THE HAMSA
A Vedic Studies Program magazine of Vedānta teachings
by Achārya Shunya ji
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Sure, these definitions may seem valid, they even make sense. But the questions continue to gnaw at your soul and the answers feel like one hollow excuse after another. We are tired of the routine where we wake up, do our daily grind, and go to bed, and yet we tell ourselves we are living.”

“We are living a life that we never met, and yet I could sense her confidence in my capabilities to improve on my performance. I saw her walking with purpose and determination, and yet I knew I was walking like a droopy dog without a purpose.”

“The last thing I remember is Ms. Gayatri Guhanarayan coming to her teacher with questions on this topic and then writing this article based on Āchārya Shunya’s responses and teachings on a variety of Satsangha dates.”

“The four Purushārthas (purush = human, ārtha = goal, purpose.) are Dharma (duty) towards a higher power, Ārtha (material acquisition) and drives your moral compass that guides your ārtha (acquisition of material wealth) and Kāma (desire) is the part of ourself that was once addicted to something or someone, and Moksha (liberation). Upon these principles, Āchārya Shunya sheds light to help us along our path. We have travelled but the only one worth travelling. Luckily, the Vedic sages saw us eventually stumbling on this path and provided us with a disclaimer here is that it is a temporary state of happiness. Giving

“Mandela experienced in the confines of prison and how Helen Keller chose to boldly live her life despite her lack of senses. To the undiscriminating eye they are bound. However, these brave souls understood that no body, sense or set of four walls could confine them. The majority of us are miserable because we are under the illusion that we are bound by finite objects like four walls. But how can the soul, which is infinite, be bound? How can that which is free of time and space be entrapped by it? Shattering this illusion is what Purushārtha literally translates to our “life purpose.” The four Purushārthas are Dharma (duty) towards a higher power, Ārtha (material acquisition), Ārtha (material acquisition) and drives your moral compass that guides your ārtha (acquisition of material wealth) and Kāma (desire) is the part of ourself that was once addicted to something or someone, and Moksha (liberation). Upon these principles, Āchārya Shunya sheds light to help us along our path. We have travelled but the only one worth travelling. Luckily, the Vedic sages saw us eventually stumbling on this path and provided us with a disclaimer here is that it is a temporary state of happiness. Giving

Let us start with ārtha. Our ultimate goal as spiritual beings is to attain moksha from this redundant world of finite objects.

The first Purusharthādharma and kāmādharmaygg is the pursuit of something more permanent, a bliss that's not going to fade away. Once we are fully aware of this unshakable bliss, we are more likely to appreciate the suffering caused by pursuit of something less permanent and fleeting. We all start life with a moral compass, Dharma. However, we lose our moral compass when we lose integrity.

If we truly are children of abundance, it is natural to want to share. We are born to give. We are born to love, but how do we know the right person to give to? How do we know if we are giving out of true compassion or self-interest? How do we know if our giving will have a positive impact or if it will be wasted? How do we know if we are making a real difference or if we are just giving for the sake of giving? How do we know if we are helping someone or if we are hurting someone?

To help us deal with this question, let us understand kāma. Kāma (desire) is the part of ourself that was once addicted to something or someone, and Moksha (liberation). Upon these principles, Āchārya Shunya sheds light to help us along our path. We have travelled but the only one worth travelling. Luckily, the Vedic sages saw us eventually stumbling on this path and provided us with a disclaimer here is that it is a temporary state of happiness. Giving

“Let us not fear kāma, let us embrace the part of us that sees other and not only ourselves as important because more love means more understanding.”

Ms. Gayatri Guhanarayan can be her teacher with questions on this and then write this article based on Āchārya Shunya’s responses and teachings on a variety of Satsangha dates.
Bade Bābā was born in 1872 in Ayodhyā, a city where, despite the strong Mogul influence in other parts of Northern India at the time, the Vedic spiritual ethos was still intact. The Hindi language, Hindu religious symbols, Sanskrit and Sanskritized culture were still alive. Ayodhyā was an active pilgrimage city for Hindus from Rig Vedic times and the birthplace of Lord Rāma.

An interesting episode attached to Bade Bābā’s birth is the fact that while his mother was in labor, many cows (and there are thousands of holy cows in Ayodhyā who roam free) arrived at the gate of the house as if walking to a pilgrimage. With single-minded focus, they sat there peacefully, as if collected for some auspicious assembly. There were more than three dozen cows gathered, enough for the neighbors to get curious and talk and gaze in awe. A rumor spread that Kanaha (Krishna) was arriving shortly.

