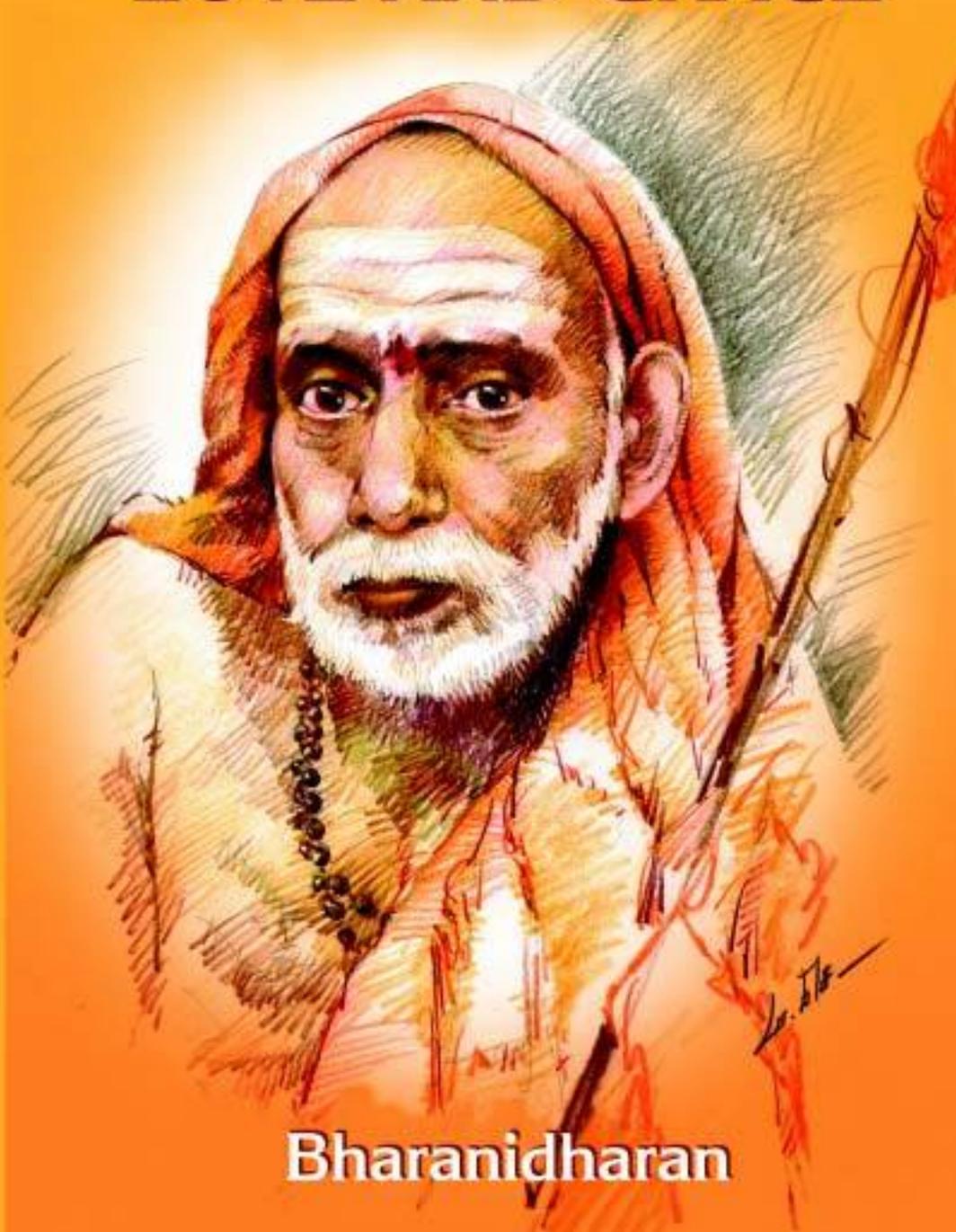


SAGE OF LOVE AND GRACE



Bharanidharan

Sage of Love and Grace

by

Bharanidharan

HOMOEOPATHIC MEDICAL PUBLISHERS
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Tel.: +91 22 26605680 • Fax: +91 22 26045637

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For the fond memory of

My dear and Genuine Friend

Sri R. V. RAGHAVAN

Founder of the Journal 'DILIP' of Mumbai

SAGE OF LOVE AND GRACE



Jagatguru Sri Chandrasekarendra Saraswathi Swamigal – 68th pontiff of Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Mutt.

Author's Preface

FOR over thirty years, my 'dharsans' of the rare saint Sri Chandrasekarendra Saraswathi Swamigal, 68th pontiff of Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Mutt enriched my life with varied memorable experiences. I also had the good fortune of listening to his nectarine words uttered in the course of talks held from time to time for my personal information and guidance. There were instances when he engaged me in conversation to enlighten me in general on various matters. I had mentioned most of them in my travelogue articles but treasured more personal and intimate ones meant exclusively for my personal edification only and not for revealing to others through print. But through the years there has been an irresistible urge to record them in writing some day.

In March 1993, during the period the Maha Swamigal was observing strict '*mouna vratham*' (vow of silence) in seclusion, I sought for a private audience and expressed my long-cherished wish, and said that if he nodded assent I will publish those anecdotes. The apostle of love and grace readily gave his assent by blessing me with an eloquent gesture by offering a pomegranate.

When I told Sri Balasubramanian, the Editor of Ananda Vikatan about my intention to make them public, he provided me the opportunity to write the intended anecdotes in Vikatan. Thus was born the serial '*Anbe Arule*' (Love and Grace) in the Deepavali issue of November 1993.

