

Madhura Murali

July 2017



Spiritual Monthly
By the Boundless Blessings of
HH Maharanyam Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji



Madhura Geetham

Raga: Jonpuri
Tala: Adhi

chandrashekaramaham praNamAmI

kailAsa vAsinam gowri manOharam
indrAdi vinutha nandi vAhanam

manmatha haraNam unmattha rUpam
amrutha kateshwaram mrutyunjayam
pradoshakAla BakthAnukUlam
shivamuraLI dhara vinutham paramavaishnavam

The background of the page is a warm, golden-brown color. In the upper right corner, there is a delicate, stylized branch with small leaves. Scattered across the upper half of the page are several small, dark brown silhouettes of birds in flight, some facing left and some facing right.

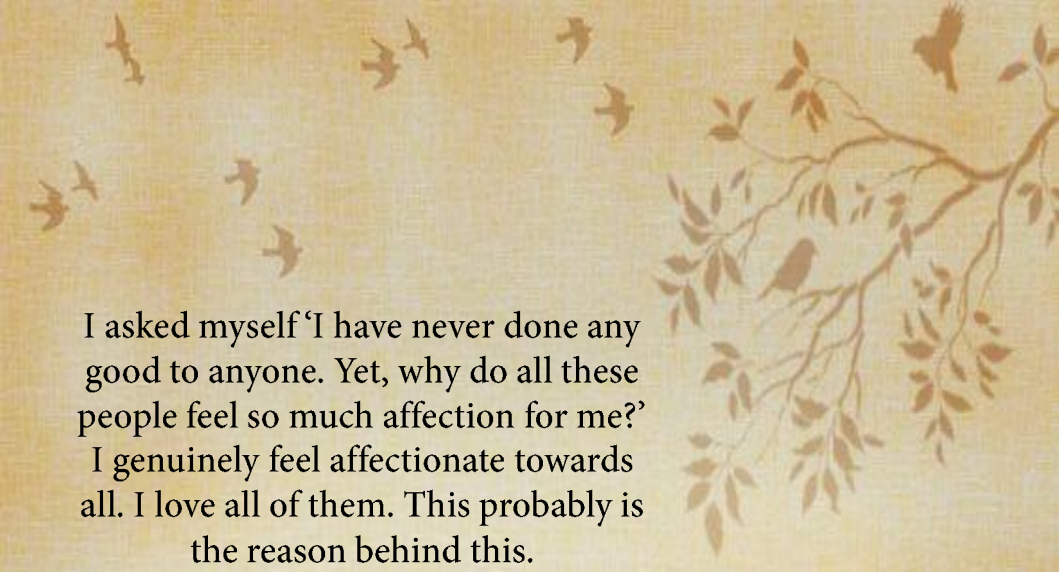
MADHURASMARANAM

My Guru As I See Him

In the last issue I had shared some of my thoughts; and the affection soaked responses and reactions to it is simply incredible!! From the moment the issue was released there has been continuous phone calls. Many began to cry even over the phone. Some expressed their concern while some offered to place their guest house at my service for relaxing and also offered to assist in receiving Ayurveda treatment. Some requested me to stay put at the Ashram itself and that they would visit me there. Some took the liberty to say 'irrespective of what you write we will not let you go. We will continue to come to your presence and trouble you'!

On Ekadasi many who had come in person assured me 'nothing can go amiss, Swamiji. We are here to render service. Please do not worry'. Many had expressed their affection through mails. Several others had performed puja in temples and sent the Prasad. In the Satsangs in India and abroad many have felt deeply concerned on reading this. Many have offered prayers.

Seeing the love and affection expressed I feel choked with emotion.



I asked myself 'I have never done any good to anyone. Yet, why do all these people feel so much affection for me?'

I genuinely feel affectionate towards all. I love all of them. This probably is the reason behind this.

Today, I wonder if I had committed a mistake in penning those words. I wonder if I had hurt the feelings of so many people. I do feel very sorry for this. Love can be returned only with Love, is it not? I am reminded of the words of poet Robert Frost which I would like to share with you all.....

