



Resource

Holy Orders Of Sannyasa

सन्न्यासधर्म



When you seek a *guru*
Seek one who is holy and pure
And then give him your all—
Your body, life and wealth.
Then in constancy learn clearly,
Not a moment distracting.
Surely shall you thus reach Śiva's State.
Placing His Feet on my head,
The Master blesses me. He is holy *Guru*.
He my Self-Realization works.
He takes the *jīva* to the state beyond *tattvas*.
He sunders my bonds. All these he performs—
He that is Truth itself.

Tirumantiram—Verse 1693 and 2049

Having entered the path of the senses,
I was wandering in despair. But he set me
On the proper way, by saying, "You are I."
That I, his slave, might not be caught and ruined
In the bondage of father, mother, children,
Wife and kin, he cleared my mind and placed me
In the midst of worthy devotees—that great lord,
My father, I saw at glorious Nallur.

Natchintanai 124

One who is established in the contemplation of nondual unity
will abide in the Self of everyone and realize the immanent,
all-pervading One. There is no doubt of this.

Sarvajñānottara Āgama, AtmaS 14. RM, 107

The luminous Being of the perfect I-consciousness,
inherent in the multitude of worlds, whose essence consists
in the knowledge of the highest nondualism, is the secret of mantra.

Śiva Sūtras, 2.3. YS, 88

I sought Him in terms of I and you. But He who knows not I from you
taught me the truth that I indeed is you. And now I talk not of I and you.

Tirumantiram, 1441. TM



Holy Orders of Saṁnyāsa सन्न्यासधर्म

EXCERPTS FROM
A ŚAIVA SWĀMĪ'S DĪKSHĀ AND
LIFETIME VOWS OF RENUNCIATION

THE FIRST PART OF YOUR LIFE WAS LIVED FOR YOURSELF; THE second part will be lived in the service of others, for the benefit of your religion. You have been tried and tested through years of training and challenges and proved yourself worthy to wear the *kavi*, the orange robes, and to fulfill the illustrious Śaiva *sannyāsin dharma*. ¶ The *sannyāsin* harkens close to Śiva and releases the past to an outer death. Remembering the past and living in memories brings it into the present. Even the distant past, once remembered and passed through in the mind, becomes the nearest past to the present. *Sannyāsins* never recall the past. They never indulge in recollections of the forgotten person they have released. The present and the future—there is no security for the *sannyāsin* in either. The future beckons; the present impels. Like writing upon the waters, the experiences of the *sannyāsin* leave no mark, no *samskāra* to generate new *karmas* for an unsought-for future. He walks into the future, on into the varied *vṛittis* of the mind, letting go of the past, letting what is be and being himself in its midst, moving on into an ever more dynamic service, an ever more profound knowing. Be thou bold, *sannyāsin* young. Be thou bold, *sannyāsin* old. Let the past melt and merge its images into the sacred river within. Let the present be like the images written upon the water's calm surface. The future holds no glamour. The past holds no attachment, no return to unfinished experience. Even upon the dawn of the day walk into your destiny with the courage born of knowing that the ancient Śaivite scriptures proclaim your *sannyāsin's* life great above all other greatness. Let your life as a *sannyāsin* be a joyful one, strict but not restrictive, for this is not the path of martyrdom or mortification. It is the fulfillment of all prior experiential patterns, the most natural path—the Straight Path to God, the San Mārga—for those content and ripened souls. Leave all regret behind, all guilt and guile, others will preserve all that you proudly renounce. Let even the hardships ahead be faced cheerfully. ¶ Never fail to take refuge in your God, your



guru and your Great Oath. This is the highest path you have chosen. It is the culmination of numberless lives, and perhaps the last in the ocean of *saṁsāra*. Be the noble soul you came to this earth to be, and lift humanity by your example. Know it with a certainty beyond question that this is life's most grand and glorious path, and the singular path for those seeking God Realization, that mystic treasure reserved for the renunciate. Know, too, that renunciation is not merely an attitude, a mental posture which can be equally assumed by the householder and the renunciate. Our scriptures proclaim that a false concept. True renunciation must be complete renunciation; it must be unconditional. There is no room on the upper reaches of San Mārga for mental manipulations, for play-pretend renunciation or half-measure *sādhana*. Let your renunciation be complete. Resolve that it will be a perfect giving-up, a thorough letting-go. Let go of the rope. Be the unencumbered soul that you are. Be the free spirit, unfettered and fearless, soaring above the clamor of dissension and difference, yet wholeheartedly and boldly supporting our Śaivite principles against those who would infiltrate, dilute and destroy. All that you need will be provided. If there is any residue of attachment, sever it without mercy. Cast it off altogether. Let this be no partial renunciation, subject to future wants, to future patterns of worldliness. Give all to God Śiva, and never take it back. ¶ To make this supreme renunciation requires the utmost maturity coupled with a dauntless courage. It requires, too, that the wheel of *saṁsāra* have been lived through, that life hold no further fascination or charm. Through experience the soul learns of the nature of joy and sorrow, learns well to handle the magnetic forces of the world. Only when that learning is complete is true *sannyāsa* possible. Otherwise, the soul, still immature, will be drawn back into the swirl of experience, no matter what vows have been uttered. True renunciation comes when the world withdraws from the devotee. *Sannyāsa* is for the accomplished ones, the great souls, the evolved souls. *Sannyāsa* is not to be misinterpreted as a means of getting something—getting enlightenment, getting *punya* or merit. *Sannyāsa* comes when all getting is finished. It is not to get something but because you *are* something, because you are ready to give your life and your knowledge and your service to Śaivism, that you enter the life of the *sannyāsin*. The *kavi* or saffron robes are the royal insignia of the *sannyāsin*. Those in *kavi* the world over are your brethren, and you should feel one with each of these hundreds of thousands of soldiers within. ¶ The ideals of renunciation as practiced in the Sanātana



Dharma are outlined fully in these *Holy Orders of Sannyāsa*. Live up to them as best you can. You need not be a saint or *jīvanmukta* to enter into the ancient world order of *sannyāsa*. Renunciation in its inmost sense is a gradual process. It does not happen instantly when a vow is spoken. Do not mistake *sannyāsa dīkshā* as the end of effort, but look upon it as a new spiritual birth, the beginning of renewed striving and even more difficult challenges. There will remain *karmas* to be lived through as the soul continues to resolve the subtle attachments or *vāsanās* of this and past lives. It is enough that you have reached a knowing of the necessity of *tyāga*. It is enough that you renounce in the right spirit and pledge yourself to meet each challenge as befits this tradition, bringing honor to yourself and your religion. Finally, you are charged with preserving and defending the teachings of the Śiva Yogaswāmī Guru Paramparā and the Śaiva Dharma as brought forth in *A Catechism and Creed for Śaivite Hinduism* and *The Holy Bible of the Śaivite Hindu Religion*. You are cautioned against being influenced by alien faiths or beliefs. You are the vault, the repository wherein are kept the priceless treasures of Śaivism, secure and available for future generations. All who accept these *Holy Orders* accept a selfless life in which all monastics work their minds together, thus keeping the *saṅgam* strong and effective. You must not veer from the San Mārga, nor follow an individual path, nor remain remote or aloof from your brother monastics. It is a serious life which you now enter, one which only a *sannyāsīn* can fully undertake. Remember and teach that God is, and is in all things. Spread the light of the One Great God, Śiva—Creator, Preserver and Destroyer, immanent and transcendent, the Compassionate One, the Gracious One, the One without a second, the Lord of Lords, the Beginning and End of all that is. *Anbe Śivamayam Satyame Paraśivam*.



Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami
Guru Mahāsannidhānam, Kauai Aadheenam, Hawaii, USA



THE FOLLOWING IS A RELIGIOUS COVENANT BETWEEN A SANNYĀSIN—ONE WHO HAS RENOUNCED THE WORLD IN SERVICE TO GOD ŚIVA—AND THE DIVINE BEINGS OF ALL THREE WORLDS. IN THE FULFILLMENT OF THESE *HOLY ORDERS OF SANNYĀSA*, THE *SANNYĀSIN*, OF HIS OWN VOLITION, IRREVOCABLY AND ETERNALLY BINDS HIMSELF TO HIS RELIGION—THE ŚAIVA SAMAYAM—TO THE TIMELESS TRADITIONS OF THE SANĀTANA DHARMA, TO HIS FELLOW HINDUS, TO HIS BROTHER RENUNCIATES AND MOST ESPECIALLY TO THE ŚIVA YOGASWĀMĪ GURU PARAMPARĀ.

