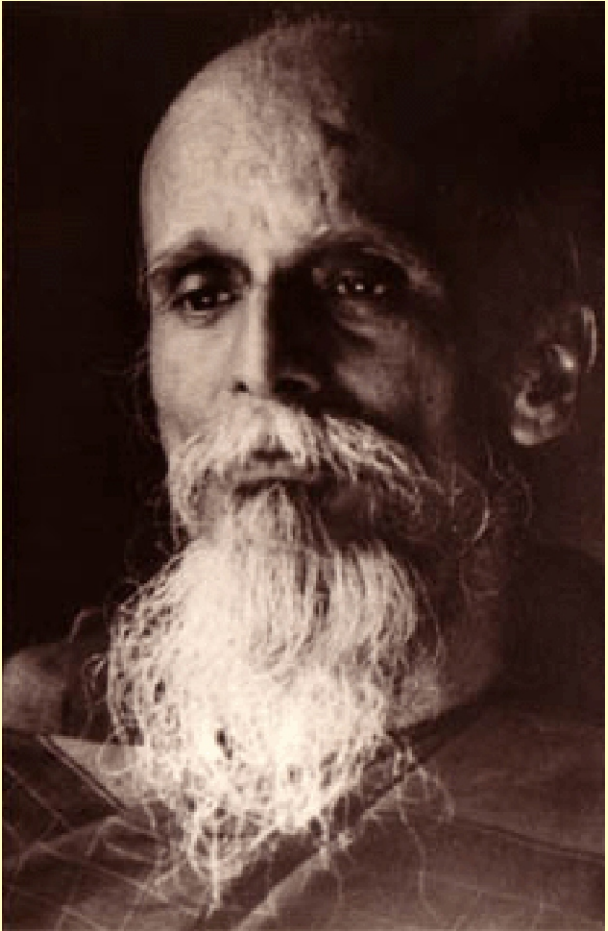


Ganapai Muni

A Biography



Dr. G. Krishna

NĀYANA

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NĀYANA

KAVYAKANTHA VASISTHA GANAPATI MUNI

BIOGRAPHY BY
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Original Telugu by
Gunturu Lakshmikantam

NĀYANA

We are thankful to the TTD for their monetary help and also to R.V.G.K. Ranga Rao, Charitable Trust and J.G.K. Murthy

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G. KRISHNA

Secunderabad,
Nov. '78

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PROLOGUE

Kaavyakantha Sri, Vasistha Ganapati Muni was a rare saint to whom life was spiritual practice. He was free from pettiness which had come to characterise religion. And religion is known to sanction the numerous cleavages and social denominations which pertuated a needless stratification of the human society. To him the Rug Veda was a guide and he considered social life and spiritual life as not being different from one another. The ancient Rishis were not social recluses. There were then no special class of spiritual leaders, away from the society. The society was spiritually impressed and life was inclined to peace.

Ganapati Muni had described his wife Visalakshi as a "Tapassakhi" comrade in Tapas (Sri Ramana Geeta). Arundhati was the Tapassakhi of Vasistha. And so were the wives of many of the Rishis. They never considered their wives as hindrances to Tapas. The belief that women are inimical to spiritual advancement has sized the people when the vedic order of life had degenerated into religions, definitely a foreign concept.

Ganapati Muni advised that women should not be barred from any spiritual or "Religious" chores. For instance, women are not considered fit to worship Agni. Women are not qualified to study Vedas nor can they recite Veda Mantras. In fact they are not initiated into the study of Vedas. They are denied the benefits of Upanayana though there were women seers in the Vedas.

Visalakshi used to worship Agni whenever the Muni was out of station.

The Muni and his wife averse to investing any custom or tradition with sanctity if the Rigveda had not done so.

The “Untouchable” caste among Hindus was unvedic according to Ganapati Muni.

He had included in his Kavyas prayer to the deity to protect the freedom of women and to free the untouchables from misery.

Swaatantram Vanitaanaam
Traatum Maataradheese
Doooreekartum Apaaram Dainyam
Panchama gaate

(Umaa Sahasram)

He used to initiate women into Mantra Japa, and many were the women who were initiated into Gayatri Vidya which was considered to be a qualification exclusive to men. He had performed the Upanayanam of an “Untouchable”. He pleased that the marriageable age of a girl should be seventeen years, 3 years after puberty

He was wearing hand spun and hand woven cloth. He never encouraged people to organise functions to honour him—he participated in functions when removal of untouchability, social reform, women liberations were propagated. In fact he was member of the National Congress for some time and attended the Belgaum Congress as the representative of the Tamil Nadu Congress. There he could not prevail upon the leadership to adopt a resolution seeking to make Samskrut as the national language.

At Kharagpoor, on his return trek from Kasi, Kanchi Peethadhiptatti desired to honour Ganapati Muni but the Muni was averse to receiving such honours. The pontiff himself started out to meet the Muni ! On seeing this, Pandit Gopadev Sastry who was close to the Muni requested him to move out to receive the pontiff, halfway ! Gopadev was glad that the Muni, Child Like, followed his advice. Ganapati was endowed with pleasing manners and he was friendly to all. He was neither superior, nor inferior to any one.

Admirers used to question in surprise “Is this how God Ganapati behaved ?”— The Muni justified the name given to him by his parents.

His life reads like the series of divine acts of a celestial being.

He had chosen his preceptor who until then remained almost unknown. He had given the name “Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi” to the preceptor. The preceptor who until then was a model of silence began to talk the first talk was guidance for Tapas to Ganapati. That guidance was the quintessence of what a Vedic preceptor must have taught a disciple — it was pure meditation — Ganapati being a Vedic Scholar had culled out similar guidelines from the Vedic literature and explained in his spiritual disciplines (Dasa Mahaa Vidyas).

Sri Ramana Lad Taught Sri Ganapati look into his self, the self which is the soul would be abiding in the Cavity of the heart — look into the root of the sound from where emanates the voice of the mantra japa and the sound dissolves at the root that is tapas.

Other Methods Explained By Ganapatti :

Continue the japa within your self while the sound of the japa is being heard only by your ears—

Let the object of the worship be the blue sky. Consider the tip of the tongue, the seat of the God of learning, as the object of worship — there would be a continuous flow of saliva which should not be spit out — such a saliva is a sign of good health also — it goes through the throat like a mouse going into a hole.

Concentrate on the meaning of mantra.

Concentrate on clear articulation of the Mantra within your self—

If you are doing Pranava Japa articulate the OM in full — arc like, let the sound be articulated within your self.

Let the rays of effulgence of the sun, see into you from the crown of your head and other points - and let them enter your spinal column and proceed to the tail — let the rays course through the spinal from the crown of head.

And there are such other ways to enable the aspirant to settle in his self.

But the aspirant should gradually give up love for lies, love for exaggeration, love for the partial etc., One must realise the philosophy of whatever is undertaken.

And similar attitudes must be adopted in all problems the aspirant would have to encounter.

Whatever diverts and disturbs the mind and whatever object distracts one from the japa and meditation, should be given up.

Dr . S . Radha Krishnan, the Vice - Chancellor of Andhra University wanted to establish a Sanskrit chair in the name of the Muni — He had proposed this to the Universitie academic committee. But some of the members were so thoroughly worked against the social outlook of Ganapati that they would not listen to such a proposal. They believed that social affairs were separate from the spiritual. They also did not like the vedic research zeal of Ganpati — and it shocked them that Ganapati began interpreting differently from the traditional scholars who had already earned a name as vedic shcolors they did not like any different thinking — they felt that the youth if taught to think differently, would lose themselves into religious wilderness.

Dr.S.Radha Krishnan walked out of the meeting !

This book is about that Ganapati Muni who was liked by many who loved to think and who was detested by the people for whom some scholars in the remote past had thought.

Let me add what I had further heard — Kasi krishnacharya the famous scholar poet advised some Sanatanists - “ We are all educated but Ganapati is educaion itself - let us not try to cross swords with him”.

MANIFESTATION

In the Srikakulam District of Andhra Pradesh, near Bobbili town, there is a small village called Kaluvarayi, which, translated into Sanskrit means Kumuda (Kaluva), Upalam (Raayi), i.e., lotus stone. A local Legend says that some one got a lotus sprouted from a stone here.

Whatever be the truth in this legend, Kavyakantha Vasishtha Ganapati Muni was the flower of the devotion and scholarship of generations of Ayyalasomayajula family.

The ancestors of Sri Ganapati Muni migrated to Nandyal in Kurnool district from Valangiman village near Kumbakonam in Tamil Nadu during the end of the sixteenth century or the beginning of the seventeenth. Ramabhadra Dikshita, the author of the Sanskrit play "Janakiparinayam" and a contemporary of the great saint Sri Sadasiva Brahmendra, was among the ancestors of Ganapati Muni.

They moved subsequently from Nandyal to Vakkalanka village in East Godavary District and finally to Nandabalaga village in Srikakulam District (then Visakhapatnam District). It was Jagannatha Sastri of the Ayyalasomayajula family that first migrated to Nandabalaga. Though their surname was Ayyalasomayajula, this Jagannatha Sastri's family was referred to specially with the surname 'Nawab Ayyalasomayajula'. It is not known how and when this 'Nawab' was added to the surname. It is believed that the literary eminence of one of them, earned this addition to their surname in the court of some Nawab.

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Kaluvarayi is near Nandabalaga. Ganti Sarvappa Sastri, a wealthy Brahmin, was the headman of Kaluvarayi. He had only one daughter. When he saw Jagannatha Sastri, who was then a student in Nandabalaga, he decided to get his daughter married to this young man. But Sarvappa Sastri, with his family, went on a pilgrimage to Kasi and died. Before his death, he informed his wife of his wish to get his daughter married to Jagannatha Sastri and settle him in Kaluvarayi. On her return from Kasi, she fulfilled the wish of her husband and Jagannatha Sastri became the master of the property of Sarvappa Sastri and also inherited the village headmanship.

Jagannatha Sastri had only one son, Bheema Sastri. Narasimha Sastri, Sarveswara Sastri and Prakasa Sastri were the sons of Bheema Sastri.

It was the custom in this family for the father to initiate his offspring into 'Sri Vidya'. Besides this spiritual heritage Narasimha Sastri was, by nature, a devout person. His wife Narasamamba was also a devout lady. Narasimha Sastri was a popular figure in the area, both by virtue of his authority as a village officer and also by his devotion, learning and character. He reinforced these characteristics by the experience gained by visits to every nook and corner of the country. There were few pilgrim centres that he did not visit both as a pilgrim and a critical observer. He was grieved at the hostile attitude of the Britishers towards Indians during and after the so-called mutiny of 1857. Brooding over the plight of his countrymen, Narasimha Sastri concluded that living faith in the Divine alone could restore the vitality of a nation. But enlightened human behaviour was the basis of such faith. Vedas were the only guides for such enlightened behaviour. The Vedic Rishis had patterned the ideals and modes of conduct for all to adopt and follow. Indian society needed a Vedic revival not only to throw off the foreign yoke

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in administrative and cultural spheres but also to resuscitate human values. Narasimha Sastri began praying to God to bless him with a son who could spread the message of Rishis among the culturally, morally and spiritually forlorn masses of the country. Narasamamba stood by him as an intelligent comrade in devotion.

A son was born to Narasamamba. But Narasimha Sastri was disappointed at the absence of any divine characteristics in that child. His horoscope did not indicate anything extraordinary. He was given the name Bheema Sastri. He was a sickly child. One day as the condition of the child caused anxiety, Narasamamba took a vow that she would have the hair of the child shaven in the precincts of Suryanarayana temple in Arasavalli, if he survived and regained health. The vow proved effective and three years later the boy was taken to Arasavalli. After the tonsure ceremony, Narasamamba spent the whole day, late into the night, in meditation. Before day-break, Narasamamba got a dream, in which a beautiful lady, with a gold vessel of fire - smiling affectionately, approached her and deposited the vessel in her hands and disappeared. The vessel immediately turned into a child. Narasamamba woke up well pleased and on returning home described this dream to her husband. Narasimha Sastri interpreted this dream as Suryanarayana Swamy's grace - the lady of the dream must be the feminine form of Suryanarayana's power and the vessel placed in Narasamamba's hands was the container of Agni. The result could only be that Narasamamba would be get a son with the grace and characteristics of God Agni.

A few months after that, Narasamamba was pregnant and in the seventh month of her pregnancy, she went to her parental home for delivery. Narasimha Sastri went to Kasi. In those days (October 1878) most of the distance to Kasi had to be covered only by foot. It took more than a month

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for him to reach Kasi. At Kasi, with a single glass of milk at night to sustain him, he started meditating in the temple of Dundhi Ganapati. Seven days passed, and on the afternoon of the eighth day (17-11-1878), while he was still in deep meditation, he saw a child emerge from the idol of Ganapati, crawl slowly towards him, and leap into his lap. This experience gave him, immense joy but when he opened his eyes, no child was found there. It was not a dream because he was not asleep. He could only interpret this incident as the birth of a child to his wife. He immediately prostrated to Dundhi Ganapati and started for his village. After about a month and a half he reached the village of his father-in-law and was told that his wife had given birth to a child on the very day that he had seen the child emerge from Dundhi Ganapati in Kasi. Narasamamba had another unusual experience. On the day of the delivery, she perceived a halo around the child for a time. The boy was named after the personal Gods of both the wife and the husband as Surya Ganapati.

In later years Surya Ganapati decided to drop 'Surya' from his name. As the Gothra Rishis (founder seers) of Ayyalasomayajula family are Kaundinya, Maitravaruna and Vasishta, Ganapati Sastri renamed himself as Vasishta Ganapati Sastri. Later on those who knew about his tapas called him Vasishta Ganapati Muni. His spiritual preceptor Bhagwan Sri Ramana Maharshi called him 'Nayana' (which means father in Telugu) and his disciples used to call him so. That name became popular among the disciples. So he was known as Vasishta Ganapati Muni or Sri Nayana.

CHILDHOOD

People generally believe and Narasimha Sasatri naturally shared this belief that those born with divine grace, should exhibit 'leelas' as Sri Krishna did during his childhood. But the child, Ganapati, instead became a source of considerable concern to his parents. He had liver and spleen troubles and a nagging fever with frequent attacks of infantile convulsions. He was dull. Relations began doubting the sanity of Narasimha Sastri and Narasamamba for their belief that this child was the expression of divine grace. During the sixth year of the child, one day when the boy had an attack of convulsions, Narasimha Sastri took courage and cauterized the child on the forehead and stomach as advised by some one. This shock treatment was fruitful. May be it stimulated the Fire latent in him. Before long he was healthy quite like other children.

Ganapati's paternal uncle Prakasa Sastri, the village school-master, was his first teacher. After he learned the alphabet, he was taught Bala Ramayana (The first canto of Ramayana in Sanskrit). Whether it was Bala Ramayana or Siva Sahasranama or any lengthy passage, the boy once taught, used to repeat all without effort. By his tenth year he was able to master the preliminary kavyas, mathematics and astronomy, He could prepare panchangam (annual calendar showing the daily positions of planets, stars and constellations). In addition to this Ganapati astounded his guru by inventing a new and easy method for the compilation of panchangam. In fact, he wrote a chapter of correction called Suddhi Prakranam incorporating the easy method he invented.

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In the field of astrology Ganapati was a prodigy. Once he predicted that a particular girl would be involved in danger on a particular day. The father of the girl took all the care on that day to prevent the mishap but somehow the girl, while playing on the bank of a rivulet nearby, slipped into the current and was carried away. But she was caught in a grassy spot where she lay unconscious. The father after a strenuous search, found her and rescued her.

In his tenth year, Ganapati composed a small kavya of thirty-four slokas called 'Pandava Dhartarashtra Sambhava' in a remarkably short period of an hour. This literary feat perplexed the teacher Prakasa Sastri. He realised that his student had excelled him. Thus Ganapati who was a source of anxiety to his parents and an object of pity or ridicule to the neighbours and relations until his sixth year, became an object of admiration and wonder to all by his tenth year.

Four years after the birth of Ganapati, a girl (Anna poorna) was born to Narasamamba and three years later a boy Sivarama Sastri was born. Sivarama Sastri was adopted by Prakasa Sastri. Three years after the birth of Sivarama Sastri Narasamamba gave birth to twins. An hour before the delivery, Narasamamba asked Ganapati about the planetary influences prevailing then and Ganapati at once replied that the woman who delivered then, would die. It came true. Both Narasamamba and the twins died almost immediately after the delivery. Narasamamba was then thirty five. When others in the family wailed for the departed soul, Ganapati remained stunned.

After two months, the boy, one day, suddenly, showed signs of change. Under the guidance of another teacher, Vedula Venkataraya Sastri, he started the study of Bharavi and Sanskrit grammar.

The marriages of Bheema Sastri and Annapurna had already taken place. Ganapati got married in his twelfth year to Visalakshi who was eight. Visalakshi belonged to 'Karra' family of Bomikapadu village which was one mile from Kaluvarayi. After the marriage, Ganapati wrote a small kavya called 'Bhrunga Sandesa' on the lines of Meghadoota of Kalidasa. It was a love message to his wife. Venkataraya Sastri lavished praise on the poem for its fine texture but Ganapati felt that it did not compare well with Meghadoota and so destroyed the manuscript. Some of the slokas that Ganapati composed before his fourteenth year are preserved.

*Vandaamahe mahaadevam
Yasya vandaaravo janaah
Navindanti punarmaatuh
Kuca kumbha payorasam*

We salute Mahadeva whose worshippers do not get the chance again of taking milk from the mother's breast.

*Kaakola munca garvam
Badabaanala munca tivrataadarpam
Vegavati jalam etat
Daarunacudaamanir jayati*

"Kaakola' a snake poison. Shed your pride. Baadaba' (sea fire) give up your arrogance in the matter of intensity. The water of Vegavati (a rivulet nearby) excels you as the crest jewel of terrible things."

*Ihakesaamcid esaa cenna
Santosaaya kaa ksatih
Kim aanandaaya kaakaanaam
Balakokila kaakali*

If this does not give pleasure to somebody, what is the harm? Is the warble of the young cuckoo for the delight of the crows?

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Thus by the end of his fourteenth year, he finished the study of Kavyas, Champus, Drama and Alankara Sastra in part. He could compose slokas extempore. He then went to Logisa (village of his maternal grand-father) and then to Bobbili to study Vyakarana and Alankara Sastra and by his eighteenth year he was thorough with the Puranas as well. He could perform Ashtaavadhaanam (A literary feat wherein the poet has to face eight questioners. Whatever the poet says, has to be in the form of verses. Finally the poet has to repeat all the questions and answers), with great alacrity. But the study of Maha Bharata strengthened in him the aspiration to acquire spiritual power like the ancient Rishis and serve God by service to the world and to harness poetry for the welfare of the worl. Narasimha Sastri had already initiated his son into meditation and Mantra Japa'.

But Ganapati felt that the atmosphere at home was not conducive to meditation. He was waiting for a chance to proceed to some holy place to do "tapas".

Meanwhile Narasimha Sastri was planning to arrange for the nuptials of Ganapati. Ganapati felt that he should do tapas before becoming a houe-holder. He made it clear to Narasimha Sastri that he was averse to escaping from the responsibilities ordained by Gruhastha aasrama. Such an escape only betrayed want of faith in Dharma, and indiscriminate donning of the ochre (kashaya) robes only contributed to the frustration of disciplined family life of the country. Ganapati did not share the belief that a woman was the source of sin and maya. The study of scriptures had convinced him that the ancient Rishis had practised austerity and attained self realisation without giving up family life and responsibilities. Women were not treated as objects of

pleasure by our ancient Rishis. They were as qualified as men to discharge spiritual responsibilities. The ancient Rishis, by their exemplary behaviour, became spiritual preceptors to their wives and helped to establish a well ordered society.

Narasimha Sastri was pleased with this outlook of Ganapati, and realised that his daughter-in-law too should be initiated into Mantra Japa. But Ganapati proposed that he should be left free for six months every year to pursue his spiritual practices. So Narasimha Sastri at once proceeded to Bomikapadu village to convey to his daughter-in-law the wish of Ganapati. Visalakshi readily agreed to be initiated. But her reaction to the proposal of Ganapati almost startled Narasimha Sastri. She was prepared to accept the proposal provided she was given freedom to do tapas, after the birth of a couple of children. Everybody was pleased with this reply which showed her as an equal to her husband. She was then fifteen and Ganapati, three years older.

TOWARDS TAPAS

Visalakshi was initiated into both Ganapati Mantra and Sri Vidya. She bestowed equal attention to house-keeping and Mantra Upaasana and earned the goodwill of all. One day, when she was serving food to her father-in-law, he asked her which of the two Mantras that she had been initiated into was claiming her major attention and interest. She replied that she was meditating on Devi with Ganapati as her object of worship. Narasimha Sastri was pleased with her tactful answer. Ganapati felt that, at the suggestive prompting of his father, Visalakshi said so and it was unreasonable for anyone to attribute to him divine qualities on the basis of his literary gifts. The claim of such a quality can only be substantiated by an experience gained by tapas. The desire to go to some place which could offer enough seclusion for tapas, became irrepressible and brooked no delay. He had a friend Venkata Sastri who was little older, but was initiated by him into Mantrajapa, and so, was his disciple. Ganapati and Venkata Sastri decided to leave home for some secret place without the knowledge of their elders. Some how Bhima Sastri got wind of it and threatened that unless he was allowed to accompany them, he would report it to the elders. It was decided that all three of them should leave home for a secret and sacred place.

Meanwhile, the month of Sravana came and Visalakshi went to her parental home to perform Mangala Gauri Vrata.

It was the year 1896. The three friends one day left home and reached Rajamahendravaram (Rajahmundry) on foot. There they got into a boat which took them to a place near Peramma Agraharam on the banks of River Kaushiki. But Bhima Sastri was already disillusioned. He began arguing that tapas was possible only for Rishis and that it would be

foolish for anybody in this age to even think of tapas. Neither argument nor entreaties could change the attitude of Bhīma Sastri. He returned home. Ganapati was engaged in tapas for fortyfive days there but did not feel like continuing it.

Meanwhile, Venkata Sastri received a letter from his elders asking him and Ganapati to return home. So, Venkata Sastri was corresponding with his people! Ganapati stopped Japa and both of them started for their village. They travelled by train up to Sigadam from where they had to walk to Kaluvarayi. Ganapati did not like to return home. He desired to visit Kasi. So he parted company with Venkata Sastri and by night he reached a village called Ramachandrapuram Agraharm.

It was a holy day, Ksheerabdhi Dwadasī (17-10-1896). Somone invited Ganapati for a feast and also presented him with two annas as Dakshina. Ganapati purchased a ticket upto Dusi. In Dusi, he met one who was known for his charitable disposition, particularly towards pilgrims. This man asked Ganapati to read upto Shantiparva (Mahabharatha) for him and he was,so pleased with Ganapati's sweet voice and interpretation, that he presented him with six rupees. Ganapati then travelled upto Tekkali where he arrived late in the evening. He look tood in a house and after dinner was resting on the pial. Two more pilgrims came to the same pial for resting. They had a pack of cards with them and they asked Ganapati to join them in a game. While play was on, some more persons came there along with an old astrologer. The master of the house, Ramadas Pantulu had returned home by then. All of them were discussing some horoscopes. The old astrologer was glibly giving out predictions. Ganapati, though playing cards, was listening to the discussions with the astrologer and at a particular stage, he interfered and told Ramadas Pantulu that the old astrologer did not appear to be conversant with the science of astrology. The astrologer, annoyed at this remark, threw the horoscopes in front of

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Ganapati and challenged him to say anything over and above what he himself had predicted. Ganapati without stopping the game of cards, un-hesitatingly answered all the queries of Ramadas Pantulu. They realised that this young man was a prodigy and requested him to stay there the following day also. But Ganapati was intent on continuing the pilgrimage along with the other two pilgrims. Ramadas Pantulu wanted to remunerate Ganapati suitably. Early in the morning the three pilgrims started out. At the instance of Ramadas Pantulu, the old astrologer met one Varanasi Achyutarama Sastri in the Dharmasala and after a brief conversation, went away. Achyutarama Sastri was a poet and friend of Krishnama Naidu, the proprietor of the Dharmasala. Naidu had not been doing well for some time. Achyutarama Sastri was longing to be effectively useful to his friend and when he was told by the old astrologer, he wished to take Ganapati, to his friend.

Achyutarama Sastri, welcoming Ganapati, told him that he had a dream the previous night that an elephant came to the Dharmasala and was surprised to know that the youngman's name was Ganapati. Achyutarama Sastri made him take his bath and food and then took him to the house of Naidu.

Krishnama Naidu was a landlord, with a charitable disposition. He had no children through his first wife and so he had married again. But since the second marriage, he had been suffering from an incurable malady. Ganapati examined his horoscope and told him that in about three months he would be free from the disease, his second wife would beget a daughter and that Naidu would adopt a boy. Naidu was almost talked out of his disease by Ganapati and his presence itself proved an effective treatment. So Naidu gave some money to the other two pilgrims and retained Ganapati with him.

Ganapati's pilgrimage to Kasi was thus delayed. Instead of moving on, he has whiling away his time comfortably exchanging literary pleasantries with Achyutarama Sastri and others. If some one recited a long poem, Ganapati would repeat it; he would open any given book and after tossing it up and catching it two or three times, would recite the contents *verbatim*. He could play chess simultaneously with four or five people and checkmate them all. Besides this, his poetic feats were a wonder to all and a cause of admiration to the learned. His stay in Nandigrama attracted many learned people and at the same time provided a real cure to Naidu.

Meanwhile Naidu sent for Narasimha Sastri and honoured both the father and the son. He promised to give fifty rupees every year to Ganapati and assured monetary assistance for the successful conduct of Ganapati's pilgrimage. He also assured that he would help further but felt that Ganapati was too young to undertake journeys to distant places like Kasi.

Ganapati's pilgrimage of tapas for the time being ended in securing a good friend, Krishnama Naidu and he returned to Kaluvaraya with his father.

THE MISSION

Ganapati now got engrossed in family life and it looked as though he had given up tapas. But he was deeply dissatisfied about his life in mundane affairs to the exclusion of tapas and other spiritual pursuits.

One day, when he was practising Japa, he saw before him, a white apparition, with a flowing beard, telling him in Tamil " I am Bhadraka, related to you since our previous births and your mate in tapas. You are Ganaka and you should start and continue your Tapas with this recognition." Ganapati did not know Tamil, but could retain in memory anything said or read. His father knew Tamil, and so he learnt from him that he was told to engage himself in tapas thereafter. Meanwhile Sivarama Sastri, who had gone to Nandigram wrote about a dream that he had in which Ganapati, along with a white man on a white elephant, was going somewhere for tapas. Narasimha Sastri permitted his son to go anywhere for tapas on condition of his returning home whenever he was asked to. It was decided that Visalakshi would stay in her parental home during his absence. And so on his twentieth birthday (18-11-1897) Ganapati, with the blessings of his father, started for Kasi.

At Kasi he befriended one Vaidyanatha Sastri. A palmist friend of Vaidyanatha Sastri studied the palms of Ganapati and pronounced that they contained marks of Sankha (Conch) and Chakra (wheel) denoting divinity in the native. On the suggestion of Vaidyanatha Sastri, Ganapati, with a small stock of flattened rice, crossed the Ganga the same night and entered Sankhamadhava temple for tapas. It was a solitary spot. The whole night he did *Sivapanchakshari* Japa. In the morning he found his Kambali (wollen blanket), clothes and money missing. Only his small vessel and one dhoti had been left. No human being could have come there in the night.

Then, how did these things disappear? Ganapati presumed that it was God's test and stopped thinking of the loss. It was cold season, but he continued his tapas. The flattened rice sufficed for ten nights. He ate nothing during the day. He was disappointed that no divine direction was available after ten days of tapas. He believed that near about Ganga there must be persons who knew the secrets of tapas. So he began wandering about the banks of the Ganga. He trearcked miles and by midnight arrived at an ashram where he found a person with a long beard. He fed Ganapati. A conversation with him revealed to Ganapati that he was also engaged in a similar pursuit. Ganapati slept there for the night and in the morning started again. On the way, he met a Brahmachari who volunteered to show him a spot congenial for tapas. It was Hamsa Teertham. The Maharaja of Ayodhya had established a Sanskrit school a Grammar teacher there offered to arrange for the few necessities of Ganapati and also presented him with a shawl and clothes. For ten days, Ganapati was able to continue his tapas uninterrupted. But after ten days the place became a bedlam. Members of the ashram and others to leave for Kasi as a solar eclipse was approaching. Though the eclipse was a month off, their anticipatory excitement was so noisy that Ganapati had to stop his tapas. Ganapati also started with them in the boart and on the way at Vindhyachala he left the boat hoping to continue tapas there. Nanda Devi was the presiding deity of the Vindhyachala Keshetra. After worshipping Nanda Devi that night, he started Japa. While doing Japa he suddenly felt something entering his body and lifting it about fifteen feet and placing it again on the floor. He was distinctly gripped by fear. He then prayed to the Goddess thus:

*Avandhya vindhya bhumi bhrut
Tataalayaa dayaavati
Vicaaradhautacetasaam
Iyam bhayam vyapohatu*

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(The compassionate goddess here who has her temple on the slope of the fertile Vindhya mountain dispels the fear of those whose minds are cleansed by enquiry.)

Ganapati felt that the spot was haunted and so not suitable for tapas. He started out the next day and reached a village called Narayanapur from where, after walking for nine hours reached Vyasakasi (Ramanagar). There he sold his upper cloth for two annas and with one anna, purchased plantain fruits, and paid the remaining one anna as boat-fare to cross Ganga and arrived at Kasi.

Narasimha Sastri's maternal uncle Aryasomayajula Bhavani Sankaram was then residing at Kasi. Ganapati was his guest. After worshipping Kasi Viswanatha and Annapoorna, Ganapati went round the city. He found an enthusiastic gathering of people at one place and enquired what the matter was. He was told that the great Pandit Sivakumar, Principal of the Sanskrit College of Darbhanga had come home for vacation and that he was the attraction. Sivakumar was the disciple of the famous Andhra savant Bala Sastri. Ganapati joined the gathering and by participating in the literary discussion there attracted the attention of Sivakumar.

Sivakumar was especially attracted by Ganapati's extempore verification of a high order. He suggested to Ganapati to go to Nawadweepa a famous centre of Sanskrit learning in Bengal. He also gave Ganapati a letter of recommendation for easy admission to the centre. Until Sivakumar returned to Darbhanga, Ganapati was busy. but from then on, he began searching for a secluded spot to continue tapas. Seclusion and silence were hard to find in a big pilgrim centre like Kasi. He had to satisfy himself with the seclusion and silence available in the residence of Bhavani Sankaram.

One day while Ganapati was engrossed in meditation, a robust black Brahmin came to him calling out "Ganapati" and appeared to be surprised to see him and the place. Ganapati was wondering who this person could be. The Brahmin said "I was told by Bhavani Sankaram that you had come. I came a long way to have the pleasure of meeting you but you seem to be too busy to talk to me. All right. I will wait until you finish your meditation."

Ganapati received him with a smile and apologised for not recollecting who he was. The Brahmin jocularly said "Yes boy, Your memory is failing; How can you remember me when you have forgotten who you are? I am Durgamandir Yogi of Ramnagar."

Ganapati : Pray Sir, kindly tell me your name prior to your becoming a Yogi.

Yogi : Somayajula Suryanarayana. But our acquaintance started far earlier than that.

Ganapati : How?

Yogi : What ? Have I to remind you of it all like Bhadraka?

Ganapati : Really! You know Bhadraka?

Yogi : Why not? We all belong to the same stock. Sixteen of us are now alive and each of us is pursuing the line dear to him. I am Suketu. As I have chosen Durgamandir in Ramnagar as my abode, I am called Durgamandir Yogi.

Ganapati : What is the line assigned to me?

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- Yogi : You will know it from 'Sthoolasiras' -
Meanwhile do not be too inquisitive. Do not
over-strain yourself by severe tapas. Tapas is
natural to you, but it will manifest itself to you
to the extent divinely ordained and at the
appropriate time. So be at peace. As you are
Ganaka you have to remove the impediments
on the way and the work of others will thereby
be fruitful.
- Ganapati : But Bhadraka directed me to do tapas. Why?
Is it for the world or for myself?
- Yogi : For the well-being of the world. Removal of
impediments is one of the aims. Now whoever
attempts to do any good, is confronted by
powerful obstacles. .

Then Durgamandir Yogi cleared many doubts of
Ganapati and when he was about to go, Ganapati said: Though
I am trying to know myself, my father is much more anxious
to know about me. I will just now write a letter to him
describing this meeting with you and your advise to me. I
request you to add a few lines to it so that he will be pleased.

Durgamandir Yogi agreed and added two sentences
beneath what Ganapathi had written: " Please allow your son
to do tapas. Do not fetter him with family responsibilities."

Then Durgamandir Yogi signed beneath as
"Somayajula Suryanarayana".

The address on the envelope was also written in
English by the Yogi, While going, he extended an invitation
to Ganapati to visit Durgamandir and also offered to post the
letter. Ganapati handed him the letter.

Narasimha Sastri received the letter and gave his son a telegram expressing his pleasure. Ganapati went to Ramnagar and was surprised to hear that no one called Durgamandir Yogi was living there. When Ganapati narrated this incident to Bhavani Sankaram he said "You are really fortunate. This Yogi, I believe, is Iswara Himself considering that he introduced himself as Durgamandir Yogi. Again, he must be the favourite God Suryanarayana Swamy of your parents as he called himself Somayajula Suryanarayana. Bhadraka and Suketu might really have been born in this world. But this Suketu met you only to familiarise you with their incarnations and missions. He might also acquaint you with the others belonging to the group of sixteen referred to by him. You must be very alert hereafter".

That night an old pilgrim appeared in a dream and exhorted Ganapati, "Ganapati; why are you wasting your time here? Suketu told me what all had transpired between you two. Nasik is the gateway to Brahmagiri, Go to Tryambakam and do penance."

Next morning Ganapati told Bhavani Sankaram about this dream, and he replied that this was also part of the divine plan with which Ganapati was already partly acquainted. Meanwhile his father also wrote to him approving of his proceeding to Nasik.

TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS

Nasik is the place where Lakshmana cut the nose of Soorpanakha, sister of Ravana. According to a local tradition, Nasik, now and then has been subject to Lakshmana's wrath. On the outskirts of the town there is a temple of Lakshmana. When Ganapati arrived at Nasik, small pox was prevalent in the town. He along with many others, was detained on the outskirts by the health authorities. Ganapati spent the day in a temple close by and at night, seeing the moon and the clear star-studded sky, felt elated and began singing some slokas. When he recited a sloka * from Raghuvamsa Kavya, the health officer requested him to explain fully the meaning of the sloka.

