

Sri Hari:

MADHURAMURALI

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English Edition

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



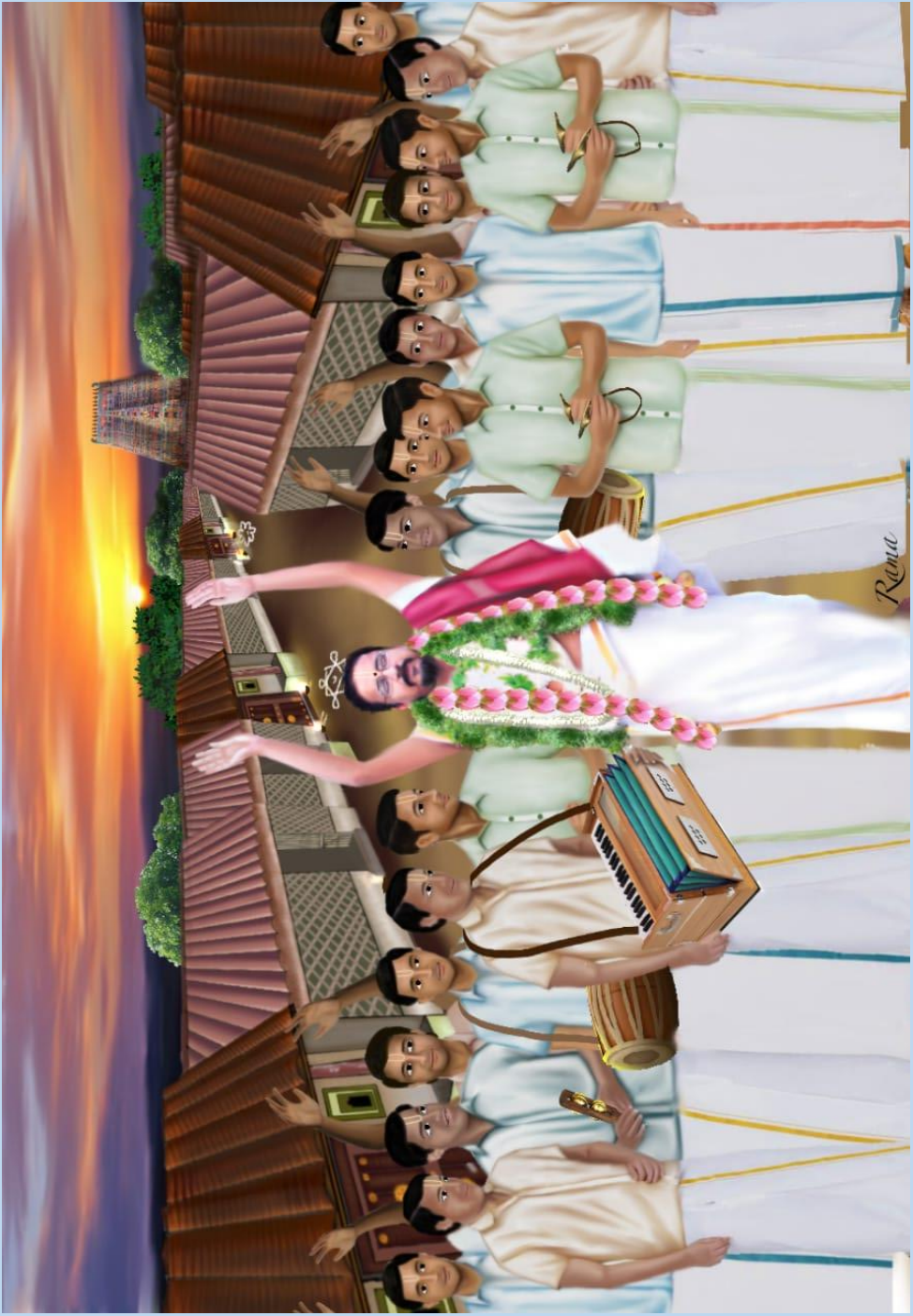
Madhuramana Mahaneeyar

- Namaji

When the month of Margazhi arrives, all our satsang devotees are very happy. In all cities, they wake up early, take their bath and perform Nagara kirtan with Nama sankirtanam. There is no limit to the happiness that Sri Swamiji gets when he sees the photos and news sent by these devotees. This Nama kirtanam is performed everywhere.

Even though there were many Gopis in Brindavan, we know that Sri Krishna had more love towards Sri Radha Devi. It is Radha Kalyanam that we perform often. Brahmanda Purana explains why Krishna felt more love towards Radha Devi than the other Gopis. In this Purana, Vajranabha asks Shandilya Maharishi this question of why Krishna had more love towards Radha Devi. To this, Shandilya Maharishi replies that in the month of Margazhi, Radha Devi woke up early and worshipped Sri Hari and offered a variety of foods. And during the whole of that month, she served and fed sadhus, and she constantly performed Hari Namasankirtanam. Explaining thus, he says this is the reason why Krishna loved Radha more than anyone else.

