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MadhuraMurali

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MADHURA SMARANAM

My Guru As I See Him

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(...contd)

In the last year, many of our prayers may have been answered by God, some prayers may yet to be answered. If our prayers go unanswered, we are beset by doubts. Many questions like 'Is our method of worship not correct? Will the effect of my sins and punyas only overcome my prayers and work? Does God have no mercy? Does he not have the mercy to come down and bless me?', arise in our mind. If we ask God for something and he does not give it to us, it is for our good only. Our mind is never stable; It is by nature very fickle. Our thoughts vary from day to day. My thought is different an hour before, it is different now. This weary, oscillating mind is unaware of what the morrow holds for us. In case we happen to ask God for something and he gives it to us and if we are beset with difficulties because of it, we will fight with God and ask him, 'Just because I asked did you have to give it?' Nachiar beautifully mentions this in Tiruppavai, 'Yaam Vandha Kaaryam Aaraindhu Arulelorembavai'. She says, 'Analyse the prayer I put before you. If that would be harmful to me, please don't bestow it on me'.

A child is sick with indigestion, colic and fever the whole night. It has great difficulty breathing. The next day, seeing an ice-cream vendor passing by on the street, it cries and demands that it's mother buys him an ice cream. Will any mother buy and give? Only she knows the discomfort experienced by the child the whole night. However, being a small child, the child will feel, 'My mother has no compassion towards me, she doesn't love me, she isn't a good mother. She doesn't get me what I want'. However, that is not the truth. If one mother itself is like this, how will God who

is equal to a thousand mothers be? He is full of compassion and mercy for us, and will do only that which is good for us. Infact, in a way, it is better that all our prayers don't get answered.

A wanderer was walking in the heat of the day. Having walked for quite a while, he was in need of some rest. He saw a huge tree. It was unkempt with overgrown branches and weeds. He thought, ' This tree provides good shade. Let me rest for a while' and sat down to rest. Having travelled for a while hunger gnawed his stomach. He thought, 'How nice it would be if there is food to satisfy my hunger'. Surprisingly all his favourite dishes started appearing before him. He couldn't believe his eyes. He ate enough to satisfy his hunger and thought it would be nice to lie down and rest awhile. But he thought, ' The ground is full of stones and thorns'. The next instant, a lovely sandalwood cot with mattress appeared. He lay down on it and slept. When he awoke it was dusk already. It was pitch dark. There wasn't a soul in sight! He thought to himself , 'I am all alone! What will happen if four strangers come and beat me up?'. The next instant he was thrashed by four people. He thought and it happened!

Is it good for all our thoughts to materialise? Is it possible to regulate the thoughts that come into our minds? At times we observe our minds and wonder why thoughts of jealousy, competition arise in our minds. Why are our thoughts not pure? Why don't we have good thoughts? When our thoughts are not in our control, it is not good for all our thoughts to materialise.

In a beautiful Tamil pasuram 'VAAYINAAL PAADI MANADHINAAL SINDHITHU', Nachiyar puts forth a philosophy in the lines 'POEYAE PIZHAIYUM PUGUDHARUVAN NINDRANAVUM THEEYINUL THOOSAAGUM SEPPAELOREMBAVAI' . Man is affected by three types of karma - karma from our actions in many past jenmas(births), karma in this birth that we have done till this date, and karma that we are going to do from now till our death - Andal classifies them as three - PRARABDHAM, AAKAMYAM, SANCHITHAM. If we chant the Lord's name,

all three karmas will burn to ashes. As in, those sins will burn down. Andal also beautifully teaches us how to say the Lord's name. To repeat a mantra over and over again is called JAPAM. To sing it with a tune is KEERTANAM. Andal refers to BAJANAM when she says in Tamil, 'VAAYINAAL PAADI MANADHINAAL SINDHIKKA'. When we chant the name of the Lord, his thoughts should fill our mind. That Is called BAJANAM. If we keep thinking of the Lord as we chant his name, all our sins leave us and disappear.

