

## Navaratri, Kolu and The Mother Goddess

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The Navaratri festival of the Mother Goddess was just celebrated this month and Indian communities everywhere were agog with the festivities. Navaratri is a time to invite friends and family, a time of togetherness and bonding, but more importantly, it is also an auspicious time to think of God, worship Him in the form of the Divine Mother and chant the Divine Names.

Generally, a child is more comfortable with its mother than the father, because the mother is loving, tender and affectionate and looks after the needs of the child. Similarly, in spirituality, the aspirant approaches the (form of) Mother first, who then shows Her spiritual child its Father. The Mother also ruthlessly kills the enemies of egotism, cunningness, selfishness and crookedness (represented by the Asuras who are killed by the Mother Goddess, in Indian scriptures).

The word *navaratri* means 'nine nights' in Sanskrit. The festival is celebrated for nine days and nights and the tenth day is worshipped as Vijayadasami. There are two types of 'navaratri' in a year. The first comes in the spring season and is known as Vasanta Navaratri and the other, more popular, Navaratri comes in the fall season and is Sharad Navaratri.

The festival commences on the first day of the bright fortnight of the month of Purattasi. It is celebrated differently in different parts of India. In Gujarat people celebrate with *garba* and *dandiya* dancing. In West Bengal, they make *pandals*, and worship images of Durga. In Tamil Nadu, people place dolls and idols on steps, called Golu or Kolu.

The interesting Kolu doll arrangement is usually such that images of the Supreme Lord are placed on the highest step, and His incarnations, *devas*, sages, saints and other exalted beings are placed on the following steps. Ordinary human beings

are placed in the lower steps, with animals, grass, etc. finding a place lower than humans. The philosophy of this arrangement is that if human beings have good intentions and follow *dharma* (righteous living), they go up the steps, and finally merge with the Lord. Instead, if they lead evil lives and harm others, they fall down to lower life forms. The dolls also depict social and cultural activities like marriages, games, flowers and vegetables, etc. emphasizing the fact that the Lord is present in everything in this Earth.



During the first three days of Navaratri, Durga is worshipped to destroy all our impurities. The second three days are devoted to Lakshmi, who bestows wealth and abundance. On the final three days, Saraswati, the goddess of wisdom, is worshipped.

On the ninth day, Saraswati Pooja is performed. Books are stacked in front of an image of Saraswati with prayers to bestow knowledge. Ayudha Pooja (anointing tools and equipment) is also performed on this day. Sweets and flattened rice mixed with peanuts, fried gram and jaggery are distributed.

On the tenth day, *Vijayadasami* is celebrated to mark the victory of good over evil and a new prosperous beginning. Kids read a book from the stack of books kept before Saraswati. Many children start attending play school or other arts classes on this day. *Akshara abhyasam* (auspicious initiation of a child into writing) is done on this day.

The Mother Goddess is known by different names in different parts of India – *Bhagawathi* in Kerala, *Chamundeswari* in Karnataka, *Kamakshi* in Kanchi, *Meenakshi* in Madurai, *Gnanambal* in Kalahasti, *Bramarambika* in Sri Sailam, *Tulja Bhavani* in Maharashtra, *Ambaji* in Gujarat, *Jwala Mukhi* in Punjab, *Vindya*

*Vasini* in Uttar Pradesh, *Vaishnavi* in Jammu, *Ksheera Bhavani* in Kashmir, *Kali* in Bengal, *Maihar Devi* in Madhya Pradesh, *Kamakya* in Assam, and numerous other names and forms.

Sri Mahaperiyava, the great saint of Kanchi, states: During Navaratri, we pray to Durga Parameswari (*Malaimagal* – daughter of the mountain Himawan), Mahalakshmi (*Alaimagal* – the one who emerged from the *Ksheerabdi*, the Ocean of Milk) and Saraswati Devi (*Kalaimagal* – the One who imparts knowledge). Whether we consider them as three goddesses or as an embodiment of all the gods, They are all that is One only, the One Parasakthi.

Sriram Sambasivan, Redding, CA

### 2015 Annual Discourse Series



Sri Ramanujamiji, disciple of HH Sri Muralidhara Swamiji, is visiting the USA for a period of 3 months for satsangs around the country. Similar to earlier years, this is a grand series of discourses and lectures on various topics glorifying the Sanatana Dharma, Nama Kirtan and Bhagavata Dharma.

