Way July 2020

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

During these times when
the Corona Virus is terrorising
the world like an asura,
MadhuraMurali salutes all those
noble souls who are selflessly serving
risking their lives for
the sake of our wellbeing.

Here are Sri Swamiji's thoughts that he shared with me about our world's current state:

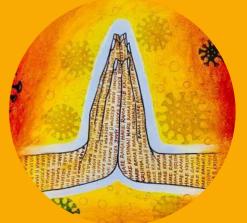
"A habit begins like a thin, flimsy thread of cobweb. Over time, through practice and repetition, it strengthens and becomes like an iron chain. One habit many of us follow is visiting temples and offering prayers to the deity. The coronavirus has stopped devotees from visiting these temples, attending festivals, and offering their prayers, essentially halting the habit we worked hard to form.

While the daily pujas have not stopped, our involvement has changed. I assume these pujas continue with simply the essential components. I keep wondering, has this happened in the past? Have our movements been limited so drastically we could not visit temples? I have asked those in older generations and they do not recall anything like this happening before. I believe similar restrictions have existed



Dr A BHAGYANATHAN

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during times of war or community unrest. This pandemic is also like a war - a third world war, perhaps, that nations around the globe are a part of. All the countries are allies, fighting against a common invisible enemy, only seen through electron-microscopes. Wars take place within national and regional borders. The war against COVID-19, however, has infiltrated countries, towns, forests, and villages, penetrating every corner of the world. This tiny virus is shaking the whole world. Atomic bombs cannot destroy it, but sanitizers can; missiles cannot contain it, but masks can. We cannot avoid it by coming closer, but we can by staying far apart. Soldiers cannot fight it, and the frontline workers, doctors, nurses, and sanitary workers who can are the true heroes in this war. They willingly risk their lives to save ours.

'Corona' means crown. Is this virus the thorn crown that the God of Death wears? While my mind was disturbed by this thought, I had a dream in which devotees were in their homes performing pujas, kirtans, and japams both individually and with their families. This vision gave me peace. Why? It was the answer to my original question about closed temples. Even if we could not physically go to the temple, the devotees have made their homes into temples. Their habits of visiting the deity

had not been broken; rather, they adapted to accommodate our circumstances. God thinks that 'all these days, my devotees have come to the temple seeking me; now, I need to reciprocate their actions by visiting their homes and protecting them.'

This gives me peace at this time."

Answers and Beyond

Sri Swamiji's answers to questions from devotees

What is the fastest way to please God?

Nama sankeertan pleases God very much. In Srimad Bagavatam, it is said

dayayā sarva-bhūteşu santuşţyā yena kena vā

sarvendriyopaśāntyā ca tuṣyaty āśu janārdanaḥ

(SB 4:31:19)

If one does nama sankeertan and is also merciful towards all living beings, lives contentedly with what he has and controls his senses, then the Lord gets pleased very soon.

The Corona Virus is terrorising the whole world now. Can you tell us a means to be free from this?

Nama keertan alone can always protect us all not just from this danger but from all dangers.

Can you tell us a specific means to be safe from fear of this virus?

Chant the divine name incessantly. Surya namaskar will yield good results. And if you can do surya namaskar while chanting Aaditya Hrudayam it is even more effective.

Pounding incessantly with the pestle of Inward-turned vision

- Sri Swamiji

Many have asked me, several times, to give them a technique to turn their vision inward. This is verily in response to that.

Let's say that two people stand facing each other. One of them is very strong. What would happen when this man places his powerful arms on the other's chest and pushes him? He would stagger and move back. He would then manage to balance himself and stand. When he is pushed again he would move back a little. If he is pushed in this manner, continuously, he would keep moving back, wouldn't he?

Likewise, when we do dhyana we should imagine our Gurudev sitting in front of us. His eyes should be open. Our eyes, too, should be kept open. We should then imagine his eyes staring at ours. We should then imagine him gradually pushing our vision inward with the strength of his glance. Our vision would turn outward after a while. We should imagine it being pushed inward again. When we continue to do dhyana with such bhavam (imagination) our vision would turn inward.



