

SRI HARI:

# MADHURAMURALI

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

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Rama

# MadhuraSmaranam

**MY GURU AS I SEE HIM**

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This year on the Kalpataru Day, 1.1.2019, the Mahamantra mass prayer conducted by our Swamiji, happened in a very grand manner. Around 7000 devotees participated in the satsang and did Mahamantra kirtan. It is to be noted that many devotees from all over Tamil Nadu and abroad joined the satsang and did Mahamantra kirtan with Sri Swamiji. The administrators of Sri Krishna College were generous in offering the college premises. The great efforts of our Tirutani and Arakkonam Namadwaar coordinators, Sri SriHari and Arakkonam Sri Srinivasalu Naidu in facilitating this huge gathering of thousands of people from that area is commendable. Around 1,50,000 devotees were benefitted by participating in this satsang through the webcast.

On behalf of GOD INDIA TRUST, Sri Muraliji (Vallabadas) has been taking the Mahamantra to almost ten lakhs school students in and around Tamil Nadu for the past ten years. In recognition of his ardent service, Sri Swamiji blessed him with prasadam.

Here, we share the benedictory message given by Sri Swamiji on that day.

“It is by the absolute compassion of the Lord that we are blessed with this wonderful satsang today. Mahamantra kirtan is not new to us. We, along with our satsang friends, sing this Mahamantra every day. Throughout the year, Mahamantra mass prayers are conducted in several cities and villages. Yet, the mass prayer on every Jan 1st is done on a large scale across various cities in Tamil Nadu. The first mass prayer was held in Kamaraj Arangam in chennai and in the subsequent years, was conducted in Tuticorin, Periyakulam, Tanjore, Dindukal, Vellore, Kalatipet, Chennai,

Thriukoshtiyur, Madurai and this year it is happening in Arakkonam. May be it is the will of the Lord to make us sing Krishna's divine names, in an institution that is named as Krishna, that, very aptly, this mass prayer is happening on the premises of Krishna Institutions.

Before we begin the prayer, expressing our gratitude to God for all that He has bestowed upon us is called Bakthi. We have got a human birth, which is the rarest of the rare. All the religious texts emphasize this truth - 'Aridhu aridhu maanidaraai pirathal arithu'. Thanks to God, who has given us this human birth. It is God's highest blessing for us to be born as a human being on earth. The human birth is an opportunity to get rid of all the accumulated effects of karma as much as possible.

May we thank God for giving this human birth on a land where Lord Rama and Krishna, Azhwars, Nayanmars, and numerous Mahans continue to incarnate generation after generation; where holy rivers like Ganges flow, where there are sacred texts like Srimad Ramayanam, Bhagavatam, Bhagavad Gita, where a religion thrives since time immemorial!

If we look back into our roots, we could infer that we belong to the lineage of a Rishi. The blood that runs in our body is that of a Rishi. Gratitude to the Lord for this greatest fortune.

We see countless people suffer due to various reasons. We do have compassion, mercy and willingness to help them. Nevertheless, let us offer our gratitude to God for blessing us with a good life.

Once we start thanking God this way, we can go on and on. The fact that we are awake today, breathing, walking, sitting, talking, eating, and the food getting digested, all these happen merely by the Grace of the God. Whether we see it or not, realize it or not, nothing happens without the Grace of the God. Let us start this prayer meeting by thanking God for all the good things that He blessed us with in the year 2018.

This city is known as Arakkonam. Every place in Tamil Nadu has a significance and is named for a reason. The city of Arakkonam, is surrounded by six holy kshetras in six different angles, hence 'Aaru konam' (six angles) is colloquially



called as Arakkonam. A palace is normally protected by a fortified wall. Likewise, these six kshetras enfold this city thus shielding it like an armor!

It is mentioned in the puranas that are seven holy kshetras that can grant liberation. It is said that if a person is born in any of these kshetras, or just visits it once, lives or if he quits his body, he is sure to attain liberation. Not just humans, it applies to even a plant, creeper or animals. Ayodhya, the birth place of Rama, Mathura, the birth place of Krishna, Dwaraka, the city ruled by Bhagavan, Haridwar, the place where Ganges originating from Gangotri flows rapidly and touches the earth, Kasi, Ujjain, Kanchi are the seven Mokshapuris. Out of these, six cities are in North India. The only Mokshapuri that is in Tamil Nadu is Kanchi.

The mere utterance of the word Kanchipuram, brings forth in our minds, the thought of the towering Vimana of Varadaraja Perumal temple. That vimana is called as 'Punya koti vimana'. There are 24 steps in the 'Athigiri' hillock where Varadaraja resides. There are 24 aksharas in Gayathri Mantra. These staircase of Varadaraja symbolically points to these 24 letters. Varadaraja Perumal, who is known as Devaperumal, along with His consort Perunthevi Thaayar, resides in kanchipuram and blesses one and all. Along with Lord Varadaraja, we are also remembered of someone. It is none other than the one who dedicated his life for Varadaraja and celebrated the Lord with all his heart, the one who is revered by all as Emperumanar, Ethirajar, Bashyakarar.the great avatar purusha, Sri Ramanujar.

