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VOLUME 09

Fast Track

When Life in the Fast Lane Needs a Pit Stop



Newsletter Highlights

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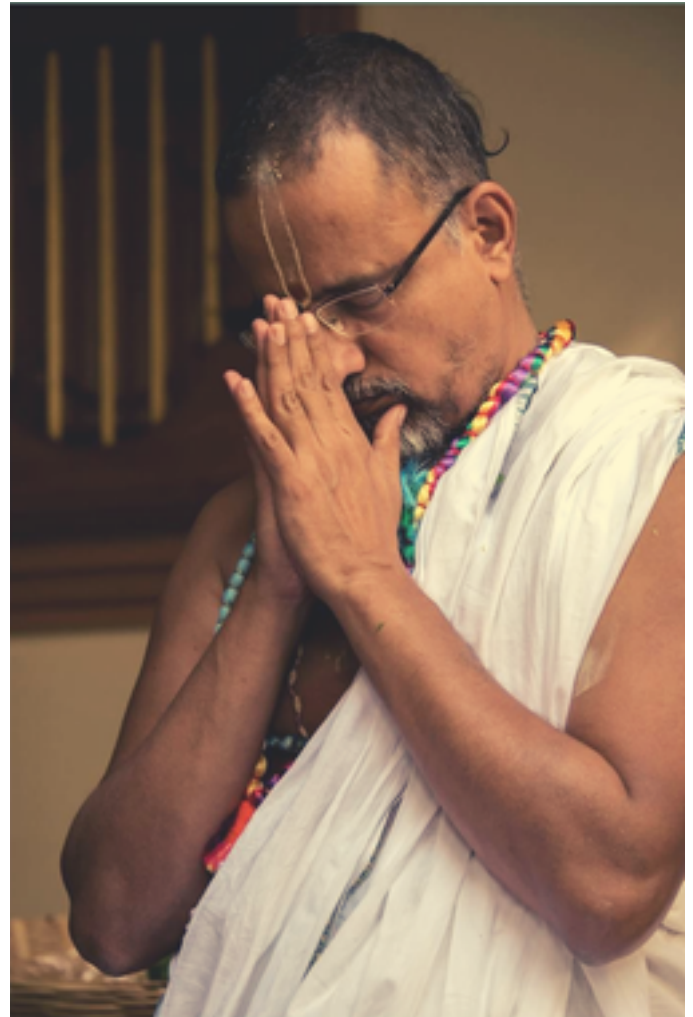
"Rama Dhyanam" by Gopakuteeram Students

Guru's grace

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

For an oil lamp to burn, it needs both the wick and oil. If there is no oil, then the fire engulfs the wick and burns it. Therefore, the oil acts as a barrier and prevents the wick from getting burnt. It is also the reason why the lamp burns continuously providing an uninterrupted source of light. If a person does not have Guru's krupa, his own prarabdha (effects of one's past actions manifesting as pleasant and unpleasant situations in his current life; however here Swamiji particularly talks about unpleasant situations) will push him into despair, similar to how the wick gets burnt without the oil.

Guru's grace plays the role of oil in one's life. If one has Guru's grace in his life, his own prarabdha that causes despair stays away in fear. Similar to how the lamp continues to burn and provide light while the wick is itself protected from getting burnt, with Guru's grace a person remains unaffected even while undergoing his prarabdha.



Madhuraageetham

By Mr. S. Ganapathy, Melbourne

What to ask of Krishna? Name and fame? Health and wealth? A trouble-free life? The list goes on and on.

Guruji in this Madhuraageetham, has beautifully said what to ask of Krishna. Can you ask anything better than this?

Oh Kanna, Rishiksha, here is my appeal. Can you please listen and fulfil my earnest request?

I ask you to be in my eyes and see because you see the beauty in all things

I ask you to be in my ears and listen because you listen the right things

I ask you to be in my nostrils and smell because you smell the nice fragrance everywhere

I ask you to be in my tongue and taste because you make the things taste the best

Please hold my hand and take me with you

Please stay in my heart for ever

Please direct my intellect to know the truth

Please be my care-taker, Rishiksha

Guruji illustrates through this Madhuraageetham, how our thoughts, words and deeds are unified when we are in union with Krishna, the Divinity. The delusions and illusions of the sense organs are in total check when you surrender to the Lord in devotion.

