

THE VOICE from BEYOND THE VOID



Words of Guruji

Increase your longing for the goal i.e., the realization of the Self or God. It has to become so intense and volcanic that it draws the Lord to you. Even when an actor is acting in a drama as per the script, nobody can prevent him from thinking of his wife at home even though he may be acting as Rama in Ramayana drama. So also, even though all the events in life have been pre-determined, you do have the liberty to think of God or the world and nobody can take away this free will. By keeping your mind constantly on God, you will be able to realise who you are and thus attain God realisation. Everyday you should pray to God and talk with Him as if He is your friend. Confide all your fears and problems and seek His help. Many great souls like Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Paramahansa Yogananda used to talk to the Divine Mother. These are all techniques which have been proved to be infallible and if you follow them without questioning or arguing, you will get the results.

[Source: Fragrant Flowers]

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Remember God always and never forget him for a moment. This alone can lead you to God. After all, everyone of us is liberated and we are bound to realise one day that we have always been free. Even that one day is here and now as all the dreams of countless births and deaths are all taking place in a moment and all time and space is as unreal as the world, being equally a product of Maya.

Disclaimer:

The views expressed in the various articles in this newsletter do not necessarily represent Swamiji's views. The views are authors' own.

Mahasamadhi of our Gurudev

Devotees of Swami Shantananda Puri Maharaj

For the last several months, Guruji was having various ailments and was frequently hospitalized. Especially in the last two months, Guruji spent most of his time in East Coast Hospitals in Pondicherry. On 14th October 2014, at about 12.15pm, Swamiji started to have heavy intestinal bleeding on account of liver cirrhosis. The heavy bleeding combined with the heart condition caused his breathing to stop. He breathed his last around 1.00pm and thereafter at about 3.00pm his final journey to Tiruvannamalai started. Guruji reached Tiruvannamalai at about 5.00pm and was kept in his room K 18, until the next day 2pm when the final rites took place. Devotees from all over the country poured in to have a glimpse of Swamiji and offer their love, respect and gratitude.

In and around Tiruvannamalai there was heavy rainfall at around 11 am offering respite from the heat and it appeared that our master wanted his devotees to be comfortable even while offering last respects to his mortal remains. Traditionally in South India, rain before any religious function is considered as a very auspicious event.

Last Rites

Swamiji's last rituals were performed on 15th October. The process started at about 2pm, when his body was taken from the Ramanasramam room. Large number of devotees thronged and collectively chanted 'Arunachala Siva'. Karpoor Arati was made by Swami Ramanananda and the body bedecked in floral offerings, in the sitting posture (Padmasana), was moved in an ambulance to the final place of rest, 6 KM away.

At the Samadhi Bhoomi, the body was kept in Padmasana. The devotees spontaneously and collectively chanted Sri Vishnu Sahasranamam. A group of Vaishanava devotees sang selected hymns from 'Nalayira Divya Prabandham'. The rituals were carried out by Swami Ramanananda and around 15 pandits from the Asramam chanted 'Taittiriya Upanishad.' As it is customary was Sanyasis, the Abhisheka of the body was performed with water, ganga jal, milk, ghee, curd, sandal paste, vibhooti, etc.

While alive (in the month of July) Sri Gurudev had articulated to some of the devotees the minimum rituals to be performed and these were followed as per his instructions. Sri Ramanasramam played the lead role in the entire process including making ready the Samadhi Bhoomi.

The body was covered in new ochre robes and bedecked with a flower garland. Vibhhoti (sacred ash) and Kumkum were applied to the forehead. The body was placed in a large cloth bag. A pit of dimension 6x6x10 (around 10 feet deep) and covered on the sides with brick and mortar was already