Oct 30-Nov 5: Bhagavata Saptaham in Maryland (Washington DC) Call 804.306.8198  
Nov 6-11: Bhaktha Vijayam Utsav in Minneapolis, MN. Call 425.445.0157  
Nov 12-18: Bhagavata Saptaham at Alpharetta, GA. Call 404.788.7391  
Nov 19-Dec 1 : Madhura Utsav in Dallas, TX Call 830.4GOD.DAL

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## Cherished Memoirs 29



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

### A Mahatma's Bhaavas

Sri Swamiji would say that bhakti is the genuine *bhaava* (devotional spiritual mood) arising in a true bhakta and that it is not an act. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa would say that a true bhakta's body would, over a period, transform into the very form of love. Novel *bhaavas* arising in the love-filled heart of the bhakta who is forever thinking of and yearning for the Lord would be graceful, sweet, enjoyable, and would always shine with fresh beauty like the cool moon. That state can never be compared with any other. It would even suffice if one can understand that it is not akin to the oft-repeated ceremonial acts.

We wear various kinds of different coloured clothes. In it there are several patterns too, aren't there? Countless are the varieties of dresses and ornaments.



HH Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji

Lifestyles are also several, aren't they? The world is full of diversity. It is countless. Nothing remains the same but keeps changing. Similarly, the way bhaktas celebrate, decorate their *Ishta* (favourite deity) in rapturous love would be novel every time. It would reflect the *bhaava rasaas* (devotional nectar) that arise in a gush in their hearts. The way Sri Swamiji celebrates and takes delight in Premika Varadan is also the same.

It was once Gopashtami utsav. Gopashtami falls on the eighth day after the Diwali festival. It is the day that Indra crowned Krishna with the title 'Govinda', as this Gokula Krishna had saved His people – who looked upon Him as their all – from his (Indra's) wrath of torrential rains by holding aloft the Govardana hill as an umbrella. That is indeed Gopashtami. On that day Sri Swamiji was in a high state of *bhaava*. The whole Ashram appeared golden to Sri Swamiji. The very place appeared as Gokula. To the devotees around him, Sri Swamiji said, "Oh, look here! Our Premika Varadan has asked Nandababa to stop the puja (worship of Indra) and offered everything to Govardhan! Indra, filled

with wrath, is sending down torrential rains. Poor Gopa and Gopis! Krishna is sitting on Nandababa's house *pyol* like Lord Dakshinamurti. All the Gopas, trembling from head to foot, are standing before Him, seeking refuge. It is pouring cats and dogs. All are looking up at the sky. Now Krishna, ocean of compassion, has lifted the Govardhan hill! All of us are, indeed, below Govardhan!"

The building made of brick and sand was not seen but only Premika Varadan holding aloft the Govardhan appeared to Sri Swamiji's vision. As only His Naama (Name) pleases Krishna,

Sri Swamiji had devotees from everywhere assemble here at Madhurapuri Ashram, and for full seven days poured torrential rains of Mahamantra! On the eighth day, Sri Swamiji exclaimed, "Here, Indra has come! He is accompanied by Airavata (Indra's heavenly elephant) and Kamadhenu (the celestial cow)." Sri Swamiji said that all these were in reality taking place right there!

**Article continued online**

**Click [here](#) to read the entire article**

**Original Tamil article by**

**Dr. Bhagyanathan,**

**Madhuramurali magazine Oct 2015**

**Translated by Nisha Giri Houston, TX**

### Quiz - Sharad Poornima

- Name the Sanskrit word that refers to 'seasons'.  
A. Prithu  
B. Ritu  
C. Brigu
- Which season does 'Sharad' refer to?  
A. Summer  
B. Spring  
C. Autumn
- Name the leela of Lord Krishna that was enacted on the day of Sharad Poornima  
A. Rasa Leela  
B. Kaliya Nardhana  
C. Brahma Mohana Leela
- In which Gitam in Srimad Bhagavatam does Sage Suka beautifully describe the Sharad season?  
A. Venu Gitam  
B. Bramara Gitam  
C. Gopika Gitam

- When is Sharad Poornima generally celebrated?  
A. July-August  
B. September-October  
C. May-June
- What is the other name for Sharad Poornima that signifies the celebration of moonlight?  
A. Kaumudi  
B. Ratha Saphami  
C. Chaitra Poornima
- It is a tradition that special pooja is performed on the day of Sharad Poornima in the Eastern part of India. Name the Goddess to whom the special pooja is performed?  
A. Parvati  
B. Lakshmi  
C. Durga

- Sharad Poornima is popularly

called by this name in the state of Gujarat.

