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- ▶ Pujas and Rituals at Sabarimala Temple - Part 4
- ▶ Ithihasa - Ramayanam: Part 3.
- ▶ Accept criticism - Amruthanandamayai Amma
- ▶ Veer Balidani - Udham Singh
- ▶ Subhasitham - 44 Quiz -29
- ▶ News
- ▶ Gita Shlokas : Chapter 2- (36-40)

SABARIMALA TEMPLE RITES AND RITUALS CONNECTED WITH DAILY WORSHIP - PART 4

(Extracts from “Sacred Complex of the Sabarimala Ayyappa Temple”

by Shri. P. R. G. Mathur, Anthropologist)



PADI POOJA

The Padi Puja is a special ritual performed after Deepa-radhana from 07:00 p.m. to 08:30 pm. Separate worship is conducted in honour of the vana-devathas / forest deities represented by each step (padi).

Previously the Padi Puja was performed only once in twelve years. But nowadays, because of constant demand from pilgrims, except during the Mandalam-Makara Vilakku pilgrimage season, it is conducted on all the days when the temple remains open for monthly Pujas (first 5 days of all Malayalam months) and during the holy days of Vishu and Thiruvonam festival period. The Padi Puja is not performed during the Mandalam and Makara Vilakku festivals for 62 days. It is also not performed a day prior to Vishu Kani.

A pilgrim should not use his left leg first while ascending the Pathinettampadi and similarly he should descend these steps facing the sanctum sanctorum only. After completing eighteen years of pilgrimage, a pilgrim is entitled to plant a coconut sapling near the temple and he will be considered as a Guruswami.

The Padi Puja is performed by the Thanthri with the help of the Parikarmikal (assistant priests). Thechi, Thamara (Lotus), and Tulsi etc. are used for the Padi Puja. The Thanthri says that these eighteen steps of the Pathinettampadi represent eighteen Malas (mountains) and their presiding gods. In other words, the Padi Puja is performed in honour of the forest gods of eighteen mountains and for each mountain there is a separate vanadevatha/ forest deity. It takes about two hours to complete the Padi Puja. Whenever there is a Padi Puja as Vazhipadu the Athazha

Puja will be performed at 09:00 p.m.

Eighteen Nilavilakku(s) (wick-lamps) are placed on each side (north and south) of the Pathinettampadi after decorating them with large flower garlands on both sides. The centre of the Pathinettampadi from the first to the eighteenth step is also decorated with large flower garlands leaving the required space for performing the Puja. In between the two flower garlands a space is earmarked in each Padi where the Padi Puja is performed. In between these two garlands on each Padi a coconut with Koorccham (dharba grass) is kept on a measure of rice. Accordingly eighteen coconuts with eighteen Koorccham with rice are required for the Padi Puja. A lighted lamp is brought from the Srikovil and all its 18 wicks are lit. Sitting on the Aavana Palaka (plank) facing the Pathinettampadi, the Thanthri first of all performs the Kalasa Puja for eighteen Kalasams for oblation to the eighteen Padis.

In the first round of the Padi Puja, the Thanthri performs the Peetha Puja and the Moorthi Puja with Manikottal / ringing of a small bell. The Neerajanam (lighted ghee lamps in two coconut halves) are used only in Kalasa time, but not before that. However they are kept in readiness for the Manikotti Puja, below the first step of the Pathinettampadi. The Nadaswaram and Panchavadyam are played throughout the Padi Puja, through a microphone. The Thanthri climbs up each of the eighteen steps and performs the Manikotti Puja which includes the Peetha Puja and the Moorthi Puja. It takes about three to five minutes to perform the Manikotti Puja for each step. The Thanthri's senior assistants help him to perform the Manikotti Puja by offering Jalam /water, Pushpam/ flower, Gandham / sandal paste, and Dhoopam /lit incense sticks and Deepam. The Parikarmikal stand behind the Thanthri, carrying a basket of flowers and the required Puja articles and Kalasam. After completing the Manikotti Puja on all eighteen steps associated with the forest deities by offering Pushpa, Gandha and Vilakku, he climbs down with the help of the Parikarmis. It takes forty minutes to complete the first round of the Puja from 07:00 p.m. to 07:40 p.m.

After that the Sankh (conch) is blown for the second round of the Puja. This Puja requires eighteen Kalasams including two Ottakkalasams (single Kalasam- larger silver pots). The oblation of the first Ottakkalasam is performed to the first step with the help of the Melsanthi. It is followed by oblation of the small Kalasam on the next of the sixteen Padis. After fixing his mind on the Lord, the Thanthri performs the Kalasam reciting the appropriate Mantras in honour of the forest deity associated with each step. In other words, the Kalasabhishekam is performed by worshipping eighteen forest deities residing in eighteen mountains, to the accompaniment of Nadaswaram while Panchavadyam is played through a microphone during the performance of the Padi Puja. When the Thanthri and the Parikarmis reach the Pathinettampadi,

the oblation of the second Ottakkalasam is offered to the forest deity. Then the Thanthri climbs down with the help of his assistants. Thus the eighteen pots filled with sanctified holy water, including the two Ottakkalasams, are worshipped and poured on the eighteen steps. The Kalasa oblation is performed with the recitation of the appropriate mantras for the worship of the relevant forest gods. The Kalasabhishekam lasts for 45 minutes. Thus the eighteen Abhishekams are performed only during the Padi Puja. There is no fixed rule as to what form of the forest deities should be depicted by the Thanthri in the second round of the Padi Puja. The depiction of the Lord depends upon the Sankalpa (imagination) of the Thanthri. It may be mentioned here that Neerajanam is used for the oblation of all eighteen Kalasams.

