

Sri Hari:

Madhura Murali

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

DECEMBER 2017





MADHURA GEETHAM

Raga: Lathangi

Tala: Jampa

Pallavi

oru noDi nin tiruvaDi nizhalil ninDriDa
kODi piravigaL puNyam veNDum - venkaTavA

Anupallavi

aDi mUnDru anDru valiya vandhu kETTU - oru
noDiyil Ongi ulagaLandha utthamanE (oru)

Charanam

aDi klzh pugalinDri amarndu pugundu
padiyAgi pavazha vAy kaNDAr AzhvArE
maDi mldu Eri amarndAn prahIAdanE
vaDivazhagA nambiyE unnaiyE saraN pugundEn (oru)



Madhura Smaranam

My Guru As I See Him

DR A BHAGYANATHAN

PERSONAL SECRETARY TO SRI SRI SWAMIJI

Sri Swamiji's thoughts are ever fixed [dhyana] on Lord Sri Venkatesa, the seven hills, Ananda Vimanam [canopy over the main Sanctum Sanctorum] Lord Varaha and the holy waters of Swami Pushkarini [holy pond within the Tirumala temple precincts].

In his dhyana Sri Swamiji walks up the holy hill of Tirumala even as he keeps singing holy hymns [Namakirtan] moved by the enchanting hills; bathing in Swami Pushkarini with great joy he goes and has darshan of Lord Bhoovaraha: then, passing the divine guards Jaya and Vijaya at the entrance of the main Sanctum Sanctorum Sri Swamiji stands on the Kulasekara step and worships the Lord even as he recalls the words of Kulasekara azhwar 'would I not remain in Thy presence as the stair and enjoy the sight of Thy red lips' and yearns to occupy that position of the Azhwar.

While worshipping the Lord in this manner, in his dhyana [meditation], Sri Swamiji enjoys bliss as he pictures himself enjoying Ananda Vimana even as he bathes in Swami Pushkarini filled up to the brim by heavy rains and the tender shoots and flowers of Tirumala floating on it. While thus bathing in Swami Pushkarini he also pictures himself holding the little form of Sri Sundara Srinivasan on his head and taking several dips. Looking at Sri Sundara Srinivasan he

says 'I have not made the trip to Tirumala but I will send you there with someone. You can go with him and take holy dip in Swami Pushkarini.' But little Lord Sri Sundara Srinivasan will not desire that. Sri Swamiji also hesitates sending Him with someone else, as he fears his safe return to him.

Recently, Sri Swamiji was in Bhagavata Bhavanam chanting Nama. Outside it was raining heavily. At once Sri Swamiji's mind was filled with thoughts of Lord Venkatesa and Swami Pushkarini. He at once went to Narayana Saras [the pond adjacent to our Ashram Sri Kalyana Srinivasa temple]. As pictured by Sri Swamiji in his dhyana the pond was overflowing with water. Several flowers and tender shoots floating on it was sheer aesthetic beauty! To Sri Swamiji it was not Narayana saras in Madhurapuri but verily Swami Pushkarini spread out before him. Narayana Saras was to him Swami Pushkarini. He at once stepped into it and enjoyed bliss bathing in it.

In the evening when Sri Swamiji came to Sri Premika Varadan's sannidhi he found Sri Sundara Srinivasan with a grim face.

Sri Sundara Srinivasan was angry with Sri Swamiji! Sri Swamiji at once realized the reason behind it. 'O My! Have I not always pictured holding Him on my head while bathing in Swami Pushkarnini! But this morning I have had my bath in it without Him. That has made Him angry.' Waiting restlessly for day to dawn, Sri Swamiji, as soon as it dawned, taking Sri Sundara Srinivasa with him went to Narayana Saras which to him was verily Swami Pushkarini. Holding the Lord on his head Sri Swamiji bathed in those waters. Only then did the face of the Lord bloom with joy!