If we do 'Nama' Sankeertan, Lord never pushes us away. He longs for you to take one step towards him. He is waiting for you to chant his name. Do not assume that good things happen only to those who do punya, one who visits one temple after another, one who does good deeds, one who takes dips in holy rivers, a disciplined man, a gentleman, or an honest man. In fact, Lord blesses one who makes a sincere attempt also. A divine poet says, 'DEIVATHTHAL AAGAADHENINUM MUYARCHITHAN MEIVARUTHTHAK KOOLI THARUM' - (meaning- Even If God cannot, true attempt will give requisite merit).

In a place in the coastal area, along the seashore, there was a tree. Several birds had built their nests and were living on it. There was a male bird and a female bird among them. They were full of love for each other. They were so close. They ran their family with such mental harmony. At one point of time, the bird laid eggs. The birds left the eggs in their nest and flew out in search of food. One day, the sea tides surged and the waves rose high and rushed inland. The eggs of the bird was also washed away into the sea. In the evening, The birds returned home and not finding their eggs started crying They were in agony not knowing the fate of their eggs. The male bird consoled the female bird saying, 'Don't worry! We shall draw out the water from the sea with our beaks and find our eggs wherever they are.' Both the birds happily started drawing out the water with their tiny beaks; Seeing this action of these birds , the other birds mocked them and called them fools. They asked, 'Do you know the depth of this ocean? How much water it holds? The

waves are so huge. How much water can you take with your tiny beaks?'. The two birds ignored these taunts of the other birds and continued to do what they were doing. They neither lost hope; nor did they abandon their attempt.

At that time, a sadhu saw those birds and asked them what they were doing. The birds replied, 'The sea has taken away our eggs. We are drawing out the sea water with our beaks, so that the sea dries up soon and we can retrieve our eggs'. The sadhu also started laughing and said, 'Please give up your attempt, this is impossible. How long can you stay alive! Do you even know what the state of the eggs underwater is going to be? A sea creature could have eaten up the eggs, or it may have rotten. What you are doing is an act of stupidity. Please give up'. Hearing this the birds got angry and said, 'We have been called fools by so many birds and people. We expected you to understand us. But you are also calling us fools. However, we are not going to listen to you. We will continue our attempts'. Saying so, they ignored him and started drawing out the sea water. Seeing this, the sadhu put out his hand and taking out the egg from the sea gave it to the birds. The Lord had indeed come there in the guise of his devotee! Why did the Lord bestow his grace on the birds? Did the birds pray to the Lord for anything? Did they chant his holy name? No! The Lord will appear by himself where there is continued efforts with faith.

Do whatever you can however much you can. The Lord will take care of the rest. Thoughts like, 'I can't do this. How is it possible?' should not arise. I will try as much as I can. If I do so, it is the Lord's responsibility to take care of the rest.

There are a lot of divya desams in and around Chennai. Baktavatsala Perumal In Thirunindravur, Veeraragava Perumal in Thiruvallur, Vijayaragava Perumal in Thirupatkuzhi, Parthasarathy Perumal in Triplicane, Nityakalyana Perumal in Thiruvidadandai to name a few. There is Sthalasayana Perumal in the avatara sthala(birthplace) of Boothathazhvar. There are many divyadesams where Perumal is in a reclining formas Govindarajan in Chidambaram, as Ranganathar in Srirangam, as Vadabadrasyee in Srivilliputhur, as Vaithamanidhi Perumal in

NavaTirupathi, as KolaValvil Ramar in Thiruvelliyangudi, as Valvil Ramar in Pullabudhangudi, as Ranganathar in Thiruthetriambalam, as Appakudathan in Koviladi.

The story of this sparrow and that of this Sthalasayana Perumal aren't any different. Sthalasayana Perumal reclines with both hands on either side. A baktha named Maharishi Pundareeka will be near the lotus on the Lord's Holy Feet. If he came across anything that was very beautiful, pure and precious, he would not want to enjoy it, rather he would want to offer it to the Lord. The moment he saw something good, his first thought would be that it should be offered to the Lord. Once he went to bathe in a pond. He saw a thousand-petalled lotus in full bloom in the pond. The Lotus is considered a divine flower. That is why when the Lord is being described, His face, arms, legs, nose are all compared to a lotus and he is described as a forest of lotuses. The moment he saw that wonderful lotus he desired to offer it at the Holy Feet of the Lord at Thiruparkadal. He wondered 'How can I go to Thiruparkadal? Isn't there an ocean at Mamallapuram? If I keep drawing out the water from there with my hands, I can reach Paarkadal. How beautiful and befitting it would be to offer this thousand-petalled lotus with such a divine fragrance at the Lotus Feet of Parandama(the Lord)!' He started drawing out the water of the ocean in Mahabalipuram with his bare hands. He truly believed that if he continued to do that, he would reach Paarkadal.

