

Sri Hari:

MadhuraMurali

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HH Maharanyam Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji*

Madhura Smaranam

My Guru as I See Him

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Sri Muthu and Smt. Vasanthi are a couple who belong to our Australia satsang. They have immense devotion to our Guru Maharaj and do kainkaryam in Sydney Namadwaar. They would tell everyone that everything in their life happens well only by the grace of Guru Maharaj, and that even mountain-like sorrows are removed like the morning mist by the rays of His grace.

A few years ago, Smt. Vasanthi became ill, and was fully cured with Sri Guruji's blessings. Similarly, their daughter Keerthana also – saying that Guru Maharaj came in her dream and told her to study Law – dropped the course that she was already studying and instead began to study Law. She is working as a lawyer today. Every year, when they come to India, they come to the Ashram, have darshan of Sri Swamiji and obtain His blessings.

When they come, Smt. Vasanthi's sister, Smt. Jayanthi and her son Akshayaraman would also come with them. They live in Cuddalore. Now and then, they visit the Namadwaar in Cuddalore and participate in satsangs there. Akshayaraman had completed his B.Tech Civil and wished to go to Australia for higher studies. In Dec 2017, when he had darshan of Sri Swamiji in the Ashram along with Sri Muthu and Smt. Vasanthi, he informed Sri Swamiji about his desire. Sri Swamiji also blessed that he can go to Australia and pursue further studies.

With Sri Swamiji's grace, he got admission into a course that he wanted, in a good university in Sydney. Since had to join the college in August 2018, he applied for an Australia visa and was waiting for its approval. There was only a week left for the college to reopen. Since he had not yet got the visa, the family worried a lot that he would not be able to join the college as planned, and that he would have to join only in the next semester and hence would waste a valuable 6 months.

At that time they heard that Sri Swamiji was performing Nama japam at Vittalapuram before the auspicious occasion of Ashada Ekadasi. Immediately they decided to go there and pray to Sri Swamiji. On July 23 ekadasi morning they went to Vittalapuram. They reached Vittalapuram at 6 am itself and waited for Sri Swamiji's darshan so that they could tell him about their worry and pray to him. Does our Guru Maharaj not know His devotees' worries?

Within a short time, Guru Maharaj came there and looking at them, asked, "Have you not left for Australia?" He replied sadly, "There is only one week left to join the course. Within that short time, it's very hard to get the visa, get the ticket, and join the university. So I am going to join next semester."

Sri Swamiji blessed him saying, "You will get the visa, get the ticket, and will also join the college, don't worry," and gave him prasadam.

That same afternoon at 1:30 pm, they received an email message that said 'Visa granted'; they were also able to book the ticket immediately, and wonder of wonders, within a week of having Sri Swamiji's darshan, he reached Australia and joined the college!

When Sri Muthu shared this experience with Australia satsang member Sri Ravi, he joked, "Everyone will get visa in the Embassy, but he got his visa in Vittalapuram!" If the Guru's blessings are there, anything can be indeed be obtained anywhere!

Answers and Beyond

Question: This July, in Kanchipuram Athi Varadhar is going to bless us with His Darshan. I pray you tell me the background of this celebration.

In the Divya Desam of Kanchipuram, known as Sathyavratha Kshethra - an important city among seven that bestow liberation - Varadaraja Perumal appeared in the Aswamedha yagna performed by Lord Brahma. Drawn to the beauty of the Lord, Brahma prayed to Him to accept His worship and stay there forever. Since this is unnatural in worldly life, He transformed himself into an idol that can be worshipped and celebrated by all. This installation by Lord Brahma is the 'dhaarumurthy' deity, Athi Varadha.

The Dhaaru murthy is referenced by Kanchi Mahaatmya and other scriptures that describe the main deity's form composed of different materials. In Srirangam, referred to as 'Kovil', the deity is made of mud, while in Thirumala, or 'Malai', the deity is made of stone. In Kanchipuram, also called 'Perumal Koil', the deity is made of wood. However, we know that the main deity in Kanchipuram is made of stone, don't we?



Sri Dhadhadesikan's family managed the Sri Varadarajan Temple and all services to the Lord. When Sri Thirumalai Dadhadesikan and Sri Venkatavaradha Dhadadesikan were managing the temple, temples were destroyed, with robbery of jewels and the deities themselves by foreign invasions. This was observed all throughout India. Hence, our ancestors, who were staunch devotees, set out to protect the many forms of the Lord for future generations. They hid the deities in safe places and continued worship.