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

- Sri Sri Swamiji

(In the last issue of Madhuramurali I had shared some thoughts expressed by Sri Swamiji. The affection filled responses of our Satsang devotees from various parts of India and abroad to this has touched the heart of Sri Swamiji. I have shared above the words of Sri Swamiji in response to the devotees' affectionate expressions)

- Dr Bhagyanathan

Answers and Beyond

Can we attain Dispassion, Wisdom and Bhakti by being in the presence of a Saintly person? Or should the blessing come in the form of a touch, initiation or Mantra Deeksha?

Not Necessary. Let us see some examples. Imagine that one of your most your favorite food item is kept in front of you. In spite of you trying your best not to do so, you may notice that your mouth produces saliva, an instinctive reaction on seeing a favorite food. It is a totally involuntary action. The delicacy, through your sense organs, is instigating or prompting your responses. This is also exactly like that. For ordinary human beings, it may be a sort of temptation or even giving in to a weakness. For saintly persons, it is their compassion which gushes forth.

Similarly, the moment a lactating cow sees its calf, milk is secreted from its udders. It is that same instinct which we talked about earlier, produces this milk. A 'feeling' which arises at the sight of its calf is what prompts this. For the cow , it is the motherly love or instinct, but for the saintly persons it is their Compassion.

A loving husband is away from his wife on official duty. But the moment he thinks of her, without any effort, his face lights up in a smile. Is it not? This is another example of a feeling prompting the inner response. For the loving husband it is an expression of his love, for saintly persons, it is Compassion.

In your question, you asked, “ whether Devotion, Wisdom and Dispassion can be attained at the “mere sight” of a saintly person?? What we are saying is even sight is not required. A mere thought about the person can produce instant compassion in the hearts of a saintly person. This very compassion or mercy will certainly help us in attaining Bhakthi, Njana and Vairagya (Devotion, Wisdom and Dispassion). Have no doubts about that !!!

My dear Soul mate!
Radhe Radhe!



It's been a long time since we had a chat. How are you? Are you regular with your Bhagavatha parayana, nama japa, pooja, and kirtan? Are you maintaining your health to do bhakthi? Don't be careless about your health. The Lord has explained this beautifully in the eleventh canto of Srimad Bhagavatham.

We have taken this body only to attain God. At the time of departure from this body, we should attain the feet of Lord Krishna in complete peace. Till then, this body has to be kept in good condition. We need to keep ourselves free from headache, knee pain, frequent fever, and other such diseases.

This body doesn't need too much food. At the same time, unnecessary food is harmful. Healthy food is always good. The disturbances caused during meditation can be overcome with a few asanas. The evil effects produced by manthra, graha and poisonous reptiles can be removed by manthra japa, fasting, and worship of the deities. The mental vasanas like lust, anger, jealousy and avarice will not go away easily. Don't get disheartened because they haven't gone away yet. It takes a long time to be rid of these vices.

The Lord tells Uddhava in Srimad Bhagavatham,
Padhya mAnOpi madbhakthO vishayair ajithEndriya:|
prAya: prakalpyA bhakthyA vishyair nApi bhooyathE||
(Srimad Bhagavatham 11:14:18)

“In the beginning, my devotee will struggle to control his senses. Though he is genuinely devoted, he tends to stumble, lose his balance and fall for lust, anger, gold, sin, etc. Later, he himself will regret.

However, he wouldn't be involved in these vices like how he used to during the time he wasn't devoted to God, and its intensity is sharply reduced.



To the extent to which he chants the name of the Lord, listens to His stories and remembers His virtues, to that extent he would be able to win over his senses. Even beyond this, he may be often troubled by a few disgusting qualities, due to the strength of the impressions from the previous births, which will shatter his poise.

To come out of these vices, he has to stay near saints who have had the darshan of the Lord and serve them. The vices would then only leave him.

It is not an easy task to cross this ocean of samsara. Do your sadhanas and be patient.

