

FAST TRACK

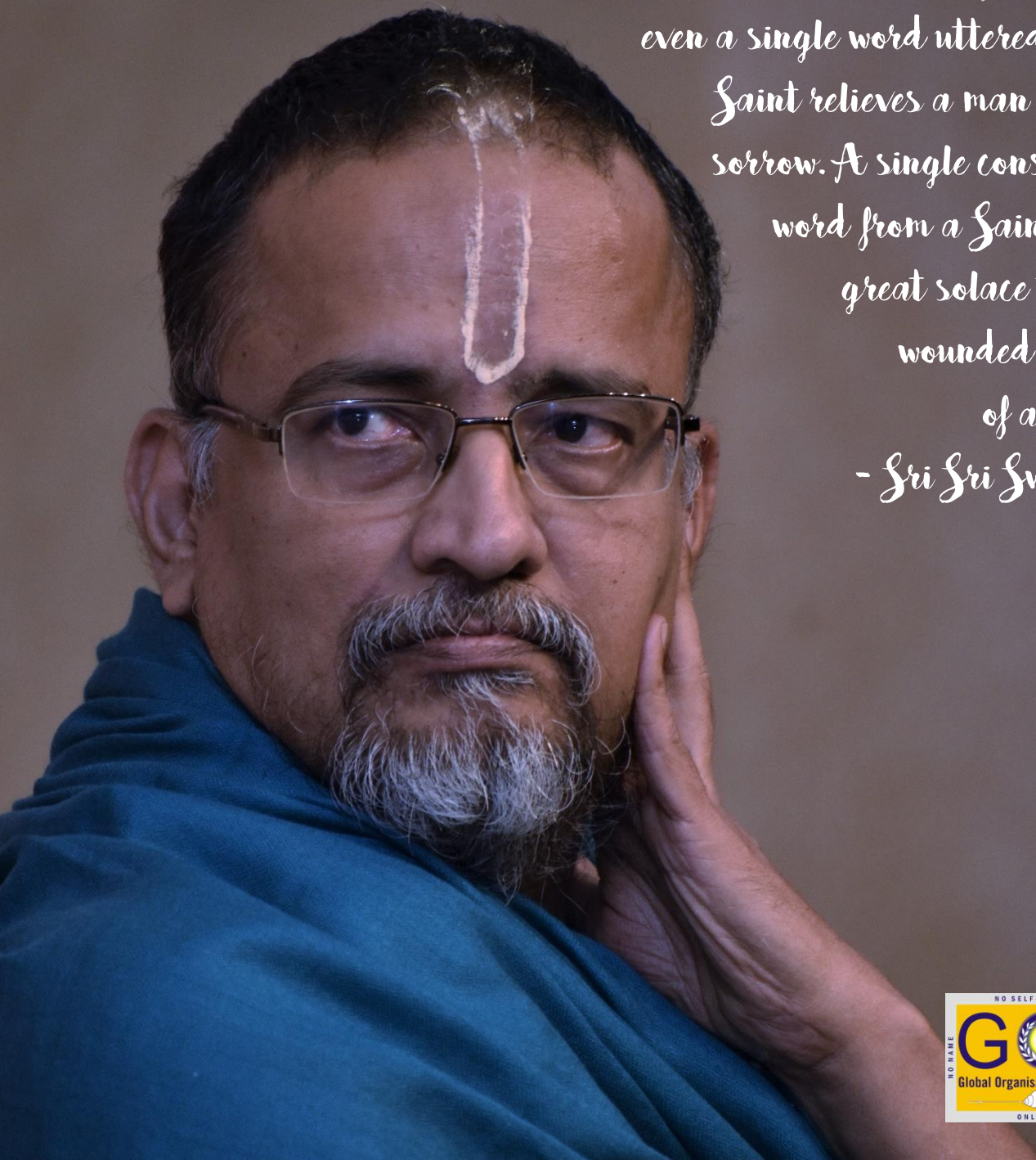
When Life in the Fast Lane Needs a Pit Stop

Monthly Newsletter

January 2021

Just as a drop of water provides great relief to a man who is very thirsty, even a single word uttered by a Saint relieves a man of his sorrow. A single consoling word from a Saint is a great solace to the wounded heart of a man.

- Sri Sri Swamiji



Radhe Radhe!

Global Organisation for Divinity – Australia and New Zealand Chapter is delighted to bring to you our monthly newsletter. We wish to share with you enriching messages from our Guru, His Holiness Maharanyam Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji in the form of transcripts of his lectures, and articles by his disciples. This newsletter titled 'FAST TRACK' has been curated to bring satsang quickly and easily to your finger tips to suit today's fast paced world.

Join us in this blissful journey...

FROM THE EDITORS' DESK

God Never Forsakes Us

Dr A Bhagyanathan, Chennai

(Personal Secretary to Sri Sri Swamiji)

It was a pleasant evening in Madhurapuri Ashram. Sri Swamiji was sitting in front of his kutir Madhuvanam at Ashram, silently chanting Mahamantra. At that time, around ten people who were at the gate saw Sri Swamiji and came inside. All of them were in the age group of 60-70 years. They were surprised and delighted to see Sri Swamiji. After offering their prostrations, they told Sri Swamiji, "We are coming from Chennai. We have hired a bus to come and visit Sri KalyanaSrinivasa Perumal temple and Kanyakumari Sri Jaya Hanuman. We are really blessed that you are here".

Sri Swamiji spoke to each one of them and gave them fruits as prasadam. There was an old lady standing alone with tears in her eyes. Sri Swamiji gently enquired about the reason for her tears. She said amidst her sobs, "My family has forsaken me. My relatives are not in good terms either. As for friends, I don't have even one true friend. The whole world seems to have

forsaken me. Now I do the rounds of temples; What else can I do?"

Sri Swamiji listened to her patiently and then called a child who was playing there. He pointed to the child and asked the lady to read aloud the printed words on the child's t-shirt. None of us had noticed it. The lady read out - "If father says no, ask mother; If mother says no, ask sister; If sister says no, ask brother; if brother says no, ask a friend". The print was in a lighter vein. Sri Swamiji asked the lady to repeat the reading. As she finished, Sri Swamiji said, "Now add one more line to it; If all of them say NO, ask KRISHNA.". Understood?. Sri Swamiji added, "Don't get upset thinking about who all have forsaken you. Instead, firmly believe that God will never forsake you. This faith and constant remembrance of His Name will give you the courage to face life".

