

Sri Hari:

MADHURAMURALI

September 2017



**SPIRITUAL MONTHLY WITH THE BLESSINGS OF
HH MAHARANYAM SRI SRI MURALIDHARA SWAMIJI**



Madhura Geetham

Ragam: Punnagavarali

Talam: Adi

Pallavi

un kaTchi maTTumE en manadai
Atchi seidiDa vENDum - kaNNA (un)

Charanam

karumugil vaNNam koNda mEniyum
karuL karuAna aDarnda kEsamum
uruvam azhagAna mayilin iragum
taruvin aDiyil ninDriDum oyyAramum (un)


asaindu asaindu ADiDum kuNDalangaLum
isaindu isaittiDum kuzhalOsayum
asai marandu aDiyil ninDriDum Avinamum
disai engum paraviDum nIla oLiyum (un)

manjaL paTTADai tazhuviya mEniyum
panjavarnam koNda asaindADum mAlayum
nenjai viTTu agalAda punsirippum
konjum mozhi pEsiDum pinju adarangaLum (un)



MADHURA SMARANAM

My Guru as I See Him
- Dr A Bhagyanathan



**Our Sandeepani Gurukula
patashalas are operating in
Madhurapuri ashram, Srirangam,
Hyderabad, Gurgaon, Vedaranyam,
Senganur and in many other places.
A Vaishnava agama patashala is
operating in Nangur. More than
100 vidyarthi do adyayana of Rig,
Yajur, Sama and Prabandham in
these centres.**

Among these, due to the efforts of Sri Brahamanand, Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji Kainkarya Sabha was established by the Veda Vidyarthi who graduated from these centres and other vedic scholars. Under the auspices of this sabha, vedaparayana and satsangs are often conducted in many places. Sri Anand and Sri Vedaram who completed adyayana in our Patashala and Sri Santosh are its trustees. Through this Sabha, on the occasion of Sri Swamiji's star (thirunakshathra), Yajur Veda Samhitha Parayan took place in 2015 in Ayodhya Ashwamedha mandap, Chennai for the first time. The second event to happen under the auspices of this sabha was during the auspicious time of Mahamaga when Rig Veda Parayan, Yajur Veda Moola, Krama, Gana, Sama Veda Parayana and Prabandha took place from Feb 12-22, 2016 in Sastra University, Kumbakonam. 67 Vedic vidwans participated in this event. The third event was an Akila Bharatha Sama Veda Sammelan from July 20-29, 2016 in the Seetharama hall of Sri Sundara Anjaneyaswami temple. 27 Sama Veda scholars did Ashtabrahmanandam Parayan in this event. On the occasion of Sri Swamiji's star, satsangs took place from Oct 25-31, 2016 in Ayodhya mandap, Chennai. Yajur Veda Jada Parayan was also held from Apr 15-19, 2017 in Brahma desa.

Recently, in Kalkare, Bangalore, at the premises of Sri Sundara Anjaneya temple, in the Seetharama hall, 48 Veda scholars did Rig Veda Gana Parayan completely for seven days, from July 16-22, 2017. This took place under the supervision of an Adhyapak of Sri Sandeepani Gurukula, Brahmashri Udhaneswarabhat Ganapatigal. Brahmashri Shridhar Ganapatigal was very helpful for the preparations for the Rig Veda Parayan. Rig Veda is classified into 8 parts. Parayan was done by splitting one ashtaka for six and making eight groups.

On the day of completion, Brahmashri Venugopala Ganapatigal was awarded the title “Rig Vedacchariya:”. He has trained many Rig Veda Ganapatigal. He has done Parayan of all the eight 8 Vikruthis. Brahmashri Surya Narayana Ganapatigal was given the title “Rig Veda Raja”. Normally, certain questions will be asked during the Vedic exams. When answered, the candidate will be informed whether it's right or wrong. But, in Maharashtra, when giving a Veda exam, one has to sit on a stage alone and chant the Gana of the whole Rig Veda without seeing. The scholars who are seated down would be watching the book keenly ensuring that there are no errors. In Satara, Maharashtra, he gave this Rig Veda Gana exam for 41 days and got this title. People from Maharashtra took him for procession on an elephant (Gaja Arohanam). Here, Sri Swamiji, took the Ganapatigal for procession on a horse (Ashva Arohanam).

