

Sri Hari:

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HH Maharanyam Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji

MADHURA SMARANAM

- DR A BHAGYANATHAN

Personal Secretary to Sri Sri Swamiji

Sri Swamiji wrote a letter to our satsang family after the Brahmotsav at Madhurapuri Ashram. I am sharing the same with you all.

Madhurapuri, 13th September 2018

GLORY TO OUR DISCIPLINE! GLORY TO OUR SATSANG!!

I am writing this letter just as soon as the Brahmotsav of Madhuri Sakhi Samedha Sri Premika Varadan concluded at Madhurapuri. I had written to you all that my wish is that the Janmashtami Utsav of Sri Krishna is celebrated at every Namadwaar and Kendra. I had also conveyed to you all that celebrating in your Namadwaars and kendras would give me more happiness and joy than all of you joining the celebrations at Madhurapuri. Each and every devotee abided to this wish of mine, like being bound by a mantra. All the devotees took part in the celebrations that happened

in their respective Namadwaars and Kendras. Not even one devotee decided in contradiction to my wish. Even devotees belonging to kendras and Namadwaars in proximity to Chennai, did not come. This devotion, obedience and discipline is our satsang's pride; this is our strength! In fact, there was a very small gathering at Madhurapuri this year. I was overjoyed in seeing photos, videos and reports from various Namadwaars every single day. Satsangs were organised on behalf of kendras every day. I was very pleased to read reports and see photos of the same. The most auspicious birth of our beloved Sri Krishna must take place in a grander way, in many more places, with many more thousands of bhaktas joining in, in the years to come.

This year, the Rathotsav of Sri Jagannatha and the Janmashtami utsav of Sri Krishna took place in a very grand manner. Many devotees have worked day and night to make this happen. They have dedicated their body, mind and soul to this most divine purpose. Bhagavan is closely observing this service that each of you are doing for Him. He will definitely bless us in abundance at the right time. Bhagavan holds the bhaktas who surrender to Him tightly with both hands and protects them. His Divine Name will never forsake us. The spirituality within us has been awakened. May this progress abundantly by the Grace of Hari Nama and Guru Seva!

All inadequacies disappear. And there is abundance everywhere, at all times!

Radhe Radhe!
Muralidhara Swamiji

We are aware that our mind is not pure. Yet, when we meditate on the Lord just for a while, we experience peace. It bestows peace of mind on us. While it is so, the pure minded Mahans are ever thinking of God: is it then a wonder if they always experience deep peace and bliss?

- Sri Sri Swamiji

What is the philosophy behind Divya Namasankirtan? What is the reason to include Gopika Geetam in it?

We are aware that Bhaktas hail the 10th Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam as the refuge ('aasrayam'). Here, five chapters – Rasa panchAdhyAyi – describe the Rasa Lila Lord Sri Krishna enacted with the Gopis. These five chapters in the 10th Canto, the refuge of Bhaktas, in Srimad Bhagavatam which is verily Bhakti shastra is considered to be the five pranas. These are indeed the base for the Divya Namasankirtan that is performed by Bhagavatas till date.

In this the Lord, at first, invites the Gopis to Vrindavan through His play of flute. Then, during the Rasa dance when the Gopis take pride in their fortune (of the Lord dancing with them) the Lord disappears – 'tatraiva antaradheeyate'! At the disappearance of the Lord the Gopis despair and pine for Him. Moved to height of yearning (viraham) and lost in the thought of Him they turn into Krishna themselves! In this state each Gopi thinks of herself as verily Krishna and all the Gopis together enact the Lilas of Krishna. One Gopi lifts her arm up treating it to be Govardhana hill and calls out to all 'I am verily Giridharalal! Come, I shall protect you from this rain! Another Gopi places her foot on the head of another Gopi treating her to be the serpent Kaliya and dances; while yet another Gopi plays the flute. In this

way 'tanmanaskA: tad lApaA: tad vichEshtA: tad AtmikA: | tad guNAneva
gAyanthyO nAtmagArANi sasmaru:' (तन्मनस्कास्तदलापास्
तद्विचेष्टास्तदात्मिकाः तद्गुणानेव नात्मागाराणि सस्मरुः) the Gopis
who had themselves transformed into Krishna (due to such deep thought of
Krishna) realizing that kirtan is the only way to see Krishna begin to sing the
wonderful hymn called 'Gopika geetam'. Pleased with the kirtan the Lord appears
before them ('tAsAm Avirabhooth source:'). Then the Lord performs Rasa dance.