(Translated from Tamil by the Editorial team)

Bhakti

- MRS GAYATHRI EASWAR,
Sydney

The world is bound by the Lord. The Lord is bound by His Divine Names. Vedantis are the ones who do upAsanA (worship) as per the philosophy of non-duality (advaita). Bhaktas worship in dvaita bhAvam (philosophy of duality). It is generally said that those who have the characteristics of Lord Shiva have inclination towards Vedanta; those who have the characteristics of Lord Vishnu (Hari) have a taste for bhakti (devotion), which is why, traditionally we say Shiva yOgis or Shiva jnAnis; and Hari Bhaktas or Bhagavatas. Therefore, bhakti is more commonly done towards Lord Vishnu. As of smaraNam (reminiscing), shravaNam (listening) and klrTanam (singing) prescribed in the path of bhakti, it is important for the Lord who is worshipped to have various divine stories, perform leelAs (divine play), be captivatingly beautiful and easily approachable (soulabhyam). These are abundantly found in Lord Sri Hari, hence bhakti is associated with Him.

If we see the life histories of Mahatmas (Self realized Masters) who have tread the path of Vedanta (path that contemplates on the formless Brahman) we observe that they have also taken shelter under a deity (God in His Form), and have only then attained the essence of Vedanta philosophy. The ones who have travelled in the path of Vedanta without seeking refuge under God in His Form, most certainly have had a Guru. As the Guru is a representation of the Lord, even if they do not worship the Lord in His Form, they also fall under the philosophy of duality (dvaita bhAvam). It can be seen that the devotion they have showed towards their Guru is more than the devotion they have had towards their ishTa dEvtA (desired Lord of worship). It is not possible to attain the state of advaita without having begun in the path of dvaita.

Bhakti is beautiful. This bhakti is understood only by the ones who have a rasika hrudayam (a heart that admires and relishes). This is an emotion; a feeling. It cannot be defined. One cannot be taught that bhakti should be done in a certain way. Like how a mother naturally

loves her child, one should naturally feel love towards God. Such a love cannot be made to happen. When bhakti is done without any expectations, not even for the sake of attaining mOksha (liberation/self realization), it is prEma bhakti.

In such bhakti, no matter how much difficulty one undergoes, one will not make a big deal of it at all. One will not relate bhakti to worldly matters. As God is present in everything, an upadesa (spiritual instruction) is also not required directly from God or Guru, to perform bhakti. For the one treading the path of bhakti, every experience that one undergoes in the world is an upadesa.

Although it is true that many Mahatmas have attained God by doing rigorous penance, the intention to do the penance was sown in them only by the Grace of God.

To free ourselves from the web of mAyA (illusion), we require the support of the one who is free from the clutches of mAyA. Without God's grace, there is no way that one can escape from mAyA.

(From Sri Swamiji's lectures)

SHRAVANAM

- MRS VASUMATHI SRIDHARAN, Melbourne

It is hard for a mind that has been indulging in worldly activities for innumerable births, to turn towards spirituality. Most people who commit mistakes are fully aware of their wrong doing, yet they do it yielding to the provocation by their vAsanAs (latent tendencies). Suppose a friend of ours who recently visited a place elaborately describes its beauty and how much he enjoyed the trip, don't we naturally get the urge to visit the place too? We may get a similar yearning when we see or read about an object or place. However, we all would agree that listening produces a deeper yearning in us as compared to seeing or reading. Therefore, it is necessary that we listen to spiritually enriching stories of the Lord and Mahatmas to nurture in us, the deepest yearning for Bhagavan (The Lord).

It would not suffice to listen to these divine stories just once. Our mind is so tuned to engaging itself in worldly pursuits, that it would

just temporarily engage in spiritual activities, only to return to worldly affairs again. So shravanam (listening) is important until the mind stays engrossed exclusively in spirituality. Shravanam is one of the navavidha bhakthis (the nine paths of devotion shown by Sri Prahlada in Srimad Bhagavatam). King Parikshit attained mukti (liberation) just by listening to Srimad Bhagavatam. On one end, it is a great bhAgyam (fortune) to listen to such divine stories from Mahatmas; on the other hand, it is verily wrong to refrain from listening to these from those who are always engaged in thoughts of Bhagavan. Amidst innumerable species of living beings, The Lord has given only humans the unique faculty of speech so that we speak of Him and attain Him. May Goddess Saraswathi, the Goddess of speech, bestow this upon all of us.

(From Sri Swamiji's lectures)

Ranganatha Beckons...

When one says I am visiting the “Periya Kovil” (great temple), we should wonder which temple they are referring to. When one says Periya Kovil, one refers to Sri Ranganatha’s temple alone. A great temple in its true sense. In accordance with the name of the temple, the Raja Gopuram of the temple also stands majestically even today. Just as how Periya Kovil refers to Sri Ranganatha Swamy temple, so also the Perumal of every divya desam have a specified name. For instance Parthasarathy, Varadaraja Perumal, Venkatamudaiyan, Veni Madhavan, Sethu Madhavan, Bindhu Madhavan, Narayana Perumal and so on.

Kanchipuram Sri Vardaraja’s name is referred to as PeraruLAlan. Similarly when asked what is the name of Ranganatha Swamy who resides in Srirangam, he is referred to as “Periya Perumal”. Therefore, Periya Kovil means Sri Ranganatha Swamy temple, and so also Sri Ranganathar is referred to as Periya Perumal.

When Periya Perumal rises to grace Srirangam, all the great devotees who meet each other in the streets enquire “has the Periya Perumal woken up to bless?”. There is no doubt whatsoever, that Periya Perumal is none other than Sri Ranganatha Swamy. Sri Ranganayaki thAyAr (His Divine Consort) is referred to as “Periya PirAtti”. Thus the names Periya Perumal (the great Lord), Periya Kovil (the great temple), Periya Piratti (the great consort) refer to Srirangam alone.

There are 4000 Pasurams in praise of Perumal called 4000 Divyaprabhandams. The azhwars wrote these 4000 divyaprabhandams that describe and praise Sri Ranganatha Swamy. A territory where all Acharyas knelt and remained in reverence is the Sriranga Kshetram. Sri Ranganatha Swamy was the favourite of all the acharyas and Azhwars. This kshetram is known as Bhooloka Vaikuntam.

