

MADHURA MURALI

AUGUST 2017



SPIRITUAL MONTHLY WITH THE BOUNDLESS BLESSINGS OF
HH MAHARANYAM SRI SRI MURALIDHARA SWAMIJI



Madhura Geetham

Raga: Desh

Tala: Adi

Pallavi

nAma dAtA mOksha dAtA
kali kalmasha oushada dAtA

Charanam

Bagavan nAma japa smaraNam
sarva shAstra sammadam

niyama sAmAnyA rahita
nAma japam vinA gati nAsti

Bagavan nAma Eva swayam BagavAn
iti vadati mama gurunAthA

Madhura Smaranam

My Guru As I See Him

Dr A Bhagyanathan

This year Sri Swamiji celebrated the spring festival [vasantotsav] for the Divine Couple Sri Premika Varadan and Sri Madhuri Sakhi in a grand manner at Mathurapuri Ashram from 31st May to 9th June. Every evening saw the Divine Couple being taken out in procession while Sri Swamiji sang and danced in divine trance. This was followed by rendering of 100 hymns on the Couple [Yugala shatakam] while the Divine Couple were seated in a swing beautifully decorated with fragrant flowers.

During this time, on 8th June Sri Swamiji celebrated the birth anniversary of

Sri Mahaswami [Sri Chandrasekhara Saraswati Swami of Sri Kanch Kamakoti Peetam, S.India]. On that day Sri Swamiji reminisced the sacrificing nature of Lord Siva that touched the core of his heart.

“On visiting a place we always search for a comfortable place to sit. When someone is occupying a chair we do not like to sit on the floor. We do not like to sit in a not so clean place, too. We always avoid sitting next to someone we deem is of lower status. If there is a place which none likes and does not even like to think of, it is verily the cremation ground. However, Lord Siva occupies it deeming

it to be pure! While all like to adorn themselves with pearl, coral, diamond ornaments Lord Siva adorns Himself with the terrible looking skull that is shunned by all! He anoints Himself with not sandal paste or such other perfumes but with ashes found on the cremation ground! Even fragrance-free flowers seem to have a price tag on them. But Lord Siva decorates Himself with wild flowers such as oomatham, common weed thumbai, erukkam, etc. that none likes. Would anyone prefer bitter food when he would not touch even those which he dislikes? When that is the case would anyone consume poison? Well! Lord Siva did, voluntarily!

‘You need not offer me a separate place to sit. All of you sit in clean and most comfortable place. I will sit in the place which all shun. Give me things like ash, skull, poison that you all shun. I shall accept them all joyously’. Who would speak in this mannner? Can anyone be so sacrificing? That is why Lord Siva is Himself Thyagaraja! [‘thiaga’ means sacrifice: ‘raja’ means king]. Let us be devoted to Him and earn at least a little of that sacrificing nature and dispassion.”

I share with all of you the interesting things that Sri Swamiji reminisced on Mahaperiyava’s birth anniversary [Jayanti].

Question: I have been doing Bhagavatha parayanam for the past 15 years. I also do pooja and chant nama regularly. I do all of this for nearly 8 to 10 hours daily. So, why have I not had the darshan of the Lord at least in my dreams? Even if there is no darshan, at least the dreams can be pleasant and good. But I get bad dreams, in which somebody or other is threatening me. How come there is no improvement in me spiritually despite all my sadhana?

Answer: Like you, many people do pooja in many temples of great significance and divinity (saanidhyam). As many devotees come to offer archana to the Lord, these people do lakhs and crores of archana to the Lord. Similarly, many people do bhajans professionally and dance around during bhajans. And some deliver eloquent spiritual discourses. Your question will apply to them too. Devotion without seriousness or commitment, combined with qualities such as mischievousness, mocking, teasing and gossiping and a lack of will power over mundane things will only give meagre results. It won't give the full (poorna) result. We have heard of great Mahans like Sri Vasudeva thatha. As mentioned in Markata nyaya (monkey), (e.g. 'if God has to come within 48 days, he has to come), one has to remain firm with conviction in their devotional practices (sadhana) and should not stop. Only such devotional practices rooted deeply in the mind will result in full benefits. If we have to quote an example from puranas, it would be Dhruva - steadfast stubbornness and conviction alone will be fruitful.

Answers and Beyond

Touching Memories

Sri Swamiji

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Once I had been to Tiruvannamalai Sri Arunachala Temple. I sat in an isolated corner in the inner corridor.

My thoughts were running around Lord Arunachala, Bhagavan Ramana, Seshadri swami, Yogi Ramsuratkumar, Tukkaram Maharaj, Gnanananda swami, Poondi Mahan and several other great souls. At that time a village woman came there in search of me.

