



SAMASTHA LOKA SUKHINO BHAVANTU

Venugaanam

Sai Krishna Charitable
Trust Newsletter



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2014

IN THIS ISSUE

From Team Venugaanam

We are delighted to bring you the 31th edition of Venugaanam this February. Starting with the precious discourse of our beloved SWAMI, we had given the SKM updates for the month of Jan.

In Atmajyothi, we further continue sharing the knowledge on devotion as indicated in Naradha Bhakti Sutras. Here we discuss the various aspects of the devotion.

Along with that we have an article which jots down the experience of Narayanan Iyer with HH Kanchi Maha Periyava.

Lets have glimpse of what Prakash intends to share with us regarding his lessons from an Australia trip

We are happy to have your feedback on how to make 'Venugaanam' a better communication tool. Please mail us at contactus@saikrushnamandir.org . Do feel free to share with us your articles, thoughts and ideas.

We pray to Swami to bless all the children and inmates so that they may all come up to His expectations. May Swami turn our lives into a celebration of His message of love, sharing and caring.

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With All our Prema,
Team Venugaanam

Message of the *Vedas*

A Divine Discourses by Bhagawan Shri Sathya Sai Baba on - 03-06-1990

DEAR Students! There is no disease equal to greed. There is no greater enemy than anger. There is no misery than poverty. There is no happiness greater than wisdom.

Man is ignoring these sacred truths. Faith in God has been replaced by disrespect for reverence and righteousness. Atheism is rampant and preceptors are not honoured. Devotion is at a discount and the ancient wisdom is being given up these days. In education character has reached its nadir.

"I am in the Light. I am the Light. The Light is in Me. The Light is Myself." When this awareness arises in the heart, it will lead to oneness with Brahman. The Vedas are the most ancient among the world's scriptures. They are a vast storehouse of wisdom. They enabled man to have an over-view of the universe. Historically, they are the earliest known book of knowledge. They are the roots of human culture and striving. Manu has declared: "Everything is derived from the Vedas." All knowledge, all the principles of right living, all qualities are derived from the Vedas. "Anantho Vai Vedaah" (The Vedas are infinite). The Vedas are immeasurable, unrivalled and filled with bliss. Veda is derived from the verb Vid, to know. Knowledge of the Supreme is Veda. It represents AtmaJnana (Knowledge of the Spirit), Brahma Jnana (Knowledge of the Universal Consciousness) and Advaita Jnana (Knowledge of the One that subsumes the many). These different terms are synonymous. Vedas embody the cosmic sound. It is not easy for laymen to understand the Vedas. But whether they are understood or not, their truth permeates the universe. They embody the Sabda Brahman (Cosmic Sound). They are not confined to a particular place, time or person. They pervade the cosmos. Realising that it is not

easy for common people to understand the Vedas, Vyasa codified them in four groups. They have been propagated and practised in three sections. The Karma Kanda (dealing with rituals), Upasana Kanda (dealing with forms of worship) and Jnana Kanda (dealing with the path of Knowledge).

"Karmanyeva Adhikaarasthe" (You have the right only for the performance of actions), declares the Gita. These actions have to be in accordance with Dharma. It must be realised that the body has been given only for the practice of Dharma. When man's actions achieve ripeness, they become Upasana (worship). When the worship is offered with full devotion and love for the Divine, it becomes Jnana (Pure Knowledge). Thus all three stages are really integral. Just as a flower by stages becomes a ripe fruit, similarly through Karma, Upasana and Jnana, the final stage of Self-realisation is reached. It is to enable the common people to go through these three stages that the puranas and epics were produced as aids to spiritual advancement. The Upanishads are the culmination of the Vedas. Hence they are known as Vedanta.

Three kinds of Yoga offered by Upanishads. The Upanishads have offered three kinds of yoga for mankind. With regard to actions, the dedication of every action to God is commended. As regards Upasana Yoga, what is required is wholehearted devotion to God, with purity in thought, word and deed. Love for the sake of securing some worldly benefit or return is not true love. Love must be for its own sake. The third is Jnana Yoga. "Sarvam Vishnumayam Jagath" (The cosmos is pervaded everywhere by the Lord). Everything is a manifestation of God. The Divine is in every being. This awareness is Jnana.