Instead of individual commentaries/interpretation for Thirumalai, Thiruppavai, or one thousand pasurams, all the 4000 divyaprabhandams were interpreted by one person alone, and he was endowed the title “Vyakhyana Chakravarthy” by Periya Piratti herself. His name was

Achanpillai who incarnated in Senganoor near Kumbhakonam district. Because he was associated with Periya Perumal, he was more commonly known as “Periya Achanpillai” rather than Achanpillai. We know about Jeeyar who lived in Ahobilam or more known as Ahobila Jeeyar. In Srirangam we have Narayana Jeeyar. Similarly, Manavala Mahamuni from Srirangam was known as “Periya Jeeyar”.

There once was a great devotee who sung the glory of Sri Ranganatha as:

“paccaimA malaipOl mEni
pavaLavAy kamalac cengaN
accutA. amara rERE. Ayartam
kozhundE. ennum”

(...to be contd.)

- Mrs Kavitha Venkat, Auckland

(Transcript of a popular TV lecture series ‘Azhaikindraan Arangan’ by Sri Swamiji)

Lessons from Vidura Neethi

- Mr Shabarinath Vaitheeswaran, Melbourne

In the middle of the battlefield, right before the Kurukshetra war was about to begin, Arjuna became weak after looking at the opposition army. He decides not to fight the war since what he will be losing in this fight would be his own kit and kin. Therefore, he decides to resign from his duties as a Kshatriya and take up sanyasa (renunciation). Soon after, he himself questions his duty as a warrior and rethinks his decision as it is not his prescribed dharma (righteous duties).

This led to weakness, anxiety, fear, and inability to decide. This is when Arjuna completely surrenders to Lord Krishna for guidance on what is sreyas (spiritual prosperity) for him and Krishna bestows Bhagavad Gita to Arjuna as a remedy. After listening, Arjuna got clarity about his dharma and adhered to the advice of Lord Krishna which led to the victory for Pandavas in the Kurukshetra war.

In the same Mahabharata, there is an episode where Pandavas returning from recluse and ask for their rightful kingdom from Dritharashtra, the father of Kauravas. Dhritarashtra due to his blind love for his children does not heed the request. Dhritarashtra sends Sanjaya to talk peace with Pandavas. Upon return, Sanjaya only increases Dhritarashtra's qualms by saying that Pandavas are being denied their right. That night, unable to fall asleep, Dritharashtra called upon his brother, Vidura to seek advice. Vidura is held to be an epitome of truth, dutifulness, impartial judgment, and steadfast dharma. Dhritarashtra asked for guidance on what is sreyas for him. The dialogue that ensues between him and Dhritarashtra is Vidura Neethi. Vidura points out Dhritarashtra's dharma and asks to give Pandavas their rightful ownership of the Kingdom. However, unlike Arjuna, Dhritarashtra is adamant and decides war is the answer. This non-adherence to dharma led to the downfall of his whole kula (family or clan).

We also go through similar situations where we struggle to decide on how to act with a dharmic (righteous) mindset. That is when we go to someone to take advice so that we are guided to do the right thing. But before approaching, we have to ask ourselves 2 important questions, whom

should we approach and what should we do with their advice.

Approaching any random person may not help us to get a solution to our problem and can sometimes end up deteriorating it further. We should approach the one who is our well-wisher, who has a strong knowledge and experience in the topic, who is willing to guide us by sharing their knowledge, who practices dharma, and most importantly has bhakti towards the Lord. We can learn from Arjuna and Dhritarashtra when they approached the right person.

It is not enough if we simply approach and seek advice but the most important difference between Arjuna and Dhritarashtra was that Arjuna had put the instructions into practice, unlike Dhritarashtra. When we think about ourselves in similar situations, we tend to approach people who will agree with us rather than those who will actually point out what is good for us. Moreover, even by the grace of the Lord, we get to be advised by a mahatma we simply take only what we want and not follow completely what they have instructed. Therefore, it is important to seek advice from wise people and adhere to their advice, in order to fully resolve our problem.

A Jnani like Vidura, due to his ananya-yOgEna bhaktih (non-separate devotion), towards the Lord has a clear mind. A mind that is not perturbed by rAga (likes) and dvEsha (dislikes) is an objective mind and can see things as they are. This enables them to find the right decision to be made in any situation that aligns with dharma naturally. Such a person is a treasure to humanity.

Vidura Neethi is a collection of gems each if understood and followed will enrich our day to day lives. A person who follows it becomes a Dharmika Purusha, a complete human being. Such persons are the bedrock of humanity.

Starting from the next article, we will explore verses from Vidura Neethi that we can practically apply to our lives. Are you ready to know what Vidura advised Dhritarashtra as a means to obtain Sreyas?

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madhuraageetham



Raṣa: Yamunakalyani
Talam: Adi

Pallavi

Kuppaiyil vinzhunda oru malar
ḡOpurathil senDru
alankarithhadE!

Anupallavi

Guru aruL enDra
perum kATrinAl
Adhisayam idhu
AnAlum uNmai

Charanam

puNNiyatthin palan enbar silar
thavatthin palan enbar silar
vidhiyin seyala enbar silar
ḡuru aruLE unmai kAraNamAm
- vERonDrum illai

His Holiness Maharanyam Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji has bestowed several hundreds of kirtans in praise of various deities and kshetrAs, depicting different bhavas of a devotee, from praise and enjoyment, prayer and bhakthi, to values to imbibe for everyday living. These kirtans are all compiled under the title – Madhuraageetham. In this series, we will embark on a divine journey presenting a kirtan each month, composed by Sri Swamiji.

