

Charity

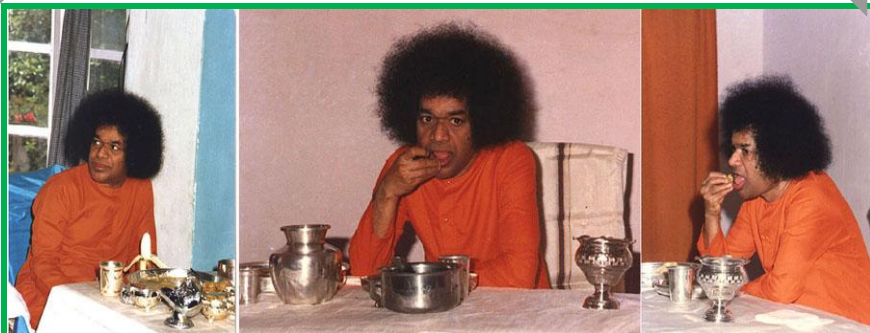
and

Annadanam

(Feeding the Hungry)



by
SAINT VAAJAPEYE
Panduranga Malyala



"I live upon Aanandha (bliss) that you derive when you sing the Name and glorify the Form of the Lord. That is My food, My daily sustenance." (*Sathya Sai Speaks Vol. 3 p. 214*)

DEDICATED TO
BHAGAVAN
SRI SATHYA
SAI BABA

**On the Occasion of His 85th
Birthday, November 23, 2010**

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ISBN NUMBER 0-938924-41-9
TITLE "CHARITY AND ANNADANAM (FEED THE HUNGRY)"

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CHARITY

Charity is giving money, time, and energy for a noble cause.

The Bhagawad Gita states: *“It is charity and not wealth which is important. One shall acquire wealth by justifiable means. Its fruit shall be charity as well as enjoyment.”*

Different *sadhanas* (accomplishments) have been prescribed in our scriptures for different ages: *Tapa* (Penance) for *Kruta (Satya) Yuga*, *Gnana* (Knowledge) for *Treta Yuga*, *Yagna* (Sacrifice) for *Dwapara Yuga*, and *Dana* (charity) for *Kali Yuga*.

The Brihadaranyak Upanishad says that the Lord Prajapati advised gods, men, and demons by one letter *“Da”*. The gods understood by this letter that they should practice *“Dama”*, i.e. self-control; the human beings that they should practice *“Dana”*, i.e. charity; the demons understood that they practice *“Daya”*, i.e. compassion.

Thus, to human beings Charity, or giving, is recommended.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba says: *“If there is no charity, wealth has no intrinsic value at all. You have four sons, each of whom will enter a claim to your wealth. The first is charity. The second is the government. The third is the thief. And the fourth is fire. Each of them expects to inherit your wealth, but if you were to hand over all your wealth to your first son, charity, then the others will get no share of it. When you give freely to charity, you will find that the other claimants will show great respect for your decision, and will not press their own claims.”*

Why Charity?

Charity yields enjoyment in this world and salvation after death. The act of Charity purifies the heart:

“Whatever you give to others, give with love and respect. Gifts must be given in abundance, with joy, humility, and compassion.” (Taittiriya Upanishad 1:11:3).

There are of four types of charity:

- 1) The *Nityadâna* (daily gift) is the gift of any article or cash to a Brahmin who does not do anything in return. It shall be given every day without wishing for any result thereof.
- 2) The *Naimittika* charity (casual) is performed by all good people for wiping off sins.
- 3) The *Kâmya* charity (desiring a special result) is given in fulfillment of a desire, say, for progeny, success, and prosperity.

4) The *Vimala* charity (free from flaw) is given to the person with the knowledge of the Brahman with a *sâttvik* mind, just to please a Deity. It is auspicious.

GIFTS AND THEIR BENEFITS

Cotton Clothes: Donor will have plenty of clothes in here and hereafter.

Yagnopavita: Angels will be happy, and will bless donor will have courage and perserverance

Sesame Seed: Fear of Yama (death) will be removed.

Iron: Fear of Yama and his servants will be removed.

Shoes: Donor shall reach heaven by horse.

Umbrella: Relief from heat from Sun during travel

Lamp: One will travel on a lighted path.

Cooked rice: Unending happiness

Gift of Lamp: Keen vision

Gold: Longevity

Garments: Attainment of the world of the Moon.

Copper pot, food: Attainment of the region of Shiva

Grain and seed: Donor will travel in comfort after death.

Oxen: Full scale prosperity.

The best charity for a true devotee is also the giving up of bad traits and weaknesses. The difference between a ball of iron and a dry leaf is that the ball of iron is not swayed when there is wind. Similarly, a true devotee learns not to be deterred at the time of adversity.