In the third round, Nivedya Puja is performed by offering eighteen Appams along with the Manikotti Puja. Thus the third Padi Puja begins and it is called Prasanna Puja. This is performed in honour of each of the forest deities presiding over each of the eighteen steps. During the Prasanna Puja Pushpanjali is also conducted. In the middle of Prasanna Puja Thookal with Havis is given to Nirmalyadhari for all the eighteen steps. After completing the Prasanna Puja the Thanthri climbs down and finally burns camphor on all eighteen steps.

A coconut each is broken by the Thanthri, Melsanthi and Vazhipadukaran (the devotee who has booked the offering) and they ascend the Pathinettampadi. The Thanthri performs a special Puja in the Srikovil by offering Kadumpayasam (Kattipayasam - concentrated rice pudding). After the Mangalarathy, the Thanthri will give Prasadam to the devotee who had paid for the Puja and the flower garlands.

Thus, the Padi Puja ends at about 08:45 p.m. Throughout the Padi Puja Nadaswaram is played and a tape recording of Panchavadyam is also played through the loudspeaker.

(....Contd)

ITHIHASA – RAMAYANAM : Part 3

(Dr. P. V. Viswanathan Nampoothiri,
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The most important message given by Ramayana is about Dharma. All positive characters depicted in Ramayana are very sure about how they should adhere to their Dharma. Vedas and Upanishads highlight the importance of following a Dharmik way of life.





Ramayana convinces us once again about the importance of following one's Dharma in all spheres of life. It is said -:**रामो विग्रहवान धर्मः** ramo vigrahavan dharma: - Rama is the ultimate symbol of Dharma and there can be no better example than Rama to learn about the importance and relevance of Dharma.

A father has to pay off his **पितृ ऋण** - pitr rna - debts owed to forefathers, through pro-creation, duly ensuring continuity of the family lineage. Dasaratha raises his children duly adhering to his paternal Dharmik duties. The story also depicts how a mother can ruin the family. All mothers would wish to emulate Kausalya, who follows the ideal mother's Dharma and not Kaikeyi, whose acts resulted in the ruin of a family.

What we see in Kaikeyi is not like the characters depicted in Kausalya and Sumitra. There is a situation where the esteemed position of motherhood is undergoing a total change overnight. On hearing the news of the proposed Rajyabhishekam - (Rama being crowned as the new king), Kaikeyi is actually so happy that she presents her bracelets to the maid who brought her the good news. However, the same mother's mind changes overnight on the evil advice of Manthara. There might be many such Mantharas in our midst also. Manthara depicts how a wicked mind with tricky words can corrupt the thoughts of a virtuous mother and make her an enemy of her son. The whole family and citizens of the Kingdom are in tears because of a mother's disoriented mind. The message here is that no one shall fall prey to the influence of a wicked companion. This story also highlights the importance of identifying the genuineness of an advisor and well-wisher. Such are the lessons to be learned from the Ramayana characters.

Ramayana story portrays many examples of human relations. It also depicts the ill effects of broken relationships. Rama and Lakshmana are the best examples of brotherhood, friendship and solidarity. No force on earth can break such a relationship. This is a classic example given by Ramayana to show how fraternal relationships should be maintained in every family. At the same time, no one wishes to be like the brothers Bali and Sugreeva of Kishkinda. The Kishkinda story narrates the problems between siblings which led to the disruption of a family.

In Kishkinda Kanda itself, Valmiki highlights the divinity of another brotherhood - that of two noble birds, Sampati and Jatayu. Here, we can find the affection of an elder brother towards his younger sibling, though they are not living in close proximity. Sampati receives the sad news of the death of his younger brother Jatayu from the monkeys who are on the search for Sita. On hearing the news Sampati is deeply grieved and requests the monkeys to carry him to the seashore so as to perform the final rites for his brother's Moksha. All that Sampati could do now is to pray for his brother and offer his tearful tributes. The poet beautifully portrays this picture of affection between two birds.

In Lanka, the three brothers - Ravana, Kumbhakarna and Vibhishana - are a different set of siblings. Though Kumbhakarna sharply criticizes his brother's wrongdoings, Ravana does not listen to his brother's advice in the least. But that never deters Kumbhakarna from obeying his brother's command. Vibhishana, the youngest brother, also doesn't approve of his elder brother's misdeeds and tries to advise him several times. But when he learns that Ravana will not accept any of these, he leaves his brother, with the conviction that he cannot stand by his evil deeds. Vibhishana seeks refuge in Rama, knowing that he is on the right side - that of Dharma. He still prays for his brother to have the wisdom to bring Sita back to Rama and seek redressal for his evil deeds. Valmiki presents many different aspects of fraternal relationships through this story. These are some examples of how relationships can be well maintained and also how such relations can be spoilt.