The easy way to the Lord is not the various steps of Yoga nor
yaga nor dhyana nor other sadhanas. The simplest way to attain the Lord is to sing
His Divine Names even as one thinks of His attributes.

If the Name alone is chanted it is known as kirtan. Namakirtan
along with the thought of His attributes is known as bhajanam. It is verily
bhajanam when not stopping with just uttering 'Govardana Giridhari!' one
meditates on Gopala Giridhari and losing oneself in deep meditation the arms
move up as if lifting the hill! This is what the Gopis did! Just as the way they sang
Gopika geetam we also sing Gopika geetam in Divya Namasankirtan.

To do what the Gopis did on the disappearance of the Lord is
verily Divya Namasankirtan. That is why Gopika geetam finds a place in Divya
Namasankritan.

Mahans (great souls) who did parayana of Bhagavatam shaped
Namasankirtan tradition along this line. In Divya Namasankirtan we first bring
about the divinity (AhvAnam) of the Lord. Along with kirtan we enact (the scene)
and dance. There is absolutely no other reason for Gopika geetam to be part of
Divya Namasankirtan. Just as it happens in the Bhagavatam, here too, we take up
the feeling of (bhava) of Krishna disappearing; even as we are with the Lord, He
disappears! And, we sing Gopika geetam only to pray to Him to return. Just as in
the Bhagavatam, we enact the reappearance Krishna and perform Rasa dance and
kolAttam.

Divya Namasankirtan is nothing but the enactment of Rasa
panchAdyAyi. So, the need for the installing the presence of other deities does not
arise. Madrudanallu Sadguru Swami's tradition must also be following this
practice. Rasa of the Bhagavatam is indeed the testimony and basis for Divya
Namasankirtan.

Satsang

(Continuation of article that was published in September issue as excerpts from Sri Swamiji's discourse at Sri Pandurangan Temple, at Triplicane in Chennai...)

- DR A BHAGYANATHAN

Who are 'Hari daasars'? How do we identify them? Sri Sri Anna explains this in his kirtan:

'Daasoham kila haridaasaanaam
Naama smarana mathaanaam
Narayanapadha chithaanaam'

Sadhus are enchanted by Hari naama. Worldly people stay away from madness of any sort while Sadhus yearn for a maddening love towards Naama. They desire to chant naama effortlessly.

Hari daasars pray, "I would like to chant naama involuntarily just as I breathe. Like the dung cakes of Jana Bai and the pillars in Naama Dev's house, I would like naama to resonate all through my body. Can god or a mahatma bless me so I can attain such a state?"

A bhagavata in the highest state would endearingly hold on to the beautiful form of the blue-hued Lord with four arms, holding the conch, discus, mace and a lotus flower in his heart and will chant naama incessantly.

'Raga Dwesha Rahithaanaam
Radha Natha Sannihithaanam'

Sri Sri Anna says, "Sadhus are oblivious to differences. They are the embodiment of love without an iota of discrimination. They are immersed in kirtan in the holy presence of Sri Radha Krishna.

Tirelessly they sing kirtan and chant naama all day and night.”

Who are bhagavatas? Anyone holding a cymbal during a bhajan is not a Bhagavata. Bhajans are the way of life for a bhagavata. The dharma of a bhagavata is to perform bhajans in a fellow devotees home just like they would at their own homes. Sri Thyagaraja Swamigal sings “Divya naamamu Nithya nemamu...’

Sri Sri Anna sings about the state of a hari daasar,
“Prema pooritha hrudhayanaam
Brahmanandha nilaiyaanam “

We all aspire to be happy and peaceful, free of sorrow, jealousy and discrimination. don’t we? Meditating on one who has these qualities will bestow that state on us.

Why do we have to meditate on Lord Krishna? He is the personification of love, eternal truth and bliss. On meditating on the Lord, we would also be transformed to the highest state where we remain unaffected by sorrow, anger, fear etc.

