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"Guru Purnima Celebrations"

Question answered by Master Kumar Garu on Saturday, the 16th of July 2011, at Hyderabad, India.

(for private circulation to WTT members)

Q1) Is Gandhiji a Mahatma?

A) Undoubtedly yes. If we see his life, we know how a person can become a Mahatma. If a person could bring independence to a huge nation, he is surely a Mahatma. If we study his life closely, we see that he was transformed after getting inspired by seeing a drama of Satya Harichandra and decided to speak only truth all his life. He studied very well and studied law in England and went to South Africa to be a lawyer. This is normal story which happens in everyone's life. Some education, profession, marriage, etc. are common. Then an incident took place in his life.

He was a famous lawyer in South Africa who held a social status. He bought a 1st class ticket in a train and climbed it. But he was pushed out of the train on some racial basis. He felt if in South Africa Indians were treated like this, what is the case in India ruled by British then.

He came back to India and first prepared himself to fight for freedom struggle. He did not immediately start fighting. He transformed himself initially. He changed his dressing style completely. He wanted to live the life of a common man in India so that he can understand the problems faced by them. He just wore a dhoti and simple chappals. He used to recollect Lord Rama continuously inside. He used to read Bhagawad Gita regularly and followed it. That one book is sufficient for anyone to practice and uplift oneself. He travelled the length and breadth of the country on foot. He trained the body to lead a natural and simple life. Initially he was leading a posh life. How could he transform himself? It was because of his will power.

He underwent this transformation for 12 years. His will power grew by leaps. Anything he wanted to do, he could do it. He decided to win freedom by truth and non-violence. "Satyamevjayate - Truth alone Triumphs". He launched a non-cooperation movement gathering people. He lead many such movements mobilizing huge crowds.

British hurt many Indians and even killed many of them but they could not touch Gandhiji. British feared Gandhiji. Why? There must be some difference right. It is the power of truth and non-violence that Gandhiji held.

He used to inspire the people so much with his words and presence that they used to offer everything they had for the freedom struggle. That was the power of speech he held. He could inspire millions and everyone started to follow him and did not cooperate with the British. So the British had to come down and started negotiating with Gandhiji. In those negotiations, he never listened to what the British said. Only his word prevailed in all the meetings that he held with the British. British Empire was huge and so powerful in the whole world but such powerful empire had to bow before Gandhiji. They were shocked and had no other option but to accept to his words.

So Gandhiji is such a Mahatma. It is because of his will power and truth. Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King with the inspiration of Gandhiji fought some great struggles in their respective countries. In tribute to him a great memorial was built in Cuba in a land of 100 acres. So he is such a great person.

Q2) It is stated that in Lalitha Sahasranama that Ganesh was created by Parvathi by seeing into the eyes of Lord Shiva. We have a story that Ganesh was born by Parvathi giving life to an idol made out of Nalugu (flour like material). What is true?

a) There is one sloka in Lalitha Sahasranama which tells that Parvathi conceived Ganesh by seeing in to the eyes of Lord Shiva. He is called Maha Ganapati. Apart from that there is Vigneswara. The 2 stories are true. It is the same Lord principle of Ganesh coming in two different ways for 2 different purposes. The first one is Maha Ganapati to grant us Yoga and knowledge. The second one is to help us overcome hindrances. So it is the same principle coming as two to serve different purposes.

There are 2 kinds of people. For some, whatever they think it happens. Whatever suggestion that person gives it provides a good solution. The other category persons suggest exactly the opposite. His suggestion would be without fail a failure. What is the difference? It is this principle of Vigneswara (Lord who removes obstacles or hindrances) working actively in the first category of person and is completely dormant in the second category of persons. So both are same and the difference is only in their purpose of existence. That is why we start with Ganapati Puja so that there are no hindrances and also to give us thoughts which would pose us with no hurdles in life.

Q3) Why did Lord Shiva give Manisha Panchakam (A Scripture) to Adi Shankaracharya if he was a person of divine knowledge (One who knows everything) ?

a) Scriptures are given to persons of divine knowledge to hand to over to us. They do not need it. It is for us. Veda Vyasa does not require Bhagavata Scripture. It was given through him for us to follow.