Each character in the Ramayana sets examples and teaches lessons like the above. Sita is a character who is always guided by a spontaneous sense of Dharma. She is not having any hesitation in accompanying Rama when he is obligated to live in the forest for fourteen years. She is well aware that her duty is to be with her husband, to support and follow him through the journey of life. Mandhodari is another example of a dutiful wife. She never thinks of leaving her husband Ravana despite her strong opposition to his misdeeds. She continues her efforts to bring her husband to the righteous path till the very end. Throughout Ramayana, Valmiki conveys the message of how each family member should discharge his/her Dharmik responsibilities by presenting such characters.

Ramayana defines how Dharma can be practised by everyone, including the Gods, sages, humans, birds, animals, trees and rivers; each living being has its own Dharmik duty. Even a small squirrel knows his duty in the path of Dharma when he helps in his own humble way in building the Ramsethu (the bridge to cross the sea to Lanka). We can find that animals of different species are having important roles in this great epic. This is another unique feature of Ramayana. Valmiki teaches us to view

the whole world as one family and to practise Dharma in such a way as to make the concept - ‘वसुधैव कुटुम्बकं’ - ‘vasudhaiva kutumbakam’ (world is just one - family) really meaningful.

Man becomes cultured when he practises a Dharmik life and follows the righteous path. Valmiki's life itself is an example - a savage turned to a sage - with the message that anyone can change his lifestyle to become a cultured human being. Ratnakara became a sage when he realised the futility of his present life and practised Tapas for a thousand years to come out of his past savage life, transformed into a great Rishi and poet. Such negative traits may be lurking deep within us, which can be cleansed through a purposeful change in our lifestyle as seen from such examples.

The story of Ramayana

The Ramayana is divided into seven Kaandas (sections): Bala-kaanda, Ayodhya-Kaanda, Aaranya-kaanda, Kishkindha-kaanda, Sundara-kaanda, Yudha-kaanda and Uthara-kaanda. Though many stories unfold through these seven sections, our discussion shall focus on the messages that they intend to convey. The reading of Ramayana becomes meaningful when one knows the spiritual messages contained therein.

Ramayana shows how a man should lead his life and the purpose of the Rama Avatar (incarnation) is exactly to teach us this. While the other Avatars demonstrate the divine powers of God, here in this Avatar Rama is leading his life purely as a human being without displaying any signs of divinity. On the contrary, in Krishna Avatar, Bhagavan displays his divine powers throughout his lifetime. Here in Ramayana, we can find that Rama is setting a perfect example of how a human being should lead his life. It is evident from many instances of his life that Rama, is completely human. When Rama was about to be crowned as king, the coronation was interrupted by the words of Kaikeyi. Rama could have easily resolved the situation using his divine powers if he desired so. However, Rama as a human being is sure to follow his Dharma as a son. When Sita is abducted by Ravana, he doesn't use any of his divine powers to stop Ravana. The search for Sita is carried out in a manner suited to that of normal people in such a situation. He does not use his divine power to locate and bring back Sita. He refrains from using any of his supernatural powers even during the seven days of war with Ravana's Army. Lord Krishna, on the other hand, makes it abundantly clear on many occasions that he is not just a human being. Krishna demonstrates his divinity with many supernatural actions to affirm that he indeed is the incarnation of God. Valmiki decided to portray the life story of Rama exactly for this reason - to give the world the perfect example of what a human being should be. However, having said all these about the human nature of Rama, the fact remains that Rama indeed is God incarnate.

Balakanda

The story of Balakanda unfolds in the city of Ayodhyapuri, the capital of Kosalarajya. The word ‘Ayodhya’ means a city invincible in battle. Ayodhya can be compared to this universe. No one can fight or work against the universal rules of nature. The lesson taught by floods, droughts, natural disasters, and pandemics is that we cannot go against nature and the universe. All living beings in this universe have to follow the basic rules set by nature, and we are expected to function in harmony with such rules. Similar to Ayodhya, which cannot be defeated by anyone, the golden rules set by mother nature cannot be broken by any living being. Any such acts against the nature would result in unbearable misery.

King Dasaratha was born in the Kingdom of Ayodhya. Dasaratha means one having ten ‘Rathas’ or chariots. These ten chariots are compared to ten Indriyas (five Jnanendriyas - sensory organs and five Karmendriyas - organs of action). Praana (life force) enters the body and gets closely associated with the ten Indriyas. Praana arrives in the body accompanied by three qualities called Satva, Raja, Tamo gunas. Each living being is bonded to these three Gunas or qualities. These qualities are inherent in all living beings though in varying levels depending on the Janma-vaṣana (results of one’s good. deeds and misdeeds from earlier lives that are attached to the Atma. These Vasanas are present in the Jeevatma when it is reborn with a new body). Some may be having more of Satvik Guna, while some others may be dominated by Rajo-Guná or Tamo Guna. Man, who is endowed with these three qualities, traverses four stages during his lifetime. Dasaratha’s four sons are the symbols of the four stages called Jagrat (wakefulness), Swapna (Dream), Sushupti (sleep) and Tureeyam (this is the fourth stage of life for the Jeevatma, which also is the most coveted stage in which one attains Moksha). Jagrat and Swapna are friends and they move close to each other. Rama and Lakshmana are always together. The mind experiences feelings and sensations during the Jagrat and Swapna stages. Similarly, Sushupti and Tureeyam are close companions. Bharata and Satrugna symbolize these two stages of life.

