

## LEAVE THE BAGGAGE! - New Year 2017 Message

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A man once set out to the temple. On the way, his slippers tore. He did not find a cobbler to fix them. He was skeptical about leaving them outside the temple, for fear of someone stealing it. He removed his slippers, and put them inside the bag he was carrying.

As he entered the temple, he was very disturbed thinking if he was doing the right thing by taking the slippers inside. As he reached the sanctum, the priest asked him for the



bag, assuming that it contained the offerings for archana. Guilt gripped him. Holding the bag in his hand, he received theertham. His mind was in total unrest.

He circumambulated the Lord, and when he was given prasadam, he received it with the bag in one hand. Guilt gripped him further.

He finally prostrated in front of the temple pillar, and was torn between keeping the bag down, and holding it. Holding the bag in one hand in a manner that it does not touch

the ground, he half heartedly prostrated, and walked out.

He was left with the feeling that the bag tuned out to be such a burden and such an obstacle that did not let him pray in peace at the temple. He was so guilty that he did not even have darshan of the Lord properly.

This scene applies to us too.

Carrying the baggage of our past, will only leave us with guilt, regret and remorse. Let us unload the baggage before stepping into the new year. Let us begin new. Let us forget the past and leave it behind. Let us move into the New Year with positivity. Let us march enthusiastically towards a successful year, where only joy and peace will prevail and we will celebrate our Lord whole heartedly every single day.

## Puranas & Itihasas - The Right Perspective for our Children

*Nine-year-old Rhea told her mom, "I hate Rama! How could he send Sita away to the forest just because some man said something?! Poor Sita, she cried so much, yet Rama paid no heed!"*

*Rhea's mother was stunned.*

As parents following the Sanatana Dharma, we all wish that our children absorb the tenets and appreciate the greatness of our Dharma and our divine Indian culture. And we know that it is through our wonderful Itihasas and Puranas that faith, devotion and the lofty principles of the Sanatana Dharma can be easily inculcated.

For our children today – especially those born outside the divine Indian soil and growing up in a westernized culture – perspectives and the environment are different from the atmosphere of inherent faith that we grew up in, in India.

So, in our genuine enthusiasm to have our children learn about our scriptures, we tend to resort to any available source – books, videos, TV, the Internet – to 'educate' them about God and our Puranas.

*Rhea had been regularly watching and enjoying a popular TV show based on the Ramayana. Her mother had been happy that Rhea was showing interest in the Ramayana and its characters. But when Rhea said she hated Rama, the bolt had come out of the blue. Her mother had not*

*expected things to take a negative turn like this. Now she was clueless about how to explain Lord Rama's actions to her daughter! What could she do?*



Let us pause for a moment to consider how reliable really are these easily available media sources, when it comes to our great scriptures. And is mere 'education' the purpose? Is it enough if our children just know the characters and the stories, even if it is through the commonly-prevalent inaccurate versions? No wonder then that our grand and noble Itihasas (History) and Puranas (Ancient History) that narrate factual happenings and universal truths have now been reduced to mere, supposedly-fictional "mythological stories!"

One of the prime reasons for this deterioration in stature are the prolific writers with no scriptural foundation who publish books with superfluous commentaries and re-tellings; producers of sensationalized TV shows allegedly based on our Itihasas but in reality portraying only distorted versions; and all the ubiquitous blogs, websites and online forums expressing their 'views' of our Puranic stories that have all unfortunately become the go-to sources for our questions. The sad state is that all of these sources completely miss the purpose of our Itihasas and Puranas, which is to sow, nourish and grow devotion to the Lord in

the heart. If that purpose is not accomplished, then the source is weak and is of zero use.

In everything, there is *saaram* (the essential) and *asaaram* (non-essential). The real intelligence in the human mind is to take only the *saaram* (essence) and disregard the *asaaram*. However in the case of divine works like the Ramayana, there is, in truth, no *asaaram* at all. But despite this, if we glean *asaaram* from it, then it is clear that it is only we who bring down the divine leelas of an extraordinary person to our own diminutive perspective seen through our confused small minds. Whenever we see *asaaram* in our scriptures or divine works of saints, then we should understand that the *asaaram* is not in the work itself, but in our own vision tainted by our mental grime.

