

Sri Hari:

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

MadhuraMurali

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Madhura Geetham

ativiraivil en munne vandiDuvAi

Ragam: Aahiri

Talam: Adi

Pallavi

ativiraivil en munne vandiDuvAi - kaNNA

ativiraivil en munne vandhiduvaai

Charanam

un azhagu tAmarai mugatai kANAmal – nAn

ettunai kAlam dAn tavitiDuvEnO (ati)

nIyE en talaivan, swAmi ellAm

aDimai ennai pArAdiruppadEnO (ati)

Baktan sharaNyan, dinan enakku – un

anbu vArtaigaLAl aBayam aLitiDuvAi (ati)

Madhura Smaranam

My Guru As I See Him

- Dr A Bhagyanathan

(Personal Secretary to
Sri Sri Swamiji)

Recently, a devotee who had come to the Ashram raised a question to Sri Swamiji – “Is not Bhakti said to be love for God? Why then do we colloquially use the term ‘bhaya bhakti’ (bhakti mixed with fear)! How can fear and bhakti go together?”

Sri Swamiji gave a wonderful explanation for this--

Some say that one should fear God. Some others say ‘why should one fear God? Fearing God does not sound good to me. One should have only love for God. Bhakti alone is enough.’

Should one fear God? Should one have Bhakti for God? Or, should one hold fear and bhakti towards God? Is God a wild animal for us to fear? Or, is He some creature like the scorpion or serpent for us to fear? Or, does He dislike us? Is He our enemy? Why should we fear Him? Is He not verily our Father, Mother, Guardian, Leader! Why then fear Him? Do we nurture fear of God throwing some curse on us? One who curses cannot be God at all!

When Brugu Muni kicked God, did not God enquire of him with deep concern, “Are your legs paining?” God does not get angry. He knows not to punish. God will never harm anyone. He is interested only in our welfare. God never forsakes those who have faith in Him. Why then should one fear Him?

Well! Let us take up worldly life. Say, we like a person a lot. We enjoy seeing him. We like to be with him always. Separation from him brings sorrow. We yearn for his attention. What is the reason behind this? We know not. We like him, that’s reason enough. Even when this person ignores us we bear it up. We do not bother about it. We see several others yearning to speak with this person and desire to associate with him in some way or the other. If the person whom we like does not look at us or speak to us or remains indifferent it would be hard for us. We would go mad. This experience is inexplicable.

Let us now take up the subject matter on hand. If moving with a human causes this state what then to speak of God’s Love? How lofty is that Love! The love that we humans have for God is of human nature. The compassion that God has for us is divine. Only those who experience that divine love know its joy! We should always hold the fear of losing the divine love of God due to our folly. Should not we have that kind of fear along with bhakti? Who can refute this!

Question:

When we listen to Mahans' discourses or read their books, we always hear the message that we should take whatever happens to us in life as God's prasadam. But in reality, when a problem occurs in life, we go to our Guru and say I have this problem or that problem and pray to Him. We write and pray, "I have this problem and need a solution for it!" We chant Nama, then perform Akhanda Nama and also receive an answer to our prayers.

Should we pray then that we should be blessed with the maturity to really accept such problems as the prasadam of Bhagavan? Or is it right to pray for those problems to go away? What should we do?

Answer:

This is something that depends on each person! We cannot give a universal or generic advice in this matter. If someone is clear that he/she needs to resolve their troubles, then [when they pray] they will surely find a solution to their problems. Whom else can they pray to, other than Bhagavan? But if our attitude is that "I don't want all that; I just want the strength to face the trouble!" then that is also good. But like mentioned before, this depends on each individual's attitude and maturity.

If someone working in an office has decided not to ever accept any bribes, he should be proud of that fact. He should not cry, “I don’t accept bribes. So I do not move up in life.” He should be clear.

“I am truthful. I follow dharma. I will not speak lies. I will not lead my life in an adharmic way through actions such as accepting bribes. I will be perfect and follow the right path in everything,” thinking like this, he should live with clarity. If one lives like this but complains, “I lived a straightforward life. But those who took bribes and told lies have all built huge houses and drive expensive cars! How fair is this!” then the answer to him is – “No scriptures say that when you live a life of truth and dharma; when you don’t speak lies or accept bribes; that you will get a lot of cars!”

If we live a dharmic life, we will get inner excellence and clarity. Within us, we will feel uplifted, be clear of mind, feel contented (atma tripti); these are the fruits of living in a dharmic way. This will certainly not be there for those who seek comforts in life by cheating and lying. .

