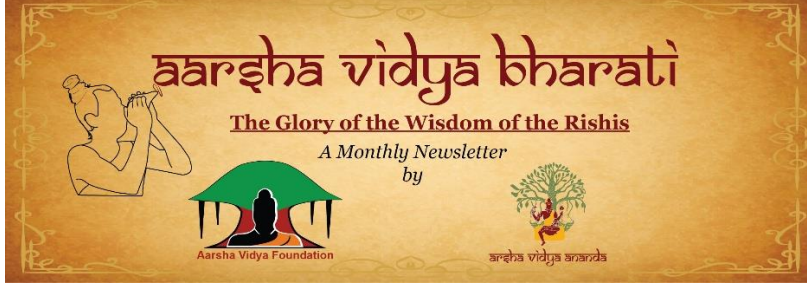

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A monthly newsletter that will bring you more happiness, more wisdom and more freedom

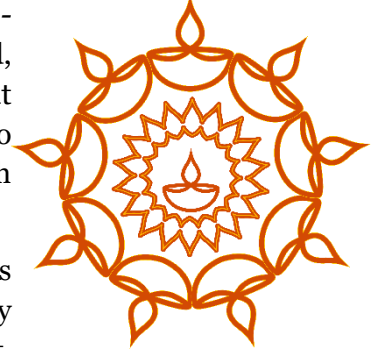


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Glory of Gr̥hasthāśrama

By Purnima Bhat, Mumbai

Gr̥hasthāśrama is the foundation of all the *Āśrama-s* and is essential for existence and continuation of society as it supports all the three *Āśrama-s* (*Brahmacarya*, *Vānaprastha* and *Sannyāsa*). Being married, the *Gr̥hastha-s* not only pursue a *Dhārmika* life, but keeping *dharma* as the foundation of life, also pursue *Artha* and *Kāma* and produce children, food and wealth and sustain society.



The *gr̥hastha-s* support gurukulam-s by providing food, clothes and shelter and bear the cost of fees as the *Brahmacāri-s* only concentrate on learning and need not follow any *Artha* pursuit. The system of Gurukulam still continues in certain parts of India.

The *Vānaprasthi-s* also do not earn any livelihood and are dependent on the society falling back on earlier savings and their children's contribution.

The *Sannyāsi-s* and *Sādhu-s* travel from one place to another, spreading knowledge of our ancient Hindu texts. As religious and cultural ambassadors of our civilization, they share the knowledge without expecting anything in return. *Gr̥hastha-s* invite them, serve them with food and clothes, *annadānam* being considered as the highest *dānam* in our culture.

The *gr̥hastha-s* produce children and thereby support the function of Brahma-ji who is entrusted the work of *Śṛiṣṭi* - creation.

In Chapter 3, Sloka 10 of *Bhagavad Gītā*, *Bhagavān* says,

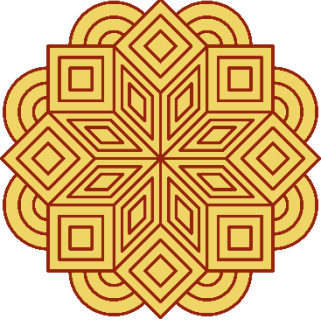
सहयज्ञाः प्रजाः सृष्टा पुरोवाचप्रजापतिः ।

अनेन प्रसविष्यध्वमेष वोऽस्त्विष्टकामधुक् ॥

sahyajñāḥ prajāḥ sṛṣṭā purovācaprajāpatiḥ ।

anena prasaviṣyadhvameṣa vo 'stviṣṭkāmadhuk ॥

“In the beginning, the creator, having created human beings along with *yajña*, said: By this (*yajña*) shall you multiply. May this (*yajña*) be a wish fulfilling cow for you.”



Gṛhasthāśrama is thus meant for producing children and partly fulfilling *pitṛ ṛṇam* (sacred debt to ancestors). Not for fulfilling ‘*kāmana-s*’ or sensory pleasures, but for sustaining the *ṛṥhvī* by producing physically and mentally healthy ‘*prajā*’ which can support the entire *ṛṥhvī* to keep it healthy, wealthy and peaceful. In this way the *ṛṇam* towards devatas (*Deva yajña*) is fulfilled.

