

SPIRITUAL MONTHLY

Madhura

Apr '16



Murali

WITH THE BLESSINGS OF HH MAHARANYAM
SRI SRI MURALIDHARA SWAMIJI

Madhura Smaranam

My Guru as I See Him

~ Dr A Bhagyanathan

With the blessings of Sri Swamiji, for the past five years, devotees from twenty countries all around the world have been performing Global Nama Relay (chanting of the Mahamantra) on the first Saturday of every January. Details about this were published in our last Madhura murali issue.

Well, how did this event take birth?

Mr. Venkat and Mrs. Kavita Venkat, a devotee couple from New Zealand, spoke to Sri Swamiji about a beautiful little desire they had and by his grace it turned into the Nama Relay. In Auckland, New Zealand, it is this couple who bring together the G.O.D satsangs and perform Nama service. Mr. Ravi and Mrs. Padma Ravi are their close friends. Mr. Ravi is highly virtuous. He is an ardent devotee of our Ashram's Kanyakumari Sri Jaya Hanuman and our Sri Swamiji. He also, without fail, participates and serves in New Zealand G.O.D. satsangs.

Mr. Ravi came to the mass prayer held on the Kalpataru day January 1, 2015 at Ambattur Vivekananda Vidhyalaya, for his first darshan of Sri Swamiji. Mr. Ravi stood within the precincts of the school looking at the thousands of devotees gathered there and thinking 'it is indeed my great fortune that I have earned the opportunity to chant Nama along with the devotees and Sri Swamiji.' Even in that huge crowd, Sri Swamiji, while walking up to the stage, called him up and blessed him with personal darshan. Mr. Ravi keeps saying that he can never ever forget this. Mr. Ravi's only son Jayasimhan, though he grew up in New Zealand culture, also has great attachment to our Indian values. We are now going to read about this youth who is always eager to help others.

At Sri Swamiji's behest, at the time of my visit to inaugurate Australia Namadwaar, satsangs were conducted in Australia, New Zealand, Fiji and Papua Guinea in November-December 2015. Jayasimhan participated with great enthusiasm in all the events that took place through the week at Auckland, New Zealand. It was vacation time after his school final examinations and he actively served in all these satsangs. For five consecutive

days, with Sri Swamiji's kirtan 'Kaliyaiyum bali kollum' as the basis, discourses were conducted under the title "Bhagavata Dharma – the Path for All." At the end of it a mass prayer was conducted. During this mass prayer, all the devotees stood in front of Sri Swamiji's divine picture, chanted Nama wholeheartedly and submitted their prayers. At this time Jayasimhan prayed that he should pursue medical or dental studies. His father too placed the same prayer request. Mr. Ravi also requested me to place the same prayer to Sri Guruji in person, on behalf of Jayasimhan.

Does not our Guruji advocate that prayer through Nama is the most powerful? And in these times, the desire of parents that their children should do well in studies and thus in life, is only fair isn't it? As Jayasimhan was the only son of Mr. Ravi, the latter's prayer was that he should be well educated.

But getting admission into a medical college there was very difficult. The reason was that the Australian University that he wanted to study in is one of the best medical universities in the world; further, there is also high competition in this field. Even though Jayasimhan had very good scores, getting admission there was not certain. On returning to Chennai I informed everything to Sri Swamiji. Sri Swamiji patiently listened and blessed, "The best will definitely happen."

I informed Mr. Ravi about Sri Swamiji's blessing words. But later when the results were announced Jayasimhan's name was not in it. Mr. Ravi was deeply disappointed. Highly disturbed, he contacted me and informed that Jayasimhan had not got a medical seat but had got admission to study engineering. But Jayasimhan did not desire that, he said. Once again I informed Sri Swamiji about it. Just as before, Sri Swamiji said, "Let us keep chanting Nama; the best will certainly happen." Accordingly I informed Mr. Ravi to chant Nama incessantly. But he felt that as the allotment list had been announced, nothing could change; and that, in spite of Sri Swamiji's blessing words, Jayasimhan would only take up engineering. Mr. Ravi had almost mentally accepted this. In this situation, one evening Mr. Ravi called me over the phone. He sounded very excited. "Sri Swamiji's words have come to pass. Jayasimhan's desire to get a dental seat has been fulfilled. Although the admissions were complete at that college, someone who had got a seat cancelled it. So we were called and he was asked to join tomorrow itself. It is all Sri Swamii's blessings." I informed Sri Swamiji of these happy tidings.

