

Bhiksha

अन्नपूर्णं सदापूर्णं शङ्करप्राणवल्लभे ।
ज्ञान-वैराग्य-सिद्धयर्थं भिक्षां देहि च पार्वति ॥

Annapurna devi not only gives the food that sustains the body but also the ambrosia of *jnana* that nourishes the soul. It is this *bhiksha* that *Sankara* asks for in this verse.

Our scriptures state that *Brahmacharins* and *Samnyasins* should seek *bhiksha*/ alms, from householders/families of devotees and not cook for themselves.

Thus it is the *dharma* of *grhastas*/householders to provide *bhiksha* for the *Brahmacharins* and *Samnyasins* by inviting them to their homes. The home is sanctified by the very presence of the *Mahatma*.

The attitude with which *bhiksha* is provided is of utmost importance. While we provide the food to sustain the body of the *Samnyasin*, we ask for *jnana bhiksha* (alms of spiritual knowledge, love, devotion and grace).

The *Acharya* is welcomed into the home with a *purna kumbha* and *arati*. If you do not have a *kalasa* for the *purna kumbha*, just *arati* will suffice. Please have a special seat for the *Acharya* to sit. You may invite your friends to attend the *satsanga* and *bhiksha*.

The food offered must be freshly prepared with utmost hygiene and served with humility and reverence. Care must be taken to provide *sattvic* food of the highest quality.

Food should not be tasted while preparing. The hosts must serve the food themselves to the *Acharya*. It is always special when the children also participate in serving the food. After serving the *Guru* the remaining food is distributed to the guests and partaken as *prasada*.

Finally, we must offer *dakshina* with fruits thus surrendering our pride, and as a token of our gratitude for the grand opportunity for *Seva*.