

Svīkaraṇam

An Initiation into Vedic Learning



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॥ स्वीकरणम् ॥

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In Memory of
Dr. K. Subrahmanya Bhat

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॥ स्वीकरणम् ॥

Svīkaraṇam

Hindu children all over the world need to learn the basics of the Vedic tradition, so they can understand their religion. One of the Hindu *saṃskārās* is *Upanayanam*. The *Upanayanam* heralds the beginning of a boy's spiritual education. We need a new, gender-neutral ceremony to recognize all our children, both boys and girls, for their efforts to learn their religion. Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati has proposed a program called *Svīkaraṇam*.

Svīkaraṇam is conceived of as a graduation ceremony similar to the Jewish *bar mitzvah* or *bat mitzvah*. This program is ideally suited for children between the ages of ten and fifteen years. The student will spend about six weeks to three months learning the chanting of the selected verses from the *Upaniṣads*, *Mahābhārata*, *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Bhagavadgītā* and some traditional *ślokas*. These verses and mantras were selected by Pujya Swami Dayananda Saraswati and also by Swami Tattvavidananda Saraswati. Daily chanting of these can be regarded as *nitya-karma*. After the student learns to chant all the verses, the *Svīkaraṇam* ceremony should be held.

During the ceremony, the student chants all the verses before a gathering of family and friends. This will be followed by the student giving a talk on any one of the *ślokas* or verses that the student chooses. Then the teacher presents the student with a *japa-mālā*. More than one student can have the graduation ceremony at the same time. But each student will chant the verses and give the talk. After the ceremony it is recommended that the student chant these verses and *ślokās* daily as a part of *nitya-karma*. The girl who has gone through the program is called *Svīkṛtā* (स्वीकृता) and the boy who has gone through the program is called *Svīkṛta* (स्वीकृत).

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Urmila Shivaram Bhat

Key to transliteration and pronunciation of Sanskrit letters.

अ	a	but	ट	ṭa	true *3
आ	ā	Father	ठ	ṭha	anthill *3
इ	i	It	ड	ḍa	drum *3
ई	ī	Beat	ढ	ḍha	godhead *3
उ	u	Full	ण	ṇa	under *3
ऊ	ū	Pool	त	ta	path *4
ऋ	ṛ	Rhythm	थ	tha	thunder *4
ॠ	ṝ	Marine	द	da	that *4
ए	e	Play	ध	dha	breathe *4
ऐ	ai	Aisle	न	na	nut *4
ओ	o	Go	प	pa	putt 5
औ	au	Loud	फ	pha	loop hole *5
ं	m̄	(anusvāra)	ब	ba	bin 5
ः	ḥ	(visarga)	भ	bha	abhor *5
क	ka	seek 1	म	ma	much 5
ख	kha	blockhead *1	य	ya	loyal
ग	ga	get 1	र	ra	red
घ	gha	log hut *1	ल	la	luck
ङ	ṅa	sing 1	व	va	vase
च	ca	chunk 2	श	śa	sure
छ	cha/Ca	catch him *2	ष	ṣa	shun
ज	ja	jump 2	स	sa	so
झ	jha	hedgehog *2	ह	ha	hum
ञ	jña	bunch 2			

1.Guttural. 2. Palatal. 3.Cerebral. 4.Dental. 5.Labial.

* No exact English equivalent. The 5th letter of each of the above classes are called **nasals** and are pronounced nasally.

Part 1

॥ श्री गणेशाय नमः ॥

Śrī Gaṇeśāya namaḥ

Dhyānam – Meditation

(Before *pūjā* or other religious functions)

शुक्लाम्बरधरं विष्णुं शशिवर्णं चतुर्भुजम् ।

प्रसन्नवदनं ध्यायेत् सर्वविघ्नोपशान्तये ॥

śuklāambaradharaṃ viṣṇuṃ śaśivarnaṃ caturbhujam

prasannavadanaṃ dhyāyet sarvavighnopaśāntaye

śukla-ambara-dharam – one who wears the white garment (*Knowledge, Omniscient*); **viṣṇum** – one who is all pervading (*Omipresent*); **śaśivarnaṃ** – one who has a bright complexion (*soothing*); **caturbhujam** – one who has four hands (*Omnipotent*); **prasanna-vadanam** – one who has an ever smiling face (*Happy/Bliss*); **dhyāyet** – may (*one*) meditate upon; **sarva-vighna-upaśāntaye** – for the removal of all obstacles.

One should meditate upon the all pervasive Lord *Gaṇeśa* who is clad in brilliant white raiment, who has a complexion like the moon and who removes all the obstacles from one's undertakings and bestows knowledge and wisdom.

(The four arms of Gaṇeśa connote that the Lord is the giver of the four ends we pursue in life, material success, pleasure, dharma and ultimate freedom.)

॥ दीपदर्शनम् ॥

Dīpa-darśanam
(Prayer before lighting a lamp)

शुभं करोतु कल्याणमारोग्यं धनसम्पदः ।
शत्रुबुद्धिविनाशाय दीपज्योतिर्नमोऽस्तु ते ॥

*śubhaṃ karotu kalyāṇamārogyaṃ dhanasampadaḥ
śatrubuddhivināśāya dīpajyotirnamo'stu te*

śubham – good/auspiciousness; **karotu** – may bring; **kalyāṇam** – prosperity; **ārogyam** – good health; **dhana-sampadaḥ** – wealth and affluence; **śatru-buddhi-vināśāya** – for the complete destruction of the thought of enemy; **dīpa-jyotiḥ** – light of the lamp; **namaḥ astu te** –salutations unto you.

May the light of the lamp bring auspiciousness, prosperity, good health, wealth and affluence. My salutation to you for the destruction of the thought of enemy (looking upon someone as an enemy).

This *mantra* is chanted before lighting the lamp for *pūjā*. Ignorance is likened to darkness and knowledge to light. Light is invoked as a symbol of auspiciousness, prosperity, etc.

॥ जलपूजा ॥

Jala-pūjā

(While taking a shower or bath)

गङ्गे च यमुने चैव गोदावरि सरस्वति ।
नर्मदे सिन्धु कावेरि जलेऽस्मिन् सन्निधिं कुरु ॥

*gaṅge ca yamune caiva godāvari sarasvati
narmade sindhu kāveri jale'smin sannidhiṃ kuru*

gaṅge – O river *Gaṅgā!*; **ca** – and; **yamune** – O river *Yamunā!*; **ca** – and; **eva** – too (*you all seven rivers*); **godāvari** – O river *Godāvarī!*; **sarasvati** – O river *Sarasvatī!*; **narmade** – O river *Narmadā!*; **sindhu** – O river *Sindhu!*; **kāveri** – O river *Kāverī!*; **jale** – in water; **asmin** – this; **sannidhim** – presence; **kuru** – be.

O Rivers! *Gaṅgā, Yamunā, Godāvarī, Sarasvatī, Narmadā, Sindhu* and *Kāverī!* May you all be present in this water (*with which I wish to take bath*).

(*These rivers have sustained India and its people for time immemorial.*)

॥ श्री सरस्वती ॥

Śrī Sarasvatī

(While commencing studies)

सरस्वति नमस्तुभ्यं वरदे कामरूपिणि ।

विद्यारम्भं करिष्यामि सिद्धिर्भवतु मे सदा ॥

sarasvati namastubhyaṃ varade kāmarūpiṇi

vidyārambhaṃ kariṣyāmi siddhirbhavatu me sadā

sarasvati – O Sarasvati (Goddess of knowledge)!; **namaḥ** – salutations; **tubhyaṃ** – unto thee/to you; **varade** – one who gives boons/fulfills wishes; **kāma-rūpiṇi** – one who has a beautiful form/one who takes (m)any form ie. arts, science, dance... 64 arts; **vidyā-ārambham** – the beginning of studies; **kariṣyāmi** – (I) do; **siddhiḥ** – success; **bhavatu** – may there be; **me** – for me; **sadā** – always.

Salutations to you, O Goddess *Sarasvatī*, who is giver of boons and who takes any form at will. I am commencing my studies. May I always gain success.

(Goddess Sarasvatī personifies all forms of knowledge, scientific, artistic and spiritual. So she is kāma-rūpiṇī, appearing in countless forms; even in the skilled movements of an athlete or a dancer.)

॥ श्री लक्ष्मीः ॥

Śrī Lakṣmī
(Prayer for prosperity)

नमस्तेऽस्तु महामाये श्रीपीठे सुरपूजिते ।
शङ्खचक्रगदाहस्ते महालक्ष्मि नमोऽस्तु ते ॥

namaste 'stu mahāmāye śrīpīṭhe surapūjite
śaṅkhacakra-gadāhaste mahālakṣmi namo 'stu te

namaḥ – salutation; **te** – unto you; **astu** – let it be; **mahā-māye** – who is all powers (*Omnipotent*); **śrīpīṭhe** – who is the seat of wealth; **sura-pūjite** – who is worshipped by the gods (*Indra and so on*); **śaṅkha-cakra-gadā-haste** – the one who wields a conch, a disc and a mace in her hands (*manifestation ie. creation, protection, dissolution, demanifestation, destruction*); **mahā-lakṣmi** – O *Lakṣmī* (*Goddess of prosperity*)!; **namaḥ** – salutations (again and again); **astu** – may there be; **te** – to you.

Salutations to you O Goddess *Mahālakṣmī*, who is the great creative power, who is the seat of wealth, who is worshipped by gods and who holds conch (*symbolizing the Veda or sound, which stands for creation*), disc (*symbolizing the wheel of time, which stands for destruction*) and mace (*symbolizing the power to protect*) in her hands. Salutations to you again and again.

॥ भूमिनमस्कारः ॥

Bhūmi-namaskāraḥ

(While placing the feet on the floor)

समुद्रवसने देवि पर्वतस्तनमण्डले ।

विष्णुपत्नि नमस्तुभ्यं पादस्पर्शं क्षमस्व मे ॥

samudravasane devi parvatastanamaṇḍale

viṣṇupatni namastubhyaṃ pādasparśaṃ kṣamasva me

samudra-vasane – O the one who has ocean as her garment!; **devi** – O the effulgent one (Goddess)!; **parvata-stana-maṇḍale** – O the one who has mountains as breasts!; **viṣṇu-patni** – O the consort of Lord *Viṣṇu*!; **namaḥ**– salutations; **tubhyam** – unto you; **pāda-sparśam** – for my touching/stepping on) (you) with (my) feet; **kṣamasva** – forgive; **me** – me.

