

Raising Spiritual Kids

The summer holidays are here. Kids are going wild! Parents across the US are now faced with the daunting task of keeping their kids engaged for the next 3 months. It is not surprising that some may want their children to use this time to learn about their roots – the great culture of the country that the kids know mainly only through their parents and grandparents.

As Indian parents living in the US, many worry that their children will grow up to be too “Americanized” and be oblivious about their own culture. But why do people lose sleep over this issue? Maybe they are concerned that their children, in an attempt to fit in, will resort to leading a life that is not in tune with Indian culture. Or maybe they want them to worship God so that He will ensure that they do well in school or help them land a lucrative job. Or perhaps parents just want their kids to build character: respect elders, be honest and lead a righteous life.

But is learning about the wonderful culture and heritage of India and putting it into practice a goal in itself? Or only a means? Indian heritage is synonymous with Sanatana Dharma, the ancient way of life that has survived in our country through the millennia. And the goal of Sanatana Dharma is nothing but God-Realization. Thus, parents have the responsibility of carving the ‘trail’ towards this glorious goal for their ward; one which can guarantee that the trek towards that goal is not only righteous, but also pleasurable.

Speaking of ‘inculcating Indian culture’, the first thing that comes to the mind of any doting parent is spiritual camps and heritage classes where kids are taught slokas, verses from our scriptures, and maybe even a technique or two about meditation and other spiritual practices. These are wonderful ways to acquaint kids living abroad with Indian heritage, no doubt. But more often than not, the spiritual activities learned in classes do not last once the kids are back in school or even back home. A few hours of ‘heritage education’ are seldom sufficient to bring

these values to use in their mainstream life.

When we think about it, parents themselves have a tremendous latent potential to plan and pave the ‘trail’ for their kids, throughout the day, all seven days a week! And summertime is a God-given bonanza!

Here are six simple ways to bring spirituality into your child’s everyday life:

1. Talk to your kid about godliness and the ultimate purpose of life.

No one is ever too young to think about spirituality or God. And if parents really believe that attaining God is life’s end-goal, why should they keep that knowledge from their children? When we know that the earth is spherical, can we just let our children believe that it is flat and save the truth for later?

2. Tell them stories about the lives of great saints and devotees.

It is imperative to speak in their language. The life-histories of numerous saints who have decorated the Indian soil is the easiest way to help them better understand life’s goal. One story a day can keep parents going at least for a year! This not only helps kids develop love for God, but also inculcates in them noble traits and characteristics enshrined in the life-histories.

3. Explain to your kid the rationale behind daily religious activities.

The rational mind is a faithful servant, and luckily for us, Sanatana Dharma is a hundred percent scientific and rational. Explaining the significance of activities connected to our tradition and heritage, from ‘clasping the palms for prayer’ to ‘lighting a lamp’ can help kids understand that everything we do has a meaning.

4. Take them to temples and satsangs regularly.

Good company is the best molder of character, and the company of devotees is the best way to develop devotion to God. Interaction with devotees will also help



kids understand that faith in God is the foundation that they should build their lives upon.

5. Inculcate in them the practice of chanting the Name of God.

This is a simple but extremely potent means that has been advocated by our scriptures. The Name(s) can be sung or chanted softly or loudly and at any place or time, while working, studying, walking, eating, playing, etc., making it an easy practice for kids to follow. Just like a pumpkin seed carelessly tossed into the garden sprouts of its own accord, the Divine Name, even if uttered thoughtlessly, will sprout the plant of faith and godliness in the little one. So let your kids pick a favorite God and have them sing His/Her Name regularly.

6. Last but not the least, parents must remember that kids tend to follow not what they instruct but what they do!

Thus, making spirituality a fun yet sincere quest for God is certainly in the hands of parents. Spiritual kids are as fun-loving and normal as any other, but the difference is that they also have a clear sense of direction towards the ultimate goal and a strong foundation of social and moral values.

Nisha Giri, Houston, TX

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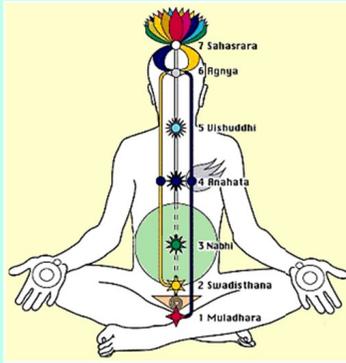
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Rama's Bow as a Yogic Principle

The uniqueness of our Puranas lies in the fact that they can be viewed from different perspectives – as a philosophy, a story, in terms of bhakti or as yoga. For example, Ramayana can be viewed as a yogic principle. In fact, the bow (*kodhanda*) of Lord Rama alone can be viewed as a yogic principle.

