

An Interview with Sri Nannagaru – Nov 1993

Foreword

During the month of November 1993, Press Reporters questioned Sri Nannagaru at Visakhapatnam on various topics. We whole-heartedly feel that these Talks will help disciples in their spiritual advancement.

INTERVIEW WITH SRI NANNAGARU AT VISHAKAPATNAM, NOVEMBER 1993



Question One: To what extent are spiritual values beneficial in reducing man's criminal tendencies?

Sri Nannagaru: To a certain extent poverty and ignorance are the reasons for man's criminal instincts. Other reasons are thinking that there is happiness in wealth, the environment in which one is brought up and imitation. However, the most important reason for man's criminal tendencies is thinking that there is enjoyment *only* in sensory pleasures.

People who do not have a purpose in life are attracted to a criminal way. In some people there is selfishness but no cruelty and in others there is cruelty but no selfishness. If both cruelty and selfishness are present, then that person will definitely become a criminal. Nowadays in certain cities crime has become almost a hobby.

Most importantly moral principles are the foundation for spiritual values - spiritual values lead to acquisition of knowledge. Man's criminal instincts are automatically subdued in the effort of a search for Truth. By clearly explaining the bad effects of illicit instincts, the criminal will be released from them. As social consciousness grows that person will

become mindful and move away from a criminal temperament. A criminal nature is a weakness and it is Society that should take responsibility for it.

Question Two: A flower emits a fragrance as soon as it is born. So did you have an interest in spiritual matters from your childhood?

Sri Nannagaru: I should say that it was there to a certain extent since childhood but only started blossoming from my teenage years. Spiritual values assist in independent thinking. I am used to selfless action and working without the desire for the fruit of action helped in my spiritual development. During childhood, although I didn't have a *clear* understanding about knowledge, I did have a strong desire to attain it. Without spiritual thinking, it is not possible to raise one's level of consciousness. My mind was inclined to spiritual matters more than towards worldly ones. I didn't have the same liking towards religion that I had for philosophy and used to think that religion and castes were polluting society.



Question Three: You are divine and pure in word. You are known for pleasing both laymen as well as scholars with your nectar-like words. How is that possible?

Sri Nannagaru: I love my listeners very much and I am at peace with them. I deal with my devotees with a noble mind and don't bother about their common follies. I not only teach Self-knowledge but also help in awakening the good in my devotees and wish for their worldly progress. I try to make them walk the path of peace. My devotees have a living faith in me. I look on them as my friends but they treat me as Divine. I feel they show me more respect than is my due. That is why I take care thinking about my devotees and while teaching them never behave irresponsibly towards them. If they commit a mistake I feel as if I have done it. Also, on some levels, I share their misery. My teachings, to a certain extent, help my devotees by making discrimination the centre of their thoughts.

The relationship between my devotees and myself is not that of *guru-sishya* (master and disciple), instead we move like members of the same family. Whether my devotees' life circumstances are for or against their relationship of love with me will never get broken. There is always a mental affinity and they get answers to their day-to-day problems through my teachings. For one who has no peace there is no happiness, but, by listening to my words, my devotees get both peace and happiness. They float in the ocean of peace, love, compassion, friendliness, respect and affection which flows out from me.

I know my affection towards my devotees is also recognised by them and that is why I am not able to stop teaching. I try to explain complex issues through simple words and if they don't understand what I tell them, I feel it is my mistake. There is no end to the affection and faith being shown by my devotees. Even if my body dies, I will be living in their hearts and will take them to a state of no-misery. I teach them philosophy with small words and



short sentences.

Question Four: Parents hope their child will become a Collector, Doctor or Engineer. But why would they not wish, even in their dreams, that their child becomes a *jnani*?

Sri Nannagaru: Generally parents have mostly worldly and materialistic attitudes. They want only material prosperity as they think that alone will give happiness. They know about the importance of money but don't know the *value* of knowledge. That's why they don't want their child to become a *jnani*. Even if an individual has talent, he needs to have the right opportunity for it to blossom. One, who uses the

opportunity that comes his way at the right time, is a wise man.

Except Self-knowledge all other knowledge is pertinent only for filling the stomach. Self-knowledge presents the person with freedom, happiness, peace and development. A person can attain immortality only through Self-knowledge. Parents who realise the value of Self-knowledge and the importance of pure consciousness will feel happy if their child becomes a *jnani*. Then, the parents will feel that they are sitting on the back of an elephant.* Even nowadays there are parents who want their child to become a *jnani*. In life acquisition of knowledge is most important and lives that have no connection with knowledge will be as beautiful as a decorated corpse!

