

Simple Yet Secret!

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The Almighty is infinite and there are infinite ways to reach the Infinite. Among them, *Bhagavata Dharma* is the most enjoyable path - one that comprises of devotion unto the Divine through Nama Sankirtan. And then, there is the path of *Atma Vichara* (self-enquiry) which is daringly non-dualistic and considered the most direct path which declares all external *sadhanas* void and exhorts the seeker to turn his focus inward and progress through stringent inquiry. Due to the rigor involved, there have been few proponents of this path, the great saint Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi of Tiruvannamalai being the most prominent.



Among the works of Ramana Maharshi is the Tamil translation of *Devikaalottaram*. An *upa-agama shastra*, this 85-verse (originally Sanskrit) masterpiece is a conversation between Lord Shiva and His consort Parvati Devi on the path of Self-Inquiry.

In the first verse, Parvati Devi asks Lord Shiva, "O Lord, I yearn to know that path of supreme wisdom and the code of conduct by adopting which one can get liberation, so that all humanity may attain salvation."

The remaining 84 verses of the *Devikaalottaram* are an answer by the great Lord to His consort's wonderful question.

It is a completely Advaitic scripture and speaks in detail about *atma vichara*.

In His upadesa, Lord Shiva says, "[For those seeking everlasting liberation] There is no room for performing *puja* (worship of deities), *namaskaram* (paying homage like prostration), *dhyana* (contemplation) and so on. Hear from me that the highest truth acclaimed in the Vedas can be known

only through *jnana*; hence, there is absolutely no need to know anything outside of oneself!"

Again He says, "[One should feel] I am pure Awareness, immaculate, perfectly liberated; and forever present everywhere. I am indeterminable. No one can grasp me or leave me. I am free from sorrow. I am a l w a y s *brahmamayam* (of the nature of Brahman)."

He says that one should renounce completely all disciplines, action plans, mental conflicts, and attachment to duties, as all kinds of action result in bondage. One should maintain a neutral attitude towards all things, be free from desire for pleasure, be unaffected by praise or slander, consider all living beings in this world as himself, avoid unnecessary arguments and worldly associations, get rid of jealousy, slander, pomp, passion, hatred, desire, anger, fear and sorrow.

After exhorting us to do things that are, honestly speaking, nearly impossible for an ordinary person of the world [like us] to do, finally in the 83rd verse Lord Shiva reveals a great secret.

Coming down from His magnificent, towering, awe-inspiring but unapproachable "I am One with the Universe" disposition, Lord Shiva now addressing Parvati, for the first time here, as "My dearest" (which is representative of His now infinitely compassionate attitude and love for humankind) says, "An earnest seeker who finds a *Jnani* (an enlightened person) and worships him with mind, body and words, offering him sweet-smelling sandal paste, fruits, flowers, incense, good water to bathe, clothes and food - *with heart-melting love* - will thus attain liberation!"

Lord Shiva who had, all this while, spoken of giving up external worship of deities and focusing only on internal expansion, now gladly advocates the same external worship with love towards a human!

But what is to be noted here is that He is not speaking of any ordinary human. He speaks of a *Jnani*: One who has attained that state of Liberation, One who is pure Awareness, who is *brahmamayam*, who is One with the Supreme Being!

What a great revelation Lord Shiva gives here! If we really want freedom from suffering, all we have to do is simply find One who has attained that state of Liberation and worship him with love! (The catch: The worshipped has to be One who has attained oneness with God, and the worship itself has to be done with 'heart-melting' love.)

How beautiful it is. How simple. How much more practical! How much more relatable!

And indeed, this is what we truly see in the case of all great mahatmas. Be it Adi Shankara, Ramanujacharya or Madhvacharya; Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Ramakrishna Paramahansa or Ramana Maharshi. They taught various paths to reach God. But the luckiest of their devotees, though, were those who fell in love with the mahatma himself. Those who worshipped the mahatmas themselves. Simply through the immense compassion and grace of the mahatma, such devotees are taken ashore.