Since cows are honored, the women in the family began making offerings to them and ritually asking for their blessings for an easy labor for Bade Bābā’s mother. Soon the buzz, crowd and commotion were considerable.

As soon as news of Bade Bābā’s happy and easy arrival was conveyed outside to the gathering of neighbors and sacred animals, the cows almost in one movement stood up. Their job of blessing complete, they walked along their way, once again crisscrossing the narrow lanes of the ancient city of Ayodhyā, never to return in this manner to the home again.

At birth, Bade Bābā was reported as a super content and smiling infant with sharp features and bright eyes, that seemed to shine with an inner glow. Hence his grandfather, after checking with a priest, named him ‘Surjan’, literally meaning ‘the divine one’.

Surjan grew up to become Shānti Prakash (Light of Peace) after Surjan’s Upanāyanam at age 11. At the Upanāyanam, the family Purohit (priest) announced that Shānti Prakash would follow the guidance of his new name in this loka and beyond.

This story has been adapted from Āchārya Shunya’s book, Vedika’s Sādhu Lineage.
We do not gossip. As a spiritual family itself. These specific customs, mores and behaviors of our cultural behaviors, called Vinay, which frame a proper approach to engaging with the teacher and the cultural behaviors, called Vinay, which frame a proper approach to engaging with the world. Vinay is the first step to understanding the ways in which the human mind interacts and engages with the world. Vinay is the first step to truly knowing our Self.

“Vinay refers to all aspects of the way in which we operate within a Gurukula—from the way we walk in, to our interactions with each other, to our interactions with our teacher. Vinay is practiced in our thoughts, our words and our actions. The literal translation of Vinay is humility/humbleness. Practically, Vinay refers to all aspects of the way in which we operate within a Gurukula—from the way we walk in, to our interactions with each other, to our interactions with our teacher. We do not show the soles of our feet to our teacher. We do not show the soles of our feet to our teacher. This is because the student needs an ego balancing. Looking up to a teacher physically directs us to a more still and open posture, conducive to learning and listening. The student needs an ego balancing. Looking up to a teacher physically directs us to a more still and open posture, conducive to learning and listening. This energetic quality of humbleness allows us to become open to receiving knowledge.

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The Vedas say there are three types of vāsanās that exist in every human and impede spiritual growth. Day-to-day life is commonly dominated by these inflated desires, and they are what stand in the way of our truth-seeking journey. To live a better life, we need to rid ourselves of these three types of vāsanās. It is quite interesting to see that the Veda itself is a shāstra, and still it is shāstra vāsanā. The third vāsanā is loka vāsanā. This vāsanā relates to an ignorant relationship with others. This vāsanā is rooted in the ignorance of how we see ourselves as a criterion for the success of others. The body can also become the criteria for our self-worth.

Reducing Vāsanās through Observation

When we see that a vāsanā is about to take over, we can redirect ourselves and that is at the thought level. The negative vāsanā once it has taken place. However, there is a window of opportunity to reduce the impact of the negative vāsanā by thoroughly observing our thoughts. We can connect the dots, and shed the light of meaning on the written words.

These teachings are scattered throughout the Vedas, and it takes a teacher to point out the references, connect the dots, and shed the light of meaning on the written words. The Vedas say there are three types of vāsanās that exist in every human and impede spiritual growth. Day-to-day life is commonly dominated by these inflated desires, and they are what stand in the way of our truth-seeking journey. To live a better life, we need to rid ourselves of these three types of vāsanās. It is quite interesting to see that the Veda itself is a shāstra, and still it is shāstra vāsanā. The third vāsanā is loka vāsanā. This vāsanā relates to an ignorant relationship with others. This vāsanā is rooted in the ignorance of how we see ourselves as a criterion for the success of others. The body can also become the criteria for our self-worth.

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Āchārya Shunya has begun the systematic study of Sri Adi Shankarāchārya’s Tattva Bodhah. Her teachings on the first verse as taught on August 7th, August 21st, and September 4th, 2014 have been compiled in this article by her student Vidya Deepa Gupta.

