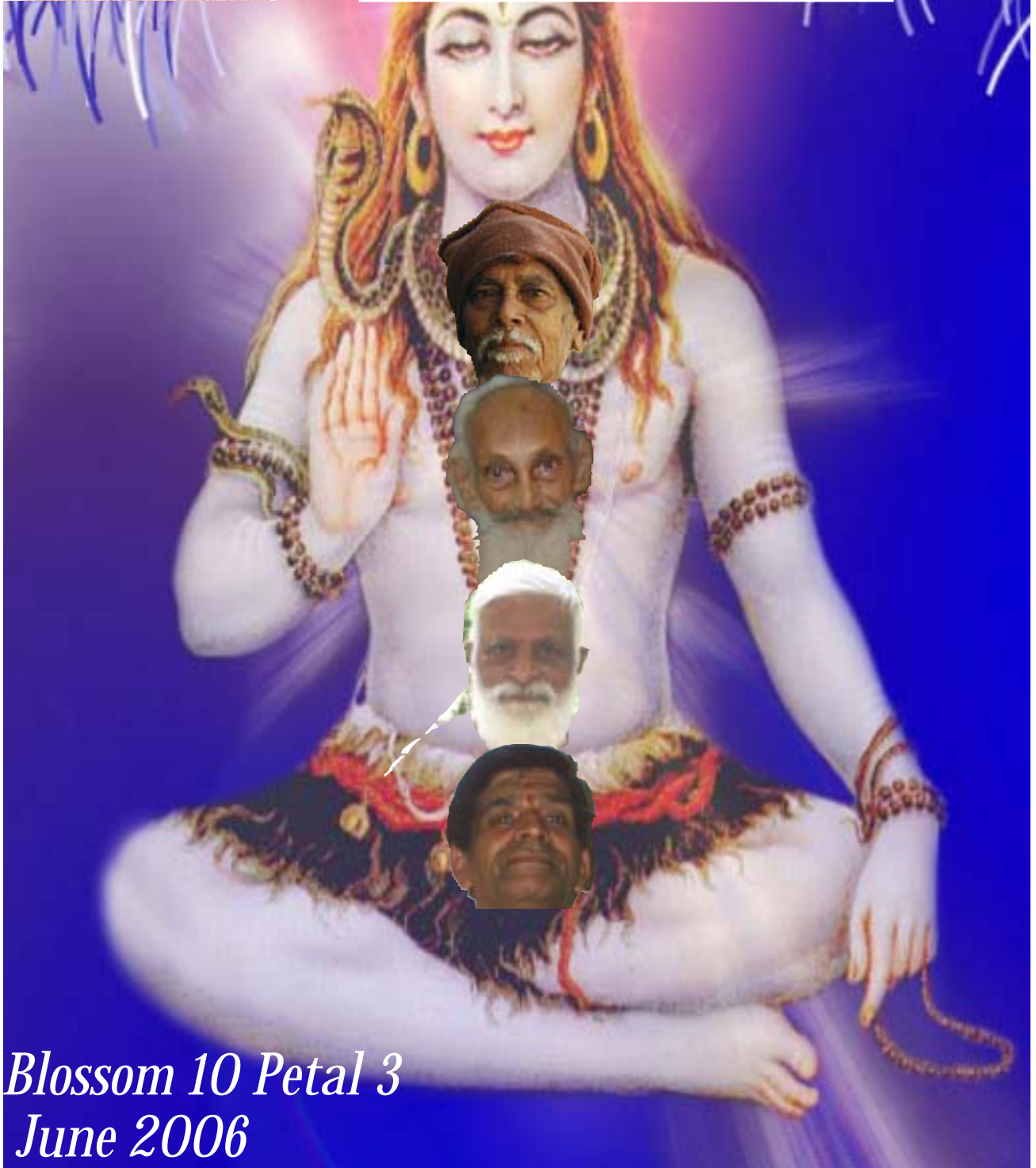




# Sri Chakra

*The Source of the Cosmos*

The Journal of the Sri Rajarajeswari Peetam, Rush, NY



*Blossom 10 Petal 3*  
*June 2006*

# OUR THOUGHTS

It is surprising to see some of the most enlightened and spiritually advanced people still unable to answer a basic question: Who's your guru?

For those who have only learned or received mantras from one person, the answer is simple. But those who have diksha from more than one guru in the parampara (or sometimes various paramparas) often have more difficulty with the question. This is why the Sri Chakra posed this question to Aiya, complete with several different scenarios.

So let us say a dikshita was initiated by Guru A (since A is for Aiya, this is very appropriate). Guru A's Sri Guru is Guru B; his Parama Guru is Guru C. If the shishya received only one small mantra from Guru A and the rest from Gurus B and C, Guru A is still the shishya's primary teacher.

If the shishya received all mantras from Guru A but then began studying with Gurus B or C, his or her main obligation is still toward Guru A. If the shishya hasn't even seen Guru A in years, he or she must still consider Guru A as the Sri Guru. According to Aiya and several advanced seekers, the one who first initiated the student into the lineage is always that student's Sri Guru. Also, more than one person cannot share the title of being a shishya's Sri Guru.

Not all may agree with this rule, but it exists to remind seekers of their obligation and gratitude to the one who inducted them into the lineage. Even when giving the smallest mantra, one's Sri Guru must take the student's karma, thereby preparing him or her for a lifetime of japam, and making him or her ready to reap the full benefits of said japam.

Some take the very humble view that anyone who has taught them anything can be called their guru, to a certain degree. Even Aiya says that his first guru was his mother, which is true for many people—everyone is indebted to their first guardians even more so than they are to their spiritual guru, hence the Sanskrit saying, “Maatha, Pitha, Guru, Devam” (meaning one's obligations are to one's mother, father, guru and God, in that order).

One may be indebted to several teachers in his or her lifetime, such as the people who taught them music, dance, reading or other skills. From what Aiya has displayed at the Dattatreya shrine in the temple, it is great if one remembers his or her gurus in the way that Aiya remembers his mother, Mathaji Shiva Sachidananda Saraswati, and Guruji, whose pictures all adorn the mantapam.

For seekers in the Sri Vidya tradition, however, the automatic response when asked, “who's your guru?” should be the name of the person who first initiated them into the lineage—irrespective of the seeker's connections with others in the lineage.

Lastly, when the Sri Chakra queried Aiya about whether one can attain liberation without the direct influence of his or her Sri Guru, he replied that Devi has different paths in mind for all of us. And those who are separated from their main teacher will eventually find themselves back on the path that leads to the Sri Guru.

The articles in this month's feature section shed light on many gurus in the later stages of our lineage, as it is Aiya's express wish that knowledge about these great people should not be lost to future generations. A very deep thanks goes out to Aiya, Kathy Allen, Prasad Balasubramanian, Mr. Madhvanath, Navin Parthasarathy and Swati Shirname for their contributions to this issue.

The Sri Chakra is delighted to accept any articles or pictures e-mailed to [sri\\_chakra\\_mag@srividya.org](mailto:sri_chakra_mag@srividya.org) because this magazine cannot operate without the help of devotees!

Sri Gurubhyo Namaha!

The *Sri Chakra* staff



# JUNE

# NEWSLETTER

## **Since Last Issue..**

At the beginning of April, Aiya went to Wisconsin to teach a class at Corinne Dempsey's house, to an audience of several different kinds of people from all walks of life. Around the same time period, the temple's bhajan group was invited to an interfaith studies event at Nazareth College, which saw participation from members of several faiths, including Buddhism, Judaism and Islam. After performing a puja in New Jersey around mid-April, Aiya headed off to San Diego, North Carolina, and Toronto to perform events, all in the span of one week! After finishing the Tamil workshop in Toronto, Aiya settled into preparations for the Pratishtha anniversary festival at the end of May.

## **Past Month's Events**

### **Tamil New Year**

By Kamyam Ramaswamy

Aiya performed dhani puja, lasting about one hour, to celebrate Tamil New Year's on Thursday April 13. The offerings consisted of rice, grains, sweets,

fruits and other auspicious items. At the end of the puja, all devotees partook of shakarai pongal (sweet rice).