Then Sri Swamiji sat in a corner of the pond's bank to do his daily religious ritual. A stone mantap designed long back was in the corner. A slight movement of his eyes was enough for his devotees to arrange everything quickly. Some devotees moved the stone mantap from the corner and cleaned it with water. Painting it with red paste, garland of mango leaves was tied to it. Soon the mantap was decorated beautifully. Sri Sundara Srinivasan sat in it. Lamp of tinai [a kind of millet] was lit. Further, Sri Swamiji, accompanied by fan and other paraphernalia, went around the pond singing divine hymns [Namakirtan]. Sri Sundara Srinivasan's joy that day is beyond all verbal description. Though not planned beforehand such a wonderful event took place in the most sattvic way. The way Lord Sri Sundara Srinivasan was celebrated gave immense joy to Sri Swamiji.

Many utsavs are well planned and celebrated here. Yet, the beauty of the Lord fulfilling at once such exceptional utsavs arising suddenly in Sri Swamiji is unparalleled! Is there a greater joy for us than experiencing these?

Answers and Beyond

MEDITATION - DOES IT RELY ON GOD'S GRACE OR SELF-EFFORT?



The answer to this question depends on one's attitude towards meditation. Let us illustrate it with an example. There are two kinds of employers - one kind that hires a qualified candidate, confident that the candidate can be trained successfully utilizing their own expertise and experience. The second kind of employer hires a qualified candidate so the candidate can be empowered with all the responsibilities right away.

The attitude towards meditation is similar to the above scenario. While meditating on Krishna, relying on one's own self to have the alluring form of Krishna control the mind is deemed as self-effort. On the other hand, entrusting Krishna with the responsibility to control the mind during meditation is deemed as relying on god's grace.

Touching memories

SRI SWAMIJI

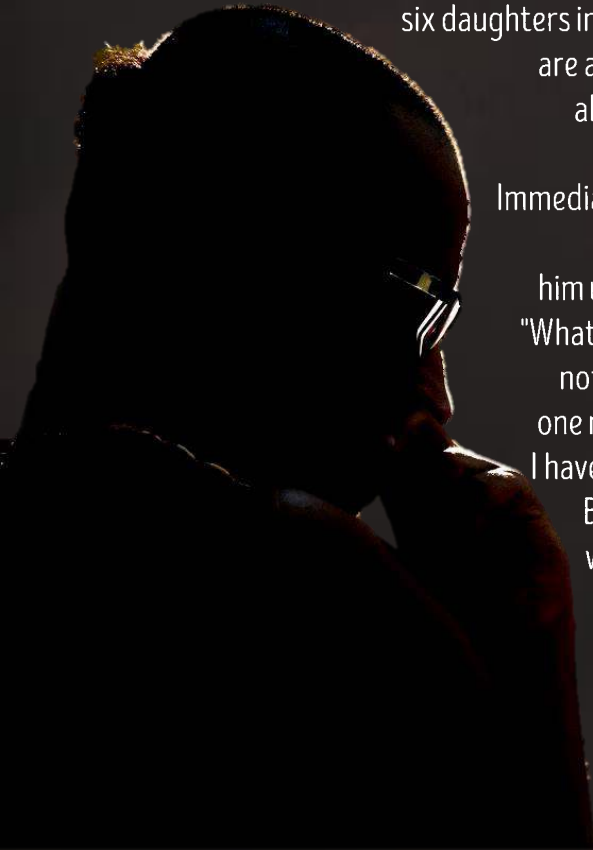
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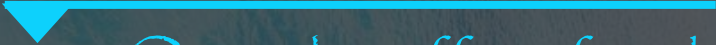
There was a devotee called Subramanyam who lived at Tirunelveli. His family had a coffee shop called 'Ambika' and hence people used to fondly call him as 'Ambika coffee mama'. He used to read Srimad Bhagavatham regularly after he came to Satsang. Once he attended our Bhagavatha Saptaham at Guruvayoor. During that time, we were waiting to have Sriveli darshan (Lord Krishna's procession on elephant) at the temple.

Then I told him, "Subramanyam, you have obtained a good human birth. You have given your six daughters in marriage in a nice manner. You are attending satsang regularly and also recite Srimad Bhagavatham.

Let this birth be your last one." Immediately he started crying and held my legs together. I slowly lifted him up and consoled him and asked, "What's the matter?". He replied, "I do not desire salvation. I wish to have one more birth. In the present birth, I have come to you at a very late age. But in my next birth, I wish to be with you from childhood itself!".

I was moved by his love for me.





