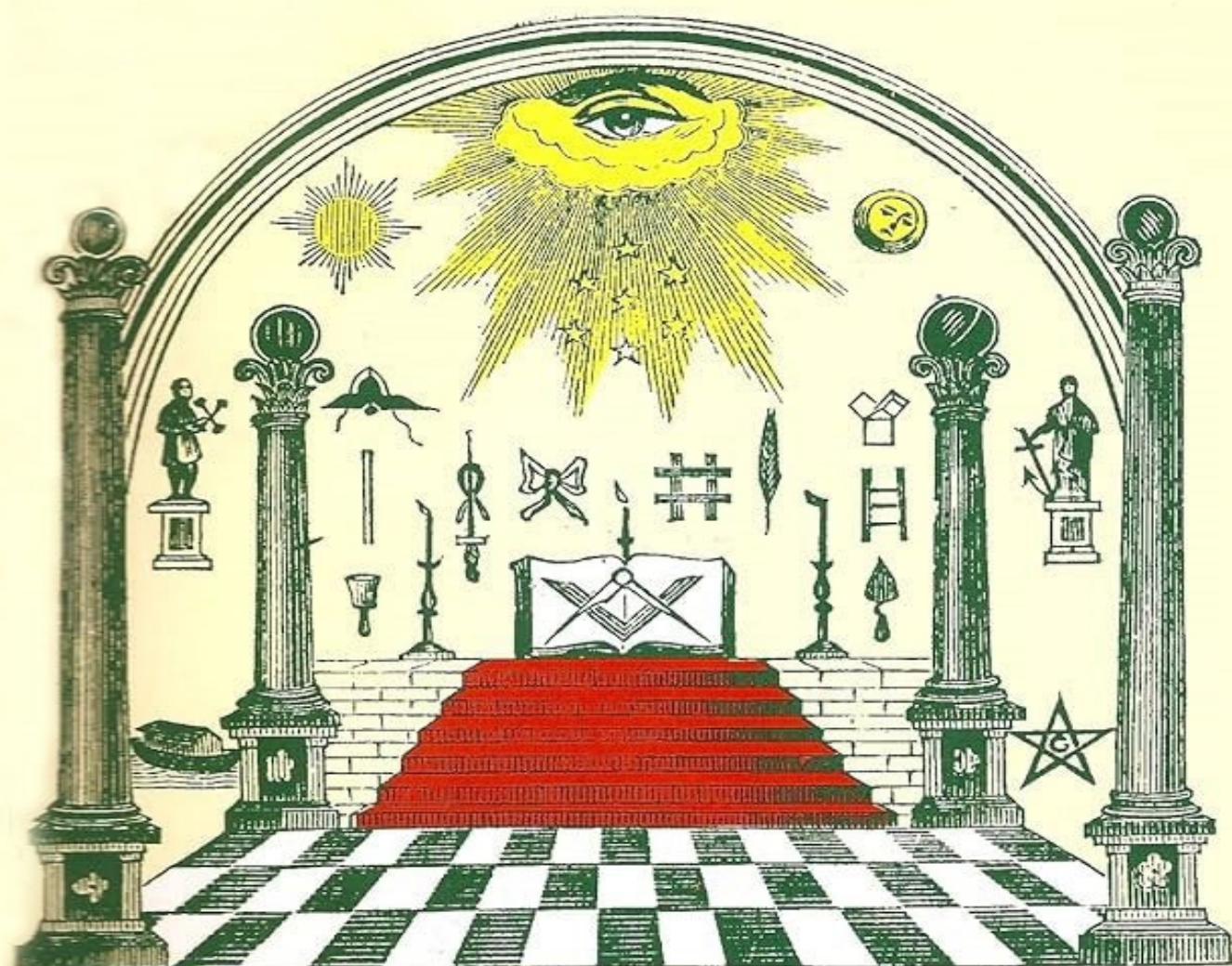


ON THE LEVEL

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COMPILER'S CORNER

Fraternal Greetings All!

After a torrential monsoon we finally have the sun shining, & the Season of Festivals is here! And speaking of festivities we just had Half Yearly Meet of RGLOWI at Bhopal and it was a roaring success. Of the many firsts that we had, a Masonic Golfing Tournament was held as well. All the enthusiastic Golfers came together and teed off in style in Bhopal a day before the Meeting! I am sure there is more of these kinds to come in the future.

Our Lodge Mother India # 110 did exceedingly well and was recognized with 2 awards, one for Social Service projects in 2023 & 3rd highest registration for the Half yearly meet.

Further, 3 Brethren from our Lodge were awarded the Regional Grand Master Plaque & 2 Brothers were given the Regional Grand Masters Certificate of Appreciation. I applaud all the Brethren of the Lodge and especially the Worshipful Master W Bro. Maulik

Bhatu and his team for this great work they have put together.

