

FAST TRACK

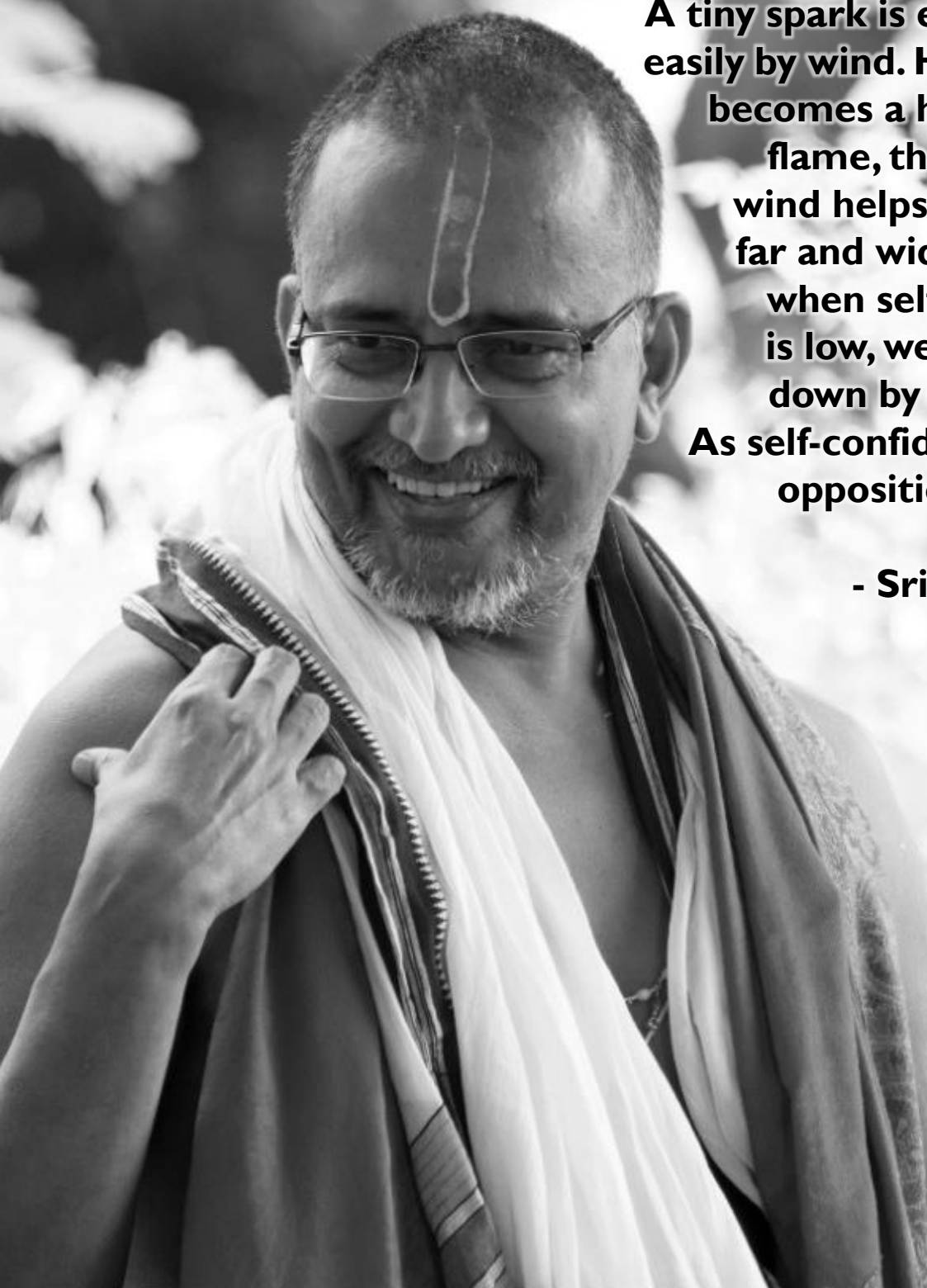
When Life in the Fast Lane Needs a Pit Stop

Monthly Newsletter

March 2021

A tiny spark is extinguished easily by wind. However if it becomes a huge roaring flame, the very same wind helps to spread it far and wide. Likewise, when self-confidence is low, we are bogged down by oppositions. As self-confidence grows, oppositions catalyze our growth.

- Sri Sri Swamiji



GRATITUDE IS... TO DO THE GIVEN TASK

Dr A Bhagyanathan, Chennai
(Personal Secretary to Sri Sri Swamiji)

It was during the time of construction of the dining hall in our ashram, many years ago. Sri Swamiji too was staying at Madhurapuri Ashram. One night, at around 8pm, Sri Swamiji after partaking of food, started walking towards the place of construction. Even at that hour, many laborers were working hard carrying stones and sand.

Sri Swamiji was really moved by that sight. Looking at the devotees nearby, Sri Swamiji repeatedly said, "Look!

How much involved they are in doing this strenuous job at this hour!" Sri Swamiji went near each worker and was speaking comforting words, enquiring about them. On seeing Sri Swamiji's unexpected arrival at that place, their faces bloomed with smile. "Did you all have dinner?" Sri Swamiji asked with so much concern. The workers unanimously replied, "We will eat once the work is done Swami". The moment Sri Swamiji heard these words, He called the supervisor and said, "It is already 8pm. They are yet to have their food. Stop the work now

and let them eat. The work can be continued after eating." Saying so, He sent them all for eating. After they left, Sri Swamiji was muttering something and was walking around the same place and addressed the devotees nearby, "We are all indebted to Bhagavan. We should thank Him for creating us; thank Him for bestowing us

with such a wonderful life; thank for every grain of rice He has provided us with, to appease our hunger. How to show our gratitude? Doing the

"To chant Nama always is the only way I can justify every grain I consume"

assigned task properly is the gratitude that we show towards every grain that we consume. Did you see them? It is fair that eat food because they are working so hard. It is justified. In fact, they are the ones who are worthy of having the food. God has given only one work for me. That is to keep chanting His names. Only if I keep chanting His names always, I become worthy of eating food. To chant Nama always is the only way I can justify every grain I consume. Saying so, Sri Swamiji started singing the Divine Names aloud.