Raga: Todi

Talam: Adi

Pallavi

Kelaai en Vinnappathai Rishiksha

Kettu Athanai Ni Poorthi seivaai

Saranangal

En kannil amarnthu niye kaana vendum

En sevigalil amarnthu niye kettida vendum -

Kanna

En Naasiyil amarnthu niye mugarnthida vendum

En Naavinil amarnthu niye suvaithida vendum -

Kanna

En kaigalai patri niye azhaithu sendridal vendum

En Manathinil Nirantharamai Irunthidal Vendum -

Kanna

En Arivinil Irunthu Unmayyai Unarthidal Vendum

Parivudan ennai ni Paripaalithidal vendum

Choices – A Reflection.

By Mr. Deepak Vinod, Sydney

CHOICES – Are the Hinges of our Destiny –
Edwin Markham

With their helmets strapped tight, sitting on their bicycles Mridula and Krishna appealed to take a different route today for our morning walk as they were getting bored with the monotony of traversing the daily track. That was reason enough for us to explore a different path.

As we navigated down the new track, suddenly realizing that in 20 years of residing in our current location, we were quite ignorant of the walking options available in our very own neighbourhood. Our initial walk led us downhill on a road towards a park and reserve. Mridula was ecstatic and jubilant to ride her bicycle downhill as the cool fresh air brushed up on her face. She was loudly and freely expressing her joy to an extent that we had to request her to keep her excitement contained as residents were still sleeping in these hours.

After a 30 min exercise around the park, the kids were getting tired and sought to return home. Thus, we decided to return home. A noticeable distinction in the bicycle ride back home awaited Mridula however. The joy of riding downhill turned into a challenging battle uphill to her surprise. The uphill sojourn was steep enough to cause her to eventually get off her bike to start pushing it uphill.

As I walked behind, I couldn't help but equate her current plight against the backdrop of her earlier experience of a joyful ride downhill only a few minutes ago. Then suddenly I was reminded about the many life principles this haphazard event brought with it.

You see, life will present to us the easy and comfortable options all the time. However, if we choose to go down the comfortable or the easy path in our younger days (though it is a relative term), the repercussions of those easy choices will confront us in our latter days.

Robert Louis Stevenson aptly writes – Sooner or later everyone sits down to a banquet of consequences. Be it with health, education, relations, work, self-care Finance or Spirituality- we always have a choice. And the result of our choices will certainly have to be faced by us sooner or later. Hence it is said that be uncomfortable now to be comfortable later.

A student will make friendship with discipline to meet their educational objectives. At the same time, they will make sacrifices by choosing not to enjoy the 'easy ride by shunning the invitations (that from one's mind and external as well) to engage in anything frivolous which does not contribute to their end goal. This of course does not mean that the student will not have to spend time on activities not related to their education –

however, at no time do they lose sight of their primary goal. Eventually, this 'uphill' journey in the early stages of life will either be rewarded with a smoother and joyful journey at a later stage, or the disciplined life becomes a habit where it is no longer seen as an uphill challenge but rather one's greatest friend and trait.

If I choose to eat 5000 calories of junk in a day by giving-in to my whims (thus taking the easy downhill ride) then I will be required to expend those calories by sweating it out in order to regain normalcy of health. This applies to every aspect of life.

"Successful people do what unsuccessful people are not willing to do. Don't wish it were easier; wish you were better." - Boretti Inc.

To understand this message in a truer context, we must first understand with complete clarity that life is a journey of a soul through different bodies where the end goal is attaining GOD or God-realisation. The realisation should also be there that this human body is the only one that has been accorded the privilege to traverse on this journey in the limited time given.

Younger days I spent chasing pleasures mundane, Life without restrictions and wasting time in vain. As old age beckoned, realisation ultimately dawned have not prepared for life beyond.

Unless the adventurer completely understands the full map or context of their trekking journey,

they will never be able to successfully navigate to their destination while tackling the ups and downs of the path.

With the above in mind, a sincere soul will make sincere efforts to 'Fast track' their goal from the very outset without delay. While the body is physically able, the seeker will exert all which is required in this pursuit without any delay. Prahalad Ji Maharaj appealed to all his school-friends with the following petition.

Kaumaram Acharet Pragyah Dharamam
Bhagavatam Iha

One who is sufficiently intelligent should use the human form of body from the very beginning of life — in other words, from the tender age of childhood — to practice the activities of devotional service, giving up all other engagements. The human body is most rarely achieved, and although temporary like other bodies, it is meaningful because in human life one can perform devotional service. Even a slight amount of sincere devotional service can give one complete perfection.

