



# Contents

Vol. 32, No. 3

**Stillness of the Mind 5**

**Taming the Mind 7**

bri. gurukripamrita chaitanya

**Miracles 12**

narayan van degraaff, australia

**Amritavarsham67 13**

br. madhavamrita chaitanya

**Sweet Reminiscences 17**

ambujam (lakshmi keyes), u.s.a.

**Tulsidas's Devotion 24**

br. achyutamrita chaitanya

**Chapter 10: Yoga of Divine Glories 30**

prof. v. muraleedhara menon, india

**Tablas and Tender Hugs 34**

rajani menon, india

**News 39**

*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

**Letters and Submissions: [matruvani@amritapuri.org](mailto:matruvani@amritapuri.org)**



# Stillness of the Mind

Children, the mind is a flow of thoughts. There is never a moment when the mind stops thinking. At times, the flow of traffic on the roads will be fast and furious, or, at other times, slow and leisurely. But it is not so with thoughts. Often, the flow of thoughts does not abate even in sleep. It is the mind's nature to brood over the past and to fret about the future.

Once, a middle-aged man was travelling in a train. A young man sitting beside him asked, "What's the time?"

Hearing this, the man said, "Shut up!"

Another passenger witnessing this interaction asked, "He only asked you for the time. Why do you need to get so angry over such a simple request?"

## **Our Humble Pranams at the Lotus Feet of Amma**

Prabhas, Sanjana, Amrita, Ashirna & Santosh, Tanya, Neel, Darshana & Shivakumar, Suprabha & Dhanraj, India

## We need a still mind to realize our true nature. We can enjoy supreme bliss and peace only in that stillness.

The man replied, “Yes, he asked only for the time. Suppose I tell him the time. He will start talking about the weather. He will then talk about the headlines in today’s newspaper. He will talk politics next. Then he will ask about my family. I might then inquire about his family as well. Having thus become acquainted with each other, I might invite him home after disembarking. He might even spend a night there. I have a beautiful daughter, who might fall in love with him. Or he might fall in love with her. I shall never agree to my daughter marrying a man who does not even own a watch. This is why I shut him up right at the start to avoid any further conversation.”

If someone asks for the time, we can either tell him the time or keep quiet. Was there any

need for this man to imagine so much of the future? Because of the conflict in his mind, the other passengers also lost their peace of mind.

If the mind says ‘stop’ while we are walking, our legs will stop moving immediately. If the mind says ‘stop’ while we are clapping, the hands will stop moving at once. However, if we tell the mind to stop, will it? No. That said, we should be able to stop the mind. This is why we practise meditation. Just as we use a remote control to turn the television and other electric appliances on and off, meditation can help us bring the mind under our control.

Above all, we need a still mind to realize our true nature. We can enjoy supreme bliss and peace only in that stillness. May my children be able to awaken to such a state.



# Taming the Mind

by bri. gurukripamrita chaitanya

**A**mma says that there can be heavy traffic on the road sometimes; at other times, it will be clear. But the traffic of thoughts in the mind — a continuous stream of thoughts, worries, hopes, dreams, regrets, judgments, and so forth — never abates. Though we might be in India, our mind can be in New York. Such is the nature of an untamed mind. It is never still. It thinks unnecessarily, fabricates stories, and becomes upset. It cannot think of doing anything without expectation.

When I was in college, one day, I went to a shop to buy a book.



There, I saw a beautifully wrapped chocolate. I thought of giving it to Amma. The day before, I had seen Her relishing a chocolate that a devotee offered Her. Excited by the prospect of Amma accepting my chocolate offering, I started fantasizing about how She would look at me, smile, and ask me where I got it from...

Though there were two other brahmacharini friends with me in the shop, I did not disclose my plans to them. I bought the chocolate secretly and kept it in my bag. If I had told them that it was for Amma, they would have been happy. But I selfishly wanted Amma's attention all for myself.

The next day, when Amma was giving darshan for ashram residents, I gave Her the chocolate. She took it and kept it aside without even looking at it. This was not what I had expected! I was upset. Later, after reflecting on the matter, I realized that, the other day, Amma had been relishing not

the chocolate but the devotee's love. I thought that I, too, was offering my chocolate with love, but my offering had been tainted by selfishness and expectation.

Expectation causes misery if we do not get what we want. Therefore, to be happy, we should drop our expectations. Lord Krishna says, "*Yogastha kuru karmani sangam tyaktva*" — "Remain steadfast and perform your duties, abandoning all attachment to the results" (*Bhagavad Gita*, 2.48). This means doing actions with full awareness, leaving aside our expectation of results. This is the attitude of a *karma yogi*. An action performed with expectation of results binds, whereas the same action done with the proper attitude leads to spiritual liberation.

A story that Amma tells makes this point clearer. Once, a man consumed a lot of ghee at a feast. The next day, his stomach became upset and he went to a doctor, who asked

him to take a litre of ghee. Hearing this, the patient explained that eating too much ghee had caused indigestion, and therefore, he did not want more ghee. The doctor mixed a few ayurvedic herbs into the ghee, prescribed the dosage the patient needed to take, and dismissed him. The man took the medicine as prescribed and was cured.

Ghee, eaten in excess, made the man sick. The same ghee, when taken as medicine, healed him. Similarly, the same action can bind or liberate, depending on our attitude.

*Mahatmas* (spiritually illumined souls) like Amma always set the right example. She does every action with utmost concentration and awareness. When She serves lunch prasad, She does so very fast. Even with four or five food serving lines, it is hard to keep up with Amma. Though She passes the plates rapidly, Amma looks at each and every person who comes to Her, and

checks to see if each plate has sufficient rice and other items. It is usually Amma who notices the missing pickle in one plate, for example. When She has finished serving the prasad, Amma calculates how much time it took to serve a number of people. Watching Her, it is clear that everything She does is optimal: maximum work done perfectly in the minimum time. This is also yoga: '*yogah karmasu kaushalam*' — 'yoga is skill in action' (*Bhagavad Gita*, 2.50).

Once many years ago, when Amma came to the press, She noticed that the printing machine was dusty. This negligence made Her sad. Amma wiped the machine with Her own hands, and said that we should see work as worship. She also said that just as we clean our prayer room before starting our worship, we should also clean our work place and pray before starting work. If work is worship, its outcome is prasad. If we accept

the results of our actions as *prasad*, we will remain equanimous whether we succeed or fail. This is what Lord Krishna meant when He said, “*Siddhyasiddhyoh samo bhutva*” — “Remain even-minded in success and failure” (*Bhagavad Gita*, 2.48).

