Sri Chakra

The Source of the Cosmos

The Journal of the Sri Rajarajeswari Peetam, Rush, NY

Blossom 16 Petal 3
September 2011

September Newsletter

Since the last issue...

The summer was dominated by small but important festivals, so Aiya was only able to travel locally, if at all. Among his local trips were a few across the border to Toronto, and some in New York state, such as a visit to the new Sai Centre in Markham, ON, and a private puja in the town of Painted Post, toward Corning.

But most of Aiya's time this summer was taken up by July festival, Gurupoornima, Aadi Amavasya, camp preparation and execution, and finally Varalakshmi vratam. After Varalakshmi was completed, though, Aiya took a trip to Asia, where he spent four days in Singapore.

There, he spoke at many public venues, including the Kathong Centre and local Sai Centre. Aiya gave a lecture at the Perumal temple there on mantras and the effects of mantras on the human body, which about 200 people attended.

He also gave a speech at the Senpaga Vinayagar temple and spoke about the scientific aspects of kalasams there. Overall, Aiya did about 5-6 private pujas in people's homes while in Singapore.

From there, he flew to Australia and landed in Perth, where he did a few private pujas. From there, Aiya went to Sydney and spoke at the Shakthi temple in front of a packed room of about 275 people.

Aiya doing a house puja.

The talk at the Senpaga Vinayagar kovil.

After a few more private pujas, Aiya conducted a workshop at the Durga Devi temple hall where more than 200 people attended.

Aiya then flew back to the US, just in time to preside over our Vinayaka Chaturthi celebrations.

Past Events

Annual Pratishta, July 1-3

This is the first year this festival has moved from May to July, following last year's kumbhabhishekam. On the first day's morning the installation of digdevata kalasams happened first thing, a Ganapathi homam took place with everyone getting the chance to offer 1000 modakams into the fire, and utsava Ganapathi went out in evening.

Saturday morning, Chandi homam started at 5 a.m.; annapavadai was offered after kalasa sthapanam, and in the evening time Devi and Ganapathi went on their vahanams and then onto the chariot. Festivities wrapped up around 11 p.m.

The last day, volunteers arranged 1008 shankams in the shape of a massive shankam pointing toward the Devi. Each one had lamp and fruits with it. After the shankams were poured onto the Devi, we did Dattatreya homam and abhishekam.

The temple kids prepared and executed Dattatreya puja again this year, and the festival ended on a high note as visitors said it was probably the best Dattatreya puja they had seen.

Annapavadai was offered on Friday; Ganapathi and the Devi went out on their respective vahanams (which were then secured to the chariot) Saturday night.

Guru Poornima, July 14

This year many people did a 45-day Dakshinamoorthy puja preceding the festival and gave Aiya their coins on this day. Volunteers set up the stage against the north wall of the temple where the Nayanmars are, where Aiya and Amma did their puja to the lineage.

Aiya arrived around 2:30 p.m. and was done by 5:30 or 6 p.m. Aiya and Amma sat while Shankar and his wife Gowri performed the homam.

The temple's young people took care of serving food on Gurupoornima evening.

One of Aiya's students, Kumaran Perinpanatan, released a book that day. At the end, Aiya also gave a short speech about one's sadhana and the efficacy of mantras and the crowd of 150-200 people partook prasadam that evening.

Viboothi Shaivite Immersion (camp), July 30-August 6

Our popular kids' "camp" hosted about 100 youngsters from the ages of 9 to 18, and they learned, had fun, and many of them grew closer to the Devi and expressed a wish to return to the temple very soon.

Over the course of one week, the kids had regular puja classes with counselors, lessons with Aiya, classes with various guest speakers, daily sports and game time, and lessons in Hindu culture. They also learned the Shivapuranam and Sri Suktam. The week was filled with fun as well, as the kids went on an outing in the middle of the week to a local park, and got horseback rides and a vegetarian barbecue on the last night.

Check out camp pictures on pages 5-6 of this issue!

Varalakshmi Vratham, August 12

Aiya had a huge mantapam made, going all the way up to the ceiling, which happened to arrive at the temple on Varalakshmi day. Volunteers dressed a 6-foot lamp up as the Devi, complete with a sari, and the face of a woman.

Devi faced east and everyone else did their deepa pujas facing west. About 50 ladies arrived for the puja at about 7 p.m. and Aiya led the puja. After, everyone got the sharadu and prasadam.

Aadi Puram, August 2

The campers, plus about 100 visitors and volunteers, made this a crowded Chandi homam, even for a Tuesday morning. It began at 9 a.m. and wrapped up around 2 p.m., with a complete homam including all 13 chapters, as well as milk abhishekam and offering of bhakshanams to the Devi.

Varalakshmi Devi, invoked in the dressed-up lamp, faced the ladies while on her silver mantapam.

Aadi Amavasya, July 29

Aiya himself led the Aadi Amavasya puja, which people perform for the souls of their departed fathers. This puja is only done in lieu of the actual thithi, and usually if the actual thithi is unknown.

Despite falling on a Friday morning, a good 50 people showed up to perform the puja. As a group, everyone sat in the yajnashala in rows facing south, with individual puja trays to do their own dads' rituals. After the tarpanams were offered inside, everyone went outside together to offer their pindams toward the south. With the help of volunteers, all the pindams were tossed southward into the Kashi creek, with Aiya chanting the appropriate mantras.

