

All things are moving temples of the Supreme Reality and therefore all things are worthy of respect, worthy of reverence.

The starting and commencement of all good things is our onus and conducting our activities in the right direction of the goal is His onus provided that we keep up self-effort sincerely.

Swami Chidananda
ॐ

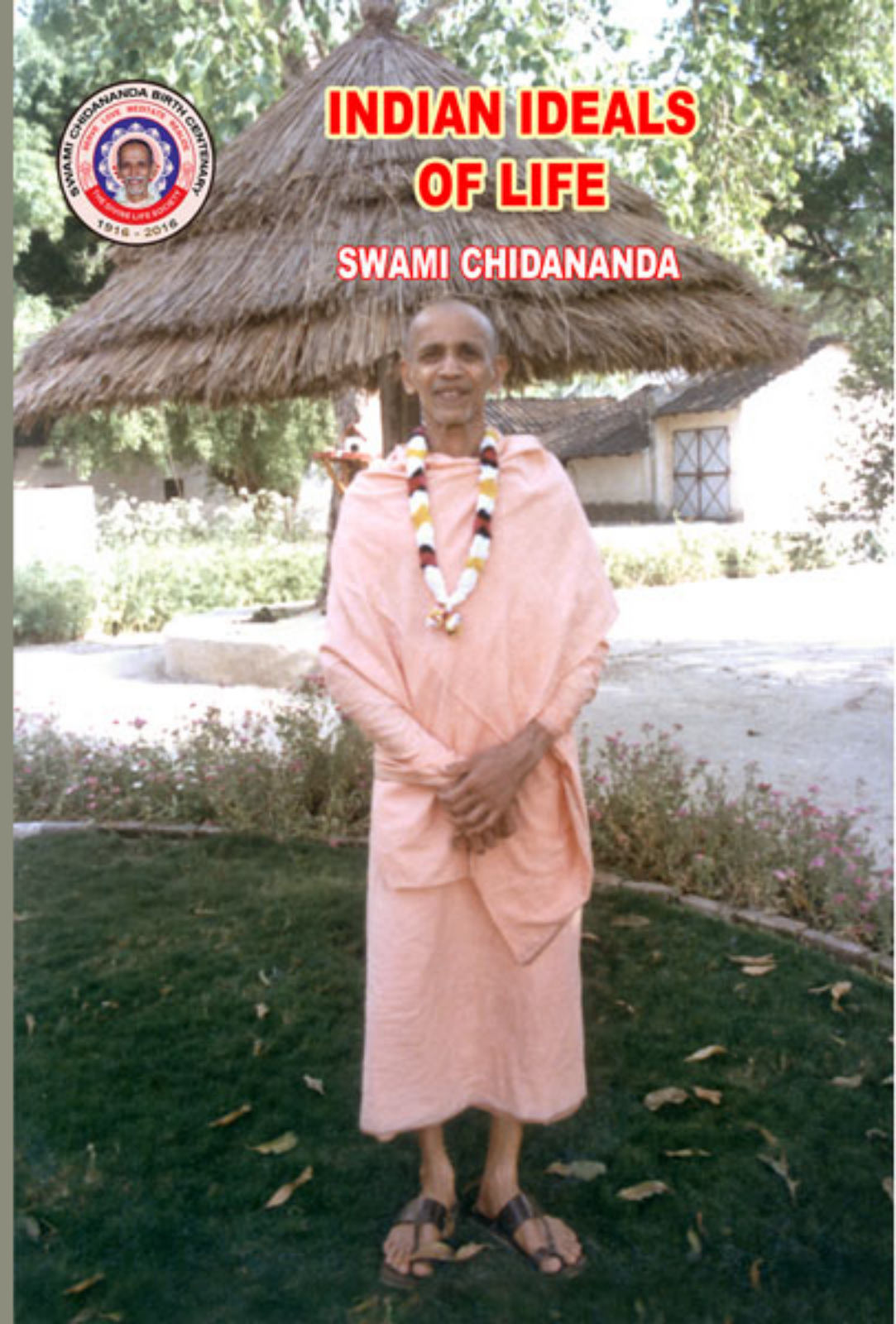


A DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY PUBLICATION



INDIAN IDEALS OF LIFE

SWAMI CHIDANANDA

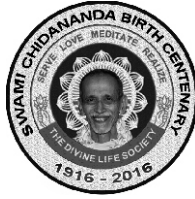


INDIAN IDEALS OF LIFE

INDIAN IDEALS OF LIFE

Sri Swami Chidananda

*(A series of 3 talks given by Param Pujiya
Sri Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj on the mornings
of December 20, 21 and 22 1999, at the
Sangeet Kala Kendra, Kolkata)*



Published by

THE DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY

P.O. SHIVANANDANAGAR—249 192

Distt. Tehri-Garhwal, Uttarakhand, Himalayas, India

www.sivanandaonline.org, www.dlshq.org

First Edition: 2015
[2,000 Copies]

©The Divine Life Trust Society

Swami Chidananda Birth Centenary Series—47

FOR FREE DISTRIBUTION

Published by Swami Padmanabhananda for
The Divine Life Society, Shivanandanagar, and
printed by him at the Yoga-Vedanta Forest Academy
Press, P.O. Shivanandanagar, Distt. Tehri-Garhwal,
Uttarakhand, Himalayas, India
For online orders and Catalogue visit : dlsbooks.org

PUBLISHERS' NOTE

24th September 2016 marks the auspicious occasion of Birth Centenary of Worshipful Sri Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj. To commemorate this sacred occasion, the Headquarters Ashram has decided to bring out one hundred booklets comprising illuminating talks of Worshipful Sri Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj for free distribution.

To propagate Sadgurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj's gospel of Divine Life, Worshipful Sri Swamiji Maharaj travelled extensively in India and abroad and showed the path of divine life to countless seekers through his spontaneous and highly inspiring lectures. His lectures, in Sadgurudev's words, are the outpourings of his saintly heart, the revelations of intuitive wisdom.

We are immensely happy to bring out some of his hitherto unpublished lectures in a booklet form as our worshipful offering at his holy feet on the blessed occasion of his Birth Centenary. The present booklet '**Indian Ideals of Life**' is a compilation of a series of three inspiring talks, given at the Sangeet Kala Kendra, Kolkata in 1999. We express our heartfelt gratitude towards

the inmates of the Headquarters Ashram for their loving service in transcribing, editing and compiling these talks.