She prostrated to me and stood there. I smiled and nodded my head. She did not leave. Once again I nodded my head in the gesture of asking her to leave. Even then she did not move. She then said to me,

"Saami! You are asking me to leave. How many Rama Namas you must have chanted with your tongue! O, Saami! Through that tongue bless me with the words 'you will do well in life' and I will leave." This touched the core of my heart. I blessed her as she desired and gave her Sri Arunachaleswara Prasad.



Conversations with Sri Swamiji

Dr A Bhagyanathan

One pointed focus on the desired goal is quintessential for success in any venture and has been the greatest strength of every successful individual. Our scriptures assert that the sole purpose of our birth and all of creation is to attain self realisation. One pointedness towards that purpose, which is attainment of self realisation is most pronounced in every word, thought and action of Mahatmas.

Just as how a person caught in worldliness manages to get engrossed in worldly things even in the most divine circumstances, a Mahatma is reminded of divinity by everything that happens around. Mahatmas have this most unique ability of teaching us to think of God even in the most mundane worldly context. The manner in which they show the highest truth drawing parallels from worldly situations is most unique and profound.

Human Birth is the Rarest of the Rarest

There is an instance in the life of Ramana Maharishi of Thiruvannamalai that is testimony to this unique ability of great Masters. An American lady who advocated the cause of birth-control, visited Ramanashram and asked Ramana Maharishi his opinion regarding the same. Bhagavan only smiled and replied, "How do you hope to control life when you cannot control death? Find out rather who it is who is born now." In other words what the Maharishi tried to explain was that birth control would prevent the unborn from being born. Whereas self-realisation would ensure that those that are born already are never born again.

Very recently, a devotee who has a keen interest in science brought to our Guru Maharaj's notice, a spate of recent scientific research reports by some world class scientists that suggested that the human race should plan on colonising other planets, even outside our solar system, within the next few generations, as resources on the earth would go dry. Instantaneously Sri Swamiji smiled and replied, "Let us not get into trying to verify the truth behind such predictions. Instead, as spiritual aspirants, let us tell ourselves clearly that we are now blessed with this priceless human birth on mother earth, who nourishes us with all her resources. God has been most compassionate in providing all of this to us. Let us not waste a single moment or resource and ensure that we realise God in this birth itself. Let us ensure that we are never born again. If we miss this opportunity and end up taking another birth, the situation could be a lot less favourable and conducive for spiritual sadhana. Let's make the best of what we have now."

Blissful Blossoms

A mother waits patiently until her child becomes tired of playing and returns to her on his own! Likewise, God, unmindful of the innumerable births, various kinds of births and the place of birth the jiva takes, waits patiently until the jiva gets tired of worldly life and comes to Him.

~ Sri Swamiji



Fragrance of Divine Love

Sri MK Ramanujam

“The main difference between bhakti soukhya (the joy in devotion) and bhakti prayojanaka (devotion done as a means to an end) is that if prayojanam is not obtained, then they will stop bhakti. In bhakti soukhya, such devotees cannot stop. Can anyone stop breathing? Why? Because it is inherent, natural. For great bhaktas, bhakti is inherent. There are many granthas (texts) on the relish of devotion that explains about bhakti rasam (Relish of devotion), sukham, sugandham (fragrance of divine love) What is the necessity for books like these? When you want to dress well, you go to a fashion designer. You go to a 5-star hotel because the chef knows the intricacies of the palate and caters to it. You ask an interior decorator to decorate your house. Why? Because he is an expert in that field and can make your home look great. When you’re cooking, someone may advice you to cook in a particular way to make the dish tastier. Another person may advice you wear your dress in a particular way so it looks more becoming. Similarly, this grantha explains how to do Krishna bhakti in such a way that it becomes more enjoyable; what form, what approach of worship will make it more joyous to us.

Now you understand what is meant by bhakti sukham and bhakti prayojanam. Great bhaktas will never keep the prayojanam in mind. Prayojanam is for ordinary people; for those who always think about their mundane matters. Even if such people come and sit in front of Premika Varadan for some time, when dhoopa, deepa, kirtana (offering of incense sticks, lamp and devotional music) is going, their mind will go towards their work, relationships, etc. Even when they are in the presence of this great divinity, they are unable to raise their mind to a higher level. Why don't they think sometimes about Bhagavan's face, the peacock feather, flute... and lift their mind to a higher level? Even if they sit here, their mind starts automatically roaming here and there. The mind has different levels... sthoola, sukshma, (gross, subtle etc) etc. Only when your mind goes towards the upper levels it is possible to think of God frequently. When the mind is not dwelling in the higher levels, it is not possible for you to think constantly of God.

"How to make the mind go to higher levels? For that, as a practice, you have to chant, chant, chant (the Mahamantra) for hours together. It doesn't matter if you chant with or without devotion. But you have to chant. Like a chanting box! And preferably with the association of a holy place. Slowly the mind will then be elevated and go to a different plane."

