

When Prayers are Seemingly in Vain...

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Prayers are extremely powerful. They have an innate spiritual power. Sincere, deep and constant prayer lightens and clears the mind of worries and in fact, bestows the great fruits of strength of mind, peace and purity on the person who prays. Prayers can perform wonders: they can move mountains and cure the incurable.

People often go to Mahatmas with prayers for themselves or their

friends and relatives. Some people are moved deeply when they see the plight of their friends or family members undergoing untold suffering: with serious health conditions, with the loss of loved ones, with dire financial difficulties, through other traumatic experiences. Themselves feeling helpless at the other person's plight, they offer prayers to Mahatmas in whom they have great faith, knowing that the compassion of such great saints will indeed relieve their friends from misery.

Sometimes though, the immediate relief or cure that the devotee expects from such prayers does not come. Does this mean that the Mahatma is not compassionate, is indifferent to the person's suffering, or is incapable of alleviating the suffering?

Certainly not. Then what can be the reason?

The following is an extract from the English translation of *Ninaivil Nirutthu*, a Tamil collection of valuable anecdotes from the lives of great saints, compiled by Sri Ramanujam ji, disciple of HH Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji:

'Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati Mahaswami, a great saint and a pontiff of Sri Shringeri Sharada Peetam, has cured the diseases of innumerable devotees who came to him and prayed for a cure. In the case of some devotees, when they visited him with a complaint, he would say, "It will be cured" and their ailment would disappear completely.

For some others he would suggest a simple rite or procedure for atonement. If the

devotees followed the instructions correctly, they too would be cured.

For yet others, the atonement process suggested by him would be very difficult and hard, or in the case of certain devotees, he would even remain quiet and say nothing.

Once a devotee questioned Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati Mahaswami about this apparent disparity in Mahaswamiji's response to different devotees. For

this, Sri Chandrasekhara Bharati Mahaswami gave a beautiful explanation.

He said, "Why do we get diseases in our life? They appear to affect us on their own. But that is not true. It is only our sins that attack us in the form of diseases. Atonement for these should be done according to the sin. When we suggest such atonement to others we should remember one thing clearly. Some diseases can be completely be cured by strictly following the instructions for atonement. The problem will not return either. In the case of some other diseases, we can reduce the suffering to a certain extent but cannot do anything more.

However, for some others, no amount of atonement can reduce or remove the sin. Only by actually undergoing the suffering can one nullify it!"'

What a lucid explanation this is!

Another related, and usually undisclosed, fact is that Mahatmas, out of compassion, often take upon themselves the sufferings of those who pray to them.

Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji says, *"Knowingly or unknowingly, throughout history, Mahans have taken up the sufferings of devotees. Saints like Sri Ramakrishna and Bhagavan Ramana got cancer. Yogi Ramsuratkumar was afflicted with cancer in his last days and suffered a lot. Then a devotee asked him, 'Bhagavan! You have led a pure life. Then why such a suffering?' Yogiji replied, 'To bring about a cosmic balance!'*

Any Karma, whether positive or negative

cannot vanish; it has to be undergone. If one person does not undergo it, someone else should. The moment a Mahan blesses a devotee, he takes their karma. But an Uttama Guru never reveals that he is suffering on their behalf, for the cognizance of this very fact might upset the true devotee and make him/her feel guilty."

We, as lay people, can never see the whole picture in any situation. There is so much more to things than we can see with our limited, blinkered vision. On the other hand, Mahatmas can see where we came from, where we are and where we are going. Hence they know what is best for each one of us. Hence if the "cure" does not come immediately like we expect, that does not mean they are not compassionate nor does it mean that they are just being indifferent by letting us face the consequences of our karma.

The most wonderful quality of a Mahatma is that, despite their clear knowledge of our past sins and failings, they still feel deeply for the suffering of every single person, and they still shower their unlimited compassion on us.

Hence once we pray to a Mahatma, be it for our own sake or on behalf of someone else, one thing is for sure: only the best will happen as a result of that prayer. "The best", at that point, could be a favorable one (from our point of view) in some cases; could be a prolonged stay in that situation in other cases; and in some other cases, the condition may even worsen.