Here is an interesting mythological anecdote:

☪☪☪ God created three kinds of people: the *devas* who were *sâtvika* by nature, the humans being who had both *rajasik* and *tamasik* qualities, and the demons who were essentially *tamasik*. None of them had elbows which are necessary to bend the hand for various chores including the very important task of eating.

The *devas* solved the problem instantly; they used their hands like ladles, and fed one another. The human beings took time to learn the trick, but did so in due course of time. The demons never learned the art of giving and almost perished before there was divine intervention! ☪☪☪

Charity thus given to deserving persons is *sâtvika* (of pure quality).

The Joy of Giving

Every parent knows the joy of accepting what is offered by their children: the value of the gift is not necessarily in the gift, but in the act itself.

❧ After the Mahabharata war ended, Lord Krishna once visited King Yudhishtira. The royal assembly was full of sages, seers, ministers, and eminent men and women who had come to meet the Lord. In this great gathering, Dharmaputra politely asked Krishna, ‘Sir! You are the Lord of the whole universe. Every little thing, animate and inanimate, belongs to You. Why is it, then, you accept gifts even if it were a leaf of Tulasi? How can we give You what is Your own? How come you say that it pleases You?’ Janardhana smiled bewitchingly and answered the king with another question, ‘Why do you feel happy when your subjects present you with gifts, even though everything in your kingdom belongs to you?’ ❧

❧ The character of Karna in the epic Mahabharata is fascinating for he exemplified the act of giving. Karna was born with armor and earrings which ensured him immortality and invulnerability. He was a prince who could not resist giving, at any cost. When Indra came in the guise of a poor Brahmin and tricked him to give him the armor and earrings, Karna did not hesitate, in spite of knowing the consequences. The ecstasy of giving overwhelmed everything else. He knew that the sheer act of giving would save him ultimately! ❧

Often do we wonder why God did not answer to our prayers? The answer is that we must have some credit in the Divine Bank to draw when emergency funds are needed.

*patrarn pushpain phalarn toyani yo bhahiya
prayachthati tadaham bhakyupahrta-masnami prayatatmahah*

In Bhagavad Gîtâ, Lord Krishna declares, “O! Dhananjaya! Perform good deeds. Don’t be anxious for the fruit; the fruit will follow automatically.”

To translate it into day-to-day life, serve the wife or husband or children as Divine souls as we are all connected by Ruñânubandha (by past actions). Einstein’s Relativity Theory of $E=mc^2$ is valid everywhere, as is Newton’s third law of every motion, “for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction.”

❧ Lord Śrî Kṛṣṇā was in His garden (*udyānavana*) on a *Makara Sankrānti* afternoon in Dwāraka with all His consorts, devotees, relatives, and friends. Kṛṣṇā was cutting some fruits with a knife. In the process He cut His little finger, and blood started flowing. Rukmiṇi, Satya Bhāma and the others called out to the servants for bandage and cloth etc. from the residential areas which were far from the garden. Draupadi was also there on that occasion of *Makara Sankrānti*. Everyone was dressed in new clothes and joyful. With no second thought, Draupadi tore her new saree and used

the piece to bandage Lord Krishñā's finger. The bleeding stopped. The servants arrived with the bandages much later. This instantaneous action of Draupadi pleased the Lord.

Later, when Dussāsana tried to remove the saree of Draupadi in the court of Duryodhana, she prayed to Lord Krishñā for protection. Lord Krishñā was in Dwaraka playing dice with Rukmiñi. He thought for a while what good action performed by Draupadi deserved Divine intervention? He recalled the incident on the day of *Makara Sankranti* when Draupadi had used a new saree piece to bandage His wounded finger. He immediately responded to her prayer from the palace of Duryodhana, and arranged for a non-stop supply of sarees rendering Dussasana tired. Draupadi's honor was thus saved (*māna samrakshaña*). ❧❧❧

God is Omniscient, and so, in whatever form we offer service, it pleases Him.

ANNADANAM

The Greatest Act of Charity

Among all gifts of charity, providing food to the hungry is the greatest of all gifts as food gives life, longevity, light and energy. Therefore if you offer food to even an enemy who had come to kill you, the Gods will be pleased and bestow their boons upon you. We can define the merit of all other charities, but even the creator, Brahma, cannot describe the merit of gifting food.

Therefore, when a guest arrives at lunch or dinner time, always offer him or her food on a leaf or plate. There is no greater merit in this world than feeding the hungry. Even the Gods appreciate the deed of regular *annadanam*.