### **Maha Prathyangira Homam**

By Kamyam Ramaswamy

More than 40 devotees could be seen carrying plates of food, puja vessels and homam materials to the far eastern bank of the Kashi river on Sunday April 16, where Aiya performed the Maha Prathyangira homam at 2 p.m.



**Aiya offering a basket full of chillis into the fire**

The homam was done for the protection of the temple's devotees and lasted about three hours, setting a record for the amount of red chillies offered. Navin and Swati sat for the homam—for a more detailed account of the day's events, please see Navin's article further in this issue.

### **Appar Guru Puja**

By Kamyam Ramaswamy

This year's puja took place very briefly on Sunday, April 23 and saw the Appar moorthi from the Nataraja sannidhi moved to the centre of the temple. Amid offerings of fruits and flowers, Aiya sang thevarams as part of the puja and did the final karpuram aarthi within an hour.

### **Toronto Puja Workshop in Tamil**

by Abhi Somaskanda

On Sunday, May 7th, Toronto was host to a puja workshop. The class was conducted completely in Tamil by Aiya, and he spoke for 6 hours about the how and why of puja. He also showed several diagrams relating to each aspect of puja.

In the days leading up to the workshop, Aiya spent countless days and hours carefully drawing functions of human physiology as they relate to sadhana. Combining human physiology and puja this intricately for the first time, all 125 people who attended were fully satisfied with the depth of information Aiya presented.

## Chitra Poornima

By Kamyam Ramaswamy

Friday May 12 saw the temple's celebration of Chitra Poornima, which involved puja to Chitragupta. According to belief, Chitragupta is the record-keeper of Yama (the god of death) and he tallies up all the karma that people accumulate in their lifetimes. Some Hindus believe that worshipping Chitragupta on Chitra Poornima will charm him into balancing the books in their favour. Aiya performed tarpanam puja in the morning, and said the temple was graced by the presence of a sannyasi from Gujurat during the occasion. During the celebrations, Aiya allowed the sannyasi Hamsananda to perform Sri Chakra puja at the central meru.



**Utsava Rajarajeswari dressed in a rice pavadai, a garland of vadai, charam, and flowers, surrounded by curries and at least 9 varieties of fruits. (see May festival feature article on next page!)**

**Aiya and a temple devotee doing puja to the 1008 shankus (see May festival feature article!)**



## Upcoming Events

### Guru Poornima 2006

By Kamyam Ramaswamy

Devotees from Hamilton, Ontario and the surrounding areas are organizing Guru Poornima this year, which is aimed to begin around 4 p.m. on Monday July 10. To exemplify temple unity and togetherness, male devotees are encouraged to wear white garments on festival day and female devotees are asked to wear red or yellow garments. The festival will include puja to Aiya and Amma, as well as a skit about the Guru Parampara, bhajans and dinner. If you would like to participate in the festivities or be updated about Guru Poornima news and meetings, please send an e-mail to [gurupoornima2006@gmail.com](mailto:gurupoornima2006@gmail.com).

### Aadi Amavasya 2006

By Kamyam Ramaswamy

This festival is an important day for people who have missed the anniversary of passing for their fathers and male ancestors. This year, it will fall on Monday July 24 and will consist of tarpanam puja,

with participants performing part of the ceremonies by the creek at Kashi (weather permitting). The puja will last approximately one hour in the early morning.

### Aadi Pooram 2006

By Kamyam Ramaswamy

This year, the festival celebrating Devi's transition into womanhood will fall on Friday July 28. The temple's celebration typically lasts throughout the morning and encompasses both the morning and afternoon nitya pujas. Many palahara are offered to Devi after she is bathed with milk and kusha grass, and the festival concludes shortly after Devi is carried in procession around the temple.

### Varalakshmi Vratam 2006

By Kamyam Ramaswamy

Married and kanya women are encouraged to participate in the Varalakshmi puja on the evening of Friday August 4. The puja allows ladies to perform puja to Varalakshmi herself (in the form of a ghee deepam) for the well-being of their households and spouses and is one of the brightest and most colourful festivals of the year. Sponsorship for only performing the puja is \$51 and sponsorship for performing the puja and keeping the puja set is \$86.

# MAY FESTIVAL 2006



By Kanya Ramaswamy

The eighth anniversary of the Rajarajeshwari Peetam commenced with the arrival of Vishnu-Durga Devi from St. Catharines, Ontario at about 9:30 a.m. on Friday May 19<sup>th</sup>. The kalasa sthapanam was already underway so Mangai amma performed the puja for both Durga and utsava Ganapathi as Devi was placed between Ganapathi and utsa Murugan inside the temple.

An hour-long Vaancha-kalpa Ganapathi homam then began, giving devotees the chance to each offer at least two modakams into the fire. After the morning's events wrapped up at about 2:30 p.m., the crowd was treated to a classical flute performance that spanned three generations—Dr. N. Ramani, played with Sri R. Thiagarajan (his son) and Sri Athul Kumar (Dr. Ramani's grandson).



**Ganapathi all ready to go in procession on the first day of the Prathishta**

In the evening, utsava Ganapathi was dressed, taken for shodasa-upachara puja in the yajnashala, and then carried around the temple on a palanquin. As he entered the temple again, the female devotees were given the chance to carry him back inside. Friday's festivities came to an end at about 10:30 p.m.

### **The Prathishta's live Nadaswara Vidwans**



Saturday's program began with the traditional Chandi homam, which started at about 6:15 a.m. after part of the day's kalasa sthapanam and Ganapathi puja were completed. This year, Aiya performed the homam, himself, sitting with Parameshwari (teacher) from Toronto and Mr. Viswanathan from the Boston area.

The kalasa sthapanam picked up again at 11 a.m. and included the bathing of utsava Rajarajeshwari during abhishekam. Following the abhishekam, utsava Devi was adorned with rice, vadai, flowers, and a sari as part of the temple's annual Annaipavadai celebration. The afternoon's concert was performed by the official musicians for the entire festival—Sri Subhan Kasim and Sri Subhan Babu (grandsons and disciples of Dr. Sheik Chinna Moulana) performed on the nadaswaram with Sri S. Senthil Kumar on thavil.

The musicians continued their craft later that evening when utsava Rajarajeshwari and utsava Ganapathi were carried in procession on the large chariot. The chapparam stood as tall as the trees on the temple property and took about an hour to get all the way around the temple. The day's festivities ended at exactly midnight with the final arthi.

But the real work was just beginning for a select number of volunteers who were given the daunting task of setting up 1008 valampuri (right-handed) shanka overnight, each with their own fruits, betel leaves, and lotus blossoms in the water. On Sunday morning, devotees entered the temple to see a formation of shanka in the pattern of the six

chakras in the body, starting with the muladhara (in the yajnasala) and ending with the sahasrara chakra (on the wooden pyramid inside the temple).

Even with several sponsors the shanka alone took hours within the abhishekam, so much so that lunch was only served at 4 p.m. Immediately after eating, vocalist Srimathi S. Sowmya took the stage, accompanied by Sri Neyveli R. Narayanan (Mridangam) and Sri R.K. Sriramkumar. Of the songs performed was one composition on Aiya by Suhir of Rochester!

Dattatreya puja began at about 8 p.m., and as is the tradition, was set up and executed by the temple kids. The small Dattatreya murthi was brought out on a mini palanquin to the yajnasala, where 16-year-old Purvaja Kamat did shodasa-upachara puja and several small children got to fan the murthi. Because Sunday's weather was bitterly cold, Aiya decided the ratham would be confined to inside the temple instead of going outside, in the interest of the childrens' health.

With naivedyam including chevda, chocolates, and fruit candy, Dattatreya made his way around the yajnasala in a constant shower of rose and lotus petals from Aiya. Immediately after the procession finished at about 10:30 p.m., Aiya offered the Bhairava bali outside and with a crowd of about 30 people, performed udvasanam of all the digdevata kalasas that had been worshipped for the duration of the festival.



### ***In Two Months***

#### **The next issue of the Sri Chakra Magazine**

Devi willing, the next issue of the Sri Chakra Magazine will be up on the temple's website ([www.srividya.org](http://www.srividya.org)) by the beginning of August. The next issue will focus on the topic of "20th Century Saints of India." We will be looking at the lives of modern-day miracle workers and holy souls alike, who show us that spirituality and a connection to the divine do not have to be lost in this fast-paced day and age.