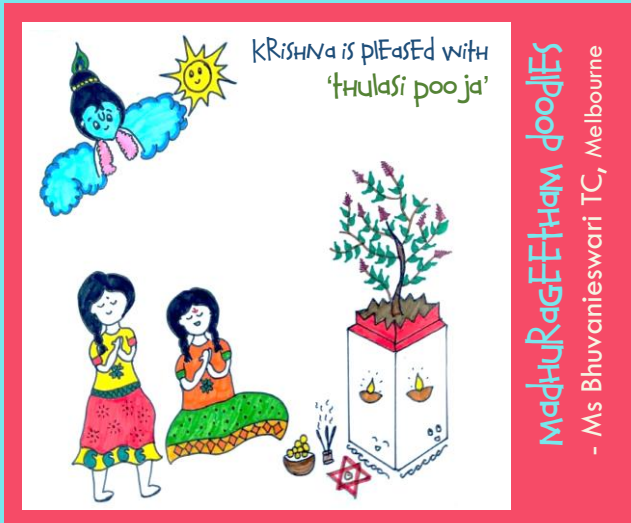
The kirtan we have taken for discussion this month, talks about the compassion of the Guru. Sri Swamiji begins by describing a beautiful flower that has fallen off a tree into a pile of dirt, adjoining a divine temple of Krishna, and is struggling for its life. In no time, defying all rules of nature and gravity, this beautiful flower finds its way out of the pile of dirt and rises up to the Gopura kalasam of the temple. Sri Swamiji says that because of a gust of wind which carried it with ease, the flower adorns the Gopura kalasam, and that 'gust of wind' is nothing but the Grace of the Guru, and the flower is His disciple. Only when we have the krupA (grace) of a Guru, can we attain that destiny.

Can one think or say that all the puNNiyam (merits) ensured that the flower reached its destiny? Sri Swamiji gracefully explains that puNNiyam alone cannot take one to the pinnacle of divinity.

In the Puranas, there are seven higher worlds – Bhoo-loka, Bhuvan-loka, Svarloka, Mahar-loka, Jana-loka, Tapo-loka, and Satya-loka. The first three lokas are a transitory place for righteous souls, who have performed good deeds in their lives but not yet ready to attain moksha. The next four lokas are for Tapasvis. Some may think or say that tapas allowed the flower to elevate to its destiny. Some others may believe that pApam, puNNiyam and Tapas are in our control, but vidhi (fate) is not, and it is fate that plays an important part in the journey of life.

Sri Swamiji beautifully says, not karma, not tapas, not vidhi, but that which is beyond the understanding of our intellect, and beyond the perception of our senses, Guru Krupa, is the only reason for the flower's (our) elevation to divinity.

- MRS MAITHREYI GOPALAKRISHNAN, Sydney



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more such
nectarine kritis
by Sri Swamiji?
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<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjrcxQTlHmMzMID03uM36A>

Social interaction and communication forms a fundamental part of our day, whether it is for casual conversation or for work; or whether it is to convey our emotions or critical information. We speak with many people throughout our lives – friends, family members, colleagues, and the general public. Even within these circles, there are different levels, or hierarchies. For example, we might speak to our brother or sister in a particular way, perhaps more casual, when compared with how we speak to our parents. At work, the tone in our conversation with a junior that reports to us would be different to our choice of words when reporting back to one of our seniors. If we broaden it even further – we may be more casual and relaxed when speaking with someone we know, compared with someone we do not know.

What about speaking with a mahān (self-realised master)? Is a mahān like any other person that we interact with in our lives? We may have many friends, colleagues and even family members in our lives. However, the number of mahāns in this world is incredibly limited, let alone the number of mahāns in our lives. So much so that we would be incredibly blessed if we were to have the association of even a single mahān in our lifetime. Hence, interacting with such a mahān would not be second nature to us – we simply do not have that experience to draw on. Thankfully, the way in which we should speak and interact with a mahān is outlined in our scriptures – in Srimad Bhāgavatam itself. So what is said about this in Srimad Bhāgavatam?

sāram sushtu mitham madhu – SB 4:22:17

The literal translation of sāram is “the true essence”. Hence, whatever we discuss with a mahān should be focused on the essence of that topic. Sushtu means that whatever we speak of, should carry great importance and significance. Mitham means that the amount of speech with a mahān should be greatly limited to avoid us rambling and going on tangents. And finally madhu means that our words with a mahān must always be sweet (swādhu swādhu padhē padhē – SB 1:1:19), and not highlighting the shortcomings and negativities of others. We may speak in such a way in our daily lives, pointing out the errors and problems in other people’s words and actions – one could say that this is a very worldly manner in which we speak. However, mahāns carry within them knowledge and grace that transcends this physical world; hence, discussing such matters would only burden them.

The purpose of this series is to take us through a journey of the many beautiful interactions and conversations between mahāns and bhakthās throughout Srimadh Bhāgavatham and analyse the way in which questions are answered, but also how and why they are asked, as that root analysis itself can be remarkably revealing. It is through these questions that Bhagavatham itself came to be. The words of mahāns are akin to the sweetest of nectar, and for those words to come, the right questions must be asked in the correct manner. It is because those questions are sāram, sushtu, mitham and madhu, that mahāns experience a specific bhāvam and impart that nectar which we relish as Srimadh Bhagavatham. In fact, it was through the six questions that were asked by the Shaunaka rishis that the foundation for Srimadh Bhagavatham was laid. By delving into this, it is hoped that such insights will further enrich our way of life.

Suryavamsam



Mr Nidheesh, Sydney

This is our small attempt to learn about a great dynasty called Suryavamsam or Raghuvamsam. We compiled them based on whatever information we could find from our itihasas and puranas.

Why we chose Raghuvamsam:

When Bhagavan incarnated as Sri Rama, He chose Raghuvamsam's Dhasarathan as His father. We can understand the greatness of this dynasty based on the kings that adorned the throne. They were not ordinary kings, as they were full of fame, penance, valour, etc..

A great poet Kalidas mentioned in his "Raghuvamsam" kAvyam that it is such a great dynasty and if he missed anything while trying to describe the kings, it will be an insult to the dynasty. He also said that his attempt to describe this dynasty with his limited intelligence will be similar to a vAmanan (dwarf in size) trying to get a fruit from a very tall tree, or someone attempting to cross the ocean in a small coracle.

Kalidas goes on to describe about this dynasty in 4 slokas:

- From birth, the kings of this dynasty were noble, and never gave up a task until it was completed and had borne fruit. The boundaries of their kingdom were the seas, and their chariot could even go to swargA (heaven).
- Whenever someone sought anything from these kings, they were given whatever they asked for. In the same way, if someone committed any mistake, he/she was punished without any bias. Interestingly Kalidasa also mentions that the kings woke up on time (in brahma muhurtham).
- The kings of this dynasty accumulated lot of wealth to perform dhAnam (charity). They spoke less – only to keep the truth, and lived whatever they spoke. They displayed great valour in fighting and performed various yAgams (rituals) - not because of any attachment to the land but for keerthi (fame). (Note: good fame is always a great character, as good people will always fear for any bad reputation).
- They got married, not due to desire, but for ensuring that dharma and virtues were passed on to their future generations. They learnt all skills right from childhood, enjoyed their life within the limits of dharma, and took vanaprastha ashrama (gave up worldly life) at the right age and ended their life by yogic powers.

