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With the Blessings of
HH Maharanyam Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji



Madhura Smaranam

My Guru As I See Him

- Dr A Bhagyanathan

(Personal Secretary to Sri Sri Swamiji)

Sri Swamiji shared some wonderful thoughts during the Vasanthotsav celebrations held at Madhurapuri Ashram in May. I am sharing those here with you.

“When we talk to elderly people, they will say, ‘Oh how lovely were the bygone days. These days things have changed so much!’ Similarly, they will say that the kings in those days ruled righteously. And that honey and milk flowed in the streets!

“But in truth, as far as we know, the world has always been the same. We see that in the Puranic times, there were tyrants such as Vena, Hiranyakashipu and Hiranyaksha. In more recent history, we see people such as Hitler and Idi Amin who terrorized the world. Our own country has suffered much under foreign invasions and foreign rule. Even now, we hear of many violent incidents in the world. Good rulers as well as selfish rulers do keep coming now and then all over the world. The world has never been quiet always. The truth is that peace and discord always keep coming alternately. Why is this?

“If God, who created us, did not give us this thing called old age, how good it would have been! It is very scary for each of us, when we think of our old age. But still, God has created old age. Similarly, He created this beautiful and wonderful human body; but if only He had not created this thing called disease, how good it would have been! Yet, new diseases keep cropping up every day. Society is also like this only.

The reason God created us is to attain Liberation (mukti). Only when there is disease and old age in the body, we will begin to dislike taking up a body. Only when there is so much adversity in society, will we have aversion towards taking birth in this world. Little by little, this aversion will turn into dispassion (vairagya) and man will desire to turn towards the One who created him. This will turn into bhakti and give us mukti!” said Sri Swamiji.

BLISSFUL BLOSSOMS

Our mind is not pure: yes, we know this. Yet, meditating on the Lord even for a brief moment gives us peace. It bestows peace of mind. When it is so, Mahans are forever thinking of God through pure mind. Can there be any wonder in their experiencing deep peace and bliss, always?

Just as the world does not touch a Jnani though being in the world, so too, satsang (divine association) does not affect some in spite of coming to any satsang!

- HH Maharanyam Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji

Answers and Beyond

Radhe! Radhe! Swamiji! Recently I had been to an astrologer. The correctness in his reading of my life, in detail, surprised me. How is this possible?

In this creation of God everything moves with mathematical accuracy – the time taken to rotate around the Sun, the path, the time taken by the earth to revolve around itself, the waning and waxing of the Moon, the incidents of eclipse, time taken to harvest the seeds sown – everything moves with mathematical excellence. Thus there is order in this creation. But for this mathematical accuracy wouldn't there be confusion in this creation?

Just as everything in this creation moves as per divine mathematical order should not matters related to a soul's (jiva) life viz. the time of birth, its growth, the time to leave the body, etc. also fall within the purview of God's mathematical order? If it were not so, just imagine how disorderly the whole world would be!

Based on the time of birth of a soul the science of astrology makes its calculation for that soul. Thus, when each soul's life is according to a certain calculation, the science of astrology is able to calculate one's life to the extent of the accuracy of that calculation.

Therefore, it is only at the science called astrology should we marvel!



Pundareekakshan

- Sri Sri Swamiji

Recently I happened to visit a proposed temple site where preparations were on for the consecration. I saw the archavathar (main deity) that was to be consecrated there. The Lord was seated as if in a meditative posture and very beautiful. I sat there looking at Him in a focused manner for a while.

When I sat to meditate that night, it was that form of the Lord that kept coming to my mind. His face was so beautiful. I thought to myself, 'His face resembles that of our Srinivasa Perumal. The eyes, nose, smile and all features were so captivating. Are the adornments the only way to differentiate one form of the lord from another?'

At that second, Srinivasa Perumal appeared before me in meditation. I could clearly see His Divine Eyes. They looked like elegant lotuses in full bloom. He made me realise that the name Pundareekakshan (the lotus eyed) befits Him, and Him Alone. His eyes do not resemble that of any other! Needless to say, as I looked at Him, lost in his beauty, His Forehead, Lips, Cheeks, Nose, and His Entire Disposition were absolutely enchanting!

BHAJANAM – NADHOPAASANAM WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

Sri Vishnupriya



The path of devotion is the simplest and sweetest of all the several paths to attain God. As per the verse, 'Bakthyaa sulabho Bhagavan', no other path is so easy as the path of devotion to attain God. It is also easy for us to be devoted to God.

