

Sri Hari:

Madhura Murali

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



Madhuramana Mahaneeyar

Sri Balakrishnan

Recently, I attended a wedding that was also attended by a Swamiji. Two friends were seated near me, out of which one of them went to seek the blessings of the swamiji and returned. I could clearly hear their conversation. The one who first went to seek blessings asked his friend to do the same. "Namaskarama? I don't want to seek his blessings. I am not going, I'll stay here," the friend said. The first one immediately said, "You are clearly egoistic. Are you going to lose anything by seeking his blessings?" The friend replied, "Okay. I accept that I am egoistic. But, don't pretend like you have no ego at all. There are a lot of people here. You wish to show yourself as a very devoted person in front of them. That is why you prostrated in front of the Swamiji and showed your devotion. Please understand that you are egoistic as well." Although the conversation was very soft, and the point made, very general, what he said made me think deeply. I could not let go of what he said. I was continuously thinking only about that.

After a few days, when I came to have Darshan of Sri Swamiji, I decided to convey this to him as well. I hesitated a little to go and stand in front of him. “What is the matter?,” Sri swamiji asked. I conveyed everything that was in my mind and said, “I have been so confused after seeing the various ways in which ego affects us.” Sri Swamiji replied by saying, “ Kanchi Mahaperiyava has said that this ego is a necessary evil.” He then went on to narrate an incident.

Once, Kanchi Mahaswamigal was staying near Five Lights in West Mambalam. In those days, houses used to be separated from one another. Mahaswamigal was giving darshan to every single devotee individually, in the Cow shed of one of the houses.

A foreign couple had also come there seeking his darshan. The couple who were involved and interested in spiritual learning asked Periyava, “It is understandable that there is no human who is free of Ego. But, even those spiritual seekers who wish to progress internally have Ego. Even those who are under the guidance of a Guru and constantly hear, read and understand good things are not spared by Ego. Why so? The couple had researched quite a lot before asking these questions. But, Kanchi Mahaswamigal did not think twice before answering and said, “Maya is because of ego, which in turn is a necessary evil for our spiritual uplift. It is good for Ego to appear inside us. An achiever can progress only by keeping Ego as a stepping

stone.” How does Ego show the way? It is logical and fair that this doubt arises in the minds of spiritualists. One example will explain this clearly. A person who is quite healthy suddenly faces fever, indigestion, fatigue and inability to eat and goes to the doctor immediately and takes medication which are also not very helpful. The doctor takes other health tests on him and finds out that he is suffering from the Last stage of Cancer. Now, any medical action will not be of any use because the disease cannot be cured at this stage. The doctors say that he may die soon. He is shocked because he has not experienced any symptoms that may have pointed out this disease in the past.

At least if he had experienced any symptoms in the previous months it would be understandable. That is, if he had experienced stomach pain, swelling, ear pain, dizziness, or any other symptoms in the early stages of the disease, he may have been able to cure it and save himself. So, the symptoms of a disease help in identifying, treating and subsequently curing the disease. But it has to be identified and treated in the beginning itself. Diseases that have no symptoms and appear only at its extreme form, take the life of the human. This is similar to the situation where a spiritual seeker thinks that Ego and its consequences are completely removed from his mind, while it is still present inside him. However, he is unaware of the same. Even when a Guru scolds his disciple in order to correct him, the Ego inside him makes him only think that the Guru has scolded him and not the reason and intention behind the same.

In some time, he himself may realise that it was only to correct himself, but he can only correct his mistakes by observing himself. However, won't he become overconfident if he is not able to identify his mind's mistakes? Then, the spiritual seeker who believes that he has overcome ego and the dangerous qualities it replicates, is like the person who lives without knowing that he is affected by a disease. That is not good for him. This is the concept that Kanchi Mahaswamigal wanted to convey through the words, "Maya is because of ego which in turn is a necessary evil for our spiritual uplift."

After saying this, Swamiji also shared another incident. Sri Chandrasekhara Bharathi Swamiji, the Madaadhipathi of Sringeri Mutt taught Vedanta lessons everyday in the morning. Once, a disciple who was working with the Mutt's management requested Swamiji to teach him Vedanta as well, for which Swamiji said "Vedanta lessons are taught everyday. You may come and listen." The disciple then requested an individual Vedanta class from Swamiji.