Notably, Udayarpalayam Jamindaars safeguarded the deities in many temples. Those that managed the Sri Varadarajan Temple gave their utsava deity to the Udayarpalayam Jamindaars for safekeeping. However, they did not know how to protect the main deity in Athigiri, who was installed by Sri Brahma and described in songs by the alvars. Eventually, they hid Him in the temple tank Anatha Saras, where adhi sesha, the umbrella, seat, and padhuka of the Lord resides. They left the town praying to Adhi Sesa in Ananta Saras to continue the worship of the main deity. Soon, the foreigners came and plundered the gold and riches of the temple, destroying the punyakoti and kalyanakoti towers by robbing the gold plating. The prakarams and towers were ruined.

The temple was destroyed and devotees were devastated at the plight of the temple and the lack of worship at the sanctum. The foreigners prevailed for some time but eventually lost their power. Many years had passed and those who knew where the Perumal was hid were no longer alive. Sri Thirumalai Dhadhadesikan, a descendant of the Dadhadesikan family that had managed the temple, tried to restore it to resume worship.

Thirumalai Dhadhadesikan was anxious to find the main deity. He begged the Udayarpalayam Jamindaar to give them the Utsava murthy of the temple but they refused. No one knew where the main deity was and could not procure the utsava deity, in spite of knowing where it was.

So, with the help of the villagers from Pazhya seevaram, an idol was made and installed. Worship resumed in the temple. When Lala Thondarmallar, the disciple of the Jeeyar of Thirupathi, intervened, the Udayarpalayam Jamindar agreed to give back the Utsava Murthy.

While transporting the utsava murthy, there were attacked by an army in Arcot. To protect the murthy, they disguised themselves as a funeral procession - one person held a fire pot at the front and the others walked behind crying; the utsava murthy was disguised as a dead body and was successfully carried through mountains and forests all the way to Kanchipuram.

40 years went by and they had not yet found the main deity. Finally, they emptied the water from the anantha saras to search for the main deity under the water, where they found the beautiful emerald-green hued Athi varadar without any armor or jewelry, safe under the water. Since then, every 40 years Athi varadar is taken out of the water and worshipped. Sri Desikan says that the truly blessed devotees have the fortune to have darshan of the rare deity. This story is recorded by Sri U. V. Krishna Dhadacharya in the book, Sri Vedhanta Deepika.

Question: As young children, Naradar, Prahladan, and Dhruvan from our puranas, and Narasimha Mehta, Banudasar, and Namadevar from Bhakta Vijaya Charithras were able to have a face-to-face darshan of the Lord. Isn't having this darshan difficult to attain? How is it possible for mere children?

A: In fact, it is easier for children when compared to adults. There was a child called Prayaga Das who set out to see Sita Devi; he never questioned Her existence. Sita herself gave darshan to the child and also blessed him with the darshan of Lord Rama. Sri Annamacharya's charithra says that he was fed by Sri Padmavathy thaayar when he was a small child. Bhakti should not have any deception. There should not be any doubt about God's existence. One should have blind faith. This state of mind is easier for children, so it is no surprise that they attained darshan of the Lord.

A dense forest! At times travellers and traders used to pass through this forest in groups. Once, one such group happened to pass through this forest. The men in this group were surprised to find a middle aged man living in a cave there. One of them remarked, "Just see how calm his face is!" Another remarked, "There is so much depth in his eyes. Certainly he must be a great tapasvi (spiritual practitioner)."

But another in the group had a different view. He felt that this man must have committed some crime and was in hiding here. Supporting this view one of them said, "I am fair of face. Would you for this reason say I am a tejasvi (lustrous)?" Hearing these words some others opined, "He must be a coward who unable to face some problem in the family has run away in fear and landed here." Yet others abused him of being a lazy fellow, coward or helpless fellow! This group crossed the forest analysing the character of that man.

**LET US INQUIRE INTO THE
TRUE NATURE OF THE MIND!**

- Sri Swamiji



A man had moved into the forest desiring nothing. He did not interfere in another's life. Even then he was not spared by others. They spoke whatever came to their mind. It would not stop at this. A debate on this subject would take place even after reaching their town. The very first defect of the mind is to forget one's own defects and pick out some defect in others. This is how we are! And so it is all around us!

No sooner someone passes a remark about us than it kindles various feelings of fear, sorrow, joy, anger, ruthlessness, insult, rage, etc. We are unable to control our joy when someone showers praises on us. When abused anger takes hold of us. When insulted we become vicious. If our defects are exposed we tremble in fear. How to console ourselves if we are to come out of this, even a little? Well! See who passed these remarks. If he were a fool who is ever occupied in discrediting others or is one who already has enmity against us; or, is just lying without any base; or, is one who is mentally imbalanced and blabbering not knowing anything – if we realize this to be the cause behind such berating it gives us solace.