Actually, failures are more instructive than successes. The pain of failing makes us stop and reflect on the real nature of things and their importance in our lives. This brings about personal transformation and improvement.

In 2019, India launched Chandrayaan-2, the country's second lunar exploration mission. The ISRO (Indian Space Research Organization) had worked hard for years to make this mission a success. However, just before Chandrayaan-2 was about to reach its goal, the lander crashed. Though the team was crestfallen, it accepted and learnt from the failure, and is now gearing up for Chandrayaan-3.

Just as failure can teach us important lessons, sadness can take us closer to God. When we are sad, our prayers are more heartfelt. That is why Kunti, the mother of the Pandavas (in the *Mahabharata*), always prayed to Lord Krishna for sorrows. She knew they would take her closer to Him.

All of us have had experiences when we were sad and cried out to Amma. Let me share one such experience. I first met Amma when She came to Mumbai in 1987 for the first time. I was in sixth grade then. Amma had two programs daily for about two weeks. When She came to Mumbai next, Amma held programs for a month. She stayed in a house next to my parents' flat in Mumbai for more than 20 days. On most days, as Amma left the house for public programs, I would stand next to Her car. Seeing me, Amma would ask, “Aren't you coming for the program?” Then She would take me along




with Her! When I was sleepy, She would put me in Her lap. So, I would be with Amma the whole day. When I was not with Amma, I would go to the swamis to hear Amma's stories. One month passed in this way. When the programs ended and Amma was about to leave, I became heartbroken. It was difficult for me to stay away from Amma, but I had to go back to school.

After a few months, the dates for Amma's Kolkata program were announced. My parents decided to attend the program, and asked one of Amma's devotees to look after me while they were away. I could not go as I had classes. After they left, I became very sad. I missed Amma and would cry often. I had no spiritual knowledge but had become very attached to Amma. I wanted only to see Her and be with Her.

After two days, Amma appeared in my dream. Holding a handful of Her hairbands,

She told me, "I'm sending these to you." When I woke up, I was thrilled as I had seen Amma and also because She had said that She would send me Her hairbands. I was sure that the dream would come true and eagerly waited for my parents to return. In those days, there were no mobile phones, and so, I could not call to tell my mother about the dream.

In Kolkata, when Amma's program ended and She was about to leave, She called my mother, gave her a handful of Her hairbands, and told her to give them to me. When my mother returned, she brought Amma's hairbands for me. I was overjoyed! What I saw in my dream came true.

Amma knows all our thoughts and sorrows, and is with us all the time. Then why should we worry? Let us work with an attitude of surrender to the Divine. When that attitude blossoms, we will enjoy peace and contentment. 

## Miracles

We talk of miracles.  
What greater miracles can there be  
Than that the tiny seed becomes a giant oak tree  
The caterpillar is transformed into a butterfly  
A baby is born from the fission of two nuclei  
A diamond is formed from deep volcanic eruptions  
Over a billion years

And the Divine Mother has come  
To comfort millions of struggling souls  
And to transform this human being  
From being a beggar and a sinner  
To a King, the self-effulgent sun  
That he always was  
But never knew.

*Narayan van deGraaff, Australia*





BIRTHDAY



# Amritavarsham67

by br. madhavamrita chaitanya

**T**he ‘tradition’ of Amma’s birthday celebrations started in 1979, when the first brahmacharis, now the most senior swamis in Amritapuri, celebrated the occasion. She deferred to their wishes to make them happy. Isn’t that Amma’s mission — making others happy? As the numbers of devotees kept increasing, the scale of the celebrations became larger and grander. But Amma makes sure that we do not lose sight of the point behind the pomp and pageantry: to pray for world peace and to launch more humanitarian projects that spread the light of happiness to even more people.

With the Covid-19 pandemic grounding people and restricting travel, has this 40-year-old tradition grinded to a halt?

“Tradition is not the worship of ashes, but the preservation of fire,” said the Romantic composer Gustav Mahler. Amma would never want the fire of loving and serving others to be extinguished.

September 27th, 2020, began in Amritapuri with the *Ganapati Homa*, a fire ceremony to propitiate Lord Ganesha, the remover of obstacles. Sixty seven monastics performed this traditional rite. The sight of 67 sacred fires emanating from 67 *homa kundas* (fire pits) in the dark, predawn hours was uplifting, seeming to prefigure brighter times ahead.

Swami Amritaswarupananda delivered a stirring discourse in the morning, in which he recounted how Amma had saved him years ago from the Stevens-Johnson Syndrome, a severe reaction that causes the skin to blister and peel, and patients are often admitted to burn units. This experience — a powerful testimony to Amma’s mercy

and power — also shows how we need divine grace to save us from life’s fiery ordeals.

The necessity of surrendering to God was driven home by the *paduka puja*, the ceremonial worship of the Guru’s sandals. Amma was conspicuous by Her absence, perhaps hinting to us that we must awaken the Guru within, especially since the pandemic has denied many people recourse to Her physical presence.

The salve for this pain of separation can be found in India’s ancient epics. In Sri Krishna’s hallowed life, Vrindavan and Mathura are often pitted against each other, the people in each place competing for the Lord’s attention. The pain of separation that the *gopis* (milkmaids) and *gopas* (cowherd boys) of Vrindavan felt when the Lord left for Mathura fanned the flames of devotion blazing in their hearts.

Amma wholeheartedly acknowledged the sorrow Her children are feeling as a result

of the physical estrangement from Her, but reminded them that where there is love, distance is no barrier. Indeed, She is the spiritual sun nourishing the lotuses of our hearts, wherever we may be.

The pandemic has undeniably upended lives and livelihoods. The 'normality' of the past seems like a distant dream, the disarray of the present feels surreal, and the future is shrouded in uncertainty. Even as we continue to reel from its impact, the coronavirus is making us reckon with the consequences of our relentless exploitation of nature. It seems to be nature's answer to human hubris. So said Amma in Her birthday message:

Nature has been sending us many indicators regarding this for quite some time, but man has refused to see, hear or acknowledge even the strongest of these messages. The bad habits we have acquired have

become our nature. They have gradually shaped human behaviour and our way of living. Our ego has not allowed us to change. We thought this situation wouldn't last long. But our intellect's calculations — even those of modern science — were wrong. Humankind remains helpless and defenceless before the coronavirus.