While travelling to Kasi along with his Acharya, a plan was devised to finish off the life of Ramanujar. Ramanujar's first cousin Govindan was also travelling along with him. Coming to know of this plan through him, little Ramanujar, managed to get out of that place and entered into a lonely forest. While being in this quandary of unfamiliar forest, unknown place and people, a hunter couple appeared before Ramanujar and guided him in the right way. On the way, the couple said, "Narrate the story of Ramayana in your sweet voice". We wish to hear it from you" saying so, they walked along, covering the entire distance overnight, which

normally takes months to reach. They said, "Look! Do you see that Punyakoti Vimana?" That is Kanchipuram. You may go!" It was Lord Varadaraja along with Perunthevi Thayar who had come in disguise and brought Ramanujar to Kanchipuram.

Ramanujar stayed back in Kanchipuram and engaged himself in 'Theertha Kainkaryam' (fetching water from the well) to Varadarajar. One thousand years is not to be assessed just by the calendar. What would have been the situations prevailing in India before one thousand years? What would have been the conditions in Tamil Nadu? How about the mentality of the people of those times? What about their lifestyle? The revolution done by Ramanujar one thousand years ago is a remarkable one.

What is the most important quality of an Acharya? Should he be well educated? Should he be God-realized? Or an exemplary orator? Should he possess abilities to alleviate others' pain? Or should he be the one who shirks from people and prefers to be aloof in a lonely cave. In the 'pallandu pasuram' the verse goes like "naadum nagaramum nangariya namo Narayanavenru". A true Guru or an Acharya is the one who has an insatiable urge to help every single being connect with God in every possible way.

Once there was a head of a mutt. He decided to choose his heir to take care of mutt's responsibilities after his lifetime, and called upon his chief disciples and said, "I have decided to hand over the mutt's responsibilities to one of you. Please tell me what will you do if you are take up such a responsibility? One of them replied, "The present economic conditions of the mutt is at stake. I would go on a yatra to various places, earn money and would open a Corpus Fund with that". Another one added, "The interest rates are going down these days. Hence, corpus fund might not be a good option. I would construct many buildings and rent it out" While all the disciples were pouring out their suggestions this way, there was one disciple who remained silent all the while. The head of the mutt called him and asked, "What would you do?" There was a calf nearby. He untied the calf and brought it to the mother cow. Without a word, he symbolically showed what he would do!

The Lord always longs for us, His children, to ever think of Him and come in search of Him. While it is so natural for a mother and father to wish their children to come to them and ever be in their proximity, how intense would be the wish of the Lord, who is indeed the father of the entire world. Understanding this wish of the Lord, the one who is capable of bringing all the people, if possible, all the living beings, to the Lord, he alone can be an ideal Guru.

That is what Ramanujar did a thousand years back, by climbing on top of the Thirukoshtiyur temple tower, and giving the 'Narayana' Nama to everyone without any discrimination. Imagine the protest that this would have raised in those times. "Wouldn't he think of God? Wouldn't he somehow attain liberation? Wouldn't he become the recipient of God's Grace?" With these intense thoughts, embracing everyone and taking them all to the abode of God is what is said to be a revolution as done by Ramanujar.

It is great even if 100 or 200 people come together to listen to the commentaries of Bhagavad Gita or Upanishad. Even when listened to such lectures, how much is understood remains a question. In spite of understanding, it is uncertain that one will put it into practice. Even if practiced, one can't be sure of the actual experience, because, Vedanta is a tough subject. Around one thousand people come to listen to Ramayana, Bhagavatam, Mahabharat, life histories of Bhaktas. As of today, the total population of India is 130 crores! Out of these 130 crores, would it suffice if just 100 or 1000 attain the Lord? We see lakhs of people gathering for Vaikunta Ekadashi in Srirangam, for makara jyothi in Sabari Mala, for Soora Samharam in Thiruchendur and for Thiruvannamalai Deepam, In Tirupathi, lakhs of people are coming every day. The path of Bakthi, that embraces one and all, is Temple worship! It is through this temple worship that our religion can be saved; Ramanujar, knowing that faith in God can be instated only through this, ensured that the divya desam temples are well protected during his lifetime itself. This was the main purpose of his incarnation.

Going past the Kanchipuram Varadaraja temple, there is Kamakshi amman temple, the Goddess of worship for all Acharya Purushas of Kamakoti Peetam. Seshadri



Swamigal, an advaita Jnaani, incarnated in Kanchipuram. He was born in Kanchipuram, then went to Ranipet and finally reached Thiruvannamali via Valaja and remained there. Kooram is a place near Kanchipuram where Koorathazhwar incarnated. Thoopul is where Desikar incarnated. Dasarathi Mudhaliandar incarnated in a place nearby Kanchipuram. Madhuramangalam is the birth place of Embar. We are reminded of each of these Mahatmas.