The curved limbs of the bow represent the eyebrows. The handle that connects the two limbs of the bow represents the space between the eyebrows, which is the location of *Agnya chakra*. The imaginary line connecting the tips of the eyebrows passing under the nostrils is the bow string. The *Prana* (vital energy) that originates from the *Muladhara chakra* at the base of the spinal column represents the arrow. The arrow *Prana* passes through various centers (chakras) on the spinal column



and hits the target – the *Sahasrara chakra* after passing through the *Agnya chakra*. *Prana* attaining the *Sahasrara* is the final goal.

The *Rajo* and *Tamo gunas* can be annihilated only with the help of *Sattva guna*. To illustrate that principle, Rama acquaints with Vibhishana, who is endowed with *sattva guna*, to win over Kumbhakarna the personification of *tamo guna* and the ten-headed (representing the ten *indriyas*) Ravana who is the personification of *Rajo guna*. The final stage is reached when one lets go of *sattva guna* as well. To illustrate that, Lord Rama crowns Vibhishana as the King of Lanka, leaves him and returns to Ayodhya with Sita Devi.

Sri Muralidhara Swamiji

Source: *MadhuraMurali magazine*, May 2009

Answers and beyond... Spiritual questions answered by Sri Muralidhara Swamiji

Q: Is chanting (the Mahamantra) while doing work considered meaningful chanting? I am usually continuously doing household chores one after the other, and I don't get time to sit and do japa. But if we chant while doing chores, does it have same effect ?

A: Yes. It is definitely great. The Gopis did exactly that.

Q: Is reading of the *Chatusloki Bhagavatam* equivalent to reading the entire *Srimad Bhagavatam*? How many lines are there in *chatusloki bhagavatam*?

A: Comprising of a total of 7 verses, this is the *bheeja* (seed) of *Bhagavatam*.

In order to provide vitamins to his body, a person takes vitamin tablets. Yet another takes delicious foods filled with vitamins to satisfy the same goal. Now, both tablets and delicious foods are means to the same goal of acquiring vitamins. But isn't the latter more enjoyable and a pleasant method?

Reading the entire *Bhagavatam* is akin to the latter means of vitamin intake, where we read *Bhagavatam* for not only the *punya*, but also for the blissful experience of reading it.

Q: If we are supposed live a life free from desire, how do we accomplish anything without motivation?

A: Desire here means greed. We should try to live a life with the basic necessities, without being greedy for worldly pleasures.

Q: If someone is continuously sad, does that have anything to do with his previous birth?

A: Sadness is only a state of mind.

For more such answers by Sri Swamiji, or to ask a question of your own, please visit the Nama Dwaar website at www.namadwaar.org.

Sniffer Dogs and Running Races - Vedic Concepts!

The Vedas contain everything about life and creation, right from macrocosmic concepts about the Supreme Being to microcosmic details about mundane facts of everyday life, and everything in between. Here are two instances of modern-day situations that have been spoken of the Vedas eons ago:

The Asuras once hid the cows of the Devas. Indra, the leader of the Devas, ordered the dog Sarama to find the cows. This dog at once set about sniffing. Indra followed the dog. Finally, it entered a huge pit and did not come out for a long time. Indra called out and asked if the dog had found the cows. The dog said happily said that it had , and came out with all the cows.

Today, we find the police using the services of sniffer dogs to solve theft or murder cases. This characteristic of dogs has been spoken of in our ancient, timeless Vedas!



Sports occupy an important place in today's world. The Vedas mirror this fact too! Read on...

Once, all the Devas who were interested in marrying the Prajapati's daughter approached him with their proposals. The Prajapati then declared that he would offer his daughter to the one who chants the Aaswina shastra mantras without help from anyone else. A quarrel then ensued among the Devas and they finally decided to settle the dispute through a running race. The race began and Agni deva was in the lead. The Aswini devas approached Agni deva with the request to slow down and permit them win the race. Agni deva agreed to help them if they gave him a share in the Aaswina shastra. The Aswini devas agreed and as proof of this, there are several mantras in the Aaswina shastra that glorify Agni deva. The Aswini devas won the race. The Aaswina shastra mantras are chanted, even today, in big Yaagaas.

