

Travels with Sri Nannagaru

Sep 4th 2003 – Sep 15th 2003



Sri Nannagaru arrived at Nagpur on September 4th, 2003 and stayed for two days and on the morning of September 6th he left for Gaya. From there he went to Kashi and returned to Nagpur on September 12th. He then remained at Nagpur until September 15th.

Sri Nannagaru asked me, 'How is life in America?' I replied, 'It's quite well.' Then I told him that I felt lonely there.

He said, What you say is correct. There, it is a little bit lonely. It is not like our India is it? There, all the neighbours close their doors and stay inside. If you had a job it would be good. Then you wouldn't feel lonely.' Then he asked me, 'What is it that we should learn from Americans?' He himself replied, 'Work Culture.'

At Deeksha Bhoomi when my father asked Sri Nannagaru to speak something of Lord Buddha, Sri Nannagaru said 'Mouna (*silence*) is better than words. Remain in mouna.'

Deeksha Bhoomi is a sthupa at Nagpur where Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, who was originally Hindu, converted into Buddhism. Sri Nannagaru said 'When a friend from Ambedkar's youth insulted him, as revenge he converted to Buddhism.'

Sri Nannagaru read the name Babasaheb Ambedkar at the entrance of Deeksha Bhoomi and asked, 'What is meant by Babasaheb? Is it also the name of Ambedkar?'

Prema then replied, 'That is simply a word. "Baba" means "Nanna" (father). "Saheb" means "Garu" (a term of respect). "Babasaheb" means "Nannagaru".'

Sri Nannagaru was then asked to sign the visitor's list at Deeksha Bhoomi. Sri Nannagaru laughed and said, 'You say that "Babasaheb" and "Nannagaru" are one, therefore I will sign as "Nannagaru".' He wrote "Sri Nannagaru" in the book.

Gaya trip: While having his morning breakfast in the train Sri Nannagaru said to me, 'If one eats bread for morning breakfast, will it digest all right? It may not.' Then Prema gave him a sweet bread packet, which Sri Nannagaru returned to Prema telling him to share it with me.

Sri Nannagaru talking to Divakar peddananna (*peddananna: elder brother of one's*

father) and Mallikarjuna uncle said, 'God is in our heart. That is His correct address. However, our bad luck is that we are unable to go there.'

Mallikarjuna uncle asked, 'Yes, we are unable to go. What has to be done if we want to go there?'

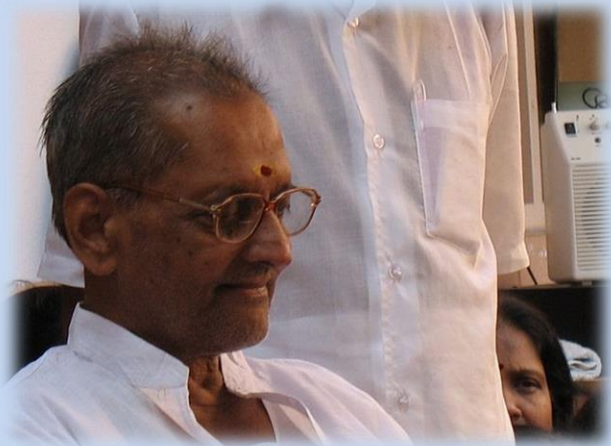
Sri Nannagaru replied '*Sadhana*, the company of good people, *smarana* (remembrance) of God, reading good books, all of these help. One must always do *smarana* (contemplate on God).'

Swarajyam aunty asked, 'How will constant *smarana* come about?' Sri Nannagaru said, 'It will come with *ishtam* (*liking something*). It is said that there is no difficulty in a place that one likes. So, one must develop the *ishtam* (love for God).'

Then she asked, 'How will preference come about?'

Sri Nannagaru said, 'One may keep the form as support (*to help develop ishtam*).'

Then I asked Sri Nannagaru, 'We do some work mechanically and at that time we can think of God but some work we have to do with a concentrated mind. So, if I keep my mind on my work then how can I do *smarana* along with the things I do with the mind?'



Sri Nannagaru said, 'Mechanical means the things we do with machines (or instruments). A train driver drives the train fast while eating meals. If we had to do that, we couldn't. It comes with practice. When one keeps doing *smarana*, it becomes automatic, intuitive. There is difficulty in the beginning but slowly it will become a habit (*natural and automatic*).'

We reached Gaya the morning of the next day. We were staying in a hotel near the railway station. On the morning of September 7th we went to Buddha Gaya and saw the *bodhi* tree and the main temple. Sri Nannagaru sat quietly below the *bodhi* tree for some time and asked the temple *pujaris* and guides, the details of Buddha and the *bodhi* tree. Lord Buddha after attaining *jnana* under the *bodhi* tree walked near it for one week and then, in the second week after realisation, he went some distance away and watched the tree from there.

