

# GOD Toronto - Jan 2020 Newsletter

## Bhagavatha Mahatmyam

Bhaktha Charitra - Panduranga Bhaktha Series 03 - Bhakta Narahari

Hail the glory of Pandarpur which has lured many a great saint, whose hymns called 'Abhangs' still stand testimony for their unparalleled devotion to their great Lord Panduranga. In this glorious place on the banks of river Chandrabaga the Almighty, along with His Consort Rukmini, stood atop a small brick for the sake of his devotee Pundaleeka. He has remained here for more than twenty eight 'Chatur Yugas'.

Every divine place can be seen as one where the devotees revel in the bliss born out of singing the Divine Names of the Lord; and Pandarpur is no exception. The Divine Name of 'Ramakrishna Hari Vasudeva Hari!' is ever ever reverberating in this holy town. Devotees are delighted to see Lord Panduranga, the enchanter of the whole Universe, wearing the 'Makara Kundala' (fish shaped ear stud) in his ears, clad in yellow silk, wearing exquisite ornaments, a bewitching smile playing on His lips and having the insignia of Goddess Lakshmi on His chest, His two palms on His hips, as if awaiting Nama Kirtan of the Sadhus.

The Lord of Vaikunta descended here verily to relish the incessant Nama Sankirtan of the Sadhus and to play his Divine Lilas with the devotees to bring out the greatness of their devotion and deep love for Him. Numerous great Sadhus like Namdev, Tukaram had immense love for Vittal and spent their entire lives immersed in Nama Kirtan. Undeniably, Lord Vittal is an embodiment of love and devotees offer unstinted love seeking in return, only enhanced love for Him!

Once, there lived in Pandarpur a devotee of Lord Shiva by name Narahari. He was a gold smith. Adept in making wonderful ornaments, he was known for his skill and craftsmanship in the art of jewel-making. Though he lived in Pandarpur, he never had the darshan of Panduranga. He was such a staunch devotee of Lord Shiva that the glorious form of Lord Vittal did not fancy him at all. He would never listen to Vittala Nama Kirtan and would shut his ears if a group of Sadhus engaged in Namakirtan ever passed by his shop. He would never allow anybody to sing the praises of Vittala in his presence and would try to surpass them by his lectures on Lord Shiva. He visited a small shrine of Lord Shiva situated on the banks of Chandrabaga and offered his worship. He always envied the popularity of Lord Vittal who had a huge crowd of devotees not only from Pandarpur but also from various parts of Maharashtra. When devotees sing portraying Lord Vittal as a dacoit who would never allow anyone to leave Pandarpur before stealing away their devotion-filled hearts, would Narahari, who lived verily in Pandarpur, be spared? The Lord had his own plan of drawing him closer to His lotus feet and making him His ardent devotee.

Once, a wealthy devotee desired to make an expensive girdle of gold studded with precious stones and gems for Lord Panduranga. He approached Narahari and expressed his desire assuring that he would adequately reward him for his befitting skill and craftsmanship. No sooner did he hear that the girdle was for Lord Vittal than Narahari turned down his request. He said that he would never in his life make an ornament for anyone other than Lord Shiva. The rich man argued that this was just a business deal and a business man should never allow his prejudices to intrude on his business. He further asserted that Narahari would be paid sufficiently just as any of his business deals and this would no way shatter his ideals.

As Narahari was very firm in not entering the temple premises of Vittal, he wanted the rich man to bring the measurement of the waist of Lord Panduranga. The rich man went to the temple with great joy and had the priests of the temple measure the waist size of the Lord and came back to Narahari with exact measurement. Narahari made an excellent ornament studded with precious stones and gems of the same size and gave it to his wealthy customer on the promised day. The wealthy man had arranged for a grand pooja on that day and took the girdle to the temple in a big procession.

Sadly, the girdle measured bigger and it slipped out of the waist of the Lord when offered! Crestfallen, the gentleman immediately rushed to Narahari's shop. Explaining that it measured bigger, he requested Narahari to alter it to the exact size of the idol of Panduranga. Narahari immediately made the necessary adjustments. But when this was offered to Vittala, the girdle seemed small and it would not fit! The devotee rushed to Narahari. All attempts of Narahari to make the girdle fit Lord Panduranga proved futile.

