

Bhagavatam and Our Ego

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Ego is a tall hurdle in any walk of life, but more importantly, in spiritual progress, it is the tallest. Only true mahatmas who epitomize perfection, lead a life of complete humility devoid of any pride. For all others, it is a goal.

This is true not just for humans, but for everyone else in creation; be it animals, king of devas/gods, or well, even the creator – Brahma himself. It is the killing of the pride that Lord Sri Krishna's famous sports showed us in Srimad Bhagavatam through the four most important episodes in the crux of this great

scripture – Brahma Mohanam, Kaliya Nardanam, Govinda Pattabhishekam, and Rasa Lila.

While the episodes themselves are fantastic, the take-home message is that of defeating pride and surrendering to the divine. In each of these episodes, the Lord uses the victims' own innate property to make them realize their mistake and lose the pride.

Brahma, the creator, is not merely some four-headed divine being. Brahma is us. We create the world every morning when we wake up. We make art, music, poetry, and literature. We come up with fascinating new ways to design – buildings, railroads, pottery and the internet. We create new dishes to eat, and new styles of fashion. We are made to create. Brahma represents us; and the Brahma Mohana Lila (where his creator pride was crushed) was not just for Lord Brahma to learn a lesson. It is for us too.

While the Lord has very much endowed us with all the potency to 'create', He wants us to realize that it is indeed His presence within that makes us creators in the first place. Without Him, we are

nothing. This, the Lord showed Brahma by recreating the Gopas, the cows, and everything else down to the little stick carried by the Gopas, when Brahma kidnapped 'his own' creations to show the Lord his powers.

It is the same case in the three other *lilas*



– Kaliya Nardanam: to destroy the pride of our body and senses like that of Kaliya, Govardhana uddharanam: to destroy our pride of power/status like that of Indra, and Rasa Lila: to destroy the most dangerous pride of them all – the

pride of being spiritually wise!

Alas! The pride in us will not vanish so easily, will it? His Holiness Sri Muralidhara Swamiji would say, "Just enjoy Bhagavatam. Keep aside the morals and *tattva* (philosophy), and just enjoy the *lilas* of the Lord. That will do. The transformation will happen automatically."

Life itself is a tremendous opportunity for us to realize this. Of course, life is not a freebie. We can do nothing to earn this gift of human life. In fact it is bestowed by the Lord's unbounded Grace. And hence, undoubtedly, the journey of life teaches us lessons all the time. Srimad Bhagavatam opens our eyes to internalize this.

We see our pride come up every time we do something new, and want an acknowledgment, a pat in the back, a reward if you will. We are wired in a way to think that we are above all classes of beings. Even within the human kind, the French believe that the French are the best; the African thinks the same. From the tribes of the Aborigines, to that of a New Yorker, everyone believes that their clan is the most supreme. We don't even

have to mention the "Indian", to whom being Indian is a source of great pride. Can't we shake off this obvious pride, where we ourselves know that we didn't earn it by doing anything ourselves? It's not so easy.

When someone challenges us on a task, we want to do it even more; if not to achieve it, at least to show them that we can do it, especially without assistance. All we need is a small challenge, an ego boost, and off we go.

When someone insults us, we spring up in agony. "How dare they call me out, and insult me?" We can never pardon them. When the ego sprouts like that, our mind becomes a devil trying to exact revenge. The opportunities to recognize our pride are everywhere. Each day of our life gives us numerous chances to catch ourselves being proud. Such a gift is life.

The more we read the divine sports of Lord Sri Krishna and take in the beauty of Srimad Bhagavatam, Mahans assure a transformation. With or without the intent to change, the stories themselves have the power to induce change.

Bhagavatam shows us that we are not responsible for the achievements but the Lord is; it shows that the power of our senses, our intelligence, our ranks, our beauty are but an infinitesimal speck of the grandness of the Lord himself. When this knowledge transforms to experience, humility flowers, and pride is lost.

For our part, we only need to keep company with the Bhagavatam. The rest is automatic.

Sriram Ramanujam, Houston TX

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Cherished Memoirs 39

*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. The original article was written by Dr. Bhagyanathanji, Personal Secretary of Sri Swamiji in July 2016 issue.*

Mental Peace; Physical Comfort

Every devotee nurtures a deep desire to visit and enjoy the places where his favourite deity lived and performed divine *lilas*, like Ayodhya, Mathura, Vrindavan, Chidambaram. Mahans are able to perceive the divine sanctity in such places.

Similarly, holy places where saints took birth are also filled with divinity. For a devotee, his Guru's birth place where he lived is a holy *kshetra*. To the disciple, the Guru's holy feet itself is Ganga and Cauvery. Such is the tradition found in India since time immemorial.