Brahmashri Manikandan Ganapatigal who took part in the Parayan, after completing Rig Veda Gana, studied Vyakarana Maha Bhashya and gave an exam for that in Tenali. Brahmashri Kumara Ganapatigal, after completing Rig Veda Gana, did complete Adyayana of Rig Veda Bhashya. Brahmashri Radhakrishna Ganapatigal completed Rig Veda Gana Adyayana and subsequently went on to complete the Adyayana of Shadangam Salakshanam (Dashagrantham) completely.

Brahmashri Raghavendra Ganapatigal, Brahmashri Gautam Ganapatigal, Brahmashri Ishwara Subramanya Ganapatigal, Brahmashri Shriram Ganapatigal and Brahmashri Krishnan Ganapatigal have completed Rig Veda Gana and done Adyayana of Sama Veda Jaimini saakai and Atharvana Veda. Brahmashri Chandrakant Ganapatigal completed Rig Veda Gana and also has done Adyayana of Krishna Yajur Veda. Brahmashri Sivasubramanya Ganapatigal completed Rig Veda Gana and went on to do adyayana of Kavya and Gaumuthi (Siddanta Gaumuthi). Special honours were made to the above mentioned scholars.

During the Rig Veda Parayana, 'Kal vaittha varam' competition took place. Vedic scholars and students participated with enthusiasm and bagged prizes.

Bhagavatha Dharma and Vaidheeka Dharma are like our two eyes. In Bhagavatha Dharma, it is a standard practice to worship the feet (pada pooja) of the Bhagavathas who do Namaskirtan or those who do Uncchavarthi. Likewise, respects were offered to the Vedic scholars who did Rig Veda Gana Parayan; Pada pooja was done to them, they were adorned with crowns on the head, were offered garlands and offerings were given on behalf of Kainkarya sabha by placing them on the head.

Apart from this, on behalf of Dr Yegnasubramanian's Om Foundation, Sri Sethuraman took part and honoured each Vaidheeka with 10,000 rupees (sambavanai). Sri Sankaranarayanan from Banglore made preparations and took care of the necessities of the Vedic scholars in a special manner. The devotees who had come to take part also did whatever service they could do to the vidwans. Gana Parayan thus took place in a grand manner.

Sri Sri Anna visited Sri Sundara Anjaneyaswami temple on July 17 around 8:30 in the morning. He took part in the gana parayan and gave his anugraha bhashanam which was the crown jewel of the event and made it special. Sri Sri Anna blessed gold coins to all the Vedic scholars personally with his divine hands.

During the time of completion, Sri Swamiji in his benedictory address said, “Sridharyam is a very acclaimed commentary for Srimad Bhagavatham. Sridharar, in his commentary on a sloka in the first chapter, “Satram Swargaya Lokaya sahasra Samamasatha” makes an interesting observation. In the place Naimisharanyam, where thousands had congregated to perform the 'Satra' yage, Sri Sounaka raises the first question. This is because, in a gathering of scholars, the one who has studied Rig Veda is deemed to be the most senior. Saunaka is a Rig Vedi. As a result, he was given the honour of raising the first question. This gathering has so many Rig Vedic scholars. This is definitely a gathering of vidwans and learned people. I pray to Veda matha to bless all those who have been a part of this parayan, those who were helpful in any way and those who made arrangements for the parayan.”

Answers and Beyond

(Sri Swamiji's answers to questions from devotees)

Recently I listened to the discourse on Srimad Bhagavatham. Prahlad, who sang, danced, cried and pined for the Lord and chanted His divine names, ever immersed in His thoughts was blessed with the Lord's darshan. Ajamila, who lived his life on his own volition and chanted the divine name of 'Narayana' once at time of death also received divine blessings. Hearing this, I wonder if it is enough to live our lives to the fullest and chant one nama at time of death, like Ajamila did, instead of doing namakirtan every day of our lives.

There are two friends. One person's aim is to only earn more and more money in his life. His outlook is to search for the kind of education or business that would help him to earn more money.