Nama Alone is Sufficient

- Sri Swamiji

This world does not exist without water. All our requirements are met through water only. For example, we cannot clean ourselves or wash our clothes or cook food without water. Like this, water is an indispensable ingredient in all things of our lives. More than all this, we cannot live without water.

Let us say there is lot of rain in a particular place. We have to get water from this rain. We have to use that water for bathing, cleaning our teeth, to wash ourselves, to clean our clothes and for drinking. It then becomes important to store this water in a particular place isn't it? Once we store the water, we can use it in whatever way we want.

Similarly, God and his Grace are inseparable. God is not different from his Grace. When we say God is omnipresent, it then implies that his grace is also present everywhere. There is no place or time where it is not there or when it is not there. The divine Name (Nama) is the means by which we can receive and store this grace.

Just as we store the rain water, this 'Nama' will store the grace of God. We can use it in whatever way we want, say for getting a job or for removal of difficulties in our lives or for unity in the family or for wealth, power, fame etc.

Instead, if the purpose of chanting the 'Name' is only to reach God, the 'Nama' will also help in its attainment.



Poison

When I was speaking to someone, he mentioned that he knows a mantra the chanting of which removes any amount of poison in the body. With a smile, I told him, "I have a mantra called 'Mahamantra". If we chant this Mahamantra, all the mental impressions of many lives, which are like poison, are removed.

- Sri Swamiji



Satsanga

- DR A BHAGYANATHAN

(From Sri Swamiji's lecture at
Triplicane Sri Pandurangan Temple,
on 12th June, Ekadasi day)

As human beings we have endless desires. Many of which are fair. For example, we want to be well educated, reach financial independence, live a healthy and peaceful life, and for our children to have the same. With countless desires in mind, which can we seek in our prayers?

We often wonder which God to pray for or which slokas and mantras to chant to achieve varied desires. We attend satsangs, listen to spiritual discourses, read divine scriptures, and wish to be blessed with bhakti, jnana, and dispassion to free ourselves from the cycle of births and deaths.

To attain jnana, we must free ourselves from worldly desires and attachments that lead to rebirth.

However, we can neither sacrifice trivial things nor free ourselves from worldly attachments. For example, we hastily decide to offer 'archana' in god's name in the temple. When the priest is about to start the 'archana' we are a bit worried if we made a mistake by doing so. The thought that we have stopped the merit

of 'archana' from reaching us by offering it in God's name instead of ours arises in us.

However, can we pray for both? Worldly desires as well as jnana? Aren't they mutually exclusive? Sri Sri Anna's abhang offers a way to attain both!

'satsanga majala dEhi dEhi! dUsarA var nAhi nAhi!'

Satsanga - if satsanga is in our lives, our material and spiritual wants get fulfilled automatically.

Satsanga is the association with a true sadhu. If we are blessed with it, we do not need a second boon ('doosara vara'). We can pray with conviction to the Lord for the one boon - the blessing of satsanga, without even seeking anything else.

'iha para sAdana dUsara nAhi.....mauLI viTTala raGumAyI!'

We need to perform the prescribed karmas for our worldly live and vedantha vicharam, Bhagavat Gita parayana, Upanishads, and other texts as sadhanas for our spiritual lives.

Sri Sri Anna says, 'Sadhu sangam' blesses us with both worldly and spiritual needs simultaneously. How do we seek and identify a sadhu sangam? In The Bhagavat Gita when Arjuna questions Lord Krishna about the one that has controlled his mind, Lord Krishna explains the state of a 'jivan mukta'. Sri Sri Anna explains about who a true sadhu is and how to identify them in his kirtan.

Sri Sri Anna says why we have to serve a true sadhu:

‘kOTi janma puNya sAdana sAdyam.
gOvinda dAsa maNDala dAsyam.’

To be blessed with the darshan of a Hari dasa (one who serves Hari) and for him/her to ask us to perform seva takes millions of ‘janmas’, over which we have accumulated millions of ‘punyas’. Who are these Hari dasas? How can we identify them?

...to be contd.

Bhaḡawan and Jnanis

- MK Ramanujam

As you all are aware, the “Vasantotsav” or the “Spring Festival” concluded in our MadhuraPuri Ashram this May. The divine couple Madhuri Sakhi and Premika Varadan were decked in the finest silks and seated on a swing decorated with the most fragrant flowers and buds . Sri Sri Guruji himself sang the Yugala Shatakam on each day of the festival. The grand celebrations are still fresh in the hearts of the devotees.

During the 9 day Utsav, Guruji gave discourses on Srimad Bhagavatham on a few days. During the discourse he shared many interesting and rare anecdotes. One such anecdote, where he touched upon the Greatness of a realized soul is very interesting. Let us see that.

