

# Matruvani

April 2020 Vol. 31 No. 9 50 Paise



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*"The first step to correcting a mistake is to become aware of it. Once we realize it, we must repent."*

— Amma



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*Some articles use the masculine pronoun when referring to God, in keeping with convention and to avoid the clumsiness of constructions such as 'He or She' or 'Him or Her.'*

Printed and Published by Swami Jnanamritananda Puri on behalf of M.A. Mission Trust, Amritapuri P.O., Kollam, Kerala 690 546, India. Printed at Amrita Offset Printers, Amritapuri P.O., Kollam, Kerala 690 546, India. Published at M.A. Math, Amritapuri P.O., Kollam, Kerala 690 546, India. Phone: (0476) 289 6278/7578/6399. Matruvani Office Phone: 08589003341 Editor: Br. Brahmamrita Chaitanya

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# Remorse

Children, to err is human. There is no one who has done no wrong in life. Doing what one should not and not doing what one should — both are wrong. Some unknowingly make mistakes. Others make mistakes under the pressure of circumstances. Either way, the first step to correcting mistakes is to become aware of them.

Once we realize our mistake, we must repent. Repentance is a form of atonement. There is no sin that cannot be washed away by the tears of remorse. That said, once we know what is right, we ought not to repeat our mistakes. We must repent sincerely. Some people only pretend to be remorseful in front of others.

A young lad became a pickpocket. His bad habit sorely distressed his mother, who asked her son to confess his sin to the priest in a nearby temple and to beg for forgiveness. The day after he picked a businessman's pocket, the lad went to

Whenever we do wrong, our conscience gently murmurs, “Do not do this! Desist!” If we listen to our conscience, we will not do wrong.

the priest and said, “O priest, I sinned yesterday. I stole a businessman’s wallet.”

Hearing this, the priest said, “You committed a terrible crime. Find the businessman at once and return his wallet!”

The boy found the businessman, returned the wallet, and went back home. That night, the mother saw her son counting money from a thick wad of notes. When she asked how he had obtained so much money, the son said, “I swiped money from the till near the priest when I went to confess my crime.”

Our remorse should not be like this. It must be sincere.

Once we realize our mistake, we must resolve firmly to make amends and never repeat

the mistake again. Whenever we do wrong, our conscience gently murmurs, “Do not do this! Desist!” If we listen to our conscience, we will not do wrong.

Sometimes, we do wrong out of ignorance. God will pardon such sins. However, if we keep repeating the same mistakes, He will not forgive us. Therefore, we must not repeat our mistakes.

Human life is a journey from error to truth. Though mistakes can happen, we must strive to correct ourselves. We must try to make our every thought, word and deed noble. Even if we make a small mistake, we must repent and correct it. This is the sole means to our ultimate victory, to eternal joy and peace. ❧

EXPERIENCE

# No God to God

by joydeep nag, india



Chengallath Ramakrishna Pillai was a social activist from Harippad in Southern Kerala. He belonged to an aristocratic and wealthy family that lived in a big house with sprawling lawns. Despite

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the wealth, Ramakrishna Pillai had a heart that beat for the poor. His communist leanings became fully engaged when he was elected as an independent member of the Kerala Legislative Assembly in 1957.

Ramakrishna Pillai's wife was Sarojini Amma, a devout woman, doting wife, and caring mother to three boys and five girls. In those times, males were considered superior to females. The sons were expected to follow their father's communist footsteps, but destiny had charted a different path for them, especially for Mohan and his older brother, Rajendran.

Vallickavu, which is about 20 miles south of Harippad, was then a sleepy fishing hamlet, lapped on one side by the waves of the Arabian Sea and caressed on the other by the gentle backwaters. The natural beauty of this land of coconut trees and fishing boats was unsurpassed. However, the

village was, in general, a place of poverty.

It was here that Sudhamani was born. From a young age, She became known for Her unfathomable compassion for all and Her mystic moods. No one had the measure of this luminous soul who manifested the divine mood of Krishna (Krishna Bhava) and that of Devi (Devi Bhava). Many came to see the bhava darshans out of sheer curiosity. Others came with the hope of finding a divine solution to their problems. All of them found solace in Her touch and words, and began to call Her "Amma" ("Mother").

These devotees would congregate in the small *kuttil* (hut) or even smaller *kalari* (ancestral shrine) to revel in the ecstasy of Amma's devotional singing, connect with the eternal in Her warm embrace, or hear Her lilting words of love and compassion! Her sacred presence pervaded the air and transported them beyond



their mundane world of suffering to a realm of love and peace. She thus sowed the seeds of spirituality in countless hearts.

Mohan and Rajendran also heard about Amma. The latter started visiting Amma's Vallickavu ashram regularly, especially for the Bhava darshans. He hung a picture of Amma in his room, and began a daily routine of spiritual practices.

Mohan, however, held steadfastly to his atheistic world views. He believed that a class revolution was the only way to resolve human suffering and poverty. He hardly visited temples and never went to see Amma. Moreover, he had scant respect for a woman who, as he saw it, went into trances and assumed the moods of Krishna or Devi.

After his college education, Mohan joined the Travancore Devaswom Board, which governed the Sabarimala Temple, as a junior clerk. Thus, by a curious twist of fate, the atheist

found himself in the direct service of Lord Ayyappa, the presiding deity of the Sabarimala Temple! But money lured him, and like many others, he looked to the Middle East to earn money quickly. He took a long leave of absence from the Board and left for the Middle East, where he found life a struggle. So, he returned to India and re-joined the Devaswom Board.

He soon got married and settled down to a life of quiet stability. With a government job, income was steady. And yet, he found that he did not feel fulfilled.

At this juncture, his friend Aravind called. They had grown up together. Like Mohan, Aravind had also gone to the Middle East to make money. Both of them also had similar ideological leanings. Strangely, then, the first time Aravind called, it was to invite Mohan to go and see Amma. Mohan spoke roughly, "What's wrong with you?" He found

even the thought of going to see Amma loathsome. He hated everything about Her and thought all that She did was contrived.

The second time Aravind invited him to see Amma, Mohan did not say anything. He just listened as his friend egged him on: "I know you don't like Her. But if She has powers, and many believe She does, what can you lose if you and your wife can have a child through Her miraculous intercession? Don't think only of yourself; think of your wife, too."

Mohan did not say anything. He felt that his friend had a point.

The third time Aravind called, Mohan said, "As you're so insistent, Aravind, let's go. My wife wants to go, too."

They went by car. When they reached Amma's ashram, they met a brahmachari whom Aravind knew well. He asked the brahmachari if it was possible to talk to Amma in private. Aravind knew that

Mohan was loath to talk about himself in public. Getting him to come to the ashram had been difficult enough; he did not want to deter Mohan from going for darshan by the prospect of discussing his private matter in public.

