

Divine Mothers on Earth

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The second Sunday in May has come to be celebrated as Mother's Day the world over. This is a perfect occasion to acknowledge and appreciate a mother's inherent characteristics of Love and Sacrifice – the two pillars that 'motherhood' is glorified for.

In this, the greatness of Indian tradition lies in the fact that we not only honor our earthly mothers but also the divine mothers – women saints who cannot be restricted as 'mother' to a particular family or community as they truly belong to the entire world, and who have, from time immemorial, shown us the way to lead our lives.

While saluting mothers, we have to first bow down to our own Mother Earth, who is the epitome of patience and forbearance. As living beings continue to commit atrocities, she stands by the order of the Lord, which is to patiently bear everything. Nuclear bombs are tested, lands are drilled, trees are slashed down, pollution fills the earth, water and air, trash and waste are buried in landfills; not only these, but the mushrooming of corruption, deceit and cruelty in our world is also an unbearably heavy burden on Mother Earth. Yet she patiently bears all of it for the only reason that there are still a few saints in the world who constantly sing the Names of the Lord. These saints reduce the burden on Mother Earth and she, in turn, shows us the way to lead our lives.

In the first canto of Srimad Bhagavatam, we find the great Kunti Devi extolling Lord Krishna. Though she is His aunt, she falls at His feet and reminisces all the dangerous times in the past when He protected them completely. In her song of praise of the Lord, she reveals to us the easy way to attain Him: "shruNvanti gAyanti grNanti abhikshnashah smaranti

nandanti tavehitam janAh..." - Hearing, singing, remembering His activities or taking pleasure when others do it is an easy way to cross this mundane existence.

Earlier, in the same canto, we find Draupadi grieving over the loss of her five sons, who are brutally killed by Ashwatthama. But on finding out that the culprit is their guru Dronacharya's son, instead of seeking revenge on the murderer, she actually pardons him! The reason? She does not want Ashwatthama's mother, Kripa (Dronacharya's



wife), to grieve over her son's death just as she (Draupadi) herself had to at the loss of her own sons. Is not this unparalleled feeling of compassion worthy of emulation?

And the foremost of all divine mothers are the Gopis of Vrindavan. Kabir Das mentions that if every single human in the world turns into a Kabir, they still cannot match the greatness of a single Gopi. Bhishmacharya, the greatest of warriors, praises the Lord with a beautiful prayer on his deathbed. The majority of this prayer focuses on relishing the exploits of the Lord on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. However he ends the prayer by speaking of the Gopis and how they celebrated the Lord in Vrindavan. Kanchi Paramacharya once mentioned that in his previous births he had constantly studied the Rasa Panchadhyayi (the five chapters on Rasa Leela in the 10th Canto of Srimad Bhagavatam), and that that had made him a Pontiff in this birth.

Such is the greatness of the Gopis that Uddhava salutes them and yearns for constant contact with the dust of their feet. Though being a student of the great, knowledgeable Brihaspati and personal secretary to Lord Krishna himself, Uddhava finally realizes that those qualifications of his are of no use until he develops bhakti for Lord Krishna just like the Gopis. Hence the Gopis show us what true love for the Lord is – which is a duty of a mother to teach her child.

Down the ages, and till this day, the land of Bharatha Varsha continues to be blessed with numerous divine mothers in the form of great women mahatmas. From Andal, Ammalu Ammal in the south to Meera Bai in the north, from Janabai, Mukta Bai in the west to Sarada Devi, Anandamayi Ma in the east, these divine mothers have nourished this great nation with their divine lives. All these saints have lived their lives entirely for the Lord and have shown that the easiest way to please the Lord is to sing His glories, take pleasure in His divine stories and chant His names.

And finally, all the above mentioned qualities that a mother should possess are present in one's Satguru. As His Holiness Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji says, when a child suffers, a mother prays to the Lord/Guru to protect the child, whereas the Guru protects the child. Without His grace, we cannot understand or appreciate the greatness of the qualities of a mother.

So on this Mother's day May 12 2013, let us all prostrate to the divine mothers who have enriched our lives and pray to our Satguru to guide us all in the path shown by them.

Aravind Thathachari, Dallas, TX

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Swami Vivekananda's Love for His Mother

All Mahans – great yogis, jnanis and bhaktas who renounced the whole world for spiritual prowess, for Self-Knowledge, for the sake of their Lord – have nevertheless had a soft corner for their mothers.

Sri Adi Shankara, the great Jnani and proponent of Advaita, came back to his mother at the time of her death and shed profuse tears of grief at her passing! Sri Ramana Maharshi, the great sage who had no possessions, maintained no relationships and was beyond the four ashramas, had a special relationship with his mother who lived with him in her later years, and eventually became a 'mother' to all his devotees and disciples too.