Swamiji said, "Why are you requesting an individual class?" The disciple replied, "I may have several doubts during class which I may raise. The people around me may feel that I don't even know the simplest of things and therefore I will be embarrassed." Sri Chandrasekhara Bharathi Swamiji immediately replied with a smile by saying, "The benefit of learning Vedanta itself is to be free of honor and shame."

What is Sanyasa?

The Vaishnava holy place Sri Vaikuntam is part of Navatirupati situated on the banks of River Tamraparani. Sri Sundaram Aiyer who came to be known as Trivenigiri swami in later years was born in this very holy place sung by Azhwars. Right from his childhood he was interested in spirituality and worship of God. As he was a Mumukshu (one who is deeply interested in realizing the truth) he came to the great Brahmajnani Ramana who he had taken for his guru. He surrendered himself to Bhagavan Ramana and practised Atma vichara as shown by him.

Great Mahans like Ramana do upadesa according to one's spiritual maturity. This is known from an incident in Ramana's life. A disciple of Bhagavan Ramana went out to some place and got initiated into sanyasa. On his return he expected Ramana to enquire of him in this regard – something like 'who initiated you into sanyasa?' 'Why have you taken sanyass?' and so on. He tried to draw Ramana's attention to the change in his outfit: he was clothed in ochre robe. However, Ramana did not seem to take notice of it at all! Losing his patience, the



disciple went up to him and asked, “Bhagavan! I have taken sanyasa and wearing the ochre robe but you have not asked me anything about it!” Ramana simply replied, “What is so great about it? Your desire to wear white cloth has left you, and the desire to wear the ochre robe has caught you! Is there any other change?” Does any transformation come about due to change in one’s outfit? Is not sanyasa in one’s mind?

‘Anuvaadha noonmaalai’ by Ramana is the Tamizh translation of a Samskrit Agama Text. In this, Ramana Maharishi defines sanyasa wonderfully ‘chittam siridasaiya samsaaram; chittam nischalamaai nirkka mukti iduvE’. ‘The still mind, the mind sans even slight movement, is verily the state of total renunciation (sanyasa); he is verily a samsaari whose mind rises up even a little’ says Ramana.

Namdev, Tukaram, Thiagaraja swami were all householders. Great Mahans. But they are the ones who had verily attained the state of sanyasa. The reason being they never moved away, even a little, from their state and did bhakti. Is sanyasa attained by mere change of the colour of one’s outfit? Does not that line in ‘Anuvaadha noonmaalai’ demonstrate it so wonderfully!

Once, when Kanchi Mahaswami was at Kalahasti, Sri Ra. Ganapati had begun to write his biography for the magazine Kalki. Kanchi Mahaperiyava sent for Sri Ra. Ganapati and told him, “Do not write about me.” Ra. Ganapati said, “I have given my word to write an article. What then shall I write? It is my duty to write on some subject matter.” At once, Mahaperiyava said, “Write about the Rajput Krishna Bhakta Mira who is hundred times greater than I am. She is hundred times greater sanyasi than I am.” Bowing down to Mahaperiyava’s order Ra. Ganapati wrote the biography of Bhakta Mira under the title ‘KaatrinilE varum geetam’.

Even Adi Sankara says that Moksha is attained verily through sanyasa. But the same Sankara also says 'udira nimittam bahukruta vEsham'. He condemns donning the robe of a sanyasi in order to make a living.

Sri Sundaram Aiyar who was Trivenigiri Swami says 'it was only when I was with Ramana that I learnt what true sanyasa was. What is sanyasa? A Sadhak should do away with all likes and dislikes totally and conduct himself in a manner that pleases his Guru. This is verily sanyasa. Further, I realized that this was the easy way to attain Jnana' says he wonderfully and clearly. Though Triveni swami practised Atmavichara in Ramanashramam the thought of doing 'Gayatri' japa kept arising in him frequently.

Once, with Ramana's permission he went to have darshan of Tapovanam Gnanananda swami. He then placed before the Swami the question that had been in him – "Though I practise Atmavichara, the upadesa of Bhagavan Ramana, the desire to do Gayatri japa keeps arising in me. I do not understand this," he said.

