

## Prayer for Them Alone

**I**t promised to be a bright, beautiful day. The sun was just peeping above the rooftops in a crisp, fresh, cloudless sky. Birds chirped cheerfully as a light breeze caressed the trees. Colorful flowers bloomed all around the beautiful garden. Springtime was in the air and Mother Nature was at her best.

But all the beauty and cheer of dawn and the lovely, well-kept, sprawling backyard was lost on Sunitha. She sat slumped down in her porch, lost in deep thought, her eyes swollen red with crying and lack of sleep. She felt helpless. Her good friend and neighbor—just 37 years old—had died in a fatal road accident a few days ago. It was a sudden, devastating blow on her entire family, especially her 7-year-old daughter. The child missed her mother terribly and pined for her, day and night. She wouldn't eat or sleep or talk to anyone. Her father was terribly distressed and depressed himself. Her parents were inconsolable and broken, having lost their only daughter.

Sunitha had stayed with the family for a couple of days, trying to help them get back on their feet, but to no avail. They were all sunk deep in sorrow, unable to overcome it. And Sunitha was helpless. She had cried with them, and for them. But she knew they had to move on. However, nothing she said or did seemed to have any effect on them. She wished she could do *something* to help them get out of the deep pit of sorrow. But what could she do? How could she help when nothing would work?

How many times have we ourselves seen people around us suffer through similar



distressing situations? In such times, what do we do? At best, we give them some physical support – bring them food or help with daily chores perhaps; or give them moral support – just be around them so they don't feel lonely, talk to them, etc. But our words of consolation to them are, in truth, only words and nothing more. They are empty and devoid of the ability to render real help. We cannot ourselves alter the situation or make it any better for them. And our own grieving or worrying for their sake will not help them either. What then can we do?

To this question, "What is the best that we can do when we can do nothing about another's misery?" Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji answers, "Prayer for them alone."

Prayer? How can that help? One may ask. Then there are also those who feel that prayer is just a way out for those who don't really want to or have the time to offer physical help.

But in a situation when we are helpless, when no amount of cooking, cleaning, running errands or even talking will make a real internal difference, who has the power to help but the One who is all-powerful yet is the loving Father of the world? When people like you or I spend time crying or worrying over something, it is, in essence, only a waste of time and energy. It doesn't help anyone, and often only makes things worse, for us as well as others.

But if we instead spend the same energy in prayer, in asking God to help the friend who is in trouble, He can actually *do* something about the situation. He can give the grieving person mental strength

and lift him up from despair, He can ensure that an orphaned child is taken care of, He can heal the scars of pain in a flash.

The catch, though, is that prayer is not as simple as it sounds. It does not mean blaming God for bringing grief upon someone and definitely does not involve using the phrase, "Why should this happen to him (or her or me)!" Sri Swamiji also warns that telling God something as one would pass on a piece of information **does not constitute prayer**.

What, then, is prayer? How should we pray? Sri Swamiji says, "*Prayer is crying before God till we attain what we want, unmindful of everything else.*"

This means begging, pleading, beseeching God determinedly but humbly. Like a baby crying persistently till it gets its way with the mother. And if this has to be done for someone else's sake, it cannot be a cursory or superficial act, but only possible when we really feel for and truly want to help the other person.

Prayers are extremely powerful. And they are the best and most effective way to help anyone in need. **For we are not alone.** "He" is there, eager and hopeful that one day we will—instead of trying in vain to pull ourselves out of the quicksand of life—turn to Him for help in all earnestness.

*Nisha Giri, Houston, TX*

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## The Purpose of a Guru

**W**hat is the *mukhya prayojana* (main purpose) and the *mukhya kārya* (main work) of the Guru? Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji says, "The work of the Guru is to stop the *manas* (mind) that is running towards *prakriti* (world) and turn it towards *bhagavat vishaya* (divine matters). All other work is only secondary."

While a Guru has that as his main goal, on the other hand, our own goal is all about the world and its offerings - health, beauty, family, money, fame, power, etc. Who can deny the attraction of the world, for after all, it too has sprung out only from Him and by His power (of delusion or Maya). So to our mundane mind, only this—*prakriti*—makes sense because we can see it, feel it and relate to it.

"*Bhagavat vishaya*" however is rather intangible. It is said that it comes with faith, by looking inward, by cleansing our impurities.

The two goals are obviously in quite the opposite tracks. One goes inside, the other outside. One is intangible to the senses, the

## Contempt for Money!

**M**other India has given birth to various *mahans* (saints) who loved God for love alone. Sant Tukaram was one such supreme devotee who was deeply engrossed in his devotion for Lord Panduranga (Lord Krishna in Pandharpur, Maharashtra). Tukaram's love for God was so deep that his heart would melt at the sight of anyone wearing *gopi chandan* or *tulsi mala* or chanting the names of the Lord. He was so submissive that he would bow to all and saw all actions as God's will. He was an epitome of humility, patience and compassion. If a devotee came to his grocery store chanting Hari Nama, he would consider himself to be most fortunate and would give away grains and spices for free.