Now let us move to the subject matter at hand. It is in this way that needless thoughts keep rising up incessantly in our mind when we do dhyana (meditate). We ponder 'what shall I do? Why do such thoughts arise in me? O! Such nasty thoughts in me!'

'I thought that I was so humble but such ego in me!'

Even desireless thoughts arise and we condemn ourselves 'O, my! What a person I am! I stink like the gutter!' Such thoughts arise and we feel bad about it; feel sorry for it and pray; ultimately we reach a state of 'nothing can be done to rid myself of these'.



I have seen some who spend their entire life asking how to do dhyana.

Some, at the outset, sincerely feel and lament 'O, I do not have bhakti, jnana or vairagya (devotion, wisdom and determination) but later end up taking pride in and stay merely lamenting. During our visit to a temple we have come across a common scene – a person standing in the Deity's presence singing or praying loudly but now and then looking askance to see if others around him are noticing it! A similar state with these people, too. Most people are interested only in showing off that they are divine rather than attaining divinity.

Various kinds of thoughts keep rising in us incessantly. That is verily our nature. Instead of debating on this, to think 'this is verily the behaviour of a non-existent entity' and ignore it is the right way to lessen the pace of thoughts. If this is not done the mind would debate and giving rise to contradictory thoughts get confused and end up losing its strength. As days go by, taking pride in lamenting in this manner the mind would make a habit of lamenting all by itself. Therefore, analysing the true nature of the mind is verily the positive way of reducing thoughts.



SATSANG

(Transcript of Swri Swamiji's upanyasam organized by Muscat sathsang members in Chennai)

Adi Shankarar in Bhagagovindam, explains the greatness of sathsang in the lines,

“sathsangathvE nissangathvam, nissangathvE nirmOhathvam |
nirmOhathvE nishchalatathvam, nishchalatathvE jeevanmuktihi | |”

(One can attain the great state of jeevan mukti by being in sathsangam)

In Tamil, one of the Agastia muni's song goes like this – “sadhukkal sangathaye manamE, thanjam adainthiduvai. Sadhukkal sangam allal manadhil shanthi varathu arivai” – meaning, only sathsang can give the peace of mind.

There is an abhang that has this beautiful line, “sant sang sarva kaala;” – the prayer is here is to have sadhus' sang always. Many slokas in Srimad Bhagawatham also explains the greatness of sathsangam.

A question may arise, “why we need sathsangam?” No one in this world can live alone. We are here because of our parents. How can we live alone without anyone? When we were infants, our mother took care of feeding us and keeping us clean. It's because of her love and affection and care we have grown. It's because of our father we have got proper education and we are able to lead a comfortable life now. That being the case, how can one lead a life without the help of others? Its nature's law that we need each other to survive. We might think that we can survive alone when we are young. But, that is not possible. The nature of all the living beings is to depend on each other for survival. God has created us to live in harmony with each other. When we look at the birds returning to their nests, in the evening, we see that they fly together. Likewise, the ants also move in groups. Even in forests, elephants, monkeys, deer and all other animals will always in groups. Human beings are also like that.

All that happens in one's life can be categorized into 2 – good or bad; If one is not in sathsangam, he is definitely in bad sangam. Bad sangam does not mean wrong sangam. Whichever sangam is not divine, and is unnecessary sangam – they are all bad sangam. Even a person who gambles is in a group. A person who is drinking is also not alone, he is in the midst of 10 or 20 people. When we go to temple or yatra, we are in a group. So, being among a group of people is our nature.

Only because of Bhagawan's grace, one can get sathsangam. One might have a question, "what are we going to get, being in sathsangam?"

When we are in sathsangam, at least for that time when we are there in sathsangam, our mind does not think about other matters. This is the first benefit of a sathsangam.

When we are not attending sathsangam, what will we do? We might be sitting in front of the Television, or might be checking Whatsapp or Facebook in our phone or we might be watching movies. When we are in sathsangam, we are not doing any sins and we are staying away from worldly matters.

What is sathsangam? What will we get being in sathsangam? Is sathsangam a place where we can learn lot of things? Is the benefit of being in a sathsangam, the feeling that we will get whatever we want? The meaning of the words, Sath, sadhu, saathvik is goodness/greatness. Harinaamakeertanam, katha shravanam, Bhagawan's procession, uthsavam and kainkaryam to Bhagawan and Bhagawathas are sathsangams.