Sri Nannagaru made *pradakshina* of the place where Buddha spent the second week after enlightenment. There was also a temple of Lord Buddha's mother Mayadevi. From there Sri Nannagaru went to Sankaracharya's math and then to Vishnu temple at Gaya. In the Vishnu temple there was another small temple of Lord Gadadhar. It is this temple of Lord

Gadadhar where the father of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa was granted the boon of a son, Sri Ramakrishna.



Then we went to Sarnath, where Buddha gave his first teaching to five disciples. Here Sri Nannagaru said 'Buddha had a lot of compassion. After he attained *jnana*, he searched for the five disciples that had left him. After he found them, he taught them. He wanted to teach them because he thought, "They may have gone away without knowing, but they were with me for so long".'

From here we went back to the hotel and on the next day, Sri Nannagaru again went to Buddha Gaya and a Tibetan temple of Buddha before leaving for Kashi. At Buddha Gaya, when it rained slightly, Sri Nannagaru said, 'It's Buddha's compassion'. There he told us that somebody once said to him that although he talks about Ramana Maharshi's teachings, he has the heart of Lord Buddha. Sri Nannagaru said, 'Then, I didn't pay much attention to his words as they did not touch my heart. But now, after I have come here, I know why he said like that.'

Kashi trip: While going to Kashi, Sri Nannagaru was talking about Lord Buddha. He said, 'Lord Buddha had a steady voice. He never raised his voice. Though Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Ramana Maharshi and Vivekananda used to raise their voice, based upon the situation, Gautama Buddha never raised his voice.'

Then he said, 'Buddha taught some things. Keep his teachings to the side. So many have talked about so many paths, but one incident is the reason for me to have respect for Buddha. That one incident is enough. Buddha could not escape death. When Anand asked where his body should be cremated the Buddha said, Anand, where there is a village, it will not be without a cremation ground, isn't it so? There should be a small cremation ground somewhere in this place. Wherever people cremate those who have died, there also cremate my body.'

Then Sri Nannagaru said, 'Buddha got diarrhoea and died. When he went to someone's house for meals, they cooked and served him meat. Usually Buddha did not eat meat, but out of compassion, he ate it that day. The pieces of meat were not cooked properly. Due to that, he got diarrhoea and died. We know the name of the murderer who killed Gandhi but even now we don't know in whose house Buddha ate that meat curry. Buddha told Anand. "Whosever's house I ate meat in, only you and I should know their name but no one else".

Then Sri Nannagaru said, "Buddha was born under a tree, he attained *jnana* under a tree, and he died under a tree. Whatever he did, he did under a tree. He liked trees very much. If anyone called him for meals, he used to go, but he didn't eat the meal in their house, he ate it under a tree. He was also born under a tree. When Buddha's mother Mayadevi was

pregnant, her husband said that he would send her to her birthplace (*wives lived in their mother-in-law's houses, but when they were pregnant they went to their mother's house in their birthplace*). Then she said, "I don't like to go to my birthplace. I will remain here only."



If the facilities are better in one's mother-in-law's house, some people won't go to their birthplace. But in recent days the situation is good for girls in the mother-in-law's house. But, as soon as the months in Mayadevi's pregnancy were complete, she said she would go to her birthplace.

Then, she started off to her birthplace with a few ladies. In the middle of the path (*journey*), suddenly labour pains began. Then the ladies that were with her, laid her down by a tree. They tied cloths all around (*for privacy*) and delivered her baby. Like that, Buddha was born under a tree.

Sri Nannagaru, then talking about Arunachalam said, 'Shiva took three forms there. One is the form of the hill; second, the form of the *linga*; and third, the form of *siddha*. Sri Nannagaru said, 'On the north side of the hill, Shiva, taking a form with hands and feet like us, is in the form of *siddha*. Until now, no one has been able to climb the north side of the hill. There are some people who try but lose their way. Ramana Maharshi saw God there. These are all matters that our mind cannot reach.'

At Kashi: In Kashi we stayed in Kshatriya Annadana satram, which is to be inaugurated by Sri Nannagaru during the Kashi trip in October 2003. It is near Hanuman Ghat in Kashi. There are about sixty-four *ghats* around the Varanasi River. Varanasi River is the *sangam* of the 'Varun' and 'Asi' rivers.

Sri Nannagaru took a bath in the Varanasi River. He walked on the roads of Kashi without wearing slippers. It is believed that there are many *rishis* under the bhoomi of Kashi in the form of *lingas*. Because of this reason most people don't wear chappals there. After taking a bath in the river we went back to Annadana satram. Later we went to the Kashi Vishveshwara Temple, where Shiva is in *linga* roopa (*form*).