If you are interested in writing on any of these topics, please email us at the address given in the front of the magazine ([sri\\_chakra\\_mag@srividya.org](mailto:sri_chakra_mag@srividya.org)). We are also looking for anyone who would like to submit or take photographs to go along with the topics.

If you would like to contribute, the deadline for submissions (photographs and/or articles) is Friday, July 21. Please be a part of this effort and we look forward to seeing your contributions and suggestions to help make this magazine the best it can be!

Sri Gurubhyo Namaha!

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# MAHA PRATHYANGIRA HOMAM

by Navin Parthasarathy

It is surprising how simple conversations turn out and lead to events that have great significance in our lives and affect the community as a whole. Especially in this temple. I have begun to believe and see the intricate web of the cosmos that the Mother is gracious enough to show Her children from time to time.

We were discussing homams with Aiya and he casually mentioned that he just finished a powerful Prathyangira homam inside the temple and used up 20 kg. of chillies as offerings. It was really amazing the power and the force of the homam as people really felt its effects. I was still feeling the effects of the earlier one held in February. It was as though someone wiped the slate clean.

So I piped in, "Aiya, why stop at 20 kg... let's go all the way... let's do a grand one."

He smiled and quipped, "I can't do it inside; it has to be outside, but it is a good idea."

"Why not Aiya," I asked. "We haven't done a homam outside since the yajnashala was built."

So we talked and we decided to have the homam outside.

Aiya asked me if it was fine if we allow everyone to participate. I have learnt by now that I am just a spoke in this wheel of life. I was happy that things were beginning to go that way—of course everyone's participation empowers the ceremony even more! Isn't that the very ethos of this temple?

But before we get into the actual events I must narrate for posterity the story about the Nikumbala Yajnam that Aiya had narrated at least five or six times in the next few days.

Indrajit, Ravana's son, was battling it out with Rama and Lakshmana. He is not an ordinary warrior, but even he was surprised at the skill and resilience of the Brothers. So one evening he disappeared from the battlefield at sunset. That is the time when no fighting is allowed as per the Dharma. Rama was curious and asked Vibhishena. He replied that Indrajit had gone to perform Nikumbala homam.

He described the power of that homam and told Rama, "If he ever successfully completes the homam, only Devi herself can defeat him. Even you cannot do a

thing! So kill him before he offers the Purnahuti."

So they found out where he was performing this powerful homam. It was near a place called Aiyavaadi (from AivarVaadi—indicative of the place where the Pandavas had come and hidden the weapons during their exile) near modern Kumbakonam. They reached there just in time to see Indrajit about to offer the Purnahuti. Rama fired a crescent-shaped arrow and severed Indrajit's head.

As he died he propitiated the Mother and asked her, "Mother! Why did you let me die like this at the hands of my enemies?" The compassionate Mother appeared before him and told him that since Rama and Lakshmana are avatars he could not come in their way. So he accepted it and Mother Prathyangira gave him a boon. The great soul that he was he asked that whoever performed a homam at that spot will have all their desires fulfilled. And that temple stands to this day! The Ramayana occurred in the Treta Yuga, which was several hundreds of thousands of years ago! This boggles my mind.

The location is important to note. The temple is surrounded by eight smashaanams (burial grounds) and if there were eight bodies burning in the ghats (pyres) at that time it makes the homam very powerful.

So we were all excited about our homam at the temple and the date was set for Sunday April 16, after Tamil New Year's. Everyone could offer one bakshanam that would be prepared in the temple or they could pay for a bakshanam as an offering. Aiya and a small group headed out toward Kashi and found a spot aligned with the Shiva Lingam just beyond the river.

Since the homam was to be conducted outside we talked about the logistics involved and whether the weather would hold up. Aiya measured the dimensions 54' x 54' x 54'. We came back to the temple and started to assign roles and responsibilities. We also made a list of possible bakshanams and people who can come and cook and how to make best use of the kitchen resources. We also were trying to arrange for all the ingredients especially the 35 or so kilos of red chillies from Toronto.



The freshly dug homam pit all set for the ritual with fire wood and coconut shells.

The temple was an anthill of activity—people digging the pit, people arranging all the puja items, people cooking the bakshanams, the lawnmowers being used as transportation vehicles, wood being cut for the fire, electricity being drawn, water being piped all the way. But there was no whining or groaning and everyone even right down to the little ones pitched in.

### The Day of the Homam

There were still a few inches to be dug. The final dimensions were 45 x 45 x 45. That itself was a deep pit and Aiya told us to stop and not dig any further. This was accomplished and as we were leaving an eagle came did a clockwise Pradakshina around the fire pit three times and left. Aiya said that He (Vishnu) just came to check that all is well at the place before HIS SISTER (Pratyangira) came there!



Garuda doing his pradakshina around the homa kunda before the homam.

All the items were carted to the site on our faithful lawnmowers. Funny site with these modern lawnmowers being driven by women in sarees and guys in dhotis. I wish the rishis could see

us... maybe they would stroke their beards in appreciation!

As we all headed to the site we settled down and started with the usual invocations of Varuna and Ganapathi. As we started the fire and started the proceedings the fire was too hot and was blowing all over the place. We were unable to sit and Aiya advised us to stand and perform the homam. We were all chanting the Maha Pratingira mantra. It was powerful yet there was a sense of peace or sowmyam, unlike the other times when we felt the sheer ferocity of Her presence.

We offered red, dried, long chillies— about 35 kg (77 lbs). No one coughed, except when we accidentally wiped our faces with our chilli-smearred hands! We were singed by the fire, but we bravely stood there, squinting into the wind and offering our prayers and our hearts to the Mother. I was too focused on the offerings and avoiding getting singed and smoked into submission. I am sure everyone had a good time and opportunity to offer to their hearts' content.

Aiya later told us that by the 10<sup>th</sup> Ahuti (offering) SHE appeared



One of the many baskets full of chillis offered into the fire.



and Blessed everyone. SHE was pleased and said SHE was happy!

I believe that Annapoorni Amma and Ganapathi (Mangai) Amma saw her at that moment. Aiya did not do the Pratingira Khadga Mala and other intricacies that he normally does as he said that She was satisfied.

During Purnahuti the fire started climbing and I felt it plucking at me and I was being singed. I took a step back and the fire followed. I barely held on as Aiya chanted the Purnahuti mantras and finally offered it in with shouts of Arohara! It was a satisfying moment.

As we were leaving there came Garuda again. He did his three circles and went away. What a blessing! Aiya keeps telling us all that miracles are not something that happen with fireworks and glamour. They are ordinary events that are enhanced by our awareness and connection to the Divine that is always present. How true.

We finished the final offerings to the Digdevatas and headed down to the river for bali. As we dissolved the turmeric for Ganapathi he took shape in the waters for a brief second and dissolved. Bali was offered and we retired to the temple. We went back to the homa kundam to make sure that the fire was burnt completely and kept stirring it to make sure all the layers were burnt.

We were all excited and happy. Aiya told us then that he saw HER at the 10<sup>th</sup> Ahuti and how SHE was very sowmyam. Everyone

had felt that calmness and benign aspect of her in some form or the other that day.

Here is the clincher. Mother Pratyangira appeared to Aiya in his dreams that night and said, "Magane! (son)... you appear to have singed yourself in the fire... here, let me soothe you." And she poured the kalasam full of water onto him. Aiya came to the temple next morning all excited and told us, "She called me Magane, She called me Magane!"

At that moment we realized that we are standing in the presence of true divinity and devotion—a true child of the Mother. Aiya's enthusiasm never fades and we are fortunate to have him for our guru and to have this opportunity to interact with this great and compassionate being! I hope that someday we will all be worthy of being called "Magane" by Her!

I also wish to add that it is unique that as a volunteer temple we are able to get together and participate in such great events. This can happen only when we are truly dedicated without selfish motives and jealousy. It is my Punyam and Bhagyam to be associated with each and everyone of you.