But the fact is that whatever happens as a result of an earnest prayer to a Mahatma is indeed the best answer to that prayer. And only with God's and Guru's grace can we even begin to appreciate and assimilate this fact.

Nisha Giri, Houston, TX



Inside this Issue

The Nityopavasi	Pg 2
Answers and Beyond...	Pg 2
Story - Sankar's Teacher	Pg 3
Quiz Time - Vasanta Navaratri	Pg 3
News and Events	Pg 4

The Nityopavasi

Panguni Uthiram (celebrated on March 26 2013) is said to be the auspicious day when Gowri married Lord Shiva, Sita married Lord Rama, Andal married Lord Ranganatha and became one with him. In contemporary times, it was on this auspicious day in April 2010 that Sri Ammalu Ammal, a great devotee who spent her entire life devoted to Lord Krishna, became one with Him! She was then 104 years old.

Srimad Bhagavatam says,

"kalau khalu bhavishyanti nArayana parAya-nAh

kvachit kvachin mahArAja dravideshu cha bhUrishaha

tAmraparNI nadi yatra krutamAlA payasvini kAverI cha mahApuNyA pratichI cha mahAna-di"

In Kali Yuga, innumerable devotees of Lord Narayana will incarnate in the southern part of India known as Dravida desha, on the banks of various rivers like Tamirabharani, Kruthamala, Payasvini, Kaveri, Mahanadhi, etc.

As predicted in Srimad Bhagavatam, Kali Yuga has indeed seen the birth of countless devotees of the Lord right from the Azhwars. Ammalu Ammal was one such great devotee who lived (almost incognito) among us!

Ammalu Ammal was born, in Kumbakonam -Tamil Nadu, to a pious Kannada speaking Madhwa couple in the year 1906. Girls, in those times, were married when they were quite young. Similarly, Ammalu Ammal too was married at a very tender age. And, within a very short time, she lost her husband. Her own family and community started considering her inauspicious from then on and tormented her by words and deeds. Driven to despair, she attempted suicide. The compassionate Lord Narasimha came in her vision and forbade her from killing herself. Instead He commanded her to sing His praises and glories. Further, He promised her that her basic necessities of food and clothing would always be taken care of. This incident reminds us of a similar incident in Bhakta Meera's life. Meera too, was driven to despair by society preventing her from singing her Lord Krishna, and attempted to take her life. However,

the Lord appeared before her and prevented her from doing so.

From that day onwards,

Ammalu Ammal felt no hunger and partook only a glass of curd/milk and fruit every day for the rest of her life. And she would forgo even that on Ekadasi. However she would cook grand varieties of food for the Lord.

Ammalu Ammal immersed herself completely in devotion and sang and danced for the Lord in ecstasy. Divine compositions started pouring out from her. Till date, she has composed tens of thousands of songs. And she is also said to be an avatara of Sri Purandara Dasa.

Once Lord Panduranga commanded her to come to Pandharpur. She started to Pandharpur the very next day and spent several years lovingly serving the Lord. When she finally came back to her hometown, she brought back a small Panduranga idol from Pandharpur and lovingly continued her service to the Lord for the rest of her life.

Kanchi Maha Periyava had great regard for Ammalu Ammal and always spoke highly of her. Once a rich man who had an unmarried daughter approached him to seek his blessings. Instead of blessing him, Kanchi Periyava asked him to go seek the blessings of the "Nityopavasi" (one who fasts everyday) living under the tree. Only then did people, even of her own community, come to know about the greatness of Ammalu Ammal.

She spent the latter part of her years mostly in her hometown, Kumbakonam. She would spend the whole day worshipping her Panduranga – waking Him up, giving Him a bath, meticulously dressing Him, cooking for Him and constantly singing His praises, even at her advanced age.

Her beautiful songs are sung even today by her followers and often also in GOD satsangs.

Sowmya Balasubramanian, Fremont, CA



Answers and beyond... Spiritual questions answered by Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji

Q. I have read in one of your messages that we should not be susceptible to emotional injuries that others might inflict upon us or emotional influence that others might try to wield on us. How to grow into such a state?

