

SAMARDHA SADGURU

Spiritual Magazine

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Sri Mataji's Benediction

WHAT IS ATMAN?

Atman is unconditioned consciousness which is all pervading. But the spiritual seeker sees himself as the conditioned consciousness until mind, intellect and ego are eliminated; then the conditioned and unconditioned merge with each other.

For example, sunlight in a room conditioned by walls of the room merges with the sunlight outside when the walls are removed. Atman is pure objectless awareness.

For recognition of one's own self or Absolute Bliss, one has to discard the five layers of matter which is termed Pancha-Kosa-Viveka. A child chews chocolate along with its silver paper wrapping and therefore although he enjoys the sweetness, it is intercepted by the taste of the silver paper wrapping. Similarly Atman or Absolute Bliss could not be recognised due to the five layers of matter or Pancha Kosa. Hence the sorrow and bitterness in life.

Seers have analysed that the five layers of matter in human being are inert and not conscious of the world around. Therefore, there is something other than matter in him which lends him the sentience or consciousness. It is evidently the Atman or Self.

A magnet is after all an iron piece but with the property to attract iron. Therefore, Atman is something other than gross (Sthula), subtle (Sukshma) and causal (Kaarana) bodies responsible for consciousness, perceiver of sense organs, feeler of the mind, thinker of the intellect. Atman is subtlest and the controller of all kinds of matter.

But subtlety should not be misunderstood. Subtlety in spiritual language indicates pervasiveness. When ice melts the water so formed occupies a larger area. Similarly when water is subjected to boiling the steam so generated occupies still a greater area. Thus water is supposed to be subtler than ice and steam is still subtler than water.

A man with the vision of Atman or Self-realisation enjoys total liberation from stresses and strains.*



Editorial

LET'S SING 'PALLAANDU...PALLAANDU...'

Om Gururam namaste!

We are in the thick of the Sharannavaratri festivities in Sri Kali Vanaashramam. This year there is a bonus for devotees in the shape of another major event which comes close on the heels of Dasara. That is the 'Shashtipoorthi' of our Beloved Amma, Poojya Sri Yogini Chandra Kali Prasada Mataji, who is the incumbent Peethadhipathi of the Ashramam. Yes, our Divine Mother is completing six decades of purposeful living on this planet on October 27 (Aasweeyuja Poornima). Having been the beneficiaries of Her motherly care, isn't it our duty to celebrate the grand gala event?



Born as the only child of Smt. Raghavamma and Sri Mavuleti Chiranjeevi Raju garu, one of the earliest disciples of our Gurudev and founder of the Ashramam, Sri Sri Samardha Sadguru Hanumat Kali Vara Prasada Babuji Maharaj, Chandra - our Amma was christened so - was deeply attached to Sri Babuji right from her childhood. When Sri Chiranjeevi Raju garu breathed his last at the holy feet of Guru Maharaj, while they were on a pilgrimage to Srisailam, Guru Maharaj took upon Himself the task of bringing up 'Ammadu' - that was how He used fondly call Her - in a spiritual ambience. Thanks to the divine tutelage of the Master, She grew up learning all essential scriptures like Upanishads, Brahma Sutras and Bhagavadgita ('Prastaana Trayi), besides a number of puraanaas, epics like the Ramayana and the Mahabharata and many spiritual texts in Telugu. These apart, endowed with a resonant voice and in-depth knowledge of Carnatic music, She excelled in conducting 'Sankeertans' for which our Ashramam is famous. Her melodious singing of Meera bhajans earned

Her the 'birudu': Abhinava Meera. Serving the Sadguru with intense faith also helped Her achieve laurels. Alongside, Guru Maharaj initiated Chandra into spiritual practices that enabled Her to acquire the inner Soul strength. With such a magnificent background, no wonder She became the automatic choice to head the Peetham, with the title Yogini Sri Chandra Kali Prasada Mataji, when Sri Babuji chose to end His 'avatar' on December 3, 1988.

After assuming charge as the Peethadhipathi, Sri Mataji further embellished the Ashramam by streamlining various activities with Her extraordinary spiritual prowess and administrative acumen. Apart from conducting festivals like Danurmasa vratam, Sankranti, Maha Sivaratri, Ugadi, Sri Rama Navami, Janmashtami, Vinayaka Chavithi and Dasara as ordained by Guru Maharaj, Sri Mataji was keen on another important event. That was the first Punya Aradhana of Gurudev in 1989. Sri Mataji would then say, "It is not difficult for us to conduct important festivals because Guru Maharaj has trained us well in that task, but we did not have His guidance for conducting the Aradhana Mahotsavam. So we have to strain our every nerve towards successfully organising that event." The event went off well, setting the trend for annual 'aradhanas'.

Sri Mataji fulfilled the express wish of Gurudev during 1988 Dasara to renovate and enlarge the congregation hall in Sri Ramalayam, within a year. Sri Babuji Brindavanam project was set in motion by arranging the 'shankusthaapanam' on the auspicious Sankara Jayanthi. The beautiful edifice was ready in a couple of years, due to the 'dhruda sankalpam' of our Divine Mother. Ashramam branches in Hyderabad, Peda Nindrakolanu and Rajahmundry came into being one by one to spread the message of Universal Religion adumbrated by Guru Maharaj. Innumerable satsangs have been conducted by Sri Mataji not only in Andhra Pradesh but also in other parts of the country and even abroad. Many yagams, coupled with Sadhu Sammelanams, were performed in the Ashramam and other places like Tuni and Guntur. The Hyderabad branch building has been thoroughly reconstructed in an aesthetic manner. The S.H.K.V.P.B. Gurukulam and hospital have been modernised

with facilities to extend quality education and exemplary health care respectively to the public at large.

Pilgrimages to Badrinath, Kedarnath, Kailash-Manasarovar, etc., were organised by Sri Mataji for the benefit of a good number of devotees who experienced the divine vibrations of those sacred spots. Above all, it is the yearning ('tapana') of Poojya Mataji to elevate every devotee to the level of a 'sadhak' (spiritual trainee), for which She has given 'lakshyartham' to scores of disciples. Sri Mataji's earnest desire is that every devotee should become a realised soul.

'Shashtipoorthi' is a milestone in the life of an ordinary person, indicating relaxation from worldly activities. But in respect of Yoginis like our Amma, it does not imply retirement, but intensified endeavour towards achieving greater tasks like 'Loka Kalyanam'. Isn't it our good fortune that we are contemporaries of such a Noble Personage?

Vishnuchitta, with his motherly affection for Lord Narayana, performed 'mangalaasaasanam' (benediction) to Him by singing 'Pallaandu...Pallaandu...' ('May You live long!'). Following his footsteps, let us also sing 'Pallaandu...Pallaandu...' to show our filial affection for our Divine Mother.

Jai Gurudev!*

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Manager, Samardha Sadguru (0863-2293206)

Thus Spake Babuji DIVINE PLAN

(Continued from the previous issue)

Sushumna Prasada

Gopanna was working as Tahsildar in the Province of Golconda for which Tanisha was the Nawab. The mind of Gopanna was totally absorbed in the lotus feet of Lord Rama. Having seen the temple of Ramachandra in Bhadrachalam in a dilapidated condition, he wanted to renovate the temple. He was very much upset by seeing the deplorable state of the Lord's temple. Gopanna began to ruminate in the following manner: "The entire universe is the creation of the Lord. Hence everything belongs to Him. So there is nothing wrong in utilising the revenue collected by way of tax for the renovation of the temple." Having decided thus, without taking the permission of the Nawab Tanisha he spent the entire money collected by way of tax from the people for the renovation of the temple in Bhadrachalam. He spent about Rs.6 lakhs for the purpose.



From the general view, spending the amount of the royal treasury for private purposes without the permission of the ruler was a crime on the part of Ramadas. But he, without any ulterior motive, did selfless service for the welfare of the humanity at large. As it was done by Ramadas without the sanction of the Government, he was imprisoned.

If we scrutinise the situation carefully, Gopanna did not spend a single paisa for his personal use. With the strong faith that the entire money belonged to Lord Rama he spent it for the reconstruction of the temple. But he received the reward of imprisonment.

At this point, Lord Babuji questioned the gathering "Does it mean that God is stone-hearted?" Gururdev answered the question himself, saying that such a view was highly fallacious. "Imprisonment of Gopanna, who had acquired the suitable name

Ramadas for his inestimable service to Lord Rama, was not a punishment. It was only training and a test of sorts for his devotion. Just as the yellow metal gets purified by being placed in fire, Sri Ramachandra aimed at purifying Ramadas by way of imprisonment. The greatness of Ramadas should be recognised by the entire world. Ramadas should become an immortal devotee. Further, this incident will prove that a true devotee never deviates from the path of righteousness, even in the hour of crisis. A genuine devotee takes gain or loss, success or failure, pleasure or pain, praise or abuse with a smile indicative of equanimity. This Divine Plan of revealing the glory and greatness of devotion of Gopanna is embedded in the harsh imprisonment of Ramadas. Not only that. Divine blessings have to be showered on the Tanisha who was a great devotee of Rama in his previous birth. Tanisha has to be saved by the blissful sight of Sri Rama and Lakshmana. For that purpose also, Gopanna's imprisonment was necessary. Though we find the life of Ramadas in utter state of confusion and unimaginable suffering externally, it was all done with an intricate Divine Plan of proclaiming the greatness of Ramadas and Tanisha, too.

