

## Gurukulams: Impeccable Systems of Education

August is “back to school” month in the USA, as children everywhere prepare to begin a new school year. School and college education play a very important role in today’s world. And especially among Indians, it forms the very fabric of life and is often the pivotal element around which an entire household’s energies, moods and fortunes revolve. Schools today tend to focus primarily on teaching the skills needed for students to eventually lead a life of comfort, wealth, and even power, in the world. Little emphasis, if any, is given to moral and spiritual values as these are not considered to be in the realm of necessary basic education.

On the contrary, the “Gurukulam” education system of ancient India was far more advanced and much more complete and effective as a system that took care of the all-round development of the individual; not only teaching him professional skills to live in the material world but also giving equal importance to learning to lead a life of *dharma* and further, sowing the seeds for spiritual growth and fulfillment of the very purpose of life – treading the path to God Himself.

In a *gurukulam*, the students lived for years with the teacher (the “guru”) and his family, until the completion of their education. The guru did not get any money or payment from the students during their stay in the gurukulam, and even the guru *dakshina* taken at the completion of the education was dependent on the student’s means and ability.

At the gurukulam, the students learned the skills needed for their particular professions such as weaponry, horsemanship, trade, agriculture, etc. They also studied the *shastras* including the Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas and how to apply the messages of these exalted scriptures to their own lives, and absorbing the *dharmas* they laid down for every person’s particular walk of life.

While staying under one roof, the students learned values like respect for others, discipline, equality, humility and service. They were taught the means to spiritual enlightenment, the highest

knowledge that a guru can impart to a disciple.

The guru took complete responsibility for the student and cared for him as if he were his own son. The guru provided food and shelter for the students, who served the guru and his family through daily chores like cooking, cleaning, fetching firewood, washing clothes, and more. Serving the Guru (*seva* or *kainkaryam*), which is considered the highest form of service in our scriptures, was thus an integral part of the student’s education. This is the beauty of the *guru-sishya* (disciple) relationship in the gurukulam system.

Even Bhagavan Himself, when he came down as an *avatara* like Lord Rama and Lord Krishna, went under the tutelage of a guru and performed *guru seva*. In Srimad Bhagavatam there is a verse which extols this relationship: “*Guror anugrahenaiiva puman purnaha prashantayae*”.

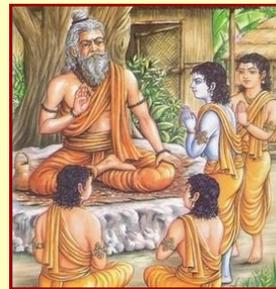
Sudama and Krishna met each other at Sage Sandeepani’s gurukulam and became thick friends. In later years, Lord Krishna became the king of Dwaraka while Sudama was steeped in poverty. Yet both of them enjoyed constant peace of mind and tranquility. Lord Krishna tells Sudama, in the above *sloka*, that it is verily due to the benediction of their Guru Sandeepani, that despite their outer circumstances, both of them continue to enjoy that invaluable peace of mind.

In the same context, while speaking of their guru’s greatness, Krishna tells Sudama that it was only because of their guru’s blessings that he remembered whatever he had learned at the right time when he needed it.

The most important and key element of the gurukulam system is the opportunity for *guru seva*, for there is nothing that a guru’s grace cannot bestow. An *uttama* Guru’s grace can bestow the very abode of the Lord – *chintAmanir loka sukham, suradruhu swarga sampadam, prayacchati guruhu preeto, vaikuntam yOgi durlabham (Srimad Bhagavata Mahatmyam)* – what

then to speak of wealth, comforts or scholarship?

Giri was a disciple of Sri Adi Shankara Bhagavadpada. Though Giri was a dull student, he spent most of his time serving his guru in all possible ways with utmost dedication and devotion. One day Adi Sankara



was about to expound on one of the difficult philosophies in the Brahma Sutras, but as Giri was not yet back from washing clothes on the river, he waited for him. When the other disciples realized that their guru was waiting for Giri, a dull wit who would not be able to

understand the subtleties in the verses anyway, they smirked. The guru was moved with compassion for his poor disciple and blessed him with all his heart. At that moment, Giri, who was far away on the river bank, was suddenly illuminated and composed an extraordinary set of verses called *Thotakashtakam*, by the grace of his guru. Later he became a great acharya, called *Thotakacharya*.

In fact, Lord Krishna himself states in Srimad Bhagavatam that no amount of yoga, tapas or austerity would lead one to happiness and it is verily the service to Guru that would usher happiness.

*naham iija prajati byam tapospashamena seva va |*

*tushyeyam sarva butatma guru shusrusha ya yatha ||*

Hence the gurukulams of ancient India, with their focus on the fully-rounded growth of the student, and most importantly, with *Guru Seva* as their foundation, were indeed impeccable systems of education.