The devotee felt frustrated. He forced Narahari to visit the Temple and take the measurement himself. Narahari was forced to accept this idea; but he placed a condition that he would not look at Lord Panduranga and that he should be carried inside, as he would have his eyes covered with a piece of cloth. Narahari was carried into the Temple Sanctum Sanctorum. Narahari had never, even in his worst dream, thought of entering the Temple. Though he entered the Temple with an air of indifference, the Lord of the Universe within was highly pleased to see Narahari enter His Sanctum Sanctorum. Is he not an exponent of magical arts and a rasika by nature? Blindfolded, Narahari entered the sanctum and was all set to measure the Lord's waist. When he touched the deity, he felt matted hair, the moon and also the third eye on the Lord's forehead, snake in His neck and the trident in His hand! Narahari was startled. 'How could it be Lord Shiva?', he thought and touched again. Overwhelmed with joy he cried out, 'Oh! this is My dear Lord – Lord Shiva!' and immediately removed the cloth that blinded his eyes. But he was dumbfounded to see the lotus Panduranga standing along with His Consort Rukmini! Narahari was dumbfounded by the divine sport of the Lord. He realized the truth that there was no difference between Lord Vittala and Lord Shiva. He at once earned steadfast devotion to Panduranga. He took the measurement of the icon of the Lord and this time the ornament fit the Lord well.

Adi Sankara, in one of his verses, says that Lord Panduranga is none other than the Nirguna Parabrahman (the formless Brahman) which has assumed a beautiful form by its sheer mercy upon the mankind and hence worshipping him would tantamount to the worship of all other deities. Narahari's story stands as an illustration to this.

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## Madhurageetham - Bharata Pradakshina - 1

His Holiness Maharanyam Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji has composed several hundreds of kirtans glorifying various deities and depicting different bhavas of a devotee, from praise and enjoyment, friendship and motherhood, to love and intense prayer. These kirtans are all being compiled by his devotees under the title—Madhura Geetam.

Sri Swamiji has also composed many kirtans on various kshetras or places of pilgrimage around India.



In this new series, we will go on a pradakshina of Bharata desha as we present, each month, a kirtan composed by Sri Swamiji on a particular kshetra, starting from Mannargudi in south India. Mannargudi Rajagopalan

Mannargudi, a holy place located near Thanjavur in the state of Tamil Nadu, is known as Champakaranya kshetra and is also called Dakshina Dwaraka (Dwaraka of the south). The deity of the temple at Mannargudi is Krishna in the form of the famous Mannargudi Rajagopalan. Here Krishna is in the form of a cowherd who goes to the forest (to herd cows) dressed as “Raja Mannar” – a king – which is how Yashoda likes to dress him up.

Just like Kulasekhara Azhwar puts Kannapuram Sauriraja Perumal to sleep, here our Guru Maharaj sings this Sanskrit kirtan in Nilambari raga. The beautiful form of the Lord is described in the charanam, where Rajagopalan wears a single vastram (piece of cloth) and shines forth with radiance. The kirtan also talks about the divine mother of the kshetra – Sri Champakavalli Thaayaar.

Champakaranya Kshetra Bala

**Raga: Nilambari**      **Tala: Adi**  
**Pallavi**

champakAraNya kshetrabAla  
jagadrakshaka rAjagopAla (cha)  
Charanam  
ekavastrAnvita thejomayarUpa  
rAgamAlikArchanapriya (cha)  
jaya srIchampakavallIramaNa  
gorakshaNakara rAjagopAla (cha)  
muraIdhara mAnasasevita  
sakalamunihRudaya sadAbhAvita (cha)

### **Meaning**

Pallavi:

O young boy of Champakaranya (forest of Champaka trees)

O Rajagopala (King of Cows and Cowherds), You are the protector of the whole world!

Charanam:

Adorned with a single piece of cloth, You shine forth with radiance

You are the one who enjoys to be worshiped with a garland of different ragas

Hail to You, O Beloved of Sri Champakavalli

O Rajagopala, You are verily the protector of the cows

You are the One who is worshiped in the heart of Muralidhara

You are the One who always resides in the hearts of all sages

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# Madhuramana Mahaneeyar 03

This series chronicles sweet experiences recounted by the devotees of HH Maharanyam Sri Sri Muralidhara Swamiji as well as some divine experiences of Sri Swamiji himself. These articles are translations from the series “Madhuramaana Mahaneeyar” that is published every month in Madhuramurali Tamil monthly magazine.

Can Fate Be Changed?

Recounted by Sri Janakiraman ji, Chennai:

From the day we saw Sri Swamiji, we, the entire family as a whole, surrendered ourselves completely at the feet of our Guru and were devoted to him. We had the rarest fortune of having Sri Swamiji stay in our place and living under the shade of His feet. Sri Swamiji used to talk a lot about various saints and avatara purushas.

Once during such a discussion, I asked him, “Guruji, can fate be changed? Some say it can be changed while some say it cannot be. Which is true?”

Sri Swamiji answered, “There is no doubt that fate can be changed if God or the Guru wills!” Saying so, he narrated an incident from Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa’s life. An ardent devotee of Sri Ramakrishna, Mathur Babu, once came to see him. Seeing him with a sullen face, Sri Ramakrishna asked him the reason. Mathur replied that his wife was unwell. The Master asked if he wanted him to cure her. Despite having experienced his Grace on many occasions, Mathur replied, “What can you do Master? Everything happens according to fate!”

