us to the experience of solitude which is higher than this. Āchāryā says ‘Sathsangathvē nissangathvam’.

Thus from God - thought the no - thought state will come. But this is not the no thought state which was in the beginning as Śūnya. It is the perfect state: It is the perfect state in which jnānā is complete and there is no scope for any thought arising.

We can give another meaning to sathsangam. The thing which is sath is the āthmā which is the true thing for all time. Sathsangam is giving up the body consciousness and joining the true āthmā which is sath. The nissangathvam which comes from the association with sathpurushas has to give the union with this big ‘sath’. Then that which we call ‘I’, that which is the cause of all these troubles, will get destroyed in the one Paramāṭhma jnānā and we can become the form of total bliss of that jnānā. So long as we think that that is different from us thoughts of ‘I’ ego etc will be there. To start with, if the true thing (sath Vasthu) is considered separate as Īswarā and we hand over this ‘I’ and ego to Him this will stop troubling. Then He will think that He need not be separate, and will Himself raise it and make it realise that it is He Himself.

Therefore what is mounam in which nothing should be thought of should start with Īswara smaraṇam. Paramāṭhmā should be meditated upon in the form of our Ishta Dēvathā. Think of Paramāṭhmā as Parāśakthi or Mahēśwarā or Lakshminārāyanā and do silent meditation. For this thought to go, let it happen as and when it will, by Parāśakthi’s grace. What we have to do is silent meditation on Īswara Swarūpam and mentally do nāma japam.
We may go from the state of thinking of all kinds of things straight to the thought of Īswarā. Or having gained some practice in being without any thought in order to ensure that it does not stay put in the state of ‘jadam’ (state of being inert) we can start thinking of Īswarā. At this stage, it will begin to get attached to Īswarā rather strongly.
WILL HELP ALSO SOCIAL GOOD

All these days I have been talking to you about all that you have to do. I have been talking about what vaidhika karmanas should be done, what karmanushtana should be done for dharma rakshanam, what should be done to the society etc. Today for a change I thought why I should not tell you to observe mounam without doing anything. This is also life's dharmā. The good that this bestows is greater than that achieved by action. We get āthma sakthi in this only. It is also of great help to the society. This is so not only because we do not spoil the society by talking bad and doing bad, the āthma sakthi generated by the control of senses is what does great good to the society. It is for this reason I thought I should tell people to include in their daily routine just sitting for sometime without doing work.
SILENT PRAYER

It is a certain view of the government that is the provocation for taking this as a topic. In recent times, there have been two views about whether there should be prayer for students or not before commencing the classes. Among the leaders some are devoted (have bhakthi) and some are not so. That is why opinion is divided. Then even those who are not devoted started saying ‘Prayer before starting school work has been there for a long time; If we stop it, we may have to face the dissatisfaction of many people. Therefore, if prayer is there let it continue and those students who want to join the prayer let them join it but those who do not want need not be compelled’. But the problem did not get over with this. If prayer is to be held what should be the prayer? This is a secular government. They thought when students of different religions are studying together, whatever prayer is introduced may prove to be a wrong move. Finally, they have now decided that before commencing the classes the students may pray silently for two or three minutes.

Since they are suggesting silent prayer to even young children, I thought, why I should not talk to grown up children about mounam.

Is it that only they are students? All of you and I too are students. All of us are life time students, learning in the vast school of the world.

What you have learnt today is mouna vidhyā. Mounam is considered to be Brahma Vidhyā itself. ‘Silence is the threshold of jnānam’. Having taken this birth, just as it is very essential to know all that we have to do, we have also to know the importance of remaining without activity and without thought. If we indulge in thinking as the mind wanders and talk without knowing what we speak we will have to feel sorry later that we have not gained the fruits of having taken this birth. That is why I thought that even knowing that controlling the mind and remaining silent is itself educative for you (let alone practising it later) and I told you.
THE LESSON THAT
I HAVE LEARNT

Having come to Madras, I have also learnt a lesson. The peace
that we get through mounam is what is permanent. It is said
that it will make us happy in the midst of all difficulties without
feeling them. If you want to be free from difficulties that is not
possible. Difficulties have got to be there. Then only the karmā can
be wiped out. But at the same time, it should not be felt as
difficulty. My stay in Madras has helped me to learn this at least in
one respect. You are all waiting here in large numbers to see the
pūjā and you are going through difficulties for hours together.
When you see the pūjā all these difficulties are forgotten and there
is enthusiasm. In that emotional upsurge you have begun to do
pārāyanī, bhajan and sing songs because you feel it is good for
others too. But because some people thought that this creates lot
of noise and causes distraction, they started putting up placards
'silence please'. I asked them to remove them. Do you know why?
'It is only now an opportunity has come to learn something and
pass the test. The test that has come my way is to find out if in the
midst of all this noise, I can conduct pūjā without being distracted
by the noise. We should not let go this opportunity', I thought.
That is why I wanted the placards to be removed. By Īswarā's
blessings, I now got used to conduct pūjā in spite of all noise.

Therefore, if I have spoken today about mounam it is not
because I wanted you to be silent during my pūjā but for you to
realise its benefit for yourselves. Since all these days, you have
done bhajan, spoken and sang as you liked, I thought it would be
fair if I ask you now to do silent prayer during pūjā. I have spoken
about it because of my desire that you should all experience the joy
of keeping quiet.
KNOW THE LIMIT AND ACT -
EXTREMES ARE INTENDED
TO LEAD TO MODERATION

There is a sāsthram which says 'Prepare several varieties and eat stomach full'. What the books on the procedure called 'Pūjā Kalpam' say have to be understood this way. One of these says 'Neivēdhyam shadrasō bhēdham'. This means food that has varieties with six tastes. All these varieties have to be shown to Swāmi. 'NiVēdhayāmi' means 'I am announcing' that is I am announcing to you that I have kept all these food before you'. It does not mean 'I am making you eat'. Rarely some one like Nāmadēvā may be able to make God eat the food offered. It is just showing the food to Him. When the food is seen by Him it becomes prasād and we take it. That is why sāstrā itself says that we have to prepare several varieties with different taste and eat them.

There is the other side of Sāsthrām which talks very strictly of several upavāsams - only fruits to be taken, even water should not be taken etc.

On one side it is the sound of the Vēdhās being recited, Rāmāyaṇa Navāham, Bhāgavatha Sapṭāham, Harikathā, Bhajan, Music with all instruments etc, as Bhagwan Himself has said, 'kathayanthescha mām nithyam', talking all the time about His stories, singing and dancing. On another side, it is sitting and doing prāṇāyānam and silent meditation, ignoring whatever happens in the world. On one side animal sacrifice being offered at the yagna. On the other side even if a tender vegetable is plucked, it is considered a sin for which prāyascithām is prescribed.

On one side there are the fearful village deities of various names. On the other there are Devathās with gentle forms. Different colours, four hands, eight hands, ten hands, eighteen
hands - several Murthis with these aspects. Their vehicles are from a mouse to the elephant to the lion.

On another side is Vedānta which says that Bhagawān is Nirguñam, no form - no Bhagawān, no bhaktha.

If the same sāstrās say like this in a conflicting manner, what does it mean? It means that we should begin where we know something and reach what is not known. It is for taking us like this the sāstrās talk of both - what we know and what we do not know.

What do we see? - The universe of duality is only what we see. The state in which we are is the state of duality with several differences in form and quality. Different tastes, several kinds of sceneries, all kinds of questions, anger, yearning, love, peace, serenity, gentleness - thus several emotional upsurges, difference in quality - this is what we see in the state in which we are.

What is the state in which we should be? What we should know hereafter is that the one thing which is the substratum for all these dualistic appearances, what people call Adhvaitham - it is that. There is no taste there, no sound, no form, no qualities, but the cause for all these is there.

It is for giving divine connection to what is known, all these are prescribed - Neivēdhyam, Shadrasōbhēdam, Harikathā, the noise of bhajans, dēvathās with severe and gentle forms and violent and non-violent offerings to suit them. Because we should not stop with what we know but gradually learn of what is not known, fasting - devoid of all taste, mounam - no noise - Nirguñã Brahman are there.

It will not help if merely two extremes are prescribed. There should be something to link the two. Our lifestyle should be such that it reflects this link in all aspects.
What is that link? It is to observe moderation. You must have heard of the Moderates in politics. ‘We should not be in a hurry to get ‘pūrṇa swaraj’ immediately. At the same time, English rule should not be permitted to be so imperial’, this was their view.

Not taking an extreme position in anything but being in the middle is moderation. The word ‘midham’ means what has been measured or the measure of which is known. When we talk of measured behaviour, does it not indicate what is not extreme but which is slow and done carefully? ‘Measured’ is ‘midham’. We say geometry. The Sanskrit word for it is ‘Geōmithi’. Geo means the earth. Mithi is midham. That is the way of measuring. Geometry evolved from measuring the ground for building the Vēdhika for yagnas. Kshētram also means the ground, the earth. This has also the name ‘Kshētra Ganitham’.

To avoid overdoing things and to prevent the mind getting attached to a particular thing there should be moderation in what we do, talk, earn, spend, allowing the buddhi to wander, eating, dressing ourselves, entertainment. If we develop this as a habit it will help the mind to remain even and in a peaceful state.

How does a habit develop? It can be had by the grace of Īswara only. If it is asked how that grace can be got, the answer is that it is for getting it, sāstrās have given us two practices of two extremes. At the level which we know, there is one extreme of festivities and eating, music, dance and several gods to suit the aesthetics of everyone. In the other extreme is the state of not eating, not talking, not sleeping and keep reminding about the one Nirguṇa Paramāthmā. It is by practising both the extremes we will achieve moderation in all aspects of our life just as the weighing scale becomes even by putting equal weight on either side.

Supposing we want a rope not to remain hanging loose but remain straight, how it is possible? We will have to fix two poles at
two ends and tie the rope tight to the two poles. Then it will be straight without hanging loose. This is how the two extremes have been prescribed for us for being practised to bring our life to even state which it cannot reach on its own. Because it is not known how to reach moderation straightaway, the two extremes have been given in religious observances so that through such practices one may attain the state of moderation.

In other religions, where they have kept only one extreme like non-violence, meditation on the formless, people are not able to bear the severity of it and they fail. Instead of that since our religion prescribes two extremes which are different from each other, human mind which likes change willingly practises the two extremes alternatively.

It is not only in religious practices but in principles like ahimsā ‘Bhikshuthva’ etc which are to be followed in daily life also, our religion instead of making it as a strict condition applicable to everybody, has suitably separated them. I have spoken much about this. That is why our religion, despite its āchārās and sāstrās has been more flexible than other religions and has attained permanent life (Chiranjīvīthvam).

In religious observances, in the state in which we are, we do not get the same joy in fasting, mounam and meditation on the Self as we get in festivities and eating, bhajans, worshipping a form (Sagunā worship) etc. It is due to a certain attitude and the faith that ‘this is a path shown by our ancestors’ we are able to practise the anushtāna for the sake of what we do not know.

When we get fully habituated to moderation and attain the matured, ripe state, what is not known to us now, what is the other extreme, what we can only just guess, that is the state of becoming one with the Paramāthmā - instead of being the extreme state will become effortless experience.
In Gîta, Bhagawān gives upadeśa about not overdoing anything but being moderate, in the middle position.

Nāthyasnathasthu yōgosthi na chaikantha manaśnathah
Na chāthi swapna śilasya jāgratho naiva chārjuna
Yukthāhāra vihārasya yukthachēshtasya karmāsu
Yuktha swapnavabōdhasya yōgō bhavathi dhukhahā (vi-16-17)

‘To the glutton, yōgā will not materialise; not also to the one who fasts too much; not to the one who sleeps all the time; not to the one who does not sleep at all. It is to the one who observes moderation in eating, in all his activities, in sleeping and in keeping awake, yōgā will materialise’, says Bhagawān. Here the word used by Bhagawān is ‘Yuktham’. In our day to day talk also, we use this word yuktham. Yuktham and yōgam both have come from the same root, yuj. Yuj means to join. Yōgam is uniting the jīvāthmā to Paramāthmā. The means to achieve such uniting is moderation or yuktham.

It is man’s nature to go to the extremes. If he is told to be moderate, he cannot. That is why sāstrās say that we should go to both the extremes alternatively. If we are told ‘Eat in moderation’ the tongue does not listen. ‘All right, here are the festivities we give. On these days, eat food with all six tastes’ (shadrasōbhēdham). But without stopping with that and to compensate for this sāstrās prescribe days for upavāsam and vratham. In the same manner, allowing certain days for freely shouting, singing and dancing, the sāstrās say that on certain days ‘do not open your mouth at all’ - prescription to keep silence. All these have been given to us connecting them with the divine. Even when prescribing – pithru ceremonies, panchāyathna, vaisvādeva sacrifice etc, to compensate for all these, they want us to say ‘Brahmaivāhamasmi’ during Sandhyāvandanam*

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* This expresses the Advaidhik thought ‘I am Brahman myself’. Saying this during Sandhyavandanam is important.
For human nature which cannot on its own be moderate in various aspects of life, practising the two extremes in religious observances becomes the means to moderate them. A feast being balanced by *upavāsam*, a joyful outburst being balanced by mounam - thus by the practice of following the extremes and balancing, all aspects of life become moderate just as the weighing scale is even when balanced equally on either side and the yuktha state is achieved. Moderation is attained by practising the extremes alternatively.

Without expending any energy or money unnecessarily, but at the same time not keeping all the money under lock and key, it should be spent in a manner that the person and the society benefit. This measured approach will help even the highest fruit namely *Īswarā Sākshāthkāram*. We have to come to the even stage, to the level. Water finds its level. Only if the *jīvāthmā* comes to level, it can mingle with the ocean, that is *Paramāthmā*. For this, there should be a limit, moderation in everything.

*Thirumūlar* has said that only those who do things in a measured way can realize the highest truth. His work is called ‘*Thirumanṭhiram*’. Therefore these words are like *manthrās*.

Without being excessive, we should be measured in all things. Whether it is talk, thought, action, food, dress, expenses etc we should stop with what is essential for life. We should not waste as we do now. It is being measured, calculative that is helpful both in this life and after. If there is no mental discipline, how can the Supreme be attained? For that mental discipline to be achieved being calculative and observing the limit in all aspects of life will help.

I had said that in our present situation, it is because of going to both the extremes in religious observances that the quality of being measured develops. In the early stages both religious
observances and ‘being measured’ will be in an unripe state. But in course of time, each will nourish the other and also condition each other. Later, to reach the matured state, it will take us to the higher peaceful state which is the evenness of mind through acting in the measured way. In the fully matured state whatever we do will be automatically measured and will show the path to others.
BEING CALCULATIVE IN ALL KINDS OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

Have we not given much importance to mathematics in education? We have to give the same importance in life too. These days what is important is only the accounting of the expenses. There is an accountant in every office and there is the Accountant General’s office. From olden times, the practice has been there of checking the receipts and expenses of the State. There used to be an official who was equivalent to the Accountant General of these days. Lower down there were accountants, who were called (in Tamil) ‘Kanakka Pillai’. Pillai here means what is small and not a jāthi. We use the word Pillai to refer to the squirrel, the coconut nursery etc. The Kanakka Pillai was an employee of small rank to check the Government accounts. But he knew all the intricacies. That is why in olden days it was the rule that even those who were posted as District Collectors had to learn under a Kanakka Pillai. It is said, ‘these days it is enough if everything is balanced on paper. If the matter goes to the Finance Minister, it does not matter even if it cannot be balanced. By deficit financing, by printing currency and borrowing from all over, if the accounts are balanced it is enough’. On the whole, in the name of modern methods of accounting, needs and desires have been multiplied, the expenses for them have been multiplied and people have been made debtors and left without peace.

Receipts and expenses do not refer to money alone but are in everything. When we talk too much we get it back from the other person, this is also receipt and income. What we speak is expenditure and what we get back from the other person is receipt! Breathing which we do all the time, even in sleep, is also receipt and income. Drawing air from outside and breathing out, is that not receipt and expense? It is because there should be accounting
in this also, prānāyāmam, manthra japam, sōham, dhyānam etc have been prescribed. If we breathe fast, it will shorten the life. The equanimity of the nervous system required for the āthmā to get purified and reach a peaceful stage will not be there. That is why it has been laid down that breathing too should be calculated and measured. The limit is that in a day we have to breathe only 21,600 times, that is it will take four seconds for one complete breathing. When we are doing work in a hurry or we are angry or emotional due to kāmam etc, one breath will be over in one or two seconds. That is why to compensate for this, prānāyāmam in which breathing is slow has been prescribed as the other extreme. Therefore it is seen that the longevity of this body and the āthmā’s Samādhi state are dependent on the breathing being measured.

In practical accounting, we can do some jugglery and balance the accounts. But when we have to be accountable to ourselves, we cannot do any hanky-panky and be successful. There is One who is witness to all that we do. We cannot deceive Him. For all the sins we have committed, we have to compensate by puṇya karmā. That accounts book is with Him. Only if there is plenty of puṇyam in what we do, He can balance the accounts. For gaining puṇyam, the first requisite is mental discipline. For that to materialise we have to be measured in our talk, thought, the action we perform for ourselves, the income, food, dress etc. It should not be forgotten that being calculative in all these things is only for permanent profit. We who are now thinking only of the profit and loss with regard to money, should at least hereafter think of the profit of puṇyam and the loss of sin and do what is necessary to balance the account.
APARIGRAHAM

What is basic to this is to be calculative both in earning for ourselves and spending. This is what has been mentioned in Dharma Śāstrās as a great dharmā. Parigraha means acquiring wealth, things. Not acquiring is aparigraham. Aparigraha dharmā is: ‘Do not keep even one bit more than what you need for your living’. In his Yoga Sū thrā, Pathanjali has listed this as one of the five basic ‘Yāmās’ to be observed by the practitioner of yōgā. Yāmām means to keep under check. Because Yāmā keeps under check even great sinners and punishes them, he has got this name. Pathanjali wrote the yoga sū thrā to control the mind. In that aparigraha has been included along with the other yāmās, namely, non-violence, truthfulness, non-stealing, brahmacharyam. He has included this in order that we keep under control the desire to have this or that and acquiring things. If the desire is checked, all else like the desire for money, to go to any country to earn it, do whatever job, indulge in falsehood etc will go.

Manu also in his Dharma Śāstrā when he talks of the five basic dharmās, after mentioning non-violence, truthfulness and non-stealing, then soucham (purity, cleanliness) he mentions indriya nigraham as the last. Instead of Pathanjali’s aparigraha, Manu has included soucham. Manu would have thought that acquiring something more than what is essential, is equal to theft. That is why he must have thought that non-stealing (asthēyam) includes aparigraha.

Theft has several definitions! Bhagawān Himself has been given the title of a thief - one who stole our heart etc. There is a saying that when receipts become less and the expenses go up, that itself is theft. In Gītā, Bhagawān says that the man who gets all his life’s requirements from the divine powers, if he does not offer these to them and enjoys them himself, it is theft. (Gītā 3.12)
We should think that whatever we acquire more than the needs of our life has the blemish of what is robbed and kept and we should try to follow the aparigraha dharma.

Our Āchāryā also has spoken high of this in Viveka Chūḍāmani. After saying that the first gate to Yōgā is mounam, he mentions aparigraham next.

Yōgasya prathamaṁ dwāram vāngnirōdhā aparigrahaṁ

From the time currency came into usage, amassing too much for oneself, spending in all sorts of ways to satisfy one's desires have increased and charity and aparigraha dharma have received setback.

One may wonder whether there was a time when there was no currency. There was, in fact, a time like that. In olden times, it was barter which was in vogue in all places. There was no rupee or sterling or dollar. It was only much later when societies got consolidated, governments came to be formed when currency came into vogue. It was easy to determine the value of any goods with reference to the currency. This was introduced because it is compact and convenient to keep and carry. But even till the arrival of the East India Company, currency was not very much in use among the people of Tamil Nādu. It was only at the top level and that too for specific purposes, transactions took place with money. Since the coin was intended to have its true value, coins were minted with rare metals such as gold and silver on a limited scale. It was only later that the practice of minting coins in any metal like copper, nickel, etc, which have no relation to their actual value and even paper currency came which is being printed on a large scale and is in circulation. Before these developments, even in the recent past, it was only barter which was in vogue among the people. Even what was paid to the government was one sixth share of grains only. The rest of the grain could not be converted into money. Is not ours an agricultural country? The major produce is
only grains. Usually, each person will be having a piece of land. But since it was the responsibility of the State to ensure the proper conduct of the *Varnāśrama* system, those who were doing a traditional trade got either land or grains as a grant from the government. Because of this when landlords gave away one sixth to the government there was no possibility of the surplus being converted into money. Therefore they established choultries for doing *annadhānam* to pilgrims, *neivēdyam* in temples on a large scale to be distributed as *prasād*, feeding Brahmmins in lakhs etc. used to be the practice. It was only later when it became possible to convert the grains into money, hoarding wealth to any extent for oneself became possible and that has blocked the way for charity.

To get an idea of aparigraham, one need not look far. It is enough if you see how people lived four or five generations back. Earthen pots, cooking vessels made out of stone, palmyra leaves, barks of arecanut trees etc. – these were the only property. Chains made of black beads were all their jewellery. A hut (with coconut or palm leaves) was more than a palace. Kings like *Dilīpan*, who lived in palaces prostrated before *Vasishta* and others who lived in such *parṇāśālā* (a dwelling covered with leaves). Even our ancestors of recent times had lived simple and peaceful life. Now we consider that our status depends upon money, possessions and luxuries. In the search for these, we have lost our character and lost the respect in society which our ancestors enjoyed even without any property and we stand as small people.

As we go on acquiring more and more belongings, only fear increases. In this we can never get the peace of aparigraham.

In this I myself have to demonstrate something. You all have the custom of honouring me with silk shawls. This practice has been in vogue for a long time as the expression of respect to elders. Those were days when the country was prosperous. The Āchāryās
of those days were also fully deserving of that honour. It is not at all proper that in these days of rationing and scarcity, I should also have myself decorated with silk shawl. Although I have been having this in mind for a long time, I have not spoken about this because I thought that those who come to honour me with love may feel it. But when I am giving long lectures on aparigraham, what pricks me is, ‘I am a sanyāsi. Can I have myself honoured with these shawls costing five hundred or thousand rupees?’ Because I feel it and also because no one particularly has brought such a shawl I request that in future you should avoid honouring me like this. Will I not have the desire that I too should have a share in aparigraha? Therefore I begin this.

In this context, one thing comes to mind. In Sri Matam also there is the custom of honouring vidvāns with silk shawls. According to this practice, a shawl was brought to honour a Tamil vidvān U. Ve. Swaminātha Iyer had brought with him and I asked Iyer himself to do the honour. I did not like some of the principles of that vidvān. He also seemed to have known this. It was Swaminātha Iyer who wanted to sort out the differences between us and therefore he had brought him after speaking to both sides. By playing pun on a Tamil word, the vidvān requested that I should not only cover him with shawl but with differences having gone, I should also praise him. I am telling that no one need cover me with shawl to praise me.

I have said all this to emphasise the point that one should be careful about one’s own property and expenses. Gandhi also spoke a lot about aparigraham and practised it also. Now Vinobha also speaks about it.

Governments and their ideologies are not permanent. Sanāthana dharma alone is permanent. That only shows the way to permanent happiness. Therefore, people should look to it, observe
restraint in all aspects of life and have peace in this world and attain spiritual sreyas.

If I go on talking about this, I will then begin doubting whether I am measured in my talk as I myself have been advocating!

 Pars \, Pars \, Pars
VAITHIKA
ASPECTS OF RELIGION
Ayurvedham

What for Upa Vedham?

The word ‘Sāngopānga’ is in use in respect of doing any thing.

Sāngopāngam is doing a thing completely without omitting any aspect. This word is ‘Sa anga upa anga’. It means that a thing is complete with all parts and subsidiary parts. It is on the basis of Vēdha Vidhyā which is the root of our religion. This word has come to be applied to everything. If Vēdhic religion is considered the Dēvathāmurthi, the Samhithās of the four Vēdhās, Brāhmanās, Āraṇyās and the Upanishads which come at the end are like the body, like the life which is all over inside that body, like the blood. This form has six parts - sikshai, vyākaraṇam, chandas, niruktham, jyōthisham, kalpam. The Vēdhās with these six angās can be called ‘Sānga’. In ‘Sānga upa anga’ there are four more as subsidiary parts (upa anga) - mimamsai, nyāyam, purāṇam, Dharma Śāstrā. We consider the four Vēdhās plus the six angās plus the four upa angās as the Sāngopānga, that is complete form of the dēvathā of Vēdhic religion. These fourteen together are called ‘Chathurdaśa Vidhyā’.

Along with upa anga, four more which are upa Vēdhās are also added and called ‘Ashtādaśa Vidhyāsthānam’. These upa Vēdhās are Āyurvedham, Dhanur Vēdham, GāndharvaVēdham and Artha Śāstrām. These four are not religious or philosophical but are helpful in practical life for the individual to conduct himself properly in his interaction with the society, the country and the world. That is why these have not been included in the fourteen Dharma Śāstrās - that is the literature which are directly linked to spirituality but have been included in the eighteen Vidhyā Sthānams which give intellectual development. These do not have the authority of Dharma Śāstrās which are law books, laying down rules of conduct. Since they provide only information of various kinds, they are accorded only Vidhyā Sthānam.
But instead of calling them upa anga they have been given a higher status, *Upa Vēdhā* (supplementary *Vēdhā*). The reason is that if one sticks to *dharma* and follows these four in practical life it will open the way for life to become ideal. That is, the way we lead our life, will become the means to acquire noble human qualities. Then this practical life itself will pave the way to earn permanent happiness of the other world. In the end, it will make life a royal path to reach *Paramāthmā*.

You yourself would have understood what these four are. *Āyurvedham* is medical science. *Dhanurvedham* is martial science. *Gāndharvavedham* is music, dance, drama and other fine arts. *Arthaśāsthrā* is political science combined with economics.

What we actually see is the extent of harm that we can cause to our soul by each of these four. By medical science we nurture our body and do not rise above our thought of body-soul identity. As if destruction caused in war by atom bomb and hydrogen bomb is not enough, the Power Blocks indulge in Cold War subjecting people to mental fear, mutual disbelief, enmity etc. We are also experiencing that music and dance have become cheap dragging people to the level of animals. Politics? I do not want to speak about it.

Our ancients have not said that all these which cause obstruction to spiritual attainment should be given up. On the other hand, they have given these four upa *Vēdhās* to be of help in attaining spiritual growth. The logic is this: ‘You cleanse them also. Soak them also in *dharma*. Just as we clean up the dirt accumulated on a metal by using various materials and make it bright, purify these through the way of *dharma*, make them shine and use them in the cause of *dharma* only. Because the glass over a framed picture becomes dirty, if it is removed, will not the picture get affected? Therefore, clean up the dirt but do not remove the glass. Change the condition in which the body and the medical
treatment for it, war, entertainment, politics are like a dirty glass hiding the āthmā and make the glass protect the āthmā and make it shine'.

People of other religions used to say, 'Hindu religion, talking about Adhvaithā and Māyā, does not pay attention to life and wants people to run away from it'. There cannot be a view more wrong than this. It is only our religion that has analysed all aspects of life thoroughly and shown the way for man to go through all that and come out victorious. They know very well how we celebrate Rāmā and Krishnā, treating them as the highest of the Avatārs. That they did not run away from practical life but were fully involved in life and led it is also known to the critics. They also know that Arjuna wanted to run away from life and take to spiritualism but Bhagawān stopped him and told him to fight. Still they criticise and we also listen to them.

Bhagawān coaxed Arjuna to make use of Dhanurvēdham for the sake of dharmā and on the lines of dharmā. Thus, every upa Vēdhā is to be used for the sake of dharmā only.

It is only in other religions that some matters relating to God have been mentioned and nothing has been said about the state, various aspects of life, military, medical science etc. The result of this is that in practical life, things went wrong in a big way. Because in the matter of doing a job, food, residence, marriage, learning, medicine, governance, war etc they did not have dharmā as the basis, it resulted in the people of these religions going the wrong way. Since some matters were kept exclusively as spiritual many people confined themselves to practical life and even here since there was no discipline enforced by sāsthrā, there was room for doing things without mental discipline.

In our religion in which all aspects of life have been systematised, the first of the four upa Vēdhās is Āyurvēdham.
THE SUBSIDIARY (UPA)
AND THE MAIN (MŪLAM)

It used to be said that each of these upa Vēdhās originated from a particular main Vēdha. According to this, the first upa Vēdha, Ayurvedham, belongs to Rig Vēdha *

Rig Vēdha has a name (Poushtikam) meaning that it is capable of giving pushti (strength, nourishment). The second, namely, Dhanur Vēdham belongs to Yajur. Gāndharva Vēdhā belongs to Sāma Vēdēhā and Artha Sāsthram to Atharva Vēdēhā.

In Dhanur Vēdha, when the asthrs (weapons) are used – Varunāsthrā, Agnēyasthrā, Brahmāsthrā etc., they have to be used along with the manthrās appropriate to each Devathā. Here, the power of manthrā is more important than the weapon. The method of using the manthrās is given in Atharva Vēdēhā. Therefore, it means that Dhanur Vēdham is connected with Atharva Vēdēhā also.

* Śuṣruthā who occupies an important place in Ayurvēdēhā says that it belongs to Atharva Vēdēhā.
VĀSTHU ŚĀSTHRĀ

Just as it is said that music is Sāma Vēdhāma, Vāsthu Śāstrā, sculpture, architecture etc which are included in it, comprise a upa Vēdhā and it is connected with Atharva Vēdhā, according to Sri Sukla of Punjab who had mentioned this at the Sadhas conducted by Sri Matam at Ilayathangudi. He pointed out that Vēdhā rishis like Brugu have compiled Vāsthu Sāstrham and added that no other upa Vēdhām has literature authored by Vēdhā rishis.*

It is Vāsthu Śāstrā which deals with town planning, the temple, the palace, the residence of individuals which are in the town. When a house is constructed, ‘Manai (plot) Muhūrtham’ is performed. It is Vāsthu Purushā to whom pūjā is performed. In Vāsthu Sāstrā, a town or a temple or a palace, house, mandap, choultries, schools or whatever else is treated as Vāsthu Purushā with a human form and the various parts of such constructions are described as the different parts of the Vāsthu Purushā - head, body, leg, hands etc. If a temple, residential colony, common places, etc are not according to Vāsthu Śāstrā, or the various parts of a house are not according to it, the śāstrā says that there will be scarcity, disease, mental illness etc. These days we do not follow the Vāsthu Śāstrā but we do town planning, colonies and

* There are some who consider a śāstrā named Sthapathyā - Sāstrha Vēdhām as a upa Vēdhā instead of the Atharva Vēdhā. They say that this branched off from Atharva Vēdhā. Since Sthapathyā Sāstrham concerns the tools and implements used by a sthapathy, this itself appears to be the basis for Sri Śukla’s views. It is understood that Sthapathyā śāstrā is Mechanics which includes all instruments and not only building, sculpture etc).
construction of houses according to English fashion. We are experiencing all the evil effects mentioned in sāstrās.

Sculpture, architecture etc come within Vāstu Śāstrā. Still the general view is that Artha Sāstrām is the fourth Upa Vēdham.
WHAT FOR SHOULD THE BODY BE NURTURED?

Āyurvedham is the śāstra that deals with the ways and means of increasing longevity. Does not longevity get affected by diseases? Therefore the Vaidya Śāstrā which deals with prevention of diseases and curing them is called Āyurvedham.

Why should the body be nurtured this way? However much it may be nurtured it will perish one day. What does it matter if a thing that will perish, must perish and the perishing of which cannot be stopped by any means goes at any time? Do not the jnānis say ‘What does it matter if the body goes? Since, so long as it exists, the indriyās only have the field leading to karmās only.’ Have not great men waited for it to go?

Let us keep aside the story of the great men and our intellectual query what for protection of the body, when death is certain. What do we do in practice? Do the determination of the great ones and our intellect lend a helping hand? Do we not act according to our ordinary feelings? What do we think then? Even if there is a little discomfort to the body, we make a big fuss about it. Even the joy of having won a huge prize in a lottery is driven away by a stomach ache or cold. Do we not consider this disease bigger than that income? A person who is seriously affected by a very advanced state of leprosy and who does not have the means to live is lying on the street crying ‘will not this life go’. But if a bus or lorry approaches close to him, does he remain where he is thinking ‘It is good, let me be crushed by this bus?’. Somehow, even crawling, he moves away. Our identification with the body has gone so deep. Even at the age of 90 or 95 when one is merely a walking corpse, the tendency is to take medicines and postpone death and increase longevity.
This is about protecting one’s body. There is another aspect. If we have wife and sons who are dear to us, we think that even if we die, they should have a long life. We pray ‘They should not pass away when we are alive’. If they become sick, we spend a lot on treatment, keeping awake during nights etc. You must have read that Babar prayed to Allah and saved Humayun from death by giving his own life.

It is strong nature to protect oneself and others who are close and try to improve longevity. This is so with all beings. Every creature, even a worm or an ant is prepared to struggle to save its life.

Have not our ancestors given the arrangement by which instead of going against Nature and getting into problem, we should go along with it and gradually turn it towards āthmā? Marriage, getting children, going for a job etc - these have been accepted by them both as being natural and practical and they have shown the way to do all these things according to sāstrās and become evolved. Consistent with this they have given Āyurvedham to cure diseases and live a long life.

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SPIRITUAL GOAL EVEN IN MEDICAL TREATMENT

This is not the only thing. Although externally it looks as if only this is important, there is the objective to enable the attainment of spiritual goal.

It is because of the enormous sins we have committed we have taken this birth and we are restlessly running about without knowing about permanent happiness. Should we not now at least start earning puttyam and dissolve the sins? We have to do several dharmas and engage ourselves in the activities that will earn us puttyam. These can be done only if there is this body. Service can be rendered to others only if there is the body and it is strong. Then only we can do sramdhān and dissolve our sins. If we have to engage ourselves in activities such as doing yajnas, undergoing great physical strain, go up the Tirupathi hills by foot, do 108 or 1008 pradakshinās, do Giri Pradakshinām (going around holy hills), do prāṯāyānam, sitting in padmāsanam with the body erect, do dhyānam – all this can be done only if the body is healthy. If we are sick, it becomes the cause of worry to others.

When our body is not well, how can we do Īswara dhyānam? If we have fever or tooth ache, how can we perform pūja? If there is no physical strength, how can one undertake pilgrimages like the Chārdhām Yāthrā in this vast country which has so many holy places and rivers? If there is body pain, can we do japam? Is yōga possible? Where is the scope for ‘nishtai’ and ānānam?

Therefore a sāsthrā is needed for prevention of diseases and curing them by medicines, regulation of diet etc only for thinking of God. That is Āyurvedham. (According to Dharmā Śāstrās if a person leads a pure life that itself acts as a preventive for disease. Even then Vaidya Śāstrā also has to help in this).
It is not enough if relief is got from disease. We have to live a long life with good health. Since Vaidya Śāstrā shows the way for it, it is called Āyurvedham. If it is asked ‘why increase the longevity of a life which in any case is going to end?’ I have given the reasons for it. I said it is only with the body we can do puṣṭyam and get rid of sins and the balance of karmā can be discharged by engaging in activities according to dharma. Before this body perishes, the karmā must be discharged and the three impurities* (as Śaiva Siddhanthis call it) should be got rid of.

It may be asked, ‘Why before this body perishes? When we have another birth and another body, we can act with that body’, we do not know what kind of body we will get in the next birth. Even great men have expressed fear about this. How can it be said that in the next birth it will be human body endowed with all the facilities with which puṣṭya karmās can be performed? Even if we get a human body, how can we say that we will have the mind, the strength, the convenience, circumstances and surroundings to do sath karmā? Can it be said that what we are now having in this karmā bhūmi - so many sāstrās, kshēthram, sthōthrās, spiritual practices, Āchāryās, the examples of great men will be available in the next birth? In this birth, with this body, we should achieve purity of mind, attain jivan mukthi. Bhagawān also has said in Gītā.

Saknōṭhihaiva yah sōḍum prāk sarīra vimōkshanāth
Kāma krōḍhōdhhbhavam vēgham sa yukthah sa sukī narah (v-23)

He begins with ‘Saknōṭhi ihaiva’. Iha ēva becomes ihaiva. Iha eva means even when we are here. Then he says ‘Prāk sarīra vimōkshanāth’ which means ‘before this body goes’. ‘One who becomes strong enough to bear the disturbances caused by desires, anger etc, that is not affected by these and who can control them even here before this body goes, he is the one who has attained yōga siddhi’ - this is the idea he has expressed in this slōka.

* the three impurities are ego, karmā and mayā
All these many puṇya karmās and religious observances are for getting rid of desire and anger, that is, the mind getting purified. Before this body falls and life leaves this body, if we do all these with its help and make sure that there is no desire or anger, we can join what is called 'Big life'. We need not have to be born again. But if life goes without doing these things, we do not know whether it will take birth as cattle. Therefore, till we know that we have got rid of desires, anger etc and have purified the mind, we have to make efforts to protect this body. But in spite of our efforts, if He brings to end our life, it is a different matter. If that happens due to our karmā and His līlā, (divine sport) let it happen. There is nothing that we can do about it.

I would say something to those who ask ‘If death is in His hands, what is the meaning of our trying to increase our longevity?’. If it is looked at this way, is it only in the case of death? All our affairs - marriages, all functions, jobs, achievement, doing good and bad - all are in His hands. What can we do unless the great controller manipulates? But strangely this drama goes on as if we have freedom to make effort and act. Therefore, just as we make efforts and do things in all other matters which are in His hands, even though death is in His hands, we should become qualified before this life comes to an end to cross the cycle of birth and death. With this object in view, we are bound to protect our life and it is for this we have to protect the body. It is for assisting in this, many rishis have compiled the Āyurvedha Šāsthram and given us.