*yan nAmAkrithibhir grAhyam panchavarnam apAdhitham|
vyArtthEna api arthavAdhoyam thvayam panditha mAninAm||
yOginOpakva yOgasya yunchatha kAya utthithai:|
upacharkair vihanyEtha thathrAyam vihithO vidhihi||
yOgadhAranayA kAmschith upacharkAn vinirdhahEth||
kAmschin mAmAnudhyAyena nAma sankeerthanAdhibhi:|
yOgEshwarAnuvrithyA vA hanyAth ashubhathAn shanaihi||
(Srimad Bhagavatham 11:28:37-40)*

I have only written the essence to you. I have written to you as I somehow felt the need to share all this with you. With who else can I share all this? The world will now call an idiot and stupid, you who are always thinking about the Lord and living for his sake. But don't worry. After death, they themselves will realise who has been an idiot and stupid.



NAME ALONE IS ENOUGH

One evening , a devotee in the satsang, was sitting in an ‘asana’ (yogic posture) with eyes closed and doing something. Sri Swamiji entered the satsang hall at that time. The devotee realised that Sri Swamiji had come and at once arose and prostrated before Sri Swamiji. Sri Swamiji looked at him with warmth and asked, “What are you doing?”

The devotee replied, “Me Swamiji? I am trying to control my mind”.

Sri Swamiji said, “You are following only the bakthi marga (path of devotion), aren’t you? Then why are you doing this?”

The devotee said, “If Sri Swamiji permits, can I ask a question?”

Sri Swamiji nodded His assent and the devotee asked, “Does the mind not need to be under control in bakthi marga?”

Sri Swamiji replied, “The mind has to be under control in bakthi marga too”.

“Then why are you telling me not to attempt to control my mind”, asked the devotee, to which Sri Swamiji gave a lovely reply.

“The mind has to be under control even if you follow the bakthi marga. However, if you sit like this and attempt to control your mind, then it becomes yoga. In the bakthi marga, by hearing a lot of stories and doing a lot of ‘nama keerthan’ the mind has to come under the control of the Lord by itself. Therefore, you should only increase ‘katha shravan’ (hearing stories of Lord) and nama keerthan, and not follow such practices”, concluded Sri Swamiji.

On hearing this, the devotee was relieved of his doubt. Sri Swamiji was delighted to hear the Mahamantra on his lips as he returned to his place.

The greatest treasure bestowed on each and everyone of us by the Lord is verily Life! Moreover, while there are 84 lakhs of living creatures, human birth that we have obtained is the rarest of the rare say all the shastras; and, all great souls sing on its greatness.

Speaking of this human birth as the supreme is not based on the bias of our having been born as humans. It could be attributed to prejudice if it were the opinion of ordinary, self-centred people. But when the Lord's devotees who have no bias and have not an iota of selfishness speak of the greatness of human birth we are able to comprehend its veracity. I do comprehend the rising of the thought 'but why is this birth glorified?' in you.

It is only in this human birth that we have the opportunity to attain realization of God or liberation (Mukti) which is the very purpose of our birth. This life is indeed amazingly an interesting journey. From the time we are born bearing this body until the last moment when this body is shirked this life is verily a path mixed with sweetness and bitterness, success and failure, achievements and disappointments, happiness and sorrows, praises and humiliations.

Well! Though it has been said that its goal is that bliss filled liberation, do all men journey on this path with one-pointedness?—NO, it is not so. Only after climbing countless steps is one able to sit on the throne placed at the top. Even if we have begun

LET'S FREE OURSELVES FROM THE CYCLE!

**(counsel given by Sri Swamiji
to a devotee from abroad)**

- Dr Bhagyanathan



the climb by placing our foot on the first step, even if we are pleased with ourselves for taking the effort in the right direction, we do find that it is filled with several hardships, struggles and blunders!

What should be the general objective of all, at the very outset? Not harming others in anyway, not making habit of wicked deeds that would affect the individual's life as also the society are common to humanity, in general.

Well! Does one stop at this?

A person who has been living according to his own whims and fancies says, "I enjoy worldly life and its pleasures. I am very happy to be with my kith and kin and watch television, enjoy sports, entertainments and go on pleasure trips. I am not slave to any bad habits. I do not harm others. In fact, I do not fail to help others to the best of my ability when the need arises. Let me spend my life happily in this manner!" He can spend his life on such lines. There is nothing wrong in it.