I placed the copy of the magazine carrying the first chapter at the holy feet of His Holiness. I submitted to him, "I have started the series without any previous notes or jottings. My prayer is that during the course of this narration, I may be enabled to recall the events with all the relevant details, which might have eluded my memory".

As I was writing this serial, whatever particulars were relevant for inclusion in a given context, surprisingly surfaced and found themselves fitted in appropriate places. This was a unique experience by itself.

During the serialization of the anecdotes, Maha Swamigal discarded his mortal coils on 8th January 1994. The serial ran for another sixteen weeks. The following May 25th, the day of 'Anusham' (His Holiness's Birth star), the completed serial was brought out in book form by Ananda Vikatan.

Even if a single reader were to get the impression that I have written these personal and exclusive experiences to trumpet my own glory, that would be due only to the shortcomings in my expressions and would not reflect my real intention. I am aware that lakhs of devotees have had more thrilling experiences than mine own. Therefore, I recorded these incidents in all humility with the feeling that even the insignificant 'I' had such experiences.

'*Anbe Arule*', made such an impact on the connoisseurs and the general reading public that many of my friends came out with a suggestion that I bring this out in English and other Indian languages, since the devotees of Maha Periva are dispersed in all parts of India and the world at large.

Sri R.V. Raghavan of Mumbai, was the founder-editor of the prestigious monthly journal '*Dilip*' dedicated mainly for highlighting India's spiritual wealth, and the glory of its Vedic literature. He was also an uncompromising devotee of the Maha Swamigal, who motivated and blessed him to start '*Dilip*' some years ago. I suggested to him to get my Vikatan articles translated into English and serialize them in '*Dilip*'. Instead, he preferred to bring it out in book form. He spared no efforts to see the project through, and attended to all the preliminaries with great enthusiasm and fervour. But destiny willed it otherwise. It is sad he could not see the book in his life time.

My gratitude is due also to Sri V. Krishnamachari, another staunch devotee of the Maha Swamigal and bosom friend of R.V. Raghavan, who entrusted the task of translating the book to the former.

Sri Krishnamachari was gracious enough to send the translated script for my perusal, to ensure that the translation had maintained the timbre of my original, as mentioned by him in one of his letters to me. I must own he has done a commendable and enviable job.

I am obliged to record that this English version as it has finally emerged is not faithful to the contents of the Tamil original. Since, before going to the Press, I felt the need to revise and elaborate certain episodes, edit and sharpen certain others for better clarity and focus. Hence I owe an apology to Sri V. Krishnamachari for having taken liberties with his translation.

My grateful thanks are also due to the publisher Dr. Rajan Sankaran of Homoeopathic Medical Publishers, Mumbai, who sincerely cares for spiritual values, for readily coming forward to publish this edition.

I am pleased to acknowledge the services of my young friend, talented yet unassuming artist, Maniam Selvan. He had contributed much towards the popularity of the original serial by his life-like sketches, recapturing the spirit of the earlier happenings as described by me to him.

When I went for dharsan of the Maha Swamigal with the sketches he had drawn for the first two chapters, Maniam Selvan accompanied me. Swamigal saw them one by one, and showered his unfailing blessings on him with one of his benign and gracious looks.

It is but appropriate that Ma.Se. designed the wrapper of this book too with a marvelous portrait of the peerless saint and seer.

1st January 2005
Chennai

Bharanidharan

Publisher's Preface

The Sage of Kanchi who lived for a hundred years, walked the length and breadth of India visiting its remotest areas bestowing His Love and Grace on its teeming millions. He was an encyclopedia of knowledge of diverse subjects, and His wisdom and humanism were legendary. His life was exemplary, transparent and pure. Soft spoken, subtle, humble, he spoke the language of the scholar and the common man with equal ease.

He met everyone without any distinction. In his conversations as in his discourses he could put profound messages into simple language. At will he would go into prolonged total silence and lapse into deep meditation. For His followers and admirers he was Divinity in human form. A mere *dharsan* of Him (a Sanskrit word that denotes, "to see and be seen by a deity or holy person") had the potential to transform them to higher realms.

The most significant and memorable *dharsan* I had of Him was in 1990. My uncle, the author of this book, took me to him at the Kanchi Mutt of which he was the 68th pontiff. He was sitting on the floor in a corner blessing the devotees who streamed past.

Standing a few feet away I prayed intensely for some guidance on the spiritual path. When this was conveyed through my uncle, the sage gave the word (mantra) *Soham*.

When I looked at him then, I saw that his body was emitting light of great effulgence, yet it did not blind me. The light kept on coming towards me till all I saw was Light alone. I realised that he was not the body in front of me. That I need not see him again in flesh and blood. This experience has stayed with me .

In Sanskrit *Soham* means, "I am that", and is regarded as the essential mantra of the non-dualistic (Advaita) philosophy, which postulates that there is no difference between the subject and the object, or between the self and God. I tried to repeat the mantra a few times in

the coming weeks, but not fully understanding what it meant, I stopped repeating it.

In 1994, one night while I lay in bed, I had a ‘vision’ of him (was it a dream?). He stood near my bed, looking at me with a benign smile. It occurred to me that he had come to explain the meaning of *Soham* mantra to me. It was not a verbal or intellectual explanation. It was a practical demonstration, an experience of the state of *Soham*. With him, I experienced the oneness of all things, of the thinker, the object of the thought, the thought itself, the space where it exists or traverses, ... all was one, all was me. At the end of the experience, He looked at me as if to ask, “Now do you understand the meaning of *Soham*?” and the vision disappeared. I have never had such a vision, dream or experience before nor since then.

The next morning, I heard the news that He had discarded his physical frame on the previous evening at Kanchi!