“Imprisonment was not the only test aimed at Ramadas. There was another temptation also to test him. Nawab Tanisha offered him a chance to overcome the imprisonment. Tanisha sent word that he would be released from the prison and the money (tax) need not be paid back, if he accepted to convert the temple into an educational institution. He would also be allowed to continue his duty as Tahsildar. This news was conveyed by Kabir Das. But Ramadas did not jump joyfully for the suggestion. He remained steadfast in his attitude without yielding to the temptation suggested by his master. He addressed his master as Gurudev and remarked “Sir, do you want me to convert the temple into an educational Institution? Am I to believe it? Is it fair on my part to entrust my Lord to others in order to maintain this bubble like body? I know you won't encourage such objectionable deed; you just want to test the steadfastness of my devotion. Are there not buildings to promote the cause of education or is it not the duty of the Government to construct buildings to promote the cause of education? I am

not in the least unhappy to stay in this prison. On the other hand, here I have plenty of time to praise my Lord and meditate on this Divine name. So it is a blessing in disguise for me. Hence I pray my beloved Lord Rama to increase implicit faith in me to withstand any type of Temptation.

“Kabir’s joy knew no bounds by the reply of his disciple and felt that his disciple was the most suitable person to be named Ramadas. So he congratulated Gopanna saying, "You have proved yourself most deserving to be known as Ramadas and the entire world will recognise your greatness and appreciate your admirable devotion." Kabir then affectionately hugged his disciple.

“Sri Rama kept His promise by paying the money due from Ramadas and offered His blissful darshan to Tanisha. Ramadas was not only released from the prison but also from the endless cycle of birth and death. Ramadas attained eternal glory by becoming the recipient of the eternal bliss Brahmananda. Thus Lord Rama proved the spiritual heroism of Ramadas with His divine plan.”

Lord Babuji concluded his discourse by saying that the Almighty always took care of His devotees. “Any incidental suffering of His devotees is only to prove the depth of their devotion.”*

A somewhat inebriated gentleman was slowly moving along with the street, carrying in his hand a box with perforations on the lid and sides. It appeared that he was carrying some live animal in the box. An acquaintance stopped him and asked, 'What have you got in the box?'

"It is a mangoose' replied the tipsy man."

"What on earth for?"

"Well you know how it is with me; I am not really drunk now, but soon I shall be. And when I am, I see snakes all around and I get awfully scared. That is why I have the mangoose for, to protect me from the snakes."

"Good heavens, those are all imaginary snakes!"

"This also, is an imaginary mangoose!"

The box was in fact empty. Similarly we require a right imagination to throw out wrong ones. Imagination properly employed is our great friend says Swami Vivekananda.

-From 'Mind and its control' by Swami Budhananda

Divine Mother Speaks

THE TRUE DASARA FESTIVAL

Japamala Prasada

Sri Durga, the Divine Mother, killed the demon king Durgadu on the eighth day of the brighter half in the month of Asweeyujam, and this day is celebrated as Durga Ashtami in our country. She killed many demons like Shumbha, Nishumbha, Raktabeeja and finally Mahishasura, the mightiest of demon kings, during the first ten days in the brighter half of the month of Ashweeyuja. These ten days are celebrated as Dasara.



Durga, Dukha Hantri, Durgathi Naasini, and Durgama - these are all various names of the Divine Mother. Whoever worships and chants the Divine Mother's names is relieved of all sorrows; all his or her wishes are fulfilled and the person is blessed with health, wealth and happiness.

One may be an erudite scholar, one may earn lakhs and lakhs of rupees, but these achievements are of no use unless one is the recipient of the Divine Mother's grace. One may dress up like a sanyasi by smearing vibhuthi all over his body, close his eyes and start doing meditation, write a number of books. But all these are futile if that person does not worship the Divine Mother.

Who is this Divine Mother? Supreme Energy, Truth, Knowledge and Infinity personified is Divine Mother. She is beyond time, space, sex, caste, creed, name and form. She is the all pervading Supreme Energy. She is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient. She is known by millions of names. All names are Hers and all forms are Hers; yet She is nameless and formless. The former is Her 'Saguna Rupam' and the latter is Her 'Nirguna Roopam'. We address Her by names such as, Maha Kali, Maha Lakshmi, Maha Saraswathi, Durga, Narayani, Vaishnavi, Govinda Roopini, Rudra Roopini, Brahma Roopini, Lalitha and so on. Her names are legion.

All of us are meeting during this Navarathri festival in the presence of our Divine Father, Guide and Mentor Sri Guru

Maharaj and happily participating in the satsangs. ‘Sat’ means truth; ‘sang’ means attachment. We are attaching ourselves with the Divine Truth (Sathyavastuvu) and detaching from the worldly things. This way, all our time is getting deposited in the ‘True Time’. This is how a festival should be spent. Festival does not mean taking an oil bath, wearing new clothes and eating a sumptuous meal. We must clean our head of all impure thoughts; and that is the real head bath. We must discard the old and ragged clothes of ignorance and wear new garments of knowledge. We must eat the delicious meal of Satsang sumptuously. That is real Dasara festival.

The Divine Mother is ‘Nama parayana preetaa’ which means She is very pleased with the chanting of her divine names. She is ‘Prema Roopa’ – i.e. Personification of Love. There is no world without love. Loving God is divinity or Bhakti. God is constant and Infinite. If we love God we will also become like that. All our wayward nature will be stilled. We will experience the divine peace and bliss. Divine love spreads joy and happiness to everyone and everywhere. It destroys the differences of opinion between people, and all world will be enveloped by peace and bliss.

During the Navarathri festival we are given a great opportunity to serve the Divine Mother in many ways. We can participate in Sankeertana and sing Her glories; we can take part in poojas and this will cleanse our body and mind. We can listen to the satsang lectures and this cleans up the mind completely. The three most important things for a spiritual seeker are ‘Sravanam’ (listening to the divine lectures); ‘Mananam’ (contemplating upon the lectures we heard) and ‘Nididhyasanam’ (experience those divine thoughts).

We can also participate in the various activities of service like cooking, cutting vegetables, serving, cleaning the Ashram premises, etc. Any act of ours in the Divine Mother’s service takes us to Her. So, may the Divine Mother bless us with infinite knowledge, devotion and detachment and the will power to do selfless service.

Om Tat Sat.*

**CURRENT PROGRAMMES
IMPORTANT PUJAS AND SATSANGS
AT SRI KALI GARDENS**

OCTOBER 2015

- 07 Wed - Sri Guru Dasami - Satsangam, Sri Sadguru Pada Puja
10 Sat - Sani Trayodasi
11 Sun - Masa Sivaratri
12 Mon - Amavasya
13 Tue - 24 Sat - Sri Devi Navaratri Mahotsavams
14 Wed - 23 Fri - 09.00 a.m - Satsangams, Sri Mataji's Discourses
19 Mon - Mula Nakshatram - Sri Saraswathi Puja,
Samuhika Kumkuma Pujas
21 Wed - Durgashtami, Maharnavami
22 Thu - Vijaya Dasami - Samoohika Kumkuma Pujas, Annaprasanal, Aksharabhyasamulu, Namakaranamulu
23 Fri -28 Wed - Akhanda Sankeerthana
24 Sat - Deeksha Viramana, 07.00 p.m. Nagarotsavam,
08.00 p.m. Sri Sadguru Pada Puja
25 Sun-26 Mon - Mruthyunjaya Homam, Satsangams of Sadhus
27 Tue - 09.00 a.m Satachidrabhisekham with kalasams to Sri Mataji-
Sashtipurthi Mahotsavam(Birth day) of Sri Mathaji -
Sri Sadguru Pada Puja, Bhakta Samaradhana
28 Wed - 07.00 a.m - Mangala Harathi to Akhanda Nama Sankeerthana

NOVEBER 2015

- 06 Fri - Sri Guru Dasami - Satsangam, Sri Sadguru Pada Puja
09 Mon - Maasa Sivaratri - Ekaham at Pavuluru Branch
10 Tue - Naraka Chaturdasi - Sri Sadguru Pada Puja, Satsangam
11 Wed - Deepavali Amavasya - Sri Sadguru Pada Puja, Bhakta Samaradhana, 08.00 p.m - Firing of crackers
15 Sun - Nagula Chavithi
22 Sun - Ksheerabdi Ekadasi - Sri Sadguru Pada Puja, Ekaham
23 Mon - Ksheerabdi Dwadasi - Sri Sadguru Pada Puja, Bhakta Samaradhana
25 Wed - Kartika Guru Poornima - Guru Nanak Jayanthi, Sri Sadguru Pada Puja, Satsangam, Bhakta Samaradhana
06.00 p.m -Jwala Thoranam,Sri Uma Ramalingeswara Swamy Uregimpu
28 Sat to 06-12-2015 Sun - 27th Punya Aaradhana Mahotsavams of Sri Sadguru Devulu

(Continued in page No.22)

Children's Section

Tales of Sri Ramakrishna

DEVOTION OF A YOUNG DEVOTEE

Ramana Prasad

A Brahmin was used to perform puja daily. One day he had to go to another village on an urgent work. He asked his youngest son to perform Puja on his behalf. He explained to the boy how to offer Nitya Naivedyam after puja and entreat God to accept the Nivedana.