But all the matters that we get involved in, at every moment of this life, not only adds to the load of 'karma' but also leads to successive births! Birth followed by death, again a birth and death and again a birth and death! – how long are we to move in this cycle? Have we not moved in this cycle several crores of times and, finally, due to the blessings of the Lord obtained this human birth? Therefore, only when the thought that we should Realize God and bring this birth to an end arises do we step into the next phase – spiritual life.

Do you know when most of us meet God for the first time? In our school days before writing our examinations, the day the result of the examination was announced, someone dear to us had been admitted to a hospital, the day we attended an interview for a job, the time when we heard from an astrologer of some grave danger awaiting us or someone dear to us....in short, we approach God as one who removes our sorrows and fulfils our desires. So, when our desires are not fulfilled we get angry with God. We even dare to refute His very presence. However, the compassionate God, in order to hold us, who have approached Him on some ground or the other, closer to Him, lifts us up and blesses us with Satsang and Guru.

Slowly matters like spiritual sadhana, dhyana, yoga, bhakti, mukti enter into us through our ears and begin to softly touch our mind. Realizing that there is no pleasure in worldly life we take effort to renounce it and involve in intense spiritual sadhanas. Some go beyond this and embrace ascetic life.

‘Well! Without getting enticed by worldly pleasures I have begun to involve myself in spiritual life. Can there be any other hazard? There is nothing to be caught in’ – the moment a spiritual sadhak laughs conceitedly in this manner he comes to realize that all that he has had to pass until then was absolutely nothing and that blunders and slips in spiritual life are vast.

A wonderful man lived in a town. He was well educated, wealthy, had lived a righteous life and earned name and fame. He had enjoyed a good family life much to others’ envy. He then attained a Realized soul for his Guru, renounced the world with deep discrimination and engaged himself in spiritual life. Practising sadhana for several years and without becoming a slave to any kind of pleasure he embraced ascetic life to the admiration of all those who saw him.

One day, another swamiji came to this town with a hoard of his devotees and attendants. The silver throne, chowry-fan, umbrella, etc. were beyond all verbal descriptions! The ascetic who happened to pass by saw all these and the thought ‘I am also an ascetic! But nobody reverts me this way’ arose in his disturbed mind. But the very next moment the thought ‘what is the use of all these? Renouncing everything and sitting on a darbasana (seat made of darba grass) is verily a high matter’ arose in him and cheered him up.

A little while later, his Guru’s laughing voice was heard from within.

“O, wonderful is your asceticism and simplicity! Is not even a moment’s yearning for such reverential treatment verily a desire! Is it not verily pride to rejoice ‘while that swamiji sits on a silver throne I am so simple using a darbasana for my seat’?

Our ascetic at once bent his head in shame. He bent his head in shame thinking of how his Guru had pointed out to him that in spite of moving beyond worldly life and progressing by several steps in spiritual life it was not so easy to reach the final goal.

While it is so on the one hand, there is yet another danger for an intense spiritual sadhak who has attained a satsang and gradually becomes familiar with Itihasa-Puranas and Devotees' kirtans. For example, a devotee who was ignorant about our traditional music and its unparalleled melody happened to listen to Thiagaraja swami's kirtans in a satsang. The purpose for his coming to the satsang was to receive guidance from the Guru, practice intense sadhana and realize God. Losing his heart and soul in Thiagaraja swami's kirtans and deeply desiring to know more he moved into it. This was several years back. Only after moving into it did he realize that it was an unfathomable ocean! Till date that wonderful friend, in order to fathom the depth of that ocean, has been attending Carnatic music classes and Telugu language classes. But neither has he succeeded in this endeavour nor has he taken to chanting the sweet Rama Nama about which Thiagaraja swami speaks through his kirtans! It is not his fault. The beauty and attraction of this subject matter is such, which is due to divinity contained in it. This is true of every subject matter and art in our Sanatana Dharma.