Students may have a doubt. Is it possible to conceive of this sense of oneness when forms, names, thoughts and actions are so varied among beings? You watch the waves on the ocean. Each wave appears to be different from another and unrelated to it. Yet the water in all of them is the same. The waves are not different from the ocean. Likewise, though names and forms and thoughts and actions may be different, all of them are like waves on the ocean of Sat-Chit-Ananda. This Sat-Chit-Ananda (Being-Awareness-Bliss) is present in everyone in a subtle form. The Gita emerged from the Upanishads. It expounds the Karma, Upaasana and Jnana (the threefold path) in three sections of six cantos each. Thus from the Vedas to the Upanishads and then to the Gita the eternal teachings has come to divinise mankind. The Gita does not belong to any one nation or people. It is for all mankind. It is the Voice of God.

God-is one for all people though He may be worshipped under different names and forms. Whether they are Hindus or Muslims, Christians or Parsis, Buddhists or Sikhs, God is one for all. Whatever the form in which worship is done, it reaches the one God. The sun is one and does not vary with the nation on which he sheds his light.

Gurus and sishyas of ancient times
The Vedas are infinite and boundless. Because of their profound meaning, those who studied the Vedas went through an arduous exercise. The preceptors were men of severe austerity. It is because of their great discipline and devotion that the Vedas could survive to this day. They are not recorded in a book. They have come down through an oral tradition from a succession of gurus and sishyas (preceptors and disciples). Great care has to be taken in reciting the Vedic hymns, observing the rules regarding accent, pause and rhythm. The gurus of those days were utterly selfless, pure-hearted and dedicated to the Divine. They were filled with love for the disciples and dedicated their lives to imparting Vedic knowledge to the students.

The students also were highly disciplined and adhered to all prescribed regulations. Those who

violated the preceptor's injunctions were placed beyond the pale. No quarter was given to those who exhibited the five defects' indifference, lack of humility, egoism, envy, and bad manners. Vaisampayana and Yajnavalkya
Vyasa had many disciples who were learning the Vedas from the sage. Chief among them was Vaisampayana. He was an ideal disciple, who implicitly carried out the guru's injunctions and studied the Vedas diligently. After completing his studies under Vyasa, Vaisampayana established a gurukula (Preceptor's ashram) for imparting Vedic knowledge. Gurukula is regarded as some kind of special educational establishment. It is not so. Gurukula was the dwelling place of the guru and it was also the abode of the sishyas (the students). The guru, after taking his meal, would distribute the food as prasadam to the students who used to spend their entire time with the guru. The guru and the disciples enjoyed everything in common and had the same ideals. The preceptor initiated the students in the spiritual quest.

One day, the sage Yajnavalkya came to Vaisampayana's gurukula. Yajnavalkya was a brilliant intellectual with keen intelligence. Yajnavalkya was proud about his intellectual attainments and this was responsible for his downfall. Pride always goeth before a fall. Yajnavalkya developed indifference to his studies and started behaving in an unbecoming manner. Vaisampayana was noticing all this. The preceptors of those times would give even their lives for deserving disciples, but would give no quarter to those who were proud and ill-behaved. Displeased with Yajnavalkya's conduct, Vaisampayana called him to his presence one day and told him: "Yajnavalkya! You have no right any longer to study in this gurukula. You must leave it at once. And before leaving, you give back all that you learnt here." Yajnavalkya, who realised his mistakes, disgorged all that he had learnt. The vomit was eaten by the Thithiri birds. Then the birds began to recite the Vedic hymns, which came to be known as Taithriya Samhita. The birth of Sukla Yajur-Veda
There are two traditions relating to the Vedas. One is known as the Brahmasampradayam (the Brahmic tradition). The other is Aditya-sampradayam (the Sun tradition). What Yajnavalkya

gave back is known as the Brahma-sampradaya. It is also known as Krishna Yajur-Veda.

Subsequently, feeling penitent about his misconduct, Yajnavalkya did penance in the form of Suryopasana (worship of the Sun), giving up food and drink. In this manner he was atoning for his misconduct.

The Sun-God appeared before him in the form of Vaaji (a sacred horse) and told him: "Child!

What has happened, is past. Remember it is a grievous crime to be disloyal to your preceptor or ungrateful to the Divine. You should not indulge in this kind of behaviour. Be careful in the future." Saying this, the Sun-God himself taught the Vedas to Yajnavalkya. Why did Surya appear before him in the form of Vaaji? Yajnavalkya's ancestors were noted for their vaajasnam (offerings of food) to the hungry, Hence they got the name Vaajasam. For this reason, the Sun-God assumed the form of Vaaji and taught the Vedas to Yajnavalkya. This Veda is known as Sukla Yajur-Veda. It is also called Vaajanaskanda. The Yajur-Veda thus got divided into two parts: Krishna Yajur-Veda and Sukla Yajur-Veda. Greatness of gift of food to the hungry It should be noted that it was because of the gift of food made by Yajnavalkya's ancestors that the Sun-God himself came down to teach the Veda to Yajnavalkya. This shows the supreme efficacy of the anna-daana (gift of food) to the hungry and the starving.