MIND VERILY THE FRIEND! MIND VERILY THE FOE!

- Sri Swamiji

A busy man, as soon as waking up in the morning, hurriedly immerses himself in the daily routine. This verily is our experience. Likewise, some, as soon as sitting for dhyana do it in a hurried way. This is absolutely wrong: it should not be done in this manner. Dhyana is not a work, nor is it a duty to be executed. One should sit for dhyana in a joyous, enthusiastic mood as would a loving lady sit awaiting her beloved. Even as one sits for dhyana the thought of how long it should be done or the thought of when it would end should not arise at all. Would the thought of time arise in a lady who spends time with her beloved? Wouldn't she feel the time spent with him too short and desire to remain with him forever? The state of our mind should



also be the same. In dhyana are we not with our Ishtta (favourite God) who showers unconditional love on us? How then the thought of bringing it to an end arise at all!

On sitting for dhyana remain seated quietly for five or ten minutes without exerting any effort. Then begin to meditate little by little, patiently. It should not be an effort taken to hold our Ishtta in the mind but the Ishtta should Himself/Herself should enter our mind as a result of our continuous prayer to Him/Her. In the initial period of your practice of dhyana just sit: do not exert any effort. Practice sitting in a marked place at a particular time. Only watch the movement of your mind; and, several ambiguities will come to light. This will help you, in future, to understand the working of the mind and bring it under control. When a thought arises, if we were to question what the thought was about, the event that had triggered it, the reason that was behind it, the consequences that it would lead to, the need for the mind hold that particular thought, etc. we shall be able to comprehend the state of our mind.

If we have to befriend someone or even make a foe of him should we not know about him wholly? The mind is verily a foe to one who does not enquire about it and verily a friend to one who has befriended it and brought it under his control. When he (the friend of a mind) disappears he is verily the God, too!

(A Madhurageetham that speaks of the beauty of Govinda, "needhAn azhagenDrAl un peyarum azhagO... (O Krishna, You are beautiful! And so is Your Name!)" ends by saying "bhaktarum azhagO paripAlippadum azhagO, azhagan un thoDarbAl anaitthum azhagO (Your devotees are beautiful, the way You guide them is also beautiful! O Beautiful One! Simply through association with You, everything is indeed beautiful!)".

The Madhurageetham that we are going to look at in detail below is one that sings specifically and sweetly of the beauty of the lives of Govinda's devotees and the beauty of the way in which Govinda takes care of them...)

gOvindanukkATpaTTa kuDumbamamma...

- Sri MK Ramanujam



In Bhagavad Gita, when Arjuna asks Sri Krishna about how a jnani (sthitaprajna) would be, how he would behave, how he would interact with others, Krishna speaks of them lovingly and joyfully. When it comes to His devotees, Krishna is so full of love for them! In Bhagavad Gita, even without Arjuna asking, Krishna sings wholeheartedly about the qualities of His true bhaktas; He Himself exclaims that He loves such devotees very much. So how will these devotees be, who have obtained a special place in Krishna's heart? What will such devotees do? How will they behave in the world? We also desire to know about their qualities, don't we?

This madhurageetham is the one that illustrates this sweetly and beautifully:

gOvindanukkATpaTTa kuDumbamamma rAgam: Folk Tune thALam: Adi

 $gOvindanukkATpaTTa\ kuDumbamammA\ engaL\ kuDumbam$

01.illaRatthil irundiDuvOm, nallaRangaL seydiDuvOm ellAm avan iShTam enDru eNNi allal paDamATTOm || gO||

02.bhAgavatha kadhai kETTiDuvOm, rAgathALatthuDan pADiDuvOm shOkamOga paDamATTOm, nAgarlgamAy pazhagiDuvOm || gO ||

03.kUDi kUDi pEsiDuvOm, ADippADi kaLitthiDuvOm - avan aDiyArgaLai thEDi thEDi, ODi ODi paNindiDuvOm | gO | |