One day Chhatrapati Shivaji, the great Maratha king, was returning home with his army after a battle, and passed by Dehu, the village where Sant Tukaram lived. He remembered that his Guru, Sri Samartha Ramadas had mentioned about the great Sant Tukaram who lived there. He enquired and

other is tangible. One is Love, while the other settles for searching for love. How can they meet? Unless a third entity enters the fray, these two will forever be apart.

Here is where the *mukhya prayojana* of a Guru comes into play. The one who, in the role of a perceptible human being, is verily that God incarnate come down with the prime purpose of taking us ashore.

In our lack of faith, we asked that God appear in front of us, for us to have belief in His existence. He obliged, by becoming the Guru in a form that we can relate to. We asked that the path to joy be in the world outside. He obliged here too, and made the Guru take care of all of our worldly needs. But over time, from our own experiences, we realize the futility when our needs seem to have no end, and the gains do not give any permanent joy.

Now the Guru's primary role becomes

approached the saint with due respect.

Tukaram was seated in the front porch of his small hut. His clothes seemed unclean and he was playing his Tambura singing to himself. But his face was bright and filled with *tejas*. He smiled at the king and signed him to come closer.

"Please eat something," he said. Even a single person would feel heartbroken to eat in Tukaram's house looking at their poor living conditions. Shivaji had a whole army. He did not want to trouble Tukaram, so he hesitated. But Tukaram asked him bring all his men. When they came, he gave a pinch of wheat flour to everyone. After consuming that, the king, his soldiers, ministers and even the horses and elephants, felt so satiated that they felt they could not eat for the next ten days! Shivaji was amazed by this incident and realized Tukaram's greatness.

After a week Shivaji came back to Tukaram's house with a huge offering of money and gold for his family. Tukaram reacted like one who had seen a ghost. He asked Shivaji to take away all the gifts he had brought. Shivaji insisted that he keep them, as his family was suffering in poverty.



HH Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji

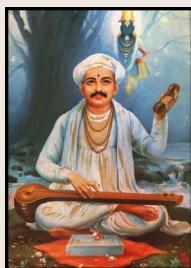
evident to us, although He has been working on it all along — to lead us to the point of seeking permanent good, i.e. in god-speak "from *prakriti* to *bhagavat vishaya*".

The Guru lays down the apt path for the disciple: the one that is appropriate for him/her and for which he/she is eligible. But in truth, the path too is only a mere pretext. For as long as we continue to think that it is we who are doing the *sadhana* (spiritual practice) to realize the Truth, the Guru would oblige there too. Sadly that only delays the process for us.

Finally, the Guru makes us realize that it is indeed His grace and grace alone that is needed, and that paths are merely an excuse. When such surrender ripens, love flowers like a flash and both His and our purpose is accomplished.

*Guru Poornima, this year was celebrated on July 3, 2012. Prostrations to the Supreme Guru on this auspicious occasion.*

*Sriram Ramanujam, Houston, TX*



Tukaram looked at him and said "Does not the Lord, whose praise I've been singing for eternity, know the condition I am in? Would he not have given me this entirely if He desired so? Will money or gold bring peace? I am scared of this money... please take it away!" he said.

But Shivaji insisted that Tukaram keep the money as he had brought it as an offering and that his acceptance would make him (Shivaji) happy.

Tukaram firmly replied, "Can I eat beef to make you happy? I cannot do something simply to make you happy. There are people who can make good use of the money you offer, like building temples, etc. I can't even manage a small grocery store... I go into trance when I sing the divine names and even fall into the river unknowingly. So please take this money away from here!"

Shivaji understood his determination towards God and the level of dispassion Sant Tukaram had towards material things. For devotees who live only for God, material matters are abhorrent as they take them away from the One they love!

**Story Time**

*- Priya Tulasi, Milwaukee, WI*

# Swami Ramakrishnananda—The Apostle of Sri Ramakrishna to the South

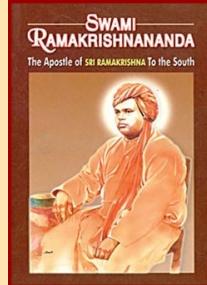
## - By Swami Tapasyananda

**Publisher:** Sri Ramakrishna Math, Chennai

**First Edition:** 1972

Among the sixteen monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Ramakrishnananda stands out for his intense Guru bhakti. He was the only one of the disciples who, after the passing of Sri Ramakrishna, instead of practicing his personal sadhana like the others, remained constantly by the side of his beloved Master's remains, taking care of Him, worshipping Him and serving his brother disciples even amid poverty and physical distress.