Saint Yagnavalkya's message of Annadanam (Sampradayas)

There are two traditions or *Sampradaya* in the Vedas viz: *Brahma Sampradaya* and *Aditya Sampradaya*. That which was vomited by Yagnavalkya came to be known as *Brahma Sampradaya*, also "*Krishna Yajurveda*". After leaving *Gurukul* of Vysampayana, Yagnavalkya sincerely repented for his delinquency and atoned for it by giving up food and drink and practiced *Suryopasana* (Sun worship) undergoing severe austerities by way of penance. Pleased with this penance the Sun God appeared before him in the form of *Vaaji* (Horse) and told him, "My child! What is past is past. You should guard yourself against such lapses in future. Betraying the Guru or God is highly dangerous. Be careful hereafter. I will now teach you the Vedas again". So saying, the Sun God taught him the Vedas.

The reason for the Sun appearing in the form of *Vaaji* was that Yagnavalkya's fore-fathers always used to do *Annadana*, free distribution of food, and therefore their family got the name *Vaajasam*. The Veda taught by him was also called by the alternative names of "*Sukla Yajurveda*". *Yajurveda* has been divided into

Vaajasakhandha and *Aditya Khanda*. For this reason, although the Vedas were originally four in number, they have subsequently become five, namely *Rgveda*, *Krishna Yajurveda*, *Sukla Yajurveda*, *Saama Veda*, and *Atharva Veda*. Recognizing that the Sun appeared before him as *Vaaji* and taught him the Vedas, because of free distribution of food by his ancestors, Yajnavalkya gave primary IMPORTANCE TO ANNADANAM in his teaching which among others, include the following:

***“There is no gift higher than the gift of food,
and no God higher than parents.”***

Here are more stories to illustrate the power of *Annadanam*:

☪☪ Once there was a Brahmin living in Ujjain, in India. He used to provide food for the hungry every day. The Brahmin asked his guests one day: What is the fruit or merit of gifting food every day? The guests replied that they did not know the answer to his question but the goddess *Annapoorna devi* in Benares would know the answer.

The Brahmin then went to Varanasi (the two rivers *Varuna* and *Asi* join in this place and hence it is Varanasi) and asked the goddess *Annapoorna devi* the same question.

She then replied that a baby was going to be born to the king of Hemavata city near *Vaarana* Ganga in the Himalayas. The names of the king and queen were *Angeerasa* and *Sumati* respectively. The goddess advised the Brahmin that this baby would answer his question and urged him to go to Hemavata city.

The Brahmin then proceeded towards the Himalayas, but lost his way. He met two tribals (*Boya* and *Kirata*) in the forest. The tribal man admonished the Brahmin for traveling alone in the very dangerous forest which was full of wild animals. He suggested that the Brahmin should spend the night with him. He then took the Brahmin to his field and gave him some grains and apologized to him that he could not supply him with a new mud pot in which to cook his food (it is traditional that Brahmins will cook only in new pots). The Brahmin then replied that he was contented and that his weariness had gone due to the tribal man’s warm welcome. He then assured the tribal man that he was not hungry. But the tribal man gave him some honey and plain rice on two leaves and the Brahmin ate them after offering them to God.

The tribal man considered it unwise for the Brahmin to sleep on the ground due to the wild animals in the forest and requested his guest to go to an elevated platform along with the tribal man’s wife and rest for the night on the platform. He then armed himself with a bow and arrows and kept the vigil for the night. But during the early hours of the morning while he dozed off, a tiger came and killed him. The wife of the tribal man then woke up

and finding her husband dead, took up his bow and arrow and killed the tiger. The Brahmin meanwhile woke up and realizing what had happened asked the Kirata's (tribal man) wife: "Am I a fitting person to receive this kind of help and sacrifice from my hosts?" He then arranged for the funeral ceremony for the Kirata. The Kirata's wife also entered the funeral pyre to be immolated with her husband. Then the Brahmin proceeded to the city of Hemavata in the Himalayas.

The queen at that time delivered a boy on one auspicious day. The Brahmin hearing this went to pay his respects to the king and queen and asked the new born baby: "My dear baby – please reveal to me the merit of offering food to the hungry." The baby boy answered him thus: "Is it possible to describe the MERIT of giving food to the hungry? The MERIT for the gift of food given with sincere and divine love is INFINITE. What else can I tell you?" Then the baby revealed to the Brahmin that he was the very Kirata who had offered him rice and honey in his previous birth. ❧❧



