

FIRST MEETING WITH YOGI RAMSURATKUMAR

Justice T.S. Arunachalam.

I would like to narrate about the "Prasad Episode" during my first meeting with Yogi Ramsuratkumar. Along with my wife and two daughters, i had my first Darshan of Yogi Ramsuratkumar early in July 1989. The purpose of the visit to Tiruvannamalai was to attend a marriage. Before leaving Madras, i was told about a Saint, living near the temple, popularly known as "Visiri Swamiyar," for, He could be seen almost always with a double palmyrah fan. A Darshan of that Saint was also suggested. i did not take the suggestion seriously, since there were ever so many proclaimed "Fake Swamijis" and further i did not also see the need, for, i was already devoted to Kanchi Maha swamigal, referred to by Yogi Ramsuratkumar as "Paramacharya." However, after leaving the marriage hall around 11.30 a.m., i was told that my next programme was only at 04.00 p.m. and that was Darshan of Arunachaleswarar. Naturally, the time lapse being huge, my thoughts traversed backwards and it struck, "Why not try to have darshan of "Visiri Swamiyar?" The members of the local judiciary did not welcome that idea, stating that the Swami was an eccentric and that, He might or might not give an appointment for His darshan, and once given, He would take away the group inside His house, lock up the outer door and one could not predict as to when He would release them. Then it might even be difficult to keep up the temple schedule. Inquisitiveness increased and i said, "If politicians and cinema stars could be met only on appointments, why not a Mahatma. Please pray for an appointment. If it is denied, luck alone has to be blamed." An appointment was sought and the time fixed was 03.30 p.m. Initial thought of whiling away the time did not fructify, but happiness did dawn on grant of an appointment. i was told, that i ought to be punctual, lest i face closed doors, for which i replied that i was also keen on punctuality. How will this sage look? Will He be a soothsayer? Can a question and answer session emerge? No answers were forthcoming. Even on the nature of offering that could be made, there was silence, except a murmur that dried garlands could be seen hanging on the outer verandah. The clue was taken and i went over to the Sannadhi residence of Yogi Ramsuratkumar with my family members, well in advance, a rose garland in my hands.

Exactly at 03.30. p.m. the outer grill gate was opened by a person shabbily dressed in dirty clothes and as such He did not attract specific attention. He queried as to who Justice Arunachalam was, and on getting to see him, enquired who the others were, to be told that they were his wife and two daughters. They were directed inside the house. As i climbed up the steps of that house, that person caught hold of my left hand and was leading me inside. It was felt that it was probably the protocol to be ushered in before the Mahatma inside, who, it was imagined, would have a shaven head and apparelled in ochre robes, with rudraksha and beads garlands adorning Him. Soon after entry into that threshold, that escorting person exclaimed, "This door has to be closed." Scenting it as a direction, i attempted to close the door, which was thwarted with the words, "No, this beggar will close it." That man who looked like a beggar called Himself similarly, to my bewilderment. A thought surfaced, if the local Judges were correct in their estimation and probably a wrong place had been chosen. There was discomfort but the expectation of Darshan of the Mahatma inside kept the wits alive and pounding. i who was standing with a garland in my right hand surveyed the whole interior for the presence of the Sage, so much talked about, only to be disappointed. It was then that i looked at the man who had accompanied me and was at once charmed by His brilliant radiance confirming that He was the Mahatma, whose darshan was sought. Nonplussed, a question was posed, "Can i garland you, Sir?" The spontaneous reply was in a loud tone, "Do it." As though by instinct, the Swami was garlanded and the garlander fell flat in prostration, all instantaneous, without any preplanning.