It is not these visions, nor His obvious spiritual achievements that make him unique. It is His Love, His Grace, His simplicity, His subtlety, and His extraordinary spiritual eminence that make Him the ruler of hearts and souls of so many. His mere presence, or even a thought of Him invokes the purest and noblest of feelings within us.

This book is not a concise biography, it is not about His glory. It is not about His spiritual prowess. It is an insight into His life and His work, through a personal walk down memory lane of a person whose life was primarily influenced by Him. It is but a microcosm that will give a glimpse into the macrocosm of the personage of the Sage of Kanchi.

My uncle, Bharanidharan, the author of this book, has had the fortune of being close to Him for about three decades and more, and has had his life subtly transformed by Him. From a boy who had no inclination even to visit a temple, my uncle who was a cartoonist and a political columnist, was “chosen” and shaped into a writer of religious travelogues, of lives of saints and seers, and a playwright of socially relevant and meaningful plays couched in humour and satire. His articles in the well known Tamil weekly, “Ananda Vikatan” popularized many hitherto lesser known places of worship, and brought into public knowledge many holy men. His plays highlighted the intricacies of domestic problems and mirrored contemporary society.

This book is a simple narration of what happened between the Sage and the author. There are no explanations or definitions. What emerges is something that words are inadequate to define or convey. It brings to our

awareness a realm of experience that defies intellectual analysis or dissection.

In the passages of this book one can get a feel of what it is to experience the Love and Grace of a Guru of the stature of the Sage of Kanchi, *Periaval* as he was referred to.

It is a narrative about a Sage who had totally lived and functioned as an instrument of God and of the author who made himself an instrument of the Sage. Such a surrender to the higher power permits divinity to radiate through humans. Reading the incidents is an experience of being in touch with that Divinity.

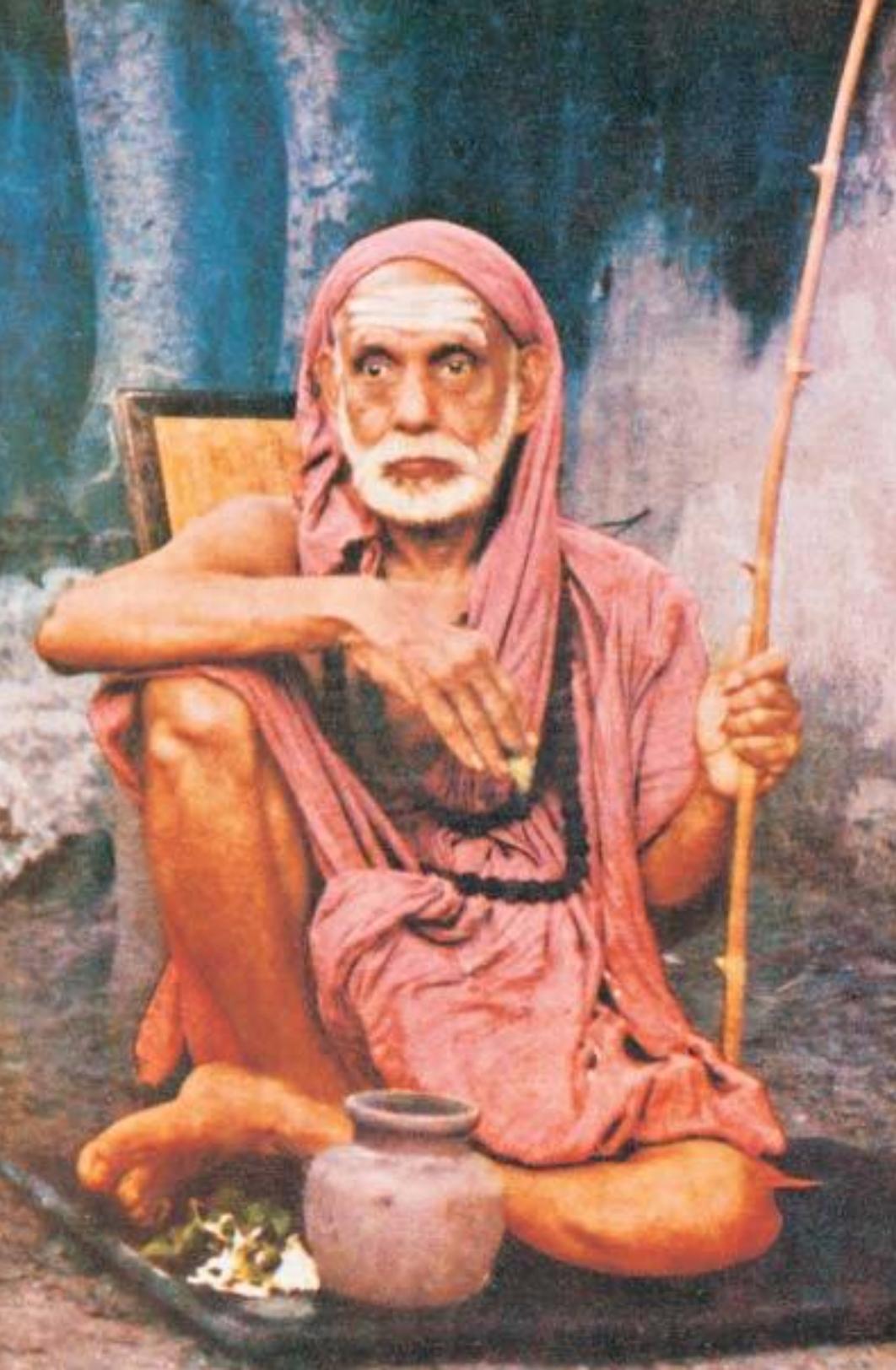
This book is tremendously inspiring for me. While reading it I felt His presence. *Aadhi Sankara* (the great saint who re-established Hinduism in India and who established the Kanchi Mutt among others and became its first Pontiff of the Mutt) wrote in *Bhaja Govindam* that the first step to Liberation (*Mukthi*) is *Satsang* (the presence or company of the righteous people). I can imagine of no greater *Satsang* than reading of books like this one.