Vinayaka Chaturthi, Sept. 1

Ganapathi Chaturthi is always a full-day festival even if it falls on a Thursday as it did this year. But the turnout was significant as most high school and university students were still on summer vacation.

First thing in the morning, volunteers organized and performed a Vancha-Kalpa Ganapathi homam, complete with the offering of 1008 modakams into the fire. After the major puja and abhishekam parts, the main kalasam went in procession around the temple and was offered to the mula murthi Ganesha.

Later in the evening, utsava Ganapathi and his consort, Siddha Lakshmi, were carried around on a palanquin, and all those present received prasadam when the festival wrapped up that night.

Upcoming Events

Sharada Navarathri, Sept. 27 - Oct. 7

The raising of the flag (dvajarohanam) will happen on Sept. 20, but the main festival will officially begin eight days later. Each day will see an extremely powerful Maha Shodasi homam along with kalasa-sthapanam and abhishekam/alankaram during the day, and a Sri Chakra (Navavarana) puja in the evening.

As usual, every third day, the utsava Rajarajeswari will be carried outside via palanquin as Durga, Lakshmi, and Saraswati, respectively, as on the right.

On Thursday October 6, the Devi will ride her large chariot around the temple, and on Friday the 7th, temple volunteers will bathe all the moveable murthis outside in the water-cutting ceremony. Vijayadasami, Chandi homam, and vidya-arambham pujas (for which Sri Akka was here last year, right) will also take place.

Skanda Sashti, Oct. 27-31

This 6-day festival for Murugan occurs right on the tail end of Kedara Gowri vratham. Murugan, Devayani and Valli stay in the yajnashala for the duration of this festival, and are worshipped in a different way each night.

On the final day, Devayani Kalyanam and Sura Samharam are performed, after which Valli Kalyanam is performed. It is during this final act when all three murthis are taken around the temple in procession, culminating with Devayani finally accepting Valli as her sister and Murugan's second wife.

Kedara Gowri Vratham (last day), Oct. 26

This three-week vratham is usually performed by ladies for the well-being of their husbands, but its deeper purpose is for the complete merger of any soul into Lord Shiva. As was the case last year (see left), the first couple of days overlap with Navarathri.

Ladies or men may sponsor and attend nightly pujas if they can, with the final night being when they recieve their prasadam.

In Three Months

Devi willing, the next issue of the *Sri Chakra* will be up on the temple's website at the beginning of December 2011.

This magazine cannot keep publishing without contributions! Articles, poems, stories and photos about any spiritual topic are welcomed.

The next deadline for article submission is November 11. Please e-mail us with your contributions or feedback about this issue at sri_chakra_mag@srividya.org or talk to Kamya or Abhi at the temple.

Sri Gurubhyo Namaha!

Our deepest thanks and gratitude to this issue's volunteers: Aiya, Kathy Allen, Vilas Ankolekar, Sundhara Arasaratnam, Venkateshwar Babu, Gratus Devanesan, Sri B. Jayaraman, Gayathri Kalyanaraman, Dr. Anand Panikkar, and Tharuman Thavakumar.

The kids were introduced to the beauty of the temple grounds on a nature walk led by Aparna akka.

Vibuthi Saivite Immersion, 2011

Ruban anna and Bhargavi akka teach their puja class Sri Suktam outside by Bhairava.

Campers received a lot of instruction throughout various classes. Clockwise from upper left: Aiya taught a daily lesson on religion, and one on traditional songs; CITs Buvil and Nicshan calm the calf while the kids watch Goh puja; the kids watched a private homam conducted by Aiya; they participated in the Chandi homam for Aadi Puram on Aug. 2; Jeilan anna taught them the importance of seva; Amma taught the CITs how to make lemon rice and puliodharai as naivedyam.

Campers got daily physical activity on the temple grounds with various games and sports in the late afternoon. On the last evening of camp, the kids continued playing outside until dusk while CITs and counselors prepared a pure vegetarian barbecue dinner for everyone, including parents!

At the halfway point of the week, all campers, CITs, counselors, and staff took a day trip to a local park where everyone rotated through outdoor games and had a picnic-style meal.

Arts were also a huge part of the camp, with campers learning bhangra dancing, making and painting their own paper mache masks, and decorating festival *thandikais*.

Neelakanta and the Universe

by Sundhara Arasaratnam

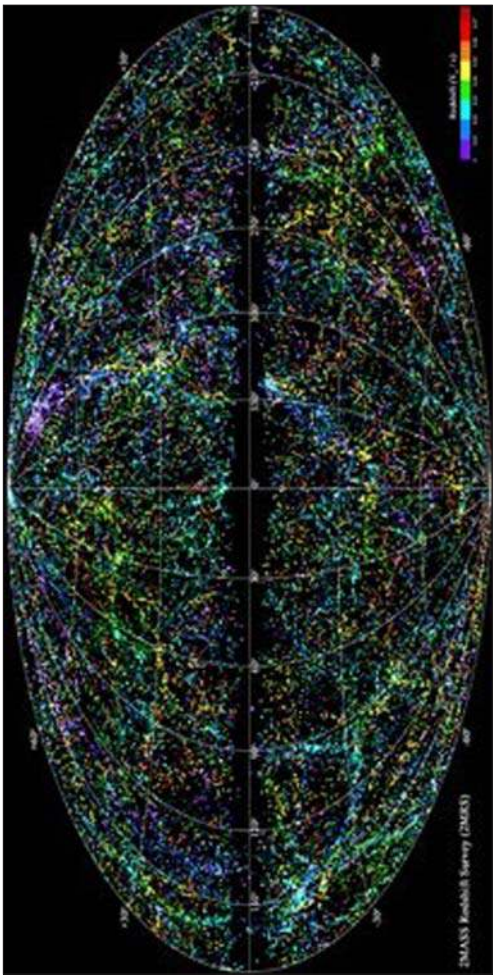
A recent article about the expanding 3-D image of the universe said the following:

"Astronomers have unveiled the most complete 3-D map of the universe ever created. In this projection, the plane of the Milky Way runs horizontally across the centre of the image. The dots indicate individual galaxies containing billions of stars. Red indicates the galaxies that are farthest away, while purple connotes the closest galaxies. Covering a distance of 380 million light-years, the map assembles in one image the location and distance of more than 43,000 galaxies."

The micro galaxy we live in resides in this universe as very miniscule trace.

Those of you who have seen the Neelakanta Pranalingeswara at the Sri Rajarajeswari Temple in Rush, New York will recognize the obvious resemblance; not only of the shape but also the patterns. So, does this not address the point that the lingam also represents the universe?

She creates and implodes universes as Herself. All universes and anything beyond is HER form that we visualize. SHE creates it, maintains it, and dissolves it. The "concept" of the universe (and "time" which creates the "universe"), as well as the attributes within the universe are implied throughout many instances in the Lalita Sahasranamam:



Brhamarupayayi, Rudhrarupa, Dhirodhanakarivari, Vishva Rupa, Bharumandalasamsthayai, Vruthayai, Brhamatvaikaisvarupiniyai, Bruhathyaii, Brahmaniyai, Brahmiyai, Brhamajanani, Brahmananthayai, Bhaharathayayai, Virat Rupayai, Kameshwara Prananidiyai (as the living Universe), and so on.

Remembering Ati Rudram

... a year later

by Tharuman Thavakumar

Yes! I said to myself walking up the temple driveway on the first day of Ati Rudram – the festival we had all waited for approached faster than we ever expected, yet no one was "stressed."

The one thing I've come to see over the past 12 years is that for one, we never plan; and two, things always work out. I don't think Aiya has EVER budgeted for a festival or truly felt his plans would stick when he assigned people to do certain tasks. Aiya would assign names and such, but then would leave it up to the Devi and will be willing to accept anything. This attitude of his has truly made me come closer and hold him in even higher regard—he's one of the few people I have ever seen with unwavering faith, an integral quality of a Guru.

Ati Rudram for sure was nothing like we imagined—it was a thousand-fold bigger, better and something that now just can't be comprehended. No one person was behind it and no one person led it. Aiya made it OUR festival; a sense of "us" is what he installed. This sense of cooperation is a lesson we have been taught at the temple, but since we were kids our families engrained in us an opposite thought, that of competition. If you get a 98% your parents will ask where the 2% went.

Aiya has done the same, but he's never forgotten to acknowledge the 98% that was complete… he just wants us to grow. I took Ati Rudram as a semester exam—one that gave me a true rebirth.

At the end of Ati Rudram I realized it's never who does what or when things gets done—we have no control. If we felt each of us had any control rather than everyone mixing and becoming a homogenous compound, the event would have been a struggle for us all. This theory of "cooperation" was extremely vivid during the entire event and I feel that was the best gurudakshina we could give to Aiya for everything he has done for us. One such incident that proved this was the unexpected flood.

Above and left, volunteers dug "the world's greatest trench" before Ati Rudram even began.

Everything was going as "planned" and a sense of satisfaction definitely began to arise in the volunteers. The world's greatest trench had just been dug: perforated pipes, sand bags, drainage, embankments – what could go wrong? Nothing could go wrong—the water was no match against our brains and our guru. Aiya's smirk when told about the world's greatest trench didn't ring a bell then, but now makes sense.

I remember the day so vividly. It was about 5 p.m. and Venu uncle and I were with all the homam volunteers inside the main sanctum going over the plans and divisions on how to manage the service work that was required. While I was sitting in the back listening and adding in some points, the thunder sounded like eight cannons being blasted right outside the temple.

About one minute later I heard the rain falling so hard on the windows which were angled open, and I could hear the water gush down the gutters. But of course, the tent would be fine—we had the world's greatest trench guarding the fortress that was hosting the event we have been waiting for so anxiously.

Suddenly, Mangala came running into the sanctum screaming, "THARUMAN ANNA! THE TENT IS FLOODING! APPA WANTS BUCKETS!"

I told Shivender to get buckets and darted towards the tent to see that there were five people trying to fight off the waters. The water at the entrance of the tent was easily half way between the feet and the knees, and our trench, which we thought could withstand anything was just not

working. The water pushed its way over the sand bags.

Then I ran inside and called a few guys, but by that time word had reached and everyone was running towards the tent—how could this trench give up? We all thought it was a joke originally. But we all looked at each other and without a word we just started to move.