A wealthy man suffered from all kinds of diseases. He was unable to eat tasty food. He was not able to walk. He was hard of hearing. His vision was affected.

He could not speak. If a man happens to come up to him and say 'You are so fortunate as you are very wealthy' he would retort 'what is the use of this wealth!' Likewise, the world is of no worth to a Jnani [the wise] who has attained nirgunas Samadhi. Therefore, it is verily right that to him the world is a myth.

M.K. Ramanujam

There are many wonderful notions in The Mahabharata. Guru Maharaj was talking about one of them.

Dronacharya was the guru of the Kauravas. He was the guru of the Pandavas too. For Guru Drona, all disciples were equal. However, Arjuna was the most favourite disciple of the acharya. He had vowed to make him the world's greatest archer and ensure that no one could equal him.

In olden days there was a ban on the combat training given to the royal ancestry, being taught to others. The intent behind this was, that in view of the security of the nation, the commoners should not gain power like the princes.

Ekalavya belonged to the hunting community. He approaches Drona and humbly requests him to teach him archery. The acharya, bound by the royal tenets, refuses to accept him as a disciple.

But, Ekalavya did not lose heart. He made a life-size statue of Drona, believed his acharya was in it, and religiously worshipped it everyday. He worshipped that statue with one-pointed mind and started practising weapons. In course of time, whatever skills Drona knew, he knew too. When Drona happened to meet him by chance, he was surprised to see that Ekalavya knew the nuances of all the weapons that he himself knew. How did he know about all that?, he asked, and Ekalavya showed him the image of Drona drawn and religiously worshipped by him. Drona was even more surprised on seeing that.

Ekalavya has drawn Drona's image and worshipped it. But it is clear from this meeting that Drona himself is unaware of it. Drona has not mentally blessed him either. Then, how did Ekalavya come to know all the weapon-wielding skills?

We have to carefully notice one thing here. The truth is that pleased with Ekalavya's sincere one-pointed guru bhakti, God was pleased and blessed him with what he prayed for. It becomes clear to us from this that whatever action we do, it's result is given only by God, the act itself never gives any result.



A TALE FOR CHILDREN



Rath Yatra at Govindapuram

- Sri MK Ramanujam

Chaitanya Kuteeram, established by Sri Swamiji in Govindapuram for continuous chanting of Mahamantra, is well known to all of us. The presiding deities, Sri Balabhadra, Sri Shubadhra and Sri Jagannatha Swamy, probably, wished to experience the Ratha Yathra, the chariot festival, similar to the one that happens in Puri. The Ratha Yathra, that was started four years back, was grandly celebrated this year on June 25th as ordained by Sri Swamiji, by the immense grace of Sathguru and Sri Krishna.

Many devotees of GOD Satsang from USA, Europe, Australia, Dubai, Muscat, Abu Dhabi, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Newzealand arrived a day earlier, just to experience the Ratha Yathra. Various GOD Namadwaar and Satsangh devotees of Tamil Nadu gathered in great numbers on the day of the Ratha Yathra. Devotees from Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra, Mumbai had also come.

The devotees of various countries as well as from Tamil Nadu, started chanting the Mahamantra with great jubilation on the previous day itself in Chaitanya Kuteeram. Sri Swamiji's joy knew no bounds! The next day, while giving a talk on the Mahamantra Kirtan performed by the devotees, Sri Swamiji said, "How well these people are chanting the divine names! Looks like I myself cannot chant like this! They are our greatest patrons! I have found our supreme benefactors". And, He continued softly, "If we give away the

money from our savings to some, they might lose it, or, spend it improvidently, selfishly or for a social cause. But when invested in a good Mutual fund, it grows multifold. Likewise, the divine names imparted to some, multiply more and more and come back to our own selves. These devotees, who sing the divine names in a way that is pleasing to the ears and blissful to the heart, are our greatest benefactors." Sri Swamiji's heart melted as He shared this.

The day of the Ratha Yathra arrived. Even before the daybreak, more than 2000 devotees had gathered and started singing the Mahamantra from 5:30 in the morning. With Gopi chandan shining brightly on everyone's forehead, their necks decked with tulasi mala , manjira and the cymbals vibrating in rhythm, their feet dancing to the tunes, the mellifluous Mahamantra reverberated through the sky. The beautiful forms of Sri Jagannathar, Sri BalaBhadrar and Sri Subhadhra were eagerly awaiting behind the curtain on the chariot, for the RathaYathra. The colorful flags in the hands of the devotees appeared to be dancing in the air, in tune with the divine names.

It was around 8:30 in the morning. There was a joyous buzz amidst the assembled devotees! In the middle of the Nama Kirtan, just like how Sri Krishna appeared all of a sudden, Sri Sri Anna entered Chaitanya Kuteeram, walking in all majesty.

