

# *Fast Track*

When Life in the Fast Lane Needs a Pit Stop

**Monthly Newsletter**

**June 2021**

**Desire to be the one who  
chants the highest number  
of Mahamantra in the  
whole world.**

**- Sri Sri Swamiji**



# Spirit of Service

## MADHURA SMARANAM - My Gurn As I See Him

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

Once upon a time, Sri Swamiji had visited a village. A lot of devotees had gathered on realising that Sri Swamiji had come. The crowd had people of varied age groups ranging from children to older people. It was early in the morning, and Sri Swamiji left the place at which he was staying and started walking on the streets.

Sri Swamiji started from that place to go to a temple nearby. All the devotees who had gathered started following Sri Swamiji. There would have been about 200 people who gathered to see Sri Swamiji. Suddenly, as Sri Swamiji stopped near the entrance of a house, all the devotees who were following him also stopped. There was a discussion in the crowd regarding, "Why Sri Swamiji would have stopped there?"

Sri Swamiji was bending and closely looking at something. He was actually looking closely at a Kolam that was drawn at the entrance of the house. To be honest, that kolam was not extraordinary in any way. It was like any other general Kolam. However, Sri Swamiji was looking at it with a lot of surprise. He asked, "Who drew this beautiful Kolam?", to the devotees around him. Every person asked the same question to the people near them, but not one had an answer. There were a few who stood in front of the house. Even they did not have an answer to the question. However, Sri Swamiji did not give up and continued to stand there.

After a few minutes, a person who was in the crowd looked at an old lady and said, "Amma, didn't you draw this? Isn't this drawn in the entrance of your house? Sri Swamiji has been looking for you. Please come forward." The lady was shy and came forward with her head bent low. One could see the fear on her face and the shiver in her body when she came forward. She came directly to Sri Swamiji and said, "If I have done something wrong, please forgive me. I only know this much."

As soon as she said that, Sri Swamiji said, "Why do you say so? I can understand that you have drawn this beautiful kolam with a lot of effort and sincerity. I was just admiring the same." The lady replied, "To be honest, I also wished that I could do something for Bhagawan. But, I do not know many things. The least I could do is draw a Kolam for the Swami on the streets, and so I wake up early in the morning and do it. I am not great at drawing Kolams. I know that there are many who draw kolams that are way more beautiful than mine. I am also well aware that my kolams do not affect Bhagawan in any way. But, I only know this much. So, I pray that he accepts my Kolam with compassion, thank him for blessing me with such a kinkarya and draw the kolam, everyday. If this kolam is not drawn appropriately, please forgive me." As soon as Sri Swamiji heard that, his face bloomed with happiness.

Sri Swamiji said, "You are the fortunate one. Bhagawan will accept this small kinkarya with utmost compassion. Do you know why? Bhagawan gets nothing out of the small Kinkaryas that we do. Even the flower we submit at his feet, is blessed to us by him. Even if we submit a Neivedhyam to Bhagawan, we do it with the body and the materials that have been blessed to us by him. He gets nothing out of anything we do. The services we do are just a blessing that he has bestowed upon us. Through this he gives us his connection and then liberates us. So, we must do kinkarya by just reminiscing that he has given us such an opportunity. If you realise this and do kinkarya, then you are truly the fortunate one. It means that Bhagwan's grace has been bestowed upon you completely. The mindset of those who do services to God, must be this way." He beautifully said this to the old lady and slowly moved ahead.

The old woman's eyes were filled with tears. She felt that, as a representation of Bhagawan accepting her service, Sri Swamiji blessed her by recognising the small seva she does to God every single day.

(Translated from original Tamil article by the team)

# Answers and Beyond

- Mrs Jayanthi Ashok, Sydney  
(Translated from Sri Swamiji's Lectures)

We say that by chanting nāma we are absolved of our sins. Our great saints (maharishis) have prescribed remedies/corrective actions for our sins. Doesn't this encourage us to commit more sins?

First of all, what is considered sinful? When we do something that violates dharma, we commit sins. We commit sins in three ways - through our body, through our mind or through our words. What is then considered as a corrective action? A corrective action could be fixing our sins by doing another action or changing the bad outcome through good deeds or consciously realising our mistakes. In this Kali Yuga (age of Kali), we can only classify people into 2 categories - those who have committed less sins and those who have committed more sins but it is rare to find someone who hasn't committed any sins. In fact, people who haven't committed any sins are very rare or probably don't exist at all. This is the very nature of Kali. In hospitals, we have special wards designated as accident wards and emergency care wards. Will anyone be drawn into thinking that the presence of these wards are to encourage more accidents? We don't knowingly/willingly meet with accidents. It's situations beyond ones control that leads to accidents. The hospitals have accident and emergency units to ensure special and urgent care is provided to save the lives of the people who meet with accidents. Similarly no matter how much emphasis the Vedas, itihāsas and dharma shastras put on dharma and adharma, man commits sins out of his emotion or ignorance or under the influence of Maya. Despite this, our maharishis, out of their utmost compassion for us, have prescribed the right corrective actions. Like how the accident wards in the hospital are not to encourage accidents, in the same manner the corrective actions haven't been prescribed to encourage us to commit more sins. By keeping in mind the progress of Kali Yuga, aren't these corrective actions a huge favour and shelter that has come as a result of the immense compassion of our maharishis?