King Aja, the son of King Raghu, was going to participate in a Swayamvara (a function in which the bride chooses her husband from among the suitors gathered). On the way he and his party rested overnight in tents. Before daybreak, the court singers recited this sloka, to wake up their King.

** Nidra vasena bhavata apyanaveksamaanaa
Paryutsukhatvamabalaa nisi khanditeva
Laksmirvinodayati yena digantalambie
Sopitvadaananarucim vijahaati candrah*

"Oh King, Lakshmi (Goddess of wealth) who felt forsaken when you were overpowered by sleep, sought the company of Chandra (Moon). Now that you have woken up, the moon has set, unable to vie with the beauty of your face."

The lotus, the face of a king and the moon are described as the abodes of Goddess Lakshmi.



The Health Officer questioned Ganapati whether it was proper to say that King Aja accepted Lakshmi after she sought the company of another person, Ganapati replied that since Chandra was the brother of Lakshmi, born from the ocean of milk alike it was not wrong on her part to have gone to him when left by her lover.

The Health Officer was pleased with this reply and freed Ganapati from all restrictions the next morning. Finding Nasik a noisy town unsuited for tapas, he proceeded to Tryambaka Kshetra, walking all the eighteen miles. After worshipping the Mahadeva there, he went to Kusavarta by evening. Brahmagiri, where the River Godavari takes its birth, is near Kusavarta. The spiritual significance of the place is considerable as Brahmagiri is supposed to represent Brahmarandhra (the aperture in the crown of head through which cosmic power communicates with the power in the human body). Kusavarta is supposed to represent Sahasraara (The thousand-petalled lotus seat in the crown of the head where the supreme Shakti resides, supported by hrudaya). Tryambaka represents the heart, the seat of Siva.

A poor Brahmin was the host of Ganapati that night and next day he took him to the residence of an opulent doctor who was a connoisseur of Sanskrit learning. He was a good host. With his help Ganapati secured a secluded spot in the nearby temple of Neelaambika. For fourteen days Ganapati continued his tapas uninterrupted. But meanwhile the good Doctor was spreading the news about the literary eminence of Ganapati and every night his friends were gathering to listen to Ganapati's literary discourses. One day a friend called Ram Bhavu came from Nasik. He was also a connoisseur of literature. They persuaded Ganapati to perform an Astavadhana. Though he was physically weak as a result of his tapas, he agreed to do it. Ram Bhavu was so thrilled that he insisted on Ganapati moving to Nasik where

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he promised to make all arrangements for his tapas. Ganapati had to yield. But experience had shown Ganapati that Ram Bhavu was more interested in literary pastimes than in making arrangements for his tapas. Disappointed at the outlook of Ram Bhavu, he began searching for a secluded spot. While doing so he saw the temple of Lakshmana. The moment he stepped into the courtyard the temple priest pounced upon him from behind the door and without a word of enquiry began abusing and belabouring him. He was in no mood to listen to the protestations of Ganapati and Ganapati did not know the reason for this brutal behaviour of the priest. The priest dragged Ganapati to a distance, saying he would produce him before the magistrate. Meanwile a friend of Ram Bhavu, who regularly attended the literary discourses of Ganapati every night, came that way and wanted to know the reason for this behaviour of the priest. The priest said that he had brought out the ornaments of the deities and vessels for cleaning and when he went to fetch water from a nearby well, he found some of the ornaments stolen. He had a hunch that the thief would come again to steal the remaining ornaments and vessels and so he was hiding behind the door to apprehend the thief. "As expected, the thief entered," said the priest pointing to Ganapati. Ram Bhavu's friend tried to reason with the priest saying Ganapati was not a thief but an eminent savant. The priest refused to listen to his explanation and continued his brutal behaviour. Ganapati lost his patience when the priest refused to relent even after being informed of the real position. A sloka emerged from him, effortlessly.

*Dhwasta pradhwasta manujaa
Ksata vikasata vighrahaa
Kerna prakerna paryanta
Naasikayam bhavisyati*

People devastated and destroyed, bodies smitten and slain, scattered and thrown round the outskirts I may this city of Nasik be.

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It was only then the priest realised his gross mistake that the person whom he had illtreated was not at all the thief. But it was too late. Ganapati also realised that anger was not becoming of a good tapaswin and that he should not have cursed the whole Nasik for the fault of an individual. Yet he could not understand why he had been directed to proceed to Nasik where he had to face such obstacles to tapas. He prayed to God either to undo or mitigate the curse.

Ganapati did not like to return to Ram Bhavu's house. He found two dilapidated temples in a locality called Navachooti and chose one of them for immediate tapas.

Ram Bhavu realised that he was responsible for this unfortunate incident near the temple of Lakshmana.

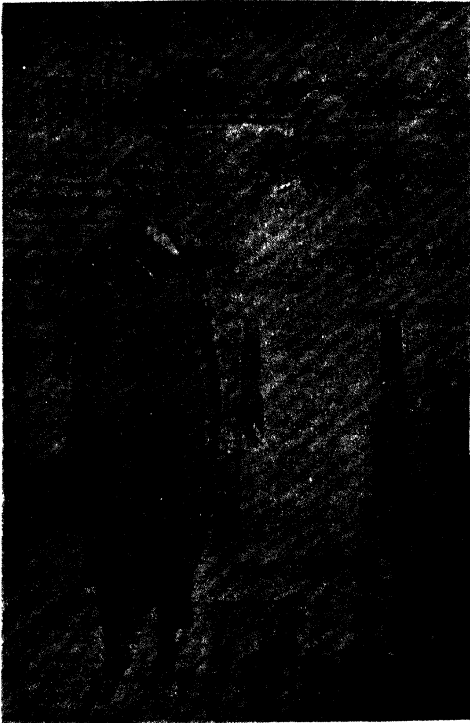
This time, Ganapati was able to go on with his tapas satisfactorily. For seventy days he performed tapas without any obstacle intervening. He took milk once a day during that period. Ram Bhavu was taking milk every night to Navachooti temple. On the seventieth day Mahadeva appeared in a dream and ordered Ganapati to return home. Ganapati stopped tapas and prepared to return. The next day Ram Bhavu told Ganapati about the effect of his anger on Nasik. Small pox killed a number of people including the whole family of the temple priest. There was a storm which uprooted many trees and destroyed a number of buildings and two temples. But outside Nasik there was no storm anywhere.

Ganapati had to break his journey at Secunderabad to meet his father. He then wanted to visit Bhadrachalam before returning home but his father reminded him of his family responsibilities as it was already six months since Ganapati had left home.

After reaching Kaluvarayi, Ganapati narrated all his experiences to his father. Narasimha Sastri then showed the letter, posted by Durgamandir Yogi and asked who it was that had drawn the sketch of Ganapati in the upper half of

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the letter. Ganapati was astonished at the change wrought in the letter. The sketch occupied the upper portion of the paper where he had actually written the letter. The contents of letter were pushed beneath the sketch. The paper he used then to write this letter was yellow. But this letter paper was pure white. The handwriting was his own - the contents of the letter were the same. This change in the letter could not be understood, much less explained. Both father and son attributed all this and the other incidents to the mysterious and omnipotent will of God.



**Sri Nayana Smt. Visalakshmi
at an advanced age.**

ATTAINMENTS

As Visalakshi was in the family way she went to her parental home. Ganapati saw no need to stay at home. So he was again thinking of going to some holy place to continue tapas. But at the request of his wife not to go to any distant place, Ganapati decided to go to Bhuvaneswar, in Orissa.

Rama Sastri, the brother-in-law of Bhīma Sastri, and Lakshminarayana Sastri, the son of Bhavani Sankaram, who were already initiated into Mantrajapa by Ganapati, accompanied him with tapas as their object. But Rama Sastri, unable to pull on returned to Kaluvarayi after a day's stay at Bhuvaneswar. Lakshminarayana Sastri, unable to give up smoking, followed Rama Sastri. Ganapati then felt free and in a secluded spot behind Bhuvaneswar Temple, began his tapas.

He was performing tapas during day, and was reciting *Lalita Sahasranama* nine times during night. For nine weeks, the Japa and recitation of Sahasranama continued. On the last night, Ganapati had a clear vision of Bhuvaneswari while he was sitting on a stone in the moon-light, in a relaxed mood. The Divine Mother offered him a cup of honey and her smile was so full of grace that Ganapati felt immersed in divine bliss as he sipped the honey. When the vision was over, he ruminated over his experience and tasted actually a residue of honey on his lips.

Since then, whatever he wrote, poetry or prose, was characterised by a distinct sweetness, and his intellect developed a rare sharpness. The memory of the smile of the Goddess lingered in him and found expression in all his Kavyas in myriad ways.

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That night a surprising incident occurred in the Bhuvaneswar village. There was a woman of seventy, whose husband Lambodar Das appeared to her in dream and told her: "I am now behind the temple of Vasudeva." Again Ganesa (also a Lambodardas) appeared in her dream and told her likewise. Next morning she told her son Bhaskar Das about this dream and prompted him to find out if there was anything remarkable behind the temple of Vasudeva particularly if a new idol of Ganapati had been installed there. Bhaskar Das did not find anything new except a tapaswin whose name, was, surprisingly, Ganapati. The old lady then bade her son to get initiated by Ganapati into Ganapati Mantra and to serve him. Bhaskar Das obeying his mother, got initiated. Ganapati performed four more months of satisfactory tapas at Bhuvaneswar.

One night (13-02-1809) he had a dream in which a cow was delivering a male calf. Two days later he received a letter that his wife had given birth to a male child on the fourteenth.

Ganapati started for home but changed his mind on the way, went to Virajapura on the banks of Vaitarani and for two months, he practised Japa there and then returned home.

As suggested by Narasimha Sastri the child was named Mahadeva in remembrance of the vision of Mahadeva, Ganapati had at Nasik.

After returning home, at the request of his wife, Ganapati tried for job. A teacher was wanted in the Sanskrit school at Kotha Agraharam in Ganjam District. But when Ganapati approached the authorities of the school, they asked him for his academic testimonials. Ganapati had no testimonials. He realised that without certificates, he could not get a job and so he proceeded to Dhavaleswaram on the

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banks of Godavari and commenced tapas in an islet nearby. He was subsisting on plantain fruits there for some days and when they were not available, he ate up the peels and contracted dysentery thereby. He then stopped the Japa and went to a village called Kesanakurru for treatment. While undergoing treatment he began learning Tarka and Vedanta from a famous savant of that village. He learnt those subjects in two months while two years would be too short a period for others to master them. While at Kaluvarayi, Ganapati studied Paanini (grammar) in about three months and on the Telugu New year's day (1900) proceeded to Mandasa.

Mandasa was a town where Andhra and Oriya customs and cultures converge. The Raja of Mandasa was a patron of letters.

On every New Year Day the Raja held a Durbar. An *Ashtaavadhana* by Ganapati was part of the programme that year. Ganapati's performance surpassed all others and the Raja wished to retain him in Mandasa. The son of the Raja one day requested Ganapati to initiate him into *Sivapancaaksari* Mantra. But Ganapati advised him to obtain the permission of the Raja first and the Raja in turn sought the permission of the family preceptor. The family preceptor was a Vaishnavite. He objected to the Rajakumar being initiated into *Sivapancaaksari*, which, according to him would be inauspicious for him. The family preceptor was also afraid that his hold on the Raja's family would weaken thereby. So the Raja held a meeting of pandits to discuss whether *Pancaksaari* Mantra was inauspicious. The family preceptor, unable to convince the gathering about the validity of his arguments, attempted to silence Ganapati by *Vaagbandhana* Mantra (*Mantra* which silences the opponent). But it had no effect on Ganapati. Ganapati enlightened him saying that a Mantra would be effective only with the pure minded. The Rajakumar thus become his disciple.

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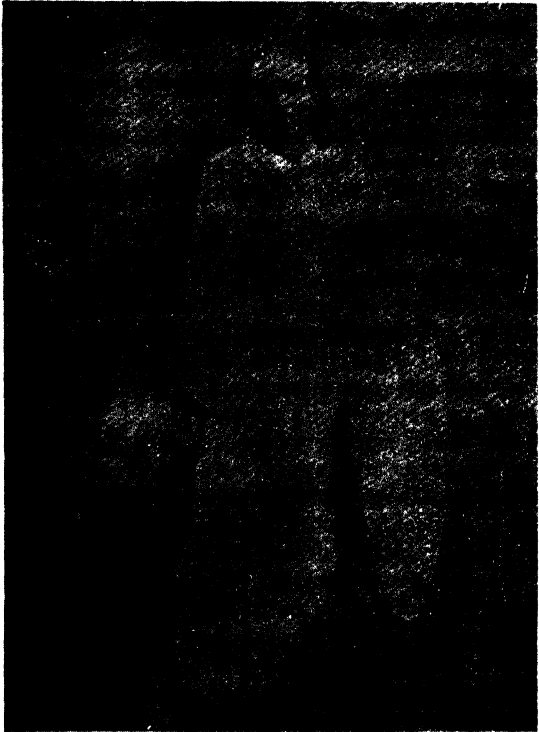
The Raja encouraged Ganapati to appear before the Nawadweep Pandita Parishad. Two poor men of the village were planning to go on a pilgrimage to Kasi then. The Raja asked them to accompany Ganapati to Nawadweep first and look after his comforts during the period of Pandita Parishad. The letter of recommendation given by Pandit Sivakumar was safe with Ganapati.

NAME AND FAME

Kancheepuram, Amaravathi, Nalanda, Ujjain and Nawadweepa had been famous seats of ancient higher learning for a long time. The first four had become extinct long ago but Nawadweepa adhered to impart traditional learning and hold examinations. Every year students and pandits from all over the country used to go to the Nawadweepa University to be examined and honoured with appropriate titles by a special committee of savants. The hall where this annual function was held was called '*Harisabha*'. The titles conferred by this Harisabha were held in high esteem all over the country. A sub-committee used to select entrants to the examination. It was no easy task to get through this entrance examination. The subsequent examination in the Harisabha was equally trying. Hence the value those titles claimed and the high esteem in which the title-holders were held from Kanyakumari to Kashmir. Ganapati arrived at Nawadweepa seeking such a distinction. That year the secretary of the entrance examination sub-committee was Sitikantha Vachaspati, a person of versatile literary talents.

Hundreds of pandits and students arrived at Nawadweepa. There were numerous visitors also. Ganapati wanted to contact Sitikantha Vaachaspati but it was no easy task. The only person of any consequence that offered to help Ganapati was Gulabignya, a pandit from Mithila. He ruled out the possibility of meeting Sitikantha Vachaspati that night but accommodated Ganapati and his two friends in his own camp temporarily. A conversation with Ganapati that night convinced Gulabignya that this young man was fit for entrance to the Harisabha. Moreover the letter from Pandit Sivakumar strengthened him in that belief. In that letter Sivakumar had likened Ganapati's literary process to the valour of Hanuman as described by Valmiki.* (*Devaasura samekesu bahuso drusta vikramah*). Sitikantha Vacaspati on learning about Ganapati's talents accepted him as his guest and provided him with all facilities.

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KAVYAKANTHA

The annual function started. The chairman of the board of examiners that year was Ambika Datta, a famous savant. Sitikantha entered the assembly followed by Ganapati. With a view to introducing Ganapati to the chairman before the function was formally inaugurated, Sitikantha led him to the chairman's seat. Ganapati asked him "Who is this exalted person?". *Kosou Mahaasayah*. Sitikantha was embarrassed that Ganapati had asked the question loud enough to be heard by Ambika Datta. But Ambika Datta smiled understandingly and replied in an extempore half verse that he was a Gouda (of a part of Bengal) an adept in extempore poetry, and that his name was 'one' Ambika Datta.

*Satvarakvitaasavitaa Gaudoham
Kascid Ambikaa Dattah*

Ambika Datta had couched the details of his name, place and qualifications in half a verse, evidently expecting Ganapati to produce the second half with like details about himself. Ganapati realising that this was a stratagem in poetic warfare immediately replied aptly in a flash, producing the second half of the verse.

*Ganapatiriti kavikulapatih
Ati kdakso Daakshinaatyboham*

It means: "I am Ganapati from the south, the chief of the clan of poets, highly accomplished." He did not stop at that but hit at Ambika Datta humorously saying "you are only a Datta (adopted son) where as I am (ourasa) the own son (of Ambika). There was immediately spontaneous appaluse from the audience.

Ambika Datta bade Ganaptti to come up to the dais and gave him these following four *samasyas* (Samasya is part of a stanza given by the examiner and the examinee has to complete appropriately the remaining parts of the stanza.)

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1. The daughter-in-law removing the cloth covering her breast longs for her father-in-law yet she is of spotless character.

*Stana vastram parityajya,
Vadhoo swasuram icchati*

- *kintu anavadyacarita*

2. Once in a year Gauri does not look at the face of her husband.

*Vatsarasyaikadaa gaurie
pati-vaktram na pasyati.*

3. Sun coursed loss with moon but not new moon day.

*Suryassaankena
Samam vinatih-(ana tu amaavasya)*

4. Ant kisses the orb of the Moon.

*Pipilika cumbati
Candra mandalam.*

Ganapati immediately completed those samasyas quite effortlessly.

The first samasyas was solved by stating that Hidimba the wife of Bheema (son of Vayu, the Air God) oppressed by summer heat, removed her breast cloth desiring her father-in-law i.e. a cool breeze.

*Hidimbaa Bhiemadayita
Nidaaghe gharma piaditaa
Stanavastram....*

The examiner had in mind *Draupadi Bheema dayitaa* Ganapati pointed out that Draupadi was not only the wife of Bheema, but of the other four brothers as well. She would have so many fathers-in-law. Also Draupadi coming from a royal lineage would not remove the cloth covering her breast like an ordinary rustic woman in the forest. So Ganapati established that *Hidimba* was the correct word. He also said that if instead of the word *stanavastram* the word *uttariyam* (upper garment) had been used, that would have been more poetic and fitting.

The second samasya was completed as follows:

*Chaturthyaam Bhaadra Suklasya
Candra darsana Sankayaa.*

On the fourth day of the bright fortnight of the month Bhaadrapada (Ganesh Chaturthy day) fearing that she might see the moon, Parvati would not see her husband's. It is said in *Ganesha Puaarna* that nobody should see the moon on the Ganesh Chaturthi day. If they happen to see the moon, they would get bad name and be victims of false charges.

The third samasya concerns the adverse disposition of planets in the horoscope of a new born. Ganapati completed it thus:

*Rahustrikone ca Gurustruteiye
Kalatrabhaava ca Dharqatanoojah
Lugne ca koste yadi baalakam syat
Suryah sasaankena samam vinastah.*

"In the horoscope of a child, if Rahu is at an angle. guru in the third house and Kuja in seventh house, and if sun and moon are placed in the Langa, the child will not survive".

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The fourth samasya was completed as below:

*Sateeviyogena visannacetasah
Prabhoh sayaanasya Himaalaye girau
Sivasya cudakalitam sudhaasayaa
Pipilika cumbati candramandalam*

"Sati Devi immolated herself in the sacrifice performed by Daksha, her father. Siva, stricken with grief, lay on the Himalaya mountain when the moon on his head touched the ground thereby giving scope to ants to lick it hoping for the nector in it".

After the successful completion of *samasyas* Ambika Datta wanted to test Ganapati in the faculty of literary criticism, for which two slokas were selected.

The first sloka was from Raghuvamsa (the seventh sloka of the ninth sarga), The second one was from *Kaavvaprakaasa*

*Na mragayaabhiratirna durodaram
Na ca sasipratimaabharanam madhu
Tamudayaaya navaa navayauvanaa
Priyatamaa yatamaanam apaaharat*

*Stumah kam vaamaaksi ksanamapi vinaa yam na ramase
Vilebhe kah praanan ranamakhamukhe yam mragayase
Sulagne ko jaatah sasimukhi yaamalingasi balaat
Tapah srih kasyaisaa madana nagari dhyayasi tu yam*

After explaining the literary peculiarities in the first sloka, Ganapati began his commentary on the second one which was given as an example of *Rasaabhaasa*. As the pleasant discourse of the young Ganapati was progressing, at one stage, he faltered and said " *Sarvesaam*" instead of ' *saarvasaam*' and immediately stopped to correct himself. But Ambika Datta cut him short (*viramataavat*) and remarked.

*Anavadye nanu padye
Gadye hrudyepi te skhalati vaani
Tat kim tribhuvanasaaraa
Taaraa naaraadhitaa bhavataa*

"Though your poetry is flawless and your prose too is captivating, how is it your speech falters? Have you not worshipped Tara who is the very essence of the three worlds"?

Ganapati felt that Ambika Datta need not have been so vehement over a mere slip of the tongue. Moreover, lost in weakness for cheap rhyming, Ambika Datta himself had committed a grammatical error when he said '*Saaraa Taaraa*' instead of the correct usage '*Saartasataraa*'. So Ganapati, pointing out this error hit him back.

*Sudhaam hasanti madhu caaksipanti
yaso haranti dayitaadharasya
Na telamaasyam kavita karoti
nopaasyate kim dayitaardhadehah*

"Poetry that laughs at nectar, that belittles the taste of honey and steals the fame of the lip of the beloved does not adorn your mouth. Have you not worshiped the one who half body is his / beloved?"

Ambika Datta instead of using the masculine *sarah* had made it feminine *sara* wrongly. In his preoccupation with the feminine goddess Tara, had he forgotten the Male who shares His body with Her? Ambika Datta became angry with this remark and said:

*Uchaih kunjara maakaarsieh
bhrumhitaani madoddhatah
Kumbhikumbhaamisaahaari
sete samprati kesari*

NĀYANA

"O Elephant, do not make much noise in bride. Now here lies the lion that makes a meal of the brain of elephants".

Ganapati : "Again a grammatical error. Instead of saying 'Kumbhikumbhaamisaaraarte' for alliteration, you used it as *haari* to rhyme with *kesari*.

*Samaaseeino rasaale cet,
maunamaavaha maukale
Lokah karotu satkaaram
matvaa tvaamapi kokilam*

"O crow: If you are seated on a mango tree, pray, remain silent. Let the world honour you taking you for a cuckoo".

Ambika Datta's anger knew no bounds. He blurted out:

*Jyotiringana na kinnu manyase
yat tvam eva timiresu laksyase*

"O firefly, does it not occur to you that you can be seen only in darkness?"

Ganapati:

*Kinnu deepa bhavane vibhasase
vaayunaa bahiraho vidhuyase*

"Ah, lamp, you shine right in the house; but outside you are wafted hither and thither".

Srī Sitikantha Vaachaspati intervened and showed a way to put an end to this quarrel. He said that instead of acrimonious insinuations at individual level is let the examiner and examinee poke fun at each other's communities, and end the dialogue.

Ambika Datta began:

*Bhatto 'khilo' ttopari vaaravadhvaa
nipayā madhvaarabhate vihaarah.*

"All Bhattas (South Indian Brahmins) go to the terrace of their houses, drink wine and then start sporting with the courtesans.

Ganapati:

*Asuvyayo vaastu vasuvyayo vaah
amee na meena vyasanam tyajanti*

These fellows Gaudas would not give up their craving for fish, whatever it may cost them, life or money."

Ambika Datta was overwhelmed with joy at this reply. He embraced Ganapati and congratulated him on his charming flow of high class poetry. Ganapati offered his apology to Ambika Datta, for engaging in literary combat, with such a great person as yourself. But Ambika Datta patted him saying that it was all in the game and laughingly added that even if he had transgressed limits his "pair of fish" had made ample amends. In his reference to the habit of the Gaudas, Ganapati had used the words *amee na meena* which sounded like two *meenas*, pairs of fish. Ambika Datta was praising the charm of sound and sense in Ganapati's extempore verses.

The president of the Parishad then announced that he had decided to honour the poet with the title '*kaavya kantha*' (one who has poetry in his throat). The decision was unanimously acclaimed.

NĀYANA

The citation, conferring the title on him said: "Poetry though not one of the gems born of 'churning the Ocean of Milk' is the nectar of the elite of the human family. He who acquires this accomplishment by extremely good luck and palpable divine grace, would be looked upon and honoured as a divine being though he is of the earth, by savants who relish real greatness

"As you have now by your extraordinary poetic talents, pleased this august assembly of savants, we, the citizens of Nawadweepa have a sense of fulfilment by your presence and performance. *Srimat Ganapati Sastri* of Kaluvarayi village of Visakhapatnam are we hereby honour your excellent traits of greatness with this *sloka* along with our blessings:

*Praacinaistaih kavikulavaraih
Kaalidaasadibharyaa
labhda kartirbhavadanugataa
saiva bhuyaad idaanim
Saubhirdatto ya iha rucirah
Kaavyakanthopahaarah
tena srimaan iha bhuvibharaan
ujjvalas caapi bhaayaat*

"May the fame acquired by the best of ancient poets, Kalidasa and others, follow you now. May you shine forth with splendour, adorned by the charming title "*Kaavyakantha*" conferred on you by discerning scholars of distinction.

Saka 1823
Saura Jyeshtha Eighth Day

Raja Krishna Tarka
Panchaanana

2-6-1900

Jayanarayana Tarkaratna
Sivanarayana Siromani
Sitikantha Vachaspati
Tarapasanna Chudamani
Rajanikanta Vidyavanta
Prasanna Kumara Vidyavanta
Durgamohana Srutitirtha
Dhwajaraja Sarma
Umeshachandra Sarma
Sivanatha Vachaspati
Swami Siva Govinda Bharati
Avinasa Nyayaratna
Yadunatha Sarvabhauma
Ahibhushana Vidyabhooshana

Ganapati sent this certificate and the action and the citation to the Raja of Mandasa to be passed on to his father Narasimha Sastri.

' KAVYA KANTHA ' CERTIFICATE

from NAVADWIP, Bengal

ইঙ্গ্রাজী—

৭৭৭

প্র নং সা প ত্র কে উৎ

শ্রীমদ গণপতি শাস্ত্রিন্ ।

সংসারে বরশ্রিত কবির নিত্যসমুদ্রস্বৰস্বরতঃ । সুদূরতক তৎ
লোকান্তিগমৌভাগ্যবলাৎ অগ্রসমদৈবানুকম্পায়া বা যঃ কচ্চিদিহ সমরি
কুক্ষতে স চ ভূষোহপি স্বর্গীয় ইতি সস্পৃহমানোকামানা গুণপকপাতিচিহ্নিৎ
ত্ৰিবিধবানাদ্রিযতে ।

জ্যোতা বদনঃ শ্রীমদ্বি বলাধাৰকবিশ্ববিদ্যে পঞ্চদশে প্রদ্বিরঃ পদে
সন্তোষ বাশাদিতাঃ তেইনৈকচৰিতাথা নবদ্বীপনিবাসিনঃ কোবিদা বয়মণে
ভূপৈকথাপ্রে বিনাৰলট্টন প্রদেখান্যে বনববাই জাম বেড গা বিহচনগলতি
শাস্ত্রিণে হুতা বাপির্জ্ঞানপূৰ্বক মিমঃ শ্লোকমুপংখান ।

আটানৈনৈঃ কবিবুলবটৈঃ কানিদাসাদিতা

নক্স কতিতামানুগতা সৈন দুখানিচাট

সদ্বিত্তো যইহ কতিবঃ "কাব্যাকৌশলঃ"

৩০১ জিমানহ হুঁ। ডবাহুন্দলগাটা ১৪৭৫।

৩০১ জিমানহ হুঁ। ডবাহুন্দলগাটা ১৪৭৫।

১০১০ কাকিহ
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৩০১ জিমানহ হুঁ।
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সমাপনবিহসিন
নিচবলে মাধিক
শ্রীকজনীলাপ্রশাস্ত্রিন্
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**SRI SRI DURGA -
SARANYAHA**

PRASAMSA PATRAMEY TAT

SRIMATH GANAPATHI SHASTRIN

Samsaarey khalwasmin kavitwam nityasamudrassam mukhamamrutham Sudurlabhamcha tat
lokaarthiga soubhaagyavashaath suprasannadaivaanukampayaa vaa yaha kaschidiha
samadhikuretey sa cha bhoosthohapi swargeeya iti saspruhamaalokyamaano gunapakshpa
athibhirvi dwadbhirni tharamaadrityatey

Atho yadadya Srimadbhi rasaadhaarana kavitwamitha prakatya sudhiyaha sarvey santosha
maapaaditaaha thenaiva charithaatha Nawadwipa vassinaha kovidaa vayamaseshagunaika
dhaamney visakhapattana pradesaan thargatha Kalavarayi graama vasathaya Srimat-Ganapathi
Shastrimey tubhyamaaseerwaadapoorwaka mimam slokamupaharamaha -

**PRAACHEENYSTHAIHI KAVIKULAVARAIHI KAALIDAASADIBHIRYAA
LABDHAAKEERTHITHAWADANUGATHAA SAIVA BHOYADIDAANEHA
SADBHIRDATHO YAYIHA RUCHIRAHA "KAVYA KANTOPAHARAHA"
THENA SRIMAANIHA BHUVI BHAWAANJJWALASCHAAPI BHOYATH**

**Tarkapawan naanaa Pathik
Jadusthe Radhakrishna Tarka Panchaanah -**

**1823 Sakaabdeeya
Saur Jyesttastaagtana duvasey**

Nawadwip Nivaasin --

**Tarkaratma Pathik
Sri Thayunarayana Sarma
Siyomanyu Pathik
Sivanarayana Sarmanah**

**Vikhavetho Pathik
Sri Rajanikanta Sarmanah
Sri Prasanna Kumar Sarma
Sri Durga Mohan Sarmanah
Sir Umesh Chandra Sarmanath
Sri Yadunath Sarmanah**

etc , etc , etc , etc ,

TOWARDS KASI

From Nawadweepa, Ganapati, on the request of Gulabī gnya went to Murshidabad. Gulabī gnya was the court pandit of the Raja of Murshidabad. The Raja held a durbar to honour Ganapati. They tried to detain Ganapati for some days at Murshidabad but Ganapati regretted having whiled away a whole year without tapas. He reached the great pilgrim centre Vaidyanath and immediately started *Sivapancaaksari japa*.

One day, when he was doing japa, his money was stolen. Only some change and his clothes were left behind. Ganapati noticed the loss only in the evening when he opened his eyes. But he did not mind it and continued his tapas.

Suresh Mitra, daily visitor to the Vaidyanath temple, saw Ganapati engaged in tapas in a secluded spot and desired to get acquainted with him. But Ganapati would not open his eyes during day time. So Suresh Mitra one day waited late into the night to get acquainted with Ganapati. They became friends very soon and Ganapati agreed to stay in the house of this new friend during nights.

Suresh Mitra was a great *upaasaka*. Conversation with him revealed that he was well versed in spiritual matters. He took great liking for Ganapati and told him that the Mantra of Goddess Tara was not correctly stated in the book "Mantra Mahodadhī". He imparted to him with due rites the secret Mantra of Tara as heriditarily practised.

Here one day, Eswara appeared in Ganapati's dream, explained to him something which he was not able to recall. This was the second time that Eswara had blessed him with his vision.

After his vision of Eswara, Ganapati longed to visit Kasi and worship Viswanatha. But he had no money to undertake the journey. He heard that there was a Zamindar

(of Garhwal) very near Vaidyanth. This Raja was very fond of chess. He had in his court eight chess experts whom he called his Astha Diggajas (the eight mythical elephants which bear the world). Ganapati dealt simultaneously with each one of them and checkmated them. The Raja was so pleased that he offered as present a plate-full of rupees to Ganapati. But he took from it only ten rupees, the bare fare to Kasi and assuring the Raja that he meant no offence, started for Kasi.

This time also Kasi did not prove a convenient spot for tapas. So Ganapati left Kasi and started for Ayodhya. Bhavani Sankaram also accompanied him. But on reaching Ayodhya, Bhavani Sankaram was stricken with dysentery. He feared he would die in Ayodhya instead of at Kasi. Respecting his wish to die at Kasi, Ganapati took back Bhavani Sankaram to Kasi. From there he went to Kanpur, and continued his tapas for three months uninterrupted. He met there a remarkable man known as Lakshmana Sastri who was feigning madness but was in fact a *Jnaa*. He narrated his spiritual experiences to Ganapati. He revealed to him many secrets of spiritual saadhana. By way of Upadesha (spiritual instruction) he told Ganapati "Whatever you see, consider it as Brahman".

*Yadyat pasyasi netraabhyaam
Tattat brahmeti bhaavaya*

On receiving some money and a letter from his father Narasimha Sastri, asking him to return home as his sight was failing, Ganapati returned home and learnt that the Raja of Mandasa honoured Narasimha Sastri with a present when the certificate of Nawadweepa Parishad (sent by Ganapati)

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reached him

MORE TRAVELS

Ganapati returned home from his North Indian pilgrimage by the end of 1900. He was the cynosure of all eyes in Kaluvarayi and surrounding parts as the news of his success at Nawadweepa and his life of tapas had reached them all. Needless to say that both his father and his wife felt proud of his achievements and the visits of admirers and relatives. For some days, this was a home of festivities.

The Raja of Mandasa earnestly wished to have Ganapati settled in Mandasa. But Narsimha Sastri had been suffering from eye-trouble. Ganapati felt it his duty to remain by his side both to nurse him and keep company. As his mother Narasamamba had died very early, Ganapati had lost the opportunity of discharging his filial debt to her. The period of the first five years of his life was one of continued anxiety to his parents due to the many ailments he suffered from. Remembering all that Ganapati stayed at home for nearly fifteen months serving his aged father. He studied Ayurveda during this period and found out a cure for his father's eye trouble. Narsimha Sastri was at last free from that malady. Then he encouraged Ganapati and Visalakshi to go to Nandigrāṇa and stay there for a week as guests of Krishnama Naidu and then proceed to Mandasa to spend the Telugu New Year's day in the company of the Raja's family. In March 1902 Ganapati and Visalakshi reached Mandasa, accordingly.

The atmosphere of Royal families is not usually agreeable to people of simple habits and spiritual inclination. Devotees lead a life of tapas impelled by some divine urge but others do not understand them and think that they are wasting their lives in unnecessary rigours. In Mandasa the Ranees provided Visalakshi with all comforts out of the great

regard they had for her. But she disliked all that and returned to her parental home. Ganapati accompanied by his younger brother, Sivarama Sastri, went to Bhuvanewar. The royal family of Mandasa felt guilty that they had scared away their guru and his wife by their well meant but unnecessary solicitude.