SANNYĀSA MAY BE SIMPLY DEFINED as Śaivite Hindu monasticism, and a *sannyāsin* is one who has renounced the world in search of God Realization and has been formally initiated by a *guru* who is himself a *sannyāsin*. In Sanskrit the word “*sannyāsa*” literally means “to throw down” or “to abandon.” Thus, *sannyāsa* is the giving up or abandonment of the world, and the *sannyāsin* is one who has so renounced. True *sannyāsa* is not a denial of life but life’s highest fulfillment. It is unmitigated selflessness. It is the relinquishment of the transient and illusory in favor of a permanent Reality, the eschewing of a worldly life that one may, by gradual stages of purification, draw inward toward God as Paraśiva, Truth Absolute. It is a break with the mundane and a binding unto the Divine. It is the repudiation of the *dharma*, including the obligations and duties, of the householder and the acceptance of the even more demanding *dharma* of the renunciate. The seasoned *sannyāsin* is truly the liberated man, the spiritual exemplar, the disciplined *yogi* and ultimately the knower of Truth, freed to commune with the Divine and bound to uplift humanity through the sharing of his wisdom, his peace, his devotion and his illumination, however great or small. The *sannyāsin* is the guardian of his religion, immersed in it,

constantly freed from worldliness, freed from distraction, able to offer his work and his worship in unbroken continuity and one-pointed effectiveness. He undertakes certain disciplines including the purification of body, mind and emotions. He restrains and controls the mind through his *sādhana*, *tapas* and meditative regimen. He unfolds from within himself a profound love of God and the Gods. His practice of *upāsana* or worship is predominantly internal, seeking God Śiva within. ¶ In the Śaiva tradition there have always existed among men a few, rare in numbers but mighty in their dedication to Lord Śiva, for whom the world held no attraction and *karmas* were on the wane. Such men are by nature inclined toward knowledge of God and disinclined toward desires of family, wealth and property, also spoken of by our spiritual forefathers as women, gold and land. Some among them are *sādhus*, anchorites living in the seclusion of distant caves and remote forests or wandering as homeless mendicants, itinerant pilgrims to the holy sanctuaries of Śaivism. Others dwell as cenobites assembled with their brothers, often in the *āśrama*, *aadheenam* or *maṭha* of their *satguru*, but always under the *guru's* aegis, serving together in fulfillment of a common mission. These devotees, when initiated into the order of *sannyāsa*, don the saf-



from robes and thereby bind themselves to a universal body of Hindu renunciates whose existence has never ceased, an assembly of men inwardly linked in Śivasambandham, their mutual dedication to Śiva, though not necessarily outwardly associated. It is this venerable convocation which the *sannyāsin* joins and to which he is bound for life in brotherhood and in service. ¶ Traditionally, there are several levels of initiation for the Śaivite monastic. Requirements and qualifications vary according to the circumstances, the preceptor and the disciple. These initiations may be given early in the monastic's life or may await the completion of years or even decades of *sādhana* and purification before they are bestowed. It is not a matter of temporal experience or timing. The first formal initiation for the aspirant is known as *brahmacharya dikshā* and enters the devotee into a chaste life of study, worship and service. The next initiation is that of *sannyāsa dikshā*. This *dikshā* is a formal Hindu rite, or less often an informal blessing, entering the devotee into renunciate monasticism, binding him for life to certain vows which include chastity, poverty and obedience, and directing him on the path to God Realization. It must be realized that the ceremonies described in the Rites of Initiation section herein form the customary rites of passage into *sannyāsa*, but that it is not merely the observance of these ordinances which makes one a *sannyāsin*. Indeed, if not a single formality was followed, not a single vow solemnized, a true *satguru* may confer *sannyāsa* on a true disciple in a most informal manner. There are other forms of *dikshā*, not relating to monasticism, by which a

spiritual teacher bestows blessings and awakening upon the devotee through the simple agency of a touch, word, look or thought. One such initiation is known as *mantra dikshā*, which in the Śaiva tradition is the teaching of the Pañchākshara Mantra, "Namaḥ Śivāya." ¶ According to the venerable laws of Manu, one enters into *sannyāsa* after training with the *guru*, but only if the candidate received *brahmacharya dikshā* and commenced such training prior to his twenty-fifth birthday. Otherwise, all are expected to enter the life of the householder, embracing the life of renunciation, if they elect, after having concluded family and societal obligations around age seventy-two. Thus, there are two distinct types of *sannyāsa*. The first is initiation of unmarried youth into the ancient world Order of *sannyāsa*. A second *sannyāsa*, described in the *Vedas*, though not commonly observed in contemporary Hindu society, may be defined as the last of the four *āśramas* or stages of life. After observing the stages of the student (*brahmacharya*), the householder (*grihastha*) and elder advisor (*vāṇaprastha*), the devout man seeks initiation by a *satguru* under whose grace he enters into life's final stage, withdrawing unto himself and ideally living the life of a forest hermit while dedicating himself to Godly pursuits. Both forms of *sannyāsa* are delineated in these *Holy Orders* and both require initiation from one who himself has the blessings of a legitimate preceptorial line to wear the renunciate's *kavi* robes. Strictest tradition requires that lifetime renunciates be single men and that they enter their Order before age twenty-five. However, there are certain Orders which accept men into *sannyāsa*



after age twenty-five provided they have been in college and not in the world after that time. Others will accept widowers; and a few initiate women. Such rules and qualifications apply primarily to cenobites, that is to those who will live and serve together in an *āśrama* or monastery. The rules pertaining to homeless anchorites are, for obvious reasons, more lenient. ¶ The ancient *śāstras* recognize four justifiable motivations or reasons for entering into *sannyāsa*: *vidvat*, *vividishā*, *mārkaṭa* and *ātura*. Briefly, *vidvat sannyāsa* is the spontaneous withdrawal from the world in search for God Realization which results from *karma* and tendencies developed in a previous life. *Vividishā sannyāsa* is embracing of monastic life in order to satisfy a yearning, developed through scriptural study and practice, for knowledge of the Absolute. *Mārkaṭa sannyāsa* is taking refuge in monasticism as a result of great sorrow, disappointment or misfortune in worldly pursuits. *Ātura sannyāsa* is entering into *sannyāsa* upon one's deathbed, realizing that there is no longer hope in life.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ŚAIVITE AND VAISHNAVITE MONASTICISM.

Renunciation and asceticism have been an integral component of Śaivite culture and religion from the earliest days, the most highly honored facet of the Hindu Dharma. Until around the ninth century, renunciation as a way of life was a uniquely Śaivite phenomenon, and even today the word *sannyāsin* denotes particularly a Śaivite ascetic, though etymologically it may be applied to all Hindu monks. Histori-

cally, *sannyāsa* has not been a part of Vaiṣṇavism until fairly recently. There are certain distinctions to be observed between Śaivite and Vaiṣṇavite *sannyāsins*. Firstly, Śaiva *sannyāsins* generally share a common philosophical ground, often described as monistic Vedānta or Śūddha Śaiva Siddhānta, while their Vaiṣṇavite counterparts embrace at least four distinct philosophies. Secondly, Śaiva *sannyāsins* throughout the Hindu world worship the same Deity, and wear the *tilaka* or sect mark on their foreheads, consisting of holy ash in three horizontal lines called *tripuṇḍra*, with little variation. Vaiṣṇavite *sannyāsins*, on the other hand, never make their *tilaka* with holy ash, but use various forms, often consisting of sandal paste in three vertical lines, called *urdhvapuṇḍra*. Worshiping Viṣṇu's divine incarnations, Vaiṣṇavite renunciates are often termed *vairagis*, and may further distinguish themselves from the Śaiva *sannyāsins* by using a rosary of *tulsa* instead of the Śaivite's *rudrāksha* and by wearing white robes instead of the traditional saffron or ochre robes. This has brought about the terms *Lal Padris* or "red-devotees" to describe the Śaivites and *Sita Padris* or "white-devotees" to describe the Vaiṣṇavites. Finally, while *sannyāsins* place great emphasis on asceticism and the disciplines of meditation or *rāja yoga*, *vairagis* for the most part follow the path of devotion or *bhakti yoga*. Despite these historical differences, modern Hinduism accepts all devout Hindus into *sannyāsa*, and devotees of any of the sects of the Sanātana Dharma—whether Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava or Śakta—may enter into *sannyāsa*. ¶ The ideal of the life-long celi-



bate monastic, living within the social order and yet freed from worldly obligation that he might find and shed his spiritual light, started for Śaivites before the Moheñjodaro and Harappa civilizations of five thousand years ago and traces its development in the references in the *Ṛig Veda*, around 1,000 B.C., to the *munis* and the *yatis*, men who wore long hair and the yellow robes, such men as Sanatkumāra, Dattatreya and others, all *naisthika brahmachāris*. Later in the *Vedas* the *sannyāsa āśrama*, or last stage of the four-fold division of life, became formalized, and many references made to those who after age seventy-two relinquished all in search of the Absolute. Renunciation of the world found a high expression in the monastic principles of Jainism and Buddhism, both religions founded by illustrious sons of India. Siddhārtha Gautama, the Buddha, was born and died a Hindu in the seventh century BC. He himself cherished, lived and promulgated the Śaivite ascetic ideal within the compass of Hinduism, and his followers made a separate religion of his teachings after his death. It is only in Hinduism, and more particularly in Śaivism and the Hindu-inspired religions of Jainism and Buddhism, that asceticism is a vibrant and valued mode of life, a part of the natural *dharma*. Though the homeless *sādhu* and the wandering mendicant existed before, it was Gautama Buddha who around six hundred years BC, organized what had been an individual *sādhana* into a monastic order, which he termed the *saṅga*. Around the 8th or 9th century, Ādi Śaṅkarāchārya, the great exemplar of the ideals of *sannyāsa* who revitalized and restored the ancient ways during his

short life of thirty-two years, organized the Hindu monastics of his day. In his travels throughout India, he assessed the existing traditions and finally validated ten orders of ascetics, at the same time establishing four religious centers or *mathas* in the North, East, South and West of India, known respectively as Jyotiḥ, Govardhana, Śringeri and Śārada. Thus, the ancient Order of *sannyāsa* extends back to time immemorial, structurally influenced by Gautama Buddha about twenty-five centuries ago and revitalized in its present form by Ādi Śaṅkarāchārya around eleven hundred years ago.

THE UNRIVALED GREATNESS OF THE ŚAIVA SANNYĀSA DHARMA.

