

Mahans: Incomprehensible, but Accessible

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Defining the nature of a *Mahan* (a Realized saint, a Mahatma) can be as challenging as cracking an 'open secret'.

"*Gurosthu mounam vyakyanam*" it is said, to show how the Guru Dakshinamoorthy gave *upadesa* to His disciples. And how was that advice? It was in complete and prolonged silence. Silent communication? While that is profound and beyond our grasp, one thing is clear. Delivering us from a world of organized chaos to the world of eternal happiness has got to be done only by such Mahans. Only they can show us that eternal happiness isn't after all an oxymoron, though everything about understanding the Mahans' own nature certainly is.



Our scriptures teach us that there are infinite ways to reach God. Then shouldn't the ways in which the Mahans—the ones who actually show us those infinite ways—teach us, also be infinite? In their teachings, in their nature, in their external characteristics and behavior, they are so varied that we cannot define their traits. And who are we to define them anyway? They have attained the purpose of life and, merely out of compassion, they choose different means to show us the path to Eternity. (Conversely, being merely indefinable or having a large following does not make one a Mahan. As a caution, it is best for us to not go in search of Mahans ourselves, for one can be easily fooled; but rather to go in search of God, who would then connect the genuine seeker with a genuine Master, as our scriptures promise.)

But however hard it is to define their nature, the scriptures and Mahans themselves have given us clues to identify the *lakshanas* (characteristics) of a true saint! "*Unmatha, mookha, jadavath,*" says Srimad Bhagavatam in describing them; meaning they may appear 'crazy, dumb and inert'. That is, crazy with love for

God, muted by the Lord's splendor, and inert as they are lost in the bliss of His glorious persona. Bhagavatam also says that they will forever be "*shrunvanti, gayanthi, grunanthi*", that is, they will always be either listening to or singing or talking about the glories and names of the Lord.

Once a group of people approached Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhuji and asked Him about the lakshanas of a *bhagavata* (a true devotee of the Lord). Mahaprabhuji said, "Anyone who has said the name 'Krishna' once in their life is a *bhagavata*!" The people were not very convinced with this. So the next year, they once again met Mahaprabhuji and posed the same question. This time the answer was, "One who chants His Names all the time is a *bhagavata thara* (devotee of a high order)". This was somewhat satisfactory for the questioners, but the subsequent year, they posed the same question again. The third time Mahaprabhuji said, "The one who, by their mere presence, inspires others to say the name of Krishna, is a *bhagavattotama* (the highest devotee)!" Thus Mahaprabhuji himself defined a characteristic of a Mahan.

In truth, only a Mahan can understand the nature of another Mahan. We can never understand, or even identify them by, their look, actions, talk or garb, because they themselves are masters in disguise who choose to reveal themselves only when they wish and to whom they wish.

However, they shower their blessings and grace on everyone. Hence we should be very careful because every action of theirs, even those we may consider meaningless or routine, serve a definite purpose and by ignoring or judging them, we could be blocking the flow of their grace on us.

Once a devotee went to have the *darshan* of the great mahatma, Yogi Ramsuratkumar. He took with him some

fruits that he wanted to offer to Yogiji. When the man went up, Yogiji immediately picked up a fruit and held it out for the man to take. But the devotee playfully insisted that Yogiji take his own offering first. Yogiji however continued to hold out his *prasad* and insisted that the man take that first. But the devotee was adamant that Yogiji should accept his offering first. Despite several attempts by Yogiji to have the man take the *prasad*, the devotee did not budge. Finally the devotee left the ashram without taking the *prasad*. Yogiji later commented that the *prasad* was given to save the man from a grave danger, but the man's stubborn nature had cost him the blessing.

Mahans, in their incomprehensible nature, give their blessing in many ways that are often imperceptible to us. They can easily see our entire past and future, and know what's best for us. Even our most rational thoughts should not cloud our judgment when we deal with Mahans. It is best to simply follow their instruction 'to the T', for, all their actions and advice are only for our benefit.