Many Mahans have appeared on this land. Each of their life is superior in its own way; commendable and wondrous one. The life of Adishankara, who was born in Kaladi in Kerala, travelled all the way from Rameshwaram to Kasi, and reinstated our Sanathana Dharma in just 32 years of his life, is extraordinary. The advaita philosophy presented by him is also commendable. Azhwars, Nayanmars and numerous Bhaktas have talked about the greatness of Nama. Many songs from Devaram speak the greatness of Nama. 'Kadhalagi kasindhu kaneer malgi oadhuvaar thammai nanerikku uypathu, vedam naangilum meyporul aavathu nathan naamam namashivayave! These verses of Devaram and many such padigams are filled with greatness of Shiva nama. All the songs contained in the Divyaprapandhams of Azhwars, speak the glory of Nama. "Paadeer avan naamam vaadaa malar kondu veede peralame" says Sri Nammazhwar. Thirumangai Azhwar talks about the glory of Narayana naamam. Thirumangai Azhwar, in his entire work of Thirumalai, glorifies the divine names. He says, while people in the hell go through immense suffering, even an accidental utterance of Narayana Nama would turn the hell into heaven. What he means by that is "Those who even heard the name of Narayana, cannot remain in the hell and must go to the heaven at once. As they no longer deserve to be in hell even for that time lapse during their transit from hell to heaven, the same hell gets transformed into heaven!"

Many devotees have glorified and rejoiced in the divine names, yet the one to coin a philosophy for Nama, stating that, "Nama alone can yield liberation. There is no need for Dhyana, yoga or a study of various texts. Incessant chanting of Nama alone will do. The Divine names of the

Lord, when chanted repeatedly, as much as possible, can lead one to liberation”, was Sri Bhagavan Nama Bhodendral, who also incarnated in Kanchi Kshetra.

Nama is sweet; simple; it can grant the fruits very easily; there are no rules for Nama; anyone can chant; can be chanted anywhere and at all times. Despite being so sweeter, simpler and a path free of all rules and regulations, a question arises in our minds that why people are hesitant to follow this path. ‘Should I not be sitting for hours and do pranayama? Is it not required to renounce the family and take up sanyasa or go to the forests and remain aloof from the rest? Can we attain liberation merely by continuous chanting of the Divine Name? Just because this path is too simple, there are very less takers. This could be the only answer to all these questions. Generally, amongst the people, there is a blind belief that only a path that is fancy and hard can yield greater results.

At the time of dawn, a woodcutter starts his journey by climbing on a mountain, wandering hither and there around the nearby forests, getting bruises in his hands, thorns slashing his feet, just to cut off few tree branches, tie them up and carry the load on his head and then finally sells it to a merchant. Climbing the mountains in the morning, it takes about evening for him to come back. Depending on the weight of the wooden logs, around hundred or five hundred rupees will be handed over to him. Another man, runs an agency. All that he needs is a small room, a cell phone and a chair. He receives a call that someone needs a specific thing. He contacts another person and sells the stuff to him. He gets a higher commission. The woodcutter is the one who exhausted himself from morning to evening under the hot sun with thorns pricking his hands and legs. But what he earned was much less. But the one who sold a product over the phone received a huge sum of money. Bhagavan Nama is exactly like this.

Do not think that we can achieve bigger only by doing bigger tasks. At the same time, do not ignore Nama just because it is simpler! It is filled with greatness. A nuclear bomb that is capable of destroying an entire nation is very tiny. Can we ever ask, ‘How can such a tiny bomb destroy a



country?" It is getting destroyed! We do see! Likewise, if we start chanting the divine names, it will destroy all the sins accumulated in this birth. It will turn our mind towards goodness. It will change our life. We will start feeling the Grace of the Lord within. Bhagavan Namakirtan is such a simple path. To formulate it in a way that everyone can accept, is called philosophy. That is what Bhagavan Nama Bhodendral did. Thus Kanchi, the prime amongst the seven Mokshapuris, is situated on one side of Arakkonam.

On the other side, we have Thiruthanigai, Thiagaraja Swamigal, Shyama Sastrigal, Muthuswamy Deekshitar are known as the trinities of Music. Muthuswamy Deekshitar, who was born in Thiruvavoor, stayed for a while in Manali and was taken over by his Guru Chidambara Yogi and went to Kasi. At the time of attaining siddhi, his Guru ordained him to go to Thiruthani and disappeared in the Ganges. As he reached Thiruthani, Lord Muruga taking a form of a small boy, placed a sugar candy in his tongue. Following that, many nadopasana kirtans sprouted from his heart. The Mudhra(signature) in Thiagaraja Kirtans is Thiagaraja. The kirtans of Shyama Sastri contain the mudra Shyamasundhara Sodhari Gowri. Muthuswamy Deekshitar's kirtans contain the mudra 'Guruguha'. That is because, Muruga residing in Thiruthani is his Guru. Thiruthani is not a separate arupadaiveedu (the six abode of Lord Muruga). It is a representation of all the hills where Muruga resides.

Vallimalai, located next to Thiruthani is where Valli lived and took care of the millet field. There is a rock where Valli used to sit and grind turmeric. If we place a wet cloth on this rock, where Valli ground the turmeric, it would turn yellow. Also, there is the cave where Lord Muruga wedded Valli.