As for the other friend, from a very young age, he had an immense liking and love for Tamil language. If you ask him, he would say that he wants to pursue advanced studies in Tamil and would do research in that language. If someone advises him, 'in the current worldly trend, studying Tamil language (unlike other faculties) will not help him to earn a lot of money', he would say, 'I don't have any such thoughts and I am not worried about it. Tamil language is my life.' For the first person, money is the only goal but the second friend had such deep love for Tamil language.

The ones who chant nama with the sole aim of getting rid of their sins and attaining sadh gathi is different. But the state of Prahlad, who was chanting only out of love for the Lord and namakirtan is different. Devotion with only pure love for the Lord, devoid of any reason or inner motive is called Prema Bakthi. For such Prema bakthas, a question like what you said will not even arise.

I wish to do severe spiritual practices, with the sincere aim to attain God. In a day, how much time should I allocate for Japa (chanting) and dhayana (meditation)?

It is not fitting for a sadhak, who wishes to lead a life with the sole aim of attaining God to ask such a question. For a full-time spiritual sadhak, shouldn't the question be 'how much time should I allocate for worldly matters'?

One should allocate minimum time for the most necessary worldly matters and be engaged in japa and dhayana at all other times.

Blissful Blossoms

A patient approaches a doctor and says, "I have taken ill. When will I get back to normal health? Please cure me of my illness and restore me back to normal health." His mind is fixed on getting back to normal health. It is this he keeps demanding of the doctor. Likewise, to be affected by sorrows and desires is not our natural state.

Boundless bliss is verily our true nature. Therefore, we should keep praying to God to cure us of this disease that we are afflicted with and help us realize our natural state.

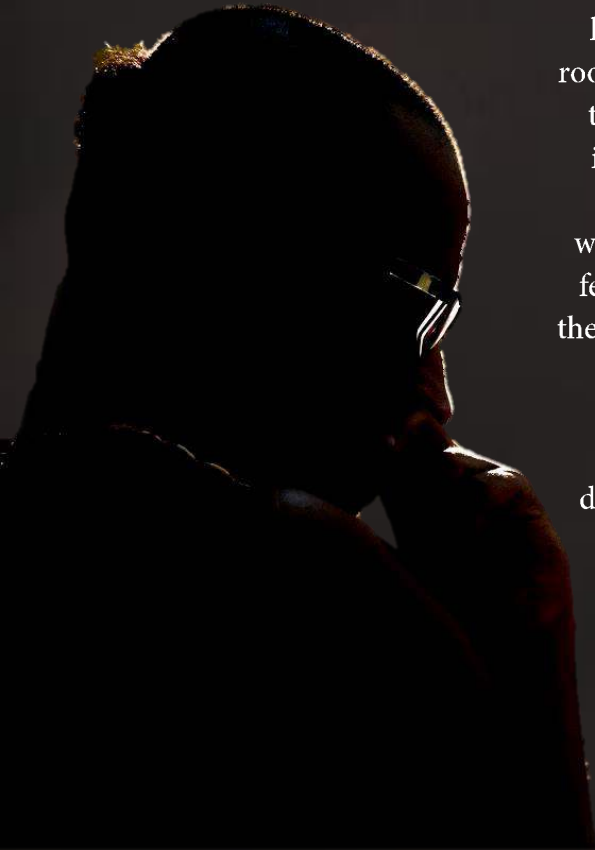
- Sri Swamiji

Touching Memories

2

Sri Swamiji

I had been to the town Anaikattu for speaking on the glory of and spreading the Divine Name [Nama prachara]. A well-built man came up to me. He was of fair complexion and wore a big vermilion mark on his forehead. He looked like a worshipper of Goddess Durga [Devi upasaka]. He desired to meet me alone. Complying with his request I took him inside a room nearby. On stepping inside this man bolted the door from inside. I could not understand his action and even as I wondered what he was up to he fell at my feet in full length! He then got up and without uttering a word opened the door and walked out! Only then did I understand his behaviour. He desired to bow down to me but felt hesitant to do it in the presence of others. That was the reason behind his odd behaviour.