In this meeting of ours we have a very unique programme for EAs FCs & non masons. We will be conducting an interactive session called 'ABC of Freemasonry' and this will be conducted by R W Bro Noshir Paghdiwala who is the Past Deputy District GM [Scottish Constitution] along with R W Bro Saifee Nasrulla who is very active member and also a part of our Lodge. This is a great way of introducing Freemasonry to Friends and Family and letting them know what is it that we do.

In this edition we have our W Bro C V Jose with an article equating Upnishads to Freemasonry.

And then we have Bro. Shishir Rattan who has given a wonderful write up Duties of a Freemason!

I Hope you enjoy this edition and please do reach out to me with your feedback.



FROM UPNISHADS TO FREEMASONRY

By W. Bro. Jose Chemmassery

Freemasonry as we are aware functions with the objective of making a good man to a better person with its ethical and moral tenets taught in the initiation process. Undoubtedly the moral and ethical values contained in the principles of the Order are borrowed from sacred volumes of religious creeds. The allegories narrated while instructing the initiates to freemasonry are adapted from biblical stories and anecdotes. The Temple of Jerusalem built by King Solomon in honour of the Almighty God as His abode is prominently presented in the proceedings of the Order.

One of the striking features of masonic education is that it is also indebted to ancient Indian philosophy which is the fountain of spiritual wisdom embedded in Vedas. Vedas literally means culmination of knowledge. With the knowledge imparted through Vedas one can live a life of perfect harmony, peace and bliss. Upanishads which are the concluding portions of the Vedas are speculations in philosophy, as also mystical utterances revealing the most profound truths. . The term Upanishad denotes Brahma vidya, the knowledge of Brahman.

Out of 108 Upanishads only ten are considered authoritative by the great Vedantic commentator Sri. Sankara for his learned exegeses. And of them Brihadaranyaka has received his closest attention. The Brhadaranyaka Upanishad is the greatest of the Upanishads by its size as well as substance. The whole composition is in prose, being here and there studded with few verses. The teaching/studying of Vedas and Upanishads is attainment higher than the self.

The knowledge of Self leads to the cessation of transmigration and all sufferings as also the final uprooting of ignorance. This knowledge, however , is not an

action but an immediate awareness, a countless consciousness. The aim of all upanisads is to teach about this Self. No one can say at what time ignorance has come upon us, for time is the creation of ignorance. The knowers of the Self , however, unhesitatingly assert that ignorance can be terminated. The individual self is at bottom identical with the Supreme Self or Brahman, but in the state of ignorance it forgets the supreme nature.

In Freemasonry certain important lessons are imparted to the candidate while he is granted/bestowed upon the degrees of progress in the Craft. The three degrees which when completed make one master mason who possess definite underlying messages concealed in the rituals working. A serious and committed student practicing close observation without being a cynic can understand the three degrees better in a lucid manner while reflecting on the immortal vedic verses chanted from the upanishad. These verses, three yajus mantras are genuine supplication by an earnest and sincere sacrificer to overcome the delusion of ignorance, untruth and mortality when the priest chants the saman. When we carefully engage our faculties to unravel the the sublime message contained in the verses we will identify with the same in our degree ritual working.

- Asatomasatgamaya From the unreal lead me to the real (Take me from evil to do good)
- Thamasomajyotirgamaya From darkness lead me to light (Take me from darkness to light)
- Mrityormaamritamgamaya From death lead me to immortality(Take me from death to immortality).
- OM shanti, shaanti shaanti OM peace, peace peace.(Brhadaranyka Upanisad 1.3.28)

Every Freemason knows, while he progresses in the Craft, the importance of truth(wisdom), light(to remove darkness) and immortality (to attain self-realization)are factored into the ceremony. As an EA he seeks light when he is in darkness in the blind fold stage of initiation. As FC he seeks truth, possession of

which eschews ignorance. This is a stepping stone to attain heavenly abode Brahman where denizens have conquered thirst, hunger and desire. In the final stage as a master mason he seeks immortality through raising ceremony.

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In short for a freemason who has attained the sublime degree , the invocation of the immortal mantra, Asathomasatgamaya..... is the sum and total of the Craft proceedings where a mere gross physical existence is transformed to a sublime spiritual incarnate. Diligent application of rituals and ceremonies imparted and their reflection help to reinforce the process of refinement and gradual transformation of the individual from nominal existence to a spiritually elevated and sublime position. This transformation enables the individual to attain peace and harmony in his life which ennobles his existence with profound meaning and satisfaction. In fact he will be able to achieve Self- realization which is ordinarily called a better person but actually it is the culmination and emergence/presence of the divinity latent in us. When we attain this honorable position of self- realization, we become liberated from the bondage of ignorance, ego, greed and attachment enabling us to be compassionate and charitable. This liberation achieved through mental process makes one enlightened to attain moksha (heaven)which otherwise can be termed as transition from brotherhood to godhood. This is the ideal aspiration of every perfect individual seeking immortality and eternity as also the lesson imparted in Freemasonry.

