

SAMARDHA SADGURU

Spiritual Magazine

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Sri Mataji's Benediction

DIVINITY NEEDS TO BE UNVEILED

People usually trot out “Nothing is gained”. The right kind of nothing can be worth more than the wrong kind of something. Doing nothing, although looks passive, is definitely appropriate. According to conventional approach, a Spiritual Seeker is expected to renounce the outer world and live in isolation. Is everybody happy that way? Certainly not. Even the most beautiful place on earth will not give you peace and bliss unless you renounce your inner world.



Man is essentially Divine, but the Divinity in him is veiled by the never ending series of desires and thoughts arising in his mind. The ultimate goal is to remove the encrustation of desires and thoughts which unfolds the Divinity inherent in man. The thoughts in human mind are conditioned in three ways. They are the pure and noble Satva, the passionate and agitated Rajas and the dull in action Tamas.

Satva is the subtlest state with balanced joy, serenity and creative poise. Rajas is a condition when the mind is agitated, stormy, passionate, ambitious and constantly riddled with desires and emotions. Tamas is a state in complete inertia, indolence and heedlessness, where there is lack of consistency, softness and nobility. Mind and intellect are composed of the above three thoughts. The mind is an instrument of feelings and emotions, whereas the intellect discriminates and judges.

The faculty of discrimination operates in two ways. When it is directed towards worldly objects it is gross intellect, whereas it gains the status of subtle intellect if it discriminates between spiritual and worldly issues. The gross intellect, however sharp it may be, cannot penetrate and understand the truth beyond the material world. It is like attempting to use a sharp big knife to shave beard.

Let us look at the veiling of Self by these states of mind. The Satvic or noble desires also veil the Self like the smoke covering the fire. The smoke can be removed by a passing breeze; so also a little prayer or meditation is sufficient to take away the subtle desire.

The Rajasic desires cover the Self like a dust on the mirror. They are ego-centric and passionate. To remove the dust off, an effort is necessary. Rajasic desires can be overcome by constant meditation.

Lastly the Tamasic desires, which are obstinate, cover the Divinity like a foetus in a womb. It clearly envisages that the Tamasic desires can be overcome by a continuous effort of a Spiritual Seeker with patience comparable to a foetus to grow and emerge from the womb.

Therefore, a Spiritual Seeker can chasten his desires and thoughts and ultimately eliminate them to unfold the Divinity through the guidance of a Guru or Master who knows the technique.*

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Manager, Samardha Sadguru (0863-2293206)

Editorial

THE ALCHEMY OF GURU MAHARAJ

Om Gururam namaste!

Manmatha naama samvatsaram has bid adieu, ushering in the New Year Durmukhi. As is our custom, we greet each other 'Happy Ugadi'! But the name 'Durmukhi' looks frightful because the Sanskrit word means 'terrific face'. But we, the devotees of Samardha Sadguru Sri Sri Sri Hanumat Kali Vara Prasada Babuji Maharaj, need not be terrorised by that description. Twenty-five years ago our Gurudev, in a message on the advent of 'Durmathi' naama samvatsaram, declared thus: "You need not get scared about Durmathi New Year which literally means 'evil mind', because we are under the protection of the all-powerful Lord. He showers His mercy on one and all equally. He is the saviour of the forlorn. His lotus feet are capable of breaking the cycle of births and deaths.....Even the God of Death respects the Lord, like a humble servant." So when that umbrella is unfolded over our heads, why should we worry about Durmukhi? The alchemy of our Samardha Sadguru will turn any base metal into gold.



Further, with the benign grace of our Divine Mother, Poojya Yogini Sri Chandra Kali Prasada Mataji, we can boldly face any evil portents indicated in the 'Panchanga Sraavanam' (almanac reading) on the Ugadi Day. To quote Sadguru Maharaj again, "The almanac deals with the passage of time in days, months and years and is time-bound. The Lord is the Master who dictates and guides the march of time. The two lotus feet of the Lord, when adorned in your heart, would drive away all duality and confer Divine vision upon you. Neither the findings of the almanac nor the confluence of the eight planets holds any terror for you. The Master converts such evil planets into auspicious ones to confer peace and bliss on you."

Such a guarantee from our Master should enable us to face the problems that are in store for us in the New Year, and enjoy in full measure the benefits that are likely to accrue during the next twelve months. So let us welcome Durmukhi with a smiling face!

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However, Manmatha naama samvatsaram has ended on a sombre note with the senior- most member of the editorial board of this spiritual quarterly, Sri Vijayeswarananda Prasad, entering the Sadguru Saayujyam. The board is poorer by his departure, as Sri Guduri Venkataratnam – his official name – was an unfailing source of inspiration for its other members. His occasional suggestions to improve the quality of articles published in this magazine were well meaning and embellishing. Till two years ago, Sri Vijayeswarananda Prasad was very active in producing this quarterly in a notable manner, and his own contributions were universally appreciated by readers. Sri Venkataratnam garu was a multi-faceted gem. He was a Sanskrit scholar and an excellent orator and writer in Telugu and English; a playwright who directed a number of devotional dramas involving the children of Kali Vana Ashramam; an expert organiser of various religious and spiritual activities in the Ashramam; and above all a humane person ready to help anybody in need of his sagacious advice. In short, he was a role model for the Ashramites, and his passing away is indeed a big blow to all of us. Perhaps, Guru Maharaj must be utilising his services in a place where they are needed badly.

Another bereavement of the Ashramites is the exit of a soft-spoken and self-effacing devotee, Sri Konda Venkata Raju, the eldest son of the late Konda Sesham Raju garu. His dedication to Sadguru Maharaj and Poojya Mataji was total, and after retirement he chose to shift to the Ashramam to become a spiritual trainee. He would never miss the pre-dawn and evening prayer sessions in Brindavanam. He was a great philanthropist and launched the Sri Chandra Kali Vidya Nidhi with his personal contribution of Rs.1.53 crore for the benefit of children studying in the Sri Hanumat Kali Vara Prasada Babuji Gurukulam. Sri Venkata Raju believed that only by enabling the poor children to study without facing financial hassles could a new generation of responsible citizens could be created. From the Nidhi, a large number of school children are getting scholarships to pursue their studies in a spiritual ambience. Besides, the Gurukulam itself has been modernised by him with the setting up of a computer laboratory for the benefit of the students. Ardent devotees like Sri Venkata Raju are rare to find. We miss him.

With a view to paying homage to these two great souls, this issue carries articles detailing their services to the Ashramam.

Jai Gurudev!*

Thus Spake Babuji

UPAVAASAM AND BRAHMACHARYAM

Sushumna Prasada

Lord Babuji, in one of his discourses, explained the real significance of fasting (upavaasam) and celibacy (brahmacharyam). Sanskrit words only will enable us to understand the significance.

In spiritual terminology, the word fasting is frequently used without realising the real significance of the word upavaasam, we use it in the sense of not taking food and drink on certain auspicious days like Ekadasi and some months like Kartika, etc. Abstaining from food is not real fasting. In the word upavaasam, Upa means proximity; vaasam means to live. Hence the compound word upavaasam means to live in proximity to God or to live in close company of God. So what is needed for that is not giving up food. One has to give up thoughts of material world; it indicates that it is not giving up food for a particular period. Having not understood the significance of upavaasam, we come to such a fallacious conclusion. The absorption of mind in God (manolayam) is real upavaasam. The mind should be entirely concentrated on God, without any slight deviation. What you have eaten and how much you have taken is not at all important.



During the time of fasting, some people observe rigorous restrictions like totally avoiding food and water. Some people do not touch even water. Some people in their strict observance of fasting, do not allow even the saliva to get into the throat. We can appreciate their strict observance. Though they abstain from food physically, invariably their minds hover round material factors. Though they abstain from food physically their minds begin to ruminate on several delicious and relishing dishes they wish to take, soon after the upavaasam is over. After fasting on Ekadasi, they eagerly await the arrival of the auspicious hours of Dwadasi to consume all the relishing items of food. What is the purpose of doing such fasting? It is to divert the mind towards God. But if

fasting increases your desire of eating it is no fasting in the real sense of the word.

There are a few others with far-fetched thinking who make arrangements from the previous night itself. Lord Babuji smilingly remarked that they purchase plantains, oranges, apples and a litre of creamy milk as a substitute for their daily food. This type of pseudo-fasting makes their appetite heavy. Instead of Jagarana (alertness) they sleep and snore. Instead of coming close to God, they totally forget God in their deep sleep.

There are some others who go to the other extreme of not taking even water which leads to dehydration. Lord Babuji said that it was another extreme. Extremes are always to be avoided. Both are not the right methods for fasting.