BHAKTI SUGANDHAM

- Sri MK Ramanujam

Even then mundane thoughts will come, but the frequency will be less. And as these thoughts come, by vivekam (discrimination), the mind can be made to come up once again to the right path. As the mind keeps going up and up, finally we will attain samadhi! What does samadhi mean? It is a state from which one cannot get back into the world. The mind going to the upper state cannot be attained automatically. For that you should eat saatvik food (harmonious simple non spicy healthy fresh food!), be in a saatvik atmosphere, should be very humble and cordial, and practice like a sadhana (spiritual practice) for a long time the means of bhakti that you like – listening, chanting, archana, and others.

At that time, do not worry that it is not possible for you to chant with bhakti, etc. So how to motivate yourself? See the world! You have come across so many people who are suffering from cancer, kidney problems and other diseases. There are people who are blind, mentally disabled. Some people don't have anything to eat. Some people don't know what they will do the next day! Some people work very hard for very small earnings. They work nights. They work in sewers and drains. But God has blessed you with everything. Just saying thanks to Him is not enough. How to show your gratitude? Utilize your life! Utilize your birth! That is the real way of showing thanks. The real gratitude is to make your human birth fruitful and

not be born once again, and go to Him instead. If you want to come again and again to the world, you could become an elephant, a donkey, a dog. You will get beaten, they will chain you, you will cry, it will be painful and there's no remedy. But now you know what the remedy is for it. You know how to come out of it. You know the way. But even if you know the way to come out of it, if you're not doing something about it and are not working for it, then what is the use?

“When we eat food for taste, it fulfils our hunger also. So even if we are doing bhakti for sukham, it will free us from the bondage of birth and death. It will happen very soon.”

To experience bhakti soukhyam you should have the aesthetic taste (rasikatvam). But if you don't have the aesthetic taste, at least you should do it mechanically. You cannot give it up saying that you do not have the taste. Motivate yourself like this... so many others are not able to wear colourful dresses. But I am able to wear! If you were blind and come sit here where someone is reading Bhagavatam, what would you think? Won't you think that if I had had eyesight, I too could have read Bhagavatam? But now when you do have good eyesight, do you actually read Bhagavatam?! One day if you are bedridden and someone goes to Brindavan or Badri, what will you think? If my legs were ok, I too could have travelled. But now when your legs are all right, do you go? That is the question.

“Human tendency is to think of everything after he loses the opportunity to do it. That is foolishness.”

We have to make use of the opportunity when we are fit and able to. When it is possible, do more shravanam (Listening to divine stories, lectures etc); when it is possible, chant more; when it is possible now, have more satsang. In all possible ways. You can throw the world away for anything. You should not throw divinity for anything. If you compare divinity and the world... the world is nothing! On some days, we may feel like chanting all day, listening to Bhagavatam, etc. But on other days we just don't feel like it. It is the nature of the mind. Some people are very good. If I ask them to read Bhagavatam, they will read Bhagavatam immediately. If I tell them to listen to

Bhagavatam, they will listen to Bhagavatam immediately. But if somebody comes and tells them, let's go to a movie, they will go to a movie immediately. If somebody comes and tells them, "Let's not go to the temple today, let's go to a wedding," they will go. This is called "chapalam", "sanchalyam" (wandering mind yielding to worldly temptations). Even if there is an opportunity for you to go see movies or do something mundane; if it is avoidable and unnecessary, with a strong mind, you should choose not to do it. In Bhagavatam, you see Dhruva. How did Dhruva realize God? Was he a garbhashrman (jnani by birth) like Prahlada? For the first 5 years, he didn't know what was meant by bhakti or Krishna or penance or forest! Only because of his strong mind, did he see Bhagavan.

"A strong mind is very important. If a strong mind is not there, any virtue will be of no use."

It was not possible for Jadabharata to overcome (his attachment to the deer) because he was not strong-minded. It was possible for Dhruva to overcome because he was strong minded. Have you heard of the man who once walked a tightrope between the twin towers in New York? It was not allowed and he did it illegally, under a lot of stress. How many people were going to watch from below! What will be the air force on that day at that altitude! Even a bird flying near him could cause him to lose balance! For the last 2-3 days before the walk, he never slept day or night. But he completed it. It was because of his drive to do it!