May the abundant blessings of the Almighty Lord, Sadgurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj and Worshipful Sri Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj be upon all.

—The Divine Life Society

First Talk

Radiant Immortal Atman! Beloved and blessed children of Light! Spiritual children of that great Reality beyond all manifestation, that eternal, infinite Cosmic Spirit Divine: beginningless, endless, limitless and boundless! Your ancestors of this great land of Bharatavarsha realised it as Existence Absolute (That which ever IS), as Consciousness Absolute (luminous Consciousness—Chidghana, Chinmaya) and as Pure Bliss; they called it Sat-Chit-Ananda, Existence-Consciousness-Bliss. That transcendental Reality—Ekameva Advaita Brahma Tattva—is experienced as Existence, Consciousness and Bliss. You are heir to that Great Being—you are His children.

That Being which is One Absolute existed prior to creation, alone with no second—Ekameva Advitiam. In the 6th chapter of the Chhandogya Upanishad, having only 4 Shlokas, the 3rd Shloka says: “That Being wished or willed: ‘May I multiply; may I become many. So that creation may commence, ‘many’ may be created.’” He wished for progeny, and that this process may go on continuously: ‘*Tadaikshat bahusyam prajayeyeti.*’ If that is so, then whatever has come

into manifestation is from that great mass of pure Consciousness. God is the divine source of all that exists. Therefore, in nature you are the same as that Great Being. We can only refer to that Great Being in the present tense (historically we may refer to it in the past tense), but the Eternal has no 'was or shall be' - It is, always It is! And therefore, bearing from That Being, you are of the same quality, and divinity is your essential nature. And from the human point of view you are the highest in God's creation, endowed with the unique ability to think and to reason.

In the introductory talk a good friend mentioned: "We are on the threshold of a new millennium, and Swamiji will give us much food for thinking." So you are called upon to exercise that privilege of your human status. Think deeply over life:

We have lived upto December 1999 in a certain way. Now, on January 1st, the year 2000 comes. Are we to continue the same humdrum monotonous pattern, or will we have some new radiance spreading into our life, helping it and making everything shine as it did not do previously? Are we not to enter into this new century and new millennium as different beings, because the poor 20th century has seen a great deal of heaviness of heart, travail and tragedy: two great wars, much destruction, atom bombs, and

now in the second half of this century, they have begun international terrorism, RDX bombings, shootings, assassinations, mass killings. Someone gives an order in some nation and someone else carries it out. Yet at the same time there have been great marvels of scientific research, advance of technology, new inventions: the 'Concord' that flies faster than the speed of sound, England and Europe are linked up with the cross-channel tunnels. There are cables across the Atlantic, from America to U.K., the hydro-coil skipping on the surface of the water. These are all marvellous inventions. And the medical science, antibiotics and so many life-saving drugs. Now everything in the house is done by a mere pressing of a button: cooking, baking, dishwashing, washing and drying the clothes—everything. And answering machines that take messages, so when you come home you know who all called—everything is there for you, almost like a miracle and magic.

But with all these changes in everything around us, we too should not be left behind. The human individual should also show and demonstrate a change for the better in his nature, his character, conduct and his dealing with people. The time has come when one cannot side-line it and be engaged in some ordinary pursuits. The change is to be made, and the time

has come for that change. We all have to become transformed beings to populate a new world. And to that end, if these 3 days of sharing would contribute, even to a little extent, and help you in bringing about that great transformation which the spirit of the times expects from all of us everywhere, then you will have not only to ponder whatever is placed before you, but you will have to actually respond to this expectation!

Because you are all my Bharatiya Atmabandhus, we are all children of this great country, of this sublime culture, therefore, it is a sharing in a spirit of fellowship. But this time the sharing should not be merely for acquiring some more knowledge, that phase has passed. You are all intellectual people, Buddhijivis. Now, you will have to think in terms of 'implementing' whatever you have heard and received. Your actions must bear testimony to your understanding, your wisdom and your idealism! Through your actions people must be able to infer the contents of your heart. Is it iron, is it silver, is it gold or is it gold plus diamonds? The time has come to make manifest your knowledge!

And the second reason for my emphasising this is because perhaps there may not be another occasion for me to come and address you. Time is fleeting and life ebbs away! Therefore, you have to ask yourself, "When I go into the 'new'

millennium, into the 'new' century, how long am I going to be there?"

The entire religion and culture of this land is derived from that great mass of wisdom called the Vedas. The quintessence of the Vedic wisdom has been given to us in a dialogue between Lord Krishna and Arjuna in the Srimad Bhagavad Gita. He says a peculiar thing at the beginning of the second discourse which seems very, very paradoxical. The Lord speaks in the same breath both of death as well as immortality. While rebuking Arjuna to abandon his cowardice and arise and fight, '*Kshudram hridaya-daurbalyam tyaktvotishtha parantapa*', Lord Krishna says, '*Jatasya hi dhruvo mrityuh*' "Certain is death for those who are born." And the next moment He asks Arjuna: "Why are you saying 'I will not kill?' Who can 'kill' whom? And who can 'be killed' by whom? No one can be 'killed' because the Being is unborn, eternal and indestructible! Weapons cannot cleave It, fire cannot burn It, water cannot wet It, wind cannot dry It; unborn, eternal, permanent is that imperishable Self—Avinaashi Atma." So, while stating that death is certain for the one who is born, He stresses that immortality is the truth! Seemingly paradoxical – but that is the great Reality! He gives us a very valuable insight: "You have an aspect, a dimension within you which is Immortal Being. Although one day

you have to perish, yet you have within you as your reality, as your true identity, the Immortal Imperishable Being. This body is Nashavan but you are an Avinashi Tattva! You are beyond time and space. You have neither birth nor death. You are unborn, eternal!”

Bearing this great truth in mind, our great religion, our grand culture has stated thus; “O Man, this human birth is a very rare and golden opportunity presented to you. You have not come here to fritter away your days in this ‘passing show’, in this carnival around you. You are born with a mission, and that mission is no less than to know your Self, to experience the reality of your Being.” Then you have conquered death! The moment you have understood your true nature, there is no return into this wheel of birth and death, you attain liberation! This is the ideal placed before the Dharma-purusha.