When we do all this for the happiness of Bhagawan, and not for fame or money or any other benefit, it is sathsangam. If we don't do all this for Bhagawan's happiness, then however, we might sing and dance, we are not different from a snake that dances to music. We are no different from a parrot which repeats "Rama" naama when taught or a snake that dances to snake charmer's music.

Our goal has to be only Bhagwan. Even if we utter the names of Bhagawan incorrectly, but when we do it to make Bhagawan happy, Bhagawan will accept that. This is sathsangam.

Many puranas say that Bhagawan Himself comes to sathsangams. So, does Bhagawan come to all the sathsangs that are happening? Whoever sathsangam has only Bhagawan as the goal, Bhagawan presents Himself there. Bhagawan came to Namadevar's santhasang. Why? He came because Namadevar sang bhajans with utmost devotion to Bhagawan. People without competition and jealousy are eligible to be in sathsangam. Wherever, people gather together and sing the glories of the Lord happily, that is sathsangam. Absolutely no worldly matters should be discussed in the sathsangams.

Where Bhagawan's kainkaryam is performed without competition and only for Bhagawan's happiness, that is sathsangam. Sadhus will prostrate to one another. There will be no ego between people. When we are in such a sathsangam, we will not be disturbed with other worldly matters.

It is not necessary that a person should be able to sing well or tell the leelas of the Lord very well. Even if two people can chant "Rama, Rama" together, that itself is a sathsangam.

What changes we might feel, being in such a sathsangam? We get so many thoughts in our mind. These thoughts materialize into actions through our sense organs. We see with our eyes; we listen to some things with our ears; we taste with our tongue; so, worldly things do have an impact on us. For example, if we have watched a horror movie at a theatre, we will feel scared even if we are inside our own house. Even though we know it is just a movie, those scenes create a fear in us. So, we cannot deny the fact that, the things that we see with our eyes do create an impact on us. On the other hand, if we see a Pooja room with a glowing lamp and altar decorated with flowers, we feel at peace. If we listen to a sad music or music that we don't like, we feel an impact. In a sathsangam, when we do naama japam, the benefit we get is pure bliss. Those divine naamas give us peace.

Even though we are not proficient in Sanskrit, when we listen to slokas from Srimad Bhagawatham or Srimad Ramayanam, we feel peaceful. That's because, these slokas composed by great sages, have the capability to calm the mind and give peace. The fragrance of a lotus flower or an agarbathi's fragrance from Pooja room will calm the mind.

How much ever sathvik qualities in us grow, rajasa and tamasa qualities will be destroyed. Sathsangam is the only way to destroy rajasa and tamasa qualities within us.

In Ramayana, Indrajit represents rajasa guna; Kumbhakarna represents tamasa guna; Vibesshana represents saathvika guna. Ravana's 10 heads represent our 5 sense organs and 5 organs of action. Seetha represents jeevatma, Sri Rama is Bhagawan. The celestial wedding of Sri Rama and Seetha represents the state of jeevan mukti. Sri Rama, to kill Ravana (destroy the sense organs and organs of action), combined forces with Vibeeshana (saathvika guna), and killed Indrajit (rajasa guna) and Kumbhakarna (tamasa guna). Ramayana shows us that only with the help of saathvika guna, we can get rid of rajasa and tamasa gunas.

Saathvika is nothing but, naama, katha shravanam and sadhus' sangam. We will feel the transformation within us, when we are near a person who thinks only about Bhagawan and no other worldly things. When we are near a Mahatma, no exchange of words is necessary between us, the mere presence of the Mahatma will bring transformation within us. Like how a lotus blooms as soon as the Sun rises, the presence of a Mahatma will remove all our karma vasanas.

When we enter a sathsangam, the process starts. First, our sins get destroyed, after that the vasanas that push us towards making these sinful acts will be destroyed. After the vasanas are destroyed, we will grow dispassion towards worldly matters and saathvika guna starts to grow. As the saathvika grows and grows, we will be able to reach such a state that we will get Bhagwan's darshan, moksham (liberation) will become easy. Only sathsangam can grant us all this.

After explaining the details of Ekadasi fasting, Sri Swamiji proceeds to elaborate on the three important steps of Bhagavatha dharma.

Hariyin kadhaigalai kEttiduvAi
08. Hariyin gunangalai pAdiduvai
HariyinrUpathai kandiduvAi
09. avan uruvai uLLatthil kondiduvAi

After elucidating Ekadasi fasting, this Madhurageetham nicely proceeds to outline the three pillars of Bhagavatha dharma.