Why do we celebrate Holi? Why do we celebrate it with colours?

Like how we have twelve months in a year, in the same manner we have six seasons. This is referred to as rīthu in Sanskrit or kālam in Tamil. The seasons are classified as spring, summer, rainy, autumn, pre winter and post winter. The period from the full moon day of phanguni (a.k.a phalgun, around February-March) to the full moon day of vaishaka (around April-May) is the spring season. During this month, deer jump with joy. Plants start bearing new leaves. We will see more flowers blooming. After the rains, it's very pleasant. A lot of festivals (utsavs) are celebrated in temples as flowers are in abundance in this season. This is considered the most beautiful among all seasons. In Tamil Nadu, the auspicious period indicating the northern movement of the sun (uttarāyana punya kālam) is welcomed by painting homes, with mango leaves hung at the entrance, wearing new clothes, keeping pongal and worshipping cows. In the same manner, the spring season is welcomed with enthusiasm by celebrating Holi. The celebration of festivals brings happiness and joy to people. In the mountains of Vrindavan, we get a lot of colour powder. In Srimadh Bhāgavatham, it is mentioned on numerous occasions that Lord Sri Krishna celebrated the spring season for ten days by singing and dancing with the gopās and gopīs and by applying/throwing colours on each other. We are continuing the same tradition by celebrating Holi.



# MadhuraGeetham

- Mrs Maithreyi Gopalakrishnan, Sydney

**Raga: Shankarabaranam**

**Tala: Adi**

**Pallavi**

**pADikkoNDiruppOm sadA nAngaL**

**pADikkoNDiruppOm**

**Charanam**

**01. maRai thEDi thEDi ODiYum, kANAda poruLai –  
pADi**

**aDaindiDuvOm – nAngaL pADi aDaindiDuvOm**

**02. angum ingum thEDip palar, kANAda  
paramporuLai – pADi**

**aDaindiDuvOm – nAngaL pADi aDaindiDuvOm**

**03. kaNNimaikkAda dEvargaLum, aRiyAda poruLai  
– pADi**

**aDaindiDuvOm – nAngaL pADi aDaindiDuvOm**

**04. munivarum yOgiyarum, thEDiDum  
paramporuLai – pADi**

**aDaindiDuvOm – nAngaL pADi aDaindiDuvOm**

**05. vAdam seydu palar, kuzhambi ninDriDa –  
pADi**

**aDaindiDuvOm – nAngaL pADi aDaindiDuvOm**

**06. pADinAl andap paramporuL, thEDi varumAmE  
– pADi**

**aDaindiDuvOm – nAngaL pADi aDaindiDuvOm**

**07. bhAgavatham sonna vazhi, idu enDrum  
palitthiDum – pADi**

**aDaindiDuvOm – nAngaL pADi aDaindiDuvOm**

We shall always sing the glory of the Great One! Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu always beheld the Mahamantra at a supreme level, even above all forms “param vijayathe Sri Krishna sankirthanam”. Param is the supreme sadhana, sadhya, and siddhavasthu. In the wonderful madhuraGeetham, Sri Swamiji expresses the immense joy and pride in namasankirtanam, which is above and beyond everything, “pADikkoNDiruppOm sadA nAngaL pADikkoNDiruppOm”.

In verse 1, Sri Swamiji says that “MaRai” (veda/ Veda MAAtA), is not able to capture the grace of Sri Krishna in its entirety. But we are able to, only by chanting His divine name, which is inseparable from Sri Krishna himself; that alone is the greatness of the Mahamantra. Individuals search for BhagavAn in many difficult and complex paths through yAgam, some in yOgam and vichAram – Sri Swamiji explains “yOgamum yAgamum thlrthamum dheivamum kuDiKonDa nAmathai klrthanam pAdire”. Instead, one can attain Bhagavan through a much simpler path – namasanklrthanam.