Praying that we are all blessed with the vivekam (discernment) and courage to traverse on the greatest journey of our life, which in the context of the infinite births we have had, is right on the door step of our true home.

To be continued...

Vidura Neethi - 3 types of people

By Mr. Shabarinath Vaitheeswaran, Melbourne

*trayo nyaayaa manushyaanaam shrooyanthey
bharatharshabha |
kaneeyaanmadyama: sreshta ithi vedavidho
vidhu: || 1 ||*

O bull of the Bharata race, persons versed in the Vedas have said that men's means are superior, moderate, and inferior.

Vidura says when it comes to achieving something, the means taken is very important. He categorizes them as good - that which involves pleasant actions that don't hurt others, middling - that which involves pleasant but with a little bit of harsh actions and bad - that which involves unpleasant action that are very much hurtful.

For example, when we are involved in a project, usually we might have to do our task to contribute to the project without any major challenges. This is considered superior. Sometimes, we will have to work harder, spending sleepless nights to meet the project deadlines. This is considered moderate. In the third case we might have to work extremely hard where apart from affecting our physical and mental health, we might affect other's wellbeing as well in that process.

*varapradhaanam raajyaam cha putrajanma cha
bhaaritha |
shatroscha mokshanam kruchchraattreeni
chaikam cha thatsamam || 2 ||*

Giving boon (to dependents), winning kingdom, and the birth of a son, these three together, O Bharata are equal in merit to the one liberating an enemy from trouble (calamity).

Giving a boon, in a corporate context can be considered as a manager giving gift to his direct report out of his own freewill as a token of appreciation or helping them during the time crisis. This will result in merit.

Fighting for dharma or protecting people in society when they are in crisis is considered to be equivalent to winning over a kingdom. A good leader would protect their team from any challenges in order for them to do the right thing. This also results in merit.

Third one being birth of a son will also result in merit since according to our scriptures, a son is the only given a duty to perform offerings to forefathers.

When a person frees his enemy from trouble, it means he is willing to oversee the hurt or pain that resulted from his enemy's previous actions and find compassion for that person. Such a

person is said to have Aishwarya (overlordship). Whenever we are in a position where we can be more giving, more sharing, more helpful, then we are said to have Aishwarya. This is not always easy, especially when we are in a position of power. Example: When we have power over our dependents like children, well-wishers like parents or citizens. Therefore, Vidhura applauds those who exercise this capacity in each of us. Thus, the liberation of one's enemy from distress and giving protection to them, is considered equal in merit to the first 3 put together.

*trividhaa: purushaa
raajannuththamaadhamamadhyamaa: |
niyojayedyathaavatthaamstrividheshveva
karmasu || 3 ||*

Men also, O king, are good, average, and bad (in gunas). They should, therefore, be respectively employed in that kind of work for which they may be fit.

Sattva, Rajas and tamas gunas generally determine what type of person one is in terms of their capability. It is important for a leader to understand people under them for what type of person they are. If a person is physically active and doesn't like to be sitting, they are considered to be more rajasic dominant person. They should be given tasks which involve more physical effort. When a person who is lazy and not interested in doing any sort of work, they can be categorized as tamasic dominant. They should be carefully managed when given any important tasks or key responsibilities. Satvic

dominant people on the other-hand are bright, positive and have a can-do attitude who can be entrusted with responsible activities.

Art of story telling

By Ms. Adithi Subramanian, Melbourne

The art of storytelling lies in the beautiful manner in which it weaves into one's heart and leaves a lasting mark. It is what elevates the human experience and makes us unique from any other living organism. Storytelling builds the fundamentals of how people pass on their traditions, wisdom and values to the next generation. Particularly, this is evident in the way that Sanatana Dharma (commonly known as Hinduism) has been practiced and shared over generations. The practice of Sanatana Dharma in this day and age is held strong by the pillar of storytelling.