There was once a family who moved into the third floor of an apartment building. The lady of the house had a direct view through her paned glass window into the balcony of the neighboring apartment where clothes would be hung up to dry. The lady was a stickler for cleanliness and it irked her that her neighbor's clothes

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## Cherished Memoirs 44 - Mahamantra in Every Home

*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" published every month in Madhuramurali monthly magazine. The original article was written by Dr. Bhagyanathanji, Personal Secretary of Sri Swamiji.*

### Mahamantra in Every Home!

About 20 years ago, Sri Swamiji, at the ashram, once spoke with deep emotion about the glory of Namakirtan, the power of the will (sankalpa) of great Mahans who have incarnated in order to establish the path of Bhakti, and other such matters. At that time, Sri Swamiji asked with a smile, "Do you know what our Premika Varadan's will is? It is that the



HH Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji

Lord's Name should very soon echo all over the world. Even as we enter the next century I desire to chant the Mahamantra in each and every home in Tamil Nadu and thus help all reap its benefit. The Lord's Name should reach every home."

While all of us who heard him felt stunned, there was one from amongst us who began to quickly calculate the number of years left to enter the next century and wondered aloud how it was possible to reach the Mahamantra in every home by the turn of the century which was only a few years away! Our intelligence is limited. To gauge its success with limited understanding would only raise doubts. But is not will of the Lord and Guru beyond everything? From the life history of several Mahans we learn that their work for the welfare of the world, for which they come, is somehow carried out.

Once Sri Swamiji participated in a public

program. The organizer of an important television channel was also present. That man who was devoted to God and had a good heart, prayed to

Sri Swamiji, "Your wonderful words of grace should reach all through our TV channel. You must please oblige." Sri Swamiji acceded to his request. That TV channel video-recorded

Sri Swamiji's words of grace and relayed it on their channel from the year 2000! In this, Sri Swamiji began his talk only with the chant of the Mahamantra, thrice. It was only after listening to this that we found the answer to the question that had been haunting us the past few years. It was really amazing. We felt very happy over the wonderful way in which Premika Varadan had fulfilled our Sri Swamiji's desire to reach the Mahamantra to every home!

Sri Swamiji's words of grace and the Mahamantra reached every home!

*Excerpts from the original article by  
Dr. Bhagyanathanji in Madhuramurali,  
Dec 2016 issue*

### Right Perspective - contd...

were never washed properly. There would be streaks of dirt on the washed clothes that were always an eyesore to her. Then one fine day, as she looked out the window expecting to see the annoyingly dirty 'washed clothes', she was surprised that the clothes actually looked clean for the first time. She rubbed her eyes in wonder and pinched herself to make sure she wasn't dreaming. The clothes smiled freshly back at her. As she stood there wondering what had changed... perhaps they had bought a new washing machine or hired a new maid... her husband came by. "Do you see the fresh, clean window pane?" he asked with a tinge of pride, "The glass was so grimy, I cleaned it today. Just couldn't stand the streaks of dirt on it!" Only then did the lady realize that the dirt had actually been in her own vision!

Notwithstanding the tainted perspectives of many writers and producers, the responsibility of protecting our children from such misguiding asaaram is completely ours, as parents. It is up to us to ensure that they absorb divine leelas only from genuine sources. And a genuine source in such matters is only a Mahan (saint). Only saints understand the heart of the Lord. Hence only they can speak rightly, insightfully about the Lord and flower devotion through the essence of His leelas.

*In the case of Rhea's question about Lord Rama's actions, her mother reached out to Rhea's Gopa Kuteeram teacher who, in*

*turn, reached out to their Guru for answers.*

They learned that there are always several reasons for any single act of the Lord. The Lord's actions certainly cannot be taken at face value and have to be seen in the right context.

Lord Rama and Sita Mata loved each other with their whole being and beyond words. They shared a special *prema* (divine love) and understood each other perfectly. When Sita Devi was kidnapped by Ravana, Lord Rama spent huge efforts, underwent immense pain, changed course, waged war, did everything possible under the sun to get her back. Therefore, when the same Rama who loved Sita Devi so much, chose to give her up, it is logical to assume that he must have had some very strong imperatives for doing so.

Lord Rama, the perfect follower of dharma (duty), believed that every single person in his kingdom mattered, and considered himself accountable to everyone individually. This is inclusiveness to the highest degree. Such was His greatness and the magnitude of His vision. And Sita Devi was no weak, submissive wife. She was so great that she was a perfect match for Rama's strength. Given this context, we can only appreciate the greatness of the Divine Couple's sacrifice. Sita Devi cried; out of *prema*, not pitifully. Lord Rama, missing her terribly, cried behind closed doors. Yet, they stood by their lofty sacrifice.