Q4) Since I am in your presence, I am trying to follow your path to realise myself but this old age is testing me. Can I proceed further?

a) Forget that you are an old person. Old age is to the body not to you. A being is never young or old. He is eternal. So it is more your feeling. But the affect of body does fall upon you and causes hindrances to you. 50% of those hindrances get cleared if you do not feel that you are old. So do it to the extent possible and you can continue in the next life. That was promised by Lord Krishna himself. So do not worry of old age. You will get a very good body in the next life if you end this life in practice. So keep going as long as you can. If you have that strong aspiration for Yoga, it will surely continue in the next life. That which is very strong in you, the nature makes sure that you get the opportunity to experience it. There are many stories of devotees who continued their practice for lives together.

Q5) In the first 11th moon phase, many do fasting? Why? What is the significance of that moon phase?

a) 11th moon phase is very pure. There exists a trine aspect (a good angle) existing between the sun and moon on that day. We are the sun and our mind is the moon. Though we are souls, we live majorly in the mind. To bridge the gap between the soul and mind, this day is very useful. That is the importance of this day. We should stay as close as possible to the Lord in the heart centre. If you are so close to the Lord and stay in his presence very much that one may forget to eat and drink. So it becomes fasting. If you merge into Lord Presence, you will never feel like eating or drinking. It is natural fasting. It is called “Upavasam” in Sanskrit. Upa = near and Vasam = stay. So it means to stay near the Lord. We distort the meaning as fasting. Fasting naturally happens when you stay near the Lord.

Ramakrishna Paramahansa used to not eat for days in praying to the divine mother. He was sometimes forcefully fed. So it is not the case of not eating but it is the case of not feeling hungry due to strong alignment with the Lord.

If you do not feel like eating, do not eat. If you want to eat, eat but in a controlled manner. Do not impose anything on your body in the name of fasting. You are hurting the body if you do not eat when you feel hungry. One need not fast if one eats in a controlled manner. God never asked you to fast for him. If your mind is in alignment with the Buddhi and oriented towards the Lord, your quantity of consumption slowly decreases and some days you may not feel like eating anything. Sometimes you may not feel like even talking to anyone.

Jesus Christ sat on a hill in alignment with the divine and did not eat for 40 days. If you try to imitate him and do not eat for 40 days, you will die. So alignment with the Lord is more important than food. This alignment is possible more on the days of 11th moon phase. So we have that tradition of fasting on the 11th moon phase.

Q7) Master, What is an illusion and what is realty? The one which seems to be real also seems to be an illusion. How to differentiate? Help us out.

a) What we see around us, does it exist forever? It keeps changing. The one which is eternal is real and one which keeps changing is an illusion.

Yesterday, I gave an example. The space is eternal. This earth, this country, this city, this building are all temporary. It is temporarily real but not real forever. Space is real eternally.

Our relations are all temporarily real. We should remember this so that we do not feel sad when that relation breaks. Do not get attached with the temporarily real ones. It should be a loose knot. You can put a strong knot with something which is real forever. Existence is real eternally. So you can attach yourselves with that. In relation to that existence, even light is an illusion because it also emerged from that existence.

All that is visible now emerged from that which is invisible. That invisible one ever exists. This emerging one emerges and dissolves. Even consciousness is not permanent. There is a background to consciousness which is existence. So only existence is eternal and everything is temporarily real on different time scales. That is why the first emerge is called "Maya" (Illusion). It is because everything that comes after that is not permanent. Though everything is temporary, it has to be accepted as permanent for now. You cannot reject a relation because it is temporary. Then people consider you to be mad. So accept it and remember that it is temporary. Also know the difference between a temporary truth and eternal truth.

Our hunger is not an eternal truth. It comes and goes when you eat. Existence is eternal truth. Know the difference between the two. Existence is realty and the rest is all illusion. There are number of temporary real's. It is all a relative realty.

Sankaracharya taught one existence and the rest as illusion. One day he and his disciples were walking in a forest and they see a tiger. All of them climb a tree and Sankaracharya also does.

Later they ask him if it was illusion why to fear it. He says "It is temporary truth." If you think it to be illusion and submit yourself to it, you die. So accept it as temporary truth. The tiger does not hurt Sankaracharya even if he stands before it but to let his disciples know, he also climbs a tree.

-Swasthi.