Bhagawan descends to earth in many Avatars to protect Dharma (Righteousness) or his Devotees. In each such Avatar, he kills the evil demon/demons. For example, In his descent as Matsya, he fought with an Asura called Hayagriva. In his descent as Varaha or the Boar, he kills the demon Hiranyaksha. In his descent as Narsimha, he killed the Hiranyakasipu an Asura. In Rama Avatar, he conquered Ravana. In his descent as Krishna, he killed the trio of Kamsa, Shishupala and Dantavakra. In each of His incarntions, Bhagawan fought back the demons who came to fight with him. But Jnanis are different altogether.

Srimad Bhagavatham which narrates the stories of numerous incarnations of Bhagawan speaks about the Jnanis in the very same breath. The Jada Bharata Charitra is a testimony to this. In the Jada Bharata U[pakhyana, there is an instance where dacoits take away Jada Bharata to be offered as sacrifice to Goddess Kali. While the dacoits prepared him for the sacrifice, Jada Bharata remained calm and serene throughout.

While Bhagawan fights those who embark on a fight with him, Jnanis choose not to respond and remain calm. What can one say about the greatness of such souls?? Perhaps, this is why, Bhagawan himself says in Bhagavad Gita, “jnAni Atmaiva mE matam” which translates to “I consider the Jnanis as my very soul”.

Bakthi should not be impaired

- Janakiraman V

Music has the power to attract everyone. Often, we see small children inadvertently tapping their hands in rhythm, while in a musical concert. Devotional songs or Classical music, although repeatedly listened to, do not get registered that easily in our minds. On the other hand, film music and songs, get hold of us instantly. Without any effort and without even being aware of, it grips us over and over again. There is such a force for temporal music. For the same reason, devotees are not only advised to refrain from filmy music but also to avoid writing and singing songs that are similar to film music.

In Srimad Bhagavatam, Bhagavan, at the time of His descent, addresses Devaki and Vasudeva, saying, “abstaining yourself from worldly stories and music, you both engaged in singing the divine names in your earlier births. Through such penance, you asked for a boon to have me as your child. That is the reason, I have been incarnating as your child for three births”. Therefore, it is clear that the devotees are to deliberately avoid worldly stories and songs(movies and movie songs), as it would impair devotion.

Srimad Bhagavatam - Canto 10- Chapter - 3

अजुष्टग्राम्यविषयावनपत्यौ च दम्पती ।
न वत्राथेऽपवर्गम् मे मोहितौ मम मायया ॥ ३९ ।
गते मयि युवाम् लब्ध्वा वरम् मत्सद्गुणम् सुतम् ।
ग्राम्यान् भोगानभुञ्जाथाम् युवाम् प्रासमनोरथौ ॥ ४० ।

A TALE FOR CHILDREN

TIME AND AGAIN

It was a beautiful morning. Madhavan who was 12 years old was having his breakfast. All of a sudden, a thought sprang up in his mind. 'I'm living a routine life by eating, what is the value of my life? Pondering over this thought, he posed the same question to his mother, looking out for an answer. 'Amma! what is the value of my life? Surprised by such a question, the mother said, "Wow! You have asked a wonderful question! Keep this question in your mind", saying so, she picked up a shiny stone and gave it to Madhavan. "First, find out the value of this precious gemstone! I will give you the answer for your question shortly",said the mother. She also instructed him on whom to ask.

Madhavan stepped out with the gemstone and returned back in the evening. The mother asked,"Madhava! What happened?" Madhavan narrated all that happened to his mother. "First, I went to the street and approached the fruit seller you mentioned," Sir! Can you please tell me the value of this gemstone?" for which he replied, "Child! I do not know. But, I shall give you a banana in exchange for this stone. This reply was unacceptable to me. So, I went straight to the museum you had asked me to go.

I asked the person in charge of the museum, "How much can your museum pay as a price for this gemstone? He said, "Madhava! I like your curiosity. However, our museum does not need

such a stone. So, I cannot give you anything.” I thanked him and then wondered who should I approach next! Then, I went to our family friend’s jewelry shop, Kumar Jewellers.

I asked him the same question. He looked at the gemstone. His face gladdened in wonder. He was looking at the stone again and again as if looking at some great wonder. I asked, “Uncle! Why are you looking at the stone? What is the answer to my question? He replied, “Madhava! This gemstone is one of a kind and is flawless. The worth of this gemstone is beyond my comprehension. According to me, this gem is priceless. So, handover the stone safely back to your mother. Be careful!”

Why did you ask me to find this out, amma?

