

Sri Hari:

MadhuraMurali

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Madhura Smaranam

Dr A Bhagyanathan

Let me narrate an incident that happened in our Madhurapuri ashram sometime earlier.

Our Satsang devotee paid a visit to our ashram. He is very dear to Sri Swamiji. He has had the fortune of having darshan of Sri Swamiji for many years. From his early days, he has always exhibited deep involvement in our satsang activities and has been doing Nama kirtan as per Sri Swamiji's Upadesha.

That day, his face seemed to be a little worried. Sri Swamiji noticed and asked, "Why are you dull? What's the worry?" The devotee prostrated and replied, "There can't be anyone who can be as fortunate as me. The reason being, I have been bestowed with this rare human birth and a great fortune of having your darshan. You have also blessed me with Upadesa. But, in all these years, I have tried my best to do Nama Kirtan. Yet, looking back, I don't find myself transformed in any way. Years have passed by. But my life remains just the same. That is the reason for my worry." Sri Swamiji smiled and started narrating this story.

“Once a person went out to buy some milk. He handed over a container to the milk man. The milk man, instead of filling it up with milk, filled it with water every single day. That person also accepted it quietly and went back. This continued for a while. One fine day, the milk man poured pure milk into the container. On seeing this, the man asked ‘Why didn’t you do this on day one itself, instead of tricking me like this’. The milk man replied, “The container you had brought in, was not clean. Hence I poured water. Gradually, the water had cleansed the container. So, now, I filled it with milk.” Narrating this story, Sri Swamiji continued further...

“Likewise, though we chant Nama all the time, Jnaana, Bhakthi, Vairagya do not flower instantly. Initially, Nama that we chant starts to cleanse the dirt in our mind. Then, gradually, when the mind becomes pure, the Nama bestows Jnaana, Bhakthi and Vairagya.”

Q: I recently read in a book that our prayers have to be specific. That is the best way to pray. But I keep chanting Nama and I too have needs in life. I have troubles too. Yet, I'm unable to pray specifically for any of these. Kindly guide me.

A: A tree has lots of fruits, vegetables, flowers, leaves and so on. A man who targets any one of these in particular, gets that alone. However, a strong person, by shaking the tree as a whole, can make them all fall down. Similarly, when one does Japa with a specific prayer in mind, gets that particular prayer answered. But, Bhagavan Nama is like shaking the entire tree. By chanting the divine names alone, one can get anything in this world, get rid of troubles and can attain liberation.

Answers and Beyond...

Sri Swamiji answers questions from devotees

Q. I have been in Satsang and chanting Mahamantra. Srimad Ramayana and Bhagavata discourses do happen in the place where we live. My friends who go to these discourses, invite me as well. Will it help me if I go?

A. Listening and doing parayanam of Srimad Bhagavatam or Srimad Ramayanam is certainly beneficial for those who chant the Divine names of Bhagavan. Only by doing so, we would internalize in our hearts, the greatness and glories of the one whose names we are chanting and thus can develop staunch devotion.

A devotee had come to have darshan of a Mahatama. He asked the Mahatma, "I observe that there are some disciples who are always beside you, and are engaged in spiritual sadhana. I was conversing with a few of them. They conveyed their disappointment that they are unable to achieve spiritual progress despite performing so much sadhana. What is the reason for that? They are all your followers. Does that not entitle them to have spiritual experiences?"

The Mahatma patiently responded to this question.

" One should seek guidance from a Guru for engaging themselves in sadhana. A disciple should be inspired by his Master. At the same time, he should not try to imitate Him. This answers your question".

- Sri Sri Swamiji



HOW DID THEY 'SEE'!

- SRI SWAMIJI

“Is there a God or not?” a constant question since time immemorial. At the same time Mahans who have seen God, Bhaktas and Jnanis keep appearing in our Bharata desam. Further, even Bhaktas who have appeared in other countries have seen God. Even today, there are several faiths and several crores of people who follow these faiths.

In spite of this, the question ‘Is there a God?’ does remain! This is followed by the question ‘if there is a God is it possible to see Him?’ There are some who say ‘if there is a God show Him to me’. Mahans say ‘one can see God’, I have seen.’ This debate is an ongoing one. ‘Does God exist or not?’ ‘If yes, is it possible to see Him?’ is the question. The answer is ‘Yes it is possible to see God’; and equally right is the answer ‘No, cannot see God’!

How is that one cannot see God?

If one sees God with these physical eyes it certainly cannot be God: because, this gross world is verily made of panchabhootas (the five elements). Eyes which are but part of it can only perceive panchabhoota objects. There are several worlds viz. sthula prapancham (gross), sookshma prapancham (subtle), divya prapancham (divine). We perceive only the gross world....