Meghanathan, a professor had a mission to accomplish. He wanted his son Sreevatsan to appreciate and be grateful for the comfortable life they were leading in one of the metro cities of India. They had all imaginable convenience and luxury at their disposal including the latest gadgets. He also did not want Sreevatsan to take any of these comforts for granted. One day, he suggested a trip to his native village Palayam. Sreevatsan (unaware of his father's intentions) happily agreed and they set about in his father's car. By evening, they reached the village and checked into a comfortable accommodation. After resting for a while, the professor suggested an evening walk to his son. They walked into the village absorbing the sights and sounds. On the way, they met the professor's childhood friend Balaraman. A delighted Balaraman, invited his childhood friend and his son home.

When they reached Balaramn's home, four or five stray dogs playing near the gate rose up to welcome them. Meghanathan shooed them away and put a protective arm over his son's shoulders, thinking he would be scared. The entrance to the simple house was low and they had to bend their heads to go inside. Unlike their city house, which boasted of a marble flooring, Balaraman's house had a simple cement floor. Meghanathan watched his son carefully to see his reaction on seeing such a simple house. He knew that this was unlike any of the city houses his son had been to.

A Tale For Children

The house was dimly lit with a bulb in the drawing room and one near the altar. Balaramn's elder daughter was praying in front of the altar, reading verses from an old edition of Srimad Bhagavatham. When she sang the "Gopika Geetham" from Srimad Bhagavatham. When she sang the "Gopika Geetham" from Srimad Bhagavatham, her mother and siblings joined in and sang along. Then Balaraman invited them to have a look at their small garden behind the house. There was no swimming pool like they had at their city house. Instead there was a well. A patch of vegetable garden and farther down, there was a stream. The dinner served later was simple home cooked food and vegetables were from their own garden. The food tasted divine.

After dinner they retired to the front court yard. It was an open area and they all sat on the floor talking and exchanging anecdotes. The night sky was lit with thousands of stars. When Balaraman insisted that they should spend the night in his house, they could not refuse.

Early next morning, they bid farewell to Balaraman and his family. Balaramn gave them a bag filled with fresh vegetables, all plucked from his garden. On the way home, Meghanathan and his son Sreevatsan were quiet for some time. Both were preoccupied in their thoughts. After a while, Meghanathan gently began, "Did you notice, Sreevatsan?, the village did not have any of the luxury or convenience that we have? Such a Spartan life they are leading"! Sreevatsan looked at his father and said. "Dad, did you notice? In our house, we have just one dog. They have four or five dogs to welcome them home! We have a swimming pool where the water always smells of chlorine!

They have crystal clear water in the stream! We drink RO water, whereas the well water they drink is naturally sweet. We are so used to having fans and lights throughout the day, but they can remain without them. And how can I forget the beautiful sight of the starlit sky in their courtyard? And, the delicious food cooked from the fresh vegetables produced by themselves”? They are so loving and affectionate to each other, praying together and having dinner together. We, in the city are confined within the four walls of our flat. Yes we have guards to protect us. They have clean air and food and natural light. Thank you dad, for showing me what we are missing by living in the city!! Had you told me all this, perhaps, I would not have realized!! But you being the best teacher clearly knew how to make me understand what we are missing!! You took me all the way to your village!! Thanks Dad, you have indeed changed the way I think!! You are indeed really great! Saying so, Sreevatsan hugged his dad.

The professor was speechless. He had intended to teach his son a lesson. But here was his son, speaking eloquently about leading a simple life!! He recalled the proverbial words of some great person, “ Child is the father of man”! Hiding the tears of joy threatening to jump out of his eyes, he hugged his son .

Yes, What Srivatsan said was correct. His dad was indeed the best teacher. “A true teacher is an eternal student of life”!

Blissful Blossoms

A Mahatma is fully aware of the merits and defects of all those around him. If they were filled only with defects he is fully aware of that, too. Yet he holds and leads them with affection. What is the reason behind this? Just as he is aware of their merits and demerits he is also well aware that it is not so easy for a jiva to win over Maya. That is why he never forsakes a jiva that has taken refuge in him.

However, when they commit mistakes he does not spare them. He repeatedly points out their mistakes only with the expectation that they will transform at least a little or at least realize that what they have been doing is wrong....

