

Gajendra's Spirit of Surrender

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In Bhagavad Gita, Bhagavan reveals to Arjuna that he can let go of all his dharma and just take refuge unto Him – “sarva dharmAn parityajya mAmekam sharaNamvraja.”

Srimad Bhagavatam goes on to illustrate this supreme secret of *sharaNAgathi*

(surrender) through the stories of several great devotees like Draupadi, Uttara, Prahalada, Gajendra and others. In the seventh canto of Srimad Bhagavatam, Prahlada beautifully alludes to the nine types of bhakti – *shravaNam, kirtanam, vishNosmaraNam, pAdasevanam,*

archanam, vandanam, dAsyam, sakhyam and finally he mentions the most beautiful characteristic of bhakti – *Atma nivedanam* – complete surrender to the Lotus feet of Bhagavan.

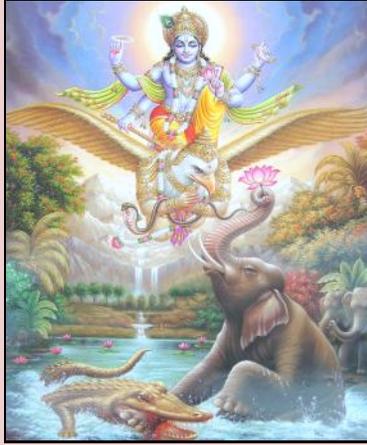
In the eighth canto, at King Parikshit's request, Sri Shukadev describes the story of Gajendra to exemplify the elephant king's spirit of surrender to the Supreme. Sage Shuka at first describes the abode of Gajendra — the Trikuta Mountain surrounded by the milky ocean, wrapped with lush green foliage; the breathtaking valleys teeming with fauna and the enchanting serene lake hugging the mountain slopes. There, in that beautiful setting, lived a herd of elephants led by Gajendra.

One day, thirsty for water, Gajendra, who was frolicking around with other elephants, entered the lake with them. Though his thirst was quenched, he continued to play with his play mates, absolutely unaware of the impending peril.

A crocodile that lived in the lake suddenly caught hold tightly of Gajendra's feet. Although the mighty Gajendra fought hard to release himself from the grasp of the crocodile, he could not. The crocodile held on tight and would not let go. The other

elephants tried to help him, but eventually gave up and went away.

A thousand years rolled by, but neither did the crocodile drag Gajendra completely into the waters nor was Gajendra able to free himself from the crocodile's formidable grip.



Gajendra had hitherto led his life believing in his own self, but at this most precarious moment of his life, he found that his family, friends, and his own might too, had failed him! The realization then dawned on him that there must be a greater power behind these happenings.

Fixing his mind on that Supreme Being, he finally submitted himself in surrender to the Lord. To surrender is to acknowledge Bhagavan and to give him control of one's life. Then the experiences of life, however dual they may seem, just become stimuli that spur one to speedily develop dispassion and attain Him.

Gajendra then remembered the prayer he had offered to the Lord as King Indradyumna in his previous birth — the beautiful Gajendra stuti presented in Canto 8, Chapter 3 of Srimad Bhagavatam.

In this stuti, Gajendra invokes the immensely compassionate nature of Bhagavan and calls out to Him –

madruk prapanna pashupAsha vimokshaNaya mukthAya bhUri karuNAya namOlayAya

svAmshena sarva tanubhrun manasipratIta pratyagdrushe bhagavate brihate namaste

I bow to the Lord of immense compassion, for He who is forever free is the only One who can relieve fallen creatures like me and untie the knots of ignorance.

Gajendra transcended to the level of a beloved devotee of Bhagavan when his ego was completely erased and he surrendered entirely to the Lord's will. He

Learnings from Srimad Bhagavatam

expressed his prayer for deliverance from the bondage of worldly existence, and not merely the grip of the crocodile.

Hearing Gajendra's heartfelt hymn, the Lord descended on Garuda to meet His beloved devotee. Gajendra plucked a lovely lotus and offered it to Sri Hari and hailed Him - *Narayana Akhila Guro Bhagavan Namaste!*

The lotus-eyed Lord can still be seen lovingly holding the Lotus offered by His devotee, in Guruvayoor. Out of His immense compassion He pulled the elephant out and freed him from the grip of the crocodile and of *samsara*, bestowing on Him the eternal abode of Vaikunta.

