

Annual GOD USA Madhura Utsav and Srimad Bhagavata Mahotsava

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Dec 21 to 27, 2014 was a joyous, blissful week in Houston with the Srimad Bhagavata Mahotsava and Grand Madhura Utsav held at Houston Namadwaar. Along with the numerous Houston devotees, over 100 devotees from across the USA came to Houston for this celebration - from Orlando, Richmond-VA, Raleigh-NC, Boston, New Hampshire, Atlanta, Chicago, Minneapolis, Dallas, Austin, Bay Area-CA, Redding-CA and other cities.



The days were packed with *kirtanam* and *katha shraavanam* with little chance to think of anything other than Bhagavan. Every day began with Prabodhanam and Tiruppavai recital at 6 am. This was followed by the commencement of Srimad Bhagavata parayanam (18000 slokas in 7 days) which went on until about 1pm daily.



Simultaneously, in the mornings there was either vahanam processions or Sampradaya bhajan with Sri Jayadeva Ashtapadis and kirtans of numerous other mahatmas including Sri Thyagaraja, Sri Purandara Dasa, Sri Bhadrachala Ramadasa, Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji and Panduranga bhaktas' abhangs. Vahanams that Lord Krishna and Sri Radha Devi were carried on, on various days included Sesa vahanam, Kudirai (horse) vahanam, Yaanai (elephant) vahanam and Garuda vahanam. It was a blissful sight to see the Lord gallop fast on His horse, move majestically on His elephant and glide smoothly on His Garuda.

was magical, as everyone was transported to Gokula and Brindavana through the wonderful exposition of Sri

Krishna Leela by Sri Ramanujamji, disciple of HH Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji. Sri Ramanujamji delved to great depths into many of Sri Krishna's bala leelas, bringing out and explaining many enjoyable points in the stories through the commentaries of various mahatmas. It was truly an amazing discourse series.

This series was held at Sri Meenakshi Temple in Houston and was co-sponsored by Meenakshi Temple Society. On a couple of days, after the discourse, the day of Krishna Jananam and Rasa Leela, women devotees danced in joy and celebration, around Bala Krishna and Sri Radha-Krishna respectively.

The discourse series was preceded daily by dance performances by Houston dancers including students of Ms. Sravanthi

Modali (Kuchipudi), Ms. Rathna Kumar (Bharatanatyam), Ms. Supradipta Datta (Odissi), Ms. Indrani Parthasarathy (Bharatanatyam) and Ms. Padmini Chari and Ms. Surabi Veeraragavan (Bharatanatyam). On one day, Gopa Kuteeram children from all across the USA presented a play depicting all the cantos of Srimad Bhagavatam, and on another, Gopa Kuteeram Youth presented a "Street Play" on how they follow Bhagavata Dharma.

Other special events during the week-

Every evening



long utsav at Namadwaar included celebration of Nandotsavam (with children dancing around baby Krishna), Govinda Pattabhishekam (with special abhishekam to Sri Premika Varadan-Madhuri Sakhi) and Anna Koototsav, Radha Kalyanam (divine wedding of the divine couple), Madhura Gitam quiz



(quiz on the compositions of HH Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji), beautiful Jhoola Seva at night amid diya lamps, Nikunjotsavam with a special vocal concert by Shilpa Sadagopan.

It was an exhilarating week that saw — all-around — selfless service and hard work by everyone, in order to conduct



the event smoothly. The entire celebration rejuvenated everyone and inspired all to do more and more kirtanam, katha shraavanam and celebrate Bhagavan in their own lives!

Cherished Memoirs - 19

This series chronicles interesting experiences recounted by the devotees of HH Maharanyam Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji. These articles are translations from the series, "Madhuramaana Mahaneyar" that is published every month in *Madhuramurali Tamil monthly magazine*.

Antima Smaranam - A Guru's Greatest Gift

Vasudeva Kutumbakam (The entire world is Lord Vasudeva's family) is true for our satsang members. Our satsangs are in various countries like America, Muscat, Australia, Dubai, Indonesia, Abu Dhabi, Singapore, Malaysia, UK, New Zealand, Fiji Islands, Papua New Guinea, etc. Parents of our overseas satsang members who visit them for a few months, come back and share with us their satsang experience with much joy and enthusiasm. Some of the exciting comments are like, "Right from a 2-year-old child everybody talks about Sri Swamiji so affectionately", "Everybody is so bound to a single mantra 'GURUJI'", "Nama Varsha and Utsavs are so frequent and well done over there", etc.