One can obtain general education from ordinary teachers. However, it is important to have the perfect Guru for learning आत्मविद्य - ātmavidyā - lessons about the Atma. Atmavidya or Brahavidya is the learning process whereby one realises through his own experience that the Jeevatma residing in each living soul is a manifestation of the Paramatma and ‘aham’ - self- is ultimately nothing but an expression of the Paramatma or Brahman itself.

After receiving formal education in Dhanurvedya (usage of weapons) and other subjects, Rama and Lakshmana are entrusted to Guru Viswamitra for learning about Adhyatmam (Studies, discussions and teachings

that are basically associated with Atma could be termed as Adhyatmam). While taking these youngsters through the forest, the first lesson given to them by Viswamitra is to control thirst and hunger with the Mantras ‘Bala and Athibala’. A disciple who is practising Brahmacharya must first learn to control the body’s basic needs like hunger, thirst, and sleep, which are quite difficult to control. Hence the first advice and lesson from the Guru is to control these basic physical needs.

Viswamitra takes Rama and Lakshmana to his place ‘Sidhaashram’ to put an end to the atrocities caused by two Asuras (a type of demons). Although he could have easily subdued these Asuras with his own ascetic powers, he brings Rama and Lakshmana with him under this pretext because he had certain other plans in his mind.

While travelling, they pass through a dense forest which is uninhabited by human beings. Rama enquires about this peculiar place and Viswamitra responds with a story. This area of forest was earlier ruled by a Yaksha named Suketu. Since he had no children, he engaged himself in Tapas for a long period. Finally, as a result of his Tapas to Brahma, he was blessed with a daughter who had the power of a thousand elephants. Suketu found it very difficult to take care of this girl or to control her behaviour as she fought with everyone just to show off her strength. Once she had an encounter with sage Agastya and He cursed her to become a ‘Rakshasi’ (a type of demon). As a result of the curse, she became a Rakshasi with the name ‘Tadaka’ and this area of forest became her domain. Her presence here was one of the reasons why this place was uninhabited.

Viswamitra instructs Rama to kill Tadaka so as to put an end to her atrocities. Though he had learned all forms of martial arts, Rama had never fought with anyone until then and he was reluctant to kill, especially because it was a woman who was to be killed. The sage explains to Rama that whoever is engaged in wrongdoing deserves to be punished. Punishing the culprits and offering protection to the citizens is a bounden duty of a king.

अलं ते घृणया राम पापैषा दुष्टचारिणी ।

वध्यतां तावदेवैषा पुरासन्ध्या प्रवर्तते ॥

alam té ghrṇayā rāma papaiṣā duṣṭacāriṇi |

vadhyatām tāvadevaiṣā purāsandhyā pravartate ||

“O’ Rama, Kill this Rakshasi, who is a sinner and wicked woman. There is nothing to be ashamed of. Punish her before the sun sets. It is the duty of the king to punish a wrongdoer even if it is a woman”. Rama obeys his Guru.

After learning to control the body’s basic needs like thirst and hunger, a student must develop control over the mind. The most difficult part in controlling the mind is to control ‘Kama’ or lust. The young age during which a student seeks education is also the period where different forms of desires are most prevalent in his mind. It is the duty of the Guru and the parents to help control the

desires flourishing in the mind of the disciple during the period of 'Brahmacharya'. (However, in today's world, instead of controlling such desires, parents seem to allow the unrestricted growth of desires in their children). An important message of Ramayana is to control desires, lust, anger etc. Tadaka is a symbol of 'Kama' and through the killing of Tadaka, Viswamitra is teaching his disciples about the need to have total control over 'Kama'.

'Mareecha' and 'Subahu' are two other Asuras encountered by Rama and Lakshmana at this time. (Mareecha represents 'Raaga' (passion / desire) and Subahu is the symbol of 'Krodha / Dvesha' (anger / hatred). Raaga and Dvesha are always seen to accompany Kama and hence all these three qualities need to be properly controlled or eliminated where necessary.

कुतश्चित् प्रतिहतात् कामात् क्रोधोऽभिजायते - kutaścīt pratihatāt kāmāt krōdhō'bhijayate - 'Krodha' (Anger) is the emotion that arises when one attempts to control or eliminate Kama. Subahu is the embodiment of anger. It is not enough to merely suppress anger, it must be destroyed. 'Raaga' (love / passion / desire) is a virtue that needs to be nurtured and maintained in a controlled manner. Hence Mareecha, the symbol of Raaga, was purified by immersing him in the sea, and sent away to live in an Ashram across the sea as a devotee of Rama. Raaga is a quality that should not be directed at material things; rather they should be nurtured in children to be focused on spiritual matters. If one develops Raaga towards the materialistic world, such Raaga becomes Anuraaga and then it becomes uncontrollable. Valmiki portrays the characters Tadaka, Mareecha and Subahu to demonstrate how Kama, Krodha and Raaga are to be controlled or eliminated.