Recognising the basic needs and cravings of a human being, the sages of Hinduism have given a fourfold ideal to be striven for by everyone. They called it the four Purusharthas or the ends to be striven for in life. Of these the Parama Purushartha, the highest striving is the attainment of liberation through the realisation of your essential nature, your Nija-svarupa. Through that experience or Anubhuti, you attain Kaivalya Moksha, the state of eternal bliss! The

others are all 'lesser' goals, but the supreme goal is to attain Kaivalya Moksha. That is why you have taken a human birth. Of all the gifts the Creator has given to His creation, the gift of the human status is the highest. Hence, you are the most fortunate ones; remember this and do not delay, because "*time and tide wait for no man*" as the saying goes.

The great Jagadguru Adi Sankaracharya, in his own inimitable way, gave in a brief manner the quintessence of this wisdom in the 'Bhaja Govinda'. He said:

*'Dinamapi rajani saayam praatah
shishiravasantau punarayatah,
kalah kreedati gacchatyayuh
tadapi na munchatyashavayuh.'*

(Days, nights, evenings, mornings, winters and springs are coming again and again in a cycle. Time is dancing; life is slowly departing. Even then the chain of desire does not break.)

How vain and foolish is man? How unthinking? With every sunrise and sunset life is ebbing away and soon the life span allotted to him will be finished. Daily he witnesses the whole world being continuously devoured by the jaws of death, and yet he is forgetful of his real mission, being engaged in frittering away his time and energy in futile miscellaneous things!

In another verse he says:

*'Ka te kanta kaste putrah
samsaro'yamativa vichitrah
Kasya tvam kah kuta ayatah
tatvam chintaya tadidam bhratah'*

(‘Who is your wife, who is your son? Strange indeed is this Samsara.

To whom do you belong? From where have you come? Dear brother, consider well what is the truth!’)

Ponder thus, “*Kastvam koham kutaaayaata*” –Who are you? Who am I? Where have you come from? We take it for granted because we are caught in a conveyer-belt-like routine day after day, week after week, month after month; years have passed. We are trapped in this Samsara, and we have no time to think deeply about life. We must ensure that this pattern will not continue. Therefore, wake up and think! And what little time is left, live it with such awareness that your way of life becomes the means to your liberation. Death is certain for this body. Your true nature, I say with great certainty, is immortal, beginningless, endless, imperishable, indestructible! Only you can realise this Reality! No other form of life can realise this Reality.

Therefore, be up and doing. Purify yourself. Make your mind subtle so that you are able to gain

insights and grasp these truths. Endow yourself with such qualities that they may gradually awaken your consciousness until it is transparent and luminous and is able to directly reflect the Divinity which shines in your heart. We are all moving temples of the Supreme Eternal Spirit, and That Eternal Spirit is the “Light of lights beyond all darkness” which shines in the hearts of all beings. It is Satchidananda. It is all auspiciousness, all radiance that abides in each one of us. So a transformation from the human to the divine is to take place. And not somewhere in Svargaloka or other Lokas after you pass away! The transformation of your consciousness into divine consciousness is to take place right here and now!

How you can bring about this transformation has been given in the Bhagawad Gita. In fact, the Gita contains practically everything as it is the quintessence of the Upanishads, and the Upanishads are the source of the highest knowledge. A hint is given in the 16th chapter, the Daivaasura Sampad Vibhaga Yoga. The more you develop divine qualities and become God-like in nature, the nearer you will draw to Divinity. There are divine qualities as well as the opposite because the human being is a mixture of opposing factors. There is that which is positive and that which is negative, that which is creative and that

which is destructive; that which we can call a very good quality and that which is its opposite, which deserves to be plucked out and discarded. A fierce determination must be present!

In the 16th chapter He tells us which qualities will gradually grant us liberation from the confines of our human nature, and these He calls 'divine' qualities. Attain these qualities, and you will be liberated, '*Daivi sampad vimokshaya*'. He states very clearly and categorically to Arjuna, "These divine qualities of Mine will grant you liberation. They are conducive to your liberation, Moksha."

You must have the determination that no matter how much the mind pulls in the wrong direction, you will not succumb. In every human mind the thought current flows in two streams. Sometimes it flows in the right channel, when you get all types of good intentions, good thoughts. Sometimes the thought current starts going in a non-desirable direction. When this is observed, you should set to work upon yourself. As long as the thought current is moving in an auspicious and good direction, encourage it and keep it going. But if you find that the thought current changes, do not keep quiet, do not allow yourself to be swayed in that direction. You must tell yourself, "No! No! Error!" and immediately withdraw the mind from that channel and sublimate it to once

again move in the right direction. Only then will you be safe. This should be a continuous and on-going process.

It calls for great perseverance! You must have the perseverance of the royal Rishi Bhagiratha. He said, "I will not take a defeat. No matter how many obstacles present themselves, I will persist and persevere in the effort until I succeed and get what I want" That is the ideal we have inherited from our great culture. In pursuing a high principle of living or in going after a worthy goal, we must never give up our efforts—Akhandaprayatna, ceaseless effort! Rishi Bhagiratha's perseverance, termed 'Bhagiratha-prayatna' has become a byword in our vocabulary. You must cultivate such fierce determination. Rishi Bhagiratha demonstrated steadfast perseverance. Time and again all the efforts he put forth became frustrated and fruitless, 'Nishphal.' But he did not give up.