Hearing this Sri Swamiji smiled and said, "This is the greatness of the Lord's Name (Bhagavan Nama)." At once I remembered the words of Tiruvannamalai Yogi Ramsuratkumar. He would say 'This Beggar is not capable of doing miracles; only Ram Nam is doing miracles.'

ANSWERS AND BEYOND

Sri Swamiji's Answers To Questions From Devotees

Q: In many saints' charitrams, we find them telling their close disciples or devotees, "You have been coming with me for two or three lives." Even after having a close connection with a mahan, why does there arise a necessity for them to take another birth?

A: In Bhagavad Gita, Bhagavan says, "bahUnAm janmanAm ante jnAnavAn mAm prapadhyate." That is, jnana is not a state that can be attained in a single birth. Only through yoga sadhanas or bhakti done through many births does one attain the state of jnana. It is because of this that we hear of such things from those who have a connection with a mahan.

Q: We understand that "antima smaranam" (thinking of God in the last breath) is very important. You say that if we don't have the remembrance of God at the moment when life leaves our body, we will have to be born again. But even if we chant Nama, it cannot be said that everyone (who chants Nama) will be able to chant it at the time of death. For example, if someone dies when they are in coma, then there will not be "antima smaranam" right?

A: What you say is true. That's why, instead of chanting Nama on our own, we should receive Nama as an upadesa from a Realized Guru, and then chant it. When we chant like that, then the Guru himself takes on the responsibility of "antima smaranam." So if we take upadesa of Nama from an uttama Guru, then we do not have to worry about "antima smaranam."

One night, as I was lying down, my mind kept thinking of Pandapur, Lord Panduranga, devotees who had lived there and their lives. My mind desired to visit Pandarpur. I posed a few questions to my mind. 'why do you desire to visit Pandarpur?' 'Do you desire to see Lord Panduranga who holds as crown his swollen head ('mastaka lingam'), adorns beautiful fish ear drops, yellow clothing, tulasi mala, big sandal paste mark on His forehead, and stands on Yogapeettah?' 'Or, do you desire to bathe in River Chandrabhaga?' 'Or, do you desire to do bhajan in the sanctum sanctorum of Lord Panduranga and on Pandarpur streets?' Thus I questioned my mind. Can one say negate all these?

However, there is a desire beyond all these. What can that be?

Countless devotees like Ekanath, Namdev, Tukaram, Kanhopatra, Janabai, Senanayi, Narahari sonar, Nivrutti deva have enjoyed singing and dancing here. They must have walked on these very streets several times. All these were devotees made known to the world by Lord Panduranga. There must have been several devotees



HAD A
SWEET
DREAM!

unknown to the world. The longing to fall down and roll on these streets where all these devotees had walked is verily the reason behind the desire to visit Pandarpur. Can anything else equal this joy? Even as I kept thinking on these lines my body began to rise up slowly and float in the air. Floating across the sky it descended on a place at Pandarpur. That place was very divine. On a platform stood a beautiful little Panduranga; a lamp burnt nearby and the fragrance of incense sticks filled the place. Tulasi mala and several other garlands had been offered to Panduranga. The place was very neat.

Only I was there and none else.

‘This Panduranga is not the one seen in the Temple. Who is this?’ I asked myself.

‘O, its Keshavaraja! This is verily the Panduranga worshipped by Namdev! The Panduranga who had actually eaten the food offered by child Namdev: the Panduranga who had made Namdev sing hundreds of Abangs: the Panduranga who had played with Namdev: the Panduranga who had held Namdev’s house up without falling during the rains’. Even as I was thinking on these lines a garland from nowhere fell around my neck! I found a tamboora in my hand! All alone, joyously I danced around that Keshavaraja even as I sang – the whole night. ‘O, Is this verily known as ‘ekanta’ (solitude) bhajan!’ When dawn broke floating in the air I returned to the place where I had laid down.

Pandarinatha Maharaj ki! Jai!

~ Nalla Hari

Only when you have faith that the deity you are devoted to can bestow anything, will you be able to do bhakti with faith. Other deities may help you in some matters and fail you in others. Hence we should always seek refuge in Lord Krishna alone.