When the disciple accepts a Guru, he learns how to control his physical needs as well as his mind. He also learns to control Kama and Krodha, and to nurture Raaga in the positive direction so as to be qualified for learning Atmavidya. Even when these are achieved, the 'Janmavasana' could still linger inside the disciple like a rock stuck into the earth. Ahalya, who is lying in the forest in the form of a rock, is a symbol of such Janmavasana. When Rama's feet touch the rock, it releases Ahalya from her present condition and she attains her original form. Valmiki illustrates the importance of cleansing ourselves of the Janmavasanas that are inherent within us like a rock.

After these events, Rama and Lakshmana cross the sacred river Ganga, leaving behind the inherent quality of 'Rajoguna' in the pure waters of the Ganga and the trio reaches the capital of 'Videha' on the other side of Ganga. The word 'Videha' means 'I am not the physical body'. Self-realization can be achieved only when a person understands the most important fact that I am not the

physical body or the Indriyas. The most important lesson is to know that 'I' or myself is that part of the Paramatma, which resides within each living being. Viswamitra takes them to Videha to let them learn this ultimate truth.

Rama weds Sita who is the symbol of Atmajnana. Sita, who was found and adopted as his daughter by King Janaka from the ploughing tracks of a farmland, had received spiritual education from many gurus, including her father Janaka (who is a great scholar), during her childhood in the Videha palace.



The story about breaking of Lord Shiva's bow explains the need for qualifying oneself to attain Atmavidya or Atmajnana. Only a person with a straight spine can practise various stages of Yoganushtana, finally reaching the stage of Samadhi, so as to achieve the ultimate target of 'Brahma- sakshatkaram'. The act of Rama in straightening / breaking the bow at the Videha palace symbolizes the need to have a straight spine to attain Atmajnana.

After the wedding, and having received Atmajnana, Rama and Lakshmana return to Ayodhya. On the way they are stopped by Parasurama, who is angry with Rama for the reason that he broke Lord Shiva's divine bow. The presence of Sita helps Rama to calm down Parasurama. This signifies the importance of Atmajnana - it helps to face various obstacles that one may have to cross during the life journey.

With their arrival in Ayodhya, they enter the next stage of life called Garhasthya /family life and the hardships associated with it. This phase of life can be difficult for various reasons and many instances in Ramayana show that problems can occur one after another during the stage of family life. Rama, the Dharma incarnate, demonstrates how to deal with such problems with the help of Sita (who embodies Atmajnana).

Balakanda comes to an end at this stage. There are many lessons to be learnt from the various incidents described in Balakanda. During the earlier years of life, apart from normal education, a student is required to learn various disciplines such as controlling the physical needs, controlling the activities of the mind such as lust and anger as well as directing one's passions in the right direction. All of these are essential for a student who wishes to attain Atmajnana. It is only after gaining Atmabalam (strength of the inner self) in this way that

one should enter family life. Many of the problems faced by today's younger generation are mainly because they lack inner strength during the period of education. Atmavidya and Spirituality could be fine-tuned with material life; and it could be practised by our youngsters to positively manage life's varying circumstances. The study of Ramayana would be fruitful only when we understand these lessons clearly and practise them in our life.

(To be continued)

ACCEPT CRITICISM

(AMMA – Sadhguru Shri Mata Amritanandamayi Devi)



Criticisms can be turned into tools for our growth and development if we receive them with dignity and caution.

Children, generally no one likes others to criticize us and point out our faults. Many people get upset when they hear criticism. Some will worry. Some will protest. Some will even launch counterattacks. Anyone will be eager to justify their part. But this is not how we should respond to criticism and accusations. If we accept criticism with dignity and caution, we can turn it into tools for our growth and development. We should use such criticism to rectify our mistakes and this helps us to grow.

In a country there was a ruler who was a dictator. He learned that a newspaper secretly published in that country was criticizing him harshly. Detectives tracked down the journalist writing the criticism. He was brought before the ruler. Everyone was curious as to what would happen to the journalist. But the ruler said to the journalist who came before him, “I read your articles. In it I note that you analyze my actions and motives in detail. Through your article I am realizing my shortcomings which I am not even aware of. If you can be my secretary I can correct my mistakes and administer the country a little better.” Later, the journalist became the ruler's secretary.

Usually it is difficult for us to understand our own mistakes and shortcomings. Once understood, we take them for granted and ignore them. But generally everyone is good at seeing the faults and flaws of others. Therefore, when criticism comes, we should take it carefully. Often the criticism may be unfounded, but if we look closely we can see some of our shortcomings that we may have overlooked. We should use such criticism to correct mistakes and grow ourselves. We should be internally grateful to our critics.

How beautiful is a flower that blooms on a rose plant? Everyone is mesmerized by its beauty. We give the plant all the manure, dung, tea leaves it needs for growth & nourishment. A fertilizer like these are necessary for good looking blooms. Similarly, criticism and objections are necessary for our growth. Even if the criticism is unfounded, our response should be mild and moderate. We should not even think of taking revenge on those who criticized us. we need to pray - 'Ishwara! Make them better, give them a good heart'.

Criticism disturbs us because of the low self-esteem we have in our actions and personality. That is what causes us pain. In fact, this false pride is our greatest enemy. No matter how we react externally, we must cultivate an attitude of accepting criticism internally with calmness. If we can do that we will be able to maintain peace and tranquility within and at the same time correct our mistakes and grow ourselves.

