

To Forgive is Divine

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Scriptures like Srimad Bhagavatam bring us face to face with the lives of *bhagavatas* (great devotees of the Lord). Interestingly, the situations they faced are not very different from those we face today, although the timelines are eras apart. However, the very reason they are called *bhagavatas* is that even in difficult times their lives shone with love, compassion, humility, truth, faith, gratitude and forgiveness – all of which are hard to find in contemporary times.



And this is why Srimad Bhagavatam has been bestowed on us. Because the simple path that it shows - Bhagavata Dharma – imparts these noble qualities to us effortlessly and makes our hearts tender and brim with love, so that Bhagavan takes over us.

There may not go a day in our lives where we have not been hurt by the words or actions of others. At those moments the pain pierces the mind and dwells in the heart as a grudge. But a soul gripped with grudge and hurt is inadvertently trapped, as the grudge eats up all goodness and mars the way of spiritual progress.

Everyone is familiar with the life of the Pandavas. It was filled with adversity and humiliation. This was especially true for Draupadi. Being the wife of five great, brave warriors and daughter-in-law of the house of the great race of Kurus, one would think Draupadi would have had a life of roses. But it was not so. She was repeatedly humiliated by the Kauravas and had to suffer terribly all her life. However, being the bha-

gavata she was, each time she unfailingly sought refuge at the Lotus Feet of her beloved Lord Govinda.

The last straw from Kauravas' side came at the end of the Mahabharata war. Ashwatthama, the son of Dronacharya, desperate to show his

faithfulness to Duryodhana, committed the heinous act of killing Draupadi's five young sons. In the silence of the night when every-

one was fast asleep in their tents on the battlefield, right after the great war, Ashwatthama tread inside and beheaded Draupadi's innocent sons, who were in no way a threat to him.

When Draupadi woke up the next morning to find her young boys dead, she lamented in agony. Seeing her plight Arjuna took a vow to kill the one who had committed that sinister act, and sped off with Krishna to bring the murderer to task. When the cornered Ashwatthama saw Arjuna coming towards him, he saw no other way but to use the powerful Brahmastra. Arjuna immediately took refuge in Lord Krishna, and on His advice, countered Ashwatthama's weapon with his own Brahmastra and withdrew both the *astras*, thus averting large-scale destruction.

Aswathama was finally caught, bound and brought before Draupadi. But to everyone's surprise, contrary to the anticipated vengeful reaction, Draupadi forgave Ashwatthama! She did it wholeheartedly, exhibiting her nobility and clarity of character. Forgiveness is not justifying the act. Draupadi never

denied the ghastly crime, but she reasoned why he should be spared. Her reasoning was that Aswathama was a *brahmana*; that he was their Guru *putra* – the son of their guru Dronacharya who was the one who had equipped the Pandavas with skills that had made them immaculate warriors; and finally that Ashwatthama's mother, Kripa, should not undergo the same agony at the loss of her son that she, Draupadi, herself had to undergo.

What compassion and foresight this great *bhagavata* had! No wonder then that her story finds a place in Srimad Bhagavatam itself.

A resentful mind binds and destroys the person it dwells in. Forgiveness is untying of the bond of negativity and exchanging kindness for hurt. The charming Krishna is earnestly looking for a pure heart to sit in, and when all the impurities are cleansed from our hearts, He will ascend its throne once and for all.

There cannot be greater treachery than what besieged Draupadi but Draupadi forgave instantaneously; it is a quality of the strong and pure. When one wonders how hopeless her life was, her act of forgiveness warms up the coldness and brings forth the intangible beauty in magnanimity. As Mark Twain put it, "Forgiveness is the fragrance shed by the violets at the heel that crushed them."

- Lekshmi Nair, Houston, TX

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Cherished Memoirs

This month we are starting a new series which will chronicle 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 Moon-Faced Lord

This time the lunar eclipse began early in the morning and lasted till about 9 pm in the night. On such days, one should eat only after the eclipse time passes and the full moon is visible again. Do you know what a disciple - Jagannathan - thought that day?

"Wouldn't our Swamiji always say that Krishna's face is like a full moon all the time? Why should we wait to see the full moon after the eclipse? I'm just going to see Krishna's face and then eat today," he thought. Thinking thus, he even went on to do the same!