In verse 4 and 5, Sri Swamiji explicitly says that receiving the grace of bhagavAn is just as dhurlabham (difficult) for the Devas, MuNiS and YOgis as it is for us. Therefore, we should constantly chant nAmA and take that one sincere step towards Him, “sadA nAngaL pADikkoNDiruppOm”. Whether we are blessed with worldly successes or are placed in testing times in our lives, we should not question the power of the Mahamantra, “kuzhambi ninDriDa”. Indeed, Bhagavan nAmA is the highest of all dharma, penance, gnyanam and tapas - “Namasankirtanam yasya sarva pApa praNashanam, praNAmO dhukkha shamaNa: tam namAmi harim param”

# Ranganatha Beckons...

In this series, "Ranganatha beckons", we will look at the lives of the Azhwars. Their glorification of Sri Ranganatha by way of compositions called Pasurams. The divine path by which the great Acharyas were in unison with the Lord. The description of Sri Ranganatha manifesting himself in the festivities held at Sri Rangam and other astounding illustrations. We will also explore the life of Thondar-adi-podi Azhwar, who composed the marvellous collection of Pasurams called the "Thirumaalai." These compositions were the result of his perpetual involvement with Sri Ranganatha Swamy.

Thondar-adi-podi Azhwar has made a mark for himself by composing songs in praise of Sri Ranganatha Swamy only. He did not sing the glories of any other Deity or Divya Desam. Madhura Kavi Azhwar's compositions were all dedicated only to his Acharya Nammazhwar and none other. The pride of Nammazhwar is the fact that the deities from all Divya Desams came to his abode to get themselves glorified by his Pasurams. Andal was the only female amongst all the Azhwars. That was her mark of pride. Peri Azhwar was famous for his unique composition of blessing Perumal himself to live long prosperously. Thirumangai Azwar is distinctly known for composing songs on more Divya desams and their deities compared to all other Azhwars.

Despite being so close to various Divya desams like Pundarikakshan Perumal Temple in Thiruvellarai, Appakkudathan Perumal Temple located in Koviladi, or the Divya desams in Kumbhakonam close to his birthplace Thirumandangudi like Aaramudan, Sarangapani, Chakrathazhwar, Ramaswamy temple, Uppiliappan Temple, Thiru Nandipura Vinnagaram Temple in Nathan Kovil, Thondar-adi-podi Azhwar takes pride in singing the glories of Sri Ranganatha of Srirangam and none other. His perpetual pursuit of Sri Ranganatha resulted in the beautiful divine compositions of Pasurams, collectively known as "Thirumalai."

(to be contd)

**- Mrs Kavitha Venkat, Auckland**

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

# suryaamsam



Mr Nidheesh, Sydney

## Marichi:

- As the creation has not progressed much despite His wish, Brahma manifested Himself into two bodies – male and female. Since the body came from Brahma it is referred as 'Ka' (hence another name for body is Kayam).
- The male part from the above manifestation became Swayambuva Manu and the female part is called Satharupa, who became the Queen of Swayambuva Manu and engaged in the further creation
- The above couple had 5 children – Priyavrathan, Utthanapathan were two sons; Ahuthi, Devahuthi and Prasuthi were three daughters
- Ahuthi married Ruchi, Devahuthi married Karthamar and Prasuthi married Dhakshan
- Devahuthi and Karthamar had 9 daughters and 1 son (Kapila Vasudeva Bhagavan)
- Marichi, who was born from Brahma and one of the Saptarishis (seven Rishis), married Kalai (who is one of the 9 daughts of Devahuthi and Karthamar)
- Sapthrishis changes during each Manvantharam (71 chathuryugam)
- Marichi and Kalai had two sons – Kashyapar and Poorniman

## Kasyapa:

Kasyapa is one of the seven sages known as Saptha Rishis. The seven sages are Kasyapa, Atri, Vasiṣṭha, Viśvāmitra, Gautama, Jamadagni and Bharadvāja [SB 8.13.5].

Kasyapa received the middle part of Earth from Lord Parasurama [SB 9.16.22].

## Family of Kashyapa:

Marichi and Kalai (who was the daughter of Karthama Maharishi) had two sons – Kashyapar and Poorniman. The descendants of these two sons were spread all over the world. Marichi, who was also called Tarkshyan, married 17 daughters of Dhaksha Prajapathi [SB 6.6.2].

Some of Marichi's wives names were – Pathangi, Yamini, Vinatha, Kadhru, Dhimi, Sarama, Surabhi, Thamra, Muni, Krodhavacha, Ilai, Saurasa, Arishta, Kashta, Dhanu, Adithi and Dithi, [SB 6.6.22, 6.6.26-45].

Pathangi was the mother of various kinds of birds

Yamini was the mother of the locusts

Vinatha (also called Suparna), was the mother of Garuda, who is Lord Vishnu's vahanam (vehicle). She was also the mother of Aruna, who is the charioteer of Sun-god.