"Why don't you try talking to Amma as She makes Her way to the kutil?" the brahmachari suggested.

Aravind thought it was a good idea. They waited near the kutil. After some time, there was a buzz. People started craning their necks to catch sight of Amma. Some, including the brahmachari, fell prostrate in devotion. Mohan stood some distance away. The sight of men lying prostrate before a woman so appalled him that he wanted to leave at once. But something made him stay on.

Soon, Amma appeared right in front of Mohan, who, urged by some overwhelming impulse, found himself lying prostrate on the floor. He

started crying “Amma! Amma!” and shed tears copiously, as if a dam of emotions, pent-up for years, had broken. He kept wailing deliriously, “Amma... Amma... Amma...”

Amma gently raised him and said, “Son, I am here. Why do you cry?”

Mohan went on crying inconsolably. He never knew from where this flood of emotions arose, from where this love had come for the woman he had despised until just a moment ago. How can anyone understand the play of the divine?

Amma pulled him towards Her and said, “Come with me.”

Amma went to the kutil, sat down and started giving darshan. Mohan sat in front of Her. For Her, it was business as usual. Not so for Mohan, whose mind was roiling with new thoughts on the impermanence of life, Amma’s divine mercy, and the humility that was overpowering his consciousness. He thought, “Am I

even worthy of Amma’s love?” The more he thought, the more he cried. Amma looked at him once or twice, sometimes with a mischievous wink, and let him be.

When it was Mohan’s turn to have Amma’s darshan, his inner resistance melted even more. The warm tears that fell from his eyes drenched his face and shirt.

When darshan ended, Amma asked Mohan and his wife to follow Her to a room nearby. There were a few brahmacharis sitting there. Seeing Amma walk in, they jumped up and ran out. Amma sat down, as composed as ever. A weeping Mohan and his wife sat in front of Her. Amma was like the Goddess Saraswati plucking the strings of Mohan’s heart. He started crying, “O Amma, I don’t want anything in this world. I don’t want riches, children, name or fame. I just want you, Amma. I just want a place at Your holy feet!”

“You don’t want children?” Amma asked.

“No, Amma, I just want you!” Mohan’s wife was also weeping.

“Come back tomorrow. Amma will initiate you into a mantra.”

The next day, Devi Bhava started at around seven. The very air crackled with a pure and subtle fragrance. When the doors to the kalari opened, the devotees saw Amma draped in a golden sari and wearing a bejewelled crown. As She sat with Her eyes closed in a deep meditative trance, Mohan thought that Amma looked breathtakingly like the Divine Mother Herself!

Towards the end of Devi Bhava, Amma started initiating devotees into mantras. When it was Mohan’s turn, he eagerly went to Amma, who intoned the mantra into his ear. As soon as he left, Amma stood up. Mohan’s wife was taken aback. Why had Amma not initiated her, she wondered? At

that very moment, Amma turned to her, smiled and said, “Daughter, come the next time.” Amma’s words were like balm to a bruised soul. The very next Devi Bhava darshan, Amma initiated her into a mantra.

Soon thereafter, Rajendran joined Amma’s ashram as a brahmachari and dedicated his life to serving Her. Mohan and his wife settled in Kochi, where he continued working in the Devaswom Board. As a humble token of their heartfelt appreciation to Amma, the brothers gifted their ancestral house in Harippad to Amma. That house was renovated and is now the Harippad Amrita Vidyalayam (school).

Almost 30 years have passed since Mohan met Amma. Today, he serves in AIMS, Amma’s multi-speciality hospital in Kochi. Amma continues to be his Guru and God. His sole prayer is, “Amma, never leave this child!” How can a Mother ever leave Her child? ❧

# Child-like Mother

by br. chandrasekhar, india

**I**n Sanskrit, '*bala*' means 'child.' The Divine Mother is sometimes worshipped throughout India as a young girl. Legends abound of seekers who worshipped the Divine Mother as Bala Tripurasundari<sup>1</sup> and obtained spiritual

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<sup>1</sup> Tripurasundari means 'She who is beautiful in the three worlds.'





liberation as a result. In the *Lalita Sabhasranama* (1,000 names of the Divine Mother), the word 'bala' occurs twice.<sup>2</sup> The first instance alludes to how the Divine Mother, in Her manifestation as a child, slew the sons of the demon Bhandasura, all of whom were repositories of evil qualities.

The Divine Mother is also extolled as '*bala-lila-vinodini*,' a child who delights in play. She enjoys the divine play of creation. With Her thousand hands, She works the strings of Her creation and thus controls it playfully. Not that She is separate from creation, as every being has manifested from Her. Even from the Vedantic viewpoint, Brahman, the Supreme, alone exists, everything is its manifestation, and creation is a '*lila*,' the divine play of the Creator.

Thus, the Divine Mother is really playing with Herself — there is no one else to play with — and She enjoys the solitary sport.

What is the game that She is playing? Hide and seek. She has conned us with the illusion of separateness, and wants us to break this spell so that we can discover our oneness with God.

To play this game, the Divine Mother assumes the form of Bala Tripurasundari. Children are guileless. Everything is a play for them. They imitate elders innocently, are ever enthusiastic, and enjoy life fully. However, as they grow older, worldly responsibilities and the bonds formed as a result conspire to shackle them with the iron chains of egoism wrought by the sense of 'I' and 'mine.'

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2 'Om bhanda putra vadhodyukta bala vikrama nanditayai namah' ('Salutations to the Divine Mother who delights in seeing the valour of Goddess Bala, who is intent on killing the sons of Bhandasura') (74); 'Om balayai namah' ('Salutations to the Divine Mother, who never forsakes the nature of a child') (965).

As far as many devotees of Amma are concerned, She is Goddess Bala Tripurasundari. Hers is the role of a loving mother, and Her play has a purpose: to awaken the child within.

Amma says, “Children alone can grow. Children alone can live in the present moment. We all should awaken the innocence of a child within us.”

Amma is often surrounded by children. They sit near Her while She sings bhajans, stand next to Her while She gives darshan, and play with Her in Her room. Children might fight with each other one moment. But the very next moment, they forget their enmity and become friends again. Amma longs to see this forgiving child-like nature in every one of us. If we want to grow spiritually, we must nurture our inner child.

Since Her teens, Amma has been embracing people from

all over the world. Some people come to Her for solutions to their problems. Others come to fulfil their desires. Yet others want to test Her. A few seek spiritual advice and blessings.

