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New Year Message from HH Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji

The holy land of Bharat is home to a multitude of great scriptures ranging from the Upanishads, the Puranas, Itihasas to the divine *pasurams* of Azhwars and the *thevarams* of the Nayanmars. One life is not sufficient to thoroughly learn and understand the meaning of even one of these scriptures, let alone all of them.

In ancient times, Bharat led the world in all fields, be it law, economy, astronomy, science, mathematics or all the art forms, primarily due to the spiritual strength of its citizens. The downfall of this great nation is solely due to the fact that we slowly let go of our spirituality.

This said, great saints such as Sri Rama Tirtha, Sri Aurobindo and Yogi Ramsuratkumar have predicted that "Rama Rajya" is not too far.

What is this Rama Rajya? The day when everyone starts chanting the divine names of the Lord is verily Rama Rajya! The inherent divine power within us will be strengthened and the glorious days of yore will become a reality only then.

An incident in the life of a mahatma reveals the wonders that Mahamantra can accomplish even if chanted without faith. Sant Surdas was blind, and when he was a young boy, he used to beg around for food and spend the rest of the day in the forest chanting the Mahamantra, just to bide time. One day, the king of the region found that two of his finest horses had run away from the stables. Two guards went in search of the horses in sheer panic, knowing that they would be hanged if the horses were not found by the evening. In the forest they found Surdas chanting the Mahamantra in his sweet voice. Thinking him to be a saint, the two guards requested

him to tell them the location of the horses. At first, Surdas told them the truth, that he was just a blind beggar. But upon insistence from the guards and to avoid trouble, Surdas cooked up a story about a lake in the westerly direction. He said that atop a tree near the lake would be a crow and the horses would be found in the direction in which the crow cawed. Once the guards



left, Surdas ran to a more secluded place and hid himself.

The next day the king himself came in search of Surdas with his retinue and eventually found him. Surdas was now scared to his wits' end thinking about his imminent death. To his utter surprise, he realized that the horses had been

found by the guards at the same location mentioned by him. The king thanked him profusely and honored him. Though Surdas had chanted the Mahamantra without any faith, that alone was enough to bring the king to his feet. This incident made Surdas realize the greatness of the Mahamantra.

Miracles happened in the life of Padmanabhan who was a devotee in the satsang of Sant Kabirdas. Once he requested a person with a severe skin disease to chant the Mahamantra. Instead, the sufferer only grumbled about his fate and never chanted. Padmanabhan, being a *bhagavata* (great devotee) and an embodiment of compassion, made the person sit in front of him every day for 2 hours as he himself prayed and chanted for him. Soon the man was cured of his disease and became very handsome. Padmanabhan's fame as a remover of people's maladies spread far and wide. He conducted mass prayers with the Mahamantra regularly in his village and cured all their diseases.

Wherever the Mahamantra is chanted, Lord Hanuman protects the chanter from all evils. Lord Hanuman protected Sant Tulsidas from evil spells cast by his jealous neighbors. A house where chanting happens, is always protected by the Lord's presence.

A thousand experiences can be provided to highlight the glory of the Mahamantra. Recently, a raging fire started destroying a paper mills in Pondicherry in the middle of the night. One of the two employees present there had staunch faith in the Mahamantra and started praying looking at the night sky. Immediately, from out of nowhere, dark clouds gathered and rain started pouring. Soon the fire was doused and the factory was saved from utter destruction. In another incident, a bank officer carrying valuables of the bank to another branch was robbed at gun point in a desolate and dark place. With no other support but the Name of the Lord, he cried out to God for help. The thieves came back within an hour, fell at his feet and gave back all the valuables. Such incidents highlight the fact that the Mahamantra, when chanted with staunch faith, brings immediate results.

Every prayer of ours will be fulfilled by chanting the Mahamantra – *Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare, Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare*. This prayer will bless people seeking marriage, parents seeking to beget a child, youth seeking jobs, rains will be in abundance for the farmers, the country's economy will flourish, diseases will vanish, and peace will prevail.

With the divine blessings of Lord Sri Krishna and our Guru Maharaj, HH Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji, may this New Year be filled with abundance of Nama and satsangs in our lives.

Excerpts from Jan 1, 2013 Mass Prayer conducted by HH Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji . Translated by Aravind Thathachari, Dallas, TX



The Clan with No Intellect

The purpose of all mind quests is to stop that very questioning mind. The purpose of all action is to nullify the results of past actions. The purpose of all efforts is freedom. The purpose of all learning is to unlearn. In fact, our whole life's purpose is to unwind ourselves back to the state of Oneness, say the scriptures and the wise ones.