Kadhru was the mother of different types of serpents

Dhimi was the mother of sea creatures

Sarama was the mother of four-legged animals

Surabhi was the mother of buffalos, cows and other animals with 2 cloven hooves

Thamra was the mother of large birds such as eagles and vultures

Muni was the mother of apsaras angels

Krodhavacha was the mother of snakes such as dhandhasukam

Ilai was the mother of all the creepers

Saurasa / Surasa was the mother of demons (arakkar)

Arishta was the mother of gandharvas

Kashta was the mother of animals without split cloven hooves such as horse

(...to be contd.)

# *His Messenger*

*- Ms Mythrei Krishna, Sydney*

When you look at a painting, initially you admire the painting as it presents on the canvas. The colours, the brushstrokes, the feelings that it may evoke in you.

After some time, you may peer closer to read the credits and marvel at the artist who painted it. From this one painting, you go home and google more about the artist, looking at their body of work, where they were born, the kind of life that they lived. You start to want to know so much more from the initial painting that you saw.

Let's pause that thought for a moment as I walk you through my monthly process of writing this article.

Each month I make the effort to go for a specific walk in order to reflect on all the things I have learned from my time with Guru Maharaj. There is an ocean deep of moments that my conscious brain could not even fathom but every month as it be, I am promptly inspired to share something that is close to my heart.

On these walks I always make a point to extrapolate what I can share that will be of benefit to others. It brings to mind a conversation I had with Dr Bhagyaji where he emphasised the importance of seva and in undertaking seva to do so with the knowing that it benefits me first and foremost before it does anyone else. I'm reminded to approach seva as my own spiritual practice and indeed it is what I have learned experientially as the years have gone by.

Remembering this conversation sprung the deepest appreciation of how most of us in our community are blessed and privileged to know and have the mentorship of Guru Maharaj's personal secretary and beloved disciple, Dr Bhagyaji, for I have never met a person who more embodies the love and teachings of Guru Maharaj than Dr Bhagyaji. He is so relatable, down to earth with an even dose of humility and presence that successfully sends him so far and wide to spread the word of Guru Maharaj's mission.

I have had the honour of witnessing his interactions across a wide spectrum of people from all different walks of life. From national politicians to earnest everyday seekers, to dubious cynics and critics, he emanates and exudes such a generous love to every single person that he meets.

At a closer glimpse I also gauge how he has given every moment to serving the mission of Guru Maharaj and G.O.D.

I mean this quite literally. Even during idle moments or leisurely times between flights and travel that we have shared, every single moment is in thought of our Guru Maharaj. Even the most commonplace every day scenarios, he will link it back to Guru Maharaj somehow and tell a story of how it relates to our journey towards God and Guru.

We were once delayed and in a long queue at the airport. Quite suddenly a new queue opened and we were ushered to the front of the express line, first ones in the new queue. He immediately quipped without a missing a beat, " You see, this is like how we are with Guru Maharaj, we are on the express queue to liberation because we are with Sri Guruji."

I was in awe of how from such a benign conversation he was able to illustrate such a teaching. It showed to me how he is always thinking of Guru Maharaj in a manner so focused and singular. If I can aim to be just a fraction like this I'm sure I will be kicking goals and maybe even skip a few spots in the queue.

Thank you Sri Sri Guruji firstly for putting me in your queue. And thank you for sending Bhagyaji to stand with us from time to time. The Sun shines its rays to every corner of the Earth and I'm ever so grateful that Guru Maharaj sent Dr. Bhagyaji to ours.

*"To lose patience is to lose the battle" said Mahatma Gandhi.*

A toddler was watching TV for a long time. The concerned parents interrupted and told the child to stop watching as it was time to sleep. The angry child shouted and screamed. Hearing the scream of the angry child, the father lost his temper and started scolding the child but the mother kept calm. In this instance, even though both the parents had the knowledge that the child was not mature enough and needs help in taking the right decision, one got triggered by anger and the other was patient. What made the mother stay calm and father get angry despite both possessing the required knowledge and reasoning power?

Such is the power of patience and Vidura now explains about its greatness and why one should have it as a core value.

eka: kshamaavathaam dhosho dvitheeyo nopapadyathe /  
yadenam kshamayaa yuktam ashaktam manyathe jana: //

Vidura says, in a man who practices patience, there can be no other defect except for one and that is people consider a man of patience as weak. Well is it really a weakness? Vidura adds more,

soasya dosho na mantavya: kshamaa hi paramam balam /  
kshamaa guno hyashakthaanaam shakthaanaam bhooshanam thathaa //

That (patience) should not be taken to be a defect for him because patience is a great power one can possess. Patience is verily a virtue to the weak and an ornament to the strong. To put up with another's insult or injury without any desire for retaliation is patience.

kshamaa vishikruthirloke kshamayaa kim na saadyathe /  
shaanthi-shanka: kare yasya kim karishyathi durjana: //

Is there anything that cannot be attained by patience? What can a wicked person do to the one who wields in his hands the sword of patience? Patience wins over all in this world.