Amma was quick to add that Mother Nature is not vindictive but redemptive because she makes us reflect on our selfish behaviour and steers us towards a more dharmic, environmentally conscious lifestyle. The antidote to the coronavirus, Amma said, is the *karuna-virus*, or virus of compassion. It is in helping others that we truly help ourselves. The example that Amma has been giving tirelessly — of how those living on the 10th floor of a building cannot afford to


turn a blind eye to the fire raging on the ground floor — seems even more pertinent than ever before. In the light of this understanding, we can better appreciate the theme of *Amritavaram*<sup>67</sup>: One World. One Prayer. We share a common fate, and the sooner we realize it and work together for our collective uplift, the better it is for everyone.

On the eve of Amma's birthday, Swami Purnamritananda gave a talk in which he mentioned an episode from the *Mahabharata*: how Ashwatthama unleashes the deadly *Narayana-astra*, which releases millions of missiles, to kill the righteous Pandavas. They take refuge in Lord Krishna, who advises the brothers to drop their weapons and to lie down on the ground in complete surrender. In this way, the Pandavas were saved from the death.

We, too, can be saved from the threat besieging humanity by lying low. Under the circumstances, this means

heeding the words of *mahatmas* (spiritually illumined souls) like Amma. In Her birthday address, She suggested seven guidelines:

1. As much as possible, keep your body and mind under control.
2. Maintain a regular spiritual practice.
3. Make protecting nature a part of your daily routine.
4. Do not belittle the forces of nature and see them as inferior.
5. See life from a broader perspective.
6. Create a balance between your selfish and selfless interests.
7. Acknowledge and obey the universal laws set by God, the supreme authority.

These guidelines are all about stepping out from the dark and morbid confines of selfishness to the revitalizing light of selflessness. May divine grace illumine our lives now and for evermore. 



# Sweet Reminiscences

by ambujam (lakshmi keyes), u.s.a.

**D**uring Amma's 2013 Summer Tour of North America, Swami Amritaswarupananda put the word out that Amma would like all devotees to attend *Amritavarsham 50*, Her 50th birthday celebrations, in Kochi, Kerala. Of course, She was not interested in celebrating Her birthday, but agreed to grace the event, seeing it as yet another opportunity to pray collectively for world peace and harmony. For those who could not afford an air ticket, She made arrangements

with devotees who were willing and able to lend money on the condition that borrowers repay the money within a year. I was matched with a lender who lived in California.

Amma also said that we need not worry, and that She would be holding our hands from the minute we left home until we returned. These words reassured me, and I encouraged my friends from Hawaii — Vishwan, who was in a wheelchair, and his wife Sunanda — to come also.

I was in the middle of moving to Hawaii, but a part of me was longing to see Amma in India and immerse myself in service at Her ashram. As I was a massage therapist, I needed to get a local licence to practise professionally. Once I reached Hawaii, I sent in my Massage Licence test application with a cheque to the County Office. The Massage License tests are conducted only three times a year in Hawaii. Shortly after the deadline

for the application submission, I received a letter saying that I was supposed to have sent the cheque to a different office, and that I would now have to wait until the next test, which was three months away. I called the County Office and offered to send another cheque, but was told to wait. I felt frustrated, but there was nothing I could do but wait.

Sunanda, who worked as a henna tattooist at a beach resort, told me that the booth next to hers needed someone to help sell toe-rings, and suggested that I work there while waiting for my licence. I did. At \$10 an hour and a little commission, it was the lowest paying job I had held since I was a teenager. It was a humbling job — putting gold toe-rings with diamonds and rubies on the toes of tourists. I did my best to like it. I brought a picture of Amma's feet, put it on the toe-rings box, and visualized every pair of feet that came as Her holy feet.



I was entitled to a 40% discount on the rings, and decided to buy Amma a ruby ring and give it to Her when I went to Amritapuri. Rubies reminded me of a special experience I had with Amma years before. While going for darshan, I felt strongly that I was far from humble, especially with my Guru. I told myself, "I can't even imagine what humility feels like. What would it be like if I were humble? How would I move, talk and behave with Amma?"

I decided that I would try to not look into Amma's eyes, demanding to get Her attention, as I usually did; I would just accept whatever She gave. It was not easy for me, and I was aware that I was only pretending to be humble.

When I reached Amma, one of Her feet was tucked under a knee and turned up, exposing the sole of Her foot. It was glowing with an unworldly brilliance, its ruby-red colour brighter than any gemstone! I

could not believe my eyes. I thought, Amma is so magnanimous that She has blessed even one who has no humility, only a flash of sincere curiosity about what being humble might be like, with this vision.

This ruby ring I was going to give Her reminded me of that moment. But I knew it would be difficult to put it on Her toe. So, I decided to get one for Her hand. I visualized putting it on Her ring finger and asking Her to marry me.

In the meantime, the desire arose to work at one of the top hotel spas on the island after obtaining my licence. When I got my first pay cheque, I bought a beautiful pair of trousers for \$70 from a boutique. My plan was to wear them for my interview. I thought that if I wore a power suit, I would feel confident and land the job. I showed Sunanda the trousers. She said, "Amma wouldn't want you to spend so much on clothes. You don't need those trousers to get

the job, only Amma's grace. Once you get a job at the spas, you'll have to wear a uniform anyway. Why not return them and get something for Amma instead?"

Realizing that she was right, I went back to the store, which had a no refund, exchange only policy. I looked for something I could exchange my trousers with, something that Amma might like. What can you possibly give the Goddess?

I saw a little mother-of-pearl box: two oval shells hinged together to make a box. I realized I could put the ruby ring inside this little box to offer Her. Then, I noticed an oval cloisonné mirror, with a jade handle and lotuses painted inside its silver frames. I imagined Amma using it to put on the *kumkum* (saffron powder) mark on Her forehead for Devi Bhava.

I was overjoyed at what I could get for Amma. I thanked Sunanda for encouraging me

to renounce my selfish desires for these small tokens of my desire to honour the Divine Mother. I knew Amma would sell the gifts for charity, as She does with all the gifts She receives. Nevertheless, I cherished the thought of being able to give something to Amma, knowing that it would be received and then offered back to the world in order to help feed, clothe and house hungry children and poor women.

Finally, it was the second week of September: time to fly to India! I had to fly to Oakland alone before boarding Singapore Airlines with Vishwan and Sunanda the next morning. The day I was flying, I found out that I had nowhere to stay in San Francisco because the friend I usually stayed with was out of town. I decided to spend the night in the airport, as I have often done before.