As the story goes, Bhagiratha's ancestors had been reduced to ashes by the wrath of the sage Kapila. The only way of their spiritual redemption was to bring the celestial river Ganga from Svargaloka or heaven and make its waters flow over these ashes. Though successive kings tried to do it, they failed. Finally it was Bhagiratha who succeeded. First and foremost, he did great penance in order to propitiate 'Svarga-gamini Ganga'. She became propitiated and agreed to

descend to this earth. He then performed very severe austerities to please Brahma, the Creator, who appeared before him and advised him to solicit the help of Lord Shiva who alone could arrest the torrential flow of the river Ganga and slow her down. Bhagiratha did Tapas or penance once again and appeased Shiva who agreed to do so. Thus Ganga descended onto Shiva's Jata, his matted locks; but the river felt so cool and agreeable to Lord Shiva that she remained in His locks. Bhagiratha again had to do Tapas and request Lord Shiva to release her from his locks. Finally Ganga emerged as a stream and followed Bhagiratha. While flowing through the hermitage of sage Jahnu, she flooded it, thereby provoking him to swallow the river. Then, at the earnest entreaties of Bhagiratha she was allowed to emerge from the ear of the sage. Hence, she got the name '*Jahnvi*'. She finally flowed over the ashes of Bhagiratha's ancestors thereby granting them spiritual redemption. This was possible only because of the tireless efforts of Bhagiratha.

In our culture we have another great ideal, and that is 'Pativrata Savitri' who was utterly resolute and determined to revive her husband Satyavan from death. When the Lord of Death, Yama, appeared with the noose to take Satyavan's soul to the abode of death, she absolutely refused to accept widowhood, Vaidhavya. Because of the

power of her chastity, Pativratiya, she was able not only to see Yama but also to follow him. After much argument, in spite of Yama's persuasive efforts to send her back, she succeeded in so impressing and pleasing Yama with her steadfast devotion to her husband that Yama was forced to revive Satyavan and grant him a long life as well as other boons that she had asked for. Such was the intense and extraordinary determination of this holy lady Savitri!

And in the same way, we have yet another great ideal – that of Markandeya! Destined to die at an early age, the young Markandeya fervently worshipped Lord Shiva to transcend death. Just as Yama approached him with the noose in hand to take him away, Markandeya clung to the Shivalinga he was worshipping. The noose fell over both the boy's head as well as the Shivalinga. Immediately, Lord Shiva burst forth from the Shivalinga, blazing in radiance with trident in hand, to save his devotee. He thus prevented Yama from taking away the boy and bestowed on Markandeya a long life of fourteen Kalpas duration. So Markandeya's 16th year was never completed. He became a Chiranjeevi, one of the Immortals. Such was his intense devotion and faith!

These are three of the great ideals we have inherited from our glorious past, and if we

diligently try, even to some small measure, to cultivate these ideals and become personifications and embodiments of them, our life will move in the right direction and will not be in vain! Bhagirata's perseverance, Savitri's determination and Markandeya's absolute trust and faith in God!

God bless you.

Hari Om Tat Sat!

Second Talk

Radiant Immortal Atman!

Beloved and blessed children of the Divine! Wayfarers upon this journey called life! There is no wayfarer who does not have a fixed destination; that destination should also be a destination worth reaching. It must be something unique, something lofty, sublime, great and glorious!

This is precisely what our ancients have charted out for us in connection with this journey called life. They have charted for us a journey in such a way that ultimately it culminates in the destination called total divine perfection, which lies in each one of you in a seed form. A tiny little seed which you hold in the palm of your hand has the potential to grow into a towering tree with wide spreading branches, full of living force, laden with flowers and fruits and home to many birds. But when it is in a seed form, all this is not visible. It is potentially there, and given the right conditions, tending it with care and patience, this self-same seemingly insignificant seed can give shade to an entire picnic party in the garden! You can put chairs and tables under it, have a leisurely afternoon with a cat or dog and rest in its shade during a summer day. And who knows, one day it

may become the rafters of a beautiful hall like this, it may become pillars, doors and windows; maybe a cradle for a baby, cots for us to sleep on, chairs and tables—it becomes everything! This potential lies within this seed! Similarly, divine perfection lies dormant within you because it is your true nature. It is your true destiny! That potential has to be fully activated, unfolded, developed and made manifest!

There is a great destination you are heading towards. Your life should be lived in such a manner that it is not only favourable and conducive but actively helpful to that great attainment. It is to this end that our wise ones and our country's grand culture has placed before us lofty ideals to be inspired by, lofty ideals to live up to, so that our life takes us to those sublime heights!

In the tenth chapter, called Vibhuti Yoga, of the Srimad Bhagavad Gita the Purna Avatara Lord Krishna declares to Arjuna how He is manifest in this creation. He is immanent in this world, if only we had the eyes to see! He is gloriously manifest in all the best things of this world, the best of each species! The glories of the Lord are termed Vibhuties. For example we say "Oh! Sri Ramana Maharshi, Sri Aurobindo Ghosh, Sri Swami Sivananda etc., they are all Vibhuti-Purushas. In

and through them we see manifest the glory of God!

Thus, in declaring His glorious Vibhūtis – the formative forces or spiritual powers which give to each object its essential nature—Lord Krishna says, “Of horses, know me to be Uchchaisravas, of collections of water I am the ocean, of mountain-peaks, I am Meru, of immovable things, I am the Himalaya and of rivers I am Jahnavi or Ganga; of the generals I am Skanda, (the second son of Shiva and Parvati). He continues to describe at length His divine forms: He says in the 26th verse, “Of all trees, I am the Ashwattha, of divine seers I am Narada; of the Gandharvas I am Chitrarathah and of the perfected ones I am Kapila the sage.”

There is a great pilgrimage place in Ganga Sagar where a shrine is dedicated to Kapil Muni. He was a celebrated sage, considered as the fifth incarnation of Lord Vishnu. He was the brother of Arundhati (wife of the sage Vasishtha) and the only son of Kardama and Devahuti. He taught spiritual wisdom to his mother Devahuti. This part of the Bhagavata is known as the Kapila-gita. This teaching contains not only the Sankhya philosophy but also Ashtanga Yoga and Bhakti Yoga. The Sankhya Darshana (the Sankhya Sutras) is attributed to him. And in the great 'Itihasa' it is said that King Sagara of the Surya

Vamsha (Solar Dynasty) once performed the Ashwamedha Sacrifice. The sacrificial horse was stolen by Indra (the king of the gods), who left it in the hermitage of the great sage Kapila, in the Patala-Loka or nether world. Sagara's sixty-thousand sons while looking for the missing horse found it in the hermitage of the sage. They tried to attack him thinking that he was the person who had stolen the horse. They thus incurred the displeasure of the Sage Kapila and were reduced to ashes. There was no one there to do Kriya-Karma (last rites) for them. After many generations Raja Bhagiratha, a descendent of Sagara, pondering the fate of his ancestors, determines to bring the celestial river Ganga down and make her flow over these remains so that the souls of the ancestors would be redeemed and they gained salvation or Sadgati. Thus was mitigated the curse of the great Kapila Muni, a Siddha Mahapurusha. Therefore, Lord Krishna says, "Among the Siddhas I am Kapil Muni".