At once Gnanananda swami said to him, "In your earlier janma you have done lots of Gayatri japa. You had taken the vow to do a crore Gayatri japa but before you could fulfil that vow your life ended. That is why in this birth this desire to do Gayatri japa keeps rising up in you. The Atmavichara path that Ramana speaks is direct path. Yet let us go on the path as per our vasana and then move to the direct path. Do Gayatri japa."

At once Sundaram Aiyar said, "Where shall I go and do Gayatri japa?"

Gnanananda swami said, “Chidambaram is verily Gayatri kshetra. Go there and do the japa. Do a crore japa; Gayatri Devi darshan will be had. But if the Devi tells you to ask for a boon do not seek any. Be careful.”

Sri Sundaram Aiyar came to Chidambaram. Drinking the Sivaganga teertham in the temple and eating sattvic food such as fruits as instructed by his Guru, he did Gayatri japa tapas. As he had the vasana of earlier janma, even before he completed a crore japa, Gayatri Devi appeared before him and asked, “What boon do you seek?” As per his Guru’s instructions he refused any boon. Yet, Gayatri Devi kept asking him repeatedly; and, he said to the Devi, “If you keep asking I will curse you.” He then continued with his tapas and completed one crore japa and returned to Gnanananda swami. He told his Guru of his darshan experience.

Gnanananda swami said to him, “Now you receive formal sanyasa. Receive Sri Vidhya Mantra upadesa and worship Ambal.”

To this Sri Sundaram Aiyar said, “Have I not had Gayatri darshan? Why Ambal upasana and why sanyasa?”

Gnanananda swami said, “It is verily for mind cleansing (chitta shuddhi) that one receives Gayatri upadesa during his holy thread ceremony (upanayanam). That is like cleaning a vessel. The milk of wisdom should be poured into that cleansed vessel. It is verily for that you need to do Ambigai upasana and Brahmavichara.”

Gnanananda swami then initiated him into Sri Vidhya Mantra.

The Swami told him, "Further, one who desires to do Brahmavichara and attain jnana does not need the fruit of tapas. Surrender fruit of your tapas."

Sri Sundaram Aiyar, as per his Guru's words, surrendered it, received sanyasa, did upasana of Ambigai and received Her blessings, He practised Brahmavichara and attained Jnana and stayed for a while in Vaishnavi temple in Thirumullaivayil. Realizing the approach of his final day, Gnanananda swami appeared before him in his dhyana and ordered him to come to Tapovanam. Accordingly, he came to Tapovanam and stayed there and attained videha mukti (left his body). Today his Samadhi is opposite Tapovanam.

(courtesy: Ramana Thiruvilaiyaar thirattu, Sri Ramanashramam)

(We saw the beautiful way in which satsang families, understanding that leading a life of servitude to Govinda and to Guru Maharaj is the path to real peace, live in the household, do good deeds, and lead a blissful life. Now...)

“bhAgavatha kadhai kETTiduvOm,
rAgathALatthuDan pADiduvOm
shOkamOga paDamATTOM,
nAgarlgamAy pazhagiDuvOm || gOvindanukku ||”

Govindanukku Aatpatta Kudumbamma...

- Sri MK Ramanujam

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Considering that “Everything is His will”, we live happily without worrying. The reason for worries in life are only these three right? - regretting the past, worrying and fearing about future events wondering “what will the future hold?”, and in the present, engaging in improper matters.

Mulling constantly about the past and not having the maturity to be in a state of acceptance which means thinking “what has happened has happened, now what can I do about it?” – this is only sorrow (shOka); the purpose of our life is freeing ourselves from the cycle of birth and death by leading a simple, beautiful way of life, and doing bhakti to Govinda – forgetting this, and instead getting attracted by unnecessary things and trying hard to attain those, is indeed infatuation (mOha); worrying thoughts about what the future will hold – worries that take hold of us when we do not have staunch faith in Govinda, is indeed fear (bhaya). What is the medicine for this triad of sorrow-infatuation-fear (shOka-mOha-bhayam)? This is shown beautifully by Srimad Bhagavatam:

yasyAm vai shrUyamANAyAm krishNE paramapUrushE |
bhaktirutpadyatE pumsah shOkamOhabhayApahA ||

SB 1.7.7

When we listen to the katha of Srimad Bhagavatam blessed by Sri Vyasa Bhagavan, we will develop bhakti towards Govinda. With the dawn of bhakti, its children jnana and vairagya will also dawn immediately. With the rise of jnana sorrow will disappear, with the rise of vairagyam infatuation will disappear, and with the rise of bhakti fear will disappear just like with the rise of the sun, mist disappears completely without trace. This is why Sri Swamiji has blessed with the words, “bhAgavatha kadhai kETTiduvOm, rAgathALatthuDan pADiduvOm.”