As advised by his father, the boy kept the Naivedyam before God and waited silently. But God did not come to eat the Naivedyam. The boy firmly believed that God would arrive and eat the food offered to Him. When God did not arrive, he pleaded, “O God! Please come and eat. I can wait no longer.” There was no reply from Him. The boy insisted, “My father told me to see that you eat the Naivedyam. Even though I requested you again and again you did not come to eat. But you were eating the Naivedyam offered by my father. Why don’t you come and eat? What fault have I committed?” The boy wept endlessly. Then suddenly he looked at the pitham where he kept the Naivedyam. He saw God assuming a human form and eating the Naivedyam.

He went home after puja. The family members said, “If puja is over, bring Naivedyam quickly.” The boy replied, “God has taken all the Naivedyam.” All present over there were stunned. They said, “What are you prattling? Did God eat all the Naivedyam? It is unbelievable.”

While they looked at him suspiciously, the boy said again, “I am speaking truth. God has taken the Naivedyam.” Then they all went and saw in the temple only to find the Naivedyam plate empty and were dumbfounded.

Implicit faith and agony for God will make impossible thing possible.*

Heart is the true seat of consciousness: Bhagawan explains "By heart is meant not the physical organ at the left side of the chest but the spiritual heart at the right: and by consciousness is meant, not thought but pure awareness or sense of being.

From: Bhagawan's 'From Darkness to Light'

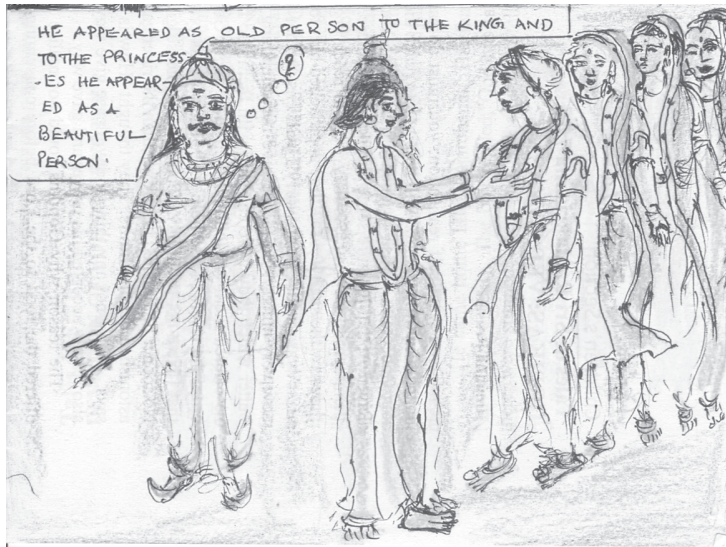
STORIES OF DEVOTEES SOUBHARI

(Continued from the previous issue)

Ramana Prasad

Mandhata readily agreed to this and asked his attendant to take the sage to the princess' chamber. As soon as the sage entered that place Soubhari transformed himself into a young and handsome person, with his yogic powers. He looked like 'Nava Manmadha' who can attract any woman from three lokas. The sevak conveyed the message of Mandhata thus, "Soubhari wants to marry one among you who shows a liking for him. Please decide who is willing to marry him and let the king know."

They looked at Soubhari and could not turn their eyes away from him. They all were gazing at him and became attracted to him. They started quarrelling among themselves to have him as their husband. The eldest of them said, "I have decided to marry him. So, all of you should withdraw." The second one said, "You are not the right choice. I am very beautiful and so I am the right choice. The third one said, "I have already made up my mind to marry him. Let me see who will come in my way."



Like this they quarrelled among themselves. The sevak went back to the king and said that all of them wanted to marry the sage. In the meantime the sage also came to the king's palace. He appeared to the king as an old person and to the princesses he appeared as a handsome lad, using his yogic powers. But all his daughters preferred to marry him. So the king had no option but to get them married to the sage. The marriage was performed with great pomp and luxury.

The sage left for his Ashram along with his wives. He created beautiful gardens, ponds, different varieties of fruit-bearing trees, well furnished villas with all facilities. He provided a separate residence for each of his wives and also kept servants to attend on them. Thus the sage was spending his married life happily.

After some time Mandhata had a desire to see his daughters. First he went to see the eldest daughter. He was surprised at the facilities in her house. He asked her "Are you happy? Does your husband look after you with loving care? Do you think of us sometimes?"

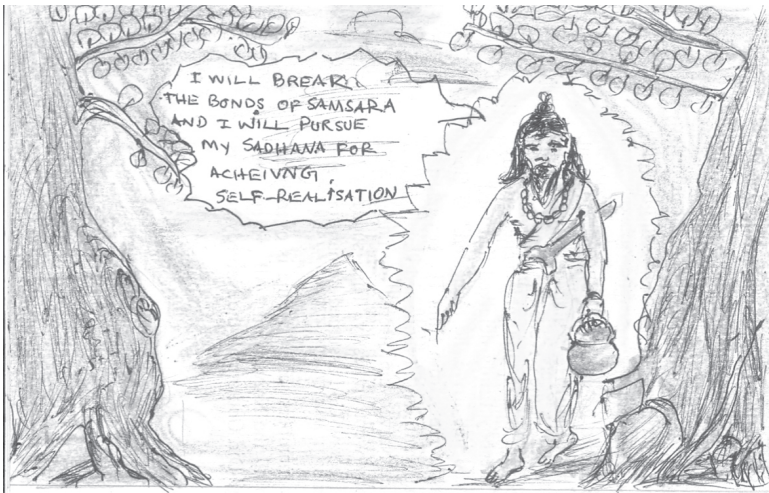
"Father, don't worry about me. I am very happy here and moreover how can I forget you all?" Again she said, "But I am worried about one thing. My husband always spends his time with me and he does not go to my sisters. He neglects them and pours all his love over me. After all, they also married him and expect him to spend quality time with them. I pity them."

After hearing her, Mandhata felt very sorry for the other daughters. He then went to his second daughter's house and asked the same questions which he asked his first daughter. She looked very happy and said, "My husband keeps me very happy and stays with me all the time. I am only worried about my other sisters as he does not think of going to them. I lament very much for their plight."

All his daughters repeated the same story. Mandhata felt happy and was amazed at the yogic powers of the Rishi. He then met him and said, "Maharshi, I could not gauge your powers. I underestimated you. Now I came to know the truth about you. I salute the power of penance you have acquired." After spending some days with his son-in-law and daughters he returned to his capital.

Months and years rolled by. The wives begot children from Soubhari, who looked after his children very affectionately. He used to enjoy their pranks and feel happy with the little words they used to utter. The children grew as time passed by. Then he thought like this, “Soon they will become young and after that they will get married and they will make me grandfather.” He happily spent his time with his sons, grandsons and granddaughters. Then he remembered Sumantra, the king of whales. He was satisfied as he could enjoy with his near and dear ones like Sumantra.

One day realisation dawned on him. He thought thus, “I misutilised my powers of penance for impermanent pleasures of samsara. I became a slave to desires and I have fallen from the exalted position to the bottom. My strong desire to marry became a bond and this bond led to another one and these bonds



had brought me disaster. In this process I did not do the daily rituals and I forgot God. One who becomes a slave to desires cannot turn his mind towards Paramatman. How foolish I was to imitate the life of the king of whales? Thus I lost myself in worldly attractions. Such bonds will undoubtedly drag a Yogi to his downfall. I have learnt a good lesson from this. Now I

will spend the rest of my life in doing penance. I will become no more a slave to worldly desires. I will break the bonds of samsara and I will pursue my sadhana for achieving self-realisation. Finally, I will merge in Sarvesvara who is all powerful and Ananda swarupa. I bow to him in reverence.”