- Sri Swamiji

Sanskrit Word of the Month


पक्ष

SRI VISHNUPRIYA

PAKSHA

The sanskrit word 'Paksha' is well known, however, there are several meanings for this word too. The moment we hear the word 'Paksha', the first thing that comes to our mind is 'Krishna paksham', 'shukla paksham'. Yes, a fortnight of a month is known as 'Paksham'. Srimad Bhagavatam also quotes this, 'paksha: panchadhasaahaani shukla: Krishnascha maanada'

The 15 days from the new moon day till the full moon day is referred to as 'Shukla Paksham' that is, waxing phase. 'Shukla' means white. As the moon enlarges to its entirety and becomes white, it is known as 'Shukla paksham'. Likewise, the days from the full moon day to the new moon day is referred to as 'Krishna Paksham', the reason being, the moon wanes and turns black, giving darkness on the new moon day. 'Krishna' itself means black! Another meaning for this word is "wing". The wing of a bird is known as 'Paksham'. In the sloka in Srimad Bhagavatam "ajaatha paksha iva maatharam kagaa;", Vrithrasuran says to Bhagavan,, "Just like how the baby birds with undeveloped wings (ajaatha pakshaa), remain in their nest expecting the mother bird, I long for you.



Similarly, in the first canto, where Yudhistira speaks to Vithura, who returned back from 'theertha yatra', he says, 'api smaratha no yushmat pakshaschaaya samedhitaan' , "Do you remember us, who grew up safely under the protective shade of your wings?" Here, 'pakshaschaaya' means 'shade of the bird's wings'.

'Kaakapaksham' means the hair that remains on either side of the tuft of hair ('shikai') in small boys. Maybe, it is called so because of its resemblance to the blackish wings of the crow.

In Ramayana, when sage Viswamithra asks Dasaratha to give Rama, he says, 'kaakapakshadharam veeram jyeshtam me dhaathumarhasi', which means, Give me your eldest son, whose shiny hair locks resemble that of the black wings of the crow. It is because of the presence of wings(Paksham), the birds are called as 'Pakshi'.

The other meaning of 'Paksha' is one side. Generally, in an argument, there are two sides. This is known as 'Paksham'. That is the reason, when we say 'Poorva Paksham', it refers to raising a question prior to establishing the theory. Favoring one side(Paksham) in an argument is what we call as 'Pakshapaadam'. Prejudice in favor of one person is also known as 'Pakshapaadam', that is, being bias. 'Paksham' is what is colloquially changed to 'Pakkam'.

Gargar says to NandaGopa, 'Vishnupakshaan ivaa suraa:', that is, just like how the asuras cannot harm the Devas, who have Vishnu on their side, the ones who are devoted to Krishna, cannot be defeated by their enemies.



MATHEMATICS IN ANCIENT INDIA

“Like the crest of the peacock, the gems on the hoods of the cobras, Mathematics is at the top of Vedanga Sastras”

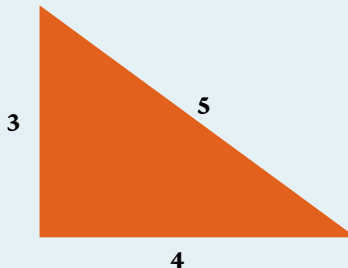
The above verse from Vedanga Jyotisa shows the importance given to the study of Mathematics in ancient Indian Society. No wonder we have produced some great mathematicians right from the Vedic times.

Theorem of Diagonals

The Vedic Sulaba Sastras explain the Theorem of Diagonals much earlier than Pythagoras.

आयाममायामगुणम् विस्तारं विस्तरेण तु ।
समस्या वर्गमूले यत्तत्कर्णम् तद्विदो विदुः ॥

Multiply the length (of the right angle) by the (same) length and the breadth by the breadth; the square root of the sum of these two (results) gives the hypotenuse; this is already known to scholars.



Place Value System

Everyone is aware that the place value system originated in ancient India. Aryabhatta of the 5th century says,

एकं च दशं च शतं च सहस्रं त्वयुतनियुते तथा प्रयुतम् |
कोट्यर्बुदं च वृन्दं स्थानात् स्थानं दशगुणं स्यात्||

Numerals are as follows 1, 10, 100, 1000...starting from 1. each number is obtained by multiplication by 10.