My salutations to you O Mother earth, who has the ocean as her garment (*or surrounded by*), who has mountains as her breasts, (*whose mountains nourish us*) and who is the consort of Lord *Viṣṇu*. Please forgive me for stepping on you with my feet.

॥ स्वस्तिपाठः ॥

Svasti-pāṭhaḥ
(Prayer for well-being of all)

स्वस्ति प्रजाभ्यः परिपालयन्ताम् । न्याय्येन मार्गेण महीं महीशाः ।
गोब्राह्मणेभ्यश्शुभमस्तु नित्यम् । लोकास्समस्तास्सुखिनो भवन्तु ॥

*svasti prajābhyah paripālayantām
nyāyyena mārgēṇa mahīm mahīśāḥ
gobrāhmaṇebhyaśśubhamastu nityam
lokāssamastāssukhino bhavantu*

svasti – may there be happiness; **prajābhyah** – for all people; **paripālayantām** – may rule; **nyāyyena** – by righteous; **mārgēṇa** – by means; **mahīm** – the earth; **mahīśāḥ** – the rulers; **go-brāhmaṇebhyah** – for cow and men of wisdom; **śubham** – welfare; **astu** – may there be; **nityam** – at all times; **lokāḥ** – beings; **samastāḥ** – all; **sukhinaḥ** – happy; **bhavantu** – be.

May there be happiness for all people. May the rulers righteously rule the earth. May there be welfare at all times for cows (*and all animals*) and for people of wisdom. May all beings be happy.

काले वर्षतु पर्जन्यः । पृथिवी सस्यशालिनी ।
देशोऽयं क्षोभरहितः । ब्राह्मणास्सन्तु निर्भयाः ॥

*kale varṣatu parjanyaḥ pṛthivī sasyaśālīnī
deśo 'yaṃ kṣobharahitaḥ brahmaṇāssantu nirbhayāḥ*

kale – at the proper time; **varṣatu** – may rain; **parjanyaḥ** – the clouds; **pṛthivī** – the earth; (**bhavatu** - be); **sasya-śālinī** – plenty of grains; **deśaḥ** – nation; **ayam** – this; (**bhavatu** -- be); **kṣobharahitaḥ** – free from disturbance; **brahmaṇāḥ** – men of wisdom; **santu**– be; **nirbhayāḥ** – without fear.

May the clouds rain at proper time. May the earth be possessed of grains. May this land be free of disturbance and may men of wisdom be safe.

सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः । सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः ।
सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु । मा कश्चिद् दुःखभाग् भवेत् ॥

sarve bhavantu sukhinaḥ sarve santu nirāmayāḥ
sarve bhadrāṇi paśyantu mā kaścid duḥkhabhāg bhavet

sarve – all; **bhavantu** – be; **sukhinaḥ** – happy; **sarve** – all; **santu** – be; **nirāmayāḥ** – free from afflictions; **sarve** – all; **bhadrāṇi** – (*as*) auspicious; **paśyantu** – may see; **mā** – not; **kaścid** – anybody; **duḥkha-bhāg** – afflicted/distressed; **bhavet** – be.

May all be happy. May all be healthy. May all enjoy prosperity. May none come to grief.

असतो मा सद्गमय । तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय ।
 मृत्योर्मा अमृतं गमय ॥
 ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः! ॥

*asato mā sadgamaya tamaso mā jyotirgamaya
 mṛtyormā amṛtaṃ gamaya
 om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ*

asato – from unreal; **mā** – me; **sad**– to the real; **gamaya**– lead;
tamaso – from darkness; **mā** – me; **jyotiḥ** – to light; **gamaya** – lead;
mṛtyoḥ – from death; **mā** – me; **amṛtam** – to immortality; **gamaya**
 – lead; **om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ** – om peace be, peace be, peace
 be.

Lead me from the unreal (*apparent*) to the real. Lead me from
 darkness (*of ignorance*) to light (*of knowledge*). Lead me from death
 (*all limitations*) to immortality (*freedom - my true nature*). Om
 peace be, peace be, peace be.

Let there be peace through freedom from obstructions arising from
 the three sources. (*This is why the word shanti is repeated three
 times.*) The three sources that can obstruct any pursuit are: our mind
 and body, the immediate environment over which we may have
 some control and the rest of the universe over which we have no
 control.

॥ विष्णुपुराणम् ॥

Viṣṇu-purāṇam
(Offering of *mantra-puṣpam*)

अहिंसा प्रथमं पुष्पं पुष्पमिन्द्रियनिग्रहः ।
सर्वभूतदया पुष्पं क्षमा पुष्पं विशेषतः ॥

ahiṃsā prathamam puṣpam puṣpamindriyanigrahaḥ
sarvabhūtadayā puṣpam kṣamā puṣpam viśeṣataḥ

ahiṃsā – non-violence; **prathamam** – the first; **puṣpam** – flower/offering; **puṣpam** – flower; **indriya-nigrahaḥ** – sense-control; **sarva-bhūta-dayā** – compassion towards all beings; **puṣpam** – flower; **kṣamā** – patience; **puṣpam** – flower; **viśeṣataḥ** – specially chosen;

शान्तिः पुष्पं तपः पुष्पं दानं पुष्पं तथैव च ।
सत्यमष्टविधं पुष्पं विष्णोः प्रीतिकरं भवेत् ॥

śāntiḥ puṣpam tapaḥ puṣpam dānam puṣpam tathaiva ca
satyamaṣṭavidham puṣpam viṣṇoḥ prītikaram bhavet

śāntiḥ – calmness; **puṣpam** – flower; **tapaḥ** – penance/perseverance; **puṣpam** – flower; **dānam** – generosity; **puṣpam** – flower; **tathā** – thus; **eva**– too; **ca** – and; **satyam** – truth; **aṣṭavidham** – eight types; **puṣpam** – flower; **viṣṇoḥ** – to *Viṣṇu*; **prītikaram** – pleasing; **bhavet** – will be.

I worship Lord *Viṣṇu* with eight flowers that are pleasing to him: Non-violence (*Ahiṃsā*) the first flower, control over my sense organs the next, compassion (*dayā*) for all beings, the third flower, patience and forgiveness (*kṣamā*), the fourth. A willingness to face difficulties, contemplativeness or calmness (*śānti*) is a flower, penance or perseverance (*tapah*), generosity (*dānam*) and truth (*satyam*) the eighth flower. Non-violence, control of senses, compassion to all beings, forgiveness, calmness, penance (*religious austerity*), charity and truth.

॥ देवीमाहात्म्यम् ॥

Devī-Māhātmyam
(Prayer for protection)

दुर्गे स्मृता हरसि भीतिमशेषजन्तोः ।
स्वस्थैः स्मृता मतिमतीव शुभां ददासि ॥
दारिद्र्यदुःखभयहारिणि का त्वदन्या ।
सर्वोपकारकरणाय सदाद्र्द्रचित्ता ॥

durge smṛtā harasi bhītimaśeṣajantoḥ
svasthaiḥ smṛtā matimatīva śubhāṃ dadāsi
dāridryaduḥkhabhayahāriṇi kā tvadanyā
sarvopakāraḥkaraṇāya sadādr̥dracittā

durge – O *Durgā*; **smṛtā** – (when/if) remembered; **harasi** – (you) remove; **bhītim** – fear; **aśeṣa-jantoḥ** – of all beings; **svasthaiḥ** – by those who are self-abiding; **smṛtā** – (when/if) remembered; **matim** – to mind; **atīva** – lots of; **śubhām** – auspiciousness; **dadāsi** – (you)

give; **dāridrya-duḥkha-bhaya-hāriṇi** – O remover of poverty, pain and fear; **kā** – who (*is there*); **tvad-anyā** – other than you; **sarva-upakāra-karaṇāya** – to help all the beings; **sadā** – always; **ārdra-cittā** – with emphathatic mind/heart/feelings.

O *Durgā*! You remove the fear of all (*the frightened*) beings by your (*mere*) remembrance. You bestow auspicious knowledge when remembered by those who are self-abiding. O remover of poverty, pain and fear, who but you has the heart ever flowing with compassion for helping all the beings?

Part 2

॥ श्रीमद् भगवद्गीता ॥

Śrīmad Bhagavadgītā
(Karma-yoga and Self-knowledge)

श्री भगवान् उवाच

śrī bhagavān uvāca

देहिनोऽस्मिन्यथा देहे कौमारं यौवनं जरा ।

तथा देहान्तरप्राप्तिर्धीरस्तत्र न मुह्यति ॥ २-१३ ॥

*dehino'sminyathā dehe kaumāraṃ yauvanam jarā
tathā dehāntaraprāptirdhīrastatra na muhyati*

yathā — just as; **dehinaḥ** — for the indweller of the body; **asmin dehe** — in this body; **kaumāram** — childhood; **yauvanam** — youth; **jarā** — old age; **tathā** — so also; **dehāntara-prāptiḥ** — the gaining of another body; **tatra** — there (*with reference to that*); **dhīraḥ** — a wise person; **na muhyati** — is not deluded.

Just as, for the *jīva*, the indweller of this body, there is childhood, youth, and old age, similar is the gaining of another body. With reference to that, a wise person does not come (*get deluded*) to grief.

