

## **Darshan after 18 years - Sowbhagyavathi Sashikala**

I heard the name of Sadguru Sri Chandrashekharendra Saraswathi Swamiji belonging to Kanchi for the first time in 1961. My grandfather late Dr.Harihar Gangadhar Moghe's disciple late Keshavaram, wrote him informing that he needs Shri Sankaracharya Swamiji's and Shri Dakshinamoorthy's hand-drawn pictures. "Shashi is studying in Art school. Would she draw the pictures?" he had enquired. Along with the letter he had sent the photos of Sadguru Swamiji and Dakshinamurthy.

My grandfather Dr. Moghe was well versed in music. He had taught music to Prof Keshavaram and to me also. As per the desire of my grandfather and also the brother disciple, I drew the pictures and sent them to Shri Keshavaram. He put those pictures before the Mahaswami. Swamiji touched those pictures with his hand and returned them to Keshavaram. "Dakshinamurthy's picture has been drawn in a fine way. It is really difficult to draw the eyes of Dakshinamurthy", remarked Swamiji. I felt very happy.

My grandfather was a student of various subjects. He had a deep knowledge of Vedanta. He told me something about Mahaswamigal with profound regard. Whatever my truth seeking grandfather told me was nothing but the truth. It was my firm belief. He talked about Mahaswamigal with great respect. So I felt like having Mahaswami's darshan. But the circumstances were not favourable. Within two years Dr.Moghe breathed his last. And my desire of having Mahaswami's darshan at Kanchi remained unfulfilled.

Approximately after 18 years, I got an opportunity to go to South India with my relatives. The object of journey was not sight seeing or observing the beauty of nature. The real purpose was to have darshan of Mahaswamigal. On reaching Kanchi we learnt that Mahaswamigal had left for touring the Northern part. He was not in Kanchi Mutt. I was disappointed. I had missed the opportunity of having His darshan. Swamiji never performed the journey in a vehicle. Travelling on foot Swamiji had reached Belgaum. Since all the tickets for our return journey had been booked, we could not change the plans. This happened in the month of May 1978.

In Nov of 1979, I learnt that Mahaswamigal was somewhere near to Maharashtra. The unfulfilled desire came to the fore. I enquired with number of persons but none had any information. Swamiji was not known to people at that time in Maharashtra.

My yearning for darshan made me restless. It crossed all limits. So much so that many a time stopping along the road, I used to enquire with the priest, the guru, the temple priest, but none had any information. "Where is Kanchi Mutt?" people used to enquire.

Even then, my search did not stop. And at last, the apparently lifeless tree of hope was adorned with tender leaves! It so happened that one day, I stood before Bhagwan Ramana Maharishi's

photo and expressed my anguish in words. 'Paul Brunton has written in his book "A search in Secret India", "Please arrange my meeting with a realized soul like you". Paul Brunton's request was to Kanchi Mahaswami. On being requested thus Kanchi Mahaswami directed Brunton to Ramana Bhagwan. That means both are identical. So now bless me with Mahaswami's darshan in a living form'.

Shri Ramana Maharshi responded favourably to my prayer.

Once I had gone to Prof. Gokhale. He lives in Shewade lane in Pune. The purpose of the visit was to have discussion with him on some religious and spiritual subjects: and if possible to talk to him about Swamiji. At that time Gokhale's cousin who works as a Brahmin priest came to him. Prof.Gokhale introduced him to me. And I put the same question to that stranger - the question that had been agitating my mind. "Sir, Do you know where Kanchi Peeth-Sankaracharya is staying at present in Maharashtra?"

And the gentleman said "Yes, he has gone to Ugar. At Ugar one sannyasin is performing Gayatri yagna. There it is said this old Sankaracharya has come. But I do not know the exact address.

I was overjoyed. My joy knew no bounds. And I exclaimed, "Where is Ugar? With whom should I enquire to get the address? How to reach there and where to get down? I bombarded him with question after question. The priest replied, "This Ugar is a small place near Sangli. There is Divekar's Mahadev temple. Gayatri Yagna is going on in that temple. You better write a letter to Shri Divekar for the required information. Beyond this I do not know much".