During the flight to San Francisco, after I had finished

doing my archana, the woman sitting next to me asked me where I was going.

“India,” I said.

“Wow!” She exclaimed. “What are you going to do there? Do you have a spiritual teacher there?”

“I do, actually. I’m going for Her 50th Birthday Celebrations.”

“So your spiritual teacher is a woman? Who’s she?”

“Amma.”

“We know Amma!” She grabbed her husband’s arm. “Sweetie, she knows Amma and is going to India to see Her for Her birthday.”

Her husband leaned over and joined the conversation. They enthusiastically explained how they had just met Amma in San Ramon that summer and how much they could feel Her spiritual energy.

When the woman found out that I was not flying to India until the next day, she asked me where I was staying. When I told her that I would remain

in the airport until it was time to board my connecting flight, she invited me to stay at their place in Oakland.

When we walked in through the front door of their apartment, the first thing I saw was a photo of Amma atop the fireplace mantle. With Her huge smile, She looked as if She was welcoming me!

The kind woman, whose name was Gina, wanted to donate something to Amma’s charities. She excitedly went around her house, rummaging in closets and boxes for things I could bring to Amma for Her birthday. She came back carrying a pair of crutches she had bought for a surgery and which she had never used since, and said she would be grateful if I could send them to AIMS Hospital in Kochi. I was concerned about carrying them as they were huge, but it seemed so important to Gina that I did not know how I could say no.

Finally, I realized that I could act as if I used them. When I told Gina this, she looked delighted. She continued looking for things that I could bring for Amma's charities. She held up a small, blue-and-green squeezie ball of Planet Earth. In the middle of the ball were the initials 'AEP.' What did they stand for? Amma Embracing the Planet? I envisioned Amma holding this soft and squishy world in Her hands and blessing it. "Yes!" I exclaimed excitedly, "That's perfect!"

Early the next morning, I set out with the crutches under my arms. I even limped to make myself look credible. This wasn't hard for me. I had been run over by a car when I was 16, and had to use crutches after that. Initially, the doctors had said that I might never walk again as one of my lower legs had been badly injured. It dawned on me that Amma must have helped me recover completely

from the accident, because after using the crutches for some time, I was able to walk unaided. The freedom I felt then had been so blissful that, for years thereafter, every time I walked and especially while running, I would feel grateful for having both legs intact. As I went through each check-in and security gate with the crutches, I began offering sincere prayers of gratitude that I could walk on my own. I realized how, sometimes, I still forget to be grateful for the simple blessings of life, such as being able to walk. To drive home the point, I was travelling with Vishwan, who though wheelchair-bound was always so positive, and Sunanda, who worked cheerfully to help him.

As soon as we arrived in Amritapuri, I went for darshan with the gifts. I first gave Amma the mirror, and when She asked about it, I explained it was for Her to use before Devi Bhava when

She applied the kumkum. She laughed excitedly and asked, "Devi Bhava?" Holding it by its jade handle, Amma humoured me by looking into the mirror. As She did so, the image of the rising sun painted on the back of the mirror seemed to reflect the mark on Amma's forehead: a circle of yellow sandalwood with a red centre.

Amma then looked at the mother-of-pearl box I was holding. With child-like innocence, She asked what was inside. I opened it and shyly took out the ring. Suddenly, I thought, "If only I could marry Her!" Amma held out Her hand and extended Her ring finger. I slid the ring on. It fit perfectly!

"Ah... married!" She said with a mischievous smile, as if She had caught me and was letting me know that She had read my mind. My heart almost burst with joy that She knew this was what I wanted. Later, I would come to discover

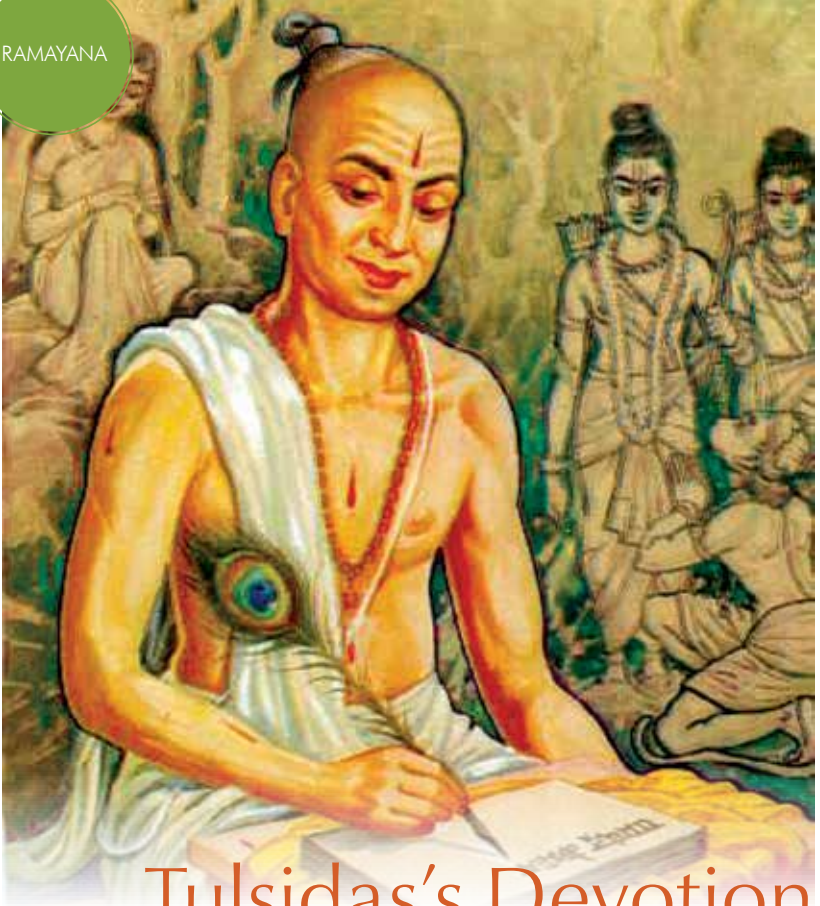
the significance of this event in my life.

On a Tuesday before or after the birthday, I put the little squeezie ball of the world on Amma's seat. She picked it up and held it in Her hands with so much love. A photographer took a picture, which later graced the cover of the DVD, 'She has got the whole world in Her hands.'