The Śaiva Siddhānta Yoga Order holds that all souls without exception will attain the ultimate realization and eventually merge in non-dual union with God, and that there are souls on every plateau of evolution at all times, some in the midst of life's experience and others who, having experienced, are naturally withdrawing from the world. This Order supports the scriptural doctrine that the two paths—householder and renunciate—are distinct in their *dharma*s and attainments, affirming that true renunciation may not be achieved by those in the world even by virtue of a genuine attitude of detachment. The householder may attain great and profound spiritual depths during his life, unfolding the mysteries of existence in his or her states of contemplation and, according to our ancient mystics, perhaps experiencing total God Realization at the hour of death, though this attainment



is reserved for the ardent, sincere and devout *grihastha*. Alternatively, the householder may, by striving, attain the highest realization after all family *dharma* and societal obligations are fulfilled, provided he enters the *sannyāsa āśrama* after age seventy-two through the customary initiatory rites given by a *satguru* and then diligently pursues his spiritual *sādhana* in a state of genuine renunciation and not in the midst of his family. Our Gurudeva spoke of this in June of 1968: "The path of the family is a path of magnetic attachments. It is their duty to own property, to succeed in business and to raise their family until age seventy-two. This natural and necessary attachment to the world, coupled with the male and female principle in the family, prevents *nirvikalpa samādhi* in this way. He represents the active, aggressive, masculine energies of the *piṅgalā* current, while she naturally expresses the passive, feminine energies of the *iḍā* current. The husband and wife are together a one being, but individually they are psychically incomplete and dependent one upon the other. Through their harmonious and disciplined life they attain to the profound illuminations of *savikalpa samādhi*. Now, the *sannyāsin* balances within himself both the male and female energies. Complete unto himself, he is whole and independent. There arises within him a pure energy, neither positive nor negative. This is the *sushumna* current coming into power through which he gains control of the *kuṇḍalini* force and eventually, after years of careful guidance, attains *nirvikalpa samādhi*. ¶ Eventually, in one life or another, all will turn to the renunciate path. However, it would be

equally improper for a renunciate-minded soul to enter family life as for a *grihastha* to seek to be a *sannyāsin*. Only the *sannyāsin* can truly repudiate the world of illusion and proclaim the Truth which others may seek but which will always elude them. The *Kulārṇava Tantra* states: "Austerities, restraints, the observance of vows, pilgrimages to holy places, bodily disciplines and other acts are ineffectual if performed by one who is uninitiated. One should, therefore, by all means be initiated by a *guru*." Again, the *Rudra Yamala* proclaims: "He who has not been initiated cannot acquire Divine Knowledge. Those who perform *japa* and *pūjā* without being initiated derive no benefit, even as seeds sown on stone do not germinate." The *Kaivalya Upanishad* proclaims, "Not by work, not by birth, nor by wealth, but by renunciation alone do the rare ones attain immortality." (Verse 3). We find the virtues of the *sannyāsin's* abdication of the world boldly expressed by Swāmi Vivekānanda of the Puri Order, "Never forget and teach to your children that as is the difference between a firefly and the blazing sun, between the infinite ocean and a little pond, between a mustard seed and the mountain Meru, such is the difference between the householder and the *sannyāsin*!" A disciple asked Swāmi Vivekānanda if it were true that without *sannyāsa* there could be no knowledge of Brahman. Swāmi replied, "That is true. A thousand times true." This lofty view of renunciation is echoed by His Holiness Ādi Śaṅkarāchārya, in his introduction to the *Aitareya Upanishad*: "The life of the householder is controlled by desire. Non-action or renunciation means the cessation of all relations



with family, wealth and other objects of desire. Therefore, it is not possible for a knower of the Self to renounce action and at the same time lead a household-er's life." The *Muṇḍaka Upanishad* says: "The Self is not gained by the weak, nor by the insincere, nor by those who merely practice austerities, nor by those devoid of the necessary insignia; but wise men who strive with vigor, attention and propriety attain union with Brahman" (III.ii.4). Śāṅkarācārya in explaining this passage comments that by practicing *sādhana* without the external signs of the *sannyāsin*, the saffron robes, *daṇḍa*, and *kamaṇḍalu*, Brahman, which is difficult to attain, is not realized. In *Tirumantiram*, Saint Tirumular describes the insignia of the Śiva *yogin*:

To smear holy ashes is the first step to *tapas*.
Rings of copper in the ears,
And garland of *rudrāksha* around the neck—
These, too, are other emblems
For Śiva to reach.
Thus does the blemishless Śiva *yogin*
For *tapas* prepare. *Kuṇḍala* for ears to adorn.
Kamaṇḍalu for water to hold.
Kaṇḍika for neck to fill,
A conch to blow, a bowl to beg,
And a *kappara* to hold the ashes,
The correct sandals and *yogic* seat,
The *yoga* sash and *yoga* staff—
These ten are the *yogi's* appurtenances.

Tirumantiram, Verse 1662 and 1664

¶ Thus, our emphasis on the necessity for initiation into *sannyāsa* in both the perpetuation of Śaivism and the attainment of *Śivajñāna* finds its authority in scripture, in the declaration of our beloved Gurudeva and in the halls of wisdom within. Let none append to this lesser postulations. Rather let all rise to the summit of understanding from

which the imperious saints and sages of Śaivism spoke forth these canons. We refute and oppose contemporary notions of *sannyāsa* which assert that it is for the masses, and which claim that it requires neither qualification nor discipline, neither celibacy nor commitment. Such approaches are neither scriptural nor wise, but relegate this most noble way of life to ordinariness and make popular and common that which has always been exceptional and rare. We refute as well the conception of *sannyāsa* as an existential surpassing of religion or an ecumenical embracing of all religions as sometimes practiced by non-Hindus. It is not a *yoga* path set apart from the Sanātana Dharma, equally available to Christians, Jews and even those not affiliated with any faith. It is a strictly Hindu path, and all true *sannyāsin*s are Hindus, for *sannyāsa* is Hindu monasticism. Just as a rabbi is revered among the Jews and a cardinal among the Catholics, so are *sannyāsin*s the most dedicated of Hindus, the teachers of their tradition and the guardians of their great scripture. For a Christian or a Jew to wear the saffron vestments and call himself *swāmi* is a wrongful abuse of both sacred traditions and must never be condoned. That is not to say that non-Hindus cannot become renunciates in the truest sense, only that they must do so within the context of their own religion. It must be added that realization is not restricted to Hindu renunciates, but to devout followers of any religion which has non-dual union with the Absolute or *Nirvakaḷpa Samādhi* as its final goal, provided such aspirants renounce the world and come under the graceful guidance of an awakened



preceptor. ¶ The following verses from Saint Tiruvalluvar's *Holy Kural* and Saint Tirumular's *Tirumantiram* speak of the greatness and the grandeur of the Śaiva *sannyāsa dharma*:

The scriptures exalt above every other good
The greatness of virtuous renunciates.

Holy Kural—Verse 21

It is the nature of asceticism
To patiently endure hardship.
And not to harm living creatures.

Holy Kural—Verse 261

Whatsoever a man has renounced,
From the sorrow born of that
He has freed himself.

Holy Kural—Verse 341

Beyond birth and death,
Reached by renunciate *tapas*
Is He, my Lord of resplendent glory!
Sing His praise! Pray incessantly!
The Heaven's Lord shall
Show you Dharma's Land.

Tirumantiram—Verse 1614

The Lord renounced all.
He is the Shining Light above.
He is the friend of all
Who have surmounted Death's days.
He is devoid of desires,
The Guiding Light of all those
Who Darkness renounced.
Only to those who this world abandon
Shall His Feet within reach be.

Tirumantiram—Verse 1620

The heart of the holy trembles not in fear;
All passions stilled, it enjoys calm unruffled.
Neither is there death nor pain,
Nor night nor day,
Nor fruits of *karma* to experience—
That truly is the state of the desire-renounced.

Tirumantiram—Verse 1624

The *tapasvins* many that live by alms
Have no life hereafter.
On them shall be showered
All blessings of spiritual wealth.
They that perform incessant *tapas*
Attain the power to end
All births to be.

Tirumantiram—Verse 1626

Without illusions, without ignorance,
Without intelligence,
Without the embraces of fish-eyed damsels
And their attachment,
Themselves as themselves,
In Solitude remaining one in Śiva-Śakti,
Thus are they, the
Holy Ones in Śiva's Robe.

Tirumantiram—Verse 1678

My body, wealth and life
He took from me as sacrificial offering
Through ritual appropriate.
He directed his spiritual glance at me and
Dispelled my *karma*'s
Network to destruction;
And then He laid His Hands on me
And planted His Feet on my head;
In a trice He imparted Spiritual Consciousness
And thus my birth's cycle He ended—
He, the Nandī,
Through these acts of *dīkshā* successive.

Tirumantiram—Verse 1778

THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR ACCEPTANCE INTO THE SANNYĀSA DHARMA.

