

The Unalloyed Devotion of Prahlada

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Learnings from Srimad Bhagavatam

In the seventh canto of Srimad Bhagavatam, in answer to King Parikshith's question requesting Sri Shuka to dispel his doubt whether Lord Narayana was partial (to the Devas) or impartial, Sri Shuka says: "... yad bhAgavata mAAtmyarñ bhagavad bhakti vardhanam..."

(The stories of great devotee [referring to Prahlada here] is a means of increasing devotion to the Lord).

Praising Parikshith for having asked a question that reminded him of a great devotee, Sri Shuka goes on to say that the story of bhagavatas (like Prahlada) are extolled with great joy by rishis themselves, headed by Sage Narada. And indeed, Sri Shuka narrates the story of Prahlada in Srimad Bhagavatam through the words of none other than Prahlada's Guru, Narada, who was overjoyed to praise his disciple, because Prahlada had no parallel.

A person whose birth, learning, power, beauty and wealth serve only to fuel his pride, cannot approach you sincerely O Lord, says Kunti Devi in her song of praise to Bhagavan (Kunti Stuti, SB 1:8). Prahlada, who was endowed with all of these - birth, power, learning, beauty and wealth - did not allow any of these to come in his way of attaining the Lord. He did not view the world as full of men; all he saw was Narayana.

Unlike children of his age who played with toys, he was constantly absorbed in the Lord. His mind was always overwhelmed with the thoughts of the Lord, his eyes brimmed with tears of joy, and his lips constantly sang His Name and praises.

Once Hiranyakashipu asked his son, "What is the highest good?" Prahlada's fearlessly replied, "Leaving the false idea of 'I' and 'mine', one should leave one's home which is no different from an unending well, go to the woods and seek refuge in Sri Hari!"

Prahlada's intense devotion to the Lord had effortlessly earned him Knowledge

and dispassion. Could reprimands, intimidations or threats change the heart of a devotee? Hiranyakashipu tried to get the answer he wished to hear, a second time, but in vain! When asked again by his father about something excellent he had learned from his guru, Prahlada answered beautifully:

"shravanam, kIrtanam, vishnOh smaraNam, pAdasevanam, archanam, vandanam, dAsyam, sakhyam, Atmanivedanam, iti pumsa arpita vishno bhakthischa nava lakshana"

(Hearing the Lord's stories, singing His praises, remembering Lord Vishnu, service to His Feet, offering worship and prayers to Him,

servng Him as a servant, looking upon Him as a friend and to completely surrender one's soul to Him, are the nine ways by which bhakti should be performed unto the Supreme Lord; this is my highest learning."

It is quite natural for a father to admonish a wayward son, but who would persecute one's son as an enemy? Hiranyakashipu did. He used demons, elephants, serpents, hurled him from cliffs, administered poison, starved him, exposed him to fire, frost, winds, and floods and crushed him under rocks to dispose of him. But Prahlada, who had the Lord's Name constantly on his lips was ever protected by the Name itself; the demon king who had conquered the three worlds could not touch a hair on his son's body!

Sent back to school in frustration by his father, Prahlada imparted the Name of God to the other asura boys, his classmates, when his teachers were away. He asked them to take refuge in Lord Narayana who is the Supreme Truth sought even by great souls who have given up attachment to everything. He convinced the boys to give up their demoniac disposition and practice pure love and compassion to all, which can be easily attained by bathing in the dust of the feet of holy men. He revealed to these young boys what he had hidden from his

own father: that pure devotion to the Lord was graced on him by his Guru, Narada, when he was still in the womb of his mother.

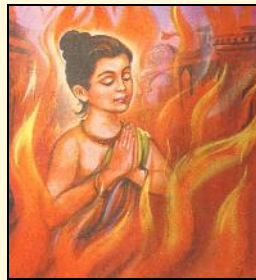
Prahlada's efforts to influence the other asura boys was the last straw for Hiranyakashipu! Hiranyakashipu challenged Prahlada to prove the Lord's presence in everything. Prahlada calmly reiterated that he saw none but Hari everywhere! As Hiranyakashipu struck a pillar to which Prahlada had bowed a moment before, in obeisance to the presence of Lord Sri Hari, Lord Nrsimha emerged from the pillar with a loud roar, to prove the words of His devotee true!

The Lord did so to protect his devotee, the five year old asura son of Hiranyakashipu. It did not matter that Prahlada was the son of a demon; all that mattered was the pure love he had for the Lord. Though the Lord remains detached from everything, He cannot help but rush to where His devotee is and He most delightfully let's Himself get bound by the cords of pure love and devotion.

Such is the love Lord had for Prahalada, He rushed to protect His blemishless devotee, His dearest one, the most exalted bhagvatha whose name alone is placed before his Guru in the list of great devotees -

Prahlada, Narada, Parasara, Pundareeka, Vyasa, Ambareesha, Shuka, Sounaka Bheesha, Rukmangada, Arjuna, Vasishtha, Vibheeshana!

