

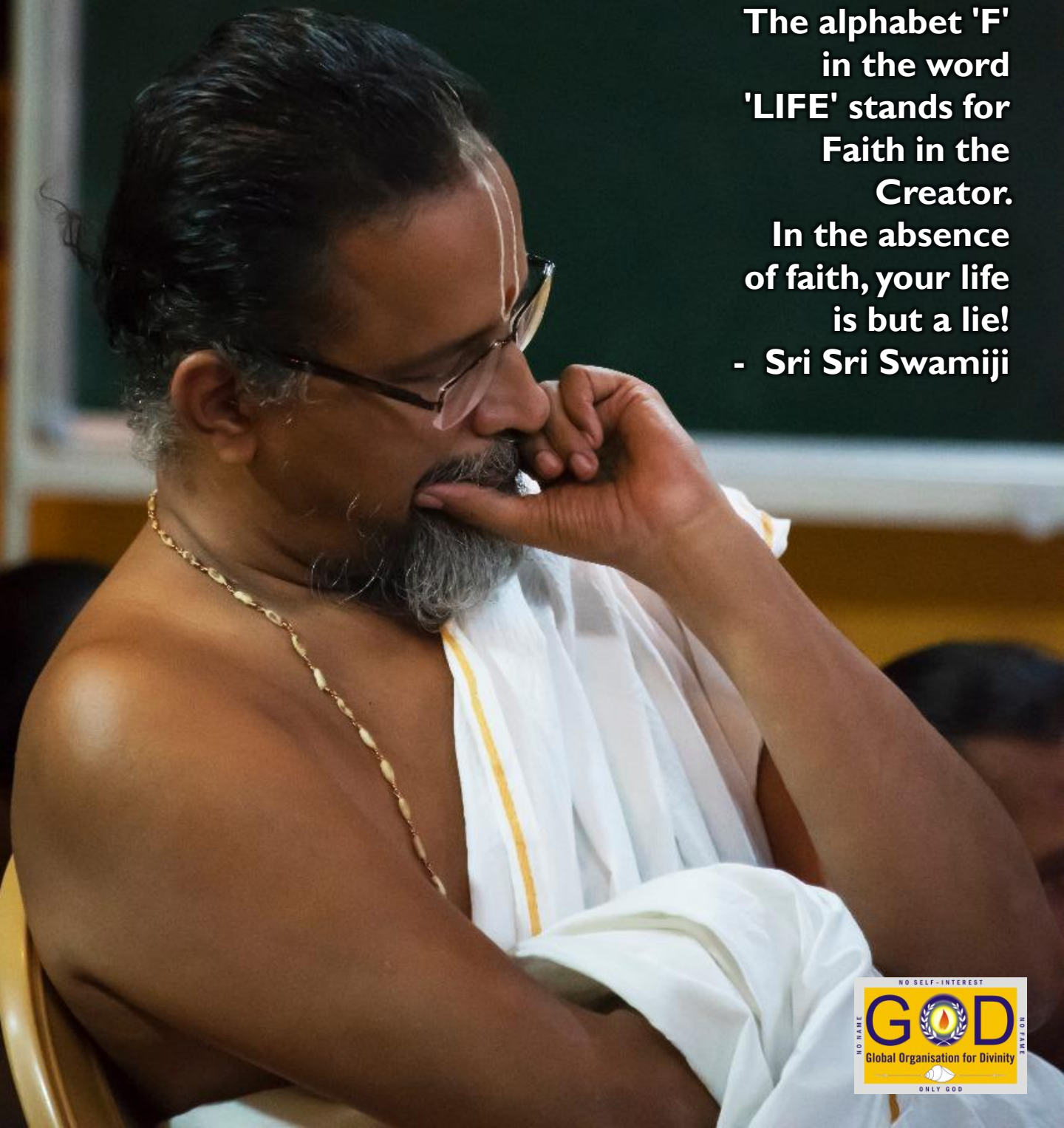
Fast Track

When Life in the Fast Lane Needs a Pit Stop

Monthly Newsletter

April 2021

**The alphabet 'F'
in the word
'LIFE' stands for
Faith in the
Creator.
In the absence
of faith, your life
is but a lie!
- Sri Sri Swamiji**



YOU SHALL NOT FORGET BUT REMEMBER, WON'T YOU? I SHALL WAIT!

MADHURA SMARANAM
– My Guru As I See Him

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

The celebration of annual Brahmotsav of Sri Madhuri Sakhi sameta Premika Varadan by Sri Swamiji is simply wonderful! Those ten days our Ashram would appear like NandaGokula and Srivanam where the Lord had taken Avatar and performed His Lilas. Sri Swamiji would begin the Utsav with the birth of Sri Krishna and enjoy conducting it on the lines of Srimad Bhagavatam.

Devotees from all over the world assemble in great numbers. The ten-day utsav is a divinely delightful one filled with Puja for the Lord, procession, Namakirtan, Bhajan, Bhagavata Parayanam, discourse, etc. Above all no words can describe the way Sri Swamiji would administrate the Utsav! Sri Swamiji would, in his inimitable style, show his affection to each and every devotee come to participate in the Utsav. In spite of all the festivity bustle nothing, not even the smallest matter, will escape his attention.

At the end of each Brahmotsav Sri Swamiji himself would bless all those who had served in the Utsav with prasad. That particular year, too, it was the same. Arrangements had been made for all those who had served in the Utsav to receive prasad from Sri Swamiji directly. Sri Swamiji was sitting on one side of the hall and those who had served came in a line and received the prasad. Even as Sri Swamiji was giving the prasad to the servitors with his right hand he was answering the questions of a devotee who stood to his left kept asking.

The line was moving fast. Suddenly when a man came up to receive the prasad, Sri Swamiji placed the prasad down and stretched out his hand towards him as if to say 'you give me!' To an onlooker it would have seemed as if Sri Swamiji, in that fraction of a second, would not have even noticed that man's face properly. The question 'why is he stretching out his hand to him?' arose in all those who were present there.

That man, looking at Sri Swamiji, said with tearful eyes, "Please pardon me, Swami! Next week I will do as promised," and fell at Sri Swamiji's feet. Sri Swamiji asked him, even as he gave him the prasad, "You will not forget again, will you? I will never forget but wait for it," and nodded him off.

