

An ode to my grandpa 🙏

# His Holiness *Sri Swami Saravanabhavananda!*

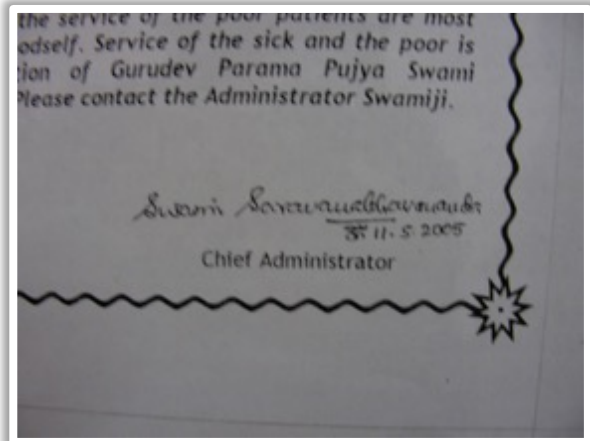


## A gentle warning!

This particular extra-long post is mostly an autobiographical note 📝, or dare I say a 📓 note-pad 📖, with invaluable contributions from my extended family!

Swami Saravanabhavananda's mahasamadhi was exactly **108** years after Swami Vivekananda's. It's also the eve of *Guru Purnima* this year!!!

Today is the 10<sup>th</sup> *MahaSamadhi* anniversary of my triple G: maternal Grandpa, resident Guardian & disciplinarian *Guru* from LKG to ME: a stellar personality whose life literally return journeyed from nothingness (*Arcot Pasu-pathy*, an epithet of *Shi-va*) to everythingness (*Venkata-chala-pathy*, an epithet of *Vishnu*), back to one born of nothingness (Swami *Sara-vana-bhava-ananda*, s/o *Shiva*) to oneness (*Maha-sama-dhi*), offering immeasurably profound service in every role & in the interim transitions too!



*Signature of Swami Saravanabhavananda,  
Chief Administrator of SSCCH, Pattamadai*



*Personal worship shelf at  
Swamiji's kutir in Pattamadai*



*Swami Saravanabhavananda with his guru Swami Chidananda's then newly sculpted murti/vigraha & one of his own sishya too*



*Swami Saravanabhavananda at the cozy little room where his paramaguru Swami Sivananda was born in Pattamadai, Tirunelveli, TN, Bharat*

## 🕒 Time travel 🕒:

Rewind by ten lunar summers to Europe! It was the US 🇺🇸 Independence Day: July 4th, 2010. In the midst of my sabbatical at *Politecnico di Milano*, I had just presented to a thunderous reception in *Ruhr-Universität*, a unique path-breaking work of one of my PhD students 🎓, *Ramesh* (now a Prof. 🧑 at SNU).



## *Festschrift*

This was at a festschrift celebrating 🥳 my grand-advisor (academic grandpa, if you will!), Prof. V. L. *Berdichevsky*'s 65<sup>th</sup> b'day. It was a rare honour to deliver an invited talk in front of both my advisor & grand advisor, amongst other stalwarts in the field from around the globe. BTW, along with another of my PhD students 🎓, *Srikant* (now a Prof. 🧑 @IIT-Ropar), we were actually four generations of 'abstract academicians' partying the way we know best: a geeky Greeky (sic) conference!



## Breaking News!

Reveling in the aftertaste of scholarly glory, *Srikant* & I were on a train 🚂 from *Bochum*, Germany 🇩🇪 back to *Milano*, Italy 🇮🇹 to resume our research. A message that I received on my sturdy 🧱 brick-like Nokia Communicator, as our train 🚂 was passing through the Swiss 🇨🇭 Alps, instantly froze all of me, except for the tears 😭 rolling down my cheeks. My dear student held my 🖐️ hands 🖐️ firmly with a childlike warmth that gradually defrosted me back to a reality check:



Yes, my dearest grandpa 🧓, His Holiness Sri Swami *Saravanabhavananda* had attained *Maha-Samadhi* at 12 Noon 🕒 IST. His holy mortal coils had just been gracefully returned to Mother Earth 🌍 in *padmasana*. While his body had returned to its source in the simplest of the wide variety of *yogic* postures that he regularly taught to 100s of *brahmacharis* & villagers till his last breath, his equally simple & principled life lives on in those that he deeply impacted, including yours truly.