Number Palindrome

Ganitasarasangraha of Mahavira, gives an example of number palindrome:

अनलाब्धिहिमगुमुनिशरिताक्षिपयोधिसोममास्थाप्य |
शैलेन तु गुणयित्वा कथय त्वं राजकण्ठिकाभरणम् ||

Multiply **142857143** by 7 and obtain a King's Necklace. Purely numerical problem: **142857143 * 7 = 100000001**

Permutations

The ancient Indian mathematicians were familiar with the fact that the number of permutations of n things taken 'n' at a time is factorial n, i.e., the product: $n(n-1)(n-2)..... 1$

स्थानान्तमेकादिचयाङ्कघातः संख्याविभेदा नियथैः
स्युरङ्कैः

The following example is again taken from Bhaskara's Lilavati
पाशाङ्कुशाहिडमरुककपालशूलैः

खट्वाङ्गशक्तिशरचापयुतैर्भवन्ति |

अन्योन्यहस्तकलितैः कति मूर्तिभेदाः शम्भो.....:

Lord Shiva holds ten different weapons namely a trap, a goad, a snake, a drum, a potsherd, a club, a spear, a missile, an arrow, and a bow in his hands. Find the number of different Siva idols.



Positive Thinking

Many a time it may appear to us that we are the only ones who think positively.

Well! How can we pass on our positive thinking to another and make him also think positively? It will, indeed, be highly commendable if only we could achieve this.

Let us say that in a huge garden of grapes a single grape ripens. The smell of this ripe grape or the impact it creates would suffice to send message to all the other grapes that it is time for them to ripen.

By this very impact all the other grapes ripen. If like that first grape we become powerful – i.e. not only do we think positively but also pass it on to all around us – all would start thinking positively. Therefore, let us always take care to think positively.

MK Ramanujam

SNIPPETS



WE LOVED

Ahmedabad declared India's first heritage city by UNESCO

July 9, 2017
The Hindu

More than 600 year old Walled City of Ahmedabad founded by Ahmed Shah has been declared India's first World Heritage City, recognising heritage value of the walled city's unique heritage.

The World Heritage Committee (WHC) of UNESCO announced on Saturday late night following a meeting in Poland's Krakwo. Subsequently, India's permanent representative to UNESCO Ruchira Kamboj also tweeted. . "Thrilled to announce! Ahmedabad has just been declared India's first #WorldHeritage city by @UNESCO,"

The 5.5 km walled city area with approximate population of four lakh living in century old wooden residences in around 600 pols or neighbourhoods is regarded as living heritage and the UNESCO had preferred Ahmedabad's entry over Delhi and Mumbai, country's two main metro cities.

Ahmedabad's nomination received huge support from around 20 countries, who lauded the peaceful co-existence of dominant Hindu, Islamic and Jain communities in the Walled City area. Besides its architectural marvels of wooden havelis, the world community also stressed on the fact that the city was the epicentre of non violent freedom struggle that led to country's independence from colonial rulers in 1947.

SNIPPETS



WE LOVED

According to Ahmedabad Municipal Commissioner Mukesh Kumar, there are 2600 heritage sites and over two dozen ASI protected monuments and sites in the walled city which has been declared as the first World Heritage City of the country. In 2011, the city had figured in UNESCO's tentative list.

The civic body and the state authorities expect a huge boost to tourism in the city after the UNESCO's declaration. The city has now joined the privileged club of heritage cities like Paris, Cairo, Edinburg and two cities in subcontinent Bhaktpur in Nepal and Galle in Sri Lanka.

"For over 600 years, Ahmedabad has stood for peace, as a landmark city where Mahatma Gandhi began India's freedom struggle. It has stood for unity with its elegant carvings in its Hindu and Jain temples as well as standing as one of the finest examples of Indo-Islamic architecture and Hindu Muslim art. And beyond this, it epitomizes the United Nation's objective of sustainable development as it accelerates in its development," Ms. Kamboj said during Ahmedabad's inscription.

It took efforts of two decades to achieve the new status as Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) had set up Heritage Cell in 1996 to preserve heritage sites and restore those which were damaged. Prior to that in 1984, Ford Foundation had instituted a project to conserve city's heritage structures in the Walled City.

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