* Riding on the back of an elephant (like a king), symbolises the very height of prosperity in India.

Question Five: Did your parents wish you at any time to become a *jnani*?

Sri Nannagaru: My parents didn't expect that I would become like this or like that. I didn't have much help from others for my spiritual progress. Any seeker of Truth will not necessarily have help from members of the family. In life, more than the *sadhana* I did, the Grace of Arunachala-Ramana helped in my attaining the conscious state. A *sadhaka* will not become a *siddha* if, along with his efforts, he doesn't have God's Grace. Without the Grace of the Almighty, the mind will not subdue. Only the subdued mind will be qualified for attaining the Self. I have attained the state of peace only due to Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi's blessings.

Question Six: Will parents feel happy if their children attain spiritual knowledge?

Sri Nannagaru: I will briefly give you an example so that you can understand. Gautama Buddha, Vivekananda, Ramanakrishna Paramhansa, Aristotle, Iswara Chandra Vidyasagar - all these individuals became great men. So if their parents were alive now would they feel happy or not? Definitely they would be happy. So it is with anyone's parents.

Question Seven: What do you think you have achieved? Is there anything further you wish to achieve?

Sri Nannagaru: I have done some social service within my limits. I did my share in spreading the *Akshara Jyothi** programme and have shown interest in activities that are useful to all. I have done all work unassumingly without expecting praise from others. The only thing to achieve is - to know oneself. If someone thinks he has achieved something, it is equivalent to zeros without a one in front! The truth of the Self is not restricted to place or time and it is only in that, that there is true peace and happiness. One who has peace can achieve freedom. A person is successful if; without depending on external objects, on other people, or upon outside circumstances, he attains happiness.



He, who puts the abilities that God has blessed him with, to proper use, may be considered to have achieved something in life. He who thus uses his abilities becomes pure and this purity leads to fitness to realise the Truth. We can be considered to have achieved the ultimate in life only when we have attained Bliss Absolute. Those who strive (for harmony) throughout life get liberated from untruth and ignorance - that is the only thing to be attained. In life's journey; thoughts, words and deeds must be conducive to our glorious future. When our objective is noble, our life will be automatically enobled and then we will attain the desired goal and achieve that which is to be achieved.

* Literacy programme

Question Eight: Can we get relief from disease (ill-health) through observing orthodox customs, *mantras* and repetition of God's names?

Sri Nannagaru: The custom of *madi** is for keeping pure. A cooking vessel has to be cleaned both inside and outside. In the same way one has to clean the body and the inner instrument called the mind. Water cleans the body and *mantra* purifies the mind. *Madi*, repetition of the name, *mantra* and meditation are useful to keep the mind in check. Yoga removes ill health and breaks the bond between man and his sorrows. Solitude, *satsang* (association with devotees and the wise) and fasting, purifies the mind and makes it one-pointed. Then one can strive to save and redeem oneself from sins, curses, insufficiencies, wrong tendencies and weaknesses.

In the first instance disease enters the mind and then gradually spreads throughout the body. The body is only a product of the mind and man is a combination of mind and body - the mind and body influence one another all the time. If a man has no mind (i.e. mentally afflicted) he is called a mad person and if he has only mind, without a body, he is called a ghost. Mental hygiene is as important as physical hygiene but nowadays man does not give as much importance to the mind as to the body. The mind of man has become a repository



of anxieties, frictions and abuses and manifests as such. What is inside you is outside. Repetition of God's name makes the mind pure. A peaceful mind helps to remove health problems. When the mind is made pure we can get rid of many maladies. Both mental and physical peace is achieved through meditation. To attain the wealth of self-realisation both mental and physical purity is a necessary requisite.

* *Madi* - wearing clothes which are washed and kept separate and not touching those who have not bathed etc.

Question Nine: Isn't it natural for human beings to get elated in happy circumstances and dejected in sad ones and try to escape them? What *sadhana* should we do if we want to face sad circumstances with fortitude?

Sri Nannagaru: In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Lord Krishna advises us to give up attachment, fear and anger. All three are causes of misery and the Lord asks us to keep them at a distance. Happiness, unhappiness, attachment and hatred etc., are called the *dwandwas* the pairs of opposites, and they hinder man in the acquisition of knowledge. The Lord has given us *yoga* techniques to help us get rid of these pairs of opposites. We must have a peaceful mind to fight them and we can get rid of them through worship of the Lord. Having courage in our hands as the antidote, we can easily face any amount of hardships and difficulties. He who has reached a state of fearlessness is not even conscious of these pairs of opposites. Weakness of purpose (heart) is the cause of elation and dejection (joy and sorrow). Lord Krishna tells us that weakness of heart is the source of all misery.