❧❧ By the grace of God, the king of Kalinga had a daughter whose name was Pushpagandhi. The astrologers predicted that her husband would become prey to a *Brahma Rakshasa* (goblin) on the seventh day after her wedding. A few years later when Pushpagandhi had grown into a young woman, the Prince of Maalava saw her and fell in love with her. He married her with the consent of her father. As predicted by the astrologers, the prince of Maalava fell into the hands of a *Brahma Rakshasa*. The prince then convinced the *Raakshasa* that he will return to him after taking permission from his parents. He then brought his young wife Pushpagandhi with him and offered himself as food to the *Rakshasa*. The *Rakshasa* then took his shining sword and brought it close to the neck of the Prince. At that very moment, the princess Pushpagandhi spread her palms in front of the *Rakshasas* and pleaded: "*Biksham dehi!*" (Please give alms)

The *raakshasa* then asked her what kind of food she wanted and she replied: "*Purusha Biksha!*" (Please give this man as alms). Wonderstruck by her intelligence the *Brahma Rakshasa* released the prince. A celestial plane then came from the heaven for the *Rakshasa*. The *Brahma Rakshasa* then left his sinful body, obtained a divine form and went to heaven in the divine vehicle. This too was a result of the gifting of food. ❧❧



❧❧ Sudhama and Lord Krishna were classmates with Guru Sandipani. Once guru Sandapani asked his son and Krishna to fetch firewood from the forest. Since they did not return for a long time, the *gurupatni* (guru's wife) sent Sudhama to the forest giving baked *chana* (a type of nutritious peas) for both the boys. Looking for his friends, Sudhama found only Krishna tired and sleepy.

Krishna asked for some water, but went to sleep resting His head on Sudhama's lap. Now Sudhama stealthily opened the lunch-box, and started munching the food.

Without opening His eyes, Krishna who was pretending to sleep, asked what the noise was and if his friend was eating something. Sudhama lied, 'Oh! It is just my teeth chattering in the cold. Gosh, it is so cold, I can't even say *Sahasranama* (chanting 1000 names of God). And what is there to eat?'

Now the young Sudhama committed two transgressions. He partook the food meant for someone else, and secondly, he lied about it. He had to suffer from extreme want during the early part of his life because of these misdemeanors.

However, God is always merciful. Sudhama's legendary deprivation eventually came to an end.

When Krishna was the ruler at Dwaraka, Sudhama's wife sent Kuchela (Sudhama) to see Krishna to get financial assistance since they are suffering with poverty. Sudhama he met the Lord who was overjoyed to see His friend and gave him a royal reception. Kuchela did not ask anything but, Krishna is Lord of the Universe knew everything. Yet he was not in a position to fulfill the wish of Kuchela's wife since Kuchela did not offer anything to the Lord in kind (cause & effect). So Krishna himself acted and took hold of his upper garment and opened the knot where in Kuchela's wife had tied pounded rice. and expressed his happiness over the simple gift by instantly putting the pounded rice in His mouth! When Krishna tried to eat the third handful of pounded rice, Rukmini raised objection and demanded it was her share. So Rukmini ate the third handful of pounded rice. Krishna thus accepted the gift as a token of affection and in return blessed Kuchela. Thus Sudhama atoned for his childhood sin, and was instantly rewarded with all prosperity by the Lord. ❧❧



The Importance of Annadanam

Dashadanas or the Ten gifts/charity of *go* (cow), *bhu* (land), *tila* (sesame), *hiranya* (precious metal), *amruta* (ambrosia: nectar for immortality), *vastra* (clothes), *dhanya* (food grain), *guda* (molasses), *rowpyam* (silver), and *lavana* (salt) **does not include annadanam.**

This is because *annadanam* is a separate entity by itself!

No other offering is satiable, and the theory of diminishing returns applies only to food. The first apple is sweet and may provoke a desire for the second, but after the fourth or fifth, the joy diminishes. Thus it is within the means of most of us to enjoy the bliss of feeding. And food can be offered to anyone—pauper, prince, ignorant, intelligent, sinner or saint.

Shodasa danams or the Sixteen gifts/charity are (*Sixteen gifts*):

1. *Go* (cow) 2. *Suvarna* (gold) 3. *Mahishi* (she buffalo) 4. *Ratna* (diamond) 5. *Saraswat* (book) 6. *Tila* (sesame) 7. *Kanya* (virgin) 8. *Aswam* (horse) 9. *Naga* (silver snake) 10. *Gaja* (elephant) 11. *Dasee* (servant) 12. *Dhana* (money or wealth) 13. *Sasya bhodanam* (land with crop) 14. *Gruha* (house) 15. *Sayya* (bed) 16. *Chhaga* (plough) There is a substitute for *Naga* as *Agraharam* (row of houses or settlement for Brahmins)



Organizing the *Rajasuya Yajam*, Dharmaputra, the Pandava Prince, assigned chores to everyone. Lord Krishna was given the chore of washing the feet of the invitees (No job is inferior even to God!). A count of the guests was kept by ringing a resounding bell for every thousand. Soon the bell chimed incessantly! Dharmaraja felt proud as the visitors poured in for the celebration. Krishna smiled all-knowingly, and took the prince aside for stroll. A big stream had formed from the water that had cleansed the noble guests.