A few days went by. A few months went by. An old Tirumal Baktha came there and said, 'I am hungry, if there is some good food available nearby go and get me some'. Pundareegan replied, 'I am involved in a divine work right now, I cannot go to bring food for you'. The baktha said, 'I am an old man. I cannot walk far. Please go for my sake. If you want until you return, I shall draw the sea water with my hands'. The old man drew out so much water as if emptying half the ocean and showed Pundareegan. Pundareegan was delighted that the old man worked better than him. He went to some nearby villages and asked for some food for the old man and brought the food back. When he returned the old man was nowhere to be seen. But the Lord himself as

Vaikuntapathi was reclining there. As he made that place itself as his bed(sayanam), he is known as Sthalaasayana Perumal there. Pundareegan placed that lotus at the Holy Feet of Perumal. Today the temple in Mahabalipuram is the place where Perumal actually reclined. The lotus is still there. Pundareegan is also there. What do the stories of such divyadesa vaibhavas indicate? Whatever we are able to do, we should continue to do with utmost conviction. We have not been blessed with hands, legs and brains to be lazy. If we do whatever we are able to, the Lord will complete for us what we are unable to do. Whenever possible, we should keep chanting the nama.

We read in the charithra of Badrachala Ramadas that nama brings back to life a dead child. In the charithra of Gorakumbhar, he regains his severed hand. There are thousands of charithras where dead children come back to life. If we ask - is all this possible by chanting nama, it is possible! They controlled their senses, chanted nama 24 hours, 365 days to the exclusion of everything else. So it happened to them. To the extent that we chant nama, it will also happen to us. Bakthas like Gorakumbha, Badrachala Ramadas, Thiyagaraja Swamigal, Janabhai, Namdev, Thukkaram, Meera -they all chanted the nama like how we breathe. They were unable to separate themselves even for a minute from nama. God blesses us according to the extent of our bakthi.

We go to the temple full of worry, the priest there while giving us prasada says 'Don't worry, everything will be fine'. We feel it is God himself talking to us. The garland falls from the deity's neck- we feel it is God giving us his blessing/permission. When we do the circumambulation of the temple, the topic of conversation between two strangers happens to answer the question in our mind. We feel God is talking to us. When we open a newspaper cutting in which the temple prasada is wrapped there is a news snippet that gives an answer to a question in our mind. For a few others, God appears in their dream or dhyana and talks to them. As we increase our bakthi more and more, God comes closer to us. We should keep increasing our nama count constantly. No harm will ever come to those who chant the nama.

Lord Hanuman stays with every person who chants the nama and protects them.