Likewise, Swami Vivekananda too had a special relationship with his mother. Swami Vivekananda's mother, Bhuvaneshwari Devi was a strong, pious woman who had to face numerous struggles in her life: After the death of her husband, when her oldest son Naren (Swami Vivekananda) was barely 20, she was cheated of her rightful property by relatives. One who was accustomed to opulence and comfortable living was now forced, along with her children, to move out of her house and live with her mother in what Swamiji later called "a hovel". She was financially in very poor condition, and continued to struggle with the court case and property dispute for her rightful home for a large part of her life. Not long after her husband's passing, Bhuvaneshwari Devi had to reluctantly let go of her eldest and favorite son, Naren, who left his home to pursue spiritual sadhana and take care of his ailing Master, Sri Ramakrishna, and later renouncing the world, took up sanyasa. Years later, Bhuvaneshwari Devi also had to undergo terrible grief through her daughter's suicide and later see her

great son, Swami Vivekananda, leave his mortal coil much before her own time.

Yet through all this, Bhuvaneshwari Devi remained patient and calm, and maintained her dignity, strength, piety and righteousness, while performing her duties with a steady mind.

Swami Vivekananda was deeply devoted to his mother throughout his life. Even though he had renounced the world and was spending all his time in Sri

Ramakrishna's work, he grieved at the thought of his mother's condition.

Swamiji once wrote in a letter to a friend, "...If there is any being I love in the whole world, it is my mother."

Whenever Swamiji was in Calcutta, he would often visit his mother, and she too would go to see him.

In 1900, two years before he passed away, Swamiji wrote in a letter from America, "As for my mother, I am going back to her – for my last days and hers.....All my life I have been a torture to my poor mother. Her whole life has been one of continuous misery. If it be possible, my last attempt should be to make her a little happy. I have planned it all out."

Swamiji returned to India in late 1900 with his health taking a turn for the worse. But yet he did not abandon any of the duties that he considered sacred. He continued to visit his mother and tried to solve her family affairs as best as he could. He also did his best to fulfill his devotion to his mother through doing things close to her spiritual heart. He performed pujas at his mother's house. He fulfilled his mother's wish of completing her old vow at the Kali temple of Kalighat near Calcutta and performed all the necessary rituals there. Despite his bad health, he took her on a pilgrimage to many places in East Bengal in 1901, just to fulfill her desire to go on a



pilgrimage with him.

Swamiji glorified his mother's character with these words: "...the love which my mother gave to me has made me what I am and I owe a debt to her that I can never repay.....I know that before I was born, my mother would fast and pray and do hundreds of things which I could not do for five minutes even. She did that for two years. I believe whatever religious culture I have I owe to that.....Whatever little good impulse I have was given to me by my mother, and consciously, not unconsciously."

Swamiji never tired of extolling the virtues of motherhood and of his mother. In a lecture in Pasadena, CA in 1900 he said: "From motherhood comes tremendous responsibility.....Why should mother be worshipped? Because she made herself pure; she underwent harsh penances sometimes to keep herself as pure as purity can be..... My father and mother fasted and prayed for years and years, so that I would be born.... She was a saint to bring me into the world; she kept her body pure, her food pure, her clothes pure, her imagination pure, for years, because I would be born. Because she did that, she deserves worship."

What better way to glorify the "Mother" on Mother's Day than to reminisce Swami Vivekananda's love for his own mother, on the occasion of his 150th birth year celebrations?

Nisha Giri, Houston, TX

Source: "Swamiji's Devotion to His Mother Bhuvaneshwari Devi"
by Swami Tathagatananda

Swami Vivekananda's Master, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, saw all women as the Divine Mother. For him, SHE was everything!

He used to pray: "O Mother, I throw myself on Thy mercy; I do not want bodily comforts; I do not crave name and fame; I do not seek the eight occult powers. Be gracious and grant that I may have pure love for Thee, a love unsmitten by desire, untainted by any selfish ends — a love craved by the devotee for the sake of love alone."

Lord Ganesha and the Fruit -by Nivedha Gopal, 5 yrs

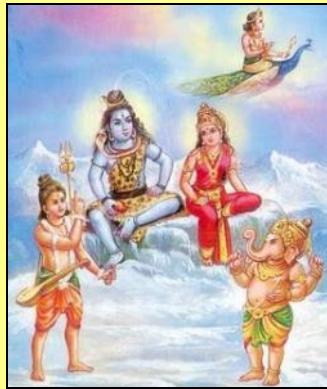
*Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama
Hare Hare*

*Hare Krishna Hare Krishna
Krishna Krishna Hare Hare*

A popular Hindu story about Lord Ganesha tells the truth.