Nisha Giri, Houston TX

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Cherished Memoirs 12 - "Knock, And It Shall Be Opened!"

boy. It is Your responsibility to

This series chronicles sweet experiences recounted by the devotees of HH Maharanyam Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji. These articles are translations from the series, "Madhuramaana Mahaneeyar" by Dr. A Bhagyanathan, personal secretary to Sri Swamiji, that is published every month in Madhuramurali Tamil monthly magazine.

The ever compassionate Bhagavan blesses all His devotees through His divine *leelas*. Just like the deities of Guruvayoor, Pandharpur and Udipi, Sri Premika Varadan (Lord Krishna at Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji's Madhurapuri Ashram) also performs divine *leelas* and rushes to the side of His devotees when they are in trouble.

A few years ago while speaking to all the Namadwaar volunteers, Sri Swamiji made this prayer unto Premika Varadan, "Krishna! Volunteers in different corners of the world are working tirelessly to fulfill my desire of spreading the Mahamantra far and wide. I want You to take care of them like You are taking care of me." Our Premika Varadan made true this prayer by enacting His Lila in the life of devotee Mrs. Jayanthi Ramanan.

Mrs. Jayanthi Ramanan and Mr. Ramanan are ardent devotees of Sri Swamiji, and live in Sydney, Australia with their two sons Mahesh and Dinesh, and daughter-in-law Aparna Mahesh. At Sri Swamiji's behest, they host and meticulously organize programs for visiting devotees from our satsang as well as coordinate local satsang programs.

This incident happened on January 10 2013.

Jayanthiji, who works for a multi-national company, was working from home that day. She was alone at home and was being extra careful to answer all emails and

phone calls promptly as she was working under a new manager.

It was almost 10 am and was getting hot outside. Jayanthiji decided to park her car inside the garage. Jayanthiji remembered to carry the front door key as her husband always reminded her to keep the key with her while going outside the house. She parked the car in the garage and closed the garage.

She used the key and tried to open the front door. But the door would not open. Only then she remembered that the door was bolted inside and so could not be opened from the outside. As she had already closed the garage door, she could not enter through that way either. She was locked out!

As she was desperately searching for a way to get in, her phone began ringing inside, and continued to do so. She was helpless. She knew it was probably her new manager trying to reach her. And now that she did not answer the phone, he would think that she was out shopping! Her fear and helplessness grew stronger by the minute. She didn't have her cellphone on hand, so she could not even inform the manager about her situation.

Desperate, she remembered Sri Swamiji saying that Sri Premika Varadan would rush to His devotees' side. She prayed to Premika Varadan, "Premika varada help me, show me the way." Then she started to sing Sri Swamiji's prayer kirtan fervently, "*Indru pol endrum enai nee kaathida vendum, Premika varada! Thoonai pilanthu vandhu baalakanai kaathaai, pethai enai kaappathum nin kadane!*" (*Premika Varada, it is You who has to protect me! You [once] broke open the pillar and came to protect the little*

protect this helpless woman too!)

She continued to sing that kirtan in mind and prayed continuously. Surprisingly, her neighbor came home from work for some reason. She went up to him, explained her situation and using his phone, called her daughter-in-law Aparna (who lived in a different part of town) to bring another key. But as her manager was new, she did not remember his phone number.

It would take her daughter-in-law some time to get there. But time was running out for Jayanthiji. "Premika Varada, help me!" her mind cried out again and again.

Her patience was running out, and soon it gave way to anger. For a devotee, it becomes a chiding mixed with love. She said to Premika Varadan, "How will I answer my manager? I am not a great devotee of Yours like Gajendra, Draupadi or Dhruva. But I don't have any other choice also. I seek Your compassion. Can You not show me a way out?"

The moment that this prayer was felt very intensely by her, something astonishing happened! A screw that was holding the bolt inside the door gave way; the bolt came loose and the door opened! When Jayanthiji saw this, she was stunned and speechless.