~ HH Maharanyam Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji



Today, surprisingly, I had the sudden thought of meditating! I cleaned the room where I usually meditate. I lit a lamp and some incense sticks in front of Krishna's picture. Switching off the electric lights I let the fan work noiselessly. Spreading a woollen blanket I sat on it facing north. I sat in Padmasana. Holding my palms together on my lap I sat straight. Controlling the breath I tried to control my mind. Though I tried this several times I was not successful. I tried to meditate on a small light that I imagined in-between my two eyebrows. In this, too, I did not succeed. I tried controlling the mind through incessant chanting of a Mantra but, no, I failed once again. I could hear a vessel falling down outside and also others talking. After a while even my body refused to cooperate. I became aware of pain in the leg, back, etc. Further, some bad thoughts began to rise up creating fear in me. Finally, I gave up all these and began to try auto suggestions viz. 'o mind you should subside'. Well! This also had no effect. Ultimately, my mind forced me to get

and, I walked out of the room. I sat talking and laughing with friends and relatives there thus involving myself in ordinary activities. Just then a question suddenly arose in me 'how can one who had striven to control his mind all this time become totally indifferent to it and mingling with others spend a gay time talking and laughing? This only goes to show that I only nurtured the thought of controlling my mind but did not nurture the desire. Only when the thought takes the form of desire will there be intense fervour to control the mind'.

On the following morning as I stood in the sanctum sanctorum of Lord Gopala I prayed 'Hey, Gopala! Please bless me not only with intense desire to control my mind but also the desire to take deep root.' The way to peace is to relinquish worldly desires if and when they rise up instead of taking efforts to fulfil them. However, peace is attained by Sadhaks (practitioners of spiritual paths) only when they, instead of trying to control spiritual desires, strive to earn them.

Credits : Ramakrishna Vijayam

Written by Bharathiar in
Sudhesamitran in 1921.

Mahamaham

Indra is known as 'Devadevan'. He is the 'deva' of 'devas' just as what other devas are to humans. Some poets like Valmiki and Kalidas in Sanskrit, Kambar and Pugazhendi in Tamil are known as 'poet of the poets'. Poets find the same enjoyment from the poems of these master poets as what enjoyment ordinary people get from reading the works of these normal poets.

In the same way, according to puranas, ponds and streams in Kumbakonam like 'Pottramarai' (Golden lotus) stream, 'Mahamaham' stream are supposed to be the holiest among the holy streams. In times of yore,

the goddesses of the nine holy rivers and streams went to 'Ishvara' (God) and said, "Oh God !, The sinners of the world bathe in our waters, transfer the sins to us and are purified. Please tell us a way by which we can get rid of all the sins that we have acquired".

The compassionate Lord said, "Oh river goddesses! I have installed two ambrosial streams in Kumbakonam which are not touched by sins. By bathing in those streams, you can have your sins removed". Every 12 years during the holy period of Mahamaham, river goddesses like Ganges visit Kumbakonam and bathe in these streams. Yesterday, Tuesday, Feb 22nd was one such day. Lakhs of devout Hindus would have bathed in the holy streams of Kumbakonam, yesterday.

Some atheists may take an objection as to how so many lakhs of people would have been rid of their sins and be purified. People of all faiths have their respective holy places and shrines. The Jews have their holy Jerusalem, the Christians consider Jerusalem, Nazareth and Rome as sacred places. Mecca, Medina, Jerusalem and many other places are sacred to the Muslims. The Buddhists revere Gaya and many other places as holy. Perhaps out of ignorance or forgetfulness, a few Christians and priests think that pilgrimages are exclusive practices of the Hindus. We can ignore the accusations of such people and since genuine believers of all religions are unlikely to have such views, people holding such views can be grouped under atheists.

We shall proceed to explain the philosophy underlying the pilgrimages to both the atheists and the believers. The traditional Hindu scriptures have clearly held that in order to get rid of sins and become purified, one must have true faith. The sastras clearly

state that a dip in the Ganges without any faith or involvement would not remove the sins. The person taking bath should also have the conviction that he/she shall not henceforth commit any sin.

The meaning and fruit of pilgrimage: It is the conviction mentioned above that does the purification. When a person is determined that he/she shall from this instant not commit any sin, the fire of this determination burns all the sins that has been committed till then.

“Jnanagni sarva karmanam bhasmasath kuruthe thatha” says the Lord in the Gita. The determination not to commit any sin in the future has to be real. This is what Jnana is. There is no superior knowledge than this. Some people try to attain this knowledge through austerities, some through charity, some through meditation and some through puja.