There is a link between January 1st and Thiruthani. The sole reason for Thiruppugazh to be so popular till date is Vallimalai Swamigal. His parents did not have child for long. Since they begot a child as a result of their penance towards the Lord of Thiruchengottai, the child was named as Ardhanari. To take up the job of a cook, Ardhanari went to the King of Mysore. At that time, he was inflicted with severe stomach pain. The pain did not alleviate with any kind of

treatment. He cried in despair. One day, Pazhani Muruga came in his dream and invited him to Pazhani. The moment he went to Pazhani and had the darshan of Balakuraman, he was relieved of his stomach pain. Hearing Thiruppugazh being sung by many devotees in the sanctum of Balakumaran, he became engrossed in it. From then on, he served Lord Muruga by staying at the foothills of Pazhani, then he went to Thiruvannamalai and spent some time with Ramana Maharishi and later settled in Vallimalai with Seshadri Swamigal as his Guru. It was Vallimalai Swamigal who gave a musical format for thiruppugazh. When he was seated alone in Vallimalai, he happened to hear the divine songs of the Gandharvas and Devas. Hearing that, Vallimalai Swamigal gave various tunes to Thiruppugazh. Valli Devi appeared in front of him as he sang Thiruppugazh. On seeing Valli, he asked, "Who are you", for which Valli replied, "How does it matter to you?" He said, "when I see you, bhakthi overflows in my heart. Valli then said, "since devotion overflows in your heart on seeing me, then know my name to be Pongi(that which overflows). So, there is a temple for Pongi Amman and the Samadhi of Vallimalai Swamigai is also there in Vallimalai.

Just like how our Satsang devotees all around the world, wake up at 4am and sing Mahamantra kirtan out in the streets, Vallimalai Swamigal was singing Thiruppugazh. As usual, when he started out to sing on the 1st of January, he found that none of the accompanying singers turned up. It was the time of British rule. A person nearby said, "Today is the first day of the year. Each of them had gone to offer their respects to their chief. That is the reason nobody turned up for Nama sankirtan". Vallimalai Swamigal replied with a smile, "When they go to see their chief, shouldn't we go and see our chief? Let us go to Thiruthani", saying so, he went to Thiruthani and started the custom of padi thiruvizha(step festival) which is celebrated on the 1st of January. Since then, this practice is being followed till date. The steps of Varadaraja temple constitutes the 24 aksharas of Gayathri Mantra. The 60 steps of Swamimalai, symbolize the 60 names of the tamil years. The 365 steps of Thiruthanigai signify

every single day in a year. Thus, this town is surrounded by such sacred kshetras like Vallimalai, Thiruthani, Kanchipuram, Thakkolam, where Dhakshinamurthy is in a dancing form, Thiruvalankadu, where Natarajar is seen switching his leg while dancing, Sholingar and Thirupathi.

Born in a village called Kamarpukur in West Bengal, Ramakrishnar, who was doing pooja in a Kali Temple built by Rani Rasmani, spent his days in a place called Panchavati in the kali temple by crying, yearning and pining for God day in and day out, performed his spiritual practices and later on, afflicted by a disease, stayed in a place called Cossipore Gardens in Calcutta. It was a time when he could not even walk and was bedridden. He was all skin and bones. But, something extra ordinary happened on the 1st of January. Despite such a condition, triggered by a divine spark of energy, Ramakrishnar went and stood under a tree nearby and looking at everyone gathered there, he said, "You all can ask whatever you want. I shall grant you", saying so, he generously granted each and every one, all that they wanted. That day is being celebrated till today as the Kalpataru day by the disciples of Ramakrishna. In line with that, we also conduct this mass prayer on the 1st of January every year.



# STAIRWAY TO DEVOTION

- M.K. Ramanujam

**‘SAdhukkal sangathai adaindhiduvAi  
Pala vidha nalladhai kEttiduvAi**

Actions that are done without any selfish motive and made as an offering to Lord Krishna are said to be known as Karma yoga by saints. Krishna says in the Gita, “You have a right to duty only, not to its fruits. At the same time don’t avoid your duties and be lazy.”

There is no charm in a life where one only lives for himself with the ‘I’ ‘I’ ‘I’ feeling. He would not have a proper relationship with his relatives and the grace of the Lord also will also be missing. But by the practice of karma yoga, one would be blessed with the benign glance and grace of the Lord which will bring lot of goodness in life. This benediction is possible only by the grace of the Lord.

Many saints who were able to get the darshan of Krishna had asked only for the boon, “Please grant me satsang”. By proper practice of karma yoga, Krishna will bless us with this satsang. This is what Swamiji sings as “SAdhukkal sangathai adaindhiduvAi”. Satsang is the only way to attain Lord Krishna. Those who attain Krishna also pray only for Satsang.