Lekshmi Nair, Houston TX



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Cherished Memoirs 7

This series chronicles sweet experiences recounted by the devotees of HH Maharanyam Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji as well as some divine experiences of Sri Swamiji himself. These articles are translations from the series, "Madhuramaana Mahaneeyar" that is published every month in Madhuramurali Tamil monthly magazine.

Guru Takes Care of Every Little Thing!

Sri Venkatesan Gurumurthy is an ardent devotee of Sri Swamiji. Just like Sri Venkatesan, his parents are also ardently devoted to Sri Swamiji.

In July 2010, his parents undertook a pilgrimage to Haridwaar. In Haridwaar, due to footwear related issues, she critically injured her feet. The wound was so bad that it became ulcerous and started to bleed. The old couple was in dire search of a plaster to arrest the bleeding and further spreading of the wound.

To make matters worse it was a local festival there and so most of the shops were closed. The inclement weather with sporadic rains further compounded the woes. With that painful leg Venkatesan's mother was getting really enervated. Both of them started praying to Sri Swamiji from the bottom of their heart to help them in that seemingly helpless state.

As a last resort, they went into a general store which turned out to be a pickle shop! Yet not losing hope, they asked the shop keeper if he sold plaster for wounds. The reply was in the negative!

The mother said, "Gurunatha! please show me some way out of this pain!" And she was about to step out of the store when she heard someone shout, "Wait!"



She turned around and to her utter joy and amazement the shop keeper had a plaster in his hand. He said, "This is the only plaster I seem to have. You may use it!"

With trembling lips and eyes swelling in tears of gratitude and relief, she applied the plaster which seemed perfect for the

sore foot!

When she proceeded to pay, the shop keeper simply refused to accept any money.

With wonder and joy mounting she went out and looked back in gratitude. What she saw made her freeze in her tracks!

The store had this sign in bold letters: "Murali Stores"!

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Quiz Time - Sri Sadguru Swamigal

Sri Sadguru Swamigal was a great Mahatma, and one who is counted in the Trinity of Nama Sankirtanam along with Sri Bhagavan Nama Bodhendral and Sri Sridhara Ayyaval. Take this quiz to learn more about the great saint.

1. What was the first word that was uttered by Sadguru Swamigal?

- A. Krishna
- B. Rama
- C. Siva

2. At what age did Sadguru Swamigal start to speak?

- A. Three
- B. Four
- C. Five

3. What was the birth name of Sri

Sadguru Swamigal?

- A. Rajagopalan
- B. Venkataraman
- C. Swaminathan

4. In which village did Sri Sadguru Swamigal settle down to propagate the path of Nama Sankeertan?

- A. Marudanallur
- B. Thiruvisanallur
- C. Govindapuram

5. For what did Sri Sadguru Swamigal formulate a format?

- A. Meera Bhajans
- B. Ashtapadis
- C. Sampradaya Bhajans

6. Name the birthplace of Sri Sadguru Swamigal

- A. Tiruvissainallur
- B. Maruthanallur

C. Govindapuram

7. Who was the disciple of Sri Sadguru Swamigal?

- A. Sarabhoji Maharaj
- B. Shivaji
- C. Krishnadevaraya

8. Name the great Mahan whose *adhistanam* was identified by Sri Sadguru Swamigal

- A. Sri Sridhara Ayyaval
- B. Sri Bodendra Swamigal
- C. Sri Sadasiva Brahmendra

Compiled by Ramya Srinivasan, Bay Area, CA

Answers:

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



Madhura Geetam - Bharata Pradakshina 7

In this series, we will go on a pradakshina of Bharata desha as we present, each month, a kirtan composed by His Holiness Maharanyam Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji on a particular kshetra, starting from south India and then going north.

Pandharpur

As we travel north from Bangalore towards the Karnataka-Maharashtra border, we reach the town of Pandharpur, the hometown of none other than our beloved Panduranga (Lord Krishna). Panduranga, addressed as "Vittal" lovingly by his devotees, stands on the banks of River Chandrabhaga, on a brick, with his hands on his hips and his consort Rakhumai (Rukmini Devi) on the side enjoying the Nama sankirtan of crores of devotees who visit Pandharpur every year. No wonder that, in an *abhang*, a devotee describes Pandharpur as a market place for Divine Name of the Lord.

