



ĪSVARA & RELIGIOUS DISCIPLINE

PŪRNA VIDYĀ VEDIC HERITAGE TEACHING PROGRAMME

HOMework

Lessons from Swami Dayananda's Life

- Who is Swami Dayananda Saraswathi?
- What did you learn from the way he lived his life?
- What are some of his important contributions to Hindu Dharma?
- What are some of his important contributions to society?

**FESTIVAL:
NAVA RATRI**



Nava Ratri

- Why do we invoke the blessings of Goddess Durga first?
 - What does Goddess Durga represent?
- Why do we invoke the blessings of Goddess Lakshmi next?
 - What does Goddess Lakshmi represent?
 - What are the types of “wealth”?
- Why do we next invoke Goddess Saraswathi?
 - What does Goddess Saraswathi represent?

INTRODUCTION TO RELIGIOUS DISCIPLINE



Free Will

- What is “free will”?
- Are animals and plants endowed with free will?
- Are human beings endowed with free will?
- What does it mean to “exercise” one’s free will? How can one exercise one’s free will?

What is Religious Discipline?

- What is discipline?
- What is the difference between discipline and “religious discipline”?
- How does will power come into the equation?
- How do choices come into the picture?
- What is the role of dharma?

Religious Discipline

- How can religious discipline help an individual?
- Will it help the individual physically?
- Will it help the individual mentally?
- Will it help the individual spiritually?
- Will it give the individual “inner strength”?
 - What is this “inner strength” anyway?

Vrata

- Vrata is a vow undertaken as a religious discipline with dharma as the basis for the decision to take the vow
- It helps inner growth of the person
- It helps build character because the person makes use of his/her free will and deliberately chooses a difficult path (sréyas) compared to an easy path (préyas)

Bhisma's Vrata or Vow

- Many thousand years ago, there lived a brilliant and great king called Śantanu
- One day while returning from a hunting trip, saw the Maiden Ganga and fell in love with her and asked her to marry him.
- She agreed on the condition that he would not obstruct her from what she liked to do. Ganga gave birth to seven sons and cast them into the river after they were born; King Śantanu was puzzled and sad.
- He did not object till this happened the 8th time.
- Ganga said that she would now leave King Śantanu and take the boy with her.
- Many years later, King Śantanu returned to the banks of the river and there Ganga entrusted him with their son - now a handsome young man whom she had named Devarata.

Bhisma's Vrata or Vow

- King Śantanu went hunting again on the banks of the Yamuna River and fell in love with a maiden - Satyawati; Satyawati's father's condition for marriage was that Devarata and his heirs would not be allowed to ascend the throne
- Devarata's devotion to his father was so great that he then took the oath that he would never marry and would abdicate the throne; because of this "terrible" oath he came to be known as Bhisma

Bhishma Character Traits

- **Devotion to father:** Renounced being Crown Prince & took oath of celibacy to make sure that he did not have heirs who would contend for the throne
- **Loyalty:** He was a loyal subject to King Dhritarashtra; he was commander-in-chief of the Kaurava army – he saw this as his dharma and followed it
- **Self-control:** Bhishma showed this throughout his life; he did not seek the kingdom for himself even though he was a skilled warrior; he counseled against the war; Even though he was taunted by Duryodhana at the beginning of the war – when Duryodhana slyly commented on the strength of the Pandava Army in front of Drona and Bhishma, Bhishma did not react (self-control) and remained steadfast in his duty

Vows in our Itihāsa

- Lord Rama's vow
- Draupadi's vow
- Gandhiji's vow
 - Did you know that October 2nd is Gandhi Jayanti?

Give me an example!

- Have you ever taken a vow?
- Did you fulfill it successfully?
- How did it make you feel?
- Taking a vow and fulfilling it is an example of an important value – **firmness in resolve!**
- The Gita talks about this in Chapter 13



Homework

- Make a resolution and keep track of how you go about fulfilling that resolution
- Practice meditation for 5 minutes a day:
Chant “**Om! Namaḥ Śivāya...**” 11 times (chant slowly with your eyes gently closed)
Then silently repeat the mantra with your eyes closed for a few minutes and watch your mind!

Concluding Śānti Mantra

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदम् पूर्णात् पूर्णमुदच्यते
पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

- Om pūrṇamadah pūrṇamidam pūrṇātpurṇamudacyate
pūrṇasya pūrṇamādāya pūrṇamevāvaśiṣyate ॥
Om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ ॥

That is fullness, this is fullness. From that fullness this fullness came. From that fullness (when) this fullness (is) removed, what remains is fullness. Om peace, peace, peace