God is not perceivable by gross eyes. Well! To understand this easily...some claim to talk with spirits. But these spirits do not appear to gross vision. If this is the case with mere spirits it is absolutely impossible to see God with these physical eyes. If anyone claims it, know it to be mere bluff.

Well! Don't Mahans like Mira, Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna claim to have seen God? Is that mere bluff? No, it is not. Their claim to have seen God is true. But they see God as we see each other in the high state of Samadhi that is beyond all senses. That is not seen by the gross eyes. It is not just this; when they see God even those near them at that time do not know it.

An illustration can be cited for comprehending this properly. Though two persons may sleep lying next to each other can the dream of one be seen by the other? No! In the same way the experience of God is to the Bhakta alone.

But one can guess, to a certain extent, about a person having had darshan of God. How? A man in fear betrays himself as his body trembles, he sweats, breathes hard, seems restless, appears pale and eyes are filled with fear. But unless he confides in us about the reason behind his fear we will not know it. In the same way, the glitter in

the eyes of Mahans, their bright faces, tejas in their bodies, the blissful joy in their faces, horripilation etc. help us guess about their darshan of God. Yet, the experience is exclusively theirs and theirs only; and not for those near them or with them.

Well! The question 'if those nearby cannot see, and God cannot be shown to them how is it said that Gurudev Sri Ramakrishna showed KaaLi to Vivekananda? How is that possible?' may arise. That is right, of course. Mahans can by their mere will can give the state of Samadhi to the deserving.

Vivekananda saw KaaLi only in the state of Samadhi bestowed on him by Sri Ramakrishna. It is akin to Sri Krishna bestowing a few seconds of cosmic darshan to Arjuna on the battle field. This is not like looking at each other in the gross world. This is comprehensible if one could understand that it is divine darshan that happens in the state of Samadhi and not the experience of the gross world.

Well! What does it mean by 'can be seen'? God appears even to the gross eyes. That is, God appears as a human or an animal or a bird or in some such state and performs Lilas. When Sri Ramana Maharishi, as a youth, was on Tiruvannamalai Hill some people belonging to a famous Mutt came there to meet him. They told him that he should embrace traditional sanyasam and wear the ochre robe. After placing their request they left the place informing that they would be back. Sri Ramana had not decided on his response to this. Within a few minutes an old man came there with a bundle. As if one who knew him the old man said to Sri Ramana, "Take care of this bundle. There are books in this. I will have my bath and return." And he left.

Ramana opened that bundle and picked up a book and found it to be Arunachala Mahatmyam. He opened it randomly and found a slokam that said 'Those living within three yojanas of this Tiruvannamalai Kshetram are verily sanyasis even if they have not taken sanyasam. They will mingle with me. This is My, Ishwara's, order!' Ramana did not read further. He wrote down that slokam and showed them as the reply when they returned. They accepted this reply of his and left. That bundle also disappeared suddenly. The old man who had gone for bath also never returned! It was verily Arunachaleshwara who had come as the old man. This is God who comes in human form visible to the gross eyes.

Once, Bhakta Thiagaraja's wife took ill. She was unable to even cook. It is said that Goddess Dharmasamvardhini of that Town (Thiruvaiyaru) came there and cooked. Thiagaraja sings indicating it as verily 'Dharmasamvardhini'. In Sundaramurti Nayanar's life also Lord Siva appears as a Brahmin and stops the wedding. In response to the prayer of Somasimaara Nayanar Lord Siva comes as a hunter. This is how God appears visibly in human form. It was in the same way that in the life of Ekanath God came as Kandiyakannan and served him for twelve long years; HE came as a barber for the sake of Senanayi and performed the work of a barber to the king. The Lord made pots for Gorakumba and stitched foot-wears for Raidas!

God takes up some forms visible to the gross eyes and performs Lilas. At such times His form is seen not only by His Bhakta but by all. However, they do not realize that it is verily God who has come.

God's form is divine. His darshan is not had by gross eyes. If seen by the gross eyes it cannot be God.

(How will the fortunate family, that leads a life of servitude to Govinda, be? Our Sri Swamiji's Madhuraageetham beautifully picturizes and shows this...)

Dharma is of two types – one is the Vedic Dharma of daanam (charity), vratham (fasting), tapas (penance), homam (sacrificial offerings), japam (chanting), learning the Vedas, dhyanam (meditation), etc. that are in the form of sadhana; and the second called Bhagavata Dharma, which is the fruit of the sadhana. Even if both these dharmas are part of our Sanatana Dharma, we call the first dharma which is in the form of sadhana as 'saamaanya dharma' ('generic' dharma) and the second dharma that is in the form of its fruit of bhakti, jnana, vairagyam as the vishesha (special) 'bhagavata dharma'.