(to be contd...)

Daily Chore - Clean the Core

with Nama the Supreme Cleanser

- Sri Deepak Vinod, Sydney

W

hen life gives you lemons, make lemonade” is a popular idiom. For me this was an apt way to describe my COVID experience. While for many, the lemonades would have come in all different forms, for me it was the flexibility to be able to work from home. In order to make the most of this opportunity, I decided to raise the standard for myself across different facets of my life like health, personal education, spirituality and relationship.

Working from home obviously meant that I got to spend more time at home. Consequently, I decided to be more helpful around the house relative to my own pre-COVID standards. Therefore, I started building a habit of cleaning the house every morning after my better half went to work daily. To her surprise, she came home to a clean house which was spick and span. Part of my daily chore was to clean the rooms, wash the dishes, vacuum the floor and carpet, tidy the mess left by the kids, remove the garbage bags, clean the sofa and the like. Coming from a process-oriented profession and about 1 month into doing these chores, I started to question as to why there was a consistent and concerted need for clean up on a daily basis without fail. This is when I had an epiphany, a deeper realisation.

By nature, our day to day behaviour leaves residues which can be in the form of dirt, mess, foul smell, filth and disorderliness. And this is not just restricted to our homes. We as humans leave a larger footprint of disorderliness and destruction in the wider world as well, be it our neighbourhood, workplace, environment and planet. What to speak of all the things around us, our body itself is subject to constant decay, so much so that if we do not brush our teeth or take a shower for even a day, no one would probably come within a metre of us. Then the thought further struck me, if this is the state on the physical plane, can you imagine the state-of-affairs from a mental plane? Just imagine, for instance - in order to eat 3 times a day, we are required to do so much restoration (otherwise known as clean-up) to put things back in its original or pristine state. Maybe that's why Uber eats is so attractive for the many. ☺

If that is the case on a physical level, imagine the contamination which is happening on the level of the mind regularly. This need to clean up mind is exponentially more, since this mind is engaged (primarily in negativity) till we sleep. For many of us, the mind remains active even when we sleep in the form of dreams. One of the qualities of the mind is that it sticks on very strongly to negativity. Just one look at our daily routines paints a dark picture on our minds. Some of which include, the debilitating negative self-talks, the media (mainstream and social), added with our own anger, jealousy, uncontrolled desires, and much more.

'I will not let anyone walk through my mind with their dirty feet.' - Mahatma Gandhi

Then immediately the million-dollar question arose. I am required to commit so much time and energy to simply keep the physical body and surroundings clean and orderly; What am I doing to upkeep my mental hygiene and purity? Am I cleansing my mind regularly? Am I daily disposing the emotional and mental garbage which are accumulating at a relatively larger scale compared to the physical plane? What am I supposed to do to keep my mind in a clean and healthy state? I am a firm believer that when the answer is seeking you, the question will arise – much like the fact that it is not the complete truth that I seek that truth only, but the truth is also seeking me. As soon as I was consumed by this question, the words and messages of the great mahatmas started to dance in my ears.

CETO DARPANA MARJANAM PARAM VIJAYATE SRI KRISHNA SANKIRTANAM.

For all who sing the divine names of Sri Krishna, dust of the mirror of their minds shall be removed. (From the divine instructions of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu - Siksastakam) It was now making so much sense.

The divine names of the lord is the supreme cleanser for the mind. The divine names of the lord is the top-most purifier. Remembering and meditating upon the Lord and his divine names is what our great spiritual scientists have recommended for ensuring the hygiene of the mind. Like we keep our surroundings clean and hygienic, let us commit to ensuring our mind is in a healthy and clean state. After all, we don't see the world as it is, but we see the world as a reflection of our mind.

Therefore, let us bathe our mind with the Lord's divine names without fail for a few minutes a day. Let us sprinkle the divine scent of Hari Nama on ourselves regularly, so that transcendental fragrance can give joy to us and to all who we come across. Let us vacuum the dirt left in our heart in the form of latent impressions of many births which we have had. All-in-all, the divine name is the most powerful cleanser we need, to keep our mind and heart in the spotless state in which our beloved Lord can happily reside. The etymology of the word Sanskrit word Mantra is 'Mananat Trayet' means, that which controls and purifies the mind'. Therefore, let us regularly chant this Divine Mahamantra at all times and in whichever state we are.

The people centric life! The story of the global organisation for divinity.

It might have been on a tv advert, maybe in a magazine or even on a gigantic billboard, but you would have seen something along the lines of "Donate for the XYZ Cancer Research Society - every cent counts!" The fact of the matter is that every cent does count and no doubt the cancer research will be valuable for the advancement of society. This is the obvious. What is not, is that by donating that one cent, you are inherently becoming a more community aware person. That moment when you really feel like donating to support research going towards helping the lives of those in need, you immediately open your life up to a whole new community out there. Your family grows from a few friends and relatives to many hundreds and thousands of people. Your life becomes people centric. It's often said that the surest way to find happiness is to seek happiness for others. This is exactly what our Spiritual Master HH Maharanyam Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji from Chennai lives and breathes. Lead your life with the faith that service to others is the best service you can do for yourself.

The Global Organisation for Divinity was founded by Swamiji in 2007 with the intention of showing the wider community that the people centric life is still possible within the modern context. He has established the organisation on three pillars: 1.Community Service 2.Spiritual Education 3.Prayer. Spiritual education drives us internally to be people centric, whilst Community Service provides a platform for this to manifest in the external world. Prayer is the simple tool used to give one faith that, leading such a life will help us grow. Together, these act as the foundation for people of all ages to develop and live the people centric life! Of course, it must be said, whilst such a movement of thought may sound pleasant to the ears, it's value to an individual's growth can only be found through practice. There are many activities that go on in the organisation and I've found being involved in them to be extremely helpful in my personal development!

carried by grace

- Ms Mythrei Pham, Sydney



We are crammed in together like sardines. Jostling and pushing for every inch of space but in a cooperative fashion, as is the natural order of things in India, there is always room for one more. One more person, one more suitcase, one more.