Saint Narada once handed over a mango to Shiva and Parvathi. He said that it was a special mango which would give special power to whoever eats it. Shiva and Parvathi

the mango should not be shared and had to be eaten by one person.



Karthikeya left. He rode his peacock and left on his world tour.

thought of giving it to their kids.

But Narada said that

But both Ganesha and Karthikeya wanted the fruit. Shiva said that both of them had to go around the world three times. Whoever came first would get the fruit.

As soon as they heard, Shiva and Parvathi asked why do you want the fruit. He replied, "Parents are my world and no other world is there apart from them."

On the other hand Ganesha stood there and put on his thinking hat. He looked down at his big body and his vehicle the rat.

Lord Ganesha got an idea. He circled his parents three times and asked for the fruit to be given to him.

Shiva and Parvathi asked why do you want the fruit. He replied, "Parents are my world and no other world is there apart from them."

Then Parvathi gave the mango to Lord Ganesha.

Kids' Quiz - Akshaya Trithiyai

Akshaya Trithiyai is a very auspicious day in the Indian calendar. It is said anything started or performed on this day will grow; that charitable acts and spiritual practices performed on this day will bring infinite merits. This day also has many ancient stories associated with it. Come, let's learn more about this interesting day:

- It was on this day that Lord Krishna blessed _____ with boundless wealth.
- A. Yudhishtira
 - B. Kuchela
 - C. Sandeepani

- Name the avatara born on Akshaya Trithiyai.
- A. Kurma
 - B. Varaha
 - C. Parasurama

- What does the term 'Akshaya' connote?
- A. Everlasting
 - B. Beautiful
 - C. Strength



poor woman's house when he stopped there for *bhiksha*:

- On this day, Adi Shankara recited this *stotram* in front of a poor woman's house when he stopped there for *bhiksha*:

 - A. Ganesha pancharatnam
 - B. Kanakadhara
 - C. Sri Jagannatha Ashtakam

- In which state in India does the construction of the famous chariots of Puri Temple begin on this day of Akshaya Trithiyai?

 - A. Orissa
 - B. West Bengal
 - C. Madhya Pradesh

- The scribing of which great epic was commenced by Lord Ganesha on this day?

 - A. Ramayana
 - B. Bhagavad Gita
 - C. Mahabharata

- Which Yuga began on Akshaya Trithiyai?

 - A. Dwapara Yuga
 - B. Kali Yuga
 - C. Treta Yuga

- Name the river that descended to the earth from heaven on this day:

 - A. Yamuna

Compiled by

Ramya Srinivasan, San Jose, CA

Answers:



HOUSTON

GOPA KUTEERAM YEAR-END PROGRAMS & FIELD TRIPS



Children of Gopa Kuteeram programs in Pearland and Cypress areas in Houston

brought their year-long weekly program to a colorful conclusion and field trips. Also, 12-hour Akhanda Mahamantra sankirtan is now conducted almost every alternate week at Houston Namadwaar, not as a sadhana but as a service to the community.

VIRGINIA - RAMA NAVAMI



PADUKA PRAVESHAM

NORTH CAROLINA SATSANGS

PADUKA PRAVESHAM



KATHA AT SAI MANDIR



MINNEAPOLIS - SPRING



BAY AREA SATSANG



MILWAUKEE SHORT STORY CONTEST

A short story contest was conducted on April 20th at the Pewaukee library by Milwaukee GOD group. The winning entry has been published in this issue.

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ATLANTA - TAMIL MARAIGAL PGM



UPCOMING EVENTS!

Houston Namadwaar: Gopa Kuteeram Summer camps for all age groups. For details call - 281.303.5828

Virginia: July 3 - 7, Madhura Utsav at Richmond. For details call - 828.668.2463

Milwaukee: May 25 - 26, Madhura Utsav. For details call - 262.264.5938

Chicago: June 14 - 15, Gopa Kuteeram Summer Camp at Naperville Public library. For details call - 630.851.8578

Weekly satsangs are held regularly in the following regions:

Atlanta, GA; Bay Area, CA; New England area; Chicago, IL; Cortlandt Manor, NY; Dallas, TX; Houston, TX; Milwaukee, WI; Minneapolis, WI; Orlando, FL; Richmond, VA; San Antonio, TX; Seattle, WA; Saskatchewan, Canada

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

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

Email newsletter@goddivinity.org for more info.