

Getting Back to Oneself, *Uparama*

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What is *uparati*, or as the author of the *Tattvabodha* calls it, *uparama*? He answers, *svadharmānuṣṭhānameva*. This is a very interesting meaning. *Uparama* is getting back to yourself. There is a tendency to omit what I have to do, and do what I need not do, do something else. This is the tendency that everybody has. A withdrawal from that, and doing what is to be done is *uparama*, *svadharmānuṣṭhānam eva*. *Svadharmā*: *sva* means one's own; *dharma*, here, is what is to be done. What is to be done is to be done. We can't say, "I don't feel like doing it," and not do it. This is a certain abuse of freedom. Even though you don't feel like doing it, sometimes it has to be done. So what is to be done, you do, even though you don't feel like doing it, and what is not to be done, even if you feel like doing it, you don't. That is what he calls *uparama*.

Uparama is also translated as *sannyāsa*, renunciation—taking to a life of renunciation for a dedicated pursuit. In fact, this is a more suitable meaning for all of us. But here, he says that it is *svadharmānuṣṭhānam eva*, whatever is your *dharma*, whatever is to be done at a given place and in a given situation, that you do, whether you like it or not. That is how we gain a certain mastery over our own likes and dislikes. Otherwise they dictate our behavior all the time, and that is a meaningless life, really speaking. As long as these likes and dislikes conform to *dharma*, they are fine. If what is to be done conforms to *dharma*

and you like it, and it is good for you, and you do it, in fact, you will be spontaneous. It is something like a doctor telling you that every day you must eat an apple, and you saying, "Oh, that's wonderful, I love apples." When you love apples and somebody advises

you to eat an apple daily, you can enjoy that; there is no conflict. But then, if they say that you have to take this bitter gourd juice every day, then you have to take it, even though you don't like it—and I don't think anybody will ever like it. Certain things you can learn to like after some time, like blue cheese, I

suppose. But I don't think anybody

will learn to like bitter gourd juice. Still, you take it. Why? It has to be taken. And so, what we like is not going to be what is to be done every time, and what we don't like is not what is not to be done every time. No, what we don't like sometimes is to be done, and what we like is not to be done. And therefore, what shall we do? If you go by what you like and don't like, you'll become a derelict, so what is to be done you do, and what is not to be done, you avoid. This becomes *uparama*. It avoids conflicts, and it gives you a sense of satisfaction, also, a sense of success about yourself as a person, because you can deny yourself something you want. That is an amazing thing. That makes you feel good, and therefore, you have a good day.

It is a very common thing in America to say, "Have a good day." But what is a good day, I would like to know? What do you mean by that "Have a good day"?

If you go by what you like and don't like, you'll become a derelict, so what is to be done you do, and what is not to be done, you avoid.



¹Excerpt from the forthcoming *Tattvabodha*, Arsha Vidya Research and Publications, 2009

Each one has his own idea of a good day. Someone thinks that if you attend a music concert in the evening it is a good day. If a pick-pocket says, "Have a good day," what does that mean? So when you say, "Have a good day," what do you mean? I will say that a good day is a day at the end of which, when you go to bed, you feel good. Why? Because you were able to avoid certain things which you wanted to do, but were not to be done, and you could do the things that were to be done, even though you didn't want to—like Sanskrit homework. Who wants to do this? "I never knew that I was in for this. I thought I would listen to the swami and get some knowledge of *ātman*, etc., but what is this?" So, you have a good day when you do your homework. Then you feel good about having done it. Really, after

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doing it you feel good, especially when you write Sanskrit and it is legible, and somebody is able to read it, and remarks, "*paṭhaḥ*, this is correct." That makes you feel good. The beauty is that when you avoid something that you have to avoid, even though you feel like doing it, that really makes you feel good. That capacity makes you feel good, because you feel that you are the master. You have reorganized your inner life and have that sense of being in charge of your life. 'I am in charge' is very good. So that is *uparama*, being in charge of your life. Then there is so much you can do, really. Once you are in charge, you can help others too. Otherwise, others have to take care of you. When you are in charge you can help others, and you are in charge when you are able to do what is to be done, *svadharma-anuṣṭhānam eva*.