Coming out of the hall, the man explained, "Several years back Sri Swamiji had come to my village. He then blessed my home, too, with his visit. It was a time when I was totally broke. I had placed the small deities that my parents had worshipped, in a box. Each deity was an inch in height. Seeing them Sri Swamiji was totally bowled over. Sri Swamiji asked me, "Why have you kept them in this manner without doing puja?" My answer shocked Sri Swamiji. I told him, "There are several more like this. I am selling them one by one." The moment I told this Sri Swamiji closed his ears as if he had heard what should never be heard! I told him, "If you so desire, I shall give them to you."

Sri Swamiji at once instructed an attendant devotee near him, "He is suffering due to financial problem. Give him the required assistance. With his permission bring all the deities." And, it was done.

Before leaving, Sri Swamiji asked, "Are there any more or only this much?" I said, "I have kept some more in another place." Sri Swamiji who was about to leave stopped and said to me, "You go and bring all the deities here. I will wait," and sat there itself.

I said, "Swami! That will take time. I will myself bring them all to the Ashram and give them to you directly."

Sri Swamiji told me several times, "Come immediately! Will you come tomorrow? I will be waiting."

Just as a mother expecting her child to return Sri Swamiji asked this of me and left.

But I did not keep up my promise. When Sri Swamiji enquired about it several times through someone or the other, I did not respond. It must be almost a decade since this happened. But Sri Swamiji has not forgotten. How many people Sri Swamiji meets! In that split second that he saw me he stretched out his hand! I never even thought that he would remember me! My first work now is to keep up my promise," he said shedding tears.

(Translated from original Tamil article by the team)

Living Life Guru's Way

- **Mrs Geetha Narayanaswamy, Sydney**
(Translated from Sri Swamiji's Lectures)

In the beginning, it will be a difficult task to send the children to the school. A few children though will go to school obediently without giving their parents any trouble. After starting in the school as they progress through higher classes, many children start to dislike going to school. What is the reason? They do not like the rules and discipline at school. As they are not involved fully in education, they are unable to understand the difficult lessons. Apart from these, there are external distractions relevant to their age that also attract them. During those times, if their parents had not forcefully sent them to school and given them the required attention, many people would be uneducated today. Actually speaking, no one needs to force, observe and look after the children who are truly interested and involved in education. They themselves will go to school with interest. They will study their lessons themselves, get good grades (marks) and accomplish high positions without being pressured. Everyone studying in school will have a desire to become a doctor, engineer or collector. Everyone will have desires, but no one will be prepared to work hard to fulfill their desires.

Everyone in the world desires to be happy and comfortable. Nobody is ready to undergo any hardships. But nobody gets only happiness without hardships. A beautiful rose flower is in the middle of sharp thorns. If one wants the sweet honey, he needs to tolerate the sting of the bees. In the same manner, one cannot get any goodness without facing hardships. Even the self realised wise (Mahāthma) attained God (hereafter referred as Bhagavan) after very significant sacrifices. So whoever has the true thirst for self realisation and cannot bear the separation from Bhagavan will walk the path prescribed by his spiritual teacher (hereafter referred as Guru) courageously without fail or any anxiety, bearing any hardships and attain self realisation. But one who seeks self realisation without an intense desire, one who is unable to undergo even the simplest of difficulties due to the lack of intense desire and unable to discipline themselves, they will move away from spiritual practices and the association of devotees (satsang).

Similar to the parents who force and send the child to the school despite their unwillingness and help them become successful later in their lives, the Guru alone will patiently guide us through the difficult situations and protect us from the anxieties we face in our spiritual life. As far as possible we also should conduct ourselves in an intelligent manner without giving any inconvenience to our Guru. Chanting Bhagavan's name (hereafter referred as japa), and meditating on Bhagavan (hereafter referred as dhyānam) continuously, the latent tendencies in our subconscious level due to our past actions (hereafter referred as vāsanā) will reduce, we will attain peace and happiness. On the other hand speaking angrily, getting jealous and always crying with self pity will increase our vāsanās.

So whenever we cook, perform any task, or when waiting for transport we should always be in dhyānam or doing japa. If we live like that our vāsanās will reduce significantly and we will accomplish all goodness.

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Ranganatha Beckons...

Guru Maharaj quotes this beautiful incident where:- “Once, while I was travelling back from Rameshwaram on a train, my co-passenger on the berth above requested me to wake him up at Srirangam if he dozes off. I agreed and thought that he is probably visiting Srirangam and is afraid that he may not disembark in the right place.

I woke him up as we reached Trichy. He sat close to the window and kept watching outside. As soon as he saw the Vimanam of the Sri Rangam temple, he raised his hand in salutation and then went back to sleep on his berth.”

He did so because he had the desire to offer his prayers to the Ranga Gopuram.

Our Shastras have long established that it is a blessing, to get an opportunity to stay, or to be at the service of Ranganatha all the time, or to travel to Sri Rangam at least once, or to be able to bathe in the waters of Cauvery. But most of all, the gentleman had understood that even looking towards the Gopuram of Sri Rangam and offering prayers leads to immense blessing. Such is the primordial form of the Vimana Gopuram and the Paravasudeva, embedded in the Vimana of Sri Rangam known as Bhooloka Vaikuntam.

Every kshetra has a unique practice, In Pandaripuram, every household resonates with Bhajans, at Brindavan everyone chants "Bolo Gopi Sri Radhe" and glorify Radha Devi, at Badrinath one can find number of Yogis involved in various forms of Thapas, at Guruvayur the Bhagavatha Parayanam is upheld the most, in some temples of Kerala a ritual of Vedi Vazhipadu is held, in Thiruchendur Sura Samharam is celebrated elaborately, people gather in large numbers to participate in these special events. On the day of Aarudra Darshanam, people come to Chidambaram, on Thaipoosam they do a Padayatra to Palani; similarly, Puri Jagannath is renowned worldwide for its Rath Yatra, Udupi is an Annakshetram where millions of people get fed. Likewise, Sri Rangam is known for the festivities held there.

Given a chance, one should endeavour to stay in Srirangam for a year to enjoy all the festivities. Acharyas have designed each procedure with so much love and reverence. It is the immense love that they had for Bhagavan that has made them establish these wonderful methods of festivities. The splendour of Sri Ranganatha's gait can be seen in the form of Simhagathi (that of a lion), Gajagathi (that of an elephant), Sarpagathi (that of a serpent), Vyagragathi (that of a tiger); the kind of water play organized for Sri Ranganatha. The processions held for Sri Ranganatha Swamy are filled with mesmerizing display of His beauty and the Acharyas' love for Him.