Scholars use a term 'tAtparya lingam' to refer to the method in which an important concept or principle is brought out in a scripture. Mentioning a point in the beginning as well as the end, repeating the point again and again etc. are some of the six ways in which a point is brought out in any scripture. In the beginning of his narration in Srimad Bhagavatham, Sri Suka also describes the three pillars of the Bhagavatha dharma of devotion.

STAIRWAY TO DEVOTION

- M.K. Ramanujam



tasmAt bhArata sarvAtmA bhagavAn Ishvaro hari: |
srotavya: klrtitavyashcha smartavyashcha icchatA bhayam || (2-1-5)

Those desirous of liberation should do three things: Listen to the glories of Lord Hari, sing what is heard, and remember Him always. While Sri Suka mentions this in the beginning, he also ends his narration with

shruta: sanklritito dhyAta: pUjitaashchAdrithopi vA |
nrunAm dhunoti bhagavAn hritstho janmAyutAshubham || (12-3-46)

By listening to the stories of Lord Krishna or by singing His name, sports and virtues or by meditating on Him or by doing pooja or service to Him, the Lord resides in the heart and removes the sins of several births and purifies the heart. Just as Sri Suka says that once the Lord stays in the heart, we are bound to attain a high state. Sri Swamiji also sings in the same vein,

Hariyin kadhaikaLai kEttiduvAi; Hariyin gunangaLai pAdiduvAi;
HariyinrUpathai kandiduvAi; avan uruvai uLLatthil kondiduvAi.

Apart from the three pillars enunciated by Sri Suka, Sri Swamiji has nicely included, 'Hariyin rUpathai kandiduvAi'. One may wonder that even in the second verse of this composition, it was mentioned, 'Hariyin kshEtrangaLukku sendriduvAi' and hence we would have seen the roopa of Lord Hari. But it is only after reaching a Sadhguru and participating in his satsang and listening to the stories of Lord Hari and singing his glories can one really see and enjoy the roopa of Lord Hari. Prior to that, it would have been only a superficial visit. We would have gone, seen the image and come back without any real devotion. But now the darshan would be deep with a melting heart when we would remember that this is the Lord who saved Gajendra alwar from the crocodile of samsara, this is the Lord who saved the honour of Draupadi, this is the Lord who broke open and came from a pillar for a child, and so on.

To sing the precious madhuraageethams like 'karunAmUrthi nlyallavo', 'govindA undhan nAmamE azhagu', 'jagannAtham mama kula deivatham', 'ranganAtha parabrahamanE nama:' before the Lord is the real darshan of the Lord in the image, isn't it?

Hence, the real darshan of the Lord in the temple happens only when our lives are transformed into one where we are fortunate to spend our time listening to the stories of the Lord and sing his glories. When our ears are filled with the stories of the Lord and the mouth is full with singing on his glories and eyes are complete in beholding the Lord in the temple, will not Sri Hari enter and fill our hearts? Lord Hari will come on his own and will refuse to move away from the hearts of such pure bhagavathas.

‘Madhuram’ means sweetness. The ears become sweet on listening to the glories of the Lord. The mouth becomes sweet on singing his glories. The mind becomes sweet with his remembrance. This is the sweet path shown by our Sadhguru. This is the meaning of the song ‘Dharmam bhAgavatam kalau atisukam’ sung by bhagavathas during Radha kalyanam.

Here are two ways in which we can bring the form of Sri Hari into our hearts. There is a difficult path comprising Yamam, Niyamam, Asanam, Pranayamam, Pratyaharam, dhyanam etc. A lot of effort is required to bring this dhyanam. The second way which is the ‘Bhagavatha dharma’ is the way shown and followed by our Sri Radha Rani. The remembrance of Sri Hari happens automatically when one listens to the stories of the Lord, sings his glories and beholds his form in the image. After this, when we see children, we will be at once reminded of the gopa and gopis in Srivanam and this will lead to remembrance of Sri Hari. If we happen to see hills, rivers forests etc, we will be reminded of Govardhan hill, the Yamuna river and Srivanam which will lead to remembrance of Sri Hari. Cows, elephants, birds will all remind us of Gopala and Narayana, one who rides on the vehicle of Garuda. Such a remembrance will not be like a steady meditation of a form. It will be more of a meditation wherein the mind constantly remembers his enchanting form, melts over His virtues, relishes his divine sports and is strengthened by His divine Names.