VEER BALIDANI SARDAR UDDAM SINGH (Balidan Day July 31)



April 13, 1919 the day when the British supremacy, known for treating citizens of colonial countries like worms, imposed utmost cruelty on the citizens involved in the Indian non violent struggle for independence.

On the instructions of Brigadier General Reginald Dyer, the British army opened fire on a crowd gathered on the occasion of Baisakhi celebrations at Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar, Punjab. According to unofficial estimates more than 1000 citizens were killed and twice the number were injured.

Although forced into retirement, Dyer became a hero to British conservatives. The then Lieutenant Governor of Punjab, Michael O'Dwyer, who ordered Dyer to fire, was also credited. But a nineteen-year-old eyewitness to the Jallianwala Bagh massacre took a pledge in front of the dead as witness. The pledge was to take revenge against this cruelty.

March 13, 1940 - Brigadier General P Sykes was the keynote speaker at the event chaired by Lord Zetland at Caxton Hall, London. The keynote address was followed by a lecture by Sir Michael O'Dwyer, infamous for his cruelty at Jallianwala Bagh, followed by a vote of thanks.

The real thanksgiving was about to begin. Moments later, Michael O'Dwyer was shot dead. The demonstration of gratitude did not end there. Sardar Uddam Singh did not forget to express his gratitude to Lord Zetland, Lord Lovington and Sir Lewis Den by two bullets. In a statement he kept in his pocket, he said: "I was watching my starving countrymen suffocating under the clutches of British imperialism. I have no regrets for registering my objection in this way. No matter how you punish me, whether it is imprisonment or death, I will not yield, I have no fear to face death. "Courage is by sacrificing one's life for one's country."

Sardar Udhamsingh came to London to take revenge in 1919 itself when the Jallianwala Bagh massacre took place and waited for the revenge for twenty long years. He was hanged by the British Government on 31 July 1940. Madan Lal Dhingra's martyrdom took place at the same place where Udhham Singh was sacrificed 30 years ago.

After 21 years of waiting, Uddham Singh kept his promise by shooting Michael O'Dwyer, who officially signed off on Dyer's shooting. That act was able to expose the cruelty of the white man once again in front of the conscience of the world. Uddham Singh fulfilled his duty to the nation by avenging on behalf of the people of Punjab who were hunted like animals.

Let us not forget those who sacrificed their lives for the nation in Jallianwala bagh, who can ever forget the martyr Veer Balidani Uddham Singh. The freedom we enjoy today was not handed over on a platter, but it has the aura and color of blood of many lives sacrificed for attaining freedom. We must remember all these sacrifices, martyrs and we are responsible to safeguard this freedom in the interest of every citizen of our great nation.

SABARIMALA AND ME

(Shree. Madhu Kadampuzha,
Spiritual Speaker, 9846982600)

A journey, a beautiful journey, A journey through the hills and forests. Who am I, the passenger? Who am I, I am Swami. Don't be surprised that the spirit within me is the Lord. Still, I'm on my way.



My journey is in search of Ayyappa spirit. I don't know where I'll end up, I don't know where I'm going, but I'm going with Irumudi on my head. A constant journey across temples, the journey is to see Ayyappa Chaitanya in every Swami. A trip to fully enjoy the splendor of Sabarimala. A journey across Erumeli and Pampa. Yatra is magnificent, we don't know the true history of that holy mountain. For that I am going on a journey, please come with me....

VRATA

Vrata/ Fasting is to identify ourselves. Vrata is to recognize the pulse of society. Look, we must control the five indriyas / senses, strengthen our minds and move forward with vrata and purity. Even a blade of grass trembles at such a holy vrata. We must have a goal to accomplish before us. What anyone needs to reach that goal is hard work. The indriyas, which are the five horses, should be tamed with ShriKrishna in the mind. Vrata can only be taken by heroes. Today it becomes only a ceremony.

Vrata gives colorful perspectives beyond the ceremony. The beginning of Sabarimala Yatra is vrata. It is not a vrata that lasts for 41 days, but a vrata that needs to be taken for a lifetime. Vrata is necessary even to recognize what is the spirit within us. Vira vratam is necessary to strengthen the purity of the body and the purity of the soul. Purification of the body will happen quickly, but our journey of life should be achieved only after attaining purity of soul. Vrata is scientific truth, the truth of life, Sabarimala Vrata is life-giving, our journey is to realize who I am...

(to be continued.... The science of Malayidal..??)

BHAGAWAT GITA

(Chapter 2 – SANKHYA YOGA) Slokas: (36-40)



अवाच्यवादांश्च बहून्वदिष्यन्ति तवाहिताः ।

निन्दन्तस्तव सामर्थ्यं ततो दुःखतरं नु किम् ॥ 36॥

avāchya-vādānśh cha bahūn vadiṣhyanti tavāhitāḥ

nindantastava sāmarmthyaṁ tato duḥkhataraṁ nu kim

Your enemies will defame and humiliate you with unkind words, disparaging your might. Alas, what could be more painful than that?