(Translated from original Tamil article by the team)

Prayer

- Mrs Vasumathi, Melbourne
(Translated from Sri Swamiji's Lectures)

Happiness and sorrow are two sides of the world we are in. On one side, we have marriages, ceremonies, festivals, sports, music, dance and theatre and on the other side, we have old age, illness, death, poverty, unemployment, competition, jealousy, suspicion and quarrels. Such are the variety of experiences one goes through in this samsara. Those who desire to come out of this cycle will immerse themselves in leading a spiritual life. Those who are happily enjoying the pleasures in samsara are very well aware of the downsides of it. They may not have had direct experience of any tragedy or sorrow, however they would have at least come to know about them through those who have experienced.

Some people in this world believe that if they have faith in Bhagavan, He takes care of all their needs. They then complain that they have difficulties in their lives despite their faith. These people are being lazy in the name of faith. They spend their money in leisurely pursuits and are upset that Bhagavan has not showered His grace on them. Do you know on whom Bhagavan showers His grace and completely takes care of everything that that person needs? One who lives his life by completely immersing himself in Bhagavan and does not worry about anything. For the one who is engaged in the thoughts of Bhagavan by constantly serving Him, singing His praise and remembering His leelas, Bhagavan goes to any extent to fulfil his prayers. Bhagavan has never uttered to anyone that he will support those who use faith to escape responsibilities.

People who undergo many obstacles in life due to their own *prArabdha karma* (the past which has begun to take effect in one's current life form) pray to Bhagavan. Every prayer certainly brings forth blessings. The efficacy depends on the level of faith in it. There are 3 levels. A person takes a *sankalpa* (vow) to not eat meat. If he dishonours his own vow and eats meat despite the availability of other options, he is said to be *adhaman* (in a primitive phase of bhakti). However, let's assume he visits a place where there are no meal options other than meat and he is starving. If he ends up having just enough meat for his survival, then he is said to be *madhyaman* (progressed to a mediocre level). One who doesn't care about his own health and honours his vow despite every obstacle that might come his way is said to be *utthaman* (supreme stage).

Similarly, if a person has been yearning to visit Kashi and perform a *Ganga snaanam* (a holy dip in river Ganges at Varanasi, Northern India) and visits the place to fulfil his prayer, he is said to get *utthama palan* (highest benefit one can get due to his action). If another person performs the same action with the same shraddha (faith) however he does it after hearing about the greatness of the place from someone else, then that person is said to get *madhyama palan* (mediocre benefit). If, however a person performs the same action without faith and goes against his own will due to coercion by someone else then he is said to get only *alpa palan* (least benefit). Without this knowledge, many people pray for an assortment of things while being under the grip of sorrow. It is interesting to note how and when they actually end up fulfilling them.

For example, let's take a married couple who pray to Lord Guruvayoorapan for a child. They have been childless for many years and are in deep sorrow. They take a vow to perform *thulAbAram* (an ancient practice where the child's weight is offered in terms of materials such as bananas to Bhagavan) if their prayers are fulfilled. They beget a beautiful baby girl. Soon after that, the prayer is forgotten or they may cite many excuses to not visit the temple. Many years roll by and the child is now going through a difficult time. Only then, the parents take their forgotten vow seriously. They rush to the temple and fulfil it. They think they have fulfilled the prayer however most of their effort was on having a comfortable trip, not on fulfilling the prayer itself. How then should one fulfil a prayer? If they had brought the baby once she was born with the burning desire to see the Lord, submitted her at his Lotus feet in gratitude to Him for having granted their prayer, isn't that alone equivalent to performing 1000 *thulAbArams*?

Ranganatha Beckons...

When we pray “Adiyargal Vazhga Aranga Nagar Vazhga Arulicheyalgal vazhga”, it means wishing well for the territory, the devotees, etc.. If we do so, the world is bound to prosper because just like how the number 100 is contained within thousand & 1000 within ten thousand, 10000 within hundred thousand, 100,000 within 10 million and every other greater number is contained within infinity, so also this whole universe is contained within the Virat Swaroopa of Vishnu.

The Vishwaroopa shown to Arjuna sitting on the edge of his chariot by the ruler of this Akhilanda Koti Bramhanda (universe) is a proof to this. Again, HE arrived at the Yagashala of Bali Chakravarthy as a little brahmin boy asking for alms and stood measuring the earth and the skies above.

Since every living creature and every universe are contained within Him, satisfying Him will take care of the world's welfare. That is the message of Sanathana Dharma, and that is why we celebrate the Lord, and we ritualistically pray to Bhagawan.

So, if we look at Bhagawan & wish him to live well for several thousands of years, then naturally we will be blessed, the world will be blessed, and all the creatures living on it will be blessed, and the whole world will prosper.

The azhwar who blessed the Lord in this manner is referred to differently from the other azhwars as “Periya Azhwar” His name was Vishnu Chithar but, since he blessed the Lord Ranganatha himself, he became famous as Periya Azhwar.

Thus, we can notice that Periya Kovil, Periya Perumal, Periya Piratti, Periya Achanpillai, Periya Jeeyar, Periya Azhwar, are names that match only to Sri Ranganatha Swamy temple.

The Sri Rangam kshetra is evidently the Bhooloka Vaikuntam (Vaikuntam on Earth).

The people who do their service to him everyday are none other than his Nithya Shooris.

All our sins get washed away by the mere sight of the Sri Ranga Vimanam (the gopuram of the temple).

If one looks towards the direction of Srirangam and calls out Ranga with utmost faith, he will be instantly blessed irrespective of which part of the world he lives in.