There is no greater gift than the gift of food

There is no God higher than one's parents

There is no japa or tapa higher than righteousness.

There is no Dharma greater than compassion

Nothing is more profitable than the company of the good.

There is no worse enemy than hatred.

No disease is worse than indebtedness,

Death is preferable on earth to infamy.

No wealth is more precious than a good name

There is no ornament superior to the Lord's name.

Realising these truths, Yajnavalkya taught his disciples the value of service to parents, reverence for the guru, and efficacy of the gift of food.

Dear students! The summer course began on an Ekadasi day, is concluding on an Ekadasi.

Regard these classes as a sacred Ekadasi observance. In this holy exercise, many veterans and

experienced scholars have spoken on many vital subjects. It is not easy to get such eminent persons to address you. You have greater access to Swami than to these lecturers. It is not enough to listen to them. You must try to put into practice at least some of the things they have taught you.

What you have been taught during these fifteen days is the essence of the Vedas. You have received also the nectar churned out of the sastras, the puranas and the epics. You will be the future leaders of Bharat. You have to practise Dharma and lead ideal lives. Never give up Truth and Righteousness. The Vedas have indicated what are to be followed and what are to be avoided. Unfortunately today people follow what is prohibited and have given up what should be followed.

You students should consider yourselves extremely fortunate in having an opportunity like this.

Whatever enterprise you may engage in, do not forget your duty and your faith in the Divine.

Perform good actions. Thereby you will purify your mind.

When you worship God with a pure mind you will achieve Self-realisation. The Lord does not seek from you material offerings.

When you love Him with all your heart He will shower His grace on you. This is evident from

the examples of Valmiki, Kuchela and many other devotees. Whatever you do, do it as a dedicated offering to God. Bear in mind the example of Sabari, whose devotion to Rama beggars description.

Keep in mind the sacred things you have heard, act upto the teachings, purify your hearts and be exemplary citizens of Bharat. This is my benediction for all of you.

Valedictory Discourse at the Summer Course in the Brindavan Campus on 3-6-1990.

SKM Updates

The school and children's home have witnessed busy activity in the New Year.

Eye camp: On 7th January, an eye check-up camp was held in school in co-ordination with doctors from Karthik Netralaya. The doctors were headed by founding member, Dr Karthik himself, and the doctors first briefed the children about eye care and followed it up with screening of all the children. Exceptional cases were identified and children with refractive lens requirements were listed. All these children will be provided with free spectacles and those needing special attention will be taken to the Karthik Netralaya for follow-up. The camp also saw the participation of almost 70 parents and villagers in addition to the participation of the 250 school children from classes 1-10 and their teachers. The event was a grand success and we profusely thank Mr Pothana Setty, Mr Ashok Meda and Dr Karthik Meda for their continued support and help in this.

The children have also been busy with different contests like **Spelling Bee** conducted by Mrs Vijayalakshmy Krishnan this month. Prizes were given for all students class-wise based on their ability to spell 30 different words given during the contest. It was wonderful to see all the children participating with enthusiasm and we hope that this will increase their zest for learning.



Republic day was celebrated in school on 26th January, 2014. This time the function was a brief occasion involving the Chief Guest's speech and welcome speeches by the school students and teachers. The children sang the national anthem and saviouries were distributed to all the children. On 27th January, 2014, all of us celebrated the birthday of Shreyas Gowda- one of the children residing in Sai Krushna Mandir. Cake cutting was done and the Happy Birthday song was sung, just after Shreyas took the arathi for Bhagavan.

We were also very happy to have had many visitors this month. Kalpna aunty and Niki aunty from London spent time teaching bhajans and gardening to the children. They also got them some interesting story books and goodies from London. Asmita aunty and Urvashi aunty spent time classifying the library books for the children and labelling them. Thanks to Mr Kaliprasad and Mrs Usha for their thoughtful gesture of getting rice and dal for the kids. Mr Madhav Naik's visit from Vermont, USA along with his family was nice too.

The SKM team is now actively engaged in finding a suitable warden on paid basis. The major duties of the warden will involve supervising the children, helping them with their homework and co-curricular activities. Knowledge of computers, record maintenance and driving skills will be bonuses on this job.