One who offers food is a giver of life

It was the end of the Mahabharatha war. The Kauravas perished and Dharma prevailed. Dharmaputra was crowned as the King and as desired by him, a grand Ashwametha Yagna had been organised. Kings from many countries had assembled. Pandavas gave away alms generously to people who were poor and desolate. All those who attended the yagna unanimously praised the yagna and said they had never seen one performed in that manner.

Suddenly, from somewhere a voice spoke and said, 'Did you all think that you have performed the yagna in a grand manner. Not at all'. Everyone was astonished to hear someone speak negatively and wondered who it was.

When everyone turned to see where the voice came from, they found a mongoose which said, 'In Kurukshetra, a pious man donated a kilo of flour to me. This Ashwametha yagna performed with all of you together from many Kingdoms is nothing before this offering. You are all talking as though you had done a great yagna?'. Saying this the mongoose laughed out loud.

Many Kings took their swords out and were about to kill the mongoose as they thought it was a malicious plan. Seeing this, Dharmaputra jumped from his throne and asked everyone to stop and bent in front of the mongoose to prevent the swords from touching it. He asked the mongoose, 'please tell me how the offering of the flour is greater than this Ashwametha yagna?'.

Everyone's eyes were on the mongoose as they were waiting for its answer. Only then, they realised the uniqueness of that mongoose. Half its body dazzled like gold and the other half was the usual ash colour of a mongoose. The mongoose responded, 'In Kurukshetra, prior to the beginning of the Bharatha war, there lived a poor old man who observed a vrata every day along with his wife, son and daughter-in-law'. Everyone assembled in the palace wondered what that vrata was. The mongoose continued, 'Every day, the old man and his family would collect grains that had dropped on ground and would cook them in the afternoon and share the food equally amongst them. On some days, they would not get any grains and would go hungry that day. The next day again, they would collect grains from the ground and with whatever they collected, they would cook and share the meal amongst them. They had been observing this vrata of eating only once a day for many many years'.

One of Dharmaputra's friends looked at the mongoose and mockingly said, 'Is that all?'. The mongoose smiled at him and continued, 'Once, they did not get any food for several days. They found some corn one day after toiling in sun for long. They ground the corn into flour and cooked it and sat down to eat it in the afternoon. At that time, a hearing impaired poor man approached them for food as he was very hungry.

Feeling very happy about his arrival at the right time, the old man welcomed him and asked him to sit down and offered his food to him. The poor man ate it hurriedly and looked at them

affectionately. Seeing this, his wife offered her share also to him. The old man said, 'my beloved! As such you are very lean and thin as you have not eaten for so many days. Do I have to see you remaining hungry too?'. With a pleasant face, the lady told the old man not to worry. The poor man took the lady's share and ate it all. After eating, he looked around for more food. The son of the old man offered his share also to him which the poor man started to eat. The old man became sad and said, 'Elders can put up with hunger but you are young and how will you manage the pains of hunger?'. The son said smilingly, 'it is my duty to do what my father did'. By then, the poor man had finished eating and looked around. The daughter-in-law of the house came and offered her share also in his leaf. The old man was bewildered and said, 'what have you done? Now you are also going to remain hungry', to which she said that it was her duty to follow what her husband did. The poor man ate the food offered by the daughter-in-law also. When he finished eating, his face was filled with contentment and happiness. He blessed all of them by saying, 'all of you will live long and you will all go to heaven' and left their house.

The mongoose said, 'the smell of that food made my nose shine like gold. When I rolled on the spilt flour, one side of my body became gold. I came here thinking that the other half of my body would also become gold. But, it did not turn gold. So, in my view, that offering of the food by the old man and his family was greater than this Ashwametha yagna'.

Performing Ashwametha yagna, after waging a successful war is no comparison to the pure gold heart of poor people who offer food to others when they themselves are hungry. By offering food, they give life to those who are hungry.

LET US CHANT THE DIVINE NAME!