(to be contd)

- Mrs Kavitha Venkat, Auckland

(Transcript of a popular TV lecture series 'Azhaikindraan Arangan' by Sri Swamiji)



Madhuraageetham

- MRS MALLIKA RAMASWAMY, SYDNEY

rAgam: kiLikkaNNi
thALam: Adi

kuzhandai kaNNan kuzhandai kaNNan mazhalai
pEsuvAn
mazhalai pEsiyE kaNNan mayakki viDuvAn

pATTuppADi ATTamADi ODit thirivAn
ODitthirivAn kaNNan pODi enbAn

pAl veNNey thiruDi ivan ODi oLivAn
ODi oLivAn kaNNan uruTTi vizhippAn

mADu kanDru ivaTrai ivan mEytthu varuvAn
mEytthu varuvAn kaNNan Eyttu viDuvAn

kuzhalUdhi kuTTigaLuDan kummALam iDuvAn
kummALam iDuvAn eLLam chumma enDriDuvAn

anbonDriAl anaivaraiyum thanpAl izhuppAn
thanpAl izhuppAn eLLam thAnE enDriDuvAn

Madhuraageethams are divine compositions of HH Maharanyam Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji. These kirtans emerged from Sri Swamiji when he was immersed in a blissful state. In this series, we will delve deeper into the meaning of different Madhuraageethams. Today, we will be looking at 'Kuzhandhai Kannan'. This kirtan talks about the beautiful little antics of baby Krishna in Gokula.

In this kirtan, Sri Swamiji explains the daily antics of baby Krishna. He says that little Krishna endears everyone with his sweet babbles and baby talk. He sings and dances his way to everyone's heart. Krishna herds the cows and calves. He steals milk and butter, and runs away naughtily rolling his eyes. He wins everyone over with the beautiful notes from his flute, draws everyone to him only with his love.

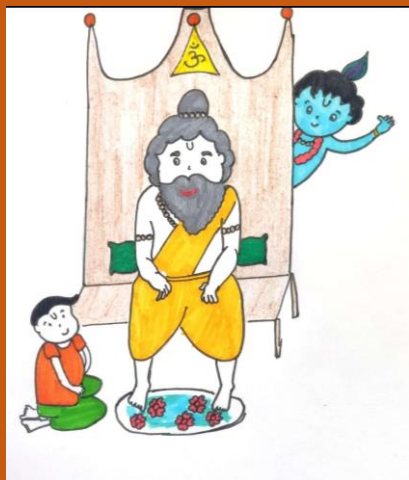
In the Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 18, verse 65, Krishna says

मन्मना भव मद्भक्तो मद्याजी मां नमस्कुरु ।
मामेवैष्य- सि सत्यं ते प्रतिजाने प्रियोऽसि मे ॥

man-mana bhava mad-bhaktō
mad-yaji mam namaskuru
mam evaisyasi satyam te
pratijane priyo 'si me

Meaning, "the only way you can conquer me is through love and there I am gladly conquered". Krishna takes great pleasure in receiving the love of his devotees, and he gets overpowered and conquered by their love, when it is genuine. Bhagavan is 'Bhaktavatsala'!! He just wants a pure expression of love and surrender. True love ("Premai") is unconditional, and so it happens just like that.

Great Mahatmas have conquered the world just by love alone, and not by performing miracles, or anything else. True Bhaktas are like Bhagavan himself; just as Bhagavan himself is a slave to unconditional love, he therefore exudes the same love. As there is no reason for this love, it happens just like that.



KRISHNA IS PLEASED WITH...
SADHU SEVA

MADHURAGEETHAM
DOODLES

Ms Bhuvaneshwari TC,
Melbourne

च्युतं वचनामृतम् Chyutham Vachanāmrutham

Dr Ashwin Bhaskaran, Sydney

Last month, we explored the beginnings of the interaction between Sage Vyāsa and Sage Nārada, a critical juncture which surmounted as a catalyst for the writing of Srimadh Bhāgavatam. Their choice of words and handling of the conversation that followed has priceless lessons, which we will delve into further.

pārāsarya mahā-bhāga bhavata: kacchid ātmanā
parituṣyati sārīra ātmā mānasa eva vā

It begins with Nārada addressing Vyāsa as the fortunate son of revered Parāśara maharishi, immediately asking him whether there are any troubles affecting his mind and body. He hits the nail on the head in his opening words and is able to deduce that something was troubling Vyāsa simply by the expression on his face. It becomes clear that our face is but a window to our mind and thoughts.

jijñāsitam susampannam api tē mahad-adbhutam
kṛtavān bhāratam yas tvam sarvārtha-paribṛmhitam

Nārada goes on to remind Vyāsa of all of the works that he has completed, and the sheer amount of conviction and higher order knowledge required to do so. He begins here with a reminder of the greatness of Mahābhāratham. Can we really refer to Mahābhāratham as a simple text? It contains every aspect of dharma that we should aim to follow in our lives. To ensure that no aspect of the dharma portrayed in Mahābhāratham goes missed, Vyāsa ensures that he captures every element of dharma to its fullest. In fact, there is a proverb in Sanskrit that explains this further:

yadhihāsti tadanyatra
yan-nēhāsti na tat kvachith

Every single point or subject within Mahābhāratham can be encountered at some place or point in time throughout the world. It can be connected to many examples or scenarios that we can relate to. Conversely, for those points that are not covered within Mahābhāratham, they will not be found anywhere else. In other words, we can view the whole world through the teachings of Mahābhāratham. That is why there is the common saying, “Vyāsō-chishtam jagat sarvam” – there is nothing in this world that Vyāsa has not described. Thus, the teachings within Mahābhāratham are truly applicable in many aspects throughout our lives.

jijñāsitam adhītam ca yat tat brahma sanātanam
tathāpi śocasy ātmānam akṛtārtha iva prabhō

Nārada goes on to remind Vyāsa that every aspect of dharma that he has expounded on in his works are not simply words on pages, but were also followed throughout his life as Vyāsa incorporated them as his own anushtānam (practice). These lines hold yet another critical point – it is very easy to share our wisdom and teaching with others as an upadēsa; however, to follow one’s own words or to “practice what you preach”, is far more important. It is truly only mahāns who are able to embody the very lessons they teach as they lead by example. Vyāsa was such a mahān, albeit Bhagavān incarnate, and Nārada asks him how, despite his brilliant characteristics, he could be so unhappy.

vyāsa uvāca
asty ēva mē sarvam idam tvayoktam tathāpi nātmā parituṣyatē mē
tan-mūlam avyaktam agādha-bodham pṛchāmahē tvātma-bhavātma-bhūtam

In Vyāsa’s response to Nārada, he acknowledges everything that Nārada has said as being correct. But he goes on to say that despite completing these works, his mind has not achieved peace and satisfaction. He then admits that he does not know the reason for this and appeals to Nārada to shed light on this, since Nārada holds that ultimate knowledge and is the son of Brahma himself. However, we must look back at the opening of this interaction between the two of them (covered last month). Before Nārada even approaches Vyāsa, Vyāsa was ruminating on this very point himself and reached the conclusion that it was likely because he had yet to write a grantha (text) to serve the needs of bhaktas – devotees of Bhagavān. As Nārada explains this, Vyāsa could have easily said that he already knew this point and reached a much swifter conclusion. However, he chooses not to. This, too, is yet another beautiful example of the way in which we should interact with mahāns.