There are two sub-paths, called Bhajanam and Nadhopaasanam in devotion. The one we do is Bhajanam or Sankeertanam. The other one is 'Sangeetham' or Nadhopaasanam. Recently, in a discourse on Saint Thyagaraja at Sundara Anjaneyar temple, Bangalore, Swamiji beautifully elucidated how bhajanam and nadhopaasanam differ from each other. Let us see about this.

There are several vedic mantras and many vaideeka mantras, such as Purusha Suktham, Rudram, Chamakam, Durga Suktham and Gayathri mantra. These mantras will yield good results, only if they are properly learnt from a Guru and practiced regularly with perfect swaram and modulation. Even if the swaram changes slightly, the results will be very disastrous. What is a mantra? It is a certain way of arranging some syllables (aksharam). There is a specific meaning and a result for each mantra. These mantras were not created intellectually, but were internalised by rishis from the sounds prevalent in space. Although there are several prescribed regulations for mantras, there are no specific rules for stotrams.

When we do Rangoli in the morning outside our house or when we light a lamp, we recite some slokams, isn't it? Let us say, we are chanting the Kanakadhara stotram, 'Angam harehe pulakabooshanam... ' while doing our work. Each of us will recite the slokam in various ways. There is no swara regulation for this stotram nor is there a requirement to recite it in a specific way. It can be said in any tune (raga) or manner according to one's liking. If ten people gave a recording of one stotram, it would be in ten different ways. Although mantras and stotrams are both aksharams only, stotrams need not be chanted like mantras.

Bhajanam is like reciting a stotram. Nadhopaasanam is similar to mantra upaasanam. When singing bhajans, we have to sing with the bakthi bhaava. It is enough if we sing with a reasonable knowledge of music. There is no need for us to be an expert in music. Singing a namaavali or singing the kirtans of Mahans in simple ways, to the extent we know music is bhajanam. Thyagaraja swami himself has categorised a few of his songs as 'divya nama' keerthanms. Songs like 'Chakkani raja ...' and Pancha ratna keertanams will not fall under Divya nama keertanams. The reason being that only simple keertanams which can be sung easily have been added to divya nama keertanams.

There is swara regulation in Nadhopaasanam. In mantras, there are several aksharams, but in Nadhopaasanam, there are only 7 swarams – sa, ri, ga,ma, pa, da, ni. The permutation and combination of these seven swarams resulting in 72 melakarta ragas and their janya ragas is how nadhopaasanam is done. In this beautiful nadhopaasanam, swarams are as important as the bhaavam. That is why keertanams of every mahan who have done nadhopaasanam will follow the swara structure. Those keertanams cannot be sung in different ways by different people. All musicians (vidhwaans)

will have to sing these songs in the same way only and not according to their mano dharmam. Three mahans who did nadhopaasanam are Saint Thyagaraja, Muthuswami Deekshidhar and Shyama sasthriyal.

They worshipped God through music. There are two gurus for nadhopaasanam – Hanuman and Naradhar. They brought the Sangeeta shastra to earth from the celestial world (Devalokam) and blessed us with that. These days, according to the Guru tradition, several styles amongst musicians have come about. Initially, there were two paths in Sangeeta shastra. One was Hanumadh madham and the other one was Naradha madham. Both of them have arranged and structured music in different ways. Sarngadevar from Bengal was the first one to expound Sangeetha sastra through his grantha, 'Sangeetha Ratnakaram'. To worship God through this structured and regulated music form is Nadhopaasanam.

HUMBLE PRANAMS AT
THE LOTUS FEET OF GURUJI

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GENUINE GRACE OF THE GURU!

A man said, "For several years promotion to higher post was giving me a slip; I prayed to my Guru and this year I have succeeded in getting it. O, its verily my Guru's Grace!"

Let us stop to think. We have heard several people speak of earning wealth, post, office, fame, luxurious life as verily the grace of the Guru. Are these the grace of the Guru? To repeatedly desire wealth, title, post, fame, etc. would only push one into many more births, would it not? How then can it be Guru's grace?

Let us say that a man is shut up in a prison. Is feeding him on time, giving him all comforts in the prison cell and making him popular in the prison quarters the real blessing? Is not freeing him from the prison the real blessing? In the same way, is drowning one in the whirlpool of birth and death Guru's Grace? What is real grace of the Guru?