हतो वा प्राप्स्यसि स्वर्गं जित्वा वा भोक्ष्यसे महीम् ।

तस्मादुत्तिष्ठ कौन्तेय युद्धाय कृतनिश्चयः ॥ 37॥

hato vā prāpsyasi swargaṁ jitvā vā bhokṣhyase mahīm

tasmād uttiṣṭha kaunteya yuddhāya kṛita-niśhchayaḥ

If you fight, you will either be slain on the battlefield and go to the celestial abodes, or you will gain victory and enjoy the kingdom on earth. Therefore arise with determination,

O son of Kunti, and be prepared to fight.

सुखदुःखे समे कृत्वा लाभालाभौ जयाजयौ ।
ततो युद्धाय युज्यस्व नैवं पापमवाप्स्यसि ॥ 38॥

sukha-duḥkhe same kṛtvā lābhālābhau jayājayau
tato yuddhāya yujyasva naivam pāpam avāpsyasi

Fight for the sake of duty, treating alike happiness and distress, loss and gain, victory and defeat. Fulfilling your responsibility in this way, you will never incur sin.

एषा तेऽभिहिता साङ्ख्ये बुद्धिर्योगे त्विमां शृणु ।
बुद्ध्या युक्तो यया पार्थ कर्मबन्धं प्रहास्यसि ॥ 39॥

eṣhā te 'bhihitā sāṅkhye buddhir yoge tvimām śrṇu

buddhyā yukto yayā pārtha karma-bandham prahāsyasi

Hitherto, I have explained to you Sāṅkhya Yog, or analytic knowledge regarding the nature of the soul. Now listen, O Parth, as I reveal Buddhi Yog, or the Yog of Intellect. When you work with such understanding, you will be freed from the bondage of karma.

नेहाभिक्रमनाशोऽस्ति प्रत्यवायो न विद्यते ।
स्वल्पमप्यस्य धर्मस्य त्रायते महतो भयात् ॥ 40॥

nehābhikrama-nāśho 'sti pratyavāyo na vidyate

svalpam apyasya dharmasya trāyate mahato bhayāt

Working in this state of consciousness, there is no loss or adverse result, and even a little effort saves one from great danger.

(To be continued)

Subhashitham – 44

॥Jagadguru Adi Shankaracharya –
Bhajagovindam, Verse 6 ॥



यावत्-पवनो निवसति देहे
तावत्-पृच्छति कुशलं गेहे ।
गतवति वायौ देहापाये
भार्या बिभ्यति तस्मिन् काये ॥
yāvat-pavano nivasati dehe
tāvat-prchChatī kuśalam gehe ।
gatavati vāyau dehāpāye
bhāryā bibhyati tasmin kāye ॥

Meaning: When one is alive, his family members inquire kindly about his welfare. But when the breathing stops and the soul departs the body, even the wife distances from the corpse.

Throughout our lives, spending valuable time for body worship, earning wealth for the comforts of body , mankind is immersed in this meaningless pursuits. Even a wife is afraid of her husband's corpse . Let us live with this awareness that a healthy life is the only way to minimize sufferings in our lives.

QUIZ – 29

(Note: Questions are related to Sanatana Dharma and mainly based on matters published in our Ayyappa Vani. Answers will be published in the next Ayyappa Vani. Any body can send answers in whatsapp to No.9447211722, within 20 days. Names & addresses of persons who answer to all questions correctly will be published in the next Ayyappa Vani).

Questions: (Ramayan Quiz)

1. “ Is there in this world a mighty person possessing all requisite human qualities?” - To whom Vatmiki asked this?, What was the answer?
2. How many kandas in Vatmiki Ramayana? How many verses?
3. The Yajna performed by Dasharatha to get a good son?
4. From which forest hermitage did Ravana abduct Sita?
5. Where did Indrajit perform Homam for victory in the war?
6. Who brought the medicine from Rishabhadri in Kailasa to save Rama - Lakshmanas and the monkeys ?
7. Who did Ravana send to obstruct Hanuman on his way to Rishabhadri?
8. Who delivered the chariot to Lord Rama when Rama was fighting on the ground and Ravana was fighting in the chariot?
9. Who stopped Hanuman trying to enter the entry door of Lanka?
10. Who was Ravana's wife?
11. What did Hanuman give Sita Devi to make her believe that he was the messenger of Sri Ramachandra?
12. In which Kanda is the burning of Lanka – Lankadahanam - described in the Ramayana?
13. Name the children of Sri Rama & Devi Sita? Where were they born?
14. How did Sri Rama end his earthly life?

