

AN EXPERIENCE TO CHERISH

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Our Vedic culture teaches us that, very few in this material world are offered opportunities to experience divinity directly. HH Sri Sri Sri Tridandi Chinna Sriman Narayana Ramanuja Jeeyar Swamiji's visit to Houston was an event that provided this to everyone.

The three days of HH Sri Jeeyar Swamiji's presence transformed the lives of hundreds of devotees that thronged to listen to, experience and simply 'feel' divinity *up-close and personal*. While the following words are an attempt to describe the wisdom and spiritual bliss that we all gained from his visit, there are no words that can fully describe HH Sri Swamiji, his vast knowledge, or his deep compassion for all. These are things that must only be experienced to be understood.

His Holiness Graced the house of Drs. Renu and Chary Tamirisa of Sugarland, just outside the main city of Houston. The festive atmosphere in this home throughout his visit resembled a sacred hall in which a grand Vedic wedding was taking place, with traditionally dressed women and children, adorning appropriate Sri Vaishnava marks, flitting about in joy. The very air was filled with the anticipation of events

and celebrations to come.



Thursday afternoon brought the first of the public talks by HH Sri Jeeyar Swamiji. Although the air was filled with excitement and light-hearted conversation, the message received in his discourse was invaluable. HH Sri Swamiji taught the value of *sathsangam* with devotees, the idea that it is only when we consort with devotees of God that we will be able to get the opportunity to find the *A:cha:rya*, who will show us the correct way to the lotus feet of *Sri:man Na:ra:ya:na*. The conversation came with appropriate gems picked from important Vedic scriptures.

On the evening of July 17, between 250-300 devotees came to the Swamy Narayan Mandir for a discourse, and eagerly stayed until late in the evening, even though it was a weekday. In his simple and sweet style of speaking, HH Sri Jeeyar

Swamiji provided answers to the fundamental questions of life, the nature of the soul, the nature of matter, and the qualities of the Supreme Soul of the Universe, **Sri:man Na:ra:yana**. He explained how all of us, the entire manifest universe, subsists upon the ever-flowing, omnipresent and unconditional Grace of God. HH Sri Jeeyar Swamiji also demonstrated to us how simply chanting the Lord's Holy Names through *bhajans* can elevate the mind and heart to dwell on the beauty and wonder of the Divine.

On July 18, HH Sri Swamiji conducted a Youth Forum, which was attended by about twenty-five young adults and teenagers. It was an interactive session and stories of great rishis such as *Bharadwa:ja* and *Agasthya* were narrated with the help of computer-aided visuals. The visual presentation was effective and HH Sri Swamiji informed and reminded the youth about their Vedic heritage. The youth forum and interaction with HH Sri Swamiji made a lasting impression on the young hearts and minds.

July 18 also marked the occasion where *Sama:sra:yanam* was performed to a dozen or so blessed devotees. HH Sri Swamiji explained the significance of the *Pancha Samska:ra*, and how it binds the disciple to the *A:cha:rya*, then to *Bhagavad Ra:ma:nuja:cha:rya* and ultimately to God. He stressed the importance of *Bhagavad Ra:ma:nuja:cha:rya* as being the foremost teacher, and how as a result

of this, all of us should address ourselves as His *da:sa-s* or *da:si-s*.

HH Sri Swamiji also visited Chinmaya Mission Houston on July 18. HH Sri Swamiji toured the *Ba:l Viha:r* Center and was very impressed with the service that Chinmaya Mission is providing to the community. HH Sri Swamiji blessed the new *Amritha Ba:lamandir* and gave special blessings to Gaurang and Darshana Nanavathy for their exemplary dedication to their Guru Swami Chinmayananda.

On the evening of 18, Swamiji's lecture dealt with various topics, beginning with an explanation of how **Sri:man Na:ra:yana** is a sacred combination of supreme power and unlimited compassion. His discourse included addressing questions from the audience and everyone was impressed with rational and logical response that HH Sri Swamiji gave to each question. Attendees were also impressed by HH Sri Swamiji's explanation



A View of the blessed devotees of a particular topic by quoting relevant information from *Upanishads*, *Bhagavad-Gi:tha*,

Ra:ma:ya:na, Maha:bha:ratha and *Dra:vida Ve:da* in the same breath.

His rendition of Sanskrit *slo:kas* from our scriptures was like drinking nectar. Those who had learnt something about the life of the great **Sri: Ra:ma:nuja:cha:rya** could not help but relish the style of presentation in HH Sri Swamiji that He Himself was known for, bringing the nectar of divinity to the lives and hearts of all those who simply had a desire to know.

On July 19, the final day of his visit in Houston, HH Sri Swamiji conducted *Lakshmi: Pu:ja* at the proposed location of the Ashtalakshmi Temple. Over three hundred devotees participated in the *Pu:ja* which HH Sri Swamiji himself led and instructed us on. We were all overtaken through the emotional and spiritual aspects of various stages of the worship, as a personal, affectionate, love-filled offering that bound us in a close bond with the ultimate Divinity. A process often seen as a chore by those who perhaps only learnt it as a ritual had suddenly become the means to a spiritual awakening.

Devotees immersed in Bhajan with HH



After all, as HH Sri Jeeyar Swamiji put it, does not the most magnificent entity we know, deserve all our love and affection? The seven stages of worship which our *A:cha:ryas* defined as *Thiru A:ra:dhanam* was made for all of us, out of the compassion, kindness and love that HH Sri Jeeyar Swamiji has for all of us. Many of us were moved to tears, and nothing could have moved us as much as HH Sri Jeeyar Swamiji's mellifluous lullaby "*Jo achyutha:nanda, jo jo mukunda*" to gently lull the Lord to sleep and reside peacefully in our hearts. It is a soul-stirring experience that still rings in our hearts, a sense of indescribable joy and peace.

Following the *Pu:ja*, HH Sri Swamiji was offered a lovely cultural program by the children in the age group 8 to 12. They recited *bhajans* and *slo:kas* and performed a sweet dance about *Si:tha Ra:ma Swayamvaram*. HH Sri Swamiji was extremely pleased with the children's performance and all who observed watched his loving and compassionate smiles towards our kids, with tears of joy.

When HH Sri Swamiji left for Washington that afternoon, there was not a dry eye among the gathering of devotees that watched him leave from the Tamirisa residence. For, a Saint had blessed us with his presence, and left us with a sense of peace and love that made us know that our lives had been touched forever.
