

श्री सनातन धर्म सभा – दक्षिण आफ्रिका

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ADHIKA MĀSA



A. INTRODUCTION

The plethora of scriptures in Sanātana Dharma extensively deals with the concept of bhakti. In the Rāmacaratamānasa, Gosvami Tulasīdāsa advocates ananya bhakti, which is undivided devotion. For Tulasīdāsa, devotion must be intense and selfless. In the Āraṇyakāṇḍa of Rāmacaratamānasa Tulasīdāsa has taught us the nine forms of bhakti. In the Nārada Bhakti Darśana, the sage Nārada explains *tat sukha sukhivam*– meaning desire the happiness of the beloved alone. A disciple of Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Rūpa Gosvami, said

भुक्ति मुक्ति स्प्रिहा यावत् पिशाची हृदी वर्तते तावत् भक्ति सुखस्यात्र कथमभ्युदयो भवेत्

bhukti mukti sprihā yāvat piśācī hṛdī vartate. tāvat bhakti sukhasyātra
kathamabhyudayo bhavet

This means, “So long as the two witches in the form of *bhukti and mukti* reside in the heart of an individual soul, the Supreme Goddess of Devotion cannot manifest herself.” Bhukti refers to material or worldly pleasures, and mukti refers to liberation.

The scriptures also talk about various kinds of bhakti. Two that are relevant for our topic (ADHIKA MĀSA) are sakāma bhakti and niṣkāma bhakti. In the Rāmacaratamānasa, it says

जातै कछुं निज स्वार्थ होइ तापर ममता करे सब कोइ सुर नर मुनि सब की यह रीती स्वार्थ लगाएं कर हे
प्रीती

jātai kachuṁ nija svārtha hoi tāpara mamatā kare saba koi sura nara muni saba kī
yaha rīti svārtha lagāem kara he prīti

This means we are inherently attached to those people or things where our self-interest is fulfilled. Niṣkāma bhakti means sacrificing this happiness for that of the Guru and God.

Sakāma bhakti means offering worship to Bhagavāna so that our various desires may be fulfilled. However, we should not confine ourselves to sakāma bhakti only. Bhagavāna Shri Krishna warns in the Bhagavada Gītā:

यामिमां पुष्पितां वाचं प्रवदन्त्यविपस्चितः । वेदवादरताः पार्थ नान्यदस्तीति वादिनः ॥

कामात्मानः स्वर्गपरा जन्मकर्मफलप्रदाम् । क्रियाविशेषबहुलां भोगैश्वर्यगैतिं प्रति ॥

भोगैश्वर्यप्रसक्तानां तयापहृतचेतसाम् । व्यवसायात्मिका बुद्धिः समाधौ न विधीयते ॥

yāmimāṃ puṣpitāṃ vācaṃ pravadantya vipascitaḥ | vedavādaratāḥ pārtha nānyadastīti vādinaḥ ||

kāmātmānaḥ svargaparā janmakarmaphalapradām | kriyāviśeṣabahulāṃ bhogaiśvaryagaitim prati ||

bhogaiśvaryaprasaktānāṃ tayāpahṛtacetasām | vyavasāyātmikā buddhiḥ samādhau na vidhīyate ||

The unwise utter flowery speech, rejoicing in the letter of the Vedas O Partha, saying, “There is nothing else than this”. Obsessed with desires, with heaven as the ultimate goal of birth and action (they prescribe) many specific rites for the attainment of pleasure and power. Those attached to pleasure and power, whose minds are drawn away by that (flowery speech), have no determined intellect fixed in samādhī (God-consciousness).

While sakāma bhakti is acceptable, we must cultivate niṣkāma bhakti too. The Bhagavada Gītā informs us that the devotees who approach Bhagavāna with sakāma bhakti (for relief from stress or for accumulating wealth) have to spend several lifetimes purifying themselves of their material desires before they reach the level of niṣkāma bhakti. The Bhagavada Gītā teaches us to make spiritual advancement. We must move from sakāma bhakti to niṣkāma bhakti. In the light of the ananya bhakti referred to earlier, niṣkāma bhakti is very important. Niṣkāma bhakti means abandoning all selfish desires and becoming completely selfless.

When we do poojas such as Satyanārāyaṇ Kathā, Durgā Saptasatī, Gṛha Praveśa (entry into a new house), Upanayaṇa Saṁskāra, Vāhana Pūjā (car prayer) and Vivāha Saṁskāra (wedding), a saṅkalpa or resolution is read. The saṅkalpa includes the fulfilment of material desires as well as the attainment of liberation. With its resolution or saṅkalpa for material desires, these poojas can potentially make us “power-drunk”. It may also influence us to obsess over karma kaand rituals. Poojas, with its saṅkalpa, falls into the category of sakāma bhakti. Engagement in such

sakāma bhakti poojas and rituals forces us to emphasise material satisfaction too much. The ideal time to practice niṣkāma bhakti is during Adhika Māsa.

B. WHAT IS ADHIKA MĀSA?



Adhika means “extra,” and Māsa means “month”. The Adhika Māsa is referred to as Mala Māsa and Puroṣottama Māsa. It is named Mala Māsa because this month is, as it were, the dirt or refuse of time. Adhika Māsa is said to be the month of Viṣṇu. Each month in the Hindu calendar has a particular deity attached to it. Since Adhika Māsa is the 13th month in the year and there was no deity to assign, Lord Viṣṇu decided to attach himself to this month. This is why the 13th month is also called Puroṣottama Māsa (Vishnu being called Puroṣottama). Adhika Māsa is a sacred month. One may not generalise that Adhika Māsa is inauspicious. When referred to as Mala Māsa, it is considered inauspicious for certain karma kaand rituals. When referred to as Puroṣottama Māsa, it becomes auspicious, albeit for niṣkāma acts. While there are certain restrictions during this month in terms of poojas, it is mostly a month dedicated to Lord Viṣṇu.