1. Try to see Krishna in them and in everybody.
2. Accept all the happenings around you as His divine plays.
3. Put yourself in the other person's shoes and think how you would act.
4. Act with wisdom/discrimination ('viveka') always.
5. Whenever you are emotional, refrain from taking any critical decisions. Allow yourself to calm down before taking any decision.
6. Whenever you take decisions, ensure that the decision is driven by the brain and not by the heart. If the latter comes into play, it ends up in a mess.
7. Control your emotions through *asanas* and simple breathing exercises.
8. Be cheerful always and always remember that the sky is your limit. Small incidents in your day to day life should not affect your cheerfulness.

Q. How can I best express my love for God?

A. When a person has wealth, he is ready to share it with his kids alone and none others. So he tries his best to acquire as much wealth as possible. In the same manner, a knowledgeable person is not ready to share his rare knowledge with one and all. In the same manner, if one is ready to share his love with the Lord, and the Lord alone, and no one else, then his bhakti grows day by day. We should not let our love to be scattered in different directions. Love has to be carefully accumulated, saved and offered only to the Lord; no one else.

For more such answers by Sri Swamiji, or to ask a question of your own, please visit the Nama Dwaar website at

www.namadwaar.org

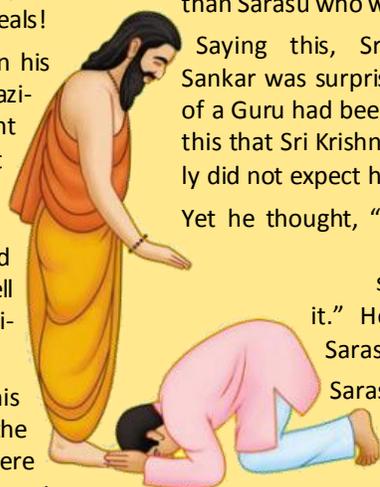
Sankar's Teacher

Sankar was a handsome young boy. He was also intelligent and of good character. But he was very lazy. He woke up only at 8 o'clock from his bed. Due to laziness he did not attend to his own work. He even expected someone else to carry his school-books. He would have even preferred to have someone feed him his meals!

He however scored all right in his examinations despite his laziness, as he was quite intelligent and thus managed to get along in school. Yet he was disappointed that he could not top the class. He nurtured the desire to score really well and pursue a successful medical career.

One day a Sadhu visited his school. While addressing the students, the Sadhu said, "There is nothing in this world that cannot be attained with a Guru's blessings. All our desires will certainly be fulfilled if only we enjoyed the Guru's Grace." The joy of Sankar knew no bounds on hearing these words of the Sadhu. He thought, "If I attain a Guru somehow, I will be able to excel in my studies and become a doctor."

Well! How to attain a Guru? There was a Sri Krishna Temple near his home. He began to visit this temple regularly and prayed to Sri



Krishna to bless him with a good Guru. In answer to his prayers Sri Krishna appeared in his dream and said, "I heard your prayers. I have now come to show you a good Guru."

At once Sankar asked Sri Krishna, "Who is that Guru?"

Sri Krishna said, "That Guru is none other than Sarasu who works in your house."

Saying this, Sri Krishna disappeared. Sankar was surprised to hear this. His idea of a Guru had been different. But what was this that Sri Krishna had shown! He certainly did not expect his Guru to be a maid!

Yet he thought, "If such are the words of God then it should bear some deep meaning in it." He then began to watch Sarasu.

Sarasu would wake up at 5 am. She would sweep, wipe and draw *kolam* (auspicious pattern) in front of Sankar's and a few other houses nearby. She would then wash the dishes in these houses and then wash the clothes there. She would eat the breakfast offered in their house and leave to catch a bus to her place of work. She was a construction worker. At the construction site, she would carry cement, sand, etc. all through the day and return home late in the evening. She would attend to her own household work

and then return to Sankar's and the other few houses, where she would once again sweep the floors and wash the dishes.

It would be almost 10.30 pm before she laid her head down for rest. And where did she sleep? She slept on the floor without any bed in her tiny hut not far from Sankar's house. The hut would be warm, stuffy without any breeze and filled with mosquitoes. Yet she would sleep deeply, ignorant of the mosquito bites!