04.piLLai kuTTiyuDan vAzhndiDuvOm, nallaRangaL solli vaLartthiDuvOm kaLLamillA bhAgavatha, dharmatthilE pazhakkiDuvOm || gO ||

06.kavalai paDamATTOm, kAlanukku anjcha mATTOm puNNiyam pAvam kAlam enDru parithavikkavum mATTOm || gO ||

07.amarndAlum, ezhundAlum, ninDrAlum, naDandAlum, pasitthAlum, pusitthAlum, avan peyaraiyE solliDuvOm | | gO | |

Krishna is the epitome of simplicity (elimai/neermai); so His devotees too are indeed like that. This song too — which describes the lives of His devotees who have taken blissful refuge in Him — is set to a simple ragam. The fact that its words also happen to be simple and sweet, is apt indeed.

Krishna is Navarasa Nayakan. His stories are also 'navarasa bharitam', filled with the navarasas. The lives of His devotees who live under His refuge, is also navam-navam. The path of Krishna bhakti is also nava vidham (has nine ways). This madhurageetham — that sings of families who celebrate Krishna as Bhagavan, who hold Krishna's krupa as their lifeline (adharam), and who do prema bhakti to Krishna — has also emerged with nine charanams.

Here our Gurunathar starts as Govindanukku 'aatpatta' kudumbam.

Those who know the Tamil language well (scholars?) will say that this Tamil word 'aatpatta' has three meanings — 'living a life of servitude', 'reaching a high state', 'recovering from a disease or pain'. See! The essence of the entire song is present in just in this one word. If we live a life of servitude to Govinda (aatpattal), by His compassion we will be cured of the disease of samsara and attain the true good (aatpattu), and with His grace, we can also attain the highest state (aatpadalam). How wonderfully that 'Govinda' is protecting the families that are 'Govindanukku' aatpatta kudumbam!

That time, in Brindavanam, when Indra became angry that the Gopas stopped the yagna that they had been performing for him and tried to destroy the entire Gokula with raging rains; and when the lakhs of cows and Gopas surrendered unto Him, He did not just say 'kaividen' (that he will not let them down) with his lips, but instead actually showed it by lifting the Govardhana mountain with His hands and protecting them from the rains, did He not?

Even today that same Govinda is protecting the lakhs of families who are living depending on Him, by bearing their mountain-like burden Himself, keeping them from drowning in the enormous flood of samsara, immaiyil varun mamazhaipponra innalgalirindum, protecting them from thunderous accidents that happen now and then, from the powerful gale winds of incidents that shake their stability, when the lightning of worry about the future blinds them... is that same Govinda not protecting them even today through the wonderful Govardhana-like Sadguru who is none other than Himself? Isn't that why our Gurunathar

sings, "Guru veru, Hari veru enbadu ariyadavar pecchu" (Only the ignorant say that Guru is different from Hari).

Our satsang families also live like this only, in servitude to Govinda. Thinking again and again about the immense grace showered by Govinda, melting with gratitude and filled to the brim with the feeling, "Indeed, who is as blessed as us?", desiring to live in a way that He would be delighted with, living with the resolve that no matter what happens in life, "Why should I worry when Govinda and Sadgurunathar are there?", with the view that whatever happens is His will, with the staunch faith that Krishna will never let us down (Kannan kaividaan), with the clarity that our family, home, children, profession... everything is His prasadam, and that the path taken by our Radhai, our Govindan's Devi, is only our path ("Radhai sellum padhaiye nam padhai") — with such a mindset of leading life as a divine celebration... indeed this is only leading a life of belonging to Govinda (Govindanukku aatpattu vazhvadhu)!

For families who live like this, Govinda Himself is the father who is the head of the family, Sri Radha is the mother, all satsang devotees are our family members. These families who live like this are indeed Govinda's families! Govinda also thinks proudly, "These people have taken refuge in me; they have taken me as their Lord, they are My family!" and feels, "It is indeed my vratham that I must watch over them and take care of them lovingly!"