**BUDHDHIR BALAM YASHO DHAIRYAM NIRBAYATHVAM
AROGATHA**

**AJAATYAM VAAKPADUTHVAM CHA HANUMATH
SMARANATH BAVETH**

There is none as brilliant, strong, powerful or successful as Hanuman. He has everything. Tulsidas lived in Varanasi. He has written the Ramayana in Hindi. Everyday he would sit on the banks of the Ganges, read the Ramayana he had written and do a pravachan on it. Thousands of people would come and enjoy his pravachan. There were some residents of Varanasi who were jealous of the popularity enjoyed by Tulsidas. They wanted to somehow destroy Tulsidas and approached a magician who practised black magic and told him, "Use some manthra and make Tulsidas go mad". They paid him a huge sum for it. The magician prepared a talisman and practised a lot of evil mantras on it. After 48 days, he called those people and said, "Put this talisman in a place where it will touch Tulsidas's head. He will go mad". They were all scared to touch it with their hands for fear of going mad themselves! They told the magician, "You only practised the mantra, so you go place it yourself". At midnight, unobserved by anyone, with his face and head covered, he kept the talisman on the roof of Tulsidas's hut. He told the people that, "When Tulsidas leaves the house in the morning to bathe in the Ganges, the talisman will touch his head and he will go mad". The people who had planned this were eagerly waiting for dawn to break and to hear the good news of Tulsidas gone mad. They sent some people to check the status. They learnt that Tulsidas was as usual doing Rama Nama japa and Ramayana parayana. They were furious that they had been duped by the magician. They wanted to confront the magician and rushed to his house. The magician had gone mad! He was roaming around in the streets. There is a name for Hanuman in Tamil - 'Sollin Selvan'. One meaning is one who is fluent with words. Another meaning is one who goes wherever Rama Nama is chanted. When Tulsidas was constantly chanting Rama nama and Ramayana how could

Hanuman have not been there? Hanuman had been observing the magician keep the talisman in Tulsidasa's house. Once he moved away he took the talisman and put it on his head itself. He went mad. In this way, Hanuman always stays with us who chant nama and protects us..

So many of you have eagerly come from various countries and various places to participate in this mass prayer. People all over the world should be happy; India should prosper; India should become a powerful nation in all possible ways; There should be good rains, farmers should not face any difficulties and Tamil Nadu should be a peaceful haven; The people of Tamil Nadu should consider themselves as members of one family. Let us pray in general that each family, every individual should have all prosperity and live a happy healthy life. Following that, there will be several specific prayers in the minds of all who have come here regarding marriage, children, home, loans, business, etc. I shall give you some time. Close your eyes and sit calmly. Faith is greater than God. God is ready to give you all that you desire. You should be prepared to receive. Some people come to me and say, "Swamiji life is difficult". When I ask them what is the difficulty they just repeat "It's difficult". You should decide what you want with clarity. There should be no confusion. Be clear in your minds about what you want.

When you pray for yourselves, pray for your family members too. There may be people you dislike. Pray for their welfare also. May your mind be magnanimous and open. God's grace falls first on the mind that is open and magnanimous. His grace does not fall on narrow minds. Make your minds magnanimous. Let your prayers to God be with magnanimity and conviction. I will also pray along with all of you. Close your eyes for five minutes and with a one-pointed mind like dhyana, pray. Bring your prayer repeatedly to your mind. Once we open our eyes let us all chant the mahamantra together. Let The ever-merciful God bless us all.

There was a learned man. He was learned in the vedas and shastras; a very disciplined person; he had an aura about him. He was an ayurvedic doctor. Many people had gotten ayurvedic treatment from him and gotten cured. He had great bakthi for Kanchi Maha Periyava. He had gotten upadesa of Sri Vidya manthras and was doing japa of them. A beautiful image of the divine form of Devi, a beautiful idol of Ambal, the Sri Chakra were all part of his daily pooja in his house. He had been doing the Devi pooja diligently and religiously for many years. As his life was progressing in this manner, he proceeded for darshan of Kanchi Maha Periyava. He was bothered by a thought since many days. It could even be called a disturbance or worry.

Periyava was at that time camping very far away from Tamilnadu. He wanted to somehow tell Periyava what had been bothering him for quite awhile now. If he did so he was sure he would get a solution to the issue. He reached Periyava's camp and prostrated before him. Periyava welcomed him affectionately and discussed various topics like Shastra, ayurveda etc with him. Then he asked , "You have travelled so far to come and see me. What is the matter?" He slowly told Periyava about the anxiety in his mind. "I worship Devi everyday. However in spite of having done pooja for so many years, my mind hasn't attained one-pointedness. I am unable to control my mind. So I am unable to do the pooja with a focussed mind. I am both ashamed and concerned about this. I keep asking myself if I should continue to do pooja without one-pointedness", he went on to say. As he was saying, his eyes filled with tears, his voice broke and he broke down in tears.