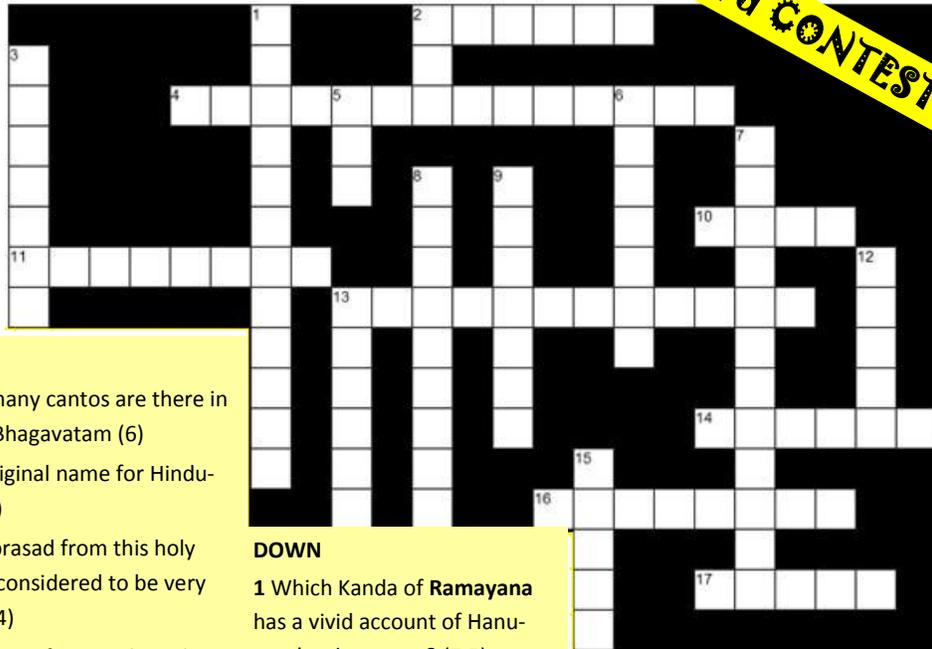
Today, in the sports world, several incidents of this kind are seen where an able team feigns defeat on receiving a bribe from another. Even this is found in the Vedas!

Source: *MadhuraMurali magazine*

7 creative activities for summer fun

1. Sing the Hare Rama Mahamantra to the tune of your favorite song, as your first action in the morning and your last action before going to bed. Try setting the Mahamantra to every tune you hear during the day.
2. Learn about one popular pilgrimage place or temple in India every week. Convince your parents to take you to one of these places next time you visit India.
3. Draw a picture of Hanuman by repeatedly writing the word "Rama" and of Radha with the name "Krishna".
4. Volunteer to do service at a nearby temple for at least an hour every week.
5. Find one or more significances within Hinduism for each number from 1 to 10 . (For ex: 4 purusharthas, 5 elements)
6. Project — create a model based on a story from Srimad Bhagavatam (Ex: Narasimha emerging from a wall, Krishna stealing butter, etc.).
7. Write an essay on "Why our Rishis are smarter than Noble Laureates."

Send us your essay, drawing or photos of your model project/volunteer work to see it published in the Nama Dwaar newsletter. Email newsletter@godivinity.org.



ACROSS

- 2 How many cantos are there in Srimad Bhagavatam (6)
- 4 The original name for Hinduism (8,6)
- 10 The prasad from this holy place is considered to be very sacred (4)
- 11 This saint from Maharashtra is considered to be an incarnation of Sant Namdev (8)
- 13 Sacred text of Hinduism and a part of the Mahabharata (8,4)
- 14 Hindu God who likes to be adorned and decorated (6)
- 16 The word 'religion' was coined from this Latin word (8)
- 17 God of the Hindu Trinity who is considered the destroyer (5)

DOWN

- 1 Which Kanda of Ramayana has a vivid account of Hanuman's adventures? (7,5)
- 2 Which canto in Srimad Bhagavatam describes the lilas of Krishna avatara? (3)
- 3 The consort of Lord Shiva (7)
- 5 How many sons did Lord Rama and Sita mata have? (3)
- 6 The oldest of the four Vedas (3,4)
- 7 Spiritual abode of Lord Shiva (5,7)

- 8 Author of the 18 Puranas (4,5)
- 9 Term for the Marathi musical compositions by the devotees of Lord Panduranga (7)
- 12 The Ramayana is divided into how many books/kandas? (5)
- 13 Who is the father of the Prajapatis (6)
- 15 Primary texts of Hinduism (5)

Compiled by Ramya Srinivasan
San Jose, CA

KIDS HURRY! SEND IN YOUR CROSSWORD ANSWERS TO NEWSLETTER@GODIVINITY.ORG, ALONG WITH YOUR NAME, AGE AND LOCATION. THE FIRST KID WITH ALL ANSWERS CORRECT WILL RECEIVE A WONDERFUL PRIZE! NAMES OF ALL KIDS WHO GET ALL THE ANSWERS CORRECT WILL BE PUBLISHED IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF NAMA DWAAR.