Be it the Vedas, Shastras, Upanishads, traditional music, traditional dance or be it our sweeter than honey Tamizh language..... all those who have stepped into any of these to fathom its depth have only realized that no amount of births can help them succeed in their quest! That is verily the glory of our traditional treasure! It is meant only for those who have sacrificed their very lives for the particular department of study or art and have set only that as their very purpose of life.

But it is important for spiritual sadhaks who have renounced the material world in order to attain Mukti, which is the purpose of life, not to involve themselves in such wonderful matters but remain one-pointed in the Guru's upadesa (counsel). That one-pointed effort itself will seat them on the throne of Mukti set on the highest step.



True Fragrance of Divine Love

Sri MK Ramanujam

Likewise even though we relish the path of divine love for its intrinsic joy, it does also serve the purpose of liberation and spiritual elevation. But, this should not be in our mind when we do bhakthi!

We relish our Brindavana yatra and have a blissful Krishna darshanam there and come back. Then if we have some trouble in our life we should not complain that, 'I had come for Your yatra and had Your darshan, why is it I am having problems now?' Do we after a vacation trip to a tourist spot like Singapore, say, 'I had been to Singapore for my fun trip and now why am I getting this problem after this!'

So we merely relish our Brindavan yatra, Krishna darshanam etc. When we love someone dearly, don't we want to know more about that person? His birthplace; his childhood sports; where he grew up; where his major life events happened etc. Like that, a Krishna devotee would be eager to know more about the person he truly loves, go to places of interested related to Krishna, etc. That would be sole purpose of his Brindavan yatra... Not for any other purpose...

This is the path for bhakthi sukham...

All great saints did bhakthi for bhakthi sukham and not for bhakthi prayojanam.

All these great devotees like Shukamuni, Sant Meera Bai or Saint Thyagaraja all wrote, sang and spoke only out of bhakthi sukham.

If a person does devotion for prayojanam, then if the purpose is not met, that person would stop doing bhakthi. But if a devotee does bhakthi for bhakthi sukham, come rain or shine in the life that devotee never stops doing bhakthi.

Can anyone stop breathing? Why can't a person stop breathing? Because it is involuntary, it is verily a vital part of that person's life! Like that these true devotees cannot stop doing bhakthi! For such great devotees, bhakthi is involuntary, as it were!!

Some of such Mahatmas have graced us divine works on Bhakthi rasa.

So why do we need such works? When we want to relish food varieties, we can benefit by a guidebook like a foodie guide, right? Similarly for clothes or houses to live in there are books and guides to help us relish these better. Likewise, Bhakthi rasa works guide us in the path of devotion to make it more relishable and joyous. Now do you realize the difference between Bhakthi Sukham and Bhakthi Prayojanam?"

The group of devotees nodded gratefully and enthusiastically! It was a discussion none of the devotees would ever forget in their life! Sri Swamiji started the dolotsavam song and walked towards the sanctum...

A TALE FOR CHILDREN

Mahabharatha is the largest of the epics in which there are several short stories with valuable inputs that benefit our day to day lives. Here is one such story!

There was a King called Brahmadata. In his palace, a clever sparrow was living in its nest, built in one corner of a room. On the same day of the birth of the Sparrow's offspring, a little Prince was also born to the King. They both grew up together. Whenever the mother Sparrow flew to the seashore, it always returned back with the most delicious fruits, one for the baby sparrow and another for the Prince. The mother sparrow had that kind of a maturity that it never felt any reason to differentiate between its own baby and the Prince.

One day, when the mother sparrow returned back to the Palace with the fruits, it saw its loving child lying dead on the floor. The sparrow was greatly shocked and on finding out that it was the Prince who had killed the baby sparrow by choking its neck, it was extremely angry at him. The sparrow realized that it was a mistake to have expected a pure friendship from this dynasty. It thought "This Prince, who did such a terrible thing, is devoid of any gratitude and I should teach him a lesson. My child and the Prince were born on the same day and my baby had total faith in him. But, he ruthlessly killed my child. Let him face the consequence for his action". Having decided thus, it pecked the eyes of the prince with its beak.