The Master soon asked, “Do you accept that KAlI can do that if she wills?”

The devotee said, “Even KAlI cannot do that Maharaj!”

Sri Ramakrishna pointed to a nearby tree and asked what its fate was. Mathur replied plainly that its fate was to put forth red flowers. The conversation ended there. The next day the tree had flowers of various colors! The Master called Mathur to show him that wonder! “Hence,” Sri Swamiji continued, “If God or Guru wills, they can surely alter one’s fate. Suppose an arrow is aimed at a bird. Though the bird may be unaware of it, an onlooker who sees it can prevent that arrow from striking the bird or alert the bird with a sound so that it escapes the arrow’s mark. Likewise, the Guru knows our fate very well. He can prepare us so that it does not affect us at all. Just as we hold an umbrella to protect ourselves from rain, the meritorious deeds that we perform have the power to shield us from the severity of our fate.” Saying thus, Sri Swamiji ended the discussion. The next day morning when we went to the garden to collect flowers for the Lord’s worship, we had a pleasant surprise. The white-hibiscus plant in our garden had a few pink hibiscus flowers!

We all shared the wonder among ourselves. This happened for a day or two and then the phenomenon stopped. When we reported this to Sri Swamiji with great joy and wonder, he said with a smile, "Perhaps God is changing your fate!"

I spoke quietly to myself, "Swamiji alone knows what our fate is and how it would be changed! What can we grasp with our limited minds? Swamiji's Grace is enough for us!"

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## Quiz Time:

Panduranga Bhaktha Series 03 - Bhakta Narahari

we will continue our journey of learning about the Panduranga bhaktas. This month's quiz is based on the Bhaktha charitram published in this month's article.

1. What the profession of Narahari?
  - a. Weaver
  - b. Gold Smith
  - c. Washerman
2. Narahari was a devotee of .....
  - a. Lord Shiva
  - b. Panduranga
  - c. Lord Muruga
3. Who approached Narahari to make a girdle?
  - a. A wealthy devotee of Panduranga.
  - b. His wife
  - c. The King
4. The girdle was for .....
  - a. The queen
  - b. Panduranga
  - c. The Trader
5. How did Narahari got the measurements for the girdle?
  - a. He himself took the measurement
  - b. He relied on his skills and made the girdle without measurement
  - c. He asked the trader to get him the exact measurement
6. What happened when the girdle was offered to the lord.
  - a. It girdle fitted perfectly
  - b. It was too big and it fell down
  - c. Panduraga thanked the wealthy trader
7. Why did Narahari to go to the temple and take the measurements for the girdle.
  - a. The trader was upset because the girdle did not fit properly.
  - b. Panduranga came in his dreams and asked him to go to the temple.
  - c. He did not know that he is going to temple.

8. What happened in the temple?
- He could not take the measurement.
  - The Bakthas did not allow him inside the temple.
  - He realised both panduranga and Lord Shiva are one and the same.

Prepared by Karthik Sundaresan, Toronto , Canada

Answers:

1 – b, 2 – a, 3 – a, 4 – b, 5 –ca, 6 – b, 7 – a, 8 – c

## News - Toronto

By the immense grace of our beloved Guru Maharaj, and the divine couple Sri Madhurisakhi Sametha Premikavaradha Thakurji, GOD Toronto was blessed to celebrate Madhura Utsav from Dec 21 - Dec 28.

The utsav started on Dec 21 at SVBF, where about 15 families chanted Hanuman Chalisa for Hanuman Jayanthi. The celebrations started at 5:30am with chanting of our Mahamanthra, doing Bhagavatha Dasamaskandha Parayanam and Sundarakanda parayanam simultaneously via teleconference. From around 2pm, we met at the houses of different GOD families for the utsav.

We sang Madhurgeethams and Ashtapadhis and also a few Abhangs. We also listened to pravachan from 8 kids from age 7 to 21.

On Dec 26, we celebrated Radha Kalyanam, and on Dec 27, we celebrated vidayatri, where we played lots of games to finish the utsav. There were games for people of all ages, and everyone enjoyed thoroughly.

There was also a Gopa Kuteeram field trip on Dec 21, to a local Gurudwaar, where the kids learnt a lot about the Gurudwaar, and the Sikh beliefs and culture and their way of life. On Dec 31, more than 10 families went to Shri Sivasatyanarayana Temple, and chanted Mahamanthra and sang Madhurgeethams, starting at around 10pm, to welcome the new year on an auspicious note.

We pray to our beloved Guru Maharaj for more such utsavs, satsangs and celebrations.