In Āyurvedha, one thing has been said clearly. It is said 'Do not treat an atheist'. When one hears this, he may react, 'What is this? This has been said without any compassion!' But really speaking it has been said like this only out of compassion. Suffering is felt only because of disease. It is only when an atheist suffers due to disease and he struggles to come out of the suffering, he will be able to think ‘If it is true that there is God and if the
Vedha sāstrās are true, let Him save me; after that I will act according to sāstrās'. If it is said that the Vaidya will not treat him, the atheist will turn to God. It is likely that Bhagawān himself may cure him. We read about Appar and some others who became atheist and by Īswara’s will they were afflicted with a disease and later they became cured by Īswara sakthi. Then they became believers again. It is not that this happened only in olden days. Even now many atheists who have suffered from some severe form of disease, got cured by the blessings of Venkatāchalapathi, Guruvāyūrappan or some great person (mahān), a Siddha Purushā and have become believers. They themselves have written about their transformation. It is only if medical treatment is denied to an atheist there is greater chance that he may turn to Bhagawān. Bhagawān also gets the chance of converting many others by saving him. Even if He has not protected, the atheist will be born as a believer in the next birth for having thought of God.

If disease is not cured by treatment, an atheist will have to continue to suffer, is it not? By experiencing this suffering his sins will get reduced. Is it not a help? Is he not one who has not practised any anusṭānam to get rid of his sin?

By treating an atheist and increasing his longevity, it will amount to his increasing the sin of his being an atheist. Opportunity would have been provided for others to go wrong because of him. It is because of compassion that all this serious ‘dhōsham’ should not affect him, it has been said like that. Let us keep aside that topic.

It will be understood from what I said that body care is necessary both from the point of view of religion and Vedanṭhā. ‘Saṟiram ādhyam kalu dharma sādhanaṁ’ is what Kālidāsā has written. This is what is conveyed by the saying ‘The wall has to be taken care of if the drawing on it is to be all right’. Just as kusā grass, samith and ghee and other materials used for āhuthi are aids
for hōmam, the body of the one who conducts the yagna (yajamān) is also a tool. If it is not there, how can Vedha yagna be conducted for the good of the world? When life itself is a hōmam, the body becomes the tool, which has to be protected so that it can become āhuthi to that hōmam.

In the language of Vedāarthā, it used to be said that the grain is important and the husk should be thrown away; āthmā is the grain and the body is like the husk. But we gather the husk also for being used in hōmam. If we use paddy as havis and do āhuthi, to brighten the agni which accepts the āhuthi, we use husk. In much the same way, the body is to be taken care of.

On the whole, what comes out of all that I have said is: till the mature stage is reached in which one does not bother about the body and remains steady in āthmā or gains the steadiness to ignore any bodily disease and do dhyāna on Īswara, one is bound to protect the body from disease.

There is a Śāsthram called Mīmāṃsam. There are two branches in it - Pūrva Mīmāṃsam and Uththara Mīmāṃsam. Pūrva Mīmāṃsam deals with karma mārgam and the dharma anushtānas related to them. Uththara Mīmāṃsa deals with jnāna mārgam. For both it is necessary to protect the body. Even the one who takes to jnāna marga, has to take care of his health to enable him to read sacred books on jnānā and make self - enquiry before he attains the state of nishtai in Samādhi.

In yōgā, when practising Rāja Yōgam, āsanam and prāntāyānam give good health. By Hata Yōgā the body is developed in a manner that it acquires fantastic powers.

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Three methods are mentioned for protection of the body - gem, manthra and medicine. Each of the nine gems (nava rathnās) has a power to cure a particular disease and is liked by one of the Nava Grahās (the nine planets). Though disease affects the body due to karmā, that karmā arises taking the form of a planetary fault. Therefore by way of propitiating the planet the appropriate gem is worn as a ring or a chain or a mūrthi is made out of the gem and the water with which the mūrthi is bathed (abhisēkam) is taken. Do we not call nava rathnās as nava māti? Just as treatment is done with mani, treatment is also done using silver, copper, mercury and other metals.

The second is manthra: doing manthra japam, doing japās connected with the mūrthis Jwarahareśwarar, Kambahareśwarar, doing Sūrya namaskāram, reciting Kandar Anubhūthi, by which disease is cured. Aushadham is the science by which diseases are cured by medicine. Ōshadhi is herb. Aushadham is derived from this word. In Āyurvedha, medicines are prepared by using herbs. Just as there are Coral basmam, pearl basmam, gold basmam (generally called basmam) - sometimes gem and metals are also used, the important basic ingredient in Āyurvedha is only herb.

In the Siddhā system, there is more of medicine made with mani and metal. Siddhā system is also based on our sāstrās. But they have high potency. If it is not correctly taken, it will have very bad effect. A very small quantity of chūrṇam is the dosage. Therefore one has to be very careful in taking treatment by this method. Agasthiyar, Thērayar and other Siddha Purushās have given us Siddha vaidya sāstrās in a language we cannot understand. It is because they are powerful, they have written in a language which everyone cannot understand.
In *Āyurvēdhā* and *Siddhā* systems of treatment, *manthras* are also used to make the medicine more effective. *Vaidyās* who belong to a good tradition will prepare the medicine along with *mantra japās* and administer it with *manthrās*.

It is the practice to associate with medicines ‘Thrayambaka manthram’, (the three holy names) Achyutha, Anantha, *Gōvinda*, *manthrās* appropriate to Dhanvanthri, *Aswini Devās*, Sūryā and others. Ādithya Hrudhayam of which Agasthya gave upadēsā to Sri Rāmachandramūrthi is famous. For poisonous bites, whatever herb or *Sindhūram* (the churna in siddha system is called *Sindhūram* or *Sendhūram*) is given with *manthra* japa only. The *manthrās* related to Garuda *Bhaṭagān* of whom the snakes are scared have wonderful power to remove poison. Our *Āchāryā* in a *slōka* in *Soundarya Lahari* (the 20th *slōka*) has said that if one meditates on Ambāl as *Chandrakāntha Silā Varīṇa Mūrthi* from whose various parts rays of *amrutha rasā* are flowing, he gets the power to neutralise snake poison just as Garudā. For such a person ‘Amrutha Nādi’ develops and after that by his very look the fever of others will come down. By doing *japā* of this *slōka* itself, it is possible to cure fever etc. Doing *japā* of certain other *slōkas* of ‘Soundarya Lahari’ also can cure diseases. Since *Nārāyaṇa* Bhattachari sang *Nārāyanīyam* and got relieved of his stomach ache this also is recited for getting cured. There is a verse in ‘Thiruppugazh’ which is also recited for the cure of diseases. *Thrurītruppadigam* which *Sambandamūrthi Swāmigal* recited to cure a *Pāṇdian* king is also recited and *Vibhūthi* is applied. The affected person himself used to do the *japā* of this through the medium of *Vibhūthi* or water or honey or milk and apply it on his forehead or drink it. But if he is too weak, another person can do the *japā* on his behalf and apply the *Vibhūthi* to him and put it in his mouth; the sick person can also be asked to drink honey, milk. *Japā* of *Gāyathri* which is called ‘*Manthra Rājā*’ is also done for curing diseases.
Vibhūthi has a special power in this. We see even ordinary folk asking for Vibhūthi and applying it on themselves and swallowing a little. Those who are knowledgeable will recite Panchāksharam or Shadāksharam and apply the Vibhūthi. Āchāryā himself has glorified the Vibhūthi of Tiruchendūr as ‘Sarva Rōha Haraṇam’ (destroyer of all diseases). (The sloka commencing with ‘Apasmāra’ in Subramanya Bhujangam). It is not necessary that this Vibhūthi should be applied or taken through mouth. It is enough if it is seen for a second. Vilōkya Kshaṁtāth – fits, leprosy, fever, madness and mischief of evil spirits will all go, he says. It is said that the idol of Palarī Aiṇḍavan is made of herbal juices solidified. Therefore, what is used for his abhishēkam is given for curing diseases. In many other holy places (Kshetras) prasādams which have medicinal value are given like Tiruchur ghee, Guruvāyur thailam etc. Instead of any physical prasādam, if people take a vow to go up the Tirupathi hills by foot, to do anga pradakshīṇam, offering māṅgalya etc, Venkataramanāsawāmi cures even incurable diseases. Paramēśwarā also, in addition to curing the disease of samsārā (pavarōgam) is in Vaithiśwaran Koil as Vaidyanathaswami to cure the various diseases that afflict people. Since the disease gets dissolved in the manner of salt and jaggery getting dissolved, people take a vow to dissolve them.

One indigenous vaidyā has written that Bilva leaves which Paramēśwarā is fond of, thulasi which is liked by Perumāl and margosa which is for Ambāl (more especially Māriamman) are mixed in equal quantity and a handful is taken everyday, no disease will come.

He has also said: the breeze from margosa tree cleans the blood and also cures the ailments connected with pregnancy; the breeze of the pīpal tree has the power to cure the diseases of uterus; since it is laid down that pīpal and margosa should be married and those who have no issues should go round them, the reason for pregnancy is known according to Vaidya sāsthras.
It has also been written that dhūp (incense) and camphor used in pūjā also act as disinfectant and prevent diseases.

If there is unshakable bhakthi, anything can be achieved through it including curing of diseases or we can gain the high state in which we remain unconcerned about health or disease. In this, manthrās which are beyond Vaidya Śāstrā, herbs which are part of Vaidya Śāstrā like margosa, thuḷaśi and other medicinal things may be combined.
When Āyurvedham is considered as only a medical science, it is not connected much with divinity. But it is not completely devoid of any connection with divinity in the manner of Allopathic or Unani systems. The fact that it has been laid down in Āyurvedha sāstrā that an atheist should not be treated is proof of this.

It is usual to practise Āyurvedha with Iswara dhyānam, particularly with the worship of Dhanvanthri. When the Milky Ocean was churned Mahā Viṣṇu took the avatār of Dhanvanthri and brought from the ocean the Amruth Kalaś.

Apart from this, it is only Āyurvedha which is not much in conflict with our religious sāstrās. In the Allopathic system and western medicines there are many aspects not acceptable to our sāstrās. Excepting a few things like the use of garlic, there are not many aspects in Āyurvedha which violate āchāraṇ. Even after taking such medicines, there is provision for doing Prāyaschitham and Puṇyāhavāchanaṇaṇaṃ. It will be good if as far as possible āsthikās do not go in for the western system of treatment. It is said that Āyurvedhic medicines take time to have effect but Allopathic medicines give immediate result. Even if it takes more time, Āyurvedha goes into the roots of the disease and cures it. Those who know say that it is not so in Allopathy and that mostly the cure is temporary. Also Allopathic medicines have after effects and side effects even when curing a disease. This is not so in Āyurvedha. Even if some troubles show up when treatment is commenced, these will subside soon without becoming a prolonged affair.

It is important that our medical science should accord with Vēdha sāstrā. Just because the body is to be taken care of, nothing
should be done against *Vedha sāsthrā* because that itself would be atheism (nasthikyam*). An atheist should not be treated at all!

*Dharma Sāsthrā* and *Āyurvedha* largely go hand in hand. The science of religion is there to ensure that the three qualities of a man - *sathva*, *rajo* and *thamo* - are maintained in a state of balance by neutralising each other without any of these becoming excessive. What has been said in detail in the ‘*dharṣanam*’ called *Sānkya* (understand *dharṣanam* as a *sāstrā* related to the soul) about this is acceptable to Vaidhika *Dharma*. *Krishṇa Paramāthmā* has spoken about these three qualities in several chapters in *Gītā*. Since *Sānkya* and *yoga* are *sāstrās* which go hand in hand, in *Yoga Sāsthrā* also, importance has been given to the three qualities. It is this balancing of the *sathva*, *rajo* and *thamo* guṇas in spiritual science based on *Vedhās* that becomes the balancing of the humors of the body, namely, kapa, vādha and pitha in our *Vaidya Sāsthrā*.

*Vedhānthā* says that since the three qualities are the reasons for *Māyā* and *Avidhyā* (ignorance) if these are balanced and the mind is brought to a balanced state, everything will subside in peace. The same idea is expressed by *Āyurvedha* differently - *Kabhā*, *vādha* and *piththā* are responsible for all the ills of body and if these are balanced the body will be all right. What the *Vedānthā* speaks in relation to mind, *Āyurvedha* speaks in relation to the body. Just as it is said that for all the thousands of disorders in prakriti, the main reason is within the three guṇas, the basic cause for all the diseases that afflict the body are the three humors in the body.

*Kabhā* causes cold, tuberculosis, pleurisy, pneumonia etc. This is mainly connected with the lungs but pervades the

*Please refer to the sub-title ‘*Vedhās and Tamil Nādu*’ under the subject *Vedha* in part II of the *The Voice of God* - *nāsthi*kyam is not having faith in *Vedha dharma* procedures rather than not having belief in God.
whole body in the form of blood. ‘Vādham’ and ‘Vāyu’ are one and the same, meaning air. Catch, pain in the bones, heaviness of body etc result from this. Vādham is the cause of several diseases such as rheumatism, arthritis etc. Although, one may think of air as breath and therefore related to lungs it is spread all over the body. Therefore this is also a humor that relates to the whole body. ‘Piththā’ affects particularly the bile and all the digestive juices that are secreted. Therefore, it is considered to relate to all this. But it does not mean that it is connected only with the digestive organs. The food that is digested runs through the whole body as blood. Therefore, any disorder caused by piththā also affects the entire body. Āyurvedham says that by a feel of the ‘nādi’ it can be diagnosed which dhāthu (humor) has caused the disturbance.

It appears to us that each dhāthu is connected with a particular part of the body. But since actually these pervade the entire body whether the trouble is in the heart, brain, eyes, ears, nose, mouth etc, the nadi is first checked before Āyurvedhic treatment is commenced.

When our Vaidya Sāstrā and Vedāntha Sāstrā spread to other countries, in some countries like Greece, these three dhāthus were classified as four. Along with three guṇas and three dhāthus they added our principle of the five elements (pancha bhūtham) and called them four humors. They left out the element of ether (ākāśam) which is known only to those who have the subtle experience and considered only four elements. They have clearly stated that the four humors in the human body determine the person’s qualities (guṇa). The four humors are, phlegm (kabam), choler (piththam), melancholy (this is also another kind of piththam), blood. Since the purification of blood is done by breathing, this can be considered Vādham. These are matched with the guṇa in the following manner: If a person has more phlegm, he will be subdued and unconcerned about all things. (this can be
assumed to be sathvam). If choler is more, he will be an angry person (this is rajō guna). If melancholy is more, he will be melancholy (this can be considered as thamas). If blood is more, he will be emotional (this is also rajas*).

I have been telling that in talking of three guṇas and three dhathus, our ancient Vaidya Śāstrā accords with Vēdantha Śāstrā. In the same manner, panchagavyam, which is according to Dharma Śāstrā has been prescribed by Vaidya Śāstrā also. Dharma Śāstrā has prescribed that as expiation for sins, panchagavyam which is a mix of the cow’s milk, curd, ghee, dung and urine should be taken. Vaidya Śāstrā also prescribes the same for prevention of attack by new germs when a person is weak after recovery from a disease.

What has been indicated as sin and puṇyam in Vaidhika Śāsthram is mentioned in Āyurvedhām as Hitham and Ahitham, that is what does good to the body and what does bad. Does not āchāra earn puṇya and anāchāra earn sin? That is why in our Vaidya Śāstrā, Anāchāram is mostly excluded as ahitham. That is why I say that except when Allopathic treatment is to be taken under unavoidable circumstances those who have faith in our Dharma Śāstrās will have to go for Āyurvedhīc treatment. I say that for everything one need not go for Cod liver, liver extract etc.

* this whole para was said by a disciple and Sri Periyavā told it to others.
Surgery

If surgery is to be undertaken, it has come to be accepted that it is Allopathic. In the present circumstances, this is unavoidable. Even those who are very particular about āchāram have to go for modern surgery, for cataract etc. Although we cannot do anything about this now, my view is that things have gone wrong in earlier days due to our carelessness.

The mistake is that we have come to believe that surgery is not part of our medical system. Really speaking, it is here that from ancient times when the practice of Āyurvēdha started, surgery was also part of it. The basic text for Āyurvēdha are the two Samhithās written by two great men, Charakā and Śuṣruthā. It appears that Charaka Rishi was Pathanjali only. Charaka has elaborated what Agnivesya Rishi wrote. Ashtānga Hrudhayam written by Vākpatar is also an authority for Āyurvēdha. In Tamil language also, a number of works have existed traditionally. Of the two, Charakā and Śuṣruthā, Charakā was a physician and Śuṣruthā, a surgeon. These days we have the M.B.B.S. which covers both. M.B. is one who gives medicines. B.S. is one who conducts surgery - Bachelor of Surgery. If we had protected Āyurvēdha in its complete form, the Āyurvēdhic doctors would have acquired proficiency in surgery in addition to medicine. But Śuṣrutha’s work has not received the same publicity as Charaka Samhithā. We are the losers for it.

I shall tell you the tragedy in this. You all know about Encyclopaedia Britannica. In that there are details of every science and art. Every twenty or thirty years, it is updated and new editions are published. In that the history of every science or sāsthrā (when it originated, where, who all carried it to different places etc.) is given. In that it is stated that surgery originated in India. Originating here, it went to Arabia, from there to Greece, then Italy and then to entire Europe.
It appears that whatever modern surgical instruments are in use now in hospitals have been mentioned in *Suśrutham*. By studying the newly discovered palmyra leaf records, researching into *Rig Vēdhā, Purāṇās* etc, many scholars have been writing that our ancients were well aware of the subtleties of surgery. In *Rig Vēdhā*, it is said that a queen who was a heroine lost her leg in war and *Dēva Vaidyās – Aświni Dēvās* fixed iron legs. In Valmiki *Rāmāyaṇa* it is said that Indra who had misbehaved with Ahalya lost his organ and the organ of a goat was fixed. In *Mahābhāratā* it is said that *Śyavanar* and *Yayāthi* overcame their old age and regained youth. When these stories are matched with what I have stated in *Vaidya Śāstrā*, research scholars find ‘these are not imaginary but what have actually happened because what we understand from the details given in *Vaidya Śāstram* is that even in olden times artificial limb surgery, transplantation of parts, plastic surgery were being practised.

In surgery, it is important to prevent a part becoming septic. During operation one should be kept unconscious. It has been shown that these two aspects were also in practice in olden times. *Kulasēkara Āzhwār* has sung ‘Just as a patient loves the *Vaidyā* even if he cuts with a sword and burns, in whatever manner *Bhagawān* may test me, my love for Him remains constant’. In this ‘cutting with the sword’ is surgery. Then ‘burning’ is cauterizing so that it does not become septic.

When there was so much knowledge of surgery, in later days, surgery in *Āyurvedha* suffered decline. I think there were two reasons for this. However carefully an operation may be performed, it is fraught with a risk. There were many instances when there were after effects of surgery. Therefore, extra caution was observed in passing on the knowledge to novices and the expertise remained with a few people with the result that in course of time the science was lost to a large extent. Another reason: The *Vaidyās* of those times were great in *anushtānam* and had the
power of penance. Therefore, they knew what herb was available in Himalayas or Podhigai hills. However serious the disease was or however deep a wound, they could find and successfully use a herb. When the whole army had fallen unconscious, Anjanéya swámi brought the Sanjíva hill. We read that as soon as the breeze from this herb touched the army, the entire army got up with renewed strength. Since they were able to cure most of the ailments with herbs, it appears possible that they avoided surgery and in course of time the science was forgotten.

In addition to medicine and surgery, several other treatment procedures are mentioned in Áyurvedha. There is one procedure called ‘Lebham’. Application of ointment and plaster is part of lebham. In the medical system, practised in Kerala, these are followed. ‘Vamanam’ is a procedure by which the patient is made to vomit and the ailment cured. ‘Viróchanam’ is the procedure of inducing loose motion. ‘Swéthanam’ is making a patient sweat so that bad water is brought out of the body. By ‘Snéhanam’ oil is applied and medicine is passed inside. This is also largely in the Kerala system. To bring out what is bad inside, among the ‘Panchakarma’ there is ‘Násyam’ by which sneezing is induced through the nose. ‘Anuvásanam’ and ‘Nírúham’ are two kinds of enema.

Apart from curing diseases which are visible, cures were also available for diseases which are internal like that of the brain, intestine, bones, nerves, blood (blood pressure), diabetes. There were methods for diagnosing these. It is generally thought that Áyurvedha means medicines made from herbs and minerals (Rasa Varga). Trees, plants, creepers all come under herb. Sulphur, metals and poison etc come under Rasa Vargam.

We hear that ‘Káyakalpam’ means protecting the body from deterioration. It is well known that there is no one who has become permanently young (Chíranjívi). But it is known that those who
took care of the body and ensured that the virile energy is not wasted and lived a life of peace had a much longer life than others without being afflicted by disease. It appears that if the body is taken care of for practising thapas, ṣṭhāpa, ḛnāṇa etc the results are better than if the body is taken care of merely for enjoyment. In Kāyakalpam, chemical science has a major place. There were chemical treatments given when remaining in the midst of a herd of cows and being under a āmalā tree. This is evidence of what I have said that what is sin and purya in Vedha Śāsthram becomes Hitham and Ahitham in Vaidya Śāsthram. In Dharma Śāthrā it is said that if the dust raised by the cows falls on us it is remedy for sins and if meditation is done under an āmalā tree it has greater effect. This concept has been incorporated in Vaidya Śāsthram through chemical treatment.

On the whole, the procedures by which Kāya Siddhi is done help increase new blood and muscles.
OTHER SCIENCES IN ĀYURVĒDA

From what I said now it will be seen that Chemistry and Physics play a part in Vaidya Śāsthrā. It is not chemistry alone. It will be surprising to know that other seven or eight sciences also find a place in Vaidya Śāsthrā.

Since the nature of the herb had to be known before they could be used for making medicine, they had good knowledge of Botany also. When they had studied the properties of minerals which form another basic raw material for medicines, Chemistry had to be studied. Is it enough if it is known what materials are to be used for making a medicine and what medicine is to be administered? It is also necessary to know the body system into which the medicines are administered. How can treatment be done without understanding the body of the patient? Thus physiology also came to be part of Vaidya Śāsthrā. Veterinary treatment was also known and practised. Since every house had cows, there were bulls for agriculture, different animals in the army, there was need to take care of their health. Therefore they had studied Zoology also and included it in Vaidya Śāsthrā. The rishis had known all the sciences through their supernatural powers and given us sāsthras like Āyurvedha. Rishis who were compassionate thought not only of animals but also of trees, plants and creepers and to cure the diseases affecting them, they have given ‘Vrikshāyurvedham’. Thus except physics they have given us all the sāsthras through Āyurvedha. They have given us physics also through other sciences and also separately. Sir P.C. Ray has conducted research and proved that the roots of modern science are to be found in our ancient sāsthras. The Westerners claim ‘what we have discovered in the last two or three hundred years was not known earlier’. But in Charakam and Šuśrutham which are at least 2000 years old, even according to them, these modern sciences are there.
REGULATION OF DIET WHEN TAKING MEDICINE

What others and even modern people appreciate about Ayurvedha is that it not only prescribes medicines, it has prescribed ‘Pathyam’ to be observed while taking medicines. Pathyam means following a particular path. The Tamil word ‘Pāthai’ and the English word ‘Path’ have been derived from ‘Pathi’. Pathyam is meant for going on the healthy path. It is not enough just to take medicine. What is important is to exclude certain items from food and take the prescribed things and the prescribed quantity. This is what is meant by observing Pathyam. Of the several pathyams, one is that all people should skip a meal now and then and fast on one day in a fortnight. Vaidya Šāstram says that it is good to fast one day in a fortnight. We are following this as upavās on Ekādași day. It is an example that Dharma Šāstrās and our ancient Vaidya Šāstrās go hand in hand.
REASONS FOR FOLLOWING THE ĀYURVĒDHA SYSTEM

One of the reasons why we in this country should follow the indigenous Āyurvedha system is that then only as far as possible, there will not be anāchāram. There is another reason which is related to Nature, that is part of Īswarā’s creation. Every country has a particular climatic condition. People in each country use as food whatever is grown there. Their health and disease are related to these. We see that the particular climate of a country and what is grown there only suit the people there. In the same manner Bhagawān has enabled people to adopt medical system to suit these. He has also created the materials required for such medical treatment in each country. In Īswarā’s creation, it has come naturally that we who are to live a sāthvik life, will get cured from medicines made from herbs and minerals. He has blessed our rishis with Āyurvedham so that those who are in this karma bhūmi will not violate Dharma Śāsthrā which is the backbone of Karmānushtāna and get protection of body, cure of diseases and improvement of longevity. He has also given to people in different countries āchārās which are in accordance with their state of maturity and religious observances and medical system to suit these.

It is not only in medicine. Architecture for building houses (silpa) and agricultural methods (krishi) were also in accordance with the conditions in each country. If we construct our houses in western fashion, we are unable to do our anushtānam. If we adopt the Japanese method of agriculture and increase the produce we are faced with drought or excessive rain. ‘We should not disturb Nature. We should allow it to balance ups and downs’, say those who are knowledgeable. This is to be considered in all fields including medical science.
In *Charaka Samhithā* which is the authority for *Āyurveda*, this has been stated clearly:

*Yasmin dhēse hi yō jāthah*

*Thasmai thajjaushadham hitham*

In a country there are lots of people. In the same manner, herbs and other medicinal things also grow. In Īswarā’s dispensation, this is not something that is happening in a blind manner. The meaning of the *sloka* is that for a person in a particular country, a particular medicine made from particular materials only will suit. This is what has been stated in Charakam as ‘in whichever country one is born, for him the medicine that is suitable is what is made from the materials available in that country’.

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The deterioration in our condition is so much that if all of you start taking Ayurvedhic treatment because of my saying, Ayurvedhic doctors will not be available to treat all the people. The reason is that over a long period medical degree has come to mean Allopathic medicine and there has been no place for Ayurvedha. About fifty years back, there was hope that things could change a little. At that time Justice Party was in power in Madras Presidency. When the Raja of Panagal (The park in Mambalam has been named after him) became a Minister he thought that since some power and responsibility had been transferred to Indian hands, something swadesi must be done. Since he was a scholar in Sanskrit he studied the old sasthras (science and arts) and he was of the view that these should be supported. He was of the view that only indigenous medicine will suit us and other systems will have bad effect. He felt 'Ayurvedha is declining like this' and to rejuvenate it he started a Ayurvedha Vidhyā Sala. Because Ayurvedha received some attention at that time, somehow very slowly they have brought it to the stage of GCIM degree. Still it has not gained much publicity in the manner in which much lesser things have received. Since people also did not have real liking for swadesi, what was started in a small way by the Panagal Raja has not grown to the extent it should after we became free. Very recently there is some awakening among the intelligentsia. Therefore it appears that things could improve.

Ayurvedha can be supported for three reasons: One is that anachārām is minimum in this. The second is that it suits the climatic conditions here and the body system of our people. Third is that it is less expensive. One more thing is that it tastes better. Several herbs have aromatic properties. Therefore even in bitter preparations and preparations based on castor oil, there is no bad smell.
Long ago, surgery went from here to other countries where it was not known. But later we reached the stage where people would ask 'Is there surgery in Āyurvēdha?' If we lose all our old sāstrās like this, there will be nothing to feel happy about our having self rule. When VIPs from other countries come, Tribal Dance is shown to them as if this is only preserving our native culture.

Āyurvēdha takes into account all the characteristics of medical science, the quality of the body, the nature of the disease, how they are caused, how to prevent them, how to cure them if they affect, what should be the quality of the materials used for making the medicine etc, - all these have been considered carefully. Therefore Āyurvēdha deserves to be protected. We should not allow the very science that protects our body to be afflicted by disease. Apart from being a complete medical science, other sciences are also in it. Although so many sciences are there, instead of the notion that science must go against Samayāchāram, Āyurvēdha accords with āchāram. Therefore, we should help increase its longevity.

'Health is wealth'. 'The wall is to be taken care of if a picture is to be painted on it'.- These are sayings that underline the importance of health. The healthy air, simplicity and anushtānams of village life have given way to urban life with crowding of all sorts and the result is the phenomenal increase in disease. Along with medical treatment, Īswarā has to be prayed too for getting cured. In several works of pārāyan related to God, in the Phalaśruthi there are statements like 'Rogārthe muchyathe rogāth' - cure of diseases has been indicated as a benefit for reciting a sthóthrā. From this it is seen that body care is necessary for protecting religion. All people should get this protection from the Vaidya Śāstrā which is in accordance with our culture and lead a happy life.
Dhanurvedham
Why It Was Evolved

Ayurvedham evolved due to the need for taking care of the health and strength of the body. Dhanurvedham contains the systematized rules and regulations for fighting wars.

The ideal is of course ahimsā and love to all. But during all times and in all places, there was a desire to expand the territory under one’s rule resulting in invasions and wars between countries. Therefore, the need arose to have a science which would codify the art of war, to teach the use of arms and to make them. That is how Dhanurvedham evolved.

In sāstrās there are references to the fight between Devās and Asurās. The incident of Indrā slaying Vridhrāsurā has been described as a great example of the victory of dharma over adharmā. We see that any Swāmi (god) has acquired a specific name and fame only by slaying the asuras - Thripura samhāram, Jalandharāsura vādham, Hiranāya vādham, Padmaśūra vādham, Mahishāśūra vādham, Bhandāśūra vādham, Rāvana vādham, Kamsa vādham, Narakaśūra vādham, Kaurava samhāram etc. Whichever God one looks at - Īswarā, Mahā Vishnu, Pillaiyar, Subramanya, Ambāl, Rāmā, Krishtā - all of them gained glory only by killing asurās. The names Purāri, (Thri) purāri, Murāri, Mahishasūramardini have for their genesis the killing of particular enemies. ‘Ari’ means an enemy. Paramēśwarā has the name ‘Thri’ Purāri. He is the enemy of (Thri) Purās. Īswarā has also the names Kāmāri, Kālāri, Gajāri because he killed Kāman, Kālan and Gajasūran (Pillaiyar killed Gajamukhamāsūran: Gajasūra who was produced by the rishis of Dhārukā forest through their ‘Abhichāra yāgam’ was killed by Paramēśwarā Himself). Since the enemy Muran was killed by Krishtā he is called ‘Murāri’.

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Mardhanam is pounding an enemy into a paste. *Krishña Paramāthmā* performed ‘Nardhanam’ (dance) on *Kālingan* and did mardhanam. Of the several meanings of Mādhavan, one is that one who killed the *rākshasā* Madhu. The same event has given rise to the name *Madhusūdanan*. One of the meanings of *Kēśavā* is also one who killed the asura *Kēśi*.

In the mythologies of other countries and in epics like *Iliad* also, war has an important place.

What *Krishña* preached to *Arjuna*: ‘Fight for *dharmā*’ through *Gītā* which is today the crown of all books of *jnānā*.

Even a look at history shows that *Chandra Guptā, Rāja Rāja Chōla, Caesar, Napoleon* and others who had gained glory were those who had fought great wars and enlarged their empires.

Even the heroes glorified in epics and literature have been people of great valour. There is a class of literature called ‘*Bharatī*’ (in Tamil) only to glorify those who have been men of valour and gained victories.
THE CODE FOR PUNISHMENT

In practical life a code for punishment becomes necessary for the sake of dharmā. Punishment is of two major types - the Police to punish the people who indulge in wrong acts and the Military to punish those who invade the country. Dhaṇḍam is the staff. People of all the Varnās who are entitled to Upanayana Samskāram have a dhaṇḍam for achieving ‘Āṭhma Jayam’ (Victory over the self), Indriya Jayam (victory over the sense organs) and Manō Jayam (victory over the mind). This is inner enemy. The mind has six enemies (shadvipu) - desire, lust, anger, miserliness, jealousy, delusion (moham) and arrogance. These have to be conquered. In addition to this, the king has to conquer those external enemies to dharmā - those who commit offences, thieves, murderers, soldiers of other countries who invade and thus establish dharmā. As an insignia for this, the king has a staff (the sceptre). The Tamil word for punishment, namely, ‘dhaṇḍanai’ is derived from dhaṇḍam. Dhanurvēdham is there for the kshathriya to punish internal and external enemies.

Although fights and violence are necessary in the practical world our ancestors did not give importance to physical strength and did not want that everyone should have training in fighting. They had made only the kshathriyas entitled to this.

It was the Brahmin who learnt all the arts and sciences and instructed each jāthi in its own field of duty. Of the six duties he had to perform one was this adhyāpanā (teaching, instructing others). He can only teach trade and commerce and the techniques of war to the appropriate jāthi but he should not himself take to trade or war. His swadharma is to protect the Vēdhās. Those like Parāsurāmā and Dhrōṇā who had themselves fought are only exceptions.
In Germany everyone was trained for war and the result was that the people became intoxicated with their power and caused the World War. The arrangement made by our sāstrās is not like this. At the same time, they did not overemphasise the concept of ahimsā and did not make us cowards and therefore have given the Dhanurvedha to the kshathriyās only.

Dhanurvedham defines the methods of punishment to be meted out when kings of other countries resort to violence against one’s country. According to this, a king should always be ready to fight a war. Now too the Government keeps claiming that whoever wags their tail, we are in a state of Military preparedness. It is one thing to be in a state of preparedness but it is another to make such a claim in order to ensure that the enemy does not become bold to venture and also to prevent demoralization of our own people. This is diplomacy. If we increase the strength of our army and the stock of military hardware, even then we should not give publicity to it. If you do so, others will think that we are war-mongers. In the same manner, if the strength of our army and our own military equipments in stock are not adequate, these also should not be made public. If these are made public, it will encourage others to invade. These matters concerning diplomacy are part of Artha Śāstrā which is another of the Upa Vedhās.

According to Dhanurvedha, a king has got to be prepared all the time for a war. This is to ensure that evil minded kings do not enter into his territory and create chaos. The king who is a kshathriyā is duty bound to protect his country with the help of kshathriyās.
WHAT IS DHANUR?

The important part of Dhanurvedham deals with the types of weapons and how to use them. If it is considered why it is not called Āyudha Vedham but Dhanurvedham it is because the important weapon is the Dhanus (bow).

Sword, spear etc can be used only to fight one who is close by. Although the javelin can be used against one who is far away, it is possible that the person who throws it may not be able to get it back. The bow is not like this. It always remains in the hand and any number of arrows can be shot from it and the enemy can be shot down even when he is at a distance. The loss of an arrow is not as big as that of a javelin. It is neither big nor weighty. A strong kshathriya can easily carry on his shoulders a container with hundreds of arrows. Arrows will go one after the other as a ‘rain of arrows’. The bow from which so many arrows are shot will remain the same.
Weapons are of two kinds - Asthram and Šasthram. Šasthram is a weapon which is used against the enemy because of the power of the weapon and the capability of the person using it. It may be thought ‘all weapons are like this only’. That is true. In modern times, what comes out during war are only the power of the weapons and the tactics followed by the one who uses them. But in olden times, manthra sakthi was also used along with these. The weapon which is used along with a manthrā is ‘Asthram’. If great rishis, avathārs and noble persons recited a manthrā and fired even a bit of grass as a weapon, it had destroyed the enemy with his entire army. But generally, manthrās were associated with weapons and such weapons (sasthrās) were used as asthrās. The importance among the sasthrās is bow. Brahmāsthram has the power of the manthrā appropriate to Brahmā, Nārāyanāsthram has the power of the manthrā appropriate to Vishnu. Pāsupatāsthram has the power of the manthrā appropriate to Paramā. Like this there are asthras with manthrās appropriate to different Dēvathās - Varunāsthram, Agneyāsthram, Garudāsthram, Nāgāsthram. When it is said in Purāṇās that heroes had used these asthrās, they had used them with the aid of the bow. From Purāṇās it is seen that the devastation caused by these asthras was much bigger than that caused by the atom bomb. There are descriptions in the Purāṇā like this : ‘A weapon was fired, then there was smoke reaching to the skies; there was a flood of fire due to which all water bodies became dried up; even birds fell dead; the foetes in the womb got affected’. To those who thought that all this was false, the atom bomb and its radiation effect have created a feeling that what is described in the Purāṇās could be true. The power of manthrās which are the basis for creation itself, is much more than that got by splitting the atom. Asthrā with another manthrā is to be sent out to counter and repulse the attack by an asthrā with a particular
manthrā. Thus Garudāsthram neutralises Nāgāsthram. It is Garudā which overpowers and kills a snake. In the same way, to counter Agnēyāsthram it is Varuṇāsthram.

Kālidāsa in his Raghuvamsam tells through the words of Dilīpan that manthra sakthi is much more powerful than that of weapons. Dilīpan who was the king of the Solar Race came to the āsram of his kula guru (the guru of his clan) Vasīṣṭhā. Vasīṣṭhā enquires of him about the welfare of his kingdom. Dilīpan replies: ‘When you are the Kula guru and when your blessings are there, how can there be anything wanting in the welfare of my kingdom? If my arrow attacks a few people whom I can see, your manthra sakthi destroys the evil powers wherever they are and make my arrows useless. If my kingdom is prosperous, the reason for it is not my strength but your ‘Brahma thejas’ which supports it’.

In asthram, Sāsthrām and manthrā are combined. Thinking of the power of the kṣathriyās and the power of the manthrās discovered by the Brahma Rishis, one thing comes to mind. A king and a noble Brahmin sat on the same throne and ruled the kingdom. The name of that king is Achyuthappa Naik. He was the second in the line of the Naiks who ruled Thanjavūr. His father was Sēnappa Naik. The person who was responsible for him to establish a new kingdom at Thanjavūr was the great Gōvinda Dikshīthar. It was by following the advice of that noble Brahmin that Sēnappa who was in an ordinary position could establish a kingdom at Thanjavūr and become its king. Even after the death of Sēnappa, Gōvinda Dikshīthar was alive. Sēnappa’s son not only made Gōvinda Dikshīthar the Minister but elevated him in status as ‘Kula Kūthastha Purōhit’. He made him sit along with him on the same throne as Ardhāsanar. When a poet saw this, he said the following sloka.

Thrināmāṭhdhyanta nāṃnānu mahikṣith dikṣithaupau
Sāsthṛē Sāsthṛē cha kuchalau āhavēhū havēshu cha
Bhagawan has three names which are important. Achamanam is done by repeating these names. The three names are Achyutha, Anantha, Govinda. In this the first is Achyutha and the last is Govinda. Of the two people who are seated on the same throne, the name of the king (Mahikshith, that is one who rules) is the first name - Achyuthappa Naik. The other person has the last name - Govinda (Dikshithar). Of the two, the first was capable in Šasthram. The second was capable in Šasthram. The king got a name by his āhavam (war tactics). The Minister is great in havam that is performing yagna.