Scripture Highlight
Tattva Bodhah selection on The Four-Fold Student Qualifications

THE HAMSA

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Further explanation as taught by Āchārya Shunya:

There are six qualities to make you picture knowledge of Śaivism:

1. Vijnāna (siddhi) is the power to perceive
2. Jñāna (siddhi) is the power to understand
3. Vairāgya (siddhi) is the power to renounce
4. Siddha (siddhi) is the power to achieve
5. Laksana (siddhi) is the power to perceive
6. Mantra (siddhi) is the power to��
Invitation to Contribute

This magazine is a sevā offering created by Sadasya members for the benefit of the entire Sadasya kula. There are many ways you too can gift your words and insights to the rest of your conscious community. If you are interested in writing an article on a topic covered in a recent Satsangha, sharing your personal reflections on how this knowledge is changing your life, editing stories from our lineage, or transcribing selected teachings from recordings, please contact Ishani, magazine Editor, ishani@vedikaglobal.org.

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A Note on Sanskrit Spellings

Sanskrit words have been transliterated from the original Devanagari using a blend of phonetic spellings and diacritical marks. We have tried to use a format that will allow a reader who may not be very familiar with technical standardized Sanskrit transliteration to read the articles naturally and intuitively understand a close approximation of the pronunciation of the words.
anītya : ephemeral, non-eternal
ārtha : material wealth
ātmabodha : experience of the Self
ātman : the Self
Brahman : the One Universal Consciousness that is both experiencing and manifesting all of creation as the innermost reality; the underlying spiritual reality
dama : sense control
deha vāsanā : obsession with the body – both its appearance and its comfort and concern for its continuity (manifested as fear of death)
dharma : righteousness, duty, noble values
dukha : sorrow
Granthis : spiritual texts from which teachers unfold knowledge of the Self for students (also known as śhāstra)
jagat : the objective phenomenal, outer world (as opposed to samsāra which is the subjective inner world, a creation of the mind)
jīnānaṃ : knowledge of the Self
jīāna yoga : path to knowing the Self through study of Vedānta scriptures (specifically Upanishads)
kāma : pleasure, desire
kāma vāsanā : the obsessive pursuit of sensorial pleasures
mananam : contemplation, the second step of learning from Guru in Vedic tradition
kula : spiritual family
loka vāsanā : giving excessive importance to the outside world for material achievements, accomplishments, approval and to define one’s self-worth and sense of identity
moha : existential confusion
moksha : spiritual freedom
mumukshutvam : desire to know the truth of Self and God
nitya : eternal
Pāda Pūjā : worshipping of the Guru’s feet, symbolizes reverence for the path the teacher has walked to reach the Self
purushārtha : the legitimate human 4-fold goals of pleasure, productivity, virtue, and acquisition of Self-knowledge
rajas : energizing/agitating quality of mind
samādhiḥ : concentration, steady focus of the mind
sādhanā : voluntary dedicated discipline to reach self-determined spiritual goals
śaṃskṛta : spiritual lineage imparting knowledge of the Self
satsangha : gathering of students to hear spiritual discourses from a spiritual teacher
svātva : quality of the mind manifesting inner clarity, harmony, inner intelligence
sevā : selfless service
śramaṇa : act of self controlling one’s mind for sādhanā
śāstra : sacred texts revealing Self
śāstra vāsanā : an obsessive relationship with śhāstra defined by an ego-driven intellectual drive to gather intellectual knowledge; rather than actually living as per the precepts of the texts (as expounded by a Vedic Guru and Vedanta); It leads to one becoming a scholar (only) and possessing the “ego” of scholarliness
śraddhā : faith, a functional openness in our minds, allowing us to receive new teachings from the śhāstra and guru
śruti : Highest knowledge of the Veda communicated via speech transmission of the guru (sound); Vedic wisdom is meant to be taught through an oral tradition of speech from master (guru) to disciple (shishya)
sukha : pleasure, happiness in the material world
svadharma : our duties based on our karmic placement in life
tamas : quality of inertia/resistance in the mind
titikshā : sādhanā indicating deliberate endurance of opposites, tolerance of cold and hot, pleasure and pain, etc.
Upanishad : section of the Vedas imparting Advaita Vedanta, literally translates to “sitting at the feet of a master”
uparamah : our duties based on our karmic placement in life
uparati : accepting what comes in life as part of the cosmological order
vātakapas : sādhanā of self-controlled speech
vāsanā : hidden desires, wants and traits borne from an imprint on the mind created by our actions, thoughts and perceptions in the past
vinaya : literally humility or humbleness, also the behavior and attitude the student mindfully cultivates toward the teacher
vīrañāga : discrimination between what is eternal and non-eternal and letting go of all mind-based value judgments, taking what we encountered in life objectively since we know it to be temporary
vishishta dharma : duties specific to a role we are performing in the cosmological order (such as wife, father, teacher, etc.)
vivekah : sādhanā of discrimination between real and unreal, eternal and non-eternal