(to be contd)

- Mrs Kavitha Venkat, Auckland

(Transcript of a popular TV lecture series ‘Azhaikkindraan Arangan’ by Sri Swamiji)



**rAgam: bihAg
thALam: Adi**

pallavi

unnai nOkki nAN

vandAI maTTum pOdAdu

**It wouldn't suffice if I walked towards
you**

enai nOkki nlyum vara vENDum

- kaNNA kaNNA || u ||

**You would have to walk towards me too,
Kanna**

Anupallavi

unai nOkki nAN varuvadaRku

thaDaigAL uNDu

**There are many obstacles that stop me
from walking towards you**

enai nOkki nI varuvadaRku

thaDaigAL uNDU? || u ||

**Are there any such hindrances for you to
walk towards me?**

charaNam

kaNNin maNiyE karumugil vaNNA

The gem of my eye! O black-hued One!

thannigarillAda thanip perum deyvamE

O unparalleled Lord!

vanithaiyar uLLam koLLai koLLum

gOpAIA

**O Gopala! The One who has won over
the hearts of Gopis!**

paNNiLE unaip pADuvEn muraLIdharan

nAnE || u ||

**I, Muralidharan, would sing of your
praises in this world**

madhuraageetham

- MR DHEERAJ VENKATACHALAM, Auckland

This kirtan is Sri Swamiji's monologue to Bhagavan. He elegantly affirms that "it is not enough just for me to go towards you; you need to come towards me too, kaNNA". His Holiness then insists that since we are mere humans, we face many hurdles in life as we strive towards reaching Bhagavan. In today's fast-paced world, we would all agree that we have enough and more distractions/commitments that hinder us from one-pointedly pursuing God. Each time there is one such interruption in our pursuit, we seem to be dragged several steps behind which almost seems like we have to begin all over again. So Sri Swamiji rhetorically questions Bhagavan, asking Him if He - the Lord himself - would face any such obstacles when coming towards His Bhaktas. Isn't Him coming towards us, the faster and surer way? Sri Swamiji also assures us in many discourses of his, that fully cognizant of this fact, Bhagavan takes several steps towards us, if we take just one sincere step towards Him.

Sri Swamiji continues beckoning Bhagavan towards Him, addressing the Lord as the apple of His eye and the beautiful dark-faced Lord. He then points out that the Bhagavan He is calling is the same, unparalleled one who has stolen the hearts of the Gopis. In the last line, Sri Swamiji vows to sing Bhagavan's glories to the world while emphasising to us that doing so, is the easiest way to please Bhagavan, and bring Him closer to us.

madhuraageetham doodles

Ms Bhuvaneswari TC, Melbourne

KRISHNA is PLEASED with...

GO SEVA



In the previous issue, we saw how the conversation between Sri Shaunaka and Sri Sūta Pauranika bestowed on us the most glorious *Srimad Bhāgavatam*. In this article let us see the greatness of the conversation between Sri Narada Maharishi and Sri Vyasa Bhagavan, and the great blessing it brought to all of us as *Srimad Bhāgavatam*, which was born as a result of this conversation.

Vyāsa Bhagavān who is worshipped as the manifestation as Lord Vishnu Himself, is the one who categorised all of the *vēdās* into their four branches, bestowed the *Mahabharatha*, and wrote the 17 *purānās*. Despite all this, he still felt a sense of discontentment and dissatisfaction within himself. He felt there was something he hasn't done for the benefit of the people of Kali Yuga.

Vyāsa Bhagavān asks himself why this satisfaction was not yet achieved and wonders whether it arose from the fact that, despite all of his works, there was a group of people that were left unserved. This may be likened to a situation where we were to feed ten guests in our home, but the eleventh guest remained hungry. Our mind would not be at ease. Until that point, Vyāsa Bhagavān had given a scripture for those that followed the path of dharma, the path of *karmā-anushtāna*, the path of *yōgā*, and *gnāna*. But what of the path of *bhakti*? Until that point, there was no text that spoken in entirety about the glory of Bhagavān Sri Krishnā.

It is at this very opportune moment that Sage Nāradhā crosses paths with him. As soon as Vyāsa sees Nāradhā, he jumps to his feet instantly. Even in this response, we have much to learn. Vyāsa Bhagavān is, himself, a maharishi who has devoted all his life to the nurturing and growth of *Sanāthana Dharmā*. In such a scholarly position, he could have easily thought of himself as greater than Sage Nāradhā, and in doing so, remained seated upon Sage Nāradhā's arrival. He rather jumps from his seat, runs to the feet of Nāradhā and prostrates to him, and performs *pooja*. Only after this, does he offer Nāradhā a seat. Such is the state of *mahāns*, who see Bhagavān in everyone else.

At this point, Nāradhā asks Vyāsa about his worries with a smile on his face (*smayan-iva*). The truth is, Nāradhā already knew the troubles in Vyāsa's mind; regardless, he asks him about the cause of his troubles. Unless someone were to ask a question, we should not offer an answer. Moreover, providing answers to unnecessary questions (*anyāyēna*) that are asked for no fruitful reason will also not result in any benefit. In such situations, even if we were to have immense knowledge and understanding in that area, we should show restraint and refrain from responding. This paradigm in social etiquette is beautifully displayed in the very first words between Nāradhā and Vyāsa. In this way, Nāradhā smiles and awakens that critical question that was plaguing Vyāsa's mind.

When Sri Vyāsa expresses his predicament, Sage Nāradhā says, the reason for his dissatisfaction was because none of the works he had done so far elaborated the glories of Lord Sri Hari. He further explains that even if a *grantha* is very well written by literary measure, if it doesn't speak about the glories of Lord Sri Hari, it will be considered irrelevant and futile by Mahatmas. Mahatmas would revere even a single erroneously written verse if it spoke of the greatness of Bhagavan and had the Divine Names of the Lord. He urges Sri Vyāsa to write a *grantha* which would speak about the greatness of *Bhāgavatha Dharma* and *Nama Kirtan*, since that would be the sole refuge for people of the Kali Yuga. He insists that it is imperative for Sri Vyāsa writes such a *grantha*, since people of the Kali Yuga, when caught in *samsara*, will look up to Sri Vyāsa's works for guidance, and they would be in deep distress if they weren't shown the path of *Bhagavatha Dharma*.