There may be times when we approach mahāns to seek their advice and blessings on a particularly vexing issue in our lives. On some occasions, we may already have an idea of the solution within ourselves. Even if we know such a solution, we should not volunteer it ourselves after approaching the mahān – it defeats the purpose of approaching them, does it not? In fact, by doing so, we may receive a simple confirmation of our own desired decision rather than the guidance that we need. Instead, we should listen to the answer given by the mahān, as they may present it in an even more beautiful manner than we had envisaged. Indeed, every word from a mahan is a bhāgyam (blessing).

That is exactly what takes place here between Vyāsa & Nārada. It is only because Vyāsa beseeches Nārada for a solution to his predicament that Nārada articulates the solution of writing Srimadh Bhāgavatam. In doing so, Nārada draws upon the story of his own life and upbringing as a prime example to inspire Vyāsa. Without the nuances of this conversation between the two of them, we would not have the beautiful story of Nārada Charithram to relish.

suryaamsam



Mr Nidheesh, Sydney

Creation of Nava Prajapathis and Sage Narada:

Brahma who came from Bhagavan, created ten sons to extend the generation and populate the world. The ten are – Marichi, Athri, Angiras, Pulasthiyar, Pulahar, Krathu, Bhrgu, Vashisttar, Dhakshan and Narada. 9 of them (except Narada) are called Nava Prajapathis.

Narada was born from Brahma's lap, Dhaksha from thumb, Vasishta from breath, Brugu from touch, Kradhu from hand, Pulaha from navel, Pulasthiya from ears, Angiras from mouth, Athri from eyes and Marichi from his mind.

Dharma (righteousness), which is Bhagavan Narayana's form, came out of Brahma's right chest. Adharma which gives the fear of death to everyone, was born from Brahma's back. Nara and Narayana rishis were born to Dharmar and his wife Murthi. Kama (lust) was born from Brahma's mind, anger from eyebrows, loba (greed) from his lower lips, Saraswathi (Goddess of speech) from mouth, ocean from male reproductive organ and Nirrudhi who is source of all the sins (vice) from his anus.

Karthama, who was born from Brahma's shadow, was very powerful. He married Devahuthi (and was the father of Bhagavan Kapila Vasudeva). Thus the whole universe came from Brahma's mind and body.

Manifestation of Vedas and Upavedas:

- The 4 Vedas emerged from Brahms's four faces as below:

Rig Veda (East face)
Yajur (South)
Sama (West)
Atharvana (North)

- Apart from the Vedas, the following also originated from Brahma's faces:

4 Ridhvik's (priests) who are involved in yagnas:

Hotha - one who invites Devas (based on Rig Veda)
Advaryu (performer) – one who offers food to Devas (based on Yajur Veda)
Uthgatha - one who sings Sama songs (based on Sama Veda)
Brahma – one who coordinates all the above rituals (based on Adharvana Veda)

- Sastras such as Upavedas (supplementaries to the Vedas) and Nyaya

- 4 legs of Dharma:

Penance
Discipline
Compassion
Truth

- 4 ashramams (stages of life/social order):

Brahmacharya
Grihasta
Vanaprasta
Sanyasa

The Divine medicine from HIS perspective

- Mr Deepak Vinod, Sydney

Mridula! Can you please come here; it is time to take your antibiotics, my dear.

This loving call from her mother was as if it was an automatic trigger for her to start her tantrums which included the combinations and permutations of the following: - refusing, crying, running away, hiding, shouting, abusing, and even begging. This was not new in our household though. It has become common that giving medicine to our daughter was one of the most difficult tasks of parenting. It was as if the pain of the sickness rendered pale when compared to the pain of taking the medicine. It takes one person to hold her legs, another to hold her arms, and another to force open her mouth so that the medicine can be forced inside her mouth – every single time. Such was my daughters dislike towards taking medicine. I am very much inclined to believe that this trait was inherited from the mother who is re-known in her village for her act of cursing the doctor when she was a spinster, that his mum should die should he administer the vaccination to her. The doctor happily put the injection while quipping that his mother had already died. On a side note, isn't it strange that for the welfare and better health of the child the caregivers for the child will happily put the child through temporary pain? I am sure many parents will relate to this marvel of raising a child. I am yet to hear about a child who has voluntarily fronted up to the parents and accepted the medicine.

So, let me come to the point now with these questions.

What is the importance of Bhagavat Dharma – which is nothing but the path of listening or speaking about the divine stories and past-times of our Lord (Katha) and singing HIS divine names (kirtan)?

Why is it said that the moment we listen to Bhagavan's Katha, the Lord enters our hearts?

To answer this, let us agree on the following.

FACT 1: Our Bhagavan is our Divine mother and father, who is exceedingly compassionate and is our true well-wisher. Just like a mother's milk is for the child and child only, similarly, our Lord's grace (kripa) is only for the sake of us, his children.

FACT 2: 'Life is a journey of a soul through various bodies. We have taken countless lives in different species from the beginning of time. The soul is the part and parcel of GOD. Mamaivamsho Jivaloke JivaBhutah Sanatanah.

FACT 3: The most compassionate Lord has eternally and always attempted and desired that HIS children should come back to HIM. Bhagavan has a greater desire to end this eternal separation with us, more than we have. A 'Game of Cat and Mouse' can be an apt way of describing how we have been reacting to our Lord in this endeavor of HIS. He has always tried to catch us in his grace net and we have always managed to escape. To date the Lord has been unsuccessful in his attempt to catch us.

Srimad Bhagavatam states 'भवौषधाच्छ्रोत्र मनोऽभिरामात् - listening to the Glories of the Lord is the right medicine for the conditioned soul undergoing repeated birth and death. Goswami Sri Tulasidasji states in his Rama Charit Manas

संसृति रोग सजीवन मूरी। राम कथा गावहिं श्रुति सूरी॥१॥
अति हरि कृपा जाहि परे होई। पाउँ देइ एहि मारग सोई॥२॥

The narrative of Sri Rama, as is declared by the Vedas and the seers, is a life-giving herb (Divine medicine) to cure the disease of birth and death. He alone, who enjoys the utmost grace of the Lord Hari can set his foot on this path – take this Divine medicine.