Šasthrē Šasthrē cha kuchalau āhavēhu havēshu cha

The sasthra sakthi should not be merely crude physical strength, enmity and anger but should be combined with sāstrā and the rules of dharmā. The power of kshathriyās should have for its support divine power and the power of jnānā. These are mentioned in Artha Šasthram when dealing with the King, the Purōhit and the Minister.

I said that Šasthrā becomes an Asthra with divine power largely on the basis of bow and the arrows. When there are several weapons, the reason why the art connected with training in the methods of warfare is called Dhanurvēdham is because of the special place that the Dhanus has.
THE BOWS OF GODS

All gods have a bow. Each of such bows has a distinct name. The bow in Paramaśivā’s hand is called ‘Pinākam’. It is for this reason that he has the name ‘Pinākapāni’. During Thripura Samhāram, he bent Mēru itself as a bow. Mahā Vishṇu is called by the name ‘Śārangapāni’. Many people keep this as their name. The ‘Rangam’ in this is not the same as Rangam in Srīrangam. There is no rangam (theatre) in this. The correct name is ‘Śārngam’ and not ‘Śārangam’. Śārngam is the bow in Mahā Vishṇu’s hand. Although it is generally said that He carries his weapons, Śanka, Chakra, Gadha and Padma weapons in his four hands, the bow, Śārngam, is also important to him. There is the Panchāyutha Sthoṭhrām in which the fifth namely the bow is included*. At the end of Viṣṇu Sahasranāmam also five weapons including Śārngam have been mentioned. In her Thiruppāvai, Āndāl while praying for rain compares it to the raining of arrows from Śārngam.

The Dēvās wanted to test the strength of Mahā Viṣṇu and Paramaśivā. The two accepted this and as a play they did Dhanur Yuddham. At that time, Mahā Viṣṇu caused some damage to Śiva’s bow. It was this Siva Dhanus which was slightly damaged that went to the Vidheha Rājās and finally came to Janaka. It was this bow which Rāmā broke to marry Sītā. (The place where Rāmā did ‘Dhanur Bhangam’ is Dharbhanga in Bihar). Then when they were returning to Ayōdhyā, Parasurāmā intercepted them and challenged Rāmā to tackle the bow which He was having. Parasurāmā told him, ‘You got a name by breaking a rotten bow in Mithila. See if you can tackle this bow. This is the Narāyana Dhanus which was not damaged during the fight between Śiva and

* In Panchāyutha Sthoṭhrām in the place of Padmam, the sword has been mentioned as Nandaki. At the end of Viṣṇu Sahasranāmam also Śanka, the sword Nandaki, Chakram, Sarngam and Gadha have been mentioned.
Vishňu. Rāma tackled that also very easily, targeted Paraśurāma’s avathara sakthi and absorbed it - this is the story in Rāmāyanaṁ. The moment we think of Rāmachandramūrthi we think of him only as Kōdhandapāṇī. In Krishna avathāram although He did not carry a bow, he had blessed his bosom friend, Arjunā to get the high status of bowman. The name of Arjunā’s bow was ‘Gāndīvam’. What is pronounced as ‘Gāndīpam’ is not correct.

Parāsakthi, when She is Rāja Rājēśwari keeps the Ikshu Dhanus which is a bow of sugarcane. Manmathā also has the same weapon.

There is thus some speciality for the bow. More than all these, the Upanishad gives the comparison of Dhanur practice to attaining the Nirguña Brahman which has become all these gods. Guru tells the disciple, ‘Sowmya! Take the Mahā asthram in Upanishad, fix on it the arrow which has been sharpened by upāsanā, target the Akshara and shoot the arrow with the attitude of becoming the target itself. (Mundakōpanishad 2-2-3). What is referred to as Mahā Asthram here is Īmkhāram. The arrow is the jīva. The target Aksharam is that which does not perish namely Parabrahmam. It means that the jīva by the sādhana concentrates and sharpens it, engages in Omkhara Dhyāna, reaches the Brahman and gets merged with it just as the arrow gets embedded in the target. Here, Īmkhāram is depicted as the bow.

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THREE TYPES OF WEAPONS

Sastham is of three types - Muktham, Amuktham and Mukthamuktham. To leave something and let it go is Muktham. The root ‘Much’ means giving up. Muktham is derived from it. Mukthi is leaving samsaram permanently. Mukthi is also derived from ‘moch’ which is another form of ‘much’. In Tamil the word for Mukthi is ‘Viduthalai’. This is derived from ‘Viduthal’ that is giving up. Because the pearl gets released from the shell, it has got the name Muktham. In Tamil, we call it ‘Muththu’. Of the weapons, those which are thrown by the hand (those which leave the hand) are Muktham. If we throw a stone that too is Muktham. All weapons like arrows which fly off the hand are Muktham. Amuktham is what is held in the hand like a sword, spear etc.

In very serious situations in war even spears are thrown at the enemy. In Dhanur the bow remains in the hand as Amuktham and the arrows which fly are Muktham. There are also weapons which have noose at the end. In the idols of Ambal, this will be found in the upper right hand. This will be seen in Pillaiyar’s upper right hand. In this, one end of the noose can be kept tight in the hand then the noose is thrown at the enemy and his neck can be caught in the noose and he can be pulled. This is Mukthamuktham. Some chakras (wheels) are so designed that with the expertise of the person who throws it, will attack the enemy and return to the person who threw it. This is also Mukthamuktham. It is said that the weapon Boomerang can attack a target and return to the place from which it has been fired.

Great men of purāntā times, instead of using Mahā Manthrās with any weapon obtained a special weapon from the particular Devathā to be used with a special manthrā.

When such Divyāsthrās are used, they will recite such manthrās which will ensure that the asthrās return to them after
attacking the target. Getting back an asthrā which has been fired is called Upa Samhāram. It is the rule that one who does not know this should not use Divyāsthrā. This rule is to ensure that if the weapon causes more damage than expected it should be taken back for the good of the world. It is only these days that intercontinental missiles and atom bombs have been discovered and stocked without any concern for dharma.
THE CLASSIFICATION OF THE ARMY

The Military consists of units of Ratha, Gaja (elephants), Thuraka (Cavalry) and Padhāthi (the soldiers). This is why it is called Chaturanga Sena. There is an indoor game Chaturangam (Chess). In this also the movement on the board is like the movement of the four types of army units. The rule is that one who is in a Ratha should fight only with another who is also in Ratha and it is so for each unit.

Just as these days the army has its divisions, in olden days also, there was a similar arrangement. The army was said to consist of so many akshauhini. There is specification about how many of each of the four units should be in each akshauhini.

It was only the Mahā Vīra (Great Warrior) who used to be on a Ratha and fight. In this, a person being alone on a Ratha and fighting 10,000 people was called the Mahārathan. A lot of these things find a place in Mahābhārata.

The arrangement of the army on the battlefield used to be according to various designs called Vyūham - Garuda Vyūham, Padma Vyūham etc which were of the shape of Garuda and Padmam. As one gets more and more into this Vyūham, the arrangement would be more complicated. It is only one who knows the secrets of this arrangement can get into a Vyūham and come out victorious. It is in Mahābhāratha that Abhimanyu who learnt from Krishna Paramāthma only to enter into the Padma Vyūham and did not know how to get out of it was caught inside the Vyūham and lost his life at the hands of the Kauravas.

Apart from the four types of armies there were naval units and the methods of fighting a naval war. It is only air force which is modern. In olden times Vīmānam was used very rarely by those who were divine and the asurās. The Thripurāsurās are in fact those who carried out some kind of aerial invasion.

All these relate to the battlefield.
Forts were built to protect the entire kingdom and cities and towns from invasion. These used to be built on a big scale and strongly. That is why the practice of asking, ‘What are you doing? Are you building a fort?’ came into being. The Ranas of Rajasthan specialised in building forts in Chittör. Šivāji also built a number of forts. The three Tamil kings also had specialised in building forts surrounded by moat. There is a chapter in Thirukkural devoted to forts. It was the fort which protected the common people from invasion and war.

Fort is called Durgam in Sanskrit. It means that into which one cannot enter easily. Ambikai who is the protector here in this world and hereafter, we call Durgā. In the North, wherever there are places with names ending in Durg, there is evidence of fort having been there. It is the same about places with names ending in ‘Gad’ or ‘Gada’. In Tamil Nādu also we have places ending with ‘Kottai’ (fort) like Pudukottai, Senkottai, Pālayamkottai etc. The fort at Gingee (Šenji) and Vellore are tourist centres. Within the fort there were a number of secrets and there were also underground vaults where people (especially ladies) would remain without being caught by the enemy.

Like Vyūham on a battlefield there are several designs in forts also. There are also methods by which the establishing of fort can be done according to sāstrās and with manthrās to ensure the prosperity of the town and kingdom. It is said that forts were designed according to the rules for Sayanam in Vēdha Yagnas. Along with man’s capability, the divine power got by manthrās and the design made according to Vaidhikam were useful in constructing a fort. What we call Sri Chakram, Shadkōṇam, Sudarṣana Chakram are all those which gain special power by their shapes. It is said that Āchāryā got the Kānchīpuram town reconstructed in the shape of Sri Chakram. In forts also, there...
were several designs such as *Chakrākāram*, *Padmākāram* etc. *Govinda Dīkshithar* arranged for the construction of a new fort in *Thanjavūr* in the shape of a *Garudā (Gārudam)*.

We have today lost such rare truths about the methods of building fort. The only greatness is that all the forts are remaining as relics.
FIGHT BY WRESTLING

Money is needed for a living. If we go on talking about Vairāgyam and Sanyāsam, it is of no use. Therefore, Artha Śasthram has been given. Without weapons, fighting used to be there between individuals – wrestling and boxing. Those who were experts in wrestling were called ‘Mallar’. Narsimha Varman (Pallavā King) had the title Mahāmallan, Māmallan. Krishna Paramāthmā had fought Chānūran and Mushtikan by wrestling and vanquished them in Kamsa’s palace. Bhīma did wrestling with Jarāsandhan and killed him.
DHARMA YUDDHAM

_ḥanurvedham_ describes the ways by which, with the body and by use of weapons, people and the kingdom could be protected.

Whatever the method of warfare, it has been systematised as Dharma Yuddham according to prescribed rules. The highest dharmā in this is that the war is to be fought only between two armies on the battlefield and the common people and towns and places should not be attacked. But in modern warfare it is killing civilians including women and children in a big way by air raids and bombings.

Only those who violated the rules and limits and entered into towns and living places, caused destruction and damage including burning, poisoning water bodies etc and ill treating the women. Such people were rare. It was only after the foreign invaders started behaving in this manner, it spread here to some extent. Even when they indulged in such atrocities, kings like Śivāji never caused harm to their women folk but sent them to safe places in pālki. In sins also there are very serious sins for which there is no prāyaschitham. Those who indulge in such sins are called ‘Āthathāyi’. Those who do not win by fighting the dharma yuddham using only body strength and weapons but do so by setting fire to a place, poisoning, killing with weapons one who is unarmed, plundering, abducting women, have been included in the list of ‘Athathayi’. From this itself, we can know how the concept of dharmā had regulated and controlled the methods of warfare.

Earlier, I had mentioned about who should fight with whom. Only those who are equal in strength can engage each other. One who surrenders should not be attacked. The one who is scared, a coward should be spared. One who is not taking part in the war but
waits aside as standby should not suddenly enter the field and attack. If the enemy is tired and wants to rest a while, he should be allowed to do so. If a soldier says ‘I want to drink water; I want to adjust my arrows; I want to change my bow; I am getting new weapons’ he should not be attacked till he is ready after doing this. One who has lost his weapon or whose armour is broken, who is absent minded, who runs away from the field should never be attacked. There will be secret agents, and messengers who carry messages; there will be some who will be helping in delivering the weapons to the soldiers; there are those who sound various instruments like the conch and the drum to rouse the soldiers – such persons should not be attacked even by mistake. It is mentioned in *Rāmāyana* that Rāma explained the principles of Yuddha dharma to the monkeys and advised them not to harass the messengers and the secret agents of Rāvanā.

It is even said that since the fight was only on the battlefield, when the day’s fight ended, both the sides should show love to each other.

In these days, it is all adharma yuddham. Chemical warfare by which water bodies and atmosphere are poisoned, scorched-earth policy by which lands are made unfit for raising crops by burning are easily resorted to.

Artham (earning, acquiring wealth and property) and love are permitted but these are circumscribed by Dharmā on one side and Mōksha on the other. Because of this, all activities including of fighting wars have been so regulated that they are conducted on the basis of dharmā, keeping Mōksha as the goal instead of the activities themselves becoming the goal. Thus, Dhanurvēdham is what the rishis have formulated for fighting wars based on dharmā. Vyāsā says that in the Mahābhārathā war when it was getting late for performing Sandhyāvandanam in the evening and soldiers had
no time to go in search of water to offer Argyam, they used the
dust from the earth as Argyam. From this we know how war was
intertwined with *Dharmāchāram*.

There is a word in Tamil, which can be translated as ‘the
compassion of the men of valour’. This is observed by acting
tough, with a view that *dharmā* should prosper in the world.
*Dhanurvēdhām* is to be practised on this basis.
GÂNDHARVA VÊDHAM
THE UTILITY OF SOMETHING WHICH IS OF NO USE!

Artha Śāsthra deals with the position we should have in the society and how to move with others and helps to take care of our living. Krishi Śāstham deals with agriculture. There is also Bāga Śāstham which deals with the art of cooking. There is the Dhanurvēdhham to deal with enemies. Āyurvedham helps in curing diseases. Gândharva Vēdhham which is the subject on hand does not serve any such purposes.

The introduction is fine, is it not?

(After asking like this Sri Periyavā is quiet for sometime. Then he begins talking with a little laughter).

I said that I am taking up a topic which has no utility and I was waiting for your reaction. Even after I had said this, no one amongst you asked ‘Are you wasting your time to talk on a useless topic like this and should we also waste our time for this?’ and no one walked out. I can see from your faces that you are sitting eagerly looking forward to know what that useless thing is. You are thinking: ‘There is a Śāstham for something that is useless and he is going to talk about it. It is going to be interesting pastime’ and you are waiting eagerly. I can clearly see that you are all waiting not because you consider it discourteous to get up and ask a question or to go out. If that be so, you would be sitting reluctantly, just tolerating something which is difficult to tolerate. But there is curiosity writ large on your face.

It is in this situation that the answer lies to the question how Gândharva Vēdhham which has no utility has gained a big name as sāsthra and a upa vēdha. Even after I mentioned that this subject
has no utility value, you all continue to show interest in it. This is proof that even in a thing which has no utility in practical life there is something that attracts people. By listening to this, your hunger is not going to be satisfied. You are not going to get money, your disease will not be cured and enmity will not go away. Yet, you are sitting in the hope that it is going to be an interesting pastime.

From this it is seen that man’s intellect and mind get something from what is of no utility but gives a sense of fulfilment and experience of joy. You are all providing practical proof for this by leaving all your work and sitting here during night to know about it.

Another thing is that an interesting pastime is very necessary for man. That is why the thought occurs ‘Let this not fill our stomach. Let it not give us money. Does it not help to pass our time? That is enough’.

It is music which provides a pastime and also a sense of fulfilment and enthusiasm to the mind that has been given the name ‘Gāndharva Vēdham’.

_Sangītham_ should not be understood only as music but as music, dance and drama. From ancient times, all the three, namely _Gīta Vidhyā_, Nrithyam and Drama have been practised. Cinema also will come under drama. In _Bharatha Śasthrām_ which is the greatest authority on _Gāndharva Vēdham_, music and dance have been dealt with together in detail. It is said that Bharathar had dealt with exhaustively on music and he is being quoted in music conferences. It is said that even _Thyagarāja Swāmi_ has referred to him in his songs and pays obeisance to him. Dance is named after Bharathar and is called _Bharatha Nātyam_. They quote rules for the art of dance from _Bharatha Śāstrā_. We had seen this sometime back: When people asked ‘You have the name _Sangītha Natak_ Academy, how do you honour dancers also? Should not the name be changed to ‘_Sangītha Nātya Nātaka Academy?_’. In the reply
that the Academy people gave, they had mentioned that the ancient definition* for Sangītham is vocal music, instruments and dance.

Similarly drama cannot be separated from dance. It is from the root word Nata that Natanam, Nātyam, Nātakam are formed. It is a word that refers to movement. In Tamil ‘Kuththu’ is a dance drama. When Nataraja is referred to as ‘Ambala Kūththan’ ‘Kūththa Piran’, Natarājā’s dance is referred to as Kūththu. The Sanskrit word ‘Natan’ and ‘Nāti’ refer both to dancers and actors. Dancers demonstrate the Navarasas by their action along with music. They do it without the aid of scenes, dress and make up. In drama, the Navarasa bhāvas are demonstrated through dialogue. This is closer to practical life. Therefore, they do it with the aid of appropriate scenes and make-up for the various actors. In dance, the audience (the rasikas) have to imagine all these things. That is its special feature. In dance and drama, there are several kinds of movements - movements of hands and legs, emotional movements, depicting a story by movements. However good a dialogue may be, the mind of rasikas gets a sense of fulfilment only if it is supported by subtle artistic taste. That is why even in dramas, dance and music are given a place in between. In dance there is music but there is no talk. But music gives the rasa without dance and dialogue. When ālāpanā is done, it gives satisfaction even without words or the aspects of Navarasa. Therefore it appears there is something special about it.

Gāndharva Vēdham consists of all the three - singing, dancing and drama. We do not get money from this, we cannot fill our stomach. Only those who perform and those who conduct this, have monetary gain. We who go to witness these, spend money which is intended for our living. We do this because we get a pastime, mental joy etc even though we stand to lose from the point of view of utility. But is this not utility? If we purchase a

* Gītham Vādhyam Narthanam cha thrayam Sangītham uchyathē
vegetable, we can eat it. But if you purchase flower with that money and keep it in the flower vase, we cannot eat. But we enjoy looking at it. How can we say that this has no utility?

In order that we do not get tired due to our daily activities and to enthuse us, we have been given Gāndharva Vedaṃ by way of music and dance which appear to have no practical utility. But these help in appreciating the utility of other things. The big help that Gāndharva Vedaṃ renders is to let us forget our load of daily struggle at least for sometime.
WHY THE NAME?

The Gandharvās always engage themselves in activities which give enjoyment and enthusiasm and pass their time singing and dancing. That is why Gāndharva Vēdham is so called. There are the Dēvā and Asura jāthis whom we cannot see. Among the Dēvās are the Gandharvās. There are small insects which are not visible to our naked eye but could be seen through a microscope. But electricity cannot be seen even with a microscope. X-ray shows what all are inside the body and which we cannot see. The Gandharvās and their likes can be seen by the rishis, yogis and siddhās who have supernatural vision called ‘Jnāna Drishti’, ‘Divya Sakshus’ ‘Athrṇḍhriya Drishti’.

When depicting the Gandharvās through painting, they will be shown as doing Veena Gānam, having a shower of flowers and in a state of merriment and joy. Gandharvās are the presiding deities (Adhishtāna Dēvathās) for things which give sensual pleasure. Therefore drawings, poetical knowledge, multi-lingual proficiency, indoor games like chess, outdoor games like badminton, puppet shows etc which give such pleasure are considered part of Gāndharva Vēdham.
THE SIXTY-FOUR ARTS

Arts are usually said to be sixty-four in number - 'Chathus shashti kala'. Because Ambal is of the form of these arts, in Sahasranamam She has a name ‘Chathus Shashti Kalamayi’. Whatever has been discussed above come within these sixty-four. The commentary of Bhaskara Rayar for Lalitha Sahasranamam is very important. By the grace of Ambal, he had attained proficiency in all arts. He has compared several ancient works and has stated clearly what are the sixty-four arts. Vedhas, Vedhangas, Upangas, Upavethas - these eighteen which are the base for the Vaidhika religion come under these arts. Shaddharsanas like Sankym, Yog and other spiritual sasthras also come under these. He has included in the sixty-four, arts like akarsham, which is done by manthra sakthi, vasyam, indrajal, alchemy, nadi sasthra, which is part of Vidhya Sthana, Garuda Sasthram which neutralises poison etc come under the sixty-four arts. Making garlands, incense and jewels, giving oil bath, training birds to talk, to bring back youth, a part of an idea being given out and another person understanding the whole thing and completing the poem (samasyan purtam) etc - All these can be considered to be part of the sixty-four. If we look at it this way, journalism which attracts the people will be part of this. All in all whatever creates a wonder can be said to be Gandharva Vidhya. It is not that magic alone is wonderful. There can be wonder in speaking, writing, singing, dance etc.
ENTERTAINMENT AND
CONTROL OF SENSES

What we see in practice is that entertainments, pleasures of senses etc have the power to pull the person. When I say ‘pull’ it is not raising him. Just as we take a little pickle so that the main dish does not cloy, all entertainments like music, cinema, sports, novels, journals etc are only for relaxation so that one does not feel the strain in karmānushtānā. That is why sāstrās have permitted these for us more as a consideration. We have to devote our time money and mind and incur expenses for these but Īswara māyā is such that if we step into these a little they drag us like a whirlpool and put us in a situation that we devote everything for these things only.

The reason for this is that there is a big decline in our karmānushtānā. If we do plenty of anushtānā, good intellect, pure mind, discipline and sense of proportion will come of their own. Then we will not make entertainment itself as our life’s concern, that too of a kind which makes us slip but stop after enjoying to the extent necessary. Was it not because of this that our country earned a name – simultaneously for āchārās and being a treasure house of so many arts?

If instead of enjoying these within limits with discrimination, we indulge too much in these, they pull us down. All these which are supposed to appeal to common people – dance, music, writing etc are going down in quality. When cinema stars come, people become so excited as if Bhagawān himself is giving dharṣan.

In the absence of anushtānam, we feel like going the way the senses wander. Low quality songs are sung and as a justification for this, it is said that ‘people want to hear only such music’. Writing is such that it excites people. The same is the case with cinema and pictures. People for their part blame those who produce such
things. Rather than the people, it is those who call themselves artistes and are practising these arts, who have a greater responsibility. Now all sorts of things can be written, sung, acted etc and money and fame can be earned. But they should have the thought ‘We are incurring the unseen dhōsham for spoiling so many people. Time will come when we have to answer someone for all these things’. When it is an offence to adulterate things sold in a grocer’s shop or when drinking water is spoiled, is it not greater offence to spoil the soul of the people? The person who punishes us for adulteration is some other person like us. We can escape from him or we can save ourselves by other means but we cannot escape from the One who metes out punishment to those who spoil their souls and the souls of others. We cannot charm him also. If this thought is there, those who are practising arts will not go the wrong way. Humility is gone because thought of God, bhakthi and anushtānam have gone. One does not acquire the refinement that comes from the decrease in the power of the indriyās. In addition to this, because they call themselves artistes, the ordinary people who are deceived by this, praise them, haughtiness increases. In olden days, a book or drama had to be approved by a gathering of vidvāns and then only they could be published or staged. But these days, in the name of freedom of all kinds, it is thought that anything can be written or spoken or acted and people get attracted to it. The quality of sāthvikam will develop only if there is religious instruction and religious anushtānas from the early days. Then only all the dance, drama etc will take one to the highest goal. It was like this in the olden days. It is only after anushtānas are given up, these Gāndharva arts have become such as to induce rajasa and thāmasa trends.

These are called Fine Arts. If these lead to crude tendencies, the name itself will not be fitting. True Fine Arts should be able to refine a person.

Music, that is singing, nrithyam, dance and drama are important in Gāndharva Vēdham.
AESTHETIC SENSE AND EXPERIENCE OF SELF

It is said that Nrithya portrays feelings and the emotions by foot work and movements of hands synchronizing with the thāḷa and jathi instead of doing abhinaya. Nātya is doing abhinayam to portray the meaning of a song.

How does mere movement of limbs produce happiness to those who see it? It might be said that there is no experience of ‘rasa bhāva’ in this. This is the pleasure derived by man’s enjoyment of beauty. It is called aesthetic sense. In appreciating the beauty itself, an inner joy is experienced. Right in our heart of hearts, there is something which makes an assessment and tells us that one thing is beautiful and another is not and what is beautiful charms us. If a dog just runs, we do not feel there is anything beautiful about it. But if an elephant walks with rhythmic movement, accompanied by suitable movement of its trunk and its ears, we feel we should keep watching it. If a crow walks by jumping we do not feel any joy. But if a hamsa (swan) walks stylishly our mind is attracted to it. Mere movement has such a power. In the same manner in Śuddha Nrithya foot work and movement of hands, bending the hip and the jathis have a beauty which cannot be defined and that gives us joy. There is purity in the joy. But if a clown just moves his hands and legs, it only looks funny. Sometimes, it will be awkward. That means movement of limbs has the power to induce different feelings. In Kathakali (practised in Kerala) everyone dances without talking as if they are dumb. But we can understand different types of emotions from the movement of hands, legs, the eye-brows and lips.

What we call Kathakali is in fact ‘Kathai Kali’. In Tamil, Kali is joy. When in a joyful mood, one feels like dancing; they call it ‘Kali Kūththu’. It is for this reason that the neivēdhyam offered to
Natarājā in Chidambaram on the day of Thiruvādirai festival is called 'Kali'. In Kerala, Kāli has been understood as Kūththu. A story being presented in the form of Kūththu they call Katha Kāli.

Expression of feelings through word and through abhinaya and ālāpanā and thillānā (which do not express any particular emotion) – all these give a sense of fulfilment to the āthmā.

Mere thāla is called laya – why? Because it has the power to charm our mind and keep it attracted to it. If a mridangam is played properly, it touches the soul. Even sruthi and ragam are like this. Mere sound by its varied beauty gives joy. What does the statement mean? Who else but the Paramāthmā can give joy? Therefore all the beauties of these arts are really aspects of Īswarā only.

Is not Īswarā the basis for all the beauty? Āchāryā describes Ambāl’s flood of beauty as Soundaryā Lahari. That is why when we look at the sky at sunset, we experience a divine joy. What reason can be given for this? Seeing a flower, hearing the song of the cuckoo, the chirping of the parrot, ālāpanā which has no word or meaning – all these touch the heart and give joy. Joy does not mean laughter. Sometimes the eyes may water. The movement we think of Krishnā’s flute music our heart melts. There is something in it which is pure and peaceful which seizes the heart. That is an aspect of Īswarā. That is beauty also. If we see the snow clad Himalayas even in a picture, it is joyful; we feel a coolness inside. People come from far off countries just to see the Taj during moonlight – this is because beauty has the power to create soulful joy. If it is asked how it has such a power, the reason is the presence of Īswarā there.

Towards the end of Vibhūthī Yōgā, this is what Bhagawān says in Gītā. Vibhūthī means the characteristics of Vibhu. Vibhu means sarva vyāpi (omnipresence).

Na thadhasthi vinā yathsyānnayā bhūtham charācharam
If it is asked ‘is there anything in the charācharam (the moving and the non-moving) other than me?’ , ‘No’, He says. Great jnānis know that He is the one which is everything. A rare jnani somewhere knows that He is everything - the stone, the mud, the beautiful, the ugly etc. How can others know this? That is why although He is Vibhu (who is omnipresent) He gives in Vibhūthi Yogam a list of things and people which/who in the view of an average person are high. He who is everything gives a list of those things in which He is specially shining. Arjuna who could not understand his presence in everything asks him ‘Hey Bhagawān! In what all things can I see you?’

Kēshu Kēshu cha Bhāvēshu Chinthyō (a)si Bhagawān mayā?

It is in reply to this that Bhagawān gives a list of things/people in which He clearly appears: ‘I am Viṣṇu among the twelve Ādityās; I am Sūrya among jyōthis; The moon among the stars; Sāma Vedā among the Vedhās; Śankarā among the eleven Rudrās; Skanda among the generals; Mēru among mountains, Ómkāra among words; Aswatham among the trees; Nāradā among the Dēva Rishis; the Lion among the animals; Garudā among birds; Rāmā among the warriors holding weapons; Margasirsh among the months; Gangā among the rivers; Vasanatham among rithus; Krishnā among the Vrishnis; Arjuna among the Pāndavās - thus says Krishnā Himself to Arjuna. After saying many more things, He says conclusively:

Yadh Yadh Vibhūthimath Sath Thvam Śrīmadh wūrjitham ēva vā Thaththa dhēvā vagachcha thvam mama thejōmsa sambavam

This means ‘whatever has Śrī, that is the aspect of Lakshmi, whatever is powerful - all these have come out as an aspect of my theējas, you understand this’, He says.

A thing which is beautiful, benign and good and gives pure joy is said to have the aspect of Śrī or Lakshmi. It is to be noted that Bhagawān has said that He is present not only in those things which
are powerful but also those which are beautiful. Gāndharva Vedham has become entitled to be called Vēdhā because of the aesthetics which are part of Bhagawān's omnipresence.

Although these give pleasure to the senses - dance to the eyes, music to the ear, navarasa to the mind - these have a place of pride because they have originated from Sāma Vēdhā. Because Bhagawān Himself has said that of the Vēdhās He is Sāma Vēdhā, their glory is all the greater. The connection that Gāndharva Vēdhā has with Sāma Vēdhā is more intimate than the connection the other upa Vēdhās have with their main Vēdhā. Any one who hears the recitation of Sāma Vēdhā will know that it is from the swarās of this Vēdhā that the Saptha Swarās (of music) have originated. From the very fact that the recitation of Sāma Vēdhā is called Sāma Gānam it is clear that it is associated with the art of music. In Lalitha Sahasranāmam there is a name 'Sāma Gāna Priyā' for Ambikai. In the ashtothra of Śiva also there is 'Śama Priyāya Namah' and as if to indicate that this name shows that the aspect of music is important to Sāma Vēdhā it is followed by 'Swaramayāya namah'.

We have seen that Krishnā who is Mahā Viśtu says that he is Sāma Vēdhā among the Vēdhās.

From this the divine nature of music and other arts of Gāndharva Vēdhā will be clear. Gāndharva Vidhyā which appears to be capable of dragging down man to lower levels of enjoyments helps to raise him and make him one with Iśwarā.

Therefore, if it leads to wrong doing that is not its mistake. It is our fault that we are not using it in the manner in which it has to be used. We light fire at home to cook our food and also raise it to offer havis. It is also useful to perform ārathi to Bhagawān. If by our negligence something catches fire or a fire accident occurs in the temple, does it mean that the fire is at fault?
If *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata* and *Purāṇas* and the stories of great men are staged as drama incorporating in them the navarasas, it will be capable of making a deep impression on the mind. It is our fault that we are making use of dramas to present so called social themes and for other bad things. Gandhi has said that the drama ‘Śravaṇa Pithrubhakti’ which he had seen in his younger days had made a deep impression on him. Can any amount of reading or listening to lectures about Pithru Bhakthi create the deep impression that characters in a drama are able to demonstrate by their action?

The kings of olden times considered *upanyāsams* on *Mahābhārata* and folk dramas in villages on Bharatham as greatly conducive to the growth of dharma. Therefore they extended all help to this and made grants to nurture these as is seen from the large number of stone inscriptions in several places. Listening to the story along with music is more effective than talk and writing. Visual art has greater effect. Drama which has speech and music and dance which has music have special power. There is a *slokā* in *Krishna Karṇamrutham*

*Kasthūri thilakam lalāta palakē vakṣhasthalē kausthubam
Nāsāgre nava moukthigam karathalē vēnum karē kankarām
Sarvāṅgē harichandanam cha kalayan kantē cha mukthāvalim
Gōpasthri parivēsltithō vijayathē Gōpāla Chūdāmanim*

It describes *Krishnā* in this manner: He has a dot of *Kastūri* on his forehead, Kausthubham on his chest, a ring of pearls on his nose, the flute in his hand, *kankan* on his wrist, pearl garland, sandal paste all over his body – he shines as the crown jewel of the shepherd clan, surrounded by the *Gōpikas*. When an expert
danseuse presents this scene with bhakti and abhinaya, it will give us much more joy than repeating this slōkā or hearing it and trying to bring the picture to mind. It will be extremely joyful if the abhinaya presents Yasōdhā or Rādhā doing all these for Krishna. I shall talk to you about the nose-ring. Lalithāmbikai is the most beautiful among ladies and Sri Rāmachandramūrthi is the most handsome among men. There is a slōkā which says that in Krishna both these aspects are combined. Since He has also the beauty of a woman, the nose-ring has been mentioned among the jewels. If along with these jewels all other things like the peacock feather, pithāmbaram, the chain on the ankle - the love of Radha who adorns him with these or the vātsalya of Yasoda, Krishna's mischief and other aspects are depicted in abhinaya, we will experience the feeling of being in Krishna lōkā itself. We can experience the feeling that we are also with the Gopikas and Krishna is in our midst. Krishna Karnāmrutham will be a feast for the eyes. (Nēthramrutham) and the heart (Hrudhāyamrutham). Gandharva Vidhyā has the power to make deep impression of both good and bad. It is for us to use what is good.

Obscene scenes can be drawn or statues made. These will agitate the mind. Instead of this if a divine figure is drawn or an idol is made for Ambal we can get the bhakti and joy which we cannot get through pārāyaṇam or dhyānam.

There is Soundaryalahari; in Tamil there are lots of divine literature - the songs of Āzhwārs, of Thāyumānavar etc. A mere reading of these touches our heart. But if the bhāva is understood and it is sung in appropriate rāgā, even a stony heart will melt.
THÉVÂRAM AND
DIVYAPRABHANDHAM TRADITIONS

That is why those like Appar, Sundarar and Sambandhar who sang the Thévâram have composed in the rāgā 'Panī' and dedicated them to Īswarā. They have also described Īswarā in several ways as being interested in music. If a great tradition has protected the Vēdha swarās for ages, in another tradition those who recite the Thévâram (Ūdhuvāmūrthi) have for the last 1400 years protected the Paṇis of Thévâram in the original form. As part of pūjā, it has been laid down that after Nīrājanam (offering lamp to the idol as ārathī) songs are to be sung in the regional language. In accordance with this, the Chōla kings had made grants for singing Thēvâram in all temples and had nurtured this musical tradition.

Divyaprabhandham also used to be sung in the Pan form. Researchers have found evidence that in later days the method of singing changed and came to be in the form in which they are now being recited. It is possible that Vaishnava āchāryās thought that it was not enough if the Divyaprabhandhams are merely celebrated as Tamil Vēdās but should be recited like the Vēdās which are recited only in two or three swarās with ups and downs.

Nṛiththa - gītham, vādhya are to be rendered as offering to the Lord as part of the 64 ubhāchārās. From this it is seen that these are divine. The fact that the saptha swarās (the seven notes) have been derived from the swarā of the Vēdās and the mudhrās of Manthra Śāstrā, have been adopted in Bharatha Nātyam are enough to show the highly divine status that the arts of Gāndharva Vēdha enjoy.

Since our mind by nature remains agitated, even when we read the books of sthōthrās connected with God or recite them the
mind runs away somewhere after sometime. But the arts have the power to draw the mind towards them and keep it immersed in them for a long time. When divine songs are just recited one can experience their taste only for a brief time. But if the same are rendered as music in appropriate ragas, we get involved in them for a long time and our mind does not get away from the thought of the Lord. If a superior quality mango is soaked in amruth, we would like to taste it little by little for a long time. In the same manner if the words of nectar are soaked in the fruit of music, we get a similar experience.

When we use music and dance in the wrong way, they disturb the mind. But really they help to concentrate our mind on Īśwarā and later we forget even Īśwarā and be in the state of Samādhi. Art helps to stabilise the mind which vacillates. That is why it has been included in the ubāchārās for pūjā.
THE DHARMĀ
APPROPRIATE TO JĀTHIS

The institution of Devādasi came into existence for offering dance as one of the services to Īswarā during daily pūjā. The word means ‘the servant of Īswarā’. She has to imagine that she has married Īswarā, wear a symbol for it and do service to Him by way of dance (Nṛthypbhabhāram). In practice the system got distorted and took a different shape. Recently the Government had to make a law to prohibit this system. It is necessary to take such steps to safeguard morality in the country. Yet, we feel that this has resulted in the discontinuation of a service to the Lord prescribed by sāsthṛās.

Those who were to practise Gāndharva Vēdham were of the Bharatha jāthi or Bharatha puthrās. This jāthi got established on the name of Bharatha Rishi who wrote the Bharatha Śāstrā. This contains many rules of dharma. If in a drama a male and a female have to play the role of a couple or those who love each other, they have to be couple in real life. Any one acting with anyone else is not approved in this. At the commencement of a drama the Sūthradhār (the stage manager) will come and will introduce the drama and also conduct it. He will call the actress who is to play the role of his wife. The lady who is the real wife will come on the stage. When his assistant (Pāripāśvakan) comes the Pāripāśvaka will be his own wife. The rule in the Nātaka sāsthṛā is that the actor and actress are to be real sathi-pathi.

The rule is that even if sringara rasam is important in a particular scene, the actor and actress should not indulge in physical gestures which tend to be obscene. Such events will be portrayed by the heroine narrating it to her friend or the vidhūshaka narrating it as the hero’s friend and not depicted by action on the stage. At the sadas conducted at Ilavāthankudi, we
pointed out these dharmic aspects and passed a resolution that these should be put into practice in dramas and cinema. It just ended with the resolution being passed for my satisfaction!

Fifty or sixty years back, it was thought that there was nothing wrong if a male had the woman’s make up in dramas. Brahmins played outstanding roles in dramas by their dialogue and singing. But in Dharma Śāstrās, it is said that it is dhōśham if we see a male in a woman’s make up or the woman in a male’s make up. It is only if a real husband and wife act as couple on the stage, we will think that it will not be quite cultured to make them indulge in love making gestures and acting will be kept within limits. If a male acts with a male or a female with a female we will think that there is nothing wrong even if they touch each other. Even though there is nothing wrong as between the two actors, it will disturb the minds of those who see it, is it not? That is why the sāsthṛās have prohibited a male appearing in a woman’s make up or a woman appearing in a male make-up.