Even the grace of God works only towards worldly affairs. If one has to get ashore from the ocean of life it is possible only through Guru's grace.

Many think they are in spiritual life! They do not even know what 'Bhakti' is! They deem whatever they do as per their whims and fancy as Bhakti! Most people consider visiting the temple, performing the ordained rituals for the dead ancestors, performing fire sacrifices (homams) frequently, bearing external religious signs is verily Bhakti. All these are

important no doubt. But can this become Bhakti? Is not unconditional, unbroken love for God, Bhakti? Is not Bhakti verily selfless love? Is not quality of true Bhakti understood only through Guru's grace and his association (satsang)? There are people who construe mere intellectual knowledge of Jnana as the perfect state! Many, by merely reading books go about declaring 'all is one', lead indisciplined life and take this to be the path of Jnana! Many even mistake those who do not have physical cleanliness, wear dirty clothes, do not do any kind of work but remain lazy and still like a sack of rice as dispassionate!

In such a confused state, only a genuine spiritual Master's grace will give one clarity on true Bhakti, Jnana and dispassion. Further the thirst for attaining that Bhakti is possible only through Guru's grace.

Guru's grace will verily bestow prema bhakti, pure Jnana and dispassion that makes a man perfect.

During the time of Krishna Avatar, during the Lord's Lila of Akasura destruction, the Gopas mistook Akasura in the form of a python to be a hill in the shape of a python and lost their lives. Lord Krishna placed His holy palm on their heads and saved them from that poison. However, a Guru would place his holy palm of grace on the immature disciple's heart, remove the poison called worldly matters, transform him into one of perfect wisdom and dispassion and reach him to God.

Creating inner transformation in his disciple is verily Guru's grace. True Grace of the Guru is when he causes an inner transformation in the disciple



Bliss of Bhajan - The pinnacle of bliss

- Sri MK Ramanujam

All of us perform some kind of devotional activities. During this process, we also sometimes pray to God for redress of our routine mundane problems. There are also some people who pray only when they have some issues. Sometimes when these issues do not get sorted out after the prayers, we start wondering whether God really exists or we start maligning God himself. This is our reality today.

However when we read or listen to the discourse on the life history of great devotees like Meera, we feel distressed and our eyes get filled with tears. We become emotional. After a while when we come back to our normal state, we start wondering as to whether such stories are real or whether someone has imagined all this to make the story poignant. What is the reason for these doubts? We find it difficult to believe that someone could be so devoted even in the face of successive turmoil in life. We are neither able to believe or disbelieve such occurrences.

I was reading a book one day about drug and liquor addicts. Initially these addicts start such things casually, which gives them a 'high'. They then tend to increase on this. After some time these habits start affecting their health seriously.



Many organs of their bodies get damaged. Doctors give them serious warnings about their health but they ignore it completely. If they are prevented from procuring the liquor or drugs, they somehow try to overcome all that and continue with the habit. Even if they don't have money to buy the liquor or drugs, they are prepared to do shameful activities to earn that money. The liquor or drugs is not a vitamin tonic which enhances the health but on the contrary is absolutely harmful to the body. But to get the 'high' it offers, they tend to continue with it.

Coming back to the life of devotees like Meera, they do not worship God for obtaining any earthly pleasures or for redress of any mundane problems. They do not perform devotion for obtaining any spiritual powers or even liberation. Then why are they so devoted to God? It is because they become blissful when they sing the praises of the Lord. This bliss of bhajan cannot be described or understood by us. It is equivalent to the bliss of liberation itself. Before this bliss that Meera enjoyed, everything else is trivial. This is the reality. In our cases, our selfishness, desires and self-prestige stand in the way of perceiving the greatness of the Lord and enjoying his grace completely.

A Tale for Children

Time and Again

In a Gurukul called “Inimai Nilayam”, there lived a Guru, who was an epitome of love. What a rarity would that be when compassion and wisdom come together as one form? That is how the Guru was!

People were drawn to Him as His messages, filled with solace, created a revival in everyone’s lives. He showered love on all of them. One amongst them called Indran, repeatedly kept narrating the same incident that happened in his life, with great sorrow. Earlier, he used to be a joyous person with a smiling face; But now, he turned out to be like this. The Guru kept consoling him, patiently waiting for him to stop this on his own. However, there was no sign of change in him!