I am seated on the floor in a hall with hundreds and hundreds of people in a remote, quaint, peaceful town in rural India named Udupi.

It is the home of legend, it is the home of sanctity because it is the home of Udupi Krishna.

As I look around I see a woven tapestry of every colour imaginable, ladies in their silk and cotton sarees, men in their coloured kurtas. There is literally a sea of people and colours to match. It's a sight to behold that I shan't ever forget.

The real magic is that we are there, in the presence of my most beloved and beautiful Guru. A living, breathing, human embodiment of all the love and compassion in the world. And in his presence we are held to the highest vibration of our best selves. We find the peace that we have been seeking, the love that we have been yearning and in each individual we find mirrored back to us the highest version of ourselves.

He is the only reason in the world that my eyes might open before the break of dawn. That I might find myself attuned to the nature of real love. That I could don a saree and blouse as easily as I would jeans and a tee shirt in my native Sydney.

It dawns on me soon enough, as I look around me that I am the only non Indian person in the hall. And the wonder impresses itself upon me, how is it that I am here, thousands of miles away from home but feeling more at home than I ever have in my life.

How is it that a mere glance from my Guru strikes like lightning to the core of my soul and my spirit is awakened to all that it has been searching for in all of its years. How has no one ever pierced all the veils of my personality like this before? How is there such simplicity and honesty in his love? He sees me and he loves me. No questions asked, no adjustments needed. Without condition.

After eight years I do not have an answer seasoned with any logic. It is an inexplicable, indescribable magnitude of love that is incomprehensible to a mere mortal like me. But it humbles me and betters me and I invite you on the journey with me of how the growth unfolds.

(To be continued...)

SELF-LOVE

- Ms Adhithi Subramanian and
Ms Neha Sivakumar,
Melbourne

Before we are able to practice it, we need to be able to fully comprehend what it means.

Self-love is a state of appreciation for ourselves that flourishes from our actions which support our physical, psychological and spiritual growth. Self-love means having a high regard for our own well-being and happiness. It means taking care of your own needs and not sacrificing your happiness to please others. It means not settling for less than you deserve. This article aims to provide a brand new horizon in rediscovering the aspect of respecting yourself whilst replenishing your soul in a spiritual manner.

The COVID-19 Pandemic resulted in a lockdown, forcing ourselves to be learning and working from home; whilst simultaneously being bombarded with our thoughts constantly.

From a psychological perspective, deathly pandemics establish life events associated with ambiguity; which is known to trigger emotional distress. We were lonely, isolated in our homes for months on end, stuck with nothing and no one other than our work, family, thoughts and ourselves. But, were we made to feel lonely due to the physical barriers or were we actually in extreme sadness or angst?

Being alone, in retrospect, can be both beneficial and detrimental in the long run. Whilst being alone can let us learn the most about ourselves, as humans we also have the natural tendency to overthink situations and inflict negativity towards ourselves.

This instigation of overestimating feelings or events has caused more uneasiness than needed. But being alone has been useful in learning more about ourselves, our tendencies and our needs in life. Being afraid of staying alone is much rather preferred than having the wrong company. This time alone has allowed us to learn the intricate details about our emotions and awakened a sense of belonging in the community.

However, critically speaking, the absence of structure in our days during lockdown, became the reason for the lack of motivation many of us have faced. Whether it was working from home or doing classes completely online; it started to become monotonous and the daily routine was bland and repetitive. This lack of energy and motivation urged the need for self-love. But not the kind of stereotypical self-love that involves bubble baths, face masks and movie nights. The kind of self-love that builds into self-improvement.

The kind of self-love that analyses where we are lacking and involves setting goals to be better. For example, my screen time was atrocious during the first couple months of lockdown and the mindless scrolling through social media proved itself to inflict nothing but headaches and sore eyes. Pre-pandemic, we would've ignored this habit but the current climate forced us to face the music and make a change. So we set goals to minimise phone usage and it was harder than we expected. But, we found that working towards bettering our habits and the way we function; is true self-love.

The pandemic has allowed an opportunity to awaken ourselves mentally, despite being physically isolated from society. This lack of social interactions gave us the chance to reconnect with our innermost thoughts - which can be beneficial in understanding ourselves better. Personally, it gave us the chance to learn about our innermost thoughts and how they affect our daily wellbeing and attitude towards life. It has helped us become calmer in the face of adverse events and has given stability in loving ourselves more - despite any hardships we may face.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has been tough to navigate, but it has given us something which everyone needed - the opportunity to pause and take a big, deep breath. We needed this time to work on ourselves whilst taking a mental break despite the craziness going on in the world. We hope self-isolation has opened the doors for self-love for everyone.

Sthree Shakti SRI ANANDAMAYI MA



Ma Anandamayee "is the most shining diamond in the luminous crown of contemporary Indian spiritual life." Initially known as a strange village girl in what was then East Bengal (now Bangladesh), She grew up to be known as the miraculously compassionate Mata Anandamayee -Mother of Joy. Her acts of love and compassion to those around as well as away from Her have become almost a legend, serving as a perennial source of faith in Her. In Ma's words:

"Wherever God may keep you at any time, from there itself must you undertake the pilgrimage to God-realization. In all forms, in action and non-action is He, the One Himself. While attending to your work with your hands, keep yourself hound to Him by sustaining japa, the constant remembrance of Him in your heart and mind. In God's empire, it is forgetfulness of Him that is detrimental. The way to Peace lies in the remembrance of Him and of Him alone.

A traveler on the path to God-realization has to obey his Guru's instructions so that his journey may be crowned with success. How-ever, in a case where there are no such instructions, one should, according to the dictates of one's heart, keep oneself occupied in calling out to God in prayer or meditation. If someone prays to Him with a sincere and simple heart, God will fulfill his cherished desire. To yearn for Him with his whole being is man's duty."