Lord Krishna tells his dearest friend and devotee  
Uddhava,

“Na rodhayati mAm yogo na sAnkhyam dharma Eva cha |  
Na svAdhyayas thapas thyAgo nEshtApUrtham na dakshinA ||  
VrathAni yagnyashchandAnsi theerthAni niyamA yamA: |  
YathAvarundhe satsanga: sarvasanghApaho hi mAm” ||

Oh Uddhava! I cannot be attained easily by yoga or dry knowledge enquiry or dharma or scriptural knowledge or tapas or renunciation or charity or fasting or sacrifices or pilgrimages or by any other method as is easily possible by satsang. This itself indicates that ‘Satsang’ stands out isn’t it?

May be, the yoga, sacrifice etc. above referred to may please the Lord and He may grant Satsang. But is it not certain that any of the above is not equal to satsang?

But the question beckons as to how to identify a true satsang. In Srimad Bhagavatham, when sage Jadabharatha instructs the king Raghuguna, he repeats what Krishna told Uddhava and also describes the mark of a true satsang,

YathrOttamashlOkagunanuvAdha:  
prasthUyathE grAmyakathAvighatha: |  
NishEvyamAnO anudhinam mumukshOrmarthim  
sathIm yacchati vAsudEvE ||

Satsang is that place where only the holy virtues of the Lord are spoken of and heard. Where the divine names of the Lord are always chanted, that is satsang. In satsang, worldly pursuits are not discussed and there won’t be any mixture of spiritual and mundane matters. Satsang is that place of purity and

simplicity where the devotees congregate with a desire to have the darshan of the Lord and are filled with divine thoughts. In short it is that place where the devotees are continuously thinking of the Lord Vasudeva.

Is it so easy to be blessed with such a satsang? Sri Swamiji sings that the Lord will bless us with such a satsang as “sAdhu sangathai adaindhiduvAi”. In satsang, the sadhus will make us listen to devotional stories; They will advise us suitably and create an urge in us to perform true devotion. They will tell us devotional stories and make us yearn for a Sadguru who will make us pure like a crystal or who can transform us into a lotus flower.

Sadhus will give discourses which would clarify to us that our attachments to worldly things will go away only by the grace of the Guru. So Swamiji sings that we should keenly listen to such good devotional concepts and take them to heart.

“Pala vidham nalladhai kettiduvAi”.

Just by listening to all this, our heart will be inclined to make prayers to attain the lotus feet of Lord Hari and to love all beings. Yes, Krishna also will listen to this and make a great blessing for which we cannot offer anything in return. Our whole life will be transformed by this grace. It will lead us to the next holy step in the ladder. What is that step?

(...to be contd.)



# DIVINE PRESENCE OF MAHANS!

- Gadadharan Murali

Prayers done before Mahans will surely come to pass. Even a sincere and deep prayer for liberation in their presence will come to pass. Even if we lack the required maturity for it in this birth, in the subsequent one or two births such maturity will be earned and we will attain liberation. The life of Narada and Muchukunda in Srimad Bhagavatam verily illustrates this. Similarly, prayers done for worldly pleasures like money, high office, fame, etc. will also have to come about. This is because prayers done before genuine Mahans never go in vain. Even if we do not possess the necessary good merits (punyam) for attaining that kind of wealth, high office or fame, in subsequent births they will be earned and we shall attain these. This is verily the glory of prayers done in the presence of genuine Mahans. That is why those interested in Mukti (liberation) will not pray for anything else even by mistake. This is because such prayers themselves will pave way for several future births and pose a block for attainment of Mukti. Incidents in the lives of some Bhaktas who were with Mahans of recent past demonstrate this.

Among those who lived with Sri Ramana Maharishi there were some foreigners also. Notable among them was Major Alan Chadwick (Sadhu Arunachala) from England. He used to involve himself in services connected with Vedic matters in Sri Ramanashramam. While speaking about him, Sri Ramana Maharishi said, "Chadwick earlier belonged to us. He was with us only. He nurtured the desire to be born in the west. That has been fulfilled now (in this birth)."

We are well aware of Sri Raghavendra Swami of Madhwa sampradaya remaining in jiva samadhi since 1671 in the holy place Mantralaya and blessing the world till date. During the time of British rule, a British official Sir Thomas Monroe came to Mantralaya in connection with collection of tax. People there did not know about the extent of Mutt land and the details of tax in this connection. They said that it had to be ascertained from Sri Raghavendra Guru himself. Sir Thomas Monroe wondered how could Sri Raghavendra swami who was in Brindavana samadhi for past 150 years could help in this. However, he removed his hat and shoes and washing his hands and legs sat in front of the Swamiji's Brindavan. He saw a wonderful circle of light. Sri Raghavendra swami stepped out of it and answered, in English, all the questions of Sir Thomas Monroe and also blessed him with Mantraskhadai (rice and kumum mix used by Mahans and elders to bless). Sri Raghavendra Swami was visible only to Sir Thomas Monroe. Saddened by this the Mantralaya priest, giving up food and water, prayed to Sri Raghvendra Swami. Sri Swami appeared to him in a divine vision and said, "Sir Thomas Monroe was also my Bhakta. But he had the desire to live in western world and was blessed with such a birth."

Therefore, as prayers before a Mahan certainly gets fulfilled, Bhaktas who seek liberation will never pray for anything else.