After he took this decision, Soubhari left his wives and children and became a Tapasvi again.

Soubhari thus burnt his desires in the fire of penance and attained Brahma-Sayujya.*

WHO IS MAHATMA?

A sacrifice a *mahatma* makes has great significance and merit than a mere physical sacrifice. For the service of humanity, he comes out of the seclusion forsaking his state of absolute bliss.

When Swami Vivekananda asked for Advaitic bliss, Ramakrishna Paramahansa granted it to him; but he withdrew it again from him immediately, telling him that he (Swami Vivekananda) had many things to perform in the world that only after his mission was completed the supreme bliss would be granted to him. And Swami Vivekananda gladly accepted it.

He even went further; he proclaimed that he was prepared to be born a thousand times to relieve his human brethren from sufferings and ignorance. What an unfathomable affection and what an extraordinary sacrifice! There are countless instances when *mahatmas* relieved people from their sufferings, by taking those sufferings upon themselves. The milk of affection flows abundantly and perennially from their hearts; and not only the humans but even insects have equal claim to it as beneficiaries.

Why is a *mahatma* so affectionate and kind to all? It is because a *mahatma* sees the Lord in himself and in every person and object around; As a *Brahmajnani* he transcends the crippling limitations of his mortal body and experiences identity with the eternal and universal soul that pervades every atom of the universe.

It is such a *mahatma* one must seek and serve as a *Guru* so that under the parental care and affection and under his masterly guidance, one can progress safely and surely towards the goal of self-realisation. *Guru* should never be mistaken for a human being.

- Sri Babuji

Devotional Stories

STRONG WILLED CHILD DEVOTEES-II

My dear Chiranjeevulaara:

Our Puraanaas have recorded the tales of some strong willed child devotees. These children meditated on the 'lakshyaartha' given by their Sadgurus and achieved name and fame. In the last issue I narrated the story of Dhruva. This time let me tell you the story of Prahalada.

Jaya and Vijaya are the gatekeepers of Vaikuntam, the abode of Lord Narayana. One day in Krita yuga, Lord Brahma's four sons – Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanaatana and Sanatkumara – came to Vaikuntam, seeking the darshan of Mahavishnu. The gatekeepers blocked their entry, saying that the Lord and His consort Lakshmi had given strict instructions that They should not be disturbed. The young sages became angry and cursed them that they be born on earth and suffer. The aggrieved Jaya and Vijaya appealed to the Lord to protect them from the curse, as they had only done their duty. Lord Narayana took pity on them and said: "One of you should have communicated the arrival of these young yogis who are dear to Me. Their curse cannot be undone, and so you have to undergo its effect before coming back to Vaikuntam. I will give you a choice. You can take birth seven times as My devotees, or you can be born as my enemies three times and reach Me." The gatekeepers preferred to take three births as Lord's foes, because they could get back to Him quickly.

The two were born as demon brothers by name Hiranyakasipu and Hiranyaksha in the Krita yuga. The younger brother Hiranyaksha was first killed by the Lord in the form of a wild boar ('Varaha') for his misdeed of abducting Bhudevi and hiding Her fathoms deep. Enraged by the slaying of the younger brother Hiranyakasipu performed a very severe penance lasting a number of years. Pleased by this, Lord Brahma appeared before him and offered a boon. Hiranyakasipu wanted that he should live forever. The Lord told him that was not possible, as everybody born on earth had to die one day, and said, "You may choose any other boon."

Hiranyakasipu then sought that he should not be killed by man, demon, animal or reptile; that he should not be killed by any weapon, poison, fire, water, etc.; that he should not be killed during day or at night; that he should not be killed within or outside his dwelling; that he should not be killed on the floor or in the sky. Brahma granted him the boon. Armed with such a guarantee of almost eternal life, the demon became very powerful and started harassing and killing people who would not accept his supremacy. In effect, he declared himself as God and terrorised the devotees of Vishnu.

When Hiranyakasipu was doing the penance, Indra tried to kill the demon's wife Leelavathi, who was pregnant. Divine sage Narada intervened and advised Indra not to slay the innocent woman, because the child that was going to be born to her would cause the death of Hiranyakasipu. The Maharshi then offered shelter to her in his place. When she was staying with Narada, the divine sage used to tell her the greatness of Lord Narayana through stories. This was heard by the child in her womb, and he developed devotion towards Lord Vishnu. The queen soon gave birth to a boy, who was named Prahalada by Naradamuni. By the time Hiraynakasipu returned to his palace, Leelavathi and Prahalada were already there. The demon was happy about the birth of a son.

Prahalada was sent to Gurukulam to learn the basics of all sastras. Hiranyakasipu instructed the teachers to ensure that his son understood his supremacy and enmity towards Vishnu. When the teachers told the prince about his father's greatness as against Lord Narayana's, Prahalada rejected their teachings and said that Narayana alone is supreme. All the efforts of the teachers to change the child's mind were in vain. They were afraid of facing the demon king when the 'Gurukulavasam' of Prahalada was over.

On return to the palace, Prahalada was hugged by his father, who asked him to give details of his learning in the Gurukulam. Prahalada said: "My efforts at changing the mindset of the teachers towards Lord Narayana failed, as they are subservient to you." The king became furious at this reply. He felt that the teachers had betrayed him,, and ordered their arrest. But

Prahalada dissuaded his father, saying that they did their duty, despite being on the wrong track.

Hiranyakasipu tried his best to change the attitude of his son, who went on reiterating Lord Hari's supremacy. This further infuriated the king who ordered his general to slay Prahalada. All the efforts to end the life of the child devotee failed. They tried to kill him with all types of weapons; they brought a mighty elephant to trample upon him; they tied him with chains and threw him into the sea; they shut him in a chamber full of venomous snakes - but Prahalada emerged unscathed by chanting the divine names of the merciful Lord. Finally, Hiranyakasipu ordered Leelavathi to feed her son with a cup of poisoned milk. Prahalada gulped it quickly, as if it was nectar, and nothing untoward happened.

When all his acts of terror against his own son failed miserably, Hiranyakasipu dragged Prahalada to the durbar and asked him to show his so-called benefactor Hari, if He really existed. The child gently replied: "There is no place where Hari is not there, as He is all pervading." Roaring with a boisterous laughter, the demon asked his son whether Hari was in the pillar in the courtyard. Prahalada said: "Hari is not only in this pillar but also in every particle."

Hiranyakasipu was sure that Narayana could not be there in the pillar - his 'Jayasthambam' - which he had built brick by brick after defeating the rulers of all the three worlds. With that confidence, he kicked the pillar with his foot. Wonder of wonders, the pillar broke into two and there emerged a creature which was neither man nor animal. That was Narasimha, the man-lion form of Lord Narayana, who came out in an effulgent manner. He dragged Hiranyakasipu and took him on his lap. Sitting on the threshold of the palace, Narasimha used his finger nails and tore the demon to pieces. Thus the Lord had met all the conditions laid by Hiranyakasipu for his death. The slaying took place in the twilight hour ('saayam sandhya') that was neither day nor night; the 'samhaaram' occurred on the threshold which was neither within nor out of the palace; by placing him on the lap, the Lord ensured that the villain was neither on the

floor nor in the sky; no weapon was used for the purpose, since the Lord's nails did a perfect job.

The fury of the Lord was such that none, even Mahalakshmi, could approach Him. It was only with the help of the child devotee He could be pacified. Pleased with the steadfast devotion of Prahalada, the Lord asked him to seek a boon. The child declined the offer, saying that there was nothing more to seek after having the darshan of the Lord. When pressed further, he appealed to the Lord to forgive his misguided father. Blessing Prahalada for his nobility, the Lord declared: "The fact of your being the son of the wicked Hiranyakasipu has ensured his redemption. Now rule the kingdom as the benefactor of the people; at the end of the reign you will reach Me. I am very happy that you have proved that the Lord is always there to protect his devotees."

Children, hope you liked the story of Prahalada who faced all sorts of punishments imposed by his father for his disobedience, thanks to his intense faith in the 'lakshyaartha' given by sage Narada. Have you noticed that the child sought forgiveness of the Lord for his father? Just as Dhruva did not harbour any ill-will towards his stepmother Suruchi, so also Prahalada did not have any rancour about his father's brutalities. He was only sorry that his father was misguided by his own ego. Chiranjeevulaara, like Prahalada, you should also develop a deep faith in Sadguru Maharaj who is ever ready to give you the protection in all dire circumstances. In the next and last part of this series, I shall tell you the tale of another child devotee, Nachiketa.

Yours affectionately,
Maathula*

A vision of God is only a vision of the Self, objectified as the God of your particular faith. What you have to do is to know the Self. Visions of God have their place below the plane of Self-realisation.

