



MY PERSONAL EXPERIENCE WITH SWAMIJI

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(Prunil is a 9th-grader who is putting together this paper for his English class. Bhakthi Nivedana magazine is blessed to share the first draft of this paper with its readers. May it serve as an inspiration to all young people.)

Although I hear the humming of the engine in the background, all I really want to hear is *Sri Swamiji's* melodious chanting. Although I saw the trees passing by, all I really want to see is *Sri Swamiji's* cheerful smile. Although I feel the AC blowing in my face, all I want to feel is the serene presence of my guru, H.H. *Sri Sri Sri Tridandi Ramanuja Chinna Jeeyar Swami*, one more time. It is July 26th 2003; I'm in the car along with my mother and sister returning from Newark International Airport where we just saw *Swamiji* off on his return to India. It's a solemn mood we are in, recollecting the past three weeks that led up to today. We are eagerly exchanging "remember when's" and "what about's" with each other. It feels like only yesterday when I first got into the car and began to anticipate who and what *Swamiji* was.

I remember asking myself who is this man to be so dear to so

many? What makes this man so influential? How can this man be so sincere? Why is this man so respected and honored? How does this man change so many lives in such incredible ways? And mostly how and why has this man made such an impact on my mother? These questions were only answered by the meeting of this man, this saint, through an event that could only be experienced and not explained. The next three weeks would change my life forever.

We reached Lake Geneva, Wisconsin after a long road trip from our home in *Tulsa*. It was 9:00 p.m. and *Sri Swamiji* formally addressed us for the first time. I only met him once before and that was eight hours prior. Until now I only knew him through my mother's stories and she only met him in December of the year before. That is why I was so anxious as well as nervous to meet him. I didn't know what he would be like. I didn't know how to carry myself around him. I didn't know if I should call him your Royal Highness or just plain dude. I had no clue but I knew everything would be taken care of the second I would enter his presence and it was. But, when I saw him, I was in complete and

utter bliss, without a care in the world, feeling almost like a baby.

The time spent at the resort in Lake Geneva was filled with discourses, prayers, and hands on worship. For me it was quite intense, waking up at five in the morning and participating in lectures until ten at night. But it was worth it, the knowledge gained and the experience received still sticks with me today. It was during this one-week long camp in which I feel I was enlightened most. This is one experience I would never trade for anything.

You may now be asking yourself the exact same questions I had once pondered. Not fully understanding how such a simple man has such a power to make the most troubled of people succumb to their senses and find not only physical but mental and spiritual peace. Just imagine if an energetic fourteen year old boy chose to sit and listen to day long lectures instead of enjoying the luxuries of a five star resort, what sort of enchantment has been cast. This is the spiritual power of Jeeyar Swamiji.

When we parted from Sri Swamiji, at the end of the camp, a feeling of longing and wanting fell upon us. Not being in the presence of our beloved Sri Swamiji we began feeling a severe emptiness in our

hearts. Although knowing we would be seeing him once again in Washington D.C. in only a matter of days we could not help but feel such yearning. No matter how hard we tried nothing could console our aching hearts.

We rejoiced when we once again united with our Jeeyar Swamiji. When I saw him this time I knew exactly how to act, how to address him, how to look at him, how to talk to him, this time I felt as if I was meeting my own mother.

We were allowed to spend one more week with Swamiji, and it was full of joy. Following Swamiji around, serving him, was an opportunity that few are blessed with. It was too much to bear when we had to let go of our Jeeyar Swamiji, again, saying goodbye, praying for another chance to see him soon. But we were comforted this time by Swamiji himself. He came down and sat on the radiator of the check in counter at Newark International. Here He talked with us, joked with us, and most importantly consoled us.

Such unselfish compassionate acts are what Sri Swamiji is all about. He is always willing and ready to bring himself down to our level and reach out to us. This is Sri Sri Sri Jeeyar Swamiji.

Jai Srimannarayana !