

SRI SUGNANANANDA SWAMY

A brief life-sketch



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A Brief Life-sketch

Sri Sugnanananda Swamy is a born saint.

Some people are born some ways, they say. Some people through an inner urge to seek the eternal, put in strenuous efforts to achieve the saintly wisdom. Some in the pragmatic world try and succeed in appearing to be Saints and achieve whatever they intend to.

Sri Sugnanananda Swamy is a born enlightened being. Saint, Sant, Muni, Sadhu, Sanyasi, Avadhuuta, Yogi, Guru or whatever may be the description with the variations of shades of meaning; his life and sojourn indicate an elitist ideal dictated by Providence.

Considering the very short span of his life and his work in the spiritual way of life, one can only surmise that he is a being born with a purpose and in its sphere, the purpose is accomplished and he attained Nirvaana as dictated by the wise course of Life.

His original name was Koneti Narasimha Das.

His place of birth is a small hamlet named Pennagadam of Papanaidu Peta village near

Renigunta, now an airport location of Tirupati, the great pilgrim place in Andhra Pradesh, India.

However, it is said that his actual birth took place while his illiterate parents Venkataswamy and Venkatamma were on a pilgrimage, perhaps a foreboding of the offspring's destiny of spiritual pursuit.

He was the first-born of the four sons.

Narasimha Das, it is said, was very brilliant as a child and showing off extra-ordinary intellectual capabilities while moving around with children of the village and the surrounding places, but like every original thinker, he was not showing interest or devotion towards formal education.

Though he was admitted in the nearby village-school run by the erstwhile British government, he attended school only up to the second standard and then it was a case of drop out.

It is said that he was mostly wandering around between villages and nearby forest areas , some cause of concern to his parents, though , those days it was not any extraordinary behavior.

One can say that the Saint-in-the-making was trying to transcend the limitations of family, relationships, boundaries and specific places.

It is still a mystery and a subject of wonder as to how Narasimha Das, the school drop-out,

sometime after his erratic wanderings and informal readings and studies, surfaced to become a teacher in a school run by the government.

It is recorded history that Narasimha Das worked as a teacher in the elementary school at Tatigunta Palem village near Papanaidu Peta during 1934-35.

Local villagers used to wonder at the way the English School inspectors were impressed with the scholarship of Narasimha Das, though he never had proper schooling, and appointed him in the responsible employment as a teacher.

However, even the prestigious work as a teacher could not hold the evolving saint Narasimha Das to a routine and to a career.

Quite disinterestedly, he quit the employment and resumed his wanderings, aimless, as they appeared to the outside world, yet, his mind was then turning to the world within, one can perceive.

He was a young man with no defined profession, but he appeared to have a refined characteristic attitude, for, slowly and steadily his company was becoming dear and desirable to people, wherever he went.

He had no riches to boast of, no calling to claim attention, yet, people were craving to hear him speak his mind, whatever the subject of the talk.

The young, tall, imposing persona he was, he for sure was having the knack of making friends with anyone who had the chance to meet him. He was a Guru in the making.

It is said he had the habit of smoking beedis for quite some time, and with this pretext, he used to make friends casually asking for a matchstick or a beedi itself, precious rarities for smokers those days.

During this period he appeared to have acquired quite some practical expertise in the field of local medicines and to some extent in the occult medical treatments.

However he emerged as popular Pundit among his followers and small batch of admirers.

And this phase has mysteriously seen him turning into a scholar in the classic Samskrit texts. Some say that he received sacred instruction, upadesham, from a Guru unknown to the common world, that he should have met the said Guru sometime somewhere in his wanderings around different places.

Some say that he received enlightenment on his own as a result of prolonged meditation and other yogic practices.

Some felt he was blessed by the Divine with a classic, above the normal intellect and celestial power to influence people to elevate them from ignorance and misery.