To obtain the complete fruit of listening to katha, he sings in another Madhurgeetham,

“kadaiyil kETTadai karutthinil koNDu
manadil ninaitthu klrthanam pADu
gnAna bhakthi virakthi vaLartthu
thurlya nilaiyai duridatthil aDaiya...
kadai kELu kadai kELu...”

It is this same thing that Govinda also tells as upadesa to Uddhava:
“shraddhAmrita-kathAyAm me shashvan mad-anuklrtnam |”

In the Ekadasa skandam it says that, “We need to have shraddha in Srimad Bhagavatam, which is the nectarine stories of Govinda, listen to it, and immediately tell the katha (repeat) of what we heard.”

If we listen to katha like this, and do kirtanam of it, we will develop smarana bhakti of Govinda, and because it develops along with jnana and vairagya, “shoka moha padamaattom” (we will not get shoka-moha) says the Madhurgeetham. Since we adopt a simple, beautiful way of life without shoka-moha-bhayam, this kirtanam says, “nAgareegamAga pazhagiDuvOm”.

Having affection for everyone in the satsang, and living like one family, we move with everyone understanding that our connection is with Guru-Govinda. We have the maturity to engage with others without speaking ill of or gossiping about anybody, without talking worldly matters unnecessarily with anyone, without allowing selfish notions such as ‘What do I stand to gain from them?’ to raise its hood in our mind, without involving ourselves in the personal matters of others’ lives, without

analyzing the positives and negatives of others, speaking and interacting only as much as needed.

We understand that interactions with others is for satsang and Bhagavat vishayam only. People are all not alike. We move with each person in a measured way accordingly. For some people, showing affection by saying Radhe Radhe with a pleasant face is sufficient. With some people, speaking of Bhagavat vishayam for a few minutes is appropriate; with some others, inviting them home once and conducting satsang will be the right thing to do; with yet others, moving with them for a week for a Bhagavata saptaham will be good. The Guru alone is the Atmabandhu who does only good for us at all times and in all circumstances.

Understanding all of this, we move with everyone. It is this that Sri Swamiji has succinctly shown sweetly as “nAgarlgamAy pazhagiDuvOm.”

The flower shall bloom further...

Sanskrit Word Of The Month

Whenever we hear the word 'Kashayam' the first thing that we can think of is the medicinal drink or Kashayam that we drink nowadays. But, this word has a lot of other meanings.

When we put some herbs in water, boil it and then reduce its consistency the medicinal drink called Kashayam is formed.

The same term 'Kashayam' is synonymous to 'arusuvai' (6 kinds of tastes) or the Sanskrit word 'Shadrasam'. The

'Shadrasas' (6 tastes) are:

- 1) मधुर (Madhura) - Sweet
- 2) लवण (Lavana) - Salty
- 3) अम्ल (Amla) - Sour
- 4) कटु (Katu) - Spicy
- 5) तिक्त (Thiktha) - Bitter
- 6) कषाय (Kashaya) - Astringent

So, the term 'Kashaya' also refers to the Astringent taste.

Sri Vishnupriya

'Kashaya' also means Red. In the 17th Ashtapadhi, Radhai says to Krishna, "रजनि जनित गुरु जागर राग कषायितमं अलस निमेषं"

which means, "As you have stayed awake overnight, your eyes have become Red (Kashayitham)."

Similarly, Srimad Bhagavatham uses the term "KashayepoothalochanaH" to refer to Hiranyakashipu whose eyes have become Red and watery because of anger.

kashAyam

कषाय

The term 'Kashaya' comes from this meaning, i.e., red. The 'Kaashaaya' vastram or dress worn by Sanyasis is reddish in colour only because of this reason.