The *gṛhastha-s* daily routine used to start with prayers with reverence to five elements i.e. ***Pañcamahābhūtaḥ***. Reverence shown to *Sūrya* devata by offering ‘*arghya*’, reverence to mother river Ganga by chanting prayers while taking a bath, and mother *Ṛṥhvī*. Thus, the ***Brahma Yajña*** was performed as Hinduism sees everything as *Brahmamaya*.

The *gṛhastha-s* used to keep aside some share of food for cows, dogs, ants, *atithi-s*, thereby doing ***Bhūta Yajña***. The *atithi* (guest who appears without prior information) was considered akin to God and was served food, clothes and *dakṣiṇā* and his blessings were obtained for the entire family as *āśirvādaḥ* of *atithi-s*, *sādhu-s* and saints.

The *Sāstra-s* say, by ‘*pitṛ tarpaṇa*’, that is by doing ‘*antyeṣṭi saṃskāraḥ*’ and last rites of the parents, the son makes onward journey of his parents successful, thereby he does ***Pitṛ Yajña***. Even the annual *śrāddha* is performed by *gṛhasthi-s* and *pitṛ ṛṇam* is fulfilled so that the *jīva* would have onward *gati*.

Dhanyo Gṛhasthāśramaḥ

I am a *gṛhastha* having completed 43 years of married life. *Gṛhasthāśrama* is more challenging as you not only serve yourself and your family but also serve the society as a whole and thereby accomplish *Dharma* towards humankind (***Manuṣya Yajña***) by providing and contributing in whatever possible way. The human birth becomes successful only when you are a contributor rather than only a taker.

As far as my personal life is concerned, I have always upheld *Dharma* and imbibed universal values in my life, and therefore, I contribute at least 10% of my income towards *dānam* in the form of *annadānam*, *dānam* to *gauśālā-s*, Orphanages and religious institutions.

We could organize ***Jñāna Yajña*** of ‘*Srīmad Bhagavat Kathā*’ twice, for *sadgati* of my parents’ *pitṛ-s* as well as *pitṛ-s* of in-laws (as prescribed in our *Purāṇa-s*) and gave *dānam* of all kinds, most important being spread of knowledge (*Jñānam*) as the word *Jñāna Yajña* itself means *yajña* of knowledge and not the *yajña* where oblations are offered. It was because I could earn during *gṛhasthāśrama* I could do so, as Lakshmi has to be spent for good cause. It is only in *gṛhasthāśrama* that one can be a contributor and therefore it is said "*Dhanyo Gṛhasthāśramaḥ*".



There is a sloka in praise of glory of *gṛhasthāśrama* which reads as follows:

सानन्दं सदनं सुताश्च सुधियः कान्ता मनोहारिणी,
सन्मित्रं सुधनं स्वयोषिति रतिः सेवारताः सेवकाः।

आतिथ्यं सुर पूजनं प्रतिदिनं मिष्ठान्नपानं गृहे,
साधोः संग उपासना च सततं धन्यो गृहस्थाश्रमः ॥

*sānandam sadanam sutāśca sudhiyaḥ kāntā manohāriṇī,
sanmitram sudhanam svayoṣiti ratiḥ sevāratāḥ sevakāḥ |
ātithyam sura pūjanam pratidinam miṣṭhānnapānam gr̥he,
sādhoḥ saṅga upāsana ca satatam dhanyo gr̥hasthāśramaḥ ||*

Where everybody in the house is happy, sons are wise, wife speaks sweetly, friends are good, there is wealth, there is loving relationship between husband and wife, servants are obedient, guests are worshipped like God, everyday delicious food is prepared in the house, saints and *sādhu-s* have *satsanga*, such *gr̥hasthāśrama* is ever blessed.

Last but very important point, because Sri Devaki and Vasudeva were in *gr̥hasthāśrama*, *Īśvara* took *avatāra* as Lord Krishna and this 'Jagat' got *Srīmad Bhagavad Gīta* which is a valuable treasure not only for Bharat but the world at large, as the values prescribed in the *Bhagavad Gīta* are universal values teaching the vision and way of life for all.