Govindanukku Aatpatta Kudumbamma - Sri MK Ramanujam

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If we take care of and grow a good crop, then we can harvest and enjoy the abundant grains. These two dharmas are like this only.

Due to Govinda's causeless compassion, as the result of merits of many crores of births, some families get the association of a great Satguru. As a result of following saamaanya dharma earnestly, for many crores of births, some families obtain entry into the visesha dharma of 'bhagavata dharma'.

Govinda's grace is indeed Guru's grace – can there be a difference between these two? This Madhurageetham paints the way of life of these satsang families who are protected by Govinda's grace.

gOvindanukkATpaTTa kuDumbammA engal kuDumbam

01.illaRatthil irundiDuvOm, nallaRangal seydiDuvOm
'ellAm avan iShTam' enDru eNNi allal paDamATTOm

Govinda's grace is also like the great shower of rain from which He protected His Gopas – yes this is also a great, nectarine shower of rain! This is a sweet rain that pours on everyone, without seeing any differences. But somehow only a few fortunate people truly feel this grace. It is the same Govinda, who takes care of and protects innumerable worlds, who also takes care of and protects all the families in this world too, isn't it? Satsang families who have received the grace of the Guru realize this and feel blessed! This Madhurageetham is indeed like the song sung by them, like an expression of their feeling of blessedness and fortune, and like their deep reminiscence of Bhagavan's grace.

“The head of our family is indeed Govinda! From the smallest issue onwards, it is He who sincerely conducts everything. This is our fortune. Whatever is needed for us, He arranges that for us Himself. Whatever has to be taken away from our lives, He does so Himself. People in the world say that family life is a ‘burden’! Learned Vedic scholars say that worldly life is full of fear! But we don’t feel any burden; nor do we have any fear! This is because our Govinda so elegantly runs our lives and has taken on our family responsibility. If we ask, ‘What are we doing then?’- because of the love we have for Him, thinking again and again with gratitude of His compassion, we are leading our lives without bringing a frown to His divine face, in a way that is approved of by Him. That’s all! We live blissfully in His servitude!”

“gOvindanukkATpaTTa kuDumbamammA engal kuDumbam...”

“Oh what is the nectar that Govinda pours on us! Even the daughters-in-law and sons-in-law who come into our family live in satsang. Even before a little Kitta or a dear little Radhe come into our families, they listen to Bhagavatam, listen to the Mahamantra, and obtain the kataksha of our Satguru. So as a baby itself, their talk is all about Guru, Krishna, Radhai. This is how our family is completely...
“gOvindanukkATpaTTa kuDumbamammA engal kuDumbam...”

“illaRatthil irundiDuvOm...”

In Srimad Bhagavatam, when explaining how those following householder dharma should be, Sri Krishna tells Uddhava Swami,

shilonchavṛtṭyA paritushTa-chitto dharmam mahAntam virajam jushANah
mayi arpitAtmA gṛuha eva tishThan nAtiprasaktah samupaiti shAntim

“By leading his life in unchavritti dharma, he attains happiness of mind, stays free from desires for results, performs many good actions, keeps his mind absorbed in Me, lives without much attachment to family, and simply while living in the household, he attains the highest peace!”

“In this way, we live exemplifying the household that Krishna envisioned. ‘How is it possible?’ if one asks, it is all His grace only! While living in the household, we will wholeheartedly continue to perform good deeds that please Krishna-Guru such as bhagavata seva, gracious hospitality, charity to the needy, and whatever little that can be done within our means. What our Gurunathar sings also seems to show our fortune, doesn’t it?

shrl hariyE endan guruvAvAn
parivuDan ennai ATkoNDa (shrl hari)

aRivonDrumillAda endanai kuRiyAy
kuRaiyonDrumillAda gOvindanE koNDAN

avan ATTivaikka nAn ADuginDrEn
avaniTTa paDi iruppadilum sukham onDruNDu
oppuyarvillAda gOvindaniDam
oppuvitthEn endanai muraIldharan nAnE

Just like Sri Krishna says “mayi arpitAtmA...”, we also think that everything is His wish, give all our responsibilities to Him, and watching and reminiscing again and again the leela of how He conducts our life, we remain “samupaiti shAntim” and never worry. Instead, thinking of the wonderful blessing where Govinda Himself takes the responsibility of our family on Himself and conducts it, we are overcome with awe! While learned scholars lament that this life of samsara is full of sorrow, we on the other hand say,

“illaRatthil irundiDuvOm nallaRangal seydiDuvOm
‘ellAm avan iShTam’ enDru eNNi allal paDamATTOM”

Veerasekar was an army Commander. A question cropped up in his mind. “Do heaven and hell really exist? When will these doors open?” He never got a satisfying answer from all those he asked. He came to know about an old sadhu and went to his dwelling place. Sadhu Shantamurthy, was seated simply in the corner of his small hut.