Jadabharatha’s story in Srimad Bhagavatam shows that he was undisturbed even when one tried to behead him. Jnanis are in a perpetual state of bliss as they meditate on the peaceful Lord. When we are in the presence of such a jnani, the peace and happiness that radiates from them fills us.

Hari daasars are Jivan mukthas. Srimad Bhagavatam often quotes ‘Parivraja Paramahamsa’ and ‘Bhagavata paramahamsa’. The saints, Kanchi Mahaperiyava Sri Chandrasekharendra Swamigal, Sringeri Sri Chandrasekhara Bharathi Swamigal are ‘Parivraja Paramahamsas’. They perform dhyana of pranava, Brahma vichaara and keep wandering from one place to another.

Saints such as Sri Bhagavan Naama Bhodendral, Sri Balakrishnananda, Sri Narayana Theerthar, Sri Sathguru Swamigal are ‘Bhagavata paramahamsas’. Being in the state of a paramahamsa, they

perform Naama sankirtan and Srimad Bhagavata katha sravanam incessantly. Srimad Bhagavatam calls Rishabha Devar and JadaBharathar as Jivan Mukthas in the state of 'Bhagavata paramahamsas'.

Upanishad quotes Brahman as "Tasya Priyameva Sira:"

The head of Brahman is made of love. Brahman is bliss, wisdom and love. One who is established in the Brahman showers love on everyone regardless of the recipient's innate abilities.

When one wants to play ball and there is no one around, they start playing by bouncing the ball on a wall. Similarly when the compassionate jnani desires to shower grace, he does not wait for the right person but showers it on everyone.

Some sit in solitude in a forest to do Brahma vichara. They fear being reborn on earth and do penance on their own to attain moksha. But bhagavatas, visit our homes without waiting for an invitation from us and let naama ring in our ears.

Bhagavatas visit samsaris in towns, cities and foreign countries and chant naama in their homes. When they visit our homes, we half-heartedly allow them to chant a few naamas but they do a big favor by filling our homes with naama.

Once Sri Sri Anna said, " Today a lot of bhajans are performed in Chennai. We all know the earlier state of Chennai and Tamilnadu and how bhagavatas such as Sri Sanganna, Sri Kothanda Rama swamigal, Naat Annaji Rao resuscitated it."

Despite kali's rampage, countless bhagavatas like Sri Kothanda Rama Swamigal who built this Pandurangan temple and Hari mama have their beginnings in this temple. Pandurangan's blessings guided the bhagavatas so they can visit houses and perform bhajans.

Sri Swamiji concluded the lecture saying that this Pandurangan temple is well-known for the innumerable bhajans and naama sankirtan that have taken place in the premises.

Aashada Ekadasi – Ekadasi in the month of Aadi! That too in the holy abode of the Lord at Vittalapuram! Premika Vittalan was elated to see so many of his devotees assembled in his name at Vittalapuram. Our beloved Guruji had also reached there in the early morning itself. What more was required? The entire place was surcharged with religious fervour and celebrations, with the names of the Lord hitting the heavens like thunder! Nectarine music was pouring everywhere. Seeing the beautiful, blue-hued Lord Vittal, Sri Swamiji and devotees were dancing gracefully with the elegance of a peacock. The name of the month 'Aadi' which rhymes with the Tamil word for dancing, probably got its name for singing and dancing the names of the Lord Vittalan.

Stairway to Bhakti

- M K RAMANUJAM

On that day, many new wonderful songs poured forth from Sri Swamiji. One of those songs was 'Punniya nadhigalil neeradiduvai' which elucidates the steps in climbing the ladder for attaining devotion. It is the quintessence of all devotional scriptures and points the way to attain fulfilment in this life and be liberated. Very aptly, the song has 18 stanzas since is not 18 itself a symbol for victory? Is not maya (Nescience) the most difficult to win over? Since these stanzas make a road map to secure victory over maya they are probably 18 in number.