Opportunity in

Long ago, a king ruled a faraway land. He was an able king, but felt that his citizens had become lazy and wanted to test this. So, one day, he had a boulder placed on an arterial roadway that connected the palace to the marketplace. He then hid behind a huge banyan tree by the road and watched to see if anyone removed the rock.

Time passed by. Some of the king's wealthiest merchants and courtiers came by. Although they saw the rock as a barrier on their path, they simply walked around it. An impatient few blamed their luck for having encountered the rock, and a few others

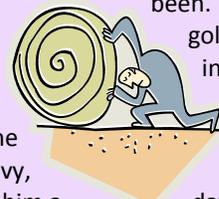
loudly blamed the king for not keeping the roads clear. No one did anything about getting the stone out of the way.

Then a peasant came along carrying a load of vegetables. On approaching the boulder, the peasant laid down his burden and tried to move the stone to the side of the road. As it was heavy, he requested other passers-by to give him a hand, but they all mockingly smiled at his 'foolish' attempt and walked away.

After much pushing and straining, the peasant finally succeeded in moving the boulder aside. After he picked up his load of vegeta-

bles, he noticed a purse lying in the road where the boulder had been. The purse contained several gold coins and a note from the king indicating that the gold was for the person who removed the boulder from the roadway.

The citizens learnt a lesson that day — every obstacle is truly an opportunity to improve ourselves. Rather than whine about it or distance ourselves from it, we should face it with optimism and overcome it. The very experience will make us stronger!



Story Time

Satsang News and

Seattle The annual University of Washington Street Fair, which boasts participation of over 400 groups, was held May 16-17 where members of the Seattle satsang set up a booth to showcase the objectives of G.O.D. A few of our mission's publications were put on display. A dart game was also set up, the winners of which were given a free snack. The visitors were excited to learn about Nama Meditation which engages the mind, unlike conventional techniques which leave the mind idle at the risk of it getting restless quickly. Interested people were also informed about the local weekly satsangs. Mahamantra CDs were handed out to all interested visitors. It was a wonderful opportunity to reach out to more than 150 people of various nationalities and talk about our mission and goals.

On May 2, the Seattle Satsang utilized a wonderful opportunity to showcase the goals and purpose of G.O.D. at a music concert by a group called *Layatharanga*. A stall was set up within the Seattle Arts Museum premises, which was the concert venue. The booth attracted almost all the concert attendees. A goodie bag containing the Mahamantra CD, sticker, flyers about G.O.D.'s mission and goals and a flyer on local satsang information were handed out. Many visitors showed a keen interest in learning about Sri Swamiji's vision and attending satsangs in the Seattle area.



Dallas On May 9 a 12-hour Akhanda Nama Sankirtan was conducted in Dallas at the residence of Sri Mayakoothan and Smt. Jayanthi Mayakoothan. The Mahamantra Yagna started off with the chanting of Srimad Bhagavata Dhyana slokas at 7 AM. This was followed by 12 hours of non-stop, highly devoted Mahamantra Kirtan which concluded with Sri Swamiji's *Kaliyaiyum bali kollum* song and Mangala Arati. About 60 devotees were blessed to take part in this event, which was organized by Smt. Sudha and Sri Thiagaraj Mannargudi of Dallas G.O.D. Satsang.

A 24-hour Akhanda Ramcharitmanas parayan was conducted on May 8-9 at the residence of Smt. Daya and Sri Narayan Dave of Houston G.O.D. satsang. Sri Ramcharitmanas, popularly known as Tulsi Ramayan and authored by Goswami Tulsidas, presents the divine plays of Lord Rama as a dialogue between Lord Shiva and Mother Parvati. More than 50 devotees enjoyed reciting and listening to Tulsi Ramayan. All those who participated were truly blessed as it is only by the grace of God that one is able to recite and listen to His divine glories.

Houston



Chicago The second installment of the G.O.D. kids' program, *Gopa Kuteeram*, was held on May 17 at the residence of Smt. Yamini and Sri ZivanPrakash of the Chicago G.O.D. satsang. The program started with Mahamantra kirtan, followed by mainly Hanuman-themed activities and games based on the month's course material. The kids had a great time and the session ended with Nama and Arati when the newly learned bhajan, *Anjaneya Rama*, was sung by the kids.

Weekly satsangs are held regularly in the following cities:

Bay Area, CA ; Boston, MA ; Chicago, IL ; Cortlandt Manor, NY ; Dallas, TX ; Houston, TX ; Los Angeles, CA ; Orlando, FL ; Seattle, WA

A weekly national telecon satsang is held every Friday evening at 8:30 PM CST.

Srimad Bhagavatam study circles are conducted in various cities.

Email newsletter@godivinity.org for more information.



गोदाल संयोजनान्तरण एव शिविनीय

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