Some who move back to India even tell Sri Swamiji that they do not get as much satsang in India as they get abroad. When Balaji Narasimhan's children (from Atlanta, USA) chanted Kunti Stuti, Bhishma Stuti even in jetlag and while half asleep, Sri Swamiji was so excited and happy about it.

Namadwaars are being established across various parts of the globe. Our Sydney,

Australia Namadwaar is nearing completion. Bhoomi puja was performed for Houston (USA) Namadwaar on November 8, 2014 in presence Ramanujamji. Srinand and Krithika are a couple who are part of our satsang in Houston. Krithika's mother Shyamala couldn't get Sri Swamiji's darshan



HH Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji

during her first visit in 2008. She got Sri Swamiji's photo and started chanting Mahamantra in front of the photo right from that day. She participated in all the satsangs when she visited the US and got Sri Swamiji's darshan on her return. She even stayed at the ashram for one whole week to participate in a Bhaghavata Saptaham and get Sri Swamiji's dharshan. Srinand and Krithika prayed to Sri Swamiji for *santana bhagyam* (child). Sri Swamiji prayed for a few minutes and gave them *prasad* saying "You will get, not a baby, but babies!" And yes, they were later blessed with twins. Sri Swamiji named them as Raman and Lakshmanan.

Krithika's mother Shyamala calls Sri Swamiji as "Gurujipa" only. She suffered from cancer and even when she was going through the pain, she would always chant Mahamantra and think of Sri Swamiji. Come what may, however the pain may be, she used to visit Sri Swamiji during every Ekadasi and used to say that the way Sri Swamiji always enquired after her health was the best palliative care.

Krithika would ask her mother, "Anyway, you will leave this world. After you, who will give me the right advice?" The standard and firm reply always was "What if I depart? You have got a wonderful Guru to care for you and your family all the time. What else do you want? So you should never worry!" Such was her faith.

Towards the end of her life, she was not able to come to meet Sri Swamiji, but still she would always chant Mahamantra and think of Sri Swamiji. She would shed tears that she was unable to get Sri Swamiji's darshan as before. Her husband used to go to Adayar Padmanabha Swami temple and get *prasad* every day. One day, when he gave her the temple *prasad*, she opened the *kumkum* packet and to her surprise, she saw Sri Swamiji's photo in the paper that the packet was made of. She held on to that smiling photo of Sri Swamiji with so much joy and cried, "Gurujipa has come and blessed me."

With this joy in her heart, in the next couple of days she attained the feet of Sri Krishna. It is also amazing that the last words she said to her daughter were, "Guruve sharanam!"

Original Tamil article by Dr. A Bhagyanathan, Dec 2014 issue of Madhuramurali
Translated by Sankar Ganesan, Dallas TX

Kid's Quiz - Margazhi

Margazhi is an auspicious month that falls during Dec-Jan in the English calendar. Our scriptures say that spiritual activities performed during this month yields great fruit.

1. Name the Lord who said that he is indeed "Margazhi" among the months.

- A. Lord Shiva
- B. Lord Krishna
- C. Lord Rama

2. Which Azhwar is worshipped specially during the month of Margazhi?

- A. Andal
- B. Thirumangai Azhwar
- C. Thiruppan Azhwar

3. Which part of the day does the Margazhi month signify for the Devas?

- A. Midnight
- B. Afternoon
- C. Early Morning

4. One year on the Earth is equivalent to how many celestial days for the Devas?

- A. One Day
- B. Two Days
- C. Three Days

5. What is another name for 'Margazhi'?

- A. Shravana
- B. Dhanurmasa
- C. Ashad

6. People in South India, commemorate the birth-day of this ardent devotee of Lord Rama during the month of Margazhi

- A. Sugreeva
- B. Vibhishana
- C. Hanuman

7. Name the most auspicious Ekadasi day that falls during the month of Margazhi

- A. Vaikunta Ekadasi
- B. Ashada Ekadasi
- C. Bhishma Ekadasi

8. In which direction does the Sun starts to move at the end of Margazhi month?

- A. South
- B. North
- C. East

9. Which of the following is specially rendered every morning during the month of Margazhi?

- A. Tiruppugazh
- B. Tiruppavai
- C. Vishnu Sahasranamam

10. Name the form of Lord Shiva who is represented in 'Ardhra Dance' that is celebrated in Margazhi month

- A. Muruga
- B. Nataraja
- C. Shiva Linga

Compiled by
Ramya Srinivasan, San Jose CA

Answers:

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



Madhura Geetam - Bharata Pradakshina 19

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 and back.