Swami Ramakrishnananda thus remained quietly lost in Guru seva for 11 years after his Guru had left His physical body, just as he had served him earlier when He was still in the world. In 1897, Swami Vivekananda, who had recently returned from his triumphant trip to the West, established the Ramakrishna Mission, and requested Swami Ramakrishnananda to serve their Master in a different way – by spreading His teachings and ideals. Thus, at the behest of Swami Vivekananda, Swami Ramakrishnananda went to the southern Indian city of Madras



(now Chennai) and established the Ramakrishna Math there.

Despite all the struggles he had to face in his life, Swami Ramakrishnananda never flinched because he was constantly in a supreme state of surrender to his Master, and hence he knew that it was only Sri Ramakrishna who was doing all the work while he was simply only an instrument.

This book is a must-read, especially for all those who are under an *uttama Guru*, for it shows us what true Guru bhakti is. Here is an excerpt from the book:

*"Ramachandra Datta, a prominent householder disciple of the Master, says: 'Sasi's (Swami Ramakrishnananda's pre-monastic name) service is incomparable and inimitable...Sasi served Paramahansa Deva heart and soul without any question, without any murmur and without any consideration of personal inconvenience... We have only heard of Hanuman's matchless devotion as a servant to his Lord. Sasi showed the perfection of such devotion before our very eyes...All those who approached Paramahansa Deva had some ulterior motive or*

other.

*They had asked*

*'How shall I be saved? How shall I progress in spiritual life? Or how shall I walk on the path of Yoga?' But Sasi had no such motive whatever. He surrendered his humble self completely to his Master and learnt only the religion of selfless service from him...There is no doubt that whosoever will hear the thrilling story of Sasi's loving service to the Master will attain devotion to the Master... Brother Sasi! You mastered the secret of real service. To the full satisfaction of your heart, you have done service to the Guru which is the most meritorious act in religious life. Brother dear, born as a man, you understood the duty of human life. That is why you have been the object of the Master's special grace. By his grace, you stand at the head of the circle of his attendants. You are his chosen son and servant and are second to none in service of him.'*

**July 17, 2012 is the 150<sup>th</sup> jayanthi (birthday) of Swami Ramakrishnananda, and His Holiness Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji will speak on Swami Ramakrishnananda on July 15th at the Ramakrishna Math, Chennai, during the celebrations.**

## Quiz Time - Ashada Ekadasi

June 29 was the auspicious occasion of Ashada Ekadasi (Ekadasi day in the month of Ashada). This is a holy day for Hindus the world over and has many significances in different holy spots in India, the most famous of them being the Varkari Yatra in the state of Maharashtra. Let's see how much you know about this day!

1. What is another name for Ashada Ekadasi?  
A. Vaikunta Ekadasi  
B. Shayana Ekadasi  
C. Uttana Ekadasi
2. What does Ashada Ekadasi signify?  
A. The end of Dakshinayanam  
B. The beginning of Dakshinayanam  
C. The beginning of Uttarayanam
3. In which *kshetra* is Ashada Ekadasi celebrated in a grand manner?

- A. Pandharpur  
B. Brindavan  
C. Dwaraka
4. What does everyone do during the Varkari Yatra procession to Pandharpur?  
A. Chant & sing the divine names of the Lord  
B. Perform a special kind of yagna  
C. Take a holy dip in the Ganges
5. What is the significance of Ashada Ekadasi in Puri Kshetra?  
A. People conclude their Pada Yatra  
B. It is the culminating day of Rathotsav [Festival of Chariots]  
C. Devotees of Lord Jagannath break their month long fast [Vratha]
6. Name the ancient king who was known for his steadfastness on Ekadasi fast.  
A. Rukmangadha  
B. Priyavratha  
C. Dharmangadha
7. What day of the month is counted as "Ekadasi"?  
A. 10th day after full-moon or new-moon  
B. 11th day after full-moon or new-moon  
C. 9th day after full-moon or half-moon
8. What holy 4-month period begins from Ashada Ekadasi?  
A. Chaturbhaja  
B. Visheshha-masya  
C. Chaturmasya
9. The Varkari Yatra of Lord Panduraga's devotees begins on Ashada Ekadasi from which place?  
A. Pandharpur  
B. Pune  
C. Dehu

Compiled by:  
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Answers:

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



## News and Events

### GOPA KUTEERAM SUMMER CAMPS DALLAS - CRAFT CAMP



### HOUSTON LI'L GOPAS CAMP



### CHICAGO SUMMER CAMP



### DALLAS - NAMA WALKATHON



### DALLAS - BLOOD DRIVE



### NAMA @ HOUSTON RATH YATRA



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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.