



# GRHASTAS, GURU, GOD

HER HOLINESS SRI SATHGURU SWAMI  
GNANANANDA SARASVATHI



(Biographical, with narratives from  
Swami Shriharipasad)

*I don't have any powers, I am only a servant of God sent here to do His work; a messenger to spread His divine message. Everything depends on your own faith and surrender.*



HER HOLINESS  
SAID...



**U**nusual are the ways of God.

Otherwise how could He combine the supreme qualities of a devoted householder, a soul driven by intense sadhana and more importantly a self-effacing Jagathguru into a human, nay a timeless expression of His own self? That is Her Holiness Sri Sathguru Swami Gnanananda Sarasvathi for you. First a grhasta, then a sanyasin and always a Guru.

Married at eighteen and with five children, She was the ideal Grhasta - a loving selfless mother and a devoted wife. She was personally trained by the Voice Divine and was commanded to live a life of great austerity and intense sadhana. Setting for Herself lofty standards, bereft of any ego, foregoing all the pleasures that were so easily within Her grasp, Sri Sathguru's grhasta ashrama was marked by sadhana. In order to practise it, which would normally would have been difficult in a household with five children,

she would rise at 2.30 am in the morning to spend long hours in meditation. Her belief: a householder was a sanyasin at heart and ought not to be attracted by the glamour of the world. For the world, Sri Sathguru's household was to all appearances an ordinary one, but every moment, that She could spare was utilised in sadhana. When Sri Sathguru teaches the importance of practising sadhana even when in *Grhasthaashrama*, Sri Sathguru is teaching only what She had practised earlier in life. For there is no better proof than one's own experience.

*But then was Sri Sathguru any different then all of us in her purvashrama?*

Her story begins in a village close to Guruvayur. Her mother, a devout scholarly lady belonged to a respected affluent family and Her father was Sri K.P.Velu Pillay, the Deputy Agent and General Manager of what was then known as the South Indian Railway.

Sri Sathguru had Her education at the St. Joseph's European Girls High School and Holy Cross College Tiruchi.

Mischievous as a child, She grew up to become calm and detached. Her communion with the Divine, which began from an early age, became firmly established. She had rare spiritual experiences, visions and telepathic powers from the tender age of seven. These were however not known to people around her because of Her self-effacing nature.

Though Sri Sathguru tried very hard to conceal Her spiritual achievements and appear an ordinary housewife to the world, people were soon attracted to Her. Sri Sathguru's forthrightness, simplicity of approach, clarity of thought and above all, Her empathy, Her unique ability to look at a problem from the view of the suffering supplicant and not from the rarefied heights of philosophical attainment attracted several devotees.

Her simple solutions to their problems and teachings which were easy to comprehend and practical based upon Her unshakable faith in the Helping Hand of a Compassionate God eager to Help his devotees moved all who came to Her. From the young Sri Lankan Muslim lady who, prostrating before Sri Sathguru in the waiting room of the Tiruchi railway junction, who became Sri Sathguru's first devotee, to the learned pandit in Kurnool who strictly lived according to the Sastras. Devotees were told that it was God who helped them, and She was merely His instrument.

Her persona of self-effacement notwithstanding, by Her fortieth year, Sri Sathguru was the Guru of a large number of devotees who relied on Her instructions in every detail of their lives. Early in life the Divine had told Her that She was born in this world to fulfill a Divine Mission. And later in 1972, it was revealed to Her that Her worldly duties

towards Her family were coming to an end and that She would be initiated into Sanyasa. Although stunned by the news initially, Her husband and children willingly yielded to the Divine Command with total surrender, closing the chapter of Her Holiness' faultless life as a Householder.

### The Divine Mission

Soon after Her Sanyasa H.H. Sri Sathguru Swami Gnanananda Sarasvathi launched the Sri Gnana Advaita Peetam to propagate Her teachings of Advaita Vedanta through the method of Sharanagati. Sri Sathguru has trained Her devotees to reach higher and higher levels of spiritual evolution. Sri Sathguru's teaching has a special Message for Householders, especially women - to perform their duties with total detachment and self-surrender as an offering to Sri Bhagavan; as demonstrated by Her in Her own life as a Grhasta. She stresses that family life is a field for attaining God-realization.

Although in the initial stages of Her Divine work, sick people were cured merely by Her touch, an intimate talk with Her with devotion, or a mere compassionate glance from Her eyes was sufficient to transmit healing Grace to the suffering.

But Sri Sathguru considers the only miracle worth performing is the transformation of the life of a devotee and giving it an irreversible turn God ward i.e. inwards. Several extraordinary events have taken place in the lives of Her devotees and She humbly attributes them to the All-powerful Grace of the Divine flowing to the recipients because of their own worthiness. Sri Sathguru once said, *"I don't have any powers. I am only a servant of God sent here to do His work; a messenger to spread His Divine Message. Everything depends upon your own faith and surrender. Faith is said to move mountains but it must be firm, unshakeable and unchanging and unquestioning.*

*If you have such faith, then the most impossible miracle can take place."*

Sri Sathguru's life in the twenty-five years since Her Sanyasa have alternated between long periods of *antarmukham* and *samadhi*, when Sri Sathguru's energies were entirely turned inwards to increase *lokasangraham* (world-integration) and Jana kalyan (welfare of the masses) and spells of intense activity when Sri Sathguru gave Darshan to devotees and taught them the way to God. Most characteristic of Sri Sathguru is Her *saulabhya*. Her accessibility. Approachable and gracious, all devotees, regardless of gender, age and status feel that they have reached a harbour of refuge when they see Her. Sri Sathguru puts devotees who are less articulate or feel tongue-tied in Her presence at ease graciously and kindly and many devotees who come to ask Sri Sathguru questions, find these doubts are cleared by Sri Sathguru in Her discourses even before they voice them.

Though a Vedantin par excellence Sri Sathguru takes a keen interest in preserving our ancient culture and in the maintenance of the great temples of South India. Sri Sathguru visited as many temples as is possible, reinvigorating the vigrahams (idols) with the power and tejas, which, they were endowed with when they were created, motivating the priests to serve the Lord with *Bhakti* (devotion) and *shraddha* (faith) and urging the devotees to support the temples not merely financially but also with whole-hearted devoted service.

Sri Sathguru's teachings are simple, easy to understand and to follow, their practical nature spring from Her experience both as a householder and as a sadhaka.

Sri Krishna (in the eleventh Skandha of the Bhagavatham) describes the Guru as the helmsman who takes our boat across the ocean of samsara. Her descent many deacades ago perhaps was with this mission: lokasangraham and spreading the timeless concept of everything being a part of *vasudaiva kutumbakam*.

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*“Unless you lead a clean, good life, you can’t expect God’s help. He is always there, but He can’t help. You see, He didn’t help the Kauravas. He helped the Pandavas.”*

- Sri Sathguru



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