Years ago, an elderly seeker, having heard about Amma’s greatness, came to see Her. When he reached the ashram, he saw Her playing games with the village children. He was confused, for he had expected to see someone sitting still in meditation or delivering a sermon. He wondered if the child-like girl he saw could guide him on spiritual matters. He decided to wait for Amma to finish playing with the kids. After a while, She came to him and lovingly counselled him on spiritual matters. Struck dumb by the profound truths She revealed, he prostrated before Amma and left with a heart full of reverence for Her.

Appearing child-like, playing innocently with children,

and yet wise beyond measure — who other than Goddess Bala Tripurasundari can be both child-like and yet the possessor of fathomless wisdom?

Today, Amma sports with all of us and lovingly chisels us to spiritual perfection. She regards everyone, irrespective of age, as Her child. Her charismatic smiles, looks and gestures disarm the ego, and Her compassion melts our arrogance and stubbornness. Because we consider Her our most intimate friend, we are ready to reveal everything to Her. We may hesitate to disclose some things to our parents or even our close friends, but that hesitation usually disappears in Amma's presence. The moment we see Her, the child-like heart within awakens.


For Amma, every action is play, and yet She acts with complete detachment. One only has to watch Her as She gives darshan to understand this. She listens to the prattle

of innocent children one moment before turning the next moment to listen to the sorrows of a devotee or advising those entrusted with running the various institutions of the ashram. She remains blissful as She does a myriad of things. Even if She shows anger, it is put on for the sake of correcting someone. Both Her anger and laughter are masks donned as part of the drama She enacts in order to help Her achieve the various ends of Her incarnation, chiefly, to eradicate evil and to foster compassion and righteousness.

When Amma entrusts us with some work, we may feel, "I'm endowed with special talents. That's why Amma has given me this work." Over time, we start facing obstacles in our work, and these impediments slowly start to shatter our arrogance. Feeling helpless, we turn to Amma, seeking Her grace for success in the work. Our attitude

towards the work undergoes a sea change. We become humbler, more responsive to others, and more detached from the work. The sense of 'doer-ship' begins to dissolve. We start to feel divine grace 'moving' the work. In this way, Amma teaches us how to play the game of 'work:' by keeping our egoism at bay, and by working with childlike innocence and an attitude of being a mere

instrument in the hands of the Divine. Neither the *seva* (selfless work) that we do nor our achievements matter to Amma, only our spiritual progress.

I humbly bow down to Goddess Bala Tripurasundari, who has come to play the role of loving mother in order to slay the Bhandasura of arrogance within us. May the innocent child within all of us awaken. 

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*In case you are interested, kindly share your resume (CV) with a photograph to the E-mail: [pr.amritapuri@gmail.com](mailto:pr.amritapuri@gmail.com) or the address: 'Public Relations Department', Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, Amritapuri Campus, Clappana P.O, Kollam - 690525.*



# Offering to the World

by br. madhavamrita chaitanya

The last time Amma initiated Her monastic children into sannyasa and brahmacharya was in 1997. Why did She decide to give deeksha<sup>1</sup> after all these years? Why now, when the whole world is in the grip of fear, panic and anxiety caused by the coronavirus contagion?

One could come up with credible and convincing explanations. But the truth is, Amma alone knows. About a week after the deeksha ceremony, She said that, after 1997, She had waited for an inner feeling that She ought to give deeksha, and that feeling had arisen a few weeks before the ceremony.

Amma has always had Her finger on the pulse of humanity. She knows the fear and grief Her children are feeling.

<sup>1</sup> The word 'deeksha' means consecration or initiation. Sannyasa deeksha is being ordained as a monk / nun; brahmacharya deeksha is being ordained as a novice.





Of late, She has been urging everyone, not just ashram residents, to pray, and has said that concerted effort and collective prayer can bring about positive change and a respite from the crises that threaten to overwhelm us.

One of the examples Amma has been citing lately to illustrate how our destinies are intertwined is that of a fire breaking out on the ground floor of a building. If the person staying on the ground floor asks someone staying on the 10th floor for help and the latter says that it is not his problem, it would be sheer foolishness, for the fire can

soon spread to the top of the building. “Isn’t this exactly what has happened?” Amma asked. The virus, which reared its head in Wuhan, in Central China’s Hubei province, has stretched its tentacles to all corners of the planet.

Under the circumstances, the deeksha ceremony might seem incongruous but nonetheless based on an understanding beyond us.

On the stage, the sepia-toned background featured two quotes from Amma:

- “The spiritual path begins and ends with compassion;”
- “A sannyasi is a real servant of the world. In fact, he or

she is the only one who serves and loves the world without receiving anything in return."

These words give us a small glimpse into the significance of the deeksha ceremony. Amma has always held that spirituality is not divorced from life, and that it is the foundation on which a meaningful life is built. Further, only spiritual understanding and compassion can provide lasting solutions to the problems that beset us personally and collectively. A truly spiritual person is selfless. Like Amma, he or she is intent only on relieving others of their pain and suffering. Such altruism has become more relevant than ever before in this selfish day and age. The deeksha ceremony can, therefore, be seen as a celebration of selflessness and compassion, and thus, the silver lining behind the dark clouds of despair looming over humanity.



The formal preparations for the deeksha started days earlier. Male initiates underwent the tonsure ceremony, during which their head was shaved, leaving intact just a *shikha*, a tuft of hair on the top of the head signifying the renunciation of all but spiritual desires. Those receiving sannyasa deeksha also conducted funeral rites for their ancestors, succeeding generations of their pre-monastic family members, and, finally, for themselves. All initiates also spent the days leading up to the deeksha observing silence, fasting and doing other spiritual practices.

On Friday, March 13th, archana began at 4:30 a.m. in the ashram's auditorium. At 6 a.m., there was a Ganapati Homa, to propitiate Lord Ganesha, the remover of obstacles. At 8 a.m., those receiving sannyasa deeksha went to the stage for the Viraja Homa, which took place behind closed

doors. Amma arrived just before 9:30 a.m. for this purificatory rite, which involves removing and offering the shikha and *sutra* (sacred thread) into the sacred fire. The offering of the shikha signifies a renunciation of all desires, and the offering of the *sutra*, also known as the *yajnopaveetam*, indicates that the sanyasi is free from the obligation to perform *yajnas* (ritual sacrifices).

When Amma emerged from the stage, it was with the 59 new sannyasis, resplendent in their austere ochre robes. After She sat down, the new sannyasis took their seats on either side of Her. Amma recalled how Swami Dhruvananda, a monk from the Ramakrishna Math, had initiated the ashram's first sannyasi, Swami Amritaswarupananda, into the Puri order of sannyasa, one of the 10 sannyasa orders that Adi Shankaracharya, the chief proponent of Advaita Vedanta, established. Swamiji has since initiated others from the M.A.