Confusion precedes Clarity

Maha Periyava asked him what all idols had he kept in his pooja. Shastri replied that he had a picture of Devi, an idol and Shri Chakram. Periyava then asked him the procedure of worship he followed and Shastri explained in detail his everyday rituals. Hearing this Periyava said, "So Devi must be happy and with full sanctity!" . Shastri replied "No doubt about it. I feel her sanctity when I do the pooja itself". He continued "Not only that. All those who come home also feel Devi's sanctity. They have placed many prayers in Devi's altar and she has fulfilled them all".

Hearing this, Periyava stayed silent for a while and then said, "I feel that in spite of being so learned in all shastras, there is no greater fool than you". Hearing this, Shastri was shocked. His face fell. He started crying. Periyava had always praised his knowledge of shastras. Now he has himself spoken thus.

Seeing his state, Periyava started talking in a majestic voice, "If you had believed with full conviction that Devi was present in your pooja with full sanctity, would you not have created a ruckus and cried out aloud to her to control your mind and make you do focussed pooja for her? Instead of that, you have travelled so far to come and tell me about it! Did you doubt whether Devi was actually present in your pooja or not??"

The moment Periyava said this Shastri could not control himself. He got the answer like a slap on his face. He fell at Periyava's feet and sobbed.

After a while, Periyava spoke to him like a child and said, "I spoke to you harshly only because I wanted it to sink in. Nothing else". So saying he gave prasad and sent him on his way. Shastri who was suffering from the inability to control his mind in spite of his pooja had a clear mind now.

RASIKA AND THE ELEPHANT

M.K.Ramanujam

(A Marathi Bagavata named Bagavatha Mahipathi has blessed us with a grantha "MAHA BAKTHA VIJAYAM" in the Marathi language. It is a compilation of the charithra of several great bakthas. Isn't it only apt that this grantha was done by a person belonging to Sant Thukkaram Maharaj's lineage? One charithra from that grantha that steels our minds is that of a baktha called Rasika Murari. We know in puranas of the bakthi done by Sri Gajendra Azhwar, and more recently the elephant Kesava in Guruvayur who did bakthi and attained Lord Krishna, similarly this is a story of the grace bestowed by him on an elephant! The Rasika And The Elephant is a poignant and amazing story)

The kshetra of Mathura in the north is completely filled with the sanctity of Lord Krishna. Murari was a baktha who belonged to the village of Chaya in that region. His life-breath was in the service of Vaishnava bakthas; the bakthas and bagavatas were his God; his greatest dharma was service to them. It was his daily routine to bathe in the nearby Yamuna river and do ritualistic worship of Lord Krishna. Following the pooja, he would invite the bagavatas in town and do 'paadha pooja' (worship of feet) with love and respect, partake of the holy water of their feet, serve them food and eat the prasada as his food. Isn't it the characteristic of a great bagavata to look upon other bagavatas as the walking form of Bagavan himself! Murari considered them likewise and worshipped them.

His loving nature drew a lot of disciples towards him. Wanting to let them also enjoy the great fortune, he let those disciples do paadha pooja of Bhagavatas and partook as prasad that holy water of the Bhagavata's feet.

Life passed by sweetly for Murari and his disciples. One day, in the group of Bhagavatas invited for worship that day, there was also a Bhagavata afflicted by leprosy. There was a repulsive odour from his body. There was pus on his feet. The disciple who went to worship him was not mature enough. He ignored him and did paadha pooja of other Bhagavatas and took the holy water to offer to his guru Murari. Murari also eagerly drank it. The next minute he called all his disciples and what he told them shocked everyone.

"Why didn't the water from the holy feet of the Bhagavatas that I took not taste like nectar today? Why wasn't I able to relish it today? Did one of you doubt the greatness of the padha pooja of the Bhagavatas? Please check amongst yourselves and answer me!" said Murari to his disciples.

The disciple who had ignored one Bhagavata alone was shocked! He built up courage and went up to his guru Murari and with folded hands, downcast eyes and stammering words told him, "Please forgive me. I did not worship a leprosy-afflicted bagavata. I worshipped all others. I did so because I saw his stinking, pus-infected feet."

The moment he heard this, Murari went up to that Bhagavata and did his paadha pooja himself and partook his paadha theertham. Immediately he said, "Wow!! It is only now that the prasad tastes divine!" As everyone looked upon Murari as a mahaan who had as prasad only the sand and water from the holy feet of Bhagavatas, he came to be known as 'Rasika Murari.