I feel blessed to have been given the opportunity to publish this book. It is a coincidence (is it?) how this happened. I landed in my uncle's house in Chennai (in a rare visit) one day in the first week of March this year. He informed me that this script which was about to go to the press was recalled by him the previous day from the Publisher. My uncle wanted to know if I can find a publisher at Mumbai. Without a second thought I said, "I myself will publish this" informing him that I am running a publishing house myself.

During the process of publishing this book, I started reading experiences of some others with the Sage. Reading these brought me very close to Him and showed me once again the true path. I can hear Him speak to me through my unexpected involvement with this book, loving, guiding, freeing.

I will be doubly blessed if I can be a vehicle to render to others the inspiration contained in these pages.

A portion of the sale proceeds is proposed to be donated for the promotion of institutions and trusts established for causes suggested and blessed by the Sage.



Translator's Note

THE privilege of translating Bharanidharan's, '*Anbe Arule*', came to me as an unexpected boon. Sri R.V. Raghavan of Colour Publications Pvt. Ltd. and Sudakshina Trust, Mumbai and Sri S. Ramakrishnan of Bharathiya Vidya Bhavan fame were good friends and both were great devotees of Kanchi Paramacharya. On the look out for someone to whom the translation of '*Anbe Arule*' could be entrusted, Sri Raghavan contacted Sri Ramakrishnan who recommended my name to him. When Sri Raghavan met me with the request, I readily agreed, telling him that I would deem it an honour and execute the task as a privilege and as a labour of love.

Seasoned journalist that Bharanidharan is, he has put together several interesting anecdotes and intimate personal details of his long association and interaction with the Paramacharya and has narrated them in an arresting but easy style, bringing out the utter simplicity of the great sage and his spontaneous love and affection which touched even the lowliest of the low. I was aware that I had taken upon myself a great responsibility. I read and re-read the Tamil version, wrote and rewrote the translation, trying to improve it with each revision so as to bring out the nuances of Bharanidharan's able Tamil narration. I believe that, with the blessings of the Paramacharya, I have, to a large extent succeeded in this effort.

For my part, I consider myself thrice-blessed and for this, I wish to record my feelings of gratitude to Sri S. Ramakrishnan and Sri R.V. Raghavan both of whom attained the Lotus Feet of the Lord in quick succession a couple of years ago.

Vankipuram Krishnamachari

Introduction

Swaminathan the second child of his parents, Sri Subramania Sastri and Srimathi Mahalakshimi was born on 20th May 1894 in Villupuram, a small township of Tamil Nadu in South India.

In the year 1900, while he was studying in the first standard at Chidambaram, the visiting inspector of schools found him extraordinarily brilliant and precocious and had him promoted to the third standard that very moment. When Swaminathan was ten years old, he was admitted to the Arcot American Mission School at nearby Tindivanam, in the second form, where he won a prize for proficiency in the Bible studies. Later in 1906 in his twelfth age, he distinguished himself as a talented actor donning the role as Prince Arthur in Shakespeare's drama 'King John', while taking part in a dialogue-delivery competition. He was presented with a rare and valuable volume of 'Old English' for his performance.

It was during that period he was drawn towards the sixty-sixth pontiff of Sri Kamkoti Sankaracharya Mutt established 2000 years ago by the prodigy and the rare philosopher of the monistic school of thought, Sri Âdhi Sankaracharya.

Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswathi Swamigal, the 66th pontiff of the Sankarite monastery, was camping then in a village near Tindivanam and Swaminathan was a regular visitor to that camp. The pontiff developed a special affinity towards Swaminathan and had mentally planned to train him as his successor.

But destiny had willed it otherwise. Shortly after the camp moved to the village Kalavai, about seventy miles away, where he took seriously ill, and passed away, after initiating Swaminathan's maternal cousin, who was staying at the Mutt as a student, as the sixty-seventh pontiff. Before his family could reach the village, the new incumbent also fell very sick, and hence the mantle fell on the young shoulders of Swaminathan (who was hardly thirteen years of age then) as per the wish of the 66th pontiff

on 13th February 1907, assuming the sanyasa name “Chandrasekharendra Saraswati”, as the 68th pontiff of Sri Kanchi Kamakoti Mutt.

During the following four or five years he went through intense training in acquiring knowledge in Sanskrit classics, spiritual lore and vedantic literature by way of equipping himself to the task ahead as the head of a monastery chiefly devoted for the inculcation of faith in god and for the propagation and preservation of the vedic tradition of its followers. During the next twenty years he travelled in the southern parts of Tamil Nad visiting town after town and village after village, to get to know the common people, their aspirations, needs and way of life by interacting with them very intimately, and in the process enriching himself in every respect.

All the while he was in the company of learned pundits and erudite scholars – discussing with them most of the time, thus enlarging his vision and knowledge which enabled him to formulate remedial measure in keeping with the ancient wisdom and spiritual mores of our motherland.

Wherever he went he was repeatedly emphasising on temple worship and the need to preserve and maintain our shrines thus safeguarding our cultural heritage. With a view to keep alive our time – honoured knowledge and wisdom he was not tired of setting up institutions and trusts, for in depth study of vedic texts.

Thus he evolved himself not only as the head of a Mutt propagating a particular cult, but as a real universal teacher (Jagatguru) inspired by the example of the exemplary Âdhi Sankaracharya, the guru of gurus, shining like a beacon light for spreading the message of monism to a modern society which can ill afford to miss the essence and strength of our ancient legacy.