Thirumazhisai - Jagannatha Perumal

There are a number of ancient temples in and around the city of Chennai. This month we will visit Tirumazhisai, a suburb of Chennai. This place is known for Lord Jagannatha's temple and is also the birthplace of Tirumazhisai Azhwar. There are totally three temples for Lord Jagannatha in India. The first and the most famous one is at Puri and is known as Uttara Jagannatha Kshetra. The second one is in Tirupullani and is known as Dakshina Jagannatha Kshetra. The third is the one in Tirumazhisai. As Tirumazhisai is in between Puri and Tirupullani, it is known as Madhya Jagannatha Kshetra.

Here, the Lord is found to be in a sitting posture along with his queens Satyabama and Rukmini. Saints Markandeya and Bhriгу

are also found in the sanctum sanctorum. The temple legend says that the saints Markandeya and Bhriгу performed severe penance in Tirumazhisai and the Lord, pleased by their efforts, appeared in front of them.

Sri Muralidhara Swamiji has composed an exquisite piece extolling the beauty of Lord Jagannatha in Tirumazhisai. The lyrics and its meaning are presented here.

Jagannatham Mama Kuladeivatam

Raga: Yamuna Kalyani Tala: Chapu

Pallavi

jagannAtham mama kuladeivatam – bhaje

Charanam

*bhAmArukmiNi- sahita- divyasvarUpam
bhaktisAravarada-vaiShNava-sevitam*

*mandahAsamukha-sundaravadanam
mamachittAkarShaNa-manmathasvarUpam*

*kaishika dvAdashI dinE bahu lalitam
muralldhara prArthanaA poorakam sadha*



Meaning

Pallavi

I sing [the praises of] Lord Jagannatha who is my family deity

Charanam

He has a divine form and stands with his queens Bhama and Rukmini

He is the Lord who was worshipped by Tirumazhisai Azhwar

He has a captivating smile on his beautiful face

He captivates my mind with his beauty that is equal to Manmatha's

He is charming on the day of Kaisika Dvadashi

He always fulfils Muralidhara's prayers

Sowmya Balasubramanian, Fremont CA

Beware of Flattery

Each one of us must be aware of our own limitations and strengths. Just as we ignore the criticism of people who are oblivious of our talents and virtues, we should also learn to disregard the comments of flatterers.



When someone praises qualities and virtues that we really don't possess, though initially we tend to ignore such compliments, as time passes we even begin to believe their words. Even if we overlook those compliments, people who require a favor from us or who intend to deface us will flatter us and succeed in making us believe it! So we must be very cautious in that regard. An instance that illustrates the above has been quoted in the Mahabharata.

One day, some boys saw a few swans walking along the beach. They told the crows, "Hey crows! You and the swans are indeed equal in every aspect. Why don't you fly like them?" Due to their fattened ego and stupidity, the crows believed the words of the children. They thought that they could indeed fly like the swans. So the crows challenged the swans to a flying competition. The swans agreed and said, "Let the best one among you compete with anyone of us."

The competition began. Initially the swan flew at a slower pace and the crows rejoiced thinking that their candidate was about to win. Gradually the swan picked up speed and began to rise to higher altitude. The crow tried hard but it could not fly above a certain altitude. The exertion weakened the crow and it fell into the sea. It begged the swan which was flying at a

very high altitude to save its life. The swan too took pity on the crow and saved it. The pride of the crow was thus curbed and it felt ashamed of its act. Thus children, we should not totally believe what others say about us. Each one of us truly knows our own state, don't we?

Source: www.namadwaar.org

Kids' Contribution



Art by Purush, 11 yrs, Redding, CA



SATSANGS WITH SRI RAMANUJAM JJ

News & Events

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CHICAGO, IL



ANCHORING ANGER WORK SHOP



DALLAS, TX



MINDFUL MEDITATION AT MD ANDERSON, HOUSTON



LIFE AND SOUL 2014, HOUSTON

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Upcoming Events!
Vaikunta Ekadasi & New Year Celebrations at various satsang centers. For more info visit www.godivinity.org

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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