Prof Pandurang Vaman Kane (1974:662) informs us that Hindus have followed the lunisolar calendar since ancient times. There is, however, a difference between a solar and lunar year. The solar year is made up of 365 days and about 6 hours, while the lunar year is made up of 354 days. Thus, both the solar and lunar years have gaps of 11 days, 1 hour, 12 minutes, and 48 seconds (Shastri, 2001:2). The followers of Hindu Dharma resorted to the device of Adhika Māsa, or extra lunar month or intercalary month to deal with the gap between the solar and lunar year.

The moon takes about 27.3 days to make one complete orbit around the earth. The earth orbits around the sun once every 365.2422 days (= earth's orbital speed of 29.79 km per second). The earth and the moon in 27.3 days, have moved as a system about 1/12 of the way around the sun. This means that from one full moon to the next full moon, the moon must travel 2.2 extra days before it appears again as a full moon due to the curve of the earth's orbit around the sun. Ultimately, this creates a variance of 10.87 days a year between lunar and solar years. The additional month is added after every 32.5 months on average to compensate for this difference. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adhik_Maas)

The gap between solar and lunar year is dealt with by adding a 13th month. However, this 13th month, referred to by names such as Adhika Māsa, Mala Māsa, Saṁsarpa, Am̐haspati or Puroṣottama Māsa, occurs every 2 years, 8 months, 16 days and 96 minutes (Vasishta Siddhaanta and Jyotish Sastrasopana). Astrologically, Adhika Māsa is a lunar month in which no *sūrya saṅkranti* takes place. *Sūrya Saṅkranti* is the entry of the sun into a zodiac sign (rāṣī).

Adhika Māsa is the most appropriate month to steer away from sakāma bhakti and to engage in niṣkāma bhakti. Any act that has a worldly goal is prohibited during Adhika Māsa. The Adhika Māsa or Puroṣottama Māsa has been offered to us to engage in niṣkāma bhakti. Once every 27 to 36 months, Adhika or Puroshotama Māsa occurs so that devotees may de-stress by disengaging from material activities and engaging in activities that offer them ultimate bliss.

C. WHAT IS ALLOWED DURING ADHIKA MĀSA?

All acts of a niṣkāma nature are allowed during Adhika Māsa. The performance of daily routine prayer, Japā (repetition of the Lord's name), reading of scriptures, attending satsaṅga, ceremonies relating to birth (like Ṣaṣṭī), and death (Śrāddha) should continue. Prof Kane (1974) asserts that one should proceed with acts prescribed on certain occasions. Hence, one should continue performing funerary rites after a relative's death (if a six-month or one-year ceremony falls in Adhika Māsa, it must go ahead since this is a time-bound act). As a rule, one should perform obligatory actions in Adhika Māsa, and no kāmya rite or sakāma act (a rite performed for securing some object or result) is to be performed in Adhika Māsa. Pūjās that are governed by specific time parameters or Pūjās that have to be performed according to natural time constraints or have to be compulsorily performed to avert life-threatening events are not prohibited. The following acts/poojas are allowed in Adhika Māsa: Garbhadhāna saṁskāra (performed at the time of conception), Puṁsavana Saṁskāra (conducted after the third month of pregnancy), Simantonayana Saṁskāra (completed during the eighth month of pregnancy), daily pooja and attending satsaṅga.

D. WHAT IS NOT ALLOWED DURING ADHIKA MĀSA?

As a rule, all naimittika (occasional pooja) and kāmya acts (poojas performed with a definite material aim in mind) or sakāma acts are prohibited. In our local context, this prohibition will apply to the following poojas:

- Performance of Satyanārāyaṇ Kathā (because it involves a saṅkalpa in which we request for the fulfilment of certain desires)
- Entry into another house for residing purposes (because it involves a saṅkalpa in which we request peace, prosperity and material happiness)

- Shaving of hair of a newborn child (mundan)
- Upanayana Saṁskāra
- Vivāha Saṁskār (consists of several mantras in which marital bliss, offspring, material wealth, etc., are requested)
- Tīrtha yātrā
- Murti stāphnā
- Buying a new car
- Anna praśana
- Nāmakaraṇa saṁskāra
- Granting or accepting dīkṣā
- Commencement of house buildings/extensions

E. CONCLUSION

Adhika Māsa has existed for centuries. It is an auspicious occasion for every Hindu to venerate Bhagavāna for Bhagavāna's sake. Once every three years or so, Hindus engage in *dhārmika* activities in a niṣkāma way. Let us use this period in 2023 to re-establish our connection with Bhagavāna. This is certainly an opportune moment for us self-evaluate, self-develop, self-reflect and self-assess.

ADHIK MASS DATES

18 July 2023 to 16 August 2023

IMPORTANT TERMINOLOGY

- Sankranti - Transition** /passing of the sun from one zodiac sign to another.
- Adhimaas/Adhikmaas** - The sun does not pass through a zodiac sign that month. The frequency of Adhik Maas is once every 27 to 36 months.
- Kshaymaas** - That month when the sun passes through 2 zodiac signs. The frequency of Kshay Maas is once every 141 years. The last one was in 1983, and the next will be in 2124.
- Nitya Karma** – Daily Pooja
- Naimittika Karma** – Occasional Pooja
- Kaamyā Karma** - Poojas are performed with a definite material aim in mind.
- Prayaschit Karma** - Poojas performed as a penance to atone for sins

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