At Bhuvanewar, Ganapati practised severe austerities. For a month he worshipped the deity with Japa. Meanwhile the Raja of Dantavani sent an invitation to Ganapati. This Raja was a friend of the Raja of Mandasa and had heard from him about Ganapati. Ganapati and Sivarama Sastri went to Dantavani. After meeting the Raja, they were returning to Dhanmandal Railway station late in the evening, walking along the Railway line. Quite unexpectedly, there began a rumbling in the sky and thick dark clouds gathered accompanied by blinding flashes of lightning. Once a flash of lightning showed that they were on the edge of a railway bridge and saved them from being crushed to pulp by a goods train shunting back and God Indra had saved them with His lightning!

As the train to Calcutta was arriving first, tickets for northern stations alone were being issued then. Ganapati and his brother had to board the train going south; they were waiting for the issue of tickets to the south. Meanwhile, Sivarama Sastri insisted on a visit to Prayaga and Ganapati attempted in vain to dissuade him. Ganapati had to yield and immediately Sivarama Sastri bought two tickets for Calcutta. By the time they reached Calcutta, Sivarama Sastri, was penitent and Ganapati, quite unusually, longed to see his wife at once! So they bought tickets for Srikakulam from where they would have to go on foot to their village. When, they reached Srikakulam, there was a cooling shower of rain and Ganapati's longing to go home cooled down. He felt an urge to go to some sacred spot in South for tapas. Sivarama Sastri ran to the booking office and bought two tickets for Vijayawada. The train moved and the brothers smiled at each

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other understandingly. They realised with humility that they were being directed by some superior intelligence to continue their tapas. Ganapati occupied the upper berth and began his usual *pancaksari* japa. The following morning they got down at Vijayawada, bathed in the river Krishna and had darsan of Goddess Kanaka Durga. Then they met the head of the Sivaganga Math there and were his guests. The head of the Math, saw that Ganapati was a scholar and honoured him suitably. From Vijayawada the brothers proceeded to Kalahasti and from there to Kancheepuram. At Kancheepuram they happened to meet Narayana Josyar, an astrologer by profession.

He was surprised at the proficiency of Ganapati in astrology and requested him to accept his hospitality and teach him the intricacies of astrology. Ganapati chose a derelict temple of Hanuman near a river there for his tapas during day time and during nights he taught astrology to Josyar who was attending to his meagre physical needs.

Meanwhile Narasimha Sastri sent some money to Ganapati asking both his sons to return home. But Ganapati did not like returning home then. Sivarama Sastri was willing to return if Ganapati accompanied him and so Ganapati decided to return home. Narayana Josyar advised him to visit the remaining three of the Pancha (Bhoota) Linga Kshetras (the five sacred places representing the five elements) water (Jambukeswaram or Tiruvanaikkaval), Fire (Arunachalam or Tiruvannamalai) and *akasa* Ether (Chidambaram)* before returning home. Josyar advised them to visit nearby Arunachalam postponing their visit to Chidambaram and Jambukeswaram to a later date. The mention of "Arunachala" had a thrilling effect on Ganapati and he felt an irresistible urge to visit Arunachalam.

* The remaining two are Kancheepuram and Kalahasti representing Earth and Air (already visited.)

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Those were the days of Navaratri. On the last day of the Navaratri festivities, Ganapati reached Arunachalam. Though the custom was to worship first at the shrine of the God (Arunachaleswara), Ganapati went straight to the shrine of Goddess (Apeetakuchamba) and was thrilled to find flowers from her idol falling in a shower. He took it as a sign of the Mother's grace. Tears of joy rolled down his cheeks and after being immersed in bliss in her presence for some time, he went to the shrine of Arunachaleswara. He felt so elated at the shrine that for a few minutes he stood quite unconscious of the outer world. This was altogether a new experience to him and coming out of the temple, he told his brother that he had decided not to leave that holy place as he felt that his tapas would bear fruit there.

Sivarama Sastri felt very hungry. But Ganapati had not finished worshipping and so he gave some money to Sivarama Sastri to aruge other eatables. Ganapati tried to him saying that they were going to the choultry for meals. But that day being Ekadasi, * the choultry was closed. So Ganapati gave some more money to Sivarama Sastri and he bought some more fruits and ate them. Meanwhile Ganapati began enquiring at various houses whether a boy could be fed that night. But it was Ekadasi and no food had been cooked in many houses. Moreover, it was already nine in the night and people in many houses had already retired. Though Sivarama Sastri had by then consumed eight plantains, his hunger was not appeased. Ganapati was afraid that indiscriminate eating might lead to ill-health. And Sivarama Sastri was already restless due to hunger. Ganapati then stood before a house, reciting a sloka which described his misery then. Though the door of the house was closed there was a man lying on the outer pial. He got up and asked Ganapati what the matter was. When Ganapati described his

* On which day the orthodox Hindus fast.

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situation, the man stating that his wife had just then finished a Vrata (a religious observance) wanted to feed two Brahmins but that being the day of Ekadasi, Brahmins were not available, requested both of them to be his guests that night. Thogh Ganapati was not hungry he yielded to the entreaties of the man. On entering the house, they found a Tulasi plant surrounded by lights and other decoratinos - the interior of the house was simple, neat and attractive. The housewife persuaded them affectionately to eat well. After the meal the brothers were given taamboolam (betel leaves and-nuts) and *dakshina* (a small monetary present). They came out and slept in the corridor of the choultry.

To convey gratitude to their hosts they searched for the house next day but ther was no house like that in that locaility at all. It was really a mystery.

Arunachala is indeed the Light of Awareness, the centre of the universe supporting it. The Light could be perceived only by inner experience. Out of solicitude for ordinay devotees, Siva himself stands threre as the Arunachala Linga. The Linga in the temple of the foot of the Hill is but a symbol of the Hill meant for purpose of daily worship. Arunachala is also considered an emblem of Srichakra. Devotees go around the Hill of such great significance as part of their worship.

Geologists also affirm that this Hill is the oldest in creation and its special features reveal the secrets of the formation of the earth.

Ganapati became an ardent devotee of Arunachaleswara and a new chapter in his life of tapas began with it.

AT ARUNAACHALA

Ganapati and Sivarama Sastri messed in the choultry for three days, the period allowed for pilgrims. After that Ganapati looked for some house holders who could feed them by turns, each a day in a week, but he could secure the help of only four such. Even they offered to feed the brothers only during day time. Ganapati could subsist on one meal a day but Sivarama Sastri could not. So Ganapati advised his brother to return home but he would not.

Under these trying circumstances, he composed the following verse..

*Virui daana vimukhena kim tvaya
deeyate nijamanaa mayam padam
Kim dadaati hara sarwam a apanam
Vinnisaasakaladaanadurmanah*

"Oh God ! Are you going to grant me untrammelled spiritual glory when you are reluctant to grant me even my livelihood? Would a merchant, who is reluctant to part with even a piece of turmeric, give away his shop?"

Ignoring all the inconveniences, Ganapati went on with his tapas and as part of it composed a thousand slokas in praise of Arunachaleswara. He began reciting everyday the day's compositions within the precincts of the temple. Many learned men as well as ordinary people gathered every day to listen to that marvellous recitation. He finished the recitation of the thousand slokas (Hara Sahasram) two days prior to the Kruttika Festival. On the last day he read at a stretch all the thousand slokas. After the recitation of the thousand slokas some prominent citizens offered Ganapati the job of a teacher in the Sanskrit School and agreed to support him and his brother. Funnily enough, Sivarama Sastri insisted on returning home and Ganapati agreed to it.

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Ganapati had no knowledge of Tamil then. But he learnt it in a fortnight and ere long became an able teacher of Sanskrit in Tamil medium. His encyclopaedic learning and amazing capacity to learn anything effortlessly, gradually came to be well-known. But this fame proved an obstacle to Ganapati's tapas as even his nights ceased to be his own.

One day Ganapati went up the Hill along with his disciple Viswanathan who wanted to see one Brahmana Swami at the Virupaksha Cave. Finding him not there, both-repaired to the Ashram of Padmanabhaswami where they found Brahmana Swami sitting. Ganapati was startled to find in Brahmana Swami all the characteristics of "Sthoolasiras" described by Durgamandir Yogi in Kasi. At the very first sight of him he recognised Brahmana Swami as a spiritual adept of the highest order.

Padmanabhaswami knowing Ganapati as great scholar asked him to give the meaning of the famous sloka *Suklaambaradharam vishnum* usually ascribed to the God Ganesha.

Ganapati interpreted the sloka in various ways as applicable to various manifestations of Divinity in the Hindu Pantheon and at last interpreted it as applicable to Brahmana Swami also who was seated, unassuming in a corner there.

"Since the Brahamana Swami is wearing a white kaupeena, he is Suklambaradhara. He is all pervading by his Awareness and hence Vishnu. He shines like the moon. He has consumed the mind, senses, ego and thoughts and so a Chaturbhuj. With a pleasing face he is a Prasanna Vadana. He removes all obstacles in the path of those that meditate on him."

Brahamana Swami smiled at this interpretation.

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A month later, Visalakshi and their five-year -old son Mahadeva Sastri came over to Arunachalam. Ganapati took them to the hill meet Brahma Swami, but even at that time a complete feeling of devotion had not come to Ganapati.

Kalpiti Ramaswami, a disciple of Ganapati, had taken from him the only copy of Hara Sahasram to his village and passed away unexpectedly and so it got lost and could not be traced.



MEETING PEOPLE

Ever since Ganapati had settled at Arunachalam, he had been longing to learn Rig Veda in the traditional way. So he chose a teacher and by the end of the year, had learnt to recite the whole of Rig Veda; and then he studied the commentary on it.

Now that he was a Vedic scholar, his advice was sought whenever doubts arose in connection with Vedic rites. Poets and writers made a beeline to his residence for guidance. People in adversity approached him for solace. Admirers were numerous. He was left with no time to continue his tapas.

One day a man called Sathanjeri A. Ramaswamy Ayyar from Madras came to see Ganapati. He was a clerk in the High Court. Ramaswamy Ayyar felt a peculiar joy on touching the feet of Ganapati whose very appearance woke up memories of ages in him. He requested Ganapati to accept him as a disciple. Ramaswamy Ayyar's great saint grand father was a who had sung the praise of God and wrote lucid commentaries on the Upanishads (These were subsequently published by the Theosophical Society). Upanishad Brahman was a friend of Tyagaraja's father. Tyagaraja when he visited Kancheepuram stayed in the Ashramam of Upanishad Brahman. Ramaswamy Ayyar

instinctively believed that Ganapati in his previous birth was none else than Upanishad Brahman. So he sought the blessings of Ganapati for the well being of all the progeny of Upanishad Brahman and then got himself initiated into the Mantra of Ganapati.

Ramaswamy Ayyar came to Arunachala every month to see Ganapati and he persuaded Ganapati to visit Madras once. As soon as Ganapati arrived at his home in Madras,

his blind old mother, touched the feet of Ganapati and told her son that she remembered to have touched the same feet long, long ago. Ramaswamy Ayyar felt fortified in his belief that Ganapati was Upanishad Brahman. Ramaswamy Ayyar refused better and higher jobs in distant places as he did not like to be away from his mother. His filial love and piety greatly endeared him to Ganapati.

The next day Panchapakesa Sastri, a friend of Ramaswamy Ayyar and an advocate, along with Vedam Venkataraya Sastri (a famous pandit) and Tandalam Subrahmanya Ayyar (Best and Co.) came to see Ganapati to clear some doubts. After a brief conversation, Ganapati said this verse extempore.

*" Syatu Sarvagnya-siromani
deedhithi dosapradarsanepi patuh
Bhavataam sankah sankara
Harinadrwso haasanaasaastri."*

There is pun on the words *sarvagnya*, *siromani* and *deedhitti* Referring to Venkataraya Sastri the meaning is "May this Sastri who is skillful in pointing out mistakes in the treatise on Nyaya Shastra called *Deedhiti* of even the all-knowing Siromani Bhattacharya, clear your doubts". Referring to the smile of the Goddess the meaning will be.

"May the smile of the fawn-eyed consort of Siva-like a new instructor - capable of showing the blemishes in the lustre of the moon that adorns the head of Ishwara, remove your doubts".

Subrahmanya Ayyar requested Ganapati to compose a sloka equally applicable to Siva, Parvati, Ganapati and Subrahmanya. In a flash Ganapati recited the following sloka:

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*Jagateedhara jaamaataa
Bhavataam bhavyaaya bhuyase bhavatu
Kancidakincanamapi
Yadvieeksa vidadhaati sakrasamam.*

(*Jagateedhara jaamata*: One who is the son-in-law of the (Himalaya) mountain - Siva. *Jagataidharajaa maataa* the mother who is the daughter of mountain - Parvati. another meaning: the daughter of the mountain and she who happens to be the mother of the two sons. She whose compassionate look can metamorphose even a destitute to Indira's equal; May she shower her benedictions on you.)

The three gentlemen took this verse as a blessing of Ganapati and asked him whether he could stay on in Madras two days more so that they could organise a function to honour him in public. Ganapati excused himself saying that he would go to Madras later during the vacation of his school.

An hour after the three gentlemen had left, Rangayya Naidu, a friend of Ramaswamy Ayyar and Professor of Telugu in Madras Christian College, came to see Ganapati. Another Rangayya Naidu accompanied the professor. This Rangayya Naidu brought along with him an old palmleaf book which he shows to various pandits and asks them for the meaning of some of the intricate verses in it and when they failed to interpret the slokas, he makes fun of them. Mere Sanskrit Pandits could not know or interpret medical terms and mere medical men could not understand the literary peculiarities of those slokas. Thus, both ways, Rangayya Naidu embarrassed his victims and enjoyed the scene.

After Professor Rangayya Naidu had spoken to Ganapati the other Rangayya Naidu started his game. He first praised the literary eminence of Ganapati and then feigning humility said that he was longing for long to understand the secrets in this ancient treatise belonging to his forefathers and requested Ganapati to explain those secrets, the book contained.

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Ganapati turning the pages of the book quickly finished the study of it in less than half an hour and asked Rangayya Naidu to proceed with his questions. When Ganapati began answering the questions, Rangayya Naidu in his usual way, suggested that the answers should be in accordance with the explanations provided in the slokas. Ganapati assured him that his answers would be in full conformity with the explanations in that book. But Rangayya Naidu seriously doubted whether anyone could master and retain all that the book contained by such a hurried perusal. Ganapati replied that it was his practice and expressed his readiness to repeat all that the book contained. Rangayya Naidu was for once in his life completely floored and became an ardent admirer of Ganapati. Professor Rangayya Naidu also, a silent witness all through, was astounded at the brilliance of Ganapati and became his admirer. While taking leave he thanked Ramaswamy Ayyar for bringing him into contact with a divine personage. Ganapati returned to Arunachalam.

IN MADRAS

Ganapati's friends and admirers were expecting that he would soon come back to Madras. Narasimha Sastri had a relapse of eye trouble and he came to Madras for treatment. Ganapati was not informed of this visit. After treatment, Narasimha Sastri went to Tiruvannamalai. There also without the knowledge of Ganapati, he visited Brahma Swami. On his return journey Ganapati accompanied him up to Madras.

After Narasimha Sastri left for Kaluvarayi, Ganapati went to Ramaswamy Ayyar as promised. As the number of visitors increased and Ayyar's home was too small, Ganapati had to stay during day time in the house of the neighbour, S.Duraiswamy, a student of Law College. Duraiswamy was surprised at the way Ganapati answered various questions of the visitors, without offending any one, always pleasing and with no trace of exhaustion. Added to this, Ganapati could retain even long passages of prose or poetry once heard and this feat Duraiswamy thought, was super human.

One day Duraiswami, along with some of his colleagues knowing Sanskrit, wanted to test the capacity of Ganapati in originality. They first offered tamboolam (betel leaves, nuts, etc.) to Ganapati. He told them he was not accustomed to chewing tamboolam. They requested him to state in a sloka, the good and bad properties of tamboolam.

Ganapati replied thus:

*Sudhaadhikyam spruhecchatruh
Phalaadhikyam sprhedbhishak
Patraadhikyam sprahējaayaa
maataa tu tritayam spruhet*

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"The enemy wishes (one) uses more of lime (which injures the mouth) - the doctor - wishes (one) eats more of nuts (which weakens the blood) - the wife makes her husband consume more leaves (which excite passion) - the mother wishes her son to take these three in proper and moderate proportions."

The students expressed their admiration for the sloka and requested Ganapati to tell them about the peculiar difference between Indian and foreign literature. Ganapati said that he was not acquainted with English, and he would follow the theme if someone of them gave him the gist of any English literary work. Then the students read out Shakespeare's Macbeth, and explained the literary excellences in the drama. They then requested Ganapati to narrate the same story in Sanskrit verse immediately. (This Sanskrit narration, unfortunately was not recorded. Only the first line of the first verse was remembered). * The students who had all along been under the impression that Sanskrit was a dead language and that modern Indian poets were incapable of originality, were penitent after listening to the lucid narration of the story of Macbeth by Ganapathi in excellent Sanskrit verse.

Then the students wanted to test the power of Ganapati's memory. When they read a passage from a newspaper, immediately Ganapati repeated it all from the beginning to the end and vice versa. He also told them the number of syllables each passage consisted of. The students were almost dumb founded at this feat. They prostrated at his feet and took leave of him.

After the students had left the room, Duraiswamy apologised to Ganapati for trying to test him and touched his feet. Ganapati knew that Duraiswamy was associated with

* Dankannaama mahapath issamahavaat Skaatiaandu dese pura.

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him from the distant past, accepted him as his disciple, and gave him the name 'Sudhanwa', which became well known in the circle of Ganapati's disciples.

Some prominent citizens of Madras began collecting money to honour Ganapati. Some students also helped in the collection enthusiastically. Meanwhile another reputed poet, Narayana Sudarsan arrived at Madras. The citizens committee decided to honour both Ganapati and Sudarsan with the money collected. This decision did not find favour with the students. The committee then resolved to hold a meeting, in which the poetic talents of both Ganapati and Sudarsan could be tested, and a gold anklet could be presented to the more talented of the two.

Sudarsan was also a boy prodigy like Ganapati. He had written two poems before his seventeenth year and earned the titles, 'Balasaraswati' and 'Bhattasri'.

As the collection of money was going on, a meeting was held in Triplicane High School to honour Ganapati. The programme was to give various *samsayas* for Ganapati to complete. Reputed scholars like Halasyanatha Sastri, Neelamegha Sastri. Vedam Venkataraya Sastri were among those who gave these *samsayas* and Ganapati completed them to the satisfaction of every one. When Ganapati completed about fifty *samsayas* Venkataraya Sastri complimented him for exhausting all the *samsayas* in the literary armoury of the scholars gathered there. Ganapati was presented with a token sum of money contributed mainly by the teachers.

The citizen's committee held a bigger meeting in Mylapore with the famous lover of scholarship, V.Krishnaswamy Ayyar in the chair. As a part of Avadhana, Ganapati was asked to compose extempore hundred verses in one hour and the story of Nala was to be narrated. Ganapati started immediately. Sri Krishnaswamy Ayyar intervened and stopped the test saying that at that rate Ganapati could easily finish two hundred and fifty verses in an hour's time.

Krishnaswamy Ayyar and the audience were all praise for Kavyakantha and they honoured him suitably.

Those who were dissatisfied with the procedure adopted by Krishnaswamy Ayyar, organised another meeting to be presided over by Sudarsan in which Ganapati would have to perform a regular Ashtavadhanam. The meeting was held at the residence of Doctor M.D.Krishna Swamy. As usual people gathered to listen to the literary prowess of Ganapati.

Ganapati was asked to compose extempore a hundred slokas within an hour narrating the story of Rukmini's wedding. Only one scribe was engaged to write the slokas. As Ganapati began dictating the slokas the scribe with his pen playing on the paper, hurried up Ganapati to go ahead. Ganapati increase the speed of his dictation. The listeners wondered whether the writer was really recording the slokas whose speedy delivery was bewildering some of the scholars present. Ganapati also suspected the scribe and asked him to read out the slokas he had so far taken down. The scribe read out some slokas which were not dictated by Ganapati. He had with him slokas written and when he was asked to explain as to why he had resorted to this, he replied that he wanted to demonstrate that it was not such a difficult thing to compose verses within an allotted time.

Some among the gathering thought that those slokas were composed by Sudarsan and given to the scribe. But all felt that the conduct of the scribe was not proper.

Then Sudarsan as president took upon himself the task of testing Ganapati. When the poet was engaged with other items of Avadhana, he would now and then be given separate letters which he had to remember and at the close of Avadhana, the poet had to regroup those letters in proper verse form and recite. This literary feat is called '*Vyastaaksari*'. Sudarsan chose his own method of *Vyastaasari*. He wrote letters separately on bits of paper and gave them all to Ganapati

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asking him to look at them and return them at once. Some of the scholars objected to this method. But Ganapati agreed to do as the president wished. He immediately wrote the verse, composed of the separate letters given, in the reverse order first and then in its proper form as under:

Apsaam drapsaam alipsaam cirataram acaram
Kseeramadraaksom iksum
Draaksaam saaksadajaksham madhurasam adhayam
Draagavindam marandam
Mocaama acamamanyo madhurimagarimaa
Sankaraacaryavaacaam
Aacaanto hanta kintairalamapi ca sudhaa
Saarasi saaraseemnaa

Then the usual practice at the end of the *Avadhana* was to ask the poet to comment on some sloka so that he could forget the unfriendly procedure gone through so far and regale the listeners. Normally a light verse from the *kavyas* of some great ancient poet would be selected for this commentary. But Sudarsan asked Ganapati to comment upon the very sloka given for *Vyastaaksari*. This was another challenge to Ganapati. But Ganapati took it sportingly and pointed out that this sloka was an example of the worst literary improprieties. They were then enumerated by Ganapati. Cream was drunk (instead of eaten), milk was eaten (instead of drunk) sugar-cane was perceived (instead of the juice being drunk), grapes were actually eaten (as though they could be eaten otherwise!), the sweetness of honey was known quickly (as though it could also be known slowly), plantains were sipped (instead of eaten). So many verbs were used with unnatural predication. In addition to this, while the word '*Drapsam*' was neuter gender, funnily the poet sought to make it feminine (gender) by elongating its end sound as '*drapsam*'. Then instead of using the proper word '*saarasya*', the poet used it as '*saarasi*' which was contrary to the rules of grammar.

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Needles to say the opportunity to comment on a defective sloka was an occasion to Ganapati not only to regale the gathering but also to indulge in some pleasantries at the expense of Sudarsan, whom he likened to the author of the sloka.

Sudarsan realised that his behaviour was not laudable. He embraced Ganapati and sought his friendship. Doctor Krishna Swamy presented shawls to both Ganapati and Sudarsan and also an additional monetary present to Ganapati. Thus, what otherwise would have ended in unpleasantness concluded as a pleasant literary function.

After this function, his room became a regular pilgrim centre with an unending stream of devotees and Ganapati got sick of their eulogies. So to escape from these admirers, Ganapati moved to the residence of Panchapakesa Sastri, where another student Sankara Sastri became his disciple.

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CONCERN FOR THE COUNTRY

Ganapati's erudition and talents were then the talk of the elite of Madras and students particularly, were very much attracted towards him. Sankara Sastri, a nephew of Ramaswamy Ayyar, was actively encouraging the students to take part in the revival of national culture which was the central theme of Ganapati's speeches and conversations. Students accompanied Ganapati to the beach daily to hear him discourse on Indian culture, with a view to chalking out a programme for its revival. Ganapati was impressed with their earnestness and sincerity and explained to them the Vedic ideas with the hope that they would take part in his movement to create and establish an ideal society.

Especially after his study of the Rig Veda he was agonised at the degeneration of his motherland. Human life as patterned by Vedic sages, was a healthy combination of earthly happiness and spiritual values. By abandoning that life exemplified by Rishis, people in general became unhappy. Westerners by concentrating on the material side of life, were able to make new discoveries and inventions at promoting the physical well being of humanity. Ancient sages of India, on the other hand, took into consideration both the material and spiritual welfare of man and found ways leading to it. They applied their knowledge to free humanity from illhealth, ignorance and indigence. But later on people forgot the meaning and significance of the Vedas and stopped with mechanical recitation of the Vedas, and the performance of rites and rituals. The vedic mantras were not properly studied and meditated upon with knowledge. Under such circumstances belief in the Vedas and the Vedic way of life deteriorated and ochre robes became a sign of spiritual aspiration and enlightenment. People became lazy losing the zest for life. Society fell into disarray and the land no wonder, was conquered and subjugated by hordes from outside. People lost their vigour, valour, dignity and self-respect. Spurious

poets and writers began misleading people. Society on the whole became disrupted and degenerate forgetting the noble ideas for which our ancients stood.

When students heard Ganapati interpret the glorious Vedic way of life, they thronged around him drawing inspiration from him and gave him no rest even during nights. Ganapati was so pleased with this impact on the students that he entirely forgot about his job at Tiruvannamalai and did not mind strain. The vacation came to an end.

Professor Rangayya Naidu was a regular visitor to Ganapati. The Professor saw the educative and elevating influence of Ganapati's presence in their midst and encouraged students to meet and benefit by it. One day, in a conversation with Professor Naidu about the trends of interpretation given to history, Ganapati pointed out how some historians had allowed their imagination to run amuck. People in the country have been using ornaments and implements made of gold, silver, copper and precious stones according to convenience and their utility. Even now in many households, vessels made of stone and earth are used. That should not make any historian rush to the conclusion that we continue to be in the stone-age. Civilization does not depend upon vessels or ornaments. If stone swords were found in some excavations, historians should not conclude that these swords were used by ancient warriors but should pause to think whether these arms might not have belonged to some idols. Some historians have written that the Vedic seers were mainly agriculturists rearing cattle, and have praised natural phenomena like earth, clouds, mountains, rivers and air as gods and offered prayers to them for protection from ravages of nature and that they were mere nature worshippers with no deep thinking. Some interpreters went to the extent of proclaiming that the crude Vedic religion was reformed and improved by Buddhism, Jainism, Islam and Christianity. Poets and writers of shallow understanding stooped to please the foreign masters by misinterpreting Vedic lore. The

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spiritual quality of the Hymns of Vedic sages was vastly different from that of the commonplace Puranas and other works evolved far later. While it is true, to some extent, that these later writings served the cause of literature and devotion, they unfortunately led people far away from ideals and way of life.

Professor Rangayya Naidu was amazed to find Ganapati delving into unfathomable depths of observation and coming out with lucid interpretations. This conversation in particular, led Ganapati into profound silence and kept him awake that night. He was moody and engrossed in thought the whole of the following day. That evening as usual, he went to the beach and was sitting there right on the fringe of the roaring waves. Professor Naidu accompanied him silently.

When Naidu asked him about the cause of this moodiness, Ganapati replied, 'This person is thinking constantly about the condition of this country'. (*Dasaam desaayaitaam prtipadaayam dhyma janah*). the reply was part of a verse.

After some time Ganapati turned to Professor Naidu and gave his reply fully in two verses thus:

*Kuleenah ksudraaya pravara iti datte nijasutaam
Anaaryan vignaasca prabhava iti gaayanti satah
Balam baahvorluptam hrutampica vaagvairyamaribhih
Dasaam desasyaitaam pratipadamayam dhyayati janah.*

'(In our country) A person born in a respectable family, is giving his daughter in marriage to one of low upbringing declaring he is a very desirable bridegroom. Another praises

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the uncultured as Lords and rulers. Men are losing strength and even their power of speech is curbed by enemies. This person (the poet) is thinking constantly about the miserable condition of this country'.

*Aribhiradayaih kraantaayai te muhurmuhurrudhataih
Karam avikalam daatum dhcero na kopi vilokyate
Kwa tava dayitaaste te poorve dhare bharataadaye
Yadajita-bhuja adurgaasthaayostavaamba na bheirabhut*

'Oh Mother land! Unkind and insolent enemies have been invading and encroaching upon you constantly and not one hero who can protect you is seen. Where are those heroes, Bharata and others, whose shoulders served you as fortresses of shelter from fear'.

The students and other admirers understood the agony of Ganapati and realised that his tapas was intended to earn Divine Grace for the complete emancipation of the motherland. They determined to follow Ganapati as true disciples to accomplish that aim. Ganapati was pleased with this attitude of his followers and left for Tiruvannamalai.

COMING OF APPU

A Telugu pandit was wanted in the Voorhies College, Vellore, and the Principal, W.I. Chamberlain requested Professor Rangayya Naidu to recommend a suitable candidate. Professor Naidu and Ramaswamy Ayyar immediately went to Arunachalam to prevail upon Ganapati to accept this job, as the salary offered by the college was far higher than that given in the Sanskrit school in Tiruvannamalai. In January 1904, Ganapati joined the teaching staff of Voorhies College. The Principal on seeing Ganapati felt that he had a vision of David. When Thomas Harris, the headmaster of the high school section, welcomed Ganapati with a 'Namaskaram', the other members of the staff and students felt that new chapter had begun in the history of that famous institution.

Ganapati started with F.A. class and as he was taking the roll call, the name of one student K.G. Subrahmanya Sastri made him pause for a moment. He asked the student whether his pet name was 'Appu'. The student replied in the affirmative. Ganapati smiled remarking 'May you redeem your debt!'

Appu means debt in Telugu. This Appu was the grandson of Ramaswamy Ayyar's maternal aunt.

Umamaheswara Ayyar, a Vakil (pleader) requested Ganapati to teach him Sanskrit. This meant an addition of ten rupees to the monthly earnings of Ganapati. Umamaheswara's wife Sundari was the niece of Ramaswamy Ayyar. Umamaheswara had a sister. Her daughter was married to Kachchapeswar, the son of Umamaheswara. After this marriage, Umamaheswara had to experience a series of domestic worries. The advent of Ganapati provided relief to Umamaheswara and Sundari.

Appu had a brother Kalyanarama who was studying in high school classes and a sister Kavery. All the three of them, orphaned while still young, felt that their parents had come back to life in the form of Ganapati and Visalakshi. They were also initiated into Mantra Japa by Ganapati.

One day Upanishad Brahman the great grandfather of Appu, appearing in a dream expressed his pleasure at Appu's initiation into Mantra Japa by Ganapati and exhorted him to serve his Guru satisfactorily. Another day a sage appeared in a dream to Appu and after drinking milk offered by him "on the advice of Ganapati", told him that he should serve his Guru with filial affection, as he was freed, by the grace of that Guru, from a curse. Appu told Ganapati about these two dreams. But they were only directions to the disciple.

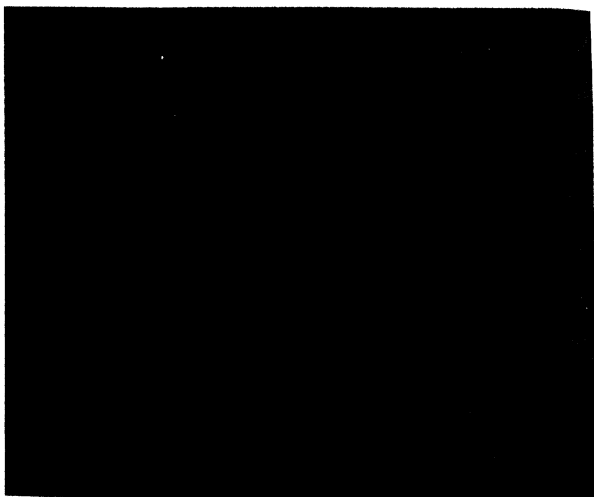
After a few days Ganapati started for Tiruvannamalai to see his friends. He reached the station only to be told that the train had already left. He then returned home to find Visalakshi lying unconscious. Her maternal uncle Mrutyunjaya, an Ayurvedic physician, gave her some medicine when she first complained of weakness. But all of a sudden she lost consciousness, and then she was dead! Ganapati also examined her and could find no killing malady in her. They stood speechless for a moment. And then as suddenly, they heard burst of wailing from the neighbour's house. An old woman in the neighbour's house had died suddenly. But they had another surprise awaiting them. They could only be on-lookers in a situation like that. Signs of life began appearing in Visalakshi gradually. She opened her eyes. In broken sentences, she told them that she had seen the life breath which just ebbed out of her re-entering.

But Visalakshi fell into another trance, causing anxiety again. However she woke up after some time and asked them to send for Appu immediately. When Appu came, she told him that she had a few moments ago seen Appu's parents and his forefathers including Upanishad Brahman n

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and that his mother requested her to treat Appu as her (Visalakshi's) elder son. Appu was overwhelmed with joy and from then on he adopted the Gotra of Ganapati. He also moved into the home of Ganapati, with Kalyanarama and Kavery.

After some days his wife Kamakshi also joined him and she endeared herself to Ganapati and Visalakshi as a devoted daughter-in-law.



Ganapati Muni with his Family and Friends (vellore period)

Sitting —(L to R) 1) Kalyana Rama Sastry, 2) Nayana 3) Smt. Visalakshi, 4) Appu Sastry

Standing —(L to R) 1) Vajreswari (daughter) 2) Kalyanaraman's wife 3) Mahadeva Sastry (Son) 4) G. Somayaji (son-in-law) 5) Smt. Kamakshi (Appu's wife).

IN THE WORLD OF STUDENTS

A number of men and women in Vellore were initiated into Mantra japa by Ganapati. But many of them were young and some of them were given to loose talk about their latest spiritual acquisition. Also, they were hoping to achieve some fascinating and spectacular results through Mantra Japa. Ganapati took upon himself the responsibility of teaching them various aspects and intricacies of spiritual practices. Some elderly people including Umamaheswara, Professor Sivasubrahmanyam and Sarvepalli Narasimhayya (who subsequently, in his advanced age, became a sansyasin, Pranavananda) were also attending these discourses.

Ganapati advised them to reduce bodily wants in order to devote themselves to spiritual life. Thereby a spirit of self-sacrifice, tolerance, compassion and broadmindedness would develop. Giving up of attachments was only for strengthening one's faith in God. This he said, was the purpose of religion. The excellence of a religion lay in the practice it enjoined on its followers. The world has witnessed many religions appearing and disappearing. History was full of instances where religions based on the experience of a single individual failed in guiding the humanity as a whole. On the contrary the Vedic religion was the repository of the experiences and discoveries of various sages—and hence its all pervasiveness. The Vedic seers lived here and sowed the seeds of spiritual culture here. And so other religions which reared their heads here for a time failed to stand before the Vedic religion.