His Holiness Swami *Chidananda*, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Global President of Divine Life Society & Founder, SSCCH, who initiated Swami *Saravanabhavananda* into *sanyasa*

An ode to my grandpa 🧓

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## Flashback within Flashback:

Here's a recursive fractal-like flashback within a flashback: Thanks to my vivid long-term memory (a decade ago!), appearing in 8K resolution on my OLED-like train 🚆 window panel was the replay of all the weird mischief I had generously inflicted as a naughty schoolboy on my life's foremost mentor! Here's a sample glimpse of two such recurring 'fun' moments:

1. Despite a high paying job for his times, he led a simple life & regularly rode a bicycle to work. Most daily routines in his life were like precise clockwork & that included his office timings as well as pre-calculated departure from home. Unfortunately for him, on certain days, he found his bicycle tire(s) flat, had to literally run with his bike to get it checked for puncture(s) & still got late to work, much against his own ethics. It took a while & quite a few such recurrences, even for the intelligent person that he was, to recognise the correlation between such 'bad' days & the occurrences of the evenings prior to that! Well, those evenings invariably involved 'over-disciplining' yours truly!



*Swami Sivananda (paramaguru of Swami Saravanabhavananda)*



*Administrative Office of Swamiji in SSCCH, Pattamadai*



## Mischief permeates...

2. The bicycle attack already having been discovered & safeguarded against, his equally smart grandkid had to chalk up an alternate 'revenge' strategy, whenever necessitated.

Once again, yours truly decided to use the poor granddad's punctuality itself to backfire on him. The yogi that granddad was, his biological clock worked with precision & he never ever needed an alarm. However, once he got out of his bedroom, he had the habit of checking the large 'grandfather clock,' typical of homes those days.



Having observed this, yours truly at late night, following those evenings when he self-adjudged that he was unduly over-disciplined, picked up the long cobweb clearing stick to open up the grandfather clock & push forward the hour hand to change the home standard time (HST!) by about an hour.

And no, it had nothing to do with Daylight Savings Time of which I had no idea then!!! Well, the effect was that, the yogi grandpa got ready quickly as usual but was huffing & puffing to work at breakneck speed on his bicycle to make up for the lost hour, only to reach office way too early for it to even be opened!



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### My spiritual seeding

Despite all the above mischief & much more censored ones, yes, my *pujya swargiya nanaji*, who attained *maha-samadhi* at the poor backward village of Holy *Pattamadai* where he was the Chief Administrator of the *Swami Sivananda Centenary Charitable Hospital (SSCCH)*, was definitely the one who sowed the seeds of spirituality in me & I was privileged to be in his care throughout my schooling. During my childhood, prior to all his promotions later in life, my dad was still a government doctor working at very remote villages of *Karnataka* with absolutely no schools whatsoever. So, I lived with my deeply religious maternal grandparents in *Jayamahal, Bengaluru* from age 4. Spiritual seeds were thus sown by my grandpa, *Sri A. P. Venkatachalapathy*, who was deeply associated with the Divine Life Society of *Swami Sivananda* (a descendant of *Sri Appayya Dikshitar*), who surrendered a rollicking medical practice as a young doctor in *Malaya* to arrive at *Rishikesh*, on the holy banks of River *Ganga*.



*Office of Swami Saravanabhavananda*



*Swamiji's guru vigraha in Pattamadai*



## Seed before the seed...

A couple of years after the demise of my grandma, my grandpa also took up *sanyas* & after a few years of penance in the *Himalayas*, he was appointed as the Chief Administrator of the *Swami Sivananda Centenary Charitable Hospital (SSCCH)* at

the latter's birthplace, *Pattamadai* near *Tirunelveli*, which had no hospital facilities until then for the villagers. He attained his *mahasamadhi* in 2010, which I missed as I was on that fateful train passing through Switzerland 🇨🇭 that you already read about.



## Sprouting the seed...

The seeds sown by my grandpa unfortunately didn't sprout until I went to USA 🇺🇸 in 1994 as a PhD student & encountered so-called 'American Born 🧑🏽 Confused 🧑🏽 Desis (ABCDs)' in Hindu Students Council (HSC) who shockingly knew far more about Bharatiya 🇮🇳 culture, tradition & heritage than most of us born in Macaulay's "India" 🇬🇧! That's when my transformation began & my grandpa's seeds started sprouting within me. As I mentioned earlier, I went on to become its Regional Coordinator (Southeast USA) as well as an executive committee member of the VHP of America. My housemate & junior at Georgia Tech became my Vedic teacher. Better late than never, I never looked back since then!