As Krishna and Dharmaraja were looking, a mongoose came out of the stream. It was a strange animal with half its body covered with golden hue. Its behavior was strange, as it dipped into the stream again and again. The puzzled prince was prompted by the Lord to ask the mongoose itself an explanation for the odd conduct. The mongoose narrated the episode of sage Saktuprastha.



Saktuprastha and family going to Vaikunta by Divine Chariot

The sage was learned and wise, but very poor. Once he and wife, along with their son and his young spouse, had to starve for four days. On the fifth day, they managed to get some food. A decent fare was cooked, and the family sat down for the repast. Then appeared a lean and famished Brahmin at the door and asked for food. The sage instantly gave his share; this was gobbled, and the visitor asked for more. Again, without a second thought, the faithful wife of the sage offered her share of the food. This was also quickly eaten, and more was asked for. The sage's son and his pretty wife too offered their share. Then the visitor revealed Himself as none other than Maha Vishnu, and took all the four noble souls to *Vaikuntham*. The Lord washed His hands after taking the food, and the water fell on one side of my

body. And, lo and behold! That part of my skin that was sprinkled with the water became golden. From that day I am looking for another host whose generosity would match that of the sage. Alas! I am yet to succeed. O! Worthy prince, I have failed here too.' Dharmaraja felt truly humbled by the story of the mongoose (who was, in fact, the great seer Jamagadagni). ூ



ூ Kartha (root of a family tree) the saint also called as Vithadundu: Bharadwaja had a son by name Manyuvu who had 5 sons. They are Bruhatkshatra, Jaya Mahaaveerya, Nara, and Garga. Among them Nara has a son by name Samkruti. Again Samkruti has 2 sons namely Guru and Rantideva.

The fame of Rantideva is indescribable. He gave away everything to the needy and became very poor. He then used to live with begging which is the meanest of all professions.

He spent 48 days without food and water with courage along with his family members who were fully tired and suffering with hunger and thirst. After collecting leftover grains in the paddy fields, he was ready to have food and water. At that moment a Brahmin came. He requested for food.

The king Rantideva gave half the food to Brahmin as an offering to HARI (God). Then the Brahmin ate the food and left. Then another man (Sudra) came and asked for food. Then the family offered half of the rest half of the food. He ate and gone. Then another man came with a group of dogs and begged for food. So the remaining food was offered to that man. Then another low caste man arrived and begged for water since he was suffering with thirst and requested to save him by giving the water Rantideva secured. Then the King Rantideva offered the water even through the entire family suffering with thirst and hunger for 48 days with great compassion to save the life of the guest.



King Rantideva worships God who is in the form of Man and His Dogs

Then all Brahma and other *devatas* (angels) came down to earth offered the King and His Family liberation and *Vaikuntha* (Heaven) ூ



Dokka Seethamma Story

ூ There was a Brahmin couple by name Srimati Narsamma and Sri Bhavani Sankar Danappindi in Mandapeta village of East Godavari District

of composite Madras State and present Andhra Pradesh State. They had a daughter in 1841 and named her as Seethamma.

Sri Joganna Dokka, who lived in Lankala Gannavaram, married Seethamma after he lost his first wife. Seethamma joined her husband when she was very young. She rendered services to her husband, God, and guests day and night. Her husband's family was rich. She spent all their property for the charity of *Annadaana*. She had a son by name Sri Subbarayudu and daughter-in-law by name Subbamma. They also cooperated to render *Annadaana* service.

Srimati Seethamma lost her mother when she was very young. Also later she lost her father. Next she lost her husband too. But she never gave up her charity of giving food (*Annadaana*). In those days the *Jamindars* (rich land lords) used to donate grains and money to Seethammagaru whenever she made any request.

One day, Lord Vishnu came in disguise as a beggar and asked Srimati Seethamma for the golden necklace (*Kante*) in her neck. In spite of her husband preventing her from giving the necklace, she donated the ornament secretly to the beggar. Maha Vishnu then revealed to her through a dream that it was He who had come as the beggar.

One day, a person who had many bad habits came from Bombay to her village. While stealing her silk saree he was caught red-handed and arrested in the streets. By the grace and kindness of Seethamma the thief was released.