We look forward to all your active involvement and participation in this God given opportunity. We also welcome you to come and visit the site and participate in the activities of Sai Krishna Mandir. We pray that Swami's grace will crown our genuine intentions and He will continue to guide and bless the children and residents to live in a happy home and grow to his ideals.



Atmajyothi

by Shri Lakshminarayan Aithal

Lakshminarayan Aithal has served for over 3 decades in Swami's institution and is the former Principal of the Sri Sathya Sai Loka Seva Institutions at Muddenahalli. Inspired by Swami's direct message to study the Upanishads, he first learnt Sanskrit and then studied the direct works of Adi Shankaracharya and Swami. Sincere perseverance led him to the reality of Aham Brahmasmi and He realized and experienced Swami's words: "I am God and so are you". He shares the import of the Upanishadic teachings with us in this series of articles.

नोत्साही भवति

22. Perseverance (उत्साह) means to remain active in any action. The one who has excess of passion quality (रजोगुण) in his conduct shows effort to do this or that. Desire of benefit itself is the cause for an action. But, the Supreme Devotee has obtained God in the Form of the Highest Achievement; therefore, he has become successful in life; and, for him no action is remained to be performed. Therefore, there is no cause for his perseverance to perform any action; and, by all means, he retains from sensual enjoyments and establishes himself in God

CHARACTERISTICS OF A SUPREME DEVOTEE AS DESCRIBED IN THE गीता

23. One should not imagine that only above mentioned are the attributes of a Supreme Devotee. There is an advantage to ruminate the characteristics described in the twelfth chapter of the भगवद्गीता. As an introduction to the verses there, श्री शंकराचार्य has written this : - अक्षरो-पासकानां सम्यग्दर्शननिष्ठानां त्यक्तसर्वेषणानां अद्वेष्टा सर्वभूतानाम् इत्यादि धर्मपूगं साक्षादमृतत्वसाधनम् वक्ष्यामीति प्रवर्तते ॥ गी. 12-13, भा. भा. 743.

Meaning of this sentence is as follows : Ascetics who worship God alone have established in the True Knowledge; they have abandoned all desires; the group of virtues described in the following verses – is the direct cause for the attainment of Immortality for the ascetics. The Lord is going to preach those virtues :-

अद्वेष्टा सर्वभूतानां मैत्रकरुण एव च । निर्ममो निरहङ्कारः
समदुःखसुख क्षमी ॥ 13 ॥

सन्तुष्टः सततं योगी यतात्मा दृढनिश्चयः ।
मय्यर्पितमनोबुद्धिर्यो मद्भक्तः स मे प्रियः ॥ 14 ॥

यस्मान्नोद्विजते लोको लोकान्नोद्विजते च यः ।
हर्षामर्षभयोद्वोगैर्मुक्तो यः स च मे प्रियः ॥ 15 ॥

अनपेक्षः शुचिर्दक्ष उदासीनो गतव्यथः । सर्वारम्भपरित्यागी
यो मद्भक्तः स मे प्रियः ॥ 16 ॥

यो न हृष्यति न द्वेष्टि न शोचति न काङ्क्षति ।
शुभाशुभपरित्यागी भक्तिमान् यः स मे प्रियः ॥ 17 ॥

समशत्रौ च मित्रे च तथा मानापमानयोः ।
शीतोष्णसुखदुःखेषु समः सङ्गविवर्जितः ॥ 18 ॥

तुल्यनिन्दास्तुतिर्मौनी सन्तुष्टो येन केनचित् । अनिकेतः
स्थिरमतिर्भक्तिमान् मे प्रियो नरः ॥ 19 ॥

ये तु धर्म्यामृतमिदं यथोक्तं पर्युपासते । श्रद्धधाना मत्परमा
भक्तास्तेऽतीव मे प्रियः ॥ 20 ॥

गी. 12-13तः 20.