When a man doesn't practice patience, what drives him is anger and in that case he goes out of control. Here Vidura gives an example of a man who doesn't have patience,

athrune pathitho vanni: svayamevopashaamyathi /  
akshamaavaan param dhoshairaatmaanam chaiva yojayeth //

Fire falling on a grassless ground is extinguished of itself. A man without patience brings unto himself many troubles.

Let us try to understand with another example. To do fire yagna (eg. ganapathi homa), the priest would ignite the firewood which is kept on top of a dry sand to let the fire glow. Let's say when there is no firewood and the priest is just trying to ignite the fire on the sand surface, can the fire grow? No, because there is nothing for the fire to hold on to. Just like how the fire without a hold got extinguished by itself, likewise a man without patience brings unto himself many troubles because he loses his clarity of thought to hold on to the required knowledge and reasoning power. This in turn he himself renders useless all the efforts he has taken thus further in the action he was undertaking.

eko dharmo param sreya: kshamaikaa shaanthirukthamaa |  
vidaikaa paramaa drushtirahimsaikaa sukhaavahaa ||

Dharma or righteousness is the highest good. Patience is the greatest peace. Knowledge is the supreme contentment. Non-violence is conducive to happiness. Looking at this sloka on another angle, we can also say that, patience is the virtue that conduces the highest good and is verily the supreme.

Patience which is a combination of courage and endurance, is the ability to face prosperity and adversity with calmness. Patience is a virtue that comes from "Satva guna" and not "Tamo guna". Acting late and not functioning on account of laziness is not considered an act of patience. This is the reason our elders give mother earth as an example of patience and not a buffalo.

Patience is also a form of action. Although in certain situations it might appear externally as being inactive while in the grip of sorrow, it is an act of being attentive and waiting for the opportune time. It is the inner attitude with the knowledge of where one should act and where one should be patient. Patience is the strength and capability to withstand the onslaughts from the situations. Therefore, patience is an act of controlling our emotions.

It is by facing the repeated blows of the chisel, that the rock takes the form of a beautiful sculpture. Similarly, only when we face our experiences with patience, our mind becomes matured.

kshama sastram kare yasya durjana: kim karishyati |  
atrune patito vahni: swayameva upasamyati ||

What harm could an evil person do to one who has the weapon of patience? Does not the fire that falls on ground that is free of grass, get extinguished by itself!

In this manner, when we realise the nature of the superior virtue called 'Patience' and pursue it, we accrue a superior benefit.

(to be contd...)

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# Path to Permanent Happiness

- MR DEEPAK VINOD  
SYDNEY

In the Industrial Age, buildings quickly became taller and people more frequently began using the elevators to access higher floors. During that time, a multi-storied office building was completed in New York City. The occupants of that building began complaining about the poor elevator service provided in the building. They complained that the waiting times for elevators at peak hours were excessively long, and many tenants threatened to break their leases and relocate if their complaints weren't resolved. Similar complaints were also faced by management of other office buildings. The companies responded to the challenge by attempting to make the elevators faster. However, this engineering challenge was difficult to solve because they were operating as fast as they safely could.

So one clever engineer suggested that the problem was not the elevator speed, the problem was with the problem statement itself. It's not that 'elevators are too slow' but that 'people think elevators are too slow'. Adding those two words, 'people think', changed the problem statement and reoriented the solution from the product to the person. This prompted the Engineers to start thinking about the problem differently and they discovered that there was nothing wrong with the elevator speed but the issue was that people in the lift had nothing to do – they were bored as they could only stare at the wood-paneled walls. Additionally, the problem was worsened as they realized they were moving vertically in a tiny small box moving up a shaft where the ground as many feet below them. Boredom soon led to claustrophobia and the fear of falling.

What was the solution?

Since the Engineers were now no longer trying to solve the problem of slow lifts but solving the problem of peoples view of the lift experience, they came up with a solution to solve the issue by placing mirrors in the elevator. No kidding. That is why mirrors are placed in the elevators. Because let's face it, we humans love to admire ourselves and most of our finest or joyful moments in life come from looking in a mirror (or the modern morphed version of a mirror – a selfie). The 2nd part of the solution was to put music/radio in the elevators. Putting a mirror and music in the elevator was the ideal solution as it caused people to become distracted enough to take a moment to fix their hair or makeup. And as we know, time flies when we are engrossed in something interesting (like ourselves), and soon enough, people found they had arrived at their floor. The effect of this was that complaints dropped to near zero.

Looking back at this case of the slow elevators, we can see that to get to the correct solution it was important that the question/problem was understood properly.