She was thrilled that Premika Varadan had heard her prayer! She was overjoyed that the door had opened! But the greatest joy was in that the Lord had actually showed that He is indeed omnipresent!

Jayanthiji shared this incident happily, when she visited India, at Madhurapuri Ashram in the presence of Sri Premika Varadan Himself.

**Translated by Viji Ramkrishnan Dallas TX
from February 2014 issue**

Quiz Time - Azhwars

- Which God did the Azhwars primarily worship?
 - Lord Ganesha
 - Lord Shiva
 - Lord Vishnu
- How many Azhwars are there?
 - Ten
 - Eleven
 - Twelve
- Which Azhwar was the disciple of Nammazhwar?
 - MadhuraKavi Azhwar
 - Thiruppan Azhwar
 - Bhoothath Azhwar
- How many verses did all the Azhwars compose?
 - Three thousand
 - Four thousand

- Five thousand
- Who was the saint who retrieved all the Azhwars' verses which were considered lost?
 - Nadamuni
 - Bhoopadeva
 - Nammazhwar
 - Which Azhwar was called Vipra Narayana?
 - Thiruppaan Azhwar
 - Madhurakavi Azhwar
 - Thondaradippodi Azhwar
 - Which Azhwar composed all his verses in praise of his Guru?
 - Madhurakavi Azhwar
 - Nammazhwar
 - Sri Andal
 - Which Azhwar remained mute and lived under a tamarind tree for 16 years?
 - Madhurakavi Azhwar

- Bhoothath Azhwar
 - Nammazhwar
- Name the Azhwar who had great devotion to Lord Rama.
 - Kulasekara Azhwar
 - Sri Andal
 - Pei Azhwar
 - In which language did the Azhwars sing praises of the Lord?
 - Hindi
 - Tamil
 - Telugu
 - Which Azhwar composed 'Thiruppavai'?
 - Madhurakavi Azhwar
 - Sri Andal
 - Kulasekara Azhwar

Compiled by Ramya Srinivasan, San Jose, CA



Madhura Geetam - Bharata Pradakshina 12

Radha and Krishna

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.

Barsana

About 50 kilometers from Vrindavan is the village of Barsana, the birth place of Lord Krishna's beloved, Sri Radha. Therefore the place itself is an important pilgrim spot for Krishna's devotees.



Radha was born to Barsana's chieftain, Vrishabanu, and his queen Kalavati after Vrishabanu chanted the Mahamantra for several years. Radha was the epitome of *prema bhakti*. Her love for Krishna was unparalleled. So was Krishna's love for Radha. In Brahma Vaivartha Purana, Lord Krishna himself says that those who chant Radha's name are very dear to Him.

used the land of Barsana for their divine plays. There is one such divine play that people of Barsana still believe and reenact every year during the Holi celebration. After Krishna steals Radha and the Gopis' clothes, Radha and the Gopis decide to teach Krishna a lesson by hitting him with a stick.

So every year, during Holi, the men of Nand gaon playing the role of Krishna enter Barsana with colors and the women of Barsana, posing as Gopis playfully hit them with sticks (*lath*). Hence the Holi celebration is known as Lath Mar Holi.

Sri Swamiji has composed many songs on Sri Radha Devi. In this series, we will be presenting "Pavitra Bhoomi", a song that describes the celebration of Radha Devi's birth in the holy land of Barsana.

Pavitra Bhoomi

Ragam: Gowlai Tala: Adi
Pallavi

pavitra bhUmi barsAnA bhUmi

Anupallavi

(andru) kshlrasAgarathil thOnDriyavaL (indru) prEma sAgaramAi vandanaLe

Charanam

dEvargAL sUzhndhanar gandharvargAL pADinar

dhundhubi muzhanga kinnarar Adinar

pUmAri pozhindhu maghizhndanare

bhuviyil malarndadhu prEmaiyenum malare

Translation

Pallavi

Holy is the Land of Barsana!