The next day, when Indran arrived, the Guru shared a humorous incident with everyone assembled there. That humour, the way He narrated, His mimicking style - all of these made everyone laugh their hearts out.

After a few seconds, when the Guru repeated the same funny story, only a few laughed. Once again the Guru enacted that same funny incident. But now, no one laughed!

At once, the Guru looked at Indran and said, “Listening to a same joke time and again does not bring out laughter. Then, why do you ponder over the same incident again and again and dwell in sorrow?”

The Guru’s words or His tapas? Not sure, but it gently touched Indran’s heart. A smile appeared on Indran’s face once again.

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SANSKRIT WORD OF THE MONTH

Sri Vishnupriya

The word “Mruga” is well known in Tamil language also, where the meaning of the word is “animal”. But in Sanskrit, “Mruga” is also a causative name as the verb Mruga means “ Go in search of”. In a forest , a hunter or even other animals go in search of other animals and hunt them. The phrase “ Mrugyathe ithi mrugaha”, amply illustrates this. i.e.”that which is searched for is “Mruga”. Similarly, the search itself is called “Maarganam” which is the origin of the word “Marg”(Way). Suppose we are embarking on a search for something, the path which we follow is called “Margam”. Over a period of years, Margam has synonymous with all paths/roads.

In Poet Kalidasa’s iconic Sanskrit work “Kumara Sambhava”, Goddess Parvathy observes severe penance to attain Lord Shiva as her husband. Then Lord Shiva appears in disguise in front of her and says “ Aren’t you a diamond? Has a diamond ever gone in search of its owner? The owner always comes in search of his valuable diamond. So why are you observing this severe penance?? “na ratnam anvishyathi, mrugyathe hi tat” is the phrase used to convey this.



Here we can see that the word “Mrugyathe” has been used with the meaning “go in search of”.

Generally, the word “mrugam” means animal, but the word “Mruga” is always associated with deer. The usage “Mrugakshi” conveys the meaning “the one who has eyes like deer (doe eyed).”

The word “Mruganga” means the moon. The moon is so called because if you see the moon, there is an outline or mark of a deer on it. The word “Angk” means “mark”. So the word “Mrigaank” translates to “that with the mark of a deer”.

Another word which is closely associated with the word “Mruga” is Mruganaabhi, which means “Kasthuri”. Kasthuri is the fragrance emanating from the navel of the deer (Nabhi meaning navel). It is also called “Mrugamadha”. It is with this kasthuri that we adorn Bhagawan’s forehead. In the abhang starting with “Vadana suhasya rasaala” there is a line “Mruganabhi rekhila tila” which translates to “Rama you are adorned with Kasthuri on your forehead”. Similarly, in the 15th Ashtapadhi, there is a verse “Mrugamadha Thilakam, Likhathi sa Pulakam”.

Now we will see the word “Mrugathrishna”. This word means Mirage. The origin of the name can probably be attributed to the fact that when animals go in search of water to distant places or deserts, often they spot water from a distance. But when they finally reach the place, they find that there is no water there and it was only an optical illusion. Here Mruga means animal and Trishna means “Thirst”. Hence the word “Mrugathrishna”. When Mahatmas talk about this material world, they often quote the example of “Mirage”. When seen from far, the materialistic world looks very real but in reality it is only “Maya” or Illusion.

Last in this list is the word “Mrugasheersha”. Isn’t there a birth star by the name of “Mrugasheerha”? It is said that the shape of the star resembles the head of an animal. That is why it came to be known as “Mrugasheersha” star. Thus there are several meanings to the word “Mruga”.

Snippets



We Loved To Read

Padma Bhushan Dr.Nagaswamy reveals Tirukkural's Greatness

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www.pgurus.com

So far Tirukkural, an outstanding Tamizh work of great depth and the highest brevity, has been ignorantly thought of as a “mere” collection of unordered, almost random, aphoristic verses. In fact, it is akin to Tolkappiyam (the oldest extant Tamizh text) in following the style of many ancient Vedic texts; that is, the form of Sutrās (Venbās).