मात्रास्पर्शास्तु कौन्तेय शीतोष्णसुखदुःखदाः

आगमापायिनोऽनित्यास्तांस्तितिक्षस्व भारत ॥ २-१४ ॥

*mātrāsparśāstu kaunteya śītoṣṇasukhaduḥkhadāḥ
āgamāpāyino 'nityāstāṃstitikṣasva bhārata*

kaunteya — O son of Kunti (*Arjuna*)!; **mātrā-sparsāḥ** — the contacts of the sense organs with the sensory world; **tu** — indeed; **śīta-uṣṇa-sukha-duḥkhadāḥ** — which give rise to cold and heat, pleasure and pain; **āgama-apāyinaḥ** — which are of the nature of coming and going; **anityāḥ** — not constant; **bhārata** — O descendant of Bharata!; **tān** — them; **titikṣasva** — endure

O *Kaunteya* (*Arjuna*)! The contacts of the sense organs with the sensory world give rise to cold and heat, pleasure and pain. They are of the nature of coming and going, are not constant. Endure them, O *Bhārata* (*Arjuna*)!

योगस्थः कुरु कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा धनञ्जय ।

सिद्धसिद्धोः समो भूत्वा समत्वं योग उच्यते ॥२-४८॥

*yogasthaḥ kuru karmāṇi saṅgaṃ tyaktvā dhanañjaya
siddhyasiddhyoḥ samo bhūtvā samatvaṃ yoga ucyate*

dhanañjaya — O *Dhanañjaya* (*Arjuna*)!; **yogasthaḥ** — being steadfast in *yoga*; **saṅgam** — attachment; **tyaktvā** — abandoning; **siddhi-asiddhyoḥ** — with reference to success and failure; **samaḥ** — the same; **bhūtvā** — being; **karmāṇi** — actions; **kuru** — do; **samatvam** — evenness of mind; **yogaḥ ucyate** — is called *yoga*.

Remaining steadfast in *yoga*, O *Dhanañjaya* (*Arjuna*)! perform actions, abandoning attachment and remaining equal to success and failure. This evenness of mind is called *yoga*.

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत ।

अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥४-७॥

*yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānirbhavati bhārata
abhyutthānamadharmasya tadātmānaṃ sṛjāmyaham*

bhārata — O descendent of *Bharata* (Arjuna)!; **yadā yadā** — whenever; **hi** — indeed; **dharmasya** — of the right living; **glāniḥ** — decline; **adharmasya** — of the wrong living; **abhyutthānam** — rise everywhere; **bhavati** — is; **tadā** — then; **aham** — I; **ātmānam** — myself; **sṛjāmi** — bring into being (assume a physical body).

O Bhārata (Arjuna)! Whenever there is a decline in right living (righteousness) and an increase in wrong living (unrighteousness) everywhere, I bring myself into being (assume a physical body).

परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम् ।
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय सम्भवामि युगे युगे ॥ ४-८ ॥

*paritrāṇāya sādḥūnāṃ vināśāya ca duṣkṛtām
dharmasamsthāpanārthāya sambhavāmi yuge yuge*

sādḥūnām — of the people committed to *dharma*; **paritrāṇāya** — for the protection; **ca** — and; **duṣkṛtām** — of those who follow *adharma*; **vināśāya** — for the destruction (conversion); **dharmasamsthāpanārthāya** — for the establishment of *dharma*; **yuge yuge** — in every *yuga*; **sambhavāmi** — I come into being.

For the protection of those who are committed to *dharma* and the destruction (*conversion*) of those who follow *adharma*, and for the establishment of *dharma*, I come into being in every *yuga*.

यतः प्रवृत्तिर्भूतानां येन सर्वमिदं ततम् ।
स्वकर्मणा तमभ्यर्च्य सिद्धिं विन्दति मानवः ॥ १८-४६ ॥

*yataḥ pravṛttirbhūtānaṃ yena sarvamidaṃ tatam
svakarmanā tamabhyarcya siddhiṃ vindati mānavaḥ*

yataḥ – from whom; **bhūtānām pravṛttiḥ** – (is) the creation of the beings; **yena** – by whom; **sarvam idam** – all this; **tatam** – pervaded; **tam** – him; **svakarmanā** – through one’s own duty; **abhyarcya** – worshipping; **mānavaḥ** – the human being; **siddhim** – success; **vindati** – gains.

Through one’s duty, worshipping him from whom is the creation of the beings, by whom all this is pervaded, a human being gains success.

मन्मना भव मद्भक्तो मद्याजी मां नमस्कुरु ।
मामेवैष्यसि सत्यं ते प्रतिजाने प्रियोऽसि मे ॥ १८-६५ ॥

*manmanā bhava madbhakto madyāji māṃ namaskuru
māmevaiṣyasi satyaṃ te pratijāne priyo’si me*

mat-manaḥ – one whose mind is offered to me; **mat-bhaktaḥ** – one whose devotion is to me; **mat-yāji** – one whose worship is to me; **bhava** – become; **mām** – to me; **namaskuru** – do salutations; **mām** – to me; **eva** – alone; **aiṣyasi** – (you) will reach; **satyam** – truly; **te** – to you; **pratijāne** – I promise; **me** – to me; **priyaḥ** – dear; **asi** – (you) are.

Become one whose mind is offered to me, one whose devotion is to me, one whose worship is to me and offer salutations to me. You will reach me alone. I truly promise you, (*because*) you are dear to me.

सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं व्रज ।

अहं त्वा सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः ॥ १८-६६ ॥

*sarvadharmān parityajya māmekaṃ śaraṇaṃ vraja
ahaṃ tvā sarvapāpebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ*

sarvadharmān – all *karmas*; **parityajya** – giving up; **mām** – me; **ekam** – alone; **śaraṇam vraja** – take refuge; **aham** – I; **tvā** – you; **sarva-pāpebhyaḥ** – from all effects of *karmas*; **mokṣayiṣyāmi** – will release; **mā śucaḥ** – do not grieve.

Giving up all *karmas*, take refuge in me alone. I will release you from all *karmas*; do not grieve.

॥ वाल्मीकि रामायणम् ॥

Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇam
(Praise of Lord Rama)

कूजन्तं राम रामेति मधुरं मधुराक्षरम् ।
आरुह्य कविताशाखां वन्दे वाल्मीकिकोकिलम् ॥

*kūjantaṃ rāma rāmeti madhuraṃ madhurākṣaram
āruhya kavitāśākhāṃ vande vālmīkīkokilam*

kavitā-śākhāṃ – the branch of the tree of poetry; **āruhya** – having perched on; **madhurākṣaram** – the sweet syllables; **rāma rāma iti** – Rama Rama ; **madhuraṃ kūjantaṃ** – melodiously singing; **vālmīki-kokilam** – (Sage) *Vālmīki* conceived (*by the poets*) as a cuckoo; **vande** – (*I*) salute.

I salute *Vālmīki*, the cuckoo bird perched on the bough of the tree of poetry, who sings melodiously the sweet name *Rāmā Rāma*.

कौसल्यासुप्रजा राम पूर्वा सन्ध्या प्रवर्तते ।
उत्तिष्ठ नरशार्दूल कर्तव्यं दैवमाह्निकम् ॥ १-२३-२ ॥

*kausalyāsuprajā rāma pūrvā sandhyā pravartate
uttiṣṭha naraśārdūla kartavyaṃ daivamāhnikam*

kausalyā-suprajāḥ – the worthy son of *Kausalyā*; **rāma** – O *Rāma*!; **pūrvā sandhyā** – the time for the morning twilight worship of the day; **pravartate** – begins; (therefore); **nara-śārdūla** – O tiger among men!; **uttiṣṭha** – arise; **daivam** – contemplation on the deity

(and); **āhnikam** – daily routine of duties (making for the purification of the body); **kartavyam** – should be performed.

Arise, O *Rāma!*, worthy son to *Kausalyā*. In the east, the dawn brings forth another day! Arise, O tiger among men!, and begin the day with worship (*be equal to whatever the day brings*).

जयत्यतिबलो रामो लक्ष्मणश्च महाबलः ।

राजा जयति सुग्रीवो राघवेणाभिपालितः ॥ ५-४२-३३ ॥

jayatyatibalo rāmo lakṣmaṇaśca mahābalaḥ

rājā jayati sugrīvo rāghaveṇābhipālitaḥ

jayati – is victorious; **atibalaḥ** – who is possessed of unsurpassing strength; **rāmaḥ** – (*Śrī*) *Rāma*; **ca** – and; **mahā-balaḥ** – who is endowed with extraordinary might; **lakṣmaṇaḥ** – *Lakṣmaṇa*; **jayati** – is victorious; **rāghaveṇa** – by (*Śrī*) *Rāma*) the scion of Raghu; **abhipālitaḥ** – protected on all sides; **rājā** – king; **sugrīvaḥ** – *Sugrīva*.

Victorious is *Rāma*, of unsurpassable strength and (*victorious is*) *Lakṣmaṇa*, endowed with extraordinary might. Victorious is *Sugrīva*, who is protected from all sides by *Rāghava*.

दासोऽहं कोसलेन्द्रस्य रामस्याक्लिष्टकर्मणः ।

हनुमान् शत्रुसैन्यानां निहन्ता मारुतात्मजः ॥ ५-४२-३४ ॥

dāso'haṃ kosalendrasya rāmasyākliṣṭakarmaṇaḥ

hanūmān śatrusainyānāṃ nihantā mārutātmajaḥ

aham – I; **akliṣṭa-karmaṇaḥ** – of (*Rāma*) who is of unwearied actions; **kosala-indrasya** – of (*Rāma*), who is the Lord of to Kosala (*country's citizens*); **rāmasya** – of (*Sri Rāma*); **dāsaḥ** – servant; **śatru-sainyānāṃ** – of hostile armies; **nihantā** – the destroyer; **māruta-ātmajaḥ** – born of Wind-god; **hanūmān** – *Hanūmān*.

And I, *Hanūmān*, born of the wind, destroyer of the armies of the enemies; am servant to that *Rāma*, Lord of *Kosala*, who is unwearied in actions.

॥ महाभारतम् - विदुर नीतिः ॥

Mahābhāratam – Vidura nītiḥ
(Code of conduct)

निषेवते प्रशस्तानि निन्दितानि न सेवते ।

अनासक्तः श्रद्धधानो ह्येतत्पण्डितलक्षणम् ॥ ३३-१६ ॥

nīṣevate praśastāni ninditāni na sevate

anāsaktaḥ śraddadhāno hyetat paṇḍitalakṣaṇam

praśastāni – acts worthy of praise; **nīṣevate** – (who) pursues; **ninditāni** – acts that are prohibited; **na sevate** – does not entertain; **anāsaktaḥ** – who is unattached; **śraddadhānaḥ** – who has faith (*in the scriptures, teacher and tradition*); **etat** – this is; **paṇḍitalakṣaṇam** – the mark of a wise man.