Math into sannyasa. Amma reminded the new initiates to uphold the hallowed sannyasa dharma.

She then read out the names of each of the new swamis and swaminis, and asked everyone to repeat their new names thrice. The new names of the swamis (monks) are suffixed with *Ananda* (bliss) and Puri. The names of the swaminis (nuns) are suffixed with *Prana* (life breath).

Amma then asked them to beg for *bhiksha* (alms), in keeping with the ancient sannyasa tradition. As each one called out, "*Bhavati bhiksham dehi*" ("May you give me some alms"), devotees generously doled out food items, cash and other gifts into their outstretched garments.

In the meantime, Swamiji called out the names of each initiate receiving brahmacharya deeksha. Each one received yellow robes from Amma, changed into the new robes, and returned to the hall,

where the male initiates received the sutra from one of the senior sannyasis of the ashram. Thereafter, Amma read out the new monastic names of each initiate, who went and prostrated before Her. Each brahmacharya name is suffixed with *Chaitanya* (pure consciousness).

At the end of the ceremony, Amma asked everyone in the hall to pray that each initiate has the strength and surrender needed to remain on the spiritual path and to serve the world selflessly. Devotees then lined the path to the sea as the newly minted swamis, swaminis, brahmacharis and brahmacharinis walked to the beach. There, the sannyasis broke the *danda* (staff), signifying the three *gunas* (attributes).<sup>2</sup> Breaking the danda and hurling it into the sea symbolize the transcending of the three gunas. Both

2 Sattva (serenity), rajas (activity) and tamas (dullness), the three constituents of the human personality.

those who received sannyasa deeksha and those who received brahmacharya deeksha sprinkled themselves with sea water as a token indication of bathing.


After returning to the ashram, following tradition, the new sannyasis started cooking their own food with the bhiksha they had received earlier. The new brahmacharis and brahmacharinis helped the swamis and swaminis. By the time the food was cooked and eaten, it was about 3 p.m.

\* \* \*

Amma gave sannyasa deeksha to 58 initiates and brahmacharya deeksha to 211 initiates, which included both Indians and non-Indians. It was the ashram's largest deeksha ceremony to date. Amma's presence lent purity, dignity and a holy magnificence to the occasion. As She sat with the new initiates, the image that came to mind was that of the rising sun,

pure white at its core, radiating gold-and-vermillion beams.

The yellow of brahmacharya deeksha signifies the flame of renunciation that the initiate is supposed to nourish, and the ochre of sannyasa deeksha symbolizes the blazing fire of renunciation. By dedicating

the spiritually-minded initiates to the world, Amma is showing us the way to peace. In this benighted hour of crisis and calamity, may the light of self-sacrifice and compassion illumine human hearts and pave the way to a brighter future. 

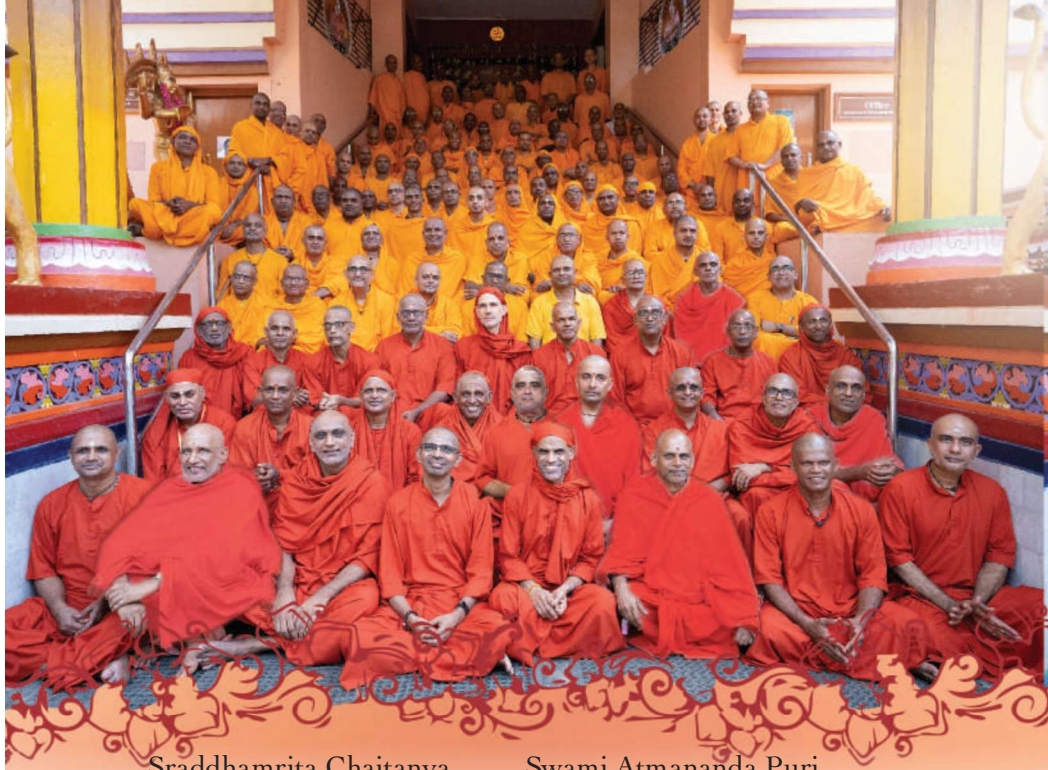
#### **Brahmacharya Name**

Tyagamrita Chaitanya  
Brahmamrita Chaitanya  
Abhedamrita Chaitanya  
Dayamrita Chaitanya  
Vedamrita Chaitanya  
Sivamrita Chaitanya  
Abhayamrita Chaitanya  
Sadasiva Chaitanya  
Dhyanamrita Chaitanya  
Premamrita Chaitanya  
Vinayamrita Chaitanya  
Yogamrita Chaitanya  
Dharmamrita Chaitanya  
Shubamrita Chaitanya  
Vivekamrita Chaitanya  
Tapasyamrita Chaitanya  
Sankara Chaitanya  
Prasannamrita Chaitanya  
Gurudas Chaitanya  
Anaghamrita Chaitanya  
Nijamrita Chaitanya  
Matrudas Chaitanya

#### **Sannyasa Name**

Swami Tyagamritananda Puri  
Swami Brahmamritananda Puri  
Swami Abhedamritananda Puri  
Swami Dayamritananda Puri  
Swami Vedamritananda Puri  
Swami Sivamritananda Puri  
Swami Abhayamritananda Puri  
Swami Sadasivananda Puri  
Swami Dhyanamritananda Puri  
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Swami Vivekamritananda Puri  
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Swami Prasannamritananda Puri  
Swami Gurupadasritananda Puri  
Swami Anaghamritananda Puri  
Swami Nijamritananda Puri  
Swami Matrudasanananda Puri