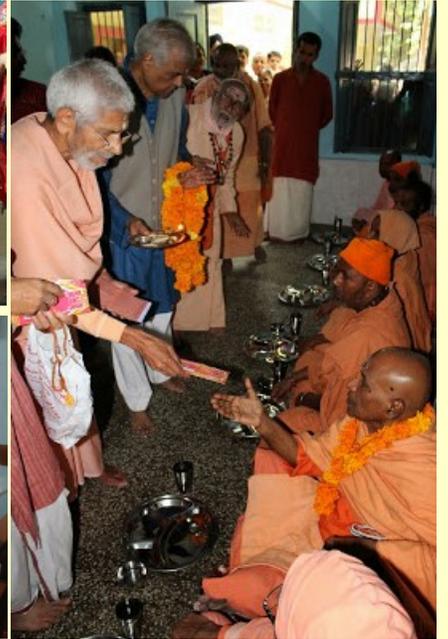
constructed and kept ready in the forenoon. The body in the cloth bag was placed inside the pit. Along with chanting of hymns the body was covered with salt, camphor, vibhooti (holy ash), chandan (sandal) powder and Vilwa Patras (holy leaves Bilwa tree). Thereafter the sides were covered with fresh river sand and brick powder. The top was covered with four large blocks of granite slabs and they were sealed with cement. A stone was placed on the Samadhi to indicate the position of head. The devotees collectively chanted 'Sri Lalita Sahsrnama'. Thereafter several verses of 'Akshara Manamalai' of Bhagavan Ramana was chanted. Swami Ramanananda offered Naivedya of coconut and various fruits and concluded the rituals by waving Arati (camphor lamp) and chanting the Santhi Mantra from Vedas.

Sri Gurudev's mortal remains face the East and the Arunachala Hill is visible towards the North East. Sri Swamiji is none other than the Ultimate Reality, 'Arunachala Siva' and he continues to shower his affection and love to one and all of us.

Traditionally the 16th day of Mahasamadhi is observed as 'Shodasi' for Sannayasis of Sankara lineage. Swami Chaitanyananda, head of Vasishta Guha Asram made elaborate arrangements to honor large number of saints on 29th October 2014 at the Guha. Yati Pooja was performed to selected Sannayasis and gifts of clothes, blankets, umbrella, foot wear, rudraksha, walking stick, cloth bags etc. were given to all Sannyasis. Around 1000 devotees participate in the Bhandara (customary feast) at noon. At Ramansramam, on 29th October 2014, 16 Sannyasis were gifted 16 items as instructed by Swamiji and Bhiksha (noon meal to all the devotees who visited the Asramam) and Narayana Seva (noon meal to all the Sadhus and poor people) were conducted.



Shodasi Pictures [in Vashishta Guha and Sri Ramanasramam]



Kriya Yoga of Paramahansa Yogananda

By Geetha Ravichandran, Commissioner of Income Tax

Paramahansa Yogananda revived an ancient tradition in which initiates practiced control of breath and could gradually achieve the highest state of super consciousness or Samadhi. A description of Kriya Yoga is found in the “Autobiography of a Yogi” of Paramahansa Yogananda.

The techniques practiced by Kriya Yogins are considered secret and are not available in the public domain. They are meant to be learnt from a qualified teacher of an authentic lineage. Chapter 26 of the book outlines the basic tenets of Kriya Yoga and its underlying philosophy.



Breath control or pranayama is known to enable oxygenation of blood and prevents decay of tissues. It energises and rejuvenates the cells and increases the life force of a living organism. Breath control leads to the control of the mind and gradually results in withdrawal of the mind from the objects of the senses which is pratyahara. The practitioner then experiences a feeling of oneness with the universe leading to Samadhi.

It is observed among the various life forms that a lower rate of respiration is connected to longevity. The tortoise which lives for 300 years breathes only four times per minute. Rapid breathing is also associated with emotional disturbances. Thus control of breath is a key to achieving mental equanimity and good bodily health. However the benefits are not merely tangible. Since the breath is the cord that binds the body to the soul, practice of breath control results in expansion of consciousness beyond the confines of the body and mind.

Paramahansa Yogananda refers to verse 29 of chapter IV of the Bhagavad Gita as the authority for the practice of Kriya yoga. This verse describes the offering of Prana or the outgoing breath as worship to Apana or the incoming breath. This results in the Yagna or fire rite where the sense related desires are consumed by the purificatory fire which is generated by this practice. Ultimately the merger of the individual consciousness with the universal consciousness takes place.