During the birthday celebrations at the Kaloor Stadium in Kochi, I did not have much work to do, but I really wanted to help. After prasad seva, someone asked me to get some water for Amma from a fridge in another building that was quite far away. Grateful for the chance to serve, I braved the hot sun and ran through the dense crowd.

Amma must have known how much I enjoyed this mission because I ended up being asked three times by three different people to run and get

*(continued on page 29)*



# Tulsidas's Devotion

by br. achyutamrita chaitanya

There is a *tulasi* (basil) plant  
in this blissful forest.  
Its flowers are the poem  
around which the black bee of Sri Rama  
ever revolves.

This was a tribute Swami Madhusudana Saraswati, a colossus in the field of Advaita, paid Goswami Tulasidas, who is hailed as the emperor of poetry.

Born in North India, Tulasidas's foremost contribution to devotional literature was his rendition of the *Ramayana*: the priceless *Sri Ramacharitamana*, a delectable blend of devotion, literature, music, philosophy and morality.

Tulasidas is believed to have lived between 1532 and 1623. He spent the greater part of his life in what is now Uttar Pradesh. Devotion to Sri Rama was inborn. Though born into a noble family, he became orphaned in childhood. Tulasidas would beg for food by going from house to house, chanting the name of the Lord. For this reason, the young Tulasi earned the nickname 'Rambola' — one who chants 'Ram' always. During

his youth, he came under the guidance of a Guru. Scriptural studies and mantra initiation followed. He then got married and was also blessed with a son, according to some biographies of his early life.

Tulasidas was passionately devoted to his wife and could not bear to stay apart from her. Once, he had to go somewhere far off. When he returned late at night, he risked his life by swimming across a river in full spate. When his wife saw him fully drenched, she scolded him: "If you had the same intensity of love for Sri Raghunath<sup>1</sup> as you have for this body full of bones and flesh, you would have already been liberated from worldly bondage."

Her sharp words were like a bolt of lightning. They ignited the devotion slumbering within him. Dispassion dawned and he left home. Subsequently, he lived mostly

---

1 'Lord of Raghunath,' an epithet for Lord Rama.

in the hallowed land of Kasi (Benares) and in Chitrakoot, famous by association with the *Ramayana*. He also spent time in holy pilgrimage places like Vrindavan, leading a life of pure devotion. He is believed to have lived more than 80 years.

### Tulasidas's Philosophy of Devotion

For Tulasidas, the ideal of life was represented by *Rama-bhakti*, devotion to Rama. His devotion was founded on the principle '*sarvam rama-mayam jagat*' — Rama pervades the whole of creation.

With my hands in prayer,  
I worship the universe  
pervaded by Rama and  
Sita.

(*Sri Ramacharitamanasa*,  
Balakanda, 219)<sup>2</sup>

Tulasidas's *bhakti* (devotion) was a mansion built on the

foundation of this principle. One can see the cosmic form of this devotion in the *Sri Ramacharitamanasa*, the epic he composed in the Avadhi dialect. One can also see the same devotion in works like *Vinaya Patrika*, *Ramacharitamakavya* and other minor works on the life story of Rama, which he also composed.

Tulasidas's mind, saturated with Rama-bhakti, moved from the principle of sarvam rama-mayam jagat to Vishnu endowed with form and attributes, and again to Rama, divine incarnation and son of Dasharatha. The *Bhagavad Gita* also declares that it is easier to worship God with form than the formless divine, for it is not easy to grasp abstractions like the formless divine, especially for those identified with the body (12.5).

---

2 Verses refer to those found in C.G. Rajagopal's Malayalam translation of the *Sri Ramacharitamanasa*.



In matters of devotion, Tulasidas follows this advice. Instead of God without form or attributes, he pays obeisance to God with form and attributes. His Lord is dark like a raincloud, wears yellow robes, is doe-eyed, wields the *Kodanda* bow, is the prince of the Raghu clan, and the son of Dasharatha. Rama is the foremost among men (*maryada-purushottama*) and the repository of all virtues associated with Lord Vishnu, the all-pervading One who has assumed the form of man.

### **Tulasidas's Rama Worship**

Tulasidas's Rama is both Dasharatha's son and Lord Vishnu at the same time. He is auspicious and unrivalled in strength. His beauty captivates the whole world. Surrendering body, mind and deed to such a Rama was Tulasidas's devotional practice.

Since Sri Rama is an ideal man, Tulasidas insists that His devotees have an obligation to

become model citizens of the world. They must not violate the moral code of conduct. The essence of devotion is following the teachings of the Lord and doing spiritual practices such as thinking of Him, singing His glories, listening to stories about Him, and performing ritual worship of the Lord.

After His coronation, Sri Rama tells the subjects of Ayodhya, "The Lord is pleased with only those who follow His teachings. Only they become dear to Him and only they are His devotees" (Utta-rakanda, 170).

It is an exhortation to surrender to God totally. Rama also encourages His subjects to lead a life of moral rectitude. If not, the devotee will face the same fate as Vali, who though devoted to God was decadent. Eventually, He was punished by Rama and thus purified.

Tulasidas's spiritual philosophy can be summed up thus: live a life rooted in morality,

worship, devotion and surrender to Lord. He explains in detail different forms of devotion and different devotional practices. One's relationship with God can be characterized by attitudes such as *sakhya* (friendship), *dasya* (servitude), *shanta* (peace) and *vatsalya* (affection). Tulasidas illustrates these with examples.

Devotional practices include listening to talk of God; singing about, remembering and serving Him; making offerings to and prostrating to Him; meditating on Him; and chanting His name. That said, the fundamental features of devotion are loving God, surrendering to Him, remembering Him constantly and being morally upright.

### Aim of Bhakti

What is the aim of bhakti? Different spiritual masters have

different views. Tulasidas accepts all the lofty aims. The loftiest aim is to know the Lord and become one with Him. This happens as a result of divine grace. Tulasidas glorifies Rama thus, "When a devotee realizes You (Rama) by Your grace, he becomes one with You" (Ayodhyakanda, 2558).

Bhakti is thus both the means and the end. Tulasidas says as much. He declares that the ultimate aim of serving others selflessly, and gaining wisdom and dispassion is bhakti.

In the Uttarakanda (3458 – 61), Lord Shiva tells Parvati the same thing: that the reward of all virtuous acts that the Vedas<sup>3</sup> prescribe is devotion to Rama. Devotion to Rama is a rare gift one receives by His grace alone.