Ganapati's talks were all revealing and naturally attracted a number of people, including some Christians. Of them, Paul Adiseshiah, feeling that Ganapati was ignorant about Christianity, went to him one day and began reading out from the Bible. Ganapati silenced him by repeating a number of passages from the Bible and asked him why he should fight shy of accepting and adopting good points found

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in other scriptures also. Would a thief be satisfied with one jewel only when a whole jewel box was at his disposal? Why should followers of Christianity or Islam talk disparagingly of the Vedic religion? They would be wise if they tried to understand its special features. Ganapati pointed out that with the change of religion, their motherland had not changed. He also advised Hindus to imbibe a spirit of independence and originality which the freedom loving foreigners would certainly respect. Ganapati, by his life and precept taught them to cultivate dignity if they wanted to be respected by foreigners.

Those were days of terrorist activities, particularly in the Punjab and Bengal. Reports of those activities created excitement among students in Vellore. Some of them were in touch with students in other parts of the land. Information reached them that many students of Madras under the leadership of Sudhanwa, had resolved to free the country at any cost. Most of them were the disciples of Ganapati. Sudhanwa came to Vellore and told Ganapati that the programme of revolution had been decided upon and requested him to bless their movement. Ganapati corrected him saying that it was preposterous on the part of a handful of youngsters to think of overthrowing a mighty government. Sudhanwa then, advised his associates to wait and avoid doing anything rash and impulsive.

That evening a meeting of students was held in the Mahant high school, the Headmaster P.S.Raghavachari presiding. Ganapati spoke advising the students not to be misled by irresponsible and indiscreet slogans of some grownups who were seeking to use them for their own ends. The foremost avocation of students, Ganapati pointed out, should be acquisition of knowledge. Ganapati's persuasive argument had a telling effect on the students and the elders were pleased with this healthy change in their attitude. More and more of students and grownups began seeking spiritual guidance and initiation from Ganapati.

Some of the students were doubtful about the efficacy of Mantra Japa. One day they came to Ganapati to discuss the usefulness of spiritual pursuits. Ganapati was then resting after Japa. He asked the students to allow him rest for a moment and keeping his Japamala aside, he lay with eyes closed. Immediately, one of the students, surprised them all, by chanting with eyes closed, the same mantra that Ganapati had been meditating upon. After a few minutes, Ganapati sat up and smiling took up the Japamala in to his hands. The student who was chanting the mantra, stopped the chanting and opened his eyes, as abruptly as he had started chanting. The students could not even remember the wording of the mantra that he chanted aloud. All their doubts about the efficacy of mantra were dispelled. Another incident also established the fact that Ganapati had psychic powers. Headmaster Raghavachari returned from a pilgrimage to Ghatikachalam (Sholingpur) and began describing the various shrines there. Ganapati, who had not so far seen Ghatikachalam, broke into sweet verses in praise of the deities of Ghatikachalam and a description of the shrines.

The students of Chittoor heard about these incidents and thought that a movement like the "Vandemataram", could be effectively launched by this saint-like pandit to free India from foreign domination. They requested him to initiate them. They even suggested the formation of a divine army under his leadership.

While Ganapati was pleased with the enthusiasm of these students, he found this popularity embarrassing. But how could he shake off these youngsters clinging to ideas difficult to translate into action? If they were not guided properly they were sure to join a violent movement. The move of the Chittoor students came to be known to students of Vellore and Madras. They all began looking to Ganapati for a dynamic and spiritual lead. So Ganapati formed in 1906 an association with about forty students as members. When they asked for a Mantra which would give them power to free the motherland, he devised a Mantra 'Umaam Vandemaataram'

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and initiated them. The Mantra satisfied their sentiments and they were convinced that ere long they would form the nucleus of a divine army. But there was in it all the tendency to get misguided also. Some of them were very restive. They were itching for some excitement to keep themselves and others occupied with. Something flashy and arresting something spectacular had to be done. Though Ganapati counselled patience until such time as their mantra japa had acquired efficacy, some of them began playing truant often and two or three of them had actually given up studies 'to discharge certain heavy responsibilities ordained by the Divine'. They were impatient and clamoured for an action committee. Ganapati nominated such a body. The members of the council were restlessly moving about with the ostensible purpose of attending to 'confidential tasks of great importance'.

Elders felt disturbed at the behaviour of these students. Srinivasa and Venkatraman, the two sons of Sundara Pandya, a contractor of Arni and Kittaji, his nephew, gave up their studies. Sundara Pandya tried in vain to dissuade them from their wrong course. They ran away from home. His nephew created a scene by shouting some slogans. Sundara Pandya had to bring him round by promising him that he would not compel him to go to school. On hearing this, the other two boys returned home. Ganapati knew they were intelligent but they were under the charm of some cheap political slogans. Sundara Pandya thought otherwise. He believed that the students were being led astray by Ganapati. Though some friends tried to correct his wrong opinion about Ganapati, Sundara Pandya was adamant. He complained to the Christian Mission authorities against Ganapati. The chief of the Mission decided to inspect unannounced, the classes taught by Ganapati. The result was, the Missionary was satisfied with the progress and conduct of the classes handled by Ganapati.

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Sundara Pandya was further annoyed on hearing the result of that inspection. So he saw the Madras Governor and complained that Ganapati was planning a revolution. The Governor laughed at this complaint saying "let those pen and pencil sepoys come and occupy my seat". This reply of the Governor became a point of loose talk among the imbecile loyalists. When Doctor Rangayya Naidu was speaking to Ramaswamy Ayyar about "Ganapati indulging in dangerous fantasies", Appu intervened to say that just as Christ could make saints out of fishermen, Ganapati would create heroes out of students.

THE CALL OF TAPAS

After three years of service as a teacher at Vellore, Ganapati felt a deep aversion for the job. The salary was meagre and he had to take up private tuitions for supplementing his earnings. The pursuit of his ideals resulted only in the promotion of social antagonism and derision. Thus he began to feel depressed at the trend of events and his life in general at Vellore.

Visalakshi's health also deteriorated and she too got vexed with life at Vellore. She wanted to engage herself in tapas and be a companion of her husband in his spiritual life. At that juncture a divine prompting made Ganapati continue his stay at Vellore. On February 17, 1907, Ganapati had a dream in which Bhadraka appeared and announced cryptically: "I have given up my body. Remain awake. Society will be revolutionised by your tapas hereafter".

Ganapati woke up and wondered why Bhadraka had not told him of his existence on the earth all these years. He felt sad at the passing away of this spiritual comrade. He immediately woke up Appu and A.P. Duraiswamy who were sleeping nearby and informed them of the sad event. Early morning, Duraiswamy who had gone out brought a newspaper in which there was the announcement of the death of Colonel Olcott, the President of the Theosophical Society, and his picture. Ganapati was surprised to find (on seeing the newspaper) that Bhadraka was none other than Colonel Olcott! He wondered why he had not found the picture of Olcott anywhere in Madras. Had he known that Bhadraka was all along staying at Adayar (Madras), he would certainly have contacted him and discussed with him about their common ideals and aims. Why had Bhadraka disappeared before the fulfilment of ideal for which he was born?

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Colonel Olcott had come to India to inculcate the spirit of unity in the orient while Swami Vivekananda had been to America to awaken the West to spiritual consciousness. The people of India had to be awakened from their long slumber to enable them regain their spiritual status. And the West had to be told of spiritual values of which they were totally unaware in their blind adherence to the outer life of the body.

Ganapati pondered over the disturbed state of the human society and engaged himself in tapas for divine inspiration. His disciples naturally appreciated his divine fervour and looked to him for further enlightenment. At this juncture Narasimha Sastri desired to see his son and daughter-in-law on account of the recurrence of his eye trouble and asked them to go over to Kaluvarayi at once. Ganapati went to him in April and pleased him immensely with his company. Both of them went on a pilgrimage to Prayaga where a mere dip in the confidence of the Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswathi (Triveni Sangam) restored his eye-sight.

On their return to Kaluvarayi, they received the news that Mahadeva (son of Ganapati) who was left at Vellore under the care of Sivarama Sastri, was afflicted with smallpox. They returned at once to Vellore. Ganapati sang in praise of Goddess Seetala, and Mahadeva was at once relieved of smallpox. These slokas, unfortunately, were not preserved.

Visalakshi was then in the family way. They regretted they had not so far visited Padaiveedu (24 miles from Vellore), a famous place of pilgrimage with Renuka Devi as the presiding deity. So during the Navarathri, October, they visited Padaiveedu and this pilgrimage proved a turning point in the life of Ganapati. The urge to rededicate his life to tapas became keener there.

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On return from Padaiveedu, a small incident resulted in Ganapati giving up his job. Headmaster Thomas Harris, during a talk with Ganapati, expressed the view that tapas was a practice of a dead past, and that it was not possible under modern conditions. Ganapati replied that he would prove to him the possibility and desirability of tapas at all times and as a first step resigned his job. As Harris felt guilty of having goaded him into resigning his job, Ganapati consoled him saying that the urge to dedicate himself to tapas was already there in him and so Harris need not feel remorse on that score. Yet the principal tried in vain to dissuade Ganapati. The fire of tapas got ablaze within Ganapati and he left Vellore for good the same night (3-11-1907).

INITIATION

Ganapati reached Tiruvannamalai the next morning and was provided with accommodation by a disiple Vasudeva Sastri. The sudden decision of his master to resign the job surprised Vasudeva Sastri but he was pleased that Ganapati had come to his house on the eve of Deepavali. He wanted to celebrate the day with festive rejoicing but Ganapati declined to participate in the festivities and asked Vasudeva Sastri to suggest a secluded spot suited for tapas. Vasudeva Sastri felt that, Pachchaimman Koil situated away from the town (the temple of Markatha Syamalaamba) would be suitable. Ganapati asked Vasudeva Sastri to keep the news of his return confidential and immediately went to the temple. Vasudeva Sastri was attending to the few needs of his master.

Goddess Syamalasambha is referred to as Mantrinyambaa, i.e., Chief Minister of Tripura Sundari, in the Lalita Sahasranaama (the thousand names of Lalita). Ganapati was pleased he could devote his time to tapas again. That night, as he was meditating he heard some music coming from the sanctum sanctorum. Then it sounded like a musical accompaniment to a dance. But then, the sounds grew louder and louder. As Ganapati turned towards the sanctum he saw numerous weird beings dancing hideously like drunkards let loose. The noise became unbearable and the dancers advanced menacingly towards Ganapati. Ganapati was annoyed at this development and invoked the Goddess.

*Uksaaraaja vaahanasya jeevitaadgareeyasi
Pakshiraja vaahanaadi varnyamaana vaibhavaa
Kekilokacakravarti vaahanena putriniee
Vaaranaar isa a rvabhaumavaahanaa gatirmama*

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"She who is dearer than life to Eswara who rides on his majestic bull (The Nandi), She whose grandeur is praised by all Gods led by Vishnu who rides on Garuda the King of birds, she who is the mother of Kumaraswamy who rides on the best of peacocks - May she, who rides on the stately lion which terrifies elephants, protect me."

The bedlam ceased as Ganapati invoked the Mother and the dancers disappeared. Ganapati felt that the bedlam witnessed by him was symbolic of the confusion prevailing in society and realised that his duty was to strive to remove hindrances in the path to spiritual achievement. Such an act would help the emergence of the Divine on earth. Ancient Rishis by their tapas prepared the field for the emergence of divine incarnations. Vasistha's tapas paved the way for the manifestation of Mahavishnu as Sri Rama. The Divine army led by Kumaraswamy was supported by the ministrations of Brihaspati. Ganapati, by virtue of his name alone should be able to remove the many inauspicious obstacles menacing spiritual life on earth. He began reflecting on the mode of spiritual practice necessary to accomplish that ideal.

Next morning he reviewed his experience of the night and decided to meditate upon pranava. It was possible only in a silent, peaceful, secluded spot. Apart from being infested by evil forces the vicinity of Pachai Amman Kovil was noisy. So Ganapati on the advice of Vasudeva Sastri moved on to Niruti (South West) Lingam, a solitary spot to continue his tapas undisturbed.

Niruti Lingam was indeed the most suitable spot for tapas. It was the month of Krittika during which a very grand ten day festival would be celebrated at Arunachalam.

Arunachaleswara and his consort Apeetakuchamba are taken daily in procession during the days of this festival. Lakhs of devotees gather from far and near to witness this

festival and feast their eyes on the grand sight of the God and Goddess and other deities being taken round the temple in procession. The seventh day was the chariot festival; the chariot, while going round the temple, stood still at the NorthWest corner. People struggled in vain to pull it on. The path was smooth with no impediment on the way and yet the chariot could not be moved despite their best attempts and so they stopped and decided to pull it the next day.

Ganapati, in the Nrruthi temple, had a nap just after midnight but was woken up by a dream in which Ramainga Gurukkal, one of the temple archakas and a devotee of Ganapati, informed him that the chariot stopped on the way and that he was inspired to believe that it would not move unless, Ganapati came. Ganapati felt that there was something mysterious behind this dream and he started at once and on reaching the spot found that this dream was true. The guards posted there informed him about the unusual stalemate in the procession. Ganapati bowed to Arunachaleswara and his consort seated on the chariot and took leave of them saying he would come in the morning. He went to the Veda Pathasala and took the rest there.

Early in the morning, hundreds of people were engaged in pulling the chariot, when Ganapati reached the place. He immediately prostrated before the chariot, and submitted to Arunachaleswara that he had come as ordered and prayed that he may be pleased to allow the chariot move on. The chariot which was unmoveable till then moved with the first pull that very moment. Ganapati felt that he had really a message from the Divine and that it was a very auspicious day for him. Viswanatha Iyer, one of his disciple invited him to be his guest that day. Ganapati agreed to it and went to his house.

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Ganapati began pondering over the significance of the great chariot coming to a stand-still. The chariot represented the universe and so its stopping denoted spiritual life coming to a stand-still. The movement of the chariot signified the revival of spirituality.

Early that afternoon Ganapati on a sudden impulse moved out of the house and went direct to the Virupaksha cave alone and found Brahmanaswamy seated all alone. Note even Pazhani Swami, his constant attendant was present then. Finding Brahmanaswamy quite alone, Ganapati prostrated before him with great devotional fervour and getting up, spoke to him thus, " All that has to be studied, I have studied and I have practised Mantra japa to the best of my ability. Yet I feel I have not understood what real tapas is. I seek your guidance. Pray enlighten me about real tapas."

Brahmanaswamy remained silent for a while, bestowing his grace on Ganapati and then replied slowly thus: If one watches whence the notion 'I' arises, the mind gets absorbed there. That is tapas. And during japa, if one watches whence the Mantra vibration (dhvani) arises, the mind gets absorbed there. That is tapas."

AT THE FEET OF THE MASTER

It was on the eighteenth of November 1907 that Brahmanaswamy had blessed Ganapati with his benign grace by initiating him into tapas. This cryptic but unambiguous spiritual instruction of Brahmanaswamy came to him as a revelation. Indeed it was difficult to get an adept master. But here was a Master who revealed the true nature of tapas as it was meant by the Vedas. Here was a sage who spoke from the depth of experience. Here was a teaching which if followed, would indeed revive Vedic culture. Both mind and praana will have to be stilled and merged in the Atman, their common source.

Ganapati prayed to Brahmanaswamy to permit him to proceed with his tapas in his benign presence, on the lines revealed just then and the Swamy readily agreed.

It needs full alertness and wakefulness to delve deep into one's heart in self-enquiry. It would be difficult to go against the mental current flowing outwards. It is not violent suppression of thoughts but watching the source of the root thought 'I'. This enquiry helps one reach the one source of all the self-supreme. Yet this is not easy. It would require complete rejection of the ego, by fixing the attention on its source.

Ganapati understood this truth as it was taught by Brahmanaswamy, and he attempted to follow this new method of self-enquiry. That was a new experience though he realised how difficult it would be to get settled in it.

After a while when Pazhani Swami returned, Ganapati asked him what the original name of Brahmanaswamy was and on being told that it was 'Venkataraman', Ganapati made it brief and beautiful as 'Ramana'. Since Ramana was truly a Maharshi, he decided to call him 'Bhagawan Ramana

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Maharshi'. He then composed five slokas in praise of his master and offered them to him praying for his grace. Ramana accepted the slokas with a smile saying allright Nayana. Nayana in Telugu means "father" which is also popular as an endearing "address". Ganapati is also known as Nayana.

From that day Brahmanaswamy cam to be known as 'Bhagawan Sri Ramana Maharshi'.

Ganapati wrote to both his father and wife about his meeting with the Master. Two days hence on the Deepotsava Day (the festival of the Kartheek Beacon) Visalakshi arrived from Vellore with a number of Ganapati's disciples. All of them went straight to the Virupaksha Cave and prostrated at the feet of Ramana. They were with Bhagawan when the Krithika beacon was lit on the summit of Arunachala. All of them together with Nayana were in great ecstasy in the presence of Bhagawan Ramana.

BIRTH OF UMASAHASRAM

Next day Visalakshi retruned to Vellore, Nayana requested Paurhani swami to show him a suitable place for his tapas. Ramana then suggested 'Amra Guha' (Mango Tree cave) and led Nayana to the cave where they sat together for some time.

Echchammal, a devotee had been taking food for Ramana daily. When she found a new devotee of great accomplishments had come to stay, she decided to bring food for him also. From then onwards, she felt happy to see the master and disciple dining together. She became a devotee of Nayana also.

Nayana had previously sung the praise of Arunachaleswara (Hara Sahasram - a thousand verses in praise of Hara or Arunachaleswara). Now, he decided to compose within 20 days, a Kavya in praise of Uma, the Mother of the Universe, to thank her for blessing him with a Guru of the highest spiritual attainment.

He informed his Master, Bhagawan Sri Ramana of his intention and received his approval and blessing.

He started the work on November 26, 1907. Ramana was visiting the Mango cave off and on to enthuse his devotee and give him strength by his kind presence.

One morning Ganapati felt unusually hungry. He stopped writing and sat meditating. Meanwhile Eechammal, who was then cooking food, had a vision - A lady appeared before her and said "Ganapati is feeling very hungry. Send him food soon." The woman disappered and Echchammal sent food to Ganapati through a young boy with instruction to ask Nayana if there was anything particular that morning. He took the food and in answer to the question of the boy Ganapati replied smiling. "I was unusually hungry this morning".

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On the fifteenth day, a whitlow appeared on the right hand thumb of Nayana making it impossible for him to write. By the nineteenth day only three fourths of the work was completed. That night Punyakoti, a doctor from Madras, was asked in a dream to go and attend to a Tapaswin residing on the Hill. Next morning he went up the Hill to Virupaksha cave and enquired if any sadhu was ailing. Learning there about Nayana's ailment he went to the Mango Tree cave and operated upon the whitlow and dressed the thumb. Even then how to write with a bandaged thumb?

It was the twentieth day. Nayana decided to complete the thousand slokas extempore that night itself.

On the night of the twentieth day five disciples went to the Mango cave, with writing material. Ramana sat near Ganapati who started dictating the slokas, engaging simultaneously all the five disciples. Various were the meters and various were the subjects of the Cantos. Ganapati finished the remaining portion of Uma Sahasram, more than 200 verses, before midnight. Ramana, who was sitting silent all the time, with closed eyes, opened them and asked those present if they had taken down everything that he had been saying. Nayana realised that it was such intimate guidance of his Master which enabled the completion of Uma Sahasram that night itself and expressed his gratitude thus:

*Yadasya mahatah kaale
Paaram yaatosmi karmanah
Anugrahoyam aachaarya
Ramanasya mahaatmanah*

"The fulfilment of this great task at the appointed time, is entirely due to the unique grace of my great Master Ramana".

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Umasahasram is a song celestial that rose from the heart of an inspired poet seer dispelling all obstacles besetting the path of spiritual aspirants, elevating the mind of devotees and awakening the divine in the hearts of the chosen ones. It helps the human soul in its supreme spiritual quest. Throughout the poem, can be heard the lilting notes of the Goddess of Learning and her ever-varying aspects and facets lifting up the spiritual aspirants to realms beyond the reach of human understanding.

REALISATION

After completing Umasahasram Nayana went, wishing to remain in solitude for sometime to a secluded spot called Elu-sunai (Seven springs or *Saptajhari*) high up on Arunachala. Elu-sunai is a cool spot. Ramana guided him to this secluded spot. Ramana knew well every nook and corner of the Hill. The Hill was in fact his retreat - he was the child of the Hill - The Hill and Ramana were inseparables - His silence was the same as that of the Hill. Arunachala verily was the heart of Ramana. The Hill and Ramana belonged to each other. Hence the expression Arunachala Ramana at the end of his 'Five Hymns to Arunachala'.

Meanwhile disciples were making arrangements in the precincts of the Pachai-amman Temple for the recitation of Umasahasram. Many devotees came to Trivannamalai, to listen to the recitation of Umasahasram by Nayana in the presence of Bhagawan Ramana. After a week, Nayana returned from Elu-sunai.

Umasahasram is a collection of devotional hymns the quintessence of all our sacred lore representing the various aspects of the Mother's splendour and moulded by the grace of Ramana the great preceptor. It is the inspired utterance of an accomplished poet whom the Goddess had chosen as Her instrument to sing Her glory. The place chosen for the recital was the shrine of Syamalamba (Pachaiyamman) at the foot of the sacred Hill. And Ramana himself presided over the function. Needless to say the listeners felt fortunate over the manifestation of this multi-sided divine grace and were throughout lost in it. A disciple Narayana Ghanapati dreamt that the Goddess appeared before him and bade him recite a particular sloka which evidently pleased Her most.

*Ganapataye stanaghatayoh
Padakamale saptaloka bhaktebhyah
Adharapute Tripurajite
Dadhaasi peeusam amba tvam*

"Mother! You have ambrosia in three places, in your breasts for Ganapati (your child), at your lotus-feet for devotees dwelling in the seven worlds and in your lips for Siva (the Conqueror of Tirupura)."

The next day a new person came to the temple just before the recitation of Umasahasram was begun, and after paying his respects to Ramana, prepared to return. Then he chanced to look at Nayana and he immediately prostrated before Nayana exclaiming 'Oh Father! You are here~'. His name was Chirupaakam Kondaiah. He was doing Homa daily and meditating upon Ganapati. One day he saw amidst the flames, Ganapati in a human form and now saw that it was the very form of Sri Nayana. And seeing thus, that Nayana was a manifestation of Ganapati, he became one of his great devotees.

Numerous were the wonders experienced by the disciples during the period of recitation of Umasahasram. Some were in doubt regarding the divinity of Nayana. During this recitation festival, the daily routine commenced with prayers early before dawn. Ramana's presence gave them the initial advantage of serenity.

One day all of them assembled for prayer and were waiting to take the lead from Nayana. Suddenly there emerged from somewhere a bright star which went towards Ramana, touched his forehead and receded. This happened six times. The disciples were immensely surprised at this unusual occurrence. Nayana realised that it was the manifestation of Kaartikeya (Subrahmanya) in Ramana. He

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at once praised Ramana, in eight slokas extempore. (These eight slokas form part of the forty verses in praise of Ramana which are recited every morning at Bhagawan's shrine, Sri Ramanasram). Ramana listened to them in his spontaneous divine mood.

Ramana usually remained silent. He spoke very little and that too when absolutely necessary. Ramana the incarnation of Kaarthikeya was born, according to Nayana, to direct and guide all mainly by his silence.

After the recitation was over Nayana wanted to continue tapas at some holy spot. He learnt from Ramana the path of tapas and he was longing to know from him the method of accomplishing his object for the redemption of his motherland. Mantra that gave power and protection to the ancient sages, was what Nayana was thinking of. But he was not clear whether self-enquiry itself was enough for the acquisition of power for the welfare of humanity. It is well-known that service to humanity was always the main ideal of Nayana. So he asked Ramana whether self-enquiry was enough or any other Saadhana was necessary for that purpose. Ramana replied:

"Rely wholly on God who controls the world and does what is auspicious. Settle still in your heart, with all cares entrusted to God. He who can shape the future can also conduct the present affairs. The Lord conducts the past, present and future and prepares the ground for the auspicious events. Do not have any doubt about it. He acts according to the needs of times. So be firmly poised in the Self. It will do you good. Leave everything to God".

Ramana made it clear that self-enquiry was effective both as a spiritual practice and as an instrument to achieve great objects for the welfare of humanity.

Then Ramana, advised Nayana to take Vasudeva Sastri with him. They both left for Madras.

ACQUISITION OF A DISCIPLE

Nayana at the suggestion of Vasudeva Sastri decided to visit Tiruvottiyur (Adipura the first and foremost city - suggestive perhaps of the fact that pilgrimage to the South begins with this holy place) where the presiding deity is Tripurasundari. They found in the south street of Tiruvottiyur, a dilapidated temple of Ganesha which appeared suitable for tapas. Then they went to the Tripurasundari temple. When Nayana was praising the Goddess with a sloka from Umasahasram, a Sanskrit student who was nearby, chanced to hear it. Delighted on hearing the charming sloka, recited in a rich melodious voice, he enquired of Vasudeva Sastri who the personage was. On being told that he was 'Kavyakantha' Ganapati the student at once touched the feet of Nayana and volunteered to be of service to him. He was Kapali Sastri. They went round various shrines and came to a small dark well. The deity inside was Kali. Legend had it that Kali in anger, had retired into this dark well. Nayana offered Her a sloka.

*Kupe vibhaasi kila kopvati triyaamaa
Caarinyasesajagadiaswari Kaali bhadre
Vibhraajadaadipuravaasini, daasamaapat
Kupaadudancaya padaambujabhaktametam*

'Mother, frowning at the prowlers during the night (evil forces) - Queen of the entire world! - Beneficent Kali! - Resident of the luminous Adipura! - you are said to be shining within this dark well. Lift up this servant of yours who is devoted to your feet, from the dark well of adversity'.

That night Narayana Ghanaapati and Adhaam (Kalambur Venkataraman) who were then in Madras, learning that their master had come to Tiruvottiyur went there. Nayana asked Narayana to take to Vellore the copy of Umasahasram for safe custody. Visalakshi was then staying in Vellore.



Sri KAPALI SASTRY

chief disciple, first biographer and commentator of
Nayana, authored SIDDHANJANAM



Smt. & Sri D S. Viswamitra : Sri Devendra Subrahmanya Viswamitra
is a famous disciple of Nayana. A poet and tapasvin. He lives in Sirsi.
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The news of Nayana's arrival spread among the learned of Madras. A number of them came to Tiruvottiyur to meet and talk with the personage eminent in the spiritual as well as literary fields. Nayana was then a changed person. He had entered the Vaanaprastha Asrama and considered the show of literary prowess incompatible with spiritual pursuits. But Kapali desired to witness an Avadhana. Nayana asked him to wait and an occasion arose. An acquaintance of Nayana came and wanted him to define good poetry in the Vasantatilaka metre. That metre is made of four feet of fourteen syllables each. Nayana asked him to draw on a slate a diagram of 56 squares and went on stating with lightening quickness the letters to be written in the squares pointed at random by the questioner. When all the fifty-six squares were filled up thus, it read as follows:

*Prietim dadaati vipulaam sriyumaatanoti
Nirmaati nootna samayamduritam dhunoti
Aardreeikaroti hrudayaanyapi devataanaam
Kasmai subhaaya na bhavet kavitaa vidosha*

Faultless good poetry delights the hearer, brings about richness, creates a new era, removes imperfections and melts the hearts of even the Gods. What benediction does not good poetry confer?"

Poetry is usually supposed to give entertainment and bring fame to the poet. But Nayana felt it to be more profound. The popular belief was that a king brings about a new age (Raja kaalasya kaaranam). But Nayana declared that "a poet creates a new age" (Kavih Kaalasya Kaaranam). The age of kings is gone. The influence of a genuine poet is far greater than that of even a benevolent king. Ganapati also proved how effective a good poet could be, a few minutes later.

The scholars who wanted to ask him a series of questions were surprised that even before they expressed them, Nayana answered them all. They then requested him to explain to them about the Upaasana (Worship of Goddess as a small girl) of Baala.

Nayana commenced by praising Goddess Bala in hymns extempore and suddenly closed his eyes in meditation. All of them, had a profound experience - to them all Nayana appeared as the diety and the hymns sung just then were continuing to be heard by them all though Nayana was sitting silent with his eyes closed. They all remained silent with eys closed for some minutes enjoying the music and meaning of the hymns and also the extra-ordinary vision of Bala Parameswari they had through the person of Nayana.

Though to them Nayana was a divine incarnation, he himself was in search of a suitable spot for tapas. He decided to devote himself to tapas for eighteen days at a stretch with milk to sustain him and taking rest for a few hours every night. He adopted the method of self-enquiry as instructed by Ramana

Some pedants say that no upaasana, no mantra is necessary if the method of self-enquiry is followed. But unelss the mind is spiritually cultured, how could any one launch upon self enquiry? Though these pedants have succeeded somewhat in propagating the wrong notion that all other spiritual practices are unnecessary, they have failed to effectively interet any body in the practice of self-enquiry. Whatever others might say, even Nayana experienced difficulty in totally harnessing the mind to self-enquiry as taught by Ramana. It is worthwhile to note the saying of the spiritually experienced that Atma reveals itself only to those whom it favours. Ganapati was seeking such a favour. He was not one to be scared by a possible failure of effort. His

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experience in spiritual pursuits served as a foundation for self-enquiry; taught by Ramana. Even then, he had found often that his strength was not adequate for self-enquiry.

On the eighteenth day of tapas, about two in the afternoon, he was struck by an overwhelming weakness, creeping up the spine and almost paralysing him. He could not sit. He was forced to lie down but he did not give up his meditation. Next moment Ramana was there and when he tried to get up and bow to him, he pressed his head with his right hand. At once Ganapati felt a divine current coursing through his body and he could not even open eyes. After a few moments, when he opened his eyes Ramana had disappeared.

Nayana was delighted and felt assured that Ramana's grace so lovingly conferred, was a sign of approaching realisation.

Subsequently it was learnt from Bhagawan Sri Ramana that on that very day he had felt his body rising up to a region of pure light and then descending to earth over a spot whose sound revealed that it was Tiruvottiyur. He said that he entered a Ganapati temple there. As usual he stopped with that as it was enough to confirm Sri Nayana's vision. However, Ramana said, he found himself back at the Virupaksha Cave in a few minutes.

POLICE, POLITICS AND PADAIVEEDU

Ganapati was resting the next day in Tiruvottiyur when he received a telegramme from Vellore asking him to come atonce. Ever since Ganapati commenced tapas in Tiruvottiyur, Kalyanarama, younger brother of Appu Sastri was in a trance. He was devoted to Goddess Renuka of Padaiveedu, a holy place, with Renuka as the presiding deity. Kalyanarama under the spell of Renuka, was saying that Nayana should proceed to Padaiveedu for tapas. So Nayana went to Vellore and taking Kalyanarama with him, proceeded to Padaiveedu to propitiate Renuka. Kalyanam was freed from the spell. Ganapati decided to stay for some time in Padaiveedu. By way of tapas, he took to the revision of Umasahasram.

While he was thus engaged, some people were busy spreading rumours against him. Umamaheswaram's son Kachchapeswara showed some signs of mental derangement and his relatives attributed that to the initiation he had from Ganapati. Though Umamaheswaram refuted this charge, his relatives were obstinate and spread about the view that Ganapati was influencing youth in favour of a violent political movement. Sundara Pandya was again active and he effectively influenced police officials. As he was already sore about Nayana's hold on youth, particularly on his son and nephew, he seized this opportunity to intensify his campaign against Nayana. The stay of Nayana at Padaiveedu, they reported, was detrimental to the welfare of youth at Vellore and round about. Chinnaswamy, an Inspector of Police took upon himself the duty of unravelling the so-called mischievous plots of Nayana. An inquiry was launched with the examination of Appu. Appu told them how the elders of all these suspected youths had received spiritual initiation from Nayana and how on various occasions the youths were

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saved by Nayana from misguided enthusiasm and hasty actions. Though Kachchapeswara's relatives were satisfied with this explanation, the police inspector was not. Meanwhile, one Venkatachalayya of Madras who had a talk with Nayana on 'divine incarnations' misunderstood the theory of divine incarnations and published a pamphlet announcing the emergence of 'Kalki incarnation' through Nayana. Kachchapeswara got hold of one pamphlet and improved upon the fantasy by propagating the view, that 'Kalki' would be born to Visalakshi. Sundara Pandya was further incensed by this propaganda. He caused the publication of a news item immediately in "The Madras Mail" describing "the dangerous influence on youth of a revolutionary called Kavyakantha Ganapati Sastri, who usually stayed in holy places". This news item also contained a warning to the Government about the threat of a dangerous political movement under the leadership of Ganapati.

C. Subrahmanyam, a lecturer in Voorthis College, contributed an article to the 'Hindu', condemning the allegations published in 'The Madras Mail'. But the Governor ordered an inquiry into the activities of Ganapati.

The police were asked to seize the manuscript 'Umasahasram' which, according to Sundara Pandya, contained hymns inciting treason.

It was true, Umasahasram contained slokas invoking the grace of the Goddess for the freedom of the Motherland. Nayana, though fore-warned of the intent of the Police, remained unmoved with full faith in Goddess Renuka.

The location of Padaiveedu and its environs is similar to the arrangement of the spiritual centres in a human body. It is surrounded by mountains. The entrance to the holy place is suggestive of the centre between the eyebrows. In the upper reaches of this plateau, the earth is white like ash (Vibhooti) where the river Kundalini (Kamandalu) takes its birth. Water

oozes out of this ashy earth. Legend says Rishi Jamadagni performed Yagna here. The white earth represents the ash of the Yagna-Kunda. Even today, this Vibhooti is given as prasada in the Renuka temple. The spot where the water oozes out represents the sahasraara or the thousand petalled lotus seat of Goddess in the human head. The water in the river is believed to be the water in the Kamandal of Jamadagni.

The river flows through the spot which forms the entrance to Padaiveedu. The path of the river is suggestive of the path of energy flowing down the Sahasrara. After emerging from the plateau, Kundalini river cascades over a rocky spot which by its resemblance to a serpent hood is called in Tamil '*Pambadichan Parai*'.

In the space between the eyebrows is located *Aagnya Cakra*. Renuka is called Vajreswari, Vajrawati, Chandī, Prachandachandī and Chinnamasta (Chinnamasta literally means a split head in Yoga, at a certain stage the skull bones in the crown of the head, separate slightly and that spot becomes soft as in the case of infants. This experience is represented by Chinnamasta. She resides in the *Aagnaaycakra* and rends the knot called Rudra (Granthi).