So what does it mean to unlearn? In Tiruppavai, Sri Andal says 'arivondrum illaada aikulam' (literally: cowherd clan who has no intellect/sense). Of the 6 senses, they (the cowherds of Vraja) possessed none, she says, hinting that their only daim to ownership of Krishna was their unflinching blind faith; which did not come from any physical or mental attributes including the intellect. Such faith is what moves mountains, literally in the case of Lord Govinda, who felt the responsibility to protect the Gopas who surrendered to Him without doubt. In this same *pasuram* (verse), Sri Andal addresses Krishna as 'kurai ondrum illaadha Govinda' (the faultless Govinda). Lord Krishna—who is perfect and hence knows perfectly well who is eligible for His highest blessing of pure love—fills the minds of those who are “without a mind” (as against those whose minds are ‘full’ of intellect, where there is little space for the love-embodiment Krishna to take

charge). The phrase “*kurai ondrum illaadha Govinda*” also highlights the blemish-less characteristic of Lord Sri Krishna, as only one who is entirely without fault is qualified to accept another's *uthama shara-nagathi* (highest surrender).

Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji also uses the same words as Andal in a kirtan: 'arivondrum illada enthanai kuriyaai, kurai ondrum illaadha Govindane kondaan' (the blemish-less Lord Krishna took over me, who am without any intellect).

Sri Koorathazhwar was a great disciple of Sri Ramanujacharya. He was a very learned person and a scholar, and although senior to Sri Ramanuja in age, was an epitome of Acharya bhakti and humility. One day, when he and many other disciples were with Sri Ramanuja, a deaf and dumb man came to seek the Acharya's blessings. Sri Ramanuja was intensely moved on seeing the plight of that man who could neither say nor hear the Divine Name of the Lord. Tears filled the eyes of Sri Ramanuja as his compassion poured on a soul who could not attain Vaikunta in that birth simply because of his circumstances. Then Sri Ramanuja asked all his disciples to leave the room immediately and close the door behind them, so that he could be alone with the deaf and dumb man. All the disciples, including Koorathazhwar, left the room. However Koorathazhwar was curious to see

what his acharya was going to do. So he peeped in through a window. He saw his acharya place his feet on the head of the deaf and dumb man and bless him, saying that now he would attain Vaikunta.

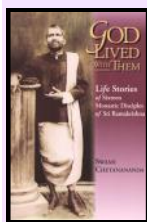
When Koorathazhwar saw this, he broke down and began to cry, lamenting his own fate. Regretting all his learning, scholarship and intellectuality, he cried wishing he had been born deaf, dumb and a simpleton so that he would have had the great fortune of having his Acharya's feet placed on his head, thus attaining life's highest goal so simply and easily!

The product of a still mind is not inaction. The point of freedom is not to become care-free. The result of unlearning is not in becoming stupid. As Mahans illustrate, the purpose of life is not in acquiring knowledge, but in acquiring simple faith. Where such faith exists, Krishna comes rushing, for it is His vow to protect His people, His devotees; as He declares before lifting the Govardhana mountain:

**tasmAt mat-charanam goshTHam man-nAtham mat-parigraham
gopaye svAtma-yogena sOyam me vrata
Ahitah (Srimad Bhagavatam 10:25:18)**

Sriram Ramanujam, Houston, TX

God Lived with Them by Swami Chetanananda



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First Edition: 1997

"The melting glaciers of the high Himalayas form the river Ganges, which flows thousands of miles over the

plains and supplies life-saving water to millions of people. Similarly, Sri Ramakrishna, who for most of his life remained absorbed in samadhi – the acme of spiritual experience – out of compassion descended to the relative plane of human existence to alleviate human suffering. His condensed spirituality, as it were, melted and flowed through his disciples who later carried his life-giving message to the world."

Thus begins the preface of the book *God Lived with Them*, written by Swami Chetanananda. This invaluable book

chronicles the lives of the 16 monastic disciples of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa: their early lives, how they came to Sri Ramakrishna, his influence on them, their lives after his *mahasamadhi*, and how they later carried on their Master's work in the world.

It is interesting to note that in the 50 years of Sri Ramakrishna's life on this earth—almost 30 of which were spent in Dakshineswar near Calcutta in spiritual earnestness and ecstasy—almost all of his monastic disciples, who were to take his message to the whole world, came to him only in the final 6-7 years of his life. And also interestingly, this year (2013) marks the 150th birth anniversary of four of sixteen disciples – Swami Vivekananda, Swami Brahmananda, Swami Ramakrishnananda and Swami Turiyananda.

Studying the lives of such great souls as these, brings in the reader an awe-filled appreciation of their service to Sri Ramakrishna and their intense faith in him; as well as an appreciation of the struggle they went through – physically, emotionally and spiritually – after his passing, both in the path of their own spiritual development and in doing his work in the world.