The town Cuddalore in Tamil Nadu is in the region of 'Nadu-naadu' (literally, 'middle-land'). There is a Tamil adage that says '*nadu-naadu saandrOrudaitthu*' (Nadu-naadu is filled with great souls). Vedanta Desika, Swami Gnanananda, Ramana Maharshi, Seshadri Swami, Yogi Ramsuratkumar and many other saints are associated with this region. This Nadu-naadu, which enjoys such great glory, is also the birthplace of our Guru Maharaj.

Recently a group of devotees from Virudunagar satsang decided to visit the house in Cuddalore where Guru Maharaj had lived. But when one of the devotees learned that the train travel would cost one thousand rupees, she hesitated. She lamented, "I deeply desire to go. But, due to my family circumstances, I wonder if this spending is really necessary." Her friends pointed out to her mahans' words that sincere spending of money, time, service and articles for the sake of satsang never goes in vain, and encouraged her to come along. Then she consented to join them.

While the thought of visiting her Guru Maharaj's birthplace filled her with joy, in the train she still felt disturbed over the money spent.

Sri Swamiji's mother's name is Savitri. Hence this house where she lived is now named 'Srimati Savitri Sadanam' and houses the Cuddalore Namadwaar. The satsang group reached Cuddalore and with loud Mahamantra chanting eagerly entered Savitri Sadanam.

That lady devotee also entered. She prayed wholeheartedly and sang the Mahamantra. She felt her mind glow and felt blissful. All the questions, confusions, thoughts that had filled her mind until then slipped away and dissolved as the Divine Name was chanted. Her eyes filled with tears. Isn't this peace priceless, she felt. She felt that her entire burden had been lifted off! What joy!

Guru's grace so casually bestowed the peace that cannot be enjoyed by the mind even

through thousands of years of spiritual austerity! Our mind does not have the power of realizing the depth of it; this is the truth.

On the return journey, her mind was totally content. Overwhelmed by joy, she felt, "Can this experience be attained even with several crores of rupees?"

This devotee was in for another pleasant surprise. When her group entered the train, they found their reserved seats occupied by others. It turned out that both sets of tickets showed the same seat numbers! Now what was to be done? Praying to Guru Maharaj mentally the devotees waited for the ticket-checker to arrive.

Checking the tickets, the ticket-examiner, without further ado, allowed the group to travel in the A/C coach! The lady, who had never before travelled in an AC coach was bestowed with the comfort without her seeking it! At the Guru's birthplace, the mind had found peace; now it was time for physical comfort! Both the mind and the body were cool and soothed.

When we start the journey towards the Guru and Satsang, we have both fulfilled – worldly desires and spiritual needs.

*Translated and excerpted from the original Tamil article by
Dr. Bhagyanathanji,
Madhuramurali July 2016 issue*



HH Sri Muralidhara Swamiji

Krishna and the Poisonous Snake

One day, Krishna went alone to a particular spot in River Yamuna. This was different because Krishna went without Balarama. All of his friends were at home in Gokula talking, laughing and playing. Little did they know that Krishna had headed to the forbidden place!

The particular spot in Yamuna was inhabited by a dreaded snake called Kaliya. He had poisoned the waters. Whoever drank the water would die. Krishna was very angry and wanted to teach Kaliya a lesson.

Krishna looked at the blue waters of Yamuna. The water was now very black because of the poison that Kaliya spit out. Krishna stood there for a while looking at all the trees nearby, but they were all dead since the poisoning of the air killed all the roots and the leaves. Krishna saw a Kadamba tree next to the river. Krishna started to climb the tree.

Krishna jumped into the river and all the water started

becoming blue. Kaliya woke up from his sleep. Kaliya was wondering who was brave enough to enter the river. Kaliya came out of the water and saw Krishna. He started to coil around Krishna. In the meantime, the Gopas and Gopis of Gokula searched for Krishna everywhere and finally, following his footprints, arrived at the river. On seeing Krishna bound by Kaliya, Krishna's mother Yashoda fainted. Nanda baba, Krishna's father started to enter the water to save his son. Balarama tried to pacify his father because he knew that Krishna would defeat Kaliya as He was Lord Narayana himself.

Krishna and Kaliya began to fight. Kaliya tried to squeeze Krishna and use his fangs to inject poison into Krishna's shoulder. But, Krishna escaped out of Kaliya's clutches. Then, Kaliya used his tail to smack Krishna, but Krishna jumped onto his head and caught hold of his

tail. Krishna then kept on

dancing on his head. Kaliya grew tired and almost fainted. He knew he could not win Krishna. Kaliya's many wives came and begged for forgiveness. Krishna let Kaliya go. Kaliya's wives thanked Krishna for teaching him a lesson and they were happy that Krishna put his feet on his head and that meant Kaliya had done something right in this life or his previous one. Krishna ordered Kaliya to go back to Ramana Dweepam, where he had originally lived. Kaliya then receded into the water and went away along with his wives. The water was clean again. All the villagers and Yashoda were very happy and started to dance and sing and once again. Krishna saved the day!

