The Glories of Śrī Puruṣottama Month

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**Two divisions of śāstra—smārta and paramārtha**

The Vedic arya-sastras are divided into two sections—smārta (literature based on smṛti) and paramārtha(transcendental literature based on śruti). Those who are eligible (adhikārī) for the smārta section do not have any natural inclination or taste for the paramartha-sastras. The thoughts, principles, activities and life goal of every human is constituted according to his respective ruci (inclination). Generally, smārtas accept those scriptures which are in accordance with their respective ruci. Having greater adhikāra for smarta-sastra, they do not demonstrate much regard for paramarthika-sastra. Providence is the agent behind the creation of these two divisions. Therefore, undoubtedly the maintainer of the world must have a hidden purpose in having made such an arrangement.

As far as I understand, the purpose is that the jīvas sequentially make progress in their level of consciousness by remaining steadfast in their respective adhikāra. By deviating from one’s adhikāra, one falls down. According to one’s activities, a person attains two types of adhikāra—karma-adhikara and bhakti-adhikhara. As long as one maintains his karmaadhikara, he derives benefit from the path shown by thesmarta section. When he enters bhakti-adhikara, by transgressing the karma-adhikara, then he develops a natural ruci (inclination) for the paramārthika, or transcendental, path. Therefore, providence has made these two divisions of śāstra: smārta and paramārtha.

**The rules and regulations of smārta śāstra are committed to karma**

The smārta śāstra has made various types of rules and regulations in order to help one attain niṣṭhā, steadfastness, in karma-adhikara. In many instances, it even demonstrates indifference towardsparamartha śāstra to make people attain specific niṣṭhā in such rules and regulations. In reality, althoughsastra is one, it manifests in two ways for the people. If the jīva gives up adhikara-nistha, he can never attain auspiciousness. For this reason, the śāstras have been divided into two: smārta and paramārtha.

**Adhimasa (extra month), also called mālā masa (impure month), is devoid of all auspicious activities**

By dividing the whole year in twelve parts, the smarta-sastras have ascertained the auspicious, or religious, activities for these twelve months. All the karma, religious activities which are part of the varnasramasystem when allotted to the twelve months, leave the extra month (adhimasa) devoid of any such activity. There is no religious performance in adhimasa. In order to keep lunar months and solar months in tally, one month has to be excluded every 32 months. The name of that month is adhimasa (extra month).\* Smartashave discarded this extra month, considering it abominable. They gave it names such as mālā masa (impure month), cora masa (thieving month), and so on.

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\* It is stated in Śrī Sūrya Siddhānta that in one mahayuga there are 1,593,336 extra months and 51,840,000 solar months. Therefore, there is one extra month after every 32 months, 16 days and 4 hours of the solar calendar.

**From the perspective of paramartha-sastra, adhimasa is superior and advantageous forHari-bhajana**

On the other hand, the most worshipable paramartha-sastra acclaims adhimasa as the most outstanding month for transcendental activities. Since life in this world is temporary, it is not proper to spend any part of one’s life meaninglessly. It is imperative for the jīva to remain continuously engaged in hari-bhajana at every moment. Thus, the adhimasa, which comes every third year, may also become useful for hari-bhajana. This is indeed the deep meaning of paramartha-sastras. Even though karmīs perceive this month to be devoid of all auspicious activities, for the deliverance of all the jīvas, paramārtha śāstra, on the other hand, has ascertained that period as the most conducive for hari-bhajana. Paramārtha śāstra says, “He jīva!During this adhimasa why should you remain lazy in hari-bhajana? Śrīmad Golokanatha Himself has ascertained that this month is the best of all. It is superior even to the greatly pious months of Kārttika, Māgha and Vaiśākha. In this month, you should perform arcana of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa with special rules, or moods, for bhajana. You will thereby attain all types of perfection.”

**The history and glories of adhimasa and how it received the name Puruṣottama**

The glories of adhimasa are mentioned in the thirty-first chapter of the Nāradīya Purāṇa. Adhimasa considered the sovereignty of the twelve months and saw that he was being slighted. He went to Vaikuṇṭha and related his dilemma to Śrī Nārāyaṇa. Out of compassion, Vaikuṇṭhapati took Adhimasa with Him and appeared before Śrī Kṛṣṇa in Goloka. After hearing about the distress of malamasa (the impure month), Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s heart melted and He spoke thus:

*ahaṁ etair yathā loke prathitaḥ puruṣottamaḥ*

*tathāyaṁ api lokeṣu prathitaḥ puruṣottamaḥ*

*asmai samarpitah sarve ye guṇamayī saṁsthitaḥ*

*mat-sadrsyam-upagamya masanamadhipo bhavet*

*jagat-pujyo jagat-vandyo maso ’yam tu bhaviṣyati*

*sarve māsaḥ sakamas ca niskamo ’yam māyā kṛtaḥ*

*akāmaḥ sarvakamo va yo ’dhimasam prapujayet*

*karmāṇi bhasmasāt kṛtvā mām evaiṣyaty asaṁśayaṁ*

*kadacin-mama bhaktanamaparadheti ganyate*

*purusottama-bhaktanam naparadhah kadācana*

*ya etasmin-maha mūḍha japa-danadi-varjitah*

*sat-karma-snana-rahita deva-tirtha-dvija-dvisah*

*jāyante durbhagā dustah para-bhagyopajivanah*

*na kadācit sukham teṣāṁ svapne ’pi sasa-srngavat*

*yenahamarcito bhaktyā māse ’smin puruṣottame*

*dhana-putra-sukham bhunktva pascad-goloka-vasabhak*

“He Ramapati! Just as I am celebrated in this world by the name Puruṣottama, similarly, this Adhimasa too will be renowned in the world by the name Puruṣottama. Now I offer all My qualities to this month. Becoming like Me, from today onwards, this Adhimasa is the monarch of all the other months, and is the most worshipable and most adored in the world. All other months are sakāma, that is, they will grant worldly desires. This month, however, is niṣkāma. Those who worship this month, either without any desires (akāma) or with all types of desires, will have all their karmas burnt. Then they will achieve Me. My bhaktassometimes commit offenses, but in this Puruṣottama month, they will be protected from committing any offense. In thisadhimasa, those greatly foolish persons who neglect to perform auspicious activities, such as japa, giving in charity, visiting and bathing at the holy places, and who are envious of the dvijas (brāhmaṇas) are deemed wicked, unfortunate and living at the cost of others. Thus, they will not attain a scent of happiness, even in their dreams. Conversely, those who are filled with bhakti will take advantage of this Puruṣottama month to perform arcana to Me. After enjoying worldly happiness, such as wealth, sons and so on, they will eventually attain residence in Goloka.”

**The glories of Puruṣottama month in the context of Draupadī’s history**

Many episodes from the Purāṇas are narrated in the context of the glories of Puruṣottama month. One such example is Draupadī. In her previous life, she was the daughter of Medhā Ṛṣi. Even after hearing of the glories of Puruṣottama month from Durvāsā Ṛṣi, she neglected to observe that month. As a result, she attained many sufferings in that life and became the wife of five husbands in her birth as Draupadī. During their exile, the Pāṇḍavas followed Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s instructions to observe purusottama-masa-vrata and thus crossed over all their sufferings. As it is said:

*evaṁ sarveṣu tīrtheṣu bhramantaḥ pandunandanah*

*purusottama-masadya-vratam cerur vidhānataḥ*

*tadante rājyaṁ atulam avāpur gata-kantakam*

*pūrṇe caturdaśe varṣe śrī kṛṣṇa-kṛpāya mune*

“He Muni! During the period of their exile, the Pāṇḍavas traveled throughout all the holy places, and by the mercy of Śrī Kṛṣṇa they observed Śrī Puruṣottama vrata with all rules and regulations. As a result of this they completed their fourteen years of exile without any obstacles and at the end attained an unparalleled kingdom.”

**The account of King Drdhadhanva as spoken by Vālmīki regarding Puruṣottama Vrata**

Purusottama-masa is glorified in the account of King Drdhadhanva’s previous birth. At Badarikāśrama, Nārada heard the procedure of the vrata from Nārāyaṇa Ṛṣi, which Vālmīki Muni then related to King Drdhadhanva in answer to the king’s questions. Just as the rules of ahanika (gāyatrī mantras) forbrahmanas are ascertained in dharma-śāstras, similarly, the obligatory activities for one observing Puruṣottama vrata are also delineated, beginning from the brāhma-muhūrta hour.

**Rules for bathing in the month of Śrī Puruṣottama**

Regarding the rules for bathing during Puruṣottama month, it is said:

*samudraga nadi-snanam-uttamam parikīrtitam*

*vapi-kupa-tadagesu madhyamam kathitaṁ budhaiḥ*

*gṛhe snānam tu sāmānyam gṛhasthasya prakirtitam*

“There are three types of baths as declared by the wise. Bath in the rivers which meet the ocean is the topmost. Bath in lakes, ponds and wells is the second best, and bath in one’s home is an ordinary bath.”