Padaiveedu, so holy to the spiritual aspirants, was considered a rendezvous of revolutionaries by the police. On a Friday morning, two plainclothed police officials arrived at the Renuka temple. It is well known that Fridays are auspicious for the devotees of the Goddess. Nayana was then going round the temple, composing a sloka* per round. He did twenty seven rounds, reciting twentyseven slokas in praise of Renuka, and sat on a pial, writing the same slokas. Umasahasram was also there but unnoticed by the police.

*This hymn begins with "Surasirascara ccarana renuka Jagadadheeswari Jayati Renuka". This hymn was later included and printed in Geetamala by Ganapati.

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officials, who sat on the same pial as disinterested strangers. Meanwhile, A.R.Doraiswamy came there and a mute indication by Ganapati, prompted him to remove the book to a safe place. In his anxiety to keep the book safe from detectives, he buried it deep in the sands of the river Kamandalu.

Nayana asked the police officials who were disguised as pilgrims as to when they started from Vellore. They were startled at this question because they had already said they came from Madras. Without waiting for their answer, he told them about Umasahasram and volunteered to give them a gist of Umasahasram which was collection of hymns in praise of the Mother Uma. Whatever question they intended to ask, was answered before their asking. They were also told that the whole hymn was recited and commented upon in the presence of a large gathering of learned persons in Tiruvannamalai. There was nothing objectionable in it. Would it be wrong to pray to the Mother of the Universe to give them character and spiritual strength, Nayana asked.

The police officials were curious to know what he was writing after going round the temple. The meaning of the hymn in praise of Renuka was then explained to them. The officials realised that the charges made against him were all baseless and malicious. They expressed their profound joy at having met him. One of the police officials advised him to leave the district for some months at least as some influential persons, were trying to get him arrested for inciting political revolution.

The enquiry by the police having blown over thus, everybody felt glad that nothing serious had happened or would happen. They slept well that night. But due to heavy rain, there was flood in the river Kamandalu that night and it was found in the morning that Umasahasram got washed off!

Nayana sent a message to Ramana thus:

'I see that the great Shakti whom I have invoked through Umasahasram is none other than Renuka, who is the life-current functioning in all creation as Kundalini. By her grace, Umasahasram is preserved in my memory, though the copy of it was lost.

He continued his stay in Padaiveedu despite the advice of well-disposed Police officials to leave the place.

PARABLE OF PARASURAMA

There are numerous interpretations to the ten incarnations (Dasavataras) of God. Both the interpretations and the nature of understanding can only be based on the degree of enlightenment of the persons interested. The sixth incarnation, namely Parasurama, was variously commented upon but the reasons given were uniformly unconvincing and never befitting divinity. The first four incarnations were not human, the fifth was a manikin and only the sixth incarnation was a fully realised being.

Nayana contemplated on the significance of these incarnations, particularly that of the sixth with which was associated the divinity of Padaiveedu (Sri Renuka) where he sought refuge.

Jamadagni, Vasistha and Viswamitra were contemporaries who helped emergence of the divine incarnation for the well-being of the world. The spiritual knowledge resulting from the Parasurama Avatar was adopted as the starting point in the case of the Rama avatar. This knowledge was reported to have been imparted by Vasistha to Rama. The *asthra Vidya* realised by Parasurama, was in truth, taught by Viswamitra to Rama. And Rama was finally portrayed as a full divine human. The story of Parasurama could only be understood against a background of spiritual appreciation.

Kaartaveeriyā the Hyhaya king belonged to the clan of Yadus who were of foreign extraction. Hyhaya kings were ruling parts of Western India comprising the present Maharashtra, Karnataka and Kerala. Their capital was *Maahishmati*, *Kaartaveeriyā* was a powerful king. Polygamy was prevalent among the Hyhayas. Many neighbouring kings

gave away their daughters in marriage to *Kaartavieerya*. One such king was. Prasenajit's eldest daughter Satya was married to *Keartavieerya* and the second daughter Renuka, to *Jamadagni*.

Parasurama was born to *Renuka* and *Jamadagni*. Until *Parasurama* grew up, *Kaartaavieerya* continued his menacing activities without let or hindrance. The *Rishis* with their families retired to deep forests to escape from the royal ire.

One day, the *Hyhaya* king with his queens, *Satya* included, started out on a hunting spree. They went too far and missed their way with no possibility of easy return. Their stock of victuals was nearly exhausted. On reaching the environs of *Jamadgni Ashrama*, *Satya* desired to see *Renuka*.

Jamadagni was not in the *Ashrama* then, *Renuka* received the royal party and offered to feed them. But this party was too big. *Satya* felt it was beyond the means of a poor *Ashrama* to feed them. But *Renuka* sprinkled some water from the *Kamandal* of *Jamadagni* and instantaneously, enough victuals for a royal feast were found there. This, along with the extra-ordinary beauty of *Renuka*, roused in the king a heinous infatuation for her and he decided that she should be his queen. *Jamadagni* came there just then, but *Kaarthavieerya*, ignoring him, carried away *Renuka* forcibly.

Jamadagni remained quiet, seeing that there was some purpose behind this. His sons returned. The youngest of them, *Parasurama* started out to rescue his mother. The power of *Jamadagni's* tapas entered the person of *Parasurama* and made him invincible. Single handed he fought the *Hyhayas* and killing them all, he rescued *Renuka*. The beauty and power of *Renuka* caused an uncontrollable infatuation for her in *Kaarthavieerya*. *Jamadagni* considered *Renuka's* holiness marred by her being in the custody of *Kartavirya* even for a short while and so ordered *Parasurama* to behead her. But

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the head so severed and the body of Renuka, remained alive

The full significance of this incident could be appreciated only by great yogis. The king represented ignorance and passion which had stolen the light 'Renuka'. Knowledge restored the light to its source, in which process the granthi (knot) in the head was riven establishing absolute unity with the universal power.

Parasurama by the grace of his father was already a realised being and he became the instrument of his father to bring about his metamorphosis in his mother. The spiritual significance of this act of Parasurama may be understood by a study of that aspect of the Divine Mother known as Chinnamasta (One with the head split).

Self-enquiry is the sole teaching of Ramana and this splitting of the crown means the destruction of the ego i.e. the sense of exaggerated individuality.

While Nayana was engrossed in reconstructing this story, on the twelfth day of May (1908) he received the news from Vellore, of the birth of a daughter. He then left for Vellore

THE VISION OF THE MOTHER

The child was named 'Vajreswari', one of the many names of Renuka, as a gesture of gratitude to the Goddess for her continued grace and protection. Meanwhile Narayana returned from Tiruvannamalai with a message from Ramana asking Nayana about the progress of his revision of 'Umasahasram'. Kalyanarama was again under the spell of Renuka and he suggested that Nayana should perform tapas for full forty days.

Nayana, after visiting Arunachala to seek the blessing of Ramana, returned to Padaiveedu and commenced tapas, subsisting on a cup of milk every night. Padaiveedu served as an ideal spot for tapas. Noise was alien to Padaiveedu. No interruptions were possible there. Forty days of tapas passed smoothly. On the last day, he, as usual was continuing tapas. It was midnight.

His eyes were open. He felt ecstatic and his body growing huge. Suddenly he saw a charming woman, tastefully dressed, rays of splendour emanating from her body and followed by numerous attendants. She sat near his legs, to be precise, near his right calf and scratched him. The ecstasy he was till then experiencing, had disappeared and she ordered him to follow her. The attendants disappeared.

Nayana followed her. She went to the Bilva tree on the western side of the Renuka temple and sat on the platform there. When he asked her 'Who am I?', by way of reply she smiled and beckoned him to follow her. She then approached the Kumaraswamy shrine and taking the Sakthi weapon (Lance) from the iodl, handed it over to him. Then she went back, entered the sanctum sanctorum and disappeared.

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Ganapati then regained his normal consciousness and found himself lying still. Within a few moments, he realised that his body was again growing. The woman returned and this time she scratched him on the left calf. He felt divine power flowing through him and his eyes were feasting on the splendour of the woman. He was ordered again to follow and was given again the Sakthi weapon. This time she sat on the Mantapam on the northern side of the Renuka shrine. From a niche she took a medicine like thing and bade him eat it. He ate it. She then told him 'Son! when you sit in continuous one-pointed tapas for twenty days, you will surely achieve siddhi'. She then disappeared.

On regaining normal consciousness he found himself lying as before. He then slept. In the morning he began reviewing the experiences of the night. He found two linear wounds on his calves which were caused by the divine woman when she scratched him. So all that had happened in the night was not a dream but a distinct and real experience with the Goddess Renuka as a participant.

He then sat near the shrine of Kumaraswamy recapitulating vividly the vision he had. The charming smile on the commanding but beautiful mien, the sweet voice, the graceful gait, the affectionate nod and the splendour of the Goddess was fully abiding in his vision and memory. His spine grew powerful with an exhilarating current passing through it. The Sakthi weapon verily should be the spinal column through which flows the Kundalini Sakthi right from the coccyx upwards. The six plexuses (chakras) were the six faces of Kumaraswamy (Shanmukha) representing six stages of spiritual achievement. In the case of those who had achieved the power of inner vision, this energy like the Vajra (weapon of Indra) rends the Rudragranthi (the nerve-knot behind the centre of the eyebrows) leading the aspirant to the heart centre through the Amruta Nadi. This Amrutha Naadi which leads to self-realisation, is represented by the single faced Kumaraswamy (Eka Mukha Kumaraswamy). This

achievement was called the Amrita (the deathless) Siddhi. The first part of the achievement, leading to the demolition of Rudra Granthi, was described as the grace of God Ganapati, the elder brother and his trunk was the Vajra Ayudha (weapon) or the spine (Sushumna Naadi) the vehicle of Kundalini Sakthi. The second part of the achievement which settles the aspirant in the Self is described as the grace of Kumaraswamy the younger brother and his Shakthi weapon was represented by the Amruta Naadi. The grace of God Ganapati dispels the external ignorance and passions and the grace of Kumaraswamy dispels the internal ignorance and passions. Nayana realised that Ramana's teaching was aimed at dispelling ignorance and passions. To reach such a stage of self-enquiry, there must be a means. What could it be?

When he was engrossed in such enquiry, a divine being with matted hair and a long beard, entered the Kumaraswamy temple and taking the Shakthi weapon, came out, looked at Nayana and disappeared. Immediately, without any inner prompting, Ganapati had a vision of one of the Suktas from Rig Veda (Mandala 7, Anuvaska 2, Sukta 32). This Sukta had twenty seven mantras. All of the except one were in Bruhati metre, the one exception being in Viraat metre (Raayaskaamo.... Huve).

It occurred to Nayana that this mantra in Virat metre must be the heart of the sukta. He delved deep into the meaning and significance of that mantra and was astounded to find by intuition that it was the Asthra Mantra he was seeking. The divine incarnation Parasurama was the manifestation of the power of this Mantra and it provided the armour to the practice of self-enquiry. Vasistha had the vision of this Mantra first. It again presented itself to the vision of Vasistha Ganapati at Pradaiveedu. The Mantra is of twenty syllables.

Ganapati prostrated at the feet of Goddess Renuka and offered in his heart, salutations to his Guru Bhagvan Ramana.

a mantra in NAYANA'S Telugu hand

విరాణ్కపకమత్రస్స వసిష్ఠుషిః
 శ్రిత్రా వవతా ద్విపదావిరాహాంబు

రాయస్రామా వశ్రహస్రం
 సుదక్షిణం శ్రత్రా న పితరం హువే

రాయస్రామః । వశ్రహస్రం ।
 సుదక్షిణం । శ్రత్రాః । న । పితరం ।
 హువే ॥

సుదక్షిణం అన్నికళకములకు దక్షిణ
 భాగవర్షియైన తేక భక్త్యానుకూలుడైన
 తేక మహాదాతయైన । వశ్రహస్రం
 వశ్రధరుడైన శ్రియైన । రాయస్రామః
 విశ్వేశ్వరకామయైన । పితరం తండ్రిని
 శ్రత్రాః + న కౌడుకువే । హువే వి
 లయకున్నాను ॥

The Mantra in Roman Script

VIRAANMAHAAMANTRASYA VASISHTARISHIHI
INDRODEVATAA DWIPADA AVIRAAT CHANDAHA

RAAYASKAAMO VAJRAHASTHAM
SUDAKSHINAM PUTHRONAPITARAM HUVEY:

RAAYASKAAMAHA VAJRAHASTAM SUDAKSHINAM
PUTRAHA NA PITARAM HUVEY:

SUDAKSHINAM: ANNI SAREERAMULALO DAKSHINA
BHAAGAVARTHIYAINA LEKA
BHAKTAANUKOOLUDYNA
LEKA MAHAADAATHA YAINA

VAJRAHASTAM VAJRADHARUDAINA INDRUNI

RAAYASKAAMAHA AISHWARYAKAAMUDANAI

PITARAM TANDRINI

PUTRAHA + NA KODUKUVALEY

HUVEY : PLUCHUCHUNNAANU:

MINOR HARASSMENTS

From Padaiveedu, Nayana went to Vellore for rest. He initiated his disciples into the new Mantra seen by the grace of Renuka. By virtue of the initiation into this Mantra, whose deity was Indra, the disciples thought it fit to call their group 'Indra Sangha'. Chinnaswamy the police inspector who was then working at Chittoor, was annoyed that Nayana's popularity was growing. But as inspector of Chittoor he had no jurisdiction over Vellore. So Chinnaswamy began telling all and sundry that he would get transferred to Vellore to teach a lasting lesson to Kavyakantha.

Orders were issued transferring Chinnaswamy to Vellore, Sundari, the wife of Umamaheswara, on hearing about these orders, hurried to Visalakshi and pleaded that Nayana should move to some far away place to escape the wrath of the Vellore police. All were agitated. Nayana tried in vain to pacify them. For one moment all of them were assailed with fear and felt so unreasonably helpless in spite of their faith in the divine attributes of Nayana. They began hurriedly planning for his safety. The women folk reinforced the confusion with tears. Realizing the unenviable situation he was in, he broke into a sloka seeking the protection of Goddess Durga thus:

*Vairidala nirdalana khadgavara paane
Vaasasi padordasana vaasasi ca sone
Netramisha paavaka visesita lalaate
Paapam akhilam jahi mrugaadhipati ghote*

('Mother - with a sword in hand to annihilate enemies, wearing red clothes, with red feet and red lips - forehead adorned with fire in the name of a third eye - with lion as your mount - May you obliterate all sins' - This sloka was subsequently included in Umasahasram).

After this invocation of the Goddess, all of them regained peace of mind and their faith in the power of the Goddess was restored.

He then decided to leave for some distant place to convince them all that their advice was heeded to. That night he boarded the train for Hampi. At Guntakal station, he moved into another train. A man dressed like a Sadhu was also travelling by the same train. He advised Nayana to stay in a choultry situated opposite the railway station at Hospet and go to Hampi next morning in a jutka (horse drawn carriage). The Sadhu, after some time, went out of the compartment and when Nayana reached Hospet, a police constable questioned him about the whereabouts of the Sadhu. Nayana replied that he did not know. Then he went to the choultry where until about midnight he lay awake thinking about the flimsy circumstances that led him to undertake this journey. The Sadhu came in then and started a friendly conversation. All on a sudden some police constables swooped on them and arrested them both. They were held in custody for that night and produced before the inspector of police the following morning. The Inspector on learning that the police had arrested the great knavyakantha had arrested the great Kavyakantha along with a confirmed criminal, apologized to him and became his disciple. After a few days Umamaheswara wrote to Nayana informing him that Chinnaswamy had expired and the Vellore police repented their indiscretions.

VISIT TO SOUTH

With the help of his new disciple, the inspector of police, Nayana visited Hampi and Pampa. Somehow he did not feel prompted to engage himself in tapas at Hampi. He visited a number of historic and holy places near about and a village called 'Maavuli' impressed him as a convenient place for tapas. He decided to get food by alms from nearby houses. The residents knowing that he was no ordinary person, offered to take food to him. He asked them to bring him only milk every night. He launched upon continuous self-enquiry for a period of twenty days. On the eighteenth night he was overcome by sleep and the process of self-enquiry was interrupted. So he restarted the twenty-day tapas. On the fifteenth day a small girl appeared before him while he was engaged in self-enquiry. Though she merely lisped as children of that age do, she conveyed to him great secrets, secrets of the spiritual world and also the shape of things to come. She made him understand that the world was not yet ready to receive Asthra Vidya and that he could initiate the devout persons into the Virat Mantra for the well-being of the world. She also bade him unravel the secrets of Veda Mantras. He was also told that he and Ramana were expected to sow the seeds of fresh spiritual awakening and Vedic philosophy and at a suitable time, the next phase of work would begin.

Nayana then stopped tapas, and returned to Vellore. The people of Mavuli did not know his name. They were referring to him as 'Dravida Raja Yogi', but on hearing from the police inspector of Hospet about him, most of them became devotees of Ramana.

When he reached Arunachalam, the disciples requested him to occupy once again the Mango Tree cave but he replied he would not occupy the cave until he finished revising Umasahasram.

He then started on a pilgrimage to the South. He visited Kanyakumari. The deity there was *Bala* (young girl). Sati after immolating herself in the Yajna Kunda of Daksha, chose in her reincarnation, this place as her abode and prepared herself by tapas to regain Eswara. This holy place therefore prompts devotees to do tapas.

Nayana then visited Sucheendram. He then visited Rameswaram. The similarity between the power of Sri Rama that subdued the thousand waves of the Sea God and the power of Parasuraa that reduced to naught the strength of the thousand arms of Kaarthaveerya, convinced Nayana that both these incarnations were one and the same. He then visited Madurai, Papanasanam, Bhakthapriya, Srirangam and reached Jambukeswaram where he was met by some disciples. With their help he secured a convenient place and for ten days did tapas. A disciple Ramakrishna undertook to provide his few needs. Ten days over, Nayana started to reconstruct Umasahasram. However much he probed into his memory, he could not recollect more than seven hundred slokas. And so he decided to limit the Hymn to seven hundred slokas for the time being, and conveyed his decision to Ramana.

Then he reached Tiruvottiyur and with the help of Kapali, secured a number of ancient books. Kapali was astounded at the speed with which his Guru was reading these books. One day when he took the liberty of asking whether the books were fully read, Nayana startled him by quoting chapter and verse from the various books so far looked into. It was said that Vivekananda used to store in his memory fully and permanently whatever he read. On observing Nayana devouring the contents of so many books and so speedily, Kapil was convinced that what was impossible for an ordinary man, was but a child's play to the great.

Tiruttani *Santhigiri* (or Mountain of peace) was the next place visited by Nayana. As usual he did tapas there also for some days and returned home on the request of his wife for the Upanayanam of their son Mahadeva in February 1910.

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ASPIRANT FROM THE WEST

Panchapakesa Sastri, a vakil of Madras and a disciple of Nayana, was longing to have his Guru settled in Madras. But Nayana desired to be near Ramana for some time before going to Madras. In April 1910 he and Visalakshi stayed in Mango Tree cave. Vajrewsari was looked after by Appu and Kamakshi at Vellore. Mahadeva became a disciple of his father and as part of service to Guru, he was getting madhukaram (food got by begging) daily. Visalakshi proved a worthy companion for Nayana in his tapas (Tapassakhi). Ramana was pleased with their Vanaprastha tapas.

One day Bhagwan Ramana was about to go round the sacred Hill of Arunachala (Giri Pradakshinam). The devotees moved down the Hill first and Ramana went to the Mango Tree cave on his way down. By the time Ganapati and Visalakshi got ready, Ramana was found seated still like a monument of silence. After some time, looking placidly, he told Nayana that he found galaxies moving beneath him. Nayana immediately recited the Skanda Sookta from the Atharva Veda, and expressed with delight that he had a vision of Skanda through Ramana. They then went round the Hill in great ecstasy.

Girl Pradakshinam together with Ramana was a rare spiritual experience by itself. It was verily a spiritual pilgrimage in which every devotee advanced towards the Heart (the spiritual centre) to the extent he could, by dint of his spiritual maturity. Blessed are those who had the good fortune of participating in it.

Nayana and Visalakshi, after a month went to Madras. Later Appu and Kalyanarama joined them there. Though Kalyanarama secured employment in a bank, Appu did not seek any employment as he desired to live with and serve Nayana as a devotee.

During this period, a new personage entered the circle of Ganapati's disciples.

Those were days when the Theosophists were propagating the belief that a divine incarnation was about to emerge for the welfare of the world. Doctor Besant believed that it would manifest through Jiddu Krishnamurthi. An Englishman, Frank Humphreys, who was already a Theosophist and could contact Masters with his subtle body, arrived at Bombay in January 1911. He came to India to take up appointment as Assistant Superintendent of Police and he had to undergo training at Vellore for that. But he was down with fever the moment he arrived at Bombay. He was admitted to a hospital where he had to remain upto the middle of March. While in hospital, one day he directed his mind (his astral body) to Vellore and saw Sarvepalli Narasimhayya, a disciple of Nayana and munshi in the police training centre. On reaching Vellore he saw Nayana in his dream and felt relieved of his weakness. He chose him as his Master. He was again laid up with fever. But this time he saw in a dream a poorly clad person and was at once miraculously freed from the malady. Later he saw the photographs of these two personages (whose very vision gave him relief,) in the possession of Narasimhayya and requested him to introduce him to these Masters.

Nayana had left for the railway station some moments earlier, to go to Arunachala. Humphreys and Narasimhayya rushed to the station hoping to meet Nayana there. The train was late and so they met him there. Humphreys bowed to Nayana and prayed that he be accepted as a disciple. Nayana blessed him and assured him that he would take him to his Guru Bhagawan Ramana soon. Humphreys was in ecstasy over his good fortune.

In November 1911, there was a conference of Theosophists at Tiruvannamalai. Humphreys attended the conference, Narasimhayya too was then in Tiruvannamalai,. With the help of Narasimhayya, he met Nayana. He was then

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led to Ramana by Nayana. Humphreys thus met the poorly clad personage he saw in his dream. The serenity of the abode of Ramana had a thrilling effect on Humphreys and after bowing to the Master he found himself seated in deep meditation lifted out of his ego-self.

He then asked Ramana, 'Will I be helpful to the world?' The Master replied 'Help yourself and you will help the world'.

That was a revelation to Humphreys. Yes. He was in the world and not different from it.

He then questioned, 'Can I perform miracles as Krishna and Jesus did?' Ramana, by way of a reply, asked a counter-question. 'Were they, at the time they performed miracles, aware that they were performing miracles?'

To Humphreys this served as the highest instruction and he realised that one had to do his duty and that a duty conscious person was a medium through whom God's power did its work. He was also instructed to realise the Divinity residing in himself and get in tune with it.

Humphreys opined that the divine incarnation expected by the Theosophists was no other than Ramana. He repeated his visits to Tiruvannamalai seeking strength to practise self-enquiry. Subsequently he became a Christian monk and preached the message of his Masters.

Nayana understood how Bhadraka (Colonel Olcott) worked to uplift Westerners spiritually. Though some of the methods adopted by Bhadraka appeared to be too mystic like the Aatma Vidya (self-enquiry) as ordained by Vedas, it must be agreed that he was instrumental in leading the spiritually inclined section of the West on the right path.

Humphreys was one of these rare aspirants who had the receptivity to draw spiritual sustenance from the Masters for the attainment of the highest spiritual goal.

AT UDIPI

Nayana stayed in Madras from May 1910 to January 192 but the pattern of life in a city held no attraction for him.

City life, if anything, made one over-conscious of health. It is noisy, the so-called civic amenities made the people addicts to ease and promoted in them an aversion to nature; purity is the first victim in city life and human nature is crippled by its artificiality. Though Panchapakesa Sastri, Ramaswamy Ayyar, Sankara Sastri, Kalyanarama and Sudhanwa were sincere in their devotion to their Guru and were always eager to provide him with necessary comforts, the Guru felt an alien in this metropolitan atmosphere. However he was visiting Tiruvannamalai now and then and these visits provided him with a great deal of relief from the make-believe culture of Madras.

Everyday, a number of persons used to visit Nayana for instruction, guidance and enlightenment either in spiritual problems or in philosophy or in literature. And he was glad that he was thus able to enthuse them in the teachings of Ramana.

During that period Visalakshi desired to visit Kaladi, the birth-place of Shankara, the chief exponent of Adwaita. On the eve of their departure for Kaladi, disciples made various presents including a pair of ear ornaments and sarees to Visalakshi. They insisted that she must wear them for their pleasure, which she did.

In Kaladi some people were amazed at the difference in the attire of Nayana and Visalakshi. Prior to their arrival at Kaladi, there was a rumour that a rich Brahmin woman had eloped with some one and was making pilgrimages in his company. When Nayana and Visalakshi camped in a choultry in Kaladi, they were suspected to be the rich woman and her paramour!

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Nayana met the head of the Mattam and was honoured. The head of the mattam provided all facilities for Nayana and Visalakshi to do tapas and on the request of the head of the mattam, Nayana was either partaking in discussions or discoursing about philosophy. He explained to them the teachings of Ramana and most of them became devotees of Ramana. They were all satisfied that the birth-place of Shankara had again seen and heard a similar personality after centuries. The rumour-mongers felt penitent for having identified an immoral adventurous woman with Visalakshi. One day some women apologised to her for having misunderstood her. Visalakshi was annoyed and could not take it lightly. She requested Nayana to seek some other place for tapas. They decided to visit Gokarnam.

Leaving Kaladi, Nayana and Visalakshi reached Udipi on their way to Gokarnam. Udipi was the home of Vasudeva Sastri, a disciple of Nayana. But as he was away at Madras, his wife welcomed Nayana and Visalakshi and pressed them to stay on for some time at Udipi. Visalakshi also felt drawn to the wife of Vasudeva Sastri. Nayana visited Badabhandeswara Kshetra and environs and was impressed with the serenity of the place and its suitability for tapas.

There were a number of scholars in Udipi. If they had known about the arrival of Nayana, they would have sought his company, and tapas would have had to be given up in favour of a series of literary and philosophic discussions and discourses. So he hurried to Badabhandeswaram to do tapas. The spot he selected for tapas was amidst hills on the outskirts of the Kshetra. He was doing tapas in the daytime and in the nights, returning to the Kshetra for food. He would sleep on any pial and before dawn would return to the secluded spot amidst the hills. After fifteen days the routine changed. He did not like to stop tapas every night for the sake of food or sleep. So he began returning to the Kshetra once in two or three days and later his tapas continued uninterrupted. He lost all sense of attachment to body and did not care for food

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or sleep. When he was immersed in such blissful meditation for about a week, some one happened to go there and see this unusual spectacle. He guessed that the Tapasvin might not have taken food for the past few days but was afraid to disturb the tapas. So he stood there for a considerable time until Nayana returned to outer consciousness. He helped him to walk to the nearby stream to bathe and to quench his thirst and then hurried to the nearest mattam to inform the head about what he saw. The head of the mattam at once started out in great anxiety with fruit juice and clothes and after serving Nayana satisfactorily, sent word to Visalakshi. The heads of all the mattams there were delighted at the presence of so great a personage amidst them and decided to honour him suitably. On their request Nayana propounded a synthesis of all the great systems of Hindu Philosophy, in hundred slokas within an hour. This work is known as the Tatva Ghanta Satakam (hundred slokas on philosophy composed in an hour).

Nayana after invoking the presiding deity of Badabhandeswaram, explained the various schools of religious thought and presented the synthesis thus:

*Brahma daasyena yogena
Jnana ca manmyaainah
Arcayantah cintayantah
Praapnuvanteeti me matih*

'By adopting service or spiritual practice or the quest for knowledge, people through worship and meditation attain the Supreme'.

After some months when Nayana narrated to his Guru Ramana his experiences in Badabhandareswaram, Ramana felt very happy and copied down that work of hundred slokas on philosophy.

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Nayana stayed in the house of Vasudeva Sastri for about ten days before leaving for Gokarnam in a steamer. During these days a pitiful incident came to light. A Hindu widow, deserting her only son, embraced Christianity. The boy was also ostracised by the Hindu community. But when he met Nayana and explained his plight, Nayana performed his Upanayam and gave him initiation.

AT GOKARNA

In the middle of April 1912 Nayana, Visalakshi and Mahadeva arrived at Gokarnam. This holy place according to legend, was completely drowned in the sea by the sons of Emperor Sagara but subsequently Parasurama ordered the Sea to recede and resurrected Gokarnam. Also the presiding deity here was installed by God Ganapati. Ganapati and Visalakshi secured a convenient spot for tapas. The priest of Sri Gokarneswara temple, however, somehow found out that the two Tapasvins were no ordinary persons and informed the scholars of the place.

There were many in Gokarnam, well-versed in the Vedas and Sastras. In the closing years of the nineteenth century, a great scholar Hosaman Ganesha Sastri founded a free Sanskrit Institute (Vidya Peeth) there to receive traditional Vedic and Sastric studies. The scholars of Gokarnam proved superior to scholars of other places; they were in considerable number also. They were delighted to find Vasistha Ganapati Muni amidst them. But Nayana did not like demonstrations of learning interfering with his tapas.

Meanwhile Ananta Sastri a great pandit of Bombay, sent word to the authorities of Gokarnam Vidya Peeth, asking them to make arrangements for his discourses and to be prepared to debate with him in any branch of ancient learning. Gokarnam pandits though learned, were essentially peace-loving and were hesitant to engage themselves in any debate with Ananta Sastri. But Ananta Sastri's challenge had to be met! So they decided to request Ganapati Muni to conduct the dialogue on their behalf with Ananta Sastri. The date of the debate was fixed with the consent of Nayana and he requested the pandits to leave him alone until that date so that he might continue his tapas.

Ananta Sastri was a great logician, gifted with ready wit and endowed with considerable scholarship. Further he

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was a skilled debater and considered invincible. His reputation, with laurels piled up, struck terror in the hearts of pandit's in Maharashtra. Nayana had not heard of him and Ananta Sastri was as usual, supremely self-confident.

The day of the debate arrived. Nayana was physically weak after tapas but alert as ever intellectually. The usual practice with Ananta Sastri was, to speak first postulating a particular school of thought - either Saivism or Vaishnavism or Advaita. His opponent should contradict him and then the dialogue would ensue. This time he postulated that Siva was supreme. Nayana who was always guided by Vedas, the base of our religious thought, slowly but steadily explained the message of Vedas, which should not be forgotten by any pandit worth the name. He illustrated how various interpretations given in the puranas were inconsistent with the spirit of the Vedas and made it clear that the puranas could not be taken as ultimate authority. According to Vedas the supreme deity was Indra and Siva and Vishnu represented only two of his aspects and therefore Saivism and Vaishnavism were but two modes of worship which prepared the seeker for final realisation.

Ananta Sastri, who had been itching for a debate, was taken aback at the trend of this reply. Realising that he had the rare good fortune of coming into contact with a divine personality, he requested Nayana to accept him a disciple. Nayana congratulated, with pleasure, Ananta Sastri on his learning and debating capacity. The pandits of Gokarnam were satisfied that Nayana had successfully proved how religion had been damaged by dry polemics and that Vedic revelation alone was the final authority.

The debate at the Maha Vidya Peeth resulted in an embarrassing popularity which Nayana had been trying to avoid as it has always been detrimental to his tapas. He was provided with accomodation in Sri Venkatarama's house where people of various interests visited him for instruction

and advice. At the request of some people interested in astrology, he dictated its main principles and it got shaped as 'Laghu Samhita'. Though he was left with no moments of peace by these numerous admirers, during conversations with some of them, he was surprised to know that some parts of Rig Veda unknown to him, were in vogue in the area around Gokarnam and he learnt them immediately. On realising that these additional parts related to the life of God Srikrishna, the hero of Mahabharata, Nayana felt convinced that Rig Veda was verily the repository of all Astra Vidyas the heroes of Mahabharata had acquired and made use of. He decided to delve deep into the meaning and significance of various Sooktas and sought the help of Vedic pandits in unravelling the Vedic mysteries. To understand the significance of any passage, the whole sookta had to be kept in view and only then the full import of it would be realised. Nayana by deep concentration, found out that some of the Sookthas which appeared as relating to rituals, were actually related to spiritual knowledge. So it was necessary to probe and understand a whole Sookta to realise its significance as all the passages in it were intimately related to one another. The pandits found it difficult to bear a whole Sooktha in mind and felt that only a person of the calibre of Vasistha Ganapati Muni could enter into the heart of Vedas.

Translation of the Vedas by Western savants lacked fundamental understanding of the spirit of the Vedas. Some Indians also tried to interpret various passages, tearing them out of context and unhesitatingly propagated the view that the Vedas contained some explanations of intersellar phenomena. Some even went to the extent of declaring that the Vedas were only prayers for earthly advantages and freedom from danger. The heart of both the Vedas and the living beings being the same at their core, one should know that research into Vedas was tapas just like the 'enquiry into self' But to conduct research on such a high plane, Nayana's residence then was not congenial. So he shifted to another place on the outskirts of Gokarnam. Gajanana Bhatt a

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youngman, offered to run the home for Nayana as Visalakshi also decided to engage herself in tapas. Nayana saw that Gajanana had been associated with him since his previous births and with pleasure accepted him as his disciple. Gajanana from that day, was called by his gotra (spiritual lineage) name, Daivarata.

Daivarata was the grandson of Hosaman Ganesh Sastri who founded the Maha Vidya Peeth in Gokarnam. He was already proficient in three Vedas, Rig, Yajus and Sama. He was being trained to become the head of the Peeth when he came into contact with Nayana.

This contact proved instructive to Daivarata both in his studies and spiritual practice. He was serving his Guru during day time and learning, though for a short while, during nights. Needless to say how fortunate and how fully qualified he was to receive the grace of the great Guru.

The procedure adopted by Nayana was thorough. He first culled out the various mantras which were seen by Rishis and sought to study and explain their significance. At the outset the period of the Rishi had to be fixed in relation to the age of Mahabharatha. Then it must be known whether that particular Sookta of which the Mantra under study formed part, referred to the life of any personality. Were the mantras in it related to Astra Vidya realised by that Rishi? If not, what other significance could it have? Did it reveal spiritual truth and the way to it?

Nayana was eminently qualified to engage himself in such Vedic Tapas. He was free from ego and never cared even for bodily needs. His tapas at Badabhandeswaram inculcate in him a divine urge to work for welfare of the world. Divinely inspired persons have a definite role to play in the world contrary to the prevailing belief that such ones would remain still like stones. Only those who have risen above the small self, can effectively serve the world.