# **The Power of Will/Desire!**

**- JANANI VASUDEVAN**

A person used to come frequently for Sri Swamiji's darshan. He is a good sadhak, too. Sri Swamiji used to converse with him for a long time. He always used to say 'I am going to stay in solitude for a while. I am going to go without food for some days. I am going to adhere silence for some days. I am going to do crores of japa'.

As I was also present this time when Sri Swamiji was conversing with him, I share this with you all.

Sri Swamiji said, "Do not think the cause for birth is our vasanas (latent imprints) and our acts alone. If we deeply will something even that becomes the seed for our birth. Leading our life as it comes, according to our karma, without likes and dislikes and without thinking of leading life in a particular way will only pave way to birthlessness.

Hearing this the person said, "I have the practice of doing japa, dhyana and mental worship for a while every morning. Will this also become a cause for pushing me into another birth?"

To this Sri Swamiji said, "These are called regulations (niyama). They also become a daily routine like bathing, dressing, eating, etc. Regulation (niyama) is different from will (sankalpam). Therefore, sankalpam is verily a big block for a Sadhak. If any such sankalpam has been made it is good to have it fulfilled."



# Story for Children

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## There is No Food without Fire

A few friends wanted to spend their vacation doing something different. One of them suggested, "Let us go stay in a place where there is no human." Everyone agreed; they also felt it was novel. All these friends were all food-lovers. So they decided that while they stayed in the place where there were no others, they would make different varieties of food and eat.

They decided to stay for 3 days as that was the number of days of holidays they had. They also zeroed in on a region for them to stay. One of them was give the responsibility to bring - during the vacation - all the necessary items and ingredients needed to cook varieties of dishes. He also made an elaborate menu for breakfast, lunch, dinner on each day and procured the needed foodstuffs. They all set out on the vacation happily. The thought that they were going to cook and eat well for three days gave so much joy to these food-lovers.

They reached their place of stay. They decided on what breakfast to make that morning and started to do the preparation work. They arranged all the ingredients that were needed to cook that dishes. Everybody's mouth watered on just seeing those ingredients. As they were preparing to cook, that's when they realized that they had forgotten to bring a matchbox or lighter or any instrument with which they could light a

fire. There were no houses or shops nearby. In the trees and plants around, there were no fruits or vegetables to eat. These food-lovers were greatly disappointed and returned home the same day.

Even if we had all the ingredients required to cook, we cannot cook if we do not have the fire that makes the food palatable. Similarly, even if we do pooja, bhajan, japa, dhyana, karma, etc., we will not get the true fruit if we do not have Jnana, which is what leads to moksha.

bodhOnyasAdhanebhyo hi sAkshAnmokshaika sAdhanam  
pAkasya vahnivajajAnam vinA moksho na sidhyati  
- Atmabodham

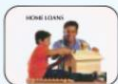
This sloka beautifully brings out the above fact.

Similarly, when one does pooja, even if one uses golden and silver plates and bowls, and even if those bowls hold many fragrant flowers, even if those plates hold a variety of exotic fruits, if there is no Bhakti in the heart, then all of it is in vain.

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## ***NAMA SHOWERS IN PANDHARPUR***

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It was decided to hold a Nama Sapthaham , viz chanting of Mahamantra for seven consecutive days, from 6 am to 6 pm, in PANDHARPUR, Maharashtra. The dates of the Nama Sapthaham were Jan 7th to Jan 13th, 2019. The dates coincided with SriGuruji's annual lecture at Narada Gana Sabha, Chennai. Sri Guruji nominated Sri Ramanujamji to conduct the sessions on his behalf and headed for Pandharpur, to participate in the Nama Sapthaham. Soon, the dates of Nama Sapthaham were announced in the Namadwaar website. Sri Guruji also said that this time around, the trip would be completely dedicated to chanting of Nama. There would be not be any sightseeing. Devotees were also informed about the low temperatures prevailing in Pandharpur and were asked to make their own travel arrangements. Kalpana mami of our Satsang was in charge of all the arrangements including food, stay, travel etc. The venue decided was Akil Bhartiya Padmashali Dharamshala. It was decided that food would be provided for all the devotees participating in this Akhanda Nama Sapthaham.

Sri Guruji left Chennai on 5th afternoon and reached Pandharpur on 6th afternoon via Bangalore and Davanagere. As expected, it was quite cold in Pandharpur. On 6th evening, Sri Guruji, along with Sri Venkatesh , Kalpana mami and the Kanya sisters went to the main Vithal temple in Pandharpur for darshan and offered prayers for smooth conduct of Sapthaham. The Sapthaham commenced on 7th morning at 5.50 am in the presence of hundreds of devotees from various parts of the country. Sri Guruji himself started the chanting. The discipline and dedication of the devotees were seen to be believed. The day started with first half of an hour chanting led by men and the next half an hour by ladies, circumambulating the picture of Vithobha and



Rukmini. Throughout the day, the pattern continued with hardly any waste of time. The dedication with which the Nama was chanted amply indicated that the devotees were quite used to chanting Nama for long stretches of time and had “Nama Ruchi”, I.e., taste for the Divine Name. The wonderful tempo of chanting was maintained all through the seven days and one hardly knew how the day began and ended. With the passage of each day, it was as if there was more and more energy flowing in.