Coincidentally the King happened to notice this act of the mother sparrow. The sparrow said to the king “One must certainly face the punishment for his wrong deeds. Otherwise, that sin would befall on his entire lineage. The King understood what had happened. After thinking deeply for a while, the King said, “ You had given the punishment for the Prince for killing your child. It is balanced out. You shall live here as before and we can continue our routine lives.

But the sparrow refused to consider this suggestion of the King and said,” Though what I did to the Prince was a deserving punishment for his action, in your eyes, it would always remain as an unjustifiable act. It would be utter foolishness to expect trust from you after all that had happened. You may speak kind words, but, once the feeling of animosity creeps in, expecting trust or friendship will lead only to destruction. Amongst relatives, parents alone can be trusted. A brother too, could turn into an enemy out of greediness. Friends would remain only till one’s wealth last. Hence, joy and sorrow are determined only by the time. Both of us cannot forget the incident that had happened. So, it is not good for me to stay here”

On hearing this, the King replied, “This incident did not bring any enmity between us. Whatever happened was the flaw of the time. Birth and death are already determined. The same time can heal this too”

“I do not accept this. If time is the reason for everything, why do we have to mourn when a loved one passes away? Why should a doctor cure the diseases of all? There wouldn't be any room for sins and virtues. Thinking about these, it is clear that the time cannot be the reason for everything. Good or bad, the human efforts are conducted or obstructed by the time only. But, the deeds belong to the one who did it. Losing a son is the biggest grief for a person. Whenever you see your blind son, your rage towards me would grow. Shukracharya Maharishi says “It is a grave mistake to have faith in a person when you are the the reason behind his sorrow” One should leave the country at once, where he is not respected. Only the trustworthy can be a friend. One who is loving is the ideal life

partner. The one, who is beneficial is the ideal heir. The place where we feel secure is our motherland. Right now, this place isn't safe for me. I do not wish to destroy myself” Saying these words the sparrow flew away.

We can understand the lesson to be learnt from this story. And, one thing that must be carefully looked into, is that, we should take into consideration the people with whom we are destined to live for a long time. For example, husband and wife, business partners, good friends, neighbours, etc. We should ensure that friction do not occur in these relationships, by living a life with careful planning and proper channelization of emotions.

BLISSFUL BLOSSOMS

Any spiritual practice which involves physical action should result in control or regulation of 'Prana' or the 'life force'. When 'Prana' or "life force" is controlled, the mind becomes focused. When the mind is focused, wisdom arises. When wisdom is attained, bliss is experienced.

- Sri Sri Swamiji

It is not even necessary to live like "Chaitanya Maha Prabhu". The satisfaction that we have begun to tread the path shown by him is enough.

- Sri Sri Swamiji



SANSKRIT WORD OF THE MONTH

- Sri VishnuPriya

madhu
मधु

‘MADHU’ means honey, sweet is well-known fact. However, let us look into several other connotations and the resultant words from them.

Yes! ‘Madhu’ means honey. That is why bee is known as ‘Madhukara’ i.e. one who makes honey. Bees, at first, drink up the honey from flowers. Then they produce honey. As they drink honey they are also called ‘Madhupa’. ‘Madhum pAdhi, ‘Madhupa’ because they drink honey. In the Ode to Bees -- ‘Brahmara Geetam’ (Srimad Bhagavatam 10:47:12-21)

Sri Radhadevi imagining a bee to be Uddhava (Krishna’s messenger), addresses it, “Madhupa! Kitava bandhO!” (Oh, honey sucker! Friend of the unfaithful Krishna!)

O, Bee! As you move continuously from one flower to another your friendship is not steady. Krishna is no different!” Radha probably expresses this subtly.

Another name for the bee is ‘Madhuvrata’. Why the name ‘Madhuvrata’? The bee, as if on fast (vrat) does not drink the honey collected in the hive but only saves it. So, it is called ‘Madhuvrata’. But the poor bee!! That very honey that it saves without itself enjoying is taken away by hunters or others. It is verily this that we use as honey.

‘Madhu’ does not mean just honey. ‘Madhu’ also means liquor. It is called ‘Madhupaanam’. It is one of the five heinous sins.