The practice of breath control primarily involves watching the incoming and outgoing breath. This is an exercise in awareness and leads to development of the Sakshi Bhava namely the attitude of a witness. The result of such a constant practice is the cultivation of detachment from the body-mind complex and surrender to the divine.

O Mother Divine

By Abir and Anisha Bordoloi

O Maha Maya Maa
 O Cosmic living and loving energy
 O Rule maker
 O Rule breaker
 O Ego annihilator
 O Formless Love
 O Creator of time

You choose from "God's own country"
 The rare one
 To know You as You
 The rest of us see You as this little form
 As any other object to possess
 As a form with a birthday

Only the rare one sees You
 As the Embodiment of Peace
 The rest of us see You as a "piece"
 Such is the power of Your Maya
 How utterly amusing!
 How utterly potent!

O Lord of Lords
 Who can own You
 O indivisible Cosmic Love?

Please rid us of Your Maya
 Please reveal Yourself to us
 Please shake us out of ignorance

Are there visiting hours
 For the one who feels Your Presence
 All day, every day?
 Is oneness not closer than a touch?
 How could we place our heads on Your
 Cosmic Lap

When we are already safe in Your Heart?
 How could we even dream of serving You
 When You are the only One Reality?
 Aren't You the mad longing in our hearts?
 Aren't You the laughter and the tears?
 Aren't You in everyone everywhere?
 Aren't we all in You at all times?
 Has devotion ever feared time and distance?

In Your Cosmic Dream
 Let us not remain fools
 Who define You by time and space
 Please wake us up, Guruji
 Your Will alone prevails
 You decide every moment
 You control each and every one of us
 You are the Divine Puppeteer
 We are Your puppets

Your most stubborn children,
 Abir and Anisha Bordoloi



Sleepless Nights with Endless Love

An anecdote on Swami Shantananda Puri Maharaj, by Reshma Krishnakumar

I often feel that for an individual who is caught by the master, life appears to be like a beautiful park and everything that happens in this life will sooner or later, turn out to be an entertainment. The various problems we encounter in this so called life are the different 'rides' in the park. Sometimes he puts us in a roller coaster hoping we would enjoy the ride. But like a small child we weep screaming, "Gurudev, get me out of this somehow! Are you smiling and watching while I cry for help?" we forget that it's all fun. After the ride, we clutch on to him saying, "Don't put me in this ever again, Gurudev". Next time he might take us to a horror house. Everything around would appear dark and it would seem as though we would remain there forever. While in the dark room the only thing we ask him is, "Gurudev, where is the exit door? I am afraid of this game. Let's get out of this". We fail to remember that throughout he was holding our hands tightly saying, "We are together. Enjoy it! There is nothing to be scared of." But, how can we? It was during the days when I was working on a project as a part of completion of my bachelor's degree in Engineering; my Gurudev directed a horror story in my life. During those episodes of my life, all that I wanted was to somehow fast-forward those scenes but here I am trying to rewind the movie and now I feel, "yes! It was all a game."

Those days there were only three things that occupied my mind – project, presentation and project review. Although not intentionally, I had not spoken even to my Gurudev for days due to the pressure from the work. One evening when I returned home from college my mother told me that she would be away for fifteen days as she was going to ashram to meet Gurudev. For a moment, I felt everyone including my project guide, mother and my whole college were being cruel to me! Even the tiny bacterias which I was dealing with in my work looked like a villain by not producing any favourable results for me. I neither had the chance to meet my Gurudev, nor any improvement in my project. I was extremely frustrated with everything around me. Days passed by and there was only a single day for my mother to return back. I was very thrilled. I would get to hear about Gurudev and moreover, every time when my mother visits Gurudev without me, he would send a letter for me. I used to carry my Gurudev's book on Lalitha Sahasranama in the pocket of my lab coat. It was a small book which correctly fits into my pocket and in between the work I used to read it. From time to time I would look at his photo and from nowhere it would bring happiness in me. I was lost in my thoughts waiting for the arrival of my mother and of course, the letter. That day after the lunch, I just visited the washroom. I locked the toilet door and the next thing I knew was I had fallen back with my head banging against the closet. I could feel terrific pain on my right knee and could not bend it. I was very afraid and did not know what to do.