So, what is the take-home message of this story? The most important aspect of this above story is understanding that most of the time we are solving the wrong problems in our lives – be it on a personal, professional or social level. Friends, the above story highlighted to me the situation we face in our lives. We are confronted with situations and problems on various fronts. On a macro level, we face problems such as COVID, Lockdowns, Wars, struggling economy, Recession, Poverty, corrupt Government and much more. We also have problems on an individual or personal level like nasty neighbours, unfair bosses, disobedient children, uncaring partner, bad drivers on the road etc. There are different understandings of the problem and subsequently innumerable approaches to solve such problems.

When we reflect on the wisdom of our Gitācharya Bhagavan Sri Krishna, we understand that the nature of the world and the yuga we live in has been described as Dukhalayam Ashashvatam – meaning that the nature of this world is that it is full of miseries and it is also temporary. The problem is that we are in a temporary world which is full of misery. Believing that we are meant to live here permanently, we are putting all our efforts trying to find a permanent solution for happiness here. Using the slow elevator example and understanding the problems in light of the wisdom provided by Bhagavan Shri Krishna, we can come to an understanding that it is not COVID, government, people, weather, or economy which is a problem. Our shastras have been pointing to the real problem all along.

Instead of asking when will COVID finish or when will the economy get better or when will we get a new prime minister- lets reframe the question.

Why is it that we suffer pain?

What is the root cause of misery / dukham in the world?

How can I permanently escape misery and find unending and true uninterrupted joy and happiness?

Is that not how the problem statement should be reframed?

Economy, war, people, disease etc are not real problems. The real problem is something else which our shastras and saints tell us. The real problem is that we are not back HOME - our real home, which is the abode of bliss, peace and joy. Our real HOME is the feet of GOD / Bhagavan.

And what is it that we have to do to go back to our real home, Vaikuntam or Golokam?

Now that we have come up with a problem statement which seems to be a better reflection of the underlying problem, all we need to do is to follow the footsteps of the great spiritual scientists and lions, who out of their immense compassion, have guided us on how to solve this problem – having solved which, ALL problems are solved.

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu has said that Golokera Prema Dhana, Hari Nama Sankirtanam. Padma Purana states that पाथेयं यन्मुक्षोः (patheyam yan mumuksoh) – Hari Nama Sankirtana is the fare or the price which is required for us to attain that permanent happiness which we are all seeking.



## SATHVIK KITCHEN

### *Mango Morekozhambhu*

Mr Deepak Nanjundan, Melbourne

#### Preparation

#### Ingredients

1 mango fully ripened  
2 tbsp jaggery  
1 (150ml) cup grated coconut  
2 - 3 dry chillies  
1/2 tbsp Turmeric  
1 tsp Mustard seeds  
Few Curry leaves  
1 cup or 200ml Yogurt  
3 tbsp Coconut oil

- Boil the chopped mangoes (with skin on) in 200ml water with turmeric.
- After cooking for 3 minutes, add jaggery and cook for another 2 minutes.
  - Grind the coconut and dry chilli together into a smooth paste.
- Once the mangoes are cooked, add the ground coconut mixture into the kadai.
  - Cook for another 2 minutes.
  - Add yogurt and stir well. If the gravy is too thick, add some water.
- Cook in very low flame for further 2 minutes. Once you start to see the yogurt slightly curdling on the edges of the kadai, turn the flame off.
- Take a separate pan, add coconut oil. Once the oil is hot add mustard seeds and curry leaves immediately.
- Once the mustard seeds crackle add this mixture into the gravy. Stir the kozhambhu and serve hot

## Meaningful Conversations

*(Interesting discussions between Gopa Kuteeram teachers and students)*

- Mr Vasudevan, Faculty, Gopa Kuteeram Melbourne

The following is stitching together (bits and pieces of) conversations within my family over many years. My own experiment to shape them the way I think they should be.

Looking good is an important aspect of our lives today. We wear good clothes, make ourselves up and by using all sorts of beauty products such as hair gel (for the spikes), foundation, maskara and many more cutting edge products. And to rest the matter, there is nothing wrong in that. I myself have done that for many interviews, wearing a suit and in these pandemic times paired it with my favourite grey track pants from K-Mart ;). It is an important tool for our social interaction. We do it for various reasons. Subtle communication of influence, power, desire etc. and (I am told) because we like it and it makes us feel good (though I never understood how shaving or combing makes me feel good. It's just a waste of time in the morning. anyways). But it is just that, a tool.

Often it is quiet limiting when that same tool is used to unconsciously judge others and their value to ourselves and the world. Closer home, we could be the ones who get judged. Infact I am going to put it out there, we are often judged by the "looks-standard". Who in our teens haven't felt other people's looks on us as being strange. Sometimes attentive and sometimes dismissive and on our "bad-looking-days" judged harshly than we are, the little snort of the nose, moving away the head and suddenly left with no one around us to talk to. What do we do, we develop an appearance based image of ourselves. I am ugly, my nose is too big, wish I didn't have those big ears and worse. All of this is quiet subtle and unconscious. Neither the person doing it nor the person being done by realises it.