All these are true paths to knowledge but in what way? They help to remove the sins leading us in to the path of liberation. Austerities, charity, meditation etc will remove the sins and clear the mental delusion, which in turn leads to knowledge. The experience that everything is God and is pervaded by God is what is known as knowledge. To create sorrow to oneself or to others is sin. In the same way, pundits well-versed in the sastras define ‘punya’ (merits) as that which creates a pure joy unmixed with sorrow to oneself or to the others.

Since everything is the Self or God, when one considers everything to be one’s Self, the inclination to harm any being will vanish and this is same as removal of sins. The Bible says that ‘Fairness’ is punya and ‘Unfairness’ is sin; ‘Goodness’ is ‘punya’ and ‘harmfulness’ is sin; ‘Truth’ is ‘punya’ and ‘Falsehood’ is sin; ‘Contentment’ is ‘punya’ and

‘sorrow’ is sin; Death is the wages of sin.

Some people could ask as to why someone with a firm conviction and who is determined to renounce sins and seek knowledge, should spend money, take a train and travel to Kumbakonam or Kasi. The answer is that for the change in mental attitudes to become firm and permanent, wise men from all over the world have traditionally prescribed many rituals. A ritual is performed at the beginning of studies. During marriages, celebrations are done in the form of elaborate rituals. At the time of entry to a new house, a ritual is carried out. The purpose of these rituals is to remove evil and make ‘goodness’ as our permanent possession. As mentioned above, when it is said that ‘Death is the wages of sin’, it clearly implies that sin is the most evil among all evils.

It is evident that ‘punya’ is the best of all goodness. Is not a royal ritual required for something which is going to remove all sins and bestow immense punya?

Blissful Blossoms

Prostrating with one’s chest, head, mind, body, word, feet, knees and arms touching the earth amounts to performing ashtanga namaskara with eight parts.

That which is called magnet when it attracts iron is called a magnetic needle when it points to the northerly direction. So too, what we call as mind when thoughts rise up is called intellect when it begins to reflect.

At the time of death one suffers inexplicable pain. The mind gets confused. All kinds of thoughts strike the confused mind. That thought which is held at the time of life leaving the body decides one’s subsequent birth.



VEEDU THEDI VARUVAN VITTALAN

Compilation of a television series by
Sri Sri Swamiji that won the heart of
millions

SRI GNANESHWAR - 13

The children gave an astonishing introduction of themselves before the pundits.

Nivrithi Deva : The desires of the world constitute the path of Pravritti marga. Renouncing the desires of the world and going towards God constitutes the path of Nivrithi. I have come to give an exposition of the path towards God and hence I am known as Nivrithi Deva.

Gnaneswar : There is nothing that I do not know. Everything is known to me. At all times and in all places, I see all as Panduranga. This is my experience. My name is Gnaneswar.

Sopana Deva : I have come to prepare the steps which lead to

liberation and hence I am known as Sopana Deva.

Muktha Bhai : I am known as Muktha Bhai since I can open the door which leads to 'Mukti'. (Liberation)

The pandits heard this introduction of the students and spoke to each other derisively, "See, though being born to a sanyasin, these children talk glibly and make boastful claims about themselves". The children were crying and again beseeched the pundits to perform 'upanayana' ('thread' ceremony performed to Brahmin boys). An interesting argument took place between them :

Pandits : Why is it necessary to perform upanayanam for you? Why

Why are you again calling the council ?

Gnaneswar: No special benefit is going to accrue to us due to the upanayana. We need it only for social recognition.

Pandits: You say that there is no benefit to you due to the upanayana but you are still asking for it?

Gnaneswar: Isn't the upanayana mainly for learning the scriptures and attaining knowledge? But we are already 'brahma gnanis' (knowers of Brahman). Someone who has had upanayana is known as 'dvija'. If he subsequently does repetition of the Gayathri mantra and acquires 'tejas' (lustre), he is known as 'vipra'. When a 'vipra' can clearly expound the sastras, he is known as a 'sastri'. A 'sastri' who can perform the rituals done with fire like 'agnihotras' and other yaga and yagyas correctly is known as a 'srouthi'. When he does japa of the mantras present in the Vedas and gets the vision of the deities symbolized by these mantras, he becomes a 'rishi'. One who keeps the mind always at its source is a 'muni'. One who sees Brahman everywhere is a gnani and he only is a 'Brahmin'. That knowledge of Brahman, we already have.