Sankar who watched all this was surprised. For one who labored from morning to night there was no one to offer healthy food. There was no one to even speak kindly to her. People only bossed over her and ordered her to do this or that job, without a single word of appreciation to her.

But despite such circumstances she was always smiling with a bright face. Observing her brought about a great change in Sankar's life.

He began to wake up at 5 am. He did all his work himself. He studied well. His family was wonderstruck at this transformation in him. They were unable to pin down the reason behind this!

But only Sri Krishna (and you) know the reason behind this!

Source: www.namadwaar.org

Kids' Quiz - Vasantha Navaratri

1. In which season in Vasantha Navaratri celebrated?

- A. Winter
- B. Spring
- C. Summer

2. What is the other name of Vasantha Navaratri?

- A. Sharadha Navaratri
- B. Paush Navaratri
- C. Chaitra Navaratri

3. Which goddess is worshipped during Vasantha Navaratri?

- A. Durga

- B. Lakshmi
- C. Saraswathi

4. Vasantha Navaratri is also called by this name:

- A. Krishna Navaratri
- B. Rama Navaratri
- C. Shiva Navaratri

5. Vasantha Navaratri culminates on this day:

- A. Ugadi
- B. Holi
- C. Rama Navami

6. Vasantha Navaratri commences on this auspicious day:

- A. Shivaratri
- B. Tamil New Year
- C. Ugadi

7. Name the king who performed worship to divine mother during Vasantha Navaratri:

- A. Surasena
- B. Ugrasena
- C. Sudarsana

8. What does the term 'Nava' connote?

- A. Eight
- B. Nine
- C. Ten

Compiled by Ramya Srinivasan, San Jose, CA

Answers: 1-B, 2-C, 3-A, 4-B, 5-C, 6-C, 7-C, 8-B



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ATLANTA - EKADASI SATSANG



MILWAUKEE NAMA SAPTAHA

A beautiful seven day Nama Saptaha (Mar 3rd to Mar 9th 2013) happened at the residence of Sri Thulasiji and Priyaji. Satsang families from the Milwaukee area participated in the auspicious event and felt blessed to be a part of it.

UPCOMING EVENTS!

Houston Namadwaar: April 26-28 - Akhanda Nama Sankirtan from 7 AM-7 PM

Milwaukee: April 20th, 10 - 12 Noon - Short story contest at Pewaukee Public library. For details contact: krishnaashrama@yahoo.com

Virginia & North Carolina: April 18-20, Satsangs and discourses by Sri Narayanan ji at various locations in Glen Allen, VA and Cary, NC. For info, Call: 919.386.1085

ATLANTA-MAHAPRABHU JAYANTHI

MINNEAPOLIS - MEDITATION SESSION



An ongoing Mahamantra meditation session on all Wednesdays of the month is being conducted at Amanae & Frequencies of Brilliance Center of Minnesota. For more details contact: 612. 345.6044

Weekly satsangs are held regularly in the following regions:

Atlanta, GA; Bay Area, CA; New England area; Chicago, IL; Cortlandt Manor, NY; Dallas, TX; Houston, TX; Milwaukee, WI; Minneapolis, WI; Orlando, FL; Richmond, VA; San Antonio, TX; Seattle, WA; Saskatchewan, Canada

A Telecon satsang is held every Fri evening and Tele-Bhagavatam discourse is telecast every Tue evening, both at 8:30 PM CST. Anyone is welcome to attend. Ph: 605-475-4000, Passcode: 131581

Gopa Kuteeram (kids' programs) & Srimad Bhagavatam study circles are conducted in various cities.

Email newsletter@godivinity.org for more info.

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3363 Bel Mira Way

San Jose, CA 95135

Phone: 1-(830)-4GOD-USA

Feedback email: newsletter@godivinity.org

Visit our websites:

www.namadwaar.org and www.qodivinity.org**Newsletter team:**

Content—Anusha Ramesh, Aravind TRA, Latha Kumanan, Lekshmi Nair, Narayanan Sathiamoorthy, Nisha Giri, Nithya Rajesh, Priya Tulasi, Ramya Srinivasan, Shalini Kelappan, Sriram Ramanujam, Sowmya Balasubramanian, Sujatha Sankar, Yamini Zivan Prakash.

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