We all recognize it's damaging, but what can we all do about this to prevent others from damaging us and restrain ourselves from damaging others, especially when we know it's unconscious? "Not much" and "A lot".

"Not Much" - if you want the world to change first. If you feel you are a victim. If you nurture an angst at others

"A lot" - If you start yourself first and get rid of the unconsciousness in our actions

And this is practical, hear me out. Let's say for argument's sake, you did not get invited to a birthday party because your friends thought you weren't cool and let's say that's because you are fat. And here we aren't going to argue if that's true. Maybe they exceeded the invitee list, maybe they forgot and maybe it's just one of those things that happened. It could be anything. But you seem to think that it's because you are fat and hence "not-cool". How does one do "A lot" about this?

Look within yourself, when have you left out someone because you didn't find them cool, and you judged them harshly. Did you judge them in an instant or did you interact with them long enough?

When you couldn't call them, did you attempt to speak to them and explain? Did you continue your old conversation and relationship the same way you did irrespective of whether you invited them? Did you provide them comfort that even if you couldn't invite them, it didn't mean that they were less friends. It's just that you forgot? Maybe there was a limit on the number of people you could have invited for the birthday party or maybe they live far away in a suburb (out-of-sight, out-of-mind). Did you go the extra mile in maintaining the relationship not because you don't want to lose them, but you truly value them?

It is a fact my friends, the folks of whom we may have one opinion today, we will change our opinions tomorrow. So let's just not get stuck so much with our opinions that when it is actually time to change our opinion, we look like a fool (apologies to self and all other fools) in our own eyes. And since we are so sure we aren't the fools, we prevent ourselves from changing our opinions.

Irrespective of what the reasons are, the reality is we are blind sided by our own actions. The moment we recognize this and pick up the phone and speak to the friend who we may have unconsciously judged based on "cool", "un-cool" factor we have made the change happen for ourselves. And the best part is it is not holier than thou selfless action designed as a philosophy to make you feel a "good person". It is for a legitimate 100%, unadulterated selfish action. So go ahead and indulge in this guilt free :).. Rest assured all the benefits are yours. Gold guarantee.

This has the magic to transcend in an instant from being hooked on to judgement and body image. It wouldn't matter anymore whether others are going to judge you on looks or coolness etc.

Some of us are endowed with genes that give us good skin colour, texture and metabolism. It's the draw of the cards and whatever cards you get, we will all one day lose it anyway. Some of us (ahem ahem) were light as a feather for a long time despite what we ate (the decadent cakes, the crispy samosas) nothing happened to us. We were quiet proud of it as if that invincibility is our doing.

Now despite all sorts of diet, keto, low-carb, slow-carb (ask me) we just cant seem to make any difference. We have to eat healthy and do our exercises (ahem ahem), for our own good. But, that's got no bearing on how brilliant and shining you really are within.

Krishna lives within each one of us, that is why all our greetings are "Radhe Radhe", "Jai Shri Krishna" and Namasthe (Namaha The) - I bow to you. Meaning I bow to the divinity within you (certainly not bow to the nose)

If, we are still friends and are settled with this beauty and body-image obsession, It's time to talk about the mind. Is mind all that is meant to be ?

That is a question for another day. For now, put on your headphones and listen to this beautiful Purandara Dasa Kirtan, Jagadodharana - With Lyrics rendered by my kids favourite singer (2nd favourite I dont know.. It keeps changing thanks to Vidya Vox),..

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WX1n5UmF4rI>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=trS7T3sSWyM>

Radhe Radhe

# Srimad Bhagavad Gita

- Mrs Latha Karthik,  
Faculty, Gopa Kuteeram, Melbourne

Arjuna's confused state of mind whether to fight against his kith and kin or retreat continues. Chapter 2 starts with the description of Arjuna's state of mind by Sanjaya as kṛipayā - Compassion. Most of us would agree with Arjuna's reasoning about his decision to not fight - as we all too would be overcome with compassion and pity towards our own family and friends if we are ever to be pitted against them. Krishna is Arjuna's cousin, friend, and confidante. Arjuna is perhaps expecting sympathy from Krishna or at least an agreement with his point of view. But Krishna clearly differs in his stance! In fact, Krishna retorts hammering down on Arjuna by calling him Anārya (not worthy of the Aryan race - noble, evolved race). He starkly reminds Arjuna that him giving up on his duties could mean no place in heaven - aswargyam, and even threatens him that disgrace will be upon him if he chose to run away - akīrti-karam. Krishna tells Arjuna to give up the pettiness, cowardice, faint heartedness and rise to go and fight!