Understanding that such surrender is very difficult for us to exhibit, it may help our progress if we understand, not the Mahans' entire nature, but simply their compassion. The very fact that Mahans are in the midst of our grimy worldliness, is indeed a great miracle. For those who would prefer to ever be in the state of divine inebriation, what is their gain in engaging with us? They benefit nothing from our interaction. It is only out of their compassion that they strive to relieve us from worldly entanglements. If nothing else, at least out of gratitude, should we not remain humbly in their presence and follow their words exactly?

Sriram Ramanujam, Houston, TX

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PRAYERS ARE ALWAYS ANSWERED! The Texas Drought Story

Sincere prayers are always answered. Only, the answer may not be in the manner or in the time that we expect. And in fact, only with the grace of God can we even realize that our prayers have actually been answered.

The Texas drought story is a clear illustration of this fact.

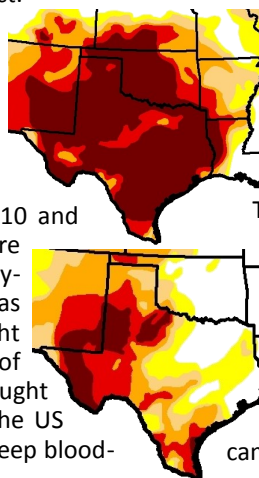
All through the latter part of 2010 and the first half of 2011, there were very little rains in Texas. By July-August, the whole of Texas was under "exceptional" drought (technically the highest level of drought), the worst year-long drought in the state in over 100 years. The US drought map showed Texas in a deep blood-red color (indicating "exceptional" drought).

By God's grace, in the USA, even in such a severe drought most of the population still had water in

the taps and abundant drinking water. However, the farmers were affected badly, and food prices everywhere were on the rise. Further, Texas being an agricultural state that contributed significantly to the country's economy, this drought, if it lasted until summer 2012—which was what the weather forecasters were predicting at the time—would have a much larger nationwide as well as global impact.

Several churches, temples and organizations around the country prayed for rains in Texas. Global Organization for Divinity was

no exception. On Sep 10, the Mahamantra—*Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare, Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare*—was chanted continuously for 12 hours in Dallas, TX with prayers for rains in Texas. On Sep 11, another 12-hour *akhanda Mahamantra sankirtan* was performed in Houston Namadwaar, also for rains in Texas.



Texas drought map
Sep 6 2011 (top) &
Apr 3 2012 (bottom)
Source: US Drought Monitor
droughtmonitor.unl.edu

There was a large spate of rains in both places and across the state the same week. However, while they were welcome showers, they were certainly not enough to alleviate the drought, which was very deep and harsh.

HH Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji came to know of the Texas situation, and asked us to once again perform prayers with continuous Mahamantra chanting at Houston Namadwaar, this time for 2 days. So on Sep 24

and 25, the Mahamantra was chanted for 12 hours each day at the Namadwaar, with prayers for rains in Texas and alleviation of the drought. Devotees from all around the USA and Texas came for the event and chanted the Mahamantra in unison.

While everyone who chanted expected a heavy shower the same day, *there was none*. Nor was there a shower the next day. Finally it rained a few days later, but it was not the drought-destroying downpour that we had prayed for! The Lord's plans being incomprehensible, everyone was disappointed.

Kid's Quiz — Lord Parasurama Trivia

Lord Parasurama's jayanthi falls this month (April 2012). Let's see how much you know about this avatar of Lord Vishnu.

1. Lord Parasurama is known as:

- A. The Playful Saint
- B. The Warrior Saint
- C. The Sleepless Saint

2. Name the god who blessed Parasurama with an axe:

- A. Lord Brahma
- B. Lord Vishnu
- C. Lord Shiva

3. Name Lord Parasurama's father

- A. Jamadagni
- B. Jagannath Misra

incarnation is the _____ in Lord Vishnu's 10 famous avatars?