Friends, the purpose of this article is not to merely impress upon you the greatness of singing and listening to the glories of the Lord. We have all heard this many times.

What is the purpose you ask? Here is where our plight as parents to administer medicine to our daughter is significant in answering the question posed above. To answer this question, let us share a hypothetical situation about my daughter, who from the outset had a distaste and revulsion for medicine.

Imagine one day she voluntarily fronts up to her mother and utters these words. - "Mummy, I have had my dinner. It is time for me to take my medicine, as it is already 6 pm. I am ready, please don't delay', while opening her little mouth wide open to take the sip of the medicine." I would say that if this hypothetical and atypical event was to be true, it may cause the mother to swoon out of sheer surprise and she would probably end up requiring some form of medicine herself.

The purpose of this article is to see this whole saga of our lives from our Divine Mother's, our Bhagavan's point of view. How does our Bhagavan feel and when we are readily going to the Satsang and singing and listening to his divine glories? Friends, our Lord has been unsuccessfully trying to get us to take this divine medicine from time immemorial. The fact that we are still alive on this earth today is proof enough that we have never heeded to this call of our Divine Mother. We have always run away from it and despised it. So can we imagine how our Lord feels when we readily and sincerely take this Divine medicine of simply lovingly hearing and singing HIS glories?

By my Sri Sri Swamiji's immense grace, I have come to understand this little secret that the joy in our Lord's heart knows no bounds when he sees his blessed children sitting in the Satsang and listening to HIS glories. He feels satisfied that now my child will be freed of this Bava-rOga – the disease of repeated birth and death. Just like the mother would feel immense love for her child who is forthcoming in taking the medicine, our Lord's love and grace pours on those who loving listen to his Divine stories. Keeping this perspective in my mind friends will allow us to value Satsang much more. Listening and singing his glories will then become a joy in itself, as we are fully cognizant that the joy our Lord gets when we are just sitting and listening to his glories is an act that gives our Lord immense pleasure. After all, isn't the objective and purpose of our birth to please our dear Lord?

Carried by Grace

- Ms Mythrei Krishna, Sydney

I have a question for you.

What would you do if you became more acutely aware that all of your days were numbered?

Because guess what, for you and me both, they are.

Most of the time we live in a blissful ignorance as though we are immortal; as though death was a far-off land, an unforeseeable time away from the present.

And then there comes a time when we are devastated by its arrival. Through the passing of a loved one or friend, expected or unexpected, it will tear at us and leave a gaping hole in our hearts.

I've come to learn that death is a part of life; it is not just the end of it.

Grief is the price we pay for love, as high as it may be, for having loved that person, lost that person. It is a fate that no one escapes, a passage that we all must bear.

And death is the exchange we make for having lived life.

Which brings me to the next question in the flowchart - are you living or are you sleepwalking?

When death skirts at the perimeter of our orbit, it can lead us to contemplate our own mortality.

Perhaps make us question our own lives, what legacy we wish to leave behind. Things we would still like to do, accomplish and enjoy.

It can forcefully make you look upon your own life and assess all that is truly important to you. And pertinently - all that is not.

The teachings of Guru Maharaj have highlighted how one might live life when looked upon with a countdown stopwatch, counting down to zero.

So, what would you do if you considered more often that your days are numbered? Because you see all of our days are numbered.

Do we leave it as a mad dash when at the end of our life we hastily remedy all the things we thought wrong? Do we do it steadily and healthily day by day?

And what if we leave it too late? If we plan to chant, pray and meditate later in life after we've accomplished all of our goals and have achieved a certain level of comfort.

What if, God forbid, we weren't destined to make it to old age?

I imagine Guru Maharaj would say the only thing that can inoculate you against all of these uncertainties, questions, ignorance and doubt is to chant the Mahamantra. It is truly a failsafe guaranteed level of protection.

Protection from what you may ask? Without a doubt I can tell you from personal experience, it is protection from all the negative things and experiences that have passed me by. That have escaped me entirely without my knowledge and all of their potential detriment to my life.

The love and guidance of a true Guru is truly the unseen hand of Grace.

How do you get that Grace?

By sincerely seeking the truth.

Guru Maharaj's words will forever echo in my mind.

"Do not search for a Guru. Search for the truth, and the real Guru will find you."

In my most humble opinion, if you are reading this newsletter, that we are on the mailing list, that I am even able to be making this written contribution, Grace and the Guru have found us. You and me both.

Humble pranams to the lotus feet of my most beloved Guru Maharaj, Maharanyam HH Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji. May He move my every thought, word and action that it be to my betterment and the betterment of others.

Jai Gurunath.

Lessons from Vidura Neethi

- Mr Shabarinath Vaitheeswaran, Melbourne

5 lessons from Vidhura neethi to excel in any karma

"None can destroy iron, but its own rust can! Likewise, none can destroy a person but their own mindset can!" said a great leader.

In order to achieve excellence in karma, we have to have a certain mindset, a wise mindset. Let us understand from Vidura, how a wise leader would take up a karma (action or goal) and completes it by remaining calm and unagitated like an ocean.

ātma-jñānam samarambha: titikṣā dharma nityayā |
yam arthān nāpakaṣanti sa vai paṇḍita ucyate ||

A wise leader is one who is endowed with self-knowledge, productiveness, forbearance, and steadiness in virtue, and is not motivated by selfish gains.

yathā śakti cikīṛṣanti yathā śakti ca kurvate |
na kiñcid avamanyante paṇḍitā bharataṣabha ||

A wise leader is one who is intrinsically motivated to exert efforts to the best of their ability and act accordingly. They observe and pay attention to the minutest of details and do not disregard anything as irrelevant or insignificant.

nāprāpyamabhivāñcanti naṣṭarṁ necchanti śocitum |
āpatsu ca na muhyanti narāḥ paṇḍita buddhayaḥ ||

Another quality of a wise leader is that they don't set unattainable goals for themselves or others. They show emotional intelligence in the face of loss and do not waste the time grieving over losses. They are perseverant, always stay firm, and do not lose heart amidst any calamity or challenges.