From the beginning of time, Sanatana Dharma has relied on storytelling as the main avenue to spread its values. In fact, the manner in which the scriptures such as the "Vedas and Upanishads" were formed - was through word of mouth. Learned sages and saints imparted their wisdom to their disciples purely through storytelling and for centuries, there was no written form of the religious practices and values. Understandably, this begs the question of how it remained relevant and prevalent in the lives of so many in India? Despite caste, creed, education and other social barriers - how was it able to pervade? The strength and staunchness of individuals' faith in their spiritual practices, can be attributed to the way that storytelling was able to transcend all these differences and demonstrate the importance of the values in the

fables and folktales. The simplicity in storytelling, lies in its capability to break down a complicated ideology and value so that a layman can find meaning and purpose. To summarise, the above reasons demonstrate how storytelling fortified the ability for Sanatana Dharma to transcend all social factors and time.

Storytelling lends power to the faith and it's ability to intertwine so seamlessly into the lives of many in this modern day and age. In my own experience, listening to such stories from my soft-spoken grandmother on the family swing, can be placed in my top five best moments of life. But most importantly, the morals and values connected to that little tale and the memories attached - stick with me to this day and have moulded me into the person I am today. The rapid pace of our lives being dictated by the increasing importance of materialism, overwhelms a simpleton like me and begs the desire for peace. Even the idea of knowing that this materialism and race for riches is redundant - is something I grasped from the stories I've listened to. At face value, Sanatana Dharma can seem packed with complexities and bundles of wisdom that are far from our comprehension. But, it's relevance and importance to me has been clarified through the art of storytelling. Furthermore, stories relay morals, they share human experiences and propose ways of thinking - but in a joyous, intimate manner. As a

first-generation Indian youth in Australia, there are often times where I find myself a bit estranged with my identity and my ethnicity. Nevertheless, this connection to my faith and culture through storytelling, is what has allowed me to feel tethered to my roots. This illustrates how storytelling allows faith to pervade into this current era and leave such a strong impact.

Storytelling is a wondrous avenue that allows one to peek into the life of another and gain a new perspective whilst learning about themselves more. Particularly, storytelling is integrated into how people learn and practice their faith, in this era and for generations before. The human experience would otherwise be bland without the art of storytelling.

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Meaningful Conversations

(Interesting discussions between Gopa Kuteeram teachers and students)

“Rama Dhyanam”

By Mr. Bala Subramanian, Faculty, Gopa Kuteeram Sydney

We present part 3 of the Ram Dhyanam presentation on the 18th April'21 by the L2 and L3 students of Gopakuteeram Sydney. In the earlier parts, we covered the greatness of Ramayana and the Bala Kanda.

Before commencing with the narration of the events pertaining to Ayodhya kanda, the kids presented an overview of Purushartha, the goals of life as stated in our scriptures. As Rama and his brothers assume the role of young princes in the Ayodhya kanda, an understanding of the goals of life is seen to be important to fully appreciate the way they conducted themselves in this kanda and forward.

Dharma was defined as the righteous life with ethics and morals, Artha as the material needs and securities for livelihood, Kama as enjoyment and desires and finally Moksha as a sense of fulfillment and bliss. These principles determine our action and conduct in life and Ramayana was viewed with this perspective in identifying its lessons and values.

A brief narration of the Ayodhya Kanda was made tracing the story from Dasaratha's decision to crown Rama as the king of the land, the tumultuous turn of events and the departure

of Rama with Sita and Lakshmana for an ascetic life to the forest.



Lessons learnt from the Ayodhya kanda were:

Bad company can bring down all the good qualities carefully earned by a person as happened to Queen Kaikeyi who lost all her motherly love for Rama because of the negative influence from Manthra.

One should be well balanced in the face of joy or sadness and not be swayed excessively as shown by Rama when he took the joy of being announced of his coronation only to be asked to go on exile very soon after.

Integrity is a great virtue and we should keep our word whatever be the price. King Dasharatha kept his promise to Queen Kaikeyi given a long time before though the price he had to pay was huge enough to cause his own death.

Actions should always be guided by dharma when situations present a choice of actions. A simple example is Bharatha's decision to forego the opportunity to be the King of Ayodhya. He reasoned that it was unjust and decided to be just the caretaker with Rama's padukas as the ruler.

Dharma can be very subtle and Rama's ability in seeing through them is a great lesson from the epic. When asked by his father to go on exile, he readily agreed not just because it was his father who asked him. Rama worked out the deeper dharma that by going on exile, he would help his father fulfill his promise to Kaikeyi. The solar

dynasty was well known for honesty and Rama did his part in maintaining that fame.

The presentation ended with a mention that Ramayana was not a figment of imagination and the existence of Bharat Milap temple in Chitrakoot even to date is a case in the point.