- DR A BHAGYANATHAN



Namadwaars have been inaugurated in Melbourne, Australia and Atlanta, United States of America, on the 8th November 2017, with the blessings of Sri Swamiji. The same day a Namadwaar was opened at Periyakulam by the holy hands of Sri Swamiji. The benedictory address by Sri Swamiji that was videotaped and played at the inauguration of Melbourne Namadwaar is shared below:

“Worship of the Divine should be simple and for all people irrespective of country and culture. And that worship should not be the fruit of our imagination. It should be in accordance with scriptural injunctions. Only that has the Lord’s support. Well, what then can be a general way of worship that is applicable to all?

Our religion that lays down strict regulations has spoken in detail and clearly, in our holy texts (Puras), about the present age we are in now. Those who have not done an in-depth study of our Puranas cannot comprehend this.

We have, from the elders in the family, heard about our lifestyle in earlier days. Our ancestors lived in a village in old model houses. A river in full flow ran across the village. Agriculture was the main stay. Vegetables were in abundance. It was an uncompetitive, simple life. People did not move out of the village for nearly a hundred generations. Such was the lifestyle. They had no reason to step out of their village. Even marriage alliance was between families within surrounding villages.

We are aware of our lifestyle in this age. The first reason for this is competition. Secondly, desire!

In days past needs were little; so were desires. It was not an open society. There were lots of restrictions. In today's world, competition and desire have multiplied. It has become an open society. We are therefore confused and struggle to know our needs. While rejecting something as unnecessary we wonder if we have taken the right step. While our lifestyle is like this how can a man devote some time for worship of the Lord? What path can he follow?

A man bereft of feelings is akin to a robot. To be wholly human one must share some time of his life with his parents, siblings, friends and relatives. Sharing does not pertain to his wealth but his love and moral support. He has responsibilities towards his family, society, office and many others. Amidst all these he must relax a little, engage in entertainment, enjoy art. Man's life becomes joyless without art. Only the joy of art keeps man happy without turning him into a machine.

When we take a walk along the seashore in the evening or when we climb up a mountain or walk through a wooded area we feel 'how quiet and peaceful this place is'. If merely looking at a quiet place outside can give us peace of mind, what then to speak of our mind itself being quiet! How to bring such peace in our mind? For this the Lord has to reside in our mind. We should always hold Lord Krishna in our mind.

Well, one may question 'Why worship Lord Krishna? Why meditate on Lord Krishna? Why sing kirtans on Lord Krishna? Why listen to Krishna's stories? Why chant the Names of Krishna?'

Today, in our lifetime, we find various kinds of sorrows, desires, race, envy, quarrels, etc. around us in the world. We certainly are affected by each and everything. Anything pleasant makes us happy and unhappy events give us sorrow. On the other hand, is abhorrence. This is how we lead our lives. We are affected by trivial matters. The moment we hear some criticism against us we at once lose fervour. Despite our desire to come out of it we fail. When our bank balance reduces even a little it makes us sad. When there is a difference of opinion over a subject between us and another and the other man's word comes true, our ego, receiving a severe beating, lifts its hood.

However, there is one who is unperturbed by any happening. But that is not the result of a heartless attitude but is verily blissful state! Whatever happens around him, even when something happens to him, he remains unaffected. The Bliss within hides all that is happening around him. Thus, whatever happens he pushes it aside as unconnected to him and remains in bliss. Even as we hear about such a one we do feel 'how wonderful it would be if I could be like this'. If there is such a one, and we meditate on him and chant his name and keep singing his praises we shall certainly be transformed into his state. Our Lord Krishna is such a One.

As long as He lived in Vrindavan He showered Bhakti on all. From the little cowherds to Gopis He showed 'prema' which is selfless and pure love. Next, when He moved to Mathura and then to Dwaraka He performed karma yoga through kingdom administration and conducting Mahabharata war. When at last His Yadava clan was destroyed He remained unaffected as a witness like a Jnani.

Mahans have prescribed chanting this great Lord's Name as the simple way for this Age. Some problems can be pinpointed in the conduct of the paths of dhyana, karma, yoga, puja, etc. But in Nama (chanting the Divine Names) alone, no fault can be found. This is because the Lord Himself declares 'even if chanted wrongly I accept it'! If pujas are not done as prescribed one has to face dire consequences. Yoga done wrongly will lead to mental disability. If we do not do dhyana properly we will fall asleep. Lethargy (tamas) would grow. The path of karma we hardly comprehend. Nama is the only path that gives the fruit in spite of any defect in us. If anyone questions 'You chant so much Nama, are you really a good person?' we can boldly respond 'I am not a good person. That is why I chant Nama; because I am fit for this. I am eligible only to chant Nama. Even a person like me can chant Nama. Ajamila also chanted, didn't he?' The glory of Nama is to always keep us humble and lead us on a simple yet scripture-supported path.