Enjoying the chanting of Mahamantra by the devotees, and showering His Grace on one and all with His lotus like eyes, Sri Sri Anna seated Himself, after accepting Sri Swamiji's Pooja and offering 'deeparadhana' to Sri Jagannathar, Sri Balabhadra and Sri Shubhadra. He extolled the greatness of Nama Kirthan in a beautiful and impressive manner for half an hour. At the conclusion of the inspiring speech, Pooja was performed to the deities, after which, Sri Sri Anna and Sri Swamiji themselves pulled the chariot and inaugurated the Ratha Yathra. Can words be adequate to describe the proceedings thereafter? Bliss! Bliss and Bliss only, isn't it?!! How would it be when 2000 people chant the Mahamantra uniformly! And that too, as NagaraKirtan! What more when Rathothsav adds to it! And, as a crowning moment, Sri Sri Anna and Sri Swamiji, with their hands held up high and with a winsome smile, started chanting the Mahamantra. Can such an experience ever be contained in words? Fortunate are the ones who were present there! The chariot too

was decorated just like the chariot of Puri Jagannath. With devotees fanning on either side, Lord Jagannath gracefully proceeded on the chariot.

The thunderous chants of “Hari Bol”! “Gaur Nithai”, “Hari Bol”, “Jai Jagannath” were heard every now and then. Starting from Chaitanya Kuteeram, the chariot was taken into a procession across four streets and after about an hour and half Sri Jagannathar returned back to Chaitanya Kuteeram. The devotees felt the procession got over so soon and with longing heart, chanted Mahamantra and partook the prasad.

Sri Sri Anna retired to the Dhyana Kuteeram. Sri Swamiji walked back while chanting the Mahamantra. Sri Swamiji was elated on seeing the devotees’ taste for the divine names. After the Ratha Yathra, Sri Swamiji went to Thirunaangur Vedhapatashala. While riding in the car, Sri Swamiji shared, “Two days back I had been to Senganur for Rohini. We were chanting Nama in the temple of Senganur Srinivasa Perumal. I asked, “It seemed, you were in deep contemplation, as you were looking at Perumal. If it can be shared...pray tell me, what were you thinking?

Out of compassion, Sri Swamiji continued, “Even while standing at the sanctum of the Lord, the mind keeps wandering elsewhere. It is only by the Grace of the Lord, the mind can be controlled. How much ever we indulge ourselves in Sadhana, even crores of japa, any amount of hard effort, or many years of Sadhana, howsoever it might be done, without the Grace of Guru or God, an iota of Bakthi is also not possible”. Further He added, “For an infant, it is impossible to hide its nakedness from its mother, Likewise, a disciple too, cannot hide anything from his Guru.” “Oh Lord! You have showered your infinite Grace on me! You have given me a birth on this holy land Bharath; Given me Satsangha; I see numerous people in this world, suffering with diseases, caught in family troubles. But you have showered your immense blessings on me!! I should be grateful for that compassion of yours. I should never turn ungrateful, as there could be nothing more miserable. May the divine names continuously flow on my tongue, protecting me from becoming ungrateful. At least then, I may remain grateful to you.”

Sri Swamiji gave a lecture in Senganur Perumal temple on the 23rd. We shall see about that lecture in detail in the next issue.

The car in which we were travelling, reached Naangur Paatashaala. As per the divine guidance of Sri Swamiji, renovation work was happening in one of the many Divyadesam temples, surrounding Thirunaangur,. Sri Swamiji wished to take a look at it and then return back to chennai immediately. We too went along to Nangur Divyadesam. The work was happening in full swing. Sri Swamiji went to the Sanctum of the Lord and had the darshan of the 'Moolavar'. Near the 'Urchavar', He saw a beautiful Krishna in 'Sayanathirukolam' (in the reclining posture). On seeing that Krishna with one of His leg's raised up high, in the reclining posture, Sri Swamiji's face saddened. Slowly Sri Swamiji called the priest who was present there and expressed His wish to have a closer darshan of Krishna. As Sri Swamiji had a closer darshan, His tender heart fluttered in despair. Sri Krishna showed His body, which was covered in dust. Sri Swamiji felt as if Sri Krishna Himself lifted His feet to show it.



The dust on Krishna's foot appeared like the little child was afflicted with a skin disease. Sri Swamiji was unable to bear it and asked the priest if 'pulikaapu' (a ritualistic anointment and bath) could be done. The priest agreed and Sri Swamiji was eager to do it right away. At once, the Paatashaala children brought the butter, chandan, milk and offerings in lightning speed and the priest performed the 'Pulikappu' to Krishna. It was only after seeing the brightness back on Krishna's feet, Sri Swamiji was at peace. Sri Swamiji repeatedly kept saying that "Krishna, like a little child, lifting up his leg, said "Look, I have a boo-boo in my leg". We all were reciting Vishnu Sahasranamam along with the Paatashaala children in the sanctum of Thaayar, until the materials for Thirumanjanam were brought over.