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The Vedic tapas of Nayana continued uninterrupted for four months. At the end of that period he received a letter from Kaluvarayi that his father was bed-ridden and desired to see him. He left for his native village immediately but due to heavy rains, train services were dislocated and by the time he reached home on 5-12-1912, his father had passed away. Narasimha Sastri longed to tell something to his son but could not. However he left his mortal coil with the satisfaction that his son had proved to be a divine being, as foreseen by him.

Nayana stayed at Kaluvarayi till the completion of the first monthly ceremony of his father and returned to Gokarnam.

Four days after the arrival of Nayana at Gokarnam, a Nambudri youngman (of Malabar) known as Narayana Brahmachari, with a dignified bearing, met him. On seeing him Nayana asked 'You are coming from Arunachalam (Tiruvannamalai) directed by Bhagwan Sri Ramana Mahairshi. Is it not so?'

The youngman was startled. He became a disciple of Nayana. He was subsequently initiated into Sanyasa Ashram by Nayana and renamed 'Amrutantha'. Narayana was the son of a Nambudri land-lord but he longed to give up wordly life in order to serve the mother land. He tried to obtain the blessing of Ramana to join the political movement. But Ramana immediately directed him to Nayana. Amrutanatha devoted his whole life to the practice of Mantra got from Nayana and was helpful to all, endowed as he was with a genial and jovial temperament. Nayana has immortalised him by his reference to him at the end of Ramana Gita.

PRESENCE AT THE YAGNYA

About four miles from Gokarnam, on the tip of the Sahyadri mountain range, there is a village called Sannabela. Gokarnam pandits planned to perform a Yagnya there under the guidance of Vasistha Ganapati Muni. Uppandopadyaya a great pandit of Sannabela, undertook to make arrangements even before Kavyakantha's father passed away. Nayana was requested to move to Sannabela and to sanctify the place of Yagnya with his tapas and inquiry into the heart of Vedas. It was a charming, cool and calm place with the sea on one side and skirted by forest on the other three sides. After his return from Kaluvarayi, he started out for Sannabela accompanied by pandits reciting Vedic hymns.

Sannabela proved an ideal spot for tapas. Kamakshi and young Vajreswari were looking after the household and all others were fully engaged in Mantra japa. Their silent tapas made the lovely place, more serene and profound. Three weeks passed by. Appu got afflicted with jaundice and he tried to bear it silently. Nayana consoled him saying that the malady was just a symptom of bad heat leaving the body. That night Appu was able to sleep comfortably for some time. Past mid-night he woke up after a dream, feeling quite comfortable. A woman appeared in his dream and after wiping his tongue with the hem of her saree, disappeared. Appu then came out of the house and he found an old woman sitting on the pial. He ignored her presence, went in and slept again and he had another dream in which the same old woman appeared and showed a creeper to Visalakshi. When he woke up again, he found the doors open and Visalakshi with a lantern was coming in. She had with her leaves of the same creeper that he had been shown by the old woman in the dream. Visalakshi told Appu that the old woman on seeing him suffering, volunteered to show a particular creeper the leaves of which were a sure cure for jaundice. They all thought that the old woman belonged to some nearby village and had come there early to collect firewood.

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But Nayana startled them saying that the old woman was Goddess Vanadurga (the forest Goddess Durga). They could not find the old woman again but Appu was miraculously cured of jaundice within two or three days.

The Yagnya was performed in April 1913. Vasistha Ganapati Muni explained the significance and meaning of the various mantras recited during the Yagnya. Though many of the pandits attending the Yagnya were well versed in the Vedas, they felt blessed in learning the profound interpretation given by Nayana. Thanks to him, the pandits thus had an opportunity to know the true spirit of the Vedas and Vedic Yagnyas. They all got animated with a new enthusiasm, a new direction of life and a new regard for Vedic rituals which were spiritually educative and productive of universal welfare.

After the Yagnya, Nayana meditated for a week on Indrani, the Vedic goddess, and after some time started for Secunderabad, where Appu and Kalyanarama had secured jobs as teachers in Mahaboob College.

On the way to Secunderabad, he visited Kumtha where a number of boys from Gokarnam and surrounding places were studying. A grand reception was given there to Nayana. He advised the students to lead a life of discipline and acquire knowledge. He exhorted them to strengthen themselves with constant Mantra japa and stand up against the onslaughts on their motherland and religion. He gave instructions to them on the teachings of Ramana and blessed them all. Devendra Subrahmanya Viswamitra and Sundara Row Pandit, two of the students who heard Nayana's speech, subsequently played an important role in his life.

There were numerous devotees of Ramana in Secunderabad, most of them officials. It cheered Nayana to have a series of opportunities to expatiate on the teachings of Ramana at various gatherings. A number of people were initiated into Mantra japa. Some of the disciples desired to

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witness an Avadhaana by the Kavyakantha and to satisfy them, two Avadhanam were performed, though he had given up showing literary and other talents long ago as mere waste of time. He was not a mere literary personality. Literature, to him, was a means to seek the grace of God and to sing the myraid glories and the splendor of divinity. He was poet with a divine mission.

Tirupati Venkatakavis (Thirupati Sastri and Venkata Sastri) the famous twin poets of Andhra who were the patriarchs of literary renaissance in that part of the country, happened to perform a Sata Avadhana in Secunderabad at that time. Kavyakantha was one of the audience and nobody noticed his presence in the vast gathering. The twin poets as usual threw a challenge at the outset that they would remove their moustaches and prostrate on the feet of whoever excelled them in the art of 'extempore poetry'. When some one brought to their notice the presence of Kavyakantha Vasistha Ganapati Muni, they hurriedly apologised. But Nayana expressed his admiration for their talents and encouraged them to proceed with their Avadhana.

Nayana was averse to exhibition or utilisation of Siddhis (supernatural powers). Siddhis, according to him, lured people into mundane bondage. And if one is known to possess Siddhis, people never leave him alone. His disciples know this truth. But M.P.Subrahmanya Iyer, whose two daughters had an attack of smallpox, and Rangaswamy Ayyangar whose son was laid up with serious typhoid, requested him to confer his grace on the afflicted and by his grace, they were freed from the afflictions.

Vasistha Ganapati Muni delighted in spreading the message of Bhagawan Ramana. He ascribed whatever worthwhile he had, to the grace of Ramana and Ramana had chosen Nayana as his voice. This devotion and grace respectively on their part were always binding them however removed they were physically, often.

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Nayana and Visalakshi visited Ramana at the end of 1913 and stayed with him for a fortnight. Ramana heard from Nayana all that was seen or experienced in Badabhandeswaram, Gokarnam and Sannabela. While Ganapati recited Ghanta Satakam, Ramana was so pleased with its profundity, that he copied it with his own hand and kept it with him.

Ganapati Muni had a discussion with somebody and placed the problem before Bhagawan Ramana and got decisive replies which have been incorporated in Chapter I of Ramana Gita. They are as follows :

Neither debates on scriptures nor the capacity to discriminate between truth and untruth can lead to perfection. Spiritual effort is the way for perfection. Inner quest for the realisation of Self is the greatest of Upasanas and it makes one established in the Atma. One who is so settled is called a Jnani. This method which is so effective in leading to self-realisation, can also bring about fulfillment of other ideals or aspirations, if any, though such fulfillment would no more interest a realised being.

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PILGRIMAGE TO THE NORTH

To fulfil his wife's longing to go on a pilgrimage to the North Nayana took her to Bhuvaneswara. For four months she did tapas with Nayana but felt sad that she could not have any experience similar to what her husband had. He made it clear to her that experiences differ different from person to person and that she need not feel depressed. He knew how her presence gave spiritual succor to his disciples and ascribed this inherent quality in her to the grace of the Goddess Bhuvaneswari. Her mastery of the culinary art was astounding. Her very touch lent a special quality to food. This also was, Nayana said, an aspect of the Mother's Grace. They then returned to Mandasa at the request of the Raja and spent there nearly a year in tapas, forgetting all about the intended pilgrimage to the North.

One day Ramanatha Brahmachari a devotee of Ramana and an inmate of Sri Ramana Ashram came to Mandasa and narrated to Nayana something interesting. That was the year 1915. Jagadeesa Sastri attempted to write a sloka embodying the teaching of Ramana. He began it as 'Hrudaya Kuhara Madhye' (in the centre of the cavity of heart) but was unable to proceed further somehow. Ramana, seeing him in such a predicament, took the paper and pencil from him and completed the sloka thus:

Hridya kuhara madhye kevalam brahmamaatram
Hyahamahamiti saaksat aatmarupenabhaati
Hrudi visa manasaawam cinvataa majjataa vaa
Pavana calana rodhaa aatmanisthobhava tvam

"In the inmost cave of the Heart, shines Brahman, the Absolute, as the Atma', as 'I, I', Enter deep into the Heart with mind searching for self or by diluing deep into it or by the control of the breath and remain established in the Atman".

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Nayana was highly pleased with the supersubtlety of this sloka in which the core of spiritual attainment was dexterously linked with the three essential paths to it. Nayana conveyed his sense of delight to Ramana through Ramanatha Brahmachari. Later he incorporated it as the subject matter of the second chapter of Ramana Gita.

Nayana and his wife accompanied by Aadhaam (Venkataraman) then started out on a pilgrimage to the North. They visited Kasi, Gaya, Ayodhya and Prayaga and reached Brindavan where a conference of the greatest pandits of the country was taking place under the presidentship of the Maharaja of Darbhanga. Visalakshi was afraid that Nayana would forget all about the pilgrimage if he were to evince interest in the conference. But he felt sure that Sivakumar Pandit, his old friend, would certainly be present wherever the Maharaja was and he desired to meet him. So he went to the venue of the conference and enquired about Pandit Sivakumar. The gatekeeper refused to reply or even allow him in on the plea that he was not a pandit. To a question as to who a pandit was the gatekeeper replied "A pandit should be wearing a turban". Nayana did not have a turban. While this conversation with the gatekeeper was going on, some people gathered there and Sivakumar who was seated near Darbhanga Maharaja, happened to notice the crowd and was pleasantly surprised to find the Kavyakantha in their midst. He rushed from the dais towards him, embraced him and led him on to the dais and introduced with delight the hero of Nawadweepa to the Maharaja and others.

The point under discussion at the conference was 'What is the appropriate marriageable age for a kanya'. After all the pandits had expressed their views, the Maharaja introduced Ganapati Muni to the audience as the embodiment of tapas and learning and requested him to pronounce his decision on the question under discussion.

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Ganapati Muni made it clear, speaking for only three minutes as every other pandit did, that marriage was natural religious function of Hindu society, but its procedure had been corrupted in India due to some complications brought about by Islamic conquest of the land. The injunction that a girl should be married in her eighth year, had no basis of sanction in our ancient social laws and so we have to revert to the old practice and move with the times. He gave his decision that the appropriate age of marriage for a girl was, three years after her attainment of puberty".

This same suggestion was approved by the gathering and given the form of a decision by the pandits.

The next item on the agenda of the conference was literature and Mahamahopadyaya Harisprada Sastri should have presided. Instead the Kavyakantha was requested to preside. The pandits were highly delighted to listen to his brilliant speech dealing with all aspects of literature. The performance left a lasting impression on the mind of all the scholars.

On the conclusion of the conference Pandit Sivakumar listened with profound interest to his young friend's narration of his varied experience after the Nawadweepa Parishad.

Nayana returned with his wife to Mandasa in March 1916 and at the request of Raja of Mandasa stayed there for sometime.

ATOP MAHENDRA HILL

While Ganapati Muni was deeply engaged in tapas and research into the Vedas, his relatives, disregarding his views on marriage, had settled the marriage of his eight-year-old daughter Vajreswari with Somayajulu, the son of Ganti Chiranjeevi of Golladi village. Visalakshi approved this match and the information was conveyed to Nayana in Mandasa. Though he was not happy over this decision, he was in no mood to object. After all it was so decided by Visalakshi in order to fulfil here responsibilities as early as possible to be free for a life of tapas. The marriage took place in May 1916 and the young couple were taken to Tiruvannamalai to obtain the blessing of Bhagawan Ramana.

On the way to Tiruvannamalai, Nayana had to break his journey at Nellore to address a convention of Andhras presided over by Sir B.N.Sarma. As part of the convention, a Sanaatana Dharma Conference also was held under the presidentship of T.R.Ramachandraiah. Nayana in his address explained the basis of Sanaatana Dharma and said that the Sampradayas (conventions) changed with times and places. It was wrong to be agitated over those outer changes as long as the eternal Vedic Dharma was followed. He then pointed out a flaw in the resolution before the conference, in which a complex word 'Veda-Sasthra Sampradaya" was used and appealed to them to realise that a changing Sampradaya should not be combined with the non-changing Vedic Dharma.

The pandit who drafted the resolution protested against Nayana's analysis but the president over-ruled the objection and accepting the instructive suggestions of Nayana, changed the resolution.

Most of the pandits, particularly the conservative Sanaatanists never took kindly to the progressive outlook of Nayana. Though they had not the courage to enter into a direct debate with him, they were propagating the view that Nayana was a rebel against Sanaatana Dharma. He however ignored the unreasonable attitude of these pandits.

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Nayana returned to Mandasa and resumed his tapas and Vedic research.

Daivarata who had been yearning to meet his Guru for three years went to Mandasa in October 1916 to seek peace and enlightenment. Mandasa Raja felt happy at the arrival of Daivarata for whom he had great respect and affection. Their kinship assumed a greater significance when they realised that they both belonged to places hallowed by association with Parasurama. Mahendragiri near Mandasa was the spot where Parasurama performed tapas. The deity on Mahendragiri Hill was also known as Gokarneswara. While it was Ganapati who installed Gokarneswara in Gokarnam, it was Parasurama who installed Gokarneswara on Mahendragiri.

Mahendragiri is blanketed by a thick-forest. Once in every year on the day of Sivaraatri, a great festival takes place on the hill and thousands of pilgrims trek through the forest and climb the Hill to worship Gokarneswara. During the rest of the year, no human being goes anywhere near the hill because it is infested with wild animals. The path leading to the hill top would be cleared before Sivaraatri and the Raja of Mandasa usually undertook the responsibility besides providing armed guards for the pilgrims.

Nayana decided to engaged himself in tapas on this hill. But how to guard against possible attacks by wild animals? He had at all. Daivarta too a courageous youngman, had no fear of any kind and he had the protective company of his Guru as well. Only Mandasa Raja was agitated that his beloved Guru might be harmed by wild beasts. Nayana removed his fears and on the day of Sivaraatri, Nayana, Visalakshi, Daivarata and the Dewan of Mandasa trekked on to the hill top.

The idol of Gokarneswara in Gokarnam was in the shape of the ear of a cow. here in Mahendragiri the 'cow's ear' was an inset. Ganapati was pleased at this sign of Dahram (heart) in the idol of Gokarneswara and praised the god in

extempore slokas where in, he called the deity 'Dahara Gokarneswara'. The difference between the two aspects was significant in that while Gokarneswara represented the Brahman with form, the Dahara Gokarneswara stood for the formless Brahman.

There was a Vishnu- shrine also by the side of the Dahara Gokarneswara temple. Nayana believed this should have been the shrine of Parasurama. There was a small mantapa between the two shrines which was chosen for tapas and rest.

He then had a look at the hill which resembled a cow lying with one ear sticking up and he wondered at the profound and meaningful imagination of our ancient Rishis who selected appropriate spots for tapas.

Visalakshi accompanied by the Dewan and guards then climbed down the hill leaving the Guru and Sishya on the hill top. Mandasa Raja was sending them milk and pooris once in three days.

For twenty days Nayana's tapas continued there satisfactorily. To Daivarata this was a God-sent opportunity to learn tapas, and the living presence of his Guru itself served as perfect instruction.

On the twentieth night Ganapati Muni had a vision while he was fully awake. The person with matted hair and a long flowing beard who appeared before him in Padaiveedu, reappeared and looked at him steadily for sometime. Nayana could clearly see an effulgence emerging from this divine person and enveloping him. He was so thrilled that he closed his eyes and immediately felt clearly that the divine lustre was settling down in his Sushumna.

He then opened his eyes only to find that the divine person had disappeared. next morning they climbed down the hill and reached Mandasa.

AGAIN AT ARUNACHALA

In June 1917, Ganapati Muni went to Tiruvannamalai accompanied by Visalakshi, Vajreswari and Daivarata. on the way he stayed for a few days with Sankara Sastri. (of the engineering department) at Vijayawada and Sudhanwa in Madras. Sudhanwa had already begun practising as an advocate.

Nayana decided to reside in Mango-Tree cave on Arunachala. But as the cave was then unfit for occupation, disciples began to get it repaired. Meanwhile Nayana and Visalakshi were staying with Echchammal.

The Mango Tree cave situated lower down was fairly near Skanda Ashramam where Ramana was staying. Ganapati Muni thought it was an ideal place where he could finalise Sri Ramana Geeta a compendium in Sanskrit verse of Ramana's teaching together with Sloka 'Hridaya Kuhara Madhye' composed by Ramana himself. The oneness of God, the universe and Jivas was convincingly taught by Ramana with his unique and direct experience of it.

It was summer and Nayana found it difficult to climb up the hill to Skanda Ashramam daily. yet he proceeded with his work, Sri Ramana Gita. The replies of Ramana to six questions asked by Ganapati Muni formed the first chapter of Ramana Gita. Ramana's sloka 'Hridaya Kuhara Madhye' with a short but lucid explanation of it by his eminent disciple constituted the second chapter. Daivarata's questions and Ramana's answers to them formed the third chapter. Then Nayana himself asked some questions about Gnyaana and Vibhuti and they with Bhagawan's replies constituted the fourth chapter.

By then some more devotees arrived. The summer heat also began to subside. it was decided that Nayana and Visalakshi could stay in Virupaksha cave where it would be

convenient for the devotees also to stay. Here they could all be nearer to Skanda Ashramam. Ganapati being a Vanaprastha could stay with Visalakshi in Virupaksha cave where family people would not be permitted to reside. But Pazhani Swami not knowing Nayana's worth, did not approve of his staying at Virupaksha cave with his wife. So when in the evening Nayana, Visalakshi, Vajreswari and Echchemmal went to Virupaksha cave, they found it locked. Moreover it had not been kept ready for stay. Nayana then went upto Skanda Ashramam where he found Ramana conversing with devotees. On seeing Nayana he asked whether Pazhani Swami had cleaned the cave and given it for his use. Hearing that he had not given the key to Nayana, Bhagwan asked Pazhani Swami why he had not. He defiantly replied that he would not allow any family man to live in Virupaksha cave. The following slokas spontaneously came out of Nayana's mouth without his volition.

*Adya krodham vimokshayaami khaandavegnimivarjunah |
Bhuvane praanibhiyh poorne paritopi ca vistrute |
Salilam kshpatascaapi dhunvatascaapi parvataan |
Yatahendrasya tathesasya putrasya mama vai mahah ||*

"I am releasing the fire of anger upon the world just as Arjuna did in Khaandava forest. Like the glow of Indra who rains water and tosses about mountains, is my effulgence as I am the Son of God".

Ganapati Muni then went down to Virupaksha xcave with his followers, and occupied it, as he had Maharishi's approval for it. He sat beneath a tree in front of the cave and viewed the world below which looked hideously parched. Deeply moved, he chanted sooktas from the Rigveda invoking God Indra to bless the parching world with rain.

That night, there was heavy down pour accompanied by lighting and thunder. The temple chariot was struck by lighting and burnt to ashes. Thus the Muni's words of wrath came true, fortunately without any loss of human life.

COMPOSITIONS AND DISCOURSES

There was a great need for a clear instruction to aspirants and a treatise based on the experience of a realised being would certainly be most welcome to the spiritually inclined. That intellectual conviction gained by mere knowledge of scriptures is all which constructed Gnyaana, has been widely prevalent among many pandits. This mistaken notion rendered superfluous the necessity of Saadhana (practice) of either a Mantra or otherwise. Some religious propagandists tried to impress the gullible with the cults of pseudo-love. The acquaintance with metaphysics and its lingo emboldened some to propagate the need to concentrate on an absolute attributeless Brahman, which cult merely degenerated into tall talk. As usual there were some who sought to provide materialistic interpretations to spiritual truths in the light of their understanding quite unsupported by practice or experience. Then there were numerous commentaries on sacred works which successfully helped to highlight the erudition of the commentators and hold a glamour for the educated. Bhagavad Geeta provided a living to the erudite, first to the public speakers and scriptural sanction to the irreligious behaviour of various politicians and public.

Under such circumstances Maharishi Ramana taught that Upaasana and Saadhana (Practice) of some kind, not discussions, were indispensable to achieve spiritual advancement. The desire for self-realization must be canalized into meditation upon God or steady quest for the self or a deep plunge into the self or restraint of life breath and mind. When one launches upon a practice thus, he would be freed from bondage and would realise the truth and would settle in Self. That meant real tapas and supreme calm.

The Mantra Sastra also enunciated similar methods of spiritual practices called Vidyas, but the commentaries on them are too vast. On the request of this disciples, Nayana composed sutras (aphorisms) while the compilation of

Ramana Geeta was still going on, explaining in simple language the nature of the Vidyas. They explain the various (explorative and meditative) methods of Upaasana or tapas.

Meanwhile Sri Ramanananda Nilayam held its annual celebrations in which Ganapati Muni explained the ten Maha Vidyas.

Seshadri Swami, a saint of repute and a great scholar who adopted a queer behaviour to guard himself against popularity, was present at the ten-day lecture course of Nayana. When the purse was about to be handed over to Nayana, Seshadri Swami himself presented it with unconcealed pleasure, revealing thus his great regard for Ganapati Muni.

By the second week of September, all the questions of disciples and the answers of Ramana were recorded and a redaction of them in Sanskrit verse was ready.

Ganapati Muni, by composing the revelation of his Guru in the form of Ramana Gita and also through his Uma Sahasram and other immortal works, had established his place in the line of ancient Rishis.

Sri Ramana Gita consists of three hundred slokas. In addition to the verses in praise of the Master, the teachings therein are the instructive experiences of a Master of the highest spiritual attainment.

After completing Sri Ramana Gita, Nayana desired to devote himself to tapas in solitude. Visalakshi also longed to devote her time to meditation. Daivarata one day came to his Guru with a startling complaint. He was experiencing a frightening void in his mind whenever he launched upon meditation in the immediate presence of Ramana. He realised the need of spiritual strength to conduct self-inquiry in the vicinity of Ramana and so requested Nayana to guide him practise for some time. So the three left for Padaiveedu where

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Visalakshi undertook a forty-day tapas. They stayed there from October 1917 to February 1918 in uninterrupted meditation.

‘Meanwhile Viswanatha Rama Somayajulu of “Sunki village near Kaluvarayi approached Ganapati Muni to settle the marriage of his sister Rajeswari with Mahadeva (the Muni’s son). The marriage was celebrated on the fifteenth of March 1918. When Nayana returned to Tiruvannamalai after the marriage, he had Ramana’s younger brother, Nagasundaram along with Narayana Brahmachari got initiated by him into Sanyaasa Ashrama, with the names ‘Niranjanananda’ and ‘Amritanatha’ respectively.

Now that his son had married, Nayana desired to free himself from all responsibilities of family and property. And so he divided the paternal property among his uncles and brothers, so that his son might take over his share of responsibility.

Though Vasistha Ganapati was born of the grace of Sri Suryanarayana of Arasavalli, he had not so far visited that holy place situated near his village. Now he went to Arasavalli as one fully freed from all family responsibilities and as a Vaanaprastha. He spent three days in Arasavalli mediating upon Sri Suryanarayana. The hymn on Sri Suryanarayana he composed during this visit was called Soorya Geetam (It was included in Geetha Mala or Garland of Songs).

Nayan and his wife then went to Secunderabad to stay with Appu. Wherever he was, he was either continuing meditation or delving into the heart of Vedas. After some time he again went to Kaluvarayi and undertook the task of revising Umasahasram. In March 1920 Rama Somayajulu arranged a conference of Pandits in Krishnarayapuram near Kaluvarayi in which Nayana explained social problems and ethics as enunciated by the Vedas. These ideas and teachings had been incorporated in his ‘Sadaachaara Bodhini’ or Instructor of good conduct.

Nayana and Visalakshi continued to live in Secunderabad with the family of Appu until March 1922. But in December 1920 Nayana suffered from an unusual ailment which gave him considerable discomfort and pain. He had a shooting pain in the head for over a fortnight which was probably a result of constant strain of tapas. As soon as he was free from the ailment, Visalakshi was afflicted by an equally queer trouble. She had diarrhoea which did not respond to any treatment - but after nearly a fortnight she was also relieved of it. Nayana had swellings on the body for nearly a month, but he took it all in his stride. He knew that his constant spiritual effort set the latent energy aflame and scorched all the impurities in his system and that was the cause of these peculiar ailments. This energy aflame, takes hold of the life current and separates it from bodily grip. Also the various knots in the body which hinder the free flow of divine Sakti, are cut asunder, causing pain and discomfort to the body. The knot above, the Rudra Granthi, when riven, causes pain in the head and blood vessels and in the case of the knot below, the Brahma Granthi, there will be trouble in the urinary and digestive tracts.

These experiences brought about a metamorphosis in their bodies. Nayana then visited Tiruvannamalai in June 1921 seeking the blessing of his Guru. By the time the disciples in Madras, Vellore and other places came to know of this visit, he had returned to Secunderabad. They are longing to see him for the last four years and so were disappointed to know that he had left Tiruvannamalai.

Sudhanwa and Kapali went to Secunderabad with the object of bringing back Nayana to Tiruvannamalai and make arrangements for his permanent stay there.

Nayana narrated to them his experience during those four years. He told them that though he was somewhat freed from the bodily grip, he had yet to cross a small hurdle for the final attainment. He then invoked the grace of God

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Ganapati in four Slokas for the removal of the veils of ignorance so that he might see the way before him clearly (These four slokas were subsequently included in Herambopasthaanam)

Nayan assured Kapil and Sudhanwa that he would return to Arunachalam shortly and the disciplines were satisfied with the assurance. But he did not leave Secunderabad for nearly eight months more.

Shri Brahmarshi Daivarat



The Seer
of
CHHANDODARSHANA "

FULFILMENT

Disciples of Nayana grew impatient over his continued absence from Arunachalam. They even wrote to Appu not to detain the Master at Secunderabad in his own interest. But, poor Appu had no say in the matter and he simply placed these letters before Nayana and his reply to them was mere silence. Nayana's disciples had the Mango Tree cave repaired and requested Nayana again to move from Secunderabad. So he went to Madras and stayed with Sudhanwa for about two months. Sudhanwa had by then become a leading Advocate of Madras and disciples gathered daily to have darshan of their Master and to receive instruction from him. During talks with his disciples there. Ganapati Muni explained the various methods of spiritual unfoldment and the gist of those talks was immediately given the shape of sootras. These sootras are known as Rajayogasaara Sutas. By dint of his constant tapas and research and the full grace of his Master, he was familiar with all the methods and secrets of Yoga.

Nayana reached Tiruvannamalai but the repairs to the mango Tree cave were not complete. Yet he stayed in the cave; but desired to have an extension adjoining it for the convenience of his disciples and visitors. Even before that was fully built, he began revising Umasahasram for the seventh time and completed it by April. by that time the construction of the extension to the cave was completed.

Then he and Visalakshi began tapas. One evening after darkness had set in and the sky was clear there was a flash of lighting and a devotee heard a voice 'Nayana is like David'

Ganapati Muni took that as a divine prompting and began to compose a hymn of seven hundred slokas in praise of Indrani and finish it in twenty eight days, at the rate of one stabaka (canto) a day.

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Ganapati planned that his hymn on Indrani also should contain twenty five slokas per stabaka set in a suitable Vedic metre. In each Stabaka the first sloka describes the graceful and benign smile of the Goddess, the second sloka portrays the misery and problems of the motherland, and the twenty fourth sloka invoked the goddess for strength to remove that misery.

Prior to that one night Nayana to feel excruciating pain in his head. It looked as though thousands of termites were stinging the head and the head was made mince meat of by an axe. Would this intense pain lead to mental derangement? He could not even take food as it was painful to open his mouth or move the jaws. he took some milk with difficulty. He could not rest his head on anything. He sat in the Mango Tree cave, praying, Kondayya staying there and helping him. After some time, the following happened: The skull of Nayana broke at the top. The sound of breaking was clearly heard and a sort of smoke like thing that emanated through the aperture was also seen. The wife and daughter of the Muni who were a bit away from the cave witnessed the whole scene. The attendant Kondayya was the only prop for the body of the Muni.

After this experience of "Kapalala bheda" he could clearly feel the flow of a current from Aakasa through his Brahmarandhra and spinal column down to the Moolaadhaara. It was permeating his whole system and he was experiencing a happy release from the bodily bondage.

According to tradition, when a sanyasi passes away, a coconut is broken on his head. But a sanyasi should have attained this siddhi while still alive. Ganapati Muni experienced what the Taittaareeya Upanishad refers to as "Vyapohya Seersha Kapaale" i.e., parting of the skull bones.

He had described in some places in Umasahasram and Indrani Saptasati how the Mother plays in the body of a devotee fully attuned to her and makes his body Her special abode. That was when for the seventh time he revised Umasahasram.

ESTABLISHMENT OF RAMANASHRAM

Alagammal, a simple housewife, was chosen by God for many difficult tests and she was administered a series of shocks beginning with the premature death of her husband Sundaram Ayyar. Then her second son Venkataraman suddenly disappeared from the house. After years of search, he was seen in Triuvannamalai but as a recluse with no possibility of return to the domestic circle. She had to learn to put up with this sorrow and disappointment for her life. Then in 1900 all on a sudden, her eldest son, Nagaswamy, the sole earning member in the family, passed away leaving the family in misery. The third son Nagasundaram was a boy then and a daughter Alamelu was young still. She had no wherewithal to maintain herself and the two children. There was also a family debt hanging heavily on her. So she sought refuge in the house of Nelliappa Iyer, the younger brother of Sundaram Ayyar. A family known for its munificence was gradually reduced to dependence. However helpful and accommodating Nellippa Iyer was, Alagammal was constantly tormented with ill luck. Meanwhile the marriage of Alamelu was performed and young Nagasundaram began earning and was also married. Alagammal saw a ray of hope for the family. She hoped they would now start again as a self-supporting and happy unit. But Nagasundaram's wife gave birth to a male child in 1916 and died suddenly. And so Alagammal had to bring up an infant as well. Under such circumstances she thought of seeking solace in the divine presence of her second son. But she could not leave alone her third son, a widower with an infant son. Nagasundaram then requested Nelliappa Iyer's wife to bring up the infant and came over to Tiruvannamalai for good. In Tiruvannamalai he subsisted for some time on madhukaram. Nagasundaram became a sanyasin in 1918. Alagammal herself chose the service of cooking and serving food to all at the Virupakasha cave. She was a devout and unsophisticated woman. She had no intention of converting an Ashramam into an establishment. After all the troubles and tribulations she had undergone, she only

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wanted to live peacefully the rest of her life, in the divine presence of her eldest son (Ramana) and served by the younger son, who was devoted to her. But she had to give up her meaningless orthodoxy, hindering her spiritual progress. Gradually she understood the way of life taught by her son Ramana and found joy and peace in following it. Her health began deteriorating from the middle of 1920. Medicines did not have any effect. From the beginning of 1922 there was aggravation of her ailments and she was bedridden.

On the nineteenth of May 1922, the signs of approaching death were seen clearly about Alaghammal. By the afternoon, she lost outer consciousness. Then Ramana helped her inhere at the heart by his proximity, look and touch.

Bhagawan put one hand on her head and the other on her heart and annihilated all thoughts rising from latent tendencies within. All thoughts of the mother were destroyed then and there as they rose up enabling her to be established in the Heart.

The tremendous Atma-Shakti of Bhagwan Ramana alone prevailed making Alaghammal remain steady at the heart. Her face glowed with peace and serenity.

Ramana had attempted to liberate Pazhani Swami also in the same way, but he could not cooperate in the endeavour.

Next day Alaghammal's body was carried down the hill to a spot by the side of Paali Teertham and laid to rest. Ramana installed a Sivalingam on her Samadhi. Nayana gave it the name Maatrubhooteswara which meant God who became the Mother. Niranjanananda performed pooja and abhishekam daily to Maatrubhooteswara. Ramana then pointed to a spot, a few yards north of the Samadhi and told the devotees that water could easily be got there. A wonderful spring was found there on digging only a few feet. It was widened and deepened in course of time. This spring the creation of Ramana, was named 'Aghashamana Teertham' (the spring that washes off sins) by Ganapati Muni.

Nayana knew well how powerful Ramana's grace was. He could clearly visualise the establishment of an Ashram based on this new Kshetra of Maatrubhooteswara to disseminate the spiritual knowledge and attract aspirants.

On the Mahapooja Day of Maatrubhooteswara (28-5-1922) Ganapati Muni sang the glory of Ramana and Alaghammal in six slokas.

Ganapati Muni then spent four months in the Mango tree cave in tapas. Swami Niranjananada erected a thatched hut over the shrine of Maatrubhooteswara and began performing abhisekam and puja daily. Niranjananada found indescribable peace in residing at the shrine though it was then a lonely spot dense with bushes. He had an assistant in Dandapani Swami a hefty man with profound devotion to Ramana. He collected donations from devotees and cleared the place of all shrubs and rocks and put up a fence around. Ramana was almost daily visiting the Maatrubhooteswara shrine. It cheered Niranjanananda and Dandapani to see that Ramana evinced interest in what they were doing. Encouraged thus they made arrangements to celebrate the next Jayanti (birthday) of Ramana at this Mother's shrine with his approval. In previous years when devotees celebrated his Jayanti, Ramana remained unconcerned. He signified neither approval nor disapproval. Nobody could take courage to ask him about his likes or dislikes. Now according to Nayana, it was clear that this new shrine would become a great centre of spiritual revival. That was the significance of Bhagwan Ramana's approval for the celebration of his Jayanti at the Mother's shrine.

A week prior to Jayanti Ramana came to visit the shrine, as usual, in his daily walk but stayed on there without returning to Skanda Ashramam even after the Jayanti was over.

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Many devotees thought that Skanda Ashramam was a nicer place for Bhagwan than the hut near Maatrubhooteswara's shrine. Moreover devotees residing at Tiruvannamalai could look at Skandasramam even from their houses. Now Bhagwan moved to the outskirts of the town. When they asked Ramana why he had left Skandasramam and moved away, he replied that some mysterious force had made him do so.