In Bhagavatam, the Lord Himself gives the *phalashruthi* (fruit of reciting) of this most touching hymn—“One who chants it daily in the early hours of the morning gets My remembrance at the last moments of his life!”

A beautifully beaded story of surrender illustrated through the life of one of the most egoistic creatures – an elephant king; the lake – a mirage of happiness called the world; and a crocodile, a representation of the clutches of *samsara*. Of all the ways of doing bhakti, the only path an elephant can follow is to remember the Lord and to offer himself to Him, which Gajendra did. This story of ‘Gajendrazhwar’ is a wonderful reminder that when the “I” is finally offered at the Feet of Bhagavan, He stops being a witness and takes complete control of His devotee's life.

Lekshmi Nair, Houston, TX

Inside this Issue

Cherished Memoirs - 9	Pg 2
Kid's quiz - Bhisma	Pg 2
Madhura Geetam - 9	Pg 3
Story Time - The Virtue of Truth	Pg 3
News and Events	Pg 4



Cherished Memoirs 9

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.

The Special Darshan

Sri Swamiji's discourses are regularly broadcasted on Indian television. "Brindavanam Nandakumaranum" series on Srimad Bhagavatam's tenth canto is now being broadcasted on Star Vijay channel. Following this, a new series called "Veedu Thedi Varuvaan Vittalan" on the lives of Lord Vittala's (Panduranga's) bhaktas is going to be aired. For this purpose, Sri Swamiji traveled to places such as Prathishtanapur, Alandi, Sajjanghat, Dehu, Pandharpur and surrounding villages between April 12-18 to record this series.

Before setting out on his journey to Pandharpur, Sri Swamiji wanted to have darshan of Lord Vittala at Vittalapuram near Chennai. So on Ugadi day, he visited Vittalapuram and had darshan of Lord Vittala and His consorts Satyabama and Rukmini there. He adorned the deities with new clothes, performed puja, and did Nama sankirtan there for nearly 3 hours. Only then did he start for Pandharpur.

Pandharpur was thronged by millions of people during that time as it coincided with the auspicious days of Rama Navami

and Chitra Ekadasi. The town was overflowing with people and hence vehicles were not allowed inside the town, and were stopped outside.

Sri Swamiji is usually very uncomfortable in crowded places, and also in closed areas. Because of this, he generally avoids crowded *kshetras*, long queues, elevators, trains, flights, etc.

Seeing the crowd at Pandharpur, Sri Swamiji felt disappointed that he would not have darshan of Lord Panduranga. He resignedly said, "I had a dip in the holy river Chandrabhaga; I performed Nama sankirtan; I spoke about the glories of Panduranga and his bhaktas; I had darshan of the fortunate people who live in this holy place and of all the visiting sadhus. This is enough."

The top temple administrator (E.O.) said, "I will take you specially with me so you can have darshan." Sri Swamiji did not agree. The temple priests too offered to take Sri Swamiji with them and enable him to have special darshan. Sri Swamiji refused that offer too. He said, "I don't want to have His darshan by asking a favor of anybody. If Vittala Himself desires to give me

The town was darshan, then let Him give."



The Pandharpur trip came to an end. Sri Swamiji was to leave for Chennai at 5 am the next morning. That night there was a sudden downpour of rain with thunder and lightning. Spurred by an inner instinct, Sri Swamiji left for the temple even in the rain.

What a surprise! Because of the heavy downpour of rain in the midst of the burning summer heat, there was no one at the

temple! There was no crowd. There was no long queue. Sri Swamiji went straight to Lord Vittala and had His darshan! He also had darshan of Rukmini Devi.

In Pandharpur, where there were millions of people gathered, when Sri Swamiji went to have darshan of Panduranga, there was no one in the sanctum sanctorum other than Sri Swamiji and Lord Panduranga. Sri Swamiji was deeply moved by the grace and compassion of Lord Vittala.

We speak a lot about Panduranga's lilas with His bhaktas. "This too is Panduranga's lila," said Sri Swamiji as he rejoiced immensely.