I could see that my knee cap had dislocated to the right side. I remember screaming aloud, "Gurudev..." and with all the pain I pulled the knee cap back to position. I cried for help but perhaps because of my cry the other girls became panicky and ran out of the toilet with nobody to help me

get out. I checked for mobile in my lab coat but that day, I had left it in my bag and my pocket only had Gurudev's book. I began feeling dizzy and I knew I had to somehow come out of the toilet else, I would faint. I kept calling for my Gurudev and tears were rolling from my eyes. I got hold of the door knob and with its support stood up. The toilet seemed empty. With the support of left leg and the toilet walls, I managed to get out of the toilet. I was taken to the causality by the college authorities.

I was told by the doctor that my ligaments were torn due to the dislocation and advised me to have complete bed rest for a month. Now, this was really happy news for me. Though there was terrific pain, I felt nice when I thought I didn't have to go to college. I collected the medical certificate and returned back to home. I called up Gurudev and informed him about my toilet adventure. The next day when his letter reached me through my mother, I was peacefully having rest. After about two days I left for college with the medical certificate to apply for my medical leave. Since I was unable to move by myself I was always accompanied by my mother. I enquired for the official formalities and applied for the leave as per the instructions from faculty and the department head assured that there would be no issues regarding my attendance. However, I got the medical leave only for four days and rest of the days I was asked to come daily and sign on the attendance register and return back home. I was exempted from attending theory classes. Though coming daily to college was a problem as my home was in the first floor of the building with no lift facility and getting down the stairs was like a nightmare, to avoid further complications regarding the attendance I agreed to sign daily on the attendance record. I was asked by my project guide to wind up the work and compile the results to begin thesis works which could be done from home. On the peripheral level, everything appeared smooth and I was unable to perceive any problem coming up.

My Gurudev would call me daily and enquire how I was doing. He would remind me to take my medicines and advice me on how to get down the stairs without giving strain on my leg. He would ask me to learn the subjects myself and tell me not to forget about my thesis. There is nothing with which one can compare that divine love. If one is fortunate to experience the unconditional care and concern of a master it would for sure make us feel, "Gurudev, do I really deserve your love?" we can see that before that divinity we appear too small.

The classes were dispersed for study leave and I left for my native. There were only three days left for my end semester examination and in the evening I got a call from my classmate saying I was stopped from writing Neurobiology exam due to lack of attendance. I could appear only after six months by attending special classes. Frankly, the moment I heard the news I did not feel worried at all. I was sure my Gurudev would not put me into such a terrible situation. But soon, my confidence was simply drained. My head kept rounding along with the hands of the clock. I became panic and began crying. I couldn't believe how this could happen to me in spite of the assurance from all the faculties of my department. Gurudev was admitted in Pondicherry and it was difficult to speak to him over the

phone. Luckily, I got the fortune of speaking to him and told him about the matter. He was very calm and only said, "Don't worry! Something will turn up." I was constantly attacked my thought of having to attend the special classes, not able to get the degree and what not? I couldn't find any way out to solve this.

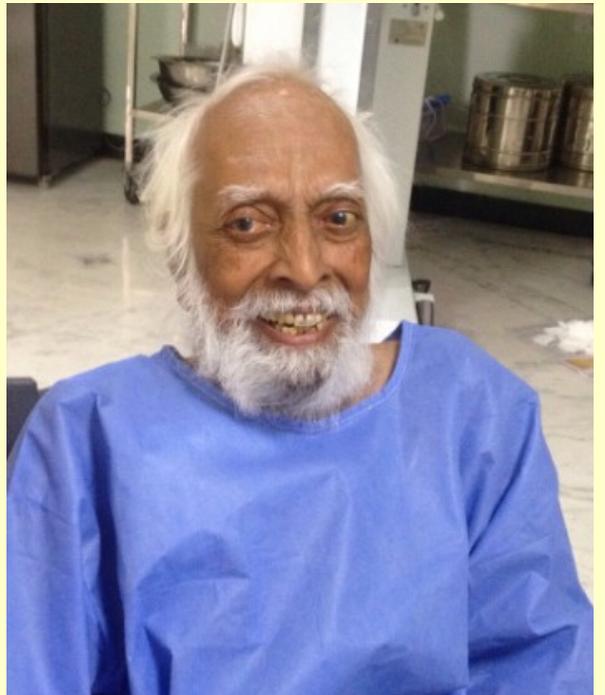
Sometimes, when God gets busy he might send his angels for help and this turned out to be true in my case. Two angels came for my help – Mr. Murali ji from Pondicherry and Mrs. Geetha ji of Pondicherry. I spoke to both of them and throughout the three days they helped me stay positive and gave me the strength to face the problem. Mrs. Geetha ji had taken great pains in presenting this issue before higher authorities which included the collector of the district as well as the educational director of Tamil Nadu who spoke to my college management directly and I was given an appointment with the management to discuss about the issue. It was the day before the Neurobiology examination and I had not revised anything. I was waiting outside the office for the authorities to call me inside. I spoke to the management and they checked for the details of my attendance. It was found that there was a shortage of only two hours.