'Janthoonaam narajanma durlabham' – This human birth is very difficult to attain and it is in this human birth that one can reach God. So it can be said that the very purpose of human birth itself is to become one with God. In the prevailing environment that we are living in, the easiest way to attain God is through devotion. The celibacy required for the path of yoga or the purity required for the path of action or the dispassion required for the path of Jnana are simply not present in us and we have no other alternative than seeking the blessing of Lord Hari and follow His path of Bhagavatha dharma.

How do we steadily progress in the path of devotion in our day to day lives? How do we attain divine knowledge and make this life fruitful? Sri Swamiji answers these questions in this hymn. Once we reorient our lives in line with the messages of this hymn, it is certain that we shall reach God. Now we shall see this Madhuraageetham song in detail.

rAgam: kharaharapriyA

tALam: Adi

1. Punniya nadhigaLil nlrAdiduvAi
shrlhari kshEthrangaLukku sendriduvAi

2. Alaya kainkaryam seidhiduvAi
NilaiyAna bhakthiyudan irundhiduvAi

3. Thannalamatra sEvai seidhiduvAi
Pirar nalamendrum pEniduvAi

4. sAdhukkaL sangatthai adaindhiduvAi
Palavidham nalladhai kEttiduvAi

5. Utthama guruvum thEdi varuvAr
avarpadham panindhu sEvai seidhiduvAai

6. uchithakAlatthil guru upadEsam seidhiduvAr
EkAdasi vratham irundhiduvAi nlyE

7. andru thUngAmal klrthanam seidhiduvAi
Hariyin kadhaigaLai kEttiduvAi

8. Hariyin gunangaLai pAdiduvAi
Hariyin rUpatthai kandiduvAi

9. avan uruvai uLLatthil kondiduvAi
Panivai endrum kaikkoLvAi

10. Thunivudan mAyai edhirtthiduvAi
kAmakrOdhangalLai vittiduvAi nlyE
11. Piraridam kutram pArAdhiruppAi
Un kutratthai pArkka maravAdhiruppAi
12. Ulagatthai hariyin lllayAi pArthiduvAi
akanda nAma smaraNam seidhiduvAi
13. Urakkam sOmbal thavirtthiduvAi
Thannai thAnE pugazhAdhiruppAi
14. Pirar pugazhndhAlum kELAdhiruppAi
Ulaga sugatthai thucchamendiruppAi
15. Unmai sugatthil nAttamAi iruppAi
bhAva lakshaNangal vaLarndhidumAm
16. prEma bhakthiyil sidhikkumAm
yEn ippadi endru kElvigal kELAmal
17. Bhakthi yEni padigaLil yEriduvAi
Thattu thadumAari palamurai vizhundhAlum
18. pidivAdhamAi nl mIndum mIndum muyandriduvAi
akandAnubhUthiyil kalandhiduvAi

Progress in the path of devotion is only possible through the grace of a Sadguru. But is it so easy to secure the Satsang of a Guru without acquiring merits in millions of births? Before we reach a Guru... no no., before a Guru comes to us, it is imperative that we should sincerely seek God isn't it?

How does this travel along the path of devotion begin in a worldly sense? One could be wondering as to why we say 'worldly sense'?

In which he says that by His causeless Grace, whoever the Lord resolves that his present birth be his last, only that person gets devotion through the association of saints and gets liberated from samsara. Hence progress, or even a beginning in the path of devotion, happens only through the grace of Lord Achyuta. But this may not be very obvious from a worldly sense!!

Hence Sri Swamiji describes the first step in the ladder of devotion as 'Punniya nadhigalil neeradiduvai'- Take a dip in the holy rivers.

He begins with the word holy. Only with faith in the scriptures does one get an understanding, that taking dips in holy rivers yields lot of punya (religious merit).

Apart from their inherent holiness, the holy rivers have been sanctified by great spiritual teachers and devotees of God, Jnanis and saints over the ages. We have already taken the first step when we also bathe in these rivers and thus have climbed the first step in the ladder of devotion.

'Punniya nadhigalil neeradiduvai' – All the sacred rivers flow in this country Bharathavarsha only. So even to bathe in these rivers, one should have earned lot of merit. Hence it can be said that the rivers are holy because only holy people can bathe in them and bathing in them also makes one holy.