Sraddhamrita Chaitanya  
Akshayamrita Chaitanya  
Shantamrita Chaitanya  
Ajamrita Chaitanya  
Avyayamrita Chaitanya  
Vijayamrita Chaitanya  
Gurupriyamrita Chaitanya  
Pavitrāmrita Chaitanya  
Pavanamrita Chaitanya  
Bhavyamrita Chaitanya  
Virajamrita Chaitanya  
Karunamrita Chaitanya  
Siddhamrita Chaitanya  
Atulyamrita Chaitanya  
Gurucharanamrita Chaitanya  
Nirupamamrita Chaitanya  
Nishthamrita Chaitanya  
Amalamrita Chaitanya

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Swami Akshayamritananda Puri  
Swami Shantamritananda Puri  
Swami Ajamritananda Puri  
Swami Avyayamritananda Puri  
Swami Vijayamritananda Puri  
Swamini Gurupriyamrita Prana  
Swamini Matrupriyamrita Prana  
Swamini Pavanamrita Prana  
Swamini Bhavyamrita Prana  
Swamini Atindriyamrita Prana  
Swamini Karunamrita Prana  
Swamini Siddhamrita Prana  
Swamini Atulyamrita Prana  
Swamini Gurucharanamrita Prana  
Swamini Nirupamamrita Prana  
Swamini Nishthamrita Prana  
Swamini Amalamrita Prana



Niranjnamrita Chaitanya  
 Varadamrita Chaitanya  
 Vinitamrita Chaitanya  
 Saradamrita Chaitanya  
 Mangalamrita Chaitanya  
 Saumyamrita Chaitanya  
 Shuddhamrita Chaitanya  
 Bhaktipriyamrita Chaitanya  
 Priyamrita Chaitanya  
 Dipamrita Chaitanya  
 Lakshmi  
 Sneha  
 Sreekumari  
 Uma  
 Indu  
 Asha  
 Suni  
 Ramadevi

Swamini Niranjnamrita Prana  
 Swamini Varadamrita Prana  
 Swamini Anashvaramrita Prana  
 Swamini Saradamrita Prana  
 Swamini Mangalamrita Prana  
 Swamini Muktamrita Prana  
 Swamini Shuddhamrita Prana  
 Swamini Bhaktipriyamrita Prana  
 Swamini Sanatanamrita Prana  
 Swamini Amritajyoti Prana  
 Swamini Srilakshmi Prana  
 Swamini Nishkalamrita Prana  
 Swamini Suvidyamrita Prana  
 Swamini Samadamrita Prana  
 Swamini Chitprabhamrita Prana  
 Swamini Sivapriyamrita Prana  
 Swamini Sricharanamrita Prana  
 Swamini Ambikamrita Prana

### Pre-monastic Name

Umesh  
Gopi  
Narayanan (Kollam)  
Babu (Kodungalloor)  
Ramasamy  
Gireesh  
Narayanan  
Omkumar  
Sudeep Kumar  
Natarajan  
Anil Varma  
Hansraj  
Shivakumar  
Ashokan  
Anil Dharmapal  
Chandramohan  
Rudra Warriar  
Ramesh Babu  
Anil K.S.  
Rajendran (Harippad)  
Sunil Dharmapal  
Didesh  
Ajith Kumar  
Muraleedharan (Delhi)  
Mohan  
Pramod  
Mukundan  
Arunachalam  
Srinivas  
Bijukumar (Matruvani)  
Sudhi  
Vijayakumar  
Raveendra Kumar  
Shankaranarayanan  
Saravanan  
Amritaprasad

### Brahmacharya Name

Umanath Chaitanya  
Sukshmamrita Chaitanya  
Prabhamrita Chaitanya  
Shridharamrita Chaitanya  
Ramamrita Chaitanya  
Viviktamrita Chaitanya  
Narayanamrita Chaitanya  
Omkaramrita Chaitanya  
Devidas Chaitanya  
Sharanamrita Chaitanya  
Vishrutamrita Chaitanya  
Anavadyamrita Chaitanya  
Sthitaprajnamrita Chaitanya  
Yatishvaramrita Chaitanya  
Devamrita Chaitanya  
Amoghamrita Chaitanya  
Prabuddhamrita Chaitanya  
Vasudevamrita Chaitanya  
Nityanandamrita Chaitanya  
Vinayakamrita Chaitanya  
Anantananda Chaitanya  
Atmaswarup Chaitanya  
Svapakashamrita Chaitanya  
Vishveshvaramrita Chaitanya  
Alokamrita Chaitanya  
Dhruvamrita Chaitanya  
Mukundamrita Chaitanya  
Atmaramamrita Chaitanya  
Srinivas Chaitanya  
Nirbhavamrita Chaitanya  
Sivatma Chaitanya  
Jayadamrita Chaitanya  
Balamrita Chaitanya  
Srinathamrita Chaitanya  
Skandamrita Chaitanya  
Amritaprasad Chaitanya

Prajith	Vedavedyamrita Chaitanya
Pradeep Kumar	Sarvapriyamrita Chaitanya
Baburaj	Guruparamrita Chaitanya
Eknath	Ekamrita Chaitanya
Vijoy	Jayamrita Chaitanya
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Amitabhan	Achyutamrita Chaitanya
Suresh Babu	Subodhamrita Chaitanya
Venkitadas	Nishkamamrita Chaitanya
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Aravindakshan	Aravinda Chaitanya
Jayasankar	Sumedhamrita Chaitanya
Shyam Sundar	Satyaprakashamrita Chaitanya
Valsaraj	Agamamrita Chaitanya
Manoj (Matruvani)	Achintyamrita Chaitanya
Narayanan (Press)	Chidghanamrita Chaitanya
Naveen	Srikaramrita Chaitanya
Gangadharan	Gangadharamrita Chaitanya
Sanjith Putran	Yoga Chaitanya
Ramesh (AIMS)	Achalamrita Chaitanya
Suresh Kumar	Jaitramrita Chaitanya
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Kamalnath	Kamaleshvaramrita Chaitanya
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Dhanraj	Vishwamrita Chaitanya
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Karunakaran  
Manoj (Mysore)  
Jagat  
Manoj (Thiruvananthapuram)  
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Ramanand  
Mukesh Kumar  
Jayakanth  
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Muktidamrita Chaitanya  
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Sacchinmayamrita Chaitanya  
Satvamrita Chaitanya  
Mitramrita Chaitanya  
Rishikesha Chaitanya  
Subuddhamrita Chaitanya

*(to be continued)*



# Offerings of Gratitude

by balakrishnan shankar, india

Last month, in a moving ceremony, Amma gave brahmacharya and sannyasa deeksha to more than 250 ashram residents.