This is what is glorified in another madhuraageetham, “This is sweet; this is simple; this has the name of bhakti; this is without malice; this does not cause confusion; this is not conceited; this is absolutely pure”.

When Sri Hari enters the heart, is there anything else to be attained in life? It only needs to be safeguarded by any means. The next steps will elaborate on this.

(More steps to follow)

Thanjavur is one of the prominent districts of Tamil Nadu. It was the capital of the mighty Chola Kings; It is a Holy place(Divya Desaim) Thanjavur is a place where the presence of Bhagawan in his Narasimha Avatar is eternally felt. There are numerous temples along the length and breadth of Thanjavur. The magnificence of Brihadeeshwera temple or Periya Koil is indescribable. In the North street, three temples i.e Navneet Krishna temple, Bangaru Devi temple and Vijayaraman temple are situated in a line. The construction of Geeta Mandapam in the Navneeta Krishna temple was Sri Sri Swamiji's initiative . Sri Swamiji has also given many discourses in this temple. The sanctum sanctorum is adorned by a very beautiful deity of lord Shri Krishna.

It was on the first Prathishta day of Sri Kalyanasrinivasa Perumal , a Basant Panchami day that Sri. Rajagopal Mama of Thanjavur first had Sri Swamiji's Darshan in Madhurapuri Ashram. He invited Sri Swamiji to Thanjavur. From then on, Sri Swamiji started visiting Thanjavur frequently. The seeds of Nama had been sown. Mr Rajagopalan mama repeatedly told Sri Swamiji to accept his house as Namadwaar. Sri Swamiji gently refused saying the very house he lived in cannot be given away for Namadwaar.

THANJAVUR NAMADWAAR

- Sri Venkatesan



This was almost 16 years back: As though it was the divine intervention of Navneeta Krishna, the work of Thanjavur Namadwaar began falling into place after the Samprokshanam of Navneeta Krishna. Here it would be appropriate to mention about Smt. Savitri Ramakrishna. For Savitriji, her every breath is dedicated to Sri Swamiji, Nama and Naama Prachaar. She has been instrumental in the creation of hundreds of Namakendras in and around Thanjavur. Sri Bharath(Vijay), son of Shri Ganpati Subramanian contributed several lakh of rupees to buy land for Thanjavur Namadwaar. Many devotees came forward and donated and also collected money for the construction.

The inauguration ceremony of the Namadwaar was held on 3rd June 2019, on the auspicious day of Amavas and Rohini star. Thirumanjanam was done for the divine couple Madhuri Sakhi Sammeta Premika Varada. Thousands of devotees thronged and chanted the Mahamantra fervently. Sri Swamiji in his Anugrah Bhashan said" when one learns Shastras, he can become Shastri, the person learning medicine can become a doctor and the person learning law can become lawyer, but a person chanting Nama can become God himself. He cited the examples of many saints who with their love, incessant chanting of Nama and unflinching devotion had attained higher spiritual planes.

Swamiji also honoured the devotees who had selflessly toiled to bring about the Namadwaar. Sri Swamiji personally handed over the Prasadam to devotees. The event concluded auspiciously.

A Tale for Children

A PICTURE AND A LESSON

Raman boarded the car along with his friend Prakash. There was a beautiful picture of Lord Rama in the car which Raman touched and prayed. Prakash was irritated and let out a snort. Raman ignored it and started the car. Before the car started Raman again prayed to the picture with a sloka, “Sri Rama Ramethi...” Prakash again showed his annoyance with a snort. Prakash couldn’t understand Raman’s feeling. He wondered why there should be so much respect for just a painting.

Unable to suppress his irritation, Prakash openly asked, “Ram! Don’t mistake me; Why all this? After all it is only a painting. You touch it; you look at it with affection and pray to it. Why?” Raman said, “It doesn’t appear to me like a painting. On looking at it, I feel a sense of happiness, a feeling of protection and a surge of affection inside me.” Prakash was not convinced and let out his disbelief with another snort.

Their car was proceeding towards Mount Road. The vehicles were moving at a snail’s pace. In between, the vehicles also had to stop at many places. At one point, Prakash brought down the car window and asked someone, “What is the matter sir? Why are the vehicles moving so slowly?”

A person in a scooter replied, “Oh that! Someone had put up a big movie poster in the night, in a corner of the road. This entire ruckus is to remove it.” “Oh! Let me also see”, said Prakash and peeped outside. His face shrunk and there was anger in his eyes.