Lauding dispassion, one-pointedness and serenity, scriptures proclaim that candidates for *sannyāsa* must possess these *sattvic* qualities. Śaṅkara's *Crest Jewel of Discrimination* states: "He alone may be considered qualified to seek the Absolute who has discrimination, whose mind is turned away from all enjoyments, who possesses tranquility and the kindred virtues, and who feels a longing for liberation.... Longing for liberation is the will to be free from the fetters forged by ignorance—beginning with the ego-sense and so on, down to the physical body itself—through the realization of one's true nature.... Be devoted to Brahman and you will be able to control your senses. Control



your senses and you will gain mastery over your mind. Master your mind and the sense of ego will be dissolved. In this manner, the *yogī* achieves an unbroken realization of the joy of Brahman. Therefore, let the seeker strive to give his heart to Brahman....The fruit of dispassion is illumination. The fruit of illumination is the stilling of desire. The fruit of stilled desire is experience of the bliss of the *ātman*, whence flows all peace.” ¶ Candidates must be at least twenty-four years of age and have begun their training for *sannyāsa* before age twenty-five, or have entered the *sannyāsa āśrama* after age seventy-two. An extensive examination, written as well as oral, is conducted by the initiating *guru* or his appointed senior *sannyāsins*. During this examination, it should be determined that the candidate: 1. is qualified as outlined above to fulfill and is naturally inclined toward a life of renunciation, 2. has attained a measure of moral and spiritual maturity sufficient to make him a respected member of the ancient tradition, 3. has completed six years of *brahmachāriya*, 4. has successfully completed a minimum of one year of personal training under the initiating *guru*, 5. has completed a two-year retreat from family and friends in conjunction with two years' preparation as a pre-*sannyāsa tapasvin* (this qualification may be waived for candidates in the *sannyāsa āśrama*), 6. has divested himself of all possessions, including lands, trusts and wills to which he may be a beneficiary now or at some future date, 7. has given away those possessions he did own to a Hindu temple or institution of his own choosing, and 8. has shown a measure of philosophical insight and

understanding in accord with the Śaiva Dharma, a Catechism and Creed for Śaivite Hindus and the teachings of the *guru paramparā*. ¶ Other qualifications which should be taken into account during the candidate's examination include: *viveka*, *vairāgya*, *shatsampati* (a six-fold virtue encompassing forbearance, courage, faith and control of body, mind and senses) and *mumukshatata* (desire for liberation), *bhakti* and the following from the *Gautamiya Tantra*: “The *śishya* should be of good parentage and pure-minded. He should be learned in the scriptures, diligent, devoted to the welfare of others. He should know *dharma* and practice it. He should be acquainted with the true meaning of the *Śāstras*. He should possess a strong body and a strong mind. He should always do good to living beings. He should do only such deeds as are good for the after-life. He should serve the *satguru* by his speech, mind, body and resources. He should avoid works of which the result is transitory, and be diligent in working for enduring results. He should be one who has conquered passions, indolence, illusory knowledge and vanity.” ¶ The candidate should be carefully appraised of the high standards he will be expected to fulfill and counseled that his *Holy Orders* raise him above caste, class and all social distinction that he may equally serve all true devotees. In consideration of the probationer's petition to enter into these *Holy Orders*, it must be remembered that scholarship and philosophical acumen are not necessary requisites for the spiritual life, and while some *sannyāsins* will be the *paṇḍitas* and scholars, others will be the great *karma yogis* and *bhaktas*, serving



their religion by virtue of their endless love, devotion and industry. Nor should those charged with conducting this examination be too severe in their recommendation, but give allowance for the training and spiritual growth that will ensue, taking care to assure that the candidate possesses such qualities as will enable him in the years ahead to mature into a worthy *sannyāsin*. Should it be determined that the candidate was not fully prepared, he would be advised to wait before taking these final vows, realizing that once taken they may not be revoked. Those conducting his interview and the initiating *guru* are advised of the solemn responsibility which devolves upon them to remember that qualification does not depend upon years spent in service or training and to not give these *Holy Orders* prematurely. In certain circumstances the candidate may serve his faith best and himself be best served by remaining a *tapasvin*, perhaps perpetually, but certainly until both he and the senior members of the Order are assured that there will be no return to worldly *kar-mas*. ¶ *Sannyāsa dīkshā* may be given by any legitimate *sannyāsin* from a recognized *Paramparā*, though its highest fulfillment comes when initiation is granted by an illumined *satguru*. The *Guru Gitā* describes such a preceptor, "A *paramaguru* is one who is devoid of delusion, peaceful, content within himself, not depending on another, ...one who is free from feelings of *dvaita* and *advaita*, who shines by the light of his Self Realization, who is able to destroy the deep darkness of ignorance, ...by whose *darśana* one attains equanimity, cheerfulness, peace of mind and patience, ...one

who sees his own Self as the non-dual Brahman and has killed ruthlessly infatuation for wealth and women—such a person is the *paramaguru*. Having attained such a *guru*, the disciple is never again bound to *saṁsāra*. He becomes absolutely free."—Verses 280, 289, 291–294. ¶ In speaking of renunciation and the qualifications therefor, Sage Nārada in his *Bhakti Sūtras*, Adi Śaṅkarāchārya in his *Hymns* and Saint Tirumular in his *Tirumantiram* have written:

Who indeed overcomes *māyā*?
Who gives up all attachment,
Who serves the great ones,
And who is freed from the sense of "I and mine."
He who lives in solitude,
Cuts through the bondages of this world,
Goes beyond the three *guṇas*,
And depends upon the Lord even for his living.
He who gives up the fruits of his actions,
Renounces all selfish activity,
And passes beyond the pairs of opposites.
He who renounces even the rites and ceremonies
Prescribed by the scriptures
And attains unflinching love for God—
Such a man, indeed, crosses this *māyā*
And helps others to cross it.

Bhakti Sūtras—Verses 46–50

O Fool! Leave off the desire
For accumulated wealth.
Create in the mind thoughts
About Reality, devoid of passion.
The water on the lotus leaf
Is very unsteady.
So also is life extremely unstable.
Know that the entire world is devoured
By disease and conceit,
And smitten with sorrow.
Do not be proud of wealth,
Kindred and youth.
Time takes away all these in a moment.



Leaving aside this entire world,
Which is of the nature of an illusion,
And knowing the state of Brahman,
Enter into it.

Mohamudgara—Verses 2, 4 and 11

A *Sattvic* is he,
His thoughts centered on Truth,
His vision clear among conflicting faiths,
Abhorrent of recurring cycles of birth,
Walking straight in *dharma's* path—
Indeed he is a disciple good and true.
He scans that which divides
The Real and the unreal.
He melts in the soul of his being,
And with Śiva's Grace to guide
He receives *jñāna* in true devotion.
He humbles himself before the Lord
And seeks the bliss of His Śakti—
He is the fit one,
The disciple good and true.

Tirumantiram—Verses 1696-97.

rites of initiation into the ancient order of sannyāsa.

Given by the *satguru* or after his *mahāsamādhi* by his designated *swāmī*s, the ceremony for *sannyāsa dīkshā* is called the *viraga* sacrifice. These sacred rites are often solemnized during *Śivarātri*, it being considered auspicious for *sannyāsins* to commence their monastic life on Śiva's most sanctified night, or alternatively during the full moon in May, a time that honors our beloved Gurudeva's *dīkshā*. It includes specific instruction in meditation and other spiritual practices and *mantras*, all of which is never disclosed. The *Śiva Purāṇas* enjoin the candidate to fast on fruits and milk for twelve days before the ceremony and to chant the Savitṛi *mantra*: "Om bhūr bhuvah svaḥ. Tat Savitur vareṇyaṁ, Bhargo devasya dhimahi, Dhiyo yo naḥ prachodayāt." *Ṛig Veda—3.62.10*. Prior to the initiation rites, the

candidate symbolically performs the obsequies for his parents including the customary food offerings, thus releasing himself from that obligation at a future date. Early in the morning on the chosen auspicious day, the candidate prostrates before the *satguru*, divested of all possessions, having given up all things personal. A Gaṇeśa *pūjā* is performed and the sacred *homa* fire is kindled in preparation for the *viraja* sacrifice. With the candidate optionally knee-deep in water, a blessing is given by the *satguru* by which all residual worldly impurities are removed, and the candidate's head is then shaved. Together he and the *satguru* symbolically conduct his *antyeṣṭi saṁskāra*, the ritual funeral rites, to betoken the death of the personal self and the birth of the spiritual being. He places the remnants of personal identity, hair, clothing, *pulnūl* or sacred thread and all desires for wealth, progeny and fame into the *homa* fire, beseeching the permission of Lord Gaṇeśa and heeding the path of Lord Muruga, vowing aloud his renunciation thus: "All that I have and all that I am I now give unto my God, my Gods and my *guru*. I have no family except the Divine Father Śiva and Mother Śakti who dwell in Kailās and on earth the *saṅgam* of Śaivite devotees. I have no home except the stillness of Being. I have no possessions except my faith and dedication. I have no desires except my desire to serve and to realize God." The candidate then says aloud three times, "I, wishing for *mukti*, take refuge in this sacred Order and in God Śiva, who created the world, who breathed out the *Vedas*. The purpose of my life is to cultivate dispassion, to become pure, to attain union with God



Śiva and be immersed in Divine Love. I do fully and of my own volition accept these *Holy Orders of Sannyāsa*, now and for the remainder of my life, and bind myself in the fulfillment thereof to the ancient order of *sannyāsa*, to my *satguru*, to my Śaivite Hindu faith and to the *devas*, the Mahādevas and Lord Śiva Himself. I am the *ātman*, the non-dual Paraśiva, pure and free." So saying, the renunciate walks unclad seven steps around the *homa* Fire, returning to kneel at the *guru's* feet. He is thereafter dead to the world. The *satguru* then whispers the Pañchākshara Mantra in the *sannyāsin's* right ear three times, along with personal instructions for meditation. The *sannyāsin* is given his ascetic name, his *daṇḍa*, a *mālā* of 108 *rudrāksha* beads for *japa yoga*, a deer skin, a *kamaṇḍalu* or water bowl. After bathing in the nearby river where he intones the *mantra*, dips three times into the waters and then dons the *kavi* for the first time, the *sannyāsin* returns. A *pūjā* is performed to invoke the blessings of the Second and Third Worlds. The *satguru* then takes ashes from the *homa* fire and marks the *tripuṇḍra* on the new *swāmi's* forehead and covers the body with the sacred ash. After the *pūjā* the following are read aloud to the *sannyāsin*: his Sacred Vow of Renunciation and these excerpts from *Natchintanai* and from the *Bhagavad Gītā*. The *sannyāsin* then prostrates three times before the *satguru* and the ceremony is concluded. Henceforth he is a *sannyāsin* of the great and ageless Order. He then walks in the direction of the Himālayas, home of Lord Śiva, to be invited back by his brothers to join in the monastic community to serve, or to be sent on pilgrimage

to return at a specified later date. On the night of his *dikshā* he is required to beg his meal. The above constitutes the formal rites of initiation, and though the ceremony be an informal declaration by the preceptor or the simple giving of the saffron robes and a name, the validity of *sannyāsa dikshā* is in no way impaired thereby.