Old, young, ladies, men, boys, girls—everyone started pulling the carpets out and taking the water that had gathered at the entrance in buckets and moving it to the back of the tent. Some began carrying more sandbags to pile up the embankments, and others dug into the mud trying to fix the drain, which had been clogged with sand and gravel.

Only the images in our minds could accurately describe this experience—we were all together, we were all one. There was no "I will tell you what to do;" it was pure teamwork. Kids as young as four to senior citizens were all working together to help and do what they could for what they loved so much.

The pictures will never leave my eyes and the fun won't either. While things began to settle, I texted Pravin anna saying the tent was flooded. He messaged back and said, "It's so sunny here, how can it be raining 10 miles away?"

Now this made me think… others that lived five miles from the temple like Sinthujan, Mohan uncle, Purvaja had just arrived and were saying how it only rained near the temple. Now, to me that's one of two things—either the temple needed water, or Aiya and the Devi wanted to see what would happen.

All these days, people like Muralee anna, Pravin anna, Selvan uncle had been assigned tasks, but this day, none of them were present. They were all doing their own things or were off the property. I felt the Devi wanted to show us right before the festival began that this event will only work if we all pulled together. Even if those people never wanted to be "leads" I feel some of the volunteers began depending on them.

I feel that the Devi wanted to make sure that every volunteer knew their place, and knew what they were to do. It didn't matter if you were a homakarta, cook, volunteer, archana person, PR helper—EVERYONE was the Devi's and Aiya's children, and we were all the same. Digging into the mud and getting our clothes messy together and working together showed us this sense of equality and totally broke down the barriers of "he's a homa kartha and he's more special than me (a volunteer)" or vice versa. Everyone came into the dirt and everyone worked together.

Although some people look at the flash flood as a negative thing, I like to believe differently. I look at this as a lesson that was taught by Aiya and the Devi—everyone proved that they truly are Aiya's disciples in the end. We all have issues, we all have shortcomings, but we are all also human and the same. I feel we realized this that day.

Whether the feeling faded or remained is a different story, but at that moment the only thought was to help, and that's what we all did. Countless memories of Ati Rudram still exist, those which will be cherished and remembered for the rest of our lives. Ati Rudram not only had lessons, but lessons built in with unbelievable fun and friendships. These 11 days will never be forgotten and the memories will never be eroded.

Q & Aiya

We all love hanging out with Aiya, drinking tea, and sometimes getting some guidance on how to travel down our own paths to the Devi. Here's an excerpt from a workshop where he explained how one can feel the physical effects of japam.

Q. How do you know if your puja, japam, homa, etc. are bearing fruit?

Aiya: The body's metabolic process is releasing energy for you to be able to do things throughout the whole day, and it's only about 30% efficient right now. When you include chanting the Vedas in there every day, your breathing gradually becomes increased and it's becoming deeper and deeper.

It won't happen overnight… chanting something like Atharvasirsam once won't get you to God right away. You see the fruits when you stay with it, and do it without getting tired. I used to tell my students the example of [the basketball player] Michael Jordan. All you see is him hanging in the air on TV; you don't see that he invested eight hours a day, all alone, shooting baskets. If you did that with your japam you would have found God in a snap.

Q. What does your metabolic process have to do with spiritual benefits?

Aiya: If you keep chanting, the efficiency of the body is going to increase. Whatever food you eat will be burned because your metabolic process will change dramatically. It will gradually rise from 30% to about 85% efficiency.

In 1919 there used to be a French woman named Theresa Newman, and the thing about her is that she could not control her hunger. She was eating at her mother-in-law's house, and this woman would always criticize her and say she would land her son in the poor house. One day, Theresa stopped eating. From 1919 to 1967 she didn't eat anything. All the sustenance she needed, she was able to get simply from breathing.

That is how the rishis sat for so many years in meditation without moving. So another sign your japam is working is that your bodily requirements will decrease—your eating, thirst, need to go to the bathroom, will all go down. The repetitive process is what will bring the mantra into your subconscious.

Q. Some people say there are certain sounds they hear when they do japam. What is this?

Aiya: I do my japam at 3:30 or 4 in the morning, and like clockwork, it wakes me up. You know you have been chanting it in your sleep because you continue chanting it the second you wake up. After some time, you will begin to hear a *ping* sound. That is the collective sound of all that has ever been written or chanted—all the scriptures, the literature in any language, any culture—all of it.

When you go to a major sports event in an arena, before you get in the arena, you will hear a *buzzzz* sound when you're parking the car, when you're entering at the doorway. It also sounds like the waves in the ocean, a *ssshhhhhh* sound. What is this buzz? Individual voices talking in the stands. You can't tell who is saying what. That is the way this *anahatam* sound is.

If you go to Niagara Falls and focus intently on the sound of the waterfall, you can hear the Vedas, bhajans or anything—the collective sound is also there. This is the universal language; She's talking to you! But we are so wrapped up in our own little things we can't put in the effort to try to hear Her.

So count on it that eventually you will hear this. Take 15 minutes a day for it. You sit in front of the idiot box for eight hours a day; why not take 15 minutes for this?