We spent that night in the Paatashaala. The next day (26.06,2017) morning, as the priest of Thirumanikoodam temple had invited for 'Theerthavaari', we went along with Sri Swamiji. The preparatory work for the Utsav were happening. Many years back, during the temple Samprokshanam, an image of Perumal with slight damages, was found under the ground. Our Swamiji was concerned that someone might cause further damage to Him, without being aware of His greatness. With the consent of the temple authorities, the Lord was installed near a wall in front of the 'Madapalli'(temple kitchen), in such a way, that He was not visible to the eyes of the public.

As the wall nearby was white washed, few drops of the lime water had spilled on the Lord. Sri Swamiji was extremely pained on seeing this. At once, Sri Swamiji, in order to clean it, went and started fetching water from the well all by Himself! With the permission of the priests and with their help, our Naangur Paatashaala students, cleansed the Perumal and performed a small Thirumanjanam itself! The Lord was anointed with oil too. When, this Aadhi Varadharaja Perumal was bathed in milk, a beautiful smile was seen by all. Sri Swamiji was greatly relieved. With the help of the youngsters present there, Sri Swamiji, with great care, removed all the plants that had grown on the temple tower.

Do we need to mention that, we too realized what true renovation of a temple is, on seeing this?



KALPA कल्प

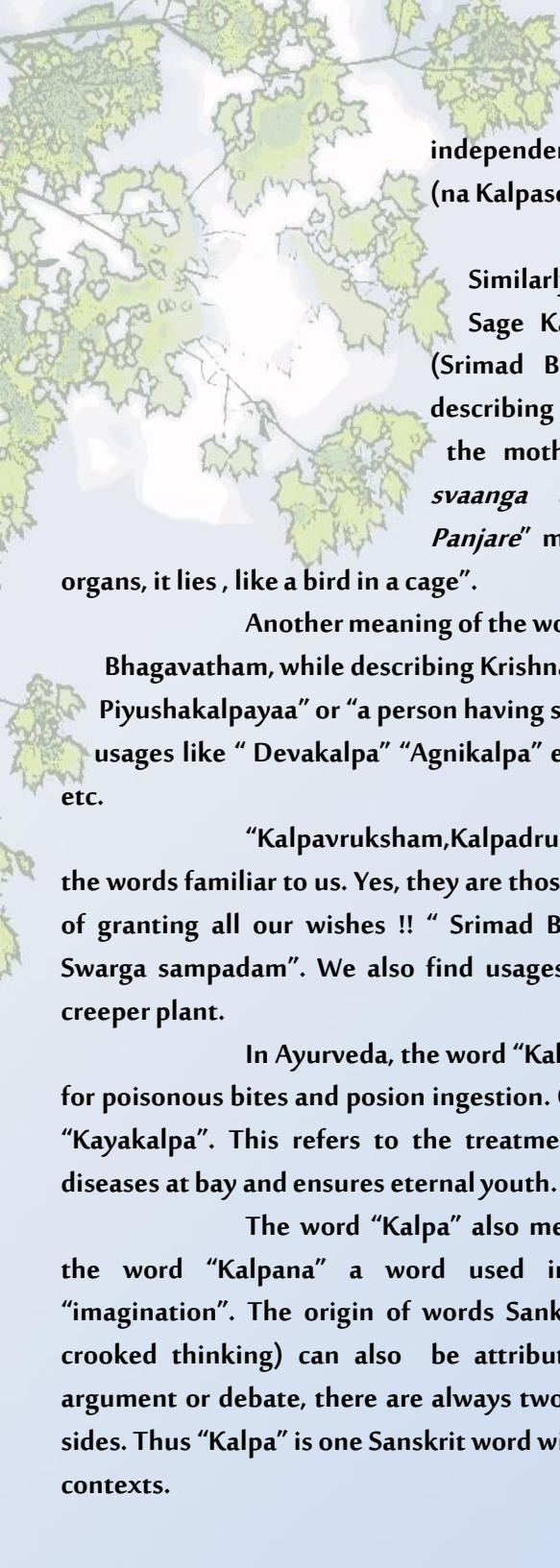
Sanskrit Word Of The Month

- Sri Vishnupriya

The word “Kalpa” has a variety of meanings in Sanskrit. The foremost and the most oft used meaning of Kalpa is “a measure of time”. The duration of one day in Brahma’s life is referred to as “Kalpa”. This is a very long period indeed and is equivalent to 1000 Chaturyugas. In human parlance or according to our calculations, it works out to 43,20,000 human years!!!

