

MY EXPERIENCES MY LORD ABIDES IN SITHANAGARAM

(by Jagannath das of Bhuvaneshwar)

The GOLCONDA VYAPARI SANGHAM of Bhuvaneshwar was very eager to organize a spiritual discourse of HH Sri Swamiji and a *Sa:muhika Upanayanam* (Thread ceremony), under His guidance, in the year 1998. I had the privilege of managing the planned event, as I was the secretary of the Sangham at the time. H.H. out of His causeless mercy consented to celebrate the appearance day *mahothsavam* of Bhagavad Ramanuja in Bhuvaneshwar on the 1st of May. That visit of Sri Swamiji left an everlasting impact on me. His magnanimity, mellifluous discourses, charming personality and easy accessibility captivated all members of the Sangham. Since then I am an ardent disciple of Sri Swamiji and started to visit Sithanagaram Asram to see H.H. and associate with the devotees in the Asram.

My youngest daughter Saumya had developed a small white spot on her left eye ball in the year 2000. On taking her to the local eye hospital the doctor asked us to take her to a multi-specialty eye hospital in Chennai or Hyderabad immediately, as he feared it to be a case of Retino Blastoma. We immediately took her to Shankar Nethralaya at Chennai. There the doctors confirmed it to be a case of Retino Blastoma and they further said "she is very serious and the eye ball has to be removed if she is to survive".

I was shattered. I did not know what to do. Tears started to roll down my cheeks. I did not have enough courage to inform to my wife or other members of the family about the seriousness of the disease. I was totally confused. I was facing the worst mental crisis of my life. I desperately wanted some mental support from someone. I was sitting with a broken heart and my sick child. I was feeling insecure and confused without knowing whom to approach for solace.

HH Sri Swamiji's radiant face flashed across my mind at that hour of crisis. I immediately rushed to the nearest STD booth and dialed the number of Sithanagaram Asram. To my good fortune H.H. was present in the Asram at that time and I could access Him immediately. I explained everything to HH Sri Swamiji. I was crying even as I was speaking to Sri Swamiji. H.H. listened to everything very patiently, expressed His surprise and started to console me. He asked me to speak to the doctors once again and inform everything to my family members as it is inevitable. He also asked me to keep Him informed about her progress.

I began to feel much stronger after speaking to HH Sri Swamiji. I mustered courage to go and speak once again to the doctors as advised by HH Sri Swamiji. The doctors once again said "the removal of the left eye ball is a must for her survival. However we can try to administer Chemo therapy and if she

responds to that we can avoid. But the chances are very remote, so be prepared for the removal of the eye ball." I informed the same to HH Sri Swamiji. This time H.H. spoke on a different note, He explained about Karma and the hard realities of life in His own unique way. Those words soothed my disturbed mind and instilled the much needed courage in me to face the crisis.

I consented to administer Chemo therapy to my daughter and returned to Bhuvaneshwar. I informed the same to my family members. All of them were shocked and were finding it difficult to bear it. All of us were grief stricken as Saumya was very dear to everyone. The words spoken by H.H. were still ringing in my ears and that helped me to console my family members.

We had to go to Chennai for Chemo therapy every 21st day. It was a very pathetic sight to see my daughter suffering during the therapy. I could not stand to see her suffering. The very mention of the name of Chennai was sufficient to make her cry. She had lost her appetite and sleep. She used to fall sick at the very sight of the railway station. We used to stop at Vijaywada on our way to Chennai to meet HH Sri Swamiji. That used to give us the required mental strength and courage to face the verdicts and suggestions of the doctors.

After administering Chemo therapy for more than four months the doctors finally decided to remove the eye ball, as her life was in danger due to that infected eye ball. We were

forced to consent for the removal as we did not have any other option. However by that time I was mentally strong and could face the ordeal without much difficulty. In the beginning I could not even think of it and whenever I used to do so I used to be disgusted with life. I could attain that state only due to the Mercy of HH Sri Swamiji. H.H. used to spare us some time out of His busy schedule whenever we went to Sithanagaram. HH Sri Swamiji used to listen to all our despair very patiently and advice us in the end. He used to explain various spiritual facts with many analogies, like that of Kunti and others. These talks helped us to face the crisis without much pain.

In my opinion I have reached a state in which I can withstand any crisis. That was possible only due to the blessings of HH Sri Swamiji. Many Saints of modern day claim to perform miracles to attract followers, whereas our Swamiji preaches the Vedic truths. The miracles might give us momentary relief but the mental strength that we gain by practicing these Vedic truths gradually make us immune to pleasure and pain. Thus these teachings provide us eternal relief. Lord Krishna says in Bhagavad Gita that one who is not disturbed by pleasure and pain is qualified for liberation. HH Sri Swamiji is guiding us to that state, with His empowering teachings. Hence I consider Him as my Lord and My Lord abides in Sithanagaram.