The fact that Arjuna's Vishaada yoga invokes different responses from different people is worth taking a note of. Krishna's stark reaction was NOT due to lack of empathy or compassion. He knows that Arjuna's feeling of compassion towards his family is misplaced because of Arjuna's ignorance of his own true divine nature. Arjuna still identifies himself with his body and mind and hence is filled with agony, despondency, and grief. Arjuna's compassion towards the others then becomes meaningless.

Krishna's stance makes Arjuna feel even more uncomfortable. Sometimes we need a jolt in our thinking to realign our thoughts. This jolt sometimes becomes an impetus for some of us to look for a deeper understanding of knowledge. Krishna's response has that jolting effect on Arjuna. Besides, Krishna also addresses Arjuna as pāṛtha (son of Pritha- another name for Kunti) just as a reminder that he is the son of the warrior queen, Kunti, and hence has to man up! But still there is no effect on Arjuna. This unexpected reaction of Krishna makes Arjuna indignant. Arjuna has tears in his eyes and to justify himself further of his decision to not to fight, he reasons that he does not want the Kuru kingdom and would rather live on alms. He adds that both victory and defeat would have a similar impact on him.

We as humans are often tricked by our minds to justify our actions to ourselves and to others, either to feel good about ourselves or to disguise our weaknesses. This is because we do not like to see ourselves in the wrong. So, the next time if we are justifying our act to ourselves or to someone else, then it is time to introspect. And that is what Arjuna does. Arjuna realises that he is confused, and his intellect is clouded and hence is not able to discern between dharma and adharma. Arjuna then requests Krishna to be his guru and teach him what is "good" (Shreyas) for him. This is famously known as kārpaṇya-doṣha - constriction of the mind or flaw of cowardice. Legend has it that when we are confused and we want guidance, then we chant verse 2.7 with conviction before going to bed and we will be shown a way!

Kārpaṇya-doṣhopahata-svabhāvaḥ pṛichchhāmi tvāṁ dharma-sammūḍha-chetāḥ  
yach-chhreyaḥ syānniśchitaṁ brūhi tanme śhiṣhyaste 'haṁ śhādhi māṁ tvāṁ prapannam

More importantly this verse also highlights the way Arjuna is asking for guidance. Arjuna is willing to change. Willingness to change or accepting one's own flaws or acknowledging that there is a problem with an open mind to accept knowledge is the first step in becoming a better person. This demolishes the fortress of ego and helps us to focus on a way forward. Having faith in ourselves that we can change for the better helps to keep us steady in our path. As Swami Vivekananda said "The old religions said that he was an atheist who did not believe in God. The new religion says that he is an atheist who does not believe in himself."



# Bhagavat Kainkaryam

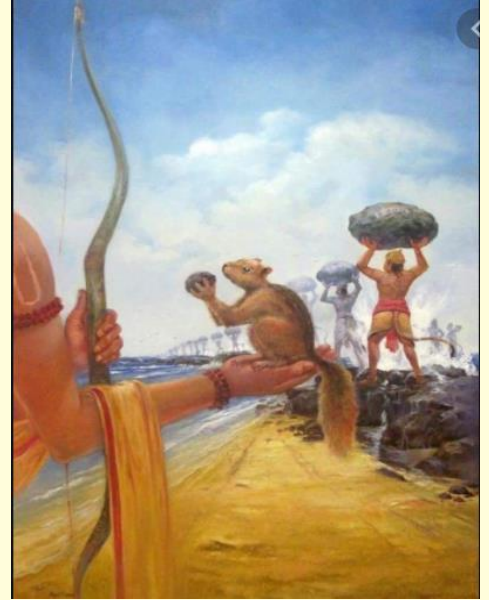
Nitin Sundarrajan, Melbourne

Bhagavat kainkaryam means service to God, which is also known as Bhagavat seva. Kainkaryam gives us inner peace, which in turn makes us happy. There are many ways to do kainkaryam. I will share the way I do kainkaryam.

We as a family perform dolotsavam at Namadwaar twice a week. During our visit, I involve myself in doing kainkaryam by clearing the old flowers and offering new flowers to Bhagavan. Once Dolotsavam is done, I help in distributing prasada to devotees. Apart from Namadwaar, at home, I do neivaihiyam (food offering) to Bhagavan daily and chant nama.

I accompany my father whenever he goes to clean Namadwaar. I rearrange the chairs to make cleaning easier. After cleaning, I make sure everything is in its right place. I also write Sri Rama Nama during my free time.

By doing Kainkaryam, I feel happier and safer. Initially I was scared of doing any work alone. I always wanted my parents help. After doing kainkaryam and chanting Nama, nowadays I feel secure.



Berwick gopakuteeram students explored the concept of upcycling as a sustainable and usable art form. The activity involved taking cardboard boxes (example: cereal boxes) and converting them into beautiful madhubani tea coasters.

## Creativity Corner

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