As the book unfolds, starting with the life of Swami Vivekananda and his molding by Sri Ramakrishna, right up to the life of Swami Vijnanananda, the youngest of the monastic disciples, it reveals new insights, anecdotes and interesting events that also throw light on the immaculate *avatara* of Sri Ramakrishna himself.

This book is a must-read for all spiritual aspirants, and especially for those interested in the Ramakrishna Order.

Nisha Giri, Houston, TX

Will Rama Nama Provide Food?

One day, Emperor Akbar and his minister Birbal, with a few soldiers, went on a visit to a nearby province. On the way, as they galloped on their horses, Akbar noticed Birbal moving his lips constantly. When asked, Birbal said that it was the divine name "Rama" that he was constantly repeating, which he had inherited from his parents. Emperor Akbar was impressed and was proud of his minister.

A little later they realized that they were separated from the soldiers and had lost their way in the woods. Both of them were really exhausted and hungry. Akbar wanted Birbal to accompany him in search of food. But Birbal settled down under a tree with his *japa mala* and requested Akbar to excuse him for a hour to do his Rama nama *japa*.

Akbar was surprised and annoyed. He

We need to put some effort and not just sit under a tree and chant." Birbal quietly continued his *japa*. The angry king stomped away by himself in search for food.



After walking a while Akbar found a small hut in a clearing. The moment the occupants knew that it was the Emperor himself, they welcomed him with all respect and fed him well. The king offered them a few gold coins as a token of appreciation. Before he took leave, he

also had some food packed for Birbal. Akbar then triumphantly went back to the place where Birbal was chanting Rama nama. After finishing his *japa*, Birbal happily greeted the king and asked if he had been able to find anything to eat. The king nodded

proudly and handed Birbal the food that he had brought, saying sarcastically, "Only effort has brought this food. This was not fetched by Birbal who sat here chanting Nama." Birbal did not utter a word, but ate the food with tearful eyes. Once Birbal finished his dinner, he turned to Akbar and said in a choked voice, "Only today have I directly experienced the power of Rama Nama! Though you are a great emperor, you had to beg for food today. But do you know what this Rama Nama has done for me, who did nothing but simply chant it? Rama Nama has made the king beg and bring food for me, a poor nobody! I have been blessed with food although I was only simply sitting here under the tree. This is verily the glory of Rama Nama!"

Akbar was dumbfounded!

Children, now do you realize that anything is possible by chanting the Divine Name of God?

Translated from Tulasi Dalangal book by HH Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji

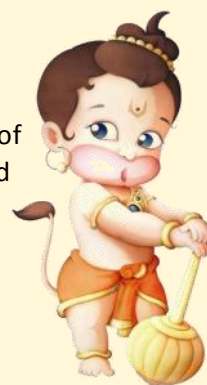
Quiz Time - Anjaneya Trivia

Hanuman *jayanti* was celebrated on January 11, 2013 in several parts of India and the world. On this special occasion, let's test your knowledge about this endearing, powerful, humble divine figure..

1. Name the "nama" that is being incessantly chanted by Lord Hanuman.
 - A. Krishna
 - B. Rama
 - C. Om
2. Lord Hanuman is fondly known as:
 - A. Monkey God
 - B. Snake God
 - C. Elephant God

3. Name the mountain that was lifted by Lord Hanuman
 - A. Govardhana
 - B. Himalayas
 - C. Sanjeevi

4. Name the devotee of Lord Rama who stayed back on earth after Rama's departure to Vaikunta
 - A. Lord Uddhava
 - B. Lord Sugriva
 - C. Lord Hanuman



5. Where did Lord Hanuman meet Mother Sita
 - A. Ashoka Vana
 - B. Chitrakut

- C. Mithila

6. It is believed that Lord Hanuman's presence is sure to be when this is recited
 - A. Srimad Bhagavatam
 - B. Srimad Ramayan
 - C. Upanishads
7. Name the great saint who composed 'Hanuman Chalisa'.
 - A. Valmiki
 - B. Tulasidas
 - C. Veda Vyasa

*Compiled by
Ramya Srinivasan, San Jose, CA*

Answers:

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



SRI RAMANUJAMJI'S USA PROGRAMS—DEC 2012

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A Telecon satsang is held every Fri evening and Tele-Bhagavatam discourse is telecast every Tue evening, both at 8:30 PM CST. Anyone is welcome to attend. Ph: 605-475-4000, Passcode: 131581

Gopa Kuteeram (kids' programs) & Srimad Bhagavatam study circles are conducted in various cities.

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