

29. Why Do You Use Sand During Bath?

One night, Mother Sarada Devi was doing japam for a long time forgoing her sleep. An assistant who came to know about it came to her and asked, "Amma! Seems you did not sleep well last night?"

The Mother replied: "Yes, I did japam until two o' clock for the welfare of my disciples. Many of my disciples don't do dhyAnam, japam; so I did on their behalf for a long time so that they should get only good things in life."

A similar incident happened in Kanchi.

One day Kanchi Kamakoti pITHAdhipati Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswathi SwamigaL was taking bath. A small boy, who was nearby, was watching him.

Sri SwamigaL in his usual habit took bath using mRttikA (sand) for soap. When the boy saw this he asked, "Won't you use soap for your bath?"

"I do not like the smell of soap," said Maha Periyavaa. "That is the reason I use sand in the place of soap."

"Well, when you use sand to scrub your body, some of it might fall in your eyes and irritate them... So I asked!"

Understanding the tender heart of the boy, Sri Maha SwamigaL continued: "Our Shastras say that if we use sand to scrub our body while bathing, all our sins will leave us. So I do it this way."

The boy was not satisfied with his answer. He persisted: "summa sollAtheengo (don't just tell me something)... neengathAn ummAchi Acche (is it not that you are God)? How can there be sins for you? Why should you take bath scrubbing with sand?"

Sri Maha SwamigaL stopped his bathing for a second. He looked keenly at the boy and continued: "I don't know if I am ummAchi or if I have done anything sinful. But then the sins of my bhakta would only be added to me who has the name as their gurunAthar. You have it that I am scrubbing myself with the sand while taking bath, to remove those sins."

Having no further maturity or age to continue the conversation, the boy gave a childish grin.

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Glossary:

mRttikA - earth, clay, loam; a kind of fragrant earth; aluminous slate