Veerasekar went straight inside. Approaching Shanthamurthy who was seated with his eyes closed, he asked “Sadhu! I’m an army general. Are there hell and heaven? If they exist, how do their doors open? “

Sadhu Shanthamurthy, slowly opening his eyes, asked “Veerasekar! Why are you screaming!”



The commander was offended. “You look like a begger”, added the Sadhu. With raging anger, Veerasekar yelled, “what did you say?” And raised his fist! “Here opens the door to the hell” said the Sadhu strongly with a peaceful face.

Veerasekar quickly understood and realized his mistake and the greatness of the Sadhu. With folded hands, he bowed down.

“Veerasekar! Here opens the door to the heaven”, said the Sadhu with compassion.

At that moment, a subtle door of Veerasekar’s intellect opened as well!

Wind extinguishes a spark of fire. A raging flame is aided by the wind in spreading wildly. When self confidence is low, slightest opposition becomes an obstacle. For the confident one, those obstacles become stepping stones towards success.

– Sri Sri Swamiji

Sanskrit Word Of The Month

The word 'rAga' instantly reminds us of the various ragas we sing in Carnatic music.

'rAga' means passion or attachment. We have often heard our Gurunathar mentioning in many lectures about letting go of rAga-dvEsha. The opposite of 'rAga' is 'dvEsha'. 'rAga' is attachment and 'dvEsha' is hatred. One can attain Bhagavan only when one gets rid of these two from the mind.

Sri Thiagaraja in his kirtan "Sri Rama Sri Rama", sings "rAga virahita ThiagarAjanutha". It can be interpreted as Rama, the one devoid of 'rAga' or the one who is worshipped by Thiagaraja who is free from 'raga' or attachment. We very well how hard it is to be free of attachments.

Sri Vishnupriya

But in Srimad Bhagavatam, Brahma in his stuti, says,
तावद् रागादयः स्तेनाः
यावत् कृष्ण न ते जनाः”

Hey Krishna! These attachments and the rest are the thieves that rob us from Bhagavan, until one become yours.

'virAgam' is the state of being free of 'rAgam'. The word 'vairAgya' is derived from this only. vairAgya is to remain free of attachments. It is very essential to attain jnAna.



There is another word anurAga, which means love. The devotion towards Bhagavan can be called as anurAga. Srimad Bhagavatam says that one will develop anurAga when we always sing the names of Bhagavan.

एवंव्रतः स्वप्रियनामकीर्तया जातानुरागो द्रुतचित्त उच्चैः
हसत्यथो रोदिति रौति गायति उन्मादवन्नृत्यति लोकबाह्यः

‘When such ‘anurAga’ happens, one would laugh out aloud, sing, cry and dance like mad’, says Srimad Bhagavatam.

‘rAga’ also means that which is red. ‘sandhyArAga’ means the reddishness in the sky seen at dawn and dusk. It is from this, the word, ‘raktha’ is derived, which means reddish. It is because of the reddish nature of the blood that it is called ‘raktham’.

We saw that the word ‘rAga’ popularly refers to the various rAgas we sing. In Carnatic music, each rAga is revered to be a dEvatA. That is the reason we find each rAga to be so full of life and is able to bring peace in our hearts.

Sri Thiagaraja sings, ‘rAgasudhA rasa pAnamujEsE ranjillavE O manasA’, ‘oh mind! Why don’t you be drenched in happiness by drinking the nectar of rAgAs. His fifth Pancharatna kirtan ‘entharO mahAnubhAvulu’ is set to the beautiful rAgA ‘SrirAgam’.

rAgamAlika refers to singing the stanzas of a kirtan in various rAgas.

Next, there is a word called angarAga which means different kinds of cosmetic products.

PushparAga is a precious gemstone, known as topaz in English and Gomedhaka in Tamil.