From: Bhagawan's 'From Darkness to Light'

Babuji's Fables

GOD LIKES NAMASANKEERTANAM

Gora Kumbhar was a great devotee of Lord Panduranga. He used to sing the Lord's divine name always and lose body consciousness.

He was a potter by profession. Once he was kneading clay by stamping on it with his feet, to make pots. Even as he was stamping upon the mud, he was singing the Lord's divine name and clapping his hands in ecstasy. Soon he went off into a trance.

The Lord took it upon Himself to make the pots and was doing so in the most beautiful manner. All kinds of pots were being prepared in the most artistic way!

Soon, some devotees came to worship the Lord in Gora's house. No sooner had the devotees come than the Lord disappeared. Gora was heart-broken and started begging the Lord to come back, and the Lord, unable to see the weeping devotee, came back and gave His darshan to him.*

Moral: God takes care of those devotees who lose themselves in His divine names.

— Retold by Dr. Swanamukhi Prasada

CURRENT PROGRAMMES

(Continued from page no.11)

DECEMBER 2015

28-11-2015 Sat to 06-12-2015 Sun - 27th Punya Aaradhana Mahotsavams
of Sri Sadguru Devulu

09 Wed - Maasa Sivaratri

11 Fri - Amavasya

17 Thur - Sri Subrahmanya Sashti - Starting of Dhanurmasam

21 Mon - Mukkoti Ekadasi, Gita Jayanthi - Chanting of Gita,
Sri Sadguru Pada Puja, Bhakta Samaradhana

25 Fri - Poornima, Christmas - Sri Sadguru Pada Puja, Satsangam

Down Memory Lane

HOW TO ATTAIN SALVATION

(Continued from the previous issue)

Sushumna Prasada

Continuing His exhortation, Lord Babuji pointed that Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa also asserted that illusion in the form of thoughts stood in the way of the spiritual pursuit of a sadhaka. “A person who devotes his time in thinking about the type of food to be taken and the dress to be worn on the next day cannot concentrate and will absolutely fail to have single-pointed devotion for self-realisation. Mahatmas attain the goal of self-realisation and eternal Bliss by their single-pointed devotion and penance. In the external world we find people getting terribly disappointed and dissipated when they fail to achieve their goal. Some people go to the extreme extent of putting an end to their lives. What is it that they achieve by putting an end to their lives? In the material world, a person is prepared to sacrifice something only with the motive of gaining something more valuable. A spiritual trainee gets prepared to sacrifice his qualities for the sake of eternity. But what is the use of giving up one’s life? He cannot escape rebirth. The type of thoughts a person entertains before he sleeps will be there when he wakes up from sleep. Similarly the type of thoughts a person entertains before he die will result on shaping a suitable body for his thoughts in the next birth.

“If a person aims at his pursuit with whole- hearted and single-pointed devotion, neither his family life nor material aspects stand in his way of spiritual pursuit. Man in order to attain his goal simply sets aside his health or age factor. He works very hard. Similarly a spiritual trainee should not forget the goal of his pursuit. The spiritual trainee should incessantly aspire to reach his goal. It is only Gurudev who can guide the sadhaka properly. It will develop implicit faith in the devotee to properly channel his spiritual activity. At the same time, he should not get disappointed thinking of his drawbacks and failure in the pursuit.

“A person keeps his shoes outside when he goes to worship in the temple or see his Gurudev. With pious thoughts in his

mind, he does not smoke in such places of sanctity. But what happens to his sacred thoughts when he comes out of the place of sanctity? He starts doing things in the normal way. Does it not mean that he has left his Gurudev? What has happened to his sacred thoughts? What has happened to the feeling that his Gurudev is omnipotent and omnipresent? What is the importance and value given to Gurudev? Water cannot be retained in a pot with cracks. Otherwise, it means that there is lack of faith in the pot of human body. If there is unquestionable faith in the pot of your body, it should be seen in the transformation of your attitude and behaviour. Then only a devotee can be said to be successful. This is to be understood fully. A person who gets suffocated by getting submerged in the ocean of family life and gets upset by the force of the waves of pain and pleasure, hunger and thirst, birth and death should catch the boat of security to reach the shore of Bliss.”

Lord Babuji concluded by saying that the spiritual aspirant who got firmly seated in such a boat was sure to reach the shore of salvation.*

Devotee: If we are always "Being consciousness Bliss" why does God place us in difficulties? Why did He create us?

Bhagawan: Does God come and tell you that he placed you in difficulties? It is you who say so, it is again the false "I". If that disappears, there will be no one to say that God created this or that. That which does not even say "I am". For any doubt arise that "I am not?" Only if doubt arises whether one was not a cow or buffalo, would one have to remind oneself that one is not but is a man; But this never happens. It is the same with one's own existence and realisation.

(When Bhagawan spoke of a false "I" and a true "I", for practical purposes, it should not be taken as implying that there are two selves in a man. What he really meant was simply giving up the false identification of the "I" as an individual being, in order to realise its true identity as the universal Self).

From: Bhagawan's 'From Darkness to Light'

SPIRITUALITY AND SOCIALISM

Kali Prasad USA

Some people misquote the verse from the *Bhagavadgita* that goes as “*Chaaturvarnam mayaa srustham...*” to argue that God Himself created people unequal. They use this argument as a cover-up for their mistreatment and atrocities towards fellow human beings. In this process they conveniently forget the fact that the same Lord Sri Krishna professed equality in several places in the same *Gita*.

Lord Krishna through the following *Gita* verse - “*Vidyaa vinaya sampanne braahmane gavi hastini shunichaiiva shvapakcha panditaah sama darshanah*” - says that an intellectual person sees and treats equally a *brahmin* with education and humility, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a dog-eater. A true intellectual doesn't see any societal or biological differences and he only sees God in everyone and in everything.

Another verse goes like this - “*Suhrun mitraar yudaaseena madhyastha dveshya bandhushu saadhushvapicha paapeshu samabuddhir vishishyate*”. It means the virtue of a great intellectual is the ability to treat his close friends, regular friends, enemies, acquaintances, detractors, relatives, saints and sinners with equality. Another one says “*Samatvam yoga uchhyate*” - equality is Yoga.

Our Gurudev Sri Babuji Maharaj used to quote the following verse from *Viveka Chudamani* - “*Jaati neeti kula gotra dooragam, naama roopa guna dosha varjitam, desa kaala vishayaativarti yat, brahma tatvamasi bhavayaatmani*” - meaning “Understand and always remember that *Brahman*, which is also your Self or soul, is above and beyond all the petty differences of society like race, caste, morality, descent, names, forms, virtues, vices, places, times and things.” He further used to say there is no better socialism than spiritualism.

In the *Vibhuthi Yoga* when Lord Krishna explained to Arjuna that He resides in and drives every living and non-living thing in the whole universe, Arjuna expressed a desire to see that universal form, *Vishwarupam*. Lord Krishna said, “OK, here you see My universal form.” But, Arjuna could not see anything

special. Then the benevolent Lord said, "You cannot see My universal form with your earthly vision. Here I am giving you the divine vision, by which you will be able to see My universal form." Then Arjuna could see Lord Krishna in everything and everyone around him including within himself. And he could see the whole universe within Lord Krishna.

Arjuna, at that moment, became the personification of the *Gita* verse "*Sarva bhootastha maatmaanam, sarva bhootaani chaatmani, eekshate yoga yuktaatmaa, sarvatra sama darshanah*" - meaning "A *Yogi* who attained the vision of equality or *Yoga* sees the whole universe within himself and himself within everything and everyone in the universe." If you ask yourself the question here "Was Lord Krishna in a constrained form till then and attained the universal form only at that moment?", the answer is a firm "No". Lord Krishna is always in His universal form without any change. The thing that changed here is the vision of Arjuna.

If we can change our vision like this through spiritual practice and self-realisation, then these words that are part of the daily prayer in our *Ashram* become true - "May there be no differences between human beings! May all the living beings in the world treat each other with equality and love! May there be peace and prosperity in the whole universe!"

Is there a better form of socialism than this?*

One day a disciple asked Swami Brahmananda, "Sir, how can *kundalini* be roused"?

The Swami replied :

According to some there are some exercises, but I believe it can be best done through repetition of the Divine Name and meditation. Specially suited to our age is the practice of *japam* or constant repetition of God's name and meditation upon it. There is no spiritual practice easier than this. But meditation must accompany the repetition of the *mantra* (the mystic word.)

From "Mind and its control" by Swami Budhananda.

WAITING FOR SRI RAMA—VII

(Continued from the previous issue) Ramaswami Sampath

As long as they stayed in Chitrakoota, people of Ayodhya would frequent the place and disturb the peace, Rama felt and decided to proceed southwards along with Sita and Lakshmana. Soon they reached the Dandakaaranya. On the way, they encountered one raakshasa by name Viraadha who tried to abduct Sita. Rama killed the giant with one shaft. Viraadha was actually a gandharva, who was cursed by Kubera to turn into a demon and wander in the forest, because of his wicked activities. However, Kubera gave him the assurance of redemption by Rama's arrow. Thus Viraadha was waiting for Rama, whose arrival in the Dandaka forest set him free from Kubera's curse. He thanked Rama and left for his original home.