In the previous issue we saw how the conversation between Sri Shaunaka and Sri Sūta Pauranika brought out the most secretly treasured *Srimad Bhagavatham* into the world, for the benefit of humankind. This most sacred conversation between Sri Vyāsa and Sage Nāradhā at the banks of the holy *Saraswati* river, led to the birth of *Srimad Bhāgavatam*. This definitely emphasises the purpose of this series of articles – *chyutham vachanamrutham* – that conversations between Mahatmas are always for the benefit of the world, and never over futile things.

Suryavamsam

Mr Nidheesh, Sydney



Sri Rudra who came out as explained in the previous issue, started crying to Brahma requesting for a place to stay. Brahma, who was born on a Lotus, consoled Rudra and told him that he will take care of Rudra's needs. Brahma also told Rudra that since he cried anxiously like a small boy, people will call him as "Rudran" (Rudhir ashru vimochane = Rudhrraha).

Brahma had already created the 11 places for Rudra as follows – heart, senses, breath/life force (pranan), sky (ether), wind, fire, water, earth, sun, moon and penance (thapas).

Brahma told Rudra that he will have 11 names as follows – Manyu, Manu, Mahesa, Mahan, Siva, Ruthadhvaja, Ugrarethas, Bhavan, Kala, Vamadeva and Dhritavratha.

Brahma also named the 11 wives of Rudra as follows – Dhi (or Dhee), Vruththi, Usana, Uma, Niyuth, Sarpi, Ila, Ambika, Iravathi, Sudha and Dhiksha.

Brahma told Rudra that since He is a Prajapathi (Lord of Creation), he should accept the above and start creation.

On Brahma's order, Rudra started creation, but he created numerous forms (progeny) similar to his strength, appearance and character. On seeing the numerous creations by Rudra occupying all corners of the earth, Brahma was scared and order Rudra to stop his creation. Brahma told Rudra that His creations seemed as if they were to burn all ends of the universe.

Brahma advised Rudra to do penance, which will bring forth all auspiciousness to Him, and thereby to the world too. By virtue of this penance, creation should be done. Also by penance one can easily attain Bhagavan Sri Hari who resides in everyone in the form of light but cannot be understood by the senses. Rudra accepted the orders of Brahma, the Lord of Vedas, circumambulated Brahma as a mark of respect and proceeded to perform penance.

(to be contd...)

“Phew! That was close. Managed to submit the assignment in 30 seconds before midnight”.

“Driver, can you please hurry? My interview is in 10 minutes. I cannot miss this”.

“Mum, the tailor said he will finish the design work on my blouse on Saturday. I am getting stressed out. Why couldn’t he do it earlier. I told him many times that the wedding is on Sunday”.

Do these scenarios sound familiar? Of course, it does, right? You and I have been through this umpteen times in our life. And after every assignment, we promise that next time I will start early and finish way before the due date. Let’s be honest. Has it ever happened?

Even as I write this article for our wonderful Fast Track publication, I am struggling to meet the due date. This is despite the fact that I have had a month to submit this.

Of course, where there are rules, there are exceptions. However, the main reason this age-old pattern does not change because it is controlled by a universal law.

Really? There is a universal law for this as well?

Yes, indeed. It is called Parkinson’s Law.

Parkinson’s Law is a term coined by Cyril Northcote Parkinson in a humorous essay he wrote for the Economist in 1955. Put simply, it states that ‘Work expands to fill the time available for its completion’.

Do it Well; Do it Now

- Mr Deepak Vinod, Sydney

I have always wondered why/how my better half is ready to go to the satsang every single time, only when we are sitting in the car ready to depart, despite having been given ample notice. Never 5 minutes earlier. The neighbours have become so used to these car horns that they don’t peek out anymore as they understood that the Vinods are going to a satsang.

One of the key players in Parkinson’s Law is procrastination. Knowing that we have a set amount of time to do something often inspires us to leave work to the very last minute. As per Parkinson’s law, if we were to be given half the time to complete a project or assignment, we would be completing it in the given time because the deadline determines how we approach it. Remember the key words in Parkinson’s Law is “time available”.

The advantage of Parkinson’s law is that it will force us to complete the project or meet the goals before the due date/time.

Now here comes the twist. Here is what got me writing about this topic in the first place. As you can imagine, there has got to be more to this than merely risking my life sharing my musings on my better half’s dressing times.

Friends, the purpose of writing this article is to share my epiphany on how the Parkinson’s Law has the potential of causing a damage in our lives which may be irrevocable.

You see, this same law is the very reason why we are dilly-dallying in our search for the supreme Truth, God. It now makes total sense to me why we humans do not have the required urgency for God-realisation. After all, at least as believers in GOD, we all know that this human body has been gifted to us in order to find our way back to our true home.

In relation to a project or an assignment on which we are working on, we are always aware of the due date or deadline. In the case where we have an appointment or engagement to attend, we are aware of what time we should be there. You see, for all tasks big or small, the commonality is that we are always aware how much time we have available to complete it. The reason why this law works against us, is that we have not been given a deadline (pun-intended) for the most important project called Life.

In Mahabharat, Yaksha asked Yuddhisthira. किमाश्चर्यम् - kim Ashcharyam? – What is that which is most wonderful/surprising?

The embodiment of Dharma, Yudhisthir answered:

अहन्यहनि भूतानि गच्छन्ति यमालयम् |
शेषाः स्थावरमिच्छन्ति किमाश्चर्यमतः परम् ||

Day after day countless creatures go the abode of Yama (die), yet those that remain behind desire immortality. What can be more wonderful/surprising than this?

The belief which we all hold so strongly that this life will never end, is then reflected in our behaviour – because we behave according to the values we hold. Though we fully understand the importance attaining the purpose of our human birth, not having or knowing when our last day on this planet causes us to be complacent about our goal.

We all have seen and heard of cases where a person suffering from cancer finds out that he has only 1 month to live? Just notice what happens then. Now Parkinson's law kicks in. Suddenly that person has all his/her priorities in order. The whole outlook of that person changes. He suddenly drops everything which is trivial and inconsequential in his life. He is constantly endeavouring to make the most of the remaining time he has available and reach his worthy goal.