When one has God as the centre of his life he does not feel any sorrow. When there is a liking for something, we do not feel any hardship in doing a job. He who takes the sorrows of daily life in a joyful attitude is the real *sadhaka*. Only a *sadhaka* attains the goal or *siddhi* - *siddhi* means the knowledge of what already exists. One who is not a *sadhaka* can never become a *siddha*.

We get the ability to face difficulties when we have faith in God. Apart from God all these joys and sorrows, likes and dislikes are only the creation of the mind. When that (mind) is destroyed all of them get destroyed.

Question Ten: Sorrows are like the waves of an ocean, are they not? They always rise one after another. Are the causes of these sorrows self-made, the product of *karma* or the product of selfish elements around us?

Sri Nannagaru: We, ourselves, cause all sorrows. They come under the category of accumulated *karma*. Joy and sorrow, success and failure, gain and loss all happen according to the results of our past actions (*prarabdha*). We had better let the body suffer the *prarabdha* and try to acquire knowledge of Reality. There is peace only in Reality. He

who has no peace has no happiness. If we believe with all our heart that all happenings in life happen by the will of God, we do not suffer under the influence of them. The pairs of opposites are purely concoctions of the mind - only spiritual truth is Real.

Sins get destroyed through suffering and the result of merit gets destroyed through enjoyment. Which is better? There is a chance of our thoughts becoming deeper and introverted when we suffer (under sorrows) as suffering widens our outlook. The environment has a great influence over a weak mind but a strong mind will protect itself from this influence. Imitation is the nature of weak minds but a balanced mind has equal vision and will get free of all doubts and malevolent influences and overcome all difficulties. He who keeps aloof to insignificant and negligible issues is a wise man. The pairs of opposites do not touch the wise man.



Man must understand that he himself is the cause of his present state. Selfishness alone is the obstruction of attaining the supreme goal. Selfish people will not influence a wise man. A man of peace does not covet temporary gain as he has a vision of the future and does not differentiate between means and ends. Pleasure that is immediate and short-lived, may lead to unhappiness and tragedy in the long run. A man of vision recognizes these fundamental issues.

Question Eleven: Lastly, what suggestions can you give to our readers?

Sri Nannagaru: One should reduce selfishness and do work. One should not forget that one's happiness lies in the well being of all. One should learn to think independently. Man can't exist without some amount of wisdom and he shouldn't habituate the intellect with laziness, as even in thought there is bliss. Man can overcome a lot of difficulties by carefully thinking before talking and before starting any work. Unless Reality illumines the intellect, it won't become pure. If we don't correct our intellect who else will do it?

We should do our share in educating mankind. We should follow the rules for health and make others also follow them. Nowadays stress created by the pressures of life leads to a decrease of mental health. Mental peace is as important as food and shelter for happiness. With our words and actions we should inspire others to enter the path of peace and thereby attain happiness. We shouldn't waste our time with wasteful actions and thoughts. We should increase respect towards work as we can attain a peaceful state through labour. We should learn to see the Divine in duty and Divinity in work and also learn to worship God through work. Rather than becoming bed-ridden and then dying, it is better to die whilst working. Doing action one can progress to an actionless state. Some people limit themselves to working only to fulfil their physical needs but some are born to live for others. Work and knowledge are not contrary to one another. The importance of knowledge and peace should be explained to people and they should be encouraged to



acquire them. Spiritual development is as important as worldly progress. We should learn patience (and attain equanimity) as patience increases the depth of the intellect and enlarges the heart. Work and knowledge are like the two eyes and that is why we shouldn't be careless about them.

Devotion to God is as important as patriotism. We should try our best to create a social conscious in man. Thoughts should be controlled because they are the basis for word and deed. If you keep thinking about things that are neither useful to you or society, ignorance increases. To attain a state without misery ignorance should be got rid of - as it is the cause of all problems and more frightening than poverty. By creating wealth, poverty is removed and by acquiring knowledge, ignorance can be removed. Knowledge is liberation. Life without knowledge is useless - such a life is a waste.

Courtesy: Vasu, Anasuya and Meenakshi at Arunachala