People of no other jāthi including the Brahmins should take to singing, dancing and acting as a profession. For one’s own satisfaction and for the welfare of the soul, any one can practise any art like music. They can sing Bhagawan nāmā (Nāma Sankīrthan) for the benefit of devotees. They can also do bhajan as part of unchavrithi. But they should not render concerts and receive money. Only those who belong to the Bharatha jāthi who are entitled to take to this as a profession can receive remuneration for it, get gifts, accept titles etc. In our region, they are called ‘Melakkaran’. These days the term ‘Isai Veḷālar’ is often seen in papers. Just as the woman danced in the temple, it was considered important that the men folk should perform Nādaswaram in the temple and also when the idol was taken in procession.

It is only to prevent competition and rivalry in society that different functions were delegated to different jāthis. Because of
this it would not mean that a particular function is of higher status and another is of lower status. If we do not look at it purely from the point of view of earning for a living, but look at it from the spiritual point of view, music, instruments and dance occupy a high place.

★★★★
arameswara Himself is considered the originator of music. Just as there is mouna Dakshināmūrthi, there is also Veenādhāra Dakshināmūrthi. This can be seen in idols. There is a krithi (song) of Thyāgarāja Swāmi ‘Nadhanathanum anisam Śankaram’. It means that Paramēswarā’s body is music. Thanum means body. Further, in the same song, he says that the saptha swaras have originated from the ‘Sathyōjātham’, (the five faces) of Śankarā. When it is said that seven swaras originated from five faces, it was a little difficult to understand this. I enquired with Vasudēvāchār, (Kāraikudi) Sāmbasiva Iyer, Mahārājapuram (Viśwanātha Iyer), Śemmangudi (Srīnivāsa Iyer). First they could not understand it. Later, when Sangītha Śāstrās were examined, it was seen that Shadjam (Sa) and Panchamam (Pa) are ‘Prakrūthi Swaras’ and therefore like Īswara, they are Swayambu (self existing) and it is the other five swaras which are ‘Vikrūthis’ which came from the five faces of Paramēswarā. There is evidence in the Sangītha Śāstrās to draw this conclusion.

In Vikrūthi swaras, namely Ri, Ga, Ma, dha, ni, there are two types in each. But the Prakrūthi Swaras, Sa and Pa are only one.

Sa, Ri, Ga, Ma, Pa, Dha, Ni are the first letters of Shadjam, Rishabham, Gāndhāram, Madhyamam, Panchamam, Daivatham and Nishādham. These swaras are based on the noise made by seven different animals/birds. Shadjam is that of peacock. Ri which is next is that of Rishabham. Ga is of the goat. Ma is the noise of krauncha bird. Pa is that of cuckoo. Dha is that of the horse. Ni is the noise of the elephant.

Just as in Śikṣha Śāstrā it is laid down from which part of the body the Vedha Aksharas should rise, in Sangītha Śāstrā also it is laid down from which part of the body - from the bottom of
the stomach up to the tip of the head - the *swarās* should be raised by variation in breath. Thus shadjam rises by contact with six parts. *Thyāgarājā* says in one of his songs that *Sundara Dēvathās* of the *Saptha Swarās* shine in *nahhi* (bottom of the stomach), heart, throat, tongue and the nose.

*Nādōpāsanā* is a great Manthra Śāsthṛā, Yōga Śāsthra sadhananam. Since worship through pure music (*Nādōpāsanā*) is worship through Ōmkāram, it is also highly Vēdhantic. There are three great principles (*Thathvās*) - Nādham, Bindhu and Kalai. In Thiruppugazh there is a song ‘Nadha Vindhu Kalādhi Namō Namali’. We need not consider those difficult matters at this stage. In this Nādham is of the form of Śiva (*Śiva Swarūpam*). Bindhu is of the form of Śakthi (*Śakthi Swarūpam*). The root for sound is Nādham. The root for forms is Bindhu. In the end forms also originated from sound. There is difference between Nādham and sound. Śabdham (sound) is what comes out. There are several in this. Nādham is the base, the root for all sounds whatever they may be. That is the place where sound joins when it subsides.

In *Vyākarna Śāsthṛā* sound has been established as Brahman. It is called *Śabdha Brahma Vādham*. The grammarians have described the characteristics of language as Brahma Swarūpam. The same has been established by those of *Sangītha Śāsthṛā* in a different way. In Sangītha, when Nādha Brahma Upāsanā or Nādōpāsanā is talked about, Nādham is not mere sound. When a musician sings a swara along with sruthi and when it merges with the *sruthi* (this is called Mūrchanaḥ) and subsides and *sruti* and swara lose their duality and become one, it is Nādham. At this stage, the singer also merges with it. Not only that. Those who hear it also, the good hearted people, will be one with the Nādham. The joy that is got from this is what has been talked about as the highest goal - Ātmānandam and Brahmānandam in religious sāstrā. When it is said that *śabdham* takes us to Nādham, how can this be possible if one does not have
the characteristic of the other? That is why the sāstrās say that sabdham itself is Brahman. In Sabdha Brahma Vādham two characteristics are mentioned - sabdham is permanent and it is perfect, all pervading. What is not constrained by time is permanent. Pūrṇam is what is all pervading without the constraint of space. What our ancestors had said about sound remaining spread at all times in all places has now been proved by science. If we hear on our radio what is sung ten thousand miles away, it means that Śabdham is spread all over. Now someone is recording on a tape what I am talking. Discs are recorded for gramaphones. Even if the discs are played after many years, the recorded sound can be heard. What does this mean? Does it not prove that sabdham is permanent without being destroyed by time?

When the supernatural powers of our ancestors were no more there and modern science had not progressed, the view that sabdham is permanent was ridiculed. ‘What is this nonsense? Whatever sound we raise dies here. How can it be permanent? At the most it may reach hundred or two hundred yards. Even thunder does not reach beyond four or five miles. How can it be accepted if it is said that it is permanent?’ – this would have been the thinking. Now science supports the view of sāstrā.

Omniscience is what is beyond the time – space concept and is whole and permanent.

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SOUND WHICH IS EXPANSIVE AND
SOUND THAT IS LIMITED

Sabdhām is without a beginning and is spread all over. It is because of the limitations of our ears that we cannot hear it. For those who have supernatural powers, it will be possible to experience the sound which is spread over the entire space. We think that what we hear is sound and if we do not hear anything there is no sound. It is only because of our perception through sight and hearing that we perceive as a small part what is really all over. We say that the sun rises or the sun sets using our sight. The fact is that the sun is where it is. Since the earth moves around the sun, it is due to our sight that rising and setting are perceived. In this pandal for example, if sunlight comes through a hole, one recognises it as light. Outside the pandal, it is the small beam of light that shines all over, but we do not perceive it so clearly. It is in the same manner that we are unable to perceive the sound that is spread all over. Only when it is made into small parts, we are able to hear it.

There is another thing. If the hole in the pandal is round, the light that falls is round. If it is of a different shape, namely, square or triangular the light that falls is also of the same shape. Because of this, a child will think that light means it will be circular or square or triangular. Where in reality light has a form? Anything which has a form is subject to the limitation of space. Like sound, light also transcends this limitation and is whole.

Suppose sunlight falls through a hole at an angle of 45°, we can see the sun through the hole only if the sight is at 45°. If the angle of our sight is different, the sun cannot be seen. Only the blue sky will be seen. But at that time, if an eagle flies, the sun light gets reflected by it and we understand that there is sunlight spread there. That means, for us to perceive what is all pervading we need
an aid which gives it in a contracted form. For example, when we say that it is very sultry, there is the all pervading air. But with the aid of an agency, the fan, we contract it so that we feel it. The manner in which an object like an eagle intercepts or a small hand fan intercepts and makes us realise and feel is called ‘abhigātam’. Abhigātam means beating. Abhigātam is what makes us understand the all pervading Akāṇḍam by disturbing it.

Sound is also like this. Its nature which is all pervading is not intelligible to us. When we clap the two hands and do Abhigātam, we are able to hear the sound. In the same manner, by the different movements of the muscles in the throat, the limitless air is contracted into small waves and these come out as different sounds. The Abhigātam caused by the muscles in the throat, the tongue, the teeth and the lips which create various sounds in the ocean of sound that remains subdued and peaceful is like causing a lot of bubbles in the ocean. This is called ‘spōtam’. Of the many meanings of spōtam, one is to cause bubbles to come up. This is spōtam because it causes several bubbles to come up in the peaceful ocean of sound.

The sound that is produced by Abhigātam is called ‘āhatha sabdham’. Āhatham also means ‘what is beaten’. There should be two - the one which beats and the other which gets beaten. The akāṇḍa (undivided whole) sabdha can be true to its characteristics only if there is nothing which can disturb it and activate it. Thus the akāṇḍa sabdha which is not caused by an external disturbance but which exists on its own is within the heart of the jīva also. The Prāṇāva Śabdham that exists in the heart is called ‘Anāhatha Dhwani’ - sound that exists without being raised by any disturbance caused by an external force. Whether it is speech or vocal music or instrumental music, we create the sound by spōtam through āhatham.
Raising the sounds of the various alphabets is one kind of *spōtam*. Creating the *Sapthaswarās* is another kind of *spōtam*. When we talk we create the sounds of the different alphabets without any link to the *Sapthaswarās*. When we sing a song, we combine the alphabets (akshara) with the *swarās* and produce the sound. In instruments like *Veenā*, Flute, Violin, *Nādaswaram* etc we raise various sounds from the different ‘*swarāsthānam*’ without the sound of alphabets. Speech which has in it the sounds of alphabets is exclusive to the human beings.
THE KNOWLEDGE OUR ANCIENTS HAD ABOUT SOUND ENGINEERING

The books on Sangita Śāstrā give detailed instructions on how to make the instruments mentioned above and also the ‘Thāla Vādhyam’. (Percussion instruments) like Mridangam, Kanjira, Thavil, jālrā etc. What does it show? It means that those who could make these had knowledge about the science relating to abigātham and spōtam. If the length of the wires on a Veerī and their thickness, the distance to be kept between the ‘mettu’ on it, the size of holes on a flute or Nādaswaram and the distance between them are not scientifically arranged the swaras required for music cannot be produced from them. In thāla vādhyam, there is neither the distinguishing sounds of the different swarās nor that of alphabets. But in these certain sounds are raised which have musical value which embellish the melody. If it is a mridangam, the sound on the right side and that on the left side is different from each other. There are rules regarding the quality and other characteristics of the leather. There is calculation for the size of the mridangam as a whole and of the different parts. It is the same with every instrument.

The Nādaswaram which is presently in use is more than two feet in length. This is called ‘pāri’ Nādaswaram. There is another which is less than the arm’s length. It is called ‘Thimiri’. The sruti in thimiri is a little on the high side. What is being played in our Mutt is Thimiri. There is one which is in between Pāri and Thimiri. All this subtleties have been understood and dealt with in detail in the books on Sangītha Śāstram. There are rules about the wood to be chosen for different instruments, the wires, the leather etc. Then only a proper sound (sunādhham) can be raised from the different instruments. In Veerī and Thanpurā, the pot and the other parts must be of the same wood. About the stringed
instrument called ‘Yāzh’ there are lots of details in ancient Tamil literature. *Thirujnāna Sambandhar* has sung ten verses which are full of musical aspects. He had so much knowledge of music. Āchāryā’s deep knowledge of music can be understood from the *slokā* in Soundaryalahiri, starting from *Galē rekhāsthīsrō* (69th *slokā*).

Those who were experts in *Sangītha Śāsthram* had knowledge of the *spōtam* which are not connected with alphabets, the abīgāthās which can cause them and that is how they have been able to give detailed procedures for making the instruments. When we talk we cause the *spōtam* applicable to the alphabets in the natural way through the throat and mouth, not being conscious of the technique. Yet when we recite *manthrās* the pronunciation of the *aksharās* should be clear. This is because although they appear to be divided parts of a whole, these are in fact what were heard by the rishis from the expansive *ākās* and given to us. It is only if they are pronounced properly, we can have the benefits of the expansive *sakthi*. It is for ensuring that the *Vedha aksharās* are pronounced properly, a scientific technique namely ‘Śikṣhā Śāsthram’ has been evolved and given as part of the *Vedhās*. This śāsthra has defined the technique of manipulating the air, starting from the abdomen onwards and till it comes out of the mouth, to produce the sounds of the different *aksharās* accurately. Thus, of the eighteen *Vidhya Sthānam* which are the basis of the Vaidhika religion, the Śikṣhā Śāsthra which is *Vedhāṅgā* describes the characteristics of the sounds of the alphabets and Gāndharva *Vedhā* which is upa Vedha, describes the characteristics of the Saptha Swarās which are not mixed with *aksharās*.
REACHING THROUGH THE SENSES
WHAT IS BEYOND SENSES

Just as the Manthra Śabdhaś which are part of a whole have the power to take us to the whole (aakaṇḍam) the sabdhaś of music also have the same power. When a particular swara is sung in tune with the sruthi either in the plain manner or as gamaka and the climax is reached what is part (kaṇḍam) mixes with the experience of the aakaṇḍam.

It is this experience of the aakaṇḍam which is the goal for all Vedanta, Yoga, Manthra and Thanthra Śastras. It is the point at which this experience materialises the sound is said to be Paramāthmā Himself as Nāda Brahman or Sabdhabrahman. When this is kept as the goal that is, not just for the pleasure got through the ears but for spiritual welfare and music is practised it attains the status of Nādopāsanā or NādaYogam.

When music is rendered by experiencing the meaning and the words, both the singer and the audience get the joy of being immersed in Paramāthmā. Japa, Thapas, Ashtānga Yogam, Dhyānam are not related to the indriyāś and therefore cannot be practised easily. But the fruit of all these, namely the experience of Īswara is obtained through music which is easy to practise and provides enjoyment to the indriyāś also.

The greatness of our religion is that through what look like matters pertaining to the senses (indriyāś) it gives God realisation (Īswara Sākṣhāthkāram) which is beyond the indriyāś. What is offered during pūja as panchopāchāra - scent, flower, incence, light and neivedyam are indeed those which give pleasure to the senses. In Upanishad, Paramāthmā has been referred to as ‘Omkhāra Swarūpam’, ‘Rasa Swarūpam’ ‘Jyothi Swarūpam’.
Omkhāram is for the ear, Rasam is for the tongue, Jyothi is for the eyes. Although we consider the enjoyment by the indriyas as small pleasure, when the same is experienced by relating them to God they give great joy, says the Upanishad. Bhagawān has mentioned it in Vibhūthi Yoga that His presence is there even in these things which are for the enjoyment of the senses. If it is said that there is no place where Īswarā is not, then he has to be present in these things also.

When He says 'I am Sūrya among the Jyothis', He refers to being light and heat. When He says that among months He is Mārgasirsh, He is of the nature of snow and cold. He says that among the Rithus, He is Vasantham which gives the joy derived from Nature and the pleasure of the senses. Here for Vasantham He uses the word 'Kusumakara'. It means the Rithu when it is flower all over. Since flower is mentioned, it should be taken that the pleasures of touch, sight and smell are mentioned. The import of this (thāthparyam) means that when we divide the whole into smaller parts and find that these give small pleasures and are a hindrance to the experience of the great joy, the same thing when used for Īswara Upāsanā give the great joy that takes us to what is whole. Although we may not be able to realise fully in this stage that sabdhām is Brahmam, form is Brahmam, taste is Brahmam, smell is Brahmam, the sensation of touch is Brahmam if we keep on reminding ourselves of these aspects, one day or the other we gain the fruit. Of these more than others, we can know to some extent the little experience of Šābdha Brahmam by getting lost in music.

The art of music is what can get us Moksham without any difficulty. If we have a Veenā and we play it with clear swaras and enjoy that experience there is no need to do yōga or thapas, we can attain Moksha easily. Not only that if the yōgi practises yōga, he only gets the joy out of it and so is the case with the thapasvi (one
who performs penance), it is only in music that it gives joy not only to the singer but also to those who hear it.

It is not only vocal music or Veena music which is with swara; even in mridangam or Jalra if the laya is pure and is combined with good Nadham, they transport us to divine joy.
KINDS OF MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS AND DANCES

There are four kinds of musical instruments - Dhanthri, Ranthri, Charma and Lōha. Dhanthri means wire. Veena, Thanpūrā, Sitār, Sārangi, Violin etc are Dhanthri. Ranthri means hole. Flute, Nādaswaram, Shehnai, Clarionet etc are Ranthri. If in other instruments, tuning has to be done by the hand or a bow has to be moved over the wires or tapping by the hand, it is only in the ranthra instruments, we have to produce music by blowing air from the mouth. Only harmonium, though operated by the hand is a kind of ranthra instrument. There are bellows in it for blowing air instead of air being blown by the mouth. Mridangam, Thavil, Kanjira and large sized drums are leather instruments which are played by beating with the fingers. In Lōha vādhya, what is important is the metal that is used for making them - Mōharsing, Bells, Jālrā etc. These are made with a single metal. There are no wires or holes. Gadam is made of mud. It is just a pot. Cups which are made out of China clay are used in Jaladarangam. Water is filled in the cups and by tapping the edges of the cups with thin bamboo sticks, swaras are raised.

Just as there are several kinds in musical instruments, there are different types of dances. Chiefly, they are two - Thāndavam and Lāsyam. Thāndavam is a dance performed by a man and is full of manliness and solemnity. What ladies perform is Lalitham and is therefore Lāsyam. Paramēśwarā’s dance is Thāndavam. We call it Śiva Thāndavam, Natarāja Thandavam, Pralaya Thāndavam etc. Ambikai’s dance is Lāsyam. There are names like Lāsyā Priyā and Layagiri in Lalithā Sahasranānāmam.
The arts of music and dance are thus linked to gods. Intellectuals all over say that there is nothing in the world to match *Natarāja Mūrthi*. When something is to be presented as a high class memento to foreigners, even governments choose only the idol of *Natarājā*. If the *Natarājā* idols stolen from our temples are sold to museums in foreign countries for millions of dollars, the greatness of *Natarājā* is on account of His dance only. There are other *Mūrthis* in dance pose, like Nardhana *Gaṇapathi*, Kālinga Nardhana Mūrthi and Natana Saraswathi.

When we consider musical instruments too, they are linked to gods. Saraswathi who is the Goddess of Arts has *Veena* in Her hand. It is said that *Veena* is the very breath of our music. But the *Veena*s of different gods have different names. Saraswathi’s *Veena* is called Vipanchi. When describing that Saraswathi is playing *Veena* in the presence of *Ambal*, even while singing the *līlās* of Śiva, Āchāryā says in Soundarya Lahari that Saraswathi is playing the Vipanchi (in the *slōkā* Vipanchya Gāyanthi). Saraswathi’s *Veena* has also the name Kachchapi. What is highly meritorious in music, we call *Nārada Gānam*. It was Nāradā who gave the Sangītha Śāstrā book to Thyāgarāja Swāmi and blessed him. Thyāgarāja Swāmi has sung the song ‘Nārada Gururāya’ on Nāradā. Nāradā also has *Veena* in his hand. It is called ‘Magathi’. Appar Swāmigal also refers to Paramēśwara playing the *Veena*. There is a story that Rāvanā who was caught below the Kailāś mountain, in order to get released, cut off his heads and veins, made a *Veena* and played the Sāma Gāna on it.

When we talk of *Krishnā Paramāthmā*, there is with him the inseparable flute. He has the names *Venugōpālan* and *Murjīdharaṇ*.

There is a sthōthram called *Pradosha sthōthram*. In that all the gods have been mentioned relating each of them to a musical...
instrument. During pradosham, Parameswarā has Ambāl seated on a rathna pītam in Kailās and dances before Her. All the dēvās play the various instruments as the orchestra for that dance. Saraswathi the Vāk Dēvi, plays the Veena. Veena has also the name Vallagi. It is that name which is mentioned here. Indra is playing on the flute. Brahmā plays Jālā. Lakshmi sings vocal. Nandikeswara is usually linked with Mridangam but during the dance at pradosham time, Nandikeswara seems to have lost himself in his Master’s dance. Therefore, Mahā Vishnū plays the mridangam. Our Āchāryā when narrating in Soundarya Lahari the several relationships that Mahā Vishnū has with Parameswarā in the slokā ‘Bānathvam Rishabhathvam’ refers to Mahā Vishnū playing the mridangam as ‘Mridanga Vahathā’.

Here, Ambikai is said to be just watching the Śiva Thandavam. In Lalithā Sahasranānāmam it has been said that when, during Kalpa Pralayam, Śiva dances the Thāṇḍavam absorbing within Himself everything, Ambāl alone remains and keeps watching the Thāṇḍavam: Mahēswara Mahākalpa Mahāthāndava Sakshīṇī.

When She is spoken of as the Sangīthā Dēvathā, She is Rāja Māthangi, Rāja Śyāmalā. Dikshithar (Muthuswāmi Dikshithar, one of the Trinity of Carnatic Music) in his song on Goddess Mūnakshi of Madurai refers to this aspect. There is a separate sannidhi for her in the Kāmākshi Temple at Kāñchīpuram too. Śyāmalā Dandakam is about Parāsakthi who is of the form of Sangītha Mūrthi. Kālidāsā has made a sthōthrā, Navarathna Mālā, which begins with ‘Ōmkāra Panjara Sukhim’ which also is about Śyāmalā Devi. It is said in it that She too has in her hands the Veena like Saraswathi – Veenā Sankrānthā Kāntha Hasthām. It is only in colour that both are different. Saraswathi is extremely fair but She is dark colour. That is why She is called Śyāmalā. Her delicate fingers are always on the wires of the Veena. This means that we can obtain Her grace through Sangītha Upāsanā. Since we cannot practise sāstrās and yōga but since we lose ourselves in swaras, it
is possible for us to surrender our hearts at Her Lotus Feet. We can secure Her grace very easily.

There is a sthōthram called Śambu Natana Ashtakam which describes the Thāṇdava dance of Natarājā during pradōsham in the manner of pradōsha sthōthram. This has been composed by Pathanjali. He is the avatar (incarnation) of Ādhi Sēshā. Just like him Vyākra Pādar who is with Natarājā also has the tiger’s legs. It means that music and dance make even the cruel and wild animals like snake, tiger etc peaceful. The ashtakam is so composed that in the manner in which they are repeated, one would get the feeling that he is witnessing an actual dance. I had a desire that this should be offered as a ubhachāram to Chandramoulīswarār during the pradōsha pūjā. There is no possibility of a woman being able to perform in the Mutt. Therefore since it is only meant as pūjā and offering and not for money or fame, I asked the Āsthāna (Sangītha) Vidwān of our Mutt (Srīvānchiyam Rāmachandra Iyer) to perform the abhinaya for this sthōthram.

Initially, he was actually afraid because he felt ‘we can do it only if we have had training in dance for several years. We do not have so much familiarity with dance as with music’. I only told him ‘There is nothing to feel diffident about. Think of Natarājā, move the legs in the manner in which a potter moves his legs up and down to soften the clay and move the hands according to the words you hear’ and gave him encouragement. It went of very well. The mridangam that is performed for Natarājā in Chidambaram is of a special type. Therefore arrangement was made to perform the similar one for the dance here. The sound of Śankam (Conch) was also included. Because of all these, divine presence was felt more than usual.

The meaning of all this is that if sruti, laya, Sangītham and nrithyam are presented as a prayer /pūjā to the Lord, they will reach us to His presence. In the end where is the SannīDhānam? It is in our heart. Music is a means to subside within that and attain Supreme Bliss.
LOVE AND PEACE
THROUGH MUSIC

In Vēdanithā, it is said that everything subsides in peace in the ‘cave’ in the heart. The purpose of music is to lead us to that peace. When Parāśakthi is Śyamaḷā, the Sangitha Mūrthi, Her heart is so soft (Mrudhula Swānthām). She is of the very form of peace, says Kālidāsā in his Navarathna Mālā. When the heart is soft, it means love and compassion. When peace of the soul is attained through music, everything is seen as the same āthmā and therefore there is a surge of love towards all beings. That is why the poet says ‘Śantham’ ‘Mrudhula Śwānthām’. Since music is not mere pleasure to the senses but leads us to the peace of the soul, it creates such love. When we think of it, it gives peace and joy. Ambikai tunes the Sapthaswarās on the Veena and She is lost in it and is the very personification of peace. Her heart becomes soft like a flower and the honey of compassion flows from it. When this is thought of, the hearts of devotees also become soft. Ambikai who is immersed in indescribable peace and joy, blesses us also with peace and joy and a heart made soft with love. When She is Sangitha Murthi, Her intention is this. That is, it does not appear She does this deliberately but that She tunes the Veena to get lost in the Saptha Swarās. The ślokā which commences with ‘Sarigamapadhani Rathām’ indicates that She enjoys the Saptha Swarās. If She is joyful like this, the entire universe which is within Her becomes joyful. It is for the universe to become joyful, to bless the art of music which gives joy, She enjoys the Saptha Swarās and remains joyful. Just as Kālidāsā says that She is one who finds joy in Sarigamapadhani (the Saint poet) Thyāgarājā also describes Īswarā in the words ‘Sarigamapadhani Varasapthaswara Vidhyālōlam. Even if we do not aim at it, if the heart becomes engrossed in saptha swarās the juice of peace will come of its own. It is ‘sāntham’ which Kālidāsā has used. Thyāgarājā says ‘Vimala
Hrudhaya’, Vimala Hrudhayam indicates that both peace and love are in it. What Kālidāsā said as Śāntham has been said as Vimala Hrudhaya in Thyāgarājā’s song. Peace is gained by music. In the same manner, in the juice of peace, music comes of its own. That is why even great jnānis like Sadāśiva Brahmendral have sung. It is only when we sing for the sake of music or for the sake of the āthmā, it will give total peace. If we think ‘although I am practising music, I do not find peace’ it means that the mind desires something else. If there is desire to earn money or fame, complete peace will not materialise. Even in such circumstances, peace will be experienced during certain times. It is like the person who collects honey. He will lick his hand and get a little taste of it. But the honey he collects goes to the shop for sale.

Thus even when music is commercialised and is the means to acquire fame, Vidwāns sometimes forget themselves and sing and in the process make us also forget ourselves. We get a little peace and joy. If one can be like Thyāgarājā and get engrossed in music only and does not seek any other benefit from it, complete peace and unlimited supreme bliss can be experienced. By good Nādōpāsanā the heart will get softened like a flower. Those who had association with Thyāgarājā and Gopalakrishna Bhārathi have written that they had soft hearts, full of compassion. Even today those who move with musicians of great qualities talk of their soft hearts.

When it is said that music therapy cures diseases and music increases the produce in crops, it is because Ambāl’s nectar of love is mixed in it.
CREATION AND RELEASE
THROUGH NĀDHA AND NĀTYA

Just as the One who is called Šakthi is peaceful like the great ocean, there is a mārga by which the Prāṇāsakthi within us is activated, without any Vēdhantha Vichārā (enquiry) and through that to take us to the peace of Adhvaitha. It is called Kundalini Yōgam. A brief explanation of the same: There is an important Nādi going from the lowest part of the spine (Mūlādhāram) up to the tip of the head. If the prāṇāsakthi which is in Mūlādhāram is taken upwards and reached to the top of the head, one can attain ‘Adhvaitha Mukthi’. There are six chakras in this nādi. By means of prānāyama, manthrās and dhyāna, the prāṇāsakthi, namely Kundalini should be raised upwards from the Mūlādhāra chakram through each chakra to the top of the head. When the prāṇāsakthi and the mind are stopped at the chakra which is opposite to the heart, the Prāṇāvā sound which is ‘Anāhathā’ can be heard. For this reason, it is called Anāhatha Chakram. In each chakram, the Śiva Šakthi couple will be in different form. In each chakram, meditation should be done on Śiva Šakthi couple on the form appropriate to that chakram. When Āchāryā talks about this in Soundarya Lahari*, He says that in Mūlādhāra Chakram both Ambāl and Iswarā are dancing. Ambāl has the form of Šamayā and performs the Lāsya dance which ladies perform. Iswarā is in the form of Ānandha Byravar doing Navarasa Mahā Thāndavam - I have already said that Thandavam is the dance performed by men. The Thāndavam is not the Samhāra dance of the deluge time (pralayam) but recreating the universe which perished in pralayam. It is said that Paramēśwarā and Pārāśakthi dance here as father and mother to give birth to the universe. In mūlādhāra, the lāsya which has in it the love of the mother is performed by Ambāl and the Thāndavam which is full of manliness required for ruling
the universe is performed by Paramēśwarā. We have Ānanda Byravi as the name of a rāga in Carnatic music. It is actually another name of Śamayadēvi who is the Śakthi of Ānanda Byravar.

From the very fact that it is said that srashti is from nādham and natanam', the greatness of Gāndharva Vēdhā can be understood. The scientific theory is also that creation came out of vibrations. Is not vibration a movement? The sound vibration of different kinds makes music. The movements of the form make dance. The earth, sun, moon, stars and the planets keep moving. The smallest of the small - the electrons and protons - also keep dancing at an unbelievably high speed. Without this dance, there cannot be the atom.

Since creation starts from this, does it not mean that to get released from srishti also, we have to go to its root? That is why it has been said that music, instruments and nrithya should be practised as the means to mukthi.

* The 41st Sloka commencing with Thavādharē Mulē
THE GREAT AND DIVINE
MASTERS OF FINE ARTS

Those who had attained great proficiency in this have given several Śāstrams on Gāndharva Vidhyā. They have also given several songs which are being sung by others. Although Bharatha Rishi is mentioned as the important among them other divine personages like Nāradhā, Agasthiya, Matanga, Ānjaneyā, Nandikeswarā and others have been considered to have adopted the medium of music for worship and were also authors of music Śāstrams. There is a rāgā by name ‘Hanumath Thōdi’ (there are also ragas with names which have divine connection such as Kalyānī, Sankarābharaṇam, Byravi, Śaṁmugapriyā, Rāmapriyā, Karaharapriyā). From the palm leaves which have become available it is seen that Sarangadēvar, Sōmadēvar, Rāmāmādhyā, Gōvinda Dīkṣithar who was a Minister and a master of Adhvaiṭha Śāstram, his son Vēṅkatamahi and others have dealt with Sangītha Śāstram in detail. Also kings like Mahēndra Varmā, Raghunātha Naik and others have also rendered similar service. Near Pudukōttai there are stone inscriptions of Mahēndra Pallavā in Sanskrit about Sangītha Śāstram. The Veenā which is currently in use is called ‘Raghunātha Veenā’, named after the Naik king. Thus, there were many who had gained great knowledge and experience in music.

In olden days, it appears, all over India there was only one system of music. But due to foreign influences especially during Moghul rule, the system of music evolved into Hindustani and Carnatic Music.

It is said that Jayadēva who wrote Gītā Gōvindam almost about 800 years back was the first to author songs with appropriate tune. Purandaradāsā is usually mentioned after him. There is a view that Carnatic music had actually originated from
him. Both of them have sung on *Krishṭa Paramāthmā*. *Nārāyaṇa Thīrthar* has also sung ‘*Krishṭa Līlā Tharangini*’. These days *(Ūthukādu)* Venkata Subbian’s Tamil work *Krishṇa Gānam* is becoming famous. *Bhadrāchala Ramadās* has sung entirely on *Rāmā*. *Thyāgarājā* who is one of the Trinity of Carnatic music has sung mostly on *Rāmā*. He has also sung a few songs on *Śiva* and *Ambāl*. *Mūthuswāmi Dīkṣithar* has sung almost on all the deities including several village deities. *Śyāmā Sāstri* has sung only on *Ambāl*. *Gopalakrishṇa Bhārathi*, *Mūthu Thāṇdavar* and *Mārimuthā Pillai* have sung only on *Śiva*, especially on *Natarājā*. *Arunāchala Kavirāyar* has written the *Rāma Nātakam*. *Māyavaram Vēdhānayagam Pillai* who was a Christian has sung several songs on one supreme God without reference to denominations and which are full of *Vedanthā*. Even in our own times, there are authors who are highly proficient in writing songs full of devotion.

From those times and up till now the tradition has grown that songs should be on deities and not on secular themes.

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FOLK SONGS AND SONGS RELATED TO DAY TO DAY LIFE

There are songs which are exclusively classified as folk songs. Similarly, for the common folk of the villages, there are several types of dances like Karagam etc. All these will have some divine connection. The man who tills the field and who waters it, the boatman, one who pulls heavy weights, the women who churn the curd at home, all of them do their chores even while singing. Music lightens the burden. When several people do their work with music and dance, output of work will be more. Even in such songs there will be something divine.

Music is capable of giving joy to the mind and thereby reducing the burden of any work. In the same way it can also increase the emotions so that they are poured out and then there is peace. One example for this is the lullaby which is sung to put children to sleep. Even the cobra gets lost in music and stands still. There are songs starting from the lullaby for children and up to wailing for the dead. Mostly, these are all the preserve of women. It was the practice in olden days for mothers to tell stories to children from purāṇās in the form of songs and turn them to the right path. But today’s drama is different. The mother has to get up before the child and has to go for shift duty. There was no celebration in which there was no music. Nādaswaram must be there for any auspicious function so much so that it has come to be called Mangala Vadhyaam. There are songs for the soldiers to march and for them to be aroused. There are songs which we respect as National Songs. Patriotic poets had sung songs to arouse the feelings of people during freedom movement. Whether it is joy or sorrow or valour it is exhibited through music. But ultimately music is for taking us to peace. From one of Thyagaraja’s songs it
is clear that the highest goal of music is to attain peace. Since it is only the thought of Īśvara which can give permanent peace, our music has come in the highest traditions of having Paramātha at the centre.
ART THAT ENHANCES NATIONAL PRIDE

We should never forget this goal. These days our music and dance are spreading in other countries and these are being taught in the Universities there. Music concerts are being arranged by big world organisations in their forum. In this we have the satisfaction that at a time when we have lost our spiritual glory and are not great in other respects also but are going around with begging bowl, our musicians and dancers are being praised by people of other countries. They say ‘There is no art anywhere as those in India’ and they come to learn this from us. We have the satisfaction that we are not just those going about with begging bowl but we are also those who can give alms to others in the form of these arts.
Our arts are spreading today. Let them spread and let them be spread for the sake of arts. But we should not allow the ideal which we had kept for these arts right from olden days to be forgotten. We should never forget that the purpose of these arts is only to take us to Īswarā. We should always keep in mind the ideal of great people like Thyāgarājā who refused a request from Rājā Serfoji to sing in his durbar saying that he did not want money but wanted only Īswara Sannidhi. Gāndharva Vēdhā has to be protected, given a high status for each one to attain peace and make others attain peace.
In the four Purusharthas, namely, Dharmam, Artham, Kāmam and Moksham, Artham comes next to Dharmam. Artham here means all the things which are useful for conducting our day to day life. Whatever we acquire, whether it is a house, clothes or food grains, all these are included in Artham. The money we earn for purchasing these things is also Artham. But if we use this Artham only for our day to day life, die some day and be reborn again, it will become 'anartham' (a disaster). It is for reminding us of this truth that Āchāryā has given the upadeśam 'artham anartham bhāvaya nithyam', (in Bhaja Gōvindam). ‘If this ‘artham’ is not there, we cannot live; if every one becomes a sanyāsi in search of āthmā and Paramāthmā, who will give them alms? (Bikshai). Therefore one has to earn and therefore has to engage in activities necessary for it. It is also necessary that artham has to be sought and obtained for satisfying the desires of the ordinary people but within limits. Here, ‘artham’ is to be considered along with Kāmam which comes next. But one should not stop with that. The ultimate Purushārtham, namely, Moksha should not be forgotten. In order to ensure all these, it is necessary that from the beginning there should be involvement in Dharmam which comes first.

The reason why Dharmam has been mentioned first is that in this world which is a drama (māyā) people cannot be without artham and kāmam but, if sometime later, māyā is to get cleared and jnānā and moksha are to be achieved, arthā and kāmā should not be polluted by ‘adharmam’. People have desire for many things. It does not matter if they are not able to give up such desires with determination. But they should not try to get those things by stealing or by deceiving someone. Although the husband and wife can enjoy by their union, they should not have this on days which are prohibited and should observe the discipline. Other women should never be thought of. One can earn but should not

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indulge in corruption. We should not deny what is due to someone else. It is only when a fencing like this is provided for artham and kāmam, it will be possible to attain the fruit of jnāna and moksha one day.

Artham is called ‘porul’ in Tamil. Dharmam, Artham, Kāmam and Moksham are respectively Aram, Porul, Inbam, Vīdu in Tamil. Thiruvalluvar has dealt with Aram, Porul and Kāmam in three sections of the Kural. Although there is no separate section for Moksham (Vīdu) there are more than hundred verses (Kural) in the sections dealing with family life and Sanyāsam in which the ways of attaining moksha have been mentioned. In that he has said that for one to reach the moksha lokā, Arul (compassion) is very necessary, as necessary as Porul is for worldly life. This is how Thiruvalluvar has emphasised the importance of Artham for worldly life.

A house is necessary for protection from sun and rain. Food is necessary to save us from hunger. Clothes are necessary to guard our personal honour. In order to satisfy these needs, money is required. Therefore, it is necessary that man should be taught the ways and means of getting money. That exactly is Artha Śāsthram which is the fourth upa Vēdham.

But when we look into Artha Śāsthram we find there is more of politics and statecraft in it than economics. Even in Thirukkural, immediately following the chapter on ‘Porul’ (money and wealth) it is the chapter on Governance. Then in several sections the Kural deals with the nature of just rule by the king, meting out punishments tempered by justice, the procedures to be followed by ministers, spys, ambassadors and others, the army, the need for forts, war tactics, the fair ways of taxing etc. All these are about governance.