It was the same Parkinson's law in effect when Parikshit was told that his death will be due to snake bite in 7 days' time. The moment Parikshit was made aware of how much time he had left to live, immediately he abandoned everything and did whatever it took to attain Bhagavan in that 7 days. Merely knowing the 'time of his death', compelled Parikshit to change his life in order to meet his goal in the "time available".

Kabir Das ji says
Kaal Kare So Aaj Kar, Aaj Kare So Ab
Pal Mein Parlaya Hoyegi, Bahuri Karoge Kab

Do that important task today and now. Our lives can end any given moment, why are you deferring it for that never-ending tomorrow. In another couplet Sri Kabir Das ji says that this life is like a dew drop on a leaf, one gush of wind will be the end of that drop.

Sri Swamiji, out of his immense compassion and care for all of us would remind us to not be complacent with chanting the Divine names of the Lord. Hereby sharing this wonderful message as I bid goodbye with a warm 'Radhe Radhe', till the next time we meet, Krishna-willing.

Life is short, grace has not come let's not waste another moment chant

Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Hare Hare
Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare

Wasting time will increase your births let's not waste another moment...Chant (Hare Rama...)

Today we are alive, we don't know about tomorrow let's chant.... (Hare Rama...)
Today we are speaking we don't know about tomorrow let's chant.... (Hare Rama...)
Today we are conscious, we don't know about tomorrow let's chant.... (Hare Rama...)
Today we are healthy, we don't know about tomorrow let's chant.... (Hare Rama...)
Today we are walking, we don't know about tomorrow let's chant.... (Hare Rama...)
Today our mind is good, we don't know about tomorrow let's chant.... (Hare Rama...)
Today we are human, we don't know about tomorrow let's chant.... (Hare Rama...)
Life is short grace has not come let's not waste another moment chant.... (Hare Rama...)

carried by grace

- Ms Mythrei Krishna, Sydney

When I travelled to Vietnam a few years ago, sitting in the back of a taxi headed to the airport, I pressed my forehead close to the passenger window, looking outside at the buildings we passed, in my mind taking it all in so that I could convey my travels to Sri Guruji.

Lo and behold, there was a building, a tall one in the middle of Ho Chi Minh city in Vietnam, you could not miss it, with bright yellow letters at the top of the building reading, NAMA BANK.

This is a true story!

Who would have thought of it? Sri Guruji had blessed me on a mission to Vietnam to spread the word of Nama and if you ever needed signs that you were on the right path, well there it was in black and gold.

As I think back on this building today it arrests me to the thought, what investment am I making each day towards my Nama bank?

We work and earn to make money and use these earnings to make investments to provide for our future security and prosperity.

We invest time to reading the news and books to become more knowledgeable.

We invest energy and efforts into our family, friendships and relationships to support our needs for connection and happiness.

We invest such commitment and dedication to our physical health by way of healthy eating habits, exercise and workouts.

Yet what would be the greatest investment of all? What investment serves to provide for us beyond this very lifetime?

What investment would take care of us years into the future when we are no longer able, or as healthy or independent?

Some investments are high risk with high reward.

Some are low risk with steady and marginal reward.

What number of investments can guarantee an exponential return on investment with zero risk of loss? Only gains are to be made.

The answer comes to me in big roaring black and gold letters, NAMA BANK.

So it begs the question, what are we putting into our Nama bank today?

I've taken the liberty to make a list of ways to deposit into our Nama bank accounts:

Make small daily deposits like a piggy bank, while driving, washing, walking, chant Nama; it all adds up.

Make fortnightly salary sacrifice on ekadashi days, chant Nama.

Make term deposits on Akhanda Nama days, chant Nama with friends.

Charitable donations of Nama to those in need or in difficult times and circumstances.

My personal favourite – chanting in front of your Spiritual Master, be it in physical presence or a photograph.

My Guru once told me, Guru and Nama are one and the same. Where Nama is, Guru is there.

So if you want to see how your Nama bank account is growing, chant Nama, close your eyes and His Grace and presence will envelope you. You will feel it, you will know it and while we have the resources and luxury of time and a speaking tongue, let us invest in ourselves by chanting Nama. Every Nama counts. It all adds up. Every single one.

Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare

***Writers note – this article today was sponsored by the Grace of HH Maharanyam Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji.
Humble pranams.**

LESSONS FROM VIDURA NEETHI

- Mr Shabarinath Vaitheeswaran, Melbourne

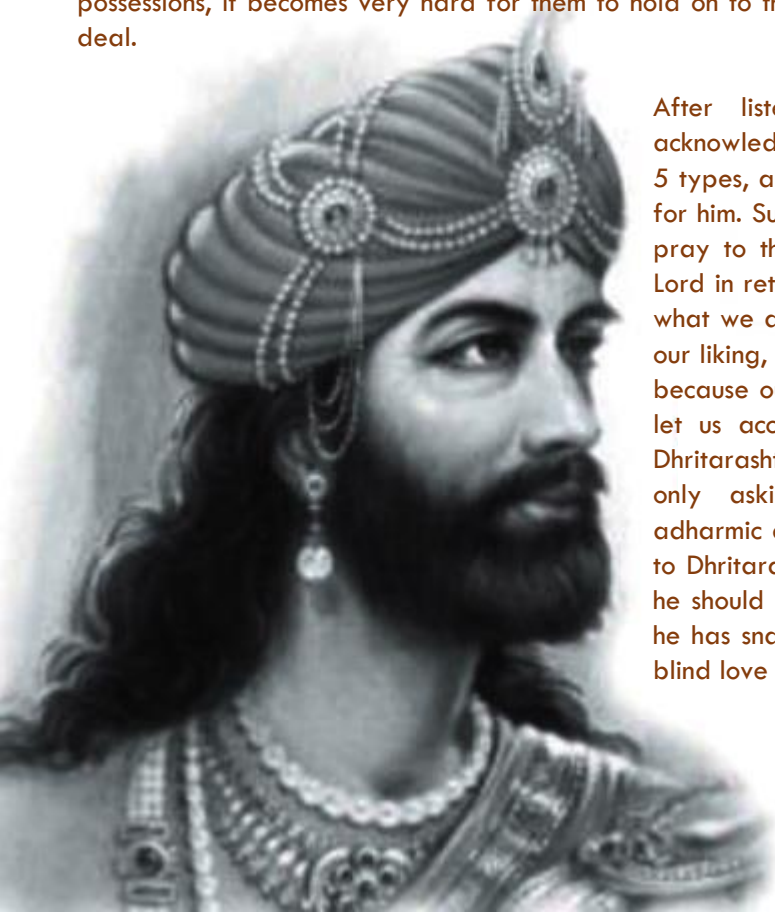
Addressing the state of mindset Dhritarashtra had, Vidura mentioned about 5 types of people who don't get sleep. Our scriptures point out what one should do before going to sleep to alleviate this issue. It asks to submit all our actions to the Lord and go to sleep with constant contemplation with a name or form. If one can do this, then it is for sure to give sleep.