Those who learning these verses by-heart investigate the meaning the meaning (अर्थानुसन्धान) obtain the reflection of the glory of the Supreme Devotion. The opinion of these verses is as follows : A devotee has thinking of God everywhere, therefore, he doesn't hate even the animals that hurt him. Those who come to him are all treated friendly by him; as friends are equal, they have familiarity in their behavior, they look after their mutual maintenance and protection; similarly, this devotee behaves well with everyone. He egoistically never thinks that he is superior to others. He has compassion towards those who suffer from worldly distress. He doesn't think egoistically attach to the non-self-objects like body, etc. He keeps his mind free from ups and downs in the midst of distress and happiness. Even a very powerful one beats him up, he patiently remains undisturbed in the mind. To maintain his body, even if he obtains sufficient food, etc. or not, he is always pleased and keeps his mind always in the state of relief; he controls his body and organs; he has a well settled opinion in the matter of the Reality; and, he has offered his mind and intellect to God. None is agitated by him and he never feels agitated by the behavior of others. He doesn't have any one of the followings : Swelling due to external causes, intolerance towards others, fear and suffering in the mind. He is free from any desire (निःस्पृह), he doesn't desire anything from body, organs, and sensual objects; and he is pure in mind and body. He has dexterity to understand the work-plan of actions that he has to perform; he doesn't take the side of anyone and he has fearless behavior; and, he has given up all types of actions in order to have happiness of either this world or that of the other one. He is not got elated by obtaining the desired thing; he doesn't hate anything if it turns disagreeable to him; he doesn't weep for

any loss; he desires nothing; and, he does neither good nor bad actions. He remains unattached in the matter of either an enemy or a friend; either he is honored or disrespected; and he remains unattached even in the midst of pairs like : cold and heat, happiness and sorrow, etc. If people blame or praise him, he, without uttering useless words, remains silent; he is contented in what he obtains; he doesn't have a particular dwelling place; and he has a firm understanding in the matter of Reality.

The reason for explain these characteristics in detail is mentioned in the last verse of that chapter in the गीता . When the seekers of liberation (मुमुक्षुः) listen to the details of the characteristics of the Devotee of God, they understand the taste of virtues of ascetics (निवृत्तिधर्म) may desire to follow them; the seekers keeping their mind in God alone, may faithfully exercise the above said virtues; then they become the beloveds of God – this is the purport of the epitome sentence : यो मद्भक्तः स मे प्रियः, such one is My beloved devotee – this refrain is repeated at the end of each verses; this is to mention that God is pleased only to the devotion and He desires nothing. This is good to remember the words of the Lord to उद्धव –

न तथा मे प्रियतम आत्मयोनिर्न शङ्करः । न च संकर्षणो न
श्रीर्नैवास्येत्मा च यथा भवान् ॥ भा. 11-14-15.

“O उद्धव, you are the most beloved to Me amongst – ब्रह्म, शिव, बलराम, लक्ष्मी and finally Myself”. This explanatory remark (अर्थवाद) reveals that none possibly become more beloved to God than His devotee. This should touch the mind.

RELATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND DEVOTION

24. Here is a doubt : The Knowledge is quite essentially needed to remove the egotism and to bestow the Supreme Achievement of life; and , that fruit cannot be had by a mere devotion. For,

if the hindrance of egoism really exists, that can never be removed. Therefore, as an imagined snake appears in a rope, that false appearance is seen due to miss-conception; and that can be eradicated only by the Knowledge in the form of right understanding.

The relief for the above objection is given : The Principle Devotion is the condition of the Form of the Self itself. The श्रुतिस tell that the Self is of the Form of Knowledge and Bliss and, in order to have the experience the Self, the condition of the Form of the Self endowed with Love itself is needed. In the world, there is no law that when the one obtains knowledge of an object, the love of that object also should be there; for an example, when the condition of the form of a snake is imagined, the condition of fear following that knowledge also appears. But, it is not like this in the case of the deliberation of the Self. When the Knowledge of the Self who is of the Form of Bliss – arises, there should essentially arise the condition of the Form of Love also. Not only that, the Love is more inevitable in order to have the Knowledge which is of the Form of Experience of the Self. That is what the Lord preaches अर्जुन :-

ब्रह्मभूतः प्रसन्नात्मा न शोचति न काङ्क्षति । समः सर्वेषु
भूतेषु मद्भक्तिं लभते पराम् ॥

भक्त्या मामभिजानाति यावान् यश्चास्मि तत्त्वतः । ततो
मां तत्त्वतो ज्ञात्वा विशते तदनन्तरम् ॥

गी. 15-54, 55.

Maha Periyava Dharshana Experience

SOURCE : [HTTP://SEVA-THEPURPOSEOFLIFE.BLOGSPOT.IN/2008/04/MAHA-PERİYAVAA-DARISANA-ANUBAVANGAL-2.HTML](http://seva-thepurposeoflife.blogspot.in/2008/04/MAHA-PERİYAVAA-DARISANA-ANUBAVANGAL-2.HTML)

This is an interesting and emotional anubavam, I read from kanchiforum.com

Many years ago, on a Chitra Pournima day, an Abhishegam for Sri Maha Linga swami was performed with the chanting of Rudra Japa. It was a grand success. With 11 Vedic Pundits, it started at 8am and finished by 1pm. Sri Narayanaswami Iyer (NI), the head of the village (Mirasudar), an ardent Maha Periyava devotee, organised the whole event.