The poster was obscene and provocative which was the reason for his anger. This time Prakash let out his displeasure with a snort even louder. Raman asked, “What happened Prakash? Why are you so annoyed?”

“Obscene poster Ram... Someone has irresponsibly put it up; if this is installed in a highway, it can be a distraction to the motorists and create many accidents; Apart from removing the poster the government should also punish the people who fixed this poster”, fumed Prakash.

Raman slowly smiled. He asked, “Why Prakash? This also is after all a poster. Why should it cause so much disturbance? Prakash was taken aback, “I thought, the image of God was only a picture and there is nothing more to it. But if a wallpost can provoke lust, why should not the picture of God inspire peace, devotion and mental strength in our minds? I only understood it wrongly”. He became silent and slowly clarity began to evolve in his mind.

They soon reached the destination. Raman stopped the car. He touched the picture of his favourite Lord Rama with adoration. This time however there was no snort from the back seat!

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SANSKRIT WORD OF THE MONTH

- Sri Vishnupriya

'JALA' generally means water. That is the popular meaning. There are several words that can be formed from the word 'JALA'.

'JALAKALMASHAM' refers to the HALAHALA poison (poison got while churning the ocean for amrut by devas and asuras). Lord Shiva consumed the poison that was got during the 'amrutamadanam'. Srimad Bagavatam while mentioning that his neck became blue because of this, says –

तस्यापि दर्शयामास स्ववीर्यं जलकल्मषः ।
यच्चकार गले नीलं तच्च साधोर्विभूषणं ॥

refers to that poison as 'JALAKALMASHA:'. Everyone knows what 'JALAKREEDA' means. Water sports include all games played in water. Elephants squirt water from their trunks on other elephants and play, because they are very fond of 'JALAKREEDA'.



'JALAJA' means appearing from water. This word alone has several meanings:

- Because the fish is born in water and lives there, it is called 'JALAJA'
- Salt is also called 'JALAJA'. Because salt is formed in the ocean.
- The conch shell is found in the ocean and so it is also called 'JALAJA'.

Srimad Bhagavatam says - Bhagavan who was Gajendravarada (granted boon to Gajendra), after Gajendra moksha, blew his conch and gladdened the devas, and climbed on Garuda and flew away.

इत्यादिश्य हृषीकेशः प्रध्माय जलजोत्तमम् ।
हर्षयन विबुधानीकं आरुरोह खगाधिपम् ॥

Similarly, in Trivikrama Avatar, while describing the Viswaroopa of Bhagavan, says- पर्जन्यघोषो जलजः पाञ्चजन्यः . Meaning, the conch named Panchajanyam that could make a noise like the roar of clouds.

In the Bharatha Kathamruta, Sri Sri Anna, while calling out to Senganur Srinivasa Perumal - Sangapuri says 'JALAJANAGAREENADHA'.

- The moon is also sometimes called 'JALAJA' because it appeared in the ocean.
- The Koustubha gem is also called 'JALAJA' because it appeared in the ocean.
- The well known meaning of JALAJA is lotus. While describing the beauty of Bhagavan's eyes, they say 'JALAJAVILOCHANA' - lotus-like eyes.
- Importantly, JALAJAA means Goddess Lakshmi Devi. She has that name because she also appeared from the ocean.

Next, 'JALADHI' or 'JALANIDHI' denotes the ocean.

Sant Thyagaraja sings 'Karuna Jaladhe! Daasaradhe'- calling Lord Rama an ocean of mercy.

"Jaladha:", or "Jaladhara:", "Jalamuch" are terms that denote the clouds. 'JALADHA' - because it gives water, 'JALADHARA' - because it stores water in itself as water-laden clouds, and 'JALAMUCH' - because it releases the water it has stored in it. We sing of Lord Krishna - 'JALADHARA-SAMA-NEELAVARNA'.

'THARANGA' means a wave, 'JALATHARANGA' is the name of a musical instrument. It is well known that water is filled in some vessels, and sapta swaras are created through that, and music is played. When those vessels are tapped, 'tharanga' is created in the stored water and the music of swaras is heard. This may be a reason why it is called 'JALATHARANGAM'.

'JALAASHAYA' means a water body. That is a pond, or lake, river.

'JALAAASA:' means foam. The white foam from the waves, appears like a smile, so it is called JALAAASAM.

In this way several words are formed from 'JALA'.

Let Lord Krishna bless us all with abundant JALA.