The question may be asked why it has been dealt with in this manner. If a person has to conduct his life with his house, fields,
money and other artham, he cannot himself protect all these. A big organisation is needed to protect these. In any country, there will be bad people. They will not toil and earn but they will try to rob others even by committing murders. Such a situation cannot be allowed. A powerful organisation is necessary to protect the life and property of everybody. It is also necessary to prevent foreigners from intruding into the country in large numbers and creating problems for the people, destroying their means of living, their religion and culture etc. The organisation must therefore have the necessary authority and man power to ensure all this. It is not necessary to teach people about earning and conducting their daily life. Even if they are told a little, they will, out of self interest, improve on their own. It is necessary that they have to be controlled in a manner that they do not spoil the interests of others and their own permanent interest. That is the objective of Dharma Śāstham. When we talk of Artha Śāstham it has to deal more with protecting the citizens, their properties etc than about individuals earning for themselves. It will also be necessary not only to protect their day to day life but their spiritual life and culture. Therefore the need to talk in detail about how to carry out these big functions in the whole country. Government is that organisation. That is how even thousands of years back Governments came to be organised to protect the people from their internal and external enemies and to ensure that nothing comes in the way of the people earning their Artham by proper means. Later on new ideologies came up and one of these is democracy in which the rule is by a powerful majority which does not always protect the rights and properties of weaker minorities. Despite this it is usual to claim at least on paper that the Government is there to protect all the people and the dharma of the country. I am mentioning this in a general way because there is a clash of ideology and principles. The reason why Government and the ways of governance have been given an important place in Artha Śāstham is because the Government is the organisation that exists for protecting the citizens’ artham in the ways of dharma.
It is for ensuring this important protection that \textit{Artha S\text{"a}sthram} has laid down several laws. But much before \textit{Artha S\text{"a}sthram} gave these laws, \textit{Dharma S\text{"a}sthram} which is considered higher than the \textit{Upa V\text{"e}dh\text{"a}s} has spoken a lot about governance. In \textit{Manu Smruthi}, \textit{Y\text{"a}gnavalkya Smruthi} and other Smruthis in which the dharma for \textit{Kshathriy\text{"a}s} and the Kings have been dealt with, the rules regarding governance are also covered. All the kings of the olden times including the kings in Tamil region were proud of ruling according to \textit{Manu Dharma}. The rule was more in accordance with \textit{Dharma S\text{"a}sthram}. This is because all \textit{Upa V\text{"e}dh\text{"a}s} have for their objective what is to be gained for practical life in this world which can be actually seen. It is only the Smruthis and \textit{Dharma S\text{"a}sthram} which are in the \textit{V\text{"e}dha Upa Ang\text{"a}s} that have in view the greatness of the other world and the elevation of the \textit{\text{"a}thm\text{"a}}.

The \textit{Upa V\text{"e}dh\text{"a}s} like \textit{Artha S\text{"a}sthram} are also based on \textit{V\text{"e}dha Dharma}. Yet, it cannot be said that they go along entirely with dharma. These are meant to specialise in particular subjects like medicine, artham, entertainment etc. Therefore, the defect that is noticed in specialisation in modern allopathic treatment also affects the \textit{Upa V\text{"e}dh\text{"a}}. There is a doctor for ears; a doctor for the throat; one for the nose; one exclusively for the heart and another exclusively for the lungs. Thus, when treatment is given in a specialised manner, some other disease affects some other part. They say that the constitution is affected. In the same way, when there is development of artham only, nurturing of music and dance etc, the way of life based on \textit{dharma} does not receive attention.

That is why the kings considered it a matter of pride for following \textit{Manu Dharma S\text{"a}sthram} more than \textit{Artha S\text{"a}sthram}.
Ultimately, it will be seen even in *Artha Śāstham* that it has been mentioned that it has come up only on the basis of dharma and for establishing it.

Not only in *Dharma Śāstham*, but in the *Purāṇās* and *Ithihāsās* which are part of *Upa Angā* much has been said about governance. Here greater importance is given to the eternal *dharma* rather than the purely ephemeral *artham*.

In *Mahābhārata* which Vyāsa Mahārishi has given only for establishing dharma and *Rāmāyana* which is the story of *Rāmāchandramūrthi*, described as the personification of *dharma* (dharma vigrahavan) there is a lot said about governance. In the *Sānti Parvā* and *Ānusāsanika Parvā* which Bhishma Pithāmahā gave as *upadesā* to Dharmaputhra after his coronation several things are found about statecraft. It is seen in *Rāmāyana* how Rāma gave *upadesā* about statecraft to Bharathā who went to meet him at Chitrakoot to bring him back to *Ayodhyā*. It is possible that Rāma must have talked to him only of the rules of Rāmarājyā which was *Dharmarājyā*.

We have to consider *Artha Śāstham* only as secondary to these works which deal with governance on the basis of dharma. These days we are only thinking that *Artha Śāstham* means a book written by *Chānakyā*. In fact, it is only one of the books on *Artha Śāstham*. It is called ‘*Chānakyā Nithi’* or ‘*Chānakyā Thanthram’*. Similarly, there is *Artha Śāstham* compiled by *Śukrāchāriār*, known as ‘*Śukra Nithi’*. One cannot expect to see sathyam, dharmam, justice and uprightness etc in the books on *Artha Śāstham* to the extent they can be seen in the books on Dharma *Śāstham*. Even diplomacy, expediency which are mentioned in the context of unavoidable circumstances may also be allowed to some extent even in the books on dharma. But in *Artha Śāstham* these have been given prominent position. If Dharma *Śāsthramps* go to the extent of telling that in certain situations the Government
can hide certain facts, Artha Śāsthram will say that what is there can be denied and what is not there can be told. It is because there is asathyam (untruth) in this, it is only called a Śāsthram and not a Vēdham in the manner of the other three Upa Vēdhās, namely, Āyur Vēdham, Dhanur Vēdham and Gāndharva Vēdham.

Wherever there is a contradiction between what is said in Upa Vēdhās and Dharma Śāsthrams we have to take what is said in Dharma Śāsthrams and reject what is said in Upa Vēdhās. If, for example, an Āyurvēda vaidya says on the basis of some palm leaves that even on the srāddhā day, a Brahmin who is sick can take a lehyam of garlic his advice should be rejected according to Dharma Śāsthram even if one has to lose his life. In the same manner, if in Artha Śāsthram it is said that a king can do certain things by giving up dharma in order to strengthen his own position in the name of diplomacy and if that is not approved by Dharma Śāsthram we should only take what Dharma Śāsthram says. May be that health, victory in war, pleasure gained through the eyes and ears, power and authority etc of the Upa Vēdhās are seen immediately. But the fruits of dharma may not be immediately seen but may be ‘adhishta’. Just because of this can we give up what is permanent and stick to what is purely temporary? Even though the Upa Vēdhās give the ways and means of protecting this body and giving it pleasure, are they capable of keeping it happy for all times? Are we not answerable for dharma and adharma once this body goes?

To understand that the unseen fruits given by the Dharma Śāsthrams are higher than the fruits immediately given by the Upa Vēdhās, the popular saying itself is evidence. In actual life, if someone gets a big gain which can be seen we say that ‘adhishtam has helped’ the man. Therefore Artha Śāsthram and others which give fruits which are visible have to bow before Dharma Śāsthrams which give fruits which cannot be seen (adhishta). In the four Purushārthās, Dharmā, Artha, Kāma, Mōksham, Artham largely
ends with the pleasure given by \textit{Kāmam}. It is only dharmam which is the means for eternal welfare. It is for following that path of dharma, artham must be used.

Because I say these, it should not be thought just as some people do these days, that in Chanakya thanthram etc, Government has been given authoritarian powers overlooking the good of the people and sathyam and dharmam. Presently, in all countries including those in which there is monarchy it is said that rule is by democracy. Yet, we find that there is a coup daily and one military government falls and another comes in its place in a short time. Those who install a new government make the allegation that the earlier government was not concerned about the good of the people, that their representatives gave up all \textit{dharmās} and indulged in corruption and spoiled the entire life in the country. Artha \textit{Śāsthram} does not permit this kind of authoritarian or inefficient rule. These days high principles are being talked about but action is entirely different. But in \textit{Artha Śāsthram} dharma is not spoken about in so many words. Keeping in view the need for conducting a government and dealing with onslaughts from other countries, it would be said that certain things would have to be publicly shown in a manner different from what they are and due to practical necessity, some compromise has to be made without looking into sathya and dharma. Although dharma was not described in so many words, since the kings ruled by making relaxations only to the extent mentioned in \textit{Artha Śāsthram}, there was no authoritarianism and adharma as obtaining these days.
THE ETERNAL LAW AND TEMPORARY CHANGES

It is only when there is scope for the Government to make laws as it likes for anything and everything, it will give room for authoritarianism. Although there was monarchy in the olden days the kings did not enjoy the authority of making laws as they liked. Because this aspect is not known, there is criticism. What those who criticise have to note is that all the fundamental laws were according to what is written down in Dharma Śāsthram and Artha Śāsthram. Since these laws based on dharma helped the attainment of the life permanent, the kings had the faith that these laws were also permanent and they were committed to them. Even in their younger years when they were in Gurukulam, it was taught to the Princes in a manner that made deep impression on their minds that it was the king’s responsibility to protect and promote Vaidhikam, Āsthikam and Dharmā. ‘These eternal truths will become the reality only when the ancient Śāsthrams are followed; the rules given by the rishis who were absolutely selfless and were given only for the good of the world have to be followed without change by us who are in a far lower state than the rishis – this was how the Princes were convinced even during their learning in Gurukulam. Therefore with the help of the Ministers who knew both the Śāsthrams and the practical needs, the King made small changes here and there in the Śāsthrās depending on the circumstances. He did not make any change but only made some modification. He used to make laws only in those areas which have been left by the Śāsthrams to the discretion of the King. Kālidāsā says that Dilipan ruled without swerving from Manu Dharmā just like the chariot wheel which keeps to the path (Raghuvasamsam). This description reflects the quality of governance by all the Kings.
When we talk of secularism there is no place for considering the eternal dharma. When it happens that those who have changing views about the practical life that keeps changing constitute the Government, laws also keep changing. While the laws based on dharma have been there for thousands of years in this country and followed without change it is only in today's democratic governments which have artham as their goal, laws are changed according to the whims and fancies of those who come to power every now and then.

_Purohith, Kulaguru, Minister, Amādhyar, Sasivar_ were the different advisors whom the king consulted and also the opinion of the assemblies which consisted of the representatives of different groups in the society and, based on the laws of statecraft, as laid down _in sāstrās_ the kings had ruled and they were never autocratic. Today, we are talking of Panchayati Raj. This was actually in vogue in those days. The king was just like a supervisor. In the matter of war and military matters, the Central Government had considerable powers. The chief role of the king in civil matters was construction of temples, digging tanks, giving grants to those proficient in _Vedhas_, to those of high conduct and discipline and artistes etc. Other civil matters were attended to mainly keeping in view the advice of local bodies.

In those days, the procedure followed was that different kings who came to rule at different times, could make new rules where necessary only on the basis of the fundamental laws which were old. The position today is that those who come to power at different times want to make laws to suit their ideology and for that they want to make even changes in the Constitution. Almost every year there is an amendment to the Constitution! The old system is said to be autocratic!
THE CONSTRAINTS AND DISCIPLINE TO WHICH THE KING WAS SUBJECT

People make allegations without knowing the facts. The allegation made by those who support Republican rule is that the son got the title to rule, especially the eldest son, according to the law of primogeniture and therefore monarchy of those days had no place for people's consent or there was no place for merit. Actually, it is only now that except the qualification regarding age, there is no other qualification stipulated for people's representatives. Even Rajendra Prasad who was the President of the Constituent Assembly had objected to this position. He argued: 'We have stipulated a lot of qualifications for the lawyers who have to argue and the judges who have to decide the cases. But if we say that there need be no qualification for the MLAs and MPs who have to make the laws, it does not appear all right'. But the Constituent Assembly did not listen to him.

In the olden days, there was need for the kings to acquire several qualifications. They had to go through Gurukulavāsam and learn all the Sāstrams and practise Dhanur Vēdham.

The Sāstrās say that the king should be great in dharma and culture and before he could defeat the external enemies, he had to become victorious over the six internal enemies, like, Kāmam and Krōdham (desire, lust and anger).

Whenever Princes like Asamanjan, who always went on the wrong path, became kings and acted in an autocratic manner they were removed by the assembly of People's representatives.

Because it was primogeniture, it did not mean that the eldest son should get the crown even if he had no qualification. Even for the coronation of Rāmachandramūrthi more than whom nobody
could have any qualification, Dasaratha called the assembly and sought its opinion in the matter.

Even those like Sūrapadman, Mahishāsuran, Rāvanā, Duryodhanā and others had called their ministers and made a show of seeking their advice. Even Rāma accepted Vibhīshanā’s surrender only after consulting the monkeys.

It is enough if we look into Kālidāsa’s Raghuvamsam. It was written at a time when not only Dharma Śāsthram but the principles of Artha Śāsthram came to be practised in a big way and it talks about the line of kings of Suryavamsam (Solar Race). Therefore we can take it that whatever has been said in that work relate to the later day Rājadharmā. I shall now mention a few of them which come to my mind.

Śāsthras say that just as the honeybee sucks the honey from the flower without causing any pain to the flower, the king too should collect the taxes from the citizens without causing them any trouble and without depressing their prosperity. This has been said more beautifully by using another metaphor. ‘Just as the sun sucks the water from the earth and then gives it back to the earth in the form of rain, king Dilipan gave back to the people what he had collected from them to enable them to spend it for their own good’. Does not the sun draw water from the ocean which is full of salty water and which is of no use to anyone and then give it back as rain? In the same manner, the king taxed idle wealth which was of no use to the society and spent it for the welfare of the society. That is the meaning of the metaphor.

The kings were given palace and all paraphernalia, the elephants, the horses, jewels etc with the object that the king who was the protector of all the people should be respected by them. But if it is thought that he had levied taxes only to increase his own wealth, that is wrong. From what has been stated above, it is clear that the concept of welfare state was there even in those times.
Kalidasa says about Raghu after whom the dynasty Raghu Vamsam came: Raghu who was victorious over all the other countries and returned with a lot of wealth, performed the yāgā called ‘Visvajit’ and gave away all that wealth in charity and as dakshinai. Not only that he did not increase his own wealth by what he had gained through his victories but he had given away in charity even whatever he himself had. When a Brahmin by name Kautsar went to him, he had no vessel made of gold or silver or even a spoon and therefore, he used mud vessel for offering argyam to the Brahmin. But these days, we see question being raised almost every day how new bungalows are coming up for MLAs and Ministers.

The definition that Kalidasa gives for the word ‘Raja’ is that he was one who did not rule in an autocratic manner but was friendly to all his people. The definition is ‘Rājā Prakruthi Ranjanāth’. Here Prakruthi means the ordinary people. ‘Ranjanāth’ means ‘because of making them happy’. He has thus shown that because he makes the people happy, the word Rāj is derived from the root ‘Ranj’.

There was another poet by name Bhavabhūthi. In the Uttara Rama Charitham which he wrote, Rama says: ‘I am prepared to sacrifice anything to please my people. When I sacrifice my friendship, my compassion, my comforts, why even Sita for the sake of the people, I will have no sorrow’. The poetic beauty in this is that following this even though Rama knew very well that Sita was pure, he sacrificed her because people had a suspicion about her purity.

Earlier also, in Lankā, after killing Rāvanā, when Sītā came so eagerly to join him and although he had so much love for her and faith in her, he wanted to respect public opinion instead of thinking that as a king he could do whatever he wanted, and rejected her before the vanarās and rākshasās. It was only after she entered the fire and agni itself vouchsafed for her purity publicly before the entire army, he accepted her. Even after that on his
return to Ayodhya just because there was a little rumour somewhere he sent away to the forest Sita who was Mahālakshmi Herself. Does this not show that monarchy was neither autocratic nor authoritarian?

There was no limit to the love Rāmachandramūrthi had for Sita. He had taken the vow of Ėka Pathni (only one wife). There was in fact no restriction that kings had to live with one wife only. Tradition had allowed him to have some enjoyment so that his heart can be light since he was weighed down by such heavy responsibilities as war, hunting, giving judgements, consultation with ministers, temple renovations etc. It was for this reason that he was allowed separate areas for his own sporting inside the palace and also other forms of enjoyment. Kings also used to contract marriages with the Princesses of other countries to maintain good relationship with those countries. Even with all this, they were never immersed in small pleasures. Nor did they neglect their duty to the country or their own spiritual uplift. In Artha Śāstham, Chanakya details the daily routine of a king. In that a day is divided into 16 parts and a duty is mentioned for each part. Of these 16, only some three or four are allotted for sleep, sporting etc. All the rest are to be devoted to the duties of the State. Even in Raghuvamsam it is said that the kings followed this time table day and night and protected dharma. Do we not hear in stories that even during nights, the kings went in disguise through the town? If this was not actually in practice, can it come as part of a story?

Although merry making was allowed for the kings since they were trained even from their younger years in Śāstrams, they maintained discipline and did not cross the limits. Did not Rāmā take all the people of Ayōdhyā along with him to Vaikuntam? Before that he had appointed one of his sons, Kusā as the king of the kingdom with Kusāvathī as capital and Lavā as the king for the kingdom with Sarāvathī as capital. Did not Ayōdhyā itself become
a zero after him? Therefore, the presiding deity of Ayodhya thinks that Ayodhya should be brought back to life by Kusā. In order to make this request to him, She appeared one midnight in the bedroom of Kusā in Kusāvathi. When Kusā found that there was an unknown woman in his room, he asked ‘Who are you? Whose wife are you? Why have you come here at midnight? We of the Raghuvamsam are those who have controlled our indriyas and we are 'vasi' (one who subdues or represses his passions); Please know that our minds will never think of other women. It is thus through the words of Kusā the poet makes it clear what the ideal of a king should be.

Chānakyā also in his Artha Śāstrram has given examples of how some kings who were infatuated with ladies, were fascinated by wealth, were very angry etc had reached a miserable state and says that kings should have good knowledge of Śāstram and discipline to enable them to perform their difficult duties etc.

It is wrong to think that the king had only looked after his own welfare and the concept of welfare state was not there in those days. Laying roads, buildings, dams (the Grand Anaicut which is over a thousand years old, still stands as an engineering marvel) public works, constructing hospitals etc were all meant for the welfare of the society and there was a separate department for each of these functions and there were officials to execute them. As a matter of fact, it was only then that the government functioned for the real welfare of the people. The kings of the olden times did not stop with doing whatever is mentioned above but led the people on the path of dharma by doing what was necessary for the same. For the welfare of the people, they performed yāgās, built temples, celebrated festivals, popularized the stories like Mahābhāratha and ensured that men of noble conduct, the sishtās lived as an example to the ordinary people.

It is in this context there is an allegation that those whom I have referred to as sishtās made the kings their puppets and
manipulated them in order that they could have a comfortable life for themselves. What is meant is that in the name of Brahma thejas it was the Brahmin who was above the king and manipulated everything. This is said without knowing how simple a life the Brahmans of those days lived and also lived in seclusion. Even Chānakāyā who is described as highly cunning and would not hesitate to do anything and who actually was responsible for making Chandragupta Mounyā the Chakravarthi and whose confidence he fully enjoyed and who could live comfortably in a big house close to the palace, actually lived outside the town in a small hut, wearing torn clothes and taking only gruel. In the same manner, purohīths like Vasishtā lived a very simple life in parrtasālās outside the town. There is absolutely no evidence that they had of their own interfered in State matters and manipulated anything. It was the kings who went to them if there was a problem and sought their advice and blessings. The Brahmin had heavier responsibilities than the king and he had subjected himself to great hardship in the interest of the welfare of the world and did not enjoy any special facility or comfort.

For the king also, there was no privilege in the eyes of law. Because a Prince ran his chariot over a calf and killed it, his father Manu Nīthi Chōḷā tied the Prince to the chariot wheel to sacrifice him in the interest of justice.

The amount of responsibility the kings of those days had and the worries they had on that account cannot be imagined by those who are conducting the affairs of the State these days. This is because the king had to be responsible for his people leading life on the path of dharma. He had been taught that the sins of his people would accrue to him for his having failed to guide them in the right path. The Śāstham says ‘Rājā Rāṣṭra Krutham Pāpam’. This means that the sins committed by the people of a kingdom will accrue to the king. As a converse of this, if a king commits a wrong, it will affect the whole kingdom, Nature itself will revolt
and create great harm. It was thus he was made to fear dharma and follow it.

In *Thirukkural*, much is said about these aspects - The tears shed by people under an autocratic rule will destroy the king's entire wealth; if the king's rule goes on wrong lines, monsoon will fail and there will be drought; milk will become scarce; the Brahmins will forget *Vedhas*, all the prosperity which will come from *yāgas* will be lost - this is how *Thiruvallīvar* has warned.

In order to show the ideal for a king to rule a country taking care of right conduct, Kālidāsa gives the example of *Dilipan*. In the capital of *Dilipan*'s kingdom, on the way to the garden, ladies would be found during night in deep sleep. The poet asks 'In *Dilipan*'s rule, even the wind did not disturb the clothes of such ladies. When that was so, is it possible that any person would have tried to do it?'

The *Śāstrās* say that it is not only towards the people but towards animals, plants, creepers, crops and everything, the king should act with a lot of consideration. There is restriction even in hunting. Many kings followed the rule that only very wild animals should be hunted. In Bhāgavatham, in the story 'Prāchīna Barhaś' it has been said that if a lot of animals are killed in the name of *yāga*, that is sin. *Śibi Chakravarthi* gave flesh from his own body for the sake of a dove. We also read that the great philanthropist Pāri gave his own chariot for a jasmine creeper to have support and grow.

From *Śākuntalam* it is seen how a king had to extend a lot of sympathy and love towards all creatures.

King Dushyantha was informed that some people from Kaṇva *Mahārishi*’s āśram had come to see him. Immediately he thought that unless something serious had happened or there is some major problem, people of the āśram would not have come to him. He then thinks to himself ‘Could it be that there was some
obstruction to the rishi’s thapas? Or did anyone harm any of the quiet animals that are moving about in the forest? Or is it due to some mistake of mine that plants have not flowered or trees have not borne fruit?’

In Rāma Rājyā someone lost his son and he was in deep sorrow. Rāmā thought that this must have been due to his own failure to ensure that Varnāśrama Dharmā was followed properly. He then found out the reason and punished the person who violated the dharma.

In Sākunthalam also, in the beginning, there is a scene which shows the faith with which the kings had followed the Varnāśramā Dharmā. As soon as Dushyanthā saw Sākunthalā, he fell in love with her. From the manner in which her friends were joking with her, he understood that she was not married. Therefore, he thought, that there was nothing wrong if he had fallen in love with her. But immediately he thought: ‘She seems to be Kanva Mahārishi’s daughter in which case she must be a Brahmin girl. The mind of a Kshathriya like me should not go after her. Yet I find that my mind goes to her. The conscience of people of right conduct can never fail. Therefore she cannot be a Brahmin girl’. In a way he made a guess about Sākunthalā’s antecedents and decided that his love for her would not be against dharma. Although his guess was not correct, it is true that Sākunthalā was only Kanvā’s foster daughter. Sākunthalā was born of Viswāmithrā who was a Kshathriya and Mēnakā who was an Apsaras. This way, the poet makes it clear that only a person of right conduct is fit to be a king and such a person’s conscience will not even unknowingly go against the Varnā distinctions.

Because the kings had so much responsibility and the possibility of incurring sin by failing in any of these responsibilities, Dharma Śāsthrām and Artha Śāsthrām have laid down with great care rules for their conduct.
The kings of olden times were not keen to fill up their treasury somehow. In order to prove this, Kālidāsa has written a scene in Śākuntalam.

Dushyantha’s finance minister sends him a note saying that the ship belonging to someone who was doing sea trade had sunk and since he had no progeny all his property would go to the government treasury. But Dushyantha is not in a hurry to appropriate all the property to the treasury. He thinks: ‘If he is a big merchant he would have married several wives in which case we will have to find out whether any of his wives is in the family way’. Exactly as he thought, one of the wives of the trader is in the family way. Dushyantha decides: ‘If that be so, the property will not go to the treasury but will go to the child which is in that widow’s womb’.

At that time, Dushyanthā takes a step which shows the great humanity of the kings, their culture which would not permit them to violate dharma. He makes an announcement that ‘whoever has lost a relative, I will be that relative to him’. Immediately he realises that his statement would be inappropriate in respect of a woman who has lost her husband. Therefore he adds a condition ‘I will be a relative only in a manner that it is not against dharma’. What is today spoken of as the care of orphans in a welfare State has been stipulated as the king’s duty. He says that the government must protect the poor, the pregnant women, orphans, old and sick people.
TWO IMPORTANT DUTIES OF THE KING

Although *Artha Śāsthrām* has given several duties to the king and prescribed very noble qualities it has mentioned two of them as very important. Whatever has been mentioned till now, they come under protection by the king. What is now to be mentioned belong to punishment. Punishing people in accordance with dharma is also a part of protection. If the crop has to grow well, the weeds have to be removed. Punishing those who indulge in crimes in the kingdom and punishing an invading army in war occupy the most important place in king’s duties.
CRIMINAL JURISPRUDENCE
APPLICABLE INTERNALLY

Yet, punishment has not been mentioned right at the start. So far as the citizens are concerned, it was not that the king could mete out punishment without any effort on his part to guide them on the right path. In the olden days, it was not like the present time when there is no connection between governance and efforts to improve the conduct of the citizens. The king provided encouragement by all means to enable the people to follow the dharma applicable to each of them. He utilised the services of the men of right conduct to propagate dharma. He also ensured that the chiefs of different groups in the society took care that people in the group followed right conduct. He made the temple the centre of social activities and made the people to follow dharma through bhakthi. It was because that he rendered all help to the people to follow dharma he severely punished them whenever they went wrong. Śāsthra is of the view that showing extra consideration and mercy to people who commit crimes would amount to encouragement. These days a lot is being talked about persuasion by which they are supposed to undergo change of heart. Considering the state of human nature the question is whether they can show anyone who has corrected himself in this manner. If all conveniences are provided in the jail, people who have no work, may think that it is better to go to jail, eat well and sleep. Since the government does not directly act to protect dharma but political leaders have created importance for themselves and their ideology in the society the authority of sāsthras and the status of Dharma Pītams have declined and therefore people have lost the feeling that they should be bound by dharma. In such circumstances, it may probably he said that it is natural for them to commit wrongs and therefore deal with them leniently! But in olden times when the
government extended support for the citizens to follow dharma and provided the means for it, if some people went the wrong way, there was no place for showing consideration, is it not? That is why severe punishments have been provided for. It was because of this that the society was all right; good people were not subjected to hardship by those who indulged in wrongs and the people led a peaceful life. On the whole, our country had shone as an example to the world for right conduct. When we consider this, we will admit that the punishment to be meted out by the State has to be in accordance with sāstrās. Starting from Megasthenes, all the foreign visitors have unanimously praised the right conduct and discipline they had observed in our society. The punishment meted out by the king was also one of the reasons for such a state of the society. We also know the present condition of the society. Yet, we keep finding fault with the rules for punishment laid down in sāstrās.

Although persuasion, correcting people in the sāthvik manner are being talked about these days, if there is war or there is a crisis politically or economically, 'emergency' is declared and the first thing that is done is to make the punishments more severe. Therefore, does this not show that the conduct and discipline in the country can be taken care of better by punishments than by persuasion?

Those who had formulated the dharma and artha sāstrās have provided for severe punishments keeping in view several noble objectives. One is that a crime committed by someone is a hardship caused to the society in some form. It is only if a citizen has the fear that if he causes such hardship to the society, the king would mete out a more severe punishment to him, he will conduct himself properly. If a jail sentence of four months is awarded to a person who stole ten rupees, he will not again steal in this manner. The second objective is that the punishment not only ensures that the person concerned does not repeat the offence but it is a lesson
for others in the society and this way it affords protection to the society. The third object is spiritual. To commit an offence is sin. That will take him to the hell. In sāsthrās and purāṇās, it has been mentioned in detail what kinds of cruel punishments will have to be undergone in the hell for different offences committed in the world. By being punished by the king, an offender becomes freed from the harsh experience of hell. When compared with the experience in hell, the punishment meted out by the king (State) is, of course, light. Thus, the punishment meted out by the king itself becomes a prāyaschithā for the sin committed by an offender and ensures his spiritual welfare.
IS THERE PARTIALITY TO THE BRAHMIN?

It would be necessary here to refer to a particular matter. The king has not been given extra jurisdiction to punish the Brahmin. The severity of the punishment meted out to a Brahmin would be less. When one looks at it, it would give the impression, that in a matter in which no concession should be given, namely, equality before law, a concession has been made in an unjust manner. Such an impression would be fair. Yet, if the reason for this is understood, then it will be known that really there is no partiality. I just now mentioned about Prāyaschitham. That really is the reason.
NURTURING OF DHARMA IS THE FOUNDATION; ENSURING THE OBSERVANCE OF VARṆĀ DHARMĀ

In general, when we look at the society the punishment meted out by the king to the offender itself becomes an act of prāyaschithā and helps him in removing the sin. With this we will have to consider one other thing. If an offender is allowed to escape punishment that becomes a sin to the king himself. ‘Rājā rāśtrakṛutham pāpam’: The sins of the citizens accrue to the king. ‘Yathā raja thathā praja’: As is the king so are the citizens. By saying that if the citizens follow bad ways, the sin would accrue to the king, it has made the king involve himself in establishing dharma in his kingdom with great care.

Just as the sin of the offender goes by the punishment meted out by the king, I shall also mention another thing. By the sacrifice made on the battlefield, punyam accrues to the soldiers who die and also the king. It is said that those who die on the battlefield go to the special swarga meant for such valorous people. It is because the king stakes his very life in protecting the kingdom he has been given several comforts and enjoyments. Let us now see the law governing punishments and dharma.

Samayāchāram, bhakthi, jnāna marga, karmā mārgā and yōga are there only to ensure that the thought of committing any offence goes out of the mind on its own. When people do not discipline themselves through these, it is only through fear that crimes can be prevented. The religious leaders, great devotees and yōgis led the people on the right path. When people do not behave properly following the above ways and indulge in crime, the king has to mete out punishment. If dharmam and punyam have to prevail in the country and the condition is to be good, it would be
possible only if there is no crime. Moreover, it is only the king who can provide protection to people who are quiet so that they can be free from the fear of thieves and murderers. It is for this reason that the king has been given the power to punish. It is because of its importance *Artha Śāsthram* itself has another name ‘the Code of Punishment’. Although *Artha Śāsthram* has other names which link it to justice, governance, policies etc, what is more commonly in use is ‘Code of Punishment’.

On one side the king had patronised those who were following dharma and through them propagated the basic *dharmās* to the people by means of discourses on *Purāṇās* and by their personal example and thus used the persuasion method. When such peaceful methods did not bear fruit and there were activities contravening dharma, he resorted to punishment. These days there is talk on one side that the methods of punishment should be made lenient but on the other hand police and courts are increasing in number. In olden days, since the king took care of those who followed the ways of dharma, police and courts were minimum. The king’s main function was to build temples. What is said basically in *Artha Śāsthram* is that those who were following *dharmā* should attain *jnānā* and to enable them to proceed on this path, they should be provided with all the facilities. If the foundation is strong, even if there is some defect in the building, it can be easily rectified. This is the function discharged by the method of punishment in the olden times. That is why police stations and courts were less but temples, choultries which provided anna *Dhānam, yajna sālās* etc were more. Now, since ‘building is coming up without a proper foundation’, in spite of thousands of police stations, there are novel methods of robberies, cheating, murders, crimes relating to prostitution etc. In spite of thousands of courts functioning, the pending cases are also in thousands. But the ordinary people are not free from fear; there is no security. When foundation is not laid for dharma, if there is
only punishment for adharmam and that too lenient punishment how else would the situation be?

The need for the king to use his power of punishments was considerably reduced by the presence of the chiefs of different groups. These chiefs enquired into wrongs committed by the people within the group. To that extent, courts had less work. Unlike their attitude towards the police people in various groups had a feeling of friendliness towards the chiefs of their own groups. That is why they voluntarily accepted the authority of the chiefs and conducted themselves properly without committing wrongs.

This is also one more reason for the king to have the duty of protecting *VArnāśrama dharmā*. In the *Varṇa* arrangement, every individual was free from worry regarding his own job. Mostly they were people of bhakthi and they had faith in good people, they were following the religious practices appropriate to their jāthi and therefore they were not only satisfied in terms of worldly life but they also gained spiritual growth. Because all the jobs were divided in an orderly fashion, all the functions necessary for the State were carried out without a sense of rivalry or confusion. Therefore, the economy of the country was in a good shape and people had a feeling of cordiality to each other which contributed to the growth of arts and culture and more than all that, there was growth of spiritual ideals. All are agreed that over the past thousands of years it was in our country more than others that there was cordiality in the society and the country enjoyed a high position in economics, culture and spirituality. If we try to find out what made this possible in this country when it was not there in other countries it was nothing other than *VArnāśrama Dharmā* which was followed as the foremost duty by the State and by the people voluntarily.

But if the kings of the olden times felt proud about protecting the Varna dharma, in today’s politics or in social life, it is supposed to be ‘casteless society’. It is a great mistake that the different jobs meant for the different jāthis are not performed by those jāthis and
the āchāram and anusṭānam appropriate to them are not being followed but only the jāthis are being maintained. This is like trying to protect the corpse after life has gone out of the body. In this we may agree cent percent with the reformers. But we cannot at all accept their view that the division of functions and therefore distinctions in the āchāram and anusṭānam are wrong. What should be realised is that it is wrong that the division of functions and the āchārās to be followed according to sāsthṛās by different people have changed. It may be asked ‘when everything has become so confused, is it practicable to bring back the old system?’ My answer is ‘I do not know’. Even now, instead of throwing up our hands thinking that nothing is possible we should try as far as possible and wherever possible to take things back to the old order.

When we look at history - when Buddha came on the scene 2500 years back and later Jainism came about 1300 years back and enjoyed the patronage of the Pallavā and Pāndyan kingdoms and the direct patronage of kings like Mahendra Varman, Nedumāra Pāndian and others - religious leaders like Udayanāchāryā, Kumārila Bhattar, Āchāryā, Appar, Jnāna Sambandhar and others came on the scene there was resurgence of Varnāśrama Vēdha Dharmā. As I have often said people do not make any research about religious ideologies but when great men came on the scene to whom they felt they could be devoted they thought ‘The siddhantha that these people are preaching must be correct’ and therefore they became their followers. But it is also true that unless they had felt dissatisfaction in the ways they had followed till then and also felt that by taking to the new path they could remove that dissatisfaction, they would not have changed. Even though they did not know the subtle aspects of religious ideologies they could realise the fruits of such ideologies which could be seen. But when Buddha and Mahāvira discarded jāthis and said that all people were one, people initially were attracted to
them and went their way. But in course of time, although they were aware that they enjoyed some status in the new arrangement, they found that both in individual life and social life, there was no scope in the new religions for improvement. Therefore without any compulsion and wholeheartedly they had returned to the Vaidhika mārgam. Intellectuals should take note of these events which had taken place more than once and then find out how best the old order could be restored in its true spirit. As a minimum measure since the Brahmin jāthi has been made responsible for all dharmās and ideals of life, that jāthi at least should be able to live according to sāstrās and efforts should be made towards this.

Irrespective of whether we make such arrangement or not, at least we should have the realisation that the rishis, jnānis, devotees, religious leaders, poets, architectes, artists and those who have given us the sciences, all of which form what we call ‘Indian Culture’ were all those who had followed Varnāśramā and therefore that could not be a wrong way. Among these people, there were not only the Brahmins but also others. The others had also praised Varnāśramā arrangement. One person namely Šekkizhār who was not a Brahmin and who was minister to a Chōla king is enough as an example. He had narrated the stories of devotees among whom many were not Brahmins. They are also praised by Brahmins. But Šekkizhār kept emphasising the Vaidhika traditions repeatedly whoever was the king and he did not fail to mention that the king followed the Varnāśramā.

The king had a lot of importance in this - is he not responsible for the entire kingdom?

The king took over the responsibility to ensure the administration of Vartta Dharmam. At the same time, Vartta dharmā helped reduce offences in the kingdom in a big way and, by this, it reduced also the king’s responsibility for meting out punishments. Since everyone was certain that he had a guaranteed
job and a life style to adopt under the *Varna* divisions there was no rivalry as existing now. It is only when there is rivalry there is jealousy, enmity, clashes, cheating, bribery, robbery, murders etc. Since these were not there in the olden days, the responsibility of the king for policing and the judicial responsibility of meeting out punishment were greatly reduced.

Although the administration of the *Varnāśramā* order was the king’s main responsibility, it was not something for which he had to make great effort. It was because the people had voluntarily bound themselves by this arrangement. Someone violating this order was a rare occurrence. Even when religious leaders like Buddha who were charismatic and who had direct contact with the common people, spoke against *Varnāśramā* divisions, there is nothing in history to show there was any popular uprising. Even the Britishers do not say that. In spite of our common people being intelligent, there is no evidence that over all these thousand years there was any mass protest against this arrangement or that any king suppressed it. People had packed off Buddhism which was beneficial to them and returned to the religion of the Sanāthanis who were considered to be cruel. Unless they had realised that in *Varna* division, they had found peace and there was stability in social life, would they have done like this?

Because of the *Varnāśramā* arrangement, the kings had much less policing and judicial work as compared to the present times and therefore the expenses for these activities were not there. Due to this, the kings could spend their time and money in other good ways. Instead of courts, they built temples. They protected cows. They constructed choultries for distribution of free food. They gave land grants to those who were proficient in *Vedhās*. They gave grants to the *pūjāri* who narrated Bhāratham. It was the king’s function to take care of the food needs of the people and the growth of dharma.
People went to the temples and other places where dharma was preached and were peaceful. They did not violate the law and lived a sāthvīk life with cordiality with everybody. It was jāthi dharmam which protected this arrangement.

These days people going to temples and for learning dharma has become less and their going to the courts is becoming more. All over one finds dilapidated temples and courts with good buildings.

These days before going to the courts and hospitals established by the ‘Welfare State’ as a first step people daily go to the cinema theatre and there learn all kinds of wrongs and spoil their health by yielding to the desires of their senses. There are crowds overflowing in places like race course. As if all these are not enough, there are the political meetings which attract people and which encourage people in enmity, rivalry and idleness. On the whole, the body and the mind have been spoiled, mental peace is lost and the peace in society has gone and as a total effect of all these, opportunities for offences are increasing.