You may wonder 'My problem is huge, and my prayers are vast. But they are asking me to chant Nama. Will this Nama save me from

huge problems?' Yes, it has to be so - Nama is simple to that extent! But wonder of wonders Nama bestows great fruit. That is its greatness! A tiny atom bomb can destroy the whole world. Nama would suffice to break our sins to pieces and bestow peace and jnana on us. Wherever we may go, whatever surroundings we may live in, whatever culture we may be in, it would do not to forget one thing - and that is - Mahamantra! This Mahamantra is very beautiful. This Nama will be the only succour to future generations.

We are living in the interim period. Our ancestors had spent their lives in a way and the lives of those who are going to come after us is going to be entirely different. They are going to face an entirely different world. They are going to be born in it and live in it. How to create thought of the Lord in them? Today, whether we are able to conceive the glory of Nama or not, those of future generations will certainly comprehend that this is their refuge.

My longstanding dream has been to establish Prayer centers for the sake of Nama. There should be no rituals or rites for this. There should be no restriction. No code of dress. No compulsion to renounce anything. There is nothing new to follow. Simple, easy Nama without anything else. All can come to this Prayer Center.

Prayer should not be complicated. Just think of your prayer and chant the Name. The Name is powerful. The Name is nothing but God. Even as we chant this Name, Krishna will be by our side. We should begin to perceive that Lord in everything and everyone. Perceive Krishna in a cat that runs around in the house; even in an ant perceive Krishna. Even if anyone abuses you accept it with a smile as it is verily Krishna who is abusing you through him. If someone heaps praises on you deem it as Krishna's blessings on you through him. Thus, deem God to be the reason behind all the happenings in the world - be it an act of an individual or that of the society. There is nothing but God. When we reach the state of realizing that all are verily God, all happenings are verily God, we shall easily attain the Advaitic state. Just Nama alone will lead to that Jivan Mukti state.

Life in our body comes only through a single opening. When it leaves the body it goes through a single opening. In the same way, “Namadwaar” is a single opening (door) to attain God. Only through this way we have to attain God. Through no other path can all attain God this easily. Fruit cannot be attained even if effort is taken through any other path. Failure is not due to any defect in the path. But most of us have, long back, lost the capability to follow those paths. We fail to realize and refuse to accept this.

Namadwaars have been established in several places in Tamil Nadu. There is a Namadwaar in Karnataka. Big Namadwaars are in the offing in Madurai, Kovilpatti, Aruppukottai, Udumalpettai. There are Namadwaars in Singapore, Malaysia, Sydney and Melbourne in Australia, Houston and Atlanta in the United States of America. Each and every devotee has offered his everything - body, mind and soul - to the creation of Namadwaar in Sydney. Any work done casually would end up as such. When done as tapas it will stand for all time to come. It is with such tapas that Sydney Namadwaar was created. This year on November 8, Namadwaars were established in Melbourne and Atlanta. My desire is establishment of a school in Melbourne for Gopa Kuteeram classes.

As Nama is chanted in a place the cosmos there is transformed. We are not able to perceive this. Once, during my visit to Thanjavur a man invited me to his home. As soon as I entered a room there I saw a white Krishna in the center. When I informed the hosts about this they were surprised. This was because some 40-50 years earlier an old Iyengar lady who lived there had had a white Krishna and done bhajan everyday! Someone else had purchased that house now. People who live there now do not possess devotion of that kind. Yet, if even after 40 years I could perceive that Krishna it is the result of that old lady's bhajan sannidhya (divine presence). Likewise, if we keep chanting Nama in Namadwaar, Divine Presence is created. There is a simple way to perceive that Presence. A person in great difficulty stepping into the Namadwaar would at once feel peace of mind (shanti). That peace of mind is the basis for sannidhya (Divine Presence). My prayers to the Lord to keep this Namadwaar - which shows theolve in the worship of the Lord - eternally.