Let us assume that before going to sleep we contemplated the form of Lord. But still, we don't get sleep. Does that mean our great wise ancestors are wrong? We can easily answer this with simple logic. Let us say before going to sleep, we have kept a jug full of water next to us. We happen to be in a dream world where we are having a severe thirst. Is it by any way possible to drink that water to quench our thirst in our dream? The answer is an absolute no because we cannot carry that jug of water to our dream world and we would only need dream water to quench our thirst.

Among the 3 states of awareness (Wake, Dream, and Sleep), sleep is considered to be the closest to the Lord. This is the reason why we always enjoy going back to sleep and to a great extent, we enjoy our snooze time when we have our alarms ringing in the morning. Even the gravest worry one might be in, when they wake up after a deep sleep, they feel so refreshed. What is the secret behind this sleep and why is it close to the Lord?

Just like the above example of a water jug, when we go to sleep, we won't be able to take anything from here, not even our mind which is what gives us the sense of "I" and "Mine" ness. Because it is the state where we are one with the Lord. The happiness or Ananda we enjoy during sleep is the same Brahma-Ananda expect that we don't consciously recognise it. It is like one person taking dip in river Ganges after knowing the glory verses a person taking a dip without knowing the glory. In both case effect of cleansing happens, only difference is one who know the glory can appreciate and have reverence towards the Ganges.

Likewise, every day in deep sleep we unconsciously experience that state of Lord which is called Anantha (eternal or unbound by time and space) which bestows us Shanthi (peace) and makes us feel refreshed when we wake up. This can happen only when we submit ourselves to that Antharyami (indweller) by leaving our mind behind. With regards to those 5 types of people, because they are still holding on to worldly possessions, it becomes very hard for them to hold on to the Lord. Therefore, getting sleep becomes a great deal.



After listening to Vidura, Dhritarashtra without even acknowledging to the question that if he was one among the 5 types, again asks Vidura to tell him that which is beneficial for him. Such ignorance happens to us also, isn't it? When we pray to the Lord seeking for something which we like and Lord in return gives us something which is actually better than what we asked for. However due to our attachment towards our liking, we feel disappointed towards what is given. This is because our intellect gets deluded by our wants and doesn't let us accept what is right for us. Vidura understood that Dhritarashtra was not asking for the right advice but he is only asking for pleasing words which would validate his adharmic act. But Vidura who stands by dharma pointed out to Dhritarashtra that being the eldest member of this family, he should have given what is right for Pandu's sons. Instead, he has snatched their wealth and kept it with him due to his blind love for his sons.

(to be contd...)

Pathway to Divinity in today's world

- Have you ever felt weighed down by repeated failure to achieve your goal or does it drive you to do better?
 - Do you take constructive criticism personally or as a means to develop yourself?
- Do you shy away from a challenge based on previous experiences or do you view it as a learning opportunity?

The way in which you answer these fundamental questions can provide insight on whether you have a fixed mindset or a growth mindset.

Adopting a growth mindset is essential for success in all aspects of life leading to a strong sense of joy, character-building resilience and overall personal fulfillment.

First, it is important to differentiate between the two types of mindset in order to successfully adopt the growth mindset.

An individual with a fixed mindset has the innate belief that their intelligence, capabilities and skillset cannot be changed. They believe that the success they acquire is only an affirmation of their inherent 'natural talent' and that they cannot improve and refine their skills with persistence, concerted effort and time. Often these individuals shy away from challenges with the view that any failure they will experience is as a result of their limited abilities. As such, they give up easily due to their lack of self-belief and fear of failing. A person with a fixed mindset is also unable to take on board constructive criticism and the idea that 'effort is fruitless' becomes ingrained within them as they fall into a detrimental cycle of self-doubt and quitting.

To further illustrate the concept of the fixed mindset, it is useful to learn about the fable of the chained elephant.

Once there was a man who was passing by an elephant enclosure when he spotted an elephant shackled to a post in chains. Deeply puzzled by the fact that this enormous, incredibly strong creature had made no attempt to escape, he approached the elephant keeper and asked him why the elephant had not done so. The elephant keeper explained to the gentleman that the elephant had been chained since its childhood and indeed had tried to escape but failed. So, due to the failure of its attempt it held the belief that it simply could not escape at all and has remained in its condition well into adulthood.

Thus, we can see that the elephant in the aforementioned story has fallen prey to the cycle of failure, lack of self-belief and lack of effort which further fuels failure and self-doubt and so forth.

On the other hand, an individual with a growth mindset believes that their intelligence and abilities can be improved upon with diligent effort, perseverance and dedication. They are better equipped to deal with failures and constructive criticism as they hold the view that they are only opportunities for learning, self-improvement and therefore, growth. By not allowing their failures to define them, individuals with a growth mindset experience continually apply committed effort to their learning in order to experience success. They acknowledge and embrace their weaknesses, actively seek out feedback and incorporate it constructively into their practice to improve upon themselves. Additionally, having a growth mindset leads an individual to find inspiration in other peoples' success. Once they themselves experience success, it creates a positive flow-on effect from which other people can derive inspiration for their own self-development. To successfully inculcate a growth mindset in oneself, it is necessary to train the brain by considering it to be like a muscle. By applying conscious dedicated effort when faced with challenges, taking constructive criticism well and finding inspiration in others success, one is able to refine their knowledge and skills in order to continually learn and grow.

