

Satsanga with Sri Swami Veditatmananda Saraswati
Arsha Vidya Gurukulam

NAIMITTIKA-KARMA, OCCASIONAL OBLIGATORY DUTIES

नैमित्तिकानि - पुत्रजन्माद्यनुबन्धीनि जातेष्ट्यादीनि॥

naimittikāni - putrajanmādyanubandhīni jāteṣṭyādīni.

Jāteṣṭi sacrifices (which are performed subsequent to the birth of a son) etc. are called the *naimittika-karma* or rites to be observed on special occasions [Vedāntasāra, 10].

Naimittika-karma is that which is performed when there is a certain occasion. We are enjoined to perform certain duties during specific events in addition to our daily duties. The illustration given here is that of the *putrajanmādi-anubandhīni*, performed upon the birth of a child. When a son or child is born, a certain ritual called *jāteṣṭi* is performed for purification. There are other incidental rites performed such as when the child is first fed external food like rice or grain, or the tonsure ceremony, which is performed when the child's hair is first removed. There are other ceremonies that are performed when the child starts writing, goes to school, and so on. These incidental ceremonies are supposed to be performed because they result in some good *saṃskāra* or impressions for purification.

We pray every day, but on special occasions like the full moon day or the new moon day, we perform additional worship. All the rituals and worship on special days or occasions fall into the category of *naimittika-karma* and they are also obligatory.

The two kinds of actions, daily and occasional or incidental, are always there in our lives; we do something everyday, but something special on occasion. For example, even though businesses prepare or monitor their income and expenses daily, at the end of the year, they prepare an elaborate income and expense statement. Similarly, even though we prepare dinner every day, the dinner prepared on festival days such as Deepavali or Christmas is special. This is true of worship as well. We perform a certain form of worship everyday like chanting or repeating the name of the Lord. Even in temples, worship is offered to the Lord three times each day as in the morning, afternoon, and evening. On special occasions, however, such as *Śivarātri*, special prayers and rituals are performed. Just as we require special food on special days, so also, God requires a special kind of worship on certain occasions.

We are enjoined to deliberately perform certain actions, which are the daily and incidental duties enjoined by the Vedas. Even though specific enjoined duties are perhaps not applicable in the current situation, the same spirit of worship is required for our duties in the present day. We are obliged

or required to respond to daily and occasional situations in the spirit of duty and repay our obligation through prayer and worship¹.

¹ Based on Vedāntasāra lectures. Transcribed and edited by Malini, KK Davey and Jayshree Ramakrishnan.