The pandits heard them and laughed. They thought that the children are saying all this after reading some scripture or hearing someone. They themselves are learned in the scriptures but still do not have any knowledge of Brahman based on direct experience. Hence they did not take the claims of the children very seriously. Among them, there was one mischievous pandit who was well-versed in the Sama veda. At that time, two buffaloes were standing in the waters of the Godavari river. Buffaloes are by nature 'tamasic'. They remain standing in the waters without any movement. That Sama veda pandit saw these buffaloes and mischievously remarked, "Hello you, come here ; You are Gnaneswar right ?

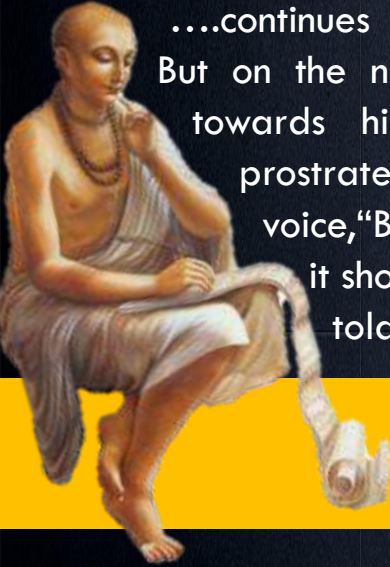
Sanatana built a small hut and was worshipping Madanmohan on the banks of the river Yamuna.

From previous issue.....

After a few days, Madanmohan felt like eating sugarcandy with butter. He pleaded with Sanatana in a meek voice, "Sadhu baba, this dry roti does not go easily in my throat. If you can get some ghee also". Even before Madanmohan could complete, Sanatana became angry and told Madanmohan sharply, "Look here, I will tell you the situation here. You can get only this dry roti from me. If you want things like butter and sugar, you should go to a rich man's house. From a beggar, you will get only this. Just because the dry roti does not go down your throat, do you expect me to ask for ghee and sugar from some rich man? You can probably push the roti down your throat with some water from the Yamuna. After all you ate mud also, once upon a time!. Madanmohan's face fell and he became silent. What else could he expect from a sanyasi dressed in rags?

....continues

But on the next day itself, Sanatana saw a rich merchant coming towards him. Sanatana was then doing bhajan. The merchant prostrated to Sanatana from a distance and said in a pleading voice, "Baba! My ship is stuck in the Yamuna river. Please bless that it should come back safely. You are my only refuge". Sanatana told him, "Brother! I don't know anything. There is one inside



SANATANA GOSWAMI

- Janani

this hut. Go and ask him". The merchant prayed to Madanmohan, "Oh God! If my ship comes back safely, I'll offer half of the profit that I get from the consignment in the ship, to your service".

Immediately thereafter, the ship became free and came back safely. There were no trains or motor vehicles in those days and all businesses used to be transacted through ships plying in the rivers. The merchants's consignment fetched him double the profits. He spent thousands of rupees and constructed a temple for Madanmohan. He appointed priests, cooks and servants for the service in the temple. Even today, the temple exists in Brindavan.

Four major works of Sanatana are very famous, namely, Brihat Bhagavatham, Haribhakthivilasam, Vaishnava thoshini and Leelasthavam. Sanatana lived for seventy years and reached the holy abode of Goloka in 1558 on the fourth day of the month of Aadi.

Some fish were living happily in a pond. The fishes were running and playing in groups with their families in that pond which was a clear waterbody. After a few days, there arose a danger to the peace of the fishes. Everyday, a man would come in the morning, cast his net and catch fishes and go away. He would come everyday without fail. Everyday, the fishes not knowing what to do, would get caught. It wasn't possible for them to escape, as they got caught suddenly. Few others knew that they were going to be caught in the net, but did not know how to run somewhere. This happened daily and caused huge worry and fear to the school of fish. Where could they go leaving the pond?

But, in that group was a small fish. It was hopping and playing fearlessly, and passing time. It had not got caught in the net so far. But, it had no fear at all. It had learnt the trick of somehow escaping from the net. Even the big fishes, were surprised at how this fish was so happy and brave, without any fear of getting caught in the net. Big fishes like themselves were unable to escape, whereas this small fish has been effortlessly escaping!

A Story For Children

ESCAPING TACTICS



The big fishes wanted to know what that tactic was. Unable to control their curiosity, they all got together, and came to see this small fish.

“Oh small fish, we have come to talk to you”.

“To me”?, asked the small fish with surprise. “Yes. How is it that u are so confident that you will not get caught in the net cast by man? Are you not scared at all? Will you never get caught at all”? they asked.