One dark night, the river Godavari was overflowing with floods and the sky was filled with clouds. While all the beings were asleep, a *Harijan* (person of untouchable caste) called out from the other side of the Godavari river saying he was hungry. Seethamma heard the noise of hunger. Immediately, she prepared the food and requested her husband to take her to the other side of the river and serve the needy. Her husband shirked at the thought. So, with great courage she went alone to the other side by boat and served the hungry person.

At that point, two ghosts (one had killed his brother and due that sin became a ghost; and the other was the killed one who became a goblin or *Brahma Raakshasa*) appeared to her. They requested to give the virtue of serving that food (*dahara-surrendering the merit through water from palm into other man or soul*) so that they could get rid of their ghost forms. She donated that virtue of service. One got rid of pain and the other went to heaven.

The king of Pithapuram, Sri Raja Rao Maheepati Gangadhara Ramarao Bahadur, arrived one day to test Seethamma. She served a delicious six-course meal to the king. When the Prime Minister (*Diwan*) pretended he

was sick, she specially prepared and served him food that was appropriate for a sick person.

Such was her greatness that Sri Karra Agnihotra Sastry, a famous Veda Pundit, came to see Seethamma. Due to her meritorious charity He circumambulated her and prostrated at her feet.

India was ruled by the British in those days. In 1902 A.D. December the Edward 7th was crowned Emperor. An invitation was sent from the Emperor to Srimati Dokka Seethamma to participate in the great function of Crowning. She refused saying that she does not want any respect, recognition, and presents. Finally it was decided to keep the photo of Srimati Seethamma Dokka adjacent to the picture of the Emperor Edward during the ceremony in Delhi. The glory of her acts of *Annadana* reached England and was recognized by the British Government. Her photo was also kept in the Darbar Hall in London during Crowning ceremony.

The following is the extract from the Madras

Gazette:

“By Command of his Excellency, the Viceroy and Governor General in Council, this certificate is presented in the name of his gracious Majesty, King Edward VII, Emperor of India to Dokka Seethamma Garu of Gannavaram in recognition of her well known charity.” Madras (Sd.) G. Stocks, 1st January, 1903 Chief secretary to Government of Madras.



Dokka Seetamma

Such a great soul merged with God on Wednesday April 28, 1908. All the hungry in that region still remember her name even today. Let her fame stay till the end of *Kalpa* (great flood).

[Source: The life history of “*Nirata* (ever) *Annadaata* (charioteer of food) Seethamma Dokka” by Sri Mittipati Seetharama Chayanulu and Brahmana Sarvaswamu; Brief history of Andhra Pradesh, first volume published by All India Bharateeya Brahmana Karivena Nitya Annadaana Satram, Srisailam, Andhra Pradesh.] ❧❧❧

These stories also illustrate how any food offered with a clean mind and heart full of love, tastes like nectar, and has the effect of nectar. It is important to note that *our thoughts affect the food we cook!* To purify the mind and the intellect for the correct reflection of the truth, the first caution is in regard to food. Indeed, this is a very serious matter for *Sadhakas*.

❧❧❧ There lived in Malur, Mysore state, a pious Brahmin who was a great scholar. He had an equally pious wife. He was always intent on *puja* and

japadhyanas and was known far and wide for his virtuous character. One day, a *sanyasin* called Nityananda came to his door seeking alms; so, he was happy beyond measure. He invited the monk to take dinner with him the next day so that he might honor him with due hospitality. He hung green festoons over his doors and made elaborate arrangements for reception. But, at the eleventh hour, physical impurity rendered his wife unfit to prepare food for the honored guest or for any one else. A neighbor volunteered to cook the meal and she was brought in and introduced into the kitchen. Everything went off well and all were as happy as they could be, under the circumstances. Only, the *sanyasin* was wrung during meals by an overpowering desire to steal the silver cup which the host had placed near his plate. In spite of his best efforts, the evil idea won and the *sanyasin* hurried to his abode with the cup hidden in the folds of his robe.

He could not sleep that night, for his conscience pricked him so. He felt he had brought the disgrace on his Guru and on the *rishis* whom he invoked by the mantras he recited. He could not rest, until he ran back into the Brahmin's house and, falling at his feet, restored the article with tears of repentance trickling down his cheeks. Everyone wondered how such a saint could stoop so low; then, someone suggested it might be the fault transmitted to the food he ate, by the person who cooked it. And when they examined the history of the neighbor they found that she was an irrepressible thief! The thieving tendency had, by subtle contact, affected the food she prepared. ❧❧❧

This is the reason why *sadhakas* are advised to live on fruits and tubers only when they reach a certain stage of spiritual achievement.