Whatever the cause, the effect was simply magical, if not supernatural, for, quite without any apparent stimuli, Narasimha Das began quoting eloquently from the scriptures, talking hours on end on philosophical subjects, and began enthralling sizable gatherings with discourses on ethical, religious, and philosophical contents.

Soon after he proclaimed himself as Guru and dispelling all doubts regarding his enlightenment, he declared that Self Guru is the wisest of all Gurus.

With this began a new phase in his life, and he went on with his wanderings, but henceforward they turned out to be tours and visits with specific purpose.

During 1938-42 he was on tour giving discourses on religion and philosophy and soon his attention was more devoted to the meaning and depth of The Bhagavad Gita. Transcending the barriers of religion, his discourses gradually took up the spirit of tolerance, Universal brotherhood and independence of free mind.

Inspired by his noble ideals, his admirers and followers at some places began establishing spiritual and philosophical societies in the name and style of Gnanananda Samajams, signifying the ideal that the best activity for human beings is to acquire wisdom and thereby derive pure bliss.

With Gnanam and Anandam as main themes of exploration, he went on discussing human endeavor in the light of morality, pragmatic necessity, sense of guilt Papam and equity Punyam.

His main approach to performing duty, Dharma, being the plane of Yogic consciousness, and Gnanam according him is desirable in its pristine goal, attainment of salvation here in the corporal world itself, he committed his ideological focus on Sugnanam , the elite wisdom.

With these realizations in mind he assumed the name Sugnanananda and the name immediately caught the imagination, attention and devotion of many followers and admirers.

Apart from delivering numerous discourses in various places in his native Chittoor District ,in the first leg of his tour he visited various places in the erstwhile undivided Andhra Pradesh, notable among them in Anantapur District: Anantapur, Kadiri and Hindupur; and in Cuddappah District: Kalamalla , Proddutur and Kamalapuram.

Thereafter he went on visiting the erstwhile Mysore state and in Mysore he found many admirers and some spiritually inclined people became his staunch disciples.

He spent considerable time in Mysore, Bangalore, T. Narsipur, Kollegal and Sivasamudram. In all these places he was

invited to give discourses on the Bhagavad Geetha and by then he has respectably acquired the status of Swamyji.

Even though he never wore Saffron or any color of renunciation, in view of his ascetically withdrawn attitude, his strict routine fixed to the practice of meditation and yoga, his towering personality inspiring confidence and assurance and above all his charismatic bearing among the people of various sections of the society earned him, quite without his desire or effort, the respectable stature of a spiritual Guru and thus evolved Sri Sugnanananda Swamy.

Occasionally returning home, and mostly on tours, he visited many places in Tamil Nadu , the then undivided state of Madras, and with this it appeared his sphere of influence spread to people of three regions, the Telugus and the Kannadigas and the Tamilians.

While busily accepting invitations from different places he was a pioneer in unifying cultural differences and at the time of political turmoil to ward off the British rule , Sri Sugnanananda's teachings gave to the people , the much needed impetus to liberate the spirit and not to be cowed down by any tyrannical circumstances.

Many of his followers invited him to stay with them at their respective places, but as a seeker and liberated spirit, he has little regard for a fixed location or abode.

However, he was nurturing an idea to establish his Ashramam at Tirupati, keeping view the importance of the place in the national religious ethos.

On his subsequent visit to Mysore, he reached the sacred Chamundi Hills and atop the hills he spent forty days, an auspicious period called Mandalam, and was in deep meditation and yogic practice.

At this time he contemplated on the overall message contained in the sacred Bhagavad Geetha and took up to explain the treatise in the light of his realization.

On the invitation of some prominent citizens of Mysore he gave a series of discourses on The Bhagavad Geeta in the city of Mysore and thereafter he accepted the hospitality of an elitist family for a considerable time, during which he started writing his magnum opus The Bhagavad Geetha Yoga Tatva Rahasyamu, an analytical commentary on the philosophical treatise.

