



## SWAMIJI ANSWERS YOUR QUESTIONS

Compiled by Pattabhiram Ramanuja Dasa

**Question: What is *Upade:sam*? What are the qualifications to receive it? And, how does one get it?**

HH - *Upade:sam* means 'a *manthram*', by meditating upon which one will be saved from problems. Another meaning of this word is 'initiation to a seeker by a guru'. To receive *Upade:sam*, one only needs to have the desire to know the real things. Whenever a desire to learn good things develops, one naturally approaches a learned person in that particular field, and shows his interest and willingness to learn. For the interested person to learn properly, the guru ordains some specific rules and regulations. These should be followed with obedience and loyalty to the teacher. These are the only basic qualifications; nothing else like money, caste, creed etc., is required.

Receiving the *Upade:sam* in this way is the only job of the disciple. How it is provided will be explained by the guru when the *Upade:sam* is given.

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**Question: I often cry for my Lord, but I am still very much influenced by the external world. I have not yet got over my lower nature! What is the way for me? Will I have to stay engrossed in this world? Am I ever going to get over my lower nature and proceed unrestricted towards the Lord of my heart?**

HH - The world is such a vast and complex place, which can drag down any person, no matter whosoever he may be. When one is in this world, one should try and use the things that are available in

way that leads to the Lord, as they are provided by Him for our benefit. But while doing so, you must try and seek out good things. Then try to feel the presence of the Lord always within you, constantly taking care of you. If you are willing to stay attached to Him in your mind and heart, then that is enough for Him to raise you up, from wherever you are.

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**Question: What is the proper way to apply *Na:mam* (*Thiruman*) on the forehead? Why is it that *Pa:dam* appears only on the forehead and not on the other 11 places on the body?**

HH - The *Pa:dam* to the *Na:mam* should be placed on the forehead only. The rule for the *Na:mam* on the forehead is to put it right from the *Na:sika:gram*, the end of the nose. There are those who have interpreted this to be the middle of the eyes, so they wear their *Thiruman* without any *Pa:dam* being visible. But, our great *A:cha:ryas* decided that the *Na:sika:gram* is located on the ending bone that is located near the middle of the visible nose.

There are those who feel that the end will be at the tip of the nose, so they chose to wear the *Na:mam* with a really long *Pa:dam*. Mainly we can see such *Na:mam* with *Thiruna:ra:yana Peruma:I*, Melkote in Karnataka state. Some devotees also wear it like this.

For other places, *Na:sika:gram* is not an issue; so, at these other 11 places the *Na:mam* is flat and rectangular, without the *Pa:dam*.

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**Question: Many people misinterpret why women and *su:dras* were not privileged to learn *Ve:das*. Being a research student, I can understand that *Ve:dic* chantings would put stress on a woman's uterus. But, what about women and *su:dras* learning spiritual knowledge? Is it a must that one has to first learn *Pu:rva Mi:ma:msa*, the rituals, and only then the *Uththara Mima:msa*, the philosophy? Is it for this reason that women were not allowed? What about the fourth *varna* men? Are *Manu* and *Yagnava:Ikya Smruthis*, which say that women should remain dependent, valid today?**

HH - There is no validity within *Sa:sthras* to say that knowledge cannot be obtained by women or non-brahmins. Whoever is interested in learning can get the *Ve:dic* essence. The restrictions are only with regards to learning and chanting the *Ve:dic Manthras* from the beginning to end with proper intonation - *swaram*.

*Manthras* in and of themselves do not add any stress on the uterus of the woman. This is a very unscientific assumption. But, since women and *su:dras* are not required to perform the *Sandhya:vandanam* three times a day, which is a qualification for chanting them in rituals, they are asked not to chant the *manthras*. But, they are free to learn the meaning and other details about Vedas and practice these.

With regards to *Smruthis*, they are valid for all the ages. But, one should understand how much needs to be taken from each. Each *Smruthi* has its own relevance for a particular condition and time.

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**Question: Do the devotees of the Lord like *Prahla:da*, *Bhi:shma*, *Meera Bai*, the *Pa:ndavas* suffer on account of their own *karma* or is it a *Li:la* of the Lord?**

HH - Anything that happens in the external world involves the *karmas* of many people. To be able to eat and relish a fruit today, we should realize that it is the result of the farmer who grew it, the person who saw it on the tree, the person who plucked it, the people who packaged it, the driver who delivered it to the market, the grocer who placed it in the tray, and so on. Even in our inner world, such as in our dreams and our thoughts, *karma* is involved. But, this *karma* is purely for the enjoyment of individual alone.

But, for great souls like *Prahla:da*, *Namma:Iwa:r* etc., God wanted to show the greatness of His devotees to the world. So, their personal *karmas* became secondary such that He could become directly involved in their lives. For *Bhi:shma*, *Pa:ndavas*, *Meera Bai*, their individual *karmas* gave them their desired results.

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**Question: We generally offer honey to the God along with the *Panchamruthas*. But that honey is obtained by dragging the food of honey bees which means it is *himsa*. Can we offer such things to God? What should we do?**

HH - Yes! Honey is used for all the activities. It is not being drawn by you. Someone does that and you are using. Yet, they are not killing the bees and extracting the honey. They drive them out and collect the honey and then again the



bees come, occupy the honey hue and recollect the honey. They also keep a portion for them too. Hence you can use it without any hesitation.

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**Question: As is understood from the sayings of great people we are born on this earth with these mortal bodies to reap the consequences of our *karmas*. So there is as such no relationship between the *karmas* of one *Ji:va* and the other. But we can still find resemblances not only physically but also mentally and behavior wise between people who are related, thereby proving that blood is thicker than water. Swamiji, how can we understand this?**

HH - We are happy for your doubt. Every soul has his own *karma* with him only and so the body came. Resemblance happens in the body only not in the *karmas* or *samska:ras* or in the *jna:na*. Body is made of *Panchabhū:thas* and the out product of those *bhū:thas* also have the same features. A mango plant yields a mango only. Same is the case with the bodies. Thus, some resemblances will be there. Blood and other qualities are also the same. All these have constraints at physical level only. When the *karmic* level comes, they are entirely personal and differ from one soul to the other. We exactly do not know what the saying "blood is thicker than the water" stands for.

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**Question: The atheist's claim that the life has sprung up from matter and the theist claim that the matter has sprung up from life. Please tell me what is the reality?**

HH - Matter is *Prakruthi* that is made of



five elements. They are Space, Air, Fire, Water and Earth. A section of the scientists say that the life is an accident. According to them it sprang up from matter. They cannot prove their claim, as it is not possible for the life to spring forth from the lifeless matter.

According to the *Ve:das*, the life is present in each and every atom. The live force that is present in each and every atom is called soul. A soul gets a body according to its *karma*. When a soul is in some atoms, it will be in a dormant state. In such a state the live force will not be visible in it. In that state a soul is designated as an insentient thing. The live force of a soul manifests itself in some atoms, when the soul attains such bodies we call them as sentient beings.

All sorts of action take place only due to the presence of a living force. The protons, electrons and neutrons move in an atom, only due to the presence of a live force. Each and every atom is a part of a universe and has the potency to produce the complete universe. A good analogy for this is a part of a tree which has got the potency to produce innumerable seeds and trees within it. Among the tree and the seed, we don't know which came into existence first. Similarly, each and every atom has a potency to produce many atoms and universes. All this can happen only by the sanction of the Supreme Lord who regulates everything. Dead matter cannot undergo changes without the interference of a live force. Hence, it is only the live force that produces matter and matter cannot produce life. We can also understand this fact if we carefully observe the Nature.

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