Due to association with Lord Rama and Lord Krishna during their incarnations and also association with divine murthis like 'Periya perumal' (Lord Ranganatha) and 'Deva perumal' (Lord Varadharaja), these rivers are holy.

Association with great Brahmarishis and Rajarishis like Agasthya, Viswamithra, Vasishta, Valmiki, Vyasa, Jadabharatha and Ambaraesha have also made them holy.

Association with the great spiritual masters of the past like Sri Adishankara, Bhagavath Ramanuja, Sri Madhwa, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Sri Bodhendral, Sri Sridhara Ayyaval, Sri Sadhguru swamigal, Sri Vallabhar and of the present masters who are immersed in devotion and wander around only for the benefit of humanity, have also made them holy.

Association with the 'ashta dasas' (the eight disciples of Purandara dasa), Annamacharya, Mother Meera, Kabir, Namdev, Sadasiva Brahmendra, Narayana theertha, Vijaya Gopala swami, Thyaraja swami have also made them holy.

WEAKNESS

I happened to visit a wild life reserve. The forest area looked beautiful with lush greenery around. As luck would have it, I spotted a herd of beautiful deer frolicking around.

“ Did you know that the deer has a weakness”? Its weakness is its instant attraction to sound”. The deer can run very fast and give the hunter a run for his money. But the hunter, fully aware of the deer’s weakness would blow his horn and make a sound. Alerted and attracted by the sound the deer would stop for a moment to listen to the sound. At that precise moment, the hunter would aim his arrow and catch the deer. Its weakness brings about its downfall.

At a distance I spotted a herd of elephants walking majestically. What a beautiful sight!! The sheer size of the elephants perhaps gave them this confidence to walk without a care in the world! But did you know that elephants too have a weakness. Their weakness is the sense of touch or the desire to be touched by the female elephant . This is the way elephants are caught from the forest and domesticated for use by men. A female elephant is made to stand at a distance from the male elephant and in between the male and female elephant a huge pit is dug to trap the male elephant when it makes its move.

As I walked ahead, I spotted a serene pond in the reserve. People were sitting on the sides of the pond with the fishing hook in hand. The hooks were loaded with baits to tempt the fish in the pond. A fish's weakness is its sense of taste. In a bid to taste the food kept as bait in the fishing hook, it gets trapped in the fisherman's net.

The pond had lots of lotus flowers in full bloom. Attracted by the exotic fragrance of the lotus flowers, a swarm of beetles were circling the lotus and dipping inside to drink the nectar. Little were they aware that with the setting sun the lotus flowers would close and they would get trapped inside to meet a certain death. The sense of smell is the weakness of the beetle.

As I walked out of the reserve, the evening chill had set in. Looking to have a sip of tea, I chanced upon a group of people lighting a bonfire to make a pot of tea.. As the fire blazed in the makeshift stove, a swarm of moths came very near the fire, attracted by the bright light. Some of them fell into the fire too.

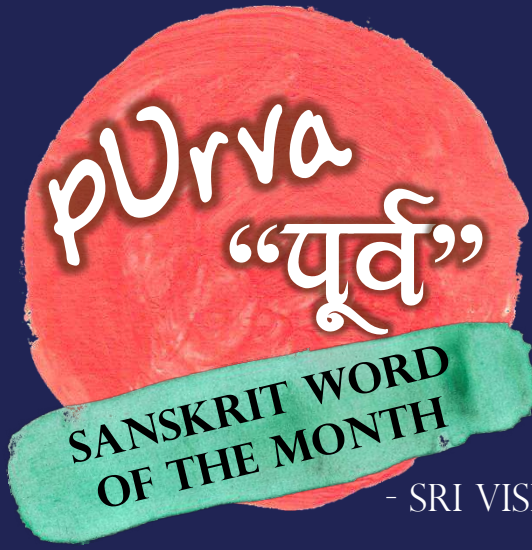
As I walked home reminiscing the sights , It dawned on me that GOD had kept ONE weakness for every living being, which would ultimately bring about its downfall. But take the case of human beings, we are pulled by our five senses in all directions. How are we ever going to rise above this and achieve the purpose of our life?