The saying, 'Ati Sarvatra Varjayet', means too much in any aspect is always to be avoided.

Bhagavan Krishna in the 16th sloka of Chapter VI of the Gita asserted "Natyasna Thastu Yogosti nachai Kantha Manasnatah, Nachati Swapna Silasya Jagratho naiva Charjuna". It means one should not eat heavily. At the same time, one should not go on fasting, You should neither sleep heavily nor wake up the whole night. O! Arjuna, Yoga gets fulfilled only when you observe limitation in every aspect. In the next sloka, Bhagavan Krishna asserted "Yuktahara Viharasya, Yukta Chestasya Karmasu, Yukta Swapnava bodhasya Yogo Bhavathi dukah"- If a person observes control by adopting limitation in the matter of taking food, sleep and activities by having control and limitation in the required actions and sleep, Yoga which drives away sorrow gets fulfilled. To gain control over the mind, all these limitations are needed, but once when your mind gets merged in God, there is no need to observe these limitations.

To elaborate this, Lord Babuji narrated the anecdote of Nityopavasi and Sada Brahmachari.

On one occasion, Durvasa Maharshi along with several disciples came to have darshan of Lord Krishna who, along with Rukmini, Satyabhama and other consorts, heartily welcomed the saint with great hospitality and humility and washed his feet with the sacred water of the Ganges. Saint Durvasa who was very much impressed by the Divine hospitality of Lord Krishna expressed his desire of staying in the Divine presence of Lord Krishna for some time. Lord

Krishna immediately agreed to fulfill his desire and built cottages on the other side of the river in lovely, healthy and greenish surroundings..

Lord Krishna instructed his beloved Rukmini to prepare food for the saint personally and serve it to him with singular attention. Rukmini implicitly obeyed the instructions of her husband in extending hospitality to the saint. Daily the river used to give way to Rukmini to go to the other bank where Durvasa's cottage was located. After the lapse of a few days, the river became ferocious with wild waves and Rukmini Matha was nonplussed. She was at a loss to know how to cross the river to serve Durvasa. She explained the critical situation to Lord Krishna and sought His guidance. The Lord smilingly replied, "Dear Rukmini, there is nothing to be worried. You go to the river and request her to give way to you, as you are going to serve food to 'nityopavasi' (one who is always fasting). Rukmini Matha confused. But with great faith and confidence in the words of her Lord, she went to the river and requested her to give way so that she could serve the 'nityopavasi'. To her utmost surprise, the ferocious waves subsided and the river gave her way to reach the other bank. She reached the cottage of the saint happily and served the food prepared by herself to Durvasa and his disciples. The sage ate the food with avidity, praising the culinary skills of Rukmini Matha. After he was sumptuously fed, she was ready to go back to her abode.

Again the river was in spate and she did not know what to do. Then she turned to the sage and explained the crisis. Durvasa, in a calm and placid manner, assured Rukmini Matha that there was nothing to worry. He asked her to go to the river and request her to give way as she wanted to go back to 'Sada Brahmachari' (the celibate). Though Rukmini was astonished for the epithet attributed to Lord Krishna, with unquestionable faith in the words of the sage, she requested the river to give way as she wished to go back to Lord Krishna who is a 'Sada Brahmachari'. To her utmost astonishment, the river gave way and she reached her abode and greeted her husband.

She waited for a proper time and expressed her doubts to her Lord and requested him to clear them. Lord Krishna with his inimitable smile replied, "Sage Durvasa is 'Nityopavasi' in the real sense of the word for he always lives close to Lord Narayana. His

mind always dwells and gets absorbed in the sweet name of Lord Sriman Narayana and nothing else. Hence the sage is 'Nityopavasi' in the true sense of the word. Similarly it is quite appropriate for Lord Krishna to be addressed as 'Sada Brahmachari'. Real Brahmacharyam has nothing to do either with married life or remaining a single. A person whose mind always dwells in God is a genuine Brahmachari. I am 'Brahman' alone and nothing else. The entire Universe and the creation are nothing else but Brahman. As Brahman is all pervasive (Sarva Vyapaka) there is no other place for Me to move. Hence I (the embodiment of Brahman) always remain and move in Brahman. Hence 'Sada Brahmachari' is the most appropriate word used by Sage Durvasa."

Rukmini Matha, who got her doubts clarified by Lord Krishna, prostrated at His rosy feet for enlightening her. Thus Lord Babuji explained clearly about fasting (upavaasam) and celibacy (brahmacharyam) and exhorted the devotees to ennoble their lives by such upavaasam and brahmacharyam.*

SRI MATAJI'S PROGRAMMES

April 2016

01-04-16 to 03-04-16 - Centenary Celebrations of Sri Santhi Ashram, Totapalli (E.G.Dt.,)

17-04-16 - 131st Jayanthi function of Sri Malayala Swami at Gannavaram-Place-S.V.R.Function Hall, Davajigudem

19-04-16 - Aradhana function of Sri Subbadasa Swami at Cherukuru village, Parchuru Mandal, Prakasam Dist.

21-04-16 to 25-04-16 - 103rd Birth day celebrations, 66th Anniversary of Ashramam, 18th Aradhana of Pujyasri Vidya Prakasanandagiri Swamy of Sri Suka Bhrahmashramam, at Sri Kalahasti

May 2016

16-05-16 - Aradhana Programme of Sri Potuluri Veera Brahmendra Swamy at Cherukuru Village, Parchuru Mandal, Prakasam Dist.

Note:

Sri Mataji's Discourses will be there in all the places.

Divine Mother Speaks

FORM AND FORMLESS GOD

Japamala Prasada

Those men, who can realise the supreme power in the form of God with attributes (Sakara Brahman) are really blessed and the greatest amongst all of the Lord's creation. Such men are getting divine happiness by devotion towards the Lord. Some may question whether this will lead to salvation. Why not? Sri Babuji Maharaj has declared that Jnana or knowledge is the ultimate result of True devotion, and Moksha or Deliverance is the ultimate result of Supreme knowledge or Jnana.



It is very difficult for man who is steeped in senses to realise the formless God, because man is so much accustomed to forms and names. To realise the Nirguna Brahman or formless God, one needs diligent practice of single pointed meditation, perseverance, total control over one's senses, level-headedness and compassion towards all beings in the universe.

When you meditate upon God with a form and attributes, it is easier to focus. You give a form and name to God and He/She becomes your personal God. You attribute all good qualities to that form and start singing its glories. You start chanting the name of your personal God and meditate upon that form. Your attention which was always focused upon yourself is now directed towards that personal God of yours. In your worship, you forget yourself. So, in order to forget your lower self, you need a higher and divine form to focus upon. This is the advantage of Saguna Aradhana or worship of God with a form and attributes.

Now the question arises as to how long should one do Saguna Aaradhana or worship of God with form? Our Gurudev, Sri Babuji Maharaj, has given a nice example for this. We take a child to a teacher to acquire knowledge. He starts to teach the child the alphabet. The child is made to copy what the teacher writes. How long does the child need a slate and a pencil? Once the child masters

the alphabet, it will not need a slate or copying anymore. The child can reproduce the letters whenever it wants! Is it possible for anyone to see the alphabet in the child's brain? Even if you rip open the child's body, you cannot see. They have become a part and parcel of the child now. The child needs the slate only in the learning stage. Similarly, a man needs to do Saguna Aradhana or worship of God with attributes in the beginning stages to attain concentration. Once he realises the all-pervasive nature of God, he sees God everywhere including in himself. As long as he worships a God with attributes there is duality - he considers himself different from God. But after realising that God is omnipresent, all the boundaries are lost and there is only 'Oneness'. This is called 'Advaita Siddhi' or non-duality. To attain this ultimate stage, the basis is faith. Faith in God, and in your Guru, will lead you to this stage. You can reach this goal only with the help of a Satya Guru. You must have implicit faith in your Guru and follow his instructions absolutely. Only then, you can realise the ultimate Truth.

Controlling your senses is of utmost importance in spiritual practice. Mind is the main switch which controls the five senses - vision, hearing, smell, taste and touch. If you fix your wavering mind on the lotus feet of the Lord, all the old and inimical traits acquired through repeated births are destroyed, and the mind thus purified merges in the Lord. Thus you experience Pure Bliss. You realise your true self as 'Prajnanam Brahma'.

A spiritual seeker should make the best use of 'Brahmi muhurtam' - it is the auspicious time before sunrise i.e. around 3 a.m. Wake up at 3 a.m., complete your daily ablutions and sit for meditation. This hour is peaceful and your mind will also be fresh and alert after a good night's sleep. The surroundings are also still and quiet and congenial for meditation. By constant practice of meditation the impure and wavering mind gets purified and stands still. Divinity is reflected in that unwavering and pure mind. With unswerving faith in your Guru and following his instructions you can achieve the ultimate goal.