Even while the work was taking shape, he accepted invitations from some enthusiasts and visited Sivasamudram and other surrounding places near Mysore. He delivered discourses on The Geetha and the Upanishads and encouraged people to form societies in the style of Gnanananda Samajams to propagate virtues of positive thinking and Universal brotherhood, and to elevate the lofty messages contained in the rich Hindu scriptures.

Shortly thereafter he was camping in Chintamani of Mysore state closer to Andhra border and at that town; he stayed for considerable time under the hospitality of some dedicated followers.

He spent most of the time in the premises of Sri Harihareswara Swamy Temple in Azad Cowk and resumed his work on The Geetha.

Soon after completing his great work he was invited by devotees from Srinivasapuram wherein he undertook and successfully performed a notable Yagnam, intended to beget Peace and Prosperity to all.

While this was his sojourn in the spiritual and cultural fields, providentially he fell ill during 1945. This happened while he was on tour in Kangundi Kuppam and his trusted followers, quite uncertain about the medical facilities around them, shifted him to Madras.

Though initially diagnosed as fever from Malaria, his ailment took declining turns and much against the advice of the physicians he went on to the sea to take holy bath on Vaikuntha Ekadasi day. With this his health deteriorated further and much to the agony of all devotees and family members, he breathed his last on 23.03.1946., Phalguna Bahula Shashti day according to the Telugu calendar.

Keeping in mind his long cherished wish to have his Ashramam in Tirupati, his disciples and relatives brought his mortal remains to the

place he acquired in Tirupati for Ashramam purpose, and there-in last rites were performed for him.

Subsequently an imposing tomb was erected to cherish his sacred memory and a temple structure was also constructed.

Throughout the period of nearly seven decades, his disciples, family members, and their heirs and followers are conducting annual Aradhana celebrations at his Samadhi Temple.

And in his memory, it has become a practice to conduct Dharmikopanyasam programmers, and various other activities related to yoga and spiritual life.

His masterly work Sri Bhagavad Geetha Yoga Tatva Rahasyamu was published posthumously in 1948 and received great critical acclaim. Immediately after publication the book received high appreciation from learned Geetha scholars and spiritual activists.

The Swamyji in this work discussed at length the relevance of Geetha in the context of action and wisdom. Touching on the eternal debate whether the Geetha proposed pure enlightenment as the ideal of life, or performing ones duty at all costs, he treated both the objectives as thesis and anti-thesis and proposed the synthesis that performing duty, Dharma, with profound wisdom, Gnanam, and never being attached to the result, is the

ideal of Life. This, he concluded, is Yoga Tatvam, the essence of Geetha.

His other works of note, subsequently edited and published, are: Sugnaana Satakam and Nirguna Raamayya Katha.

Here are some quotes, translated, from his Geetha work:

The Bhagavad Geetha is a book of Universal appeal. To people of any walk of life, it acts as a friend, philosopher and guide. Especially to spiritual life, it is a great indicator of proper destination.

In its story content, The Geetha with the dramatic context of Lord Krishna prompting Arjuna to take up arms and go to war and not to relinquish war, the message to everyman is very clear: that an individual is destined to perform his part of the Universal design of events, and it is not righteousness to avoid war in view of emotional imbalance.

The Geetha is unparalleled in proclaiming that God is manifest among human beings and in each and every being, at times of historical necessity, God comes out to re-define and re-establish righteousness. The individual is advised to fulfill his responsibility and not to shun the necessary action dictated by the force of the Universe.

There is internal war in every human being and to win this war is the ideal of life, irrespective of attachments.

Action without proper enlightenment is futile. Gnana or wisdom is the thing that sets apart the unthinking layman from the knowledgeable philosopher. Avoidance of deeds is no relinquishment and can never be treated as Salvation or emancipation. A knowing man performs his part without a sense of attachment: he relinquishes the result and in so doing reaches the plane of the sublime liberation from attachment.

A man rises above the consideration of sin when he performs his deeds without claim of responsibility to the outcome.