

Sri Hari:

MADHURAMURALI

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Spiritual Monthly
With the Blessings of
HH Maharanyam
Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji



MADHURA SMARANAM

My Guru As I See Him

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Sri Swamiji visited many Naamadhwaras recently. He visited Thiruthani Naamadhwar and Arakkonam Naamadhwar on July 6th. He was welcomed by SriHari at Thiruthani Naamadhwar. Sri Swamiji gave a short satsang to the devotees who were gathered there. He reached Arakonam Naamadhwar after. Sri Swamiji did satsang there as well.

After the Ekadasi Pooja on July 9th, Sri Swamiji left for Senganoor. On the occasion of Rohini, Sri Swamiji took part in Sri Guru paadhuka procession followed by a satsang at Senganoor Naamadhwar.

He visited Mannargudi Naamadhwar on July 10th. Then he went to Sri Rajagopaldaswamy temple and had dharshan of thirumanjanam. It was 'Nilamutram' utsavam that day. He then visited Perambhur which is closer to Mannargudi. He was welcomed by Mrs. Savithri and Mr. Ramakrishnan. He then reached Govindapuram that night and reached Madhurapuri ashram the next day.

He attended Adhanur 'abhayam' Yogiramsuratkumar bhajan mandiram prathishta day celebrations. He left for Senganoor on July 13th. He had dharshan of Sri Sri Anna that evening. Govindapuram Sri Jagannathar Rathothsavam happened on July 14th. Amidst the crowd of thousands of devotees, Sri Sri Anna did Namasankeerthanam.

Sri Swamiji participated in Ashta Saastha temple's mandalabhishekam celebrations at Veppampattu (near Chennai), on July 15th. With Kanchi Sri Mahaswamigal's divine blessings, this temple has been constructed by Sri Viswanatha sarma trust.

As part of 5th Anniversary celebration of Chrompet GOD Sathsang, Sri Swamiji gave an upanyasam at Sri Padmaaraam Ganesh Mahal near Chrompet Nehru Nagar around 6.30 pm. Around 1000 devotees participated in the celebration.

As part of Ashada Ekadasi celebrations, Akanda mahamantra japa from 6 AM to 6 PM was performed in the presence of Sri Swamiji, from July 16-22 at Vittalapuram, Sri Premika vittalan temple. Purappaadu happened on July 19th as part of Pooram nakshatram celebration. Sri Swamiji had the darshan of Sthala Sayana Perumal and Nithya Kalyana Perumal on July 20th before returning back to Chennai. On July 21st, Vittalan was taken on a procession at Vittalapuram.

On July 23rd, on the auspicious occasion of Ashada Ekadasi, Sri Swamiji performed thirumanjanam and Namasankeerthanam at Vittalapuram Sri Premika Vittalan temple. Sri Swamiji took part in Divya naama sankeerthanam at Tiruvallikeni Sri Pandurangan temple that evening.

Sri Swamiji had dharshan of Perungalattur Sri Badari Naarayana Perumal and Sri Srinivasa Perumal and did sathsangs there on July 24th. Devotees gathered there welcomed Sri Swamiji by performing Nama sankeerthanam. Sri Swamiji did an upanyasam on Azhwargal Mahimai there. Sri Swamiji also started Premika varadha sathsang there.

On July 26th, Sri Swamiji participated in the completion of Maharudra homam at the ashram. On the occasion of Guru Pournima, Sri Swamiji performed thirumanjanam and Pooja for Kanchi Sri Mahaswamigal's paadhukas.

On July 27th, Guru Pournima was celebrated with great festivities at Senganur, with thriumanjanam and procession of sadhguru paadhukas at Premika janmasthaan. Over 1000 devotees took part in these celebrations.

At Govindapuram Chaitanya Kuteeram, Sri Kalyana Krishnan and Sri Swaminathan did abhishekam to Sri Swamiji with special water got from holy rivers. Sri Swamiji went into meditation after this. On the day of Chandra grahanam, hundreds of devotees gathered together with Sri Swamiji and did Namakeerthanam from 11 PM to 4 AM. On July 28th, Sri Swamiji did snanam in the holy Kaveri river, did japam and then performed pushpaanjali to Yogiji at Yogiramsuratkumar Naama Ashram and gave prasadam to the gathered devotees. After this, Sri Swamiji reached Kadalur Naamadhwar and did satsang there.