Our satsang families are all Govinda's families, families that belong to and serve Him, sings our wonderful Sadgurunathar here proudly. "gOvindanukkATpaTTa kuDumbamammA engaL kuDumbam"

Here our Swamiji's usage of 'amma' as a suffix, is one to be relished. It implies — 'amazement' at the fact that while others are suffering in this samsara, we alone have such a happy life; 'immense bliss' at the sense that that Paramatma who has no equal "than oppor illappannana" Govinda Himself has made us a part of His family!; and wonderment (viyappu) that "What tapas have I done for Him to take us unto Him!" (orunge eduthu)

In the same way, in Venu Gita, the Gopis sing – "prAyO batAmba vihagA munayO vanEsmin..." "Amba, these birds must indeed be sages..." where they convey amazement with the use of the term "Amma!"

Sri Ramana Bhagavan also sings about the greatness of God's grace with the use of the term "Amma" in Arunachala Ashtakam: arivaru giriyena amartharum amma! adhisayam idhan seyal...

Amma! What wonder! Even though it looks like a stone mountain, no one can comprehend the immense grace of this Tiruvannamalai!

Yes! Govindanukku aatpatta kudumbam "Amma!" engal kudumbam!

In the next nine verses, this madhurageetham speaks of the way in which these families live...

(The sweetness will continue...)

Kannapiran was a famous man in the Chola kingdom who trained the princes and the children of army generals in archery. The prince of that kingdom Veeraraja was the prime disciple of that patashala. In just two years he became an expert archer. During the monsoon vacation of the second year, the king himself came and saw his son; he was eager to witness Veeraraja's skill. Kannapiran tied a log of wood at a great distance and asked Veeraraja to aim and shoot his arrow. Veeraraja took a fistful of mud; he judged the direction of the breeze; he took his bow, concentrated on the target and aimed his arrow. and it hit the target. The king was thrilled! Everyone was speechless. The applause of everyone created a feeling of pride in Veeraraja's mind. He told his father, "Respects to the king! Father, what is left for me to learn here? I have mastered the skill of archery even better than my guru Kannapiran. Enough of my training here". On hearing this, there was a hint of smile on Kannapiran's lips seeing which the king understood what the matter was. He told his son, "If your guru permits, you may come".

A Tale for Children

Veeraraja gave his bow to his guru and asked, "Can you shoot better than this?". Taking the bow with a smile, he said, "Follow me". Veeraraja followed him.

There was a hill nearby with dense trees! There was a waterfall in that hill; A huge tree had fallen across the waterfall; You could look down at a ravine 200 feet deep! A fall would certainly end in death! Kannapiran walked on that tree with ease and with a smile. He stood in the middle, aimed at a tree and shot an arrow. It hit the branch accurately!

He returned with the same smile and gave the bow to Veeraraja and said, "Now your turn!" Veeraraja trembled as he walked on the branch, aimed at the tree shown by his guru, and shot an arrow; his legs trembled; his hands shook; he felt giddy. He ran back and held the feet of Kannapiran.

Kannapiran, with a calm face said "You passed in the test of bending your bow and shooting an arrow, one last practice awaits you; You failed the practice of bending your mind and shooting an arrow. You will learn it from me with humility by staying here for one more year. No skill yields complete results if the mind is not controlled!"

Veeraraja walked behind Kannapiran towards the gurukul with folded hands .

Sri Vishnupriya

SANSKRIT WORD OF THE MONTH

kshEma 'क्षेम'

The word 'kShemam' means goodness, wellness, fearlessness.

Narayana theerthar, in one of his tharangams prays, "kShemam kuru

Gopala – santhatham mama kShemam kuru Gopala" – "Hey

Gopala! Whatever is good to me, whatever is kShemam for me, please do that for me." He himself explains what this kShemam is in the anupallavi of the tharangam.

"kAmam thava pAdhakamala brahmari bhavathu sreeman mama mAnasa madhusoodhana" – "Hey Krishna! Let my mind always go around Your lotus feet, like a bee that always swirls around the lotus flower." From this we understand that when our mind dwells at the lotus feet of Bhagawan, that is kShemam for us.