Lord Krishna says, "Of divine seers I am Narada." Narada is a well-known figure featuring in all the Puranas; there is no Purana without Narada. He was the spiritual son of Brahma the creator. A great ascetic, he led his life according to the principles of Dharma. He moved among the three worlds in order to propagate the Lord's name and preach devotion to God. Hundreds of people

who came in touch with him took to the path of religion and devotion. Sometimes, he corrected and brought round people by encouraging them to quarrel! He is a divine messenger because the Lord identifies Himself especially with Narada among the divine sages. He moves freely in the three Lokas—Asura-loka, Manushya-loka and Swarga-loka—the world of demons, the world of men and the world of celestials. None can touch him; the Asuras and Devatas both give respect to him.

Among his wanderings in the different Lokas he often heard the praise of Anasuya, the Dharmapatni of the great sage Atri Mahamuni. Anasuya was a paragon of wifely virtues and chastity who served her husband with intense devotion and love—a Mahapativrata. Narada had a keen desire to see this wonderful lady. He descended upon the earth and went towards Atri Maharishi's hermitage. Atri Mahamuni had gone for his bath and Sandhya—his personal austerities. Anasuya was husking the paddy and was completely absorbed in her work. Sage Narada announced himself by uttering "Narayana, Narayana, Narayana." At that time, Anasuya had lifted her hand to bring down the pestle. When she heard "Narayana" she left the pestle in mid-air and immediately went to welcome him with due respect. Meanwhile, the

pestle was hanging in the air, where she had left it! Sage Narada stared in wonder and thought, "Truly my visit has not been in vain. She is not an ordinary woman. She is an extraordinary Pativrata Nari." He asked her, "What is this miracle?" She replied, "It is not a miracle. It is all due to my husband's blessings. Taking the name of my husband, I asked the pestle to remain where it is so that I could come and receive you." Narada replied, "Indeed! It is something which I have never seen in my entire career!" And when he went back he praised the great Pativratya of Anasuya to Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva. The three deities came to test the chastity of Anasuya. They came as Sadhus with matted hair, ochre robes, Kamandalus and Danda and asked for alms, "*Bhavati bhiksham dehi*". As soon as Anasuya hears this she comes out and welcomes them with due respect. But they insist on 'Nirvana-Bhiksha' (Nirvana-Bhiksha means to be served without any clothing). Anasuya intuits that she is up for a severe test. She concentrates on her husband and says, "Certainly! As you say, so it shall be." She takes a palmful of water from Atrimuni's Kamandalu and prays to him, "My Pativratya is in your hands, O Patidev. It is you alone who can safeguard it." She then comes out and sprinkles this water upon the three Sadhus who are sitting there as her guests. Within a

moment they become three little infants and start crying. She goes inside, takes off her clothes and breast-feeds them! Thus, she passes the test. The gods are so pleased that they grant her a boon. Being childless she asks that the three gods remain with her in the form of a child. She is granted the boon, and a child with three faces and six arms wielding the symbols Shankha and Chakra of Vishnu, the Kamandalu and Mala of Brahma and Trishul and Damaru of Shiva is given to the couple. So a new Svarupa of Bhagawan was the result of the Maha-Pativratya of Anasuya.

This is one of the great ideals our culture has given to those in the Dampatya-grihastha-jeevana in the Manava Loka. The majority of people live the householder's life. The world is maintained by them. The world is not maintained by Sadhus who are living isolated in the Himalayas! Though the Hindu scriptures have eulogised Sannyasa, they have also boldly declared that the Grihastha is the pivot of the whole society since the members of the other three Ashramas depend upon him for their sustenance. The central government, state government, the airlines, etc., are all manned by the people who are in the world, who are in the Grihastha-ashrama. If there is no Grihastha-ashrama, there will be no continuance of lineage. Because they have progeny, generation after generation are kept up. Therefore, it is the

Dharma of the Grihastha to create progeny so that they contribute for making the next generation. And if one is without progeny, the Shastras enjoin that the Grihastha must take a second wife to have children and possibly a son, so that the family lineage is kept up.

And so, the great ideal before us for all times is Pativrata for the Nari and Eka-patni Vrata for the Sad-grihastha.

And the highest ideal of Eka-patni Vrata is that of Maryada Purushottama Bhagawan Sri Ramachandra. When Lord Rama, Sita and Lakshmana were in exile in the forest, the sister of Ravana, Shurpanakha, comes across the Lord. Struck by his princely radiance and charm, she takes the form of a beautiful damsel and appears before Lord Rama and entreats him to take her as his wife. Lord Rama stoutly refuses her pleas on the grounds that he already has a wife and that he strictly adheres to the 'Eka-patni-Vrata'. Thus Bhagawan Sri Ramachandra stands as the great ideal for all husbands; and for all wives it is that of Maha-pativrata Anasuya, one of the most celebrated women of Hindu mythology, who forever stands as a model of wifely virtues and testimonies that the power of chastity can bring nature under ones control.

The second great ideal that we have received is that of keeping one's word—'*Raghukula reeti*

sada chali aayee prana jaayi para vachana na jaayi.' Once we give our word there is no going back on it. One may lose one's life, but never shall the word be broken. And in the same way Lord Rama says, "If anyone should come before Me and says, 'I surrender to you', that person I can never reject." "*Tava asmi iti*" - if he says, "I am yours" no matter who he was before, a Parama-shatru, an Asura, I will never turn him away. I will give him shelter." This was the case with Vibhishana, the brother of Ravana, who repeatedly beseeched Ravana to desist from his unrighteous behaviour lest he will land in dire consequences and will have to face the Lord himself. He falls at Ravana's feet in open court and begs him not to be adamant. But Ravana gives him a kick and tells him to get away from his sight. Thus, downcast and determined not to be allied with evil Vibhishana turns his back on Ravana and goes to Rama to seek refuge. Hearing his story both Lakshmana and Sugriva are suspicious that he could be a spy from the enemy camp, and they strongly advise Rama not to concede to his request. But Rama says, "No! He has come in a state of surrender, I shall not turn him away." Such was his adherence to his word!