Ramana Jayanti on the third of January 1923 was celebrated in the new Kshetra. And this was the beginning of Sri Ramanasramam on the southern side of Arunachala, on the Pradakshina path.

It was on this occasion Sri Nayana sung the following verse in praise of Bhagwan in his presence.

Devi Saktiriyam drisoḥ sritajana dhvanta kshayadhaayini
Devi Sriyam ambujaakshamahis vaktre sahasracchade
Devi Brahmavadhur iyam vijayate, Vyahara goodha pare
Visvacarya Mahanubhava Ramana, tvam stautu kah prakritah

“It is Devi Sakti (Uma) in your look, destroyer of the ignorance of devotees. It is Lakshmi, the consort of lotus eyed Vishnu on the Lotus of your face. And it is Sarasvati Beloved of Brahma, hidden in your speech. O Ramana, the Great Teacher of Mankind, how can ordinary men praise you.

IN CONGRESS SESSION

By February 1923 Kavyakantha had revised Umasahasram for the last time.

Ganapati Muni hoped, his son Mahadeva would set up his family in Kaluvarayi. But as Visalakshi was not keeping good health, she needed the support of her son and daughter-in-law. Visalakshi set up home in Tiruvannamalai. Disciples as usual were visiting them often and serving them. Ganapati Muni however continued to stay in the Mango Tree cave.

In December 1923, he received an invitation from Bulusu Sambamurthi, secretary of the reception committee of the Kakinada session of the Indian National Congress. Ganapati Muni had attended a Congress Session in 1916 when the Congress leaders sought his opinion on some problems. After a lapse of seven years he was invited again to speak about the rights of Indian women. Many were the speakers and all of them stressed the need to give equal rights to woman without any reservation.

Ganapati in his revealing speech proved that according to the Vedas, women had equal rights with men in all rituals like Homa. Yagnya and Sraadhā. They also had the right to study Vedas. During a dark period in our country's history, these rights of women were curtailed and laws were made relegating women to a secondary position. If the rights of women in spiritual life were restored, all other rights would accrue to them. He appealed for the abandonment of unvedic traditions and superstitions, which had made society degenerate and the resuscitation of the way of our Rishis for the restoration of society to enlightened happiness.

Ganapathi Muni's speech was an eye opener to many who till then had held exactly the opposite views. So the Andhra Congressmen organised a conference in Alamuru to discuss the Harijan problem with Ganapati Muni as the main

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speaker. The conference was attended by many Andhra Pandits, most of whom had not met Ganapati Muni so far. It was not as though they had not known him. But they were reluctant to recognize his greatness. For the first time they now had an opportunity to see the Sage and the very first sight convinced them of his divine supremacy. He looked like the human manifestation of god. Ganapati Muni appealed to them not to mix up fleeting social customs and observances with eternal Dharma. They should, he said, realise the necessity of moving with the times. Untouchability could never be a dharma. Moreover, family or individual likes or dislikes should not be raised to the status of social laws. Why, when untouchability was not observed in their dealing with Muslims and Christians, it should be allowed to taint their dealing with Hindu Harijans, he asked. Finally he advised them, if they could not give up such customs immediately, they should give them up gradually atleast.

Though the no-changers among the pandits were sore at heart at this advice, all others were convinced of Ganapati Muni's plea based on Eternal Dharma. Many Congressmen wished that Ganapati Muni would help their cause by accepting political leadership.

He spoke at a number of meetings on his return journey to Tiruvannamalai and it looked as though he was lending a much needed tenor and tempo to the work of the National Congress. Agitated by this belief, a reactionary section of pandits, led by one Ramakrishna Chainulu launched a tirade against him. This Chainulu got a number of articles published condemning Ganapati Muni. When Ganapati Muni finally replied to these charges, Chainulu failing to marshal points to refute him, retired into silence. Ganapati's trend of argument and the points he made proved useful to Congressmen. But he refused to join Andhra Congress Organisation as he knew well the futility of making speeches. Also he did not like his tapas to be interrupted.

However, Tamilnadu Congressmen succeeded where the Andhra Congressmen failed. The requested Vasistha Ganapati Muni to merely lend his name in the conduct of their programmes and assured him that he need not be an active participant in Congress affairs. He was thus made a member of the Congress in 1924 and was elected Chairman of the reception committee of Tamilnadu Congress conference held that year in Tiruvannamalai. His frank and fearless speech was acclaimed universally. He participated in the Belgaum Congress Session, which was presided over by Gandhiji. His speech explaining the anti-scriptural nature of untouchability was heartily appreciated by the president, Doctor Annie Besant and Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and praised by all as revealing. He was particularly admired for his pointed and easy-to-follow speech in Sanskrit and for his dexterity in marshalling relevant points. The next day Gandhiji decided to move a resolution recommending Hindi as national language. When Ganapati Muni expressed his intention to introduce an amendment to it, recommending Sanskrit as national language, Gandhiji requested him not to interfere with it, as it was a political move. Ganapati Muni was thankful for this reminder and did not renew his membership in the political organization. However until 1929 he co-operated with the programme of Harijan uplift which was a work of social reform. He also wrote a book called "Rashtra Nibandhanam" for the guidance of politicians.

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THE SOCIAL PROBLEM

After attending the Congress Session in Belgaum, Nayana went to Gokarnam to see Daivarata. Daivarata was married three years before and his wife Shraddha Devi was pregnant, at the time of Nayana's visit. She needed the help of elders. Nayana assured her that Visalakshi would help her and it was decided to take Shraddha Devi to Tiruvannamalai. Meanwhile Daivarata's disciple Maganlal of Bombay, a wealthy person, having known of Vasistha Ganapati's arrival, came over to Gokarnam and invited them all to Bombay. Ganapati Muni, Daivarata and Shraddha Devi were guests of Maganlal for nearly a month. Maganlal's wife tried in vain to persuade Shraddha Devi to stay in their house for delivery. But Sharadda Devi was eager to have darsan of Bhagwan Ramana and Visalakshi and pay respect to them. Not minding her advanced stage pregnancy she travelled with a sense of elation to Tiruvannamali. On seeing Visalakshi she felt she was in the assuring presence of her own mother. Tears of joy welled up in her eyes the moment she saw Ramana as if she saw God in human form. But the long journey had told upon her. A male child was born and passed away almost immediately. All were grieved at this misfortune but she had born it with courage. She stayed in Tiruvannamalai with her husband for about 2 months and then returned to Gokarnam.

Ganapati Muni was staying in the Mango Tree cave engaged in tapas, and at intervals writing some Sootra Granthas (books of aphorisms) and 'Viswa Meemaamsa' a rare treatise on all the secrets of the Vedas and Upanished.

In the middle of 1925, he suffered from Diabetes for some time. Yet he continued his tapas undeterred. Visalakshi also was devoting all her time to the Sadhana of Sri Vidya, disassociating herself from the cares of family even while staying with it.

During this period, something pathetic happened which however revealed the insincerity of people clamouring for reforms.

V.V.S. Iyer, a great patriot started in Shermadevi, a village in South Tamil Nadu, an educational institution called Bharadwaja gurukulam, with a hostel attached to it. His aim was to inculcate in the students a sense of fraternity based on patriotism. But the cook he employed was a Brahmin. Some of the non-Brahmins who were contributing towards the maintenance of the Ashram and who were also Congressmen, brought pressure on Subrahmanya Ayyar to employ a non-Brahmin cook instead of a Brahmin. Ayyar, though above caste feelings, thought that sudden changes might antagonise conservative sections of the people under such circumstances both parties agreed to abide by the decision of Ganapati Muni. Ganapati Muni felt the quarrel would continue one way or the other as long as the cook was a caste Hindu. So he recommended that a Harijan should be appointed as cook. This decision startled the non-Brahmin Congressmen. Meanwhile Ayyar died suddenly under tragic circumstances.

Both the quarrel and the Ashram came to an end. Ganapati Muni was upset and referred to the ancient sloka which meant :

‘As the night set in, the louts closed with the black bee in it. The bee was thinking “the night will pass - the day will dawn and the sun will rise up making the lotus blossom. And I shall fly out” Then suddenly an elephant came to the lake, pulled out the louts and stamped over it, killing the bee in it’.

Ratrigamishyati bhav isyati suprabhaatam
 Bhaaswaan udeshyati hasishyati pankajaatam
 Ittham vicintayati kosagate dwirefe
 Haa Hanta Hanta nalineem gaja ujjahaara

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In November 1925, Ganapati Muni went to Machilipatnam, invited by a Sanaatana Dharma Sabha. He was staying in the house of his disciple Cheruvu Ramakrishnayya. Ramakrishnayya's father Chainulu though a man of great scholarship, was a confirmed conservative. Ganapati Muni's criticism of the current religious practices and advocacy of social liberalism were disliked by him. He thought that the presence of Ganapati Muni in his house, would contaminate its religious atmosphere and forbade his son from playing host to him. Ramakrishnayya requested his father in vain to be reasonable and to understand the significance of Vasistha Ganapati's attitude. Chainulu stayed away until Ganapati Muni along with his disciples had lunched. Returning home late in the afternoon, Chainulu did the ritual of purification and started Homa. But he was startled to see the form of Ganapati Muni amidst the home flames. Was it a hallucination? No! Chainulu was frightened. he regretted his misunderstanding of Ganapati Muni and leaving the Homa, He went and prostrated before the great sage as a disciple and devotee.

Nayana then went to Vijayawada and stayed with his lawyer disciple Govindarajula Venktasubba Rao. They visited the great pilgrim centre Mangalagiri which impressed Ganapati Muni as a sacred spot of Indra, the Vedic God.

Some pandits who followed his speeches of these days, felt greatly perturbed and their leader, one Pakayaji published an article condemning Ganapati Muni. Ganapati Muni was about to issue a rejoinder to clarify his standpoint but Pakayaji realising his mistake offered his apology.

Nayana returned to Tiruvannamalai at the end of 1925. He was pained to note certain incidents which threatened to mar the peaceful atmosphere of Sri Ramanasramam. Some one, a devotee, was trying to become the manager of the Ashram appropriating money given by devotees. Under such circumstances Swami Niranjanaanan was appointed the sole Manager of the Ashram as advised by devotees and the ugly drift was put an end to for good.

At about the same time Vajreswari was in the family way and came over to Tiruvannamalai for delivery. Ganapati Muni as usual was immersed in tapas. When he was free, he kept himself busy writing. Disciples were also claiming whatever time he could spare. He could narrate, intricate stories effortlessly, as though he was reading out of a book. Except one novel 'Poorna" all the others were lost unrecorded. This one (Poorna) he narrated during some evenings to a gathering of devotees. His ideal of living with both valour and devotion under a just administration, solely concerned with the welfare of all people, was the life-breath of this novel. Ganapati Muni desired to present through it, a practical ideal of socio-political set-up.

One day he was narrating this novel to his son Mahadeva and others at the outer precincts of Arunachaleswara Temple. For some time past Vajreswari was suffering from diarrhoea and she was in need of some plantain fruits of the 'Peyan' variety to cure it. Then fruits were not available at Tiruvannamalai and no one tried to get them. As Ganapati Muni was proceeding with the narration, there came a stranger, offered his respects to Ganapati Muni, presented a bunch of 'Peyan' plantains and went away. As the behaviour of that visitor was unusual, Ganapati Muni asked Mahadeva to follow him and know from him the object of his visit. Mahadeva followed him, but the man disappeared through the Eastern exit of the temple known as Pey-gopuram. And so it proved to be one of the mysteries in the life of Gandapati Muni.

PARTNER DEPARTS

Visalakshi's health began deteriorating from March 1926. For a long time she had been swallowing small quantities of Vibhooti at regular intervals during Japa and that might have been a reason for her ill health. Despite her ill-health she was engaged in constant japa of Sri Vidya which has become effortless along with her experience of the flow of Kundalini.

Daivarata wrote a letter imploring Nayana to attend a Yagnya to be performed by one Deekshita Dattatreya at Gokarnam, but he was unable to go on account of his wife's illhealth. Daivarata had founded an Ashram in Gokarnam to protect cows and to teach and train brahmacharins. This endeavour was approved and blessed by Nayana as early as 1925. Daivarata planned to run his Ashram on the lines of ancient Ashrams conducted by Rishis and requested Ganapati Muni to guide him with his presence and instruction. Ganapati Muni felt that a small venture like this was not enough and that the whole country needed such Ashrams. So Daivarata was advised to run his Ashram himself acting as the chief preceptor and make this a model for others to copy. to represent the Guru in the Ashram, Daivarata took the padukas of Ganapati Muni and started the work with great enthusiasm. He also purchased the Nandini Mudranalaya, a printing press in Sirsi town (North Canara District) to publish the books of his Guru. His brother Sitram Bhadati was entrusted with the management of the press dedicated to the Guru.

Visalakshi was satisfied with this gesture and felt that Daivarata was serving her as Niranjanada served Alaghammal.

Her health was fast deteriorating. yet she was visiting Sri Ramana Ashram whenever she could. According to her, Ramana was the very incarnation of Dakshinamurti, the originator of Sri Vidya. The name Dakshinamurti to her meant the 'Attributeless' in the 'Right' (Dakshina Amurti).

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In April of that year, Vajreswari gave birth to her second child. Quite unusually Appu did not attend the Namakarana (giving the name) function. It was Appu who had brought up Vajreswari from her early childhood as Nayana and Visalakshi were always busy with tapas, and his presence was therefore taken for granted. Appu, it must be remembered, in addition to freeing Nayana and Visalakshi from various family responsibilities, was also a sincere spiritual Sādhaka. Moreover his wife Kamakshi and younger brother Kalyanarama were no less devoted to Ramana and Nayana. So Appu's absence was keenly felt by all. However, he sent a message informing Nayana of a peculiar pain and discomfort he was experiencing. As Visalakshi also felt it was the result of spiritual practice, Nayana went to Secunderabad immediately and prescribed a course of treatment first. Then he invoked the goddess to free Appu from this affliction.

Agnyaana dhwaantaandhaan, asahya rogaagni
Keela santaptaan
Bhaasura Seetaladristiprabhayaa
Paradevtaa vataadasmaan

May we, blinded by the darkness of ignorance and suffering from the scorching agony of unearable disease, be protected by the Mother goddess, with the light of her luminous cool gaze.

Appu was free from the pain and discomfort the very next day and Nayana returned to Tiruvannamalai.

In June the Annamalai University invited Ganapati Muni to address their Students Union. He was first hesitant to accept the invitation but Visalakshi felt that they should visit Chidambaram, never visited by them during their stay of more than twenty years in the South and she requested Nayana to avail this opportunity to visit the holy place. In spite of her very bad health, she visited Chidambaram along

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with Nayana and returned to Tiruvannamalai on the eighteenth of July 1926. On the day of return Visalakshi undertook a nine day Sadhana of Sri Vidya, subsisting on meager liquid food. She refused to take any medicine, as Japa itself gave her adequate comfort and joy. On the eighth day she told Nayana 'I am able to experience in myself the attainment I sought. You should be pleased'. Disciples who had already come to know of her deteriorating health, came with great concern and received her blessing. She was the Guru's companion in tapas (Tapassakhi) sharing with him, his spiritual experience. The disciples were particularly beholden to her for her motherly affection and ideal behaviour. Her kindly presence gave them a sense of satisfaction and activated their spiritual inclinations. She was considerate and noble like goddess Annapoorna and to the disciples, she represented visibly the numerous aspects of the Mother goddess. She proved that a family woman could serve her husband and God with equal fervour and devotion and successfully do sadhana (spiritual practice). GanapatiMuni and Visalakshi, by their example, had shown how the ancient Rishis, without giving up family life and without disturbing the basic unity of society, lived perfectly attuned to God. Visalakshi was then 45. On the twenty sixth of July 1926 (Ashaada Krishna Dviteeya, Dhanishta Nakshatra) Visalakshi left her mortal body. At that time, Sri Ramana was shown camphor light (Aarati) - when he presented his palms over the light, the light was atonce extinguished! So, a light had gone!.

IN THE VORTEX OF VARNASHRAMA

After the death of Visalakshi, some persons expected that Ganapati Muni would take to Sanyas. His thoughts were different. Ramana remained a lifelong celibate. (Naishtika Brahmachari) wearing only a white Kaupeenam. Nayana also remained as before with his yagnopaveetam and his normal white khadi dress. Those who knew him, knew him as a sage. Externals did not matter at all.

Ganapati Muni was not keeping good health after Visalakshi passed away. There was something balmy in her culinary preparations which he was now deprived of. Though his daughter Vajreswari and his daughter-in-law Rejeswari, were taking all care, his health continued to deteriorate.

On day while his son-in-law Somayajulu was sitting on the outer pial of their residence, a stranger asked him ' Is Nayana in? if so please tell him, a Sanyaasi has come from Kanyakumari'. Somayajulu smiled to himself as this stranger without Kashaaya robes or Kamandal was describing himself as a Sanyasi. He then went in to convey this information to Nayana and came out at once but the Sanyaasi was no where to be seen. This Sanyasi's appearance proved miraculous. Nayana's ill health too disappeared just as the Sanyasi did. Nayana then proceeded to Secunderabad where he was kept busy by numerous visitors and disciples. He had to speak at various gatherings, on various subjects. Prominent citizens with varied interests, ranging from literature to social reform and spiritual matters, participated. People of all denominations, languages and professions had opportunity to learn about Ramana Maharishi and his teachings through the 'Kaavyakantha, Ganapathi Muni presided over the Silver Jubilee Celebrations of Sri Krishnadevaraya Andhra Bhasha Nilayam (a famous library in Hyderabad) and exhorted the vast gathering of the day, to follow the pattern of living shown by our ancient Rishis. This speech was published in the Rajitotsava Sanchika (1926) of the library.

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Bhagya Reddi, a prominent Harijan leader, and Bai Kishen Rao a leader of social reform movement, organised a big conference under the presidentship of Professor Veerabhadru with Ganapati Muni as the main speaker. He was taken in a grand procession and honoured. They were thrilled by the divine message of the sage which as usual throbbled with the Vedic spirit of social liberalism. Though some pandits felt that Ganapati Muni should not have given expression to ideas that ran counter to the customs in vogue, educated people and social workers derived meaningful inspiration from the speech of Ganapati Muni. To express their pleasure and gratitude they presented him with a welcome address heartily addressing him as 'Muni' sage. It was a revelation to them to be told that every one regardless of caste, was entitled to receive spiritual initiation and many people became the disciples of Ganapati Muni. The poor, the elite, the Jagridars, and the officials all made a bee line to Vasistha Ganapati's residence to be initiated and blessed.

After a busy time in Secunderabad and Hyderabad, he returned to Tiruvannamalai and occupied the Mango Tree cave. Tapas continued satisfactorily for about six months when he received a queer invitation from Madras:

The Varnaashrama Sangham of Madras invited pandits from all over the country in December 1929 in order to propose a resolution to be sent to the the National Congress condemning the programme of 'Removal of Untouchability'. The organising committee instructed their secretary to invite such pandits who supported their move. But the secretary came to know that pandit Madanmohan Malaviya would be in Madras on the day. He chose to invite Malaviya knowing full well his attitude. The idea of inviting Ganapati Muni came as an after thought. Since Ganapati Muni and Malaviya were friends, the Secretary thought it appropriate to send an invitation to Ganapati Muni also. It was not as though the secretary was ignorant of the progressive ideas of Ganapati Muni. Would it not be delightful to find all these Varnaashrama

pandits dodging under a mask of petrified silence in the formidable presence of Ganapati Muni? He played a wanton joke - but at whose expense?

The pandits, were surprised to find Vasistha Ganapati Muni and Malaviya in the gathering. The organisers questioned the secretary as to how these two happened to come. The secretary, quite according to his scheme, entertained himself by speaking the truth and by witnessing their confusion. They could not ask Ganapati Muni and Malaviya to go out. While the organisers were debating on how best to overcome this predicament, Malaviya and Ganapati Muni were chatting with delight quite innocently, having met after a long time. Then they came to know of the discomfiture of the Varnaashrama Pandits and they came out of the conference gracefully providing relief to the organisers.

Malaviya then arranged a meeting in the Hindu High School compound and invited prominent citizens and the Varnasharma Pandits also. Malaviya himself presided over the meeting and Ganapati Muni spoke about the undesirability of untouchability. It was a successful meeting.

But Ganapati Muni was convinced that the Varnaashrama pandits could never be influenced by reason. It was a waste of time to try to reform them - time alone could cure them of their unreasonable attitude.

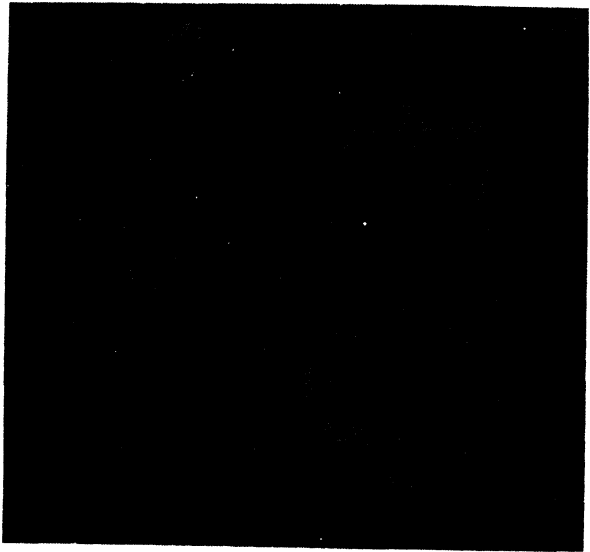
He then began revising Indraani Saptasati. Ramana meanwhile translated into Sanskrit verse his Tamil treatise 'Upadesha - Undiyar' (Upadesa Saaram, and sent it to Nayana. The brevity, simplicity, unambiguity and the lyrical elegance of Ramana's slokas overwhelmed Nayana.

At the request of his disciples, Ganapati Muni wrote a commentary on Upadesha Saram and submitted it to Ramana by the evening

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Sudhanwa who had already given up his lucrative practice at the Madras Bar wrote from Pondicherry where he had set up his residence conveying the wish of Sri Aurobindo to meet Sri Nayana. Nayana accepted the invitation and went to Pondicherry in the second week of August 1928.

The Maharshi and the Muni



AT SRI AUROBINDO ASHRAM

At Pondicherry Nayana stayed at the residence of Sudhanwa. Disciples and admirers from far and near were arriving at the Ashram to partake in the birthday celebrations of Sri Aurobindo on the fifteenth of August. Some years ago Nayana read the 'Arya', the magazine conducted by Sri Aurobindo and going through the writings of Sri Aurobind, he felt a kinship with him. But the opportunity to meet him came only now. Between them there was no need for a conversation. They were to note the radiance of each other. So no special interview was sought by Ganapati Muni. He met the Mother also during this visit.

sometime prior to this visit, Sudhanwa had presented a copy of Sri Vasistha Ganapati's Umasahasram (manuscript) to Sri Aurobindo who on going through it said that it was a superhuman performance and that he would like to meet the author. It was thus their meeting came about.

And so Ganapati Muni did not hesitate to visit him and pay his respects to him.

The Mother told Sudhanwa subsequently that in the presence of Ganapati Muni, all the hostile forces ran away. Sudhanwa felt thrilled and when Nayana told him that he had witnessed a powerful spiritual radiance about Sri Aurobindo, he felt likewise.

Next day the Mother invited Ganapati Muni for a joint meditation. Ganapati Muni accepted it as he had not properly looked at her at the time of his darsan of Aurobindo. One of the devotees led him to her room. there were two seats in the room, one for her and the other for Ganapati Muni. They meditated for about forty five minutes. She closed her eyes and meditated with her arms stretched out. Ganapati Muni, as was his practice, meditated with eyes open. After the meditation, she told the devotees present that Ganapati Muni

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was a real yogi who could plunge into the depths the moment he started meditation and that she had not so far found any person abiding in her spiritual consciousness for forty minutes as Ganapati Muni did.

Nayana stayed for about a month there in the company of Sudhanawa, Adhaam, Kapali and Kodandaraman. On the request of Kodandaraman, Nayana wrote "Tatvanusaasanam" of 108 sootras which work also received the praise of Aurobindo.

Before Nayana started for Tiruvannamalai, the Mother told him that he did not need permission to see Sri Aurobindo and he could come any time he liked.

BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

Ganapati Muni could not stay in the Mango Tree cave as it meant giving trouble to the disciples. He had gathered the various names of Indra from the Rig Veda and composed a Hymn of 108 slokas consisting a thousand of those names. It was called Indra Sahasranama Stotram. The specialty about this stotra is that there are no expletives at all in it. Those acquainted with Sanskrit literature could understand how difficult it is. This stotram began with the name "Indira" and ends with "Swaraat". Bhagawan Ramana heard with interest the explanation given by his disciple of the names like "Acakraya Swadhaya Varthamaanah", "Aaneelah Suparnah", "Kijah".

During this period, Adham, who wanted to become an inmate of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, requested Nayana to give a letter of recommendation to the Mother and it was given at once. Though it was not easy to get accepted as inmate of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, he was immediately accepted on account of that letter from Nayana.

There is here another interesting incident to narrate. B.V. Narasimha Swamy a required advocate from Salem visited Tiruvannamalai to gather details for the biography of Ramana that he intended to write. Nayana was requested by him to narrate his biography as he was a stalwart amongst Ramana's devotees. Nayana complied with his request and Narasimhaswamy took notes of what was narrated. Then Ramana answered whatever Narasimhaswami asked about his life and experiences. Narasimhaswamy then wrote the biography of Ramana in English on the basis of points gathered from him and his devotees. It was from these notes amongst other material that "Vasistha Vaibhavam", the biography of Nayana was written in Sanskrit by Sri Kapalisastriar as these notes were preserved by Viswanatha. Ramana's biography "Self-Realisation" in English written by Narasimhaswamy was published by Ashram management.

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Ramana was giving verse form to his teachings now and then and was passing them on to Muruganar. Forty such verses (venbas) were arranged into a work by Muruganar, with the help of Bhagawan and Nayana. As these forty verses revealed ultimate reality, the collection was called "Ulladu Naarpadu" in Tamil (Forty verses on reality). Ganapati Muni translated these 40 verses into Sanskrit (during his stay at Anandaramam, Sirsī, North Kanara) and gave it the name Satarasanam.

AT KULUVE

Nayana was unable to bear the heat of Tiruvannamalai and it caused considerable discomfort to him. Though he was staying in a grove, he felt for want of cool breeze. In march, 1990 two disciples came from Gokarnam and were grieved at his suffering. They invited him to stay at Gokarnam and if the climate there was not suitable, they suggested, he could stay at Sirisi. He then went to Gokarnam but was disappointed to find that Daivarata had gone away somewhere for tapas. Shradha Devi his wife welcomed Nayana and began serving him with devotion. He did not want Daivarata to stop his tapas and come back. Even Gokarnam climate was not congenial to Nayana's health. Daivarata's younger brother Seetarama Bharati, an Ayurvedi doctor, came to Gokarnam from Kuluve (near Sirsi) to treat Nayana for the bad effects of heat on his blood and eyes. Kuluve is only a few miles from Sirsi which is a taluq town. Seetarama was staying in Kuluve looking after his lands and gardens. As directed by Daivarata he took Nayana to Kuluve, a cooler place.

On the way to Kuluve, Nayana rested in a Shankara Mutt on the banks of River Shalmalee. This ancient Peeth called "Lakshminarasimha Chandramouleswara Padapeetham" was founded by Sri Viswananda Saraswati Swami, a Mahatma. The Zamindar of Sondaswaranavalli was contributing towards the maintenance of the Peeth. The head of the Peeth, Swami Sri Sarwagnendra Saraswati welcomed Ganapati and told him that as a result of a litigation regarding inheritance in the family of the Zamindar, the maintenance of the Peetham was ignored and the Peetham was not in a position to worship the presiding deity even on a small scale. GanapatiMuni was grieved at the pitiable condition of the Peetham, wrote a sloka invoking the chief deity of the Peetham for help and presented it to Swami Sri Sarwagnyendra Saraswati. All were agreeably surprised that within a few days the Peetham was restored to its normal state.

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On the outskirts of Kuluve, about fifty pandits received Nayana with Sama Gana (recitation of Sama Veda) and followed him in a procession to the house of Seetarama. All of them had heard about Vasistha Ganapati's erudition and spiritual eminence and were delighted to have the sage now amidst them. One of those who came to welcome him was Devendra Subrahmanya Viswamitra of Sirsi. He had been attracted to Ganapati Muni ever since he heard his instructive speech years ago in the high school of Kumta where he was a student then. He had already met Ganapati Muni at Gokarnam along with Seetarama. Viswamitra played an important role in the life of Ganapati Muni subsequently.

Kuluve climate was cool and calm enough to meditate. Now and then people came seeking instruction, initiation or grace from him. There were no interruption whatsoever.

One day a young man called Ganesha Bhatta approached with a strange case seeking. Nayana's grace. Bhatt's wife Ahalya was a very good natured and vinacious girl. After marriage for about six months she was all right. Then suddenly she was afflicted with a strange malady which did not yield either to medicines or mantras. Often she became mute and dazed and was in the habit of discarding her clothes and seeking a hiding place.

As Bhatt was talking to Nayana, she was in a room close by. Nayana strolled about in the garden and approaching the door of the room, called her to come out dressed. She did so at once and that was the last time she was ever afflicted with the malady. After some time when Bhatt was laid up with typhoid, Ahalya sought the grace of Nayana. She was given a copy of Indraani Saptasati. When she recited it in the presence of her husband, he relieved of the malignant fever. Such was the power of Nayana's presence and word.

Another day, about thirty people gathered in a thatched house in a field to listen to Ganapati Muni. Suddenly one haystack caught fire which, aided by the wind, spread to the other stacks and they were literally surrounded by a threatening fire. Ganapati Muni quite unperturbed, repeated a few times an Agni Mantra in Virat metre, seen by Rishi Parasara in Rig Veda (Vanema purveeraryo maneesha Agnih susoko viswaanysyah). A gust of wind, suddenly swooped over the burning hay stacks and carried the burning hay away and saved them all from the threat of fire. They were all amazed at this Mantra Shakti of Ganapati Muni and were glad to learn about the existence of such potent mantras.

Sivarama Saastri, Nayana's younger brother quite unexpectedly, came to Kuluve on the sixth of February 1930. On seeing him Nayana asked in anguish whether he had come to finish his journey. next day, He who was hale and hearty all along complained of a pain in his chest and was dead the next moment. Was it due to Nayan's displeasure regarding Sivarama Sastri's plans? One has to be very careful when moving with Tapaswins.

One day Nayana was going some where in a car from Kuluve accompanied by his son Mahadeva. The car suddenly turned turtle while negotiating a bend. Except Mahadeva, no one else in the car was injured. Mahava's forearm was fractured. Doctors advised him to enter a hospital for treatment. Nayana invoked the "Asthi Sandhaana Mantra" seen by Medhaatidhi the son of Kanva (Yarute cidabhisrisah puraa jatrubhya aatrdhah Sandhaata sandhim maghava puruvasuriskarta vihartam punah) and applied it to Mahadeva. The effect was remarkable. The doctor was surprised at the unexpected cure.

As Mahadeva was afraid of returning alone, Nayana accompanied him to Kaluvarayi. And on his return journey. Nayana visited his Guru Bhagwan Ramana who was delighted with progress of his disciple's tapas.

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Ganapati Muni was engaged in tapas uninterrupted at Kuluve and Seetarama served him with great devotion looking upon him as God Ganapati incarnate.

SIRSI - SATDARSANA

In February 1931, Devendra Subrahmanya Viswamitra invited Nayana to Sirsi to grace a get together of his learned friends. Among the participants, mention must be made of a reputed lawyer devotee called Pundarikaraya, who had travelled widely and had the pleasure of conversing with the Pope, the head of Roman Catholic world. He was deeply religious, and loathed exhibitionism. His son Sundara Pandit (S.P. Pandit) also a lawyer, was a schoolmate of Viswamitra in Kumata and was one of those who had heard the message of Nayana years ago. He was endowed with good traits and was of a friendly nature. He had a younger brother Madhava (M.P.Pandit) a boy of pleasing character.

Pundarikaraya had a fine building (Ananda Ashram) constructed in a garden on the outskirts of Sirsi where he wanted to spend his old age in prayer and peace. But as his health did not permit it, he decided to stay in his house itself. If Ganapati Muni agreed to stay in Ananda Ashram, it would become a real abode of Ananda (bliss), thought Pundarikaraya. Viswamitra also supported this idea and with the consent of Seetarama Bhakti, they succeeded in prevailing upon Nayana to move to Ananda Ashram. Many were initiated into Mantra Japa and Ramana's message was clearly explained by Ganapati Muni to the visitors. Some sought to strengthen or recharge their capacity to pray and meditate in the graceful presence of Ganapati Muni. As usual, his abode became a temple of a living God.

Most of the time was devoted to tapas. The experiences of the inmates of Ananda Ashram were thrilling the grace of tapas manifesting actively. The subtle body which evolved since the separation of his skull bones (Kapaala Bhedana Siddhi) had been moving about without his perception and some times gracing certain devotees with its power. Ramachandra Bhatt, a disciple who had no knowledge of Sanskrit was frequently visiting Ananda Ashram. Though

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not learned, he was drawn to Nayana and looked satisfied with mere listening to his voice. After a few days, surprisingly, he began exhibiting a good knowledge of Sanskrit. The grace of mahatmas is such.

A few days after Ganapati Muni's arrival at Ananda Ashram, Viswanathan came from Tiruvannamalai and joined him. On the suggestion of Bhagwan Ramana, a Sanskrit translation of "Ulladu Narpadu" was sent to Ganapati Muni for revision. Ganapati Muni felt a new translation, would be appropriate even before the new translation had begun. Kapali, with his wife, had come from Pondicherry. Next came Mahadeva. Seetarama Bhadati's daughter Nagaveni also arrived to serve Ganapati Muni. Seetarama and wife were often coming from Kuluve. Ganapati Muni was much pleased with this reunion and his delight knew no bounds.

Ganapati felt prompted too begin the translation of Bhagvan's Forty Verses on Existence. While translating them into Sanskrit verses, he explained their essence and significance to Kapali and Viswanathan. By the fourteenth of March, the translation was complete. He gave it the name "Sat-Darsanam" (Revelation of Truth). Mahadeva went to Tiruvannamalai with the correct Telugu version of the 40 verses. With the completion of the Sanskrit translation, Nayana's outlook became clearer. He began to see the one reality behind all-manifestation, by discarding the differentiating features. At this juncture, to attract Bhagawan's grace, he decided to write a weekly letter to Bhagawan Ramana.