Jagannathan now felt that Sri Swamiji would definitely ask about this during the evening darshan.

When he came for darshan that evening, Sri Swamiji was seated outside on a chair in Premika Bhavanam.

The moment Sri Swamiji saw Jagannathan, he laughed and jokingly asked, "Isn't it the



eclipse today? Did you eat? They are all saying that we should eat only in the night."

Sri Swamiji then continued, "So you thought that Krishna's face is equivalent of the full moon, and seeing His face, looks

like you have already had your food!"

The moment Jagannathan heard this, his joy knew no bounds. He was not surprised that Sri Swamiji knew of his act, but was thrilled and surprised that Sri Swamiji had also fulfilled his wish that he (Sri Swamiji) would ask about it the moment he saw him!

Translated from Madhuramurali magazine, Dec 2003 issue.

Madhura Geetam - Bharata Pradakshina

His Holiness Maharanyam Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji has composed several hundreds of kirtans glorifying various deities and depicting different bhavas of a devotee, from praise and enjoyment, friendship and motherhood, to love and intense prayer. These kirtans are all being compiled by his devotees under the title—Madhura Geetam.

Sri Swamiji has also composed many kirtans on various kshetras or places of pilgrimage around India.

In this new series, we will go on a pradakshina of Bharata desha as we present, each month, a kirtan composed by Sri Swamiji on a particular kshetra, starting from Mannargudi in south India.

Mannargudi Rajagopalan

Mannargudi, a holy place located near Thanjavur in the state of Tamil Nadu, is known as Champakaranya kshetra and is also called Dakshina Dwaraka (Dwaraka of the south). The deity of the temple at Mannargudi is Krishna in the form of the famous Mannargudi Rajagopalan. Here Krishna is in the form of a cowherd who

goes to the forest (to herd cows) dressed as "Raja Mannar" - a king - which is how Yashoda likes to dress him up.

Just like Kulasekhara Azhwar puts Kannapuram Sauriraja Perumal to sleep, here our Guru Maharaj sings this Sanskrit kirtan in Nilambari raga. The beautiful form of the Lord is described in the charanam, where Rajagopalan wears a single vastram (piece of cloth) and shines forth with radiance. The kirtan also talks about the divine mother of the kshetra - Sri Champakavalli Thaayaar.

Transliteration

Champakaranya Kshetra Bala

Raga: Nilambari **Tala:** Adi

Pallavi

champakAraNyakshetrabAla jagadrakshaka rAjagopAla (cha)

Charanam

ekavastrAnvita thejomayarUpa rAgamAlikArchanapriya (cha)

jaya srlchampakavalllramaNa gorakshaNakara rAjagopAla (cha) muraLldhara mAnasasevita sakalamuniRudaya sadAbhAvita (cha)

Meaning

Pallavi:

O young boy of Champakaranya (forest of Champaka trees)

O Rajagopala (King of Cows and Cowherds), You are the protector of the whole world!

Charanam:

Adorned with a single piece of cloth, You shine forth with radiance
You are one who enjoys to be worshiped with a garland of different ragas
Hail to You, O Beloved of Sri Champakavalli
O Rajagopala, You are verily the protector of the cows
You are One who is worshiped in the heart of Muralidhara
You are One who always resides in the hearts of all sages



Unity is Strength

Only if there is a good understanding between the husband and wife, can the

household be a happy one. It is only when the children in a family gel well with their parents that peace and happiness will prevail. A family that has no unity is but a family in sorrow. A friendship bears fruit only if the friends are amicable.

Likewise, unity is indispensable in a business, community, city and country. Unity brings all goodness. Let us read a story from Mahabharata that underscores the importance of unity.

One day, a hunter ventured into the forest and with the intention of catching birds, spread his net. As he waited patiently, a bird came and fell into the net. Then yet another bird fell into trap. The hunter was a



happy man now. But does greed spare anyone? 'If I wait a little longer, I will see more birds falling into the net! It is going to be a feast today!' thinking so, he waited patiently. But soon, he witnessed

something that he least expected! The birds started to flap their wings and in no time, they started to fly carrying the net along!

This saddened the hunter. He repented that he lost not only the

birds, but also the net that earned his livelihood. He began to chase the birds that were starting to soar up. Those who watched the hunter running behind the birds laughed loudly. 'Oh! Foolish hunter!' They called out. The hunter did not stop, but still heard them continue... 'Have you gone insane? Do you think you can match the pace of flying birds? How on earth can you ever dream of grounding those flying

birds?'