- Sharad Ekadasi
- Karthika Poornima
- Sharad Poonam

9. Name another leela of Lord Krishna that was enacted by the Lord during the Sharad season.

- Gopi Vastraparahanam
- Kaliya Nardanam
- Govardhana Leela

10. In which Hindu Lunar month is Sharad Poornima generally celebrated?

- Phalgun
- Chaitra
- Ashwin

**Compiled by  
Ramya Srinivasan San Jose, CA**

**Answers:**



## Madhura Geetam - Prayer Series: 3



In this series, we present, each month, a prayer kirtan composed by His Holiness Maharanyam Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji. The Kirtans in this series shall underline the importance of prayers.

### En Asaigalai Ketpayo

The purpose of human birth is to attain the Lord. And the compassionate Lord has given infinite ways to reach Him. But of all the paths, the easiest and the most blissful one is that of Bhakti or devotion to the Lord. This is also the Lord's favorite. In fact, in Bhagavad Gita, when the Lord expounds on the various paths, he refers to spiritual aspirants using various terms like yogis, sadhaks, etc. But when he refers to bhaktas - people following the path of Bhakti, he refers to them as "Mama Bhaktas" (My devotees). He also promises Arjuna that in all the other paths, the aspirants have to struggle to attain Him and even then, there is no guarantee that they can reach Him (because they rely on their own efforts). But in the path of Bhakti, He ensures that his devotees reach Him in no time (because they rely on the Lord).

So how do does one practice the path of Bhakti? Once again, Mahans come to our

rescue. Numerous devotees like Purandaradasa, Tyagaraja, Tukaram, Meera and others have shown us how to show our love to the Lord. Sri Swamiji too has composed a song, in which he shows how a life of devotee following a path of Bhakti looks like. The song is set in the melodious 'Sahana' Raga.

**Ragam: Sahana Talam: Adi**

**Language: Tamil**

*en Asaigalai kEtpAyo kaNNA*

*kETTU adai pUrti seivAyo nlyE*

*un tiruvaDi nizhalil vASam vENDum*

*uttama bhaktargaLuDan kUDiDa vENDum*

*uLLam muzhudum un eNNangaLE niraya vENDum*

*unnada thoNDu unake nAn puriya vENDum*

*brindAvanam nAn eppozhudum sella vENDum*

*bhAgavatam gitai sadA nAn padikka veNDum*

*bAvatudan nAma kIrtanam seiyya vENDum*

*pAdiyum Adiyum konDAda vENDum*

*mElum mElum nAma nidi serka vENDum*

*mElum mElum dyAnatil layikka vENDum*

*mElum mElum bhakti vaLara vENDum muraLidharA un pugazh lokam ella sUzha vENDum*

**Meaning**

Oh Krishna! Will you listen to my desires?

And will you fulfill them after lending your ears to them?

I desire to reside in the shadow of your feet  
And spend time in the company of your devotees.

I must be consumed by your thoughts  
And be engaged in your divine service.

I wish to travel always to Brindavan  
And read (Srimad) Bhagavatam and (Bhagavad) Gita always.

I yearn to sing your Names with devotion  
And celebrate you with song and dance

May I chant your names incessantly and accumulate the wealth of Your Name  
May my mind ever meditate on You  
May my devotion increase multifold  
O Muralidhara! May your fame spread to all corners of the world!

**Sowmya Balasubramanian Fremont, CA**

### Story Time

## Struggles are Stepping Stones for Success

Young Gopal was struggling. He was having a hard time understanding some math concepts, unlike some of his classmates. He was dejected.

He ran to the pooja room and asked the lovely deities of Radha and Krishna silently, "Krishna! Are you not compassionate? Why should you allow me to struggle so much? It is so unfair!"