Anupallavi

The One who appeared (ages ago) in the Ocean of Milk

Has (today) been born as the Ocean of Love.

Charanam

The Devas (gods) assembled, the Gandharvas (demigods) sang

Drums were played as the Kinnaras (demigods) danced

They all showered flowers and rejoiced

As the flower of love (Radha) blossomed on Earth

Sowmya Balasubramanian, San Jose CA

Ambareesha: Humility Personified

banks of the Yamuna. On *dwadasi* day, as he was

Learnings from Srimad Bhagavatam

Srimad Bhagavatam, in its pursuit to purify the listener, aptly places the story of King Ambareesha - an ardent devotee of the Lord and an epitome of humility - right before the glorious tenth canto (which contains the stories of Sri Krishna) to cleanse any nuances of pride left in the listener.

Ambareesha had exceptional devotion to Bhagavan. He had inherited the entire earth and possessed unrivalled power, yet his mind was constantly immersed in Him, his hands cleaned the premises of His temple and served His devotees, his ears heard only His wonderful stories, his eyes saw only Him and he ate only His *prasadam*. Ambareesha had offered his entire self to Hrishikesha, the Lord of the senses. And the Lord in turn protected Ambareesha by sending his discus Sudarshana to guard His devotee's kingdom!

Once Ambareesha undertook a vow to fast on every *ekadasi* for an entire year. The last one, he observed at Madhuvana on the



Pic source: Keshav, bhagavatham.blogspot.com

about to break his fast, Sage Durvasa arrived there. Ambareesha offered his obeisance and invited him to dine. Durvasa agreed and went to bathe in the river. As the sage was delayed and the time to conclude the fast was running out, Ambareesha had a sip of water, which would conclude the fast while at the same time allow him to remain dutiful to his guest.

On learning that Ambareesha had broken his fast, the enraged sage created a fiery spirit to attack Ambareesha. Ambareesha stood humbly in his place, ready to accept the result of his 'mistake'. But the Lord's discus could not remain still. Being It's duty to protect Bhagavan's devotee, the Sudarshana instantly burned the spirit and rushed toward Durvasa. Durvasa frantically ran in different directions in an effort to save himself from the scorching fire of the Chakra. The devotee king who lived amid luxuries stood fearless when faced by death, while the sage who performed austere penances

ran fearfully from the Lord's own discus!

After trying in vain to seek help from Brahma and Rudra, Durvasa finally ran to Sri Hari for relief. But, revealing that He is only a slave to His own devotees, the Lord sent Durvasa back to Ambareesha. Full of remorse, Durvasa returned to the king and clasped his feet.

Here again, Ambareesha's humility stands out. Instead of being gratified that the sage who had tried to kill him was now at his feet, the king actually considered it a misfortune that his feet should be clasped by a great sage! Withdrawing his feet out of humility, Ambareesha extolled the Sudarshana in the name of his own glorious ancestors! Sudarshana cooled down at the king's entreaty.

King Ambareesha, though bestowed with the highest birth and supreme devotion led a humble life in communion with the Lord. The Lord Himself says, "Asceticism and devotion bring highest good only when offered with humility, while lack of modesty leads to contrary results".

Lekshmi Nair, Houston TX



SRI RAMA NAVAMI CELEBRATION

News & Events



RALEIGH, NC



GOPA KUTEERAM, BAY AREA



DALLAS, TX



YEAR-END GOPAKUTEERAM PROGRAM, HOUSTON TX



UPCOMING EVENTS

- Minneapolis - "Radhe Radhe - Dance Ballet" - June 8th, 3.30 PM @ The Southern Theatre.
For more info contact: minneapolis.god@godivinity.org
- Houston - Gopa Kuteeram Summer Camps June-July. For more info visit www.godivinity.org

VASANTOTSAVAM, US NAMADWAAR, HOUSTON TX



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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