Pursuing the commendable, shunning the prohibited, unattached, having faith (*in the scriptures, teacher and tradition*) – this is the characteristic of the wise.

षड्दोषाः पुरुषेणेह हातव्या भूतिमिच्छता ।

निद्रा तन्द्रा भयं क्रोध आलस्यं दीर्घसूत्रता ॥ ३३-६६ ॥

ṣaḍdoṣāḥ puruṣeṇeha hātavyā bhūtimicchata

nidrā tandrā bhayaṃ krodha ālasyaṃ dīrghasūtratā

iha – here; **ṣaḍ-doṣāḥ** – six faults; **bhūtim** – prosperity; **icchatā** – who wishes to attain; **puruṣeṇa** – by a person; **hātavyāḥ** – should be avoided; **nidrā** – sleep; **tandrā** – drowsiness; **bhayaṃ** – fear; **krodhaḥ** – anger; **ālasyam** – indolence/laziness; **dīrgha-sūtratā** – procrastination.

Six faults are to be given up, if you seek to improve yourself and grow: excess sleep, drowsiness, fear (*of failure*), anger, laziness and procrastination.

रथश्शरीरं पुरुषस्य राजन्

आत्मा नियन्तेन्द्रियाण्यस्य चाश्वाः ।

तैरप्रमत्तः कुशली सदश्वै

र्दान्तैः सुखं याति रथीव धीरः ॥ ३४-१७/४७ ॥

rathaśśrīraṃ puruṣasya rājan

ātmā niyantendriyaṅyasya cāśvāḥ

tairapramattaḥ kuśalī sadaśvair

dāntaiḥ sukhaṃ yāti rathīva dhīraḥ

rājan – O King!; **puruṣasya** – of a person; **śrīram** – body; **rathaḥ** – (is in place of) car/chariot; **ātmā** – the intellect (is); **niyantā** – the driver; **ca** – and; **asya** – his; **indriyāṇi** – senses (are); **āśvāḥ** – steeds; **dhīraḥ** – wise; **taiḥ** – (drawn) by those; **dāntaiḥ** – tamed; **sad-aśvaiḥ** – by excellent steeds; **apramattaḥ** – who is vigilant; **kuśali** – who is adept; **rathī** – the charioteer; **iva** – like/as; **sukham** – happily; **yāti** – travels. (pleasantly performs the journey of life).

O King! This body is the chariot; the intellect is the charioteer, and the senses, the horses. The wise, who knows how to choose, and is alert in guiding the horses, which he has trained to obey, rides happily.

Part 3

॥ कृष्णयजुर्वेदः ॥

Kṛṣṇa-yajurvedaḥ
(śānti-mantra)

ॐ । सह नाववतु । सह नौ भुनक्तु । सह वीर्यं करवावहै ।
तेजस्विनावधीतमस्तु मा विद्विषावहै ॥
ॐ । शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

om saha nāvavatu saha nau bhunaktu saha vīryam
karavāvahai tejasvīnavadhītamastu ma vidviṣāvahai
om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ

saha – together; **nau** – both of us; **avatu**– may protect; **saha** – together; **nau** – both of us; **bhunaktu** – may nourish; **saha** – together; **vīryam karavāvahai** – may we acquire the capacity (to study and understand the scriptures); **tejasvi** – brilliant; **nau** – for the two of us; **adhītam** – what is studied; **astu** – may it be; **mā** – may not; **vidviṣāvahai** – may we not cavil at each other; **om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ** – om peace be, peace be, peace be.

May (the Lord) indeed, protect us both (the teacher and the student). May he nourish both of us. May our study be brilliant. May we not cavil at each other. Om peace be, peace be, peace be.

॥ शुक्लयजुर्वेदः ॥

Śukla-yajurvedaḥ
(Śānti-mantra)

ॐ । पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात् पूर्णमुदच्यते ।

पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥

ॐ । शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

om pūrṇamadaḥ pūrṇamidam pūrṇāt pūrṇamudacyate
pūrṇasya pūrṇamādāya pūrṇamevāvaśiṣyate
om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ

pūrṇam – fullness; **adaḥ** – that (*is*); **pūrṇam** – fullness; **idam** – this (*this creation*); **pūrṇāt** – from that fullness; **pūrṇam** – this fullness; **udacyate** – has come; **pūrṇasya** – of that fullness; **pūrṇam** – this fullness; **ādāya** – having removed (or added); **pūrṇam** – the fullness; **eva** – alone; **avaśiṣyate** – remains; **om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ** – om peace be, peace be, peace be.

Fullness is Brahman. This creation is fullness. From fullness which is the limitless Brahman, this limitless creation comes forth. If the infinite is subtracted from or added to the infinite, infinite alone remains. Om peace be, peace be, peace be.

(Anything that is added to or taken away from Brahman, which is fullness makes no difference and is only an appearance.)

॥ अथर्ववेदः ॥

Atharva-vedaḥ
(Prayer for blessing)

ॐ भद्रं कर्णेभिः शृणुयाम देवाः । भद्रं पश्येमाक्षभिर्यजत्राः ।
स्थिरैरङ्गैस्तुष्टुवाग्ँसस्तनूभिः । व्यशेम देवहितं यदायुः ।
स्वस्ति न इन्द्रो वृद्धश्रवाः । स्वस्ति नः पूषा विश्ववेदाः ।
स्वस्ति नस्तार्क्ष्यो अरिष्टनेमिः । स्वस्ति नो बृहस्पतिर्दधातु ॥
ॐ । शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

oṃ bhādraṃ karṇebhiḥ śṛṇuyāma' devāḥ bhādraṃ
paśyemākṣabhiryajatrāḥ sthirairaṅgai'stuṣṭuvāgumsās-
tanūbhiḥ vyaśēma devahitaṃ yadāyuh svasti na indro
vrddhaśravāḥ svasti naḥ pūṣā viśvavedāḥ svasti
nastārksyo ariṣṭanemiḥ svasti no bṛhaspatīrdadhātu
oṃ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ

bhadram – auspicious; **karṇebhiḥ** – with (*our*) ears; **śṛṇuyāma** – may we listen; **devāḥ** – O gods!; **bhadram** – auspicious; **paśyema** – may we see; **akṣabhiḥ** – with (*our*) eyes; **yajatrāḥ** – O gods!; **sthiraiḥ** – with strong; **aṅgaiḥ** – limbs; **tuṣṭuvām saḥ** – glorifying (*you*); **tanūbhiḥ** – through the Vedas; **vyaśēma** – may we enjoy; **deva-hitam** – bestowed by the Lord; **yad** – that; **āyuh** – (*our*) full life; **svasti** – auspiciousness; **naḥ** – for us; **indraḥ** – Indra; **vrddhaśravāḥ** – of great fame; **svasti** – auspiciousness; **naḥ** – for us; **pūṣā** – sun deity; **viśva-vedāḥ** – the omniscient; **svasti** – auspiciousness;

naḥ – for us; **tārksyaḥ** – Garuda; **ariṣṭa-nemiḥ** – of unobstructed flight; **svasti** – auspiciousness; **naḥ** – for us; **bṛhaspatiḥ** – *Bṛhaspati (the preceptor of deities)*; **dadhātu** – may he bless; **om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ** – om peace be, peace be, peace be.

May we listen to what is most auspicious, meaningful and truthful. May our eyes see what is auspicious and truthful. May we live with healthy limbs and bodies, our full lifespans, doing good and worshipping the *devas*.

May *Indra* of great fame, the all-knowing and nourishing *Sun*, *Garuda* of unobstructed flight and *Bṛhaspati*, protector of our intellect bless us with well being and auspiciousness.

॥ मृत्युञ्जयमन्त्रः ॥

Mr̥tyuñjaya-mantraḥ

(Prayer for health)

ॐ त्र्यम्बकं यजामहे सुगन्धिं पुष्टिवर्धनम् ।

उर्वारुकमिव बन्धनान्मृत्योर्मुक्षीय मामृतात् ॥

ॐ । शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

*om tryāmbakaṃ yajāmahe sugandhiṃ puṣṭivardhanaṃ
urvārukamiva bandhanān̄mr̥tyormukṣīya mā'mṛtāt̄
om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ*

tryambakam – the three-eyed (*Śiva*); **yajāmahe** – we offer our worship; **sugandhim** – to the one who is fragrant; **puṣṭi-vardhanam** – to one who enhances prosperity; **urvārukam** – the water melon; **iva** – like; **bandhanāt** – from the bondage; **mṛtyoḥ** – of death; **mukṣīya** – may I be liberated; **mā** – not; **amṛtāt** – from immortality; **om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ** – om peace be, peace be, peace be.

We worship the three-eyed Lord (*one who is aware of the past, present and future*), who is fragrant and who nourishes our health. Just like the ripe watermelon (*that gets spontaneously released from the creeper in time*), may I be released from death, but not from immortality.