If ‘Welfare’ building is raised without worrying about the foundation of dharma, it will be like this only. When there is no dharmāchāram and wherever one sees there is ‘club’ and people eat without any control and spoil the body and the mind they will not enjoy real welfare. When there is no discipline enforced by dharma, freedom of writing, ideas etc will only take people in the wrong way through journals and cinemas. If more and more hospitals are built and more and more new treatments are given, people who are not afraid of dharma will think that even if they go the wrong way they can protect themselves from bad diseases. If banks are opened in village after village and loans are given people indulge in a lot of misdeeds to obtain loan and they are thus being encouraged to spend the money on those things which are against dharma. The greatest welfare is dharma. That dharma will take
root among people and grow only by bhakthi and attachment to religion. When the artha and dharma sāstrās which did all the real good on the basis of these fundamental policies are cut off no new political methods or ideologies can create them for us. Yet, even after daily seeing the deterioration and bad conducts, people say that in the old order there was no human feelings and considerations.

I have to refer repeatedly to Thirukkural and Thiruvalluvar. Thiruvalluvar, in the chapter dealing with wealth (artham) and speaking of the king’s dharma, has given a sub-section dealing with ‘Not offending the great’. The kings had to bow to the great and please them. Otherwise, his fate will be that of Indra who offended Agasthyā.

Instead of directly saying that the king will meet with bad fate if he does not follow the sāstrās, he says in an interesting way addressing the king thus : ‘If it is your wish that you should meet with bad fate, act without listening to the sāstrās’. Therefore the path shown by Thiruvalluvar is that the king has to rule on the foundation of dharma and on the path shown by the great men (mahān).

If we see what is real consideration (dākshināyam) and real humanity it will be seen that it is what establishes dharma in the country and protects people from those who give trouble and take care of their security. It is also that which prevents the offender from repeating the offence again.

If some one indulges in cruelty and someone else among the people causes him harm as a retaliation and thus doubles the harm that is wrong. Such action gives rise to personal enmity, anger etc. But it is different when the State punishes him for the sake of dharma and without any personal reasons. The punishment is to ensure that people should not be harmed again by the person who
was punished. If a mad person throws a stone, do we not put him inside in a room and lock him even if the person is our own child? In the same manner, those who are mad about robbing, committing forgery etc, have to be jailed by the government. Cruelty has to be resorted to for reducing cruelty.
One of the important aspects of governance is for the king to protect his people from any trouble from the kings of other countries. Right from ancient times, in almost all the countries, the kings had invaded other countries and fought wars to bring them under their rule. I am not going to discuss whether this is just or not just. A foreigner (J. W. Elder) asked me whether what is said in Artha Śāsthram that a king can invade another country without any reason but for expanding his own territory can be followed in the present time. I told him ‘That was the practice in those times. That was also more related to artham than dharma. It is not necessary to take it that it has got permanent validity’.

Somehow it has come to be accepted that a king has to try for becoming an unquestioned monarch of all that he surveyed. Although in Vēdanīthā, this comes under the desire for territory and gold, the same Vēdanīthā says that the king in his old age has to enter the Vānaprastha Āśram and give up all his desires. Dharma Śāsthram does not restrain the king from going to war. At the same time, it does not prod him to go to war either. But the Artha Śāsthram, instead of saying that the king has to go to war only as defence when there is trouble from the king of another country or invade another country to establish dharma when there is excess of adharma there, says in general that the king can expand his territory and shine as a Chakravarthi and thus provides the provocation.

Even so Artha and Dharma Śāsthrams do not say that just for the sake of expanding the territory, the king should go straightaway for war. They have recommended four ways (upāya chathushtayam) and war has been mentioned only as the fourth. When we consider the other countries, this is something of which
we can be proud. Other countries indulge in indiscriminate bloodshed without being answerable to anyone. *Upāya Chathushtayam* 'are Sāmam, Dhānam, Bēdham and Dandam.

When a king wants to expand his kingdom on his own or when another king is intending to invade his kingdom, these four methods have to be followed one after the other.

First of all, it should be considered whether by kind approach, it would be possible to subdue the other king. Arrangement must be made to advise the other king through intermediaries. This effort should be made with peace in mind. This is Sāmam.

The second is Dhānam. The king has to offer to the other king something which is of value and ask him whether he would join his kingdom. Or, in case the other king invades, the same valuable thing could be given to him so that he feels satisfied and retreats. Alternatively, a small part of the kingdom should be given away without fight or wealth or grains can be given. Otherwise, a Princess should be offered in marriage to the enemy king or his Prince and relationship established. These are part of the methods of Dhānam. Since giving something and removing enmity is only a little less in quality than changing one’s mind by love, Dhānam has been mentioned after Sāmam. If there is real love, there will be the thought ‘Whatever is ours is also his; whatever is his is all ours. Therefore, there will be no occasion to say ‘I will give you something from mine’. When giving Dhānam, the feeling of oneness goes and the feeling of distinction comes up.

Bēdham is further lower in quality. Normally, in our daily life, we should not follow this method. Bēdham and Dandam are methods permitted only for the State and not for individuals. Bēdham is creating a split among those who are close to the enemy and thereby reduce the support he enjoys and in such a state of reduced strength, the enemy is to be asked ‘Will you now become
subject to me?’ and make him pay tribute. In divide and rule, divide is *Bēdham*. Although this is a bad method, in Artha Śāsthram, there is a restraint based on dharma even in this. The dharma is that when the enemy’s strength gets reduced by the method of *Bēdham* and it would be possible to invade his kingdom and defeat him, instead of going to war in that state when his strength is reduced, it has to be seen whether the enemy king on his own comes down and go to war only if he does not come down.

War is the last recourse. There are a number of punishments awarded to offenders within the country. For the king of another country, the only punishment is through war. Although there are several differences between the two, causing harm and punishing are common aspects. Also to show the physical strength is common to both.

When we think about this a little, it is seen that these four methods are there even in internal matters. Spreading dharma by the *sāthvik* method by using the services of those who are noble in their conduct and by their example is *Sāmam*. Giving grants and bestowing titles and concessions is *Dhānam*. To make one among the offenders as an approver for the prosecution and have the offence proved is *Bēdham*. Punishment is *dharīdam*.
Noble Aspects Even in Punishment

In the method of dhan†dam also, there are several dharmās.

Artha Sāsthram has laid down honourable rules for the victor country to treat a defeated country. When a king becomes victorious over another country, he should not annex the entire territory to his own. It has to be left alone to ensure its individuality. ‘The governance of the country should be entrusted to those for whom the people of the country have love and respect. Nothing should be done to change or force something new in the place of their samayāchāram, culture, lifestyles, traditions etc.’ These noble policies have been laid down not only by Dharma Śāsthram but also by Chānakyā who is considered rather harsh.

It is the practice followed in other countries to resort to religious conversion through extension of territory or offer of inducements of a mean nature and creating splits among them. Our sāsthrās do not at all approve of a victorious king indulging in religious conversion of the people of the country which he has defeated. Yāgnavalkya Smruthi says:

Yasmin dhesē ya āchārō vyavahāra kula sthithih
Thadhaiva paripālyō (a)sau yadhavaśaṁ upāgathah

This means whatever āchārās and practises were prevailing in the kingdom which has been won by a king should be allowed to prevail there and should be protected.

According to Artha Śāsthram also the king who wins another kingdom has to ensure that the desāchāram of that country prospers. Although the king can keep with him the ultimate administrative authority of the new kingdom he has to give a certain amount of freedom like ‘Dominion Status’, and entrust the country to someone who commands the love and respect of the
people of that country. Manu goes one step further and says that this responsibility should be entrusted to the relatives of the old king. On several occasions, the responsibility for administration had been entrusted to the defeated king himself or if he had died in war, to his son. Although after killing Vāli, Rāma crowned Sugrīvā as king, he also gave the status of Yuva Rājā to Angathā. When he defeated Lankā, he crowned Vibhīshanā as the king instead of ruling it himself.

The defeated kingdom has to pay an annual amount as tribute to the victorious king. That kingdom should not go to war for extending its territory. Defence and foreign affairs of the defeated kingdom will have to be totally subject to the king who had defeated it. But in matters of internal administration, it can by and large be independent. In very important matters only, information has to be given to the king who had defeated the kingdom and act only after getting his approval. Except in our country, we cannot see this kind of generosity anywhere else in respect of defeated countries.
SIX POLICIES TO BE FOLLOWED IN RESPECT OF OTHER COUNTRIES

Artha Śāsthram has defined six principles to be followed by a king in respect of other kingdoms as ‘Shādgunīyam’. These are ‘Sandhi’, ‘Vigraham’, ‘Yānam’, ‘Sthānam’ (or) ‘Āsanam’, ‘Samasrayam’, ‘Dhwaithībhāvam’. Of these Sandhi is a treaty of friendship by which the two will remain at peace. In modern times, we call the countries which have entered into Sandhi as allies. Vigraham means treating a country as enemy and fight a war with it. Sthānam or Āsanam is the present day neutrality or non-alignment. Yānam is something like cold war in which instead of openly proclaiming war, preparations are made for war and readiness for war is shown. Samasrayam means having friendship with another king who is more powerful than him, take his protection and then attack another enemy king. It was like this in the First World War, when Austria went into Samasrayam with Germany and another small country (Serbia) went into Samasrayam with Russia and it resulted in World War. Dhwaithībhāvam is to ensure that a country which is close to the enemy country does not join the enemy country, make friendship with it and go for a peace treaty. This is friendship not for the sake of friendship but for a purpose. Diplomacy is actually duplicity by adopting two different standards. It is also said that this is ‘thsavathībhāvam’. As already mentioned above, duplicity has no connection with Dharma Śāsthram but is permitted by Artha Śāsthram only. Therefore, we need not consider it with regard.
THE VARIOUS ORGANS OF A GOVERNMENT

When speaking of Shādgunyam in respect of foreign policy, we recall Sapthaṅgam which relates to the country. These seven are 'Swāmi', 'Amādhya', 'Suhrut', 'Kōsa', 'Rāṣṭra', 'Durga' and 'Bala'. Swāmi means the king. The direct meaning of Swāmi is one who is the owner of a thing. Since Rājā owns the kingdom, he is called Swāmi. Amādhya means the Minister. Suhrut means a friend that is friendly countries. Kōsa means the treasury; Gold, Gems and all that is produced in the country are included in this. Rāṣṭra means the country which actually means the citizens. Durga means the Fort. Bala is military.

Thiruvalluvar has kept Rājā who is the Swāmi at the centre and has described the remaining six which he should have.
If one is to talk in brief about Artha Śāsthram even if it gives the superficial impression that artham is above everything but when we go deep and see it will be seen that we cannot violate dharmam and go for artham.

Because it is customary to give a greater pride of place for a subject that has been taken for discussion, artham has been mentioned specially in Śāsthram. If there is no protection by the king for those who follow dharma and the jnānis from the rogues, what will be the state of dharmam or jnānam in a country? Because of this, although it is thought that artham is conducive only to kāmam, Chāṇākyā says that it is also the support to the other two namely Dharmam and Moksham. Even in Mahābhāratha it is said it is only if a ‘grahastha’ offers bikshai, brahmachāris and sanyāsis can survive. Grahastha āśramam has been given a prominent place among the four āśramās. But because it is mentioned in this manner, giving the impression that brahmacharyam and Sanyāsam should be there, it appears that Chāṇākyā also wants the purushartha of Dharmam and Moksham.

Just as it is said that the other three purusharthas depend on Artha Śāsthram for support, one other thing can be mentioned. Starting from Vēdha Rakshatam, it was the State which took care of all the vidhyās and also those who practised them. Artha Śāsthram is the armour for the fourteen dharma pramāṇās which are central to our Sanāthana religion.

When we talk of eighteen 'vidhya sthānas', there are the upa Vēdhās other than these, namely, Āyurvedham, Dhanur Vēdham, Gāndharva Vēdham for which also not only the support of the State is necessary but they have close connection with the king. Since wounds will be caused in wars the king had to have knowledge of Āyurvedham. Herbal remedies, surgery etc should be known to the
king. There is a section in *Āyurvedham* called ‘*Salya Sāsthram*’ by which whatever has got broken and got embedded inside the body can be taken out. It was also the king’s duty to function as the Patron of Arts. Because of this, there is relationship established with *Gāndharva Vidhyā*. Many kings like Bhojan, Vikramāditya, Mahēndra Varma Pallavā, Krishnādeva Rāyā and even smaller kings of recent times like the *Ettayapuram Rājā* and others had patronised music and dance, *vidwāns* and *vidhūshis*. They were also one among them.

*Arjuna* was dance master (*Nrithyāchāryā*) in the *Virāta* kingdom. King Udayānar played the *Veena* and subdued a rogue elephant. There are a number of facts mentioned like this in *Ithiḥāsās, Purāṇās* and Epics. When describing Rāma’s auspicious qualities (in the beginning of Ayōdhya Kāndam) it is said that he was the first in the world in *Gāndharva Vidhyā* like music: ‘*Gāndharvē cha bhūvi śrēṣṭha*’.

Even in historical times, Mahēndra Varma had the title ‘A tiger among artistes’.

He has written ‘*Maththa Vilāsa Prahasanam*’. He has also made stone inscriptions in Sanskrit about Music *Śāsthrā* at a place near Pudukōttai. Rāja Rāja Cholā had the title ‘Rājavidhyādharan’ (Vidyādharās also are like *Gandharvās*). He had arranged for different kinds of dances to be performed at the Periyakoil (Brahadhiśwara Temple) at *Thanjavūr*. In recent times, the Naik rājās and Maharashtrian kings like Serfōji of *Thanjavūr* were responsible for resurgence of arts in *Thanjavūr* region.

A king had to be ‘Sakala śāsthrā pārāṅgadhā’ (the direct meaning for pārāṅgadhā is one who has crossed the bounds). It is therefore clear that he must have practised the Gāndharva vidhyās and patronised them.

*Āchāryā* in his Soundarya Lahari says that when *Ambāl* and *Īswarā* are together in one of the ‘*Chakrās*’ inside the human body
as twin hamsā and when the hamsās conversed the same came out as the eighteen Vidhya Sthanam:

_Yadhālābadh ashtādhasa gunitha vidhyā pariñathir_

_The king had to be an expert in all this._

The greatness of Artha Śāsthram is that it makes a king know several Śāsthrams and also protect all of them.

It is not alone Sukrāchāryā, the guru of the asurās who wrote a sāstrā on Statecraft. Bruhaspathi also wrote a similar sāstrā. Visālākshar wrote ‘Vaisālāksham’ on Statecraft which is only part of a book in the name of Brahma, dealing with all the purushārthās. It appears that Bruhaspathi further condensed it. The Statecraft dealt with in Smruthis has been commented upon so clearly by Medhādhidhi and Mitaksharar that these are highly respected in modern law also.

What has been said in the beginning should not be forgotten. Artha Śāsthram can be taken as authority only when it does not conflict with Dharma Śāsthram. We hear it said by Chānakyā himself: ‘Wherever there is a conflict between Dharma Śāsthram and customs and day to day affairs, the king should decide only on the basis of Dharma Śāsthram. ‘Dharmo rakshathi rakshithah’ : If dharma is protected it will protect the one who protects it. The rule for the king is that he should administer dharma and also conduct himself according to dharmā.
POETIC GENIUS
PLAY OF WORDS

The poets also use the same words which we use almost daily. But the beauty which our talk lacks we get from their writing. The poets have the ability to take us to navarasās, high bhakthi bhāvās and noble ideas. This is 'Alankāram'. (decoration embellishment) Just as even a girl of ordinary looks will look better by 'Alankāram' the poets by their expertise make even ordinary words and ideas as beautiful poems. Metaphors, speaking without giving out the inner meaning, pun etc are used to make their work beautiful. It is for this reason that the sāsthrā which gives the rules for embellishing poetry is called 'Alankāra Śāsthram'. In Tamil also there is a work authored by Dhandi which is called 'Dhandi Alankāram'. He was a Sanskrit poet who lived in Kānchipuram about 1200 years back. He has written a book 'Kāvyādharṣam' relating to the sāsthrā of poetry (Kavithā Śāsthram). Dhandi Alankāram in Tamil has been written on the basis of this work about 800 years back.

There are two ways in which the poets make their poems beautiful. One is that, by the greatness of the ideas and the beauty of the words used, the reader gets noble feelings and he also gets noble ideas. The other is the manner in which the words themselves are used, which make the reader happy. In this, there will not be anything that will appeal to the intellect or melt our heart. But it helps in impressing an idea firmly. Moreover, when we see the manner in which the poets are able to play with words, we enjoy the same and forget our day to day worries.

Therefore, even great poets have resorted to word-play on rare occasions. If we use words in a manner that conveys no meaning, they are able to use the same words in a manner that it
gives a novel meaning. For this reason, it has been named ‘Chitra Kavithā’. In this there are two namely Artha Chitram and Šabdha Chitram. Bringing out different meanings by play of words is Artha Chitram and creating magic merely by sound is Šabdha Chitram.
A BHARATHA ‘GUTTU’

I am starting with Vyāsāchāryā. Should I not start with Pillaiyār? Therefore I start with a Mahābhārathā slokā which stunned even Pillaiyār for a while.

As Vyāsā kept on dictating the Bhāratha slokās, Pillaiyar wrote with his ivory, sitting on Mount Mēru. Vyāsā who dictated became tired because he could not cope with Pillaiyār’s speed. Ordinarily, one cannot write at the same speed at which another is dictating. That is why today we have the Shorthand for making a verbatim report. Vignēswarā’s greatness was quite contrary to this. It was not possible for Vyāsā Mahārishi himself to keep pace with Pillaiyār. At the very start he made a condition. He told Pillaiyār: ‘I will go on repeating slokās without a stop. If you write slowly I may have to go slow and that will affect the inspirational flow. Therefore I will only dictate if you can write at the same speed’. When Pillaiyār heard this, He told him in a manner of challenge: ‘If I start writing, my hand will not stop and it will almost be running. Will it be possible for you to repeat the slokās so that my hand will not stop even for a second?’ Vyāsā said ‘It is possible for me’.

Thus after a mutual challenge between the two, Vyāsā kept repeating the Mahābhārathā slokās like a flood and Mahāganāpathi also kept writing at the same speed. When 1000 slokās were completed, Vyāsā felt exhausted. Pillaiyar who went round Pārvathi-Paramēswarā and defeated Subramaṇya in the running race, reached the stage when he was in a position to defeat Vyāsā. If Pillaiyār had won, He would not write further. Who else can write what Vyāsā dictated? Therefore Vyāsā planned a trick to retain him as his writer. He told Pillaiyār ‘It is not enough if you go on writing in a mechanical way. You will have to understand well the meaning of the slokās and you should be able to explain the same whenever I ask you’. Pillaiyār who is Jnāna Swarūpa agreed.
Vyāsā used this trick and, after every 1000 slokās when he felt that he needed a little rest, he dictated a complicated slokā. If such a slokā is read although each word may give a meaning, the slokā itself will not make any sense and it will be confusing. It will be possible to know the meaning only if the letters are split in a manner different from the way Vyāsā says the word should be split. But Ganapathi would think for half a second and understand the difficult slokā. In that half a second, Vyāsa Bhagawān also had a little rest and got the energy to think further.

It is because of this that in Mahābhārathām, for every 1000 slokās there will be one slokām which cannot be easily understood. These are called ‘Bhāratha Guttu’. Therefore in one lakh slokās, there are hundred guttus. I shall mention only one as a sample.

It was the time when the Pāndavās were living in disguise in Virāta kingdom. The condition was that if they were able to complete a year without being found out, the Kauravās would have to return the kingdom which the Pāndavās had lost in the game of dice. Now was the stage when twelve years of forest life had been completed and one year of anonymous living was also about to end. Duryodhanā was keen to somehow locate them before that and ensure that they did not get back their kingdom. He sent spies all over and got clues that the Pāndavās could be in Virāta kingdom. He made a plan to expose them. He knew well the loyalty of the Pāndavās to the king. He therefore thought that if they gave trouble to the King of Virāta, the Pāndavās would come to his rescue and at that time they could be exposed. Under this plan, the Kaurava army came to the borders of Virāta kingdom and started taking away the herds of cows. In Bharatham this stage is called ‘Gōsha yāthrā’. Gōsha means the area where the shepherds live. We see this in ‘Virāta parvam’.

When the Kaurava army captured the cow herds like this, the Prince of Virāta, Utharakumārā came to fight and Brahannalai
(Arjuna who was in the guise of a woman) was the charioteer. Utharakumāra who spoke brave words before coming to the battlefield became panicky the moment he saw Bhīshma and Drōṇā and wanted to go back. At that stage, Arjuna encouraged him and even when he was in the guise of Brahannalai he started shooting the arrows.

Bhīshma was wonder struck: ‘Who is this woman who is raining arrows in such wonderful manner?’ Drōṇā tells him who that woman is. This is the slōkā which is one of Bhāratha guttu.

Just as Arjuna himself was in disguise and could not be recognised, Drōṇā’s slōkā also is a quiz:

Nadhijalam kēśavanāri kēthuh nagāhvayō nāma nagārisunuh Ėśāṅgnaveshadharah kirīti jithvā vayam nēshyathi chādhya gāvah

This slōkā gives the following meaning word by word.

‘Nadhijalam’ - ‘the river water’.
‘Kēśāvanāri Kēthuh’ - ‘the identity of Kēsavā’s woman’.
‘Nagam’ - ‘mountain or tree’
‘Nagāhvayō nāma’ - ‘one who has the name of nagam’
‘Nagārisunuh’ - ‘the son of the enemy of nagam’
‘Ēśāṅgnaveshadharah kirīti’ - in this ‘Ēsha Anganā’ has become ‘Ēshāṅgana’
‘Ēśāṅgnaveshadharah kirīti’ - ‘the one who is having the make up of a woman and having a kirātām’
‘Jithvā’ - ‘by winning’
‘Vayam’ - ‘we’
‘Nēshyathi’ - ‘he is taking away’
‘chādhya’ - has become ‘Sadhya’
‘cha’ - ‘moreover’
‘Adhya’ - ‘now’
‘Gāvah’ - ‘cows’
Although the individual words have some meaning for each of them if they are read together we cannot make out any sense. Let us see what it means when we read them together. It would mean: 'This person who is in the guise of a woman and who is wearing kirītam is river water; the identity of Kesava's woman; He has the name of a mountain or a tree; He is the son of the enemy of mountain or a tree; we are victorious and he is taking the cows'. All this sounds as mere nonsense. Brahannalai who is teaching dance is not wearing kirītam. Therefore the use of the word 'kirīti' is wrong. Only if the word is 'kirītini' it will indicate a woman. The slokā appears to be wrong both in respect of grammar and meaning.

If the slokā is properly analysed after careful thought by separating the alphabets and joining the words in a different manner, we will get the correct meaning. It is possible to understand the meaning only for those who are highly intellectual. But for Pillaiyar, it became clear in half a second.

What is the meaning of the slokā?

To understand the meaning we have to separate the words of the slokā which are in the beginning and at the end in a different manner.

'Nadhijalam kesavanāri kethuh' should be split as 'Nadhija lankesa vanāri kethuh' (in Sanskrit Lamke becomes Lanke). Although Vyāsa deliberately used these words in the wrong way, Vignēswarā understood it correctly. What is the meaning?

'Nadhija' means 'you who are born to the river'. Drōṇā is addressing Bhishma like this. Bhishma is the son of Gangādevi.

- Addressing Bhishma as 'Nadhija' what does Drōṇā say further? He says: 'Lankesa vanāri kethuh' æ 'Lankesa' means what belongs to Rāvanā, the Lankēswarā;
• Vana ari - vanari; vanāri means ‘the enemy of the forest or the one who destroyed the forest’. This refers to Ānjanēyaswāmi who destroyed the Asoka vana in Lankā.

• ‘Kethuh’ has the meaning here ‘flag’.

The meaning of ‘Lankēśa vanari kethuh’ is ‘one who has on his flag Ānjanēya’. In Arjunā’s flag, there is the figure of Ānjanēya.

• Hanuman who took JnanOpadesam from Sri Rāmachandra-mūrthi came and sat in Arjunā’s flag to listen to Krishṇa Paramāthmā’s Githōpadesam during the Mahābhārathā war.

‘Nagahvayo nama’ means one who has the name of a mountain or a tree. If we think about this, we will know that just as ‘Lankēśa vanari kethuh’ refers to Arjunā, this one also refers only to Arjunā. Here ‘Nagam’ is to be understood as ‘tree’. The normal meaning of Arjunā is one who is extremely fair. Arjunā is also the name for the Marudha tree. The Kṣethrās which have for their sacred tree (sthala vriksham) are Srisailam, Thiruvvidaimarudur, Thiruppudaimarudur. In Sanskrit, these are called Mallikarjunam, Madhyārjunām and Putārjunām respectively. ‘Nagahvayo nama’ means ‘one who has the name of Arjunā tree’.

I have said that ‘Nagarisunu’ means the son of the enemy of a tree or mountain. Here Nagam should be understood as ‘mountain and not tree’. Who is the enemy of mountain? It is Indra. It appears that ages back the mountains were flying with wings. Indra cut off their wings with his Vajrayudham and made them remain in one place. It was only when they became immobile like this they came to be called ‘achalam’ ‘agam’ ‘nagam’ etc. Chalam or gam means ‘moving’ or ‘going’. If the alphabet ‘a’ or ‘na’ is added before a word it will give the opposite meaning. Therefore the words ‘achalam’ ‘agam’ ‘nagam’ indicate the mountain. The son of Indra who cut off the wings of the mountains is Nagarisunu : Arjunā was born to Kunthi as Indra’s prasād.
‘Esha anganā vēshadharah kirīṭi’ – Kirīṭi should not be taken as a Common Noun indicating anyone who has a kirīṭam. If such a meaning is assumed, the question will arise that Brihannalai did not have kirīṭam. Therefore, the word ‘kirīṭi’ here must be taken to be a Proper Noun indicating a particular person. It is Arjuna who is having the special name Kirīṭi. Indra praised his valour, adorned him with a crown and gave him also the title Kirīṭi.

Once the word kirīṭi is understood as Arjuna, then it becomes clear that he is in the guise of a woman and is the charioteer of the Prince of Virāṭa, one who has Hanumār on his flag, who has the name of Arjuna tree, the son of Indra who cut off the wings of the mountains.

It is still not clear. The slokā ends with ‘jith vavayam neshyathi chādhya gavah’. The direct meaning of the words would be ‘we win and he is taking the cows’. This is an incoherent meaning. This also has to be split properly as was done for the beginning of the slokām. What Vyāsā said as ‘jithva vayam neshyathi chādhya gavah’ should be split as ‘Jithva (a)vayam neshyathi chādhya gah vah’. When this is done, the following will be the meaning: (This Arjuna who is Kirīṭi) cha adhya – further now, yam – whom, that is Duryodhana – Jithva, after defeating; va – your; gha – the cows; neshyathi – driving away; tham – him – that is Duryōdhanā; ava – protect him.

Thus, the meaning of the entire slokā is: ‘Oh, son of Gangā! Arjuna who is having on his flag Ānjanēyaswēmi who destroyed Rāvanā’s Asōka vanam, who has the name of the Arjuna tree, who is the son of Indra, the enemy of the mountains, the Kirīṭi who is in the guise of a woman, who has come to rescue the cows which have been captured by you by defeating Duryodhana, protect that Duryōdhanā’.

What we could understand after so much of effort, Bhīshma could understand in no time. He was a great intellectual and he was
also a ‘Naishtika Brahmachāri’ and therefore he had a sharp intellect (we have now gained the puṇya of remembering three great brahmachāris, namely, Pillaiyar, Anjaneyar and Bhīshmachariār).

Vināyakā solved the several ‘guttus’ like this with effortless ease and wrote Mahābhārathā and did a great service to Bhāratha Deśam.
In splitting words like this by changing the letters in a different form, the meaning gets changed. An example of this used to be given from Kālidāsa. This refers to the famous slokā starting with ‘Vagardhaviva’.

This slokā which comes at the beginning of Raghuvamsam as Mangala slokā (prayer given at the beginning of any work) was known to ninety percent of the people in the last generation.

Vagardhāviva samprukthau vāgardha prathipaththaye
Jagathah pitharau vandhe Pārvathi - Paramēswarau

The meaning of this is: ‘I bow to Pārvathi-Paramēswarā who are the mother and father of the universe, who are always together like the word and its meaning that they may bless me with the intelligence to understand the word and the meaning’.

Here ‘Pārvathiī-Paramēśwarau’ are also split in a different way. When this is done it would mean ‘I bow to Paramēśvarā who is the Pathi of Pārvathi and Mahā Vishṇu who is the Pathi of Ramā’. This does not mean that the meaning mentioned earlier is wrong. What is meant here is that in addition to mentioning Pārvathiī-Paramēśwarā, Mahālakṣmi and Mahā Vishtū are also included. Therefore instead of saying that the meaning gets changed, it would be correct to say that there is an additional meaning.

‘Pa’ itself means ‘Pathi’. The Rājā is called ‘Nrupa’. ‘Nru’ means ‘Nara’. ‘Narasimham’ is also called ‘Nrisimham’. ‘Pārvathīpa’ means Īswarā who is the Pathi of Pārvathi. ‘Rameśvara’ means one who is the Lord of Ramā that is Vishṇu. ‘Pārvathīpa - Rameśvara’ means ‘Śiva-Vishṇu’.

If the words are read as ‘Pārvathiī-Paramēśwarau’ it would mean Śiva-Śakthi. The same words will mean Śiva- Vīshnū if one
letter from the second word is removed from that and added to the first word.

There is a great truth (thathvam) in this. When Śakthi is in male form, She is Viśnu. Śivam is always referred to as Purushā and He is Nirguṇa. When He becomes Śaguṇa for conducting the affairs of the world and is with Śakthi in the form of Ambā, She is to His left as Ardhanārīśvarā; the same Śaguṇa sakthi, if it is in male form as Viśnu, He keeps him as his left half as Śankaranārāyanā. Viśnu takes the place of Ambāl and is Īśwarā's wife. Therefore, if it is understood to mean `Śiva- Viśnu' who are the parents of the Universe, there is nothing wrong. Śasthā was born to these parents.

There is another great thing in this. Since Mahā Viśnu is of the male form, one gets mental satisfaction only if He is thought of as being together with Mahālakṣmi. Rāmānuja Siddhāntham is called Srivaishnavam. Thus, Sri who is the Mother is mentioned first and then only Viśnu. In the case of Īśwarā also it is only when we think of Him along with Ambāl as Śambamūrtthi, we get full satisfaction. When it is said 'Pārvathī - Rāmeswarau' both Pārvatī and Rāmā are mentioned. Thus, at the beginning when we pray for good speech etc by thinking of both Pārvatī-Īśwarā and Lakshmi- Viśnu, it is highly auspicious for us. Even without changing a single letter but by simply shifting one letter, there is so much change or so much addition that is gained!

The biggest gain is that without any difference between Śaivam and Vaishnavam they are joined together like the word and its meaning.

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FANTASTIC CHANGE BY REMOVING A SINGLE LETTER

By removing a single letter from a slokā wherever it occurs, what appears to be a ‘nindhā slokām’ (what is abusive) becomes a slokā of praise.

The slokā is ‘Sīta Rāvana Samvādham’. Sīta and Rāvana are talking.

Rāvana abuses Rāma by a slokā. In reply to that Sīta says:

Kala! Tham asakrun-mā-spruSa girā

‘You, rogue! Don’t touch him again and again by your words’. This is the superficial meaning one gets.

Kala - you rogue
Tham - him
Girā - by word
Asakrun - again and again
Mā-sprusa - do not touch

It appears Sīta Devi feels that Rāvana talking about Sri Rāmachandramūrthi is like polluting him with his spit and therefore offensive!

This is the superficial meaning. But if we go deep, what is the real meaning? Now ‘tham’ does not mean ‘him’. ‘tham girā’ means ‘a word which has the alphabet ‘tha’. It would mean ‘you rogue, do not touch (Rāma) again and again with words which have the alphabet ‘tha’.

In the words used by Rāvana to abuse Rāma, the letter ‘tha’ comes again and again. ‘If that ‘tha’ is removed and then it is read, you will understand the real meaning’ – This is the inner meaning.
What is the slokā of abuse (nindhā slokam) which Rāvana had repeated? If all the ‘tha’ appearing in the slokā are removed, how would the meaning change?

Athalpam nidrālu rajanishu kuvāk durgathathamah  
Mahā gādaryādyo manasi vidhutha prōjvalayasāh  
Vadhāth māmsādhānām bahu vimathalābhau janakajē  
Katham ślāgyō Rāmah

This is what Rāvana has said about Rāma in the form of slokā.

In the last line Sītā’s reply is also added and it becomes the complete slokā:-

Katham slāgyō Rāmah Kala tham asakrun-mā-spruśā girā

The meaning of what Rāvana said is this: ‘Oh, daughter of Janaka! Does Rāma have a bed for sleeping during night? (in Sundara Kandam the manner in which Rāvana slept in comfort with huge cushions has been described. But Sri Rāma at this time is sleeping on the floor. This is what Rāvana points out). Rāma cannot speak good words. (Probably he said like this because Rāma did not seek peace with him! Or since he himself does not know to speak good words, he must have abused Rāma who always talks dharma and with great love). Rāma has fallen to a very low state. (Rāvana refers like this to Rāma who actually sacrificed the empire which Bharathā surrendered at his feet and of his own took to life in the forest and in his mind was always king). Rāma is a big coward. (This is a huge lie). All the glory he had long back when he was a Prince has left him. Somehow he has foolishly killed some rākshasās and earned a lot of enmity. How can he be great?’

Rāmah - Rāma (this comes in the fourth line)  
rajanishu - during night  
athalpam - (even) without bed  
nidrālu - who sleeps
kuvāk - who can only speak bad
durgathathama - who has reached the superlative state of misery
manasi - in the mind
Mahā gādharyādyā - who is lying low as a big coward
vidhutha prōjvala yacha - who lost all his glory
mamsadhānam - the rākṣasās who eat māmsam
vadhan - because he killed
bahu vimatha labhou - those who are opposed to him (the enemies whom he has increased) (such a person)
katham - how
slāgya - deserves to be praised
Janakaje - Oh, daughter of Janaka

In this sloka let us remove the alphabet ‘tha’ which occurs in the first three lines of the sloka and see how it shapes.

Athalpam would become ‘alpam’.
Durgathathama will become ‘Durgama’
The first three lines of the sloka will read like this:

Alpam nidralu rajanishu kuvāk durgama
Mahā gādaryādyō manasi vithu prōjvala yacha
Vadhān mamsadhānām bahuvimalāpau

What is the meaning of this? ‘Rāma has very little sleep during night. (those of the royal families have to protect the people from theft etc and therefore they have to sleep less. This is sāsthrā. It was because Arjuna became victorious over sleep, he has the name ‘Gudākesan’. Gudaka means sleep, laziness and one who cannot be approached with bad words. (‘He is unapproachable by the bad words you had used’ - this is what Sita has implied without saying it. He used two abuses ‘kuvak’ and ‘durgathathama’. These
two words have now become ‘kuvak - durgama’ and thus become words of praise. It means he cannot be reached or touched by bad words). He has a determination to achieve big tasks. (He has the determination to establish dharmā by protecting some and punishing some others). He is like the moon which cools everyone’s eyes and minds and shines with glory. By killing the rākshasās he gained pure effulgence’ - thus it becomes a slokā of fullsome praise.

Rajanishu alpm nidrelu - sleeps very little during night
Kuvēk durgama - impossible to be touched by bad words
Manasi Mahā gādaryādyā - whose mind is full of thoughts about big tasks
Vithu prōjvala yasa - one who has the glory like the shining moon
Māmsādhānām vadhān - by destroying the rākshasās
Bahu vimalapau (bahuvimala apau) - having pure effulgence (apa means effulgence, brightness)
ONE DOT MORE

We have seen that by just removing one ‘tha’ from a śloka Sītā changed its meaning. But Kālidāsa by just removing one dot, changed the meaning of a śloka.

Bhavabhūthi was a Mahākavi ranking almost equal to Kālidāsa. There are stories about competition between these two people and how one or the other got defeated. The story which I am going to narrate is not one such. The story relates to one who understood the view of the other and corrected what he wrote.

Bhavabhūthi wrote Uttara Rāmayana as a drama called ‘Uttara Rāma Charitham’ and took it to Kālidāsa for his approval and read it before him. Kālidāsa enjoyed what Bhavabhūthi read even as he was enjoying the thambulam which was being given to him by the lady whom he loved.

In the first scene of the drama, Rāma reminisces the days which he had spent with Sīta in Dandakāranyam. In that this line comes:- ‘without knowing how the time was passed the night would pass off in our talk’.

Avithitha - gatha - yāmā rāthrīrevam vyaramsith

When Bhavabhūthi read this line, Kālidāsa said ‘there is more sunnam’. The lady who was giving him thambulam thought ‘I have probably put more of lime in the betel and he is referring to this’. Kālidāsa thought that it would not be proper to advise Bhavabhūthi in front of her and therefore he made this remark with an inner meaning. Since Bhavabhūthi was a great scholar, he could understand what Kālidāsa meant. ‘Sunnam’ means zero that is a dot. In the word ‘rāthrīrevam’ there is the dot above the letter ‘va’ and Bhavabhūthi understood that Kālidāsa meant that this dot was in excess. (In Devanāgari script if a dot is put on the alphabet ‘va’ it would become ‘vam’). He praised the subtle correction and
removed the dot and the word became ‘rāthrīrēva’. ‘Rāthrīrēvam vyārāmsūth’ means ‘night passed off like this’. ‘Rathriīrēva vyārāmsūth’ means ‘night only passed off like this’. In other words, it was only night that ended like this. Some people say that Kālidāsā told him that there is one ‘anuswāram’ which is in excess. ‘Anuswaram’ means ‘im’. But instead of saying that Kālidāsā pointed out openly like this, the story that some people say is more appropriate that Kālidāsā said in a subtle manner ‘there is more sunnam’.

If Kālidāsā had said like this, he probably belonged to Andhra Pradesh. Because it is only in Telugu that the word ‘Sunnam’ has both the meanings. If it is said that he cannot be called a Telugu only on this basis I shall tell one other thing. In Kālidāsā’s Mēgasandēsam, it is said that ‘Yaksha’ sent the cloud as a messenger from Rāmagiri. Some people are of the view that Rāmtēk which is near Nagpur is that Rāmagiri. But in Andhra also near Nāgalāpuram, there is a Rāmagiri.