Next, 'kashaya' means dirt and dust or pollution. In Bhagavatham Brahma beautifully says to Narada, "I will narrate Sri Hari's leelas to you. They are capable of removing dirt (कर्णकषायशोषान्)."

The desires and dirt we have in our mind can also be called Kashayam. Lord Krishna tells Udhava Swami, "Until the dirt in one's mind (मनःकषाय) is removed through one's devotion for me (Bhakthi), one must stay away from information." Similarly "भक्त्या निर्मिथशेष कषाय धिषणो अर्जुनः" says that Arjuna's mind was free from dirt because of his devotion towards Krishna.

There is a term called "Pakva Kashaya". This term means the state where one is free of all desires of the mind and has become matured. In opposition to that, "Avipakva Kashaya" means the state where one's mind's desires are not removed and has not become matured. When Narada did penance (tapas) in his previous birth (purva janma), Bhagawan gives darshan and says, "अविपक्ककषायाणां दुर्दर्शोऽहं कुयोगिनां"

Which means, those who pretend to be Yogis (कुयोगि) and have no control of their dirty minds' desires and have not become mature cannot see me. Saying so, he disappeared. After which, that birth of Narada got completed and Narada was born as Brahma's son and has always been singing the praise of Bhagwan along with strumming the veena and happily moving around.

Forgiveness?

Once upon a time, there lived a rich man called Dhanapal in a village. He was a big merchant. He had a son named Mukundan. He was sincere and brilliant in studies and hence got into a good college and studied 'Business Management'. Dhanapal strongly believed that his son would meticulously run his business after his retirement.

In the same village there lived a great man (Mahatma) called Ramanadiyar. A lot of his devotees who had interest in spirituality learned Ramayana, Kirtans, meditation and chanting (japam) in his ashram. Once, Mukundan went along with his friends to look around the ashram. He experienced a feeling like no other when he went around the Ashram that was filled with silence, peace and beauty. Although he visited the Ashram only to pass time, he was fortunate enough to receive the darshan of the Mahatma. The happiness and peace in the divine face of the Mahatma lured Mukundan. After receiving his wisdomful preachings, he left. From then, he started visiting the Ashram often and spent three to four hours singing kirtans, chanting and meditating.

Dhanapal completely disliked this inclination of his son. He got irritated whenever Mukundan sat for meditation. "Aren't you wasting time by closing your eyes and sitting like this for hours together? At least, you can use this time to do work that has some use or benefit," he scolded Mukundan. However, Mukundan did not listen to his father whatsoever. Instead he started spending more time in the Ashram.

On seeing this, Dhanapal's anger was completely diverted towards the Mahatma. "This Mahatma only is spoiling everyone. My son was ready to listen to my advice and take over my business. But now he has completely confused him," he perturbed.

As a living example of the saying, "anger makes you a fool", Dhanapal decided that he needed to teach the Mahatma a lesson and thereby went to the Ashram. He directly entered the Ashram and walked into the place where the Mahatma was sitting. There, a lot of devotees were sitting silently and meditating. Although Dhanapal entered with fury, he stood still after looking at the Mahatma's radiant and calm face.

Even though his intention was to curse at the Mahan, he was not able to think of any degrading words. But, the anger inside him was uncontrollable. He lost himself in anger and spoke ill of the Mahan by saying a few insulting words. However, the Mahan sat still and unperturbed, with the same beautiful smile on his face. Dhanapal could not understand what was happening! The devotees around him could not tolerate this. In spite, they sat silently as they could not take any action in front of their Guru. On realising that his actions had no effect, and as he could not do anything else, he left the place.

However, he could not forget the calm and smiling face of the Mahatma. He only thought about that throughout the night. He wondered how the Mahatma was silent and smiling even after seeing his behaviour. He started feeling a change in himself. The next morning, he immediately went to the Ashram. He fell flat on the feet of the Mahatma and cried. "I'm a sinner. Oh Swami! Please forgive me," he said.