॥ तैत्तिरीयोपनिषत् ॥

Taittirīya-upaniṣat
(Instructions on values and duties)

ॐ शन्नो मित्रः शं वरुणः । शन्नो भवत्वयमा । शन्न इन्द्रो
बृहस्पतिः । शन्नो विष्णुरुरुक्रमः । नमो ब्रह्मणे । नमस्ते वायो ।
त्वमेव प्रत्यक्षं ब्रह्मासि । त्वमेव प्रत्यक्षं ब्रह्मं वदिष्यामि । ऋतं
वदिष्यामि । सत्यं वदिष्यामि । तन्मामवतु । तद्वक्तारमवतु ।
अवतु माम् । अवतु वक्तारम् ।

ॐ । शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

om śanno 'mitraḥ śaṃ varuṇaḥ śanno 'bhavatvayamā
śanna indro bṛhaspatiḥ śanno viṣṇururukramaḥ namo
brahmaṇe namāste vāyo tvameva pratyakṣaṃ brahmāsi
tvameva pratyakṣaṃ brahmā vadiṣyāmi ṛtaṃ vadiṣyāmi
satyaṃ vadiṣyāmi tanmā'avatu tadvaktāramavatu avatū
mām avatū vaktāram"

om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ

śam – auspiciousness; **naḥ** – to us; **mitraḥ** – the sun deity; **śam** –
auspiciousness; **varuṇaḥ** – the ocean deity; **śam** – auspiciousness;
naḥ – to us; **bhavatu** – let (him) be; **aryamā** – Lord of the manes;
śam – auspiciousness; **naḥ** – to us; **indraḥ** – the ruler of deities;
bṛhaspatiḥ – the preceptor of deities, *Bṛhaspati*; **śam** –
auspiciousness; **naḥ** – to us; **viṣṇuḥ** – the all-pervasive sustainer of
creation; **urukramaḥ** – of long strides; **namaḥ** – salutation;

brahmaṇe – to the creator; **namaḥ** – salutation; **te** – to you; **vāyo** – O deity of wind; **tvam** – you; **eva** – indeed; **pratyakṣam** – perceptible; **brahma** – the truth; **asi** – are; **tvam** – you; **eva** – indeed ; **pratyakṣam** – perceptible; **brahma** – the truth; **vadiṣyāmi** – I declare (*understand*); **ṛtam** – right ; **vadiṣyāmi** – I declare (*understand*); **satyam** – truth; **vadiṣyāmi** – I declare (*understand*); **tat** – it; **mām** – me; **avatu** – may protect; **tat** – it; **vaktāram** – the teacher; **avatu** – may protect; **avatu** – may protect; **mām** – me; **avatu** – may protect; **vaktāram** – the teacher; **om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ** – om peace be, peace be, peace be.

May the Lord in the form of the Sun, bless us. May he bless us as the life-giving oceans. May the Lord in the form of *Aryamā* (deity of ancestors) bless us. May *Indra*, the Lord of the heavens, bless us. May *Brhaspati*, the divine teacher bless us. May *Viṣṇu*, who measures the universe in his stride bless us. May the Creator bless us. May *Vāyu*, the life- giving air bless us. It is through you, the manifest alone, I relate to *Brahman*. I declare you to be the truth, which I have ascertained to be free from doubt and error. May that truth protect me. May it protect the one who teaches this. Let it protect me. Let it protect the teacher.

वेदमनूच्याचार्योऽन्तेवासिनमनुशास्ति । सत्यं वद । धर्मं चर ।
 स्वाध्यायान्मा प्रमदः । आचार्याय प्रियं धनमाहृत्य प्रजातन्तुं
 मा व्यवच्छेत्सीः । सत्यान्न प्रमदितव्यम् । धर्मान्न
 प्रमदितव्यम् । कुशलान्न प्रमदितव्यम् । भूत्यै न प्रमदितव्यम् ।
 स्वाध्यायप्रवचनाभ्यां न प्रमदितव्यम् ।

*vedamanūcyācāryo 'ntevāsinamaṅśāsti satyaṃ vada
dharmam cara svādhyāyānmā pramadaḥ ācāryāya
priyaṃ dhanamāhr̥tya prajātantum mā vyāvachchetsiḥ
satyānna pramaditavyam dharmānna pramaditavyam
kuśalānna pramaditavyam bhūtyai na pramaditavyam
svādhyāya pravacanābhyām na pramaditavyam*

vedam anūcya – having taught the Vedas; **ācāryaḥ anuśāsti** – the teacher instructs; **antevāsinam** – the student (*thus*); **satyam vada** – speak truth; **dharmam cara** – follow *dharma*; **mā pramadaḥ** – may not deviate; **svādhyāyāt** – from the study of the scriptures; **āhr̥tya** – after offering; **priyam dhanam** – the desired wealth; **ācāryāya** – to the teacher; **mā vyāvachchetsiḥ** – may you not break; **prajātantum** – the family lineage; **na pramaditavyam** – may one not deviate; **satyāt** – from the truth; **na pramaditavyam** – may one not deviate; **dharmāt** – from *dharma*; **na pramaditavyam** – may one not deviate; **kuśalāt** – from (*your own*) well-being; **na pramaditavyam** – may one not deviate; **bhūtyai** – from propitious activities; **na pramaditavyam** – may one not deviate; **svādhyāya-pravacanābhyām** – from the study and teaching of the scriptures.

Having taught the Vedas, the teacher gives valedictory advice to the students. May you speak the truth. May you live a life of *dharma*. May you never neglect the study of the Vedas. Offer desirable wealth to the teacher. Have children so that they continue this quest. Do not disregard the truth. May you never take *dharma* lightly. May you never neglect to improve yourself. Do not neglect to develop your particular skills. Do not neglect to study, and to pass on your learning.

देवपितृकार्याभ्यां न प्रमदितव्यम् । मातृदेवो भव । पितृदेवो
भव । आचार्यं देवो भव । अतिथिं देवो भव । यान्यनवद्यानि
कर्माणि । तानि सेवितव्यानि । नो इतराणि । यान्यस्माकम्
सुचरितानि । तानि त्वयोपास्यानि । नो इतराणि ॥
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः!

*devapitrkāryābhyāṃ na pramaditavyam mātṛdevo bhava
pitṛdevo bhava ācāryaḥ devo bhava atithiḥ devo bhava
yānyanavadyāni karmāṇi tāni sevītavyāni no itarāṇi
yānyasmākaḥ sugarītāni tāni tvayopāsyāni no itarāṇi
om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ*

na pramaditavyam – may one not deviate; **deva-pitṛ-kāryābhyām**
– from the worship of gods and ancestors; **mātṛ-devo bhava** – may
(your) mother be a god to you; **pitṛ-devo bhava** – may (your) father
be a god to you; **ācārya-devo bhava** – may (your) teacher be a god
to you; **atithi-devo bhava** – may (your) guest be a god to you; **tāni**
– those; **karmāṇi** – actions (of ours); **yāni** – which; **anavadyāni** –
are not blameworthy (censurable); **sevitavyāni** – should be
performed; **na u itarāṇi** – not the others; **tāni** – those; **asmākaḥ** –
(actions) of ours; **yāni** – which; **sucaritāni** – are noble; **upāsyāni** –
should be performed; **tvayā** – by you; **na u itarāṇi** – not the others;
om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ – om peace be, peace be, peace be.

Never be indifferent to the duties towards the *devas* and your
ancestors. May you look upon your mother and your father with
worshipful attitude. May you look upon your teacher with respect
and devotion. May you treat the learned guest with honor and

respect. May you do only those actions which are not blameworthy and not other actions. These actions of ours which are (noble) commendable are to be followed by you and not other actions.

श्री गुरुभ्यो नमः

Śrī gurubhyo namaḥ

ॐ तत् सत्

Oṃ tat sat

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A Note on Chanting

Vedic chanting has come to us, virtually unchanged, after thousands of years. This was possible only by following strict rules of pronunciation. These rules place special emphasis on point of articulation (*āśya*) and effort (*prayatna*).

Letters are classified as guttural, palatal, lingual dental and labial depending on the place of production of the letter.

Pronunciation is based on duration, tone (*svara*) and nasalization. The duration may be short, long or prolated. For instance, the time required to pronounce a short ऋ (*u*) is short, one *mātrā*; ऊ (*ū*) is long, two *mātrās* or twice the duration and prolated is thrice the duration or three *mātrās*. The tones are low, middle and high as in सुह नाववतु.

A vowel may be nasalized or non-nasalized and the nasalized is represented by the *anusvāra* above the vowel and its pronunciation depends on the consonant that follows.

A CD is supplied with this booklet, which can be a helpful supplement in learning. But, a 'live' teacher is the right way to learn *mantras*, especially the Vedic *mantras*. This is available at Arsha Vidya Gurukulam or from temple priests who are willing to teach, or from those Hindus in your area who have been trained in chanting.

Recommendation for Lesson Structure

The purpose of each *Svikaraṇam* lesson is to challenge and engage students. As such, we recommend the following structure for lessons. This recommendation is meant to be a helpful guide for teachers, to be adapted to needs and abilities of the teachers and the students.

The *ślokas* taught in *Svikaraṇam* are divided into three parts: Part 1, which has *ślokas* concerning deities; Part 2, which has mostly *ślokas* from the *smṛtis* and *itihāsas* and some *mantras*; and Part 3, which has Vedic chants. In each lesson, students can learn one verse from Part 1, three verses from Part 2, and one verse from Part 3.

When students chant the *ślokas* in Parts 1 and 2, they will focus on correct pronunciation. When they do the Vedic chanting in Part 3, they will continue to focus on correct pronunciation, but they will also pay attention to correct *svara* (varying pitches). When they practice chanting at home, students can listen to the chanting on the CD provided to them. Listening to chants will help them improve pronunciation and *svara*.

When students complete the *Svikaraṇam* class and feel comfortable with the chanting, we encourage them to give recital during which the student will chant all the *mantras*. In addition, each student can pick a deity, an epic, and a Vedic *mantra* of their choice, and talk briefly on each of them.





A short description of the verses

Sri Ganesha

This is a verse chanted at the beginning of any Hindu prayer, puja, or homa. It recognizes two things: (1) we are not in charge of the conditions under which we may be required to take any action, and (2) the Lord alone determines the success, failure, and result of the action. Recognizing this, the intelligent person seeks help through prayer so the conditions may not be so daunting that the needed action cannot be undertaken, and so one can put forth one's best effort to complete the task. Also implied in the prayer is an appeal. We appeal to the Lord, who alone grants Artha (material success and security), Kama (love, family, and aesthetic enjoyment of arts and natural beauty), Dharma (one's ability to grow ethically in treatment of others, in one's relationship to the Lord, and in one's own emotional maturity), and Moksha (freedom and discovery of one's true nature), who gives with each of his four hands, to help us learn from every success and every failure.