# HOW I MET MY GURU

by Swati Shirname

It all started over a weekend workshop early in 1998. My husband, Navin, and I were part of a self-realization Society (SRF) and had decided to take this three-day weekend workshop where the agenda was meditate, chant, meditate, exercise, meditate, eat... you get the drift. Here, we met this truly amazing person Rama, who incidentally was the only other brown-skinned person in the group. As luck had it, we forged a very strong friendship in that short stay.

Every afternoon we used to take long walks in the many trails around the farm. The cold crisp air was a great setup for many heart-to-heart talks. In one such exchange, Navin got talking about his favourite temple, the Rajarajeshwari temple in Bangalore. Rama interjected saying there was another Rajarajeshwari temple in Rochester, NY. One thing lead to another and we realized Maha Shivaratri was two days away. So we all decided to put in sick leaves and head off to Rochester for Shivaratri.

In a lot of high spirits and much junk food, the three of us set off. The journey was extremely

pleasant. And though we talked pretty much non-stop, I had a very sketchy description of Aiya or where we were going. After reaching Rochester and just before searching for Aiya's house we decided to eat dinner as Shivaratri would surely mean fasting at the temple. We had the most amazing Italian food, very close to Aiya's house. Incidentally, ever since I have tried to find that restaurant but no luck.



**Swati Shirname and her husband, Navin Parthasarathy**

I was surprised to pull up outside someone's house. There were many cars parked around the house. We were asked to park very far away and someone gave us a ride back to the house. It felt different barging into someone's house as opposed to going to a temple. I wasn't sure about our welcome. But we followed. Rama didn't even bother to knock on the front door; he just opened it and walked in. There was big a pile of footwear and I wondered again



**Aiya performing abhishekam to several lingas**

what this was leading to. There were loud chanting sounds coming from the garage. We decided to explore the upstairs area first before we jump into the action.

It surprised me to see lots of food laid out on the dining table. I later realized that as a Srividya Upasaka we don't fast as we are the living embodiment of the Devi. The only exception being, when your birth mother dies. In any case, this was all very new to me at that time.

After some time we ventured into the garage area. The loud chanting and the activity going on blew us away. Amidst a lot of 'happenings' I discovered Aiya. Everybody was in the midst of Rudram. Aiya had planned eka-dasa Rudra abhishekam that night. I wasn't sure I could even touch the Devi, forget about giving her abhishekam. So I just passed up this opportunity.

After the Rudram, the whole crowd proceeded to the living room and there was a lot of friendly laughing and chatting. We connected with what seemed like the entire crowd and in a matter of a few minutes were chatting, laughing and joking with everyone as if we've known each other forever. After a break, everyone again trooped back into the garage and we went through another abhishekam. This time I had managed to ask permission of Aiya for abhishekam and he had heartily encouraged me to go ahead.

After all, Devi is a mother and a woman. I was thrilled to bits with this simplistic explanation. We went through another Rudram. I went twice to do abhishekam, still not sure whether Aiya might revoke this right. J Again there was a break, I loved everyone's enthusiasm and lightness of spirit. This was really going great.

The next round of Rudram, Aiya stopped somewhere in the middle and called Navin and me to the center of the room. I was sure, I was out of the abhishekam route, and so I submitted to my fate and came forward. He proceeded to initiate Navin and me into a whole bunch of mantras. Now this I wasn't too sure of. I was, after all, a Krishna bhakta. Coming from a hardcore family where, if you don't worship Krishna you were doomed to darkness, I gingerly said to Aiya at the next break, "Aiya I am a Krishna bhakta."

He replied, "Amma, Krishna and Devi are the same." Just that. I

was stunned again at the simplicity of the explanation. I have read in every book, ever since I was a child that "God is one." And yet this simple truth had deluded me.

The good thing was from that day onwards we never missed a single day of mantra japam. This kind of regularized our puja from the sporadic state that it was in earlier. The next morning, the majority of the crowd was either sleeping or had dispersed. Aiya was still up and awake and offered to show us the new place where the temple was scheduled to move in May. We piled into his large van and visited the would-be place.

We came back by noon. Now we were too awake to sleep and so decided to head back to Boston. All three of us wanted to drive, as we were alert. One hour away from the temple all three of us had wilted, we pulled over and slept for sometime. This eventually formed a pattern for us. We always leave the temple, even after days of little to no sleep in the highest of spirit but one hour away and we are ready to drop.



**The temple's Madurai linga adorned after abhishekam**

In any case, we still visited the temple once in six months or so, still not thinking of Aiya as our Guru. He was a very learned man we liked to visit. Somewhere in Feb 2002, the dynamics changed.

Both Navin and I realized that this is it, Aiya IS our guru and we better start building a relationship with him. Then we started coming more often. Every visit Aiya overwhelmed us with his generosity and compassion.

By the end of 2002 we had made a commitment to come once a month at least. As Aiya said, if you are thirsty you come to the tap. This "tap" was a hose pouring at mile a minute. Until today every visit rejuvenates us like a lighting bolt. We remain at a high, reminiscing about our last visit with fondness. So this Guru Poornima, Navin and I we want to say, Aiya we can't thank you enough for what you have done for us. Our two souls are rescued forever.

Incidentally, many years later Navin was told that this Rajarajeshwari was actually an identical twin of the one in Bangalore. Carved from the same stone, by the same craftsman it is slightly smaller than the one in Bangalore. For Navin this was especially miraculous because just before he left India to migrate to the U.S., he had visited the Bangalore temple. There he had been asking the Mother, getting very emotional, how would he visit Her from this 'foreign' country or find spiritual solace. He asked of Her a promise to never let him go astray. And so for Navin, discovering Aiya's temple in Rush was an answer to his prayers. For weeks after he was told about the connection, Navin was stunned and amazed. Her grace is boundless.

# Temple Lore

***The stories of the devotees at the Sri Rajarajeswari Peetam create the very essence of the temple's soul. Starting this month, these stories will be chronicled in a regular section within the Sri Chakra journal. Aiya has verified all these tales for their authenticity, and he urges devotees to share their experiences for the benefit of future generations. All identities will be kept in the strictest confidentiality unless otherwise informed.***

Compiled by Kamyā Ramaswamy

One temple devotee was blessed enough to receive diksha from the spirit of Sri Ragavendra Swami, himself, but through the bodies of others. When this devotee lived in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu she was taught the Soundarya Lahari slokas with raga during a Devi puja. A man who this devotee had never seen before attended the puja and asked to see her shrine. He stood there for a minute, and then opened his hands up to reveal fistfuls of kumkum, which he poured onto the Kamakshi picture. He said to the devotee, "Don't think She's not alive, or only a picture..."

While the devotee sang the slokas in front of Devi's shrine, a jasmine garland dropped from the picture. The man then said Swami Ragavendra would initiate the devotee into Sri Vidya. Swami's

spirit came upon the man, and then gave the devotee the Ganapati and Bala mantras.



A New York devotee visited the Vajreshwari temple near Puna, India in 1985. She noticed there was Satyanarayana puja going on in one corner, and there was a little girl who came to greet her at the entrance of the temple. When the girl grabbed her hand, the devotee said she felt 1000 volts go through her body, and she didn't let go of the girl for the rest of her tour through the temple.

The child told the devotee stories and guided her through each area of the temple. At the end of the tour, the child asked the devotee to go to lunch with her. For some reason that the devotee can no longer recall, she had to refuse. Later, she discovered through interactions with her guru that Bala, herself, had taken the devotee's hand and led her through the temple. It was only then that the devotee truly discovered the power of Maya.



A devotee from New York had taken a trip to Kanchipuram, and was standing at the entrance of one of the temples, near the traditional temple elephant. When she was about to enter the temple she saw a 9-year-old girl come running out, wearing a green pavadai (skirt), red blouse, several bangles and a single braid in her hair. She shouted, "I've been waiting for you people! Why did you come so late?" and ran back

inside. The devotee ran into the temple after the little girl but upon entering, found she was nowhere to be seen. Throughout the devotee's visit, she went searching for the child but could not find her.