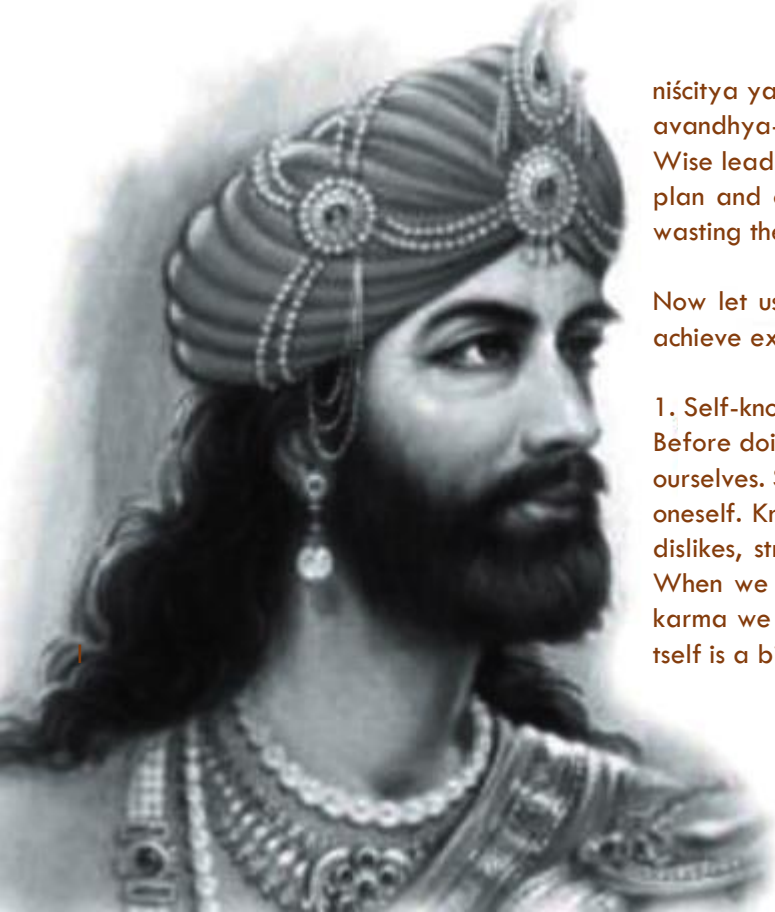
niścīya yaḥ prakramate nāntar vasati karmaṇaḥ |
avandhya-kālo vaśyātmā sa vai paṇḍita ucyate ||

Wise leaders always start any project with a well-thought-out plan and once started, they act until it is completed without wasting their productive time and possess great self-control.

Now let us analyse more in detail about 5 wise qualities to achieve excellence in karma.

1. Self-knowledge (ātma-jñānam)

Before doing any karma, it is important to know about ourselves. Success in the real-world starts with knowing oneself. Knowing oneself means understanding our own likes-dislikes, strengths-weakness, abilities, capacity, interests, etc. When we have this knowledge, we can make sure that any karma we take up, aligns with our interests and values, which itself is a big factor in deciding our success rate.



2. Thorough-planning (niścītya yaḥ prakramate nāntar vasati karmaṇaḥ)

Once we have committed to take up a karma based on our self-analysis, we have to make sure that we learn everything that we can about that karma and its consequence. It is not only important to weigh what the consequences are when the karma is done but is equally important to weigh what the consequences are if it is not done. In addition, one should also gather enough knowledge about what to do, when to do, how to do, how much to do, where to do the karma without disregarding anything as irrelevant or insignificant.

3. Initiative, Productivity (samarambhas)

Not only it is important to gain theoretical knowledge about the karma and why it is important to do it, one must have the initiative to get started with it without wasting time. More often we get stagnated or spend too much time in planning or knowledge gaining towards that karma to perfect it. But sometimes we get into the act of procrastination which is the biggest enemy for one's progress. We must be biased towards action.

4. Attitude of forbearance (titikṣā)

Once we get started, this attitude of forbearance is the key for us to get through ups and downs during the course of action. It is like a compass that helps a ship navigate to the destination. It is a mindset that comes along with the understanding that life is made of challenges and we need to endure both pleasant and unpleasant situations in order to grow.

5. Giving one's best/persevere (yathā śakti cikīrṣanti yathā śakti ca kurvate)

With the attitude of titikṣā, one automatically does not worry about results. Therefore, we focus our minds on the task itself without unnecessarily thinking or worrying about the outcome. When we put our effort into the outcome, the outcome decides our emotions whereas if we put our effort into the action the action will certainly lead us to the outcome. Any outcome which comes out of an action is governed by infinite variables of which we are just one part. Therefore, it is not wise to be attached to the outcome instead we always try to give our best in the action leading up to the goal.

(to be contd...)

Three Shakti

SMT DURGAWATI DEVI

Durgawati Devi popularly known as 'Durga Bhabhi' (7 October 1907 – 15 October 1999) was an Indian revolutionary and a freedom fighter. She was one of the few women revolutionaries who actively participated in armed revolution against the ruling British Raj. She is best known for having accompanied Bhagat Singh on the train journey in which he made his escape in disguise after the Saunders killing. Since she was the wife of Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA) member Bhagwati Charan Vohra, other members of HSRA referred to her as Bhabhi (elder brother's wife) and became popular as "Durga Bhabhi" in Indian revolutionary circles.



In 1929, during freedom struggle Durgawati Devi was caught by the police and imprisoned for three years. She had also sold her ornaments worth Rs. 3,000 to rescue Bhagat Singh and his comrades under trial.

Unlike other freedom fighters, after Indian independence, Durga started living as a common citizen in quiet anonymity and exclusion in Ghaziabad. She later opened a school for poor children in Lucknow.

Durgawati Devi died in Ghaziabad on 15 October 1999 at the age of 92.

Resilience

- MRS NIVEDHA, SYDNEY

Resilience. What is it and why do we need it? Resilience is one of those things we hear about all the time; at school, at university and at work, but, do we actually understand the role it can play in our everyday life? Resilience is much more than 'bouncing back' from a tough time...

Imagine you're going to take a boating trip down a river. When you look at the map of your trip, you see the usual slow water and shallows that you'll need to navigate through. You also see unavoidable rapid sections and sudden turns. What would you do to make sure you can safely reach your destination? Well, some people might call upon experience rafters or sailors to accompany them, or some may rely on companionship and enlist their trusted friends. Maybe packing extra life jackets? Or opting for a larger, more stable boat? The point is that no matter how you decide to tackle it, with the right combination of tools and support, you can successfully make it through the boating trip, and also come out the other side as a more confident, courageous sailor.

Sure, it's great to hear such examples, but life doesn't exactly come with a map. No matter who we are, we will all experience sudden twists and turns. Some that are gone within the day, and some that have a more lasting impact. Each challenge affects us differently, and as individuals we will all have our own unique thoughts, emotions and uncertainty. So how can we get through this?