Very eager to offer the Rudra-Prasad to Maha Periyava, NI reached Kanchi the very next day. He had packed the Prasad in a plantain-leaf covered with a new silk shawl.

At Kanchi, after finishing the daily Puja, Sri Maha Periyava was giving dharshan. A lot of people were waiting for the dharshan. When his turn came, NI was shivering and lost his voice. He did a sashtanga namaskaram. Maha Periyava looked at him and raised his brows, meaning "Whats the news?"

NI opened his prasad packet, kept it in a plate and offered it to Maha Periyava – still shivering in reverence. The Prasad offering had vibhuthi, Kumkum, chandan, vilva leaves, 2 half coconuts, and bananas.

Maha Periyava: " This prasad is from which Kshetram?"

NI: " Periyava, I organized a Rudra abhishegam yesterday in Tiruvidaimarudoor for Maha Linga Swami. I brought this Prasad for Periyava from there. I am offering it for Periyava's anugraham".

MahaPeriyava was looking at that plate containing the Prasad. And then asked him: "Narayanaswami, you are a rich man; still did you share the expense with someone else for this Abhishegam?"

NI: "No Periyava...I bore all the expenses myself"

Maha Periyava was smiling after hearing the emphasis on "I, myself".

Maha Periyava: "You performed this abhishegam for Loka Kshemam?"

NI: "No Periyava...for the last 2 or 3 years we are not getting good harvest from the fields....some lands have not yielded anything....Muthu Josiyar asked me to conduct a Rudra Abhisegam on Chitra Pournima day for the best yields....I did that after believing him, Periyava"

The Acharya still has not accepted the Prasad. " This means that you did not do it for aathmaartham or Loka Kshemam....!", saying this, Maha Periyava closed his eyes and meditated for 15 minutes. When He opened His eyes, one could understand that He was very clear as to what had happened.

Maha Periyava: "Ok. How many Brahmmans were there?"

NI: "Eleven Pundits were there, Periyava"

" Who are they, you only organised them, right? From which place are they?" this was Maha Periyava.

By now the devotees around were wondering why Sri MahaPeriyava was so inquisitive. NI took out a paper and read out the names. ".....Tiruvidaimarudoor Venkatrama Sastrigal, Srinivasa Ganapadigal, Rajagopala Swouthigal....." MahaPeriyava intervened, " Oh... all of them are great Vedic Pundits....just see in your list, if you have Thepperumanallur Venkatesa Ganapadigal".

NI was very happy to find that name in his list. He exploded: "yes, yes, Periyava, he was there yesterday...."

Mahaperiyava : "besh....besh....Venkatesa Ganapadigal was also there...Very good. He is a great Vedic Pundit! He is getting very old now. Nowadays he chants Rudra Japam with great difficulty."

As if he got the point, NI immediately said: " You are very correct, Periyava. He did not do the Rudra Japam properly. Most of the times he was sitting with his eyes closed

without chanting.....and the number of Japams got reduced because of that.....I was wondering why I invited him”.

Maha Periyava got annoyed with NI. “ Just because you have money, you cannot assume you can say anything! Do you know the qualification of Thepperumanallur Venkatesa Ganapadigal? You are not even comparable to the dust in his feet. How can you say that about him? Now I understand what happened yesterday. Now you answer me. When he was sitting with his eyes closed, did you not go to him and shout at him saying ‘ For the money you are getting, why is your mouth keeping shut?’

There was absolute silence there. The devotees were stunned. NI, who was at ease a minute ago, started shivering again, fell down on his knees, got up, closed his mouth with his palm and with tears in eyes said, “ I was wrong, Priyava...please, please forgive me. To Ganapadigal, I said exactly what you just now described. Please forgive me”

“ Wait, that is not it. There is more. Did you give dhakshina to every Pundit? How much did you give?” – Maha Periyava.

“ I gave ten rupees to each of them” – NI, with great difficulty.

“ I know everything....tell me again. Did you give ten rupees to everyone?” – Maha Periyava.

NI was quiet. But Maha Periyava did not leave him. “ You are ashamed to tell me. I will tell you what happened. You offered the ten rupee sambhavana to each Pundit. When you came near the Thepperumanallur Ganapadigal, you reduced the sambhavana to seven rupees since you thought he did not do the Japams continuously. You felt vindicated by this! And you were happy! But the Ganapadigal did not care. He smiled at you and took it.....Tell me all this is true?”