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The Duties of a Freemason in the Lodge

By Bro. Shishir Rattan

Before we get into the topic let us first be very clear about the two key words here –

- **‘Duty’ – “A moral or legal obligation; a responsibility”**
- **‘Mason’ – “A person skilled in cutting, dressing, and laying stone in buildings.”**

Now let’s delve into the conjunction of the two words and see how they, make sense together.

If you consider someone as a skilled individual, it means one very important thing about such a person. He/She has dedicated time and effort into studying and practicing some act which was worthy of mastering to the effect that it not only adds value to one’s credibility but also has value in the purview of a society.

Such a person, in that time and age is known for their unique and essential skill; garnering respect and social standing as a reward for the many hours spent toiling away with the working tools and laying designs on their tracing board.

Likewise, brethren, each of us has a duty that we ought to toil way at. Fortunately, our time and age does not need us to carry around heavy tools nor work on heavy stones or in dusty surroundings like our ancient brethren once did. But, just like them, we still have a few things very much in common and one of those is – Our Duty as a Mason.

It was alluded to when we were obligated as part of the ceremony of our initiation. I’d suggest you give it a fleeting moment to recollect that instant when the light was revealed to you and you could barely see properly owing to the

vision adjusting to the ambient brightness – The transition to the figurative Light from Darkness is similar, in that it's not immediately understood but when it does become clear; there is nothing quite like it.

In this talk, I'd like to draw your attention to what some of those duties are, in practice.

To the Entered Apprentices, I extend my warm welcome to the gentle craft! As you begin pacing towards the Fellow Craft's lodge and the subsequent journey into the folds of Masonry; it is your duty to be curious like a toddler that has only just begun to crawl on its knees. Explore the world of masonry around you by interacting with the brethren in your lodge, paying close attention to the ceremony being done for the newer brethren and help them out because you and the initiate share a bond that is similar, that of dealing with the unfamiliar.

At the same time, you have a bigger role to play; one that will begin your foray into the understanding of servant leadership. By helping the WM and the DoC with thoughtful acts of organizing things as the lodge opens such as placing the collars on the officers' chairs, helping out with arranging the festive board and hosting the brethren. These are simple but very practical things that serve not only to help a lodge be prepared for its ceremonies on time but also give you the opportunity to grow your interactions with the brethren of your lodge. A seed confined to its fruit is of no real use until it's out of its shell and interacts with the life-giving forces of the elements around it.

To the Fellow Crafts. You're in a transitory phase where you are merely a step from being a Master Mason but much ahead from the engulfing darkness out of which you emerged when you were initiated. Your duty holds an even bigger significance upon the future of the lodge – of nurturing the EAs as a big brother would take care of his very young siblings and of preparing yourself own self to be able to help in the affairs of and one day leading the lodge as a Master Mason. Your time in the lodge will have given you a better understanding of how a lodge functions and the several logistical things that you can help with. This experience is what must be imparted to the EAs to help them break the ice and get involved with the lodge activities much like a supervisor directs and demonstrates while serving the more pressing matters. The element of leading by example here is the key since the EAs have your conduct as a template to

apply to themselves as they look forward to becoming an FC in due course of time.

And finally, to the Master Masons. You my dear Brethren, are the key that has been shaped as an EA, polished as a FC, and finally applied as a Master Mason in the affairs of the lodge. Whether you're a day old in the 3rd degree or 30 years old, the primary duty remains much like the clouds in the sky. They come in various forms but they all rain down life giving water upon the earth so the seeds may sprout forth and the trees thrive! While some of you may wait to ascend the ladder, you can still be valuable asset to the lodge, one of the ways that I have personally experienced is to be ready to substitute a missing officer. Let's all be practical here; our time and age leave as all with several pre-occupations, some planned while some unplanned and it is always possible that one fine day a brother might not be available due to events out of his control. That my brethren, is your chance to experience masonry from a different vantage point – by being involved in the ceremony as an active participant! I can personally vouch that the experience of watching a ceremony from the benches and actively participating in it are worlds apart. It fires your imagination as the new perspective enriches your curiosity and the experience fuels your enthusiasm to be more involved in lodge activities.

In summary, regardless of which degree you might be in brethren, we all may seem to have different duties but in essence, all of it culminates into one goal – Building, maintaining, and enlivening the lodge and Freemasonry at large. As an EA you might ponder if the common gavel is of any use while in fact without your effort the more expert workman will have to spend more time smoothening it when he could have rather spent his effort in perfecting the rough ashler. A FC can use his time to impart his knowledge to enable the new workmen while preparing himself for a higher pedestal while a Master Mason forges ahead with the support of his lodge, learning from the experiences of his predecessors and showing the way to his officers into the vast unknown path carved forth by the arrow of time.

I thank you for your time brethren, I hope you will ponder over what I had to share with you and seek out opportunities to not only be more active in the lodge but also find ways to gain experiences by volunteering as much as you can.

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Compiled and Sponsored by Bro. Nikhil Mehra