As to the question of which (knowledge or devotion) is the

---

<sup>3</sup> The most ancient scriptures known to humanity, the Vedas were not authored by anyone but revealed to sages in the depths of their meditation. They are four in number.

means and which the end, Tulasidas says, “There is no difference between knowledge and devotion. Both can redeem one from the cycle of birth and death.” (Uttarakanda, 3030)

Only a few thoughts on Rama-bhakti found in the *Sri Ramacharitamansa* are presented in this essay. The *Manasa*, as it is popularly known in North India, is also referred to as the *Panchama Veda*, the fifth

Veda. Ordinary human beings cannot plumb the depths or measure the breadth of this ocean of devotion. To glean the precious pearls of bhakti, one must dive deep into this ocean. To taste the nectar of bhakti, one must churn this ocean. Also, to internalize Tulasidas’s teachings, it would help if one studies his other works as well. May we all be benefited by Tulasidas’s philosophy of devotion. 🌸

---

(continued from page 23)

water for Amma. I was overjoyed that I could serve Amma in my own small way. It also reminded me of how, as a restless child, I used to love it when my teacher sent me on errands, because I was happy to run and use my energy for some purpose. The crutches had earlier reminded me of the blessing of being able to move without restriction, and now, I was able to use my mobility to serve the Divine Mother.

I returned to Hawaii totally transformed. By Amma’s grace and without the fancy pants, I got my dream job. But as I had ‘married’ Amma, opportunities soon arose to take me closer to Her, which was my heart’s truest desire.

May I be able to continue serving Amma and Her mission of loving and serving all unconditionally for the rest of my life — this is my heartfelt prayer to Amma. 🌸



## Chapter 10: Yoga of Divine Glories

by Prof. V. Muraleedhara Menon, India

**T**he first half of the *Gita* is over. The chapters thus far may be summarized as follows:

The first chapter discusses freedom from desire and abidance in *svadharma* (actions suited to one's nature). The second chapter introduces the *sthita prajna*, one established in supreme consciousness. The third, fourth and fifth

chapters clarify *karma* (action) and *vikarma* ('special' action). From the sixth chapter onwards, there is a discussion of the diverse paths of *vikarma* that lead one to a state of non-agency, i.e. a sense that one is not the doer though engaged in work. The spiritual practices meant to purify the mind are also discussed.

In the sixth chapter, the Lord recommends *dhyaana yoga* (yoga of meditation) for gaining mental concentration, and stresses the necessity of *abhyasa* (practice) and *vairagya* (dispassion). In the seventh chapter, He teaches *prapatti yoga* (yoga of surrender), the best practice in the path of *bhakti* (devotion). The eighth chapter is dedicated to *satatya yoga*, a spiritual practice that is continued dedicatedly until our last breath. The ninth chapter is about *raja yoga*, in which offering all actions to the Lord transforms life radically. This yoga is simple yet difficult.

Devotion for God arises only as a result of spiritual merit gained from good deeds done in past lives. We live in an age of materialism. Human life is now all about gratifying the body and its sensory appetites. Under these circumstances, it is difficult to cultivate devotion. But in this chapter, the Lord tells us how we may do so.

Indian children are taught the alphabet in two stages. First, they are taught single letters, which are written in a large and then small size. After that, the more difficult compound letters are gradually introduced.

Similarly, we should first learn to see God in His larger manifestations like mountains and oceans. By and by, with sufficient practice, we will be able to behold Him even in a drop of water or a grain of sand. Here, the vision of God moves from the gross to the subtle. This is one method.

The other method is to start seeing God in small and simple things first, and then developing this vision. Let us see God in the auspicious, the dear and the beautiful before learning to see Him in the inauspicious and the distasteful. May we see Him equally in Rama and Ravana, in Prahlada and Hiranyakashipu. What this means is that we should be able to see the same divine essence in all. This practice helps us to develop equal vision, which will enable us to see God in both the good and the bad. This vision must grow from the gross to the subtle, from the simple to the complex. Let us start by first seeing God in what is closest and dearest to us. The Goddess who is closest to us is our mother, who is the very embodiment of love, grace and compassion, and the personification of boundless self-sacrifice. Let us start by seeing God in her. Thereafter, we can try to behold Him in our father,

teachers and children. Thus, we must first see the Supreme in gentle and pure forms, and eventually behold It in all creatures, beautiful and ugly, of this vast universe.

How splendid sunrise is! The goddess of dawn is the Lord's messenger. Let us worship the Sun, the eternal friend of all moving and unmoving creatures; the Ganges, the pure one who washes away all sins; the Himalayas, abode of the gods; the cool breeze that caresses the oceans; and the cattle that serve us, especially the cow, which is the very symbol of purity. Seeing God in these, we must eventually be able to see Him in wild animals such as tigers and snakes, too.

The uncommon greatness of the *Ramayana* lies in such sweet relationships. More fascinating than the father-son relationship was Rama's friendship with the monkeys. That was where His quintessential nature revealed itself

Let us see God in the auspicious, the dear and the beautiful before learning to see Him in the inauspicious and the distasteful. May we see Him equally in Rama and Ravana, in Prahlada and Hiranyakashipu. What this means is that we should be able to see the same divine essence in all.

most clearly. Lord Krishna was Gopala-Krishna, a cow-herd boy. How incomplete He would have been without the cows and calves. In the *Ramayana* and *Bhagavata*, we can see the supreme imagination of Rama and Krishna, who beheld God in monkeys and cows respectively.

The bewitching sight of the peacock dancing with its fan of outspread feathers, flames that taper upwards, and the sweet warbling of the cuckoo — all these should awaken in us thoughts of God. The creative inspiration behind the Aesop Fables, in which the deer, fox, snake, dog, crow and

tortoise were characters, was probably this vision of divinity in nature.

There is a hymn in the Vedas that says, “Prostrations to the leader of the outlaws, to the cruel and the murderous. Thieves and traitors are verily Brahman. Prostrations to them, too!”

In short, the Lord dwells as warp and woof in the subtle and the gross, the clear-cut and the convoluted. He dwells in all, has equal vision, and is compassionate, ever pure and the embodiment of unconditional love. Let us fulfil our life by realizing Him. ❧

(to be continued)

# Tablas and Tender Hugs

by Rajani Menon, India



**I**t was a cold and wintry evening. The rain drizzled softly on our backs as my son and I made our way to Amma's Munich program. The venue was an indoor basketball stadium at the sprawling green campus of the



Montessori School Biberkor, situated near Lake Starnberg, Germany's second largest lake, on the outskirts of Munich. As rain had muddied the grounds, plastic sheets were laid out to create temporary pathways to a large tent, which served as the Indian food cafeteria.