For one who is observing Śrī Puruṣottama vrata, after taking bath he should observe the following:

*sapavitrena hastena kuryād acamana-kriyam*

*ācamya tilakam kuryad-gopi-candana-mrt-snaya*

*urddhvapundra mrjum saumyām dandakaram prakalpayet*

*sankha-cakradikam dharyam gopi-candana-mrtsnaya*

“After bathing one should perform ācamana with clean hands. One should then make paste of gopīcandana clay and wear simple, beautiful, straight urddhvapundra tilaka on his forehead and the marks of conch, disc and so on, on his body.”

**The exclusive worship of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa is Obligatory in Puruṣottama month**

The worship of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the obligatory activity of Puruṣottama month.

*purusottama-masasya daivatam puruṣottamaḥ*

*tasmāt sampujayed bhaktyā śraddhayā puruṣottamam*

Vālmīki said, “He Drdhadhanva! Puruṣottama Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the presiding deity of the Purosottama month. Therefore, being filled with bhakti-sraddha, you should worship Puruṣottama Śrī Kṛṣṇa with sixteen types of paraphernalia every day of this month. As it is said:

*sodasopacarais ca pūjayet purusottam*

“The worship of the divine couple Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa is indeed obligatory in Puruṣottama masa.”

*āgaccha deva deveśa śrī kṛṣṇa puruṣottama*

*rādhāya sahitas cātra gṛhāṇa pūjanaṁ mama*

**Activities forbidden in the month of Puruṣottama**

All the rules and regulations regarding Śrī Puruṣottama vrata, which we have presented above from thesesastras, should be followed by religiously devoted persons of all the varṇas (castes). The Nāradīya Puranaconcludes by saying that in the holy place of Naimiṣāraṇya, Śrī Sūta Gosvāmī spoke to the assembled devotees as follows:

*bhārate janurasadya purusottam-uttamam*

*na sevante na śṛṇvanti grhasakta narādhamāḥ*

*gatāgataṁ bhajante ’tra durbhagā janmajanmani*

*putra-mitra-kalatrapta-viyogad duḥkha bhāginaḥ*

*asmin māse dvija śreṣṭha nasacchastrany udāharet*

*na svapet para-sayayam nalapet vitatham kvacit*

*parapavadan na krayan na kathañcit kadācana*

*parannanca na bhuñjīta na kurvīta parakriyam*

“Even after taking birth in India, those who are the lowest of mankind remain attached to household life and never hear the glories of Śrī Puruṣottama vrata; nor do they observe it. Such unfortunate persons undergo the suffering of repeated birth and death and the distress inflicted by the separation from sons, friends, wife and other relatives.

“O best of the dvijas! In this Puruṣottama month, one should not uselessly discuss worldly literature or mundane poetry. One should not sleep on the bed of others nor indulge in discussions of worldly sense enjoyment. One should not criticize others, eat foodstuffs cooked by others, or perform activities prescribed for others.”