The conversation between Rāmā and Śīta would not have ended but only the night would have ended - this is what would have been meant by Rāmā.
EXCHANGE OF GARLANDS

There are certain words in Tamil like ‘Vikatakavi’, Kudaku which can be read in the same way in the reverse order. The word Malayalam for example, when it is read in the reverse is also Malayalam. Such words are called Palindrome. A pilgrimage to Kāśi is a must for every Hindu. Along with that the Srāddhā to be performed at Gaya, bathing at Prayāg, Pithru karma are also prescribed. This also used to be said as a Palindrome. Kāśi has also got the name Kāsika (in Sanskrit). It will be the same when read either way. It is also the same with ‘Gayāprayāga’ (Sanskrit).

A pundit said that by inverting words like this a slōkā has been made with the beauty of a kāvyam. The word ‘Sakshara’ (Sanskrit) means one who is merely well read. He would not have got immersed in literary taste. The word ‘sarasa’ (Sanskrit) means one who has gone deep in kāvya rasa. One who does not have the evolved mind to know the rasa and changes from the path of his learning, becomes a rākshasā; but a rasikā, even though he changes outwardly, his high quality of being a rasika will not leave him - this is the import of that slōka.

By reversing the words ‘sakshara’ and ‘sarasa’, the slōkā establishes its import. Sakshara when read in the reverse becomes ‘Rakshasa’. But if Sarasa is read even in the reverse, it remains sarasa.

What remains the same even when read in the reverse order is called ‘gatha prathyagatham’. A great poet called ‘Māgan’ has written a long sentence itself like this and not just one or two words. That refers to Mahālakṣmi embracing Bhagawān with great love;

‘Tham sriyā ganayānastharuchā sāradhayādhayā yādhayā tharasā chāru sthanayānakayā śritham’ (if ‘tham’, ‘sri’, ‘stha’ are taken as a single alphabet as in Sanskrit when it is read in the reverse order also, it will be the same).
THE HOLY FEET (OF KÂMÂKSHI) 
AND THE PLANETS

Kâmâkshi removes all difficulties and bestows happiness. According to Jyôthisham the Navagrabhs (the nine planets) are considered to be the cause for our problems. In Mûka Panchasathi there is a slôkâ with word play which says that those who meditate on Her holy feet, will not be affected by problems caused by the planets.

Mûka Panchasathi is a sthôthrä of five hundred verses in beautiful poetry sung by Mûkar which is full of jnânâ, bhakthi, the principles of Šâktha Šâstrâ. One of the slôkâs says that Ambâl's feet have the quality of each of the nine planets.

Thadhãnô bhâsvañththâm amruthaniilayô lôhitavapuh
Vinâmrâmâm soumyô gururapi kavîthvam cha kalayan
Gathan mandhô Gangôdhara-mahishi kâmâkshi bhajathãm
Thamah kôthrh mâthah thava charañapadmô vijayathê

The word ‘basvaththam’ has been used to describe the feet because of their effulgence. Is this not the quality of the Sun which is the first planet? The Sun has the name Bhâskaran. Nectar is flowing from Ambâl's feet. He indicates this by the words ‘amrutha nilaya’. At the top of the heads of yogis, the nectar from Her feet is flowing and therefore they feel cool. This is called ‘charañamrutham’. The Moon also gives out nectar. That is why the moon is also called ‘Sudhâkaran’. The word ‘lôhitavapu’ in the slôkâ means ‘has the red form’. It is Mars which is red in colour. ‘Vinâmrmâmâm sowmya’ – those who pay obeisance at the feet feel the ‘sowmyam’. All that is agreeable to the mind, soft and peaceful is sowmyam. We talk of ‘Ugra Dêvathâ’ as opposed to ‘Sowmya Dêvathâ’. What is the direct meaning for this? The Moon is Sôma and what comes from Sôma is Sowmyam. Because of this
we say that all that is like the Moon, giving gentleness, peace and happiness is sowmyam. The planet Budhan (Mercury) is the son of Sōman. Therefore, he is called Sowmyan.

*Mūkar* says *Ambāl’s* feet are ‘Gururapi’. This is ‘Guru api’ which means that the feet are also Guru. Guru means that which is great because of its quality. Apart from that, if even for a moment, one can have the *dikshai* through Her feet, he will get *Brahmajnānā*. Because it gives *jnānam* it is also Guru. Guru also means the planet Jupiter. *Ambāl’s* feet also blesses one with poetic genius (*kavithvam*) – ‘*kavithvam cha kalayan*’. Āchāryā himself has said that the holy water from the holy feet of *Ambāl* made even a dumb person a poet. (Soundaryala - *slōkā* 98). The poet *Mūkar* who was thus blessed by *Ambāl* purposely kept this name in order that people should know that he was once dumb and he was blessed by *Ambāl* with speech and to become a poet. Of the nine planets, the presiding deity for ‘*Kavithvam*’ is *Śukra*. Just as the word ‘Guru’ refers to Bruhaspathi, the *Deva Guru*, the word ‘kavi’ means *Śukrāchāryār*, the Asura Guru. Because *Ambāl’s* feet bestow blessings of poetic genius they are *Śukra*. The feet have slow pace – ‘*gathau mandhah*’. The planet Saturn has the name ‘Mandhan’ because it moves very slowly. It is wrong to call the planet ‘*Sanīswarān*’. It is not fair to give the title ‘*Īswara*’ to this planet when other planets are not given this title. The correct word is ‘Sanaicharan’. ‘*Śanai*’ means slowly and ‘chara’ means one who moves. We contract it and call it ‘*Śani*’. *Ambāl’s* feet destroys the thamas of those who worship Her – ‘*bhajathām thamah Kēthuh*’. Thamas means darkness and sorrow. *Rāhu* has the name thamas. All of us know that Kethu is the ninth planet.

In this *slōkā*, the quality of *Rāhu* alone has not been linked with *Ambāl’s* feet but the word ‘thamas’ has been used. The other eight planets have been directly linked to *Ambāl’s* feet.
Poets have played with words in respect of almost everything in the world from Paramāthma to the mosquito and have created magic in meanings and also sound (sabdham). There is a poem in which there is a pun which means both the Paramāthma and the mosquito.

Chakra pramaṇa karathvāth
Kudhrushtibhir dhūrarvarjyamānanathvāth
Śruthyantha kēlanathvāth
Maṣaka thvāmeva mādhavam manye

'Chakra pramaṇa karathvāth' - Mahā Viṣṇu is the one who is having the disc (chakram) which is constantly revolving. The mosquito keeps on flying in circles. The word ‘kara’ when it refers to Viṣṇu, means the hand. When it refers to the mosquito, it means ‘what is being done’.

'Kudhrushtibhir dhūrarvarjyamānanathvāth' - Bhagavān is far away from and cannot be approached by those with bad thoughts.

'Kudhrushtibhih' means those who are having eyesore. Those who are having eyesore will run away from the mosquitoes.

'Śruthyantha kēlanathvāth' - Śruti means the Vedhas. 'Śruthyantham' means Upanishad which is Vēdanthā. Bhagavān plays happily in Upanishad. When Śruti refers to the mosquito, it means the ear. The tip of the ear is ‘śruthyantham’. The mosquito sits right near the tip of the ears, makes noise and troubles us.

'Maṣaka thvāmeva mādhavam manye' - 'Hey, mosquito! I think of you as Mādhavā' - thus ends the poem.

'Since you are doing all the functions of Mādhavā, namely, rotating, keeping away people of bad thoughts, playing in
Sruthyantham, I think of you as Mahā Viṣṇu - ‘Maṣaka thvāmeva Mādhavam manye’.

Now the mosquitoes have started singing here. All are feeling sleepy. Till now this was not felt because of listening to some fun. Now if you go to bed you will only be troubled by the mosquitoes. But if we think that the Bhagawān who is in Ananthatayanam has come in the form of mosquito, we may forget the trouble to some extent. If we are unable to sleep because of the trouble from the mosquitoes, we can think of this poetic beauty and get some peace.
THE PRINCIPLE OF DIVINITY;
THE GODS
CAN NATURE FUNCTION WITHOUT ĪŚWARĀ?

When you see the wooden plank on which I am sitting, you know for certain that there must be someone who has made it. There you see a branch of the tree which has fallen and is lying. No one who sees that branch will think that it has been made by a carpenter. Why? This plank is of a rectangular form and polished uniformly. It has two pieces of wood below to prevent dust from the floor sticking to it. Because there is a certain order in this and also the purpose that someone should sit on it, we conclude there must be someone who has made it (karthā). Because an inert piece of wood cannot on its own assume the rectangular shape, attach two pieces of wood to itself so that a person can sit on it, we feel that some intelligent being must have made it.

The branch which is lying there has a crude form. It does not have the order which we find in this plank. That branch does not also serve any purpose. Therefore, we do not associate the intelligence of any being with that branch.

Below that tree if little tender mangoes are all lying scattered, we do not think that someone has scattered it. We understand that these have just fallen on their own. But if the same mangoes have been collected into heaps there will be some order in it and we will know that someone must have done it. We also conclude that in collecting the mangoes into heaps there is the purpose either to take them home or sell it or distribute it free.

There can also be purpose without order. If we find in a house that clothes, vessels, books and other things are all lying scattered, we understand that this has been done by some thieves who wanted to rob and run away.
On the whole, if there is order and purpose in something, that must have been done by an intelligent being. We infer that the inert thing has not done it itself.

Let us now think of the branch which does not appear to have been made by anybody and its original plant species. That branch which has a rough exterior was till yesterday a part of the tree and within it were very subtle canals sucking water from the earth with order and discipline with the purpose that the tree should grow. On this rough looking branch, tender silky leaves grow. The veins which run through the leaf have so much order; the leaf also serves the purpose of forming chlorophyll which is a food energy. It is on this rough surface the softest flower comes up.

Among the trees and plants, there are two types. Some plants produce beautiful flowers. There is a particular order in the designs of the flowers. Not only that, there is also a purpose. It is because of its beauty, the honeybee is attracted to it and drinks the honey. While giving food to the honeybee another greater purpose is also fulfilled. It is because of the honeybee transporting pollen from one plant to the other, the plants develop their species. Thus there is a trick here which is highly intelligent and which an inert thing cannot do.

There is another funny thing: There are some flowers which are not very colourful but have strong scent to attract the honeybee - flowers like the jasmine, manoranjitham, sampanki etc. There are some other flowers which are very colourful but which do not have the scent. It appears that there is some economy in this also that one trick is enough to attract the honeybee and two are not necessary! (the rose is an exception). Is it possible for an inert thing to plan all this and act accordingly?

There is another fun also! In what we call the Nature there is a lot of variety. Just as there are flowers with smell and flowers
with colour, there are also those which flower in the morning and those which flower in the night. Of these, the flowers which flower in the night like jasmine etc are very white so that they can be clearly seen in darkness.

From the other types of the plant group, man gets tasty fruits. This is a purpose. But within this there is another cunning purpose. It is because we want that our succeeding generations also should get such fruits we plant the nuts of these fruits. But because of this another purpose is also fulfilled, namely that the tree multiplies its own species.

When we think on these lines, what do we find? ‘An inert thing cannot of its own create order and a purpose; therefore there must be a carpenter who has made the plank out of the wood’. On the basis of these premises, it is clear that there must be a super carpenter who has made the tree. Since the tree exhibits greater order and serves bigger purposes than what we do that great carpenter must be more intelligent than us. If we do something and demonstrate it, He does such great wonders secretly, hides Himself and makes all our capability look foolish.

If there is the fruit of the margosa tree which man cannot eat, He has created a relationship for it with the crows. Since that crow cannot plant the nut of that fruit like a human being and cause a plant grow, He makes the crow discharge the nut somewhere else (in order that it does not get dried up and wasted in the shade of the tree) so that it sprouts and grows there.

The tree absorbing the carbon dioxide which we exhale; our eating the sweet fruits that the trees give; our converting the same into manure and giving back to the tree - thus he has linked so many things which have life and which are inert.

Thus, if we think of the countless varieties of plant species, oceans, the worlds, the stars, the planets all of which are functioning with wonderful order and discipline, can we not know that what we call Nature as if it is inert is actually Iswarā’s līlā which is full of life?
‘Navaitham’ means what is taken out fresh. ‘Nava’ means new, fresh. ‘Nitham’ is what is taken out. Navanitham is the butter that is taken out by churning the curd which has been formed with the fresh cow’s milk got in the morning.

All of us are cows. Our minds should be spotlessly clean like the white milk. Only then Krishna who has this name because He is dark in colour will come to us. It is not a darkness that creates revulsion; it is darkness of the clouds which attracts (mōham). The darker the cloud, more will be what it rains. Is that water dark? In the same manner, one who pours out love as a flood is Krishnā. Just as the brightest lightning comes out of the thick clouds, Krishnā is Gīthāchāryā, giving out flashes of jnānā. Although outwardly He looks like being cunning and deceitful, if we make our mind clear like the milk, He will come as Gōpālā with pure love to protect us.

He does not drink the milk as it is. It has to become curd and new butter should be taken out from it. It is that Navanitham He will take, that also stealthily.

In the heat of bhakthi if the pure mind is boiled, it will rise up. Then for that emotion to subside, we have to add sānthaṁ to it to make it ‘curd’. The curd does not flow away like the milk. It is solid and quiet. He needs peace and also the activities of līlā. Then only, in the end, it will be that all the activities subside in peace and peace is the base for all the activities. The Upanishad says ‘Śyāmāth sapalam, sapalāth syāmam’, combining the two.

Therefore, the curd which does not flow away and remains peaceful has to be vigorously churned. If the curd which is within the pot, namely, the heart is churned using the eagerness to know
the truth (this is called *jnāna* vichāram or *āthma* vichāram) as the tool for churning and the concentrated thinking as the rope, the butter of perfection (*pūrṇāthvam*) will come up. He will come even when it is *Navanitham* and does not become old. How can this *pūrṇāthvam* be within the pot of our body? Therefore, it will reach Him who is Perfect (*Puritran*). It means that we will lose our individuality and become one with Him.

Why should it be said that He is taking the navanitham stealthily? If *Bhagawan* comes as an ordinary guest, will we not treat him as separate and consciously offer him all the *ubhachārās* (*rājābachāram*) and give him the butter? At such a time, it is not certain whether we will have the mind to surrender to Him or not. Also when we say ‘I surrender’ there is the mention of ‘I’. That is why He comes as a thief to take us away when we are not conscious of it!

The butter is like Parabrahmam. It is absolutely white. If it is melted that whiteness also goes and it becomes colourless like spatikam. It is not part of any colour. Its taste is also similar. Even when we say it is ‘madhuram’, butter is in fact not sweet like sugar or honey. It is not among any of the six tastes called ‘shadrasam’. It has to be said that its colour, taste and everything about it is only ‘sāntham’. In order that the play of ‘śamsarā’ (worldly life) should go, we make a lot of effort and through this when we attain great peace, *Krishnā* is the *Paramāthmā*, who takes us into Himself.

Milk mixes with water; but butter even when it is in water will not stick to it but will float without getting mixed. In the same manner, if we are in the world but are not of the world, He will swallow us and keep us within Himself. Therefore, it is our mind which is the butter that He wants. What do we understand when He is called in two different ways : ‘*Navanitha chor’* and ‘Chitha chor’? It means it is our mind that has to change as the *navanitham* which He can steal.
The same *Krishṇā* who sports in this manner, running into every house of every shepherdess, breaking the pots etc, sleeps as a child on a banyan leaf. Was it in *Gokulam* that He was lying like this on a banyan leaf? No. He did not lie on the banyan leaf during the period which he spent in Mathura. At some other time, in order to show His *māyā* to *Mārkaṇḍeya*, He showed *pralaya* (deluge). It was in that flood of *pralaya*, He was lying on the banyan leaf as a child and gave dhāraṇa.

*Paramēśwarā* gives *jnāna upadēśam* sitting under the banyan tree. *Maha Viṣṇu* is Vatapathraśāyi who lies on the banyan leaf and shows His māyā which appears to be opposed to *jnānā*. But through that only He gives *jnānā*. Does He not show that, in *māyā*, the entire universe and all creations are absorbed in Himself! It is for releasing us from māyā and giving us mukthi He gives dhāraṇa in this manner. It is for this reason that when He is in this form, He is called Mukundan. Mukundan means one who grants mukthi.

*Karāravindhēna padhāravindham*

*mukhāravindhe vinivēshayantham*

*Vatasya pathrasya putē sayanam balam*

*Mukundam manasa śmarāmi*

The meaning of the *slokā* is: ‘I wholeheartedly meditate on the child Mukunda who is lying on the banyan leaf, taking the toe which is like a lotus with his hand which is like a lotus and putting it into his mouth which is like a lotus’.

Why should the toe be put into the mouth and tasted?

There was a king named *Māndhāthā* in the Solar Race (*Sūryavamsam*) long before *Rāmā*. He was born from his father straightaway. Therefore, he had no mother to feed him milk. At that time, Indra said ‘I give - *mām dhāthā*’ and took the child’s thumb and put it in his mouth. There is a *devathā* residing in every part of the body. The *devathā* appropriate to the hand is Indra. He blessed that the nectar that he had taken should go into the child’s
mouth through the thumb. That is why many children put their thumbs into their mouth.

But here what Bhagawan put into his mouth was not the thumb but the toe. He is of the form of amrutha all over the body and not any particular part. In Vishnu Sahasranana[m] there is a name ‘Amrutha vapuh’. Therefore, He puts his toe into his mouth and tastes it as if to show that He can do with his leg what the devas can do only with their hands. The manthra says ‘what is eaten is Brahmam, eating is Brahmam, feeding is Brahmam’. He is establishing the truth of this manthra. He keeps his own finger into his mouth and tastes it.

What He is tasting is the toe of the left leg. Nataraja’s leg which is in the lifted position is also the left.

Although we are not full of nectar like Bhagawan, He has blessed us with ‘Chandranadi’ which is to our left. Chandra (the Moon) gives out nectar. If yoga sadhana and anushtana are practised, the flow of nectar in the Chandranadi can be perceived. It is to show this that He is tasting the toe of the left leg.

He shows that everything is great and nectar and that the leg or the left is not less in merit.

Thus, there is nectar in Him. Although He is nectar Himself, He steals butter from outside, gets thrashed for it and tells lies to hide it. If, in this manner, He descends to our low level and conducts this sport, it is because He is the ocean of compassion and He wants to give us the nectar of love and the nectar of His sport.

How can we call Vatapathrasayi who appeared sometime during deluge as Krishna? If we think of this, we will know the reason. We should not make any distinction between Mahā Vishnu and Krishna Paramāthma. We usually call Him an avataram but He is Mahā Vishnu only. ‘Krishnaṣṭhu Bhagawan swayam’. In fact
even calling Him, *Mahā Viṣṇu* is to give Him a slightly lower status. He Himself says ‘Ādityānāṁ aham Viṣṇuḥ’ (I am Viṣṇu among the Ādityas) and ‘Rudrānāṁ Śankaraschāsmi’ (I am Śankara of the Rudrās) and thus shows Himself as Śiva also. He also says ‘I am Rāma, I am Skanda’ and then says the ‘I’ which is in everybody’s heart is He Himself. He announces Himself as the Parabrahramam by saying ‘there is no charāchāram other than me’ - that is why we call Him *Krishṇa Paramāthmā* and ‘Pūrṇam Brahma Sanāthanam’.

Since it is *Krishṇa*’s important function to come in His child form (*Bāla rūpam*) and rob our hearts, when He floats on the green leaf and attracts our hearts, we think of Him as *Krishṇa* only.

By showing us that He is taking the nectar, He is actually putting the nectar into us and by this we get relieved from death and reach the state of eternity. That is why we talk of Him as Mukunda who gives mukthi. This name Mukunda is an important name for *Krishṇa* only.

‘*Bhīṣma mukthi pradhāyakāya namah*’ - thus we do archana to Him in *Ashtothra Śadham*. Rāmā also gave *Moksham* to Jatāyu. Yet why should Mukundan mean only *Krishṇa*? There is a reason for this ñ that is why Vatapathraśāyi has been connected with *Krishṇa*.

At one time, He eats butter - the milk given by the cow which is the highest among the animals becomes curd and then becomes *Navanītham*. Just as food is a need, lying down is also a need. These are called *Asanam* and *Sayanam*. *Asanam* is *Navanītham*. *Sayanam* is the banyan leaf. (Even now without giving up *asanam*, He is tasting the toe). Just as the cow is the greatest among the animals, the banyan tree is the highest in plant life. It is called ‘vatavriksham’ and ‘nyakrōdham’. In *Sahasranānam*, ‘Nyakrōdhan’ is a name for *Mahā Viṣṇu*. *Srāddham* performed at Gaya is considered very important and offering the pindam below
the ‘Akshayya vatam’ is also said to be important. This is Karmā Kāṇḍam. Dakshināmūrthi who bestows the experience of Self through mounam (silence) also sits below the banyan tree. This is Jnāna Kāṇḍam. Thus it is important to both. However high may be karma, it is connected with māyā. That is why when giving the māyā dharṣan to Mārkaṇḍeśya and also giving him jnānam, Bhagawān was lying down on the banyan leaf. One who lies down on Adisesha as Lakshmināyaka and the father of Brahma came as a child on the banyan leaf.

If butter which is His food shows the highest form of the juice given by the cow, the banyan leaf shows the beginning stage of the banyan tree. First it is the leaf, then only flowering, becoming fruit etc (the banyan has no flower. It straightaway bears fruit. It belongs to the Vanaspathi group).

He shows that there is no level in which He is not there in full form - from Navanītham which is the highest state of milk to the tender banyan leaf.

There is something great about the banyan leaf. There is more of life in it. That is why however much it may become dry, it does not get crushed. Even when it is completely dry, it will be soft. That is why when Bhagawān comes as a child, he chooses it as his bed. It can be seen that if a little water is sprinkled on a dry banyan leaf which has fallen from the tree, it will again become green. Why does He who takes the cow’s butter for freshness choose the banyan leaf for his bed? He is the ātmā which never becomes weakened. Praṇavam also means that which is always new. Lying down is always ‘navam’; what is taken is nvanītham. Apart from showing the state which is beyond old age and death by tasting his toe, He also shows the same by His sayanam on the banyan leaf in a subtle manner. The youth of Dakshināmūrthi sitting under the banyan tree also shows the state of deathlessness. Just as the root does not move - the Šruthi says ‘Vriksha iva
**stapthah’** - *Dakshināmūrthi* looks great with *jñāna*. But He (*Krishṇa*) is always playful and is of the form of love and running about just as the leaf moves even due to a little wind.

The banyan tree has several uses. A whole army can take rest under it. It is a visible example of *paropakāra*. For such a huge tree, the seed is so small. That huge tree being contained within that seed of atomic size shows that *Paramāthma* who is like the atom within atom is also the limitless universe. Although it may be said that this is so for all kinds of trees, nobody plants a seed of the banyan tree. Somehow, the seed sprouts of its own. This explains the principle that *Īśvara* is Swayambu (being of His own). It gives out several ariel roots from which it gets support and due to which it spreads further. Large crowds go to *Adyar* to see the huge banyan tree. This seems to be an example to show that *Īśvara* needs no other support. Even if one part of the tree becomes dried up, ariel roots which come out maintain the greenness of the tree and this shows the eternal nature of *Īśvara*. Just as the entire universe has spread from *Īśvara*, who is the father and mother, the banyan tree goes on extending itself from one mother tree.

Thus, *Vatapathraśāyi* makes clear to us who are struggling in this ocean of *samsāra*, the principle of permanence and the state of being without any support.

He is a Truth much bigger than the tree. However big the tree may be or however long it may survive, there is a limit to which it can spread and the time upto which it can survive. But He is limitless, omnipresent and eternal. Yet, hiding so much of His greatness, He is a child so that we can take him and fondle Him. Without speaking he conveys the message to us: ‘Do not worry about anything. Be like me with a child’s heart. Then you can keep floating happily and playfully on the flood of *samsāra* without being hit by the waves. Just as the butter that comes up by churning
floats in the buttermilk without mixing with it, His floating in the ocean of samsara like butter is to make us realise that we should also become like that.

In the state in which we are, if to the extent we know we meditate on the child which is lying (on the banyan leaf) with devotion, faith and sraddhā, we can be always like the banyan leaf, soft and green. When we are like that, He will come to our mind and lie down there. When we call Him Vatapathrasāyi, Kshīrabdhisāyi, Srīrangaśāyi etc and pray ‘Ramathām manō me’ we pray to Him that He should come, lie down in our mind and be happy. That is why the slokā (the last slokā of Sri Ranganāth-āshtakam) begins with ‘sath - chitha - sāyi’ – one who lies in the minds of people who are sādhus. When that soft body of the child, the never changing young body, touches our mind, this also will become like that. The impurity and the bad taste will go and will become clear and peaceful and tasty like the butter. It is only after making us soft like the butter through our meditation on Him, He will swallow without any effort and we can go into Him and remain happy.

What we should do first is to meditate on Him. If we make the mind pure like the white milk, one who is lying on the ocean of milk will come and float like the butter inside our minds which are full of love for Him. Then He will make us also like butter and keep us within Him.
THE GLORY OF THE NAME OF ŚIVA;  
THE GLORY THAT ŚIVA BESTOWS

It will not be particularly great if Śiva nāmā is glorified in Saiva Purāṇas or Āgamās or in Thēvāram or Thiruvāchakam. That it has been glorified in Vaishnāvā literature is its greatness. If Śiva’s glory has been praised by a staunch Vaishnāvā, then only it is great. Both these aspects are there for Śiva and Śiva nāmā.

Bhāgavatham is intended to establish that the glory and stories of Viśnu are greater than all others. In Bhāgavatham there is the story of Dākshāyani. It is in that story that Śukāchāryā who is Brahma Swarūpam has spoken of the glory of Śiva nāmā through the words of Dākshāyani. Sukabrahmam’s words command special respect. Parāsakthi who came as Dākshāyani spoke of this glory. What is the context in which she spoke of the glory?

Dākshāyani went to the yagna performed by her father Dakshā although She was not invited. She did not listen to Parameśwarā who advised her not to go to the yagna without being invited. Her real name is Sathi. That is the avatār She had taken before she became Pārvathi.

Parameśwarā does not show special respect to anyone nor does He treat anybody with disrespect and He keeps aloof as a jnāni. Brahmā created Brahma Puthrās called ‘Prajāpathi’ to be the chiefs of the people. Dakshā was one of them. He was always proud of his position and authority and expected that everyone should pay obeisance to him. But Īswarā did not do it. Therefore, Dakshā did not like him. But in deference to Brahmā’s words he gave his daughter Sathi in marriage to Īswarā and sent her to Kailās. With that he cut off his relationship with the daughter and the son-in-law. When he was performing a big yagna and had invited the thirty three crores of Devās without exception, he did not invite his daughter and son-in-law.
When Dākshāyāṇi saw that in the arena of the yagna, all were seated except Īśvarā, She thought why she should have gone to the yagna. Dakṣa not only did not welcome her with love but started speaking abusively of Śiva and Dākshāyāṇi could not bear it.

‘Shall I go away from here? But where will I go? Except the husband’s house, there is no other place for a wife. Can I go there? Why this thinking, I have to go. But if I go, Paramēśwarā may get angry and tell me, ‘In spite of my telling you repeatedly you went there and not only you got disgraced but, you have also brought disgrace upon me. Why have you returned here? But He is love personified and will not show any feeling towards me except love. Therefore, He will not ask me like this. But somehow my own mind refuses to reconcile to what has happened. There is also another possibility. Supposing in between our cordial conversation He calls me ‘Dākshāyāṇi, what will I do? Can there be a bigger punishment to me than that? Is it not a name which I got because I happened to be the daughter of a sinner who abuses Śiva? There cannot be a bigger punishment than my having this name which will keep reminding me that I am born as his daughter. Therefore better than all this, let me give up this body itself. I was thinking where to go. Let me give up this body and join Him who is the āthma itself. Thus, she made a vow of sacrifice.

Ambāl did Īswarā dhyānam right near the spot of yagna (yagna kuṇḍam) and sacrificed her body in the fire of yōga (yōgagini). This is what Bhagavatham says. But in Śaiva Purāṇās it is said that She fell into the yagna kuṇḍam and reduced herself to ashes.

In Bhagavatham it is said that before She gave up her body for the sake of Pāthivrithyam, She looked at Dakṣa with burning anger and spoke to him. It is in the midst of this talk to Dakṣa, Ambāl spoke of the glory of Śiva nāmā.
Because the words came from Ambāl, they are great. Moreover, due to the context in which they were spoken they are still greater. The words, therefore, are so supreme that there is nothing higher than them.

*Ambāl* did not commit suttee. Yet, suttee which came to be practised got the name after Her. Since giving up the body for the sake of Pāthivṛthym is common to both, this name (suttee) has come to be used.

When a couple are referred to as Sathi - Pathi, the idea is that Sathi is the ideal wife. Āchāryā says ‘Sathi Sathinām āchāramē’. This means ‘You who occupy the first place among Pathivrathās’.

There cannot be greater sathyam than what was said by such a Sathi (Dākshāyāni) at the time of Her giving up Her life. That sathyam is invaluable. What did she say?

_yadh dwayakasharam nāma girēritham Nrunām_

_Sakruth prasangāth agam āsu hanthi thath_

_Pavithra kirthim tham alankya sāsanam_

_Bhavān aho dweshti Šivam Šivētharāḥ_

In the *slōkā*, the last word is ‘Šivētharāḥ’ - meaning ‘one who is other than Šiva’. By this word *Ambāl* refers to Dākshā only. She addresses him in a tone of respect as ‘Bhavān’. Since Dākshā expects that Īswara Himself should respect him, She has a dig at him by addressing him as Bhavan and then calling him Šivētharāḥ.

In *Amarakōśām* which is the Sanskrit dictionary, all that is auspicious has been mentioned as meaning for the word ‘Śiva’ : ‘Svahah Śreyasam Šivam Bhadham Kalyāṇam Mangalam Subham’. If there is someone who is different from such a Šivam, would it not mean that he is one without śreyas, of inauspicious form etc?

One of the books on Adhvaitha written by Appaiya Dīkṣithar is called ‘Parimalām’. Someone who objected to
Adhvaitham wrote condemning this book. When this was mentioned to Dikshithar, it is said that he closed his nose with his hands. Parimalam means good smell. If there is a book which is opposed to this, should not one close his nose? If Dakshan felt proud in not liking Šivam which is highest mangalaṃ, would it not mean that he is the opposite of mangalaṃ and kalyān. Dākshāyani who thought that Her very name was a punishment to her, calls him ‘Šivedharan’ and thus punishes him.

‘Oh, you are such a Šivetharā who is inimical to Šiva. Is not Šiva of pure glory and faultless? (Pavithra kṛthi) Is it not by His command that all the Dēvathās are doing the different jobs? No one has disobeyed His command (Alankya śāsanam). Strangely, it is only you who want to go against Him’ ṛe Ambāl speaks all this. This is in the latter part of the slōkā. In the first part, she talks of the glory of Šiva nāmā.

_Yadh dwayakasharam nāmā girēritham Nrūām_
_Sakruth prasangāth agam āstu hanthi....._
_Dwayāksharam nāmā Šiva nāmā which has two aksharas_  
(Sanskrit)

It is not necessary to say it as Panchāksharam with Praṇavam first and namah at the end. It is enough if merely the two letters Šiva are said. In Thirumanthiram also the emphasis is on the two lettered Šiva and not on Panchākshram.

_‘Dwayāksharam nāmā girā’ means ‘a name which has only two alphabets. ‘Nrūām ritham’ means ‘if these are said by people’. _

What are the prerequisites for pronouncing the name? Is it necessary to have a bath, control the breath and observe some discipline?

No, all this is not necessary. It is said ‘Sakruth prasangāth’ which means ‘somewhere casually in the middle of a talk’.

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'Sakruth' means 'only once'. 'Prasangāth' means 'when a lot of casual and useless talk is indulged in'.

It is not even necessary to apply the mind on Siva and deliberately and consciously say the name. Even if casually or accidentally if the two letters 'Siva' come in between a talk that itself is enough.

If the name is mentioned like this even casually what does it do?

Agam āsu hathi
Agam - the sin
Āsu - immediately
Hanthi - destroys

Just in between a talk if the two alphabets (of the name of Śīva) are casually mentioned, that will destroy all the sins.

These are the words of the highest of truths which were uttered by the one who is Supreme Dēvathā just when She was about to sacrifice Her life and have come through Śukrachāryā.

If one who does not utter 'Śīva Śīva' is a bad person who has indulged in bad activities and is a sinner, does it not then mean that if Śīva nāmā is repeated sins will go?

We have committed a lot of sins knowingly or unknowingly. It is this which obstructs our spiritual progress. If Śīva nāmā is repeated that obstruction will be removed. After that we can achieve everything right upto Mōksham.

Some people of other religions say 'There is nothing in your religion for doing expiation for sin. We have the way. We will sprinkle some water. All the sins will go. Therefore you come to us'.
These people invite us to join them as if there is no remedy for sins in our religion. Since we do not know about our religion, there are some amongst us who respond to their invitation and go to them. All the karmānushtānās which have been laid down in our religion are only for removing the sins. Every time we make a sankalpam for doing any karmā, we start with ‘Mamo pāththa samastha duridha kshayadwārā’. Duridham means sin. Bhakthi margam is only for removing the sin. When bhakthi matures, it will result in prapathi (surrender). When concluding the Gītā, Bhagawān says ‘You surrender unto me. I shall release you from all your sins’. ‘Sarva pāpebyō mōkṣaśhyāmi’. He makes this promise. There is no need to go to someone else instead of having faith in Him.

Whether it is dharma or jnāna they remove sins. The Upanishad (Mahānarāyaṇa Upanishad) says ‘Dharmena pāpam apanuthathi’. ‘Even if you are a great sinner you will cross it with the boat of jnāna’ says Bhagawān in Gītā.

Bhāgavatham has shown a very easy way, easier than karmānushtānam, prapathi, the way of jnāna etc in order to destroy all the sins that we have committed during several births. That simple way is repeating Śiva nāmā.

Therefore whoever invites us to join them saying ‘we will wash off all your sins’ should be told ‘no one else has a remedy for destroying sins easier than what we have. Therefore you first remedy your sin of calling us to join you.’
THE PLACE OF ŚIVA NĀMĀ IN THE VĒDHĀS

If we have a very costly gem, where will we keep it? Will we keep it in a room which is in the front or adjacent to the backyard? We will keep it in a box and in a room which is in the middle and is safe. In the same manner, Śiva nāmā which is ‘Jīvarathnam’ has been kept very safely in the Vēdhās. When it is four, the second is the middle. The second of the four Vēdhās is Yajus. In (Thaithriya Krishna) Yajur Vēdhā, what is in the middle is the fourth kāṇḍam. In the middle of the fourth kāṇḍam is the fifth ‘praśnam’. It is in the middle of this there is ‘Sri Rudra Suktham’ for which Panchāksharam is central. The Dwayāksharam ‘Śiva’ is central to Panchāksharam.

If we consider the Vēdhās as a body, Śiva nāmā is the life in it. If it is the heart in which there are Paramāthmā and life that heart is at the centre of the body. This is what Jnānasambandhar also says.
NĀMĀ WHICH IS FOR ALL

‘Nalvazhi’ (the Good Path) is one of the several works of the Saint Poetess, Avvai. All that is necessary for right conduct has been mentioned as applicable to every one without distinction of jāthi or religion. In this there is a statement ‘There is no danger at any time to any one who keeps thinking of ‘Śiva nāmā’. From this, it is clear that Śiva nāmā is meant for all people. It is said even the Chandāḷā who has been excommunicated should repeat the Śiva nāmā. From the fact that, in Rudram, Paramēśwarā has been referred to as ‘a dog’, ‘one who eats dog’s meat’, it is clear that His name is the common property of all people.
A VAISHNAVA’S ACCLAIM

I am of the view that just as the glory of Śiva nāmā has been referred to in Srīmadh Viṣṇu Bhāgavatam, one who is held in great esteem by Srivaishnavaś has also spoken of the greatness of Paramēśvarā. The story that is usually said is that he had denigrated Śiva. But I do not think so.

He was one of the very important disciples of Rāmānujāchāryā. His name was ‘Kūraththāzhvār’. That is not a name which his parents gave him. His name was Srīvāthsaṅkar. Since he belonged to a place called ‘Kūram’ near Kāṇchīpuram, he was called Kūraththāzhvār.

Till Rāmānujā’s time, most people had worshipped both Śiva and Viṣṇu. In any place, there would be a temple for Īśvarā in the north - east and a temple for Perumāḷ in the west. That is the rule. In this arrangement all people used to go to the Perumāḷ temple in the morning and the Śiva temple in the evening. Even though some were staunch in their devotion to Śiva or Viṣṇu, they never had the feeling that one of them is higher in status and the other is lower. It was in such a situation Rāmānujā came and said ‘there is no God other than Viṣṇu; no other dēvathā should be worshipped’. He made this a religion and started preaching that people should not go to Śiva temple.

The Cholā king who was ruling then and the vidwāns thought about this. They decided to call Rāmānujā himself and ask him what the authority in the Sāsthṛās was for his views. For this purpose, a vidwāth sadhas was arranged at Gangaikondachōlapuram (which is about ten miles north of Kumbakōṅam) which was the capital at that time. Rāmānujāchāryā was staying in Srirangam. Rājā sent a messenger to him.

Kūraththāzhvār who was with him at that time told Rāmānujā, ‘Swamy, the king is a Śaiva; he has built Śiva temples.
You are saying that people should not go to Śiva temples. Therefore, he is inviting you to the vidwāth sadhas only to punish you. If there is any danger, let it come to me and not to you. You wear my white cloth and go away from the Chōlā kingdom. Instead of you, I will wear the saffron cloth and go to the king’.

It was done accordingly. Rāmānuja left Srīrangam that very night and reached Thirunārāyaṇapuram which is twenty eight miles from Srīrangam and then finally reached Thirunārāyaṇapuram which is near Mysore. Kūraththazhvar came to the venue of the sadhas.