On 9th morning Sri Sri Krishna Premi Anna graced the venue with his presence. Sri Guruji accompanied Sri Sri Anna to the Vithal temple and had darshan. Sri Sri Anna again graced the venue on 9th evening. On 11th evening there was Nagara Sankeertan around Vithal temple. Later in the day, Sri Guruji visited Ganpati temple in Sangli . When he was offering his prayers there, a man was constantly looking at Sri Guruji. He then came forward and said that his Guru Gajanan Maharaj had come in his dream the previous night and told him that he would have a sadhu’s darshan the next day. Sri Guruji graciously accepted the man’s invitation to visit his home.

On 13th, around 4.30 pm, the chanting continued and devotees moved towards the main temple along with Sri Guruji. Sri Guruji said, “Vithalan is known for his love for Nama Sankeertan .Since we have been chanting Namafor the last seven days, he would have been with us here. We have come to leave him back at the temple”. The visit concluded with darshan, Nama sankeertan and singing of Abhangs. Sri Guruji also said that Ammalu Ammal , { a much revered south Indian saint} had appeared in his dream during the Nama Sapthaham.

Everyone had a word of praise for the sumptuous and delicious food provided three times a day by Sri Guruji. Shri. Ganesan was in charge of food arrangements.

Sri Guruji also visited some of the “leela sthals” of Panduranga along with a few devotees. Some of the devotees also paid a visit to Alandi, Dehu Road and Sajjangad, the holy places associated with the saints of Pandharpur. On 14th January, Sri Guruji left for Pune to accept the invitation of some devotees. There he spoke in a Ganpati temple. Later in the day, Sri Guruji left for Hyderabad where he stayed at the Paadashalai. He also visited the houses of a few devotees and left for Chennai. Sri Guruji reached Chennai on 15th January morning and fondly reminisced the Nama Showers in Pandharpur.

- Houston Ramaswamy

**Sri Vishnupriya**

**SANSKRIT  
WORD FOR  
THE MONTH**

**PRAKRUTHI**

**‘The word ‘Prakruthi’ has several meanings in Sanskrit. Generally ‘Prakruthi’ means NATURE. It could also mean ‘disposition’(svabhavam) or quality (‘thanmai.). It is generally said that it is the ‘prakruthi’(nature) of a snake to hiss, the ‘prakruthi’(nature) of an elephant to be majestic and so on.**

**The word ‘prakruthi’ has several significant meanings in the shashtras. The shashtras say that the cause for this universe is itself this basic Nature. This prakruthi is only Bagavan’s shakti which is ‘maayai’(illusion). The philosophy of “prakruthi-purushan” explains this. It is also said that The lord is the only purusha, and prakruthi is just his ‘maaya’. In Gajendra stuthi , “पुरुषाय आत्ममूलाय मूलप्रकृतये नमः”- Gajendra does prostrations for this “prakruthi-purusha” philosophy too.**

**In the Bagavat Gita, Bagavan tells Arjuna - “मयाध्यक्षेण प्रकृतिः सृयते सा चराचरं” - i.e “This prakruthi creates this world in my presence”. Bagavan is always in control of prakruthi. He is not bound like us by prakruthi.**

That is the reason, Bagavatam says - “हरिर्हि निर्गुणः साक्षात् पुरुषः प्रकृतेः परः”- i.e., Sri Hari is ‘nirguna’-without attributes. He is beyond prakruthi.

This prakruthi is said to have three characteristics, viz., sattvam, rajas, thamas. Bagavatam says- “सत्त्वं रजस्तम इति भवतः प्रकृते गुणाः”. It is with these characteristics that prakruthi creates the world. This multi-faceted universe is only a form of prakruthi. That is why when we look at nature, we say it is the beauty of prakruthi-beauty of nature.

This philosophy of prakruthi is considered as a form of a woman or of a mother. That is why in the ashtotra(hymn of 108 verses) of Lakshmi Devi who is the ‘loka maatha’(mother of the world), the very first verse is “प्रकृतये नमः”(Prakruthaye namah). Mother Lakshmi Devi has manifested in the form of this world visible to us. That is why in English we use the term Mother Nature.

The word ‘praakrutam’ comes from the word ‘prakruthi’. Anything to do with ‘prakruthi’ is referred to as ‘praakrutam’. Therefore, anything visible in this created world, anything material or worldly, ordinary is called ‘praakrutam’. The opposite of this is ‘apraakrutam’ which refers to anything beyond nature, not related to this world. This is the reason why when we speak about Bagavan we say everything is ‘apraakrutam’. His beauty, his quality, his ‘leelas’, his grace-everything is ‘apraakrutam’. In Govinda Shatakam, Sri Anna , while singing about Sri Krishna’s beauty, says “Apraakrutam Thava Soundaryam”.

The vernacular language of Sanskrit is called “Praakrutam”. This will be a little informal. Ladies and common folks in dramas speak in this language.