Sri Swamiji had dharshan of Sri Narasimhar at Singagiri on July 29th. Later Sri Swamiji took part in the centenary celebrations arranged by Pondichery Yogiramsuratkumar sathsang members.

Answers and Beyond

When a sadhak (spiritual aspirant) comes before you, is it possible for you to tell in what path he is performing sadhana (spiritual practices)?

When someone comes before me, by feeling a deep peace within him, one can understand that he is following the jnana marga. If he exhibits bhava lakshanas (outer manifestations of devotion), one could understand that he is in the path of bhakti. If we see movement in the nadis (energy centers) we could tell that he is doing mantra japa, and based on some signs of the eye and body it is possible to tell that he is following the path of raja yoga.

When we read Puranas such as Bhagavatam, Ramayana, or Mahabharata, we only wonder if it is necessary for Bhagavan to be Himself born in this world and suffer so much. Does Bhagavan need to suffer so much in His avataras?

This world is such that, even if Bhagavan Himself descends, He has to undergo so much suffering and trouble. What that is the case, imagine our state! Therefore, in order to also show us that we should aim to liberate ourselves from rebirth and try to find a path to attain Mukti, Bhagavan takes up suffering as a lila in His avataras.

Every life (creature) experiences joy and sorrow through its own indriyas (senses). It also undergoes feelings of happiness, concern, pain, jealousy, competitiveness, shock, anxiety, peace, serenity, lust, etc. through the mind. An act that gives rise to happiness immediately does not raise the question 'why should I do this?'

The question 'why should I eat this?' does not arise when the tongue relishes tasty food; None questions 'why should I see these?' when looking at scenes that pleases the eyes; Likewise, the question 'why should I do this?' does not arise at all while listening to music that pleases the ears, enjoying cool breeze that pleases the skin and smelling fragrance that pleases the nostrils.

When we tell people 'do not eat food that is relishing to the tongue, listen to music that is delightful to the ears, enjoy breeze that is soothing to the skin, smell fragrance that is pleasing to the nostrils, look at scenes that is pleasing to the eyes, some acts that are soothing to the mind' they would, at once, pose a counter question 'why?' 'why should these not be done?'

In the same way, mind does not accept matters that are not flattering to its tongue, ears, nostrils, skin, eyes and simply rejects them. We spit out that which the tongue rejects. We close our ears as soon as something displeasing to the ears is heard. If it were displeasing odour we close our nostrils. We close our eyes when the scene is not to our liking. If the place gets hot we search out and shift to a cool place. Mind removes the jiva from the place where it faces fear or humiliation.

Well! When the fruit of an act is earned not at once but only after prolonged practice a number of questions arise. 'Why should I do this?' 'What do I get out of this?' 'If I would indeed benefit out of this when will that come about?' 'Can you tell me exactly when it would come about?' 'will all those who do this will benefit or only a few?' 'will one certainly benefit doing this?' 'has anyone benefitted by doing this?' 'is this true or merely a tale?' Several questions of this kind rise up.

**Prostrations, again and again,
to the very direction!**

- Sri Swamiji

For example, we say 'chant the Divine Name. This is verily the easy path to attain God'. To get a person to do this with enthusiasm a motivating factor, in line with human nature, has to be pointed out. Only when it is known for sure that by doing a certain kind of worship one will not have any enemy, not a soul will dislike him, no danger will be faced by him, he will not meet with any accident that many would come forward to perform it. This is because every jiva nurtures feeling of insecurity deep inside even without his own knowledge. Fear is the sign of tamo guna*. Most people have only tamo guna. Even thoughts such as 'I should never face any kind of humiliation in my life, ever' 'I should never face danger', 'I should never be dependent on another's assistance', 'I should never be laid up in bed' reflect only insecure feelings.

When people are told to conduct worship that we follow in order to alleviate these then they would come forward to do it. When told that as they keep doing this it would ensure the welfare of their family and children they would be willing to do it. This is because love for one's own children is but natural.

Performance of this kind of worship will alleviate sufferings, will help earn lots of money, high office and fame, will bring all glory with great prosperity, will remove the trials and tribulations of life, will make one a greater leader become a motivating factor for those who have rajo guna*.