Hail, O *sannyāsin*, love's embodiment!
Does any power exist apart from love?
Diffuse thyself throughout the happy world.
Let painful *māyā* cease and ne'er return!
Day and night give praise unto the Lord.
Pour forth a stream of songs
To melt the very stones.
Attain the sight where night is not nor day.
See Śiva everywhere, and rest in bliss.
Live without interest in worldly gain.
Here, as thou hast ever been, remain.
Then never will cruel sorrow venture nigh.

Hail, O *sannyāsin*,
Thou who knowest no guile!
Establish in thy heart and worship there
The Taintless One—Pañchākshara's inmost core,
Whom neither Vishṇu nor Brahmā
Had power to comprehend.
Thou that regardest all others as thyself—
Who in this world can be compared with thee?
The powerful *karma*
Thy past deeds have wrought
Will vanish without trace.
Daily, on the thought
"Is not this *jiva* Śiva?" thou must meditate.
Best of *sannyāsins*, of one-pointed mind!
Morning and evening worship without fail
The Holy Feet of the Almighty Lord,
Who here and hereafter
Preserves and safeguards thee.
Cast aside the fetters of thy sins!
By steadfast concentration of thy mind
Awareness of a separate self thou must extirpate.
Conquer with love all those that censure thee.
Thou art eternal! Have no doubt of this!
What is not thou is fancy's artifice.
Formless thou art!
Then live from all thought free!

Natchintanai 228



Learn from me now, Oh son of Kunti,
 How man made perfect is one with Brahman,
 The goal of wisdom.
 When the mind and the heart
 Are freed from delusion, united with Brahman,
 When steady will has subdued the senses,
 When sight, taste and sound are abandoned,
 Without regretting, without aversion;
 When man seeks solitude, eats but little,
 Curbing his speech, his mind and body,
 Ever engaged in meditation on Brahman,
 The Truth, and full of compassion;
 When he casts from him vanity, violence,
 Pride, lust, anger and all his possessions,
 Totally free from the sense of ego
 And tranquil of heart:
 That man is ready for oneness with Brahman.
 And he who dwells united with Brahman,
 Calm in mind, not grieving, not craving,
 Regarding all men with equal acceptance:
 He loves me most dearly.

Bhagavad Gītā XVII/49-56

THE GURU-DISCIPLE RELATIONSHIP IS THE CRUX OF ŚAIVITE MONASTICISM.

During the order of *sannyāsa*, the *sannyāsin* enters into the mature stages of the *guru*-disciple relationship. *Guru* literally means the “remover of darkness.” The *satguru* has been the candidate’s spiritual guide and preceptor, and now he becomes as mother and father, friend and companion on the Eternal Path, the very embodiment of truth and goodness. The *sannyāsin* should strive through the years ahead to perceive the *satguru* as his higher self, not different, not external to himself. In many ways he and the *guru* have become one, and that oneness will blossom forth in later years. There is a one mind, a one energy, a one mission. The *sannyāsin* should not look upon his devotion to the *satguru* as the whole of his commitment, for he is equally bound in service and

obedience to God, the Gods and his religion as he is to his beloved preceptor. It is taught that there are three pillars of Śaivism: the *satguru*, the temple and scripture. These together constitute the fullness of the renunciate’s dedication. Nevertheless, nothing is more central to the *sannyāsin*’s spiritual awakening than the nurturing of the relationship with the preceptor so that it may blossom in its mystical and loving maturity. The *sannyāsin* should never perceive this to be an ordinary association, but remember the admonition spoken in the *Kulārṇava Tantra*: “He enters perdition who regards the *guru* as merely human, the *mantra* as mere letters and the temple image as mere stone.” The *sannyāsin* must foster and protect this relationship, working daily to bring his mind ever deeper into harmony with that of his *satguru*. He should consider this his first and foremost monastic duty. ¶ It is up to the *guru* to see each one to his final destiny, and it is up to the disciple to serve so perfectly that the *guru* is freed from external affairs to work within. The disciple’s first responsibility is always to the *guru*, and his final authority comes always from the *guru*. Should there ever arise instances wherein other Śaivite authorities or scriptures or traditions differ from the directions of the *satguru*, the *sannyāsin* must take his *guru*’s direction as the overruling prerogative. If the *guru* scolds, he must accept it in love and understanding, perceiving it as a blessing. The *sannyāsin* must always be “on the eve of his departure,” ready to respond at a moment’s notice to any change or direction that may come from the *guru*. The *sannyāsin* must work to understand his *guru*’s mind and mission,



and then bring his own awareness and objectives into harmony with the *guru's*. The *sannyāsin* must cultivate devotion to the *satguru*—*guru bhakti*. This he does through study of the *Guru Gītā* and the *Tirumantiram*, and through application of the attitudes and protocol these ancient scriptures contain. He does this through bringing his *guru* a flower each day, through prostrating daily when he first sees him and through awakening an abiding love for his spiritual master. He does this through attending *guru pūjā*. He does this through serving his *satguru* even better when he is not present, knowing this is the most meritorious service of all. He does this through obeying the instructions and living up to the unspoken expectations of the *guru*. He does this through nurturing an unflinching love for his *satguru*, through worshipping the *tiruvadi* and taking refuge at his *guru's* Holy Feet, yet never allowing his reverence to fall into mere personality worship which would be an externalizing of this deeply internal process. The purpose of the *guru*-disciple relationship is not to be bound to anyone, but to learn perfect freedom from one who is himself free. Nonetheless, a *sannyāsin* may of his own volition bind himself in service to a monastic order or community, consciously offering his life in such service until *sarvatyāga* or complete giving up of even religious duties naturally arises with the *guru's* blessing, perhaps after age seventy-two. ¶ Our Śaivite heritage holds that all of existence is Śiva, and there are no so-called divine incarnations or *avatārs*. God Śiva exists equally in all, though His presence is more apparent in the person of the illumined teacher.

In this spirit the awakened *śishya* is directed to see the *satguru* as divine, no different from Lord Śiva Himself. The *Kulārṇava Tantra* says, "Why the pains of long pilgrimages? Why observances that emaciate the body? All the fruits anticipated from such austerities can be easily obtained by motiveless service to the *guru*. By mind, by speech, by body and by action do what is helpful to the *guru*....As in the vicinity of fire butter gets melted, so in the proximity of the holy *guru* all sins dissolve. As darkness is destroyed at the very sight of the lamp, so is ignorance destroyed at the very sight of the holy *guru*. *Moksha* is in the palm of his hand." The true *sannyāsin* will know that knowledge of the Self arises only from the *satguru*, know further that there is but one *satguru* in this life and that the three worlds grieve to see a disciple abuse or abandon his teacher and rejoice in the faithful and constant disciple. The ceremony of *sannyāsa dīkshā* binds *guru* and disciple psychically, much in the manner of the lifetime bonds established between man and wife when vows of matrimony are solemnized; both are very real inner ties, not to be broken without unhappy consequences. *Guru Gītā* states, "They who understand the significance of the great teachings by service to the *guru* are real *sannyāsins*. All others are mere wearers of the ochre-colored robes." ¶ There follow Ten Observances of the Guru-Disciple Relationship compiled from the *Guru Gītā* and given unto the *sannyāsins* of this Order to observe as best they can:



1.

The disciple shall daily offer a gift in love, such as a fruit or flower, and prostrate himself at the feet of his *satguru*, or in his absence before the Holy Sandals or in the direction where the *guru* abides.

2.

The disciple shall in devotion or knowledge look upon the person of the *satguru* as the very embodiment of Lord Śiva, offering every service and reverence equally unto both, making no distinction between the two.

3.

The disciple shall in faith and trust obey his *satguru*, setting aside his own needs and preferences that he may carry out the directions and wishes, expressed or implied, of the *guru* without delay or reservation.

4.

The disciple shall in his every act and thought seek the blessings, inwardly or in person, of the *satguru*, always acting in harmony with the preceptor's will, surrendering himself unconditionally, trusting in his Master's supreme wisdom and seeking refuge in his grace.

5.

The disciple shall observe the acceptance of *uc̣hishṭa* and the sanctified waters from the *abhishekam* of the *tiruvadi*, and in all service to the spiritual master realize that the whole of existence, sentient and insentient, is served.

6.

The disciple shall meditate upon the inner form of the *satguru*, earnestly striving through this *guru dhyāna* to understand his temperament, the contents of his heart and his essential nature as eternal, peaceful, unattached—as *guru*

tattva, the essence that pervades form.

7.

The disciple shall never criticize nor advise the *guru*, nor contradict him, nor correct, nor argue with him; nor shall he allow others to do so in his presence, never listening to criticism directed toward his preceptor, defending him in such instances and leaving the presence of those who persist in such denigration. He shall accept correction and criticism openly, and look upon the wrath of the Master as a fiery grace capable of consuming unseemly *karma* and upon his praise as a merciful grace.

8.

The disciple shall not stand or sit above the *satguru*, or take a place of authority or instruct others in his presence, or carry on worldly activity or conversation before him, or walk or drive ahead of him, or partake of anything without first offering it to the preceptor.

9.

The disciple shall never utter falsehood before the *satguru*, nor words of contempt; neither shall he approach or address him as an equal, stretch his legs in the *guru's* direction or touch his body or possessions with the feet; neither shall he imitate him in dress or deportment, nor speak excessively or with pride in his holy presence.

10.

The disciple shall emulate the awakened qualities he sees in the spiritual teacher as he strives for realization of the Truth which is the gracious gift of the *satguru* and attainable by no other means.