He did not opt for a life of pomp and power glued to his Mutt premises, but grew up as a mobile wandering monk, treading the length and breadth of his motherland. He was not tired of walking to the nook and corner in search of Holy spots, hallowed by gods, seers and saints. Coming into contact with the intimate lives of his followers and tirelessly suggesting ways and means of preserving the essence and roots of our religious and spiritual glory for the good of humanity at large. He was never tired of emphasising that only the feeling of oneness and genuine concern for the welfare of all, overcoming the artificial barriers and differences, will enable us to restore peace and plenty on earth.

He always talked to people in simple and easy language emphasising the need to be honest, sincere, simple, loving and caring while dealing with fellow beings. He repeatedly kept reminding us about the ancient Indian thought proclaiming 'Let all prosper and lead a happy life'. He was an embodiment of 'simple living and high thinking', denying himself of all personal comforts. He practiced what he preached throughout his life.

After a purposeful span of life stretched to a hundred years, observing strict silence during the final four years, he was a mute witness to what was happening around him and suddenly breathed his last and merged with nature on the afternoon of 8th January 1994 at Kanchipuram, and his body was laid to rest within the Mutt premises itself.

Thousands and thousands have had his 'dharsan' and those blessed ones are never tired of narrating their thrilling and elevating experiences. Apart from the simple unlettered folks, to leaders of society, savants, scholars, ministers and business magnates thronged to him in their hundreds and thousands to have a glimpse of him and exchange a few words.

Many a fortunate foreigner have been regular visitors to him and got enriched and inspired by his words of wisdom.

In 1931, Paul Brunton, the noted British writer and spiritual seeker met him and got inspired by an interview he had with him and was motivated through him to meet Ramana Maharishi of Thiruvannamalai. He hesitated saying that he may not be able to undertake the trip during that tour but will do so sometime later. But the Sage insisted that he must make it during that trip itself. Brunton had mentioned movingly in his very popular book 'A search in Secret India', about the thrilling 'vision' he experienced while on his bed that midnight. The sage appeared before him and insisted that he can return to England only after meeting Ramana Maharishi. Paul Brunton obeyed the command because of which both foreigners and Indians were benefited greatly.

Later, many foreigners, seekers of truth from different parts of the world started coming not only to Ramanasram but to the remote villages where the Sankaracharya was camping.

Miss Eughina Borghini, of Buenos Aires, Argentina, after meeting with the 'Sage of Love and Grace' has this to say :

"I consider the day I first saw his holiness as a day of great fortune in my life. I consider that in him Jesus has come again into this world. He is an image of love. From the moment I saw him, the light of his

grace gave me maturity to understand clearly some of the aspects of spiritual life and religious teachings. His holiness lives like Jesus, homeless and devoted to a life of renunciation, and with his contemplation, worship, penance, and teaching working for the welfare of mankind. I shall bow at his feet and be always adoring him”.



THE year was 1961. The place – office of the Ananda Vikatan. Production of the prestigious Vikatan Deepavali special number was in full swing. A few pages were all that remained to be printed. Matter for the customary dedication to the ‘Goddess of Letters and Arts’ by the Editor was getting ready. Just then, I got a call from the Assistant Editor, Sri Gopalakrishnan. When I met him, he told me that I should proceed to ‘Ilayathangudi’ (near Karaikudi in Ramnad district) the same night and obtain the benediction message from The Kanchi Maha Swamigal who was camping there.

Whenever I got an opportunity to have the Maha Swami’s dharsan my heart invariably jumped with joy. Now, here was a rare opportunity but I was weighed down by a certain hesitation! A journey, which I was trying to avoid for some months, was being thrust on me. I could not avoid it. There was a struggle in me between a feeling of resistance and the call of duty. There was a reason for the same.

A few weeks earlier I had written an article captioned ‘Lava Kusa in Mylapore’. It was a frank comment on the *Ramayana* discourses then being delivered at Mylapore Vidya Mandir by the popular duo, Sri Sengalipuram Anantharama Dikshidhar and his brother Narayana Dikshidhar. As I was listening to the discourse, I noted that, in an otherwise excellent exposition, certain observations not so relevant had intervened with a jarring note. My critical article took shape the same night. I had joined the Editorial staff only a year ago and a new enthusiasm combined with strong feelings resulted in the comment turning out to be rather harsh. The Editor received a number of letters highly critical of my article. But, there were many more which were on my wavelength and congratulated me for boldly recording in print what was actually agitating their minds but hesitated to express openly lest they should be labeled infidels.



THE first conference on *Agama* and *Silpa sasthanas* and ancient arts was held in Ilayathangudi in 1962. This was conceived and guided by Periava. Under his auspices and blessings, it turned out to be a grand success. Several delegates from other parts of India and even from abroad – scholars, experts in various fields and the spiritually great – participated. Of the many original and purposeful plans of Swamigal, this one was unique and important. I had received an invitation to attend the conference but to my great regret I could not make it.

When the second conference was held next year at Narayanapuram near Madurai, I could go there but could stay only for a day or two. I was, therefore very keen to attend the third conference held in Kanchipuram in 1964 and benefit from it by participating in all the events. I completed all my assignments for the next week in advance and proceeded to Kanchipuram determined to attend all the sessions. But my plan fizzled out and what happened was entirely different.

The inaugural function was a grand affair. The *Maharaja* of Mysore – Jayachamaraja Wadiyar who inaugurated the conference made a brilliant speech. Swamigal spoke at great length on the objectives of the conference, focusing on our ancient arts and the cultural heritage etc. When I went to him next morning to pay obeisance, Swamigal asked me “Did you listen to the Maharaja’s speech yesterday?”