With great effort, but as speedily as I could, I reached home. My mind prayed continually, "Oh Swami, let me have your darshan. Enough of this hide and seek game!"

Only one reply paid postcard was available at home. On that postcard I wrote the typical address. "Shri Divekar, Mahadev mandir, Ugar. Near Sangli." I wrote my address on another card, so Shri Divekar might send the reply post in haste. "How to reach Ugar? Where to stay? Were my enquiries in the letter?

In spite of there being two places of the same name - factory Ugar and Ugar khurd, the letter reached its destination. The postman had done his job correctly mine being an open letter. Shri Divekar sent the reply immediately.

There was only one state bus from Pune. That too is leaving Pune at 4.30 am! That bus used to reach Ugar at about 1.30 in the afternoon that is after about nine hours. How could I go all alone? My mother was very much worried. That was the problem. But all the obstacles were removed by Swamiji. When I had gone to the bus stand at about 4 pm to purchase the ticket for the journey to be performed the next day, I met unexpectedly one of my friends. "I too will

accompany you” she said. Only two tickets were available. We had those last two tickets. Next day in the morning my friend’s husband came to the bus stand to see us off! At about 2 pm we reached Ugar. That blessed day was 1st January, 1980!

After having prayed to Shri Ramana Bhagawan, within eight days I found myself in the presence of Mahaswami Chandrasekarendra Saraswati. I stood before Him with folded hands! The yearning of 18 long years was getting drenched in the free flow of my tears!!

I found Swamiji sitting in a small cart joined to a cycle taking His hands and feet closely to His body, sitting in a crouching position. He was staring at me. But I could not look into His eyes. While performing the ST bus journey, I had written a short letter in broken Sanskrit addressed to Swamiji. Swamiji was looking without batting His eyelids. And I could not control my tears!! Tears flowed down my cheeks freely.

In this state 5 to 7 minutes passed. Someone told me, “There in the hut like room Yati Narayananda is seated. Go and sit there.”

I sat there. Immediately one attendant of Swamiji came and asked, “What is your name?”

“Shashikala”, I replied.

“If that is your name, then perhaps Mahaswami is calling you. He observes silence today. That is why he is making a sign of the crescent moon on the head. So come.”

I went there and made pranam touching the ground with my head. The thought crossed my mind, “Rev. Swamiji, for 18 long years I waited for your darshan, but you are hiding your holy feet. How can I take a look at your holy feet?” And the next moment Swamiji got down from the cart. He stood before me! I repeatedly touched the ground with my forehead. I felt my mind was being X-rayed. Then another desire came up. Again I started the dialogue with Swamiji in my mind. (The dialogue without uttering a word. All that was “Mounasamvaadha”)

“Rev.Swamiji, today is the day of observing silence, how then will I hear you speak! Do speak something”.

Suddenly, Swamiji started for the cottage of Shri Narayananda, He sat outside the cottage and started telling Narayananda something by making signs. Shri Narayananda glanced the threshold of the room at a small stand specially made for keeping the holy books. He kept a volume on it. Then he started reading the holy book. Whatever he was reading was being explained by Mahaswami at length in chaste Sanskrit. Swamiji had fulfilled my desire to hear him speak!! But how wanton man’s mind is! I could not help asking Swami’s attendant in a low voice, “Today Mahaswami observes silence, and even then he is speaking”.

The attendant spoke slowly, “He is not speaking in a worldly language meant for the practical life. He is speaking in the language of the gods (Shwewaani) – Sanskrit. Moreover he is explaining the meaning of the Upanishads. The Upanishads are not man-made. They form the part of the Vedic literature. So by explaining the Vedic literature in Sanskrit, the vow of silence in practical life is not broken.”