Only great mahans by the grace of the guru are aware of the greatness of the water and sand from the holy feet of Bhagavatas, isn't it? Our 'Rasika Murari' had a Sadguru called Sridhayarnavar. A special elephant also came and stayed with Rasikar. This elephant became a Bhagavata who had given up religion. Let's see this wonderful event next time.

(Sri Swamiji's Madhura Geetham Bakthi Enippadigal is a true companion for us to experience the purpose of a satsang. This madhura geetham is similar to the description of Lord Rama as 'PRASANNA GAMBEERAM' - meaning a simple but attractive outward appearance, but a significance like the depth of the sea)

STAIRWAY TO DEVOTION

- M.K. Ramanujam

- 04) Saadhukkal Sangathai Adaindhiduvai
Pala Vidham Nalladhai Kettiduvai.
- 05) Uththama Guruvum Thedi Varuvar
Avardham Panindhu Sevai Seidhiduvai.

Sadhus are those who, in the presence of bakthas ready to hear, will narrate stories describing the divine leelas of the Lord, in the presence of Bhagavathas ready to narrate baktha charithras, will eagerly listen to those stories, and in a solitary state where both are absent, will be immersed in bliss with the names and thoughts of the Lord!

Such a satsang with sadhus is possible only by the sheer grace of the Lord. When we get such a satsang, the best thing to do would be to listen to the stories they say with the intention of spiritual progress and not just for punya by darshan and to remove worldly thoughts by their proximity. So, Sri Swamiji sings about what has to be definitely done in a satsang: "Pala Vidham Nalladhai Kettiduvai".

By constantly hearing about the Lord, the greatness of bakthi and the nama, a spiritual desire, to be blessed with at least a little bit of bakthi, will rear its head. That will take the form of a true prayer. Bagavan will also pay heed to it and bestow his grace ! Yes! A sadguru will come in search of us! Just as was the case of King Parikshith, Dhruva and Prahlad, we will also be blessed with a 'uttama guru' by the causeless mercy of the Lord. Is it even possible to measure that good fortune with words? Similar to how there is no child without a mother, no vision without eyes, no meaning without words, no cure without medicines, so also there will never be realisation without a sadguru.

Sri Swamiji sings 'Uttama Guru'. An uttama guru makes a uttama disciple complete just by his mere kadaksham (sight). An uttama Guru, bestows realisation through devotion to the Lord in Bagavata Dharma. An uttama guru is one whose mere thought gives us Hari bakthi; An uttama Guru is one the connection with whose Lotus Feet completely quenches our thirst for worldly matters; An uttama guru is one whose service seems enough, drives away the desire for moksha; an uttama Guru is one for whom only love gushes forth no matter what.

In the eleventh canto of Srimad Bagavatam, the characteristics of an uttama Guru are mentioned.

"KSHAABDE PARE CHA NISHNADHAM BRAHMAN YUBASHAAMASHRAYAM" - meaning one who is an expert in our vaideega Vedas, Puranas, Ithihasas and Shastras, and who has fully realised God, who is the abode of serenity, he is an uttama Guru.

How fortunate are we, if that **uttama guru** comes in search of us and showers his love and grace on us!

Bakthi shastra says that such a guru should be loved like one's own soul and worshipped like God. Let this be on one side. If one is blessed with such a **sadhguru**, it is said that the disciple automatically tends to worship him with great love and respect!

A **uttama** disciple will make the service to his guru the aim of his life. A **madhya** disciple (medium) will aim for **moksha** through service to his guru; a normal disciple will do **kainkarya** for his worldly welfare.

Sri Swamiji sings "**AVAR PADHAM PANINDHU SEVAI SEIDHIDUVAI**" ..implying the service to be done by a disciple to his guru.