PURANAVA

Wondrous Whispers From Ancient India

Krishna's Butterball in Mahabalipuram, Tamil Nadu is a massive 20 feet high and 5 meter wide rock stands on a slippery slope of a hill on less than 4-feet base. The position of the rock is so surprising that it looks like it will roll down the slope. But, it stands still firm and tourists can even take shade under it. Even it is unmoved by Tsunami, earthquakes or cyclones for over 1200 years old. In 1908, the Governor of Madras Arthur Lawley decided to remove the ball from its position. As, he feared for the safety of the town at the base of the hill. For this he had sent seven elephants and tried to move the rock but it didn't move an inch. Be it science or supernatural powers. This butterball is giving gravity a competition.



Creativity Corner

Diya Stand from Newspaper



Materials required:

Newspaper, Pencil, CD, Paints, Glue, Empty toilet paper roll - 1

Method

1. Cut out newspaper strips of approximately 5 cms wide. We would require about 35 strips
2. With help of a pencil roll out the newspaper strips and make tight rolls. Seal the edges
4. Roll out the paper rolls into rings.
5. Glue the paper rolls to the ring and continue to roll if. We would require 7 rolls to make one Diya
6. Press the paper ring gently in the middle to make a bowl shape.
6. Paint the Diya with desired colour
6. Paint the CD and keep it ready
7. Place the painted roll (empty paper roll) and place it in the centre (glue the edges)
8. Glue the paper diyas around the CD and on the roll.
9. Decorate it with pearls, jewels, or lentils

- Mrs Shilpa Vasudevan
Melbourne, Australia

Meaningful Conversations

(Interesting discussions between
Gopa Kuteeram teachers and students)

As parents, caretakers, teachers or just uncles and aunts to many of the children born after 1995, the so called "Pivotal generation" or the "Gen Z", we must be aware of some of their characteristics, beliefs and value systems depending on the context that they are growing in. The kids of today are digital natives - they can talk, walk, sing, yell, love and cry digitally! This generation is about "show me the data" ! They are looking for verifiable proof spruced up with a bit of science on most topics.

While imparting the usefulness and the importance of chanting to our Gopakuteeram kids, the challenge was to prove that it works. But how? Where is the proof that will strike a chord with them? We tried stories from scriptures, explained that one of the benefits of chanting is that it could potentially increase focus, expanded on the ideas of mahamantras etc. - we tried every trick in the book!

The main question that kids came up with in class is, "How can chanting help?" In attempting to answer that question, we tried an activity in one of our classes:

First, we set up a timer for a minute and asked all the 20 kids to individually number the thoughts and describe in a couple of words the thoughts that occurred to them. Trust us, it was great fun discussing some of the thoughts. The number of thoughts per child ranged from 25 to 0!

The next part was to get them to chant the Mahamantra in their heads and to repeat what they did earlier (number and describe the thoughts) within a minute. The twinkle in their eyes told us that they knew what just happened. The number of thoughts reduced to under 5 for 18 out of 20 kids – that was 90% of the class! It helped to shine the spotlight on how chanting the Mahamantra can reduce the number of thoughts and potentially declutter your mind. It's easier to focus when the mind is clear and energized.

This was a humble attempt to get our kids to know and understand the power of chanting. Try it for yourself and see the magic happen!

- **Mrs Latha Karthik**
(Gopa Kuteeram Teacher, Melbourne)



Master Tanish Mehta,
Brisbane Gopa Kuteeram

The Peacock Feather

Krishna was a rasika. He would adorn himself with different flowers and twigs from the forest. We always see him with a peacock feather which he'd wear on his head, tucked in a bandana. It all began when a peacock who loved Krishna would go near his home and sing His Name for him everyday. Krishna however never responded to him. This upset the peacock majorly. Another bird heard this and told the peacock to go to Radharani saying that she'd help you. The peacock flew off and sang the same in front of Radharani's home. When she heard Krishna's name, she ran out to the peacock and held it close. The peacock was extremely happy with her hugging it. The peacock told the story to Radharani who asked the peacock to go with her to Gokula and chant Radhe Radhe. The moment Krishna heard this he ran out to the peacock. Krishna said he'd honour the peacock by wearing its feather on its head and that he'd reward anyone who would chant Radha's name.

- **Master Gavril Govinda Kumar,**
Sydney Gopa Kuteeram

SATHVIK KITCHEN

Ksheer Madhuram

- Mrs Archana Sankar, Melbourne



Ksheer Madhuram is a sweet made of butter, ghee, milk and curd. It is a combination of a lovely milk sweet and a beautiful flaky pastry.

Steps

- 1) Prepare the milk base
- 2) Prepare the pastry
- 3) Prepare the sugar syrup
- 4) Final process:
 - Make the paste
 - Roll the dough
 - Deep fry the rolled-out rotis
 - Assembly

Ingredients

For Milk Base

Full Cream Milk	2L
Sugar	250g
Fresh Khoya	200g
Cardamom Powder	1tbs
Saffron	a pinch
Chopped Almonds	a handful

For pastry

Plain flour or maida	500 g
Curd	100 g
Butter	100 g
Salt	½ tsp
Rice flour	2 tbs
Ghee	5 tbs
Oil	To Fry

For sugar syrup

Sugar	500g
Water	1 cup
Cardamom Powder	1 tsp
Lemon Juice	1 tsp

Steps to make the MILK BASE

Boil milk until it reduces to half its quantity
Add sugar and koha to it
Boil for a few more minutes till sugar and koha are dissolved
Add cardamom powder and saffron to the mixture and let it cool down
Add chopped nuts to the milk mixture

Steps to make the DOUGH

Add flour, curd, butter and salt in a large mixing bowl
Make a soft dough using enough water
Let the dough rest for 30 minutes
In the meantime, make sugar syrup for the pastry

Steps to make the SUGAR SYRUP

Add sugar and water to a saucepan
Allow it to boil till it reaches almost one-string consistence
Switch the gas off and add cardamom powder and lemon juice. Lemon juice will prevent crystallisation of syrup

Make the paste

Take a small bowl and add 5 tablespoons of ghee to it
Beat the ghee with a spoon or using your hands till it becomes light and fluffy
Add 2 tablespoons of rice flour and give it a thorough mix
Keep this paste aside for using it when the dough is rolled

Roll the dough

There is a unique way to roll the dough
Divide the dough into large lemon sized balls
Take 4 balls and roll them out into thin rotis
Place one roti on the work surface and smear a tablespoon of ghee and rice flour paste evenly across its surface
Place another roti over it and repeat step above
Repeat the process of stacking of all four rotis
Gently roll the piled up rotis into a log and cut it into as many 1/2" thick cylinders as possible
Using a rolling pin roll-out each of the cut cylinders (from the log) into thin rotis of 4"- 5" diameter
Roll-out all the cylinders as explained above