## Did You Know...

- If one has not completely surrendered to their guru, their kundalini can only travel as high as their throat chakra
- One of the greatest pujas to the guru is to imagine his/her feet placed on top of your head, being washed by purifying waters. This is to be done even before getting out of bed in the morning
- The sage Parashurama (Vishnu's sixth incarnation) had surrendered so completely to his father and guru, Jamadagni, that he killed his mother at the guru's command
- The direct translation of the word "Guru" from Sanskrit is "the weighty one," referring to a great depth of knowledge and experience
- In Sanskrit, "gu" means darkness, and "ru" means light. So the guru is literally the one who takes a person from darkness to light
- One's Sri Guru is commonly referred to as the Satguru ("true guru")

Learn more about the temple's guru lineage at [www.srividya.org](http://www.srividya.org), and click on the Guru Lineage link.

**“THE GURU'S FORM IS THE ROOT OF MEDITATION,  
THE GURU'S FEET ARE THE ROOT OF WORSHIP,  
THE GURU'S WORD IS THE ROOT OF MANTRA,  
THE GURU'S GRACE IS THE ROOT OF LIBERATION”**

**THIS MONTH'S MAGAZINE IS DEDICATED TO THE LOTUS  
FEET OF OUR SRI GURU AND OUR GURU LINEAGE.**

**Dhyaana moolam guru murtih  
Pooja moolam guror padam  
Mantra moolam guror vakyam  
Moksha moolam guror  
kripa**

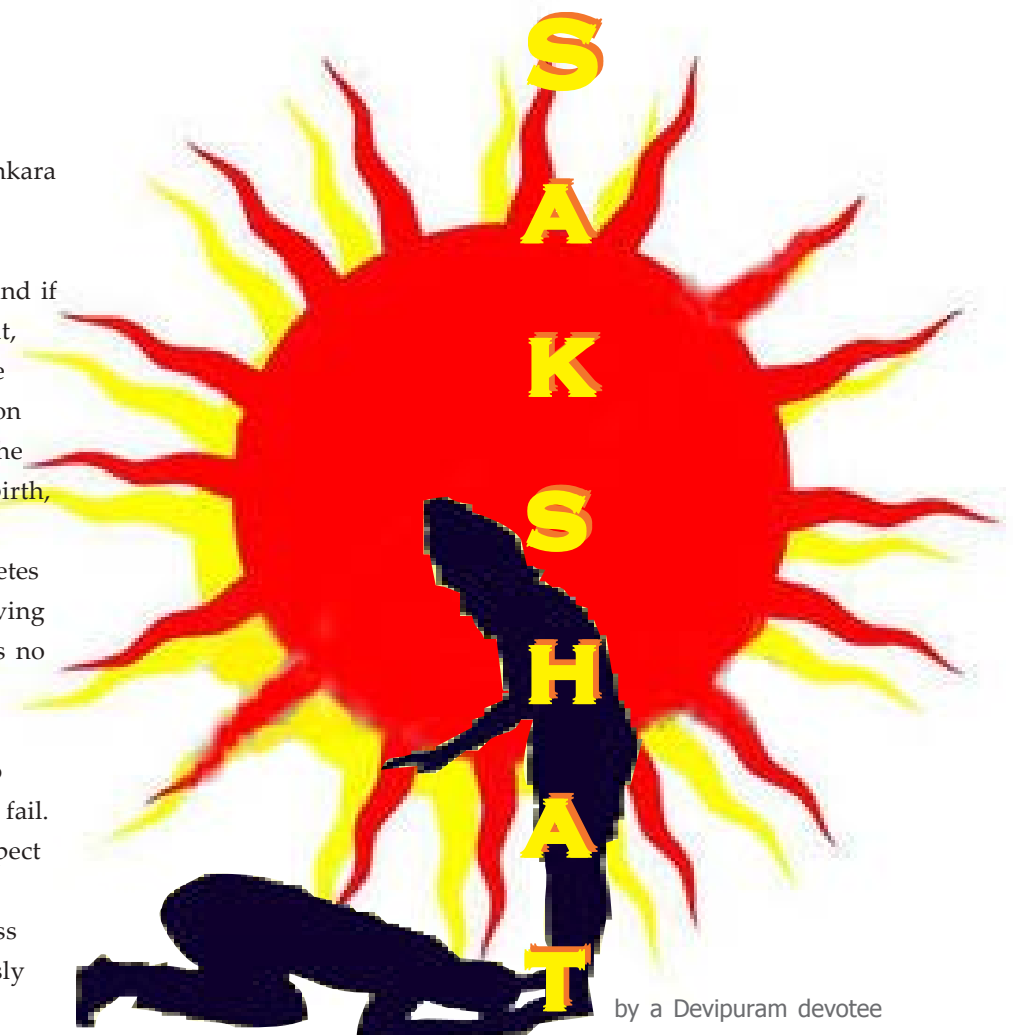


In the *Vivekachudamani*, Shankara Bhagavatpada says that the discipleship under a Maha Purusha is the rarest to get, and if you've been blessed with that, you must realize that it is the highest blessing one can get on earth. This Maha Purusha—The Guru—gives you a spiritual birth, nourishes you with the knowledge of Self and completes your spiritual practice by giving the realization that there was no single moment you were unrealized.

A realized saint does this to every disciple of His without fail. This is the most inspiring aspect of taking refuge in Guru. He incessantly makes us progress every single minute, ruthlessly hunting down the beastly limitations and makes us evolve to be nobody, a big zero, at which point, Brahma Jnana blooms.

For us to become that zero is why the Guru comes into our life. Only when you, the limited being become zero, only when your small mind dies, the super mind takes over. Only then you realize that you have always been that supreme intelligence which is not just infinity, but infinity of infinities.

The Guru makes you into that. After initiation, He makes you learn at a rapid pace and more importantly, makes you unlearn simultaneously. You don't only unlearn the whole gamut of impressions that got imprinted in your little brain in this birth, but whatever subtle impressions that have piled up in the past eight



by a Devipuram devotee

## PARA BRAHMA

million plus births, through different Yonis.

This process of unlearning is to make you that super zero. It is a long process spanning across births. But the Guru does it silently as Lord Dakshinamoorthi. You'll have no clue if any such unlearning is happening in you. Having come to the feet of the Guru, you don't have to be bothered if you find no trace of tangible milestones of spiritual progress. Don't be worried if you have no divine experiences.

If you've longed for Devi's darshan and if it never happened, it does not matter. Your Guru silently takes you there all the way. All the way up to the top

and just gives that all-time big experience, the direct knowledge, that You and Him were no different from Shiva or each other, now or before or later or ever. He makes you realize that this is the case not just from the latest big bang that occurred a few billion years ago, but billions of big bangs ago in the past and in the explosions of the future too. He makes you realize that your Guru is very much Lord Shiva, who has descended to make you realize that you're no different from Him, the supreme intelligence, the entity that is beyond time, space, name and form. The Guru is a trickster too. Trickster supreme—often giving a roller-coaster ride

to you, making you almost run away from him. He takes you through those rides of free-falling and unprecedented ups and downs to slowly wash away the thickest layer of dirty ignorance that has stuck to you from yore. He never tells you at anytime that the ride is going to be rough. He simply enjoys pushing you into washing machines of different kinds.

What comes out is the newest you, crystal clear with no adjuncts and untarnished by any dirt. You would silently admit that those roller-coaster rides were worthwhile and you realize that unless those rides were there, the dirt of ignorance would not have come off your back. So never forget that the tricks that your Guru does on you cannot be for something but the highest good for you, to merge you with Himself. If the weather is way too stormy in your life, it could be time for your Guru to reveal Himself to you. Unless you are beaten up mentally to the extreme, your attention will not turn towards God. Getting pushed to the maximum is the surest sign that you're going to be reborn spiritually. If you have a Guru and are still having roller-coaster rides, have no doubt. It is that non-stop trickster in action, silently working on you, silently and mercilessly crushing your ego. Silently enjoy those rides, even if they happen again and again. Don't complain. Just go through with it. It will all be perfect at the end. These roller

coaster rides are His secret ways of elevating your awareness.

But there are also varieties of Gurus. There are Gurus who have not transcended their own limitations, who have not realized that they are that existence, consciousness and bliss. They are only on their path to that spiritual peak. Such Gurus cannot take you "there." After taking you to the farthest that they too have visited, you'll know that they are not established in, but still on their path to nirvikalpa.