The next most prominent meaning of “Kalpa” is as one of the six parts of Vedas. Shiksha, Chandas, Vyakaranam, Niruktham, Kalpam and Jyotisham are the six parts of Vedas. In this the “Kalpa” elaborates on the Vedic rituals to be performed by a man right from his birth, marriage, becoming a parent and right up to and after his death. It also explains about the ideal way of leading one’s life.

Another meaning of “Kalpa” is “Capable” or in a position to do. In Srimad Bhagavatham, Canto 1, while reminiscing his earlier birth, sage Narada speaks about his mother in that birth, thus: *“sa Asvathantra Na Kalpaseedh Yogakshemam mamechathi”*



Even though she wished for my welfare, not being independent she could neither look after me (na Kalpaseedh) nor herself”

Similarly in the conversation between Sage Kapila and his mother Devahuti (Srimad Bhagavatham, 3rd Canto) while describing about the state of a fetus lying in the mother’s womb, it is said, “*Akalpa svaanga cheshtaayaam, shakuntha iva Panjare*” meaning unable to move even its organs, it lies , like a bird in a cage”.

Another meaning of the word “Kalpa” is “Similar”. In Srimad Bhagavatham, while describing Krishna’s qualities, it is said, “Vaachaa Piyushakalpayaa” or “a person having speech like nectar”. We also find usages like “Devakalpa” “Agnikalpa” etc meaning like Devas, Like Agni etc.

“Kalpavruksham, Kalpadrumam, Kalpatharu”, are some of the words familiar to us. Yes, they are those magical trees in heaven capable of granting all our wishes !! “Srimad Bhagavatham also says “Suradru: Swarga sampadam”. We also find usages like “Kalpalathika” meaning a creeper plant.

In Ayurveda, the word “Kalpa” refers to a mode of treatment for poisonous bites and posion ingestion. One is also familiar with the word “Kayakalpa”. This refers to the treatment which keeps old age related diseases at bay and ensures eternal youth.

The word “Kalpa” also means “IDEA”. This is the origin of the word “Kalpana” a word used in many Indian languages for “imagination”. The origin of words Sankalpa, Vikalpa (straight thinking, crooked thinking) can also be attributed to the word “Kalpa”. In an argument or debate, there are always two sides. Kalpa refers to one of the sides. Thus “Kalpa” is one Sanskrit word with multiple meanings in different contexts.



Itihasas and Puranas

The Right Perspective For Our Children

Nisha Giri, Houston

Nine-year-old Rhea told her mom, "I hate Rama! How could he send Sita away to the forest just because some man said something?! Poor Sita, she cried so much, yet Rama paid no heed!"

Child bewildered by Rama SitaRhea's mother was stunned.

As parents following the Sanatana Dharma, we all wish that our children absorb the tenets and appreciate the greatness of our Dharma and our divine Indian culture. And we know that it is through our wonderful Itihasas and Puranas that faith, devotion and the lofty principles of the Sanatana Dharma can be easily inculcated.

For our children today – especially those born outside the divine Indian soil and growing up in a westernized culture – perspectives and the environment are different from the atmosphere of inherent faith that we grew up in, in India.

So, in our genuine enthusiasm to have our children learn about our scriptures, we tend to resort to any available source – books, videos, TV, the Internet – to ‘educate’ them about God and our Puranas.

Rhea had been regularly watching and enjoying a popular TV show based on the Ramayana. Her mother had been happy that Rhea was showing interest in the Ramayana and its characters. But when Rhea said she hated Rama, the bolt had come out of the blue. Her mother had not expected things to take a negative turn like this. Now she was clueless about how to explain Lord Rama’s actions to her daughter! What could she do?

Let us pause for a moment to consider how reliable really are these easily available media sources, when it comes to our great scriptures.? And is mere ‘education’ the purpose? Is it enough if our children just know the characters and the stories, even if it is through the commonly-prevalent inaccurate versions? No wonder then that our grand and noble Itihasas (History) and Puranas (Ancient History) that narrate factual happenings and universal truths have now been reduced to mere, supposedly-fictitious “mythological stories!”

One of the prime reasons for this deterioration in stature are the prolific writers with no scriptural foundation who publish books with superfluous commentaries and re-tellings; producers of sensationalized TV shows allegedly based on our Itihasas but in reality portraying only distorted versions; and all the ubiquitous blogs, websites and online forums expressing their ‘views’ of our Puranic stories that have all unfortunately become the go-to sources for our questions. The sad state is that all of these sources completely miss the purpose of our Itihasas and Puranas, which is to sow, nourish and grow devotion to the Lord in the heart. If that purpose is not accomplished, then the source is weak and is of zero use. And in fact, it doesn’t even make sense to ask questions based on such extremely weak sources that are poor in facts and truth.

