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Inspirational Keynote Address

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Dear fellow brahmanas and fellow followers of Santana Vaidika Dharma. This vaidika dharma is not only 'sanatana' meaning eternal but also 'pracheena' meaning ancient. As we are discussing this dharma in our times, it is also contemporary. We see that classification is an inherent expression of nature which is full of diversity. This natural classification is there for the harmonious operation of society. If there is no classification in the society even for a short time, there would be chaos.

The inherent classification that can be seen in a human society is four-fold namely, spiritual, martial art, production of wealth and obedient activity or service. This classification can also be applied to an individual. However, in the context of a human society the classification is based on predominant frame of mind of people. That is to say, in a person with predominantly spiritual quality, the other qualities support. Similarly, it is the case of other three qualities. This system of arrangement of division of mindset and labor can be seen in an institution through teachers (educators, designers), administrators, accountants and service providers. Such inherent arrangement in human society is referred as 'varna vyvastha' meaning arrangement based on inherent frame of mind and aptitude for a corresponding profession).

This varna vyvastha or societal arrangements inherent in nature is based on guna (frame of mind) and karma (work orientation) given by the Lord Krishna as He says in Bhagavadgita (4.13), "chhaturvarnyam maya srishtam guna

karma vibhagashaha". The basis of this classification is linked to the three well-known mental qualities as satva (spiritually oriented), rajas (action oriented), and tamas (service oriented). Although everyone's personality is an integration of all these three qualities, one of these qualities will be predominant. However, the proportionality of these qualities can be changed by an effort.

The terminology used in the varna arrangement of a society is Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra. Sri Adi Shankracharya in his commentary on Bhagavadgita describes the relationship between guna and varna as follows. Satva through spiritual qualities characterizes a brahmana. Rajas as the dominating quality with satva as supporting characterizes a kshatriya. Rajas as the dominating quality with tamas as supporting characterizes a Vaishya. Tamas as the dominating quality with rajas as supporting characterizes a shudra. This natural classification based on equal importance to all four varnas was brought out by rishis as a working plan and guideline for a society. This arrangement expresses the integration of nature and nurture that makes a personality. This arrangement is set to avoid undue competition as everyone is good in performing according to their frames of mind. An example can be given in the harmonious cooperation of various limbs of a human being. That is in the case of a thorn pricked into the feet, the eyes see it, and the elbows bend and hands remove the thorn from the feet. In a similar way all the four-fold components of the society need to work in harmony for the healthy existence of the society. It is to be noted all human beings have equal need and eligibility of pursuit of happiness based on food, shelter, clothing and worship of God.

A person born in a brahmana family has to achieve brahmanatva which is based on satva qualities. These satva qualities are also referred as eight Atma gunas (qualities of all-pervading entity Atman) by sage Gautama. These eight gunas are:

1. Compassion and mercy on all beings (daya)
2. Forgiveness and endurance (Kshanti)
3. Absence of envy or jealousy (Anasuya)
4. Purity in thought, speech and action (shoucham)
5. Absence of exertion (Anaayasam)
6. Auspiciousness and wishing good for all (Mangalam)
7. Absence of wretchedness (Akarpanyam)
8. Absence of longing for things (Aspruha)

With these eight qualities achieved a person realizes Atman (Brahman) can speak about the nature of Brahman, the Supreme Being. It is on this basis the Purusha Sookta says "Brahmanosya Mukhamaaseet" which means "a Brahmana (with these above eight qualities) becomes a mouth-piece for Brahman".

A person born in brahmana family not only has to achieve these above qualities but also has to help others to achieve these qualities which are universally valid. All the Vaidika samskaras and day to day activities prescribed for a Brahmin by birth is to help him or her to achieve these above eight qualities of Atman. Thus a person born in Brahmana family should necessarily strive to possess these above eight qualities.

Now a question arises namely what about a person born in a brahmana family, either not work towards these qualities or becomes indifferent to these qualities? The answer is that person is referred as "brahma bandhu" or "brahman bruva" meaning that due to the birth in a

brahmana family, that person has still potential to give birth to children who could take the path of brahmanatva through achieving these eight qualities. However if in three generations or more, the effort towards achieving the brahmanatva is not made then that family ceases to be a brahmana.

Then another question arises, namely, what about a person not born as brahmana, but possesses brahmanatva through the achievement of eight qualities? The answer is that person by possessing qualities of Atman becomes an "Atma jnani" (or "Brahma jnani"). That person is to be revered by all. His guidance is sought by those in the path of achieving the qualities of Atman. It is to be noted that the person possessing these qualities of Atman has risen above all obstacles. His or her life is fulfilled and is full of bliss. He is a spiritual light and a blessing to the society.

Thus, persons who are brahmanas by birth should necessarily strive to achieve the eight qualities of Atman (Brahman). Once they achieve and possess these qualities, they become brahmana by letter and spirit. Then they can guide all others in the path of achieving these qualities of Atman.

I humbly offer my salutations to my spiritual guru, yogi-seer His holiness Sriranga Sadguru for his guidance in this fulfilling path of Sanatana Dharma. I acknowledge with gratitude yogi-seer His Holiness Sri Ranga Priya Swami of Ashtanga Yoga Vijnana Mandiram for his guidance in preparation of this presentation. Also I offer my salutations to all those from ancient times to our times who possessed or possess these eight qualities of Atman.

I wish to finally offer a poem of mine composed as a title song for a play on Chanakya, a brahmana with all the eight qualities who integrated the land of Bharata.

Let the Spiritual Light Shine, Shine everywhere...

*Let the Light of Land of Bharata shine, shine everywhere.
By dispelling the ignorance within, and showing the path.*

*Let the Adharma be defeated and the Dharma attain victory.
With Knowledge-valor, as Krishna-Arjuna, Chankaya-Chandragupta*

*Let the efforts of rishis, the success of yogis show the paths.
Follow Rama's path, Krishna's Gita, and Chanakaya's wisdom.*

*Let the immortal lights of Bharata shine, shine everywhere.
Let these eternal lights inspire Truth and Dharma everywhere.*