[On July 26th, Sri Swamiji conducted a satsang with the devotees from the Gulf. Here's one lofty conversation from that! In last issue, we relished the answer given by Sri Swamiji, for a question raised by a devotee regarding service to Sathguru. Let us see the concluding part of that answer in this issue.]

The question was, "While doing a service, the thought that "I'm only doing this service", arises simultaneously! Is it correct to do the service with such thoughts? Or discontinue the service itself!"

Sri Swamiji answered it beautifully, saying, "The service should not be given up for any reason. What else will you do, if you don't engage in the service? You might end up watching movies or television. So, regardless of your ego...JUST DO IT. Do the service without a break" Thus Sri Swamiji very aptly answered the question.

A Divine Dialogue - MK RAMANUJAM

And, looking at that devotee who asked the question, Sri Swamiji opened His lotus lips to answer it from a unique perspective. The devotee's heart too gently blossomed on hearing the reply.

Sri Swamiji continued (with a winsome smile that touches the heart), "I feel there is another way of looking at it. When would a person get the egoistic thought of I'm doing this? Will it come while doing any mundane task? Imagine, we are doing a very ordinary task, for example, travelling in a bus somewhere. Will the ego rise up from this simple task? The ego comes in, only when we think to ourselves, that we are doing something that is rare and extra ordinary. (Sri Swamiji paused briefly, while everyone, with rapt attention, was anticipating the divine words from Sri Swamiji, just like how the homa bird anticipates the rain)

To serve a Mahatma or a Sathguru is indeed a rare fortune. The fortune of serving a true Sathguru, a great Mahatma, who is in the service of Govinda, is obtained as the result of the merits accrued over millions of births. Hence, the fact that the service to Guru is rare, great and wondrous is indeed true!

Ego doesn't show up with mundane tasks. Ego rises when we do something extraordinary, right? So, what I feel is, when one gets ego in Guru Kainkarya, it means that he considers even that small service to Guru as something very big, isn't it? You have realized this rare point! That's the reason the ego comes in!! Let aside the ego, never give up the fortune of serving the Guru for any reason!! The Seva to the Guru itself will take care of the ego in due course!!

How would the state of that devotee be on hearing this! She thought, Sathgurunathar is the epitome of compassion, who does not look at our mistakes. Aho Bhagyam! Aho Bhagyam!! Wiping the tears that welled up in her eyes with a handcloth, she muttered the Mahamantra.

A beautiful and a deep silence prevailed. After few seconds, on hearing another devotee saying "Radhe Radhe Swamiji, Sri Swamiji turned towards him. "I have a question"... the devotee hesitated. But as Sri Swamiji encouraged him, saying, "Ask without hesitation", he continued, "We experience in this birth, the results of our actions done in our earlier births! How do we determine which karma of our earlier births are we experiencing now. Sri Swamiji, with the same winsome smile, posed a question. "for that you have to answer one question of mine first! Egg came first or chicken?" Everyone bursted out laughing. Then, Sri Swamiji gave a beautiful answer...

(...contd)

BRAKE

(...CONTD)

A TALE FOR CHILDREN

(The fact that his son Srivatsan was by nature psychologically mature, gave great joy to Professor Meganathan. He started recording in a diary, his son's perspective of routine life happenings. Here is a very surprising note from his notes.)

October 18-Deepavali

Srivatsan and I were returning from the bazaar.

It was raining heavily! There was a traffic jam too! The car we were travelling in was crawling along like a snail. Suddenly a young lad came in front and the driver had to brake suddenly. After my experience with Srivatsan last month, my habit of criticising others had reduced. I looked at the lad who came in front of the car. I wasn't angry with the driver either. Finally we reached the highway. Thank God! Only now the car started speeding by, rather than crawling by like a bullock cart. I looked at Srivatsan. I know that look!! I saw him lost in deep thought.

I softly called out to him, "Srivatsa! What are you thinking about?"

“Dad! Why do you think a car has a brake?”

I replied, “To stop the car...hmm...to control the speed.”

Srivatsan replied, “That’s true. What I think is that the main intention of the brake is that the car must go fast, isn’t it!”