The body is the crucible for the purification of the mind. If the crucible is not strong, it will crack or break. To make the crucible of the body strong enough to withstand the heat of the spiritual fires, care should be taken to choose the food that is taken in and the activities which are taken up so as to make the body strong and worthy

As you advance higher and higher in your Saadhana, you will feel more and more the *subtle influences* of the food you take as also the influences radiated by environments and the embodied energies around you, till you reach that stage where you will see Divinity everywhere, in everyone and in everything. ❧❧❧

Mahalaya Paksham & Its Significance

❧❧❧ King Srnjaya performed *putra kameshti* and prayed to God for bestowing a son who can produce gold at will. In due course of time, he was blessed with a son who was named as Suvarni Istivi. Everything about the child was gold except the sweat, spit and other natural excreta. The king built golden palaces and abodes where even the toilets were made of gold. Shortly, some thieves came to know of the little prince's prowess, and stole him from the palace. They took him to the forest and foolishly thinking that there would be

gold, they cut open the child's stomach. Finding nothing, they left the dead body and went away.

The unhappy King Srinjaya lived for some more years and reached Bramaloka after his death. There he was offered food made of gold, because of his yearning for gold. After going hungry for a couple of days he complained to Brahma. Brahma explained the reason, and allowed him to go back to earth for 15 days. He said that the king must talk to his subjects about greed, and what it leads to.

The reformed king accordingly spent the time in advising his subjects the importance of *shraddha*, and that they should offer rice, vegetables, oil, etc., to the needy who partake them on behalf of the ancestors and other invited gods. ❧❧❧

Wealth earned in the right way can bring solace and happiness, but greed can only cause misery. Let us not meditate for money and debase ourselves, and indulge in a million ways to amass wealth.

On the day of *Mahalaya Paksham*, make about 0.5 inches balls with cooked rice. Drop these rice balls in milk; add sugar or *jaggery*. *Kheer* (pudding) thus prepared shall be offered to the Divine Mother for peace and protection. For spiritual upliftment, *ghee* lamps should be lit on banana stalk and set afloat in water.

Charity and Shri Shirdi Sai Baba

In order to teach the devotees the lesson of charity and to remove their attachment to money and thus to purify their minds, Shri Shirdi Sai Baba extracted *Dakshina* from them; but there was this peculiarity, as Baba said, that he has to give back hundred times more than what he has received.

Shri Sai Baba advised the author many years ago, on a winter day, to offer grains to birds and sugar to ants in the USA. I was doubtful and wondered from where birds would come in the winter to eat the grains I offered and postponed this offering. Shri Sai Baba reminded me one more time. After this reminder I sprinkled some bird seeds outside the door. The wonder of it! Colorful birds came and started eating the grains I had thrown for them. I continued feeding the birds over the years. It is said that sometimes Saints from the Himalayas come as birds and eat the food offered with love. It is also said that he who offers *annadanam* will himself never go hungry and I can attest to that. Sai baba will take care of such individuals.

More specifically, here are some ways to observe daily charity:

(1) Give sugar to the ants

- (2) Feed the cows with grass
- (3) Feed the birds with grain, seeds, fruit, or bird feed
- (4) Offer water to plants or trees (e.g. pour water to *Tulasi* plant at home)
- (5) Offer food to the hungry on your birthday, marriage anniversary etc.

☞☞ Kuttan was an old watch dog in the village of Bikketti, and was the darling of the village folks. But he was chained as he was not well-disposed to strangers. When Baba visited the village, he strained his utmost to free himself from the chain. Baba came near the dog, petted him, and directed the dog be unchained. The dog sat on the *dais* with Baba during the *bhajans*. When it was time to partake in the feast, Baba asked that Kuttan be fed first! After the feast was over, Kuttan placed his head on Baba's divine feet, and merged in Him. ☞☞

Such is the power of *Annadanam*. Elderly people including our parents also realize the importance of timely food.

Baba's Message To Mothers

Mother is the pillar for the Universe and base of the families. The mother is the most decisive factor in child's life. A child's future is molded by the mother therefore all mothers shall become and act as annapournas—cook while changing God's name. Feed the family and themselves. This will grant them bliss, liberation in the mind will be freed from worry and fickle mindedness. Please join the *Annadanam* program and acquire the merit which even Brahma cannot fully describe.

Annadanam by Pittsburgh and Austin Shirdi Sai Baba Temples

America supported many countries to feed the hungry people in the world. This enabled the USA to have prosperity and world leadership.

The Pittsburgh and Austin Temples serve more than 30,000 free meals each year to their devotees. Also, more than 40,000 free meals and/or sandwiches are distributed to the homeless.