Getting through these emotional and uncertain times are like rapid rivers. It's definitely challenging, but they don't have to determine the outcome of your life. This is where resilience comes in. Learning to control, modify, and grow through negative events is what can empower us to cope through challenging life experiences.

So how can we actually be resilient? Do a simple google search and you end up with numerous different methods on how to be resilient. One such example is the following 7 components (7C's) to being resilient; competence, confidence, connection, character, contribution, coping and control.

In everyday life, it may be a little difficult to put all of these into practice. So instead, why not focus on four basic strategies that can be incorporated into your daily life?

- The first of these being, building your connections. This can be prioritizing relationships that are important to you, or joining a group based on common interests.
- The second is fostering your wellness, by doing things like practicing mindfulness.
- The third is finding a purpose. Have a goal, move towards it and be proactive.
- Finally, embrace healthy thoughts! Keep things in perspective, accept change and most importantly, learn from your past.

Will practicing resilience be the end of all stress or difficulties? Well...it's important to realize that resilience doesn't mean a person won't experience challenges. In reality, people who possess resilience don't see life through 'rose-colored' lenses. Setbacks will happen to everyone, and as an individual you will still experience emotion, pain, and even tragedy. The difference is that those who practice resilience, are able to work through such feelings and recover to be the happiest version of themselves.



Meaningful Conversations

(Interesting discussions between Gopa Kuteeram teachers and students)

- Mr Shabarinath Vaitheeswaran, Faculty, Gopa Kuteeram Melbourne

In our Level 2 Gopakuteeram class, we have been teaching Bhagavad Gita. To explain what is having "Prasada buddhi" (an attitude of glad acceptance of results) we gave the kids the following scenario.

Let's say you have an exam tomorrow after which your parents have planned a fun holiday. You are now preparing for the exam with your books. You are having dinner and going to bed early so that you get a night of good sleep to be fresh the next day. Next day, you wake up and get ready to go to school. Your parents have prepared breakfast, you eat it and you pack all the things needed for the exam. You then go to school in the car and reach well before the exam time. You meet your friends before going into the exam hall. Then you enter the exam hall and get seated. You are given the questions for you to write down the answers. You take a quick look and feel confident that you can do well. You start answering and your invigilator in the exam hall ensures you have a comfortable environment while you are attending the exam. You finish writing the exam in time and hand over the paper. You come out with a big smile on face and you head home to prepare for your holiday trip. Meanwhile, your paper is taken for marking. Your result day comes. You are about to check the result with so much anticipation!

"Now, tell us, how do you think the results will be?" Most of them said, they would expect good scores because they have studied well and performed well.

"Now, tell us, how would you feel if the result goes against what you expected?" Most answered that they would be very disappointed.

"Can you point out the actions that you were part of in this scenario?". The student answered "Well, I studied the previous night, I had dinner, I went to sleep, I woke up, I packed my stuffs for exam, I had breakfast, I got into the car, and got dropped at my school. I met my friends before the exam. I got into the exam hall and started giving my exam. I handed over the paper back to the invigilator. Then I went on holiday. Finally, I am now expecting my result."

"Great, you did do a lot of work, that's great. Now, can someone point out all the external factors involved in the same scenario excluding you?" A student answered "I need my subject book to prepare, I need my bed to sleep, the next day morning I need all the materials needed in order to pack my bag, I need my parents to give me breakfast, I need a car and my parent to drop me off in the school, I need friends whom I can greet and meet, I need my question paper and answer sheet inside the exam hall. I need a desk to sit on and a pen to write my exams. I need someone to handover the paper". The list even got bigger when we included weather, traffic, health (physical and mental) of everyone involved.

They had now split the scenario into 2 different entities, one being themselves and others being external enablers. When they compared their actual contribution with that of the external contributions, they were amazed. In fact, the number of external factors were 4 times more. It became easy to understand that a lot of things had to be available at the right time and the right place for them to attend their exam. What if they didn't have the book that was crucial? or their parents were sick and unable to give dinner or take them to the school? or their bed was taken by their sibling due to some reason or their alarm went out of battery? They recognized that there were many things that could have gone even slightly wrong and they wouldn't have ended up successfully writing their exam.

We have learnt through this example scenario that our actions themselves are 80% governed by multitude of factors. Given this, what can we say about the results of our actions? can we really expect results out of our effort only? No. that won't be appropriate. Yet, so many actions that we perform do become successful, so much that we take all the little things for granted. An attitude that arises out of this understanding is called "Prasada buddhi". So we accept every result of our action with an "attitude of gratitude". In Sanskrit this attitude is called Isvara Prasada Bhavana. Let's pray to Lord Krishna that we get this attitude towards any work we do.

SRIMAD BHAGAVAD GITA

- Mrs Latha Karthik,
Faculty, Gopa Kuteeram, Melbourne

Shrimad Bhagavad Gita has 18 chapters and 701 verses. Every chapter of the Gita is packed with layers of knowledge. Over the next few months, we will be going through some interesting questions and answers from the Gita.

Chapter 1 is called Arjuna Vishaada Yoga: Arjuna's confusion or dejection.

Premise

Chapter 1 sets the scene for the battle in the sacred location of Kurukshetra. The battle is between cousins, the Pandavas (5 sons of King Pandu) and the Kauravas (100 sons of the ruling king Dhritarashtra). The Pandava Prince Yudhishtira is the rightful heir of the Kuru Dynasty. The Kaurava Prince Duryodhana denies the throne to the Pandavas due to greed and jealousy. No number of negotiations or peacekeeping strategies work, thus leading to the epic war that is Mahabharata. Bhishma (grandfather of the Pandavas and the Kauravas) is the Commander-in-chief of the Kaurava army and Bhima (son of Pandu), is the commander in chief of the Pandavas. Sanjaya, King Dhritarashtra's advisor/ charioteer relays the happenings on the battlefield to the blind king and queen (Dhritarashtra and Gandhari). Here, the scene has been set for the greatest battle to have ever existed. Here, lies the foundations of knowledge and wisdom that shape the core of Hinduism as a religion and way of life. Here, the Bhagavad Gita unfolds.

What made Duryodhana feel insecure?

In the days leading up to the war, the Kaurava prince Duryodhana remained overconfident of their strength and prowess. He had the allegiances of Bhishma, Drona, Shakuni, Vidura and the strength of the Kaurava army. On the other side was Krishna, Arjuna, Drupada and all the Pandava army. Kurukshetra was witnessing the greatest warriors of all time preparing for battle.