Hence, let us also wake up early during the Margazhi month, perform Hari Namasankirtanam, and become the recipients of the immense love of Bhagavan Sri Krishna.



Answers and Beyond

What is the reason behind the Avatar of Krishna taking place at midnight?

This Age that we now live in is indeed a Dark Age. This Age is like a day's night portion. When a man moving on the desert finds water it feels like having secured amrit; likewise, when a man struggling in darkness, not knowing which way to go, finds light he feels overjoyed. We are living verily in the darkness called Maya. From that darkness has arisen the light that is Sri Krishna in order to show us the way.

A year on earth is a day for the Devas and the star Rohini in the month of Avani is verily midnight in Devaloka. A month on earth is just a day for Pitrus; in this, Sukla paksha – the fortnight moving towards full moon – is day time and Krishna paksha – the fortnight moving towards new moon – is night time in Pitru loka. Bhagavan incarnated in Krishna paksha. That is, it is night time for Pitru loka. In this, Ashtami thithi (eighth day) is midnight in pitru loka. One should take note of the fact that in order to take us, who are drowned in Maya, ashore, the Lord took birth on earth at a time when it was midnight in Deva loka, Pitru loka and manushya loka (earth).



The eleventh canto of Srimad Bhagavatham, while describing the exposition of the Navayogis, refers to devotion as
**'bhAva lakshanangal valarndhidumAm
prEma bhakthi siddhikkumAm'**

This means devotion which is caused due to devotion! A riddle isn't it? It will become clear only when we look at the commentary. Isn't devotion itself somewhat secretive? We should understand the first stage of devotion as one which is based on effort and the devotion which comes in the final stage as a spontaneous divine love.

Stairway to devotion

- Sri Ramanujam



Whether or not the mind is involved in the exercise, if one makes an effort as an austerity and chants the divine name continuously, listens to God's glory and keeps thinking of Lord Krishna, then by the grace of the God and the Guru, true love evolves in his heart. The mind is filled with unconditional love and bliss on hearing or singing or speaking about the Lord. The urge to have the darshan of the Lord will keep increasing. When it comes to an unbearable situation where survival is not possible without seeing the Lord, then the devotee gets His darshan. All these are the characteristics of divine love.

During the initial stage when devotion is made with an effort by way of bhajans or listening to discourses or while thinking of the Lord or making offerings to Him, one occasionally feels horripilation, has a quivering of the voice and sheds tears of love. Sages call these as devotional characteristics ('bhava lakshanas'). Like these, there are eight. When all eight of them happen, it is known as 'Mahabhava'. This happens only to divine incarnations like Sri Radharani, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. These eight characteristics are:

**'sthamba svedhaccha romAncha:
svarabedhOtha vEpathu:
vaivarnyamashrubhramaya
ashtau bhAvA: sAtvikA ithi'
----- Sangitaratnakara**

1. Shedding tears of love during nama sankeerthan or hearing of discourses.
2. The face of the devotee lits up when he remembers God.
3. At times, when the devotee feels oneness with the Lord mentally, the nerves become loose and there is a shiver in the body. This is known as 'kampa'.
4. During the chanting of the Name or while discoursing, there is a quivering of the voice, inhibiting further speech. This is known as 'gatgatham'.
5. Due to a surge of love during devotion there is a horripilation in the body. Sages call this as 'Romanchanam'.
6. Sometimes the body gets heated up and starts sweating, This is called 'svetham'.
7. Sometimes the devotee has his mind merged in the Lord and loses consciousness of the external world. This is known as 'sthambam'.
8. In the end, the devotee may also faint. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa calls this as 'bhavasamadhi'.

For ordinary people, even two or three of these may occur rarely. All of these happen only to divine incarnations like Sri Meera, Sri Andal etc. During the stage when devotion is made with an effort, the characteristics like horripilation, tears of love or quivering will grow as one grows in devotion. This is what is referred to in this Madhuraageetham as

'Bhava lakshanangal valardindhidumam'

Like this, the devotion made with an effort will one day blossom in to divine love, by the grace of God and the Guru. What is this divine love? We'll examine that state in the next issue.

To be Continued..

Empathy

Keertana's only daughter, Smruthi was 8 years old. Keertana will always make sure to advise her every now and then to bring her up in a good way. Smruthi was a very good girl! She will always listen to her mother's advice and put them into practice as well. Once, they were returning back in a flight after visiting her father who was working in a different city.