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### Harvest

My aunt *Jegeema* revealed to me just last month that while I was in the US in the 1990s, my grandpa had apparently told her “Seeing *Dinesh*’s *samskaras*, I want him to serve the Divine Life Society, either at *Rishikesh* or at *Pattamadai*.” She felt that I would have excelled if I were in *Ramakrishna* Mission’s *ashram* & wanted to know, if based on my astrological background, I had known all along that I’ll be involved in spirituality post-marriage! I had to give her a return surprise with the following revelation: “*Jegeema*, my exposure to astrology came as a result of my deepening spirituality rather than the other way around. *Thatha* might have mentioned it because during my PhD, I had a series of letter exchanges with *Swami Chidananda* of *Rishikesh* on taking up *sanyasa*, with copies to *Swami Saravanabhavananda*.”



*Swami Sivananda (paramaguru of Swami Saravanabhavananda)*



*Swamiji’s simple resting place in Pattamadai*



## First attempt@monkhood...

Even before that I was attempting to become a monk at the naturally verdant & beautiful *Kauai Aadhenam* in Hawaai. But the literally & figuratively towering American *Gurudeva Sivaya Subramuniaswami* advised me that

my inclination at that time was more towards *smartha* rather than *saiva siddhanta* & hence I should get in touch with *Swami Chidananda*, who in turn advised me that it wasn't yet time for my *sanyasa* & it's possible to be fully involved in spiritual life even in marriage like the ancient *rishis*!!! With immense trust in my grandpa's great guru, I never looked back since then..."



## Did you know that?! I didn't!!!

As listed in [rasikas.org](http://rasikas.org), *Swamiji* was also a [Carnatic music composer](#). Of course, in his pre-*sanyas* years, I knew the games he used to play with my grandma on guessing *Carnatic ragas*... but then, my grandma always had a lead!

## Back to the present:

To befittingly honour this self-effacing saint of the highest calibre, *Swami Saravanabhavananda*, I invited a few of my dear ones to reminisce about him. Here's what we've, after suitable editing:



An ode to my *naina* 🙏

## His Holiness *Sri Swami Saravanabhavananda!*



His youngest of 2 pre-sanyas kids, *Jegeema*, my *Yashodama*!

First things first. My maternal aunt 🙏, *Jegee-ma*, was a favourite of my grandpa 🙏, perhaps because she was as naughty as me! She's the one who kindly reminded me of today's *mahasamadhi* anniversary & I put the onus back on her to provide me her content as well. She was more than happy to oblige:

1. His father's name was *Pasupathy* & his mother's name was *Asalamba*.
2. Every year, on his *tithi*, led by the DLS & SSCCH management, the people of *Pattamadai* perform *Pada Pooja*, *Samadhi Pooja*, *Kirtans* & *Annadanam* in the memory of H. H. Swami *Sarvanabhavanandaji*. 🙏
3. He would have been so happy to see you at this stage of *sadhana* & your writings. Feeling so happy. God bless you *Dinesh* for your work.
4. What I have heard about him is that from his childhood, he was attached to lord *Rama* & used to share his food & knowledge with other students. Later he literally lived with lord *Muruga* & helped others by sacrificing his wants. After *sanyasa*, he lived fully in service/*seva*.



*Swami Saravanabhavananda with part of pre-sanyas family, visiting him once in a blumoon!*



*Recovering well!!*



5. Specifically for the poor patients in the Holy *Pattamadai* hospital and their attendant family members, he conducted regular yoga classes.

6. For many years until his samadhi, he edited & published a Tamil magazine called *Pattamadai Kural*, for free distribution, and conducted *satsangs* in every village around *Pattamadai*.

7. His *Guru bhakti* was so great that he chose the day for his *mahasamadhi* to be the same as his first *manasika guru* & hero (whom he used to refer to as the 'real' father of our nation, as opposed to Mahatma Gandhi as the 'adopted' father of our nation!) *Swami Vivekananda's samadhi* day & that too at his *Parama-Guru's* birthplace.

8. He used to work to improve so many temples in Bangalore & done lots of charity before *sanyasa*.



9. I regularly get invitation from DLS *Pattamadai* for his *tithi puja*.

10. He has helped many poor people towards their education, wedding, & medicines for the sick amongst them.

11. He liked to have regular *satsangs*. *Swamiji's purva ashrama* life was full of *Muruga* worship. He used to perform *Aaru (6) kaala puja* to the *Muruga* in his own temple.