May Lord Gurudev bless you all with infinite devotion, detachment and knowledge.*

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

April 2016

- 02 Sat - Sri Guru Dasami - Satsangam, Sri Sadguru Pada Puja
06 Wed - Masa Sivarati- Ekaham at Pavuluru Branch
07 Thurs - Amavasya
08 Fri - Ugadi - Durmukhi nama Samvatsaradi - 11.00 a.m -Panchanga
Sraavanam, Sri Sadguru Pada Puja, Bhakta Samaradhana
08 Fri to 14 Thurs Mouna Dhyana Saptaham
15 Fri - Srirama Navami - 05.30 A.M. Sri Sadguru Pada Puja
11.00 A.M. Samuhika Sita Ramula Kalyanams, Bhakta Samaradhana
22 Fri - Poornima - Sri Sadguru Pada Puja

May 2016

- 02 Mon - Sri Guru Dasami - Satsangam, Sri Sadguru Pada Puja
05 Thurs - Masa Sivaratri - Ekaham at Pavuluru Branch
06 Sat - Amavasya
09 Mon - Akshaya Trutiya - Sri Sadguru Pada Puja
11 Wed - Sri Sankara Jayanthi - Anniversary of Pratishta Mahotsavam of
Sri Sadguru Murthy, Sri Sadguru Pada Puja, Satsangam,
Bhakta Samaradhana
21 Sat - Vaisakha Poornima - Sri Sadguru Pada Puja, Satsangam, Bhakta
Samaradhana
26 Thur - Vaisakha Bahula Panchami - Pratishta Mahotsavam of Sri Maha Kalika
Parameswari with Sri Ramalingeswara Swamy - Leela Kalyanams
31 Tue - Sri Gurudasami, Hanumat Jayanthi - Satsangam, Sri Sadguru Pada Puja

June 2016

- 03 Fri - Masa Sivartri - Ekaham at our Pavuluru Branch
05 Sun - Amavasya
18 Sat - Sani Trayodasi
20 Mon - Poornima - Sri Sadguru Pada Puja
28 Tues - Eighth Punya Aradhana of Sri Suguna Prasada Mathaji
29 Wed - Sri Guru Dasami - Satsangam, Sri Sadguru Pada Puja

July 2016

- 02 Sat - Sani Trayodasi
03 Sun - Masa Sivaratri - Ekaham at Pavuluru Branch
04 Mon - Amavasya
15 Fri - Toli Ekadasi - Sri Sadguru Pada Puja, Bhakta Samaradhana
16 Sat - Starting of Dakshinayanam
19 Tues - Ashada Guru Poornima - Satsangam, Sri Sadguru Pada Puja, Bhakta
Samaradhana, Starting of Chaturmasa Deeksha
29 Fri - Sri Guru Dasami - Satsangam, Sri Sadguru Pada Puja
31 Sun - Antya Pushkarams of Godavari Matha

Children's Section Tales of Sri Ramakrishna Milkmaid and Brahmin

Ramana Prasad

A milkmaid used to supply milk to a Brahmin who resided on the other bank of the river every day. One day she got delayed to deliver the milk. When the Brahmin scolded her for the delay, she said, “Sir! I had to wait for the boatman to arrive. He did not start



till more passengers arrived and thus I got delayed. From tomorrow I will cross the river in the first trip itself so that I can reach you early.”

The Brahmin said, “One can cross the ocean of samsara by chanting the name of God. Can you not cross the small river by chanting His name? The innocent woman was pleased with his suggestion and wanted to implement it. From next day onwards she delivered the milk in time. The Brahmin was pleased and asked her how it became possible to avoid the delays involved in crossing the river.

The milkmaid replied, “As suggested by you, I am chanting the name of the Lord and I am able to walk across the river.” The Brahmin was surprised and said, “Will you please show me how you are crossing the river?”



She agreed and took him along with her and started walking on the river reciting the name of the Lord. After some time she looked back and found that the Brahmin was having trouble in crossing the river. She asked, “Instead of walking freely why are you lifting your clothes for fear of drenching. It seems your belief in God is not total.”

Moral: Complete surrender to God with implicit faith will make such miracles happen!*

Self-help is the best of all helps, but it need not be egocentric. Swamy Brahmanandaji used to tell us, 'let your mind be your Guru'. This means that it should be pure enough to come in contact with the Guru of all Gurus, dwelling within us. This is the best advice I can give. Do not weaken yourself by thinking that you are good for nothing. Instead of depending too much on any outside help, pray fervently to the Guru within for Light and guidance.

Learn to feel happy seeing others happy.

All of us have our weaknesses and strong points. Put both together, and as you look at them, you will find that good overweighs evil which, however, is to be removed in gradual stages.

- Swamy Yatiswarananda

STORIES OF DEVOTEES BHAGIRATHI WHO BLESSED A DEVOTEE

Ramana Prasad

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa used to treat Gangajal (water of the Ganges) very sacred. He would call Gangajal 'Brahmavari' (Pratyaksha Brahmam - God in visible form). If anyone talks about worldly matters, he would advise disciples to sprinkle Gangajal to make the place sacred.

How Gangajal is known for its sacredness? We all know that epic. Sage Bhagiratha brought the Ganges from sky to earth to send his ancestors to Brahmaloaka. When their ashes got drenched in waters of River Ganga, his ancestors reached Brahmaloaka. Bhagiratha had to face many difficulties in this process and ultimately he succeeded in his attempt. From that day onwards when anyone who accomplishes a very difficult task, it is said that he has achieved it with 'Bhagiratha Prayatnam'.

Our epics thus describe the manner in which sacred Ganges was brought down to earth by the sage to pave way for his ancestors to reach Brahmaloaka. No doubt, this happened long, long ago! But here is a story which narrates how Mother Ganga appeared before the house of a devotee to fulfill his wish. Don't you want to know who that great devotee was?

All of you must have heard of Naga Mahasaya who was a prominent householder devotee of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. His full name was Durga Charan Nag.

With the divine grace of Sri Ramakrishna he made tremendous progress in his spiritual sadhana. The all-pervading Paramatman who dwells in all living and non-living beings was none else than Sri Ramakrishna himself, for this disciple. Naga Mahasaya recognised that all living creatures are the forms of God and worshipping them is equal to the worship of God. He believed that serving them was equal to worship of the Lord Himself. His sole motto was, therefore, to serve the deserving people. He was kindness personified. He used to melt at the sufferings of his fellow beings. He, being a doctor by profession, would treat patients freely. Not only would he give medicines free, but also extend financial help needed for taking food and beverages as prescribed by him.

He led a disciplined and simple life. He would spend all his time in thinking of God and doing worship. He would not even wear chappals. He used to go out with just one piece of cloth to cover his body.

Sri Girishchandra Ghosh would often say, “Goddess Mahamaya could not influence two people. The first person was Sri Vivekananda who identified himself with vast universe leaving no space for Maya to enter and the other person was Naga Mahasaya who reduced himself to a tiny form on which Maya could not spread Her net.” Such was the docile nature of Naga Mahasaya.

Leading the life of an Avadhuta, Naga Mahasaya reached the pinnacle of spiritual heights where he found no difference between pure and impure, good and bad.

One day he had to go out of Calcutta to visit his village. That day happened to be an auspicious day. His father chided him for leaving Calcutta without taking sacred bath in the Ganges. He said, “Durga, what a fool you are! You know very well that today is an auspicious day and still you came here without taking bath in the Ganges as though you had an urgent work here. You should have stayed there today and should have come here tomorrow.”

Naga Mahasaya replied in a stern voice, “Father! Ganga is there everywhere not only in Calcutta! If God wishes we will get Ganga water here itself.”

Then a miracle happened. Naga Mahasaya was about to go for taking bath. Then suddenly a jet of water sprung from the ground and filled the surroundings with water. Naga Mahasaya praised God for keeping His word and instantly shouted in exuberance, “Welcome! Ganga Maa!

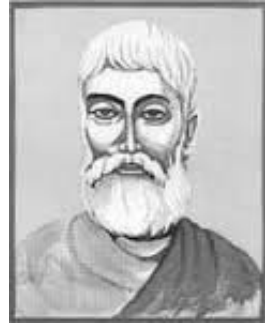
Come down and make us take bath with your pure waters.”

What is impossible for a disciple who got divine blessings of an Avatara Purusha like Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa? Surely their utterances will be fulfilled by the Almighty.