THE SANNYĀSIN'S FIVE SACRED VOWS OF RENUNCIATION, PURITY, OBEDIENCE, HUMILITY AND CONFIDENCE ARE BOTH AN IDEAL AND A CODE OF MONASTICISM THROUGH WHICH THAT IDEAL MAY BE REALIZED. AS AN IDEAL, THEY EXPRESS THE FUNDAMENTAL OBJECTIVES OF MONASTIC LIFE, THE STATES OF BEING AND CONSCIOUSNESS TOWARD WHICH THE ŚAIVA SANNYĀSIN IS STRIVING AND WHICH CONSTITUTE THE UNOBSTRUCTED EXPRESSION OF HIS SOUL. AS A CODE OF LIVING, THEY PROVIDE THE DISCIPLINES, PRACTICES, STANDARDS AND RULES WHICH, WHEN RELIGIOUSLY OBSERVED, UNIFY THE BROTHERHOOD OF RENUNCIATES INTO A SINGLE SPIRITUAL BODY AND GUIDE ITS INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS TOWARD THE COMMON GOALS OF SERVICE, DEVOTION, SPIRITUALITY AND GOD REALIZATION.

The five sacred vows hereunder constitute a holy covenant by which the *sannyāsin* pledges himself to the ideals they contain and solemnly swears to defend and preserve the doctrines and faith of Śaivism and the traditions of *sannyāsa* itself. The *sannyāsin* enters into this covenant entirely of his own volition and takes these vows between himself and the divine Beings of all Three Worlds, binding and obligating himself in the fulfillment thereof to his *satguru*, his fellow *sannyāsins*, and indeed to all Śaivites. ¶ These are lifetime vows, once taken they can never be rescinded or relinquished. The *sannyāsin* pledges to faithfully abide by these vows for the remainder of his life, in good times and in bad, a pledge which transcends any changes in his Order and endures beyond the life of any and all of its members, including the *satguru*. He knows that difficulties may come to him and to his fellow renunciates at one time or another and that these tests may be all the more challenging for those who have progressed the farthest, just as the mountain climber faces his greatest obstacles near the summit. He will not lose heart if impediments appear, but face even the most difficult passages through

his *karma* with courage, determination and affectionate detachment. Most of what he will experience from this day onwards will not be the residue of a personal past but the *karma* of the larger body of Śaivites which he has willingly undertaken to resolve, the *karma* of his religion and its myriad members. He may take heart when in the midst of difficulties, knowing they are but the *karma* of others inherited by virtue of his selfless service. ¶ These Sacred Vows are administered by the *satguru*, or after his *mahāsamādhi* by his designated initiating *swāmīs*. These solemn vows enter the *sannyāsin* onto the illustrious path of the Hindu renunciate, relieving him from a worldly *dharma* that he may diligently strive to know God Śiva in His three perfections: Paraśiva, Maheśvara and Satchidānanda. Saint Tirumular spoke eloquently of the need for renunciation:

They know not the evil fruits *karma* brings.
They choose not to find *jñāna*
For liberation from *karma*.
“Renounce *karma* and be liberated” —
This Vedic teaching they know not.
They who wallow in *karma*
Will never the Rich Harvest reap.
Renouncing all, I inwardly entered
And beheld the Light within.
My heart trembled. I prostrated low.



But Him I never forgot;
And the Lord of Celestials
Freeing me from the whirl of births
Immortal made me, here.

Sunder your desires. Sunder your desires.
Sunder your desires even unto the Lord.
The more the desires, the more the sorrows.
The more you give up,
The more your bliss shall be.

A million times they are born and die;
In a million follies they forget this.
In the darkness of *mala* they are enveloped,
When, at last, the hidden grace of Śiva
Bursts forth and chases away the night.
Then comes the moment for the soul to renounce,
And it then becomes a radiant Light.

Tirumantiram—Verses 2557, 2615, 2585, 1615

THE SACRED VOW OF RENUNCIATION: KNOWN IN TAMIL AS AHATTURAVU.

Renunciation is the relinquishment of world, desire and ego. It is detachment founded in knowledge of the magnetic nature of body, mind and emotion, a knowledge which inclines the soul toward non-involvement with external forms and, in time, summons forth realization of Paraśiva, Absolute Reality. Renunciation is repudiation of individual personality and ownership. It is poverty as opposed to affluence, simplicity as opposed to ramification in life. It is self-containment, freedom from worldliness and its concomitant distractions and obligations. In its deeper sense, renunciation is a surrendering of limited identity, ego-sense or individuality known in Sanskrit as *ahankāra*, that the soul may soar to the very depths of Being. It is the beginning of the end of *samsāra*, the wheel of rebirths, the death of the old ushering in a spiritual renaissance which will ultimately mature into illumination and *moksha*. It is the ultimate

ripeness of the soul and mystic marriage to God Śiva. It is the Mahāvratā, or Great Oath, of the Śaivite pathfinders and contains within it commitment to the unwritten and even unspoken customs followed by those who have worn the *kavi* for untold centuries. In Tamil, renunciation for the *sannyāsin* is known as *ahatturavu*, which means “detachment through giving up the sense of ‘I’ and ‘mine,’ ” epitomizing the ideal of this Sacred Vow. ¶ Renunciation is not a running away from the world provoked by fear or failure therein. Rather it is an irrepressible drawing into sacred realms of consciousness and being far more subtle and demanding of discipline than anything the world may offer—a state of being that follows fulfillment in the world as the next natural evolution of consciousness. Renunciation is not an opportunity to shun responsibility or to do as one pleases, but carries with it challenges and accountability of an even more formidable, albeit inner, nature. It is not a disgust for this world, but a love of deeper worlds so great that the material universe and its gifts are, by comparison, mean and meager. Though he strives to be affectionately detached, the *sannyāsin* should never become indifferent or so accepting of all that happens that he accepts passively harm to himself, his Order or his religion. The renunciate’s life is not one of inactivity, but vital activity directed toward selfless and spiritual ends—an inner consciousness described in scriptures as the giving up not of work but the fruits thereof, whether apparently good or bad. It is not by virtuous acts that the *sannyāsin* attains liberation. They are chains, though wrought in



gold. No deed, however altruistic, is without its bearing on the ego of the doer; and thus the *sannyāsin* holds firmly to his detachment even in the midst of his bountiful benevolence. Renunciation is the abjuration of the *gṛihastha dharma* and the acceptance of the *sannyāsin dharma*, a *dharma* which will create or resolve *karmas* according to how it is discharged. Though it disallows personal possessions and upholds the ideals of simplicity known as poverty, renunciation is not a condition of destitution, deprivation or disregard for one's well-being. Nor is it a resignation from life or an abandoning of humanity, but a fulfilling of mankind's highest need and a joyous surrender to That which is the substratum of life. It serves not man, but God in man, not the body but the spirit within the body. ¶ Renunciation for the *sannyāsin* may be defined as wisdom in handling of *karma*, *māyā* and desire. He must strive to free the mind from the thralldom of the senses. He must work diligently to extirpate vanity and selfishness, realizing that the ego, though subdued by the strength of *tapas* well performed, is never annihilated as long as the soul remains embodied, but is subdued, reserving the potential to rise again should he abandon his *sannyāsa dharma*. He must strive, especially at the outset, to quell the forces of pride, pretension and conceit, never allowing himself to feel the flush of self-importance or arrogance. He must guard his modesty as a treasure, never holding himself superior to others, for there is no conceit so tenacious as the spiritual ego. Before he is well-grounded and stable in his realization, he must give up all *siddhis* that

may arise as a natural consequence of his *sādhana* and unfoldment, neither desiring nor encouraging such powers. He must see the perfection resident within the souls of all men, but remain aware of his own faults and transgressions, however insignificant. He must remain equally indifferent to both praise and blame, never allowing others to extol his virtues, never speaking personally of himself or his past, even when asked. He must never accept personal gifts, however small or well-intended. However, he may accept food and minimal travel assistance and receive nonpersonal contributions on behalf of the monastery, placing them immediately upon the altar, offered to the Lord. ¶ The *sannyāsin* cultivates renunciation through meditation on the transcendent Paraśiva and worship of the immanent Lord Hara who removes the fetters which bind the soul. He cultivates renunciation through remaining secure within his inner consciousness and radiating the joy and contentment which are the harbingers of awakening. He cultivates renunciation through living simply, holding the consciousness that Lord Śiva has entrusted to him the care of tools and personal items which he uses; such an attitude of custodianship averts any sense of possessiveness. He cultivates renunciation through patiently enduring hardship. He cultivates renunciation through performance of *tapas* and austerities which keep his will strong and his ego subdued. He abjures personal wants that may arise rather than seeking to fulfill them and casts off all preferences, both likes and dislikes. He accepts in trustful love all that comes, offering no complaint when



ostensible needs are not provided. He practices detachment and dispassion, *vairāgya*, consciously remaining calm, kind and quietly strong in the midst of even adverse circumstances. He cultivates renunciation by continued penetration into contemplative states of mind, withdrawing from the vortex of external consciousness into Paraśiva, the Self God. He cultivates renunciation by surrendering to the will of Śiva in his life, abiding in the knowledge of *Sarvam Śivamayam*, all is Śiva, a mystic insight which will dissolve all concepts of separateness from God and offer in its stead cognition that *jīva* is indeed Śiva. He cultivates renunciation through living on the eve of his departure, always ready to change, to move, to travel wherever he may be needed. He cultivates renunciation through not identifying with name and form, through not attaching importance to title or position. He cultivates renunciation through detachment which evolves from *viveka* which is discrimination to *vairāgya* which is dispassion to *tyāga* which is renunciation and finally into *kaivalya* which is emancipation, blissful independence and *moksha*. He cultivates renunciation through giving up all fears of death and even desires of anticipated enjoyments of the heavenly realms. He cultivates renunciation through viewing himself as the homeless one, free and unattached, finding security within the recesses of his own being, not participating in the mundane concerns and conversations of the world, nor engaging himself in social life outside of the brotherhood of *sannyāsins*. He cultivates renunciation through noninvolvement with his family or former friends. He cultivates renun-