By June, Kapali completed his commentary in Sanskrit of Sat-Darsanam. Meanwhile Nayana had composed a hymn "Prachanda Chandi Trishati" (Three hundred slokas in praise of prachanda Chandi).

He then went to Gokarnam to attend the Upanayanam of Daivarata's son Soma and returned. On the first of July, a copy of the commentary on Satdarsana written by Kapali in

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Sanskrit, was sent to Bhagawan Ramana thorough Ranga Rao and Vsiwanathan. Then Kapali left for Sri Aurobindo Ashram. Nayana was taken by Seetarama to "Sagarsaariba", a cool beautiful spot with a waterfall from where he returned after sometime to Kuluve.

Ganapati Muni always encouraged a sense of independent thinking in his disciples and never allowed his affection for them to be clouded by 'difference of opinions'. This outlook of his always helped an erring disciple to correct himself.

VEDIC VISTAS

The letters Nayana wrote to Bhagawan Ramana reveal the various stages of his spiritual realisation. Ramana himself chose to have them all carefully preserved. The old devotees knew well with what great affection Maharishi regarded Nayana. These letters were written in sanskrit.

After Navaratri in 1931, Ganapati Muni returned to Kuluve on the request of Seetarama Bhadti and had decided to devote a major part of his time to the study of Rig Veda and note the portions (passages) pertaining to the genesis of the great epic Mahabharata. In 1933 he completed assembling into a critical treatise, the biographical elements of various heroes of the epic. He called this "Bhaarata Charitra Pareeksha". Disciples referred to its as Mahabharata "Sangraha" or Vimarsa or Meemamsa. This treatise showed the heroes of Mahabharata, including Sri Krishna, as seers of Mantras (Mantra-drashtas) who, acquiring strength by virtue of tapas, waged war against Kauravas in the interest of the well being of the country. The seers of Rig-Veda had the interest of the country at heart and whenever the freedom of the country was in danger, they averted it effectively and safeguarded the welfare of the nation. They bestowed effective attention on individual development and on collective well-being of all and the necessary course of action was adopted. The suggestion that Kauravas were aliens, also emanated from this critical study of Rig-Veda. But the Mahabharata War, evidently, was not limited to subcontinent alone whatever picture the topic in its present form conveyed. This great war which occurred at the beginning of Kali Yuga (the age of Kali) had set the pattern of conduct for future generations, both by its cause and effect.

Kaliyuga means the age of Kalaha or dispute. This could be seen in the various fields of activity in this age. Mahabharata should serve as a guide to us to recognise and understand Dharma and not to violate Dharma by succumb-

ing to the lure of foreign influences which deprive the country of her freedom. This epic also laid down the pattern of conduct for leaders who administer to protect and implement Dharma.

In addition to unveiling the heroic deeds of our ancient Rishis. Ganapati Muni also proved how the various epic writers and story writers had misrepresented the lives of our Rishis in various contexts and misled the trends of popular thinking. That these writers had also tampered with Vedic laws and created fake laws, was made clear. Their misrepresentation had resulted in creating an orbit of thinking for pandits of later times who as a result were incapacitated from thinking independently. Ganapati Muni tried in vain to enlist the cooperation of pandits in this divine task of unravelling Vedic truths through tapas. So Ganapathi Muni after culling out mantras pertaining to divinity, Astraas and lives of Rishis, undertook to study their significance and meaning. He was totally dedicated to the critical study of this sacred lore in all its aspects. Rig Veda fully occupied his thoughts and radiated through him. It inspired him with dynamic energy. as he was concentraing on the sublime Rig Vedic mantras, His already superb poetic faculty came under its influence, and acquired a new grace. His voice was fast becoming an instrument of divine utterances. Several of his utternances were found to be set in Vedic metre, without any special effort on his part.

One day Daivarata came to see him and during conversation with him, two mantras emanated from the Muni extempore - one in Trishtubh metre on Vishnu.

In Trishtubh Chandas :

Diwogabhastiratih Pruthivyaasteshaam
Rupam idyuto yontarikshe
Vaiswaanarah Sahasaavam amartyo
Madhuman maarohatu dasma eeksaam

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In Gayatri Chandas :

Akramista bhuvaneshu brahmanaaham Viduryatah
Pravarothaasmi viprataha

Ganapati Muni was also selecting such mantras from Vedas and translating them into Sanskrit verses. A mantra in Rigveda (1-3-12) on Goddess Saraswati :

Maho arnah Saraswatee Prachetayati Ketunaa
Dhiyo viswaa Virajaati

Its sloka form given by Ganapati :

ambhodivyam valakshasmitalasisitamati
Jyotisha cetayanti
Viswassaaraavagatrih suvimala dhisaanah
Praaninaam bhaasayantee
Gambhiram vijravinaam Kisalaya
 mrudunaa paaniaa vaadayantee
Vidyuarupa saraswatyama latamarucaam
Vaahiniee nah punaatu

Ganapati Muni collected numerours Rig Mantras including those designed to combat enemies and ailments. He was engrossed in culling out the mantras concerning physical sciences when he had to leave for Kaluvarayi in the beginning of 1934 on the request of Mahadeva.

If his stay in Arunachalam had revealed the characteristics of God Ganapati in him, his stay at Gokarnam, Sirsi and Kuluve proved that he was a Veda Rishi. Some of his disciples in North Canara who had served him well, deserve mention here. Daivarata became a great scholar and earnest aspirant (sadhaka). His brother Seetarama Bhadati considered it his supreme good fortune to serve the Master. Viswamitra and Sundara Pandit were blessed by Sri Nayana and later on published Vasistha Vaibhavam and Umasahasram

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with the commentary of Sri Kapali Sastri. Sundara Pandit helped Mahadeva in publishing the Geetamaala. The friendship of Pundarikaraya was selfless and was always cherished by Ganapati. And M.P. Pandit of Pondicherry is what he is today by his close association with Sri Kapali Sastri, the foremost scholar disciple of Sri Nayana.

TALKS IN THE UNIVERSITY

Ganapati tried in vain to visit Ramana on his way to Kaluvarayi. His health was not satisfactory. He was unable to bear even a small rise in the atmospheric temperature. The strength needed for travel was fast diminishing. He was then invited by the Andhra University to speak at one of their functions.

The Vice-Chancellor of Andhra University, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, though educated by his paternal uncle Sarvepalli Narasimhayya, a great disciple of Ganapati Muni had no acquaintance with Ganapati Muni so far. It pleased them both to meet and Radhakrishnan requested Ganapati Muni to stay in his house while in Visakhapatnam. Ganapati Muni gave two talks on Mahabharata and the educated elite who gathered in the University hall under the 'presidentship of Pingali Lakshmikantam, were delighted with these talks which were suffused with rare charm, originality of interpretation and full of astounding revelations about the culture of the Vedic period - rarer still was the clarity and rarer was the speaker who impressed them as more progressive in his outlook than all the progressive scholars they had so far met. They all realised how impossible it was to understand either the basic culture of our Mother land or divinity without the knowledge of the Vedas.

Many felt that the quality of research work in the oriental section of the University would improve if a person like Ganapati Muni guides it. The Vice-Chancellor also expressed the same sentiment. Mention must be made of the fact that a similar offer from the Calcutta University was rejected by Ganapati some years ago. His total dedication to tapas made him reject these offers.

Meanwhile Mahadeva requested Nayana to stay in Kuluvarayi in a suitable cottage which he undertook to construct in their mango grove. The construction was completed

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and it was decided to occupy it on the fourteenth of September, 1934. Five days prior to this, Nayana's paternal uncle's grand daughter Chittipilla and her husband Prasada Rao came from Karagpur and offered to secure a job for Mahadeva. They also pressed Nayana to visit their home in Kharagpur. Strangely on the same day that they had decided to occupy the cottage in the mango grove, they found themselves travelling for Kharagpur !

Kharagpur once was a holy jungle spot, the abode of Goddess Khadgapaami Durga (Goddess Durga with a sword in hand). But it had become a big railway colony now. Nayana gave two talks at the residence of Prasada Rao which were attended by some of his friends and acquaintances. Then a talk was given in the Indian Institute. A few of the Andhras sought initiation and some others thought that the visitor was an astrologer ! Those who felt attracted to Nayana could be counted on fingers - just a dozen of them. One of these talks was attended by Nemaani Suryanarayana, an accountant in the head office of the Bengal Nagpur Railway in Calcutta, who went to Kharagpur on some official assignment. He approached Nayana to get some doubts cleared. Nayana as usual gave his answers even before Suryanarayana had asked his questions. He was amazed and immediately invited Nayana to Calcutta where there were a considerable number of Andhras who would be delighted to come into contact with so great a person.

On the twenty fourth of November, 1934 Nayana reached Calcutta.

AT CALCUTTA

Suryanarayana planned to have Nayana as his guest and was preparing to go to the railway station to receive him. Just at that time, message was received from his chief in the office, requiring his immediate presence. His wife also was unwell and so he requested his colleague Guntur Lakshmikantam to deputise for him at the railway station and also to be the host for sometime. But Kantam had to attend office. So he deputised in turn, R.Sanjiva Rao a genial person. He was a temporary librarian in the Andhra School of which the headmaster was B.S. Rama Rao., So Sanjiva Rao went to the station, received the visitor who never asked any questions and brought him to Kantam's residence. Kantam's wife, Suramma, was a woman of common sense. She realised that the visitor was not a mere astrologer ! But before taking the meals, Nayana asked her "Where is Suryanarayana?". He was told about the suddenness with which the arrangements made by Suryanarayana were changed. Then Nayana learnt the name, native place, and profession of his host of the moment, and smiled. Suramma assured that her husband would not have gone to the office, had he known about the guest. But Nayana asked her whether she would have him as guest as long as he wished to remain in Calcutta. Suramma replied that she and her husband would be grateful if they were given the opportunity to serve him. After meals, Nayana was resting in the spacious front room. That was a Saturday; Railway offices were closed in the early afternoon and Kantam returned home. The guest was writing something but his face could be seen in profile. Kantam was astonished on seeing his face. He had seen him ten years ago but in a dream ! In that dream, Kantam in his search for a Guru reached Kailaasa Mountain and there stood at the source of the River Ganga to offer Arghyam to the Sun God. He saw a Saint doing tapas on the top of the Mountain. Kantam approached the cave from which the River was gushing out, to offer oblation. A stone about two feet thick was separating the Saint and Kantam. The Saint too was preparing to offer oblation. After offering

oblations twice, he asked Kantam to hold his palms to receive the water of the third oblation. Kantam stretched his hands only to strike them against the rock and there ended the dream. Now that every saintly person was there sitting in this house ! Kantam hurried into the house and was told by his wife about all that transpired between her and the guest. He then hastened to pay his respects to the Guru who had come searching for him ! With tears he prostrated before him and mumbled apologies for not being able to receive him properly. Nayans consoled him saying that Suramma was a sensible housewife.

Suramma was amply acquainted with tradition and formalities being the daughter of a scholar Aakella Suryanarayana, a spiritual aspirant who later became a sanyasin.

A number of friends meanwhile came there to see Nayana and during the conversation which ensued, he was requested to narrate his story which he did briefly. After the friends left, Kantam asked whether he did tapas in Himalayas at any time to which Nayana replied in a whisper "You had seen my abode of tapas there".

That night about forty persons gathered in the Andhra School for bhajan. After bhajan Nayana was asked by Kantam "If karma is the cause of birth in this world, how is the birth of incarnations (avatara) caused?"

Nayana's explanation : Avatars are of two kinds - One of them is the fruit of yagnya. The deeds of the desireless (Nishkama Karma) assume the form of Yagnya. The other Avatar is a manifestation of divine radiance (tejomsa). Persons who were strengthened by good deeds in previous births, and persons who are activated by the grace of those who attained liberation and who might be still abiding in their mortal coils or otherwise, are qualified to emerge as divine incarnations. The Grace itself is enough to emerge as an

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Avatara to reform the world. Even if this grace lasts for a limited period, it will be effective in influencing the trends of the world. In the case of those whose good deeds in previous births were the cause of the incarnation, that aspect of the deity they worshipped, would generally manifest. They will be receiving the divine prompting on the spur of the moment. By the nature of these promptings the divine radiance filling them, could be comprehended. Generally this type of Yogi is meant to achieve union with the Supreme and not achieve anything on the mundane plane. They might also be promoted to act in the mundane plane depending on their attachments or other causes. Even then they act completely submitting to God's will and with complete resignation. Such persons become spiritual Masters and ideal beings. Even if an incarnate person, in accordance with God's will, has to fight a war, with no ego, he would consider it as God's work.

This speech though short, was simple enough to be understood and the meeting the following day (Sunday) was attended by a greater number of people. Nayana spoke about the Vedic period and made them all yearn for the establishment of a Vedic society. On Monday he spoke about Ramana. Then there was a great demand for literature from Ramana Ashram. Sunday times of Madras, edited by M.S. Kamath, was subscribed to by many, as it was serialising articles about the life and message of Ramana.

Nayana gave altogether fifteen talks in Telugu and every day questions were invited from the listeners. Rama Rao and Sanjiva Rao were entertaining Ganapati Muni with their intelligent questions though some thought that these two persons were superficial and talkative. Ganapati Muni thought otherwise and patiently answered their questions. They were enthusiastic and broadcast the news of Nayana's stay with Kantam throughout the city and its environs.

Tamilians and Malayalees had heard of Ganapati Muni but most of them had not seen him before. Among the

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Tamilians there were some disciples of Nayana. Of them, Subrahmanya Ayyar, a Senior Officer in the intelligence department, was a great devotee of Ramana. His hobby was photography. Though he resided in a distant locality, he went to see Ganapati Muni every alternate day. He had taken a number of pictures of Nayana and presented every one with a copy. Ganapati Muni gave two talks in the Tamil Association and one in the Malayalee Association.

Numerous were those who received initiation into mantra japa and Ganapati Muni made the men to assemble daily to chant the Mantra 108 times, in his presence and also to do Homa once a week.

Separate portion adjacent to Kantam's residence was secured for his stay. The quantity of food he needed daily was meagre though what he needed was a little of quality. He could not eat anything hot, sour or saltish. No sweetening was tolerated. Milk without sugar, rice and dall, buttermilk, apple juice, wheatcake with milk were his daily foods, all in small quantities. His body was delicate but strong enough to bear the operation of the Kundalini Sakti ever vibrant within his system. Only soft and light food agreed with his constitution. Whenever any one, not knowing this special diet, invited him for meals, he felt miserable as he could not refuse and as the food they so lovingly served, caused him suffering either with the tongue swelling or with nausea. Just as his food was a child's quantity his behaviour too was children's delight. His affection for children was unique. Suramma was preparing his food but her eight year old sister Subbalakshmi became a source of worry to her until Nayana changed the worry into pleasure. Subbalakshmi was made to serve food to Nayana but she ate the wheat cakes even before Ganapati ate them. She consumed the apples too. Suramma was chiding her often. But Nayana took delight in the playful behaviour of Subbalakshmi and used to call her "Chellayamma Rao" as the women of the families of Zamindars were called. Subbalakshmi like a devotee, was

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tasting first to approve the quality of the food before it was served to her Deity - Just as Sabari did ! So there was no justification for Suramma to chide her !

Nayana had a way of driving home any point howsoever complicated it was. He could illustrate the point with popular parables or a readily improvised story. Many years ago in Madras, a disciple read out a whole Encyclopaedia to him and he retained in his memory all the details. There were of course a number of other books which he literally consumed. He had also travelled wide and came into contact with a great variety of people. He was an incarnation. Any wonder such a person could drive home a point, or any point or could even improve the receptivity and understanding capacity of a person ? His method of preparing one's mind to receive and assimilate spiritual instruction was typical. The mind of a normal disciple must be first cultured to make it spiritually active. Nayana used to do it with grace, gradually rubbing off dark influences of the past.

He initiated Suramma into Gayatri Mantra Japa and adopted her as his daughter. One day Kantam felt he had a beard, a large forehead, a bald head and an unusually sweet voice - All characteristics of Nayana ! He made sure that others were not able to recognise this change in him. He first decided to continue in that feeling but thought it was advisable to inform Nayana. Then Nayana cast his look at him for a moment and Kantam was free from this feeling. Nayana's subtle body graced Ramachandra Bhatt in Siris in a like way.

Nayana said he was waiting for a green signal from within to undertake a twenty day dedication to tapas as ordained by Renuka. He would then be in a position to control this subtle body fully to acquire the next Siddhi.

The Muni advised his disciple to guard their health, eat good nourishing food, be at peace with their lot and make the body fit for spiritual activity.

DISCOURSES AND DISCIPLES

In August 1935 Vedula Ramamurthi and Prasada Rao came from Kharagpur and successfulluy prevailed upon Nayana to move from Calcutta on the plea that disciples in Kharagpur had undertaken a great task which needed his presence. One of the tasks was to influence one Naidu to sell a house site in Nimpura colony for an Ashram for Ganapati Muni. The other was to worship (do pooja) a living Ganapati on the Ganesha Chaturthi day ! And the living Ganapati was not told of it until the last moment !

While the Naidu who was all the while offering to sell the house site had gone back on his word and agreed only to lease it out for some years, the pooja of Ganesha Chaturthi provided some mirthi to Vasistha Ganapti. The purohit by force of habit chanted the Visarjana (voiding) mantra also; Generally idol was pronounced void after the pooja and then consigned to the waters of a nearby river. What should be done in the case of a living idol !

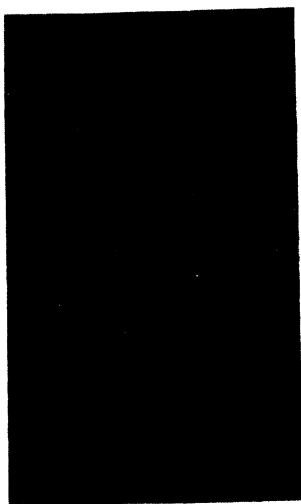
The next day on September two, Nayana went to Kaluvarayi to attend the Naamakaranam function of Mahadeva's son. There he was talking to relative with a copper coin held in his grip. Suddenly he was perspiring and his hand began aching. He found the copper coin in his grip changed into a gold coin. He realised that the time had come to undertake the final twenty day dedication to tapas and this change of copper into gold by his touch, gave him the indication. Kittaji came from Arni in Tamilnadu to see his Guru and on hearing about the latest indication, hoped the next and final attainment would be realised soon.

Raavaada Mahadevam was a volunteer in the national movement who had stayed in Gandhiji's Ashram for some time. He was a Brahmachari and desired to serve Ganapati Muni. He accompanied Ganapati Muni from Kaluvarayi to

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Kharagpur. He was called "Raavaada Yogi" by Nayana. In the last week of September 1935 the foundation for the proposed Ashram in Nimpura Colony was laid. Disciples from Calcutta also attended this function. They had the opportunity to see copper turning into gold at the touch of Ganapati Muni. The coin first turned grey, then yellow and finally golden. In this manner one or two gold coins were produced and what should be done with them ? Ganapati Muni ordered that they be thrown away. That night he told Paruateesam, 'I will go to Calcutta with Kantam and will return soon'. The next day he was again in Calcutta.

The visits of two old disciples in the month of October 1935 had shown Ganapati Muni in a new angle to the disciples in Calcutta. His emotional side was so far not known



Sri. Sarvepalli Narasihmam

to these new disciples. His company never satiated them and made them crave for more if it. He never restricted the freedom of disciples but made them feel at home. He was a friend, an elder to whom the feeling of affection was quite spontaneous. He never claimed any special position as a Guru but always blessed all with his grace. Soft of speech, suave in manners and sympathetic all through, he endeared himself to all the disciples. His behaviour was divine. Yet there was something mysterious about him. One could understand him only in accordance with the degree of one's spiritual development.

Sudhanwa who was taking his daughter to Benares where his son-in-law was an officer, broke his journey at Calcutta to see his Guru. Nayana was overwhelmed with joy on seeing him. Sudhanwa was more than overwhelmed. He narrated some incidents from the life of Ganapati Muni for the benefit of the disciples in Calcutta. He then gave some money to them to get a copy of Mahabharata and advised them to learn the significance and meaning of various incidents narrated in it, from the Guru. This meeting of Nayana and Sudhanwa provided the disciples with a glorious opportunity to witness the great incident that the meeting of a Master and his worthy disciple, could be.

Then came Seshu Ayyar a wakil of Cocanada to see his son who was employed in Calcutta. As he was telling about Ramana, Nayana listened with mounting emotion and with tears flowing. A current from his body, particularly from the point where his skullbones separated, began issuing and fanning out in the room. Seshu Ayyar then stopped his narration, sensing distinctly this flow of heat from the great human dynamo. It was noticed that even inanimate things got magnetised by the current flowing through his body. Sri Nayana told Seshu Ayyar "My body is now ready to undertake the divine task".

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Ganapati Muni explained the significance of Mahabharata to his disciples every evening. One day Kantam requested him to write his "autobiography" which would be of great help to spiritual aspirants and in improving their understanding. It was impossible for any one else to write the life of Ganapati Muni, bringing out his myriad aspects, mysterious or obvious. This request was made for this realisation and he acceded. He was also requested to write out the meanings of the slokas in Viswa Meemaamsa. Suramma implored him to complete his "Poorna" in Telugu.

There was something indescribable about the way Ganapati Muni wrote. The pen appeared to be moving but the eyes would be found to be viewing, not the paper, but some other object, not visible to the observer. An activity guided by an inner stillness. He was glowing with tapas whatever he might be doing. His talking was a succession of waves emanating from in his wonderful heart. His smile and he was rarely seen without a smile - reflected the very effulgence of the Divine Mother's Compassion.

He advised that it would be better to depend on God for the fulfilment of desires, whatever they might be, rather than keep aloof from worship. Though devotion to God would automatically result in fulfilment of desires it elevates the devotee to a state beyond any expectation of fruits. He himself had desired certain improvements in the world but after Kapaala Bhedana, he achieved a state of disinterestedness. He advised his disciples not to give up Bhakti or Mantra Japa and not to give undue importance to rituals.

As a result of Vedic research, he concluded there were two kinds of Yugas - Jyotisha Yugas and Dharma Yugas. Jyotisha Yugas were calculated by astronomers on the lines of days, months and years. Dharma Yugas were based on the behaviours of humanity. Krita or Satya Yuga, during which the human being could meditate upon the attributeless Brah-

man is a period of 1200 years. Manu also quoted the same figure. With an intervening period of fifty years, starts the Tretaa Yuga (2400 years) in which, God with attributes is worshipped. The word "Treta" suggests three or Trayi which is the name of God Agni which has a Triple form consisting of Saura, Vydyuta and Paarthiva (Solar, Electric and Earthly). After an interval of a hundred years, Dwaapara Yuga (3600 years) commences. Dwaapara comes from the word "Dwe Paraa" which means viewing the supreme as a dual entity with the result, there will be dual thinking and confusion. With an interval of a hundred and fifty years commences Kaliyuga or Kalaha (quarrel) Yuga which lasts for 5000 years. The intervening period between Kali and Krita is 200 years. In the recitation of ritualistic mantras, it is indicated that we are in the first quarter of Kali Yuga. But, according to Vasishta Ganapati Muni we have now reached the interval between Kali and Krita Yugas.

He also explained how various cults had emerged as a result of imperfect understanding of the Vedas and this had led to the disruption of the society and to quarrels, Naiyaayikas, Saankhyas, Saivas, Vaishnavas, Shaktas, Gaanapatyas, Kaapalikas and numerous others had, each in their own, way, contributed to the imperfect appreciation and understanding of our vedic culture. There was too much of ritualism, too much clinging to traditions to the exclusion of the main Dharma - all perpetrated in the name of the Vedas. Buddha gave a shock-treatment through a negative method to such deissension-ridden society and set it on the road of reform and renaissance.

The disciples at Calcutta felt fortunate in getting a guru like Vasishta Ganapati Muni. But it was a short-lived joy. On the twentyfifth of April 1936, Ganapati Muni went to Kharagpur on the request of the disciples there. He had by then written a major part of Poorna and meanings of Viswa Meemaamsa. But only three chapters of the autobiography had been written.

WITHDRAWAL

DISCIPLES in Calcutta realised how difficult it was to bear the absence of the Guru though they had known him only for a little over two years. he was referred to and addressed as "Nayana (father' and experience had proved that he was more than a father (God was described in Rig Veda as Sakha, Pita, Pitrutamaha - pitroonaam). His golden frail body of medium height with radiant affectionate smile, was to be a lasting impression with them. He was always free from anxiety and care, but his zeal to undo widely current false interpretations of the Vedas and Sastras was formidable. When it was known that Visalakshi used to do Homa whenever Ganapati Muni was out of station and he ignored the criticism of misguided pandits, the Calcutta disciples realised with reverence that the Guru practised first what he taught. His insistence on equal rights to women and on the removal of untouchability made them respect him as a reformer with progressive outlook though he was in fact preaching in accordance with the spirit of the Vedas. He made the Vedas look modern, eternally modern. Just like God, the Vedas too are ever new. But disciples were helpless to prevent him from going to Kharagpur to grace an Ashram which he never wanted.

The Ashram was thatched house of two rooms. Somayajula Suryanarayan was chosen by the disciples to arrange for the daily meals to Nayana. Simhalu came from, Kaluvarayi to serve him and he had to mess in a different house every day. When Simhalu went out for meals, Somayajula Suryanarayana's brother was keeping watch over the Ashram. Disciples were gathering in the Ashram every Saturday and Homa was performed in the presence of Ganapati Muni after which generally he spoke for a while. As these disciples were living in distant localities, no one had the time or facility to personally look after the needs of the Guru. The schedule of his special diet was not adhered

to. His health began to deteriorate. He had a boil which troubled him for some time and although no one attended to it, it subsided ! Then diabetes took hold of him but he did not complain. He told Somayajula Suryanarayana in the course of a conversation "I shall go out to spread my ideas".

Another disciple P. Manikyam desired to study the horoscope of Ganapati Muni. Though he was told by Nayana that the native was under the shadow of death then, Manikyam kept it confidential and began endlessly digging into various books on astrology.

Nearly three months passed. Nemani Suryanarayana sent this telegraphic message to Kantam, "on the twenty third of July; on 21-7-1936 Nayana took his lunch and lay down for rest. But he could not get up though he was conscious. A doctor examined him and opined that the patient was very weak. Nayana has not been taking even water Start immediately. Bring your wife too. We have sent telegrams to Maharishi and Mahade yesterday".

Kantam and Suramma arrived the next morning and after touching Nayana's feet, Kantam read out the telegraphic message and asked "Is this all true?" to which he replied with only a smile. Suramma gave apple juice and Nayana remained silent for a while. Then he took a paper and pencil lying near the pillow on his bed and wrote "Both Mahadeva and you have come now. Both of you can have a holiday to-day." But Kantam again asked him as to why he was not speaking. He cleared his throat and said "I can talk - weakness is lessening".

When Kantam asked Simhalu why Nayana had become so weak and whether fruit juice was not given regularly, he said "I gave orange juice to Nayana but since he did not touch it, I though he did not want it".

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Apple juice was given two or three times and Nayana was able to move out of the bed to change clothes. At about two in the afternoon, there was a downpour of heavy rain and the Asram was leaking everywhere except the spot where Nayana was. Kantam requested him to agree to move either to the residence of Parvateesam or to Calcutta. He replied : "Tomorrow (Saturday) afternoon at two thirty we shall move out"

Why was he suffering like this in this "Ashram" when there were so many disciples who would unhesitatingly sacrifice anything if only they could make him happy?

That evening the doctor again examined him and assured that the patient was recovering. A telegram from Sri Ramana Ashram was also received then. It read "Two telegrams sent by you were given to Bhagawan. He kept them with him, remained silent".

Kantam by mistake had brought with him a key belonging to his office. So he hurried back to Calcutta hoping to return before the next afternoon when Nayana could be taken to Paravateesam's residence.

Next day (twentyfifth July, 1936) Nayana appeared almost normal. He participated in the Homa performed by his disciples. For fifteen minutes he rested on his cot and asked Suramma, "Has Kantam come". Suramma replied in the negative. Then he closed his eyes and Mahadeva immediately found that the great sage was about to give up his body. Anxiously he asked "Nayana ! What am I to do?". Nayana opened his eyes and said, "I have already told you to continue your Japa".

Parvateesam came with a car ! It was two-thirty ! Nayana had just then left his body.

NĀYANA

At Tiruvannamalai that day from the morning Bhagawan Ramana was unusually silent. And the inmates of Sri Rmana Ashram felt that something grievous had happened.

That evening the telegram from Kharagpur was received. Veda-parayanam was going on as usual. As soon as it ended, Bhagwan said 'A shock. Nayana has gone'. But again he said "Has he?" indicating that he had not. With tears in his eyes, he exclaimed, "Where do we go to see the like of him?."

EPILOGUE

For many days after wards Bhagawan Ramana was feelingly referring to various incidents from the life of Nayana and explaining his greatness to the devotees.

The agony of the disciples could be imagined all the more, as it was a permature end. Ganapati Muni was only 58 then. Prof. C. Mahadevan's (Andhra Unviersity) wife had a dream the preceding night in which she saw Nayana rising in a radiant form from the funeral pyre and going somewhere to do tapas. Next morinign both the wife and the husband discuseed the significance of this dream with great concern. The afternoon brought them the telegram. So were the innumerable disciples informed. They were all grieved that god Ganapati should have planned only such a brief sojourn in their midst.

Ganapati Muni has blessed us with standard works whose themes are based on Vedic culture. But they are all scattered at Gokārnām, Kuluve, Sirsi, Arunachalam, Secunderabad, Calcutta and Karagpur, the places where he stayed with his loving disciples. He left a rich legacy and Kantam has done his best to bring many of them to light.

Some months after passing away of Ganapati Muni, Kantam and Suramma visited Sri Ramana Ashram. Mahadeva and Narasimha Sastri the son of Sivarama Sastri were also there then. Ramana was sitting in the hall, and Narasimha Sastri was copying Umasahasram. Ramana asked Narasimha Sastri 'Narasimha! How far have you copied?'. He had copied upto the ninetysixth sloka and was about to begin the next one. Ramana smiled and asked him to read out the three slokas from the ninety-sixth onwards.

Cittam aneeyo vittam
 Ya idam mulye prapancato pyadhikam
 Hrudayaguhaayaam nihitam
 Janeete Sa vijahaati bahiraasaa
 Apraaptaa murdhaanaam
 Hrudayaat samprasthita dhrutaa naadyaa
 Tvadruciruktaa buddhih
 Tvayi nisthaa bhavati devi tannisthaa

Annamayaanum praaptam
 Dheejyotiscandramaarkam iva tejah
 Paribhaasyate mahesvari
 Mana iti samkalpasambhavasthaanam

the meaning of these three slokas :

1. **Whoever realise the chitta - pure Awareness as being more precious than the whole universe, as the carefully concealed treasure within the heart's cave, he will discard all other desires.**
2. **Mother ! Your radiance which has emerged from the heart, but has not yet reached the head and is being borne by the Amruta naadi (the channel between the heart and Sahasraara) is called Buddhi (sense). Inherence in that Buddhi is called inherence in you.**
3. **Maheswari ! As the light from Moon is but the reflection of the Sun's radiance, so the reflection of the radiance of Buddhi which reaches the atom (of matter) in the Head, becomes the Manas (Mind) the source (starting point) of all thoughts.**

Ramana asked Narasimha 'Are you able to understand them?'

When Narasimha replied 'The meaning of the words is' evident but how can I know the subtle meaning of the pas-

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sage/ Vara Ramana remarked smiling 'What ! You mean every sloka has two meanings ? Is it not Nayana's speciality to explain in simple language even very subtle ideas? You are a scholar - how is it you say that you do not understand ?'

Then Ramana explained slowly - Nayana has extolled the very precious nature of Chitta in the first sloka and then explained his own experience gained by spiritual practice. Though the radiance passing from Heart to head gets entangled in external influences due to its association with sense organs, it will be experienced in its pristine purity by those who arrest the flow of the current in between in the Amritanadi. This radiance is not anything different from the Pure Awareness of the Heart. Chitta is the subtlest essence of the mind and intellect. What proceeds to the Head from the Heart is that pure radiance. Chitta Aakaasa and Chidaakaasa coalesce inseparably. The heart is the support of the Universe as well as the body. The universe and the body are inhering in this subtle all pervading Heart. Whence all knowledge and activity arise in the Jiva it is called the Heart. It has to be understood by experience; it is there as a very subtle centre on the right side of the chest.

Ramana wanted to go for Giri Pradakshina. But as Suramma had a sprain in the ankle, she planned to go in a jutka (horse -drawn cart). But Bhagawan did not approve of it. And so before starting for Giri Pradakshina, she and Kantam touched the feet of Ramana and reassured themselves that those divine feet were where they belonged. Suramma and Kantam had a vision that Ramana was walking before them and the ankle sprain was not at all felt. After Giri Pradakshina, Suramma did Pradakshina to Ramana. When Ramana remarked whether it was necessary to do pradakshina to him after Giri Pradakshina, Suramma replied that Pradakshina to Bhagawan Ramana was Pradakshina round the whole universe.

Kantam was thinking of seeking Ramana's grace for the publication of Nayana's works. Ramana then cast his graceful look at Kantam and told him "All the books of Nayana will be published. The time must come. You write the biography first. The publication of Nayana's books will follow.

Kantam did as ordained by Sri Ramana Maharshi and wrote in Telugu the biography of Sri Ganapati Muni called "Nayana" - the dear name by which he was known by Sri Bhagawan and all others.

Jayatu Bharata ksonee Khandam
 Vishaada vivarjitam
 Jayatu Ganapastasya Kshemam
 Vidhaatumanaa munih
 Jayatu Ramanastasyaa caaryo
 Maharshi kulaacalaha
 Jayatu ca tayormaataaputaa
 Mahesavilaasini

- Umasahasram XXXIV, 24

May this land of Bharata
 Free from sorrow, prosper aloft
 May Ganapati wishing welfare
 Of his motherland, rise victorius -
 May Ramana, the Master of Ganapati
 And Chief of the clan of Maharishis
 Emerge effulgent
 And May Maheshwara's spouse,
 The Holy mother of both shrine forth.

Canto XXXIV, 24 Verse Umasahasram.