- A. Fifth
- B. Sixth
- C. Seventh

5. Which region of India is known as "Parasurama Kshetra" because he reclaimed it from the sea?

- A. The Konkan region along with the state of Kerala
- B. The Coromandel Coast
- C. The Malabar coast

6. Who was Lord Parasurama's mother?

- A. Renuka
- B. Savithri
- C. Sita

C. Janaka

4. Parasurama's

7. What does the term 'Parasu' connote?

- A. Arrow
- B. Axe
- C. Trident

8. When is Lord Parasurama's birthday celebrated?

- A. On Tamil New Year's day
- B. On the day of Raksha Bandhan
- C. On the day of Akshaya Tritithiyai

9. How many generations of Kshatriyas did Parasurama obliterate?

- A. Twenty nine
- B. Twenty one



C. Thirty one

Compiled by:
Ramya Srinivasan, San Jose, CA

Answers:

1-B, 2-C, 3-A, 4-B, 5-A, 6-A, 7-B, 8-C, 9-B

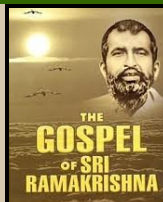
The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna

Publisher: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre, New York

First Edition: 1942

lInnumerable mahans (saints) have been born in the holy land of India. The mahans incarnate for the special purpose of showing a spiritual path to the masses. They lead a life in accordance with the principles that they have to propagate. Thus they set their life as an example for generations to come.

The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, the English translation of the Bengali *Kathamrita*, gives us a rare insight into the life of this great mahatma. What makes this book appealing is that it is informal in nature, capturing the conversations between the Master and his disciples. M. (Mahendranath Gupta), one of the closest devotees of Sri Ramakrishna and the author of the Bengali original, recorded



these pearls of wisdom.

In these conversations, Sri Ramakrishna shares some of his divine experiences and some incidents in his life. He also expounds the various spiritual paths to his disciples. Through this book, we also learn few things about the mahans himself. He is an embodiment of pure love and showers mother-like love on his disciples. At certain instances, he also exhibits his child-like nature and trusts everybody. In his presence, the conversation is always focused on divinity. He does not read books to acquire spiritual knowledge. Yet, he knows the essence of the scriptures. He reveals that The Divine Mother teaches him everything through divine visions. And, he shares these teachings with his disciples.

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa uses simple stories or analogies to explain profound spiritual concepts. For example, when advising householders, he says:

"Do all your duties, but keep your mind on

God. Live with all - with wife and children, father and mother - and serve them. Treat them as if they were very dear to you, but know in your heart of hearts that they do not belong to you.

A maidservant in the house of a rich man performs all the household duties, but her thoughts are fixed on her own home in her native village. She brings up her Master's children as if they were her own. She even speaks of them as 'my Rama' or 'my Hari'. But in her own mind she knows very well that they do not belong to her at all."

As we read the book, we get transported in time and it feels like we are in the same room as the great saint, and that he is directly addressing us. Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi's words about the book aptly summarize this feel, "When I heard the *Kathamrita*, I felt as if it was he, the Master, who was saying all that."

This book is a must read for all spiritual aspirants.

Sowmya Balasubramanian, Fremont, CA

The Divine Provider

Once Sage Durvasa visited Hastinapura with thousands of his disciples.

Duryodhana and rest of the Kauravas received him with respect, honored him and served them all humbly. Sage Durvasa was very pleased by the Kauravas' hospitality and blessed them. When he offered them a boon, Duryodhana requested the sage to bestow his grace on his cousins, the Pandavas, by visiting them unannounced in the forest, where they were living in exile. He further requested that the sage visit them with all his disciples well into the afternoon, which would be an ideal time to spend with them. Sage Durvasa agreed.

Duryodhana's request, though seemingly innocent, was really a cunning plot to bring his cousins' downfall. The Pandavas were living in exile, but through the grace of the Lord, they had been given a magical divine vessel called the *akshaya patra* by Surya. This vessel gave unlimited food every day, but only until Draupadi, the wife of the Pandavas and the last one to eat, had finished her meal and washed the vessel. Then it would no longer yield any food for the rest of the day.