Sri Vivekananda who, as a great scholar and orator, has spread spiritual winds of Hinduism in the west said in his letter written to his fellow disciple on 25-09-1894, thus:

*Kurmastaaraka charvanam thribhuvanamutpatatayamo balat!
Kim bho navizanaasyasmaan Rama Krishna Dasavayam !!*

“We can pound all the stars in the sky into dust! We can shift the Globe from its orbit! Don’t you all know who we are? We are the followers of Sri Ramakrishna!” *



Devotional Stories

TRUTH ENSURES EVERYTHING ELSE

My dear Chiranjeevulaaraa:

Our Gurudev would often stress the value of Truth in his conversations with disciples. 'Truth is God' is the universal saying. According to our scriptures, 'Satyameva Jayate! Na anrutham' (Truth alone triumphs; never falsehood). Let me now narrate a story which emphasises that when Truth is by your side you will never be the loser...

Once there was a king by name Satyavrata. True to his name, he was always truthful in dealing with his subjects. It was his practice to get up very early in the morning and bathe in the river that was flowing beside his palace.

One day when he was going to the bathing ghat, he saw a beautiful woman going out of the palace gate. He asked her who she was and where she was going in the pre-dawn hour.

"I am Dhanalakshmi, (goddess of wealth). I will never stay in one place for long. Hence let me go," replied the woman, and the king bade her adieu.

A few minutes thereafter, the king saw a handsome man leaving the palace. When the king accosted him, he said: "I am Dharmadeva. When wealth has left the palace, I cannot stay here. Let me go." The king permitted him also to go.

When the king was returning to the palace after bath in the river, he saw another man leaving the palace gate. "Who are you? Why are you going away from my kingdom?" the king asked that man who replied: "I am Sadaacharan, the embodiment of good character and values. When wealth and Dharma have left you, why should I remain with you? Let me go." The king said: "Okay, go."

As Sadaacharan was leaving, the king saw a person with a very bright face quietly walking out of the palace. Satyavrata caught hold of that person and said: "What is happening to me today? I see wealth, Dharma and good character leaving my kingdom. Who are you? Why do you want to desert me?"

“Oh king, I am Satya (Truth). Since my colleagues have left your kingdom, I do not want to be alone here. But you have been adhering to truth in all your activities. Hence, I am a bit hesitant to leave you. Understand my situation and permit me to go with the other three,” said the fourth person trying to exit the kingdom.

But Satyavrata stood firm that Truth should not leave his kingdom. “I do not mind wealth, Dharma and character going out. I can always make good the loss. But without Truth, my kingdom will collapse. Hence I cannot allow you to go away from me. Get back to the palace,” the king commanded. Satya obeyed the king’s order and returned to the palace.

When the other three found that Truth was not coming with them, they felt that without Truth, they had no place to go. Hence all the three returned to the palace much to the delight of Satyavrata.

Children, hope you liked the story of Satyavrata who correctly understood that Truth alone was his benefactor. Like that king all of us should always be truthful in our life. Truth always stands first and foremost, if we go by the maxim: ‘Satyam, Sivam, Sundaram’ (Truth, Serenity, Beauty). In our Ashram prayer, don’t we say ‘Satyam, Shanthi, Daya, Prema’ (Truth, Peace, Compassion, Love), giving top priority to Truth?

Yours affectionately,

Maathula*

When you feel depressed looking at your weaknesses, look back and notice what a great change has come over you in the course of the last few years. Let this fill you with hopes, and encourage you to try, try and try again. Knowing that the Divine Power is behind you, you should learn to draw upon this Power through your earnest striving and prayer. I am sure that in due course you will find yourself Spiritually transformed, more than you can dream of now.

Our ideal is so high that the more we proceed towards it, the more we find that there is yet so much to achieve. This is very good because it keeps us going and enables us to have a little taste of the Divine joy as we continue to do our prayer and meditation.

- Swamy Yatiswarananda

Babuji's Fables

DIVINE MOTHER

Once upon a time there was a Chola king who had great respect for sages and mahatmas. He came to know that there was a self-realised sadhu in his kingdom. The king invited him to the palace, washed his feet and did pooja to his sacred feet and then adorned him with a very beautiful and expensive gold-threaded shawl. The mahatma was oblivious to all this as his mind was fixed on the Almighty God.

After some time the sage left the palace and was walking along a forest. There he saw an old woman sitting under a tree, shivering and begging for alms. The sage immediately took out the shawl on his person and covered the old woman with it. She was aghast and could not believe her own eyes.

This news reached the king through some of his men who were following the sage. The king was furious as he considered it as an insult and ordered his men to bring the sage to the palace. When the sadhu was brought, the king angrily asked him as to why he had given away such a precious, expensive shawl presented by him to a beggar woman.

The sadhu answered without a trace of fear, “Oh king! I did not give the shawl to a beggar woman but to the Divine Mother ruling all the worlds. I see only Her everywhere. When I saw the Divine Mother shivering with cold, I gave Her the shawl as a humble offering.”

With this answer, the king was enlightened and he fell at the sage’s feet and asked for pardon.

Moral: The Divine Mother resides in every single being - animate or inanimate.

—Retold by Dr. Swanamukhi Prasada

HOMAGE TO SRI VIJAYESWARANANDA PRASAD



Sri Vijayeswarananda Prasad (Sri Guduri Venkata Ratnam garu), as christened by Sri Babuji Maharaj, attained Guru Sayujyam on 13.03.2016 at 7.12 a.m. He was 87 and is survived by two sons and two daughters.

He was a staunch devotee of Guru Maharaj, and a scholar in Sanskrit, English and Telugu languages and literature. He was also a prolific lyricist and wrote many songs of devotion and sang them before Gurudev who was highly pleased with those renderings. He was an eloquent speaker, too. He rendered many laudable services to the Ashram. As a member of the editorial board for 'Samardha Sadguru' Telugu monthly and English quarterly magazines, he made valuable contributions. He also compiled Sri Babuji's speeches which appeared in Telugu dailies and published in a book form as 'Guruvani' in Telugu and 'Samardha Sadguru' in English. He rendered his valuable services to Gurukulam as its Correspondent for some time.

Sri Venkataratnam garu wrote the stories of great devotees in drama format and would enact them in the presence of Sri Babuji

during Navaratri Utsavams and receive His appreciation. Bhakta Prahalada, Bhakta Siriyala, Jnanadev, Samardha Ramadas and Paramananda Sishyulu were some of the most popular plays directed by him.

Ever since the idols of Sri Ramalingeswara Swami, Sri Kalika Parameswari and Nava Grahas were installed and consecrated by Guru Maharaj (24.05.1981), Sri Venkata Ratnam garu and his wife Srimati Kalyani garu were in charge of conducting regular worship and rituals in those sannidhis for a long time.

During Navaratri Utsavams, as soon as Sri Babuji's discourses were over, he used to put the salient features in an article form and send them to the press. Gurudev would explain the subtle aspects of such published articles to the devotees latter.

His magnum opus as a writer was his authoring 'Sri Samardha Nathuni Divya Charitra' (two volumes). Praising this monumental work of Sri Vijayeswarananda Prasad, Poojya Mataji says, "It is indeed a difficult task to write the Gurudevula Charitra as He is pervading the whole universe (Viswatma Swarupa). This could be accomplished only with the grace of Sri Babuji Maharaj Himself who with great compassion enabled Sri Vijayeswarananda to incorporate His prema tatwa in these volumes. May all the devotees do *Parayana* of the books and receive the grace of Sri Babuji Maharaj! At this juncture of Sri Vijayeswarananda's *Swaswaroopalayam*, I pray to Sri Guru Maharaj to bestow strength, bountiful devotion and spiritual knowledge to all his family members to attain self-realisation!"*

Do you know how God dwells in man? He dwells in the same way as ladies of wealthy families do behind a latticed screen (chik). They can see everybody, but no one can see them. God abides in all in an exactly similar way.

It is the nature of the lamp to give light. With its help some may cook food, some may forge deeds and some may read Bhagavata (Holy Scriptures). Is it the fault of the light? So is it the fault of God that some try to attain salvation with the help of His holy name, while others use His name for success in attempted theft?

- Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa

Down Memory Lane

FAMILY LIFE IS NO HINDRANCE TO SALVATION

Sushumna Prasada

One evening devotees assembled to have darshan of Lord Babuji in order to get enlightened by listening to his spiritual discourse. One of the devotees, an eminent educationist of Andhra University, approached Guru Maharaj and expressed his desire of giving up family life, as he strongly felt that it was a hindrance to reach his goal of spiritual pursuit. He remarked that he would provide enough money for the maintenance of his wife. He wanted to lead the life of a recluse by going alone to a cave on the top of the Himalayas or by leading a life of solitude by doing penance in a deep and dark forest, and sought the advice of Sri Babu to get his problems solved.