As worship of God progresses lust, competitiveness, jealousy, anger, desire, covetousness and fear will vanish while forgiving tendency, compassion, etc. would arise, the state that world is but an illusion and there is no joy in it will come about, yearning to attain God will deepen, fear of another birth will take hold, thoughts about world beyond and fear of it will arise, one will be able to lead a life of peace without causing trouble to anything or anyone, no harm will befall the world because of him nor will he be adversely affected by the world are verily the motivating factors for sattvic* people. They desire only Liberation (Moksha).

There are also those who are beyond all these. They do not have any of the motivating factors cited above; yet, unlike people mentioned above, they spend their time in incessant worship of God and chanting His Divine Names. If anyone questioned them as to why they acted in this manner their reply would be 'God is happy I am like this', 'my Guru is happy'. Such people are purely sattvic.

Just as breathing is an automatic act taking place in one's body, so too, these people keep incessantly chanting the Divine Names with their minds fixed on the Lord. They are immersed in the thought of God. These are the pure sattvic ones. They live, until their last breath, ever in the thought of God and singing His praises (doing kirtan).

Fools, in their uncertainty, would ask 'Have they not yet seen God that to their last breath they are doing bhakti?'

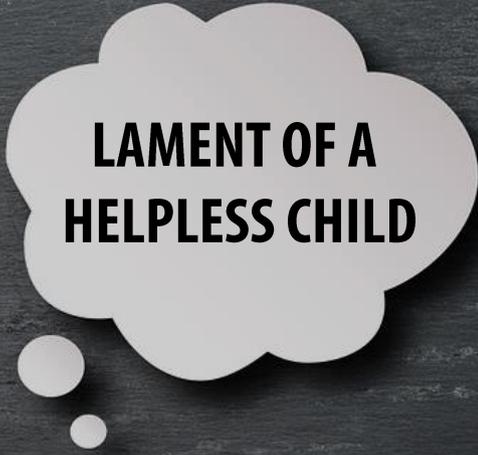
These pure sattvic people need and have no motivating factor like 'attainment of God' or 'attainment of Mukti', etc. Therefore, they do not undergo the two states of 'after seeing God – before seeing God'. They do bhakti only because it pleases the Lord. Therefore, the Lord is attained by them and none else. Repeated prostrations to such pure sattvic Bhaktas; repeated prostrations to the very direction where they are! They are very rare!

*Tamas, rajas and sattvic are the three tendencies or qualities that rules every being in creation. Tamas refers to the quality of lethargy/ignorance, rajas to that of passion/activity and sattvic to goodness/purity.

**Our Humble Pranams to the Lotus feet of
His Holiness Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji**



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LAMENT OF A HELPLESS CHILD

1.

**There are times, our scriptures mention,
When a sage's curse has made one mad.
I sure deserve to be cursed by them
for my countless sins and deeds so bad.
If I were ever cursed to be mad,
I have just one heartfelt plea,
That mad I become for Nama, and Nama only,
Since that will be the best for me.**

2.

**As I see the world around
By pain, suffering and grief it is wound.
Stroke, autism, cancer, paralysis
the names of diseases are an endless list.
So many people suffer and die
from accidents which they cannot survive.
The elderly are left uncared and alone,
No one caring for them, not even at home.
So many lives are in tatters
Caught fighting in legal matters.**

3.

This makes me realise
that worldly life is nothing
And to attain the Divine
is indeed everything.
Lazy I am, this realization despite
To embark on my spiritual trail
It is indeed Maya in all her might
Working to make my determination frail.

4.

India is a holy land which countless Mahans have adorned,
From north to south, and east to west, ever since time dawned
They all echo one thing, out of compassion for the human kind
“If even one jiva were to benefit, let me be born time and again.”
Can I please be a fortunate jiva
Who benefits by your descent?
Would you please bestow jnana bhakti and vairagya
As alms to me from your abodes in heaven?

5.

There are so many diseases
for which there is no cure
And every afflicted person
knows he is going to die for sure
He knows there's no way out
of this dreaded terminal disease
And all he can do
Is plea, plea, plea!
For a miracle by God
That would set him free

I am caught too, in one such dreaded disease,
The one called Maya from which I cannot break free
The sadhanas I do, go completely in vain
Because from maya's trap I am unable to refrain.
I helplessly cry to the Lord above
to cure me by His mercy and love.