Sri Namdev Maharaj

Shiv Kanya - Shri Kanya

In due course, Namdev's family grew bigger. He begot four sons. Narayanan, Vittal, Govind, Mahadev and a daughter Nimbai. They grew up and got married and thus came in four daughter in laws. There were now fourteen members including sister Avubhai and parents. All of them were dependent on Namdev's earnings. But Namdev was never worried and was ever immersed in the thoughts of Panduranga, always singing bhajans.

Bhagavan Sri Krishna says in Bhagavad Gita,

अनन्याश्चिन्तयन्तो मां ये जनाः पर्युपासते ।
तेषां नित्याभियुक्तानां योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम् ॥९- २२॥

I take the responsibility of carrying the burden of the one who has taken refuge in none but me. True to these words, Vittala carried the burden of Namadev's family. Once in Namdev's house, Rajayi was lamenting to Konabai on their present condition, saying "Namdev is ever in the temple, meditating on the Lord. But we are struggling here. And, he is not bothered about this at all"

This reached the ears of Panduranga, who is all compassionate towards His bhaktas. Without the knowledge of Namdev, Panduranga disguised Himself as a wealthy man wearing silk Kurta, silk dhoti, pearl necklaces, nice turban, went to Namdev's house and called out to him. Rajayi was surprised on seeing this stranger and without coming out of the house, told that Namdev was not in the house.

Bhagavan at once replied that He is Keshav Seth and that he is a very close friend of Namdev. Rajayi questioned the purpose of

his visit. Panduranga said, “ I am going on a business trip and on my way wanted to hand over this payment to Namdev. So please give this bag of gold coins to Namdev” Saying so, He gave a bag filled with gold coins. Rajayi hesitated to accept such a huge wealth from a total stranger. But Panduranga, in disguise of Keshav Seth, compelled her to accept it. Also, He assured her that she can let him know whenever they are in need of money.

Rajayi requested Him to have food but Keshav Seth said, “ I don’t have time to wait until Namdev comes. I have some work” and left.

When Namdev returned home, Rajayi told everything about Keshav Seth and showed the bag of gold coins. Namdev understood immediately. He doesn’t know anyone by the name Keshav Seth. He realized that this must definitely be the Lila of Bhagavan.

Namdev said, “Rajayi! This is not ours. Moreover, having such huge sum at home would unnecessarily invite thieves and later we might have to grieve over the loss of wealth. We don’t need this and let us give it off to everyone.

At once, Rajayi very happily donated all that Keshav Seth had given.

Bhagavan does everything to protect His devotees, yet, His Bhaktas hold on only to His lotus feet without getting carried away by the things He bestow.

Expression of God's Grace

- Dr Bhagyanathan

(Personal Secretary to Sri Sri Swamiji)

Once Sri Swamiji was visiting the Namadwaars located in the southern parts of Tamil Nadu. There was a satsang organized at the place where Sri Swamiji was staying. A devotee had travelled very far from his place to participate in this satsang. Nama is so dear to this devotee and he never misses an opportunity to have darshan of Sri Swamiji.

Sri Swamiji called that devotee closer and asked him with concern, "When did you come? It is very cloudy and it is raining. How did you come? The devotee said, " I came few hours back. I came by motorbike"

Sri Swamiji asked, "You travelled this far on a two wheeler? Where is your helmet? The devotee too replied in excitement, "Yes Swamiji! I came on my two wheeler all the way from my village just to have your darshan. Helmet is in a bad condition and hence did not wear it"

Sri Swamiji said, “Is it! You have travelled these many hours, that too without helmet, just to be a part of this satsang”, The devotee was delighted on hearing Sri Swamiji’s words and said, “Yes Swamiji, God is there; Divine Names are on my tongue; Gurunathar is here; So I have no worries and I came without any fear. As soon as he said this, the expression on Sri Swamiji’s face slightly changed.

“Do you think this act of yours is called as faith? Knowingly putting yourself at great risk, you say you are fearless as you have Bhagavan Nama. God has given you the intellect. To make use of that wisely is the true mark of a devotee. And, do you know how a person, who is truly devoted to God and His names would conduct himself?

He would be extra cautious to not to get into trouble because he would never want the world to say ‘He ever chanted Nama, now look what happened to him, he met with an accident’

The true mark of devotion is to live in such a way that nothing causes disrepute to God, Guru or Nama.

Mahans have told that all that happens is the Grace of God and Guru. It is indeed true. No doubt. But, at times, because of laziness, carelessness, hastiness or tempted by our desires, we might involve in certain acts without proper contemplation. And then, when in trouble or fear, we say we have the compassionate God, Nama and Guru.

The real Grace of God is the common sense that has been bestowed upon each one of us and how well we use it to take right decisions at every step. Beyond that, we can always pray to God for His protection.

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