Sthree Shakti

RANI CHANDRAPRABHA

Chandraprabha was the wife of Tamradhwaja, King of Kachar, who ruled in the last decade of the eighteenth century. She was celebrated for tactfully freeing her husband, the king, from the neighbouring kingdom where he was held captive.

She was a patron of learning and poetry. At her instance, Bhuvaneshwara Vachaspati, a learned member of her court, wrote Naradi Rasamrita, an adaptation of Narada Purana in Bengali verse. It is said that she was largely responsible for the spread of Sanskrit culture in Kachar.

Meaningful Conversations

- Mrs Jayshree Ramkrishnan, Faculty, Gopa Kuteeram Sydney

(Interesting discussions between
Gopa Kuteeram teachers and students)

'Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah'

'Life in a holistic perspective' is a key objective of the Gopa Kuteeram program. This objective lends itself to multitude ways of teaching and inspiring children to lead a dharmic and happy life. Through several self-help sessions, such as 'Happy Me', 'SMART Goals' and 'Growth Mindset' that integrate the principles of Sanatana Dharma, values from Ithihasas and Puranas, children learn to introspect their own thought processes, emotions, behaviour and make conscious decisions for self-improvement from a young age. And above all, to pray sincerely for their progress and to be HAPPY.

Everybody likes to be happy all the time but why are we not? We posed this question to children in class. The answer emerged on its own when narrating the story of Satyawati from Mahabharata. When Dasharaja demanded that the son born to his daughter, Satyawati and King Shantanu should be the king, Shantanu's son, Devavrata fulfilled it by taking a vow to renounce the Kingdom and to never marry so there would be no rival to the throne.

Dasharaja's selfishness and greed for power, fame and riches for his daughter and his grandchildren, knowing fully well that he was robbing them from the rightful owner, Devavrata led to a situation of no heir to the throne after a few years, when both the children of Satyawati died. Devavrata aka Bhishma remained firm in his vow not to be the King. The subsequent events led to a great war and the death of many people leading to utter sadness for the kingdom.

When the teacher asked if children remembered a similar situation in Ramayana, instantly, children mentioned the name of Kaikeyi. Despite knowing that Rama was to be crowned the King, Kaikeyi allowed her mind to be corrupted and became greedy and demanded Rama's kingdom for her son Bharata. This only brought about the death of her husband, wrath of her own son and an unsettling sadness to the people of Ayodhya.

Children were able to decipher that when we are plagued by certain thoughts and emotions that make us selfish, greedy and jealous, they eventually rob us of happiness, not just ours but people around us too. Is the converse true then? If we harbour certain thoughts and emotions that make us selfless and caring of others and be happy for the achievements of others, could we be filled with happiness?

The teacher continued and said that when we stop thinking only about ourselves and wish well for everyone around us and pray for their well-being, a remarkable sense of happiness would fill our hearts. When we wish well for even one person a day, it creates immense joy in the heart. If we extend that for everyone in the world, obviously it would create infinite joy and happiness in our hearts. The easiest way to do this is by praying 'Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah', which means 'May all be happy'. We told children to do this prayer every day and see for themselves the difference in their happiness levels.

We can all try too!

PURANAVA

Wondrous Whispers From Ancient India

The tradition of married women wearing toe rings has a scientific basis too. Toe rings are generally worn on the second toe. The nerve from the second toe connects the uterus and goes through the heart. Wearing toe rings is known to keep the uterus healthy by regulating constant blood flow to it which in turn normalizes the menstrual cycle and ensures good uterine health



Srimad Bhagavad Gita

THE NEED FOR CHILDREN TO LEARN

- Mrs Latha Karthik, Faculty, Gopa Kuteeram, Melbourne

The world around us has been changing since the beginning of time, but one thing has probably remained constant - the continuous pursuit to overcome suffering. Interestingly, we each have our own “Kurukshetra battles” in our heads, ranging from the simple battles like ‘how do I prepare for my exams?’, ‘How do I do my job well?’ and ‘How can I get motivated to do something that I don’t like?’ to more fundamental questions that breed existential thoughts - ‘Who am I?’ or ‘How can I be happy?’

Oddly enough, these questions have had answers for about 5000+ years! Where may you ask? Look no further than the 700 verses of the Bhagavad Gita. Within our own little Kurukshetra wars that our minds play, there are multiple conflicts based on our choice of dharma (right) and adharma (wrong)! Perhaps that’s why the first verse of the Bhagavad Gita starts with - “Dharmakshetre Kurukshetre...” For an untrained eye this could be just a geographical location where the battle between good and evil was being held, but for individuals that have read multiple interpretations, the word Kurukshetra refers to our body, and the battles in our minds based on what is right and wrong - refer to Dharmakshetre. The Gita is filled with such metaphors. In fact, it offers a scaffolded approach to learning. Thus, the need for the Gita is because it teaches us the art of dharma or more formally, rectitude – the key to a contented and a stable life.

To further understand how we can lead such a life; we need to take a deeper dive into the Gita. Some of the crucial things that the Gita talks about is ego (the real and the false ego), identity, self-respect, self-belief and how “one must raise themselves through the ‘right’ self because the ‘self’ alone is one’s friend and the self alone is one’s enemy - in short, it is all in our minds! A lot of our day-to-day problems/sufferings can be solved by giving ourselves the power to control our own minds. It is here that the Gita proposes solutions to help us with our lives. Even in western philosophy, there is a quote by John Milton - “The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven”. The Gita offers a balanced, meaningful, peaceful holistic view of life through the 4 yogas - Jnana, Karma, Raja, and Bhakthi - techniques to practise self-control and mind control. These 4 yogas are pathways to practice for different types of personalities. For a meditative mind, the pathway could be Raja yoga, for a mind filled with devotion and love towards God, Bhakthi yoga could be a pathway, while for a mind that is action focussed, Karma yoga could be a pathway and for a mind that seeks to question our existence and seek knowledge, Jnana yoga could be a pathway.