Students should be encouraged, while chanting this prayer before any undertaking, to close their eyes and visualize the beautiful form of Ganesha, glorious as the full moon, smiling, full of love, and never displeased by us. Whenever they attend a puja, they could listen for this hymn, and mentally chant it to be part of the Puja.

Deepa Darshanam

The simple act of lighting an oil-lamp near the altar at home, at the twilight hour, has been a key part of Hindu culture for millennia. It symbolizes the love and nourishment that a family represents; it is

also an act that makes a home Hindu. This act of worship invokes the presence of the Lord in the midst of darkness as Lakshmi, as Saraswati, and as Durga.

The tiniest flame is able to hold the enveloping darkness at bay. If, for some of us, night brings fear of the unknown, the prayer also asks that all feelings of enmity and misunderstanding (shatru buddhi, from which harm may spring) may be dispelled by the pure flame. With Lakshmi, Saraswati, and Durga gracing our homes, auspiciousness and wellbeing will surely mark the coming night.

While traditionally this act is the privilege of the women in the house, men and boys may also do it. Note also that in one of the Vedic models of the universe's origins, Agni (fire) is the first of the "five great elements or constituents" (pancha-maha-bhutas) to have a form. The sequence in this model is: Atma or Brahman manifests as Space-time (Akasha or Desa-Kaala), which then gives birth to Air or Vayu, from which arises Fire or Agni, Water or Ap, and Earth or Prthvi. From these arise the plants and vegetation, and from this food, arise sentient beings. Each one has its entire being in Brahman or Atma. Of these five, space and air do not have color and are therefore not visible to the eyes. Fire has color and is therefore visible. Hence it is called pratyaksa devata or perceptible god. Since the goal in prayer is to recognize the Lord as manifest before us, and to express gratitude or seek help, a simple flame is an image (or a murti) of the infinite Lord. All students learning the Svikaranam program should be encouraged to make the lighting of the lamp at twilight part of their daily prayer ritual.

Jala Puja

The daily bath refreshes us, and chases away sleep and lethargy. Imagine a plunge into the cold, crisp waters of a river on a hot day! We Hindus have always loved the natural beauty of the Indian

landscape, its forests, its mountains, and its plains, but particularly the rivers. And the rivers have nourished our land and fed our people for millennia. In Hindu dharma, any river, in any country, that nourishes people, plants and animals, is recognized immediately as a special manifestation of Bhagavan or the Lord. Its power and beauty can awaken poetry and love in us. Thus any river or sparkling stream deserves our reverence and our protection. It is thus incumbent on us to protect the rivers and environment from pollution.

Each river in this mantra has also been home to our civilization, the great Rishis, and thinkers: Narmada to Veda Vyasa, Cauvery to Agastya and all the way down to the musical genius of Thyagaraja, Yamuna to Sri Krishna and the Gopis, and Godavari to many great saints of central India. Ganga and Saraswati have been cradles to our civilization, as has the Sindhu (the Indus), from which both India and Hindu Dharma have gotten their current and popular names. For us, the rivers are not just inanimate objects but mothers, embodiments of the Lord's grace. They are goddesses to be remembered with reverence, love and thanks. In this verse we invoke the presence of these holy rivers in the water with which we take shower or bath. Make this prayer a part of your daily bath. It will reconnect your mind to your heritage, even as the waters wake you up. Wherever you are as a Hindu, and whether you were born in India or not, the waters that refresh you will always bring you a memory of these great rivers, and tie you to your people.

Sri Sarasvati

We recognize that the universe is intelligent, that everything here follows an order. Knowledge is worshipped as goddess who is manifest everywhere, and we call her Sarasvati. That intelligence which is manifest to us in countless different forms is called Kamarupini: she who can take any form, from a baby's instinctual

recognition of its mother's smile, to the fact that all humans are able to form language and grammar in their minds, to our ability to appreciate rhythm and music, to the most sophisticated train of mathematical reasoning, and to the study of the Veda. Recognizing that both the gorgeous order of the universe, and the ability to understand any part of it, flows from Goddess Sarasvati, we take a moment to seek her blessings before we begin any undertaking that involves learning. This prayer can clear our minds of anxiety about our fitness to understand the subject, and enable us to delve into it step by step at our own pace. If we can bring such humility and curiosity to every moment in our lives, we will indeed feel her presence at every step.

Sri Lakshmi

Her name, Lakshmi, means Beauty, and the creation around us is beautiful. We call her Mahamaya, the great creative power of the Lord, because this world is miraculous, a thing of beauty and order. She is Shree-Peetha, the abode of all prosperity, all well-being, a refuge even when the world around you appears overwhelming and confusing. All the Devas recognize this and worship her, who is their mother and their origin. Because wherever she is, the Lord also is, she is depicted as his consort, his beloved, inseparable from Him. And she carries in her mighty and beautiful arms the Shankha (the conch, signifying space-time as well as the primeval Veda), the Chakra (the wheel of karma, of cause and effect), and the Gadha (the mace, signifying her protection of us). One hand is shown open showering her grace upon us.

Bhoomi Namaskara

Each morning is different. Some mornings, you are alert and calm; some mornings, you are dull and anxious; on others, you are excited and happy. Can you take a pause at that time, every day, no matter

how you feel, to consciously focus on something more enduring, something beautiful? Not something you want to possess or control, but something that just is, something quietly providing you with support and sustenance, something most people take for granted?

If we consider only our immediate portion of this vast and beautiful creation, we see that Lakshmi, inseparable beloved of the Lord, is manifest to us as Bhoomi Devi, the mother earth. So as we wake up and come to awareness of the earth with its brilliant, clear air, with the sounds of birds and animals and people all waking up, tradition asks us to pause a minute, and think of her with reverence. The poetry here is simple, but lovely. The great rolling oceans with their frothy waves are seen as her skirts; and the mountains and hills as her breasts. Together, these are responsible for much of our weather, for our waters, for how Bhoomi Devi not only carries us on her lap, but nourishes us. And in the last line, the Hindu Svikritaa or Svikrita pauses before swinging her feet off the bed and pacing upon the ground. Although the literal meaning is seeking forgiveness for touching with one's feet, the Mother Goddess, beloved of Vishnu, the underlying sense here is that you are making a pledge to tread lightly on her, and to be caring and protective of our beautiful planet. We do not own her we do not control her. She is our mother.

The practice of gratitude upon awakening and the pledge to be mindful of the environment are important habits for every Hindu to develop. Another issue to discuss could be: both Lakshmi and Bhoomi are presented as the inseparable consorts of Lord Vishnu. Are they therefore two Goddesses? Does that make them the "two wives of Vishnu? But from a poetic standpoint, can they be visualized as two, each beautiful and important in their own right? So can they be portrayed in art and sculpture in that way? Can these forms then be worshipped in their own right? Yes, and so you will find them worshipped in our temples.

Svasti Pathah

In this, we ask the Lord for the wellbeing of all the peoples and animals of the earth, and of the people of wisdom who should provide guidance and direction to us. We also ask here that the rulers that rule the various nations, “the rulers of the earth” or “Mahi-ishah,” rule with justice and fairness. When justice and peace prevail in human relations, and when the powerful are just, the cosmic order, or Dharma, also operates in harmony with us. Therefore, the prayer asks that the cycle of weather and rains follow an order just as we follow the order of Dharma amongst ourselves. May the rains come in time, so the earth may turn dark green and lovely with vegetation.

May my country in particular be free of instability and violence and upheaval. Kshobha encompasses all these meanings, and can refer to economic, political, and security disturbances. The mantra specifically mentions go, the cows. Here, cow can be taken as a Lakshana, a symbol for all animals, domesticated and non-domesticated. But in the Vedic Dharma, we recognize that cows, which provide us with milk, help fertilize our farms and gardens, and are exceedingly gentle and beautiful, are a special manifestation of the Lord. They are a blessing and are loved and revered. Throughout our history, millions of Hindus have kept these animals in their homesteads, and have personally cared for them, so we have a special bond with them. So to remember them specifically in a prayer makes complete sense.

It also implies that in our own life-styles we must try not to harm animals. “Brahmana” can mean any person of wisdom. In any culture or nation, intellectuals and scientists deserve respect and special prayers, especially since they are rarely among the richest, strongest, or most influential people. Indeed, if a society treats its

Brahmanas well, it means it values wisdom, and has grown beyond the worship of power and wealth alone. In our particular context, “Brahmana” would include those who study and transmit the Vedas and Vedic knowledge with commitment, reverence and love.

Sarve Bhavantu

This verse is traditionally chanted at the end of many auspicious occasions, such as Pujas, a recital of the Ramayana, or even at the end of a dance or music performance. The verse may come from the Garuda Purana as a very similar verse appears in its Uttara Kanda (verse 51). Like the previous verse, it shows the nobility and inclusiveness of the Hindu tradition: the verse is a prayer for universal flourishing of all humanity.

Asato Ma Sad Gamaya

This is the Pavamaana Mantra from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (1.3.28). Pavamaana means “the purifying one”. As the Bhagavad Geeta says, nothing purifies like knowledge of the self. The vision revealed in this mantra is that Self-knowledge, understanding of one’s true nature is liberating, because then one sees oneself as free from all limitations, including death. In the prayer, we entreat the Lord, who is also the first Guru, to take us beyond the apparent and unreal to what is real. Living without knowledge of the self is like living in darkness. Living with the belief that I am this body (with this mind and these senses) means that when anything bad happens to this body- such as its death—I am dead. Thus, the one who lives in ignorance lives with the fear of death always.

This mantra raises amazing possibilities that could take a lifetime to explore and understand. What kind of knowledge could set us free from death?

Vishnu Purana

This prayer describes a Hindu's life journey. It affirms our commitment to growth and maturity in this Puja. We offer flowers to the Lord because they are beautiful. When fresh and fragrant, they can make our mind calm, cheerful, and focused on the Puja. We also offer fresh clothes and fresh produce from our fields (or fruits bought with one's hard work) to Bhagavan. If the flowers you offer were grown in your garden, then you have cared and nourished plants to do so. To offer a thing of beauty to Bhagavan is a central principle of Puja. These verses take it one step further. Your growth as a Hindu and as a mature human being, your growing into one who can appreciate Isvara in everything and everywhere, is the most beautiful thing. If you work on yourself throughout your life to develop these qualities, your life will become the most fitting worship of the Lord.