The reply that the Mahatma gave shocked everybody. "I will not be able to forgive you," he said. On hearing this, Dhanapal and all other devotees were shocked. "Our Guru is the personification of Kindness. Is there any sin that is not forgivable by him?", they wondered. The Mahatma slowly continued, "Why do I need to forgive you? What mistake have you committed?", he asked. "Swami! I came here yesterday and insulted you," he said with worry and guilt. For which the Mahatma who was called 'Ramandiyar' said, " Oh! Him? He is not here anymore. If I meet him again, I will surely let you know. The one who is in front of me is a noble man with good intentions. I see no mistakes in you. I only know you as a humble person. The Dhanapal who was here yesterday is not here today and the Ramandiyar who was here yesterday is also not here today. Now tell me who should forgive whom?" After saying this with care, he continued the Ramayana Parayanam.

The sloka that came after this conversation delighted everybody.

कथंचिदुपकारेण कृतेनैकेन तुष्यति
न स्मरत्यपकाराणां शतमप्यत्मात्तया

Sri Ramachandra Murthy forgets mistakes immediately, even if one commits thousands of them. That day, everybody witnessed Sri Rama's qualities in the Mahan's eyes. Dhanapal, with his head bent low, wiped the tears that overflowed from his eyes.

Garuda Seva that was delayed for Bhagavatham! - Sri Venkatesan

Hundreds of years ago on an Akshaya Tritiya Day.

The priests (Archakas) of Kumbakonam Sri Sarangapani temple had mounted beauty personified, Sri Aravamudhan on Garuda Vahana. As Perumal comfortably sat on Garuda Vahana, the poles of the palanquin were secured tightly, instruments (mangala vadyam) started playing and with firecracker arrangements, everybody was ready to witness and experience the Garuda Vahana procession. When the devotees who bear the palanquin of Perumal on their shoulders tried to lift Aaravamudhan seated on Garuda, they were not able to move him even a little. Even when they tried to lift him with more people, they did not succeed. Without any reason, when nobody could understand 'why?', a Vaishnavar came running towards the procession followed by his wife.

As soon as the couple arrived, Perumal descended on an Archaka and said, "We delayed our Garuda Vahana procession for sometime only for you." The Vaishnavar requested to submit a book (grantham) covered in a silk cloth to Perumal. As soon as it was submitted to Perumal, as a sign of Perumal's happiness, the Garudavahana immediately moved and they were

able to carry him easily. Bhagawan enjoyed his procession. Before which, Perumal gave the Vaishnavar excellent Garland (mala) prasadam.

All the other Vaishnava around were curious and, they asked, “What did you present to Perumal that was wrapped in silk?” The new Vaishnavar replied with overwhelming happiness, “That is the copy of Bhagavatha slokas written in Tamil by me.” We have to know more about him, don’t we?

Hundreds of years ago, there lived a Vaishnavar called ‘Arya Pillai’ in a small village near Nannilam that is close to Thiruvarur. Being an expert in Tamil and Sanskrit languages, he was also an ardent devotee of Thirukkudanthai Sri Aravamudhan. He regularly recited (parayanam) Sri Veda Vyasa’s Srimad Bhagavatham, which told the story of Sri Krishna. Eventually as he continued reciting Bhagavatham, he would become one with the meaning of the slokas. As he sang the slokas of Bhagavatham that he became one with, on a daily basis, Tamil verses of the same started appearing in his mind with meaning and devotion as slokas. He kept writing down all the Tamil slokas that appeared in his mind and eventually he completed a Tamil version of Bhagavatham. He desired to submit his Tamil version of Bhagavatham to his dearest Perumal, Sri Aravamudhan. More so, he desired to submit it on the Akshaya Tritiya day that was coming up. Garudaseva always happened on Akshaya Tritiya day in the Thirukudanthai, Aravamudhan temple.

On deciding the same, he wrapped his Bhagavatham in a silk cloth and shared his decision with his wife. His wife was full-term pregnant. In spite, as the wife insisted on travelling along with him, they started walking slowly along the Arasal riverside towards Kudanthai. As he came with his full-term pregnant wife, they were forced to stay in some places on the way in between their travels. And because of that reason, he could reach somewhere near Kudanthai only on the morning of Akshaya Tritiya. He was worried because Perumal's Garudaseva would start in sometime and before that he wanted to see Perumal and submit his Tamil Bhagavatham at his lotus feet. But his full-term pregnant wife could not walk that fast. He also could not leave her alone and travel by himself. He was restless because he could not even ask her to walk fast. With restlessness and anxiety he slowly walked accompanying his wife.