**The obligatory activities in the Puruṣottama month**

*vittasathyam akurvano dānam dadhyad dvijātaye*

*vidyamāne dhane śāthyaṁ kurvāṇo rauravam vrajet*

*dine dine dvijendraya dattvā bhojanam-uttamam*

*divasasyastame bhāge vratī bhojanaṁ ācaret*

*indradyumnaḥ satadyumno yauvanāśvo bhagīrathaḥ*

*puruṣottamam ārādhya yayur bhagavadantikam*

*tasmāt sarva prayatnena samsevya puruṣottamaḥ*

*sarva sadhanatah śreṣṭhaḥ sarvārtha phala-dayakah*

***govardhana-dharam vande gopālam gopa-rupinam***

***gokulotsavam-isanam govindam gopika-priyam\****

*kaundinyena pura proktaṁ imaṁ mantram punaḥ punaḥ*

*japan-masam nayed bhaktyā purusottamam-apnuyat*

*dhyayen-navaghana-syamam dvibhujam muralidharam*

*lasat pita-patam ramyām sa-radham purosottamam*

*dhyāyaṁ dhyāyaṁ nayen-masam pūjayan puruṣottamam*

*evaṁ yaḥ kurute bhaktyā svabhistam sarvam āpnuyāt*

“Giving up miserliness, one should give in charity to the brāhmaṇas. If a person remains miserly even though he has wealth, his miserliness will be the cause of his going to Raurava (one type of hell). Everyday one should feed the Vaiṣṇavas and brahmanaswith the best foodstuffs. A person who is following the vows should take his food in the eighth part of the day. Indradyuyamna, Satadyuyamna, Yauvanāśva and Bhagīratha attained sāmīpya, close association of Bhagavān by worshiping the Puruṣottama month. One should perform service to Puruṣottama with all of one’s endeavors. Such service to Puruṣottama is superior to all types of sādhana and fulfills all variety of desires. In a previous age, Kaundilya Muni repeatedly chanted the mantra ‘govardhana-dharam vande’. By chanting this mantra with devotion during Śrī Puruṣottama month, one will attain Śrī Puruṣottama Himself. One should devote Puruṣottama month to constantly meditating upon navaghana dvibhuja muralīdhara pītāmbara Śrī Kṛṣṇa with Śrī Rādhā. Those who do this with devotion will have all their cherished desires fulfilled.”

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\* “I worship the lifter of Govardhana, Gopāla, who has the form of a gopa. He is the festival of Gokula (gokula-utsava), the Supreme Controller of all (īśvara), and He is Govinda the beloved of the gopīs (gopika-priyam).”

**The observance for transcendentalists – svanistha, paranistha and nirapekṣa**

There are three types of transcendentalists: svanistha — those who are steadfast in their personal vows;paranisthita — those who are steadfast in following the vows set forth by their respective ācāryas; andnirpeksa — those who are indifferent to the above two types of steadfastness.\* All the activities mentioned above for Puruṣottama month are prescribed for svanistha transcendentalists. Paranisthita bhaktas are eligible to observe Puruṣottama vrata according to the rules and instructions of Kārttika vrata prescribed by their respective ācāryas. Nirapekṣa bhaktas repect this sacred month by daily honoring śrī bhagavat prasad with one-pointed attention, following some routine for śravaṇa and kīrtana of śrī harinamaaccording to their capacity.

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\* Svanistha and paranisthita bhaktas are generally householders and nirapekṣa bhaktas are renunciates.

The following statement from Viṣṇu Rahasya, which is the topmost instruction of Śrī Haribhakti-vilasa, recommends:

*indriyarthesv-asaktanam sadaiva vimala matiḥ*

*paritosayate viṣṇum nopavaso jitātmanaḥ*

“Those whose intelligence has been purified by bhakti are detached from the inclination for sense enjoyment. The intelligence of such persons is naturally pure; therefore, they are jitātmā, they have conquered their minds. It is by their innate bhakti, rather than by upavāsa (fasting) and other such activities, that they have purified their minds and are thus able to please Śrī Kṛṣṇa at all times.”

**The innate ruci (inclination) and obligatory activities of ekantika bhaktas**

Therefore, Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī has concluded his book Śrī Hari-bhakti-vilāsa by presenting the following statements for one-pointed devotees:

evaṁ ekāntināṁ prāyaḥ kīrtanaṁ smaraṇaṁ prabhoḥ

kurvatāṁ param-pritya krtyam-anyan na rocate

bhāvena kenacit preṣṭhaḥ śrī murter-anghri sevane

syād icchyaisam svatantrena sva-rasanaiva tad-vidhih

vihitesv eva nityesu pravartante svayam hite

ityady ekāntināṁ bhāti māhātmyam likhitam hi tat

“Ekantika bhaktas (one-pointed devotees) of Śrī Kṛṣṇa consider śrī kṛṣṇa-smaraṇa and śrī kṛṣṇa-kīrtana alone to be the most fulfilling and valued activities. Generally, they do not engage in any other aṅgas of bhakti besides these two, which they cultivate with great love and affection. Their eagerness for these aṅgas is so strong that no other activity can captivate their taste. They develop an intense desire to serve the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa in a specific mood. Therefore, they render service to the lotus feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa with moods which are favorable to their own rasa, along with some independence (to give up the injunctions which are unfavorable to their cultivation). This alone is their vidhi. The ekantika bhaktas are not bound to follow all the rules and regulations which have been prescribed by the ṛṣis. The moods of the ekantika bhakta’s inborn, natural disposition generally remain prominent. This is their glory.”

**Adhimasa is dear to bhaktas as there is no disturbance from the karma-kāṇḍa in this month.**

The bhaktas observe Śrī Purusottma month according to their respective adhikāra; this means according to the distinctions of the moods of svanistha, paranisthita and ekantika bhaktas. Bhagavān Vrajanātha Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the sovereign of this month; therefore, adhimasa is dear to every bhakta. This is because, incidentally, in this month no disturbance from the karmakanda can come to obstruct the performance of one’s bhakti