Shri Adi Shankara, the venerable seer has lamented about this in his unparelled work "VIVEKA CHOODAMANI":

Verse 76

Shabda AAdibhi: Panchabhi: Eva,
Panchatvamapu: Swagunena Badha:
Kurangamatangapatangameena
brunganara:Panchabiranjita kim||

शब्दादिभिः पञ्चभिरेव पञ्च
पञ्चत्वमापुः स्वगुणेन बद्धाः ।
कुरङ्गमातङ्गपतङ्गमीन-
भ्रुङ्गा नरः पञ्चभिरञ्चितः किम् ॥७६॥



The word pUrva means 'earlier' or 'at first'.

The word 'pUrvaja' refers to the first born, that is 'Anna' the big brother.

While describing about Sanakadhi Rishis, Srimad Bhagavatam says, pUrvEshAm api pUrvajA:, meaning, the ones born prior to all those who were born earlier. Being the mind-born sons of Brahma, they are the earliest ones of all.

In the sloka of the eleventh ashtapadhi Sri Jayadevar says "pUrvam yatra samam tvayA rathipathE: AsAthithA siddhaya:", that is, 'Krishna awaits you at the same place where He enjoyed with you earlier', says the sakhi to Radha.

pUrva also means east. 'pUrvadhik' denotes the eastern direction. That's the reason the word 'pUrvAchalam' refers to the mountain located in the east from where the sun rises up.

There's a term called 'pUrvapaksha' in the sastras. When two groups are in a debate, the argument presented by the first group is called 'pUrvapaksha', for which the opposing group presents a rebuttal. This is quite popular in Vedanta.

Then there's this beautiful word called 'pUrva bAshi'. 'pUrvabAshi' refers to the one who initiates the conversation with loving enquires while coming across known people, without expecting the other to start the conversation. Srimad Ramayanam says that Rama was a pUrvabashi.

pUrvaphalguni is the name of a star. The star 'pooram' is what is known as pUrva phalguni.

Finally, lets look at the word 'pUrvarAgam'. This word 'pUrvarAgam' is often found in literary works. The love that emanates in the heart of the 'nAyaka' and 'nAyaki', even before their first meet, just by hearing about each other is called pUrvarAgam. That is the love(rAgam) that arises even before the initial meet(pUrvam). Radha hears the name of Krishna prior to seeing Him in person. Then she hears the music of His flute, then she listens to her sakhis talk about Him. Instantly, tremendous love spurts in Radha's heart for Krishna. This is what is known as pUrvarAgam. This pUrvarAgam of Radha has been beautifully described by many poets and Bakthas in their nectarine works.

SNIPPETS WE LOVED

Divine words can defeat diabetes, says research

August 31 2018
Times of India

A team of researchers including doctors from Osmania General Hospital (OGH) has found a 'spiritual' way to heal diabetes, and the source? The Gita.

Researchers say that the communication between Arjuna and Lord Krishna as enunciated in Bhagavad Gita could be utilised to cope with illness, especially chronic diseases such as diabetes. They are pointing to the verses (slokas) of Bhagavad Gita, which talk about various situations in life.

"The Gita points out negative situations and goes on to showcase positive coping skills suggested by Lord Krishna and implemented by Arjuna," the researchers said. Stating that diabetes is a lifestyle disease, which warrants a thorough change in one's lifestyle, including changes in basic activities such as diet and exercise, the researchers said utilisation of the teachings of Bhagavad Gita could help cope with it.

The study published in the Indian Journal of Endocrinology and Metabolism had doctors and researchers drawn from several hospitals and research institutes within and outside the country. The foreign experts were from Dhaka Medical College Hospital and Mitford Hospital, Dhaka, Bangladesh, and Aga Khan University Hospital, Karachi, Pakistan.

“The Bhagavad Gita is more than a religious or philosophical text: its 700 plus verses offer insight into every aspect of life and are universally relevant,” the researchers said adding that upon diagnosis, a diabetic victim may experience a sense of grief as he often has to part with some of the most beloved things in life. “He has to be motivated to exercise restraint, change lifestyle and comply with medical advice. Self monitoring of blood glucose and insulin administration are not perceived well by most. That is where Gita comes in.”

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