The small fish happily said, “I have no fear at all. I will never get caught in the net. However he casts the net, I will escape”. “What is that tactic, please tell us also”, asked the big fishes.

Generally, we are thankful to one who has done us a good turn. When we stand to gain due to another’s help either financially, materially or physically we feel grateful to him. We revere this person who has helped us. If the help was a timely one, we feel moved.

But this alone cannot be a sign of our gratitude.

For example, let us say that someone, through his hard earned money, helps us get admitted in a good school, offers us boarding and lodging, and meets all our needs. It is indeed right that we verbally and mentally thank him. But would this suffice? His intention in helping was for us to get educated. To actually pursue and do well in our studies is the right way of showing him our gratitude. Then he would also feel elated.

Likewise God has, in numerous ways, helped us in the world. What is the way to show our gratitude to Him who has given us good eyes? We may, for instance, enjoy seeing His divine forms in the temple; or, read the Bhagavatam. Well, there are several such ways!

Giving us a healthy body, a good life, intellect and holy association (satsang), God also gives us a precious Guru. Why? God bestows on us human birth and comforts in a janma (life) only so that we attain liberation; therefore, to embrace a Guru and attain liberation in that life is the mark of true gratitude.

~ HH Maharanyam Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji

*Haribaba decided to build a dam 20 miles long, 75 feet wide, 12 feet high, in order to save 700 villages from the Ganges floods and got into action. His countless devotees joined with Baba and started piling sand----
-(from previous issue)*

However, huge amount of money, engineers and labourers were needed for this mammoth task. This task would not get completed with just physical labour, would it? Therefore, Baba would go ,now and then, with his devotees to beg for alms. All the arrangements got done within a short period itself. His devotees who were engineers and overseers, retired from service, started doing the work, without getting any money. Men-women, aged people, small boys-girls, youngsters, several thousands of such people gathered, and engaged in the sand-piling work. Besides that, thousands and thousands were spent and labourers and contractors were appointed. Several motor vehicles, bullock carts, trucks and camels, reached there from various places to bring sand, for the sand-piling work. A big store was constructed to arrange for food for all these people. The task progressed very fast, with Hari Naam Sankeerthan.

Whenever he found the work lagging somewhere, Baba went there himself and engaged himself in it. He would motivate those working



Brindavan
and
Nandakumara

with him, would infuse them with energy and get them engaged them in work again. News kept coming that work was progressing at the right pace in all the places. It was believed by all, that the sand-piling work would get over by the scheduled date . On the 8th thithi (lunar day) of the chitthirai (mid-April to mid-May) month, the news that sand had been completely piled, was conveyed to Baba. Baba, went himself, to supervise if the work had been completed, and only then came to know that in one particular place, due to a contractor's mistake, work had not been carried on for many days. Hence, Baba, as per his vow, decided to give up his life, piling sand, forsaking food and water.

Hearing this, everyone was shaken. They sent some men on horseback to neighbouring villages. Thousands of people came together from those villages, filled sand in huge baskets and bonds, and by ten 'o' clock that night ,the task was completed. Once the work was completed, Baba lavishly praised everyone.

The next day, RamNavami utsav was celebrated in a very grand manner. Ten thousand people had gathered there for this utsav. From that day onwards, the task of pouring concrete on the dam commenced. By the end of Aani (mid-June to mid-July) month, that task also got completed.

In the Aadi (mid-July to mid-August) month, Ganga Devi, as usual surged forth. However, she was unable to cause any damage to these 700 villages because of the dam. In Aavani (mid-Aug to mid-Sept) month, from Dhasami thithi (10th lunar day), until Sharadh Poornima, an utsav was celebrated to commemorate the construction of the dam. This utsavam was celebrated in a very grand manner with Akhanda keerthan, Raasa Leela, pravachan etc.

~ Janani

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- This online English version of Madhuramurali will be available free of cost till June 2016

**Translation of original
articles to English
done by**

Smt Nirmala Giri
Smt Jayanthi Sundararaman
Smt Jeyashree Ramakrishnan
Smt Nisha Giri
Smt Sujatha Manikandaan

**To convey your prayers to
Sri Sri Swamiji, mail to**

Dr A Bhagyanathan, Personal Secretary to
HH Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji
New No 51, Old No 24, 7th Avenue
Ashok Nagar, Chennai – 600083
Tel: +91-44-24895875
Email: contact@namadwaar.org