**HUMBLE PRANAMS AT
THE LOTUS FEET OF GURUJI
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The Divine Life of Namdev Maharaj

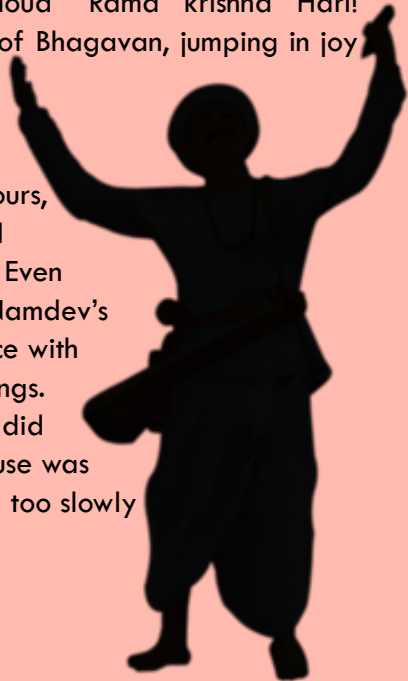
Shiv Kanya - Shri Kanya

Srimad Bhagavatam, describes Uddhava as,

यः पञ्चहायनो मात्रा प्रातराशाय याचितः ।
तत्रैच्छद्रचयन् यस्य सपर्या बाललीलया ॥

Sri Shuka says, even when Uddhava was five years old, all his plays were ever around Krishna. He carved an image of Krishna with his hands and spent every moment in worshipping Krishna. He was immersed in worship so much that he never paid heed to his mother, even when she called him out for meals.

Likewise, Namdev too was often seen in the temple, worshipping Panduranga, singing out aloud “Rama krishna Hari! Vasudeva Hari! Panduranga Hari!” in front of Bhagavan, jumping in joy of dancing and chanting His divine names. Now that father Damushet had granted him permission to perform the daily pooja, Namdev started staying in the temple for hours, talking to Panduranga, singing abhangs and playing with Panduranga with so much love. Even though, he was not aware of any mantras, Namdev’s pooja was packed with beauty and elegance with the singing of the names of Vittal and abhangs. He was very prompt in reporting all that he did to Panduranga. Any new purchase in the house was first taken to Panduranga. Thus, Panduranga too slowly started yielding to Namdev’s devotion, revealing his lilas.



Once, a cow named Kapila in Damushet's house, had given birth to a calf. It was a custom in their house to offer anything that is new to Vittala and then accept it as a Prasad. So, Damushet and Konabai were discussing about offering the colostrum(the first milk) of the cow to Panduranga. This reached the ears of Namdev. He wished to offer the milk to Panduranga all by himself.

Konabai went to the cowshed, milked the cow and boiled it so that it can be offered to Vittala. After boiling the milk to a thick consistency, she was thinking of flavoring it with sugar, cardamom, etc, before offering to Vittala. At that time, an urgent work cropped up that she had to step out and hence she asked Namdev to take care of the house.

Namdev was eagerly waiting to offer the milk to Panduranga. So, he ran to the fetch the boiling milk from the stove, before Konabai could return. The vessel was extremely hot. Immediately, Namdev, tried holding the vessel with his upper garment that was wrapped around his waist. Very slowly and cautiously he got the vessel down and ran to the sanctum of Panduranga holding the vessel tightly with his garment.

Placing the milk that was boiling-hot, in front of Vittala, he called out, "Panduranga! Come soon. I have brought milk for you" But today, Panduranga did not come as he would come before. Not knowing the reason for Panduranga's delay, little Namdev started singing an abhang.

Doodh piyo mere Govindalala I
Kalaa bachhara kapila gayee I
Doodha duhavatha Nama jayee II
Sone ka katava doodhne bhariya I
Pivo Narayana age dhariya II
Prabhuvana kee muratha doodha na pivatha I
Seera pachaara Nama rovatha II
Aisa bhaktha mai kapu na paya I
Namadevane deva hasaaya II

Namdev says, "Hey Govinda lal! drink the milk. There is a new black calf in our house isn't it? I have brought you the milk of the cow Kapila, the mother of that calf. Just for you, I have filled the milk in a golden bowl. Hey Narayana! come soon and drink the milk"

Namdev saw that Panduranga did not appear even after this long, and on realizing that neither his singing nor his stubborn cries are working, just like before, he started banging his head on the feet of Vittal. At that time, on seeing Namdev's persistent devotion, Panduranga appeared before him with a smile and started conversing with him.

Namdev had started schooling by this time. Although he was just trying his hands at writing small words, writing the words "Panduranga, Vittala, Pandarinatha" were too simple for him. He was ever involved in writing the divine names of Bhagavan.

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