

Hara Hara Sankara



Jaya Jaya Sankara



Shri Vedavyasaya namah:

**Shri Shankara Bhagavatpadacharya Paramparagatha Mulamnaya Sarvagna Peeta  
Shri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam - Kanchipuram**

**Veda DharmaSasthra Paripalana Sabha** Kumbakonam, (Regd. 1942)

### **Dharmasandesam - 8**

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#### **Namaskarams**

We were discussing last week how 'Ahara' & 'Achara' -Food & Conduct- are interconnected. We saw how much the purity of the food ingredients (Ahara Dravya S'uddhi) matter to us. If the ingredients of our food have not been sourced righteously, the troubles one can face by consuming that food were also highlighted, by way of a story. The purity of ingredients has many facets. There are many stages from where the ingredients are sourced, change hands by way of trade, exchange or otherwise, until they reach our hands in a shop or market. Should there be any defects or deficiencies, they have no significance when we buy them, using our hard-earned funds.

Next, we have to look at the deficiencies of those who cook the food, the vessels in which the food is cooked, and the place where it is cooked, including that of the oven or stove on which the food is cooked. Our elders have laid down the hygiene requirements and the need to ensure their importance of cleanliness. One may be surprised to know that these are still being observed/followed in our orthodox households, and institutions which are run strictly as per the Vaideeka Dharma.

The 'sthAna s'uddhi' or cleanliness of the kitchen can be ensured by using cow-dung on the floor, woodstoves etc., and sprinkling water charged with holy 'mantras' called 'Punyaahavaachanam'. In our households, when a birth or death occurs, 'aaS'aucha' or some contamination takes place. We have 'punyaahavaachanam' performed to purify the entire household before we resume our normal chores. That the 'vaideeka' sanitizer can destroy very tiny harmful microbes by this ceremony is the conclusion of our 'maharishis'.

Even after this, our Maharishis have held that the deficiencies arising out of the three attributes- sattva, rajas, tamas- the mild & balanced, the regal or passionate and the slow or dark aspects- can be countered by performing punyaahavaachanam, aachamanam & praanaayaamam. Therefore, the affirmation or 'sankalpa' done at the start of the ceremony encompasses 'gruha', 'bhu', 'bhaanda' 'sarvopakarana' 'atma' & even 's'uddhi's s'uddhi – i.e., the purification of one's home, the place where it is situated, the vessels used, the various implements in use, that of self, and even the process of purification itself!

When this ceremony is observed through our family 'purohita' or by ourselves with all the affirmations in place, we can be sure of the requisite purity. However, for preparing food, punyaaham alone is not sufficient. There is 'panchagavyam' – five ingredients obtained from a cow – dung, urine, milk, curd & ghee- mixed in the prescribed portions and run through the 'dharbha' grass with water-and ingested with the appropriate 'mantra' – is believed to reach even the bones of our body, through the skin, and cleanse us thoroughly. Our S'Astras observe that even as fire burns down tinder and turns into ash. (यत् त्वगस्थिगतं पापं देहे तिष्ठतिमामके, प्राशनात् पंचगव्यस्य दहत्वग्निरिवेन्धनम्). A cook is therefore purified of his defects, by imbibing 'panchagavya'. This can be done at our homes or at a place where 'vaideeka' practices are observed.

One may raise the question that as we eat at restaurants, canteens etc., paying for the food we eat from our pocket, whether these 'doshas' of the place, vessels, stoves etc., will attach to us. But even when we pay for our food, that is subject to certain limitations. As the saying goes: 'न हि कतकं पयस इव पङ्कस्य प्रसाधनाय' – just as the cleaning nut cleanses muddy water it cannot be used to clean up the mud! We cannot, therefore, swallow/digest a wooden pestle by drinking a herbal decoction containing dry ginger which has very limited power. Therefore, we should avoid eating food in restaurants etc., where such practices are hardly observed.

**Dharma flourishes**

**“Sarve Jana: Sukino Bhavanthu”**

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