Paramacharya Mahaswami made the most ordinary lady devotee hear his speech without breaking his vow of silence! In how easy a manner and how quickly do the realized souls fulfill the desire of their devotees! Besides, that miracle remains a secret with that particular devotee only. Others do not get even the faintest idea about it!

I went for Mahaswami’s darshan again at 8 pm. At that time He was sitting in his small cart in a crouching position – His hands and feet drawn close to His body like a tortoise neck bent low and eyes closed.

Along with my friend I went to Shri Divekar, had our dinner and went to sleep. “Swamiji gets up early in the morning at about 3 to 3.30 am. At that time Suvasinis perform His aarati with niranjan, to have this darshan is considered to be extreme good fortune”, Mrs. Divekar told us. Both of us decided to have that darshan. But the next day, we got up at 5 am. due to exhaustion caused by journey.

We could not have the first darshan which is called “Vishwaroopadarshan.” We felt bad for that. After taking bath we started for the temple. At that time Mrs. Divekar handed over a tray to me. In that tray, there were all the things (flowers, matchbox, haridra, kumkum, deepam etc.) needed for pooja at the time of darshan. Mrs. Divekar said, ‘Forget about Vishwaroopadarshan. But when you take swami’s darshan forget not to perform His aarati with deepam. That will do.’

We went to the temple with that tray. On that day there was severe cold at Ugar (20 Jan, 1980). Even though we had put on the sweaters having full sleeves, shawls over it and the kerchief tied to the head, we were shivering with cold. There, we learnt, Swamiji had not got up till that time. We looked through the grills fixed to the front part of the cart. Swamiji was found sitting in the same crouching position as he had been seen the previous day at 8 o’ clock. He had only the loin cloth. There was severe and biting cold and Swamiji sat in the cold cart, unconcerned. The level of our knowledge was not adequate enough to understand whether the Swami was sleeping or experiencing Samadhi.

The time of the bus for the return journey to Pune was 7:30 am, so we asked the attendant when Swamiji was going to get up. He replied, “Everyday He gets up before 3.30 am. why has He not got up today? I don’t understand. We cannot predict anything regarding Him!” I started

praying earnestly to Swami in my mind. "Swamiji, please get up. I cannot miss the bus for the return journey". Please get up to bless us."

There was some movement in the cart. One more suvasini was ready to perform aarati. What she felt was beyond me. She said, "We belong to this place. Today, have Vishwaroopa darshan for yourself. You will acquire great merit." My mind was full of doubts. I said, "I am a maiden. A suvasini alone has to perform the aarati first, so how can I do it?" My words did not reach her ears. She said in a commanding voice, "Light the deepam immediately, and perform the aarati, .be quick.....be quick... Swami is looking at you." In my mind I said to myself, "Taking this to be your order, I am performing the aarati Swami, if this is not proper, please forgive me." And on that day I had "Vishwaroopadarshan."

Unasked, I had the benefit of the blessings! My joy knew no bounds. Within 10 to 15 minutes Swamiji came after taking bath. He sat near the door of the cottage. I performed the aarati and recited Shrimad Shankaracharya's "Shiva manas pooja" with eyes full of tears and the voice choked with emotion. I did it in the very presence of "Parabramha Shiva" Himself!

Swami listened with rapt attention with a fixed gaze. I bowed down to Him and uttered one sentence in Sanskrit – "Swami Maharaja, Mama Maatha Vridha. Saa api apekshathe Bhavatha: Darshanam. Saa athra aaganthum na shaknothi. Atha: thasyaa: namaskaram ahameva karomi." (Swami Maharaj, my mother is old. She too has a desire of your darshan. It is not possible for her to come here, so I am making pranam on her behalf also.)

Thereupon Swamiji responded favourably and smiled such a sweet smile that it is next to impossible to describe it in words.

Raising His hand in blessing, He permitted us to leave. We reached the bus stand. We were in a great hurry. And we were at the bus-stand on time. All that was possible due to Swami's blessings. The bus arrived a little late that day. Had it not been so, we would have missed the bus.

What a darshan it was after having kept me waiting for 18 long years!

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