“Yes. I did”.

“Did you notice that he spoke four lines extempore which were not part of the prepared text?”

“No. I missed it”.

“ I asked two or three persons. No one seems to have noticed it. Do one thing. Keep the printed copy of the speech with you and listen to the recorded version in the tape. Compare the two and find out what those four lines were. You must do this immediately and meet me”. Swamigal entrusted me with this urgent task.



3

MY friend Sri K.M. Rangaswami of ‘*Dinamani*’, a Tamil daily, had come to cover the conference as a special correspondent. I could gather from him, information about all the proceedings at the conference and benefited greatly. Just a day or two was left for the conference to conclude. Next morning, before going to the conference venue, I went to have dharsan of Swamigal. There was not much crowd around him and he appeared relaxed.

“ I wish to bring something to Periva’s notice”, I said.

“Yes. Go ahead”

“I had been to Ekambareswarar temple. I found a board there indicating that a fee of ten paise has to be paid to go inside and have dharsan. I was pained. As it is, tickets are to be purchased for ‘*abishekam*’, ‘*archanai*’ etc. Is that not enough? I feel it is very wrong on the part of the temple authorities to collect a fee for mere dharsan also”.

“Is that so?”, asked Swamigal in surprise.

“Yes. There is also one more objectionable thing. A screen has been kept near the ‘*Dwajasthambam*’ (Flag staff). I was told that this was to prevent people from having dharsan from outside without paying the ten paise. There is so much talk about inculcating bhakthi among people and making temple worship flourish. Yet this is what is happening”.

“It is very wrong”, said Swamigal.

Next day, Periva participated in the meeting of the Executive officers of the Hindu Religious Endowment Department held at the sadas. In his concluding remarks he said, “I have to refer now to an important issue. I believe that in Ekambareswarer temple people can have dharsanam only on payment of ten paise. A young man who saw a board to that effect was extremely upset and reported it to me. I believe a screen has also been put up near the ‘*Dwajasthambam*’ to prevent people having dharsan from outside free of charge. I do not know under whose

‘SILPI’, who, with Periava’s grace and blessings, was drawing pictures of temples and gods regularly for Vikatan, was hailed as a unique and unparalleled artist.

One day, early morning, Periava, after bathing in the sea at Santhome was walking back along Kutcheri road. Suddenly, halting at the corner of Arundale street, and asked, “Silpi’s house is some where here, is it not?” When one of those who were following him said ‘Yes’, Periava entered the street and wanted him to locate that house. We were making frantic enquiries house after house. In the meantime, Periava stopped before a particular house and said, “See if this is the house”. I went inside and enquired. Yes, it was Silpi’s house. Periava went inside. At that time only members of Silpi’s family were present but Silpi was out of station.

Silpi’s mother was flabbergasted. She did not know what to do.

Periava went straight to the Pooja room. Then he came to the hall, closely observed each of the divine pictures drawn by Silpi, which adorned the wall, and started to depart. Just then, Silpi’s mother told Periava, “I am troubled by asthma. I am suffering a lot”. Before leaving Periava told her in the manner of a doctor prescribing a drug, “Take two Bilwa leaves everyday” and left.

When Silpi returned from his tour, he felt very disappointed that he could not be present in the house when Periava visited him. The same evening he went to Periava, and expressed his happiness at Periava having graced his house with his presence but regretted that he could not be present at that time. Laughingly Periava told him, “You have been saying ‘Please come to my house, Please visit my house’ you did not say that I should come when you are there!”

When Periava was camping in Nungambakkam, Gurumurthy, a contractor - devotee, requested him to grace his house. One evening,

MY uncle's grand daughter, Anuradha, who was a picture of beauty, was afflicted with polio in her young age. All sorts of treatments proved futile. Her parents lost all hopes. A pall of gloom descended over the family. Years rolled by.

Periava was camping at the Sankara Mutt in West Mambalam. During a dharsan, I told Periava about my niece's plight, he wanted me to bring her to the Mutt. But how to take her inside? She cannot walk. Her father would have to carry her. When told Anu felt too shy to be carried in the presence of so many persons.

We took her to the Mutt. Periava was participating in a seminar on 'Sastras'. When he saw me, he asked, "Has the child come?"

I said, "Yes".

"Where is she?"

"She cannot walk. She is in the car outside".

Periava got up abruptly, walked briskly and came straight to where the car was parked. The parents, who did not expect Periava to be there, were dumbfounded. Anu, who was looking elsewhere suddenly turned and saw Periava standing before her. She was shocked and dazed. She was puzzled whether it was real or a dream. She was rendered speechless. I opened the door of the car. Periava looked inside.

"Which leg?", he asked endearingly.

Anu slightly moved the skirt. Periava's look of grace fell on the affected leg and with his raised hand he showered his blessings.

Within a month, there was good news. It was learnt that a foreign expert who was performing successful surgery for the particular affliction, had come to the Vellore hospital. Parents took Anu to Vellore. A significant improvement ensued. A special shoe was fixed. Anu started walking with the help of a stick. Those who thought that she could not walk at all felt greatly relieved.



THE year is 1965. Place – Sri Karpagambal Kalayana Mandap in Mylapore. It is 4.30 early morning. Periava is getting ready to step out. I too get ready to follow him. He turns back and looks at me. I go near him. Periava talks as he walks....

“Will you write about Thirupathi?”.

“I will carry out Periava’s command”.

“Thirupathi is the most sacred centre of spiritual and religious forces on Earth. Primordial Masculine and Feminine energies combine and vibrate in unison and influence the destinies of multitudinous devotees.