Q. Where does this sound come from? Can everyone hear it?

Aiya: This sound is called *Anahata dvani*. When it starts at the base of the spinal cord, it is 0.001 kilocycles per second. As it starts to rise through the solar plexus, through the cardiac plexus… by the time it comes up to your throat, it is 1.0. Exactly 28 days before you die, She will turn it off. Then you have exactly a month to take care of your affairs.

Here's another thing: how do you know it has stopped? You only know if you have been focusing on it every day. *That* is japam.

Chidagni

The story of Sri Amritananda Saraswati

part 4

The biography of Sri Amritananda Saraswati—who is affectionately known as Guruji to most of Aiya's students—was penned in Telugu by Smt. Nethi Seeta Devi. These chapters were translated into English and graciously submitted to the* Sri Chakra *by Venkateshwar Babu from Philadelphia in an ongoing series.

Guruji was extraordinarily smart in his studies, but lacked any interest in sports. He tried his hand at sports once and fractured his hand, and that was the end of his interaction with sports.

While studying at Saint Anthony High School in Visakhapatnam, he was always looking for answers on religion and traditions. Guruji's questions were numerous.

"What is the difference between sleep and death?"

"What is the significance of divine visions?"

"Why was he getting those divine visions?"

"Was it just him or did others have similar experience?"

Guruji never received any definitive answers to his questions from his parents, teachers, elders, or kids his age. Though he was fully aware that there was a strong meaning and significance to all this, unfortunately no one was able to explain it to him. Any answer provided did not satisfy Guruji either! Things unseen by human eyes and unheard by human ears always evoked strong emotions in him.

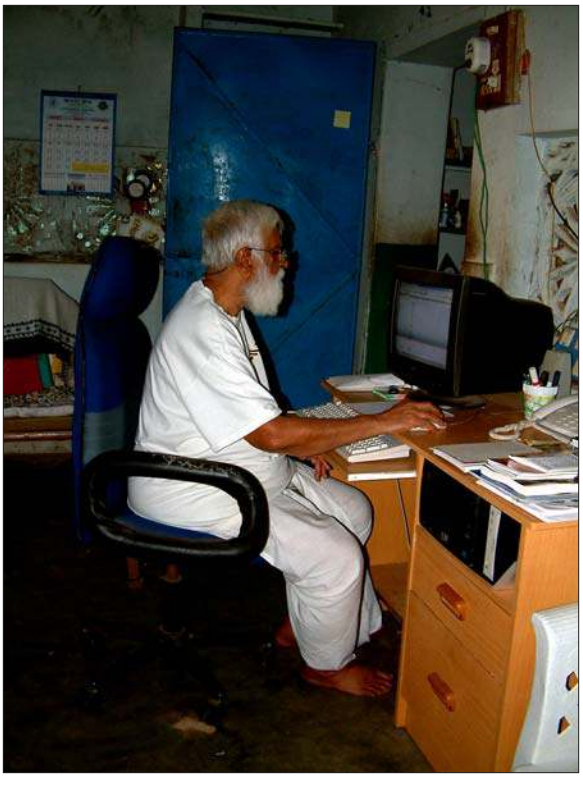
Guruji always kept hearing strange sounds deep from inside. But he was unable to understand the meaning or the origins of these sounds. He knew well there was some untold significance but unfortunately Guruji did not have any proper guidance at that young age to help him explore and understand these sounds. If that had happened was it possible that he may have found answers to all his unanswered questions?

There were multiple things and situations that created a lot of inquisitiveness, and thereby restlessness as Guruji was unable to get the answers to these unanswered questions. He resigned himself to the fact that no one knows answers to his questions, nor did he have the ability to find the answers on his own. He made up his mind to take his sister's suggestion and give up thinking about God, creation, and all these unanswered questions.

He thought, *"I can start thinking about these after I am 40 years old, and not bother about them until then!"* And from then on, Guruji completely ignored spiritual pursuits just as his sister suggested, and was focused on his studies.

Maybe it was God's will that Guruji got a taste of normal worldly life before fully delving in great depths of spirituality, and so that spirituality and divinity never got in his way. Guruji excelled in his studies. Upon the advice of his brother Sri Nishtala Somayajulu, he completed his Master's degree in Nuclear Physics.

As mentioned earlier, Guruji's family was not well-to-do. Yet, they could make a decent living and were never at a shortage of basic needs, or to shower hospitality on friends and relatives. Right from a very young age, worldly pleasures



never fascinated Guruji. He was happy he had wonderful parents, who showered him with love and affection and took good care of him! Studies were his prime responsibility, and he was fulfilling his responsibility. So what else did he really need to think or be worried about?

If analyzed, this is the basic characteristic of a genius mind. But how can it flourish? Only when the doubts get cleared and one has a definitive answer to each of one's unanswered questions.

Even though Paramahamsa Yogananda had attained the pinnacles of spirituality, he always asked his spiritual master Sri Yukteswara Giri, *"When will you show me God?"*

Sri Yukteswara Giri always responded, *"You have already seen God. What else can I show?"* That in turn conveyed the entire essence of what was pursued by one and all.

Right from the olden days of Vedas to the days of rishis, to those spiritually inclined with a quest to attain God, it was made possible by showing a well defined path or by example. But over a period of time, this approach got sidelined and eventually vanished. Patience, dedication, and knowledge to attain God also diminished over period of time.