We wandered around for some time until we saw a long queue in the corridor just outside the darshan hall. We stood patiently in the line and were soon given tokens and ushered into the darshan hall. All the chairs were occupied but we found an empty bench and happily took our seat, soaking in the effervescent atmosphere of eager anticipation. A Bavarian folk orchestra started playing on the small stage and the audience clapped their hands gently to the music.

Suddenly, Amma arrived on stage. There She was, dressed in a simple white sari, standing in front of the orchestra and listening intently to the music. Most of the musicians

stopped playing and bowed to Her, but a few continued playing, unaware that Amma was standing before them, enjoying their music and waiting for them to finish before proceeding to Her chair. When they realized it, they stopped abruptly, faces reflecting joy and surprise. The audience clapped both for Amma and the musicians.

After Amma sat down, a big brass urn, heavy with water, was passed to Her. She held the urn, closed Her eyes, and for a few minutes, breathed Her divinity into the water. The atmosphere changed palpably as sacred love wafted like a gentle breeze in the air.

After a few minutes, Amma opened Her eyes and the water was transferred into small plastic containers and given to each one of us, a blessing to take home and cherish the whole year long. Some devotees drank the water before they heard the instruction about taking it home. Amma

laughingly consoled them: “It’s okay! Don’t worry.”

Then She began Her talk. I watched the rapt faces of the people gathered there and the silent children who slid to the ground and played with tiny cars or drew pictures, not disturbing their parents. Amma spoke about the need to have single-minded focus on the spiritual goal under the guidance of one Guru instead of roaming in search of different gurus. She said it was akin to wasting time by approaching different physicians to cure a single ailment; one’s ailment might worsen as a result of seeing many doctors and following different treatments. She also spoke about how bad karma can be alleviated by doing good deeds and about the importance of planting trees and conserving nature.

As Swami Amritaswarupananda chanted the 108 names of the Divine Mother, Amma led the devotees in repeating “*Om parashaktyai*

*namah*” (“Salutations to the Almighty”) after each mantra. Then the curtains closed as She went inside to prepare for Devi Bhava. Her children waited expectantly as She worshipped the crown while singing ‘*Ambike devi jangannayike namaskaram*’ — ‘I salute the Divine Mother of the universe.’

Then She reappeared, an incarnation of divinity seated regally on Her chair. She was wearing a gold-and-blue sari and adorned with garlands of fresh flowers and necklaces of *rudrakshas* (prayer beads). Her radiance seemed to immerse the huge hall in a golden glow as people silently lined up on both sides for darshan. They took fresh flowers to Her and She inhaled their fragrance before enfolding Her children in a warm embrace, dispelling their inner worries and impurities.

The Germans had brought sleeping bags, and when it was late, they put the children to sleep in the space between the

rows of chairs. Members of the Munich Satsang sang poignant bhajans. We went to the Indian food tent and ate hot *masala dosas* (pancake with potato stuffing) and delicious *poha* (flattened rice flakes).

The darshan queues were slow moving but everyone was patient. Amma had to leave early the next day for the 14-hour drive to London. Nevertheless, She took Her time, lavishing love and attention on each of Her darling children.

One incident remains fresh in my memory. After our darshan, we sat down beside Amma. A young boy with Down's syndrome came for darshan with his parents. He smiled sweetly at Amma and offered Her a red rose. She embraced him tightly and placed him on Her lap. He snuggled down comfortably in Her lap while his parents had darshan. Amma hugged all three of them tenderly. The boy remained in Her lap even after the parents left. In between

darshans, Amma would talk to him: "Do you know how to play the tabla? Let me teach you how to move your fingers rhythmically."

For more than 10 minutes, the happy child sat in Her lap as She taught him to play the tabla. She would place his fingers on top of Her hand and get him to beat the rhythm on Her hand. She would then play the rhythm on his hands. She told the people beside Her, "He should learn music." Finally, She gave him another affectionate kiss, and he slid off Her lap to go back to his parents. Their faces were aglow with hope and happiness.


I remembered the mantra '*Om abala gopa viditaye namah*' — 'Salutations to Her, who is well known by all, even by children and cowherds' (*Lalita Sabhasranama*, 994). Devi's motherly love is equal for all, and all of us respond to Her love with gratitude and hope.

The bhajans resounded in the clear air, and darshan was

ending. Amma held up a token in Her hand and gestured for everyone who had still not received darshan to come up on stage. “Even without a token is fine. Come up,” She said. A few lucky souls ran up. Finally, the last person received darshan.

Amma stood up, Her silver crown sending shafts of moonlight across the room. Her blue Kancheepuram sari with the dark border shimmered like molten gold. She moved slowly and gracefully to the front of the stage and showered fresh rose petals on all of us. We huddled around the front of the stage, unable to take our eyes away from the magnificent vision of Devi, standing and smiling

in front of us, blessing and embracing each one of us with Her radiant, loving glance. The magical moments seemed to last forever. She was so beautiful as She stood there with a tender, beaming smile on Her face, Her gaze darting from one darling child to another. Finally, She stepped back and the curtains closed.

I sat down, soaked in love and light. Another mantra arose in my mind: ‘*Om sri maharajnyai namah*’ — Salutations to Her, who is the empress of this universe’ (*Lalita Sabhasranama*, 2). How blessed we are that we have been held close by our Mother, the Queen of the Universe, seated on Her eternal throne. 

---

## *Dear Readers,*

Share your experiences or poems, and inspire thousands. All submissions are subject to approval and may be edited. Email your submission to [matruvani@amritapuri.org](mailto:matruvani@amritapuri.org). By submitting your artwork or article, you give your consent to have it published.