On the first day of the battle, Duryodhana looks at all the yodhas on both sides and initiates a conversation with Dronacharya. The mere sight of all the yodhas unnerves Duryodhana's confidence. If we were to analyse Duryodhana's mindset, on one side he feels overconfident that under the able leadership of Bhishma, all his friends and allies are in the war to win it just for Duryodhana's sake. On the other hand, he still has his doubts on where the true loyalties of Bhishma, Drona and the others really lie. Perhaps, they still support Yudhishtira and the Pandavas?

He starts off the conversation with his Guru, Dronacharya by listing the names of the many heroes of warfare on his side like Drona, Bhishma, Karna, Kripa, Ashwatthama, Vikarna and Jayadratha and re-assures himself and the others that their loyalties lie with the Kauravas. He also lists the names of the Pandava sena (army). Here, Duryodhana seems to be assessing the strengths and weaknesses of both the sides. The use of words like "my army" (Verse 1.7) and "my sake" (Verse 1.9) indicates that Duryodhana associates the army and its prowess to himself which is perhaps a reflection of his vanity, arrogance, and false pride.

Arjuna's and Bhima's competencies made Duryodhana feel insecure and coupled with his need for power, Duryodhana attempts to harm and even kill the Pandavas throughout the various events of the Mahabharata. The fact that Duryodhana is not the heir to the kuru dynasty, his perceived bias of injustices towards the Kauravas by Bhishma, Drona, Vidura and others created apathy in Duryodhana's mind towards the Pandava and their supporters.

Duryodhana even feels the need to remind Drona of his mistake of imparting military secrets to Dhrishtadyumna (son of Drupada, born with a boon to kill Drona) using words like "your wise disciple"(Verse 1.3), a sarcastic attempt to remind Drona of his naivety in teaching the art of warfare to Dhrishtadyumna.

When someone feels insecure about their abilities, then they often feel the need to talk themselves up. This is evident with Duryodhana when he feels the need to call the Kaurava army aparyāptam meaning unlimited and the Pandava army paryāptam meaning limited. When someone has self-belief and talks about their own abilities it comes across as confidence, but when it is in comparison with someone else and more importantly by putting the others down, it is arrogance. Duryodhana reinforces the saying, "Confidence is silent, while insecurities are loud".

The Importance of Truth

- MS ANEKA SUBRAMANIAM, MELBOURNE

Truth is important to us as individuals, and it has a significant impact on society. Being truthful allows us to grow and mature as individuals, learning from our mistakes. For society, truthfulness strengthens social bonds while lying and hypocrisy weaken them.

It all comes down to being honest with yourself and others about who you are, what you want, and what you require to live your most authentic life. Honesty encourages transparency, empowers us, and helps us to establish accuracy in our facts communication. Honesty is the key to a happy, free life. Honesty entails more than simply saying the facts. It's about being honest with yourself and others about who you are, what you want, and what you need in order to live your most authentic life. Honesty sharpens our vision and helps us to see things clearly around us.

Despite its allure, ease of use, and false claims, lying leads to nowhere. We either remain in the same place or, even worse, go backwards.

Other times, I told myself that I wasn't good enough or capable of doing something I really wanted to do. The easiest way out was to lie or act as if I knew anything I didn't. This thought manifested itself in ways I hadn't supposed at the time.

When we lie to ourselves in order to deceive, it is the worst form of deception we can do. We begin to question our own morality, right and wrong, as well as our hopes and desires. I could sense it when I lied to get away with doing something I knew was wrong.

Looking back, any time I lied (that I recall), I was attempting to justify or misinterpret my own flaws or cover for anything. I was attempting to satisfy a wrong desire that would only provide fleeting gratification at best. My lies were often the product of a lack of effort, good morals, or emotions.

Honesty and the pursuit of the facts are always the best options. Honesty instils trust, faith, strengthens our resolve, and represents us in the best possible light for others to see and witness. Our vitality is improved by integrity.

I remember getting my test results in Math class in school and not being impressed by it, so I chose not to tell my parents because I assumed that they won't be happy. After arriving home a few hours later, I began to feel bad for not telling my parents, and I reasoned that if they knew, they would be happier than if I had not told them.

So I made the decision to tell them the truth rather than lie to them. Though they weren't thrilled with my results, they were happy that I told them and that I didn't lie about it.

Assume, for example, that as a last resort, I chose not to tell them. What would have happened if that had happened? Even if I didn't tell them, my parents were going to find out my results sooner or later. In the end, I'd be the one who is still unhappy about the results because my anxiety, fear, and guilt would have built up to the point that I'd have to tell them, that, either 89 percent or 100 percent was my score.

Over all, honesty is a very important habit and life skill. Honesty can show trust in a person. Honesty can be shown in many different ways including to yourself and to others. Being honest to yourself is the first step, because if you are not true to yourself, then you won't be a trustworthy person to yourself, let alone others. Honesty to yourself can mean keeping something as simple as keeping a promise to yourself and not breaking it. It could mean accepting responsibility for your own actions or talking about your feelings. Challenge yourself to see if you are honest to yourself. Being honest to others is the next step in being honest. Honesty to others gains relationships and trust. Trust is very hard to get from a person, but not if you are honest. Honesty is used every day in so many different problems and situations. It brings you to being a better person.



SATHVIK KITCHEN

Capsicum Paruppu Usali

Mrs Usha Ayyar, Sydney

Ingredients

100gms Tur Dal
100gms Chana Dal
4 Dry Red Chillies
Curry Leaves
Hing
Turmeric powder
Mustard seeds
Urad Dal
Cooking oil
Salt to taste
Red capsicums 100gms
Green capsicums 100gms
Yellow capsicums 100gms

Preparation

Soak both the Dal and chillies for 2 hours

Grind Dal coarsely into a paste

Cut all the capsicums into small cubes

Place frying pan on the stove

Add 3 tablespoons oil

Once the oil is hot add tablespoon mustard and urad Dal

Add the cut capsicums turmeric , Hing and curry leaves

Once capsicums are half cooked

Add the grind paste and salt

Cook on low flame till nice and fluffy. Ready to eat with rice.

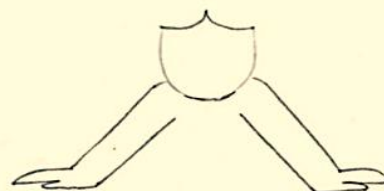
Note that the same recipe applies with capsicum swapped with okra, beans or cabbage.

Activity Corner

**Draw little Krishna
in simple steps**



Step 1



Step 2



Step 3



Step 4



Step 5