12. He was born in *Udhagamandalam* (Ooty), lost his parents at an early age & was thus brought up by his maternal aunt.

13. His schooling was at *Chennai* & graduation from Loyola College. He was an outstanding student of *Thamizh* & stood first in his college in History.

14. Later, he went to Bangalore. He was an official treasurer in many temples & in Divine Life Society's Tasker Town Branch, now called *Sivanandapuram*.



An ode to my *naina* 🙏

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### *Jegeema (cont...)*

15. Apart from his physical, emotional, cultural & intellectual services, he has also contributed financially to many temples. For example, he donated the silver *kalasam* for the silver chariot of *Thiruthani Muruga* is one among them. If you people go to *Thiruthani*, please pull the chariot. Its top *kalasam* was offered by *thatha*.

16. He felt he was actually living with *Muruga*. Without offering freshly self-cooked prasadam & milk to *Muruga*, he would never have his food.

17. Many used to gather for *shashti* & *Krittika puja* conducted by him. His house was effectively a temple.

18. He had 2 rooms built for his *Guru*, *Swami Chidananda* to stay whenever he was at *Bengaluru*. He lived serving & following his *Guru*.

19. Grace of lord *Muruga* along with his *guru bhakti* made him chose his *samadhi* day to coincide with that of the great *Swami Vivekananda* & that too at holy *Pattamadai*.

20. His *chithi*, 'Singapore aaya' told me about his childhood days. She only brought him up.

21. He got blessed by *Kanchi-mahaan*.



*My wife & daughter receiving blessings of Swami Saravanabhavananda*



*My parents receiving Swamiji's prasadam in Pattamadai on 6<sup>th</sup> September 2009, 2 days before his paramaguru's birthday!*



22. He had a large *bhajan* group. They used to sing one *Thirupugazh* over each step of the *Thiruthani* mountain on 31<sup>st</sup> December night every year & gradually reach the divine shrine uphill on 1<sup>st</sup> January morning to have the first darshan of *Muruga* for the year. This is followed even now by many others & is called *padi puja* for the new year.

23. He attained *bhu samadhi*. His samadhi is located at *Gopala-samudram, Cheran-ma-devi*. His samadhi is in sitting position, it was filled with *vibhuthi* & *rudraksh* by the President of Divine Life Society *Rishikesh*, other *sanyasis* & *purohits*.

24. Swami Gnyanananda Tapovanam & Swami Satchidananda, classmate friends of Swami Sivananda visited his house at *Nandi-durga* Extension.



25. He had contact with *Mouna-guru Swamigal, Thiruvalam*.

26. He used to read the "Gospel of Sri *Ramakrishna*" daily.

27. He used to conduct *satsang*, read spiritual books & give discourses every day at home for family members. Later, he continued to do this to the people of *Pattamadai* & its nearby villages.

28. He used to take *kavadi* for *Oorigaum Muruga* every *Thai Poosam*. He got a *Muruga vigraha/murti* from *Pazhani* & actually saw *Muruga* living in the stone sculpture. He, in turn, lived with *Muruga*.



An ode to my *naina* 🙏

## His Holiness *Sri Swami Saravanabhavananda*!



His eldest of 2 pre-*sanyas* kids, *Vasanthima*, my *Devakima*!

My mother, *Vasanthi-ma*, the eldest of his two surviving pre-*sanyas* children, obviously had a lot to say about her dear father! As she rampaged at the speed of *Veda Vyasa*, the li'l foetal *Ganesha* in me could jot down just a few of her fond recollections, hopefully not lost in translation:

1. Even in his early years of marriage, he frequently travelled to *Rishikesh* with family. Hence, I got the privileged *darshan* of *swamis*, *Ganga* & many sacred deities at a very young age.
2. Do you know the story, or rather history, behind how he got his new name? His guru, *Swami Chidananda* gave him the name of *Saravanabhavananda* at the time of *sanyas* because of your *Thatha's* pre-*sanyas* home being christened "*Palani Nivas*," where his *guru* & *paramaguru* both used to stay in a dedicated set of first floor rooms whenever they visited *namma Bengaluru*. Immediately upon his arrival, *Swami Chidananda* used to enquire of my grandma 🙏 "*Thayaare sowkyama?*" meaning "Mother, are you fine?" My then li'l sister *Jegee* used to get super excited & chant her praises "*Swami Chidananda ji maharaj ki jai*" etc. loudly, while I used to welcome 🙏 Him far more soberly.