The deities just stood there, smiling at him. Disappointed, he walked out of the room.

He went to the garden, and there he spotted a butterfly cocoon. Even as he was looking at the cocoon, a small opening appeared. Gopal perked up. Curious, he sat and watched the butterfly for a long time as it struggled to force its body through that little hole.

It tried and tried, then it seemed to stop making any progress. It appeared as if it had gone as far as it could and that it could not try anymore. Gopal thought, "This butterfly is struggling just like me! But at least let me help it come out."



scissors and snipped off the remaining bit of cocoon. The butterfly then emerged easily. Gopal was overjoyed that he had helped the butterfly out of its struggle. But his joy was short lived. The butterfly didn't look like a butterfly at all! It had a swollen body and small, shriveled wings.

It could not fly. Gopal was shocked!

He watched, hoping it would suddenly turn into a complete butterfly. But no. The butterfly remained crippled.

Gopal cried and ran to his mother. He explained everything, right from his own struggle to the butterfly's predicament.

Gopal's mother listened to the entire story, then took him by her side, "Oh Gopu, you see, the struggle for the butterfly to get through that tiny opening was our Krishna's way of forcing fluid from the body of the butterfly into its wings, so that it would be ready for flight! That struggle was essential for the butterfly. Sometimes struggles are exactly what we need in our life, dear child! If Krishna allowed us to live without any obstacles, it would cripple us. We wouldn't be as strong as we could have really been!

So he got a pair of

And so we could never fly high in life!"

The lovely flower on deity of Sri Krishna dropped down softly, blessing Gopal's silent prayer with a subtle answer. Gopal smiled for the first time that day and wiped his tears away. With renewed strength he went back to his math book, understanding the simple truth of life: Struggles are stepping stones for success in life.

**Source: www.namadwaar.org**

### Nama Anubhava of a Devotee

His Grace and Nama together makes impossible to be spelt as I M Possible and this is no new thing to any of us. Koti Pranams to our Guru Maharaj and Thakurji for us to always be under his grace .

For the last few weeks, a family known to us had a family member visiting from India hospitalized and in serious condition. Due to financial constraints, they were unable to get him the life saving surgery he needed here in this country. In the mean time , the hospital bills were piling up and he was neither cleared to be medically fit to be discharged nor **Contd...on page4**



## News & Events

GK KIDS IN RATH YATRA RALEIGH, NC

SRI RAMANUJAM JI'S SATSANG IN DETROIT, MI



RADHASHTAMI IN NAMADWAAR HOUSTON, TX

21 DAY NAMA RELAY IN MINNEAPOLIS, MN



BHUTANESE SATSANG IN DALLAS, TX



### Nama Anubhava

Contd...from page3

travel back to India to get the appropriate life saving surgery. The family was distraught and asked for prayers at the lotus feet of our Master through the Dallas GOD Satsang.

As the Navaham started on Sept 5, Dallas GOD Satsang continued earnest prayers for the family every day. On Sept 12, on the eighth day of the Navaham we were thrilled to hear that the hospital had cleared him to travel back to India and the airlines also had approved his journey. Yet they had one more hurdle to face. Doctors said there was a very good chance he would not survive the flight. The family once again approached Dallas GOD Satsang and made a heartfelt request. They asked for us to pray for him with Mahamantra during their flight.

By HIS divine grace their flight was supposed to start on Sunday September 13 at 7:30 pm just as we finished the ninth day of the Navaham and we all whole heartedly prayed for them through the flight's descent in Chennai, India and were thrilled to hear he made it safe through the flight and is now admitted in a big hospital in Chennai where he will receive the surgery he needs.

When we have our Sri Sri Swamiji, Thakurji and Mahamantra - any problem can be overcome with HIS grace.

*Sangeetha Chandrakantan, Dallas TX*

### Upcoming Events!

#### HOUSTON TX

1. *Shaking Hands Across Continents*, A Western Indian musical concert, fundraiser for Namadwaar- Nov 7th at Berry Miller Junior High, Pearland. Contact: 281. 402.6585

2. Sri Swamiji Jayanthi Celebrations @ Namadwaar, Nov 8th morning. Call 281-402-6585

**Sri Ramanujamji programs at various cities around USA.**

**See Page 1 for details or visit [www.godivinity.org](http://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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