Smruthi was very fond of apple juice. The air hostess in the flight was returning back to her place, after serving first round of refreshments to the passengers. Smruthi asked the air hostess, 'Excuse me! Could you please give me more apple juice?' The air hostess thought, 'just now I have served food and juices, what is the need for another one now?' So, she was little annoyed and replied back to Smruthi, "I will go and check in the back, if we have more juice and if I find time, I will bring it for you."

A TALE FOR CHILDREN

Keertana was losing her patience and was getting mad. Smruthi told her mother, "Mom! You please stay here. I will just come back" and saying this, she went behind the air hostess. After few minutes, she returned back to her seat with a gift bag in one hand, juice on the other hand and a big smile on her face.

Keertana looked at Smruthi and said, "She should not have talked so rudely to you! What did you do?"

Smruthi looked at her mother and said, "I just did what you have taught me! You have told me before! Some times when people talk little harshly, or act annoyingly, that means, they have some thing stressing them from inside. It's because of that pain, they behave differently. We should get angry at them. We should show compassion to them. You only told this, mother. Have you forgotten it?" Keertana replied, "I did not forget, Smruthi. So, what did you do?"

Smruthi happily said, "Oh, the air hostess was even annoyed to see me go behind her. But, I told her, 'I did not come to get the juice. I felt you were getting stressed because of your work load. So, I came to help you in any way possible.' Hearing this, she gave me a big hug. She said, "Your words itself are good for me. What is your name? Here is your juice. Here, please accept this also as my gift to you." Saying this, she gave me this gift bag and juice in my hand."

Keertana got so happy. She thought, "I taught Smruthi about showing empathy to others, but, I myself forgot and got angry. But, my little daughter Smruthi practiced what she learnt." The proverb "Child is the father of man" echoed in her heart that time.

Sri Vishnupriya Sanskrit Word of the Month

mAnam
मानं

मानम् means respect, as we say in 'To live with respect'. It also means pride. In Vishnu Sahasranama, we find the two names अमानी and मानदः. अमानी means the one who is humble, that is, the one who has no pride, while, मानदः refers to the one who gives मानम् or respect to everyone.

In Sishtashtakam, Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu says that these two qualities are to be present in a devotee, "अमानिना मानदेन कीर्तनीयः सदा हरिः" which means, without expecting any honor, and at the same time, offering all respects to others, a devotee shall ever engage in chanting the divine names of Sri Hari.

In Jayadeva ashtapadi, Radhe stays away from Krishna because of her love-filled anger. When Radhe refuses to go to where Krishna is, her

friend says,
"माधवे मा कुरु मानिनि !
मानं अये सखि!"

Hey Radhe! मानिनि! The one who is struck by anger and pride! Let go of such pride and go to Krishna leaving behind your anger, says her friend in the 18th ashtapadhi. Similarly, in the 19th ashtapadhi, Sri Krishna himself says to Radhe,

मुञ्च मयि मानम् अनिदानम्

that is, 'Radhe! Let go of this unfitting anger on me'

मानभङ्गं (mAnabhangam) means to destroy one's respect, that is to dishonor someone.

The word 'अभिमानम् (abhimAnam)' is also well known. अभिमानम् means to have excessive attachment towards something. To say that one should become worthy of Vaishnava abhimAnam, is to be in a way that earns the affection of the devotees of Bhagavan.

मानम् also means to measure.

Vedanta Desikar has composed a stotra on Goddess named "SriStuthi". The first sloka begins as मानातीतप्रथित विभवाम्, describing the Goddess as the one with immeasurable glory (मान अतीत)

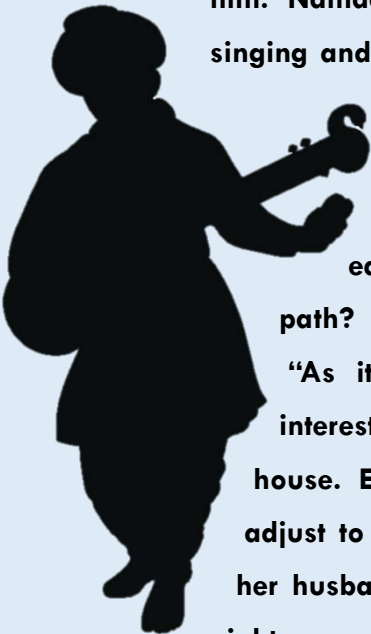
'मान' also means proof. It is from this, the word प्रमाणं (pramAnam) is derived. The world accepts anything only when suitable pramana or proof is provided . Thus, to know Bhagavan too, Vedas and Sastras become the pramAna.