Two days before the ceremony, there was an equally profound ceremony for those who were





going to be ordained as sannyasis: the *shraaddha*, in which one makes offerings to one's ancestors, gods, nature and, finally, oneself.

The ceremony started at around 8:30 a.m. on March 11th, and took place at the seashore near Amritapuri. It began with the Vishnu Puja. The priest conducting the puja led the chanting of the *Vishnu Sahasranama*, the 1,000 names of Lord Vishnu, the Preserver in the Hindu Trinity.

Among those in attendance were the ashram's senior swamis. Swamiji (Swami Amritaswarupananda) asked me to translate the priest's instructions into English as there were Western brahmacharis and brahmacharinis among those who were going to receive sannyasa deeksha. Thus, I found myself right in the middle of the sacred proceedings.

The solemn rite of passage involved making various offerings (*tarpanam*), including

*deva tarpanam* (offerings to deities), *divya manushya tarpanam* (offerings to the ancient *mahatmas* (spiritually illumined souls) and *rishis* (seers)), *divya pitru tarpanam* (offerings to holy ancestors) and *manushya pitru tarpanam* (offerings to one's own ancestors). Offerings are also made to flora and fauna. Finally, one performs *atma tarpanam*, last rites to oneself. Tarpanam was done for all ancestors from both the father's side and mother's side. The initiates also made offerings to the Guru as well as members of the Guru's family. All the offerings are expressions of gratitude for the role all these beings have played in the spiritual evolution of the initiate.

In what was the most moving part of the ceremony, the monks and nuns made offerings to their own mothers, some of whom are still alive. There were 16 mantras to be chanted for one's own mother;

even the gods were propitiated with only one mantra each. The mantras for the mother allude to the various difficulties she had to face while raising her child: "I offer you my gratitude for the various pains you bore: carrying me in your womb for so long, for the labour pains, for raising me, cleaning me, feeding me even when you did not have food to eat..." This part of the ceremony moved quite a few people, including the priest, to tears.

Everyone bows down to the sannyasi, except his/her mother. The sannyasi is not required to prostrate to anyone, except his/her Guru and mother. Such is the exalted position one's mother occupies in one's life.

The climax of the ceremony was performing last rites to oneself. Swamiji said, "These last rites to yourself mean that individual existence has ceased. You are no longer an individual. You no longer




There were 16 mantras to be chanted for one's own mother; even the gods were propitiated with only one mantra each. The mantras for the mother allude to the various difficulties she had to face in raising the child: "I offer you my gratitude for the various pains you bore: carrying me in your womb for so long, for the labour pains, for raising me, cleaning me, feeding me even when you did not have food to eat..." This part of the ceremony moved quite a few people, including the priest, to tears.

identify with the body, mind or intellect. You are the Self."

Two days later, these initiates performed the Viraja Homa, which Amma presided over. That She is re-enacting ancient Vedic rituals in this day and age is nothing less than marvellous.

The ashram now has many new yellow- and ochre-clad monastics, who, together with

other ashram residents, are engaged in intense sadhana, sacrificing everything for the sake of God. Even as the world reels under the coronavirus calamity, Amritapuri continues to be a haven for spiritual seekers. With Amma's grace and guidance, they will go out and steer the world towards the path of love, peace, selflessness and harmony. 