6.

There was a man who climbed a tree,
Seeing a cobra there, he had to flee
He jumped down to see a sight he dread
He saw a wild bear and again he fled.
He ran and ran and bumped into an elephant in fury
Who seemed very ferocious, mean and angry
He jumped into a river that ran beside,
And it seemed like he safely reached the other side.
But to his dismay, it was a lion he met
And he had to run again to escape from the jaws of death
He sank unknowingly into a pool of quicksand
And could do nothing but to pray for God's helping hand.

7.

In the same way I have tried to escape from many a pain
Only to find myself caught up over and over again
I tried all I can to escape desire
Only to find jealousy burn in me like fire.
I fought jealousy, but ended up angry,
To get rid of anger was another malady.
I fought in anger to attain name and fame,
And the quicksand called maya, played her game.
She lured me deep into her confine
And I am stuck her, and in pain I pine.

8.

Every misery I experienced in life,
I felt was my end, and I would never survive.
Each time God saved me by His unfailing Grace
Removing every sorrow without a trace.
My heart swelled in gratitude and my will grew strong
To never ever do a deed that is wrong.
As time rolls by, my gratitude fades
And before I know it I fall back to my old ways.
My pride and ego convince me I am the best of all,
But I stoop lower and lower and again I fall.

9.

I recount the troubles Meerabai had to endure
From her husband who did not understand her bhakti so pure!
Prahlad too was thrashed and beaten
By his father, by whom he was forsaken!
So many women have suffered silently and long
Their devotion not understood by the society where they
belong!
While for me there is nobody who says, 'Don't chant, Don't do
bhakti!'
But I still fail to chant the nama and do Krishna bhakti

10.

In trying to control my senses
I sometimes feel that I have won
But each time I realise
I am losing the battle even before it has begun!
I often feel like giving up
And going my own way
But I struggle and pick myself up
'cos I should eventually do this some day!

11.

I chant so much nama, so many kirtans I sing
I feel I am still a toddler, I find myself never progressing!
Is attaining God such an arduous and formidable task?
Or do I remain ignorant, since my sadhana is full of flaws?
These thoughts leave me clueless, I don't know where I stand
In this Divine journey, the most purposeful one I have ever
planned.

12

It is said in our scriptures, that as we take our last breath
Krishna or Guru would come, to liberate us from this cycle of
birth and death
May I believe this only due to my faith in Guru and God
May this not be an excuse to laze without chanting the names
of the Lord.

13.

I am so full of impurities that I detest myself completely,
With all the hate I have on myself, I wonder how you will ever
like me!

It is by your compassion, that you love this undeserving,
It is because of your love, that I still remain hovering.
You know that if you hate me, I would have nowhere to go,
As you are the only shelter for me, that I surely know,

14.

A mother would have many children, but only the one will
need her more,
who is physically and mentally challenged, and cannot manage
on its own

I am a helpless child, who is incapable, ignorant and weak,
The warmth of your merciful embrace, is all that I seek.

15.

I always thought I was simple, good and honest
But when I sit in a Mahan's presence, my mind is never at rest.
It is only at this time I see my thoughts surfacing,
Dozens and dozens of them...ugly and disgusting!
Shame engulfs me that moment, I am unable to withhold,
These thoughts seem like hidden snakes coming out of a hole.
Until I came to a Mahan, little did I know,
I was not so good, was putting up a show!

16.

In spirituality it is said, one should be practical and real,
It is not wise to tread what seems assumptive and surreal
We hear of many Mahans who have realised their self
By treading a path where not just the destination but the
journey is sweet in itself!

I wish to tread this practical path shown by these great souls
To attain God and achieve the human birth's goal!

- Karuna Mai, Sydney

ताल

Sri Vishnupriya

thala

The well known meaning of the word 'thala' is beat. Raga (tune) and thala are commonly used terms in music. The beat signifies the timing in a song. There are many types of beats, like Aadhi, Roopakam, Chapu etc

Thala also denotes the palm tree and is called in Sanskrit as 'thalavriksha'. There is a forest in Brindavan known as 'thalavana' consisting of many palm trees. Bhagavatham relates the story of the ghost Dhenukasura who was occupying thalavana and how Lord Balarama killed him. Palm tree is also known as 'thrunaraja'.