Rather than agreeing to the fact that one is illiterate in these endeavors, it has become a habit for an elder to impatiently shout, *"Why do you bother us with these unnecessary questions? Go and play!"* This was an easy way out for elders, and thereby the quest to attain this knowledge eventually diminished. Adding insult to injury, parents' focus on professional education got utmost importance.

It was in this same fashion, Guruji's quest for knowledge, spirituality, and God was always put down by one and all every step of the way. Getting involved in scientific studies further distanced Guruji from his aspired path, and his questions remain unanswered.

Guruji's specialization in Nuclear Physics was closely associated with nature at a micro particle level. Guruji, in his eagerness, with all his enthusiasm, questioned others on how water, air, sky, sun, moon stars, clouds, and nature in general functioned. Guruji's only hope remained that if not all, at the least, a few of his questions were answered.

Guruji strongly believed that trying to understand spirituality was a form of penance, and so was trying to understand sciences. In addition, he also understood that there was one major difference between the two in its outlook. To understand the deep meaning of spirituality requires self-introspection of one's thoughts, beliefs, and nothing more than that.

At the same time, Guruji was also fully aware that to get a better understanding of science, scientific equipment and labs along with relevant scientific knowledge was essential. Even though these clearly defined the borders and limits of science, Guruji never discounted the notion that science can equally be considered a penance in its own form.

On the other hand, Guruji was clear in his thoughts that in case of spirituality, there can be no limits or boundaries defined to curtail the depth to which one can delve into seeking self-realization. At the end of the day, Guruji was of the firm belief that both were great in their own ways.

Discoveries made in science, and inventions and innovations made in technology have provided comforts to mankind. But at the same time, these have contributed to mankind's behaviour in very many complex ways. Mankind may attribute greed, aggressiveness, anger, jealousy, and many similar unwanted desires due to these

advances. At a personal level, it became more a question not of what one had, but more about what one did not have.

Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore once said, *"Man made weapons to win the worlds, and the weapons defeated him!"*

Guruji once said, *"Science can never stop such disasters from happening! Man must change! His thought process must change! For this to happen, spirituality is the only path!"*

The beauty of Guruji's life has been that right from a very young age, his involvement in spirituality and thinking about God never changed even as time progressed. It just remained the same even after he mastered science.

During those days, Prof. Swami Gyanananda was the Head of the Department of Nuclear Physics. Though he was an ascetic by nature, he was also a great scientist. Some say that it was our first Prime Minister Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru who requested him to head this department in Andhra University.

Prof. Swami Gyanananda was a Kshatriya by birth. He had received his doctorate from Germany, and had taught at Oxford University before joining Andhra University. Upon his return to India, he went away to Himalayas to meditate. He had spent 18 years in the Himalayas, and was considered to have spiritual powers. During the days he spent in the Himalayas, it was said that many saints would keep themselves warm by placing their hands on his warm body. He was known to have such a great internal spiritual strength in him.

Once he returned back from Himalayas and started leading a common man's life, people started calling him 1008 Sri Gyanananda Swami. It literally meant that people would prefix his name with "Sri" 1008 times before calling him by his name. He was also considered an expert in Kundalini Yoga.

Sri Gyanananda Swami always wore orange robes. He was around 65 years old by the time he became Head of Nuclear Physics at Andhra University.

Guruji had gone to Sri Gyanananda Swami's house once. It was not a house exactly. It was more like a small cottage or a hut in an ashram. Guruji was extremely fascinated by a picture he saw at that place. This picture had two intertwined snakes with a lotus flower in between them. With immense curiosity Guruji asked Sri Gyanananda Swami what this picture implied.

Sri Gyanananda Swami laughed and said, "*Oh! Looks like you are interested in these things too! But the time is not yet ripe for you to know about these things! Don't worry! You will come to know about these things when the time is right.*"

Sri Gyanananda Swami was an excellent teacher. In his first batch, he had only 3 students: Sri Nishtala Prahlada Shastri (Guruji), Sri Bhagavatula Nageswara Rao, and Sri Kandula Seetharama Shastri.

Sri Gyanananda Swami delved into spiritual aspects along with Nuclear Physics and this gave Guruji a preliminary insight into topics of his interest. Though Guruji was determined not to probe spiritual aspects until a later stage in life, how could one block or control the urge and inner desires? Being closely associated with Sri Gyanananda Swami as a student, these unfulfilled answers and thoughts continue to expand day by day in Guruji's mind.

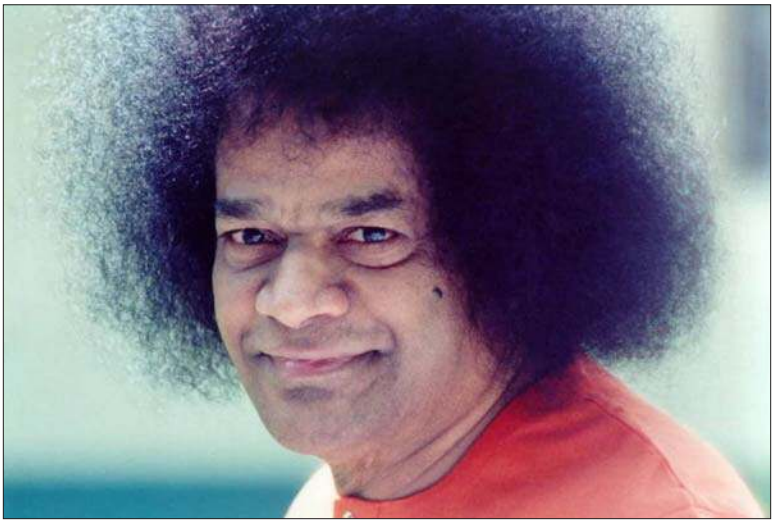
There were many occasions when Guruji realized that answers to many of his questions were in close proximity and yet unattained. This caused an unexplainable commotion in Guruji's mind. In certain aspects, Guruji was able to derive the correlation between science and spirituality, and this amazed him. In the process, Nuclear Physics turned out to be Guruji's favorite subject.