“Srivatsa! What are you saying?”

“Think about it! If there wasn’t a brake, would we dare to go at such speed? Don’t we wish to drive fast because of the secure feeling we have from knowing that the brake is there? Whenever you, my teachers or some friends have questioned me about some of the attempts I make or things I do, I have considered them as obstacles on my path of progress. But, now I understand, only because all of you question me about my decisions and actions, I am able to move fast in my path of progress. If there wasn’t such a brake, I would have gone astray on some backward path or fallen in some deep pit wouldn’t I? The reassurance that you are observing me and questioning me now and then is only the reason that I am able to proceed peacefully in my path of progress. From now on, when you ask me, “Why are you doing this? I will not think that you are controlling me, instead I will truly accept it gratefully.”

“Similar to how the brake is a reason for the car to move fast, so also I will not look at the questions you ask as an obstacle but as a stepping stone. Isn’t that right dad!”

I was lost for words.

I only remember happily nodding my head.

SANSKRIT WORD OF THE MONTH |

GURU

‘गुरु’

- SRI VISHNUPRIYA

There are hardly any people in this world who has not heard of or who is not aware of the word “Guru”. One can even say that there would not be anyone who does not have a Guru. Even those who may not have a spiritual Guru may have a Guru in his materialistic existence because it is virtually impossible to learn anything without the guidance of a Guru or a teacher. That is the most important aspect of a Guru.

The word “Guru” is normally associated with “Teacher”, but are you aware of what it really means?? “Guru” means very big, huge, heavy, important, respectable etc. Maybe, that is precisely why, we call the person who fits all the above adjectives a “Guru”.

As mentioned earlier, “Guru” means, very big, important. Let us see a few verses from Srimad Bhagavatham which corresponds to this meaning of “Guru”. In Srimad Bhagavatham, Sri Suka encompasses the entire Ramayana in a single Verse.

“Gurvarthe Thyakthraajyo vyachaata anuvanam... is a verse in the Ninth Canto. The verse begins with Gurvarthe...meaning.. Guru arthe Thyakthraajyo”...which translates into “Giving up the Kingdom for his Guru, Dasharatha who is also his father”. Or it can be interpreted as He gave up his kingdom for “Truth” (Sathya.. which is very important (another meaning of “Guru”). Thus we can conclude that “Guru” also means “very important”.

We also said that “Guru” means “heavy”. There is a power (one of the Eight yogic powers or Ashta Sidhis) called “Garima”. A person possessing this power can will himself to become heavy. The word “Garima” owes its origin to the word Guru.

Similarly in Dhruva Charitra, when Narada advises Dhruva to do penance, he says, “ Abhidhyayet Manasaa Guruna Kurum”, which means “Meditate with a heavy, courageous mind “ on Bhagwan”.

In Sanskrit Grammar, the word ‘Guru’ is associated with a different meaning. Just as there are “Long” and “Short” vowels in English, there are Long and Short alphabets in Sanskrit too.. “Guru” corresponds to the long vowel. Correct pronunciation of short and long vowels assumes importance while reciting verses in their intended metre (“Chandas”).

Let us see one more meaning of the word “Guru”. Among the planets, JUPITER is known as “Brihaspati”. Brihaspati is also the Guru of Devas. Perhaps, Brihaspati has been so named to indicate that it is the heaviest planet. That is also why Thursday is also known as “Guruvasaram”, auspicious for Brihaspati.

Thus the word Guru which has numerous meanings is also the source for equally important words such “Gurukulam, Gurushushrusha, Guru Dakshina which are familiar to us.

Once a very busy professional who had a lovely little girl child brought work home and was busy tapping into his laptop. This little girl came and started pestering the father to play with her. The father was busy. He told his daughter to find something else to play with and the daughter asked the father, “Why don’t you give me something to play with?” He was frantic. He looked around. There was a newspaper which had this big world map. The father quickly took that page, tore it into ten pieces, gave it to his daughter and said, “Hey! You somehow put this world map into order. Paste it and bring it to me. Father will play with you.” He was hoping that it would engage his daughter for at least a couple of hours because she was hardly in the first grade. To his utter surprise, the daughter came back with a perfectly ordered world map. The world map was in perfect order. She held it up to the father and said, “Father! Have I done it right?” The father was surprised. He said, “How did you know about the world map?” The daughter said, “What world map are you talking about Papa?” And then, she turned it and showed a small photo of a human being. There was a person well-dressed. She said, “I merely put this person in order and the reverse of the page was the world map. It automatically came into order”. The father understood-If you put the human being which is me in order, the world will find it’s own order.