Sri Venkatesa Perumal dwelling on the seven hills symbolizes those combined divine powers. On my way to the Holy Kasi in the thirties I had dharsan of Perumal. I was then permitted to go inside the sanctum sanctorum; I went behind the Swami idol and had a close look...”. As Periava started narrating something very special and significant, a devotee interrupted, paid obeisance and invited him to grace his house which was nearby. This distracted Periava’s attention. I felt very sorry for having missed a treasure of rare information on Thirupathi that morning.

Since then on two or three occasions, I tried to get more information on Thirupathi from Periava but I did not succeed. Twice I had the good fortune of walking up the Thirumalai Hills along with Periava. On the first occasion, I broached the Thirupathi topic. I wanted to know when I could start writing. But I did not get a direct answer. Instead, he came out with another revelation on the subject.

“When I went to Thirumalai for the first time I remembered to have seen in the ‘*Vimana gopuram*’ of Swami (dome over the main shrine) a sculpture depicting Markandeya embracing the Sivalingam tightly and Siva raising his foot to chase out Yama. But, after a metal covering (Kavacham) was fixed over it, that original sculpture was missing on the

AT a Kalyana Mandapam in Sri Varadharaja Perumal Sannidhi street, Vishnu Kanchi, the cataract surgery had been performed on Periaiva. Dr. Badrinath of ‘Sankara Netralaya’, not only performed the operation successfully but early morning everyday he drove down from Chennai, sixty kilometers away to attend on him.

One day, Srikantan, one of Periaiva’s attendants came to my office and said that the next day, Periaiva would be leaving the *Mandapam* very early in the morning and he desired that this information should be conveyed to me and to Dr. Badrinath only. I went to Little Kanchipuram the same night and spent the night on the pyol of the mandap.

Periaiva came out of the mandapam at 4.30 a.m. Apart from Srikantan there were only four persons with him. I joined them. When Sannadhi street was still in deep slumber, Periaiva walked slowly towards the East tower of the temple. We followed him quietly.

Periaiva stopped in front of the gopuram, knelt down and did obeisance in the manner prescribed for Sanyasis. I paid my obeisance to Varadharaja Perumal and Maha Periaiva together.

The manner in which Periaiva did ‘*Gopura Dharsanam*’ stirred my thoughts. Is not Sri Varadharaja Perumal the deity who had blessed the exemplary devotee ‘*Koorathazhvar*’ with eyesight? Is that the reason why Periaiva had his eye operation at a place very close to the Perumal sannidhi? Is that the reason why after leaving the Mandap he did obeisance to Perumal first to express his gratitude? One would never know.

In south mada street, The caretaker of Sri Kamakoti Seshadri Swamigal *Nivasa* Mantap, Sri Gopala Diskhitar was standing at the entrance with ‘*Poomakumbham*’ along with his family members. Just at that very moment, Dr. Badrinath arrived there from Madras with his wife. Periaiva was about to step into the *Nivasam*, after accepting the ‘*Poomakumbham*’ honour. Mr. and Mrs. Badrinath on one side and I on the other side offered our ‘*Prostrations*’ to Periaiva. Periaiva signalled us to follow him inside and we did so.



THE year was 1994, January 8, Saturday, 2.58 p.m., *Dwadasi*. The news of Periava attaining ‘*Mahasamadhi*’ spread like wild fire through cities, towns and villages throughout the length and breadth of the country and beyond. Thick dark clouds of gloom engulfed millions of hearts. Tears burst out. Devotees who had developed ineffable attachment towards him wept inconsolably. They felt suddenly orphaned and rudderless.

Various were the lamentations heard:

“Periava has left me helpless”. “Periava has left us in the lurch and disappeared suddenly”. “We can no more have Periava’s dharsan. We cannot see that personification of grace, cannot see that captivating smile, that bewitching laughter. No more the nectar-soaked words”.

“When I lost my parents I came running to Periava for consolation. Now that Periava has gone. To whom would I go?”

“I was praying that I should precede Periava. Of what use am I to others? If Periava was alive it would have been of immense benefit for humanity”.

“I am in a way fortunate. Before Periava under took ‘*Mounavratam*’ I had his dharsan one day. He spoke a lot. He blessed me profusely. I thought he would live long. I deceived myself”.

“I know none other than Periava. For the last 40 years I have been with Periava and served him. How much has he spoken! Once he became angry with me. The next moment he asked me in the manner of a child, ‘Have I been very harsh on you? Did you feel very much?’”.

“When we knew that the great master was in the room we had a feeling of assurance and safety. Now if we peep in, he will not be there”.

Glossary

<i>Aarathi</i>	Showing of camphor flame or oil light as a part of worship
<i>Abishekam</i>	Consecrating with sanctified water
<i>Adhistanam</i>	Sacred tombs or final resting place of saints
<i>Agama</i>	Religious rules and rituals prescribed for temple worship
<i>Akshaya Patra</i>	Legendary heavenly vessel providing inexhaustible food
<i>Aradhana</i>	Annual sastric ceremony performed in memory of anchorites
<i>Archanai</i>	Panegyric worship of gods and goddesses
<i>Ashram</i>	Humble dwelling of renounced persons
<i>Brahma</i>	Creator of the universe
<i>Brahma jnani</i>	A realized soul
<i>Brahmana</i>	Brahmin by caste
<i>Chakrams</i>	Sanctified symbols and talisman. Such lines found on palm and feet in birth.
<i>Deepa namaskaram</i>	Worship of light or with light
<i>Deepavali malar</i>	Special issue published for Deepavali festival
<i>Dharma</i>	Righteous path – Good and correct conduct.
<i>Dharsans / Dharsanam</i>	Face to face with god and god like person
<i>Dikshidhar</i>	A sect of vedic scholars and religious practitioners
<i>Grahasthasrama</i>	Living as a family man