There once lived a king by the name ‘Madhu’. ‘Madhu-Kaitapa’ is well-known in Puranas. Lord Vishnu earned the name ‘Madhusudhana’ as He killed this demon Madhu. Thus, the Lord also is known as ‘Madhumathana’. In the Ashtapadi (the divine Poet Jayadeva’s hymns) the divine companion of Radhadevi tells her “MukdhE! Madhumathanam anusara’ – follow Krishna!” Being the enemy of demon Madhu, the Lord is also known as ‘Madhuripu’ (‘ripu’ means enemy). ‘iti MadhuripuNa sakhi niyukta’ is a line in the Ashtapadi.

The Capital ‘Madhura’ was once known as ‘Madhuvanam’, ‘Madhupuri’. That is the reason that Sage Narada after initiating Dhruva instructs him ‘puNyam Madhuvanam yatra sAnnidhyam nityatA HarE:’ – i.e. go to Madhuvanam where Lord Hari’s Presence is ever-present. This verily refers to what is known today as Madhura (Mathura). Krishna who is the king of Madhura (known as Madhurapuri) also enjoys the name ‘Madhupati’.

Yet another meaning of the word ‘Madhu’ is spring (vasantam). The spring season (vasanta ritu) that falls in the Indian calendar of Chaitra is known as ‘MadhumAsa’. Sri Swamiji has written a sloka (vrittam) ‘Madhumaasam thannil sarasa sangeetam paadi’. ‘Madhu mAdavam’ is the Samskritam name for the two months in vasanta ritu.

We mix what is called ‘atimadhuram’ in drinking milk. In Samskritam it is known as ‘Madhuyashtika’. Drinking this is said to make the voice melodious.

There is something called ‘Madhuparkam’. In the Age of Puranas the tradition of offering this to guests was practised. ‘Madhuparkam’ is the mixture of honey, curd, ghee and water. In the Bhagavatam we find that when Akrura comes to Vrindavan, to take Krishna to Madhura, Nandagopa (Krishna’s foster father) welcomes him warmly, washes his feet with water and offers ‘Madhuparkam’ – ‘prakshAlya vidhivat pAdaU madhuparkArhaNamAharat’ (SB 10:38:38).

Thus several words are born from the word ‘Madhu’.



Gurukulam

Impeccable Systems of Education

August is “back to school” month in the USA, as children everywhere prepare to begin a new school year. School and college education play a very important role in today’s world. And especially among Indians, it forms the very fabric of life and is often the pivotal element around which an entire household’s energies, moods and fortunes revolve. Schools today tend to focus primarily on teaching the skills needed for students to eventually lead a life of comfort, wealth, and even power, in the world. Little emphasis, if any, is given to moral and spiritual values as these are not considered to be in the realm of necessary basic education.

On the contrary, the “Gurukulam” education system of ancient India was far more advanced and much more complete and effective as a system that took care of the all – round development of the individual; not only teaching him professional skills to live in the material world but also giving equal importance to learning to lead a life of dharma and further, sowing the seeds for spiritual growth and fulfillment of the very purpose of life – treading the path to God Himself.

In a gurukulam, the students lived for years with the teacher (the “guru”) and his family, until the completion of their education. The guru did not get any money or payment from the students during their stay in the gurukulam, and even the guru dakshina taken at the completion of the education was dependent on the student’s means and ability.

At the gurukulam, the students learned the skills needed for their particular professions such as weaponry, horsemanship, trade, agriculture, etc. They also studied the shastras including the Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas and how to apply the messages of these exalted scriptures to their own lives, and absorbing the dharmas they laid down for every person’s particular walk of life. While staying under one roof, the students learned values like respect for others, discipline, equality, humility and service. They were taught the means to spiritual enlightenment, the highest knowledge that a guru can impart to a disciple.