Under the guidance and blessings of his Professor Sri Gyanananda, Guruji successfully completed his studies. At the same time, Guruji also felt some strong unknown force had energized him to probe and seek new frontiers in his spiritual growth.

The God Within You

by Anand Panikkar

At the temple's most recent camp in the first week of August, the kids got a very special treat—two of Aiya's oldest friends, Dr. Anandakrishna Panikkar and his wife, Linga, visited the temple. Anand uncle, as we all call him, has a close and personal relationship with Sri Satya Sai Baba, who attained siddhi in April, and he related some of his experiences with the 20th century avatar to the kids, counselors and parents alike. It began with when he was staying at Baba's ashramam when he was only a teenager, a few years before he met Aiya.



I would stay with him during the interviews as well, so I was able to see all the different miracles that he would perform. One of the most dramatic was when a French photographer was there and he was taking pictures of us all in the interview. Afterwards, I asked how the pictures came out, but there were no pictures—it was blank. And this happened so many times; if you took a picture of him and for some reason he didn't want you to have it, it would disappear.

But then right there, [Baba] created a picture of this French photographer and Swami in the interview room and he gave it to him.

You would see this all the time; he would create thaalis for weddings. You could see him twisting his hands and you'd see it coming down, and then he'd close his hand and catch it. It was effortless. So once when I was with him, I was wondering, "How is he doing this? Where is he hiding it?" I thought it was in his armpit.

Soon after I thought this, he came down and said, "So you think I'm hiding it?" And he said, "Come," and he put his arms out and invited me to search him. So I took the chance and I touched his hair and looked. But then he pulled up his sleeve and right in front of me he created a locket, a heart-shaped locket with his picture on one side and "God is love, God is truth" on the other.

You could develop a relationship with him that you could be thousands of miles away from him, but if you thought of him, you could experience him there with you. Just because he's not in the physical form doesn't mean he's not around. He's more powerful now than he was before, because now he's pure consciousness; there's no body to restrict him.

So all of you have to get used to talking to him like you'd talk to a friend; like you'd talk to your mother. Talk to him and wait for the answer—he'll come back and he'll talk to you. But you have to be absolutely silent inside and out if you want to hear the answer. If you're talking to somebody else, I can't have a conversation with you, can I?

It was 1963 when I met [Swami], and I was 13 (I met Aiya a few years later when I was about 16). So Baba must have been about 35 or 40 at that time. When I wasn't with him, he would talk to me in my dreams. He asked me to keep a diary when I was a kid of everything I did during the week, and then Thursday was when he would come in my dream and tell me what I did right and what I did wrong. If I repeated the same mistakes he would come back and say, "Didn't you get it? Are you slow?" You can also experience this communication with him any time if you just think of him.

I do this sometimes in the operating room—I'm an anesthesiologist; I put people to sleep. With this one patient, they

opened him up and blood was just gushing, and they couldn't find where it was coming from. And they looked but they couldn't find the source. So I just asked this question, "Where is the bleeding coming from?" and stayed calm. And the answer came. So I told the surgeon and he was able to stop the bleeding.

So when you develop that sensitivity and get your mind to stop analyzing the situation, the answers will come. That's why being in silence, doing the mantras, doing meditation—all these things gradually train you to be able to receive the answers. And it's not about hearing it in your head; you *feel* the answer. You know what the answer is as it comes out, and you know intuitively it is the correct answer.

But how do you know it's God and not your mind? That's an excellent question. The answer that comes is coming from your consciousness. When Baba says God is within you, that's it—the God inside you is responding to your question. What causes most of our problems is we think of ourselves as flawed, so how can we create miracles?

Now that Swami is not with his body, I feel him now more than I ever did. When I think of him, I can actually smell his scent. It's really crazy, but it's the viboothi smell that's all over him, and you just know he's there. See, before GPS I used to get lost all the time and my wife would say I don't want to stop and ask for directions. But I would ask—I would ask Baba, and then I would get his smell. And he would tell me the way.

Let me describe the idea of consciousness like this: if you go to sleep, how do you know that you're asleep? But when you wake up in the morning and someone asks if you slept well, you either tell them you did or you didn't. Who was there to know whether you did or didn't sleep well? That's the consciousness—it is an overall awareness of the self.

There's a story of a king who goes to sleep in his palace and while he's sleeping, he forgets he's a king.

Aiya embraces Anand uncle and presents him with a gift immediately after his session with the camp kids.