Deep fry the rolled-out rotis

Heat oil in a frying pan on medium to low flame
Do not fry the pastries in a very hot oil because it won't cook inside thoroughly

Assembly

After all pastries are fried, dip each of the pastries into the sugar syrup for a few seconds and keep aside
Take a serving dish and pour the required amount of milk mixture into it
Arrange the pastries over the milk mixture
Garnish it with more chopped nuts and rose petals

SATSANGS

Ongoing daily Satsangs via Zoom were held throughout the year. The Mahamantra was chanted by devotees from different parts of Australia between 8 and 8.30 PM from their respective homes through Zoom. Namadwaar Sydney's priest, Sri Janardhanan Ganapatigal, conducted classes on the Srimad Bhagavatham via Zoom where he teaches the recital of the slokas & explains the meaning of each verse in great detail. The 1.5-hour group classes were conducted on different days & times of the week for approximately 10-15 devotees per session from Sydney, Melbourne & Perth.

The Grand Finale of Puranava Indian Heritage Quiz OZ-NZ was conducted online on Nov 1. There was also a quiz conducted by Sri Janardhanan Ganapatigal for the students of the Srimad Bhagavatham weekly classes at Namadwaar Sydney on Nov 8.

SYDNEY

On Nov 8, the 6th anniversary of Sydney Namadwaar with Akhanda Mahamantra chanting through Zoom between 6am and 6pm by various devotees across Sydney. Members of the youth team shared their journey and experiences with Nama, Namadwaar and Guru Maharaj. As per guidance from relevant authorities, a simple celebration of Sri Swamiji's Thirunakshatram was done on the Nov 14 by having Akhanda Mahamantra chanting on Zoom with a small gathering for children to celebrate Deepavali by lighting sparklers.

Rama Ekadashi on Nov 11 and Utthana/Karthika Ekadashi on Nov 26 with special Pooja in the morning and Mahamantra Kirtan in the evening. Dec 14 was the conclusion of 108 days of daily Nama chanting on Zoom between 8pm to 8.30 pm.

MELBOURNE

Deepavali celebrations were held on Nov 14 with a concert featuring Bhajans and Madhurageetham by Aradhana Iyengar, Aneka Subramanian, Aryav Karthik, Anindhita Iyengar, Adhya Vasudevan, Akshara Vasudevan, Sricharan Karthik, Srinidhi Karthik and Shrenik Sridhar. A Nama Mahima discourse was delivered by Siddharth Murali.

Karthigai Deepam was celebrated on Nov 30 with Bhajans by Deepak Malya and team. As part of the ongoing Margazhi Utsav from Dec 16 to Jan 13, daily online Thiruppaavai lectures are being delivered by Dr Jananiji. There were weekly music concerts during the weekends in the month of Margazhi. Vaikunta Ekadasi was celebrated on Dec 25 with Akanda Nama chanting and Vishnu Sahasranamam from 8:00am to 8:00pm.

WELLINGTON

Sri Guruji's Thiru Nakshathram was celebrated at Namadwaar Nov 14 with Mahamantra Kirtan from 4pm to 6pm.

Grihe Grihe Mahamantra Kirtan happens every month on varying dates where we go out to chant Mahamantra kirtan at devotees' homes for one hour.

Weekly Satsangs were held at Namadwaar including Vishnu Sahasranamam chanting followed by Mahamantra Kirtan every Saturday, Mahamantra Kirtan from 5pm to 6.30pm every Sunday and Mantra Meditation every Thursday, both online and at Namadwaar site during Ekadashi

AUCKLAND

Fortnightly Nama sessions were held with knowledge sharing, predominately discussing Nama Mahima.

To mark Sri Swamiji's Jayanthi, a Nama Saptaham was conducted virtually based in Auckland commencing on Nov 8 between 7pm and 7.30pm and concluding on Nov 14.

A special mention to Sri. Sitaraman, Sri.Srikanthalle, Sri.Prabhuraman, Sri.Vinayak Nadgir, Sri.Sathyakumar Katte, Swarna Aunty, Sri.Umesh, Sri.Basavaraj, Sri.Subramanya (from India), Sri.Padmanabhan(from India), Sri.Anil Mohan, Sri.Venu, Sri Thippeswamy and their families for leading the chanting sessions. A special thanks to the Thursday Bhajan Group and the Bhajan Satsangh Prayer Group trust for their continued support.

On Dec 14, as a part of the final day of our Nama Saptaham, the Auckland GOD devotees joined the Global Nama Relay initiated by GOD Singapore. During the 2 hours of blissful Satsangh, Abhishekam and Pooja were offered to Padukas blessed by our Guru Maharaj. All the devotees offered milk to Guruji's paduka on this occasion. A Gandha Lepana was offered to the Paduka as we concluded our Nama Chanting. A special mention to Akarsh Shankar (Auckland Gopa Kuteeram student) who kept the rhythm on his Tabla for the 2 hours of Nama chanting.

GOPA KUTEERAM

Sydney

In our fortnightly classes, children were taught morals from Srimad Ramayana, and they were also introduced to the topic of "GROWTH MINDSET". Dec 6 was the Annual Day when kids presented what they learnt from Srimad Ramayana this year by singing slokas, bhajans and role plays.

Melbourne

An online workshop on DIGITAL DISCIPLINE was conducted on Dec 6 by Dr Jananiji from Chennai and was attended by 33 children. Some of the key topics covered were digital identity consciousness, fighting invaders, gaining control over situations and being self-sufficient. Madhubani art workshops were conducted for the students.

Brisbane

Annual day was held on Nov 22, when the kids presented their learnings from Ramayana and concluded with a certificate presentation ceremony.

Perth

Weekly virtual classes were held throughout the year discussing values from our Puranas.

Wellington

Board Games and Tennis sessions were organised in our weekly classes.

Auckland

Gopa Kuteeram summer camp was held in Auckland in December. Kids created a vegetable basket of their own with their favourite vegetables. The example of vegetables was used as a practical example to discuss how to manage likes and dislikes. Kids also learnt the art of Mahamantra meditation, several Bhajans and the Vishnu Sahasranamam.