The mother looked at Madhava and said,” Madhava! The people in the world assess you within the limits of what they know about you and the trust they have upon you. Yet, it cannot change the fact that you are precious and very special! Remember this, just like how the jeweler appraised the gemstone, you surround yourself with people filled with love, compassion and affection. Because my child! you are indeed precious! So, as much as possible be with the ones who truly care for you. Only those people will realize that you are invaluable and precious. They alone can make you realize the same”

Madhavan embraced that rare gemstone to his heart, beaming with pride!

artha

अर्थ

SANSKRIT WORD OF THE MONTH

- Sri Vishnupriya

Let us look at the various meanings of the Sanskrit word 'artha'. We know that the common meaning of this word is 'meaning'. The terms 'padhaartha', 'shabdhaartha' refer to the meaning of a word.

The word 'artha' also means Purpose, goal, aim. The term 'purushartham' gets referred with this meaning. We always hear about chaturvidha purushartham or 4 types of purushartham. Purushartham means what a human being has to achieve in his life. They are dharma, artha, kaama and moksha. The second purushartham 'artha', refers to another meaning of this word. This 'artha' means wealth. The purpose of human life is to follow the dharmic path to earn necessary wealth and use this wealth to satisfy our needs and necessities and finally attain the moksham.

Sri Narayana theerthar, in his Tarangini, ‘krishnam kalaya saki sundharam’, sings beautifully ‘artham shithileekruthaanartham sri naarayana theertha parama purushartham’. Sri Krishna is the parama saaram that we have to attain. He will remove all mishaps. Narayana theerthar sings that his parama purushartham is Sri Krishna.

We already saw that the word ‘artha’ has the meaning wealth. Sri Krishna, in Bhagawad Geeta mentions that 4 people pray to Him – aarthee, jignasu, arthaarthee and jnani. Of these 4 categories of people, arthaarthee is the one who prays to Sri Krishna for more wealth and prosperity – an arthaarthee desires to have more wealth. But, mahans say that this wealth will only push a person deep into maaya. Sri Adi shankarar in his Bhaja Govindam sings ‘artham anartham bhavaya nithyam’ – always remember artham (wealth) is anartham (meaningless). In the word ‘arthaarthee’, the first part ‘artham’ means wealth. Second part, arthee means, one who longs for it. The meaning of the word ‘arthanam’ is to ask, pray for, to beg.

Srimad Bhagawatham says, ‘satyam dishatharthitham arthitho nrunaam (5-19-27)’, which means Bhagawan grants whatever a person prays for.

If we add an upasarga, ‘pra’ to the word ‘artha’, it becomes ‘praarthana’. This word means ‘to make a special prayer’.

Likewise, if we add the upasarga, ‘vi’, we get ‘vyartha’ (vigatho artha:). ‘vyartha’ means meaningless. Our elders always say that we should not waste time in meaningless pursuits. As such, there are many meanings to this word when we look at the word in different angles.



Why Religious People Live Longer

June 15 2018
Times of India

Religious people may live on average four years longer compared to their atheist peers, a study of obituaries in the US has found. The four-year boost — found in an analysis of over 1,000 obits from around the US — was calculated after taking into account the sex and marital status of those who died, two factors that have strong effects on lifespan.

“Religious affiliation had nearly as strong an effect on longevity as gender does, which is a matter of years of life,” said Laura Wallace, a doctoral student at The Ohio State University. The study, published in ‘Social Psychological and Personality Science’, found that part of the reason for the boost in longevity came from the fact that religiously affiliated people also volunteered and belonged to social organisations, which previous research has linked to living longer.

“The study provides persuasive evidence that there is a relationship between religious participation and how long a person lives,” said Baldwin Way, an associate professor at Ohio State. The first study involved 505 obituaries published in the ‘Des Moines Register’ in January and February 2012. In addition to noting the age and any religious affiliation of those who died, the researchers

also documented sex, marital status and the number of social and volunteer activities listed. The results showed that those whose obit listed a religious affiliation lived 9.45 years longer than those who did not. The gap shrunk to 6.48 years after gender and marital status were taken into account.

The second study included 1,096 obituaries from 42 major cities in the US published on newspaper websites between August 2010 and August 2011. In this study, people whose obits mentioned a religious affiliation lived an average of 5.64 years longer than those whose obits did not, which shrunk to 3.82 years after gender and marital status were considered.

However, while volunteering and social events can extend lifespan, the researchers believe they aren't the only factors. Lifestyle guidelines, such as abstaining from drinking alcohol or taking drugs, could explain the boost, as well as practices which ease stress, such as praying or meditating.

This is the latest research to point to religion having life-boosting effects. In 2016, a study published in the journal JAMA Internal Medicine suggested that regularly attending religious services can increase lifespan.

ஸ்வாம் விவேகானந்தா

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