Lord Babuji smiled hearing the proposal of the professor of philosophy and proceeded to speak thus:

One can make family life quite congenial for spiritual pursuit. It is the mind which should be kept under control. In the ocean of the family life i.e. samsara, birth and death, hunger and thirst, happiness and sorrow, success and failure are the multiple waves that dash the shore. Is there any guarantee that your problems will get solved by leading the life of solitude in a cave or forest? Can you totally forget your wife and children? To get success in your spiritual pursuit, there must be a sweeping change in your mental outlook. Otherwise there will be no success in your spiritual pursuit. The mango will cling to the tree as long as it is unripe. But when the fruit becomes ripe, it will automatically drop down from the tree. Likewise a sadhaka (spiritual seeker) like you should get rid of his qualities (gunas) first. Then family life will not be an obstacle to you.

There is ample opportunity to rectify your mistakes in family life; for, it is like a smooth travel on a wide road. But the life of a recluse is highly risky. There is scope to rectify mistakes in 'gruhastashrama'. There is no such scope in the life of a recluse. In the 'Bhagavadgita' Lord Krishna never advised Arjuna to give up karma (life of action). Bhagavan advised Arjuna to perform his duty without expecting the result and leave the result to the God. - i.e. nishkama karma. Let me explain to prove the Truth behind it.

Without renouncing family life, man has the opportunity to receive spiritual experience in family life. The children who are brought up with loving care and attention have no time to take care of their parents in old age, because they go to distant places and foreign countries to seek their livelihood. As age advances sensory organs get debilitated. The capacity to listen and see gets lessened and physical strength also decreases. Enjoyment of life also turns into a dream, and the children begin to show aversion towards parents. It is impossible to describe their bitter suffering in terms of language. Even in that state, man does not meditate on God. Hence it is the duty of man to seek the guidance of a spiritual master and realise the goal of life by understanding the futility of family life and attachment. Hence a sadhaka has to get rid of the hurdles that stand in the way of attaining spiritual experience. By removing the layers of the onion, nothing remains in the last. Similarly, only he remains. So by doing constant spiritual practice he will reach the goal of life and attain salvation by total self surrender. Let me narrate an anecdote here.

A person approached a monk who was doing penance in a forest. He requested the monk to show the path of self-realisation. Then the monk (Yogi) replied with a smile, “What is there in the forest, you innocent man? Go back from where you have come, and do spiritual investigation.” He was not satisfied with the reply given by the monk, and roamed around the country, visiting all the sacred places. But he failed to attain peace. He went back to the forest and began to ruminate on his experiences. He stared at the trees which are dropping the leaves which were flying in the air. Seeing that sight, he shouted with joy that he had realised the goal of life. In the meanwhile the tree which he had observed turned into a Yogi. He was surprised to find that the Yogi was none else but the monk whom he saw in the forest several years ago. Prostrating at the monk’s feet, he said: “Sir, I have now realised the Truth of your preaching by self-experience.”

In this creation everything which is born is bound to die. It is the spirit (chaitanya) that remains forever, said Lord Babuji and concluded his discourse by saying that the person who got fed up with his mundane family life, finally realised the ultimate Truth by implicit obedience to the instruction of the spiritual master (Sadguru). By practical implementation, the sadhaka will attain salvation.*

DUTY WITH DETACHMENT VS. RENUNCIATION

Kali Prasad, USA

When Lord Sri Krishna explained to Arjuna how one should not run away from one's duties due to emotions and also explained the concept of renunciation, the Pandava prince got confused and asked "Oh Lord, You are telling me about duty and also about renunciation. Please do not confuse me but specify clearly which one of these two is good for me."

Lord Krishna explained, "No doubt they both lead you to salvation. But, performing one's duties without attachment is always better than renunciation. It is almost impossible for an earthling to renounce all deeds. In fact, none should renounce three duties -Yajna, Daana and Tapa. But when one performs one's duties with detachment towards the result, it leads that person to salvation (Moksha)."

Our Gurudev Sri Babuji Maharaj used to say, "Leading a family life is easier for attaining Moksha than taking to sanyasa." He would compare family life with a train in a station and sanyasa with a train on a bridge. If the train derailed in the station it causes little damage and there is every possibility of getting it back on track. But when a train derailed on the bridge, it plunges into the river and certainly kills everyone on board. Similarly when one commits a mistake in family life there is always a possibility of correcting it and proceeding in the path of nirvana. But when a sanyasi commits a mistake it leads to his downfall from the path of nirvana.

There is a tale in the Buddhist literature 'Jataka'. A tribal man plunges into a lake full of lotus flowers, swims in it and plucks a lot of flowers and enjoys them. A sanyasi watching this goes near the lake and smells a lotus flower. The Yaksha guarding the lake reprimands the sanyasi for doing this. The confused sanyasi asks the Yaksha why he did not say a word to the tribal man who had caused a lot of damage but was finding fault with an ascetic just for smelling a flower.

The Yaksha explained: "The tribal man is an ignorant one and his sins will be excused, but you have renounced all your duties and desires. Hence you have no right to desire the smell of lotus." When a paper is already dirty, even a big stain doesn't make a difference. But, a tiny stain on a pure white paper makes it impure.

Coming to 'duty with detachment', our Gurudev used to give a nice example. A cashier in a bank transacts money worth millions daily through his hands. But he never shows any attachment towards those millions and only yearns for the salary worth thousands he gets each month. The moment he shows an attachment to any money that's not his, he lands himself behind the bars.

In the same way we should perform our duties with detachment and be content with what God provides us. That leads to Moksha and it's the easiest way as shown by many of our Rishis.*

ASHRAM BRANCH OPENED IN GUNDUGOLANU

With the blessings of Sri Sri Sri Hanumat Kali Vara Prasada Babuji Maharaj and Pujya Mataji, the Gundugolanu branch of Kali Vanaashramam was declared open on 03.03.2016 at 7.25 a.m.

Sri Mataji installed a portrait of Sri Gurudev on this occasion. This was followed by Sri Sadguru Pada Puja and Hanuman Chalisa Paarayana and Ekaham which ended at 11 a.m. the next day. Samoohika Sri Sadguru Pada Pujalu were performed on March 4 to mark Sri Guru Dasami. Bhakta Samaradhana was there on both the days and devotees from several places attended in large numbers.



In the satsang programmes on both days, Sri Parasara Prasad, Dr. Ashok Varma Prasad and Sri Taraka Parabrahma Prasad spoke on Guru Tatwa. In her discourses, Sri Mataji spoke thus:

Sri Gurudev's leela is just inexplicable. Otherwise this construction work would not have been completed within one year of laying of the foundation-stone. Gundugolanu village has a great past. It is here Sri Babuji Maharaj used to celebrate Sri Navaratri Utsavams before Sri Kali Vanashramam came into being.

There is nothing more wanting in this mundane world for a person who takes refuge at Sri Gurudev's lotus feet. Just as cows and cowherds forgot their surroundings when they heard the mesmerising sound of the flute played by Sri Krishna, so also all those who heard the voice of Sri Guru Maharaj at the Navaratri Utsavams in Gundugoloanu were immersed in devotion and joy.

Every person is known to have three qualities, *Rupa, Nama, Guna*. But in Mahatmas there is a fourth quality, *Leela*. One feels like to stay for any length of time in their presence and feel how nice would it be if time stops ticking away. A devotee may worship God in *Rupa, Nama, Guna* and derive Ananda.

One who has implicit devotion and faith in Gurudev will certainly realise that he is not the body but the *Atman*. That is the *jeevan - mukta* state.

May Sri Gurudev bestow unstinted devotion, pure knowledge and *Atma Jnana* on all of us!*

WAITING FOR SRI RAMA—IX

(Continued from the previous issue)

Ramaswami Sampath

Events proceeded as contrived by Ravana, and the chase for the golden deer began with Rama deciding to capture the doe. Lakshmana, who sensed some foul-play in this, tried to stop his brother from the waste effort as golden deer was not a possibility. However, Rama pacified Lakshmana by saying, “My dear brother, since marriage Sita never sought any gift from me. Hence it is my duty to catch and present this golden deer to her. Please guard Sita and do not leave the hermitage till I capture this golden deer and return.” Then he ran after the deer.

A short while later, unable to catch the deer, Rama shot an arrow at it. Maricha who was in the garb of the deer then shouted (in Rama’s voice), “Save me Sita... Save me Lakshmana...”

Hearing this “cry” of Rama, Sita was perturbed and told Lakshmana, “Your brother appears to be in a dangerous situation. Immediately rush to his rescue.”