The devotees did not know how Maha Periyava knew all this. NI was stunned and silent. He repeatedly pleaded guilty and said he would never ever do such things in future.

While Narayanaswamy Iyer was feeling ashamed and was pleading guilty, Maha Periyava did not stop there. “Wait...I

would have been happy if it ended here. Did you organise lunch for all of them at Ramachandra Iyer’s house?”

“Yes, Yes, Periyava” – NI.

“ You served very well.....the Chakra Pongal was like Amrut, made with a lot of cashews and raisins; overflowing with ghee... was served personally by you. Right?” – Maha Periyava.

“ Yes Periyava, I served the Chakra Pongal myself” – NI was pleased to say this.

“While serving, did you do it with clear conscience and follow the proper etiquette and decorum? ” – Maha Periyava.

No response from NI. “OK. I will tell you. Since it tasted very good, all the Pundits enjoyed it and asked for more Chakra Pongal. You also served them more and more. But when you saw Thepperumanallur Ganapadigal asking for more, not once but many times, you pretended as if you did not even hear him! So many times he asked for more! Yet, not once did you respond. Is this dharma? You cheated him off....You played so dirty. You deceived him, you betrayed him, you insulted him!”. Acharya looked very upset and sad.

NI was standing there, fully ashamed of himself. Maha Periyava changed his position and sat straight as if Lord Parameshwara was sitting there. After 15 minutes of silence and meditation, Maha Periyava opened His eyes. “Mirasudarvaal, you must understand one thing. The Ganapadigal is now 81. He has been chanting Rudra Japam from the age of 16 at many Siva temples. Sri Rudram is embodied in every nerve of his, and runs in his breadth and his blood. He is such a Maha Purush. What you displayed was absolute sin. Nothing but sin”. Maha periyava could not talk any more. After a while, He continued.

Maha Periyava continued: “The insult you heaped on him affected him thoroughly. Do you know what he did? He did not go back to his village. Yesterday evening he went straight to Maha Linga Swami temple. After three pradhakshinas, he stood in front of the Swami and do you know what he prayed for?”

Maha Periyava had difficulty talking. He continued after some time...“with tears rolling down his cheeks, ‘Appa

Jothi Maha Lingam! You know I am your ardent devotee. You have heard my Rudra Japams so many times in your Sannidhi, from my young years. I am now 81. Am very strong at heart, but the strength in my voice has diminished. You are well aware of what happened during lunch today. That Chakra Pongal.... was so tasty.... And leaving aside my shame, I was pleading for some more....so many times. That Mirasudaar just pretended as if he did not hear me and went away. You know I like Chakra Pongal so much....I felt so bad that he did not serve me more in spite of my pleading. But later on, I realised that I should not have that kind of attachment to a mere dish. That's why I am standing in front of you. When people go to Kasi, they give up a vegetable and a fruit. You are the same Lingam in Kasi as well. That's why I am promising you that from this minute on, till my jeevan leaves this body, I am giving up not just Chakra Pongal, but any sweet dish. I will not touch. Maha Lingam, this is my promise... I am taking leave of you'. So saying, with more tears from his eyes, the Ganapadigal left for his village. Now you tell me, Narayanaswamy Iyarvaal, was it not a sin you committed? Will Maha Linga Swami accept your actions?"

Maha Periyava stopped here. It was 3pm. He refused the Biksha for the day. No one left that place. Tears in everyone's eyes.

NI fell on Maha Periyava's feet. He was sobbing, uncontrollably. Unable to speak, but still managed to say, "Periyava, I feel very very ashamed. I made a big mistake. I will never do this mistake in my life. Please pardon me. Please, Periyava. Please tell me that you forgive me....Please take this Maha Linga Prasad and pardon me. Please Periyava". Even then Maha Periyava didn't touch the Prasadam brought by NI but firmly said "Wait for a while, that Maha Linga Swami himself will give me anugraham for Prasadam".

Just then a Pundit aged around 65, looking fresh with rudraksha around his neck holding a plate arrived there. He told Maha Periyava: "My name is Maha Lingam. I am the Archagar in Tiruvidaimarudoor temple.

The Pundit continued: "Yesterday there was a Rudra Abhishegam for Maha Linga Swami. I came to offer the Prasad to Periyava and take His blessings".