As we saw in the beginning of the article, this is the point where Aaravamudhan did not give permission for the Garudaseva to begin and delayed the same. At the same time, the vaishnavar who accompanied his wife slowly into the temple, witnessed his Aaravamudhan seated on Garudavahana. He felt as though Perumal himself was welcoming him. He thought that he was hallucinating, but Perumal, through an archaka, told him, "We waited only for you."

This story is that of Kudanthai Aaravamudhan who delayed his own Garuda Seva for the sake of his Bhaktha. The most surprising of all is the wife who decided to come along with

her husband, although she was full-term pregnant, just to witness him submitting his Bhagavatham to Perumal. Maybe he waited for that as well. Bhagavan derives extreme joy and happiness from celebrating his Bhaktha's greatness.

It was Aaravamudhan who blessed us with the Nalayira Divya Prabandham also called as Dravida Vedam, through Nathamunigal. This happening has let us know that the same Aaravamudhan has accepted the work of Arya Pillai that was written in Tamil based on Vyasa's Bhagavatham that is nothing but the gist of the Vedas.

Note:

1) Madhavan alias 'Sevvai Sooduvar' of Vembathur, Ramanathapuram and Nellinagar Varadarajan or Nellinagar Varadaraja Iyengar alias 'Arulaaldasar' have sung Srimad Bhagavatham in Tamil.

2) Apart from them, Vaishnava scholar Rajagopala Pillai from Komalavallipuram published a Tamil Bhagavatham in 1881. In that, he has mentioned that the book's author is Arya Pillai.

Sri Namdev Maharaj

Shiv Kanya - Shri Kanya

Once, Namdev Maharaj was walking on the river banks of Chandrabhaga chanting the divine Hari nama. Then, at a distant place there was a lot of crowd under an awning. It looked like a Great emperor was chanting and singing Hari Kirtan there. On witnessing the same, Namdev Maharaj went there to take part in the Satsang.

There, a Narrator (Pauranikar) was narrating the story of Ramayana. He was describing the various beautiful aspects of the Adikavya. "Ramayana is the first Kavya that is said to have emerged in this world. It is a great work authored by Maharishi Valmiki. In his early days, Maharishi Valmiki was a hunter. With a lot of grace and compassion, Maharishi Narada taught the 'Rama' Nama to Maharishi Valmiki. Only because of Rama Nama, the hunter who wandered around hunting small animals in the forest transformed into Maharishi Valmiki. Then Brahma Deva also gave him his blessings.

मच्छन्दादेव ते ब्रह्मन् प्रवृत्तेयं सरस्वती ।
रामस्य चरितं सर्वं कुरु त्वमृषिसत्तम ॥

"On my command, Saraswathi Devi will be present in your words and speech. Hence, please author the Story of Bhagawan Sri Ramachandra Prabhu," proposed Brahma Deva.

Then with the abundant grace of Brahma Deva and Saraswathi Devi, the slokas automatically started forming in the mind of

Valmiki Maharishi. Just like one wave after another, slokas kept coming one after another, without a break in his mind. In this way, Maharishi Valmiki authored the Adikavyam, Ramayana.

चरितं रघुनाथस्य शतकोटिप्रविस्तरम् ।
एकैकमक्षरं पुंसां महापातकनाशनम् ॥

This is a sloka that is from the Ananda Ramayana. Sri Raghunatha's Charithram has 100 crore slokas and has been written in a voluminous manner. Not even one single letter (Aksharam) in it is general. One Aksharam of Srimad Ramayana is capable of cleansing all 5 types of Maha Patakas or sins committed by humans. That is the greatness of Srimad Ramayana.

Once, when Anjaneya swamy took Srimad Ramayana Grantham to Brahmaloaka, Brahma Deva was elated. On deciding that the humans of Kaliyuga will not be able to chant all the 100 crore slokas of Srimad Ramayana, Brahma Deva kept the Kavyam with himself.