The verses begin with Ahimsa, non-injury or non-hurting, which the Veda says is the basis of all Dharma, the Parama Dharma. No human and no sentient creature wishes to be harmed. Ahimsa is not just kindness or physical non-violence. Ahimsa also implies justice and fair play. When you lie to or cheat someone, you do violence to their right to be treated fairly and honestly. When a soldier or a surgeon refuses to do their duty, and thereby allows innocents to be harmed, that too may be Himsa. Learning what is Himsa and what is Ahimsa in any given situation requires wisdom, discrimination, self-discipline, and compassion for others. There are no short cuts in Dharma, especially if you want to grow into a mature human being. A Svikritaa or a Svikrita may have to work with their feelings and passions to be the boss of one's senses and the mind, rather than their slave. One way traditional Hindus work on this, apart from a daily process of watching one's mind and actions, is Tapas: undertaking a religious discipline, such as fasting or pilgrimage. Tapas is a voluntary courting of hardship in order to grow in

endurance and in one's love of Bhagavan. To cultivate Daya, compassion for all creatures, and to become giving and generous (Danam), one has to be willing to be patient and even forgiving (Kshama) of others. In life, it is practically certain that people will do foolish and unfair things to you. Knowing when to fight to correct this, when to draw a line so they cannot hurt you further, and when to forgive and move on is also an accomplishment. Thus, you will have to grow in knowledge and wisdom throughout your life, and be willing to pause and contemplate on how the Shastras help you make sense of life. These, too, become flowers you can offer.

All this may be beautiful, but it may still not fulfil your life. Compassionate, just, and worshipful people can still end up unhappy and frustrated. This is because a key understanding of reality may be missing. The Vedic knowledge is that all that is here is Isvara, and the world is not separate from Isvara, nor are you away from Him or Her. This is Satyam or truth. Appreciating this fully is the final flower that is beloved to Bhagavan. Sri Krishna therefore says in the Geeta that while he surely loves each of the devotees who approach him, but the Jnani, the one who knows the self as non-separate from Isvara, is the most beloved. Indeed, he or she is the self of Bhagavan himself. This life-long puja, which begins with concern for others and for fairness, ends in the understanding of truth, which cannot be gained without the grace of Isvara in the form of the Vedas. Thus, you become the flower that is most pleasing to the Lord.

Devi Mahatmyam

Durga is majestic and beautiful, riding on her Lion. The personification of feminine strength, she is the fierce and protective mother Goddess. As Mother, she provides us with everything: resources that take away our poverty, knowledge that takes away our sorrow, and protection that takes away our fear. Other than her,

who is a complete refuge for us? The Lord approached as a mother soothes and protects us in many ways. When we are in trouble, when things are going badly, we feel fear. Here, we have the choice to pray, but we need not. We can fret and worry, or rage and complain about how unfair it is all. But if we take the trouble to pray with a loving heart, Durga takes away our fear. She may also ease the difficulty we are facing. But certainly we will be granted to courage to face what we have to face. And if your life is prayerful, then in the good times, your mind can be focused and clear, so you can accomplish great things.

Bhagavad Gita

In the Svikaranam program are included a few verses from the Gita, and they are best explained to the children in the way provided below; this approach is consistent with the spirit of the Gita and with the purport of the verses, but there is a lot more that needs to be understood. This understanding can come only over time, with a dedicated study of the Gita combined with an ethical and compassionate way of life. For further reference, please see Bhagavad Gita home study by Pujya Swami Dayananda.

Chapter 2:

The two verses here deal with 2 levels of problems and fears we encounter in life. Verse 14 deals with an everyday reality - the constantly changing conditions of life: you may or may not be able to buy a favored toy or gadget, you may make and lose friends, you may move to a new town and a new school, you may encounter a favorite teacher or a terrible one. Your family may go through ups and downs. Bhagavan Sri Krishna acknowledges that these conditions (for which he uses the examples of terrific heat and a cool conducive climate) do create in our minds anxiety and sadness (duhkha) or it's opposite, elation and happiness (sukha).

Indeed, he knows us well to say that yes, these things may seem like a very big deal while you are facing them; so much so that we can spend our entire life chasing after pleasant experiences and avoiding difficult or unpleasant tasks. But sometimes, the right thing to do is difficult or unpleasant, and the comfortable and pleasurable thing may actually end up harming us or others.

So the Lord teaches us a way to put these ups and downs i.e. Sukha and Duhkha caused by circumstances, in the proper perspective. They are *agama-payinah*, *anityah* i.e. they come and go. Indeed, every one of us will have to experience ups and downs, and rather than being swept away by them, if we recognize that they are temporary, we can become less dependent on them for our happiness. Recognizing that circumstances need not dictate our happiness or sadness is the first step towards maturity and wisdom.

The earlier verse, deals with the biggest problem and fear of all; the fear of death. Indeed, overcoming this fear through understanding one's true nature as the *akshaya*, the imperishable is the main teaching of the Gita. In this verse, the Lord just helps us recognize that the end of one's body is not the end of oneself. Your body undergoes incredible changes from childhood through youth and old age; you have probably lost and replaced not only every cell you were born with, but even every molecule and atom that once made up your body. And yet, you have continued, as you! The Lord says the same logic applies when your body finally falls at death-you will just take up a new body in keeping with your Karma. So death is not the end of you. This passage gives us a sweeping vision, which can help us deal with death and grief in their proper contexts. There is much more analysis and teaching in the Gita about the nature of life and death, and of yourself, but this just introduces the topic.

Verse 2-48 talks about Karma Yoga. Karma Yoga is the critical path to self-growth, that which prepares your mind to receive the

teaching of self-knowledge. With reference to action itself, there is choice involved, as a karma yogi you exercise your choice based on certain norms. These norms are what are meant by words 'dharma' and 'adharma'. When your actions are governed by what is right (dharma) and not by your likes and dislikes, then you are living an ethical life. While doing the right thing if you take Ishwara into account, then it becomes karma yoga. Just like the "heat and cold" of the earlier verse, success and failure (siddhi and asiddhi) are not in our hands, but the choice of how to act is. So we can and should plan, work hard, adapt to conditions and give a task our best effort, but we recognize that success and failure are not under our control. These results are called karma phala, and the Lord alone is the giver of the fruits of action. When we combine this with a strong desire to learn and grow from every experience, in an attitude of sharanagati, total appreciation of and trust in the Lord, Karma Yoga becomes complete.

Samatvam is the attitude that enables you to have evenness of mind, and your mind to remain a learning mind even when you face failure. Both dejection and elation can take away your samatvam.

There is no prohibition against being ambitious or having desire, just a teaching that self-growth cannot come without consciously choosing it. And if one consistently violates dharma in the pursuit of those desires or ambitions, this means that those desires and ambitions are mistaken for things that will make to completely happy. And once that mistake is made you can harm yourself or others in the pursuit of those desires and ambitions. That is what a wasted life is all about.

Verses number 18-46 and 18-65 & 66 give away the real secret of Karma Yoga. Karma Yoga is not possible without surrendering to the Lord completely. Sharanagati (surrender) in

Hindu Dharma means slowly but surely learning to appreciate the Lord in everything in everyone.

Here the Lord reveals that all creatures, all worlds have their origin in him, and are sustained by him. He pervades everything and everyone. Thus, when we interact with the world, we are interacting with him. When we interact with people or animals, we interact with him alone. Every situation that we face is him alone. Every situation that we face calls for a response from us. If we choose to respond correctly, i.e. respond in a way that is keeping with our duty, (svakarma and svadharma) then we are worshipping him with our actions.

This is not at all easy to do, but the best Hindus do try to live this way. They may lead a materially difficult life but are cheerful, relaxed and compassionate. The Lord says that if you keep trying to do this every day, you will grow so much in your maturity and compassion, that your life would be considered successful.

Such a person begins to have a very special relationship with the Lord: over time, he sees the Lord everywhere, and in everything, so he responds with grace and compassion. He becomes one whose mind totally is absorbed in the Lord. Such a person does not ignore reality, but sees it more clearly than the rest of us do.

The Lord says that one who truly lives with the Lord always in mind, whose devotion is to the Lord alone worships the Lord by acting correctly in every situation, and who accepts the fruits given by the Lord with a cheerful mind; such a person comes to the Lord alone. Such a person is dear to the Lord and he guides them to self-knowledge. For such a person there is joy in life, no matter what the circumstances. The idea is that apart from winning the Lord's protection; the person's mind and emotions have matured and he or she is ready to benefit fully from the teaching of the Shastra.

We mostly do actions, Karmas, to earn rewards, but also to earn punya and papa by acting with dharma or against dharma, ethically or unethically. Thus all karmas, actions are choices and all choices may have dharma or adharma inherent in them. The Lord says here that if you act less and less for the reward and more and more because an act is correct, because an act it is in keeping with Dharma, as an offering to the Lord, that is the same as giving up Karmas (called here as dharmas). Such a person begins to love the Lord with all their heart and wants nothing other than to grow into a mature and compassionate human being, and to know their own true nature. For such a Karma Yogi, the Lord becomes the one who delivers them beyond all suffering, all pain. This verse is about putting ones trust in the Lord and relaxing in that trust, not about giving up actions.

Yada-Yada hi dharmasya..(4-7)

Since human beings are given free will, they are free to act either with Dharma or against dharma i.e. Adharma. Even though the law of karma will deliver punya and papa, i.e. justice for these rights and wrongs, because humans cannot see the law of karma working relentlessly, they will sometimes doubt there is such a law at all, or that it works in all cases. Thus, there are periods in history where more and more people may choose to cut corners or to oppress others in order to grab rewards and escape paying their dues. This can reach a critical mass. In such times, the sacred right of people to choose the right things and act freely and appropriately may also be impinged on. In such times, when free choice of ethical and compassionate actors is itself threatened, Dharma is said to be weakened, the Lord manifests himself as an avatara, and corrects this situation. The avatara comes in response to the cumulative prayers of the good, who even if they are helpless, at least can exercise their choice to pray. This is the great promise the Lord gives to all of us. This affirms the Lord's love and compassion for us, for

even though all oppression and injustice is the result of cumulative bad choices by us, the Lord does not abandon us. As an avatara the Lord will protect the good and their freedom to choose, and severely curtail the power of the wicked to oppress. This is enough to restore the dynamic balance of the world.