But Lakshmana stayed put and told her: “Mother, please do not fear. Nothing untoward will happen to brother as he can face any danger, and we are witness to his valour in single-handedly decimating the hordes of Khara and Dhooshana. I suspect that this is the illusion created by the demons in the jungle. Further, he has strictly instructed me not to leave the ashram in any circumstances, until his return.”

Overwhelmed by the anxiety about Rama’s safety and Lakshmana’s reluctance to leave the place, Sita looked askance at him and uttered the following harsh words unbecoming of her: “Now, I understand your real motive of having me after your brother’s exit. You have been waiting for this opportunity. Do not think that I am so cheap. Your servitude all along is only pretence. If you do not go to the rescue of your brother now, I shall immolate myself.”

When Lakshmana heard these heart-rending words, he cried: “Mother, what sin have I committed to deserve these poisonous darts from you? You have thoroughly misunderstood me. I cannot stay here anymore, but I am concerned about your safety. Please do not stir out of the ashram, come what may, and do not do anything

in haste. I am now rushing into the thicket.” [According to Kamban, Lakshmana drew a line in front of the hermitage and told her not to cross that line, which is spoken as ‘Lakshmana Rekha’.]

Watching the whole scene with glee from behind the ashram, Ravana came out donning the robe of a mendicant and sought alms from Sita. As it was the practice to feed ‘bhikshus’, Sita offered food to the ‘Ravana sanyasi’ from behind the line. But he insisted on her coming out. Seeing her hesitation, he tried to cross the line, but immediately the hermitage was surrounded by a huge fire. Ravana then took his original form and uprooted the whole hermitage with his might and placed it in his Pushpaka ‘vimana’ and took off for Lanka.

“Who are you, rascal, trying to abduct my daughter?” Ravana heard the shout and noticed Jatayu flying menacingly towards Pushpaka. Fearing that this would upset his plan to take away Sita before the arrival of Rama and Lakshmana, Ravana tried to kill the mighty vulture which, however, was powerful enough to cause immense harm to the demon’s person. In a fierce fight that ensued, Jatayu caused the fall of all his ten crowns. Ravana then took out Chandrahasam, the sword given as boon to him by Lord Siva, and cut the wings of Jatayu. Fatally injured, the bird fell down bleeding profusely. Taking pity on the vulture, Sita got down and tried to render first aid to it. But Ravana dragged her by tresses and hurried in his Pushpaka vimana in the southern direction.

With its life slowly ebbing out, the hapless Jatayu started moaning thus: “Oh, my soul, do not be in a hurry to leave this body. Wait till Rama comes, so that I can inform him of what has happened to Sita.”

Tricked by Maricha, Rama was aghast at seeing Lakshmana coming toward him. “Brother, why did you leave Sita alone in the hermitage, despite my clear instructions?” he asked Lakshmana who explained the circumstances that led to his leaving the ashram. The brothers then ran towards the hermitage only to find no trace of Sita. Grief-stricken, both started searching for her in the vicinity. Suddenly, they heard the moan of Jatayu, “Rama, where have you gone? Come quickly, I must tell you what has happened to Sita before I die.”

Rama came near the vulture and was pained to see its agony. There was some brightness in the eyes of Jatayu, who said: “Rama, have you come? I am trying to keep myself alive only for your sake.

Why did you both leave Sita alone? Taking advantage of her loneliness, the Lanka ruler has abducted her, carrying the entire hermitage in his aircraft. I tried my best to stop him, but could not succeed. Now you must somehow save Janaki from the clutches of that demon.” So saying, Jatayu breathed his last.

Rama’s agony of having lost his consort was compounded by the death of brave Jatayu, who was just like a father to him. Rama performed the last rites of the vulture, a privilege which Dasaratha could not get.

Having got the clue of Sita’s abduction, Rama and Lakshmana, despite their profound grief, walked along the Godavari in the southern direction, searching for Sita.

On their way, they were caught in the long hands of a demon. Composing themselves, they both cut the arms of the demon and tried in vain to kill him. He started crying, “Oh, I am unable to bear this agony.” From the direction of this sound, Rama noticed a demon with no head and legs, with only a big eye in his belly. On seeing the two, the demon asked amidst his moans “Oh, brave ones, who are you?”

“I am Rama and this is my brother Lakshmana,” replied the Ayodhya prince. “Forgive me Rama and Lakshmana. With my arms snapped I am unable to salute you even. Actually I have been waiting for you only all along,” said the demon and started narrating his tale

..My name is Kabandha, a mighty Gandharva cursed to become like this. I propitiated Lord Brahma and secured a very long life. I became haughty because of this, and started harassing everybody. One day I accosted Devendra for a fight. Indra hit me with his Vajraayudha. He could not kill me but caused my head and legs piercing into my belly. When I apologised to Indra for my insolence, he took pity on me and provided me with long arms and an eye in the stomach with which I could prey on any intruder coming my way. When I asked him when redemption would come to me because of my long life, Indra said: “One day Ayodhya princes Rama and Lakshmana would come this side, and they would relieve of your distress. So wait till Rama comes”. Since then, I have been waiting for you....

Rama felt sorry for Kabandha and asked him as to what they should do. “Oh princes, please bury this ugly body in the ground,” Kabandha said, and after the burial, a handsome Gandharva arose

from the ground and saluted Rama. “I am beholden to you for this act of kindness. In return I want to do some favour to you. Tell me how I can help you.” Rama told him of Sita’s abduction by Ravana and asked whether Kabandha could help in retrieving her.

“Shed your worries. Befriend and seek the help of Sugriva, the Vanara prince of Kishkinda, who is also suffering a similar fate with his wife Ruma having been appropriated by his brother Vali. Sugriva is currently hiding in the Rishyamukha hill to protect himself from Vali. You cross over to the western banks of the Godavari and reach Rishyamukha in the south-west direction,” Kabandha said and took leave of Rama.

As the princes walked towards Rishyamukha hill, Rama’s grief became so uncontrollable that Lakshmana had to console him with soft words and advise him not to lose hope. They soon reached the Matanga Maharshi ashram on the banks of the Pampa to seek his blessings. But they were told that the sage had attained liberation and that the ashram was maintained by his devoted disciple Sabari, an old woman belonging to the Bhil tribe. They were astonished to hear that Sabari was waiting for years to meet Rama whom she had not seen before. “Brother, is it not strange that a woman not known to me is keen on seeing me? Let us meet her,” Rama told Lakshmana.

When they went inside the ashram, Sabari was in deep meditation, and so they waited till she ended her meditation. When Sabari opened her eyes and saw Rama and Lakshmana, they introduced themselves to her. Sabari was so pleased that she fell at Rama’s feet. “How long have I been waiting for your darshan?” she said and started narrating the background of her desire to see him. . . .

. . . . Though an unlettered tribal woman, I served Matanga Maharshi by keeping the ashram neat and tidy and bringing his requirement of fruits, vegetables, etc. Pleased with my service, the sage gave me initiation and transformed me into a ‘mumukshu’. One day, he told me “Sabari, time has come for me to attain liberation, and so from tomorrow you should manage the ashram.” I pleaded with the sage to give me also the benefit of liberation. But he firmly said, “For that you must have darshan of Rama, and so wait till Rama comes.” From then on I have been longing for your

(Continued to page no.38)

GLORIOUS DEVOTEES

SRI RAMANA MAHARSHI

C.V. Ramana Babu

(Translation of Telugu original by Jagam)

When the whole earth is about to be inundated in a huge watery grave, Lord Siva lifted a tiny part of the earth with His trident to save it. So, that place is known as Thirucchuli (Thirucchuli in Tamil means trident). Siva's elder son Kumaraswami decided to save the people on the earth and so He entered the foetus of Alagamma, wife of Sundaram Ayyar, a resident of Thirucchuli.



On December 30, 1879, Alagamma gave birth to a boy and he was named Venkataraman.

As a child, he was not interested in education. He spent most of his time playfully. But, he was very intelligent and quick grasping. He was very strong physically. Whatever he took up to do, it became a sure success. So, his was a golden hand – ‘Tanga Kai’ (Tanga means gold and Kai means hand). During the childhood itself he believed that ‘Arunachalam’ meant God. But, a relative told him that Arunachalam is a hill in Thiruvannamalai. But, he could not believe it. He went to Arunachalam and there he was much satisfied as his thinking that ‘Arunachalam is God’ was confirmed.

At the age of 17 years, Venkataraman got an excellent experience with death. He explained it thus later: “I was alone in my room in Madurai. I was healthy. Suddenly, I felt that death started swallowing me. There was darkness around me. But, I was not afraid. I questioned myself ‘What is death? What is it that dies?’ Very soon death gulped me completely. Blood circulation, inhalation and exhalation and heart beat stopped functioning, within no time. The body turned into a corpse. I realised that this corpse would be carried to burial ground and cremated. The body then would become ash. Thus, the history of this body would end. It struck me that the body had died, but, ‘I’ did not die. I learnt that ‘I’ is not this ‘body’. The body is mortal and ‘I’ is immortal. Then suddenly, the darkness turned into bright light; there was vitality in the body and

life re-entered the body of Venkataraman. Thus, he conquered 'death'. It is the glory of Venkataraman!"