Then, just like a mother who squeezes the juice out of a fruit to feed her child, the creator, Brahma Deva compiled 24,000 slokas as the gist of Ramayana for the benefit of the humans in Kaliyuga. Therefore, that gist of 24,000 slokas of the Ramayana is in circulation on Earth today. Even today, 100 crore slokas of the Ramayana are being chanted everyday in Brahmaloaka."

The Pauranikar narrated the greatness of Srimad Ramayana in this way.

Namdev Maharaj, who heard the story in its entirety, became extremely happy. He was elated when found that Maharishi Valmiki had described the great qualities of Sri Ramachandra Prabhu in 100 crore slokas. On the other hand, he also became dismal that nobody had authored anything like that for his Panduranga. So, with happiness on learning about the former and realising the latter, Namdev Maharaj left that place and went straight to the Temple to see Panduranga.

Madhura Smaranam

The Spirit of Service

- Dr Bhagyanathan

(Personal Secretary to Sri Swamiji)

Once upon a time, Sri Swamiji had visited a village. A lot of devotees had gathered on realising that Sri Swamiji had come. The crowd had people of varied age groups ranging from children to older people. It was early in the morning, and Sri Swamiji left the place at which he was staying and started walking on the streets.

Sri Swamiji started from that place to go to a temple nearby. All the devotees who had gathered started following Sri Swamiji. There would have been about 200 people who gathered to see Sri Swamiji. Suddenly, as Sri Swamiji stopped near the entrance of a house, all the devotees who were following him also stopped. There was a discussion in the crowd regarding, “Why Sri Swamiji would have stopped there?”

Sri Swamiji was bending and closely looking at something. He was actually looking closely at a Kolam that was drawn at the entrance of the house. To be honest, that kolam was not extraordinary in any way. It was like any other general Kolam. However, Sri Swamiji was looking at it with a lot of surprise. He asked, “Who drew this beautiful Kolam?”, to the devotees around him. Every person asked the same question to the people near them, but not one had an answer. There were a few who stood in front of the house. Even they did not have an answer

to the question. However, Sri Swamiji did not give up and continued to stand there.

After a few minutes, a person who was in the crowd looked at an old lady and said, “Amma, didn’t you draw this? Isn’t this drawn in the entrance of your house? Sri Swamiji has been looking for you. Please come forward.” The lady was shy and came forward with her head bent low. One could see the fear on her face and the shiver in her body when she came forward. She came directly to Sri Swamiji and said, “If I have done something wrong, please forgive me. I only know this much.”

As soon as she said that, Sri Swamiji said, “Why do you say so? I can understand that you have drawn this beautiful kolam with a lot of effort and sincerity. I was just admiring the same.” The lady replied, “To be honest, I also wished that I could do something for Bhagawan. But, I do not know many things. The least I could do is draw a Kolam for the Swami on the streets, and so I wake up early in the morning and do it. I am not great at drawing Kolams. I know that there are many who draw kolams that are way more beautiful than mine. I am also well aware that my kolams do not affect Bhagawan in any way. But, I only know this much. So, I pray that he accepts my Kolam with compassion, thank him for blessing me with such a kainkarya and draw the kolam, everyday. If this kolam is not drawn appropriately, please forgive me.” As soon as Sri Swamiji heard that, his face bloomed with happiness.

Sri Swamiji said, “You are the fortunate one. Bhagawan will accept this small kainkarya with utmost compassion. Do you know why? Bhagawan

gets nothing out of the small Kainkaryas that we do. Even the flower we submit at his feet, is blessed to us by him. Even if we submit a Neivedhyam to Bhagawan, we do it with the body and the materials that have been blessed to us by him. He gets nothing out of anything we do. The services we do are just a blessing that he has bestowed upon us. Through this he gives us his connection and then liberates us. So, we must do kainkarya by just reminiscing that he has given us such an opportunity. If you realise this and do kainkarya, then you are truly the fortunate one. It means that Bhagwan's grace has been bestowed upon you completely. The mindset of those who do services to God, must be this way." He beautifully said this to the old lady and slowly moved ahead.

The old woman's eyes were filled with tears. She felt that, as a representation of Bhagawan accepting her service, Sri Swamiji blessed her by recognising the small seva she does to God every single day.

- More sweet reminiscences to follow