Anusha Ramesh, San Jose, CA

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## Adhika Masa, the Leap Month

We are all familiar with the term 'leap year'. According to the Gregorian calendar, which is the standard calendar in most parts of the world a leap year comes once every 4 years and contains an extra day. Our Hindu lunar calendars too have the concept of leap year.

In this calendar, a leap year occurs once every 28-36 months (2-3 years) and instead of one day, one whole lunar month is introduced in the calendar.

This 'leap month' is called 'Adhika Masa'. A question that may arise is, "Why one whole month?" The reason behind that is a lunar month is 29.5 days long, so one year contains only 354 days as opposed to an astronomical or solar year, which is 365.25 days long approximately. The 'missing' days are accumulated resulting in the addition of a 13<sup>th</sup> month in the lunar calendar once in every 2-3 years.

Astrologically speaking, the period that the Sun remains in a zodiac sign is termed as a solar month and a lunar month is the time from one new moon day to the next. Thus, during the year with Adhika Masa, two new moon days occur during the same solar month, causing the lunar month between the two new moon days to be called as the 'Adhika Masa' and the following lunar month to be called as the 'Nija Masa' of the same solar month.

Adhika Masa is also known as 'Purushottama Masa'. Scriptures like Padma Purana mention the glories of this Purushottama Masa. Spiritual aspirants consider this month very auspicious, as one is believed to accrue innumerable merits by performing good deeds during this period. The scriptures describe in detail the various activities

August 2012						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 FM	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9 LQ	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17 NM	18
19	20	21	22	23	24 FQ	25
26	27	28	29	30	31 FM	

that a spiritual aspirant should engage in, ranging from reading the scriptures, fasting, dip in sacred waters, charity and so on. Among them, the easiest and the most practical one deemed the most suitable for this age of Kali is chanting the names of the Lord.

Lord Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita:

*"svalpam apy asya dharmasya trAyate mahato bhayAt"*

*Even a little advancement in the path of Dharma will relieve us from the eternal suffering.*

This year, the Adhika Masa falls during the Bhadrapada month between August 18 and September 16. During this month, whenever we find time in our busy schedule, let us resolve to chant the names of the Lord as much as possible

*Sowmya Balasubramanian, Fremont, CA*

## Answers & Beyond

Spiritual questions answered by  
HH Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji

**Q. What makes the incarnation of Lord Krishna more special than the other incarnations of Lord Vishnu?**

**A.** "When we see a beautiful sight, we are naturally attracted towards it.

When we hear beautiful music, we are attracted towards it.

When we watch a beautiful dance, we are attracted towards it.

When we see some enticing mannerisms or actions, we are attracted towards it.

When we see a little child doing mischief, we are attracted towards it.

When we hear a good orator speaking, we are attracted towards him.

When one speaks in a scholarly manner, we are attracted towards him.

When one speaks in a sweet manner, we are attracted towards him.

When one talks about high philosophy, we are attracted towards it.

When one does a lot of good for us, we are attracted towards him.

When one behaves gently with us, we are attracted towards him.

We can keep listing such qualities almost endlessly. There are plenty of such instances in Krishna Avatar.

No wonder, Lord Krishna attracts one and all!"

**Q. We have heard in one of your discourses that there is a higher positive purpose behind every happening. As far as I can imagine, there seems to be no positive purpose or rationale behind disease as an entity in God's creation. Am I not right?**

**A.** "Yes, as you say 'Disease' is the most cruel, uninvited guest in anyone's life. However, we should all salute disease for one reason. Greatest tyrants and evil men, who could neither be vanquished by war nor by force, were reduced to dust by disease!"

*For answers to other similar questions or to ask one of your own, please visit [www.namadwaar.org](http://www.namadwaar.org).*

## The Mahamantra: Words that can Solve ANY Issue!

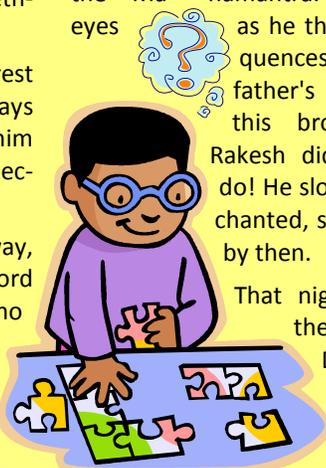
Rakesh was simple 13-year-old boy who loved to tinker with electronics. He loved to take things apart and put them back together again.

Rakesh however did not show any interest in his studies, which his stepmother always pushed him to do. His dad however, let him follow his passion of tinkering with electronics.

Like his mother, who had passed away, Rakesh was a very big devotee of Lord Krishna. Unlike other kids of his age who would sing movie songs, Rakesh would chant the Mahamantra. Perhaps this was one reason he seldom made mistakes while doing his projects, apart from being able to be very focused on his work.