And then another great ideal that has come down to us from our wonderful past is the truthfulness of Raja Harishchandra. In the Hindu

religion and society, the name 'Harishchandra' has become synonymous with Satya or truth, so much so, that he is called 'Satya-Harishchandra'. When I think of Harishchandra, I always think of Mahatma Gandhi. Mahatma Gandhi once declared, "We are told that God is Truth. But I say, 'Truth is God'. I am the worshipper of Truth, and as long as I live, I will not leave the path of Truth. *Satya hi hamare liye divyata hai, Bhagawan hai. Mein Satya ka pujari hoon. Satya par mera atal vishvas hai. Satya ko kabhi bhi mein apana jeevan se bahar nahin nikaal sakata hoon.* If I utter anything, it is 100 % true, otherwise I keep silent. I will not utter anything which is not the truth." That is why he was held in such esteem by everyone including the British government with whom he crossed swords. Even they said that they had the highest reverence for Mahatma Gandhiji.

Harishchandra is an immortal figure in our history and due to his truthfulness even the great Gods revered him. Sage Vashistha had declared that the king Harishchandra of the solar dynasty was the most truthful person on earth. Hearing this, Sage Vishwamitra decided to test king Harishchandra in order to disprove Vashistha's statement. With his malicious imagination he employs Shani to the task. Shani can bring even the person of the highest fame and greatest prosperity to the most abject state of

disrepute and misfortune. If his shadow comes into one's horoscope, one goes through a very bad period (Shani-prabhav). So Vishvamitra sends Shani and soon Raja Harishchandra loses his kingdom and wealth, is banished and forced to go to Kashi. There he sees no other way but to sell his wife, Chandramati and son Rohitashva to a rich man to pay his dues to the sage. In a state of abject poverty he seeks employment under the caretaker of a crematory and to deposit the requisite cremation fees with the owner of the crematory. One day his son Rohitashva is bitten by a serpent and dies. The erstwhile queen Chandramati, who was reduced to work as a domestic helper, has no money for the cremation of her son. When she takes the body to the cremation ground, Harishchandra recognises her and is shocked to see their son dead in her arms. She tells him that she has no money and pleads with him to cremate the child but he does not relent and insists that he can only cremate if she can pay the fee. He says, "I have promised my employer that I will cremate the bodies only after receiving the fee, and so I cannot go back on my word". Even in this tragic and dire situation he sticks to his duty and his truthfulness—he does not budge from his Dharma and Satya. She says, "I have nothing with me to give as a requisite fee." Harischandra replies, "But you have that

Mangalsutra (the auspicious thread or ornament worn by married women, usually worn hidden to other's view and only known to the husband).” She suddenly realises that he is none other than her husband Harischandra because she is a great Pativrata and there was no way that he could know about her Mangalsutra. She lays the child aside and falls at his feet, and they both face each other but he still persists in telling her to either pay the fee or take the child back. At this point, pleased by his strict adherence to his Dharma of Satya, Vishwamitra is forced to concede defeat and the gods and sages appear on the scene, bring the child Rohitashva back to life and restore the kingdom to Raja Harishchandra and bless him saying, “The world shall never forget that such great beings like you have come and sanctified this earth by your presence!” This high ideal of truthfulness is also a bestowal of our culture. It serves as a guideline in our life.

Such lofty ideals actually lived by great ones in the past teach us that we can make our life sublime. They have gone before us and set footprints in the sands of time. Even if we cannot become just like them, we must still try to emulate them. If we try to emulate these great examples, then our life will not be ordinary; our life will be lived upon a much higher plane and will not be in vain.

I wind up by mentioning two more names of great ones. One name is that of Raja Shibi Chakravarti. He is a prince from Rajasthan, belonging to the Rana family. And the other is of Raja Dilip. Dilip and Shibi and the two great ideals which they exemplified in their lives we will take up for tomorrow morning's consideration. Until then, thank you for your presence and thank you for your patient listening. God bless you all.

Hari Om Tat Sat.

Third Talk

Radiant Immortal Atman!

Beloved and blessed children of the Divine! Mumukshus and Jijnasus, devotees of God, Bhaktas, Sadhaks and Yogis engaged in doing spiritual Sadhana in your chosen path of Yoga.

The main purpose of my being amidst you for these three days and giving these talks in the spirit of sharing is that you may start applying as many of the truths that you can in your day to day life from today onwards. It is not merely for imparting information, for increasing your knowledge or giving you a fresh look towards things that you already know, but mainly and solely that they will become a part of your character and conduct.

Cultural ideals are to become living expressions manifesting through you. Cultural ideals may fill pages of books, but then they have no relation to human life and human society which are dynamic, growing and progressive. Everything should move towards greater wholeness, towards complete perfection in everything—not merely in the deepest and the highest sense of your true spiritual identity – Nija Swarupa, the ultimate spiritual dimension. But

you are all born to not only move towards the attainment of divine perfection, but perfection in every other dimension of your life also.

If you are a citizen of a city, the city must be richer and benefitted for your being in that city. And as a son or a daughter of Bharatavarsha your presence should be of a positive benefit to your Motherland. Your Motherland is not only in Delhi or Calcutta, but it is from the Himalayas to Kanyakumari, from Arunachal Pradesh right up to the western-most corner of Gujarat. This is India. Everything you do should directly or indirectly leave a beneficial effect upon this India. And at the same time India is where you are. The person who is sitting next to you in a bus or a train, who is shopping in a store where you are purchasing something, that person also is India for you because he is your Bharatiya Atmabandhu. There is a brotherhood between you and every other citizen of India. You must feel, "I am not a stranger here. No one is a stranger to me. Everyone is mine. I am always moving amongst my own brethren. It is our Mother India that unites us all into one great national brotherhood."