But the sacrifice was not in vain. Sita Devi had wished to spend time in the holy

company of rishis for the sake of her unborn children. As Lord Rama could not leave his kingly duties, he also used the excuse of the washerman's comment to fulfil her wish. Sage Valmiki was akin to Sita Devi's brother (as he too was born from the earth [anthill] just as she was). Hence going to Sage Valmiki's ashram was, for Sita Devi, like going to her parents' home.

Another little-understood reason why the Divine Couple separated themselves on purpose, is actually the secret of *prema*. Love is complete only when there is a little separation! This is why Krishna also left Brindavan and the Gopis.

What Lord Rama and Sita Devi did was an immense sacrifice by both of them. They tore their hearts out knowingly – for *prema*, for dharma! This is their Greatness! When understood in the right way, this can only deepen our love for both of them.

Such a sublime view of the Lord's heart can be explained only by Mahans. Our Itihasas and Puranas are indeed great, divine works that carry the secrets of life and love. Their purpose is neither knowledge nor entertainment, but to develop the highest devotion. Viewed in the right perspective, which is only that of sadhus and Mahans, our children can safely enjoy and appreciate the Lord's divine leelas and nurture love for Him in their hearts.

*Nisha Giri, Houston TX  
Based on the talks of Sri Ramanujamiji, disciple  
of HH Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji*







## Madhura Geetam - Sloka Series: 1

In this series, we present, each month, divine verses and hymns of praise composed by His Holiness Maharanyam Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji.

### Sadguru Panchakam

Kabir says, "Guru govind dou khade, kaake lagoon paay

Balihari guru aapne govind diyo batay"

When the Guru and Lord Hari are standing in front of me, whom should I pay my respects to first?

I will prostrate to my Guru who showed me the way to Lord Hari"

Such is the greatness of a Guru. As a result, we will start this series by paying our obeisances to the Guru. Sri Swamiji has composed a set of five slokas on Sadguru, which are usually rendered as a ragamalika viruttam. The lyrics and the meaning are given below.

Raga: nATTai

sadAnanda svarUpam kriShNadAsya priyam  
shudda bAlaka hrudayam sadgurum  
sharaNam prapadye

Raga: mOhanam

dIna vAtsalya svabhAvam nAma klrttana  
priyam  
madhura bhAva hrudayam sadgurum  
sharaNam prapadye

Raga: madhuvanathi / rEvathi

bhavya guNAlaya nidim bhAgavata sanga  
priyam  
udAra guNa hrudayam sadgurum sharaNam  
prapadye

Raga: kalyANI

hari bhakti prAkASakam ananthakalyANA  
guNa sAgaram  
sAtvika bhaktha hrudayam sadgurum  
sharaNam prapadye

Raga: sindhubhairavi

pratikshaNam IOkAnugrahakaram  
pulakAnkita gAtram |  
prEma pUrita hrudayam sadgurum  
sharaNam prapadye ||

#### Meaning

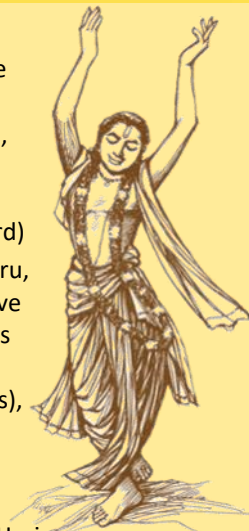
I surrender to the Guru, who is the eternal embodiment of Bliss, who loves Krishna's service, who has the pure heart of a child  
I surrender to the Guru, whose nature is to

be extremely compassionate to the downtrodden, who loves Nama kirtanam, whose heart is filled with madhura bhava (love towards the Lord)  
I surrender to the Guru, who is a treasure trove of humility, who loves the association of bhagavatas (devotees), whose heart is extremely generous

I surrender to the Guru, who illumines Hari bhakti, who is the repository of all auspicious qualities, who has the heart of a pure devotee

I surrender to the Guru, who is constantly showering His grace on the world at every moment, who always has His hair standing on end (horripilated with devotion), whose heart is filled with Prema

**Sowmya Balasubramanian, Houston TX**



### Divya Desam Quiz—Tirutthanka (Tupul)

This month's Divya Desam Quiz is on the holy Tirutthanka kshetra, also known as Tupul. Read on to learn more about it.

