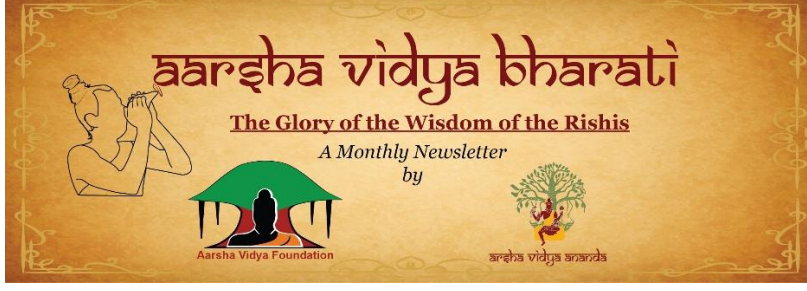

Aarsha Vidya Bharati - Sep 2022

Bhadrapada - Ashvina 2079

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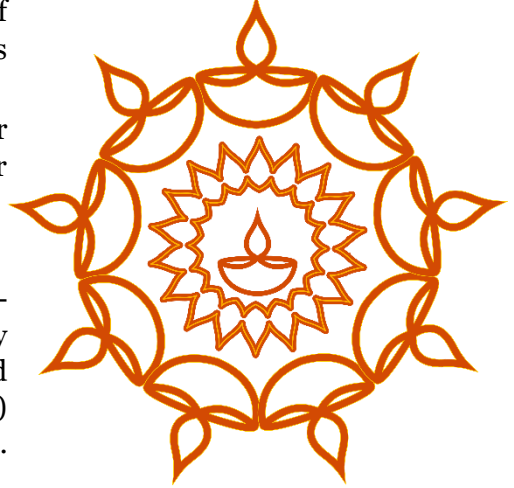


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Glory of Gṛhastāśrama

By Mangala & Panchapakesan, Mumbai

Sri Lal Bahadur Sastri during the height of the Indo Pak war of 1965, proclaimed 'Jai Jawan Jai Kisan!'. No army marches on an empty stomach. Harry Truman during World War II said, 'When everyone wants to march, you still need someone to sit on the pavement and clap'. To maintain the army you need others also. Similarly, of the four Āśrama-s, the one which sustains the *Brahmacarya*, *Vānaprastha* and *Sannyāsa* Āśrama is the *Gṛhastāśrama*, without which the other three are not possible. This is the anchor for the other three.



Manu glorifies the *Gṛhastāśrama*, when he declares - 'Because men of the three (other) orders are daily supported by the householder with (gifts of sacred knowledge and) food, therefore (the order of) householders is the most excellent order.'

यथा वायुं समाश्रित्य वर्तन्ते सर्व जन्तवः ।

तथा गृहस्थम् आश्रित्य वर्तन्ते सर्व आश्रमः ॥ ३॥ ७७

yathā vayuṃ samāśritya vartante sarva jantavaḥ |

tathā gṛhastham āśritya vartante sarva āśramaḥ ||3||77

'As all living creatures subsist by receiving support from air, even so (the members of) all orders subsist by receiving support from the householder'.

यस्मात् त्रयो अप्याश्रमिणो ज्ञानेन च अन्वहम् ।

गृहस्तेन एव धार्यन्ते तस्मात् ज्येष्ठाश्रमो गृही ॥ ३ ॥ ७६

yasmāt trayo apyāśrmiṇo jñānena ca anvaham

gṛhastena eva dhāryante tasmāt jyeṣṭhāśramo grhī ||3||76

In the *Bhagavad Gītā*, *Bhagavān* says ‘All beings are born out of food. Food is born out of rain. Rain comes out of *Yajña*. *Yajña* is born out of Karma’.

अन्नाद्भवन्ति भूतानि पर्जन्यादन्नसम्भवः ।

यज्ञाद्भवन्ति पर्जन्यो यज्ञः कर्मसमुद्भवः ॥ ३॥ १४॥

annādbhavanti bhūtāni parjanyaḍannasambhavaḥ

yajñādbhavanti parjanyaḥ yajñāḥ karmasamudbhavaḥ ॥3॥14

To do Karma throughout one’s life, you have to be a householder, one in *Gr̥hastāśrama*.

Sri *Ādi Śankara*, who alludes to *Sannyāsa* lifestyle often, glorifies Lord Shiva as the Primal Householder in *Śivānandalahari* Verse 56: Line 2

सत्याय - आदिकुटुंबिने मुनिमनः प्रत्यक्ष - चिन्मूर्तये ।

satyāya - ādikuṭumbine munimanaḥ pratyakṣa – cinmūrtaye

But the question will naturally come, what about the Prime *Puruṣārtha*, Liberation *Mokṣa* for which human birth is the most suitable? It is to be noted that *Āśrama* is not a limitation for *Jñānam*. Being householders, many were *jñāni*-s. And Lord Krishna gives examples of such people in *Bhagavad Gītā* Verse 3.20, referring to people like Janaka and Ashvapati, though kings and doing duties, but at the same time being liberated.

A Subhashitam says:

कृष्णो भोगी शुकः त्यागी नृपौजनकराधौ ।

वशिष्टः कर्मकर्ता च पंचै ज्ञानिनः स्मृता ॥

kr̥ṣṇo bhogī śukaḥ tyāgī nr̥paujanakarādhau ।

vaśiṣṭhaḥ karmakartā ca pañcai jñāninaḥ smṛtā ॥

During the Republic Day parade, the one piece of presentation we all admire is the Army band, the one done by the Army men. They are from the Army, ready to fight and lay down their life for the cause of the nation, but they are also musicians. Their role as army men does not limit their musical skills, like a householder can also pursue knowledge and be a *Jñāni*.

But being a householder takes a large part of one’s time to pursue knowledge, so how long one should be a householder. The time is short, work (to be done) (vast like an) ocean, body is withering, when are (you) leaving them and going to forest?

कालं कणिकः कर्म कंचगलः ।

कायं कपूयः कमण्डलं कदा ॥

kālam kaṇikaḥ karma kaṁcagalaḥ ।

kāyam kapūyaḥ kamaṇḍalam kadā ॥

Manu stresses, 'When a householder sees his (skin) wrinkled, and (his hair) white, and the sons of his sons, then he may resort to the forest.'

गृहस्थस् तु यथा पश्येद् वली - पलितम् आत्मनः ।

अपत्यस्य - एव - च - अपत्यं तदा - अरण्यं आश्रयेत् ॥ १। २ ॥

gr̥hasthas tu yathā paśyed valī - palitam ātmanaḥ /

apatyasya - eva - ca- apatyaṁ tadā - aranyaṁ āśrayet |1| 2||

Thus, *Gr̥hastāśrama* is a sustainer of the other three *Āśrama*-s, and it is to be used for sustaining Dharma through begetting children and through them sustain Dharma.

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