In Sanskrit, every word has two parts viz.,- prakruthi-pradhyaya. Prakruthi is the base word. Pratyaya is the suffix. Both these combine and form every complete word in Sanskrit.

In Srimad Bagavatam, in Bhishma Stuti, Bhishma while singing the praises of the Gopis, says, “कृतमनुकृतवत्युन्मदास्थाः प्रकृतिमगन् किल यस्य गोपवधः”. Meaning, the Gopis lost in the ecstasy of Krishna Prema, did the antics of Krishna themselves, and attained Krishna’s characteristics(gunam) and Krishna swaroopa(appearance)- (प्रकृतिमगन्) says Bhishma.



Sri Dhamuset and Konabhai were living in a village named Narasi, near Pandharpur. They were ardent devotees of Sri Pandurangan. They belonged to a “Shimpi” clan, they were tailors. They had a daughter named Aavu bhai. They used to walk to Pandharpur very often to have the darshan of Pandurangan.

Once, when they went to Pandharpur for Lord Pandurangan’s darshan, they did not feel like leaving Pandharpur, which is considered as Vaikuntam of Bhoo lokam itself. Dhamuset thought that they did not have any land or other properties back in Narasi, so there is no need to go back and forth between Narasi and Pandharpur, so, let us settle down in Pandharpur itself. Konabhai was a great devotee of Lord Pandurangan and a devoted wife as well. So, she readily agreed to Dhamuset’s decision of staying in Pandharpur. They started livening in a house near the temple of Lord Pandurangan. They built a beautiful altar for Kesavarajan, who was the aradhana murthi and has come through many generations. Even today, we can have darshan of this Kesavarajan, when we visit Namadevar’s house.



## ***Sri Namdev Maharaj***

*Shiv Kanya - Shri Kanya*

Dhamuset and Konabhai, used to wake up Kesavarajan, daily, by singing Prabodhanam in the morning, did thirumanjanam, decorated Him with beautiful vastrams, adorned Him with flower garlands, offered many different types of prasadhams, sang kirtans and also did Dolotsavam to put Him to sleep. They considered Kesavarajan as their own baby and took great care of Him.

After some time, Konabhai started worrying about who would take care of Kesavarajan after their time? Who will do nivedanam? Who will decorate Him daily? Who will sing Kirtans for Him? So, she prayed to Lord Pandurangan to bless her with a boy who would take care of the family deity, Kesavarajan and also to spread the Namasankeertanam margam in the world, which is the easiest means to reach Bhagawan.

How Bhagawan blessed the couple, Aryambal and Sivaguru with Sri Adi Shankarar, after they did vratham towards Lord Vadakunathan (near Thiruchur), how the couple, Kesava Somayaji and Kanthimathi were blessed with Sri Ramanujar after they did Putrakameshti yagam at Tiruvallikeni Parthasarathy temple, likewise, Bhagawan, after hearing Konabhai's prayers, blessed them with a boy, in 1192 Shalivahana shaka, Prabhava samvatsaram, i.e., in the year A.D. 1270, in the month of Karthik, in Rohini Nakshatram, Shukla paksham, Ekadashi day. When the baby was born, there was a sound of whispering that was heard. That sound was nothing but, the baby was whispering through his baby mouth the names of Lord Pandurangan as "Vittal, Vittal, Vittal". Konabhai and Dhamuset were extremely happy to see Lord Pandurangan's compassion. Since, the baby was born whispering the names of the Lord, he was given the name "Namadevar" by his parents.

(To be continued)

# Snippets We Loved Reading

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From Newspapers and Magazines

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## Befriend Mahapurushas

The Hindu

19 January 2019

We should bow before Mahapurushas, for they have eminent qualities not to be found in others. Vedanta Desika enumerates their qualities in his Subhasita Nivi, said M.K. Srinivasan in a discourse. Mahapurushas are fair minded, and so if there is merit in what their enemies say, they will accept it. They will not be affected by the fact that someone dislikes them. The mind of a Mahapurusha is pure and there is no trace of evil in their thoughts. They are incapable of wishing anyone harm. We should worship such Mahapurushas, says Desika. Mahapurushas should be befriended. We cannot pretend to be superior to them or equal to them. So instead of ignoring them or criticising them, it is best that we are cordial with them.

At the time of the dissolution of the worlds, there is a fire. Can the mere hissing of a serpent equal the heat of this fire? A snake catcher may be able to catch ordinary snakes, but can he catch Adishesha? Likewise, Mahapurushas too cannot be controlled by anyone, for they are not swayed by wealth, lineage or worldly learning. When a King sought to impose his views on Kooratazhvan, the latter was not afraid. He was prepared to lose his life, but would not bow before the king. Eventually, the king deprived him of his sight, but Kooratazhvan did not compromise on his beliefs or principles.

Brahma has given each of us a special quality. But all good qualities reside in Mahapurushas. Garuda is known for his speed, the Himalayas for their strength and stability, the ocean for its depth, the moon for its cool rays, the sun for its brightness. Thus, each has one outstanding quality, but Mahapurushas possess all amazing qualities. That is why they are worthy of worship. Mahapurushas do not seek material wealth. They are interested only in peace of mind.



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