Answers of Quiz : 28

1. Jhansi Rani alias Rani Lakshmi Bai (childhood name Manikarnika) was martyred on 17th June 1858 in the Gwalior battlefield against British Army.
2. Sage Vishwamithra took Rama & Lakshmana to the forest to protect Sages & Yajnas from the atrocities of demons including demoness Thadaka.
3. It was 'Pinaka' - the divine bow of Lord Shiva, which was later passed down to King Janaka lifted and broken by Rama as the condition put forth for the swayamvar / marriage of Sita.
4. Mahendragiri was the mountain at Rameswaram from where Hanuman jumped over to Lanka over the ocean in search of Sita.
5. Brahmos Missiles Regiment of India Army has 'Swamiye Saranam Ayyappa' as the war-cry / slogan.
6. Sabari, born in lower caste and disciple of Maatanga Rishi, was waiting for the darsan of Lord Ram for her salvation, near Pampa river, later became famous as Sabarimala.
7. Sree Rama, Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrugna - the four brothers in Ramayana are considered as model for the Best brotherhood, whereas Bali & Sugriva and Ravan & Vibhishna are examples of Bad brotherhood.
8. Sikhism emerged more than 500 years ago in Punjab. It was founded by Guru Nanak, a non-practicing Hindu who was against rituals and praying to idols. Sikhism is classified as an Indian religion or Dharmic religion along with Buddhism, Hinduism, and Jainism.
9. Meghanathan, son of Ravana is known as Indrajith as he could defeat Devendran, the king of devas. Indrajith means one who got victory over lord Indra.
10. Sage Ashtavakra, son of Sage Kahoda gave advices to King Janaka of Mithila, famous as Ashtavakra Gita. Ashtavakra Gita is a dialogue between Ashtavakra and Janaka on the nature of Self/Atman, reality and bondage.

Names of persons who gave correct answers to all questions:

None

NEWS

The National Executive Committee Meeting of SASS was held on 29th July 2023 - Online Google Meet - from 7.30 to 9.30 pm. Trustees, National / Kshetriya Karyakarthas, Presidents, General Secretaries, Treasurers of all States and some special invitees attended the meeting. The Meet chaired by Shri. T. B. Sekhar, National Chairman was started with SASS Prayer. Shri. Erode Rajan, National General

Secretary welcomed all and the proceedings were compered by Shri. S. Vinodkumar, National Joint General Secretary. The session on Organisation was conducted by Shri. Rajan. The State General Secretaries reported present position of Ayyappa Yogams and other organizational parameters and presented their ambitious target for the next 2 years. Shri. Rajan reiterated the importance of regular follow up meetings at state and district level.

Shri. P. Shanmuganandan, National Administrative Secretary stressed the urgent requirement of Auditing of State Accounts soon to enable the Centre to file the Returns to IT department on time. Shri Prakash. G. Pai, National Treasurer breifed about financial discipline, preparation of budget, sources of funds and the need of financial self reliance of individual states as well as the centre.

A detailed discussion was conducted on Harivarasanam Centenary Celebrations which was coordinated by Shri. S. Vinodkumar. Everybody gave their valuable suggestions for the successful Finale of the HV Celebrations - mainly the Global Mass Chanting of Harivarasanam on January 15 at 7.00 pm (both online and offline) and the grand Ayyappa Mahasangamam on 20th January 2024.

Shri. T. B. Shekhar, in his concluding remarks reiterated the necessity of growth of the Organisation through regular pravas and systematic follow up of the action-points for the successful culmination of the Harivarasanam Centenary Celebrations.

With the chanting of ‘Lokaveeram....’ lead by Shri. Girish Nair the NEC was concluded.

OTHER NEWS

*Today, 19th August 2023 Uthram - Auspicious day of birth star of Swami Ayyappan. At the behest of SASS, Ayyappa devotees from all over the world perform Uthram Puja in their own homes and nearby temples.

* Brahmashree Goshala Vishnu Vasudevan Namboodiri has been appointed as Melshanti of Attukal Bhagavathy Temple, Thiruvananthapuram for a period of one year. Previously he had served as Melshanti of Sabarimala Temple and Shri Padmanabha Swami Temple, Thiruvananthapuram also. Presently he is associated with SASS as the Vice President of Kerala State Committee.



- Lord Ganesha is worshiped not only by Hindus in India but also by many Hindus and non-Hindus all over the world. The SASS Kerala State Committee passed resolutions protesting (1) Kerala Assembly Speaker A.N. Shamsir’s unwarranted anti-Hindu remarks on Lord Ganesha and (2) raising hateful slogans at the Muslim League Youth Wing protest rally in Kasargod, Kerala. SASS was at the forefront of protest marches,

namajapa yatras and dharnas held at various places along with like-minded Hindu organizations like Hindu Ikyavedi and Vishwa Hindu Parishad. Swami Purushothamananda, VHP President Shri. Viji Thambi, General Secretary of Hindu Aikyavedi Shri. P. Sudhakaran, National General Secretary of SASS Shri. Erode Rajan, National Admin Secretary Shri. P. Shanmuganandan and others participated



Thrissur - Kerala



Mumbai

Along with other Hindu organizations SASS Konkan and Hindu Jagaran Samiti conducted protest march and dharna on 1st August in front of Mumbai Kerala House. Protest marches were held in other states and cities like Delhi, Hyderabad, Bhopal and Bangalore.

**OPENING / CLOSING dates of
SABARIMALA TEMPLE
during the next 27 days.**

The temple has been opened on August 16th at 5:00 PM and will be closed on August 21st at 10:00 PM for the **Chinga Masa Puja**.

Again the temple will be opened on August 27th at 5:00 PM and closed on August 31st at 10:00 PM for the **Thiruvonam Festival**.

Disclaimer : The opinion expressed in this publication are of the authors only and do not purport to reflect the opinions or views of SASS or its members.

Published by P Shanmuganandan, National Administrative Secretary from National Administration Office, Ayyappa Vihar, Viyyur, Thrissur, Kerala - 680010 on behalf of Sabarimala Ayyappa Seva Samajam