Valmiki Ramayana

Kujantam Rama Rameti

This is a traditional verse chanted whenever we begin the study or recitation of Ramayana. It celebrates the aesthetic beauty of Valmiki's simple and elegant Sanskrit verse by comparing him to the Kokila bird that is heard singing during the long spring and summer in India. It celebrates the moral core of the Ramayana. The verse suggests that the great epic poem is an extended meditation on the meaning of the sweet and beautiful word Rama. The verse also recognizes that repetition of the Lord's name can calm our minds, enable us to manage intense desires like anger and desire, and finally allow us to dwell in awareness of the Lord and of Dharma.

Kausalya Supraja Rama

This is a verse from the Bala-Kanda of the Ramayana. In this part of the Ramayana, Rishi Vishwamitra takes Rama and Laksmana away to the forest when they are teenagers. Here, they come face to face with what their lives as Kshatriyas really mean. They confront physical hardship, danger, and long, exhausting hours of watchfulness followed by intense and deadly skirmishes with the Rakshasas. Even without battles, the forest itself must be difficult and disorienting for children raised in the lap of a great and

flourishing city. Vishwamitra sings this verse to Rama one morning on their travels. It is a call to take life one day at a time. If one can wake up every morning with openness to whatever the day may bring, and do what needs to be done, one can become a hero, a person of accomplishment.

Jayati AtiBalo Rama

These two verses are taken from the Sundara Kanda. Hanuman has just completed the enormous task of crossing the ocean and finding Seeta in Lanka. But his presence is discovered. He is now surrounded on all sides and attacked by Ravana's powerful guards. It is a desperate situation, one against many. But Hanuman does not despair. In this verse, he roars out that while he is one person, in truth, the rakshasas are up against not just Sugriva and Lakshmana (formidable in their own right), but against Rama himself. For Hanuman is now free of ego and has become the Lord's instrument. He sees that the Lord himself is acting through him. No task, big or small, is too much for the Lord. The great fight that follows proves him right, and the rakshasas are unable to hurt, kill, or capture Hanuman till he allows himself to be captured. Whenever you are trying to do the right thing, and are surrounded by various and daunting obstacles, this is a great verse to bring to mind.

Vidura Nitihi

This dialogue between Vidura and his older brother, the Emperor Dritharashtra, occurs in the Udyoga Parva of the Mahabharata. Yudhisthira and the Pandavas have returned from their years of exile, unjustly imposed on them by Dritharashtra's grasping and vengeful son Duryodhana. Unable to sleep because of his fear that the Pandavas will want their Kingdom back, Dritharashtra sends for Vidura to give him advice that will soothe his mind. Vidura however does not indulge the Emperor with flattery or try to assuage his guilt.

He speaks truth to power. Vidura gives him, in a kind but fearless tone, advice on the ethical principles of Hindu kingship, which requires any powerful person to master his or her own weaknesses before attempting to master other human beings. Dritharashtra must set aside fear or favor, and act justly to all who come before him. The dangers of indulging the wicked and unjust, and of oppressing the just, are repeatedly pointed out. Both Vidura and Dritharashtra know that if Dritharashtra is unable to learn from this advice, a terrible and awful war will be upon them, and the line of Kuru may be extinguished. Here, in these two verses, we see a part of the teaching that is applicable to any human being who truly wishes to grow and prosper. Dritharashtra must act now, and not procrastinate or take refuge in sorrow and self-pity. If he abdicates his responsibility and lets events drift, he cannot achieve the well-being for himself and his people. This is true for all of us. The comparison of the Ratha, the chariot, to your human body, and of horses to your senses, and of you to the person who holds the reins, is taken by Vidura from the Kathopanishad. Are you the boss of your chariot, or are your senses in command? Do they obey you, or do you get dragged around by them? There is no condemnation of enjoying life here, simply a question of whether you have the inner freedom to choose wisely.

In the war that is to come, we will see that Arjuna turns over to the Lord the control of his “chariot” and “horses,” and becomes an instrument in Bhagavan’s hands. Arjuna is able to do this because he lives for Dharma, and not for what is immediately pleasurable. He is able to relax in this arrangement, and act with energy and wisdom. Unlike Arjuna, Dritharashtra cannot relax in Dharma. He enjoys hearing his learned brother’s wise words, and is even convinced that he needs to act justly. But he is ultimately unable to overcome his weakness for his son.

The Shanti Mantras

Each of the Veda-Shakhas, the branches of the Vedas, has beautiful and powerful mantras that invoke Shanti or peace. Four Shanti Mantras are taught in the Svikaranam program, including the one from Taittiriya upanishad. Shanti is required for any contemplative pursuit, whether worship, study, or meditation. The Vedic vision is that Shanti, peace, is the default setting of the world. But this shanti, this peace, can be disturbed. These disturbances can arise from sources classified as three. Disturbances arising from within your mind and body such as fear or agitation or fever and pain are called adhyatmika taapa. Disturbances arising from immediate environmental conditions (everything from noisy traffic to bothersome insects) are called adhibhautika taapa. Some of these may be amenable to your control or changing. Disturbances over which you have no control at all, such as storms and widespread environmental calamities, are called adhi-daivika taapa. In each of these mantras, we pray for Shanti from all these disturbances (that is why “Shanti” is repeated thrice here). But in most mantras, we first affirm what we are aspiring to do or understand.

Krishnayajurveda

In **Saha Na Avatu**, we (teacher and students) ask for the Lord’s protection and guidance as we study any branch of the Vedic lore. Any subject worthy of study calls for your mind to be committed and not to be distracted by extraneous things.

Shuklayajurveda

In **Purnamada Purnamidam**, there is no obvious seeking, no asking in prayer. Instead, a great and sweeping truth is being stated. You are recognizing that you are not one isolated, helpless

individual arrayed against a huge universe, but that you and this universe are one infinite whole. The prayer comes only in the thrice repeated Shanti: you are asking for the right conditions to study and understand this profound truth. Thus, we note the svaras for chanting Shanti here are different than in all the other Shanti mantras.

Atharvaveda

In **Bhadram Karnebhihi**, the prayer paints a vast canvas. You are asking for a life in which you have every opportunity to grow. You are asking for exposure to Vedic ideas and other noble things that are truly meaningful and beneficial, as opposed to things that are just empty. You are asking for role models who will guide you, and the blessings of the Devas. As long as I live on this earth, may I be a blessing to all because of my dedication to the Devas and to Dharma. You are asking for a life in which you will become a contributor, not just a consumer.

Mrityunjaya Mantra

This is a Vedic mantra, also known as Rudra Prasna, traditionally chanted at the end of Sri Rudram. Its primary idea is that though devotion to the Lord and study of the Shastra, we can come to recognize our own immortal nature. Indeed, this transition from mortality to immortality should be natural and easy, but we make our lives complicated and difficult, and lose sight of what we truly need to accomplish. This mantra, when chanted with devotion and commitment, invokes the grace of the Lord for someone who is ill with a dangerous illness.

Taittiriya Upanishad

In **Shanno Mitrah Sham Varunaha**, a universalistic idea is being expressed. The Lord is manifest as the world around us. Nature itself is a form of the Lord. The fundamental Hindu attitude to the

environment is one of reverence and delight at its beauty, its power, and its plenty. The elements and people who have bequeathed this earth to us deserve our gratitude and love. We are not afraid of relating to the Lord through forms. In fact, this prayer explicitly recognizes that we relate to the Lord through this beautiful world of forms.

In helping your students understand this prayer, ask the students to do some basic pranayama or deep steady breathing. The lungs should be filled with air, the stomach bulges out as they inhale, the diaphragm relaxes and as you exhale the stomach is pulled in and the diaphragm moves up. Let them become conscious of their breath, of its touch in their nostrils, of the expansion of their chests, and of the quieting of their minds.

Help them see that while we can of course take it for granted, this air that moves about us, fills our chests, energizes our cells, and quickens us with life is emblematic of our intimate relationship with the Lord. If we can recognize the miracle in this, we can recognize at least the possibility that we are non-separate from the Lord. He transcends the manifest world of time and space, but this does not mean that we cannot recognize him in every aspect of the universe. Such a prayer also ought to remind us that as Hindus, we have a sacred responsibility to caring for the environment.

Passage from the Taittiriya Upanishad

In **Vedamanuchyacharyonte**: This is one of the most famous of all Vedic passages. The emperor Ashoka had these inscribed in his famous rock edicts in the common language of his time. The setting, as the Mantra itself describes, is a valedictory ceremony for students who have completed their Vedic study. The teacher then gives the m his final instruction. Truthfulness and Dharma are the anchors of this instruction.

The meaning of Dharma is then briefly explained. The fruit of this effort is that we grow into men and women of maturity and kindness, who can appreciate the wonderful world around them; and who are not rootless and disconnected. By feeling yourself to be part of the worldwide community of Hindus, you will also be motivated to help them. When you reach beyond just the Hindu community and help others in the world, you will see that you are part of an infinite network of Dharma. All this is possible if one can see the Lord in all of nature. It takes a full lifetime to grow into this vision. But if you persist in learning the Shastra, you will see that you are not an isolated, helpless, and unloved person.

In **Devapitrukaryabhyam**: You are the most significant one: secure, strong, and complete. Hindu Dharma offers a thoughtful and meaningful approach to the problem of human sorrow and suffering, not in heaven, but here and now. You have just begun this journey of self-growth and self-discovery.

But hopefully you recognize that any tradition offering a real solution here and now is special and you are fortunate to be a part of it. This is why in the mantra you are asked to value your parents (Mata and Pita), not only for all they have given you in terms of love and material benefits, but because they have initiated you into this spiritual quest. Simply treating each other kindly and speaking mildly would be a great beginning.