Keeping active, the roadway to happiness

By Master. Rohan Vijaybaskar, Melbourne

Keeping active is one of the most important traits us as humans can incorporate in our daily lives. In a time where everyone is mandated to stay at home, we can easily forget to go outside for that run, bike ride or a walk. We all know that keeping active benefits us physically, but why else might we want to keep active? And how can we keep a regular schedule in our busy lives?

During a time where we are required to undergo our daily routines behind a screen, Physical activity is pivotal to keeping your eyes and body healthy. Have you ever had your parent or guardian ask you to shut that laptop, as it's bad for your eyes? You may be thinking, how? Blue Light radiation is actively getting emitted from any digital screen. This special radiation can seep into your retina, which can result in blurred and short vision. In 2019, 25.3% of children aged 2-17 years wore glasses or contact lenses, and by 2021, almost 45% of children in the same age category now wear glasses or contact lenses. I myself have experienced this, as I have had to wear glasses with a special film to reduce the impact of this radiation. I did not enjoy wearing it and would have much preferred to have not gone through this.

It is a huge increase, and one of the best ways to reduce this number is to spend less time on screens and spend more time outdoors and

active. To help with short term vision, people need to concentrate their eyes on far-away objects, particularly outside. Cardio-based exercises such as aerobics will lower pressure in your eyes, and this helps to keep the retinal cells protected. Therefore, we should all spend a bit of our time keeping active outdoors.

Our daily lives, much less our online lives, can take a big toll on our mental health as well, and physical activity is one way to improve this. There are obvious reasons how physical activity can help relieve stress; it is simply a way to take a break, and people can find great satisfaction in finishing a long run or ride, or being able to finish a certain number of push-ups, but what is this feeling? Well, this is due to a chemical inside your brain, called Dopamine. Your brain emits this chemical when you are happy, specifically when you have achieved something. It can, surprisingly, release stress and tension in your brain, and allow you to be at peace with yourself. Exercising is the healthiest way of having dopamine release, and all the situations mentioned totally fall under healthy ways of having dopamine release. Being able to know that you have pushed yourself, and that you will become stronger, or faster can really motivate your brain. In a time period where we can't anticipate upcoming events, or even go out and meet friends, your emotions and mental state can start to wither, causing you to become a

more secluded person, so being able to escape, and finish a good exercise is optimal to staying mentally healthy.

mentally and emotionally stable, strong and healthy!

Now you may be onboard for a life changing adventure of physical activity, but you're asking yourself, "How do I start?" To quote the Australian guide of physical activity,

"We recommend children and young people do at least 60 minutes each day of moderate to vigorous physical activity that makes the heart beat faster. More is better"

An hour a day of physical activity is more than enough, and there are many ways of how you might want to schedule it. If you are keen to strengthening arm muscles, try push-ups, and if you are trying to improve your cardiovascular endurance, try going for a run or bike ride. During this time, I, myself, have tried to regularly indulge in more physical activity, such as skipping, bike riding and stretching, as well as more strength-based exercises, such as push-ups and squats. As well as the physical benefits may be from committing to regular physical activity, it has also given myself a break, and has allowed me to relax, and work towards a more direct goal. The main idea is to use physical activity to keep you physically and mentally active.

Physical activity is one of the most important traits we can have, and it can help us have a healthy lifestyle in general, keeping us physically,

Creativity Corner

By Mrs. Bhuvaneswari, Melbourne

Doodling is basically a casual or rough drawing made without much thought, say a little face on the back of your school notebook, or a little house in the napkin while waiting for your food at a restaurant. This casual random drawing comes with bags of benefits.

One of the benefits of doodling is it helps spur creative insight. According to Sunni Brown, author of "The Doodle Revolution: Unlock the Power to Think Differently ", doodling is thought to stimulate areas of the brain which normally remain dormant when you're just in linguistic mode. This can help you to analyze information differently. So, the next time you are stuck with a problem, the solution is - Draw them. The answer will paint its way in.

Doodling also proves to be a stress buster. The repetitive motion of moving the pen across the page making the same shape over and over again is relaxing. Being relaxed means you can concentrate better and thereby improving your productivity.

So, what are you waiting for? Take a pencil and paper and let out your inner Picasso!



Doodling artwork by kids of Gopakuteeram,
Point Cook



Varuni Bottu, Sydney



Varuni Bottu, Sydney



Vaishali Narayanan, Sydney