i was made to sit in a place allotted, while others had their seats fixed. Silence, absolute at that, was reigning. The interior was dark as sanctum sanctorum and only the faces were reasonably visible. Suddeny the Swami questioned, "Have you come to this beggar before?" No was the response. A similar exercise to the author's wife was an experience unparalleled. The next interrogation was, "What brought you to Tiruvannamalai?" The reply was "a marriage." Details were given, on asking. The question that followed was "What is your next programme?" Answer naturally was, "Darshan of Arunachaleswara" at 04.00 p.m." Apparently perturbed, the Swami shot hack, "Justice Arunachalam has come to Tiruvannamalai for a wedding. That work is over. The next engagement is in the temple. Did you think that you can peep into this beggar and run away like that?" Flabbergasted as i was, i concluded that i had unwittingly come to a wrong place

and the Dailies on the next day might carry a news item, "Justice Arunachalam in the web of a false Swami." Distrusted as i was, i turned round to say, "Yes," but then to my astonishment i found a Sivaling (Arunachaleswar) in the place where Yogi Ramsuratkumar was till then seated. Astonished at the turn of events, i stated, "Now that i have seen Arunachaleswara, the need to proceed to the temple has taken the back seat." Obviously satisfied, the Saint patted me rather forcefully on my back and exclaimed "Father is happy."

Then the Swami said, "This beggar wants to smoke and he needs the permission of Justice Arunachalam," i saw a charminar cigarette packet placed, over which was was a match box. An ash tray was nearby. The interrogated responded. "This is your own house; cigarettes are yours - not offered by me; smoking is a health hazard - why then my permission?" "Because you are a Justice, permission is required," stated the Swami. Not realizing then, about this great Master, casually i said "Permission granted" as though a judicial order was pronounced (mentioned earlier in another context.) Smoking commenced. There was no outlet for the smoke inhaled. Contrary to the pungent smell that "charminar" would emanate, there was a pervading sandalwood fragrance to the astonishment of the assembled. Some cigarettes were quarter or half smoked, one or two with a single puff or one more and a few fully smoked almost hurting the fingers, found their way into the ash tray. i was then narrating to the Swami my experience in "Dwaraka," where Lord Krishna indirectly commanded me to continue as a Judge and not to resign. This drew a comment from Swami, "Krishna did not want Justice Arunachalam to resign." This sentence was repeated a few times and it apparently appeared sarcastic. While looking annoyed at the Swami, i noticed on the wall before me several images of Krishna playing over His flute. Surprised and frightened i asked the Swami as to Who He was - a magician or trickster, for, He had shown Himself as Arunachaleswara earlier and now Krishna was on the walls! A smiling Swami got up from His seat mumbling. "This beggar will also like to see Krishna" and switched on the electric light. All Krishna images were the photographs of Yogi Ramsuratkumar! My wife was also mesmerized by this divine play. It was the good fortune of the family to have had Darshan of that Mahatma as "Siva" and "Krishna" even on the first Darshan.

My wife and daughters chanted slokas or rhymes as bid and the Swami patiently explained to them their meaning and significance. The time was 06.10 p.m. and the Swami said, "My firends, This beggar will leave you now." So saying, He got up from His seat and offered sugar candy to my wife, biscuits to a daughter and dates to the other. No prasad was offered to me and i thought, "Why this partiality?" The Swami who caught hold of my hand to lead me out, spurted out, "Justice Arunachalam is wondering, why he has not been given any prasad." The Swami took me to the right cornor of the house, pulled out a book from the dirty heap, opened its first page and scribed "OM" and handed it over to me with the words, "This is your prasad." That book was one of songs composed by a great Tamil scholar and a renowned poet Sri Periasami Thooran, who was an ardent devotee of Yogiji.

The Swami saw us off by accompanying us to the car, while directing us to go to the temple, where the authorities were still waiting. i didn't believe that the temple staff would be awaiting my arrival for over two hours, but to my surprise they did, because no message of cancellation of the darshan was communicated to them. A Saint in a corner, had this vision of the waiting officials, to the group's utter surprise. Irrespective of the qualms of the veracity of this Swami, the fact remains, that the first visit had its indelible impact.

-to be continued
(Extract from the book
"At the Holy Feet of My Master"
by Justice T.S. Arunachalam.)