There should be no feeling of difference between people of your province and those elsewhere. This feeling of unity has to be nurtured and made to grow. In the beginning of this century due to a lack of today's modern means of

communications, large portions of India were unknown to the rest of India; our tribals became alienated, we never gave them a thought, we did not even know that they existed—the Adivasis, Girijan, and the Vanavasis. Due to the neglect of Indians by Indians, it became possible for alien cultures and religious systems to enter into that area of India to such an extent that the Adivasis started to think of themselves as not belonging to India at all but instead maintained their loyalty to the West. Now we realise that it was a mistake to have neglected our own kith and kin, and we are forced to admit it and make amends.

Recently many organisations have started to set up new relationships with the original, native inhabitants of our jungle lands, and sometimes, this positive and very desirable process is being vitiated by the poison of politics. However, no matter how much politics may try to divide and separate, there is one thing that has always knit us together as a whole, and even now is a powerful force and will always continue to be a powerful force of oneness, and that is our great culture and our cultural ideals.

Two cultural ideals have always been dominating our national life. One is the great ideal that man should not live for himself alone; man should live to benefit others. Through that only, your nature will evolve and expand, your heart

will become generous, your vision will be broadened, and your hands will not try to grab for yourself. “Let me give to others; the hands are meant to give.”—Parahita Paropakara has always been a dominant note in the unfoldment of Indian history, so much so, that the great colossus Veda Vyasa Maharshi, whom the other great ones equated with God Himself, ultimately declared: “I have brought into being these 18 Puranas mainly to tell you two important things: “The highest which a human individual can perform is to do good to others, to benefit others, and the worst crime that one can ever commit is to harm any creature in the creation of God”—Recalling this great utterance of Veda Vyaasa, many millennia later, Sant Tulsidas confirms this in his saying, “*Paropakara sama punya nahin bhai, parapeeda sama nahin adhamayee*”—“Oh brothers listen! This is what I have to say—There is no greater merit, there is no greater good act in the eyes of God than that of benefiting others.” Paropakaar is doing good to someone from whom you expect nothing, whom you do not even know, whom you have never seen in your life before and perhaps will never see. This act of Paropakara has been raised to the level of a sacred act which our great ones have handed down to us as our cultural heritage.

Long ago in the Upanishadic era the students, after having imbibed knowledge from a teacher in a Gurukula, were told upon completion, "Your stay with me is over; now you have to go into the world, enter into active, social life and become a householder. Whatever you have learnt here, you must practise and apply in your householder life and elevate it to a sublime and noble height." He would thus give the final parting instructions to the group of students or graduates as it is done in the Universities today. This is the ancient version of the modern University Convocation Address in those forest universities or the Gurukulas. As parting advice, the students were told, 'Matri devo bhava, Pitri devo bhava,'—"Honour your mother as God; honour your father as God." This we can understand because during the most helpless period of our life, when we are totally helpless after birth, it is the mother who gives her whole life: day and night, sacrificing her rest and sleep to look after the child, protecting it, nourishing it, loving it and making it comfortable as it is a newcomer to a strange world. Therefore, the mother being the first experience of comfort, protection and nourishment of the new Jivatma is the first benefactor. Then the father, being the giver of your life—you are an extension of him—enables the mother to devote all her time to

you. By his exertion and hard labour he brings home the food and keeps the pot boiling in the kitchen and mother is without any worry and able to look after the child. Though it is indirect activity, it is the Seva and exertions on the part of the father that makes everything possible and therefore 'Pitri devo bhava.'

Thirdly, the distinguishing factor between other forms of life and the human being is intelligence, the mind. But then, even though endowed with this faculty, if nothing is done to unfold it, develop it and feed information into it, one becomes an illiterate fool. If no education is given, if the intelligence and mind remain the same, then one is no better than an animal. If you are illiterate, if you do not know even to count or sign your name, the potential of the faculty of intelligence remains dormant. It is to be unfolded and made dynamic and active, and it must grow and progress. That is done by the teacher (the Acharya) in the school or maybe the Moulvi in the Madarasa of the Muslims. This academic instruction is important and man is made a real man through the faculty of thinking and knowing things. Therefore, 'Acharya devo bhava' – 'Regard your teacher as God' who has made you a real human being through knowledge. These three things we can understand—*Matri devo bhava, Pitri devo bhava, and Acharya devo bhava.*

But then, the fourth which is '*Atithi devo bhava*'—'Honour the guest as God' may sound strange! Someone who unexpectedly turns up at your doorstep without prior intimation is to be regarded as God. Maybe an unknown wayfarer on a journey or pilgrimage who has been walking past midday without food or drink and suddenly presents himself at your door expecting your hospitality. If he is an unknown person, then you must go out and receive him and ask, "What can I do for you, brother?" because in terms of the global human family, he is your brother. The word 'Atithi' means he is an 'uninvited guest'. An 'invited guest' is expected. But this person is an unknown and unexpected person at your doorstep. Therefore, he is called an 'A-tithi' or one without an appointment. '*Atithi devo bhava*'. Regard a perfect stranger also as God and do everything that you can for him. This is our concept of Paropakara which should not only be towards the people related or known to you, but even to those absolutely unrelated and unknown. As we are fortunately born in Punyabhumi Bharatavarsha, there is no greater Punya or merit for us than being of benefit to others - "*Paropakara sama punya nahin bhai.*"

There is an example to illustrate this. Once a great famine stalked the land and people were dying. There was no food at all. A very well to do

and respected family was impoverished due to this famine. If there is nothing to eat, one is helpless. Money cannot appease hunger. Once this family managed somehow to go into the jungle and get some little root and fruit and made a meal. Just as they were about to eat, a beggar came and said, "Please give me something to eat. I have not eaten anything for many days. I am very hungry." The husband said to his wife, "Look here! Our children are young. They require your care. They are closer to the mother, so you please eat. I will give my share to this man." And so, he gave away his share and the beggar went away. The devout wife said to her husband, "Let the children eat their full share. But you cannot expect me to eat my share while you are hungry. I give half of my share to you. Please accept it." When they were about to commence their meal a Chandala or untouchable approached them and said, "I have lived my life by hunting, but now due to starvation, I have become so weak that my eyes are blurred and my head is reeling, and I am not able to see my target nor do I have the strength to pull my bow. Please give me something to eat." The couple further divided the food which the wife wanted to share with her husband and she said, "Let us give this to this man and let the children eat. We can somehow bear our hunger." And so they gave the food away to him. The Chandala

with tears of gratitude took it and went away. Then just as the children were about to eat, a hungry dog appeared before them looking emaciated and eagerly eyed the food. The husband looked at his wife; the wife looked at the husband and said, "Look! The dog is also the child of some mother even as our children are from us." They approached the children and asked them to share their food with the dog. The children could not understand why their mother was asking them thus when they were hungry and about to eat. But they unquestioningly obeyed. They gave a little portion to the hungry dog and were happy to see the dog gobbling up the food. It comes to pass that the last piece of food left in the hands of the children was taken by a crow. Ultimately they end up sacrificing everything to appease the hunger of others. Great is the glory of this act because there is no agony worse than hunger for any living creature. It is said that the Gods themselves appeared and blessed them.