The vidvāns who were gathered there said ‘Let those who worship other gods as Ishta Deivam claim that there is another God, say, Viṣṇu who is like Śiva or equal to Śiva but how can they say that among the gods one is higher and the other is lower? If they say that Viṣṇu is higher than Śiva let them prove it on the basis of Sāsthraś’. Therefore, they wrote on a palm leaf ‘Śivāth paratharam nāsthi’ which means ‘there is nothing superior to Śiva’. They decided to send this palm leaf to the vidvāns. If they accepted what was written on the leaf, they should sign it but if they objected they should explain their position on the basis of sāsthra.

The palm leaf was given to Kūraththāzhvar.

Kūraththāzhvar wrote something on the same palm leaf and returned it. What he wrote was ‘Asthi dhrōṇam athah param’.

What was originally written in the palm leaf was ‘There is nothing superior to Śiva’. What Kūraththāzhvar wrote means that above him there is ‘dhrōṇam’. ‘Asthi dhrōṇam athah param’ means ‘Above that (Śiva) there is dhrōṇam’.

Śiva is not only the name of Īswarā. Its other meaning is a measure by which paddy or grains are measured (in Tamil this is
called 'Marakkāl'). This measure is called Śīvam in Sanskrit. There is a measure which is bigger than this 'Marakkāl' (Śīvam). This is called dhrōṇam in Sanskrit (twice the measure of Śīvam).

Taking advantage of the double meaning the name Śiva has, he took the name Śīvam (marakkāl) and said ‘Who said there is nothing bigger than Marakkāl? There is the dhrōṇam’ and wrote it.

'It was the royal court and several vidwāns had gathered there. It was a respectable sadhas. In such a sadhas, instead of explaining in a serious manner on the basis of sāstrās, he has mischievously written that dhronam is bigger than Śīvam'. All those who had gathered there thought like this. The king became angry and severely punished Kuraththazhvar. That is the story which is usually narrated.

But what I feel is that Kuraththazhvär did not indulge in any mischief but has only stated as the inner meaning of what he wrote the truth accepted by those who are devoted to Śiva and accepted by Rudrasuktham which is in the Vēdhās.

Till now, it has been thought that the word Śiva was understood in two ways and therefore the king punished him. But what I think is in the words ‘Asthi dhrōṇam athah param’ it is not the word ‘Śiva’ which is to be understood in two different ways but the word ‘dhrōṇam’.

What is the meaning?

'dhrōṇam' means the small white flower which is the favourite of Paramēśwarā (in Tamil this flower is called Thumbai). Just as Bilwa among the leaves, what is considered to be particularly pleasing to Śiva among the flowers are some like this white flower, flower of datura and the flower of yercum which are not sold in any shop.

There is no greater devotee of Śiva than Appayya Dikshithar. He has written a sthothra by name ‘Āthmārpaṇa sthuthi’. It is also called 'Unmaththa Panchāśath'. The slokās is:

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He says 'If dhronam and yercum flower are offered to you as archanā, that gives mōksha sāmrājyam itself as the fruit'.

The white flower ‘dhronam’ which is offered in archana falls on Śiva. It goes and remains on his top. If one dhronam is kept on top of the Śivalingam then it becomes higher than Śiva. Therefore how is it right to say ‘there is nothing above Śiva’. There is the small flower, dhrona pushpam, which is white and pure and remaining above Śiva. It appears that to emphasise that the flower is on the top of Śiva the slōkā has been started with the word ‘asthi’ and then continued as ‘asthi dhronam athah param’.

When we talk of ‘tharam’ (quality), it means one is higher than the other. When it is said ‘Śivāth paratharam nāsthi’ it means that there is nothing to say in comparative degree that there is something higher than Śiva.

In view of the position in which the dhronam flower is, we can say that it is above Śiva. But how can we compare it with the qualities and glory of Śiva and say it is higher than Him?

That is also possible. Srirudram which is a Vēdha manthrā supports this view. At the end it says: ‘This hand is Bhagawān, Paramaśivā. No, it is higher than Bhagawān - Bhāgawath thara’, in comparative degree.

How can this hand be higher than Bhagawān? The Sruthi itself says that because the hand does ‘abhimarsanam’ it is higher.

‘Abhimarsanam’ means ‘touching well’. It is the hand that touches the idol during pūjā, applies sandal and does archanā. A little touch like this is enough. It is enough if we are at his feet for a little while. When we have his touch, He gives away to the person who touches Him, all his qualities and glories, even more. If He is Bhagawān, He makes what touches Him as ‘Bhāgavath tharam’.
Therefore it is not necessary that a flower (dhrōṇam) should remain on His head. Even if it is at His feet after being used for archanā, it becomes higher than Śiva, ‘Śivāth paratharam’.

He must have had such thoughts in his mind but since he could not go against the views of his āchāryā, he decided to receive any punishment for his sake and said ‘asthi dhrōṇam athah param’ implying two meanings. It can be understood this way.

We can understand clearly from the words of that Vaishnavā that even a small flower when it reaches Paramaśivā, He who is so generous glorifies it more than Himself.

But is it possible to go on doing pūjā by touching Hīm? Will everybody get this facility? Even this dhrōṇam flower is not available during all the months. Therefore, all this touching, sticking etc have to be done by words only. We have to keep His nāmā in our tongue and take Hīm into our heart and stick to Hīm. No facility or aid or discipline is required for repeating the nāmā.

Therefore one need not cry that he has committed so many sins. There is one thing which can destroy all the sins in one second. We need not go in search of it somewhere. We can make it ourselves. It is not at all difficult. It is just two aksharas. What should we do with that which is like life in the body, the Mahā Lingam in the temple and as jīvarathnam in the middle of the Vedhās? Is it necessary to collect money and conduct abhisēkam on a large scale? Is it necessary to offer several varieties of neivēdyam? Is it necessary to offer garlands, jewels etc? None of these is required. It is enough if the tongue which is all the time talking unnecessary things is just moved.

This is the birth right of only the human beings. We are talking of birth right for so many other things. But this is the highest birth right. Speech has been given to man only for this purpose. If it is not used that way, Paramēśwarā will think, ‘he has
not done what had to be done by using his speech. There is no use giving him the speech’ and take it back and in the next birth He will give a janma which has no speech. But if His nāmā is repeated, all the sins will fly and it will give the ‘Mōksha Sāmrajya Lakshmi’.

Can we see the form of Paramēśwarā? Even if we keep an idol, can we see it all the time? This nāmā also is He Himself. We can make this come the moment we think of it.

Therefore, whenever it is possible, the two aksharas ‘Si va’ should be repeated to make the world become ‘Śivam’ ‘Mangalam’ and ‘Kalyānām’.
MINĀKSHI

In the context of the sthōthrās on Ambāl two of them namely Lalithā Sahasranānāmam and Soundarya Lahari come to mind.

The three prominent forms of Ambāl are Kānchi Kāmākshi, Madurai Minākshi and Kāsi Visālākshi.

There is a mention in Sahasranāmam: ‘Kāmākshi kāma dhāyini’. Although the name of Kāmākshi does not figure in Soundarya Lahari, in the slōkā ‘Kvaṇāth Kānchi dhāmā’ which is the dhyāna slōkā and describes Ambāl, the description is that of Kāmākshi with the bow and the arrows, the goad and the noose in Her four hands. Without mentioning the name it has been indirectly indicated by the words ‘Kānchi dhāmā’. Although ‘Kānchi dhāmā’ means the golden belt worn by ladies on the hip, we are also reminded of Kānchipuram.

If we see whether Minakshi’s name is mentioned in Sahasranānāmam, it is not there. If we see whether Āchāryā has described Her in Soundarya Lahari, we do not find it. This is really surprising.

Mānambikai is famous the world over and She is one who bestows boons. She combines in Her compassion, beauty and the ability to rule. She holds the sceptre for six months and it remains with Sundareswarā for the next six months. When we look at the daily pūjā, the naivedyams offered etc, She is a cut above Īśwarā. It is only in Madurai that there is the practice different from other places that pūjā and neivēdyams are first offered to Minākshi and then only to Īśwarā.

Here, I am reminded of: ‘Dhwadhasāntham’.

When I was in Rameśwaram, someone called another person as ‘Dhwadhasāntham’. I asked a pundit who was near me, the meaning of Dhwadhasāntham. In the Śankara Mandapam at
Ramēśwaram, there are the twelve Jyōthirlingams worshipped by Āchāryā. Probably, the pundit had this in mind and told me that of these twelve Lingams the one which was at the extreme south, namely, Ramēśwara Rāmanāthar is Dhvadhasānatham. But that is not correct. Usually, we talk of the six chakrams starting from the Mūlādhārā and upto Brahmārandhiram (the suture on the skull). Looking at it in a more subtle manner, the chakras are said to be twelve. What is at the top, namely, the place where Jīvāthmā and Paramāthmā unite is Dhvadhasānatham.

What is said as Dhvadhasānatham in Thanthra and Yoga Sāstrās as the highest state is Madurai and therefore Madurai is called ‘Dhvadhasāntha Kshōthram’. Madurai is Brahmārandhiram of the world and here Mīnākshi is as Brahmānanda Swarūpīīi.

Only Mīnākshi has a temple for her with huge towers and wide corridors at which even the Westerners wonder. The architectural wealth in the temple cannot be counted. Usually, in all other holy places, the temple has the name of the presiding male deity, namely, the Īśwarā, and it is said that the sannidhi for such and such Ambāl is in that temple. This is so even in respect of the very powerful Ambāl forms like Bālāmbāl, Karpagāmbāl and Mangalāmbāl. These temples are called Vaidyanātha Swāmi temple (or Muthukumāraswāmi temple) Kapāliswarar temple, Kumbēswarāswāmi temple etc. But it is only in Madurai we do not call the temple as Sundarēswarar temple but as the Mīnākshi Amman temple. It is here that Sundarēswarar had played the 64 types of divine sports. Jnānasambandar prayed to Sundarēswarar and by the greatness of the Vibhūthi he cured the Pāndyan king of his serious disease and converted him from Jainism to Śaivism. Thus, it is Sundarēswara who was responsible for our Vaidhika religion being reestablished. But as if all this glory means nothing, Mīnākshi only is important there.

In the Kāñchi region, there is no sannidhi for Ambāl in any Īśwara temple. But Kāmākshi has a temple for Herself without a
sannidhi for Īswarā. Therefore, it is no surprise that it is called Kāmākshi Amman temple. But the temple at Madurai which is actually a temple for Īswarā according to Saiva Āgamās has come to be called Minākshi Amman temple. Therefore, it is something great. Although in Jambukeśwaram it is usual to refer to the temple as Akilāndeswari temple, the town itself has the name Jambukeśwaram after the Swāmi there.

Therefore, it is no surprise that it is called Kāmākshi Amman temple. But the temple at Madurai which is actually a temple for Īswarā according to Saiva Āgamās has come to be called Minākshi Amman temple. Therefore, it is something great. Although in Jambukeśwaram it is usual to refer to the temple as Akilāndeswari temple, the town itself has the name Jambukeśwaram after the Swāmi there.

Right from olden times, great men and poets have sung sthōtras on Minākshi.

Śyāmalā who is mentioned in the famous ‘Śyāmalā Dandakam’ of Kālidāsā, is actually Minākshi. Śyāmalā, Māthangi, Manthriṅī are all the names of Minākshi in Thanthra Sāstrā. She is the presiding deity of music and is always playing the Mānikya Veṇī. She is the one who bestows the nectar of Moksham through music itself. The following lines in Śyāmalā Dandakam are notable:

Māthā maragatha śyāmā Māthangi, Madhaśālinī
Kuryāth katāksham Kalyāṇī Kadhambavanavāsinī

These lines refer only to Minākshi who is emerald green in colour. Madurai is in fact Kadhambavanam. In Tamil, it is called ‘Kadappavanam’. In Navarathnamālikā which begins with ‘Ōmkhāra panjara sukīm’, Kālidāsā has described Ambikai as the Dēvathā for music. He starts the description of Ambikai by saying She is the parrot who is in the cage of Ōmkhāram. In Madurai, Minākshi does not hold a Veṇī in Her hand but has a parrot.

Āchāryā also has sung a sthōthra on Minākshi : ‘Minākshi Pancharathnam’. Even when Jnānasambandar sings of Īswarā, he first refers to Minākshi as Īswara’ s ‘Ardhīngi’.

Thus several great poets have sung Ambāl. Kumara Guruparar has made a sthōthra on Minākshi by treating the Mother of the Universe as a child. The ‘arangētram’ (first public approval by a learned assembly) for the same was done in the temple itself.
Thirumalai Naicker was presiding over the function. Even as Kumara Guruparar was repeating the verses, all of a sudden the young child of the priest came there, took off the pearl garland which was worn by Thirumalai Naicker and put it on Kumara Guruparar. Even as everybody was wondering about what the child had done she went into the sanctum sanctorum and disappeared. It was only then that they realised that Minakshi Herself had come and honoured Kumara Guruparar. Nilakanta Dikshithar who was Thirumalai Naicker’s Prime Minister has also made a sthōthra on Ambāḷ: ‘Ananda sagarasthvam’. He was the grandson of Appaiya Dikshithar who was actually an aspect of Paramasivā Himself. He was great in his devotion, qualities, conduct and scholastic ability. There is a story about the background to this sthōthram.

The Pândyan kings rendered a lot of service to Minakshi temple and had offered several jewels to Minakshi, Thirumalai Naicker continued this service. Under the supervision of Nilakanta Dikshithar the new mandapam was being constructed. The sculptor by name Sumanthira Āchāry sculpted a statue of Naicker to be installed in the new mandapam. When he was making the statue of the chief queen, a small piece above the knee got chipped off. However much he tried, he could not rectify the defect and it was clearly visible. The sculptor felt deeply that a defect had come in such a beautiful statue. He went to Dikshithar and cried.

Dikshithar thought deeply for sometime and then told him ‘Do not weep. It is Ambāḷ’s will that the statue that you have made should exactly conform to the original and therefore She has caused a small bit to be chipped off. The statue can be kept in the mandapam as it is.

The Queen had a mole in that place. This flashed in Dikshithar’s mind and that is why he told the sculptor like this. He understood that because, according to ‘Sāmudrikā Lakshanam’, ladies of noble blood should have a mole in that place the queen must be having a mole in that place.
The sculptor also kept the statue in the mandapam. Even today when we look at the statue of Thirumalai Naicker along with his seven queens we can see the defect in the statue of the Chief Queen.

Naicker came to see the progress of the work. He looked at the Queen’s statue and asked the sculptor why he had allowed the defect to remain.

The sculptor told Naicker ‘Dikshithar told me that it is correct that this defect should be in that place’. Naicker started having a doubt how Dikshithar could have known that the queen had a mole in that place. He became very angry and ordered the men to arrest Dikshithar and bring him.

When Naicker’s men went to arrest Dikshithar in his house, he was doing pūjā to Mīnākshi. When he saw that the royal servants had come to him at a wrong time by Ambāl’s grace he immediately understood the reason.

He pressed the burning camphor which he was showing as ārathi to Ambāl on his eyes as if he was keeping ice. Just as for Appar Swāmigal, the burning kiln was cool, by the grace of Mīnākshi the burning camphor was cool.

He came out of the house and told the royal servants ‘Whatever punishment the king wanted to give me I have given it to me myself without any trouble for the king. You can go and convey this to the king’.

When the servants informed the king of what had happened he felt very sorry that he had thought wrong of a great person. Immediately, he ran to Dikshithar’s house and sought his pardon for what he had done.

Dikshithar who was a man of noble qualities, told the king ‘Is it not just that you had a doubt? Is it not a doubt which anyone will have?’ and pardoned the king.
The king told Dikshithar ‘It is not big that you had pardoned me. My mind will never be at peace so long as you remain blind like this. I can regain peace only if you somehow get back your sight’.

It was at that stage that Dikshithar started singing ‘Ānanda Sāgarasthvam’. In a situation which was so poignant he floated on the Ananda Sāgaram of Ambāl’s compassion. In this sthōthrā, more than karmā, bhakti and jnānā, it is surrender that figures prominently. It will be like talking to Ambāl face to face. One will feel like repeating it again and again due to the words ‘Charānām prapadhyē Mīnākshi Viswajananīm jananīm mamaiva’ which occur. He says ‘the Mother of the Universe is also my mother. She is my only refuge and I surrender to Her’.

In this sthōthrā, which contains more than hundred slōkās, the first half deals with ‘Prapathi Dharma’ (surrender). In the second half, Dikshithar gives a complete description of Ambāl from head to foot. In this the sthōthrā is similar to Soundarya Lahari in which the first half deals with Śakttha principles and the second half deals with the description of Ambāl. It is at the beginning of the second half dealing with the description of Ambāl, the caption ‘Ānanda sāgaram’ occurs just as the title ‘Soundarya Lahari’ occurs in the second half.

In the sthōthrā, at one place, he says ‘Dhrashtāśmi kēna dhadhaham thu vilōchanēna? (even if you show your holy feet to me) where do I have the eyes to see them?’ This is an internal evidence for the anecdote mentioned above.

When Dikshithar finished singing this sthōthrā, Ambāl blessed him with eyesight. Mīnākshi who has that name because of Her eyes blessed Dikshithar with eyesight again.

But after this, Dikshithar resigned from the service of the king and went to Pālamadai on the banks of Thāmirabharāṇi, lived
there for sometime, took sanyās and attained siddhi. The place
where he lived has got the name ‘Nīlakanta Samudram’. It was
Mīnākshi’s blessing which was the Samudram, Ānanda Sāgaram,
experienced by Dikshīthar.

This is Mīnākshi’s greatness. Not only on great people like
Kumara Guruparar and Nīlakanta Dikshīthar but even on those
who spoke about Her in a derogatory manner, She had bestowed
Her blessings. With great compassion She had blessed a European
Collector. (Rose Peter). Lightning was about to strike the bungalow
in which the Collector was sleeping. Ambāl gave him a warning in
time to get out of the bungalow and saved him. He then became a
great devotee of Ambāl and offered to Her costly jewels, a stirrup
etc.

It is a bit disappointing if it is said that Mīnākshi who has
been shining with such glory from ancient times and who has that
name because of the beauty of Her eyes, is not referred to in
Sahasranīnānam and Soundarya Lahari which are like two eyes of
all sthōthrās.

But if we think about it deeply, it will be seen that although
Mīnākshi has not been mentioned directly, She has been
mentioned by implication. Because of this, it appears that Her
glory is greater. What is subtle has always greater value than what
is obvious.

If there is a very costly gem, will anyone keep it in a place
where everybody can see it? Will they not put it in a box within a
box and keep the box in the innermost room? In the same manner,
since Mīnākshi has been mentioned both in Sahasranīnāmam and
Soundarya Lahari in a secret manner, it gets greater merit.

Usually, we do not call highly respectable people by their
names. In Bhāgavatham also the name of Radha has been indirectly
suggested without mentioning it. Those who belong to the
Radha krishna cult consider Radha to be a step higher than Krishna. They would refer to Krishna having fallen at her feet etc. It is because the name of such a highly respected person should not be mentioned loudly, in Bhagavatham it has been mentioned indirectly*.

In the same manner, both in Sahasranamam and Soundarya Lahari, Minakshi's name has been mentioned in an indirect manner and this gives higher status to Minakshi.

Let us see where Lalitha Sahasrananamam makes a reference to Minakshi.

When describing Ambal, there is a name 'Vakthra Lakshmi parivah chalan Minapalochana'. 'Vakthra Lakshmi' means (Ambal's) brightness of face. It is like a big flood. 'Parivah' means flood. If the brightness of the face (thejas) flows like a flood, there should be fish in it! Where are the fish in this ocean of brightness?

The long eyes of Ambal are the fish. Lochanam means the eye (lokanam means seeing). Because it is seen, the world is 'lokam'. In Tamil also the word 'Par' stands both for seeing and the world. The English word 'look' has also been derived from 'lok'. The eye which is of the shape of the fish is 'Minapalochanam'. It is not only like fish in form but it also satisfies the requirement that in a flood there should be fish. Ambal who is the flood of beauty has such eyes. Instead of openly telling Minakshi, it has been indirectly said 'Minapalochana'.

Now let us see how it is suggested in Soundarya Lahari'. Here are the first two lines of the slokas which describe Ambal's eyes.

*Krishna who was playing with the Gopis suddenly disappeared. The Gopis who went in search of Him found marks of only one Gopi having gone with Krishna. She is Radha. Yet, instead of directly mentioning her name, it is said 'anaya araditho nünum' (Krishna is specially worshipped by her). Thus, Radha's name is indicated.
Why do the fish always swim inside the water instead of swimming on the surface of the water? Āchāryā speculates the reason for this. The fish saw Ambāl’s eyes which reach up to the ear. Ambāl keeps moving her eyes in all directions so that nothing in the Universe escapes Her sight. At that time, whenever the eye goes to one end, it would appear as if it is touching the ear. The fish then think that they are whispering some secret into Her ears. What is that secret? In respect of form, these fish are like those eyes. Just as those eyes are constantly moving in order to bless everything in the world, the fish also copy them and keep on moving constantly. Because of this, the fish develop a fear. The fear is that ‘Ambāl’s eyes may be trying to compete with them’. Supposing Ambāl listens to what the eyes say and begins to take action against the fish - this is the fear due to which the fish do not come to the surface but keep swimming inside the water.

Just as Duryoddhanā went hiding into water when he got defeated the fish which got defeated by Ambāl’s eyes go into the water.
Saparika means female fish. Paišunya means carrying tales. Chakitha means trembling with fear. If paišunya is understood as jealousy, then it would mean that the fish become jealous by seeing the eyes which touch the ears and also become afraid. The fish go into the water because they feel that if they try to fight with the beauty of Her eyes and the manner in which they keep moving, they will be defeated. There is a popular saying, ‘In the holy tank inside the Minākshi temple, there is no fish. This is because they feel ashamed before Her eyes and therefore they do not show themselves there’.

In the Soundarya Lahari slokā when Āchāryā compares Ambikai’s eyes to the fish and also that they are all hiding inside the water, Āchāryā hides Minākshi and refers to Her by indirect suggestion.

Now it is clear that both the sthōthrās on Dēvi refer to Minākshi and therefore there is no need to have any grievance on that account.

Apart from the similarity between the eyes and the fish in respect of the form and also constant movement, there is also something special in saying that Ambāl’s eyes are like fish.

The mammals namely, the cattle, human beings etc feed their young ones with milk. The birds do not give milk to their young ones. They lay eggs, incubate and then the little ones come out of the egg. They do not give milk but they bring worms and insects and keep them for the young ones to eat. What do the fish do? They lay eggs but do not incubate nor do they give milk to the young ones. They do not also bring other kinds of food and give it to the young ones. Whatever may be said by zoologists and biologists, there is a poetic tradition according to which the mother fish keeps on looking at the egg and the young one comes out of the egg. Then by its constant look only it is able to satisfy the
hunger of the young one. It is the belief that the mother fish takes care of the young one and nurtures it by its sight only.

Not only in form but also in the manner of protecting the children by Her mere sight, Ambāl’s eyes are like fish. Who are Ambāl’s children? All of us and everything in world. In a way it is said, even Īśwarā is Her child. Mīnākshi is the Janani who soaks all the creatures and beings in the nectar of Her look and redeems them. Just as the hunger of the young fish is satisfied by the look of the mother fish, our mind also becomes full by Her look.

Animēśhā is what is said in Soundarya Lahari about fish which means without closing the eyes (The time that is taken for the wink is ‘nimisham’ which has become minute just as Madurai has become Marudai). Mīnākshi also does not wink (does not close Her eyes even for a second). If She does it even for a second, Her children will miss the nectar of Her ‘Katāksham’ and therefore She is alert and keeps protecting the world.

There is another connection between Mīnākshi and the fish. The river Vaigai was previously called ‘Kruthamālā’ in Sanskrit. Bhagawān took the avatār of fish Mathsya-vathāram for the sake of Vaivasvatha Manu. Nīlakanta Dikṣīthar has referred to this in his ‘Sivalīrālīvatam’ and introduced an element of humour. ‘Mahā Vishnu took the avatār of fish and went in search of the Vedhās which were caught in the deluge (pralayam). But those Vedhās are themselves searching for your feet, Mīnākshi!’

Āvishya kinnam nigamān āśēshān
Amī na mīnām prathamam smarāmah
Āvishyamānām nigamaṁr asēshaih
Amba snumasthe vayamākshi mīnam

Madurai resounds with the sound of Vedhās. ‘In Vanchi, the capital of the Chēra kings and in Uraiyūr, the capital of the Chōla kings, people wake up on hearing the crowing of the cocks. But in
Madurai, the capital of the Pāndya kings, we wake up on hearing the Vedhā sabdham’ – This is said in a verse in Paripādal. (A work of the Sangam Age).

Ambāl has huge towers for Her. What is the tower? (Gopuram). It is the fruit of the tree of Sanāthana Dharmam. What is its root? It is the Vedhās. When it is such a tall fruit of a Gopuram, it means the root that is Vedhā has gone so deep in Madurai! Apart from being Nādha Swarūpini and Sangītha Swarūpini Ambāl shines there as Vedha Swarūpini. Wherever Minākshi’s nectar like Katāksham reaches there it becomes sweet. Is not nectar known for its sweetness? What does it mean when it is said that all the creatures and beings become ‘madhuram’? It only means they become full of love. Attaining perfection (Paripūrṇathvam) is madhuram for the living beings. Just as the ordinary unripe fruit becomes ripe and becomes sweet, we who are full of bad qualities, evolve and attain the state of perfection which is madhuram. Mināmbikai’s eyes give us that madhuram. They give this fullness even when we are in this world and then releases us from this world and samsārā and gives the supreme bliss of Moksham.

Mināmbikai blessed Muthuswāmi Dikshithar in this manner. On the day of Amavāsyā coinciding with Dipāvali, after performing pūjā to Ambāl, he kept singing on ‘Minākshi’ with deep involvement. Even when he was describing the form of Ambāl by singing the words ‘Maragatha chāye’ ‘Minalōchanī’ ‘Pāsamōsani’ etc Ambāl removed the grip of samsārā from him and took him to Her feet. Minākshi who is the presiding deity of music gave to Dikshithar the fruit of his Nādōpāsanā.

It is because Minākshi’s sweet look (Madhuram) which gives the beings the perfection is widely spread in Madurai, the place itself is called by that name.
If it is said that Her katāksham spreads in waves, then it is the ocean of katāksham. Earlier, we saw that just as there are the fish in ocean, the eyes which are like fish are in the ocean of Ambikai’s bright face. Now we see that within these eyes also there is an ocean which is the ocean of compassion.

It is not as if She is somewhere and that Her katāksham only falls on us. By Her katāksham, we feel as if we are in Her lap just as a child is in the lap of the mother, who sings the lullaby. Just as the very look of the mother fish becomes its touch and its milk Minākshi’s katāksham embraces us and feeds us with the milk of jnānā. The citizens of Madurai who are close to Her are really fortunate.

When you all feel so happy in having what you call my ‘dharṣan’ how much more happy will I not feel by having the dharsan of all of you who are living so close to Minākshi*. This mutual love between us is only a drop of the bliss that Mināmbikai rains. Let us pray at Her Lotus Feet that the nectar of Her katāksham flows all over and to all the beings which are under Her care and great joy is experienced everywhere.

Madhurāpuri Nāyikē namastē
Madhuralābha sukhābhirāma hastē
Malayadhwaja Pāṇḍya-rāja kanyē
Mayi Minākshi krupām vidhēhi dhanye

‘Hey, Lordess of Madhurapuri whose hand is holding a parrot that makes beautiful noise!. Hey, daughter of Malayadhwaja Pāṇḍya! Obeisance to you. Bestow your grace on me’.

Let all of us, Her children, sing Minākshi’s praise like this and let us without differences and enmity live happily with unity in thought and deed.

* This is the Periyavā’s address to the citizens of Madurai when he visited Madurai in April 1961).
A TOWER OF STRENGTH TO SĪTĀ AND RĀMĀ

Sri Rāmachandramūrthi is the strength of those who are weak. 'Nirbhal kē bhal Ram.' Who else but Rāmā can come at the time of a danger and bear it and give strength? We say 'Apathām apaharthāram'. 'Agratha prushta thachchaiva pārsva ēva Mahā bhalau'. - This means 'who is the one who will be in front of us, behind us and on our sides and protect us all the time?' That is only Rāmā. He is ready with the bow and the arrow fixed in it to come to our rescue even if there is a little danger to us. Lakṣmānā who never leaves him will also be with him. 'Ākarnā pūrṇa thanvānau rakṣethām Rāmā Lakṣmānau'. But this noblest among men who has the name Veeraraghavan and Vijayaraghavan has shown that he could achieve the objectives of his avatar only by Ānjanēyā’s support.

Rāmā acted excellently as a man. He acted as if he was not aware where Rāvanā had kept Sītā. He was in indescribable sorrow. It was Ānjanēyaswāmi who at such a time found out the place where Sītā had been kept and gave strength, zeal and enthusiasm to Rāmā.

The sorrow that Sītā had felt by being away from Rāmā was a million times more than what Rama had felt by being separated from Sītā. Rāmā had only the suffering that his beloved wife was not by his side and that she would be undergoing difficulties by being away from him. But for her there was the additional suffering because she had been kept under arrest by the lustful Rākshasā. A woman is called 'abala'. Mahālakṣmī, the Mother of the Universe, came as Sītā but underwent so much suffering in Asōka Vanam, worse than an ordinary abalā and she even decided to give up her life by hanging. It was Ānjanēyā who gave her hope, strength and zeal at such a time.
The extraordinary acts performed by Anjaneyā are countless. But if any one action is to be highlighted as the height of all he did, it was the hope and enthusiasm which he gave to Sītā when she was totally dejected. We talk about it in words of praise as ‘Jānakī sōka nāśanam’:

Anjanānandhanam vīram Jānakī sōka nāśanam

He was born to one Anjanā, the monkey woman, and gave her joy. But that was not something big. A mother will always feel that the son gives her joy even if he is bad. That is why the son is called ‘nandhanan’. Anjaneyā is Anjanā Nandhanan like ‘Daśaratha Nandhanan’ and ‘Dēvaki Nandhanan’. It was not only for his mother but to the one who is the ideal to all the mothers who are there now and who will come in the future, he removed the great sorrow. That is why we continue to pay our obeisance to him.

The fire of sorrow which was burning inside Sītā was drying up her life. It is said that Rāvanā set fire to Hanuman’s tail. Really speaking, was it that fire which burnt Lanka? Not at all. Hanuman added another fire within that fire and with that he burnt Lankā. That fire was the fire of Sītā’s sorrow (sōkāgni).

Yah sōka vanhim Janakāthmajāyāh
Ādhāya thēnaiva dhadhāha Lankām

Janakāthmaja means Jānaki. ‘Sōka vanhim’ means the fire which is in the form of sorrow. The place where she was kept is Asōka vanam. What was inside her was sōka vanhim. Thēnaiva means ‘because of that’. ‘Lankām dhadhāha’ – He burnt Lanka with that sōkāgni.

We only know that ‘Although Anjaneyā’s tail was set fire to, it did not scorch him. This was because of Sītā’s blessings’. But the great power it got to burn all the places was the sorrow of Sītā which Rāvanā considered as fire and lighted Hanumān’s tail. Why did he get the idea that he should set fire to Hanumān’s tail? At the
time when he got this idea, the stage was that if Sītā’s sōkāgni had continued and she continued to suffer on that account, the world could not bear it. That had to be brought out and made a spent force in some way. Someone had to bear it and let it out. Who could bear it? Nobody other than Ānjanēyā Swāmi could bear it. That is why when Rāvanā wanted to punish him, the thought came to him that the tail should be set fire to. This was according to Īswarā’s will. Thus Ānjanēyā took out Sītā’s sōkāgni and with that he burnt Lankā. He also ensured that it did not affect those who were peaceful and good but affected only those who were bad.

It was because that fire was Sītā’s sorrow it did not burn Ānjanēyā who was the beloved of her husband and he felt cool.

The great help Ānjanēyā rendered to Rāmā was to have found out the place where Sītā had been kept and given the information to Rāmā. The great help he did Sītā was to give the assurance that Rāmā would definitely come and rescue her. He gave this assurance at a time when she was preparing to give up her life. Thus, he gave strength to them at a time when it looked that both of them had lost their strength.

But how did he achieve both these objectives?

He could do it only with the strength of Rāma nāmā.

He could find out Sītā only because he could cross the ocean. How did he cross it? He kept on repeating ‘Rāma Rāma’ and with the power of that nāmā, he crossed the ocean.

When Sītā was about to give up her life, how did he save her? Supposing he had said ‘Mother, do not give up your life’ and had fallen at her feet, he could not have saved her because Sītā would have thought that that was also a deceitful act of Rāvanā. After the incident of Marīchā and the deer, to her everything looked like the magic of the rākshasās. Ānjanēyā understood Her feeling (because he was a pure brahmachāri with a mind as clear as spatikam, he could read in a flash the other person’s mind). What did he do at
that stage? He started repeating ‘Rāma Rāma’ and began singing the story of Rāmāyana slowly. The moment the name Rāmā is mentioned, particularly by Anjanēyasvāmi, will not any kind of māyā disappear? He put out to some extent her sōkāgni by the nectar of Rāma nāmam. She blessed him who gave her this nectar that the fire should be cool to him.

Rāmā and Sītā talked as if they were saved only by Ānjanēyā. Rāmā always used to say that he was deeply indebted to Ānjanēyā for having saved Sītā’s life and Lakshmāna’s life by bringing Sanjīvi. Sītā also was constantly thinking ‘in what manner can I return this great help?’

Let us see what both of them did:

When Rāmā’s coronation was celebrated in Ayōdhyā, he gave gifts to several people and he gave a pearl garland to Sītā. She took it out, kept it in her hand, looked around at all those gathered there and had a meaningful look at Rāmā. They were a couple who were fully united in their thought. They made a plan to honour Ānjanēyā in that big gathering.

By the manner in which Sītā looked at Rāmā she had asked Rāmā to whom the pearl garland should be given. Immediately, Rāmā said ‘Give it to the one who is perfect in courage with high intellect and humility. Immediately after this citation by Rāmā without naming the person, Sītā gave the garland to Ānjanēyā.

There is nothing to equal the honour that both of them together did at the time of coronation.

The pearl garland on the huge body of Ānjanēyā looked like the clouds which are settled down on a big mountain during moonshine.

Even when Rāmachandramūrthi saw Ānjanēyā for the first time in Risyamukha Parvatham, he concluded that rest of Rāmāyana had to be conducted only by Ānjanēyā. At that time, Sugrīva had lost his wife and was suffering on account of his
brother Vāli in spite of his having Hanumān’s support. He sent Hanumān as an emissary to Rāma to find out who he was, whether he was good and powerful so that he could take his help in defeating Vāli. Even when Rāma met Ānjaneyā, under such circumstances, he knew that it was Hanumān who was going to be his own support. (Has he not as Īswara determined the manner in which the drama of Rāmāyaṇa should be acted).

Therefore, even when Ānjaneyā merely made enquiries of him and Lakshmanā, Rāma judged his greatness and spoke to Lakshmanā in praise of him, that he is a great scholar and a fine speaker. He says ‘Do not think that he can only speak well, he is possessed of all strength. If this world is a chariot, he is its axis. Even if you do not know it now, you will realize it one day’.

That was the time when due to the curse of a rishi, Hanumān had forgotten his own strength. That is why despite having his support, Sugrīva lost his kingdom and wife. Rāma knew ‘very soon Jambavān would be reminding him of his strength and remove the rishi’s curse. After that, he was going to cross the ocean, burn Lankā and do great acts’. He tells Lakshmanā ‘you will know later that he can conduct the whole world by his glory’.

Rāmāyaṇa itself is a world – a world with seven kandams. It was a time when this chariot of Rāmāyaṇa was about to stop – Sitā was lost and Rāma did not know where she was. At that time when Rāma saw Ānjaneyā, he made him the axis of the chariot. Immediately the chariot started moving. Sugrīva who was waiting for a long time to fight Vāli prepared for the fight. Rāma killing Vāli, the monkeys going in search of Sitā and finding Her out, constructing the Sethu, the war between Rāma and Rāvanā and then the coronation. In all these, Hanumān had the major role.

Till then, that is till half of Rāmāyaṇa was over, nobody knew him. He came only in Kishkindhā Kāṇḍam. Immediately, he became more important than the hero. The next kāṇḍam, namely,
Sundara *kāndam* is entirely devoted to his achievements. In *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *kāndam* which is read as Pārāyanā for achieving anything is only Sundara kāndam and not the remaining six. As soon as *Rāma* saw him he told him ‘you move the *Rāmāyaṇa* chariot from now on’. By repeating his name before *Sītā* through Ānjanēyā, he saved *Sītā*. He made Ānjanēyā cross the ocean by his name. But when he went to *Lanka* he constructed the *Sethu* with considerable difficulty and walked over it.

Ānjanēyā thought that whatever he did was all due to what *Rāma* gave as alms and also the blessings of *Sītā*. The world praises him saying that he had crossed the ocean and burnt *Lanka*. ‘Really, is it not His name – His *Thāraka nāmā* which enabled all this being done? Was it not Her sorrow that burnt *Lanka*?’ – this is what Ānjanēyā thought. He was grateful that *Rāma* and *Sītā* had utilised his services also for their work and he thought that he was highly indebted to them and he could not discharge that debt.

But among us it is competition for accepting gratitude. ‘We have helped so many people; nobody has returned anything to us’ we think. But *Sītā* and *Rāma* felt that they got their strength from Ānjanēyā while Ānjanēyā thought that he got the strength from them and both of them felt that they were not in a position to return the help in any manner.

This is a great lesson to us in *Rāmāyaṇa*.

Ānjanēyā who possessed such great strength thought that Rāmachandramūrthi was responsible for that strength and his humility was as much as his own strength. Usually, strength and humility are opposed to each other. But he had the maximum of both these qualities. We have neither strength nor humility. May Hanumān bless us with great strength to achieve good tasks like him without, at the same time, becoming proud due to that strength but feel that it is all *Rāma*’s prasād and with the mind to offer it to *Rāma*.

**MANGALAM**

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