Meanwhile, outside the palace gates, there's a beggar that's sleeping who also forgets he's a beggar. It's the same consciousness in the king that's in the beggar and in everyone else—but we just think we're certain things while the mind is telling us those things.

What's the real you? The real you is the one pure consciousness that's in everyone.

Read more from Anand uncle's talk in the next issue.

Sri Chakra Avaranas & Chit Vimarsa

part 1

by Sri B. Jayaraman & Smt. Vijaya

Dear Atma Bandhus,
Sri Mathre Namaha.

Recently during our visit to the Sri Rajarajeswari temple, Rochester, one senior upasaka wanted a simple explanation regarding the nine avaranas which opened up our *chit-vimarsam*, resulting in this article. This article is based on *Sri Vidya Saparrya Vasana*, by B.R. Sri Chidanandanatha and other Tantric texts.

We have taken the liberty to send this article to Sri Aiya and his disciples, since the moola karanam of this article was my visit to the learning temple of Rajarajeswari. Namaskarams to Chit Vimarsa Roopini Sri Rajarajeswari.

With Viswa Prem,
B. Jayaraman & Vijaya

Sri Jayaraman and Smt. Vijaya at Ati Rudram last year.

Humans are endowed with faculties of developed 1) Mind, 2) Intellect and 3) Ahamkara.
In tantra shastras, "Ahamkara" means awareness of one's own existence and **not** Ego. Mind + Intellect is Chittha, and Chittha + Ahamkara is "Chit"—the dynamic principle of self consciousness.

"Prakruthi" tatvam refers to the overall specific development of mind, intellect and Ahamkara along with three gunas. "Chit" is one's own state of development of mind, intellect and Ahamkara with the three gunas as per his own accumulated Vasana.

"Chit Vimarsam" is enlightenment based on one's own experience of the world. Technically, it is defined as an interplay of Sath, Chit and Ananda.

"Sath"—The existent principle of one's own self awareness,
"Chit"—The dynamic principle of living entity,
"Ananda"—The enlightenment or bliss of Chit from the experience of one's own perception of the world.

Obviously, as one's perception improves due to enhancing faculties of the mind, buddhi etc., the level of Ananda increases.

An example will clarify this idea. Two persons are passing through a scenic spot. One passes through just seeing the scenery, while the other irresistibly stops to enjoy the scenery, and if he is a poet, a nice song is created. If he is a philosopher, he stops and certain difficult concepts emerge with clarity. Thus, the "Chit Vimarsa" or the experience of the same scenic spot is different for different persons.

There are nine levels of Chit Vimarsa starting with:

1) A mere awareness of Self as five *Indriyas* that experience/enjoy this world, and ending with...
9) Grace, realizing the Self as a witness conscious to the experiences, and enjoyment of both outer and inner worlds by the faculties of a highly developed mind, intellect and Ahamkara.

In short, the process is the Self Awareness of experience to Awareness of Self in relation to experience.

The nine Avaranas of Sri Chakra represent:
1) Nine levels of Grace (by the corresponding Chakreswari to attain them)
2) Nine levels of Chit Vimarsa—Siddhis (needed to experience)
3) Nine levels of Ananda—Mudras

With pranams to Sri Guru, based on the tantric text, let us discover the relationship of Chit Vimarsam and the Avaranas of the Sri Chakram.

Avarana 1

This avarana represents the base level Chit Vimarsam of all humans with which they experience and enjoy the physical world with their five *indriyas*. The chakreswari "Tripura" represents the thriputi—"Enjoyer, Enjoyment and Objects of enjoyment." As the name "Thrailokya mohanam" suggests, the jeevas are attracted to everything and get entangled in this physical world of thriputi.

The ananda obtained while waking up to the reality of the world—"Jagrat Avastha," after deep sleep is Sankshobini Mudra. Jeeva is called by name "Viswa" in this state. The yoginis are "Prakata"—well-known and worshipped ceremoniously. Ashta Matrukas representing eight dathus of the body form a part of every devata's worship.

The first avarana can only be entered after passing through the outer square enclosure of the Sri Chakra/ Meru

Avarana 2

The enhanced "Chit Vimarsam" with which the physical world is enjoyed through the development of mental and intellectual faculties is this second avarana as reflected by names of the avarana devatas, Kamaakarshini, Buddhyaakarshini etc.

"Akarshanam" means you attract to attain with your enhanced abilities and fulfill your desires, which justifies the name of the Sarvaasha Paripooraka chakram. Ananda attainment is through the mind and buddhi faculties. Hence, it is referred as "Swapna Dasa." In the mind, objects have the form of tejas. In swapna (dreams), objects are recognized not by prakasa but by tejas. So the jeeva here is called "tejasa." You fulfill your desires by your mind and intellect. Hence, this is called "Sarvaasha Paripoorakam."

Sarva Vidravini Mudra represents the anandam obtained by mental achievements and emotions. The yoginis are "gupta" i.e. hidden, referring to the secret form of worship (not public but privately done), involving mantra chanting by mind, dhyanam and other internal forms of worship that are short but intense and powerful. Hence, the siddhi referred here is Lagima.

A Sri Meru is a 3-Dimensional Sri Chakra

Watch for the 2nd of the three parts of Sri Jayaraman's article in the next Sri Chakra.

Sri Gurubhyo Namaha