After the slaying of Viraadha, the three reached the ashramam of sage Sarabanga for taking his blessings. At that time, the sage was conversing with Indra, who told Sarabanga, "Pleased with your austerities and prolonged penance, Lord Brahma has commanded me to bring you to Satyaloka. Hence, please accompany me to His abode." But Sarabanga declined the offer and told Indra, "Kindly convey my gratitude to the Lord for the invitation. I do not intend residing in Satyaloka, but would like to go to Vaikuntam so that I would be out of the cycle of births and deaths. Actually, I am waiting for the darshan of Sri Rama, the avatar of Lord Vishnu, after which I would like to journey to the abode of Lord Narayana." Indra then took leave of the sage.

A few moments later, Rama, Sita and Lakshmana entered the ashram. Sarabanga was extremely delighted and hugged Rama. "By your visit to this ashram, I am blessed and fully qualified to go to Vaikuntam, having fulfilled my duties on earth. In fact, Rama, I have been waiting for your darshan only all these days, since my inner mind has been telling me not to leave earth without seeing you."

After taking the blessings of the sage, Rama said: "O Munindra, you must guide us to find a place in this thicket to spend our exile."

"Rama, you approach sage Sudeekshana, who is also waiting for your darshan. Better than me, Sudeekshana knows

the ins and outs of this huge forest, infested with rakshasas. You take his blessings and he will guide you to a secure place where you can build your cottage and spend your exile happily. Now that my desire of seeing you has been fulfilled, I would like to take leave of you. May you be victorious in all your endeavours!” So saying, the sage descended into the ‘homa kundam’ in the ashram and shed his mortal coils.

From Sarabanga’s ashramam, Rama, Sita and Lakshmana proceeded towards sage Sudeekshana’s ashram. On the way, the ascetics living in Dandakaaranya met Rama and sought his protection. “O Rama, only you are our refuge. We are being harassed day and night by the demons of this forest under the control of Lanka king Ravana’s representatives Khara, Dhooshana and Trisiras. These rakshasas hinder our spiritual practices. Look at the heap of skeletons there. Those were that of rishis like us. Your very presence in this forest provides us the much needed protection,” they said in one voice

Rama was moved by their plight. He bowed to them and said:”Hereafter, you can conduct your rituals without fear. I shall guard you from all wicked elements.” Rama then sought their help in locating Sudeekshana’s ashram. They took the three to the sage’s ashram. On seeing Rama, the sage’s joy knew no bounds. Caressing Rama’s cheeks, Sudeekshana said: “When I heard that you three were in Chitrakoota, I was sure that you would visit me. Like Sarabanga, I am also waiting for your arrival. Hereafter, you are the shield for these rishis. You can stay anywhere in this region comfortably.”

As ordained by Sudeekshana, Rama, Sita and Lakshmana built their cottage in that place and lived happily for ten years, providing security to the ascetics. When Agastya, who was then living in deep south as per the instructions of Lord Siva, heard that Rama was in Dandakaranya, he came to the forest. On learning about this, Rama rushed to the spot where the sage had come, to get his blessings.

Lakshmana asked Rama to narrate the story and good deeds of the dwarf ascetic. Responding happily, Rama said: “O Lakshmana, let me narrate the stirring story of Agastya Mahamuni. In his accomplishments, he will match our Kulaguru Vasishtha and sage Viswamitra. When Lord Siva wedded Parvati

Devi on Mount Kailas, the entire retinue of celestials, sages, siddhas, yakshas, kinneras, kimpurushas, gandharvas and vidyadharas assembled on the Himalayan mountain to witness the grand event. Because of the overweight caused by this assembly, the northern hemisphere tilted down and the southern part rose above. To keep the balance, the Lord commanded Agastya to go deep south from where he could see the entire proceedings of the divine wedding. Obeying the Lord, the sage went to the edge of the Sahya Parvatam. On the way, Agastya saw the Vindhya mountain rising higher and higher to become taller than the Himalayas. As this would disturb the movement of Sun, Agastya felt that such a situation should be prevented. On seeing Agastya, Vindhya Raja bowed in reverence. The sage then asked the mountain to remain in that posture till he returned from the south. Since Agastya made south his permanent home, Vindhya mountain could not rise further.

“In those days, there were two demons, Ilvala and Vaataapi by name. They were well versed in the art of magic, and using this technique they were killing rishis in large numbers. They would lure the ascetics to their place for a feast. Ilvala would cook Vaatapi, without the rishis’ knowledge, and after the feast was served to them, he would call Vaatapi to come out. Vaatapi would burst out of the stomach of the rishis, killing them in the process. The two then would feast on the dead rishis. When Agastya came near that place, he was also invited by the demons for a feast. The sage accepted the invitation, and soon realised the deceit of the demons. After the feast when Ilvala called Vaataapi out, Agastya caressed his belly and uttered, ‘Vaataapi jeerno bhava’. Vaataapi could not come out because of this. An enraged Ilvala tried to attack the sage, but fell dead by his mere look. Thus Agastya saved rishis from these demons.

“After reaching south, Agastya saw the severe drought stalking the region. Mercifully, he emptied his pitcher (‘kamandala’) and the Ganga water in it started flowing as River Cauvery, making the region fertile.

“Lakshmana, the sage is also an adept in all the sixty-four arts. When the Lanka ruler Ravana challenged Agastya to compete with him in playing on the veena, the latter convincingly defeated him by his excellence in that fine art. The sage is also

an expert in astrology, herbal medicine, etc. Currently, Agastya is busy fostering the Tamil language, which was born out of Lord Siva's countenance, to make it equivalent to the divine language Sanskrit. Should we not take the blessings of such a great personality?"

Rama, Sita and Lakshmana rushed to the spot where Agastya was camping, and sought his blessings. Extremely pleased, Agastya told Rama: "You come and stay with me in my ashramam in the south, for the rest of your exile term. There you will not have any problem concerning the demons."

But Rama gently declined the offer and said: "O sage, I have made a pledge to the ascetics of Dandakaranya that I would give them protection from the demons. With your blessings, I would like to remain here only." Agastya expressed his happiness over Rama's concern for the rishis, and gave him a bow and some 'astras' with which he could conquer his enemies. The sage then asked the three to settle down in Panchavati, and headed for south.

On their way to Panchavati, near Triyambakam, the origin of River Godavari, Rama, Sita and Lakshmana saw a huge vulture, staring at them. When they neared the bird, it told them, "I am Jatayu, the younger son of Aruna and my elder brother is Sampaati. You look like royal people. Why do you wander in this forest region?"

When Rama introduced himself as the son of Ayodhya king Dasaratha, Sita as his wife and Lakshmana as his brother, Jatayu was elated and said: "How is my good friend Dasaratha? We became friends during his battle with Sambarasura in which I extended my support."

Rama narrated the events that led to his exile and the death of his father. Jatayu was shocked to hear that Dasaratha was no more and started shedding tears. Soon recovering from the sorrow, he said: "Who can conquer fate? We have to submit to destiny." The vulture then told Rama: "Panchavati is a safe place for you. I shall also stay here and be your guard."

Lakshmana built a beautiful cottage for their stay. The three were happily residing there enjoying the halcyon surroundings.

-to be continued

GLORIOUS DEVOTEES

JNANADEV

C.V. Ramana Babu

(Translation of Telugu original by Jagam)

As a result of intense prayers by the virtuous couple of Aapegaon village in Maharashtra, Govind Panth and Neerubai, they were blessed with a son Vithal Panth. Vithal became an expert in the religious ‘Sastras’. He was, however, not willing to marry. But, due to the persistent request of his father, Vithal told him that he would marry after completion of his pilgrimage.



After visiting many holy places, he reached Alandipura and began worshipping God. One day a brahmin by name Kulkarni Sidhopanth came there and took Vithal to his house as a guest. They discussed many spiritual issues. On the host’s request, Vithal stayed there that night. In the dream, the Lord ordered Sidhopanth to perform his daughter’s wedding with Vithal and declared that they would beget four children, with Godly qualities.

Next morning, Sidhopanth told Vithal about his dream and requested him to marry his daughter Rukmabai. But Vithal was not at all willing. Then Sidhopanth told him “In that case my daughter and I would sacrifice our lives.” Vithal was much saddened and prayed to God. He heard God’s order to marry Rukmabai. The next day, they were married.

Vithal resumed his pilgrimage and Sidhopanth accompanied him. After completion of the pilgrimage, they reached Alandi. All the family members then went to Aapegaon. Sidhopanth and his wife went back to Alandi.