It is a blessing if your Guru is a realized saint, a seer who has already experienced and become that infinity of infinities. If your time is ripe, this life at the feet of the Guru becomes the last leg of that longest, timeless journey as a being. The journey back to the source, the source of no-return and no-limitations—the nameless, formless para brahma. This seer, your Guru, is the Pushpaka Vimana, the celestial chariot of the highest order that has descended on this earth to fly you back to Kaivalya, the state you came from due to Maya's imposed ignorance of your original identity of ever being that all-pervading Narayana.

Surrendering to this Seer, the Brahma Jnani, hence means to have a struggle-free cake walk, one big jump, to regain our original identity. This is what the Upanishads herald. This is what Guru Gita professes. This is Krishna's message in Bhagawat Gita sloka 18.66.

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**Sarva dharmaan parityajya.....**

You don't have to visit Kashi, Madurai or Kamakhya. It is all there at your Guru's feet. You don't have to do day-long pujas, crores of Mantra Japa or practice the difficult Pranayama. Be there at His feet and serve Him. That is enough. This service beats the power of anything else in this world. He will make you perfect, perfect to the core. If he makes you work, he'll make sure that you perform like a lion.

The highest qualities of all kinds, with sharpest of intellects would burgeon out of nowhere to bloom and spread their fragrance in all directions. What you've tried for decades would come to you in jiffy. The thing that never worked starts working instantaneously. Being the maintainer of passion and feeder of confidence in you, the Guru acts as your backbone, taking care of you more than his own child. He does all these by just silently sitting under a tree or probably in front of a computer, as if caring least for anything.

He is an Avadhoota, he makes you an Avadhoota. As he has seen and experienced that nameless and formless entity, he takes you and makes you sit on his shoulder and makes you see farther than he saw, and experience more than he experienced. He always is interested in expanding your awareness to the size of this whole universe. So, if you are blessed with this realized saint as Guru, just hold on to his feet. A place where such a seer resides is Mathura or Ayodhya.



# BHADRAKALI PITHAM

By Kriyananda

## OF SRI KALYANANANDA TIRTHA

In our daily pujas, as Sri Caitanyananda (whom we fondly call as Aiya) is our Swaguru, we end with our Parameshti guru, Sri Swaprakashananda Avadhuta when we recite our Gurupaduka.



Sri Kalyanananda Tirtha

Hence, there is a tendency to forget our gurus beyond or they never come to our mind. As you all know, our Paratpara Guru is Sri- la-Sri Kalyanananda Tirtha. A brief description of what we know of him is given below.

Sri Kalyanananda Tirtha, originally from Andhra Pradesh, South India, was initiated into Sri Vidya upasana around 1945 by his guru Sri Rajarajeshwarananda Natha. In addition to Telugu, he was very fluent in the Hindi and English languages. He settled down at Haridwar, a city about 200

kilometres north of Delhi, on the banks of the Ganges river.

When he did the installation of the Bhadrakali Peetham at the Sapta Rishi Sarovar, at Haridwar, his guru came down from the Himalayas to be with him for the consecration of the Bhadrakali idol. How this brief information was gathered needs some elaboration.

In late 1994, Aiya gave us the task of publishing the second detailed Tamil edition of his book, Sri Vidya Sri Chakra Puja Vidhih. In order to prepare biographical sketches of our gurus for incorporating in the book, I, along with one Golla Srinivas (now residing in the Bay Area of California) visited Guru Garu who was then residing at Anakapalle, 14 km. west of Guruji's Devipuram.

As he knew only Telugu and Sanskrit, we asked several questions in Telugu and from the answers given, we prepared the biographical sketch of him which appeared in the Book. It did not occur to us to visit Haridwar to meet Sri Kalyanananda Tirtha for this purpose. However, that



information, though brief, came through one Sri Vishudha Avatar Baba (Bill Thomas, now residing in Holland, Europe). Early in 1994, he had made a trip from Rochester, NY to Devipuram along with others to participate in the consecration ceremony of Sahasrakshi Devi Meru Nilayam of Guruji. At that time, he had made a trip to Haridwar and met Sri Kalyanananda Tirtha. The biographical data with the colour photo collected by him appeared in the Sri Vidya Sri Chakra Puja Vidhih (Tamil) book which was released as the Navarathri Malar of 1995 (first time Navarathri Malar appeared in printed, bound book form) and English version in 1996. Well, afterwards, we heard of him from Guruji and Aiya that Sri Kalyananda Tirtha left his mortal coil in 1998 or so. It pains me to realize that I had not been to his Peetam and met him even once.

The writing of an article on our Paratpara guru was evoked because of our visit to Bhadrakali Peetam on April 18, 2006. Though we made a trip to Haridwar and Rishikesh in May 2003, we missed visiting this Peetam. Located at a point where the Ganges emerges from the Himalayas, Haridwar is one of Hinduism's most sacred cities in India. It takes four-and-a-half hours by train from Delhi going North-North East.

The Bhadrakali Peetam is about 5 km. north from the Haridwar railway station (with very good approachable roads) close to Shantikung Ashram of the late

Shriram Sharma Acharya. It is very close to the west bank of the Ganges. The Peetam's pictures given below in two parts were taken by Sri Avatar baba 12 years ago. They were taken from a raised 8-foot wide road running in front of all the Ashrams situated in that region.



Above and below: The Sri Bhadrakali Pitham of Kalyanananda Tirtha



The huge Peetham's nameboard does not exist now. Instead, there is a board with words "Bhadrakali Peeth" and below is written Sri Ganapathi Satchidananda, Mysore. Kalyananda Tirtha's name is nowhere to be found inside or outside the building. Some construction work is going on with workers and dust all over the place. We went inside the

temple dwelling and found an idol of Bhadrakali, about 15 inches high, housed in a 3x3 feet mantapam on a raised platform with full alankara and lit lamps.

An elderly Telugu-speaking person attends to the daily pujas and rituals of the shrine with his family. At the entrance to the mantapam on the left, we saw a closeup photo about 8x6 inches of Sri Kalyanananda Bharathi and Sri Ganapathi Satchidananda—a photo taken together.

We enquired at the Sapta Rishi Sarovar Ashram across the street about what happened to the peetam, and came to know that about 10 years ago, around 1996, Sri Bharathi donated his peetam to Sri Ganapathi Satchidananda of Datta Peetha, Mysore to look after it when he is gone.

Our Parameshti guru Sri Swaprakashananda is also not with us now. Scores of us have met and talked to him until his last day. He attained the abode of eternal bliss on Gurupurnima Day, 2002. Let us remember him by reading his detailed biography in our Sri Vidya book. I most sincerely thank Bill Thomas for e-mailing me the wonderful pictures within a few days of my asking. What a professional record keeping system he must have! We met him last year and had a flying visit to Tiruvannamalai before he boarded the plane to Holland.