My performances in the previous examinations were taken into consideration and I was permitted to appear for University examination as a special case. I take this opportunity to mark my gratitude to both the angels without whom I could never have written the exam and needless to mention, the magical blessings of my Gurudev which does wonders.

We may not meet any of the eligibility criteria required to be a disciple but in the Cascade of Compassion of the Master he makes each one of us qualified to enjoy his love. We may not shed tears for the "Ultimate Truth" as much as we do for the worldly affairs, yet he forgives us for our ignorance! Can any of us clear the examination of HIS University without his Grace marks? Like an immortal guardian he holds our hands taking us through the ocean of hurdles. Words cease to describe his affection. There remains only one thought, "Gurudev, I am obliged to you for this life. Thousands of pranams at your holy feet."



Memories of our Gurudev



Satsang by Gurudev in the last months

Spoken by Swami Shantananda Puri Maharaj

Gurudev returned to Tiruvannamalai from Pondicherry on 15th August after concluding some of the tests and was extremely weak. However, when a few devotees visited him, the same day he started his satsang. This was one of last satsang's of Guruji and an extract is given below:

For realisation, the mind has to be one pointed. Now it goes for husband, father, office, etc. It should all be concentrated to one point, God alone. Change is the nature of life. Changelessness is the nature of bliss.

In quantum physics, zero is the absolute number. Reduce to that - then you become a Jivan Mukta. Nothing can come and affect you. Nothing can attract you. This is logical, rational and scientific.

There is a story in this regard. The enemies take over King Janaka's kingdom and they ask King Janaka to leave the kingdom before midnight else they would kill him. Janaka manages to run the whole day to cross the border. At last he crosses the border just on time before midnight. He has no food or water during the day. He reaches a Dharamsala and then approaches the manager for food. The manager says, "Yesterday night there was a big feast, a bhandara. Nothing is left. The vessels are under the tap. You may get 1-2 handfuls of rice in them." Janaka goes to take food from the unwashed vessels and then suddenly some dogs came and snatches the handful of rice gathered by Janaka. Janaka begins to weep, "Oh I am Janaka, who has done so much good is facing all these difficulties".

Suddenly, the scene changes. He finds the scene is gone. He is lying in his bed in his palace. To him it was not a dream but an actual vision. He asks his wife, "Is this the truth or is that the truth?" He also offers to give half the kingdom to the one who answers this question. People gave replies, "This is also true and that is also true."

At last, one great mahatma Ashtavakra comes to the darbar. Ashtavakra laughs loudly and says, "I am laughing at you people. I was told you are vedantins. You are seeing the drama. Neither this is true nor that is true. Truth is what is not affected in all the three states. That vision that remains yesterday and not today is not true. If I saw a white cow, even after ten years I will say I saw a white cow."

There is no other truth. The real truth we have to find out; that which remains forever and changeless. The clue is our sleep state and dream state. In sleep you rejuvenate because there is no fragmented energy in you. You are the Totality. A glimpse of that truth is given and we are happy. Analyse why you are happy. It is because you do not have a relationship with wife, money, etc. in that state. Other things like subconscious, conscious, etc. are all shadows of the original Super Conscious.

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