In one of Sri Swamiji's lectures, he has described how he made his first trip to Pandharpur. Once, many years ago, Sri Swamiji had talked about the glories of Lord Panduranga and his bhaktas. That night, he had a vision where he saw a blue

light and realized that the blue light was emanating from none other than Lord Panduranga. His desire to have the Lord's *darshan* in Pandharpur heightened and unable to control it any further he boarded the train to Pandharpur the very next day. When he reached Pandharpur and had the Lord's *darshan*, he told the Lord that he had finally come to Pandharpur. To this, the Lord replied that it was not Sri Swamiji who had come, rather it was the Lord Himself who had made him come! Sri Swamiji describes this visit to Pandharpur in a song. This beautiful song is given below:

Pandari Vara Ennai

Raga: Atana **Tala:** Adi

Pallavi

*paNDarl vara ennai paNDurangan
ANaiyiTTAN ANaiyiTTAN*

Anupallavi

*paNDarl nAnum kiLambiviTTen
sarva ulagamum marandhuvviTTen
chandrabhAgaiyil snAnam seyithen
paNDarl namakku puthithalla ena
uNardhen (paNDarl..)*

Charanam

*sAdhukkaL nAma sankIrtanam keTTen
sadguruvIn krupaiyai uNardhen
paNDuranganiDam nAn bhaktiyai keTTen
paNDarl dhULiye bhakti tharum endrAn
paNDarlayai viTTu yeno ennai anuppiviTTAN
paNDurangan en hrudayaththil
nindruviTTAN (paNDarl..)*

Meaning:

Pallavi

To come to Pandari (Pandharpur),
Panduranga commanded me!

Anupallavi

I too started for Pandari
And forgot the world
I bathed in Chandrabhaga river
And, I realized Pandari was not new to me

Charanam

I heard the sadhus perform Nama
sankirtan
I understood the grace of the Sadguru
I asked Panduranga for bhakti
He replied that Pandari's dust itself will
bestow bhakti
I don't know why He sent me away from
Pandari then
But, Panduranga remained in my heart

Sowmya Balasubramanian, Fremont, CA

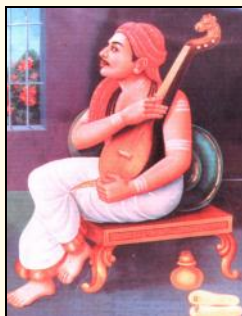
The Lord Fulfills a Devotee's Duty

The pious couple Venkatasubbaiyer and Alamelu Ammaal lived in Tiruvaisainallur. Venkatasubbaiyer was a Rama bhakta, had studied the Vedas and shastras and earned his living through priesthood. To this pious couple was born a son verily as an *avatar* of Rama. He was named Venkataraman. This Venkataraman grew up to become a great mahatma, Sri Marudanallur Sadguru Swami, who spread the greatness of Nama sankirtanam and set the famous south-Indian *bhajana sampradaya* that is followed by *bhagavatas* even today.

Here is an incident that happened in the life of this mahatma when he was still the young boy Venkataraman.

In accordance with worldly life, Venkataraman was taught the Vedas and shastras. He soon became an adept in them. He also had deep knowledge in music. He began to practice priesthood, like his father.

Once, as Venkatasubbaiyer had an



appointment elsewhere and as the young Ventaraman had learnt to conduct 'sraardha' (annual rites for the deceased), he sent his son to Karpur (near Kumbakonam) to conduct the sraardha ceremony in a family.

Venkataraman used to chant one lakh and eight thousand japa of Nama daily. While doing Nama japa he would become immersed in it. He set out early in the morning to Karpur. As he neared a Ganesha temple on the way, he decided to sit there and complete his Nama japa as there was still a lot of time left before the start of the sraardha ceremony. So he entered the temple and sat for japa. His mind went deep into it and lost count of time. When he finally regained consciousness of the outer world, it was evening! The auspicious time for sraardha had passed!

Realizing there was no use for him to go to the house for sraardha, he returned home. At home, he had to admit to his father that he did not do the sraardha. He did not give any reason for it as he did not want to boast

that he had gone deep into japa.

His father was disappointed and very concerned about the householder who had requested him to do the sraardha. Immediately he rushed to Karpur. When he went there and enquired how the man had had the sraardha done, he replied, "Swami, your son came and conducted the ceremony very well. His chanting of mantras is wonderful. From now onwards please send your son regularly to our home for the rituals"

The father was confused and returned home. At home, he asked Venkataraman why he had said that he did not go when he actually did. Venkataraman replied that he really had not gone but that he had actually stopped to do japa at the Ganesha temple and had lost count of time as he was immersed in dhyana of Rama.

Only then did the father understand that the Lord himself had gone to the householder's place to do his son's duty!

When a Bhakta forgets himself and his work due to thought of the Lord, the Lord himself does the devotee's work!

Source: www.namadwaar.org



SRI RAMANUJAM JI'S SATSANG EVENTS

News & Events



DALLAS



SRI SWAMIJI'S JAYATHI DAY!



MINNEAPOLIS



SRI RAMANUJAM JI'S SCHEDULE

City/State	Date
Houston, TX	Dec 18 - 28

Please visit www.godivinity.org for contact information and program flyers.



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Apart from weekly satsangs in numerous cities across the USA, 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.

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