ciation through remembering that this body is destined to perish, that this personality is fleeting, and identifying therefore with nothing ephemeral, but with the only permanence there is— That within which lies beyond time, form and cause. He cultivates renunciation through spurning the life that is death and embracing the death that is life eternal, transcending himself by himself. ¶ In fulfillment of his Sacred Vow of Renunciation, the *sannyāsin* is directed to not involve himself in matters of the world. Should worldly situations arise, whether from within the monastery or without, he is enjoined to remain silent and aloof. Neither shrinking from disturbed conditions nor feeding them by his thought and concern, he must remain ever the witness lest he hasten the harvest of such unseemly *karmas*. He is enjoined to keep his own personal needs moderate while not requiring the same of others and to hold firmly to his *yoga* and his equanimity. If he can remain the silent watcher, if he can control the wanderings of the mind sufficiently to be *summa*, to just be, if he can remain joyous and serene in all circumstances, if he can progressively surrender the sense of “I am the doer” and awaken the perception that “Śiva does all,” if he can patiently endure all hardship and maintain his *tavam*, standing apart from the entanglements of sex, money, food and clothes, if he can live in simplicity owning nothing in this world, not even the robes he wears, if he can never, never forget his *guru* and the goals of service and realization, he will have fulfilled the spirit of this Sacred Vow. May the *sannyāsin* ever call to mind the words of the *Holy Kural*, “At-



tach yourself to Him who is free from all attachments. Bind yourself to that bond in order that all other bonds may be broken.”

THE SACRED VOW OF PURITY: KNOWN
IN TAMIL AS TIRIKARANNASUTTI.

Purity is the pristine and natural state of the soul. It is not something which the *sannyāsin* attains as much as that which he already is, and which becomes evident as the layers of adulterating experience and beclouding conceptions are dissipated. Purity is clarity and clearness in all dimensions of being—physical, mental and emotional. It is innocence as opposed to familiarity with the ways of the world. It is, for *sannyāsins*, the observance of chastity, called *brahmachārya*. In Tamil purity is given its fullest expression in the term *tirikarannasutti*, which means “purity in mind, speech and body.” These three—also called thought, word and deed—convey the amplitude of the ideal of purity. ¶ Purity does not consist in merely doing good and being good, though these are essential, nor is it an external appearance or show of such goodness. It is primarily an inner quality, equally present in the saint who outwardly reflects the purity of his attainment and in the sage who inwardly rests in that same purity though his attainment may not be apparent. Purity is not a manner of behavior, though it may be reflected in our behavior, and there is no merit in taking on the semblance of being pure when one is not yet pure. ¶ Purity for the *sannyāsin* may be defined as wisdom in handling the forces of the mind and body, including the sexual instincts.

In aspiring toward the ideals of purity, the Śaiva *sannyāsin* must attune himself to the inner worlds, the Second and Third Worlds. He must strive to live the contemplative life, cautiously avoiding undue or unseemly involvement with the world. He must associate with other Hindu devotees, seeking the company of good and holy men. He must be pure in his thoughts, never allowing his mind to indulge in sexual fantasies. He must speak pure words that reflect the purity of his thought, never using harsh, angered or indecent language. ¶ The *sannyāsin* cultivates purity through harnessing the sexual energies which are a natural concomitant of human nature. He cultivates purity through maintaining a clean and healthy physical body. He cultivates purity through observance of *ahimsā*, the great oath of nonviolence and nonkilling by which he vows to never intentionally cause injury by his thought, word or deed—a vow which may be tempered by Paramaguru Śiva Yogaswāmi’s observation, “It is a sin to kill a tiger in the forest, but if he enters the village it becomes your duty.” He cultivates purity through acting virtuously and living righteously, returning kindness for injuries received. He cultivates purity through being honest, fair, scrupulous and truthful. He cultivates purity through avoidance of worldly knowledge and cunning, seeking instead the artless innocence found in children and great *bhaktas*. He cultivates purity through controlling the patterns and content of his thought, bringing the mind ever to the Feet of the Lord. He cultivates purity through seeking out faults and bad habits, through admitting his failings and



making the necessary corrections. He cultivates purity through transmutation of the sexual energies and instinctive nature, bringing them under the control of his will. ¶ In fulfillment of his Vow of Purity, the *sannyāsin* is enjoined to follow to the best of his ability codes of living that are intended to enhance the purificatory process. He must eat moderately and follow a vegetarian diet. A pure body is the foundation—and the reflection—of a pure mind, and he exercises regularly, especially through long walks, to maintain his natural strength, vigor and health. He practices *haṭha yoga* regularly. He bathes often and cares for his fingernails, teeth, skin, etc. The *sannyāsin* observes the traditional South Indian discipline of shaving his entire body every month on the full moon day, making of this a solemn religious ceremony. He considers sleep a sacred time of each day, preparing both his sleep environment and his mind for these inner hours. When in the monastery, the *sannyāsin* sleeps always on the floor. Each night when he retires and each morning upon arising the *sannyāsin* performs *japa yoga* and then observes the devotions or meditations given to him by his *satguru*. ¶ He lives in the Eternal Now, not letting the mind wander into memories of the past or fantasies of the future, and certainly not recalling these memories in conversation with others. He avoids the influences and even the words of psychics, astrologers and fortunetellers. He observes the discipline of avoiding waste, being conservative in using all of nature's precious resources. This includes not wasting food or water, not throwing away items that may have value, not ne-

glecting the care and maintenance of tools or equipment that he may use, and in general being thrifty and resourceful. A clean, uncluttered environment is important in spiritual life, keeping the *śākti* strong and not attracting negative forces. The *sannyāsin* keeps his personal clothing and items wrapped with care and adding beauty to the room in which they are kept. There should be no sense of anyone's living in the monastery, so transparent and inconspicuous are the personal items of each resident. He cleans his clothes, mending them when needed. When he leaves a room, it should be improved by his presence; he should never leave behind a mess for someone else to attend to or a dish or cup for someone else to clean. His own work area should be kept clean and tidy. ¶ The *sannyāsin* does not indulge in watching or admiring girls when moving in the world or seeing one as more beautiful than another. He fosters the inner attitude, strictly maintained, that all young women are his sisters and all older women his mother. He should not attend movies that depict the base instincts of man, nor read books or magazines of this nature. The principle with which he is working is to protect the mind's natural purity, not allowing anything that is degrading, sensuous or low-minded to enter into the field of his experience. He observes a nontouching policy, never touching or embracing his fellow monastics and being careful to avoid physical contact with those in the world, especially women. He maintains no eye contact with women when talking with them, focusing rather on the spiritual center between the eyes. ¶ Transmutation of the sexual energies



is an essential discipline for the *sannyāsin*, and he is enjoined to follow the practices elucidated in the aphorisms of Gurudeva's *Rāja Yoga* in perfecting his *brahmacharya*. Transmutation is not a repression or inhibition of natural instincts, but a conscious transformation of these energies into life-giving forces that lend vigor and strength to the body and provide the impetus that propels awareness to the depths of contemplation. This process of transmutation begins with the sexual instincts but encompasses transmutation of all instinctive forces, including fear, anger, covetousness, jealousy, envy, pride, etc. True purity is possible only when these base instincts have been conquered. When impure thoughts arise, he should turn his mind to positive, high-minded concerns. If the *sannyāsin* finds that in spite of his efforts the mind dwells on impure thoughts, he should take refuge at the Feet of Lord Gaṇeśa, praying that these obstacles may be removed. Attending the temple is at all times purifying as it cleans the aura, clears the mind and opens the heart to divine *śakti*. There is no better remedy for impurity. He should also chant the sacred Pañchākshara Mantra, "Aum Namaḥ Śivāya," frequently during these times and, if such states persist, he may wish to undertake some form of penance, such as one hundred and eight prostrations. ¶ The *Holy Kural* advises us to "Keep the mind free from impurity. This alone is the practice of virtue. All else is nothing but empty display." It also tells us, "As the intense fire of the furnace refines gold to brilliancy, so does the burning suffering of austerity purify the soul to resplendence."

SACRED VOW OF OBEDIENCE: KNOWN
IN TAMIL AS TAALVU ENUM TANMAI.