# THE EVERYDAY SAGE OF DEVIPURAM

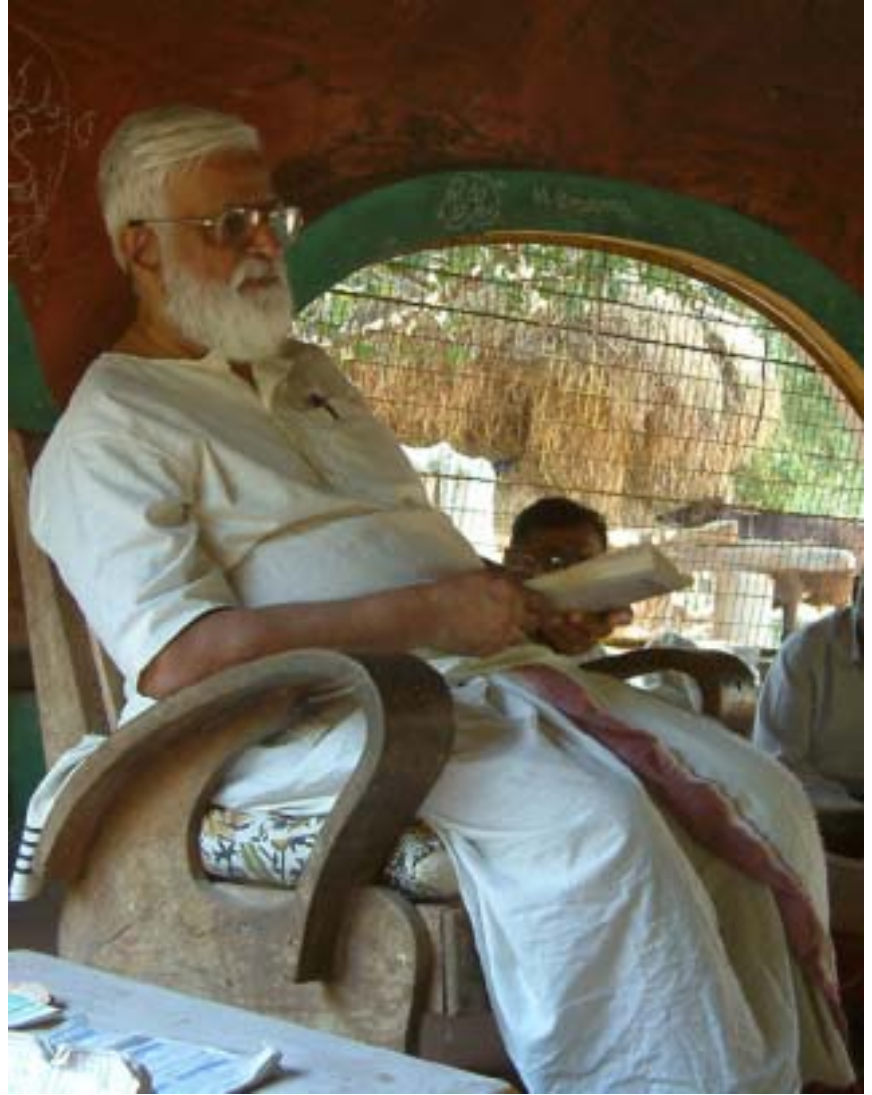
by a Devipuram devotee

What about spending a day in Devipuram? It is a small village housing the world's largest Sri Chakra, built under the guidance of the divine Mother by a seer.

He is Sri Annapooramba sameta Sri Amritananda Natha Saraswathy. He is a scientist, a perfectionist of the first order, a walking encyclopedia, an authority on Sri Vidya and Tantra and above all, a brahma nishta, taking those taking refuge at his feet to that great source—Sarva Yoni.

You ask him how a flight's landing gear works, you'd get an answer up to the detail of the last nut and bolt. You ask him the practical application of Fourier's transform, he'd explain you. You ask him the deepest significance of Maha Shodashi Mantra, he'd draw a few diagrams and explain you, as if you were a first-grade kid and he is your mother, teaching you addition and subtraction, though of the universes and galaxies. People call him "Guruji."

Guruji is silent. He hardly speaks. The face reflects that silence within, of unfathomable depth. When He speaks, it is for a purpose and words slowly and gently flow out. Shortly after, the silence-supreme reigns once again. Disciples find him



answering their questions with silence more than words.

The pauses he makes between sentences and words convey what you sought him out for. But He claims nothing. Not for the spiritual progress of his disciples or for his being an extremely knowledgeable Guru. He simply says it is the Universal Mother

who is doing everything and not to unnecessarily bring his name into the picture.

His spiritual discourses are quite scientific, mixing both science and spirituality to give everyone a good grip of different aspects of how God's rules work scientifically in the world. If

Goddess Lalita is “anEka kOti brahmAnda janani,” and as Guru is no one else but Lalita, you’ll learn to create universes and destroy them, thus becoming a Godly disciple, or a rather super-Einstein.

No one would ever come to know that somewhere in space, universes are being created. If you’re able to create a universe, having become Himself, what is He? Though Guruji’s discourses deeply involve Sastra and many unrevealed aspects of Mantra Sastra, it always ends in making us contemplate on Maha Vakyas and realizing our true selves.

He has a decent HP computer with the latest Intel processor and works on it for at least eight hours a day. He, himself, makes animation presentations right from jotting down the story board to splitting it to different scenes and all the way up to coding them in MX-Director software. His productions have the strength of a rich aesthetic sense. It is not uncommon that, over time, people working with him get the same aesthetic sense and start having a richer taste towards every aspect of life.

If you drive a stick shift car for him, he makes you a better driver. He teaches you how a good driver effectively utilizes gears compared to brakes. If he hands over a job to you, he expects you to work on it with 200 per cent effort and blesses you with the strength and passion to perform.

But how does Guruji look to a common man? He wears the

simplest white clothes. White dhoti with half-sleeve unpresed cotton kurta. No pomp whatsoever. Guruji does not care about his dress. Amma makes sure that he wears comfortable and decent clothes. After his bath, he puts on whatever clothes are kept in the table near the bathroom by Amma. For many functions that he would have to preside over, he’d just get up from the bed in the evening after his two-hour nap, wash his face, have a small cup of sugarless tea and get into the car with the same, simple, sometimes crumpled kurta with a few drops of dried sambar spilt while taking lunch.

If a spiritual leader visits Devipuram, he would make them sit on the chair and he would sit on the ground and listen to them. If Devipuram staff try to hold that huge, traditional umbrella for him during any function in Devipuram, he chases them away with a few blasts. He would silently say, “the whole AkASa (space) is my umbrella.” If any disciple gives him any undue extra respect, he ignores him totally.

He won’t even look at him. He never appeals to anyone’s ego nor complains about anything. He eats a simple diet without complaining for salt and spice. He attends calls of the Devipuram phone himself. Never does he avoid a call from His disciples or someone who wants to talk to him. He silently attends phone calls, sometimes close to 50 a day,

without any expression on His face. He is simple.

On the other hand, he encourages people to live the life they want without any second thoughts. He assures them that they don’t have to forego anything



**Guruji enjoying the Vizag paper**

to get liberated. He says that the whole of Devipuram stands for that—creativity, adoration and beauty. He suggests the latest tattoos that replace mehndi to women who visit Devipuram. He advises people to decorate Devi to their fullest satisfaction however they want.

He is a mix of traditional values and modernism. He has passion for creativity and inventiveness. He does things like a scientist, taking care of the details meticulously, whether it is writing down the title on a freshly burnt CD or the construction of a complex 54-foot-high Sri Chakra temple.

There is an astOttara Sata nAmavali (108 names) of Guruji, revealed to Sri Haran Aiya of Rochester Peetam by Devi, including a shloka with which to meditate on His form. The sloka has a line “sakala vidyAlankArinIm,” meaning, “the one who is decorated with varieties of knowledge.” You can experience this line, if you spend a few days in Devipuram.

But Guruji is difficult to understand. There is no definition of him to bring him under any category. Even his long-time disciples struggle to cope with and to thoroughly understand him. It would always look as though it is the super mind that is



working through him, a mind that is difficult to comprehend.

In the same way that Patanjali Yoga Sutra talks of realised souls momentarily creating minds for themselves on a need basis and destroying them soon after, devotees in Devipuram experience it. It would look as if a mind

created by Guruji for himself for a particular situation does not have any relation to the mind created for any other situation. Every mind would look fresh. Still, you would never miss to perceive that unconditional love and the fact that you’re progressing steadfastly in your spiritual sadhana.

No one knows whether Guruji is in some other world always and when we talk, he quickly descends to this world and talk to us and then goes back to his world somewhere else in universe. Devi revealed one more name of His: “nirvikalpAnanda sAgara hamsAya namah,” meaning, “the swan that ever swims in the ocean of nirvikalpa.”

There are a few incidents worth mentioning. One early morning in Devipuram, Guruji silently allowed a disciple to place a few vilva patras (bilva leaves) on his head, instead of permitting him to go to Shivalaya to pay homage to Shiva. Anakapalle Gurugaru, Guruji’s Guru—an avadhoota, an adept in 42 of 64 tantras—tells about Guruji in one of his speeches. Guru Garu said that for his tapas on brahma jnana, he must have been in samadhi forever; because of Devi’s will, He has come to build this temple in Devipuram.

If you have always thought of visiting Devipuram and have never made it, don’t delay. Time is ticking. A mere dharsan of a seer destroys sins committed in thousands of births and elevates you to Liberation.

