

My Guru as Ishwara

I pray every day for certain things, things for myself, things for my family, and things for the world. The prayer that is the common thread through all the three is for the health and the long life of my guru, Pujya Swamiji. I count myself so lucky, (it is an emotion difficult to express), that I have had this Being (and I use the word "Being" because one cannot describe Swamiji as a person, anymore than one would describe Adishankara as a person), as part of my life from as far back as I can remember. He is Paramaguru, he is Ishwara, one only has to sit in his class where he teaches Vedanta to Indians from around the world, Japanese, Brazilians, Germans, Americans, Australians and other mix of world cultures, to know that we have been given a gift which this earth has not seen in centuries. There is nowhere else where one can come and be in the presence of not just a teacher and life guide for many of us but also gnyana ganga.

I see him now as I was fortunate enough to see him during his 80th birthday, sitting upon a stage with an enormous lifelike cut out of himself in the backdrop ostensibly seated upon a purple lotus. He had his students at his feet as they performed the Pada Pooja, and as his feet were washed and flowers placed upon his feet, I had tears streaming down my face I know not why. I only knew that I must have done a great deal of good, must have lived many lives in harmony with the universe, to have been given the opportunity to be at that place at that time. This feeling has swept me over times without number, as I have sat through class and been one of may be sixty students walking out with a dazed expression on my face, feeling as though all that I knew or thought that I knew has been taken gently in hand and subtly changed so that the world that I thought I knew, is a very different one indeed.

I have had this feeling while watching Swamiji greet each Sanyasi who comes for the Bhandara in Rishikesh. In fact I think it is safe to say that I experience this feeling every time I am in his presence, to a greater or lesser degree. It is ironic that this is what I write today when there was a time I remember when my father would hie off to the Annaikatti ashram at the drop of a hat and I would wonder what on earth it was that caused him to do that. I must have been about 15 or 16 and while I loved the ashram when I could be around Swamiji, I did not think that I particularly enjoyed the food or thought the people very interesting and it irked me no end that I was forced to wear a salwar and pottu and generally look unfashionably conservative. Unfortunately for my parents, they decided on a rather democratic upbringing for their daughters, and I was a particularly opinionated teenager. When and how this changed I cannot tell you, but as with anyone in Swamiji's orbit, given enough time, he changes you, fundamentally. My parents both say that their outlook on life, the way they live their lives, the way they brought us up all has images of Pujya Swamiji in there somewhere, if one only were to look hard enough. In fact one does not really have to look very hard. He is there, in every aspect of our lives, be it prayer, ritual, daily attitude, my rather rueful apologies after a particularly spectacular loss of temper, our family gatherings where we try to discuss each other's day, the times I have had a conversation with a friend and then thought back only to realise that something Swamiji had said featured there too. The Upanishads talk about an all pervasive Ishwara – Pujya Swamiji is living proof of this for me, for my family, for he has permeated every aspect of our lives and brought with him that Order, the divine order which he so often talks about.

Once during my first camp in Rishikesh, just a few days before the camp ended, after a class

where I felt as though my heart was too full with emotion and my skin too sensitive to even be around another human being, Swamy Aparokshananda just passed by and he must have seen my face, and his wore a rather similar expression, and he said "Did you not feel as if Lord Mahavishnu was in front of you just now?" There was nothing else to say. He was in truth Mahavishnu himself. I am one of those lucky few who has had this remarkable Being, this closest earthly approximation to Ishwara in my life from the time I was a child and while I have not always recognised the import of this fact, I

am happy to say, I recognise it now every day as I pray for Swamiji's health and long life. I also pray that am I able to live each day of my life as an offering to Ishwara, and while right now it is still a prayer and nowhere in the realm of reality, it is only because of Swamiji that it is a prayer at all.

To My Guru
My Pranams
Kamna Shrikanth
Chennai

PUJYA SRI SWAMI DAYANANDA

Holy Ganga takes its origin
From Gangotri of Himalayan region
While passing through divine Rishikesh
She stopped a while to ask Akash.

"Is not this place has a shallow
Bereft of budding saint with a hallow
Find him out from Cauvery region
Bring him here to propagate Vedic religion"

Akash looked around as per her tutelage
Able to find one from Manjakudi village
Bid him to learn under the feet of Chinmaya
Emerged as a teacher to expose worldly Maya

Divinity is not extraneous of man
Advaita, he taught makes a human
Serve the man with selfishness resigned
All India Movement of Seva as he designed.

In him convulged Ananda and Daya
Travelling round the world he teaches Sathya
He crossed eighty and marching towards hundred
I pray Eashwara to preserve him beyond Hundred.

With pranams from
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