



Sadguru Sri Nannagaru

*I*n the verandah of the house nestled among coconut palms, sits an elderly man surrounded by men and women gazing at him silently. His countenance is flooded with peace and love as if from a secret well of joy in his heart. He embraces each with loving glances, showering additional benevolence on men and children with soft caresses. Gracefully accepting offerings from the visitors with the eagerness and joy of a child, he returns a portion to them and distributes the remaining among others sitting around. This is the daily routine of Sadguru Sri Nannagaru.

Nannagaru (Nanna - father; garu - respectful title) as he is called endearingly, is the beloved Guru and father-figure for thousands of devotees who throng daily at his home seeking peace and guidance, both spiritual instruction and also advice for dealing with life's challenges. No one leaves dissatisfied, their doubts cleared and turbulence in their hearts quelled. A look is enough to lighten their hearts, and inspire courage and confidence to face the world and their inner struggles.

Born on 23 September 1934 in Jinnuru village, near Palakollu in West Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh, he had spiritual inclinations since childhood. In his early twenties, he saw an old man in a vivid dream whose overpowering presence remained with him even after waking. His quest to find this old man ended some months later when he saw a picture of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. He immediately surrendered to Ramana and dedicated his life to him. Ramana took him into his fold though they never met in person. Since then his spiritual journey intensified and he remained firmly established in the Self and God Consciousness, while continuing his duties as a householder to perfection, keeping his personal needs simple and to the minimum.

Over time, his spiritual radiance attracted seekers, who experience deep peace and joy in his presence. As devotees grew in numbers, he started travelling across Andhra Pradesh and other States reaching out to devotees, while also respecting his family's privacy. Hundreds attend his discourses regularly in Jinnuru and other places drinking in his every word.

Nannagaru frequents the holy town of Tiruvannamalai, where Ramana Ashram is located. Over the years his devotees established two ashrams to provide for seekers visiting this holy town – Andhra Ashram and Sri Nannagaru Ashram.

A glimpse of his teachings and Grace

Nannagaru stresses on the purification of mind. Change should come from within to attain the higher states and real happiness. Your behaviour pattern in daily life is what really matters, he advises. Results are determined by the motive behind actions, and not the action itself.

Our fundamental aim should be to overcome likes and dislikes. These are the cause of fear; and fear results in pain and grief. True happiness comes when we overcome likes and dislikes and accept every incident in life with calmness, equanimity, and a positive outlook.

The course of life, including birth and death, are pre-determined but we have the freedom to choose how we handle each incident in life – with

a positive or negative attitude – and use these as opportunities for self-purification and spiritual upliftment; while also achieving worldly success in the bargain!

But then he says our destiny is made by us! Our fate is a consequence of past deeds. One should be alert and careful of every thought, word and action. You have to bear the consequences of not only what you say and do but of every thought that comes to you.

The world he says is neither good nor bad; it is the way you see it based on your attitude. It serves as a mirror to show your faults and shortcomings; you have to make the effort and overcome them. True revolution does not happen from upheavals in society; it happens when each person strives to overcome his shortcomings and becomes pure and simple. Only that person can truly serve society.

Good and bad deeds merely determine the course your life will take now and in future births. Good deeds however show you the right direction, while bad deeds distract you from the goal. To reach the final destination of Supreme Bliss and Awareness one has to rise above both good and bad.

He extols holy company as they aid your spiritual practice and under their influence your path is made smooth and easy. He cautions against friendships that can ruin you and divert you from the right path.

He gives equal importance to *Jnanamarga* (path of self enquiry) and *Bhaktimarga* (path of devotion). *Bhakti* is *Jnanamatha* (mother of *jnana*) he quotes. *Jnana* without *bhakti* (knowledge without devotion) is dry and tasteless. Only a true *bhakta* (devotee) can attain *jnana*. Courage is required to be a true devotee and constantly contemplate on God without a single thought about worldly matters. Like a leaf that trembles at the slightest breeze, if the mind is even slightly disturbed by one thought, true devotion is not possible. True *bhakti* ripens into Universal love. Only he with universal love blended with compassion, can truly serve God and humanity.

While he focuses on Ramana Maharshi's path of Self Enquiry and Bhagavat Gita, his spiritual instruction expands to include teachings of great Masters of all religions and faiths; including role models among social leaders and scientists. He gives us a deep insight into their greatness and contributions, inspiring us to reach the heights achieved by the great Masters and Leaders.

He speaks the language of common man; the most profound philosophy and intricate spiritual concepts are made easy and followed even by the simple uneducated housewives in villages. The clarity of his instruction shows the depth of his understanding and wisdom.

A true father to his devotees, he takes keen interest in their personal well-being and shares in their joys and sorrows. He guides them like any responsible head of a family - applauds their achievements, corrects their faults, and shows the right direction, expecting nothing in return.

Nannagaru's silence is however more eloquent than his words, and his eyes have the power to teach and reform. While his followers have an unquenched thirst for his talks, they hold his silence even more precious. Many have experienced the miracle of his silence when they found total peace in his presence, their sorrows dissolved and mind driven inwards, as exemplified by an incident witnessed by a western seeker.

An old lady came to Nannagaru sobbing pitifully; totally devastated having lost her son. Nannagaru sat quietly through her outpourings of grief with a compassionate look. Gradually she calmed down, as he spoke a few words softly. In less than 15 minutes, she was totally relaxed and left with a smile - a miraculous transformation coming to terms with the worst tragedy for any parent. The immediate burning pain was soothed in Nannagaru's presence, as naturally as a soft breeze blowing away a flame, giving strength and courage to overcome the deeper attachment and sorrow. He does not have to do anything, but just be there; and He has this effect on anyone who comes to him with a yearning – an automatic Divine action!

- Sreedevi P.