Next day we went to somebody's place. Sri Ramakrishna came to Kashi once and stayed with Raja Mathurnath for some days. We went to the house of the eighth generation family of Raja Mathurnath. There Sri Nannagaru spent lot of time. He liked the place. They had the chandhan bed, which Raja Mathurnath made for his visitor Sri Ramakrishna. During his stay there, another Swami called Thrailinga Swami used to come to see Sri Ramakrishna. Sri Ramakrishna, sitting on that bed, used to feed him payasam (*sweet pudding*) with love. Sri Nannagaru touched that bed; he sat near it for some time and said, 'This is a very good place.' When leaving their home, the family person asked for Sri Nannagaru's blessing. Sri Nannagaru laughed and said, 'You have the blessings of Sri Ramakrishna, what else do you want?'

Back to Nagpur: While going back to Nagpur, everyone was filled with joy and sang a lot of bhajans. Sri Nannagaru listened to all of them with interest. Then later Sri Nannagaru said, 'Angry speech is not good. It pollutes our mind and hurts the mind of others. The polluted mind cannot go within (*beyond the senses*).'

Aruna Peddama asked Sri Nannagaru about a painting we saw in the main temple of Buddha Gaya. Sri Nannagaru said that it is a very good painting and that it means that the Buddha had won both the inner and outer enemies. He said on one occasion that, 'In *Buddham saranam gacchami*, Buddham doesn't mean Lord Buddha - Buddham here means *jnanam*. It means to surrender to *jnana*.'

Varuna pinni sang many Gajendra moksham padyalu (*poems from the Bhagavatam about the liberation of Gajendra the elephant from the clutches of a crocodile*) before Sri Nannagaru. He listened to all of them with great interest and congratulated her for learning so many padyam's by heart.

Varuna pinni said, 'It is not enough to learn - its essence and its meaning should be known, isn't it so?'

Sri Nannagaru replied, 'It is good to get it by heart. If one gets (*learns*) it by heart, it revolves in our mind.'

Then I asked Sri Nannagaru, 'Nannagaru, I have heard of so many paths from books and cassettes but I feel that I am late in deciding which path to go on.'

Sri Nannagaru said, 'The same path that you followed in previous birth will attract you. You will follow that path.'

I said, 'But Nannagaru, I feel that I am wasting time.'

Sri Nannagaru said, 'This is not wasting time. This is also a part of *sadhana*. If Arjuna did not get distraught, Krishna would not have taught the *Bhagavad Gita*. Due to Arjuna getting distraught, it happened that the *Bhagavad Gita* was taught. Similarly, the first time that Buddha saw death (*a dead person*), he became distraught and after that he attained *jnana*. In the same way, all of this is preparation. Don't imitate. If anyone says words with the quality of *rajo guna* (excited or passionate), don't listen. After realising that "this is a good thing," don't delay. Gandhiji was ready even to give up his life for a good cause. If he made any decision, some people agreed to it and some people did not agree. However, after thinking that it was a good cause, he did not pay attention to anyone else.

Gandhiji policy was, *Do or Die*. After taking a decision, it could not be avoided that many people opposed it. But by the time it was put into action, everyone followed him. Nehru also did not agree with Gandhi on a few matters, but when it was put into practice he used to listen only to Gandhi's words. The way the night is between today and tomorrow, death is between this birth and next birth. We will get up in the morning with the same body we





laid down with at night; but if we die, we will get up with another body. If you realise the bliss in your heart, you won't know the difference whether you are in America or Nagpur. If you know the bliss in your heart, when you go to heaven everyone there will see you and be jealous. This is because yours is a permanent happiness and theirs is a temporary happiness. Yours is absolute happiness and theirs is relative happiness.

Gandhiji also had a lot of control regarding food. One time an important man came to his ashram. He sat beside Gandhiji for meals. After meals, some chutney was served on the leaf that Gandhiji ate off of. Then, Gandhi asked that the chutney be served to this important man also. It was neem chutney. Gandhiji ate even that neem chutney slowly, like it was a gulab jamun (*a sugary dessert sweet*). Seeing that, this important man thought that it was some sweet. When he put some in his mouth, it was completely bitter. Thinking that if he spat it out it would be bad manners; he swallowed it quickly with water. He left what was remaining and threw away the leaf it was on. He didn't sit by Gandhiji for meals again!

In Nagpur, Nannagaru spoke with a lawyer. He said, 'Some lawyers do not know anything but books. It is good to read books but one must speak according to one's intuition. How is it if one speaks exactly what is in books? One must speak according to context.'

Prema asked, "Nannagaru, you say that God does everything, then what is *swaprayathnam* (self-effort)?"

Sri Nannagaru said, "Do you have experience of the words you said before? Do you have experience of God doing everything?"

She said "No."

Then Sri Nannagaru said, "All of those are parrot's words. If you had experience of the words you said, you would become Ramana Maharshi."

Courtesy: Saumya Muddu, Divya, Meenakshi