One day, he was taking apart a DVD player. His dad was out of town and his stepmother would be late from work. It was late in the night and something didn't seem right as he was putting the DVD player back together. If he didn't put it back correctly and quickly he was going to be in BIG trouble because his stepmother had bought this DVD player with her first month's salary.

to do and went to the pooja room, knelt before Lord Sri Krishna and began chanting the Mahamantra. Tears filled up his eyes



as he thought of the consequences and his beloved father's face when he saw this broken DVD player. Rakesh didn't know what to do! He slowly fell asleep as he chanted, since it was 11:30pm by then.

That night he dreamed of the day they got the DVD player and went out for dinner to his favorite restaurant. He dreamed of watching

a movie in his own house, his eyes big because, until then, he had never even heard of movies that could come to your house. He woke up right then and smiled to himself about that day.

His stepmother's hard work had been ruined now all because of him. He realized then that he had fallen asleep right in front of the Lord and got up to get himself some water. Then a thought struck him and he

Rakesh tried all the possibilities, but nothing worked. Rakesh didn't know what

froze right there for a moment.

The owners manual! Why hadn't he thought of that before? That could give him a clue on how to fix the DVD player!

He sprinted to cupboard where it was located and zipped to the living room again to fix the DVD player.

Sure enough, the manual helped him fix the DVD player in no time. He had an epiphany right then. He had remembered the manual because of the dream and the only reason he could have had that particular dream was because he prayed to Sri Krishna. Until then he had not remembered the manual. He cleaned up and thanked the Lord with his full heart, and how? By simply chanting the Mahamantra again:

"Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare!

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare! "

--Dedicated to all my friends in Holland. Our wonderful memories together will never be forgotten.

**Deepika Sureshkumar, Houston, TX**

12-year-old Deepika recently moved to Houston, TX from Holland, MI. She and her little brother are active Gopa Kuteeram participants in both Holland and Houston.

## Quiz Time - Krishna Trivia

August 9, 2012 is Krishna Janmashtami. Most of us are quite familiar with Sri Krishna's childhood and youth lilas as a cowherd Gokula and Vrindavan. For a change, here are some questions to see how much you know about the Lord's lilas during his royal adulthood in Dwaraka. So here you go...

1. Name the king who turned into a chameleon and was later rescued by Lord Krishna.

- A. Rukmangada
- B. Nriga
- C. Jarasandha

2. What did this king give away in charity which caused an issue that eventually led to him turning into a chameleon?

- A. Gold coins

- B. Cows
- C. Horses

3. Whose son was this king?

- A. Son of Duryodhana
- B. Son of Ikshvaku
- C. Son of Yadu

4. Whom did Lord Krishna marry as a result of recovering the Syamantaka jewel?

- A. Rukmini & Sathyabama
- B. Kalindi & Satya
- C. Sathyabama & Jambavati

5. Whom did Lord Krishna fight in the forest when searching for the Syamantaka jewel?

- A. A Lion
- B. Jambavan
- C. Banasura

6. Whom did Lord Krishna allow to keep the Syamantaka jewel, in the end?

- A. Akrura
- B. Kritavarma
- C. Balarama

7. Who was the son of Mother Earth whom Krishna fought to recover Indra's valuables?

- A. Narakasura
- B. Banasura
- C. Bakasura

8. Name the eldest son of King Bali who gave his daughter to Lord Krishna's grandson Aniruddha:

- A. Banasura
- B. Vrikasura
- C. Dantavakra

Compiled by:

Ramya Srinivasan, San Jose, CA

Answers:

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

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## News and Events

### Guru Poornima Satsangs

#### HOUSTON—SIX-DAY AKHANDA NAMA & SPECIAL SATSANG



#### SEATTLE SPECIAL SATSANG



#### DALLAS SPECIAL SATSANG



#### HOUSTON—GOPA KUTEERAM END-OF-CAMP PROGRAM



#### HOUSTON—PUPPET SHOWS IN CHILDREN'S MUSEUM



#### DALLAS - BONE MARROW DRIVE



#### UPCOMING EVENTS

##### HOUSTON NAMADWAAR

##### KRISHNA JAYANTI MADHURA UTSAV

AUG 10-18 — 6AM to 6PM Akhanda Mahamantra Sankirtan

Discourses by Sri Ramaswamyji

AUG 17, Fri — 6 PM Krishna Jananam

AUG 18, Sat — 6 PM Govinda

Pattabhishekham

AUG 19, Sun — 11 AM Rukmini Kalyanam

For more info, call 832-515-1251

or email [houston.god@godivinity.org](mailto:houston.god@godivinity.org)

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 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](mailto:newsletter@godivinity.org) for more info.

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