In everything, there is saaram (the essential) and asaaram (non-essential). The real intelligence in the human mind is to take only the saaram (essence) and disregard the asaaram. However in the case of divine works like the Ramayana, there is, in truth, no

asaaram at all. But despite this, if we glean asaaram from it, then it is clear that it is only we who bring down the divine leelas of an extraordinary person to our own diminutive perspective seen through our confused small minds. Whenever we see asaaram in our scriptures or divine works of saints, then we should understand that the asaaram is not in the work itself, but in our own vision tainted by our mental grime.

There was once a family who moved into the third floor of an apartment building. The lady of the house had a direct view through her paned glass window into the balcony of the neighboring apartment where clothes would be hung up to dry. The lady was a stickler for cleanliness and it irked her that her neighbor's clothes were never washed properly. There would be streaks of dirt on the washed clothes that were always an eyesore to her. Then one fine day, as she looked out the window expecting to see the annoyingly dirty 'washed clothes', she was surprised that the clothes actually looked clean for the first time. She rubbed her eyes in wonder and pinched herself to make sure she wasn't dreaming. The clothes smiled freshly back at her. As she stood there wondering what had changed... perhaps they had bought a new washing machine or hired a new maid... her husband came by. "Do you see the fresh, clean window pane?" he asked with a tinge of pride, "The glass was so grimy, I cleaned it today. Just couldn't stand the streaks of dirt on it!" Only then did the lady realize that the dirt had actually been in her own vision!

Notwithstanding the tainted perspectives of many writers and producers, the responsibility of protecting our children from such misguiding asaaram is completely ours, as parents. It is up to us to ensure that they absorb divine leelas only from genuine sources. And a genuine source in such matters are only Mahans (saints) and those who are knowledgeable, scholars and well-versed in our traditions and scriptures. Only saints understand the heart of the Lord. Hence only they can speak rightly, insightfully about the Lord and flower devotion through the essence of His leelas.

In the case of Rhea's question about Lord Rama's actions, her mother reached out to Rhea's Gopa Kuteeram teacher who, in turn, reached out to their Guru for answers.

They all learned that there are always several important reasons for any single act of the Lord. The Lord's actions certainly cannot be taken at face value and have to be seen in the right context.

The primary reason that Lord Rama's avatara was taken — and that the Ramayana was written — is to set an example and show us morality and moral values. When that is the case, how can Ramayana itself bring down our moral values?

Lord Rama and Sita Mata loved each other with their whole being and beyond words. They shared a special prema (divine love) and understood each other perfectly. When Sita Devi was kidnapped by Ravana, Lord Rama spent huge efforts, underwent immense pain, changed course, waged war, did everything possible under the sun to get her back. Therefore, when the same Rama who loved Sita Devi so much, chose to give her up, it is logical to assume that he must have had some very strong imperatives for doing so.

Lord Rama, the perfect follower of dharma (duty), believed that every single person in his kingdom mattered, and considered himself accountable to everyone individually. This is inclusiveness to the highest degree. Such was His greatness and the magnitude of His vision. And Sita Devi was no weak, submissive wife. She was so great that she was a perfect match for Rama's strength. Given this context, we can only appreciate the greatness of the Divine Couple's sacrifice. Sita Devi cried, out of prema, not pitifully. Lord Rama, missing her terribly, cried behind closed doors. Yet, they stood by their lofty sacrifice.

But the sacrifice was not in vain. Sita Devi had wished to spend time in the holy company of rishis for the sake of her unborn children. As Lord Rama could not leave his kingly duties, he also used the excuse of the washerman's comment to fulfil her wish. Sage Valmiki was akin to Sita Devi's brother (as he too was born from the earth [anthill] just as she was). Hence going to Sage Valmiki's ashram was, for Sita Devi, like going to her parents' home.

Another little-understood reason why the Divine Couple separated themselves on purpose, is actually the secret of prema. Love is complete only when there is a little separation! This is why Krishna also left Brindavan and the Gopis.

What Lord Rama and Sita Devi did was an immense sacrifice by both of them. They tore their hearts out knowingly – for prema, for dharma! This is their Greatness! When understood in the right way, this can only deepen our love for both of them.