Arjun Arunachalam, 11 years, Dallas TX

Kid's Contribution



Madhura Geetam - Prayer Series: 13

In this series, we present, each month, a prayer kirtan composed by His Holiness Maharanyam Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji. These kirtans underline the importance of prayers and show us how to pray.

You Gave Me Much Unasked; Now Give me What I Ask For!

Devotees charm the Lord with their devotion. There is nothing sweeter than love for the Lord. And, when a Lord is pleased with His devotee, he goes to great lengths to please the devotee in return.

Take Sudama, the childhood friend of Krishna, what did he offer to the Lord? All he could afford was three handfuls of puffed rice. The Lord ate it happily. And what did He give in return? He showered wealth and prosperity on Sudama.

Similarly, he bestowed beauty to Kubja, the hunchback in Mathura, who offered him some sandalwood paste. And for the fruit-seller who gave him some fruits in exchange for some grains, did he not bless her with precious gems?

The Lord will bestow worldly pleasures and beyond, unasked. What then can be said of

His boundless grace, if we ask Him for His grace with a sincere prayer? Won't he immediately shower it on us?

It is this boundless grace that Sri Swamiji extolls in the kirtan "Ketkamalae pala nanmaigalai", set in Reetigowlai raga and offers a prayer to the Lord for the knowledge of the Self, devotion, dispassion and eventually liberation. The lyrics and its meaning are presented here for you.

Ketkamale Pala Nanmaigalai

Ragam: Reetigowlai

*ketkAmale pala nanmaigaLai
aruL purindaYe kaNNA*

*palamurai kETTum aruLAdadu Eno
jnAna bhakti virakti tannai kaNNA*

*kAlam kaniya veNDum enDRu kAttirundaI
adarkuL kAlan vandu viTTAI nAn en seivEn*

*mum mUrtigaLin mudalvan nlye
mukti aLipadilum mudalvan nlye
muktargaLum tozhudiDum mukunda*

mukti veNDi unai sharan aDaindEnE

Meaning

Unasked, innumerable acts of kindness,
You bestowed, O Krishna!
Yet, despite pleading many times, you
refrain from bestowing
Knowledge, Devotion and Dispassion, O
Krishna

Are you waiting for the opportune
moment?

While you are waiting, what if my time (on
Earth) is up? What will become of me?

You are the foremost among the Trinity,
You are unmatched when it comes to
bestowing liberation
O Mukunda! The One worshipped even by
liberated souls
Yearning for liberation, I surrender unto
You

Sowmya Balasubramanian, Fremont CA

Quiz - Divya Desam Series 9

There are 108 Divya Desams – temples/abodes of Lord Narayana that have been sung by the Azhwars. This month, take the quiz to learn more about Srivilliputhur in Tamil Nadu, the kshetra where Sri Andal lived and loved Krishna.

- Who is the deity at Srivilliputur?
A. Sri DevanathaSwamy
B. Sri Vatapatra Shaayee
C. Sri Parthasarathy
- Name an Azhwar whose birthplace was Srivilliputur:
A. Nammazhwar
B. Madhurakavi Azhwar
C. Periyazhwar
- How many pasurams have been composed on Srivilliputur Divyadesam?
A. 22 pasurams by Thirumangai Azhwar and Thondaradipodi Azhwar

- 58 pasurams by Nammazhwar and Bootath Azhwar
- 2 pasurams by Periyazhwar and Andal
- What bird does Andal always carry?
A. Cuckoo
B. Parrot
C. Peacock
- What does the term 'Kodhai' refer to?
A. Butter
B. Long hair
C. Temple
- What is the other name for Srivilliputur Divyadesam?
A. Sri Rangam
B. Van Puduval
C. Thirumalai
- Name the divine work that was composed by Andal in Srivilliputur:
A. Thirumalai
B. Thiruppavai
C. Thiruvembavai

8. Lord Vatapatra Shaayee in Srivilliputur reclines on _____:

- A Banyan Leaf
- Adi Sesa
- A Badri tree

9. Name the important event that takes place on Aadi Pooram day in Srivilliputur:

- Teppotsav
- Vennai Thazhi Utsav
- Chariot Utsav

10. Name the important event that is joyfully celebrated in Southern India on the auspicious day of Aadi Pooram

- Radha Kalyanam
- Seetha Kalyanam
- Andal Kalyanam

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

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



News & Events

GURU POORNIMA IN MINNEAPOLIS



SHRI RAMA KATHASUDHA, A DANCE PERFORMANCE IN MINNEAPOLIS



GURU POORNIMA CELEBRATION, ORLANDO



Upcoming Events:

- * "Life and Soul" Free Community Health Fair—Manvel TX (Houston area)
- * Gopa Kuteeram classes begin across US. Contact local center coordinator

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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