If Guruji is the life-force of Devipuram, Guru Amma—Guruji’s wife, is the spinal chord. The whole Devipuram functions effectively because of her, Sri Annapoornamba. She is the most loveable, friendly mother and a highly-disciplined task master. If Guruji takes things easy, Amma makes sure that things are spic and span and are attended to by everyone with utmost care. She gives often a bag full of guavas or mangoes to every staff to carry to their home for their kids. But she makes sure that they discharge their duties without fail. She is a project manager and an administrator of high caliber, and efficiently handles work and people of different kinds.

She attends to the needs of Guruji throughout the day. Whatever she is doing, if Guruji calls her, she comes running to him. Let Guruji ask for any documents or records, even if it is 10 years old, Amma goes inside the room and comes back within 10 minutes with what Guruji asked for. She maintains the accounts of daily sales of different photos, CDs, books and maintenance tickets. She does not need any calculators or fancy organizers. For her, her brain is enough. She decides the menu for the day in the canteen, measures the ingredients and gives to the cook. Things are very systematic and streamlined. If there is a surprise delicacy everyday, it is due to Amma. She is an expert in making different pachadis, the ones that need careful preparation

Guruji  
Amma and  
Guruji

to last for a year. She decides when the harvest of mangoes is. She directs "Ammatalli" to shake the gooseberries and tamarinds in Devipuram after they've been there in the tree for at least two months. She knows the techniques of preserving these invaluable resources of Devipuram throughout the year.

If Guruji distributes his seven-hours sleep into three short naps at gaps, Amma sleeps for six hours a day at one stretch in the night. She never sleeps in the day. She works for 16 to 18 hours a day without getting bored or upset. Even today, when she is 67, she is there at 5:30 a.m. sharp in the canteen, boiling milk for making tea for everyone. You have to come to believe it. Even while watching TV occasionally, she would be silently making small wicks from cotton wool. If she is

going on a trip to the Vizag house, she carries a ball of cotton wool to continue this wick-making in Vizag. If she has made enough wicks, she switches to making broomsticks from dry coconut leaves herself by taking hundreds of stick patiently off the leaves.

One day, the reliance WLL phone, the wireless phone in Devipuram with a musical ringing tone started ringing.

Amma quickly told this disciple in Telugu, mocking that ringing tone, in her own funny way, "occhindi Babu! Vellu! Ngoyyong... Ngoyyong..." (Go friend. It has come. Ngoyyong.. Ngoyyong). She would surprise people with the correct modulation of that ngoyyong ngoyyong sound. This disciple laughed out loud before picking up that call. If any door she is opening makes a noise due to friction, she would mock that sound immediately, making people around giggle silently.

When a senior seeker had come to Devipuram discussing some depressive situation that he had, Amma was telling him, "what is the use of sadhana? You should be able to see your depressions as if it is happening to a third person. Because, you are always that observing Atma." Even today, she does not miss her everyday pujas.

She has been chanting Durga Sapta Sathi for the last 20 plus years every single day without fail.

Amma divides and gives flowers everyday for different shrines, sends kumkum to temple whenever it is required, prepares the samagri required for Homas on Tuesdays, makes sure Guruji has his food and medicines on time. She assigns eight-hours of work to staff. She attends to Guruji whenever He calls. She attends phone calls patiently. She makes those delicious long lasting Avakaais and other pachadis. She maintains accounts. She knows where things are. We can see that the whole Devipuram depends upon her so much everyday for its normal functioning. She is awake mostly up to 10:30 or 11 p.m. every night. She works, works and works, without break, without wasting a minute.

If you've never made it to Devipuram yet, come here. You can see two souls incessantly serving the society for decades together. If you think you should come and serve them, do not delay. It is the rarest blessing you can get. If you're in search of your Guru, come to Devipuram. However tight your schedule could be, however big a business magnate you might be, however knowledgeable an upasaka you are, come! Come to Devipuram. This is the place that helps you expand your consciousness to the entire universe.

Shivam.

*The following are accounts written by Aiya in past issues of the Sri Chakra, detailing parts of his journey into spirituality and his first encounters with Guruji in Lusaka, Zambia. Aiya's first initiation was into the Sadakshara mantra of Sri Murugan on March 16, 1966 by Guru Mathaji, but his yearning for a spiritual life began much earlier.*

*Aiya writes in the Navarathri 1982 temple malar about the family history that pulled him toward Devi:*

My grandfather was one of the wealthiest men in the village and every Navarathri he would host the entire village to a well laid out feast and distribute sarees to the ladies and dhotis to the men. He had been not only celebrating his position, but also following what had been going on for at least five generations before him (my father said so) in worshiping Her in this fashion during Navarathri.

My father had a brother and a sister who was supposed to be very beautiful and had a regal air about her. She was fully blossomed at 16 in the second decade of this century. The preparations for the navarathri festival were well advanced and this girl, as usual, had a bath and as was the tradition, gone to worship while still in her wet clothes.

As 'She' had decreed, the child developed pneumonia and two or three days later she was dead. It was a devastating blow to the ego structure of my grandfather. In his deep anguish at losing his

only daughter, he had abandoned the worship of the Mother from that year onwards. When my father related this bit of family history I decided then and there silently that one day, if at all possible, this worship would resume in my house.

As though She wanted my mental make-up to be oriented towards Her, She removed my father and made me, the youngest of nine children, dependant on my mother. Everything I knew about parental affection, responsibility and love was directly from my mother, which she gave without restraint. So the stage was set 20 years before for what was going to be a real challenge.

*There were five families living in Lusaka in 1979 when Guruji moved there from India. He had refused to participate in the Indian government's plans to develop nuclear weaponry. In the subsequent period of soul-searching, Guruji made spiritual advances that surpassed even his own expectations, to the point of receiving dharsan of Goddess Saraswati. Aiya says when he first met Guruji, the latter was in a permanent state of oneness with Devi and had already had fabulous experiences:*

...The sixteenth century mystic Sri Bhaskararaya mukhi (the authority on the worship of Lalita in modern times) imparted the Mahasodasi mantra to him in the Astral plane. Such was Her overflowing love for Her children in Lusaka, that She chose him

by Aiya (with italic notes by Kamyā)

# AIYA'S JOURNEY TOWARD DEVI

to formalise, initiate and teach us Her matchless Brahma Vidya.

He came to Zambia as professor of physics at the University of Zambia, Lusaka campus. My first meeting was in Mr. Balasubramaniam's (Balu's) house where on Tuesdays Sahasranama archana took place in front of a Madurai Meenakshi deity. Balu is simplicity itself. His humble and calm exterior was deceptive. For in Him lurked the brilliance of a sharp intellect, clarity of thought and the steadfastness of devotion. If Sri Devi Herself chose to project Herself to her waiting devotees in Guruji's form, from his house, what more needs to be said of this great family!

I invited him and his family to my house for the Friday poojah. He came with Ammah! A week later I decided to beg him for initiation. It was the most important decision that I ever made. After going into meditation for a few minutes 'She' agreed to give me the priceless mantra on the Poornima day Friday October 5<sup>th</sup>, 1979.

I now feel ashamed to think how much I would have troubled Guruji trying to learn the intricacies of performing the various aspects of the Maha

Yagna called the Navavarna poojah. I would go there at all hours of the day or night, sit entranced at his feet as he explained the intricacies and helped me write down everything in English. He and Ammah became the most important part of our lives. I would descend on them unannounced and he would have already told Ammah, "Haran would be here in a few minutes." She would prepare the most delicious meals and lovingly feed us.

That She projected her immeasurable compassion on earth to lift us up, I have no doubt at all. I would sit at his feet and feel that I was in the presence of a woman. Guruji's arrival was preceded by his "seeing" all his disciples in his meditation.

*Four months later in January 1980, Aiya's family was issued Visas to the U.S. By May they had moved to New York state. Aiya was worried that the weekly gatherings during Friday pujas would diminish and eventually end, but when he asked Guruji whether he would go to the U.S, Guruji replied, "Of course you will go, She will not stand in your way, but you will come back." Days later, while in meditation, Aiya saw his new home in America, as well as where and how Devi wanted the new shrine room!*





*Sri Gurubhyo Namah*