Sacrificing oneself for the good of others has always been considered as a great virtue in Hinduism. One of the greatest examples in the Puranas is that of king Rantideva. He was the son of Sankriti and belonged to the Chandravamsha or Lunar race. He had performed many Yajnas or Vedic sacrifices. Once he was doing severe austerities in a forest along with his family. As a

part of this, he fasted for 48 days. on the 49th day he received divine food, just enough for him and his family. As the family was getting ready to partake of the food, a few hungry guests came one after the other. Rantideva gave away all the food including the meagre drinking water. Then these guests, who were none other than the Trimurtis—Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva—appeared before him as they were well pleased and asked what boon he wished. Rantideva paid them humble obeisance, but did not ask for any boon! The Gods then blessed him and his family with the highest spiritual wisdom.

What is the meaning behind these examples? We are all one, we belong to one family—‘*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*’. When I experience pain, I understand the pain of others, and when I experience satisfaction by eating food, I understand the hunger of others and that a hungry man should be fed. Thus identifying oneself with the joys and sorrows of others is “Paropakara”. ‘Paropakara’ is not Para-upakara’, meaning I am serving or benefitting ‘others’. There is no “other”. In fact, I am benefiting myself; I am giving to myself, because the “other” is myself in another form.” This is a grand vision and truth. This is the great ideal.

A great emperor named Shibi Chakravarti was the king of Kashi. He had taken a vow that he

would protect anyone who took refuge in him. Once the Gods Indra and Agni decided to subject him to a severe test. Indra took the form of a hawk and Agni that of a pigeon. The hawk started pursuing the pigeon to kill and eat it. The pigeon managed to approach King Shibi and sought his protection which he instantly promised. The hawk too approached him to give him the pigeon which was its rightful food and prey. Shibi struck a compromise saying that he would give from his own body as much flesh as the pigeon weighed. Thus he was fulfilling Dana, Dharma and his Kartavya as a king. Dana means the charity which he made to the hawk; Dharma means one's moral duty—the protection of the helpless, as in the case of the pigeon; and Kartavya or kingly duty which was to satisfy all the beings under his care which he did to both the hawk and the pigeon! when he started cutting his own flesh, the two gods revealed themselves, blessed him by making his body whole again and granting him several other boons. This blazing example of King Shibi Chakravarti's single act of adhering to his duty as a king, giving protection to one who sought shelter from danger and at the same time, satisfying one who had asked for charity, stands out as a great source of inspiration for all times.

Another ideal that has come from our culture is the ideal of compassion. Tulsidas says, "*Daya*

dharma ka mool hai”—All Dharma or righteousness is rooted in compassion.” One who feels for others, one who is compassionate towards all creatures, he can never commit anything wrong. In human conduct ego is a Kalanka or a black spot, and it leads to inappropriate actions. So Tulsidas says, “*Daya dharma ka moola hai, paap moola abhimaan, Tulsi daya na chhadiye, jaba tak ghata mein pran.*” Tulsi says, that the root of Dharma is compassion and the root of sin is the ego; do not give up being compassionate towards all creatures until your very last breath.—Be kind, be compassionate, be soft-spoken. Be a source of solace to those in distress, cheer up those who are sad, give hope to those in despair. These are all manifestations of compassion in various ways.

Raja Dilip is said to have been one of the most righteous and chivalrous emperors of the Suryavamsha or Solar Dynasty. Due to an inadvertent omission on his part he was cursed by the divine cow, Kamadhenu, to be childless. To negate the ill-effects of the curse, the king was advised to worship the divine cow Nandini who was the daughter of Kaamadhenu and thereby earn her goodwill. The king faithfully served Nandini for twenty-one days. He slept where the cow slept and ate when the cow ate and washed the cow and took very good care of it. On the

twenty-second day, when the cow was grazing in the field, a lion suddenly appeared and pounced on Nandini. The king tried to kill the lion but could not because the lion happened to be a servant of Lord Shiva and he cast a spell on King Dilip that made him motionless. The king wanted to protect the cow but could not do anything except speak. He begged the lion to spare the cow and eat him instead, and he bowed before the lion. Seeing that the king was willing to sacrifice himself to save her, the cow was very much pleased. She revealed that the incident was actually a trick played to test his faithfulness. As he came out victorious, he was blessed by the divine cow and soon begot a son and heir to the throne, who was called Raghu. This supreme sense of self-sacrifice, what a lofty ideal!

Another lofty ideal is perseverance! Lord Buddha struggled with his mind and overcame the conflicting thoughts that were pulling as harsh strings: memories of his young wife, memories of his little child Rahul, and the thought of all those wonderful enjoyments that he had as a young man when he was surrounded by all sensual attractions, naturally all this put his mind in a turmoil. Thus tormented, Lord Buddha takes a vow that he will not stir from his seat until he attains illumination: "The flesh may shrivel, the skin may dry up and fall, all my bones may

crumble into dust, but Siddhartha will not leave this seat unless he has attained illumination!” Such was his firm resolve and determination! He became an illumined Muni and a sage!

We're most fortunate to have such grand ideals as part of our heritage from the sublime culture of Bharatavarsha. We have considered them during these past three days. May we be inspired to live a life of idealism and be an asset to our nation and through such an ideal life may we make our spiritual Sadhana also fruitful in God-realisation. May God and all the saints bless us to attain success in this worthy endeavour!

Hari Om Tat Sat!