The guru took complete responsibility for the student and cared for him as if he were his own son. The guru provided food and shelter for the students, who served the guru and his family through daily chores like cooking, cleaning, fetching firewood, washing clothes, and more. Serving the Guru (seva or kaink-aryam), which is considered the highest form of service in our scriptures, was thus an integral part of the student’s education. This is the beauty of the guru-sishya (disciple) relationship in the gurukulam system. Even Bhagavan Himself, when he came down as an avatara like Lord Rama and Lord Krishna, went under the tutelage of a guru and performed guru seva. In Srimalad Bhagavatam there is a verse which extols this relationship: “Guror anugrahenalva puman purnaha prashantayae”.

Sudama and Krishna met each other at Sage Sandeepani’s gurukulam and became thick friends. In later years, Lord Krishna became the king of Dwaraka while Sudama was steeped in poverty. Yet both of them enjoyed constant peace of mind and tranquility. Lord Krishna tells Sudama, in the above sloka, that it is verily due to the benediction of their Guru Sandeepani, that despite their outer circumstances, both of them continue to enjoy that invaluable peace of mind.

In the same context, while speaking of their guru's greatness, Krishna tells Sudama that it was only because of their guru's blessings that he remembered whatever he had learned at the right time when he needed it. The most important and key element of the gurukulam system is the opportunity for guru seva, for there is nothing that a guru's grace cannot bestow. An *uttama* Guru's grace can bestow the very abode of the Lord – *chintAmanir loka sukham, suradruhu swarga sampadam, prayacchati guruhu preeto, vaikuntam yOgi durlabham* (Srimad Bhagavata Mahatmyam) – what then to speak of wealth, comforts or scholarship?

Giri was a disciple of Sri Adi Shankara Bhagavadpada. Though Giri was a dull student, he spent most of his time serving his guru in all possible ways with utmost dedication and devotion. One day Adi Sankara was about to expound on one of the difficult philosophies in the Brahma Sutras, but as Giri was not yet back from washing clothes on the river, he waited for him. When the other disciples realized that their guru was waiting for Giri, a dull wit who would not be able to understand the subtleties in the verses anyway, they smirked. The guru was moved with compassion for his poor disciple and blessed him with all his heart. At that moment, Giri, who was far away on the river bank, was suddenly illuminated and composed an extraordinary set of verses called Thotakashtakam, by the grace of his guru. Later he became a great acharya, called Thotakacharya.

In fact, Lord Krishna himself states in Srimad Bhagavatam that no amount of yoga, tapas or austerity would lead one to happiness and it is verily the service to Guru that would usher happiness.

*naham ijya prajatibyam tapospashamena seva va|
tushyeyam sarva butatma guru shusrushaya yatha||*

Hence the gurukulams of ancient India, with their focus on the fully-rounded growth of the student, and most importantly, with Guru Seva

Mastery

Mastery means influence. Right? A chap was riding a horse, very fast, on a dusty road. As the horse galloped, a fellow horseman came aside and asked, "Where are you going"? The chap replied, "I don't know. Ask the horse!" At times instead of we driving the horse, the horse drives us around. A better way could have been to come to terms with the horse, pay attention to it, respect it, understand it and slowly influence it and then ride on it's power. Our powerful emotions, habits are our horses. They can take us places. Do we want them to take us places, or do we want to take them to the places we wish to go? Mastery starts with bridling, influencing our horses which are our emotions, habits, etc. The first step is, I believe paying attention to our emotions and habits. This attention and awareness can truly take us places. Be happy and spread the happiness around. Have a great day!

- *MK Ramanujam*





PM Narendra Modi releases stamp on 1,000th birth anniversary of Sri Ramanujacharya

May 1, 2017
Financial Express



Prime Minister Narendra Modi released commemorative stamp on 1,000th birth anniversary of Sri Ramanujacharya in Delhi on Monday. The PM, after releasing the stamp, remembered the saint and said, “the central message of Sant Shri Ramanujacharya’s life was inclusive society, religion and philosophy”. The PM, in a tweet in the morning, had said that the “rich thoughts” of Sant Shri Ramanujacharya continue to influence many. Later, while releasing the stamp, he said the saint “saw the manifestation of God in Human beings and Human beings in God. He saw all devotees of God as equal.” He broke the settled prejudice of his times, PM Modi added.

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