OUR TEAM

Mentor

Dr A Bhagyanathan, Chennai

Senior Advisory Faculty

Brahmasri Balaji Sharma, Chennai

Senior Co-Ordinators

Mr Soma Sekar, Sydney

Mrs Jayanthi Ramanan, Sydney

Editors

Brahmasri Ravi Teja Janardanan, Sydney

Dr Janani Vasudevan, Chennai

Editorial Team

Mr Easwar Prasad, Sydney

Mrs Gayathri Easwar, Sydney

Mr Shabarinath, Melbourne

Mrs Vasumathi, Melbourne

Gopa Kuteeram Leads

Mrs Jayashree Ramakrishnan, Sydney

Mrs Vidya Subramanian, Melbourne

Mrs Kavitha Venkat, Auckland

Mrs Pavithra Vijay, Wellington

Dr Aparna Shankar, Brisbane

Mrs Srilakshmi, Perth

Team Photographer:

Mr Siddarth Murali, Melbourne

Following a single path or a combination could help us to achieve mind control and eventually equip us to reach everlasting peace and happiness.

Whilst the modern generation may think that the Gita is preachy and only talks about rituals and God, you might be pleasantly surprised! Though the Gita has religious undertones, the text talks about 'positive psychology' and the human mind for the most part. For example, the Gita offers a step-by-step logical explanation of how anger is manifested due to unfulfilled desires and how to overcome this anger problem - here, the Gita offers a self-management course.

If we know that the Gita brings great perspectives on life, all that is left to do is to read and understand it right? Well, the answers provided are not all entirely dictatorial and explicit. It takes effort and patience. If we can invest time and effort, then the returns are very rewarding!

In simple words, the Gita guides us to the stark awakening that the unhappiness we experience due to suffering, is a myopic perspective and that these problems are pale compared to the magnificence of existence. The Gita offers solutions to strengthen the mind such that we can treat successes and failures alike.

The Bhagavad Gita tells us that our roles can change on a day-to-day basis. Understanding that making a Duryodhana-like decision can lead to a Duryodhana-like consequence is just a part of it. We also may sometimes feel relieved because the Krishna inside of us has reigned us in just as we were about to make a bad choice. For the most part of our lives, we are like Arjuna - confused and looking for directions. As Arjuna had Krishna, we have the Bhagavad Gita!

In essence, let us all try to try and understand what is being conveyed in the Gita for it can be a self-transforming journey towards our inner self. A path provided to unlocking our best selves and living our life in a happy and a contented manner. As with many things in life, the Gita is a journey that we may choose to take. Embarking upon this journey is something that is left to each one of us as individuals. So, if you do not know where to start or the path ahead may look daunting, just remember that "The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step". And that step is what we have taken at Gopa Kuteeram, by introducing Bhagavad Gita to the young minds.

Never Say NO

The people who fail 10 times succeeded on the 11th attempt are Achievers and the people who fail 5 times but give up are called failures. Today I am going to tell the story of Soichiro Honda. Honda was born in Japan. Honda went to engineering school, and he designed a prototype for piston rings. And then he presented the piston rings to Toyota, but Toyota say, "No, we don't want it". Honda made another design, and this time Toyota selected it.

Toyota told him to set up a factory selling piston rings. So when his factory was all built, there was an earthquake few months later, and his factory got destroyed. Honda said, "We can build another one". Second time he was about to make it, Japan had entered WW2(World War 2). After the war, he setup his factory again. But by that time, America entered the War, and America bombed his factory. But he never gave up, he said, "No matter what, I will still build my factory". Once his factory was ready and there was no disturbance, there was no orders for piston rings.

One day he was riding his bicycle and then, Aha! He had the best idea. He decided to add a motor to the bicycle and from that day, they were known as "Motorcycles". When he first made it, he was driving around the neighbourhood and some of his neighbours said, "Can you make 1 for me". By 2 days there were 20 orders of Motorcycles. Then he thought to himself, I could sell so much of these motorcycles and make so much money. By 1 month there were 9000 people asking for a motorcycle. The First Motorcycle he made was too long but the second one was right on the dot. And from the day he started selling billions of motorcycles. Honda teaches us to never give up and always try hard, one day you will reach your dreams. Swami Vivekananda says, Never say "No", Never say "I Cannot", For you are infinite, All the power is within you, YOU CAN DO ANYTHING!

- **Krishna Hriday Vinod**
Gopa Kuteeram, Sydney

SATHVIK KITCHEN

Ms Pushkala Shivram, Melbourne
Sathvik Rainbow Bowl



We all know the importance of eating vegetables as part of a healthy diet but somehow think it may be too time consuming to prepare a dish with more than a couple of vegetables. It is easier than we think to create a rainbow of colours and textures with ingredients readily available from our vegetable vendors, fridge and pantry. Building a rainbow bowl can be a mindful and meditative activity that can be shared with everyone in the family.

Starting with greens, arrange lettuce, baby spinach or any greens of your choice in a bowl. Green leafy vegetable are high in Vitamin K and antioxidants making it a wonderful base to start our journey. Line the bowl with raw and cooked vegetables like sweet potato (fibre and Vitamin A), beet root (Vitamin C and iron), Carrots (beta carotene), Tomato (lycopene), Cucumber (many nutrients and great for hydration), corn (Vitamin B) and nuts and seeds (proteins and healthy fats). Once you are happy with the contents of your bowl, you could drizzle it with a dressing of choice.

Savour the different flavours and textures of each of these. Experiment with other vegetables, anything you have on hand. It's simple, clean eating to help us bring body, mind and spirit into balance.

Apple Cider Vinaigrette:

Combine below ingredients in a jar and shake.

1/3 cup Apple cider vinegar

1/4 cup olive oil

1 tsp honey

Salt and pepper to taste