Sri Namdev Maharaj

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Shri Kanya - Shiv Kanya

Sri Namdev was not like ordinary people, in the sense, most of us are naturally inclined and tuned outward towards the world and its mundane existence. But Namdev was tuned inward. His father, Damu Sheth did not know whether to be happy or sad at this. On the one hand, he was delighted to see his son's deep unflinching devotion towards Vittal, on the other hand he was worried that Namdev exhibited least interest in worldly affairs. In those days, child marriages were quite common. Namdev was 8 years old and his father started to worry about finding a match for him. Namdev spent his entire day at the temple, singing and dancing in front of Lord Pandurang. His parents wondered who would offer their daughter in marriage to Namdev? Even so, whether the girl would be equally interested in following Namdev's path? His mother Gonabai thought to herself, "As it is we are poor and Namdev is not interested in sharing the responsibilities of the house. Even if he gets married, would the girl adjust to this life?" She shared her concerns with her husband. Both of them spent many sleepless nights.



Lord Pandurang knew their worries. Namdev was very very dear to him, like HIS own child. So isn't it absolutely natural that Pandurang would be even more concerned about Namdev's wedding? So Pandurang decided to choose a suitable bride for Namdev; a girl who would understand Namdev's Bhakti and with whom Namdev can continue his devotion. So Pandurang set about finding a bride for Namdev. There was a village called Basav Kalyan near Pandharpur. There lived a rich merchant by the name Govind Seth Sadavarte, belonging to the shimpi caste. He had a beautiful daughter named Rajaayi. Right from her childhood she used to accompany her parents to all satsanghs in the neighbourhood. She enjoyed listening to kirtans and doing seva to sadhus and saints.

One day Pandurang, who is none other than NARAYANA himself came to Govind Seth's house. He was dressed in fine silk clothes and expensive jewellery and accessories. He introduced himself as Vithu Seth, assistant of Dama Seth, (NamDev's father) and said that he had come to ask the hand of their daughter in marriage for his master's son Namdev. Rajaayi's father was impressed with Vithu Seth. He thought to himself, "If a servant is so well dressed, how rich the master would be; my daughter is indeed lucky to have found such a match; she is going to get a good life". He readily agreed to the marriage proposal. Such was Vithu Seth's (Pandurang himself!) effect on Govind Seth's family that the entire village came to see him. It was reminiscent of Dwapara yuga when all the gopas and gopis came to see Krishna when he came to Nanda Baba's house in Gokulam. Nobody knew that it was Panduranga himself who has come as Vithu Seth. Thus agreed by all elders and with their blessings, the marriage of Sri Namdev and Rajaayi was solemnised in Vaishakh month on a Shudh Panchami day.

THANKS TO PREMKA VARADAN!

- Dr Bhagyanathan

(Personal Secretary to Sri Swamiji)

Every Ekadasi is like an utsav in our Madhurapuri. It is the practise of Sri Swamiji to perform abhishekam to Madhuri sakhi sametha Sri Premika Varadan and bless all with teertham. Bhaktas from many cities come to the ashram early in the morning. Amongst them some have the practice of visiting Madhurapuri every Ekadasi; some come to receive blessings from Sri Swamiji for some auspicious occasion in their families; some come from far off cities in order to place their prayers, in person, with Sri Swamiji; there are yet others who come to receive Sri Swamiji's blessings for their city temple utsavs, satsangs, etc.

After the puja when devotees come in the queue to receive teertha Prasad Sri Swamiji's compassionate interaction with each and every one is very charming. It is a real wonder to find Sri Swamiji remembering the matter each devotee had told him in his earlier visit even if it was several months or even years earlier. It is simply amazing to see Sri Swamiji pick up the thread from where it had been left off during the previous visit of the devotee!

Sri Swamiji would often say, “When we pray for something we do it with deep involvement. But once our prayer is fulfilled we forget to thank the Lord.”

Once, on Ekadasi, a family had come from another town. After the puja Sri Swamiji sat in Premika Varadan’s altar itself and was blessing all with teertha Prasad. When this family came up to Sri Swamiji, they said to him with tear-filled eyes, “We had come here some weeks back and placed a prayer with you. That matter which had been given up as absolutely impossible has come about successfully. We just are not able to believe it. It is verily your blessings! We have come only to thank you.”

At once Sri Swamiji smiled and with folded palms looked at Sri Premika varadan and said, “Many come here and inform me as you have done now. But do you know the truth? When you people come here and place your prayers, leave alone my listening to it, Premika Varadan listens to everything. It is verily Premika Varadan who fulfils all the prayers. I am in no way connected to it. All that I do is keep looking at Premika Varadan; and, HE takes care of you all! Please offer your gratitude and pranams to Premika Varadan! Do lots of Namakirtan.”

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