¶ Obedience is the state of willingness and cooperation in which the soul remains open and amenable to enlightened direction. For the *sannyāsin* it is an unbroken pledge of trust in and surrender to the *satguru*, the Śiva Yogaswāmī Guru Paramparā and the mystic process of spiritual evolution. In the Tamil language this definition of obedience is expressed in the term *taalvu enum tanmai*, which denotes "the quality or state of humble submission." ¶ Obedience does not consist in blind submission and yielding to authority, nor in weakening our own will that it may be dominated by the will of another. Yet it is, in another sense, submission to a sacred purpose and the divine authority of the Second and Third Worlds. It is, for the *sannyāsin*, an inner quality that allows him to remain consciously tractable and responsive. At those times when the instinctive nature looms strong and there arises a sense of "I" and "mine," obedience is a surrendering of the ego to the soul or the instinctive nature to the spiritual nature. As long as the ego dominates the life of man, he will experience obedience as capitulation or subjection. As the soul unfolds and separateness is replaced by knowledge of the unity that pervades the universe, obedience is perceived as the union of minds and purpose, a state of harmony so complete that there can exist no distinction between him who gives and him who receives instruction or direction. True obedience is based on agreement, trust and knowledge, as opposed to passive servility, nonresistance or domination which



have ignorance and fear as their basis. ¶ Obedience for the *sannyāsin* may be defined as wisdom in handling directions and instructions. He must learn to work closely with the mind of his *satguru*, seeking to bring his awareness ever closer to that of his preceptor. He must work to learn the art of accepting direction, whether expressed or implied, and fulfilling it beyond the expectations of his *satguru* or senior monastics. He must remain open to change, never allowing his mind to become so inflexible, so settled in its ways that it cannot respond. He must take upon himself the responsibility for clarifying directions that are not clear, never executing directions thoughtlessly and then casting blame on those who made them. He must respond with a full heart, never subtly resisting directions he has received. He must respond quickly and with full energy, never using delay or lethargy as a means of opposing or impeding authority, for even delay and resistance are forms of disobedience. He must always seek agreement and a merging of minds with his fellow monastics, never supporting or sustaining contention or disagreement, or stubbornly clinging to an opposite point of view. ¶ The *sannyāsin* cultivates obedience through faithfully following the customs of his Order and of the ancient Order of *sannyāsa*. He cultivates obedience through listening carefully to directions he may receive and then carrying out those directions without changing them to suit his own preferences or perceptions. He cultivates obedience by conscientiously following not only overt instructions, but those subtle unspoken directions that may come from his *satguru*, senior monastics

and his own conscience. He cultivates obedience through neither forgetting nor neglecting instructions, even years later. He cultivates obedience by contemplating, in the absence of instructions, what his *satguru* would do or expect of him, and not taking such instances as opportunities to express his own ideas. He cultivates obedience by being loyal to his spiritual heritage and customs, holding fast to the ancient wisdom. ¶ In fulfillment of his Vow of Obedience, the *sannyāsin* is enjoined to establish a rapport with his *satguru* and fellow monastics, working his mind into harmony with theirs rather than expecting them to adjust to him. He should study the scriptures of Śaivism diligently, discovering their principles, observances and commandments, and then following these faithfully. He should study the *Guru Gītā*, learning what it says of the disciple's conduct and protocol and complying with its expectations, recalling that "One should never disregard the orders of one's *satguru*. Remembrance of his name is *japa*. Carrying out his commands is duty. Service to him is worship." In his daily life he should shun all resistance, rebellion and defiance, performing a penance of 108 prostrations in the temple should these arise. ¶ Finally, he should foster in himself a faith and trust in the process of unfoldment, a trust that allows him to submit himself to that process, to his religion, to the Deity, the Mahādevas and the *devas* and to his *satguru* in perfect acquiescence and deference. To that end he may remember the *Kural's* admonition, "They alone dispel the mind's distress who take refuge at the Feet of the Incomparable One, Lord Śiva."



THE SACRED VOW OF HUMILITY:
KNOWN IN TAMIL AS PANNIVU.

Humility is the state of profound maturity in which the soul, immersed in the depths of understanding and compassion, radiates the qualities of mildness, modesty, reverent obeisance and unpretentiousness. There is an analogy in the Śaivite tradition that compares the unfolding soul to wheat. When young and growing, the stalks of wheat stand tall and proud, but when mature their heads bend low under the weight of the grains they yield. Similarly, man is self-assertive, arrogant and vain only in the early stages of his spiritual growth. As he matures and yields the harvest of divine knowledge, he too bends his head. In the Tamil language this absence of pride or self-assertion is known as *pannivu*. *Pannivu* also means “jewel.” In the *Holy Kural* it is said that “Humility and pleasant words are the jewels that adorn a man; there are none other.” ☪ Humility does not consist in concealing our merits and virtues or in thinking ourselves as worse or more ordinary than we are. Nor is it a pretended meekness. Rather it lies in not exalting ourselves before others, for we perceive the grandeur of God Śiva in every human being and reverently acknowledge Him there. Humility in this ideal is the awakened perception that “Śiva is All.” It is the inner being predominating over the outer nature. ☪ Humility may be defined for the *sannyāsin* as wisdom in handling the ego. He must learn to accept criticism and correction without justifying himself, without defending his actions, even when that correction is unjust or unfounded. He must not make claims of knowledge or

attainment, even when he possesses knowledge and attainment—for it is the highest knowledge that knows “We know not.” Unless so ordained, he must not presume to guide or direct others in their unfoldment, but allow the *devas* and Mahādevas to direct this inner process. He must exercise restraint in his dealings with others, allowing them to have the fullest freedom in expressing themselves and never attempting to control or direct them. He must execute all tasks and chores equally, not considering one work as desirable and another as distasteful. He must avoid the pitfalls inherent in title and position, never allowing himself to identify with external importance and never feeling himself superior or inferior to others, for inferiority, too, is a shadow cast by the ego. He must become detached from the desire for status or position, never allowing jealousy to arise should other monastics be apparently promoted or given greater privileges or opportunities. He must endure hardships and problems in strength, never carping or complaining, for difficulties are the very grist of the mills of the path of *sādhana* followed by his *guru paramparā*. He must remain open to correction and suggestion, welcoming it as a means of amending his faults and bettering his performance, never criticizing others for criticizing him. He must act always with decorum and nobility, never dominating conversations, never forcing his own opinions or preferences in discussions, never interrupting when others are speaking but listening intently that he may come to truly understand their views. ☪ The *sannyāsin* cultivates humility through learning to take the experiences of life



in understanding and not in reaction, for the man of perfect understanding accepts all happenings in life as purposeful and good. He cultivates humility through seeing God everywhere, knowing that He is at work in all sentient and insentient beings and therefore loving and revering all as God Śiva Himself. He cultivates humility through practicing patience with circumstances and forbearance with people. He cultivates humility through controlling his speech and his actions. He cultivates humility through drawing near the innate refinement of the soul, which is ever gentle and quiet and centered, for pride, pretension and self-importance are but different names for externality. He cultivates humility through abdicating self-interest and self-indulgence, turning his awareness to compassionate and universal interests. He cultivates humility through being thankful for the rare privilege of having a *satguru*. He cultivates humility by learning to work closely with his artisan or those who are teaching and instructing him, bringing a flower or other small gift to offer before classes or meetings and treating his teachers, and indeed all who are his senior in physical years, with respect. He cultivates humility by assuring that his actions in dealing with others are meant always to uplift them, never to lower them that he might stand higher. He cultivates humility through putting into practice the ideals of the Śivanadiyar, serving as the slave of the servants of the Lord, respecting and working harmoniously with elders of the Śaivite community and with all genuine *swāmīs*, *munis* and *sādhus* of other orders. ¶ In fulfillment of his Vow

of Humility, the *sannyāsin* is enjoined while in the monastery to use the gestures of humility. Should he ever cause or participate in confusion, contention or argument, he is encouraged to make a sincere apology to all those affected and to perform some penance in atonement. He is directed to foster the ability to perform menial chores joyfully—such as cleaning the kitchens and bathrooms, working in the gardens, washing the windows, sweeping the paths, mending the robes—without seeking praise or approval. He must hold in his heart the wisdom of the *Holy Kural* which says that “Humility and pleasant words are the jewels that adorn a man; there are none other.”

THE SACRED VOW OF CONFIDENCE:
KNOWN IN TAMIL AS RAHASIYAM.

Confidence is the state of trust in which the sacred teachings and sensitive or personal matters are not divulged to others. Spiritual instructions must be protected and preserved by those to whom they are entrusted, never wantonly or indiscriminately revealed. When we confide in another, we do so with the assurance that sensitive and serious information will not be inappropriately disclosed. In the Tamil language confidence is known as *rahasiyam*, meaning “secret or mystery.” ¶ Confidence as applied to these *Holy Orders* does not mean “certainty” or “a belief in one’s abilities” or “self-confidence.” Rather, it is a confiding, a trusting and a relying upon. It is the sharing of privileged teachings or information that should not be disclosed, but held in confidentiality. In its most simple form it is the keeping of a



secret. ¶ Confidence for the *sannyāsin* may be defined as wisdom in handling information. The *sannyāsin* must learn to hold in strict secrecy all spiritual direction and esoteric laws entrusted to him, never revealing them unless specifically ordained to do so. He must realize the wisdom of Śiva Yogaswāmī's statement that "Sacred is secret and secret is sacred," never treating the inner teachings as ordinary knowledge to be published or spoken of to the public or prematurely shared with devotees. He must regard as confidential any discussions or information overheard dealing with the personal lives of other monastics, families or devotees, never listening secretly to such matters when they are being discussed by others. He must protect his own spiritual unfoldment through not speaking of inner states of consciousness, visions or other experiences, for there is no greater obstacle to further progress on the path than to display one's attainments. ¶ The *sannyāsin* cultivates confidence by controlling his speech, being always aware of what he is saying, to whom he is saying it and what effect it will have, never gossiping about others. He cultivates confidence by being discreet and prudent. He cultivates confidence by honoring and respecting the privacy of others and not infringing on that privacy. He cultivates confidence by not prying or seeking to know information to which he is not privileged. He cultivates confidence by keeping records, notes and other material entrusted to him securely protected, not leaving such information lying around where it can be read. He cultivates confidence by not reading material or listening to conversations that he

knows to be private. He cultivates confidence by never revealing, even inadvertently, the personal matters of students, devotees and Church members with whom he talks in the course of his work as teacher and counselor. ¶ The *sannyāsin* vows to keep all sensitive information classified, never using information learned by virtue of his position of trust against or to the detriment of any individual. Thus, his Vow of Confidence is a two-edged sword, for he neither receives information which is classified, nor does he convey such information to those who are not authorized to receive it. He may call to mind the advice of the *Holy Kural*: "To trust a man who has not been tested and to suspect a man who has proven trustworthy lead alike to endless ills."