Kapila Vasudevar tells His mother
Devahuti that, "kshemAya
pAdhamoolam mE pravishanthi
akuthObayam - my bhaktas reach
my feet without experiencing any
fear."

Sri Krishna while explaining His viboothi yogam to Udhava tells, "I am that state of mind which does not wander outside and dwells upon the inner consciousness, which will bring the fearless state and kShemam."

kShemam means 'that which is greater than every other goodness — moksham.' That is why in Srimad Bhagawatham, wherever moksha dharma is being explained, there either Parikshith would ask, 'please tell me what will bring kShemam to people', or Shuka maharishi would say, 'I will tell you that which would bring kShemam to people."

Parikshith, after listening to the entire Srimad Bhagawatham, before attaining moksham he tells Shuka muni, "bhavathA darshitham kShemam param bhagawatha: padham – through you I have been taught Bhagawan's glories which will bring all the kShemam."

When Sri Krishna was born to Devaki matha, she does a beautiful stuthi and in that she says, "tam tvEshAnam kShema dhAma prapadyE - I take refuge in You, who is the dwelling place of all auspiciousness, goodness and kShemam."

There is another word 'kShemaShUra' — "It means, one who talks and acts, as if he is very brave and courageous under fearless situations and gets scared in front of real war or real fearful situations." In Srimad Bhagawatham, Kamsa's ministers and guards tell him,"kim kShemaShUrai: vibudhai: asamyugavikatthNai:" — what can the Devas, who are kShemaShUras do to us?"

Next, there is this famous word 'yoga kShemam'. This is a beautiful word. 'Yoga' means those things that we get in our lives. 'kShema' means, those things that we begot stay with us without getting lost. In our lives, we may get so many things, but, if we loose them in course of time, then that is not very useful. They should remain with us. For others, they have to take care of their own yogakshemam, but, for bhakthas, Bhagawan takes care of their yogakshemam. Sri Krishna, in Bhagawad Gita says,

"ananyaschinthayantO mAm yE janA: paryupAsatE tEshAm nityAbhiyuktAnAm yOgakShEmam vahAmyaham"

Since, Bhagawan Himself takes care of the yogakshemam of His bhaktas and jnanis, we need not have to worry about this. In Bhagawad Gita, Sri Krishna tells Arjuna, "niryOgakShEmam AtmavAn bhava" — do not worry about yogakshemam be in that state of inner consciousness.

Among the Nava durgas, 'kShemangari' is the name of one of the Nava durgas. 'kShemangari' means one who does all kShemam.

Another name of gruhastashramam is kShemaashramam.

As Sri Narayana theerthar prayed, let us all be blessed with all kShemam by our Sri Krishna.

Sri Namdev Maharaj

Shiv Kanya - Shri Kanya

Once many devotees had set out for a pilgrimage to Pandharpur. They bathed in the holy river of Chandrabagha, and did Nagar Sankeerthan i.e singing devotional songs and walking around the streets of the holy town, had the darshan of Panduranga at the main shrine and went to meet Namdev Maharaj at his residence.

Namdev's family members were delighted to see the devotees and welcomed them warmly. The devotees were lovingly offered food. After lunch, Konabai started airing her worries to the devotees present there. She said, "I am clueless about what my son Namdev is going to do with his life. We thought he would carry on the

family business of running our modest shop. But he is always in deep meditation of Panduranga. He is not

inclined towards our family occupation of tailoring or business. These days he is not even bothered about hunger, thirst or

sleep. Such is his deep devotion that Panduranga constantly resides in his heart."" She continued, "As for me, I wish my son would be like others, looking after the family business, taking care of us and then do bhajans in his spare time. Could you gentlemen please make my son understand all this,??"