Knowing this, the wicked Duryodhana had made sure that Sage Durvasa and his disciples visited them in the afternoon, when

Draupadi would have finished eating. This meant that as the *akshaya patra* would not yield any food, the Pandavas would have no way to offer any food to Sage Durvasa and his thousands of disciples. Duryodhana, knowing the fact that Sage Durvasa was easily angered, expected that he would curse the Pandavas when they were unable to be hospitable to them all.



On that fateful day in the forest, the Pandavas, blissfully unaware of the impending danger, had finished their meal. Draupadi too had eaten and the *akshaya patra* had been washed and put away. Suddenly they heard the noise of pattering feet, and realized that they had visitors – not a few but thousands of them.

They cordially invited Sage Durvasa and his retinue. The ascetics were all hungry after the long walk from Hastinapura. Sage Durvasa told the Pandavas that they would all come back for a meal after taking a bath in the nearby river, and set off.

Now the Pandavas were all worried. The *akshaya patra* would not work until the next day. There was no way they could cook or gather enough food to feed these innumerable sadhus. Draupadi was completely helpless and she prayed to Krishna for help.

The next moment Lord Krishna arrived there. Draupadi was surprised but relieved. But then Krishna casually said, "I am very hungry. Can you give me something to

eat?"

Draupadi was jolted. She said, "O Krishna! Are you teasing me? Is this the time to play games? You know we have no food left. We are in danger of being cursed by Sage Durvasa. Please do something and save us!"

Lord Krishna insisted, "But you have to give me something to eat first. Bring me your *akshaya patra*."

Draupadi brought it and showed the empty vessel to Krishna.

Krishna looked keenly into the vessel and exclaimed triumphantly, "Aha! I knew a queen like you wouldn't know how to wash a vessel properly! See there is a little bit of spinach and rice stuck in the corner." He scraped out that tiny morsel and ate it.

Then he asked the puzzled Draupadi to bring him a glass of water, which he drank quickly. Satisfied, he patted his stomach and said, "Ah! I am so full now."

This action of the Lord who pervades everything, made Sage Durvasa and his disciples, who were bathing in the river, suddenly feel that their stomachs were very full! They felt they could not eat even one little bit more. Now worried that the Pandavas would, out of hospitality, force them to eat if they went back to their ashram, the sage and disciples quickly left the area without returning to the Pandavas' home.

Lord Krishna had saved the day! He always protects and comes to the rescue of those who call out to Him.

Yamini Kelappan, Chicago, IL



News and Events

Dallas—Swarna Jayanthi & Madhura Utsav with Mass Prayer



New England Area Satsangs



Houston Namadwaar - 2nd Anniversary



UPCOMING EVENTS

Sri Poornimaji's Programs

Chicago, IL

Apr 13-15, 7-8:30 pm, Hindu Temple of Greater Chicago, Lemont IL
 Discourse on "Nectarine Bliss of Bhagavatam"
 Apr 15 10 am-12 Noon, Aurora, IL
 GOPA KUTEERAM ART COMPETITION
 To register call 630 8518578

Houston, San Antonio and Corpus Christi

Apr 19, 6 pm: Shirdi Sai Temple, Houston, TX
 Apr 20, 7 pm: Hindu Temple of San Antonio, TX
 Apr 21, 5 pm: Sri Venkateshwara Temple of Corpus Christi, TX
 Contact: 281-402-6585

Atlanta, GA

Apr 28-29, 5 pm: Hanuman Mandir, Alpharetta
 Bhakti Yoga: The Ultimate Path for Perfection
 Contact: Kishore/Jeya 404-788-7391

Gopa Kuteeram "Traditional Treasures" Spring Camp —Houston



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; Orlando, FL; Richmond, VA; San Antonio, TX; Seattle, WA; Saskatchewan, Canada

A Telecon satsang is held every Friday evening and Tele-Bhagavatam discourse is telecast every Tuesday 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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