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Translated by Viji Ramakrishnan, Dallas TX

Quiz Time - Bhishma

Bhishmashtami is the day that the great warrior-devotee attained the feet of the Lord. Test your knowledge about him and his last moments.

1. Who was Bhishma's mother?

- A. Kunti
- B. Gandhari
- C. Ganga

2. Who was the father of Bhishma

- A. Santanu
- B. Vichitravirya
- C. Dushyanta

3. What is another name of Bhishma?

- A. Vichitraviryan
- B. Devavrata
- C. Chitrangada

4. What does the term 'Bhishma' mean?

- A. Person who has terrible strength
- B. Person who has terrible anger
- C. Person who has taken a terrible vow

5. Bhishma was blessed with

- A. Death only when he wished
- B. Limitless wealth
- C. Peaceful life

6. Name the Pandava who asked Dharma related questions to Bhishma on his deathbed

- A. Arjuna
- B. Yudhishtira

C. Bheema

7. What famous stotram of 1000 names did Bhishma offer to Lord Krishna from his deathbed?

- A. Krishnashtakam
- B. Vishnu Sahasranama
- C. Lalitha Sahasranama

8. Whom did Bhishma want to meet during the last moments of his life?

- A. Yudhishtira
- B. Lord Krishna
- C. Sage Veda Vyasa

Compiled by Ramya Srinivasan, Bay Area, CA

Answers:

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



Madhura Geetam - Bharata Pradakshina 9

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.

Nathdwara - Srinathji

A visit to Dwaraka is not complete without visiting the shrine of Srinathji in Nathdwara, a town in the state of Rajasthan and about 700 km from Dwaraka. Here Srinathji is worshipped according to the principles of Pushti Marg, a path described by Sri Vallabhacharya.

Srinathji was originally discovered near Govardhan hill, Mathura and worshipped by the locals. The locals could see only the head and face of the Lord. It was Vallabhacharya who discovered Him in his entirety. Sri Vallabhacharya entrusted the worship of the Lord to his primary disciples Kumbhandas, Paramanandadas, Surdas and Krishnadas. Later, Sri Vallabhacharya's son Vittalanatha and his 4 disciples took the responsibility of service to the Lord. The 8 followers of Vallabhacharya and Vittalanatha are together known as the "ashta sakhas" of the Lord.

It was in the year 1672 that ardent devotees moved Srinathji from Mathura to

present day, Nathdwara to save him from Aurangzeb's soldiers who were on a rampage, desecrating and looting Hindu temples and forcefully converting the citizens to Islam. Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji has visited Nathdwara and has had the darshan of Srinathji. He describes the Lord in a beautiful song. The song has been set in the raga Kedara Gowlai. The song and its meaning is presented here:

Srinathah Mama Nathah

Raga: Kedara Gowlai Tala: Adi

Pallavi

shri nAthah mama nAthah
mama nAthah jagannAthah (shri nAthah...)

Anupallavi

devAdi devah rAjAdi rAjah
sujana vinutah vallabhasulabhah (shri nAthah...)

Charanam

bhAvarasa bharita bhakta pUjita
bhava brahmAdi suragaNa sevita (shri nAthah...)
parama sukha pradha llla vinodah
paramahamsa shuka mukha klrtita nAthah



(shri nAthah...)
puShTimArga jana vanditha mUrtih
taveshta muraLidhara lAlita mUrtih
(shri nAthah...)

Meaning

Pallavi

Srinatha is My Lord
And, my Lord is the Lord of this universe (shri nAthah...)

Anupallavi

He is the God of gods and the King of kings
He is the Lord praised by the good and virtuous and easily approachable to Vallabha (shri nAthah...)

Charanam

He is worshipped by devotees brimming with the feeling of love
He is worshipped by Shiva, Brahma and other Devas.

He is the bestower of permanent bliss and a lover of past times
He is the Lord who has been sung by the supreme renunciate Sage Shuka

He is the Lord who is worshipped by the followers of Pushti Marg
He is cherished by your favorite Muralidhara!