"**AVAR PADHAM PANINDHU**" means "with no malice, true, devoid of the feeling of 'I', humble, respectful and with care; it also means realising truly that any service done is only possible because of his grace (similar to saying "**AVAN ARULAAL AVAN THAAL VANANGI**")"; "**Padham**" means his real form, guru's **padham** (feet) is verily the feet of the Lord Hari; It means we should serve the **sadguru** as we would directly serve **Bhagavan** - with fear, love, respect and eagerness. **Srimad Bagavatam** also talks about 'seva' in the lines "**AMAAYAYA ANUPRADAYA...**"

This step is sufficient for a **uttama** disciple. **Sri Swamiji** describes how the guru's grace will further enhance...

(Steps will continue)

A Tale For Children

BOAT OF LIFE

Gopakumar worked as a manager in a company. He was a very virtuous and responsible person; intelligent; capable of ably managing his team; although he had so many virtues, he had one big drawback. He was short-tempered! So his colleagues secretly named him **KOPA KUMAR**(Kopa in tamil means anger).

A sadhu in a satsang that he went to, advised him to take a break and practise dhyana in solitude. He went to a tourist spot. It wasn't crowded because it was 'off-season'. There was a beautiful lake. He rented a boat and sitting in the boat in the midst of the lake he practised Dhyana (meditation). Calm surroundings; a silence enhanced by the sporadic chirping of birds. Gradually his mind also calmed down. It was then that an incident happened.

As he was sitting with his eyes tightly closed, he felt his boat being banged by another boat. Gopakumar got slightly irritated. However, hoping that the other boatman would leave on his own, he continued to stay with his eyes closed and tried to pursue his dhyana. The knock knock sound distracted him again; he kept quiet; when the sound repeated three, four times at regular intervals, he lost his temper.

Thinking to himself furiously, "See what I do to that senseless boatman", Gopakumar opened his eyes and was shocked! The boat which was banging against his was an empty boat! Now, who had made him angry? Who could he be angry at? That instant, Gopakumar realised that his anger came from inside. He was the sole reason for his anger. He immediately returned home and reformed.

As we sail on the boat of life many irritating incidents are caused by empty boats. Once we realise that, we can reach our destination with ease.

pruthu

प्रुथु

SANKSRIT WORD OF THE MONTH

Sri Vishnupriya

The word प्रुथु means 'big', 'spacious', 'plenty/surplus' etc. In Srimad Bagavatam, in the story of Mathsya Avatar, Bagavan first appeared as a small fish. A king named Sathyavrata brought the fish in his 'kamandalu' of water. But the fish kept growing daily. It told the king "PRUTHU DEHI PADHAM MAHYAM YATH THVAAHAM CHARANAM KADHAA" - "Give me a big(pruthu) place. I have sought refuge in you", it said.

Similarly, Sri Sukar says - "Shankadhoorya mrudangaanaam Vaadhithraanaam pruthu: svana:" - when Ksheerabdi was churned, and Lakshmi Devi appeared and garlanded Sri MahaVishnu and married him, instruments sounded loudly.

When Lord Krishna danced the Kaliya Nardhanam, it is described as - "आनम्य तत् प्रथुशिर स्वधिरूढ आध्यः" . Meaning, after controlling Kaliya, Krishna stood on his spacious hood and then danced, he says.

It is well known that there was a king named Pruthu in Srimad Bagavatam. His story comes in the fourth skanda. "जातो नारायणाम्शेन प्रथुराध्यः क्षितीश्वरः", King Pruthu appeared as a manifestation of Lord Narayana himself. He was the first king. When talking about him, Bhagavatam sings his praises using the word "Pruthu" itself. पृथुश्रवाः - meaning one with great fame, पृथुपराक्रमः - one with great strength, पृथुकीर्तिः - one with a great reputation, etc.

This earth got the name of 'Pruthvi' only because of an important act of Maharaj Pruthu during his avatara time. Bagavatam looked upon BhoomaDevi as a cow, milked her and said, "सर्वकामदुग्धाम् पृथ्वीम् दुदुहुः पृथुभाविताम्". So, BhoomaDevi becomes Pruthu's daughter. Therefore she got the name 'Pruthvi'.

Whoever rules this earth called 'Pruthvi' and runs the kingdom, that king has been called 'Parthiva'(पार्थिवः)

The word Pruthuka (प्रुथुक) has two meanings. One meaning of pruthuka is 'beaten rice'. It is referred to as 'pruthukathandala'.