Vithal’s dispassion grew stronger. His parents passed away. He told his wife that he would go to the Ganga for immersing the mortal remains of his parents in the river. So, he took her to her parents’ house and left her there. He then went to Kasi and completed the ritual. From there he went to Prayaga and was spending time in the company of virtuous people.

At Prayaga, he became a disciple of a scholar by name Ramananda Swami. Concealing the fact of his married life Vithal

adopted asceticism with the Guru's blessings. He was rechristened as Chaitanyasrama Swami by the Guru who taught him in detail the 'Mahavaakyaas' (great sayings) - Prajnanam Brahma, Ayamatra Brahma, Tatvamasi and Aham Brahmasmi of Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda and Adharvana Veda respectively.

After some time, Ramananda Swami handed over the ashramam to Chaitanyasrama Swami and went on a pilgrimage. In course of time, he went to Alandi, where Sidhopanth and Rukumabai met the Guru. She offered salutations with great reverence. He blessed her "May you soon be blessed with a son!" She laughed at it. Sidhopanth explained the reason for her laughter. Ramananda Swami guessed that Chaitanyasrama Swami could be her husband. So, he and Rukumabai went back to Prayaga. He counselled Chaitanyasrama Swami that a married man should not adopt asceticism without his wife's permission. The Guru also would be held responsible for initiating such a disciple into 'sanyas'. So, he ordered him to go back and lead a family life. Vithal obeyed the Guru's order and returned to Alandi.

But the villagers were opposed to the way of a sanyasi coming back to family life. So, they excommunicated him. As time passed by, Sidhopanth died. Vithal and Rukumabai could not get any respect and cooperation in the village. Dejected, they went to a forest area. They were blessed with three sons Nivruthidev, Jnanadev, Sopandev and a daughter Muktabai. The four children appeared to be embodiments of the four Vedas. They grew up. The priests refused to perform the 'upanayanam' to the three brothers. They said that as Vithal left 'sanyasam' and came back to family life, he should atone for this lapse and for that he had to sacrifice his life drowning in a river. "That is the only way out of this enigma," they insisted. Vithal felt that his children should live happily with fame. So, he and Rukumabai went to Triveni Sangamam and sacrificed their lives.

Despite this sacrifice there were still priests who challenged the brothers to prove the point that the 'Aatma' existing in all - man, animal or inanimate object - is the same. Jnanadev then placed his right hand on the head of a buffalo. It recited the Vedic hymns with perfect rhythm. When he removed his hand, it stopped recitation. The chief priest who witnessed it felt sorry for his folly and performed 'thread ceremony' of the three brothers.

A village brahmin gave shelter to them in his house. Some priests in the village who were still foolish excommunicated him, for giving shelter to the four. One day when he was performing obsequies to his late father, no priest came to his house, though invited. Jnanadev told him not to worry and asked him to prepare the food for his deceased forefathers and great-forefathers. Jnanadev then prayed to them to descend and receive the hospitality. Soon, they came there in a celestial car. They were received with reverence, and the feast was spread before them. They were soon enjoying the food. After seeing the celestial car, the village priests were spell-bound. The forefathers blessed the brahmin and left. The priests felt sorry for their act of excommunicating the three brothers and sister, and prostrated at their feet. They later turned as Jnanadev's disciples.

Nivruthidev, Jnanadev, Sopanadev and Mukthabai left on a pilgrimage. In Pandaripuram, they met Namadev, a great devotee of Panduranga. Namadev too joined them in their journey. Namadev was very much pleased at the devotion of Jnanadev and his singing of Vedic hymns.

They went to a village Nevase in Ahmedabad district, where they visited Satchitananda Baba who was suffering from a chronic disease. Jnanadev touched Satchitananda Baba and he was completely cured of the disease. He became Jnanadev's disciple. Jnanadev gave discourses on the 'Bhagavadgita'. Satchitananda penned them and the discourses were compiled as 'Bhavartha Deepika'. It was later renamed as 'Jnaneswari'.

Returning to Alandi, Jnanadev gave many spiritual discourses and cleared the doubts of devotees and the common public. He emphasised that though literally 'Guru and Sisyha' were two separate words, both were same. "The relationship between Guru and the Sishya can be compared to gold in jewellery. Similarly, moon and moon light, camphor and smell, candy and sweetness cannot be separated. Gold cannot be separated from jewellery. There is no disciple without Guru and no Guru without disciple," he explained.

A great Yogi Changadev wanted to meet Jnanadev. He wrote a letter to Jnanadev about his wish. Being arrogant, he did not address Jnanadev as 'Respected Sir'. He also thought that it was not proper to address a great scholar Jnanadev as 'Dear'.

So, in utter confusion, he sent an empty letter to Jnanadev. In reply to that 'empty' letter, Jnanadev, with Nivruthidev's inspiration, wrote 64 slokas, giving wide knowledge about one's self, God and Atma. Later, the slokas became popular by the name 'Sri Changadeva Pasasti'. Jnanadev asked him to realise that he himself is Brahman. Changadev read it and learnt many things. But, he could not understand the implied meaning or intention of writing that letter. He decided to meet Jnanadev. With an intention of showing the power of his yogic skills, he went to Jnanadev riding a tiger, using a cobra as a whip in his hand. By that time Nivruthidev, Jnanadev, Sopanadev and Muktabai were sitting on a wall and discussing an issue. Jnanadev understood Changadev's intention. He made the wall move towards Changadev and they invited him to join the discussion. He was spell-bound to see an inanimate wall move. He understood the glory of Jnanadev and begged pardon.

Jnanadev told him that he would give initiation to him and for that somebody should sacrifice himself. Changadev, still arrogant, said that he had many disciples who would be ready to do whatever he ordered. But, really none came forward and they even blamed him as selfish. Dejected, he told Jnanadev that he was ready to offer his head. Jnanadev laughed and said: "Very good. There is no need of any more sacrifice. Your arrogance has died and that itself is a sacrifice." As per his order, Muktabai gave initiation to Changadev.

On a Deepavali they wanted to arrange a feast to the Sadhus. Jnanadev told Muktabai to prepare sweet cakes (Bobbatlu). When Mukta went to the market to purchase mud pots for preparing the sweet cake, a rich man by name Visoba saw her and angrily broke all the pots, so as to punish the sanyasi's children. Jnanadev learnt of it. He prayed to Agnidev. Fire entered his body. His back started burning like a pan. Muktabai prepared the sweets on his burning back. Visoba, who witnessed it, begged Jnanadev's pardon and became a sincere devotee.

Many were enlightened by Jnanadev's discourses. After going on a pilgrimage, he returned to Alandi. At the age of 21 years, he entered the grave alive (Jeeva Samadhi). Nivruthidev placed a stone slab and closed it. It is the belief of the devotees that Jnanadev is still alive in the grave giving messages and blessings to devotees.*

PRABODHAM

[On July 3 this year, Sri Mataji addressed the devotees gathered at the annual three-day Satsang held in New Jersey. Here goes a gist of Sri Mataji's Prasangam. - Editor.]

*Dhyana moolam Gurormoorthihi,
Pooja moolam Gurorpadam
Mantra moolam Gurorvakyam,
Mukti moolam Gurorkripa*

With the divine blessings of Sri Guru Maharaj, we start our three-day satsang on this auspicious morning. Sri Gurudev used to say that the pre-dawn hours constitute 'Brahmi Muhurtham' and it is very conducive for meditation. Your thoughts will be in low ebb and, therefore, the mind will be in a tranquil state at this time. As the day progresses many thoughts rise in your mind and cause distraction. Mind is called the subtle body (sukshma sareeram) and it cannot be seen. Likewise God also cannot be seen with our naked eyes. But the invisible God takes a form and comes among us to lead us to the path of self-realisation. Such holy persons are called Mahatmas. But the paradox is we cannot recognise them as they look like ordinary human beings.

Suppose God appears and says, "My son, come with Me. I will take you to heaven," how many of us are prepared to go to heaven? We start giving excuses. One of us may plead with Him, "My family commitments stand in my way. After all You made me a family man and blessed me with children and grand children. I would not hesitate to come with You if my grandson who has just completed his studies gets settled in his life." Some other person might say, "Had my granddaughter been married, I would have accompanied You."

Our Gurudev (God in human form) mingled with us closely as one among us. He used to say, "Treat me as your guest in your house. I have indeed come to bless you all so that all of you walk in the path of God-realisation. As a first step, whatever work you do, please keep me in your mind. That is enough.

Recognise that whatever happens or is happening is with my grace only.”But seldom we follow this advice. When you accomplish something, you would say, “I did this.”

A person who works the whole day needs rest. In sleep he gets rest. Sleep is the God given gift to mankind. Man can live without food but he cannot live without sleep. When he gets up, he says, “I slept very well.” At that time his mind will be in a peaceful state as his mind will be free from thoughts.