## Toppers - Science

### XII Result 2019-20



98.6%

**A Ashwin M**  
 Chennai


98.0%

**Devapriya P S**  
 Thrissur


97.6%

**Neeraj P V**  
 Kuthuparamba


97.6%

**Akshaya A**  
 Trichy


97.2%

**Ananya B N**  
 Ettimadai


97.0%

**Keerthana B N**  
 Trivandrum


96.6%

**Sibhi P S**  
 Nallampalayam


96.4%

**Aryan K**  
 New Delhi


96.2%

**Devika Biju**  
 Ernakulam


96.2%

**Ayush Charit**  
 Kolkata


96.0%

**Unnikrishnan**  
 Perumbavoor


96.0%

**Aravind H R**  
 Haripad


96.0%

**Lekshmi R P**  
 Puthiyakavu


96.0%

**Jishnu M B**  
 Thiruvalla


96.0%

**Aiswarya M**  
 Pandalam


96.0%

**Adil M**  
 Nedumangad


96.0%

**Sourav Gupta**  
 Durgapur


96.0%

**Aniket Sen**  
 Durgapur


95.8%

**Shanthini PNR**  
 Kanyakumari


95.8%

**Vimala D N**  
 Kanyakumari


95.4%

**Gouri K**  
 Palakkad


95.0%

**Suyajna U M**  
 Bangalore


94.8%

**Apsara P**  
 Chavakkad


94.6%

**Akash Umesh**  
 Kannur


94.4%

**S Gowri K**  
 Alappuzha


93.8%

**Adarsh K S**  
 Navi Mumbai


93.6%

**Pranavam V**  
 Nagapattinam


93.2%

**Anusree S**  
 Kodungallur


92.6%

**Adwaith S**  
 Kozhikode


92.6%

**Sneha S**  
 Pathanamthitta



92.0%

**Ananya Das**  
**Ahmedabad**


89.6%

**Rishikesh R**  
**Thalassery**


89.0%

**Sannidhi**  
**Mangalore**


86.6%

**Ashwin K**  
**Ottapalam**


84.4%

**Jahnavi M**  
**Mananthavady**
**Science**
**Commerce**


98.6%

**Lakshmi K**  
**Pathanamthitta**


98.2%

**A Abhirami**  
**Palakkad**


98.2%

**Neethi**  
**Thrissur**


97.0%

**S Smrithi**  
**Chennai**


96.8%

**Hariram S**  
**Nallampalayam**


96.6%

**Aiswarya L**  
**Nedumangad**


96.6%

**Nainu Binu**  
**Trivandrum**


96.6%

**Ashutosh G**  
**New Delhi**


96.4%

**Anjali S**  
**Chavakkad**


96.4%

**Aileen G T**  
**Alappuzha**


96.0%

**Srinivas J B**  
**Bangalore**


95.8%

**Sithara Biju**  
**Perumbavoor**


95.6%

**Sankari G**  
**Kodungallur**


94.4%

**Akshaya S**  
**Ernakulam**


94.4%

**Dhruv M P**  
**Ahmedabad**


94.0%

**Theja L P**  
**Kannur**


94.0%

**Anagha K**  
**Kuthuparamba**


93.0%

**Parvathy**  
**Haripad**


91.0%

**Rishikesh V**  
**Thalassery**


90.2%

**Gourav K**  
**Durgapur**


90.0%

**Ghanashyam**  
**Kozhikode**


84.6%

**Devi Karthika**  
**Puthiyakavu**


79.2%

**Rajesh**  
**Mangalore**



99.4%

**D Sowmika**  
 Chennai


98.6%

**Aditi Sunil**  
 Palakkad


98.6%

**Ninad B S**  
 Navi Mumbai


98.4%

**Keerthana K**  
 Alappuzha


98.2%

**Deepak S**  
 Trivandrum


98.2%

**Pranav N**  
 Harippad


98.2%

**Anjana C V**  
 Nallampalayam


98.2%

**Anishka V**  
 Ettimadai


98.2%

**Hanshika R**  
 Trichy


97.8%

**Meenakshi K**  
 Thiruvalla


97.8%

**Krishnapriya**  
 Kuthuparamba


97.8%

**Theertha PS**  
 Nedumangad


97.6%

**Krishna K R**  
 Pondicherry


97.6%

**Vaishnav A K**  
 Ottapalam


97.4%

**Nandakishor**  
 Thrissur


97.4%

**Devanarayan**  
 Ernakulam


97.4%

**Ravikiran T**  
 Kodungallur


97.2%

**Shalika**  
 Puthiyakavu


97.2%

**Nandhana P**  
 Kanyakumari


97.0%

**B Jayalakshmi**  
 Thiruvalla


97.0%

**Arjun R Nair**  
 Perumbavoor


97.0%

**Nishit Jain**  
 New Delhi


96.8%

**Goutham R**  
 Pathanamthitta


96.8%

**Navami S**  
 Pulpally


96.6%

**Ananya P**  
 Bangalore


96.6%

**Diganth VR**  
 Tiruppur


96.6%

**Devanjana SP**  
 Thalassery


96.4%

**Sneha Pal**  
 Kolkata


96.4%

**Adithya SM**  
 Kozhikode


96.2%

**Yadhu KNP**  
 Kannur



96.2%

96.2%

96.0%

96.0%

96.0%

96.0%

**Ashwin V**  
Pandalam

**Vrinda G R**  
Mangalore

**Chinmayee P**  
Odisha

**Abhiram S**  
Kanhagad

**Nandini S P**  
Mysore

**Tarpan Roy**  
Durgapur



96.0%

95.8%

95.6%

95.4%

95.2%

94.8%

**Pranav A N**  
Ahmedabad

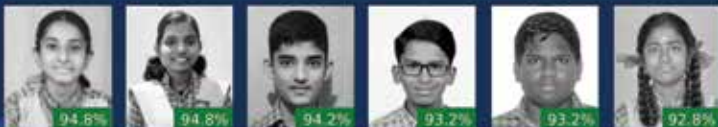
**Sanjana M**  
Cheruthuruthy

**Amal V P**  
Chavakkad

**Abhijitha S**  
Mananthavady

**Maghila S L**  
Ramanathapuram

**Sanjana G N**  
Karwar



94.8%

94.8%

94.2%

93.2%

93.2%

92.8%

**Chandrika R**  
Secundrabad

**Ayushy M P**  
Kollandy

**Adithya V N**  
Tanur

**Goutam R H**  
Belgaum

**Kanmani S P**  
Nagapattinam

**Subbalakshmi**  
Thoothukudi



91.8%

91.4%

91.4%

91.0%

**Naveen K**  
Manjeri

**Keertana R R**  
Vatakara

**Alka Girish**  
Vatakara

**Jyothika L M**  
Davangere

**Toppers**  
XII Result  
2019-20  
Humanities



97.8%

97.8%

96.2%

**Avantika Rout**  
New Delhi

**Tanya Juneja**  
New Delhi

**Arjun M S**  
Nedumangad