Dhamu Seth and Konabhai prayed to Lord Keshavraj not just for a boy who would worship him but went one step further and prayed for a son who would propagate the namsankeertan way as a means for all living beings to easily attain the Lord. What noble parents were they who selflessly prayed for a son to worship the Lord and show the way to people lost in samsara! How would an ordinary child be born to such noble parents!

Mahaans can clearly identify and state the manifestation of which avatar of the Lord each mahapurusha is. Sri Ramanujar is said to be an avatar of Adishesha and Sri Vedanta Desika is said to be an avatar of the bell of Tiruvenkatamudaiyan. So also, the one who appeared as Prahlada in the Kruta Yuga and taught nava vidha bakthi(nine forms of worship), who appeared in the Treta Yuga as Angad and made Lord Rama happy with his devoted service, who appeared in the Dwapara Yuga as Udhdhava and served Lord Krishna, he himself appeared in this Kaliyuga in Pandarpur as

Sri Namdev

Maharaj

Shiv Kanya - Shri Kanya



Namdevar to teach people the greatness of Namasankeertan. This has been stated by devotees like Janabhai, Eknath Maharaj in their abhangs(Marathi keerthans).

A tulsi leaf gives out a distinct fragrance from the moment it appears on a plant. So also, Namdev grew up with love and devotion to Lord Pandurang from childhood and unlike other children, his smartness, his playfulness were all directed to Panduranga only.

Namdev accompanied his father Dhamuseth everyday to the Keshavraj temple and observed his father's worship of the Lord. He would give his father the necessary things for the worship. He would gather flowers. He would fill a small vessel with the water drawn from the well by his mother and give it to for 'tirumanjanam' (divine bath)of the Lord. He would make sandal paste with his tender hand. During the worship, when his mother Konabhai brought 'neivedyam'(food offering to the Lord), he would also bring a small bowl of milk. When his father stood in the sanctum of Keshavaraja and did namakeertan, Namadev would stand nearby and play the cymbals(jalra) to that tune.. In this way, young Namdev grew up seeing the worship of Keshavraj, and a desire slowly arose in his mind. The desire being, that having watched his father's worship of the Lord, he also wanted to do 'tirumanjanam' of Keshavrāja, adorn him with 'vastras'(clothes), decorate him with flowers, do the pooja, and offer nivedhana(offer of food to the lord).

One day, he went to his father and told him of his desire to do pooja for Lord Keshavaraja.Dhamu Seth was delighted but told Namadev, "Namadev! You are a small boy! You are just five years old now. You can't even reach upto the sanctum dais. You can do pooja of the Lord once you grow up". But Namadev wasn't convinced by his father's words and went out and, with the clay lying outside, he made an idol of Panduranga. He did pooja for that Panduranga just how his dad worshipped Keshavrāja at home, and alongwith

other children said "Vittal Vittal" and jumped and did bhajan and experienced bliss. However the desire to do worship of Lord Keshavraja never left him. Everyday he would plead with his father for the same. Lord Panduranga himself did a 'leela' in this regard.

Once, Dhamu Seth went out of town for business. He was unable to return home immediately because the work did not get over on time. In Pandarpur, Konabhai was getting worried because she did not want the pooja of Keshavaraja to be disturbed because of this delay. So she called out to Namadev who was playing in the street and said, "Namdev! Come here. Your long-awaited desire is going to be fulfilled today. Dad hasn't returned home from work yet. Won't Keshavraja be hungry? We can't keep him waiting. Therefore, today you will have to do the pooja of Keshavaraja".

Hearing this, Namadev was very happy and ran to the Chandrabagha river had a bath and got ready for the pooja of Keshavaraja. Konabhai applied the 'gopi chandan' on Namadev's forehead, adorned his neck with a tulsi mala, tied a silk cloth on his waist and took him to the sanctum of the Lord. Namadev held his mother's hand tightly with one hand and with the other hand enthusiastically carried the necessary things for the pooja, walked fast with his tiny feet, eager to do pooja for Keshavaraja.

(to be continued)

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