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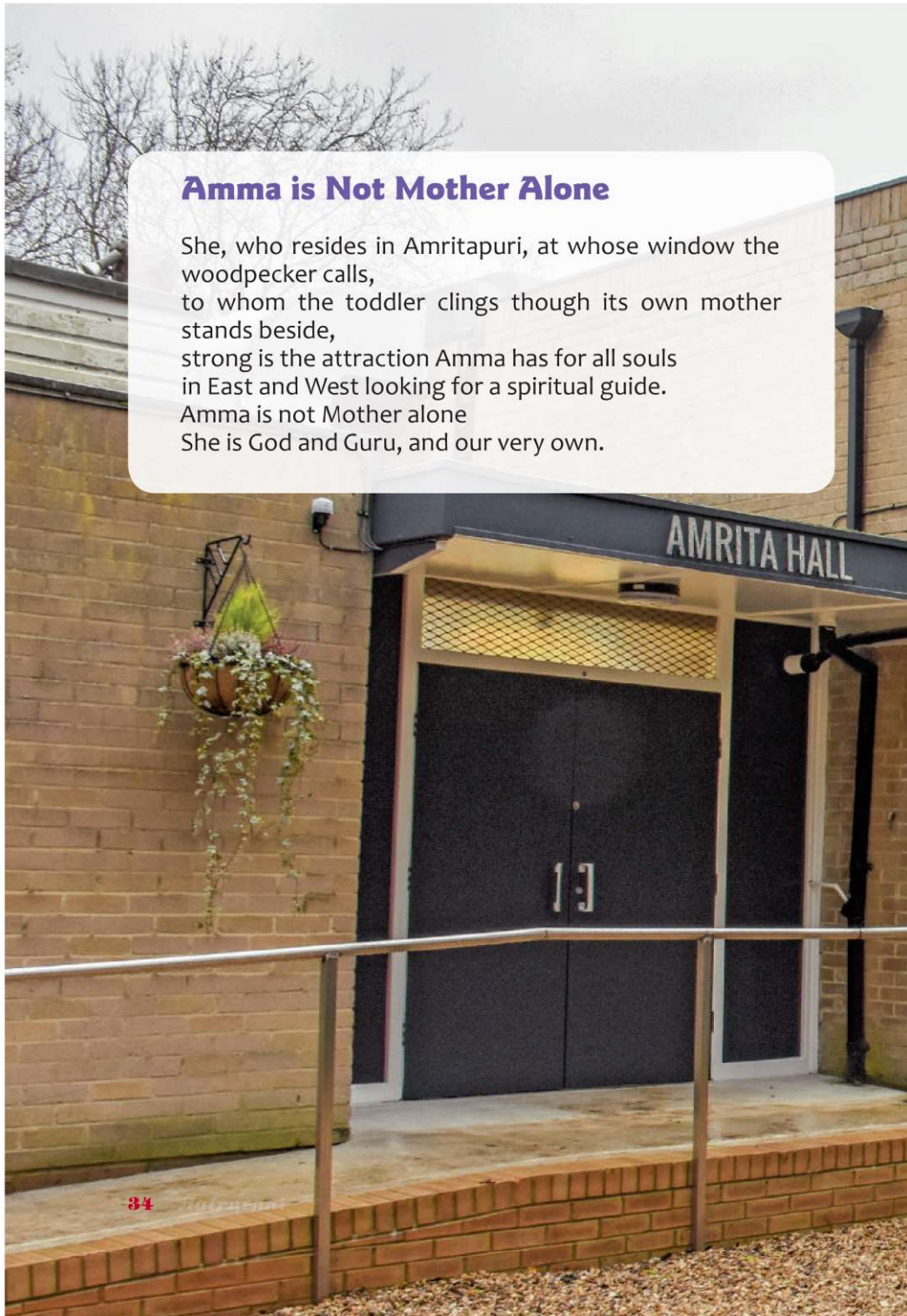
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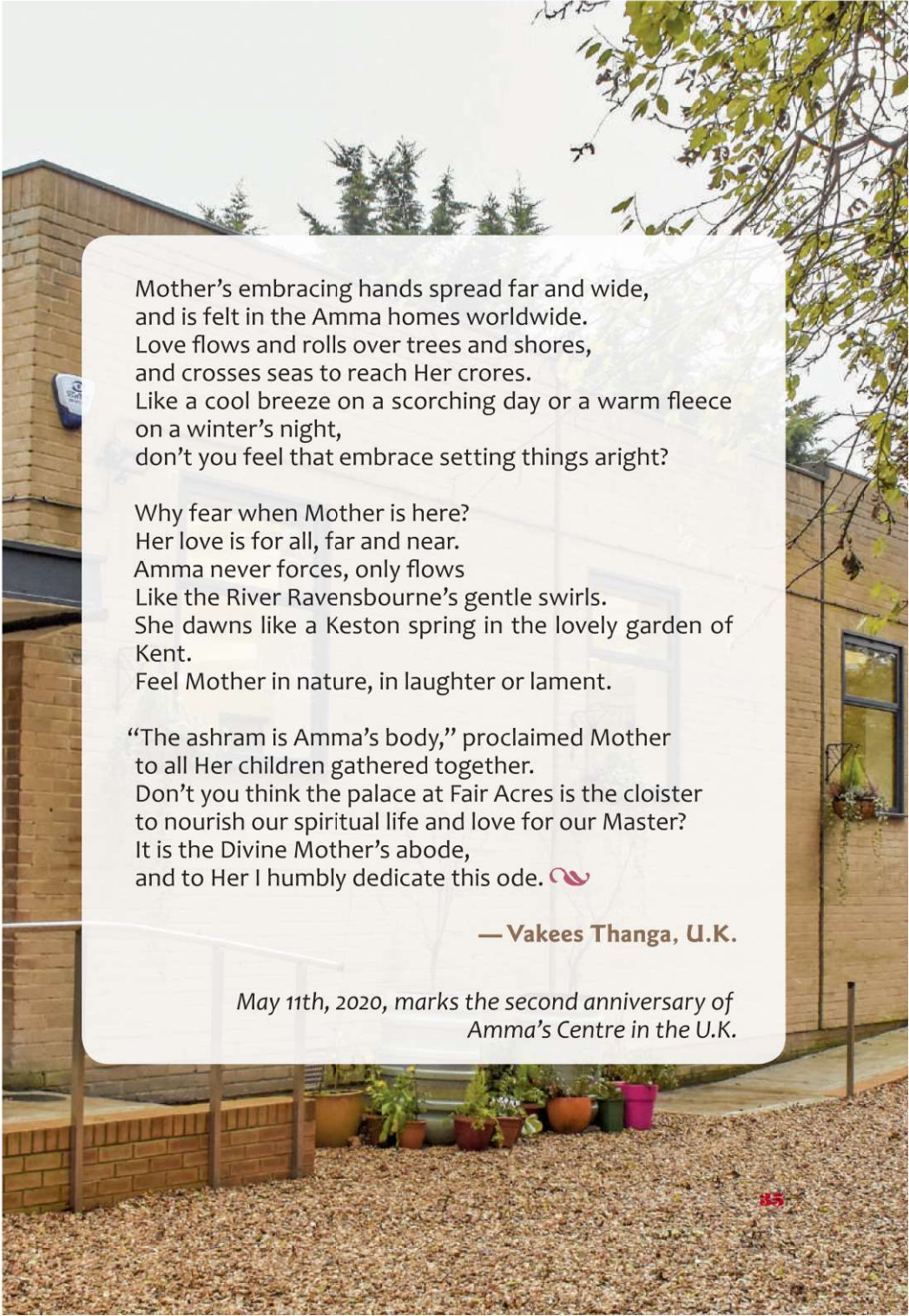




## **Amma is Not Mother Alone**

She, who resides in Amritapuri, at whose window the  
woodpecker calls,  
to whom the toddler clings though its own mother  
stands beside,  
strong is the attraction Amma has for all souls  
in East and West looking for a spiritual guide.  
Amma is not Mother alone  
She is God and Guru, and our very own.





Mother's embracing hands spread far and wide,  
and is felt in the Amma homes worldwide.  
Love flows and rolls over trees and shores,  
and crosses seas to reach Her crores.  
Like a cool breeze on a scorching day or a warm fleece  
on a winter's night,  
don't you feel that embrace setting things aright?

Why fear when Mother is here?  
Her love is for all, far and near.  
Amma never forces, only flows  
Like the River Ravensbourne's gentle swirls.  
She dawns like a Keston spring in the lovely garden of  
Kent.  
Feel Mother in nature, in laughter or lament.

"The ashram is Amma's body," proclaimed Mother  
to all Her children gathered together.  
Don't you think the palace at Fair Acres is the cloister  
to nourish our spiritual life and love for our Master?  
It is the Divine Mother's abode,  
and to Her I humbly dedicate this ode. 🌸

— Vakees Thanga, U.K.

*May 11th, 2020, marks the second anniversary of  
Amma's Centre in the U.K.*





## Chapter 4: Yoga of Knowledge

by Prof. V. Muraleedhara Menon, India

Selfless action is possible only for one committed to *svadharma* (duty suited to one's nature). However, this does not mean that *svadharma* needs to be selfless. Selflessness is an elevated state of mind, one that is free from impurities. Gaining such a mind is not easy. But we must purge the mind of its dross; it is

the only way to gain selflessness. This ultra-subtle inner cleansing must go on ceaselessly. We can thus vanquish negativities such as lust and anger.

*Karma, vikarma and akarma* (desireless action) — these three words, which appear in the 4th chapter of the *Gita*, have deep meanings. Karma refers to the outward actions associated with one's svadharma. Vikarma (or *visvesha karma*, i.e. 'special' action) refers to actions that purify the mind. Karma becomes vikarma when the mind becomes fully absorbed in the action. In other words, the subtle karma arising from mental purification must be in perfect harmony with the gross karma. That is when selflessness dawns within.