The hunter, still keeping his pace, replied, 'It is only because of the birds joined hands that they have tricked me. Unity seldom lasts! When the unity among these birds is lost, I win. It is just a matter of time...'

Just as expected, very soon, one of the birds wanted to fly in a particular direction and the other was adamant on flying in the opposite direction. The stronger among the two dragged the net. The other one gathered all its strength and pulled the net towards its favorite direction. Soon, they lost balance and fell on the ground.

The hunter happily walked home with the birds and the net, smiling slyly at those who mocked at him!

Children, do you see the power of unity? When the brain, brawn, energy, thought and power of everyone in a group are united, the resulting product is no less than divine.

Source: www.namadwaar.org

Kids' Quiz - Sant Kabirdas

Sant Kabirdas was a great saint and poet who is said to have been born as a Muslim but who followed the path of Bhagavata Dharma (singing and listening to the glories of the Lord). Sant Kabirdas has many followers even today and his poems and songs are very popular. His birthday falls this year on June 23, 2013. Let us reminisce his life with a quiz.

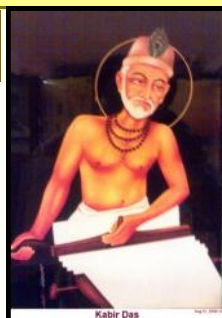
1. In which state in India, was Sant Kabirdas born?

- A. Bihar
- B. Uttar Pradesh
- C. West Bengal

2. Name the path that was advocated by Sant Kabirdas

- A. Advaitam
- B. Chanting the Divine Name
- C. Dwaitam

3. What was the name given to Sant Kabir's



famous philosophical couplets?

- A. Abhangs
- B. Ashtapathi
- C. Dohas

4. Name the home town of Sant Kabirdas.

- A. Lucknow
- B. Kasi

C. Gaya

5. Name the Mahatma from whom Kabir got the initiation of Rama Nama

- A. Sant Ramananda
- B. Sant Jnaneshwar
- C. Sant Tukaram

6. On which river bank did Kabir get the initiation of Rama Nama?

- A. Yamuna
- B. Ganges
- C. Godavari

7. What does the term 'Kabir' connote?

- A. The Great

B. The Force

C. Knowledge

8. Name the occupation of Kabir's parents

- A. Pottery
- B. Fishing
- C. Weavers

9. What do Kabir's poetic works primarily glorify?

- A. Greatness of Rama Nama, Guru and Satsang
- B. Greatness of Karma Yoga and Jnana Marga
- C. Greatness of Raja Yoga

10. Who were Kabir's parents?

- A. Jagannath Misra and Sachi Devi
- B. Niru and Nima
- C. Vishwanath Datta, Bhuvaneshwari Devi

Compiled by
Ramya Srinivasan, San Jose, CA

Answers:

1-B, 2-B, 3-C, 4-B, 5-A, 6-B, 7-A, 8-C, 9-A, 10-B

News and Events

DALLAS - HEART OF LOVE



MADHURA UTSAV - NAMADWAAR



ATLANTA - RATH YATRA

GOD Atlanta satsang participated and performed bhajans along with other Bhagavathas during Ratha yatra procession in Hindu temple of Atlanta, on May 25. The rathotsavam was part of the Brahmotsavam celebrations and was very memorable and wonderful experience. GOD satsang was overjoyed and blessed to be a part of it. Around 100 people took part in the yatra.

MILWAUKEE - MADHURA UTSAV

By the benign grace of Sri Swamiji and Lord Sri Madhuri Sakhi Sametha Sri PremikaVaradan, a Madhura Utsav was celebrated from May 25th thru May 27th by Satsang families in Milwaukee. Devotees from Milwaukee area and Chicago took part in it joyfully.

SEATTLE - MOTHER'S DAY



BAY AREA - NAGARA SANKIRTAN



UPCOMING EVENTS!

Houston Namadwaar: Gopa Kuteeram Summer camps for all age groups. For details call - 281.303.5828

Virginia: July 3 - 7, Madhura Utsav at Richmond. For details call - 828.668.2463

CHICAGO - PUPPET SHOW AT AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



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; Minneapolis, 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 for more info.

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