'Thalavrindha' refers to a hand fan made of palm leaves. In olden days, they made use of palm leaves for writing. They used to call it 'thalapatra'. The 'Aathichoodis' of the ancient times was also written in palm leaves.

'Thalapalam' refers to the fruit of palm tree. In Ashtapathi, Sri.Jayadeva sings "thalapalathapi kurum athi sarasam kimu vipali kurusesha kuchakalaksham."

Another meaning of thala is lock, which we use to keep something safe. In Tamil we call it 'pootu'. 'Thalangaha' refers to Lord Balarama. He is also known as 'thaladwajaha' i.e someone who has the palm tree as the symbol in his flag, just as Lord Krishna is known as 'Garudawaja' since he has the symbol of Garuda in his flag. Srimad Bhagavatham refers to the chariots of Lord Krishna and Lord Balarama as 'suparna thala dwaja sihnithau rathau' .

Thala also refers to the measurement known as 'jhan' in Tamil. It also refers to a mudra in dance. 'Thalaparni' refers to a fragrant scent. 'Harithala' means a powder yellow in colour. It is smeared on the bodies of actors before a play, for dressing them up.

Like this, the word thala has many meanings.

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WE LOVED

Neuroscience and the ‘Sanskrit Effect’

July 12, 2018

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Many of us have heard the Gyuto Monks of Tibet. With their extraordinary chanting and low throaty drone of ancient sacred texts, they have kept audiences in the West spellbound with their long, careful and accurate recitations of potent Tibetan Buddhist texts. Sitting in their presence you feel a clarity, and a potent spiritual transference of energy and healing. The Buddhist tradition stems from India and the sacred language of Sanskrit. While Tibetan Buddhists have a rich chanting tradition, in India, this age-old tradition goes back even further.

Sanskrit scholars in India learn to chant ancient texts from a tender age. They chant simple mantras, Sanskrit poetry and prose, along with memorising and chanting the most ancient Sanskrit texts, including the Shukla Yajurveda, which takes six hours to chant. While those listening to these chantings receive the gift of the sacred texts they are sharing with us, the chanting of long texts does, in fact, have an amazing effect on the brain.

Neuroscience shows how rigorous memorising can help the brain. The term the ‘Sanskrit Effect’ was coined by neuroscientist James Hartzell, who studied 21 professionally qualified Sanskrit pandits. He discovered that memorising Vedic mantras increases the size of brain regions associated with cognitive function, including short and long-term memory. This finding corroborates the beliefs of the Indian tradition which holds that memorising and reciting mantras enhances memory and thinking.

An Unexpected Discovery...

Dr Hartzell, a Sanskrit devotee and postdoctoral researcher at Spain's Basque Centre on Cognition, Brain and Language, spent many years studying and translating Sanskrit and became fascinated by its impact on the brain.

I noticed that the more Sanskrit I studied and translated, the better my verbal memory seemed to become. Fellow students and teachers often remarked on my ability to exactly repeat lecturers' own sentences when asking them questions in class. Other translators of Sanskrit told me of similar cognitive shifts. India's Vedic Sanskrit pandits train for years to orally memorise and exactly recite 3,000-year old oral texts ranging from 40,000 to over 100,000 words. We wanted to find out how such intense verbal memory training affects the physical structure of their brains.

Dr Hartzell's research is the first study to examine the brains of Sanskrit scholars. Using structural Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) at India's National Brain Research Centre, they scanned the brains of 21 Sanskrit pandits and 21 control subjects.

What we discovered from the structural MRI scanning was remarkable. Numerous regions in the brains of the pandits were dramatically larger than those of controls, with over 10 percent more grey matter across both cerebral hemispheres, and substantial increases in cortical thickness. Although the exact cellular underpinnings of grey matter and cortical thickness measures are still under investigation, increases in these metrics consistently correlate with enhanced cognitive function.

He reports that the right hippocampus of the scholars, a region that plays a vital role in short and long-term memory, and is specialised for patterns, such as sound, spatial and visual patterns, had more grey matter than the brains of the control subjects. The right temporal cortex, associated with speech prosody and voice identity, was also substantially thicker.

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