Eight Veda Pundits impart higher learning such as the *Vedas* and *Smartham* to about 108 or more Vedic students in both the Kakinada and Puttaparthi campuses (Andhra Pradesh), Katra and Srinagar (Jammu and Kashmir), Gantok (Sikkim) where about 100,000 free meals are served during the year.

SO THINK AND JOIN THE ANNADANA CLUB. DEPOSIT IN THE SAI
BABA BANK AND ACQUIRE THE INDESCRIBABLE MERIT FOR YOU
AND YOUR FAMILY MEMBERS.

BOW TO SAI – SATISFY THE HUNGER OF ALL THE BEINGS IN THE
UNIVERSE

MAY ALL BE HAPPY
MAY ALL BE HEALTHY
MAY ALL SEE AUSPICIOUS THINGS

LET LIVE TOGETHER
LET US NOURISH THE WISDOM SO FAR ACQUIRED
LET US PROSPER TOGETHER
LET US LIVE WITH FRIENDSHIP WITHOUT ENVY

BOW TO SAI ~ PEACE BE TO ALL

Shirdi Sai Baba Temple, Pittsburgh and Austin are grateful for the unstinted support of their devotees. As the year closes we seek your contributions to be used for worthy causes such as *Annadanam*.

Thank you for your continued support.

May BABA bless us all!



“SERVING HANDS ARE HOLIER AND DEARER TO GOD THAN PRAYING LIPS”



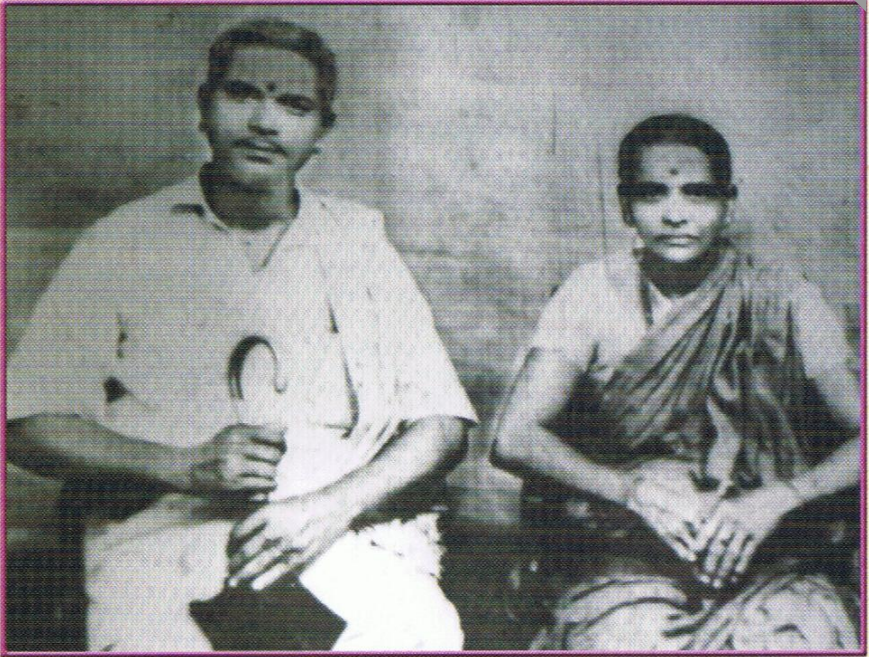


Jill Yogini and Craig Sastry Edwards of the Shirdi Sai Baba Temple in Austin, TX, with Mahalakshmi and Panduranga Rao Malyala at Puttaparthi Veda Pathasala in August 2009



About the Author

Panduranga Rao Malyala is a graduate from Carnegie-Mellon University-Pittsburgh-Pennsylvania, 1978. Minister for 34 years in USA. Attained Sainthood in 2009. Also honored (titled) as *Vajapayee* in 2006 (for conducting many Peace *Yagnas*).



VENKATA CHALAPATHI RAO & PULLAMMA MALYALA
Founder Parents of Saint Panduranga Rao Malayala

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Goddess Annapurna
The giver of food and plenty

The Goddess of the elements, *Bhutesa*, represents the physical being or body of food (*anna-maya-murti*), who is the being-of-speech (*van-maya-murti*).

The connection of the body with the life energies is dual. These energies express themselves to the body and are sustained by the body. This double relation is represented by speech (*vac*) and food (*anna*). Speech is the outward projection of the mind, and food is the substance of life breath and thought.

All physical matter used in the making of physical bodies is spoken of as food. The body is entirely made of food, and is food for other bodies. The spoken word is also the materialized, the transmissible, form of thought moving from body to body as the food of the mind.

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