A gentleman once asked Sri Aurobindo "You say that everyone should have a Spiritual guru. But, who was Venkataraman's guru?" Sri Aurobindo explained that an exemplary 'yogi' like Venkataraman did not need any guru. "He was the guru unto himself. Venkataraman was a 'Prince of Peace'."

The experience with 'death' had magically changed Venkataraman's life. He became dispassionate and turned to be a staunch devotee. Previously, he treated the gods in the temple as mere idols. But now he saw life in them and treated them as living Gods. So, he would spend most of the time in Madurai Meenakshi temple. At this stage, his parents worried a lot about his condition. One day he and his brother were studying. Venkataraman closed his eyes, and his mind went into deep meditation. His brother sarcastically said, "O, great yogi! Why do you stay in home? You can rather go to forest for peaceful meditation." But, Venkataraman did not treat it as a joke. He took it as Lord's message and order. He decided to go. Where? He again got a message internally – 'Arunachalam'. He left a note on a piece of paper in which he wrote, "As per His order, I am going in search of my God. Don't waste time and money in search of me."

On September 1, 1896, he reached Arunachalam in the early hours. For him, Arunachalam is not just a hill, but Lord Parameswara Himself. It was not the time to open the doors of the temple. But, as soon as he stepped in, all the doors of the temple, including the sanctum sanctorum, were kept wide open. But, there was not a single person on the premises. Who had opened the doors? None other than Lord Siva Himself, in the service of His devotee! God is more accessible to the devotees. Venkataraman went directly to the sanctum sanctorum and embraced Lord Siva, who was in the form of a 'Linga' and both conversed with each other. Venkataraman was much satisfied. There had been no rain for three months in Arunachalam, but on the night of September 1, 1896, there was a downpour. Rain God Varuna was much pleased with the arrival of Venkataraman and expressed his joy in the form of rain! "Lord descends with rain!"

The lad from Madurai was in deep penance for years together. He did not care for the place or time, rain or shine, day or night. Penance completely occupied his mind. In those days he was called as 'Brahmin Swami'.

After nearly three years, Alagamma came to know the whereabouts of Venkataraman. She came to Arunachalam and requested him to return home. But, he did not concede. So, Alagamma went back reluctantly.

In 1907, Sri Kavyakanta Ganapathi Muni, a great poet and saint, met Sri Venkataraman. He prostrated at Venkataraman's feet and said to him, "I have studied many subjects. I did penance. But, I did not get peace. Please explain to me about penance. Kindly bless me." Then Venkataraman, after many years of silence (Mouna), opened his mouth and explained, "See the origin of 'I'. Search for it within yourself. Your mind will be absorbed there. That is knowledge. When you utter a 'mantra' in a low voice, search for the origin of that voice. The mind will be attached there. It is called penance." Sri Kavyakanta was much pleased and happy at the elucidation as such teaching is not found in any scriptures. He named Venkataraman as 'Bhagawan Sri Ramana Maharshi'. All his devotees became Sri Ramana's. Incidentally, Sri Kavyakanta used to be addressed as 'Naayana' by the Maharshi.

By God's will, Alagamma decided to stay with her son and so came to Arunachalam. She was a staunch follower of ancient customs. Sri Ramana made her leave all those customs. She later fell sick. He learnt that her last day on earth was May 19, 1922. On that day, he did not go anywhere. He kept his hands on her heart and head from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Then He removed His hands and said, "I passed on my power to my mother through my hands. There are no more sins or virtues in her life, the result of which she would have to experience in her future births. She attained salvation (Moksha)." Many would argue that a guru can only show the path to attain Moksha but cannot give Moksha to anyone. But, Sri Ramana proved them wrong. He ordered all those present there to have food, beside her body. Later, she was rested in a grave at the foot of the hill. In that place, Sri Mathru Bhuteswaralayam was constructed. That is today's Sri Ramana Ashramam.

There the doubts and questions of any devotee would be clarified within oneself unasked for. Devotees, who come there, prepared to ask many questions, would generally forget their questions but they get the answers and clarifications.

Sri Ramana Maharshi was the embodiment of true love. Sri Thambiran described that Divine Love took the form of Sri Ramana and descended on earth. Lustre always flowed from his glorious eyes. His look at the devotee was itself a 'Deeksha' (initiation). But, the receiver of this 'Deeksha' might not be aware of it. All were equal to Bhagavan Ramana who did not like to be treated specially. He would say, "I am the first in the last."

He authored many books in Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Sanskrit. His discourses were from the experiences of his life only. His main teachings are: "'Be a refugee of God. He will bless you with salvation"; "Ask yourself what is 'I'? See and search for its origin within yourself. That is Atma (Soul)".

The Maharshi used to tell devotees, "Whenever a devotee's wish reaches his guru's heart, the 'Kalpa Vriksha', 'Kamadhenu' and 'Chinthamani' would all go from his heart with much speed. It is an automatic divine action. They will save you and help you."

Once, a small sore developed on his left shoulder and it pained him much. The devotees were worried. But he said, "Why do you worry about this body? Just like you came to see me, this sore also wanted to see me. I have to bear with it. Don't worry."

The abode of love, Sri Ramana's Atma, shed the mortal coil on April 14, 1950, at 8.47 p.m. At the time of His demise there was great white brightness in the sky and it moved in the north-east direction. Kailas, Lord Siva's abode, is in the north-east. As Sri Ramana was the incarnation of Kumaraswami, he thus reached his Divine Father's abode!*

OBITUARY

Smt. Gadiraju Sitayamma, aged 84 years, w/o late Suryanarayana Raju (Batula Raju), a resident of Ashramam and an ardent devotee of Sri Babuji Maharaj, attained Guru Sayujyam on Saturday, 16.01.2016.

May Sri Gurudev bestow peace to her soul and courage to the family members.

BHAJA GOVINDAM!

BHAJA GOVINDAM, BHAJA GOVINDAM
GOVINDAM BHAJA MOODHAMATE,
SAMPRAPTE SANNIHITE KAALE
NAHI NAHI RAKSHATI DUKRIJNKARANE /

Sri Adi Sankaracharya saw an old Brahmin reciting the rules of the grammar. He felt pity over him and exhorted him to think of Govinda. Only reciting the name of Govinda will help one when death approaches. The Acharya said, "Think of Hari! Think of Hari! No one knows when death knocks your door. At that time the earthly



education will not come to your rescue. So take refuge at the feet of Govinda for crossing the ocean of samsara."

Continuing further he said, "Oh poor Brahmin! Don't waste your time in reciting the grammar rule 'dukrunkarani'. At the time of death the knowledge of scriptures will not help you. Pray Lord Govinda. Recite His name. Only that can help you to get out of the cycle of births and deaths. Spirituality will help you to realise the importance of life and achieve *Gnana*. By praying the Lord of the Universe, you will realise the Viswa Tatwa and will reach the abode of happiness. So don't waste time on worldly matters. Pray Govinda. Surrender to His feet." *

HOMAGE TO SRI KONDA VENKATA RAJU



Sri Konda Venkata Raju garu, an ardent devotee of Sri Babuji Maharaj, who breathed his last on 24.02.2016 after a brief illness, was the eldest son of the late Sri Sesham Raju garu and Krishnavenamma garu. He was 69 and is survived by wife and only son, Sesa Prasad, who is working in Norway.

An engineering graduate, Sri Venkata Raju, after serving in B.H.P.V, E.I.L and other public sector undertakings in India, worked in Kuwait for some years and returned to India in 2004 and settled down in Eluru Town. He moved to the Ashram in 2012 and since then his main motto was to raise the educational standards of the pupils of the Gurukulam School. He realised that this would be possible only by giving encouragement to parents financially, because those poor people were about to stop their wards from going to school for lack of resources.

This impelled him to make a singular contribution of Rs.153 lakhs and create the Sri Chandra Kali Vidya Nidhi, and started utilising the interest earned exclusively for the betterment of the school children by way of scholarships and free distribution of school uniforms and textbooks. He also made midday meal arrangements to the children of lower classes. He ensured that additional coaching classes were undertaken by teachers for the benefit of academically weak students. In this manner he had gone out of the way to achieve

his aim: to raise the educational standards of the children. At the daily prayer sessions in the school, he would narrate thought provoking stories to the kids and make them retell those stories during the next day's prayer meetings. He was providing financial help to the downtrodden sections of society.