When he was going to do Namaskaram, Maha Periyava stopped him saying "those who got Siva Dheeksha should not do Namaskaram to me". Maha Periyava took the Prasad and offered Matam's 'return gift' – prasad. By then the Archagar saw NI and said, "Periyava, he is Narayanaswamy Iyer. He was the one who organised the Abhishegam yesterday." Then the Archagar took leave from Maha Periyava and left.

NI told Maha Periyava repeatedly that he made a big mistake and asked for Prayaschittam- 'how can I wash this sin?'

Acharyal got up and said, "I cannot tell you the Prayaschittam for this. Only Thepperumanallur Venkatesa Ganapadigal can tell you". "But will he tell me, after whatever I did?" asked NI. In a loud voice, Maha Periyava said: "If you have the Praaptham he will tell you". So saying, He went inside to His room.

Maha Periyava did not come out for long. NI now decided to meet the Ganapadigal. He took a bus and reached Thepperumanallur next day. He wanted to plead for pardon from the Ganapadigal, get his blessings and then only go back to his place. When he reached the Ganapadigal's house, he saw a lot of people there.....the Ganapadigal left for his heavenly abode early that morning! What Maha Periyava said hit his head: "If you have the Praaptham, he will tell you".

He said to himself, "Maha Periyava knew I did not have the Praaptham – what a big sinner am I". However, he did Namaskaram to the Ganapadigal's body and left for his village back.

Later on, Narayanaswamy Iyer did a lot of service for the Mutts in the North and obtained Mukhti in Kasi.

Jaya Jaya Sankara Hara Hara Sankara.

Lessons From Australia

BY PRAKASH SRINIVASAN

I had gone on a visit to Australia with my wife recently and I thought I will pen down the wonderful things we observed and learnt from there. This post might be a little redundant for many of those who stay outside India, so please bear with me. We had told ourselves before the trip that apart from making it a leisure trip, we would also try to see if there was something which we could apply back in India to make life easier and simpler.

- **Fitness as a way of life:** Most Australians are remarkably fit and this is owing to multiple reasons. Almost every Australian city is on the coastline and swimming is a way of life for them. I heard from them that babies are put into the water as early as when they are 3 months old! They also indulge in a lot of water and adventure sports like diving, snorkeling, surfing, kayaking etc.

Australia like many European nations encourages cycling and almost all roads have exclusive cycle lanes and there are signboards everywhere to ensure that other motorists share the road with cyclists. Many Australians cycle over long distances which can many times extend to over a few hundred kms. I saw them cycling even on hotter days where we were hesitant to walk out in the sun. One more aspect of fitness is that senior citizens who were over 70 years old were extremely mobile, driving their cars and managing their luggage easily in places like airports, train stations. I even saw an 85 year old grandmother driving her car which is unthinkable in India.

- **Waste Segregation at source:** Similar to many other countries Australia vigorously practices waste and garbage segregation at the source itself. There are 2-3 types of trash bins-One

for recyclable items, one for rubbish and one for all food items. Moreover these bins were there in plenty in all public places and the bin boards were very clear as to what kind of item could be dropped in the respective bins.

Green living is my pet topic and I was really enjoying seeing this disciplined way of waste management. I always made sure that I dropped the correct contents into each bins, especially for the recyclable ones like coffee cans, food packaging etc.

- **Public Transport Facilities:** Melbourne has the world's largest tram network covering many parts of the city apart from Metro trains and buses. Sydney has a metro rail, monorail, Ferry, Bus and a light rail to add to that list. Travelling within the city was a sheer delight and all modes of transport were punctual to the exact minute. The wonderful thing is that every Metro station has a bus station (called interchange) which connects people to those parts of the city where trains do not ply. So, the amount of thinking and planning that has gone into this is brilliant. It was very nice to see Australia embrace public transport (in the European way) rather than allowing people to run their cars and congest the cities (like in most parts of USA).
- **People Sensitivity:** Like many countries in the west, Australia has special facilities like restrooms for differently-abled people and parent rooms for taking care of infant needs. This was extended applicable even in all the modes of public transport. Many parents would enter the bus with their pram and it all looked so easy. I was wondering what would be needed to implement this in India because

we show how humane we are by having these kind of facilities. This is the least we can do for these people to bring some light into their lives and make it easier for them to live.

- Others: People would religiously wait on line for their turn at any public place and they would not crowd around. Customer service at all places was brilliant and all the staff were very polite and attentive to what was needed.

The main point I am wondering is that what is needed to make at least some changes in India? Is India's massive population its main handicap? I shudder to think what would happen if all the millions of people settled abroad return back to India!