That is why Mahatmaas say that ‘Brahmi Muhurtam’ is ideal time for meditation, since your mind will be in a thoughtless state. The atmosphere around you also will be calm and quiet and conducive to achieve concentration easily in dhyana. Group meditation will give good results as divine waves prevail all over the place where you are meditating. The prime requirement is that you should have profound faith in the chosen idol or your Guru. God is not away from you as He is omnipresent. Even if you meditate in a group for half an hour or one hour, it will yield the best results. All your past karmas will be burnt in the Dyanagni.

In order to develop faith in your chosen idol, first you should recognise truth. Truth is all pervading Anantha Shakti and the same shakti is in you also. It is in ‘avyakta’ state. If this shakti is not there, man is a mere corpse.

A sadhaka should eat to live but not live to eat. He should have mita-ahaara, mita-nidra and mita-sambhashana. He should not indulge in worldly matters. He should be able to discriminate the real from the unreal (nityanitya vivekam). He should always question himself “Who am I”, and contemplate on it. As he progresses in his sadhana, he would reach a state where his sense organs cease functioning and his mind merges with Self. This is samadhi state. As you will all be knowing we experience this state in sleep. The difference is that in deep sleep state your mind will be only in a suppressed condition. When a dream comes, your mind will bring so many thoughts of past and present. They all appear to you as real. But when you wake up you realise that they are not real. You should realise that your experiences in wakeful state are also not real and try to remain in nija-jagratta state.

No doubt you get thoughts. They move like a reel in your mind's eye. Mind is like an olive seed. If you dip it in a sugary syrup it gets sweet taste. If you dip it in neem potion it will get bitter taste. Similarly if you dip a white cloth in coloured water, it assumes the same colour as of the coloured water.

We are under the protective hands of Samardha Sadguru. His grace is there on all of us. *Bhadram karnebhihi srunuyama devaaha* - you should protect your eyes and ears from grasping unwanted things. Don't let them run on worldly affairs. A man who is controlled by his mind is Manava. A man who controls his mind is Mahatma.

When thoughts crop up in your mind, you should act as witness to them. If your mind wanders in your thoughts, it means you are under the power of delusion (Maya.). You should then keep your attention on your chosen idol or on a mantra and drive away the thoughts saying, "Look! This is not your time." Contemplating on Guru Bodha will be very helpful in keeping your mind on your lakshyardha.

Our Gurudev never said that one should shun samsara. He said, "On one hand you do your swadharma and do sadhana on the other. We should be able to grasp the divine bodha of Sri Gurudev.

God created this universe and gave the keys of emancipation to us. By leading a pious life, you will reach the goal. Dhyanam – dhi and yanam - means your mind's travel in meditation. Concentration is the most important factor in dhyanam. You may sit in whatever posture you want which keeps you comfortable. Keep your mind on lakshyardha. *Dhyanam nirvishayam manaha* - keeping your mind free from thoughts is called dhyanam.

So now all of us do dhyanam in the serene atmosphere at this early hour. May Sri Gurudev bestow on us such Bhakti, shakti, and Atmajnana! Sukhi bhava!*

An earnest disciple considers his *Guru* as his sole refuge. Mere faith unshakable and singular in his *Guru* is sufficient to steer himself through the ocean of *Samsara*.

-Babuji

GURU BHAKTI LIKE MADHURAKAVI'S

-Ramaswami S.

Madhurakavi Alwar's devotion to his Master, Nammalwar, is well known. In the Vaishnava Guru Parampara there is another great personality who exuded such a devotion to his Gurunatha, Bhagavad Ramanujacharya. He is Tiruvarangathu Amudhanar. Born in Moongilkudi village on the banks of the Cauvery, he settled down in the service of Lord Ranganatha in the Srirangam temple. He used to perform regular rituals to the Lord like Suprabhatham, Panchanga Sravanam and reciting Alwars' 'paasurams'. Because of these services to the Lord, he was fondly addressed as 'Peria Koil Nambi' ('Peda Gudi Poorna').

When Sri Ramanuja was ordained by the Lord to streamline the devotional procedures in the temple, he took over its administration. Nambi was initially not cooperating with the Acharya who, he felt, was interfering with his job, and even tried to hinder his reforms. He would be curt in his behaviour towards the Acharya. Because of this recalcitrance, Sri Ramanuja decided one day to remove Peria Koil Nambi from the temple service. The Lord appeared in his dream that night and told him: "Nambi is dear to Me because of his excellent service all along. So, instead of sacking him, you should correct him."

Ramanuja then called his most ardent disciple Kuresa Poorna and entrusted the task of bringing Nambi on the right path. Kuresa undertook the mission of inculcating devotion towards Bhagavad Ramanuja in Peria Koil Nambi's mind by narrating the Acharya's greatness and nearness to the Lord. Nambi felt sad that he had treated the great Acharya shabbily, and fell at his feet seeking his pardon. "Sir, you must take me into your fold by making me your disciple," he pleaded. Sri Ramanuja was pleased and said: "Since you are reciting the Divya Prabandha 'paasurams' with your nectarine voice, hereafter you shall be addressed as Tiruvarangathu Amudhanar'. ('Amudhu' in Tamil means nectar).

As part of his administrative reforms, Bhagavad Ramanujacharya wanted Amudhanar to hand over the conduct of temple rituals to Kuresa. A reluctant Amudhanar did not concede the request immediately. Soon his mother passed away. On the eleventh day of the 'antima kriya', he had to feed a

pious Brahmin and ask him whether he was satisfied with the feast. Only when the guest expressed his total satisfaction, the ceremony would be deemed complete. As if by divine decree, the Brahmin who was feasting on that day said: "I will be satisfied only if you hand over the temple rituals to Bhagavad Ramanuja." Amudhanar promised the guest that he would do that. After Amudhanar surrendered his rights to the Acharya, Kuresa took up the task as desired by Sri Ramanuja.

After this, Amudhanar devoted himself completely to the service of the Acharya. Thus he got closer to the Acharya and became his dearest disciple. This also enabled Amudhanar to learn the intricacies of Vishishtadvaitam.

Apart from singing the 'prabandhams' in a sweet voice, by the grace of the Acharya, Amudhanar started composing a lot of verses in praise of his Master. He compiled them into a 108-verse compendium and named it 'Ramanuja Nootrandhadhi' (108 verses in the 'antakshari' form in praise of Sri Ramanuja). As per this format of poetry, the last word of the first verse would be the first word of the next verse and so on. He then presented it to Ramanuja, who was not enamoured of adulation for him. The Acharya asked Amudhanar to present it to Lord Ranganatha and seek His blessings. Amudhanar did so. The Lord was pleased.

One day when a festival was conducted in the temple at which the 'prabandha paasurams' would be recited by a chorus of devotees, the Lord commanded Ramanuja to stay away from the festival, and asked Amudhanar to recite the 'Nootrandhadhi'. From then on it became a practice during such festivals in the temple to start with the recitation of Madhurakavi's ten 'paasurams' in praise of his Guru Nammaalvar followed by the other Alvaars' 'paasurams' and end with the recitation of the 108 verses of Amudhanar. Gradually the 108 verses were added to the 'Divya Prabandham' making it 'Naalaayira Divya Prabandham' (four thousand hymns). Bhagavad Ramanuja praised the work of Amudhanar and called it 'Prapanna Gayatri'.

Like Madhurakavi Alwar, Tiruvarangathu Amudhanar was totally dedicated to his Master whom he worshipped as Lord Ranganatha Himself. Such was the 'Guru Bhakti' of Amudhanar.*

CLEAR YOUR DOUBTS

Devotee: Amma, the entire universe is God Almighty's creation you say. Yet, while offering flowers to God before pooja, we are removing the stalks of the flowers and removing the spoiled flowers. Isn't it a pity that some flowers are left out and not reaching God's feet?

Sri Mataji: I did not ask that question. It is you who asked that question and the answer is also with you. You saw the small insect crawling in the flower. You saw the rotten flower (or fruit) and you picked it up and threw it aside. Why? Will you wear flowers which are rotten and infested with insects in your hair? Will you eat a rotten fruit infested with worms? While you don't wear such flowers in your hair or eat such rotten fruits, how can you offer them to God?



If you don't have body consciousness like some great devotees - for e.g. Vidura's wife, - that is a different matter. Vidura's wife was so overwhelmed to see Lord Krishna in her house that she went running to Him with bare body smeared with oil straight from her bathroom! She was oblivious of her surroundings and her body. She sat with the Lord and was feeding Him banana peels instead of bananas! That is the pinnacle of devotion and ecstasy. Even while taking Prasadam (divine offerings of food) if you start thinking about the taste of it, you are on the wrong track. A spiritual seeker doing proper upaasana will never think of tastes while taking Prasadam.*

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