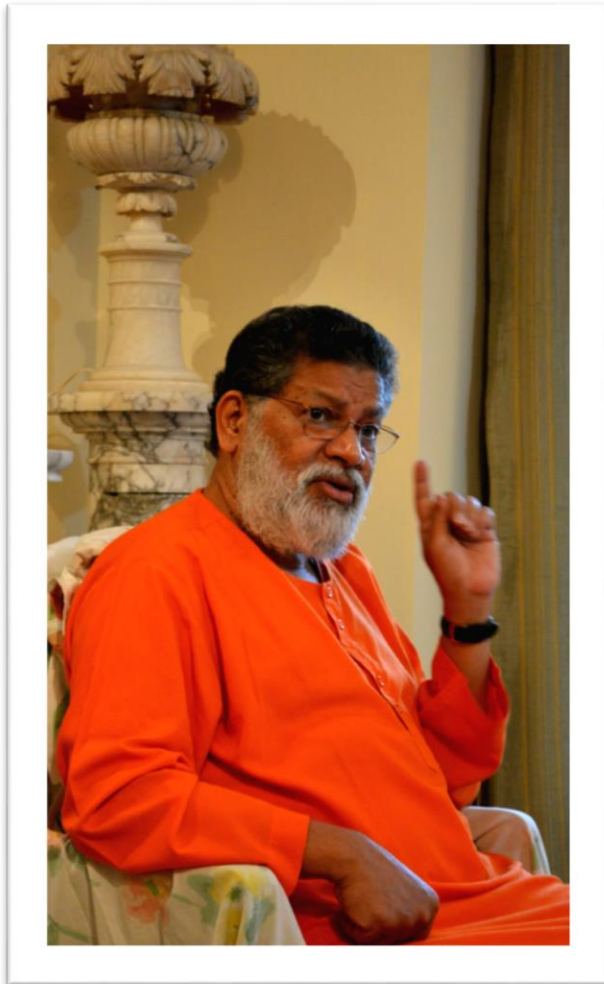


Renunciation and Call of Duty

SWAMI BODHANANDA

7 June, 2004



Dear R...,

I just read your article on ' Non-renunciation'.

It was not clear what was your position, but I presume that you are appreciative of Sonia Gandhi's renunciation of the PM's post that was rightfully hers.

Nehru considered PM's post a duty that he was called upon to perform, while Indira Gandhi and Rajiv took it as their privilege. Sonia Gandhi, according to you, knew well that she was not Congress nor was she synonymous with India. Everybody appreciated Sonia's dispassionate gesture.

But analyzing it from the paradigm of Varnashrama Dharma is stretching imagination too much. Since when have scholars started benchmarking social and political events against the much despised Varnashrama Dharma. Neither Sonia Gandhi, nor the Congress party nor the Indian society follow the Varnashrama model of social organization or praxis.

Ours is a Parliamentary Democracy practicing competitive market economy pursuing the goal of equality and justice for all regardless of their religion, language or gender.

You can always find earthly reasons for the renunciation of Buddha, Gandhi or the death of Jesus on the cross. But we have created myths around them and they have become icons. The same thing is being done to Sonia's sensible action and instead of seeing it as such the myth making has started.

The result will be to put her permanently on the cross or compel her to be a permanent renunciant. I hope you scholars will not succeed in that objective. I am sure that she will stake claim to the Prime Ministership if her party gets absolute majority in the parliament or a comfortable number of seats, say 230, in a coalition.

I see Sonia Gandhi an intelligent woman with a strategic eye on power. I will consider her act as really renunciation if she like Bhishma forswears power for ever publicly or like Siddhartha leaves family and the palace of pleasure totally in search of higher spiritual values. Rama did not renounce power; he only went to the forest temporarily to fulfill father's promise and came back to assume power.

I would like to know how you classify Sonia's renunciation, like that of Rama's, Buddha's or Bhishma's. In the first case power was not given up, in the second case power was totally given up and in the third case he remained a kingmaker.

Hope you will find time to respond.

Incidentally, I liked your presentation given in the Nehru Memorial Museum on Nehru's death anniversary.

Regards,
Swami Bodhananda.

Source: [Email response to RG, the author of a write-up on 'renunciation and Indian politics' which appeared in an Indian daily](#)
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