Kural is the essence of the four Vedas (3); fits the four Purusharthas (as per Dharma Śāstras) in three arthas, divisions (19); the truth that is in the Vedas is in the Kural given by the incarnation of Brahma himself (28) – cf. the King Ukiraperu Vazhuti as well made the same comparison writes Dr Nagaswamy

TAMIZH UPANISHAD: Now, Dr Nagaswamy has shown unequivocally that the Sutra style used in the composition is not the only similarity to the Vedic texts. Its entire structure, the order in which it deals with the various subject matters, is also thoroughly in accord with the Hindu Veda-Agamic tradition. To have missed this beautiful structure for so long is the greatest disservice done to the work and Tamizh language by the self-proclaimed aficionados of one of the foundational languages of Bharatiya civilisation (Samskriti). Perhaps these fanatics saw only their own poorly formed intellect in it, which is a random mess indeed.

In fact, verse 30 by Bharatam Padiya Perundevanar in Tiruvalluva Malai proclaims that Kural, being well above the rest of the literature, is on par with only the ancient Vedas, Mahabharatam, Ramayanam and Manu Dharma Śastra (முப்பாற்கு பாரதஞ்சீ ராம கதைமனுப் பண்டைமறை நேர்வன).

SELF-HATE MOVEMENT: The source for this confusion is the ignorance of these pseudo-intellecets of many of the traditional commentaries available on the text which acknowledge the close kinship with the Vedic Śastraic texts. (கி.வா. ஜகந்நாதன் 2004) The primary reason being a wanted ignorance of Sanskrit texts and the unwarranted reliance on shallow translations and commentaries of Christian missionaries, such as G U Pope. The ridiculousness of relying on a non-native student of the language for understanding one's own mother tongue shows the psychological state of the so-called "self-respect movement" in Tamizh Nadu. To quote a few of the couplets from the traditional view as expressed in a eulogy on Tirukkural written by a collection of authors from great antiquity (obviously ignored by the "self-hate movement"):

செய்யா மொழிக்கும் திருவள் ஞுவர்மொழிந்த
பொய்யா மொழிக்கும் பொருள் ஒன்றே
~ வெள்ளி வீதியார், திருவள்ளுவமாலை (23)

(Apaureshya Vedas and Tiruvalluvar's Kural are the same)

ஓதற் கெளிதாய் உணர்தற் கரிதாகி
வேதப் பொருளாய் மிகவிளங்கித்
~ மாங்குடி மருதனார், திருவள்ளுவமாலை (24)

(An exemplary essence of the Vedas, the Kural, is effortless to recite but great in depth)

ஆரியமும் செந்தமிழும் ஆராய்ந் திதனினிது
சீரிய தென்றொன்றைச் செப்பரிதால் – ஆரியம்
வேதம் உடைத்துத் தமிழ்திரு வள்ளுவனார்
ஓது குறட்பா உடைத்து.
~ வண்ணக்கஞ் சாத்தனார் (43)

(The learned should not compare Tamizh and Sanskrit and claim superiority or inferiority for one over the other as Sanskrit has Vedas and Tamizh has Tirukkural)

Tiruvalluvamalai verses (numbers in parentheses): Kural is the essence of the four Vedas (3); fits the four Purusharthas (as per Dharma Śāstras) in three arthas, divisions (19); the truth that is in the Vedas is in the Kural given by the incarnation of Brahma himself (28) – cf. the King Ukiraperu Vazhuti as well made the same comparison writes Dr Nagaswamy (Nagaswamy 2017: 111); which is more beautiful, the earliest text of Vedas or Kural which captures all their essence? (32); since ancient text of Vedas are difficult to understand Kural distils their essence for universal comprehension (33); since the highest truth of Vedas are contained in Kural the world is kept in the righteous path (37); whatever is fit for Manu and the rest of the Dharma Sastras alone is included by Tiruvalluva Nayannar (38); Kural is a Tamizh commentary on the essence of Vedas (42); the gist of all the Vedas and the six Darśanas are in the Kural (44).

The Kural starting with Akśaram corresponds with the Dr Nagaswamy's identified structure of Tirukkural. It signifies the start of Brahmaçarium (the phase of studentship in one's life) which usually starts on the Vijayadasami Day even today, with the ritual of the child sat on the lap of the father and writing the first alphabet of their respective Indic languages (अ – अ – A).

Please click the link below for the full article

<https://www.pgurus.com/padma-bhushan-dr-nagaswamy-reveals-tirukkurals-greatness/>

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