1. Name the Perumal who is worshipped in Tirutthanka Divyadesam:

- A. Jagannatha Perumal
- B. DeepaPrakasa Perumal
- C. Bhakta Vatsala Perumal

2. What is the another name for this deity?

- A. Vilakkoli Perumal
- B. Varadaraja Perumal
- C. Parthasarathy Perumal

3. Which great Vaishnava Acharya was born in this Tirutthanka divya desam?

- A. Sri Adi Shankara
- B. Sri Ramanuja
- C. Sri Vedanta Desikan

4. Name the Azhwar who has sung pasurams on Tirutthanka Divyadesam.

- A. Tirumangai Azhwar
- B. Tondaradipodi Azhwar
- C. Tiruppan Azhwar

5. Name the famous temple town where Tirutthanka Divyadesam is located:

- A. Srivilliputur
- B. Kanchipuram
- C. Kumbakonam

6. What is the name of the Thaayaar of Tirtthanka Divyadesam?

- A. Komalavalli Thaayar
- B. Maragathavalli Thaayar
- C. Kodai Nachiyar

7. Name the plant that grows wildly in this Divyadesam:

- A. Tulasi Plant
- B. Darbha Grass [Kusha Grass]
- C. Arugampul [Bermuda Grass]

8. According to the *sthala purana* (ancient history of this kshetra), Lord Vishnu appeared as a streak of bright light to **this deity**, to help complete a *yagna*.

- A. Lord Shiva
- B. Lord Indra
- C. Lord Brahma

9. In which posture is the Lord worshipped in this Tirutthanka Divyadesam?

A. Standing

B. Sleeping

C. Reclining

10. How many Pasurams have been composed on this Tirutthanka Divyadesam?

A. 108

B. 2

C. 210

11. What is the name of the temple tank [Pushkarini] of this divyadesam?

A. Lakshmi Pushkarini

B. Saraswati Tirtham

C. Kshirabtha Pushkarini



Sri Vedanta Desikan  
Source: Wikimedia

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

1-B, 2-A, 3-C, 4-A, 5-B, 6-B, 7-B, 8-C, 9-A, 10-B, 11-B





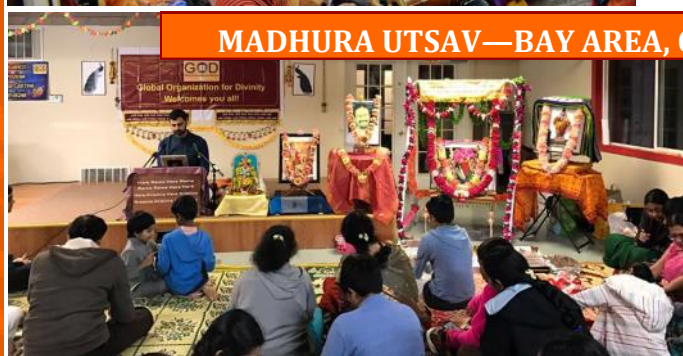
## News & Events



**MADHURA UTSAV, HOUSTON**



**MASS PRAYER AND BHAKTI YOGA DISCOURSE SERIES—ATLANTA**



**MADHURA UTSAV—BAY AREA, CA**



**YOUTH WORKSHOP—CA**



**MD ANDERSON TALK—HOUSTON**



**BERKELEY LABS—CA**

### UPCOMING GOD EVENTS

#### BOSTON, MA

Feb 4-5: Sri Guru Paduka  
Pattabhishekam  
Contact 617-820-2968

#### MINNEAPOLIS, MN

Feb 12: "Sri Thyagaraja Vaibhavam"  
Sangeetha Upanyasam  
Contact 424-445-0157

#### REDDING, CA

Feb 20-26: Srimad Bhagavata Saptaham  
Contact 530-355-8384

#### HOUSTON, TX

Mar 4: "Sri Ramanuja"  
Tamil Drama by Meenakshi Theaters  
Contact: 281-402-6585

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**Global Organization for Divinity**  
3363 Bel Mira Way  
San Jose, CA 95135

Phone: 1-(830)-4GOD-USA

Feedback email: [newsletter@godivinity.org](mailto:newsletter@godivinity.org)

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#### Newsletter team:

**Content**—Aravind TRA, Latha Kumanan, Lekshmi Nair, Narayanan Sathiamoorthy, Nisha Giri, Ramya Srinivasan, Sankar Ganesan, Sriram Ramanujam, Sowmya Balasubramanian, Viji Ramakrishnan, Yamini Zivan Prakash.

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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.

Email [newsletter@godivinity.org](mailto:newsletter@godivinity.org)