If you put
the human being
which is me in order,
the world will find
its own order

- M.K. ஸ்ரீபதி

Traditional Treasures

Rani ki Vav

RANI-KI-VAV, ON THE BANKS OF THE SARASWATI RIVER, WAS INITIALLY BUILT AS A MEMORIAL TO A KING IN THE 11TH CENTURY AD.

Stepwells are a distinctive form of subterranean water resource and storage systems on the Indian subcontinent, and have been constructed since the 3rd millennium BC. They evolved over time from what was basically a pit in sandy soil towards elaborate multi-storey works of art and architecture. Rani-ki-Vav was built at the height of craftsmens' ability in stepwell construction and the Maru-Gurjara architectural style, reflecting mastery of this complex technique and great beauty of detail and proportions. Designed as an inverted temple highlighting the sanctity of water, it is divided into seven levels of stairs with sculptural panels of high artistic quality; more than 500 principle sculptures and over a thousand minor ones combine religious, mythological and secular imagery, often referencing literary works. The fourth level is the deepest and leads into a rectangular tank 9.5 m by 9.4 m, at a depth of 23 m. The well is located at the westernmost end of the property and consists of a shaft 10 m in diameter and 30 m deep.

Rani-ki-Vav is an exceptional example of a distinctive form of subterranean water architecture of the Indian subcontinent, the stepwell, which is located on the banks of the Saraswati River in Patan. Initially built as a memorial in the 11th century CE, the stepwell was



Photo Courtesy: Amusing Planet

constructed as a religious as well as functional structure and designed as an inverted temple highlighting the sanctity of water. Rani-ki-Vav is a single-component, water management system divided into seven levels of stairs and sculptural panels of high artistic and aesthetic quality. It is oriented in an east-west direction and combines all of the principle components of a stepwell, including a stepped corridor beginning at ground level, a series of four pavilions with an increasing amount of storeys towards the west, the tank, and the well in tunnel shaft form. More than five hundred principle sculptures and over a thousand minor ones combine religious, mythological and secular imagery, often referencing literary works.

Rani-ki-Vav impresses not only with its architectural structure and technological achievements in water sourcing and structural stability, but also in particular with its sculptural decoration, of true artistic mastery. The figurative motifs and sculptures, and the proportion of filled and empty spaces, provide the stepwell's interior with its unique aesthetic character. The setting enhances these

attributes in the way in which the well descends suddenly from a plain plateau, which strengthens the perception of this space.

Rani-ki-Vav is preserved with all its key architectural components and, despite missing pavilion storeys, its original form and design can still be easily recognized. A majority of sculptures and decorative panels remain in-situ and some of these in an exceptional state of conservation. Rani-ki-Vav is a very complete example of the stepwell tradition, even though after geotectonic changes in the 13th century it does no longer function as a water well as a result of the change to the Saraswati River bed. It was however the silting of the flood caused during this historic event, which allowed for the exceptional preservation of Rani-ki-Vav for over seven centuries.

All components including the immediate surrounding soils which adjoin the vertical architecture of the stepwell are included in the property. In terms of intactness, the property does not seem to have experienced major losses since its flooding and silting in the 13th century.

Rani-ki-Vav has a high level of authenticity in material, substance, design, workmanship and, to a certain extent, atmosphere, location and setting. While it maintained its authentic material and substance, it also required some punctual reconstructions for structural stability. In all instances reconstructed elements were only added where structurally required to protect remaining sculpture, and they are indicated by smooth surfaces and a lack of decoration which can be easily distinguished from the historic elements. Around the outer terrace at ground level, slopes of smooth descent, a so-called sacrificial terrace, were created to prevent soil erosion following stronger rain falls. Unfortunately the Rani-ki-Vav cannot retain authenticity in use and function as a result of the altered ground water levels following the relocation of Saraswati River.

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