<i>Harichandra</i>	A king in Hindu mythology who stuck to truth come what may
<i>Hashta nakshtram</i>	Star of Hashta in Hindu almanac
<i>Janma nakshatram</i>	Birth star
<i>Japam</i>	Silent Prayer
<i>Jayanthi</i>	Annual celebration of ones birth star
<i>Jnani</i>	Realised soul
<i>Kainkarya sabha</i>	An association for service
<i>Kalaimamani</i>	An annual State award conferred on artistes
<i>Kalyana Mandapam</i>	Public wedding halls
<i>Keerthanais</i>	Songs
<i>Kumkumam and Vibhuti</i>	Sacred vermilion and sacred ash
<i>Kumbabishekam</i>	Consecration
<i>Lava – Kusa</i>	Sri Rama's twin sons
<i>Maha Swamigal</i>	Exalted soul
<i>Mahamagam</i>	Holy festival occurring every twelve years at Kumbakonam – A town in Tamil Nadu
<i>Mahasamadhi</i>	Death of holy persons
<i>Mahavidyalaya</i>	University
<i>Mala</i>	Garland of beads
<i>Mandap – Mandapam</i>	Public halls
<i>Marghazhi, Thai</i>	Ninth and Tenth Tamil months respectfully
<i>Matam</i>	Monastery
<i>Mathusri</i>	Respectable lady
<i>Mouna vratham</i>	Vow of strict silence
<i>Muhurtham</i>	Propitious time
<i>Namaskaram</i>	Prostrate to pay respects
<i>Narasimha Jayanthi</i>	Birth star celebration of Lord Vishnu – an incarnation with human form and lion's face
<i>Nivasam</i>	Dwelling place
<i>Padhayatra</i>	March by foot

<i>Panchangam</i>	Almanac
<i>Pandal</i>	Enclosure erected with coconut or palm leaves
<i>Paramacharya</i>	Exalted preceptor
<i>Pavazhamalli</i>	A tiny white flower with a dot of coral-red shade at the centre
<i>Peetam</i>	An exalted seat
<i>Peetathipathi</i>	One who occupies such a seat
<i>Periava</i>	A venerable sage
<i>Perumal</i>	Lord Vishnu
<i>Poornakumbham</i>	A metal pot with holy water used for respectfully welcoming distinguished guests
<i>Poorvasrama</i>	Bachelorhood – Family life – Retirement – Renunciation are the four Asramas. The one prior to the present one is poorvasrama
<i>Raga</i>	Pattern of notes used as preliminary basis for rendering a composition or song.
<i>Rama Nama</i>	Sri Rama's name (The hero of the epic Ramayana)
<i>Sadas</i>	Conclave of scholars
<i>Sahitya Academy</i>	Academy of Letters and arts
<i>Saivite</i>	Pertaining to Siva sect
<i>Sangeetha Mumoorthigal</i>	The music trinity – Thyagaraja – Muthuswami Dikshidhar – Shyama Sastrigal
<i>Sanyasi</i>	An anchorite
<i>Sashtanga namaskaram</i>	Falling flat while offering obeisance
<i>Sastra</i>	Philosophic injunctions
<i>Sastri</i>	One who is well versed in them
<i>Sathya sabha</i>	An organisation for upholding the cult of truth
<i>Siddhi</i>	Attainment of occult powers
<i>Silpa</i>	Sculpture
<i>Siva</i>	One of the holy trinity of Hindu religion
<i>Sri Ramajayam</i>	Hail to Sri Rama

<i>Sumangali</i>	Married woman with her husband living
<i>Suprabada seva</i>	Pre-dawn prayer offered at temples
<i>Swamigal – Swami</i>	Venerable spiritual person
<i>Theertha prasadam</i>	Offering of sanctified water after prayer or ritual
<i>Upadesam</i>	Words or passages of mystic and spiritual energy – mantra
<i>Vanaprastha</i>	Third asrama or stage in a man's life (Living in forest)
<i>Vasthra / Vasthram</i>	Apparel
<i>Veda Patasala</i>	School for study of scriptures
<i>Vedantic</i>	Pertaining to scripture or philosophy
<i>Veedhi valam</i>	Procession round the streets by foot
<i>Veena</i>	A stringed musical instrument
<i>Veena Dakshinamurthy</i>	Lord Siva in eternal silence holding a veena in his hand
<i>Veshti</i>	Men's wear (Lower garment)
<i>Viswarupa dharsan</i>	Pre-dawn visit to a temple or a holy man
<i>Vratham</i>	Observance of vow
<i>Yama</i>	God of death



T.S. Sridhar, born on 25th December 1925, a commerce graduate, had a flair for caricaturing and cartooning while a student at college. After graduation he established contact with Ananda Vikatan the reputed Tamil weekly as its contributor. Later he was absorbed as a member of its Editorial board. He was drawing cartoons regularly and also was contributing jokes and humorous skits. He grew up as a skilled journalist under the efficient care, encouragement and guidance of its Proprietor - Editor, S.S. Vasan.

Soon he flowered as a full-fledged writer under the nom-de-plume Bharanidharan, after he came under the benign influence of the Sage of Kanchi, who inspired and motivated him to travel to many holy shrines and sacred spots of India. The records of his travelogues serialized in Vikatan week after week, and later published in book form were sought by the spiritually and religiously inclined multitudes. Nearly a dozen and more of his travelogue books are ever in demand.

Bharanidharan has also authored a book in English entitled 'Six Mystics of India'.

He is also Marina, the popular playwright. His plays are appreciated by innumerable readers and are also being enjoyed on the stage by theatre-enthusiasts for their family appeal and satirical commentaries on men and matters of contemporary life.