After hearing her out patiently, the devotees consoled her, "Mataji, Please listen to us carefully, Do not worry about your son Namdev. You stay here, in this divine Pandarpur amidst so many devotees. No ill will befall you"!. They continued, "Namdev 's love for Pandurang is unblemished and unconditional. Can one separate a lamp from its light?? Such is the relation between Pandurang and Namdev.

Further, by giving birth to Namdev and by nurturing him with your milk, your body has become blessed; by constantly seeing him in this exalted state, your eyes have become blessed; this very house is blessed because Namdev Maharaj is staying here and your entire lineage is blessed by the birth of Namdev Maharaj. Your entire being is blessed by his presence. The day he was born, you have obtained the purpose of your birth. You have nurtured him lovingly by feeding him with your hands, by caressing his hair, by singing lullabies to him when he lay in your lap, Mataji, you and your entire being is blessed and this love and concern for your child, that is also blessed. Konabai was overwhelmed by the devotees' words and realised how fortunate she was to be blessed like this. She set out to do little things for them making their stay comfortable.

The devotees gathered around Namdev Maharaj, taking his darshan to their heart's content and spent the night doing Namsankeerthan with him. It was a blissfulexperience that transportedthem to another world. Next day morning, the devotees left for their respective houses.

GURU BHAKTHI VS HERO WORSHIP

- Dr A Bhagyanathan

This is a lovely incident that happened around 20 years ago. It was one summer. Schools and colleges were closed for vacation. Sri Swamiji was in Premika Bhavanam, blissfully immersed in singing kirtans every evening. As it was the time of vacation, many children had come to participate in the satsang. Sri Swamiji loves children. Every now and then, He bestows appropriate advice to them in a way they could understand.

That day, Sri Swamiji had ordained around ten children to come after having their lunch. They too joined as instructed. With a smile, Sri Swamiji, looked at them and said, "Now that you all feel satiated after a nice course of meal given by your mother, I could see some faces dozing off. Those who want to rest for a while, raise your hands." The moment Sri Swamiji uttered these words, everyone raised their hands with great joy. Sri Swamiji said with a laughter, "I'm glad that you are all truthful to me. It is not advisable to take naps during the day. Shall we spend this time in a productive way? Let us all chant Mahamantra together" Saying so, Sri Swamiji started chanting Nama. The children too, with great jubilation, started chanting along with Sri Swamiji.

Sri Swamiji was seated in a corner near the window at the front of Premika Bhavanam. We can get a good view of the street from there. Suddenly, by pointing to the people walking down the street, Sri Swamiji posed a question to the children sitting inside the hall." Are the people walking down the street better? Or yourselves? What do you think? Reply with a reason"

The children muttered amongst themselves "What do we say?" They were unsure of which of the two would be a right answer. If answered that they are better, it might appear like they are too proud of themselves or if answered otherwise, it might turn out that being in satsang, chanting Nama, they are still unaware of its greatness. So, no one came forward to answer. Everyone kept looking at our Master.

In a while, Sri Swamiji slowly started talking. "You children are indeed wonderful. Simply obeying my words, you are all chanting Nama now. Pay attention to what I'm telling you now and always adhere to it in life. In my opinion, at times, the ones walking down the street are better than the ones here. Do you know why? Majority of those people have no clue of what Satsang is, the purpose of birth or Namakirtan. They have not even heard of such things. They lead a life driven by the mind and while away the time. But, we are very much aware of all these things. And yet, there is no significant change in our lives. They do not know and hence have not changed. But, despite knowing we have not changed. On this account they are greater.

Sri Swamiji continued, "Please make a mental note of what I'm saying now. Guru bhakthi, in any instance, must not become Hero Worship. If we like a sports person or an artist, we tend to find out every single detail about that person. We start collecting their photographs and follow suit their style of walking, way of dressing and all their acts. This is called Hero Worship. True sign of Guru Bhakthi is to meticulously follow the path shown by the Guru and to live a life that pleases the Guru. Without following this, whatever we do would merely be Hero Worship. It is no way connected to Guru Bhakthi." Saying so, Sri Swamiji blessed the children with prasad before sending them off.

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