

Change Means Opportunity

As human beings, all too often we lose the big picture because we're lost in the concerns of the moment. We are caught up in what Pūjya Swāmī Chidānandajī frequently calls “the passing show.” The ancients of this land had a different perspective. They knew that all this is Divine, that our reality is Divinity. They said that, while our outer life is lived in stages, we're meant to pass naturally from one stage to another keeping our minds focused on the underlying Reality, the underlying permanence. We are not meant to get attached to any stage of our life.

There are some people who don't want to leave the student stage of life. Their school years have been good to them. There are many more who don't want to leave the householder stage. They are attached to their family and their present lifestyle. However, by resisting moving on, we miss the opportunity for a whole new life, for a second life that can be even fuller than the first life. In fact, while the ancients laid out four stages for our life—student, householder, retired, renunciate—in a sense there are only two stages: the first stage that we dedicate to the world—student and householder—and the second stage that we dedicate to God and Mokṣa—retired and Sannyāsa.

Similarly, when they laid out four aims of life—Dharma, Artha, Kāma, and Mokṣa—really our lives have only two principal aims—Dharma, the way we should live our life, and Mokṣa, the goal of our life. We're meant to welcome the second stage and aim of our life. We are meant to meet it with courage and optimism. Even if it is delayed, it doesn't mean it should be forgotten. At any time we can go inward, remember the real purpose of our life, and dedicate ourselves to it.

This Guru Pūrṇima—as we dedicate the new Swāmī Śivānanda Satsang Bhavan—marks, we might say, the end of one stage and the beginning of a new, fresh stage in the life of The Divine Life Society and Śivānanda Āśram. What will the future bring? We don't know, but we're not meant to be attached to the past. Rather, we are meant to be focused on the permanent Reality underneath and recognize that change is inevitable. Change means opportunity. It means freshness. It means the possibility of new things, better things. And, therefore, in the life of an institution, just as in our own personal lives, we must face the changes with courage, anchored in the eternal underneath.

We have no idea of what God and Gurudev have in mind for The Divine Life Society and Śivānanda Āśram. The new beautiful Swāmī Śivānanda Satsang Bhavan is a sign to us that perhaps the best is yet to come. And so should we feel about our own lives. We all run into difficult periods. We all run into periods where we wonder if our life is finished. It is only finished if we think it is so. It can't be finished because our real life is what we really are right now, always have been, and always will be.

Life on the surface will always change. If we want those changes to work out well, we will connect ourselves with our real life and, with faith in God and optimism for the future, treat present difficulties and changes as God-given opportunities.