This is why in *bhakti yoga* (path of devotion), alongside physical austerities, mental spiritual practices like *japa* (repeated chanting of one's mantra) are also prescribed.

Does fasting mean just abstaining from eating? No, we must also endeavour to make the mind absorbed in thoughts of God. What is the point of physically renouncing the objects of sense pleasure when the mind continues to entertain thoughts about it? Mantra should go hand in hand with *tantra* (technique). While physically engaged in *seva* (selfless service), we must be inspired by the mentality of serving. If we do not feel kindness and compassion while attending to a patient, for example, our service will feel onerous.

Karma will remain lifeless until it has evolved into vikarma. The union of karma and vikarma sparks off a huge explosion of energy. When firewood is burnt, it becomes ash, which we can smear all over the body. In this instance, the properties of wood have undergone total transformation. Similarly, when there is vikarma in karma, what

arises is akarma. Akarma does not mean doing nothing. Instead, it is the sense of not having done anything even after doing it.

Any action done with a purified mind is *nirlepa* (untainted); it remains untouched by the slightest trace of *punya* (merit) or *papa* (demerit). This is the secret of karma. If we do not understand this principle, the ceaseless torrent of karma will make our mind agitated and restless. On the contrary, when karma and vikarma unite, karma ceases to feel burdensome, no matter how challenging. This sheer weightlessness and effortlessness of karma is akarma. Here, the mind is steady and at ease.

We can see this highest art of transforming karma into akarma in the lives of *mahatmas* (spiritually illumined souls). This was, in fact, the gist of Lord's advice to Arjuna: "Approach the virtuous and gain this great wisdom

through practice." We cannot gain this wisdom without *satsang* (company of the holy). Mere book knowledge is not enough. Today, information has become widespread. Schools have mushroomed all over the country. Yet, people lack an inner refinement and a focused mind. They dissipate their energies in trifling matters and thus squander their lives. It is sad that things have come to such a pass.

The Lord told Arjuna, "When your intellect, even if perplexed by what you have heard, becomes steady and anchored to the Self, you will attain Self-realization. (2.53) Therefore, stop this haphazard listening and learning, and start serving mahatmas. Hearken to their silent teachings and thus clear your doubts. No matter how daunting their action may be, they remain aware of the imperishable bliss and peace in their hearts." ❧

(to be continued)

# Moving with the Times

by br. sarvapriyamrita chaitanya



If a literary work continues to be a solace and sanctuary for human hearts even thousands of years after its inception, we can safely say it is truly hallowed. Such is the *Ramayana*, composed by Sage Valmiki. Indians consider this sacred

epic both the path and a guide. It is also regarded as the first poem ever.

The genesis of this poem is interesting. During the Treta Yuga,<sup>1</sup> Sage Valmiki asked Sage Narada a question when the latter visited his ashram: “Is there anyone living in the world now who is endowed with all the noble qualities?” Valmiki wanted to know if there was anyone who was rich in the virtues — such as wisdom, valour, righteousness, gratitude, compassion and honesty — that distinguish the human race.

In answer, Narada narrated to Valmiki the story of Rama, scion of the Ikshvaku dynasty and son of Dasharatha. This story forms the *Ramayana*. Valmiki divided it into six cantos, viz. Balakanda, Ayodhya-

kanda, Aranyakanda, Kishkindhakanda, Sundarakanda and Yuddhakanda.<sup>2</sup> These sections encompass a total of 24,000 verses.

What is the secret behind the *Ramayana*’s perennial appeal? It shows how one should behave towards one’s parents, spouse, siblings, siblings’ spouses, extended family, friends and foes. It also explores the *dharma* (codes of conduct) of a disciple and son.

Throughout the *Ramayana*, one can find stark depictions of human nature. In addition to ordinary humanness, each character is invested with varying degrees of conscience, including civic consciousness.

When Rama was preparing to leave for His term of exile in the forest, His brother Lakshmana seeks permission

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1 Hindus believe that one cycle of universal existence, from creation to dissolution, is made up of four yugas (ages), each succeeding age marked by a moral decline. The Treta Yuga is the second of these four ages.

2 In some versions of the *Ramayana*, there is a seventh canto, viz. the Uttarakanda. Some scholars consider it an interpolation.

from his mother, Sumitra, to accompany Him. She gives him her blessings immediately. She does not lament that her son would be leaving the comforts of the palace for the rigours of a forest life or that his path would be strewn with stones and thorns. Instead, she says,

*ramam dasharatham viddhi  
mam viddhi janakaatmajam  
ayodhyamatavim viddhi  
gaccha tatha yatha sukham*  
Think of Rama as  
Dasharatha (your father).  
Find me (your mother)  
in the daughter of Janaka (Sita).  
The forest shall be your  
land of luxury, Ayodhya.  
May all goodness be  
yours.

In these words, we can see, thousands of years later, the broad mindedness and dharmic consciousness of a noble mother. No doubt, Lakshmana found much solace in these words, saturated as they were

with love and wisdom, during his years of exile. How much strength they lend! Those utterances impart not just hope but unshakeable confidence. Sumitra thus gave her son the strength to move ahead without forsaking dharma and with an attitude of renunciation. For 14 years, Lakshmana devoutly served Rama and Sita in harsh jungles, forgoing sleep.

Valmiki provides yet another picture of Lakshmana. While Ravana is carrying Sita away in his aerial vehicle, Sita secretly tears a strip of cloth from Her garment, wraps Her jewellery in it, and throws the bundle down. When He comes upon it while searching for Sita, Rama is moved to tears and thus unable to see the ornaments clearly. He summons Lakshmana, who picks up each item and puts it back, apologetically saying that he does not recognize it. Suddenly, Lakshmana notices the anklets and exclaims,




*nabam janami keyure*  
*nabam janami kundale*  
*nupure tvabbhijanami*  
*nityam padabbivandanat*  
I do not know these  
bangles,  
nor do I recognize these  
earrings.  
I know these anklets  
because I prostrate to  
Her daily.

Through these words, one can see what a noble soul Lakshmana was. In keeping with his mother's advice, he revered Sita, seeing Her as his

mother, and prostrated to Her daily.

Through this incident, Valmiki reveals to the reader a true picture of India's lofty heritage. This is why Amma says that the *Ramayana* purifies human hearts and that it is a mirror of ancient Indian culture.

Thousands of years have passed. Generation after generation continues to be sanctified by the *Ramayana*. Thus, the *Ramayana* continues to accompany us through the ages. 

---

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