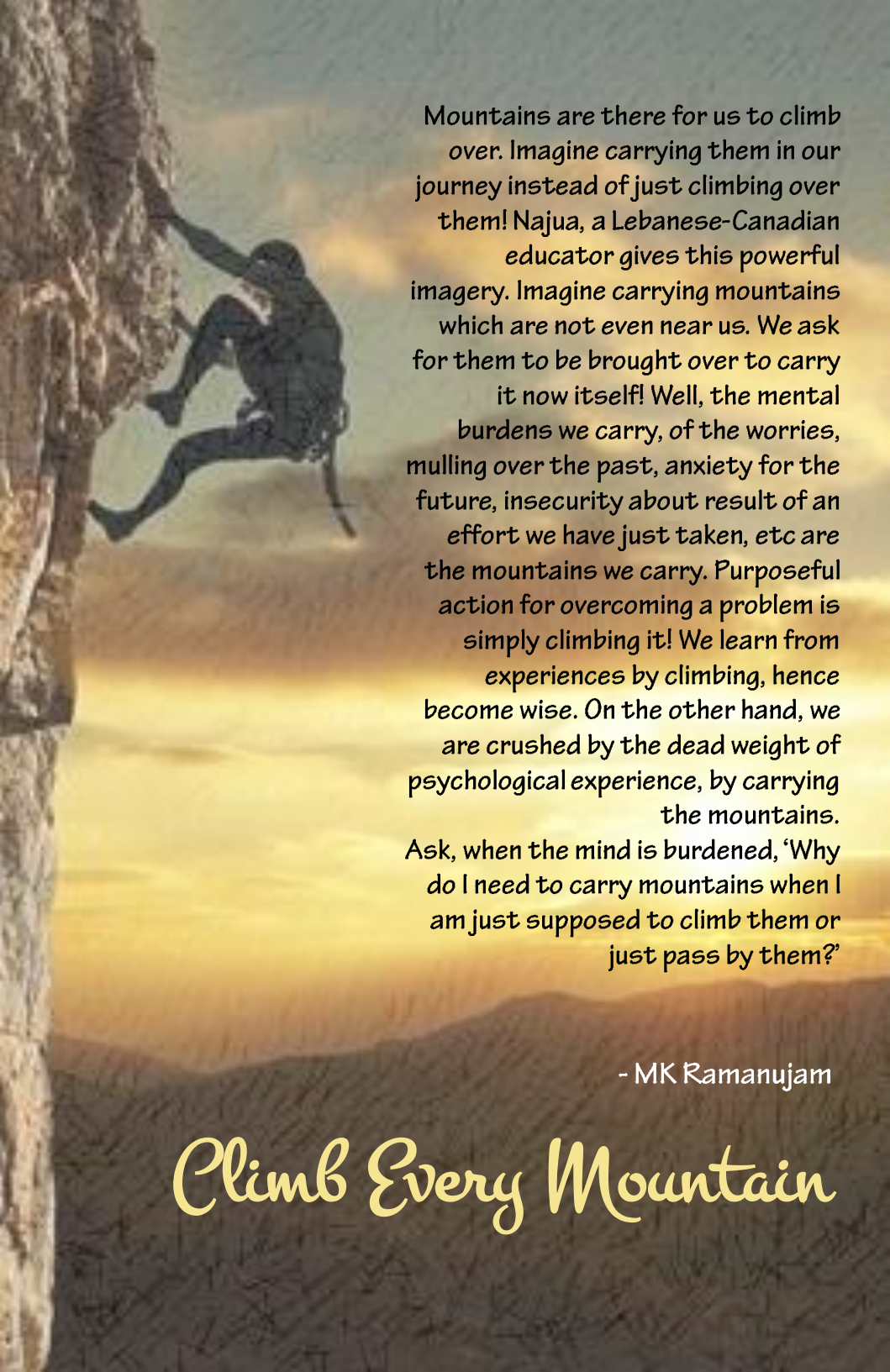
Such a sublime view of the Lord's heart can be explained only by Mahans. Our Itihasas and Puranas are indeed great, divine works that carry the secrets of life and love. Their purpose is neither knowledge nor entertainment, but to develop the highest devotion. Viewed in the right perspective, which is only that of sadhus and Mahans, our children can safely enjoy and appreciate the Lord's divine leelas and nurture love for Him in their hearts.

Blissful Blossoms

A person asked me, "Are you an Advaitin or a Visishtadvaiti or a Dvaiti?"

I said, "Even scholars belonging to these philosophies are still debating on this. As all the three philosophies exist till date it shows that the final decision on this account has not yet been reached! So, let the three – Sri Sankara, Sri Ramanuja and Sri Madhwacharya – come together and debate. Let Sri Veda Vyasa be the moderator. We may then come to the conclusion of which is the right philosophy. Until Sri Veda Vyasa declares the result let us continue to chant the Mahamantra!"

- Sri Swamiji



Mountains are there for us to climb over. Imagine carrying them in our journey instead of just climbing over them! Najua, a Lebanese-Canadian educator gives this powerful imagery. Imagine carrying mountains which are not even near us. We ask for them to be brought over to carry it now itself! Well, the mental burdens we carry, of the worries, mulling over the past, anxiety for the future, insecurity about result of an effort we have just taken, etc are the mountains we carry. Purposeful action for overcoming a problem is simply climbing it! We learn from experiences by climbing, hence become wise. On the other hand, we are crushed by the dead weight of psychological experience, by carrying the mountains. Ask, when the mind is burdened, 'Why do I need to carry mountains when I am just supposed to climb them or just pass by them?'

- MK Ramanujam

Climb Every Mountain

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