Sowmya Balasubramanian, Fremont, CA

The Virtue of Truth

Once during the exile period of the Pandavas, Arjuna and Draupadi saw a tree bearing a huge gooseberry. As she wished to taste it, Arjuna plucked it for her. Just then a sage who came there mentioned that every year another sage, Amitra, would come there to partake this unique fruit that the tree yielded just once a year.

On hearing this, the Pandavas were remorse-stricken. They were worried about the consequences of their act. To save themselves from the curse of the sage, Bheema thought of looking for the sage and handing over the fruit to him. But wise Nakula reminded them to pray to Lord Krishna. After all, the misfortune befell them because they played the game of dice without getting the consent of Lord Krishna. Appreciating Nakula's suggestion, the Pandavas prayed to Lord Krishna. Heeding the prayer of his ardent devotees, Lord Krishna appeared before them and asked the Pandavas the reason for their prayer. The Pandavas and Draupadi explained their dilemma and prayed to relieve them from the crisis.

Filled with love for his guileless devotees, Lord Krishna said, "I will see to it that the wrath of sage Amitra does not befall you. In order for that to happen, each one of you must speak only the truth." Saying thus, he took them to the gooseberry tree. He placed the large fruit under the tree and said, "Each one of you should now speak whatever is in your mind without any deceit. The fruit will go and cling to the tree on its own accord."

Yudhistira said, "Truthfulness, honesty, tolerance and righteousness should flourish in this world. This is my wish. I hold Panchali responsible for the whole event." At this, surprisingly, the fruit moved two feet above the ground and remained in the air.

Next Bheema said, "I wish I could kill Duryodhana this very moment - the meanest of all the petty-minded people. I also feel that our trials and tribulations have increased because of our staying in the forest." The fruit moved two feet further up.

Arjuna said, "Prestige and fame mean more to me than even my life. Unless I kill Karna in the war, the ambition of my life will not be fulfilled." The fruit moved up two feet further.

Then Nakula said, "I believe that a man can attain fame just by leading a life in this world that is based on his discrimination alone." Again, the fruit moved up two feet.

Sahadeva said, "Truth is my mother, intelligence my father, good deeds my siblings, love that I shower on others is my friend. My calm mind is my wife. The attitude of eradicating the thoughts of hatred and enmity is my son. I believe these to be my real family." The fruit moved up by two feet again.

Lord Krishna looked at the grief stricken Panchali with benevolence and she said, "I have five husbands like the five senses. Though And I am being the cause of agony for all. I feel penitent for having acted thoughtlessly." Just as she completed her statement, the gooseberry moved up and stuck to the tree.

Lord Krishna bid farewell to the Pandavas happily.

So children, being truthful pleases God immensely. We also see from this episode that if we surrender unto God when faced with difficulties, he will free us from all sorrows.

Source: www.namadwaar.org

Story Time



NEW YEAR GLOBAL NAMA RELAY

News & Events

VAIKUNTA EKADASI CELEBRATIONS



Vaikunta Ekadasi was celebrated by chanting Akanda Nama Kirtan in various cities like Dallas, Minneapolis, Virginia, Chicago and Houston. In Dallas, a 24-hour Akhanda Mahamantra chanting took place in the presence of Madhuri Saki Sameta Sri Premika Varada Thakurji. Around 50 families took part in the Maha Yagna.



On Jan 5, Global Organization for Divinity conducted a worldwide Hare Rama ...Mahamantra chanting around the world, where devotees from 20+ countries and 100+ cities participated in the chanting and welcomed the New Year!



HOUSTON - GOPA KUTEERAM KIDS ON RADIO

MINNEAPOLIS - RADIO PROGRAM—BHAKTI SANKIRTAN



MINNEAPOLIS - THIRUPAVAI & GODHA KALYANAM SATSANGS



UPCOMING EVENTS

* **Houston** - Namadwaar's 4th Anniversary—*Radhe Radhe* - A classical dance ballet depicting the divine love of Sri Radha Rani - Sat, Mar 15, 4.15PM @ CA Nelson auditorium, Pearland, TX

***Boston - Gopa Kuteeram** - A kid's life enrichment program starting on Feb 26 at Concord area. For details, contact: gopakuteeram.ma@gmail.com

RALEIGH - GOPA KUTEERAM ANNUAL DAY



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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