Thanks to the initiative of Sri Venkata Raju, the School Building Extension had been completed. The school now provides students with a library, a laboratory and a computer centre, besides other infrastructural facilities.

According to Sri Sessa Prasad, his father believed that "Education is important for kids and that an educated kid will help bring his/her family out of poverty. With education, kids will also develop vivekam. Nannagaru considered all school kids as his own and devised many schemes to make the school attractive for them so that there would be full attendance."

In her condolence message, Poojya Mataji said, "He rendered valuable services to Gurukulam during these four years and thus nullified all his karmas and reached the abode of Sri Gurudev. May his wife and son follow Sri Venkata Raju garu in carrying out such welfare activities! Bhartruhari says, 'Only the brave accomplish their goals despite many obstructions.' Similarly Sri Venkata Raju garu executed all welfare schemes crossing the hurdles he had to face in fulfilling them. Let us pay our respects to the departed soul. May Sri Guru Maharaj bestow strength, devotion and spiritual knowledge and finally self-realisation to his family members!"*

It is the veil of Maya that keeps God hidden from our sight. The Universal Soul (Paramatma) cannot be realized till this veil is removed. As for instance, suppose Rama is only a few steps ahead of Lakshmana, and Sita is between the two. Here Rama stands for the Universal Soul, Lakshmana for the individual Soul (Jiva) and Sita is the Maya. So long as the Mother Janaki (Sita) is between the other two, Lakshmana cannot see Rama. It is only when She stands aside a little that Lakshmana can see Rama.

- Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa

'ABHIMAANAPUTRA' OF LORD RANGANATHA

-Ramaswami S.

Kuresa Poorna, an ardent disciple of Bhagavad Ramanujacharya, had two sons who were named Paraasara Bhatta and Vyaasa Bhatta by the pontiff himself, thereby fulfilling his 'maanasika Guru' Yamanucharya's wish to name two Vaishnavite children after the great sages.

Even as a child, Paraasara Bhatta secured the grace of Lord Ranganatha. One day his mother Andaalamma went to Srirangam for the darshan of the Lord, who saw Paraasara, the babe in her arms, and instructed her to leave the child in the temple itself. Obeying the Lord, she left the child in a sling near the Lord's sannidhi. The 'Adi Dampathulu' reared Paraasara as Their own child.

Child Paraasara used to do a lot of pranks near the Lord which He liked very much. Once, 'Sarkarai Pongal' (sweet pudding) was brought as 'neivedyam' to the Lord. As soon as Paraasara saw it, he immediately rushed to the pot and put his tender fingers to collect some portion for tasting. Lord Ranganatha was amused by the child's act, and ordered that hereafter all the 'neivedyams' meant for Him should be presented to Paraasara first. Because of this Lord's extraordinary affection for the child, Paraasara came to be known as 'Sri Ranganatha Putra' (son of the Lord).

After Kuresa Poorna became blind to save his mentor and later took to 'sanyasashrama', Bhagavad Ramanujacharya took upon himself the task of bringing up Paraasara and Vyaasa. Sri Ramanuja was particularly fond of Paraasara and asked his cousin and disciple Govinda Bhatta to be the mentor of the elder son of Kuresa. Thanks to this tutelage, Paraasara Bhatta acquired vast knowledge of all Vedic scriptures, Upanishads and Divya Prabandham, and became a scholar at a very young age.

Sri Ramanuja was mesmerised by the way Paraasara expatiated the various scriptures and his insight into the inner messages therein. Finding him to be the fittest person to write a commentary on 'Vishnu Sahasranamam', the pontiff instructed him to undertake the task. Incidentally, this was also one of the unfulfilled wishes of Yamunacharya. Paraasara Bhatta's commentary on 'Sahasranamam' is hailed as one on par with that done by Sri Adi Sankara Bhagavad Paadacharya.

The scholarship of Paraasara Bhatta became so famous that a king by name Tribhuvana Veera Devaraya requested that Paraasara should come to his palace and be the 'aasthaana vidwan'. But Paraasara Bhatta who never left the portals of Sri Ranganatha gently rejected the royal honour by declaring "Can there be a greater abode for me than Namperumaal's?"

Towards the close of his life, Paraasara was afflicted with cancer on his back. Unable to see his suffering from the ailment, many devotees appealed to him to undergo surgery. He, however, rejected the suggestion and said: “The pain is only for the body and not for the soul. Let me undergo this ‘praravda karma’ (accumulated demerit over previous births).” When they repeatedly pressed him to get rid of the pain by surgery, he relented and said: “Okay, go ahead. But I would not subject myself to the administration of chloroform for this operation. Whenever I deliver a discourse on Sri Andal’s ‘Tiruppavai’, I would get into trance. At that time, you do whatever you like.” The surgery was done accordingly when he was delivering a discourse on the eighteenth verse of Tiruppavai’, “Undhu madagalitran...” which describes the opening of the door of Lord Krishna’s private chamber to the Gopikas by the all-merciful Radhadevi. This ‘paasuram’ was also a favourite of Sri Ramanuja.

At the end of the purposeful and short life of only 28 years, Paraasara Bhatta reached the lotus feet of Bhagavad Ramanujacharya.*

WAITING FOR SRI RAMA—IX

(Continued from page No.29)

arrival despite the local people calling me mad. Today that day has arrived.....

Sabari then offered the berries she had collected for him. The brothers enjoyed eating the fruit, which was nothing but a token of the affection and love of the saintly woman for Rama, who then described the circumstances of his exile, Sita’s abduction by Ravana and Kabandha’s advice to befriend Sugriva. Fondling Rama with her right palm, Sabari said: “Sugriva will indeed be blessed with your friendship. You will definitely regain Sita with his help. Rishyamukha hill is a difficult terrain and only Vanaras can access it. Do not worry. There is a noble one waiting for you to help in the process. Now that my wish has been fulfilled, Rama, please permit me to reach the lotus feet of my Gurudeva.”

So saying, by her yogic power Sabari raised herself to the portals of Moksha Samrajya.

-to be continued

CLEAR YOUR DOUBTS

Devotee: Amma, you often talk about the importance of speech and Mounam (observing silence). Can you please elaborate? Is everybody eligible to practise this Mounam?

Sri Mataji: Yes, speech plays a very important role in one's spiritual practice. Our Gurudev has incorporated this as the very first entity in our daily universal prayer – "Oh Lord! Please grant us truthful, pure and gentle tongue and a pure, unblemished conscience." Talking plays a very important role in our lives. The way we talk can bring us not only prosperity and goodwill of friends and relatives but can also earn enemies and bad blood. A bad and unthinking word can also be fatal at times. Therefore, talking plays a very important role in our day to day life. Be gentle and compassionate in your talk. Never use harsh words. Keep control of your tongue. Once your mind is under your control, your speech also comes under your control because mind is the main switch which controls all your senses.



Talking uses your breath. So, avoid useless and excessive talking which wastes your precious life force. Controlled talking will also bring steadiness in your troubled, wavering and restless mind. That's why great masters have stressed upon Mounam or silence. 'Speech is silvery, while silence is golden' goes the adage. A talking tongue is a great obstacle to your mind and spiritual practices. Silence provides peace to you. That's why Sri Babuji Maharaj stressed on Mouna Dhyanam. Lord Gurudev used to tell us to practise silence for at least two hours every day. Silence builds up energy and creativity in us. It stills the wayward nature of the mind. It gives us clarity of thought.

This is the reason why Sri Guru Maharaj has started Mouna Dhyana Saptahams. Every year we conduct 'Silent Meditation Week' from Ugadi (Telugu New Year day) to Sri Rama Navami. The spiritual aspirants should practise the three following essential 'Dos': Mitaahara - controlled eating, Mita nidra - controlled sleep and Mita bhashana - controlled speech.

The participants should wake up by 2.30 a.m. and come to Brindavan for meditation from 3.45 a.m. to 4.45 a.m. Then participate in prayer from 5 a.m. to 6 a.m. It will be free period from 6 a.m. to 8.30 a.m. Meditation will restart from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Then there will be Sankeertan from 11 a.m. to 12 noon. After rest from 12 noon to 2.15 p.m., there will be meditation session from 2.30 p.m. to 4.30 p.m. followed by rest. After participating in the evening prayer from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m., there will be Sankeertan and Satsang up to 8 p.m. after which meditation will start from 8 p.m. to 8.30 p.m. Then participants retire for the day. This is the schedule we follow during the 'Silent Meditation Week'. You can all participate in it and experience the bliss. This is a good training period for spiritual seekers who want to practise meditation and silence. Anybody can and everybody should practise silence and meditation to get a taste of Pure Bliss.*

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