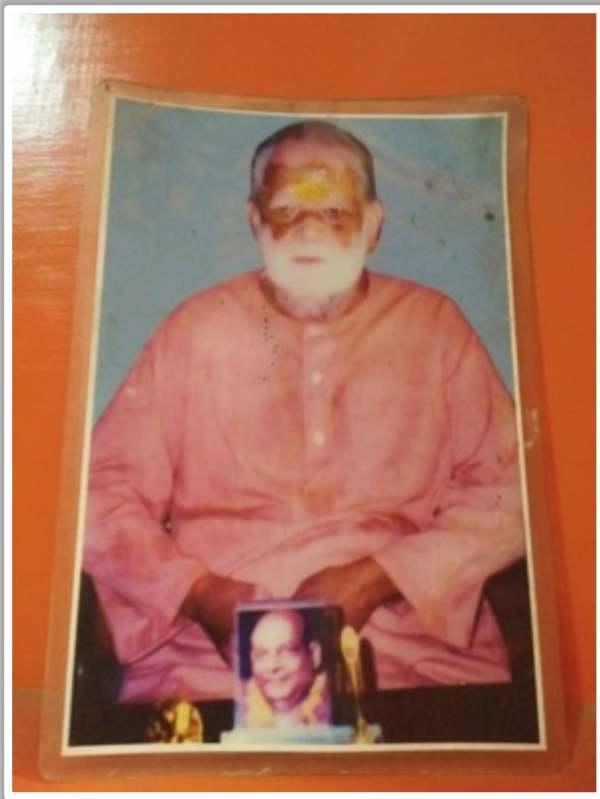


*My brother Dilip & his family receiving prasadam from Swami Saravanabhavananda*



*Children love the presence of swamiji...*

*Pragnya had a jolly good time on both her visits.*



Swami Chidananda used to then go directly to our beautiful large *Puja* room, personally designed by your *thatha* with temple-like doors, to offer his worship to the *Pazhani Dhandayudhapani* (@Saravanabhava) *vigraham* that *thatha* used to pray to regularly. Recognising his unflinching devotion to *Muruga*, Swami Chidananda had chosen the post-sanyas name for *thatha* as Swami Saravanabhavananda.

3. Whenever an opportunity arose, he used to take the whole family to *Pazhani*, stay there for at least four days, & rise up early to take the very first *darshan* uphill & remain there till the last *darshan* before coming downhill late in the night. This was repeated religiously in the remaining days too! Such was the intensity of his *Muruga-bhakti*.

4. *Aaru-padai veedu* pilgrimage was also done ✓ very frequently.

5. He had many small but significant practices/habits that you & I have inherited fully & follow to this day. One such useful practice is to always keep all items in their allotted places in specific orientations so that they could be picked up easily even with closed eyes or in utter darkness. This makes our home so organised & saves us so much time & energy which would otherwise be wasted in searching for things.



6. Another such practice is to ensure that not even a single grain of food is wasted. Even if some food is rarely accidentally spilt on the dining table, it needs to be dipped in an adjacent glass of water for cleansing & then consumed!

7. Literally <sup>100</sup>'s of lepers used to be fed by him every Wednesday morning with a variety of fruits as well as his tasty full course self-cooked meals.

An ode to my *naina* 🙏

## His Holiness *Sri Swami Saravanabhavananda!*



### *Vasanthima (cont...)*

8. *Krittika puja* every month followed by *bhajans* accompanied by instrumentals along with a big group of his colleagues, followed by *prasadam* which used to be a full-scale dinner 🍽️ for the entire large group. That's how *Mohan periappa* first got introduced to *Parvati periamma*, who in turn took care of my first delivery: you!

9. Orphaned at a very young age, he grew up with a series of guardians, all of whom he was so grateful to that he gave away most of the family wealth to them in their times of need. The rest was given away in donation to Divine Life Society & SSCCH. He had the clarity-based confidence that his family had the capability to fend for itself, even without any inheritance.

10. Every one of his meals used to be *prasadam* as he used to first offer it to *Muruga* accompanied by elaborate & unique *pujas* specific for each *muhurta*.

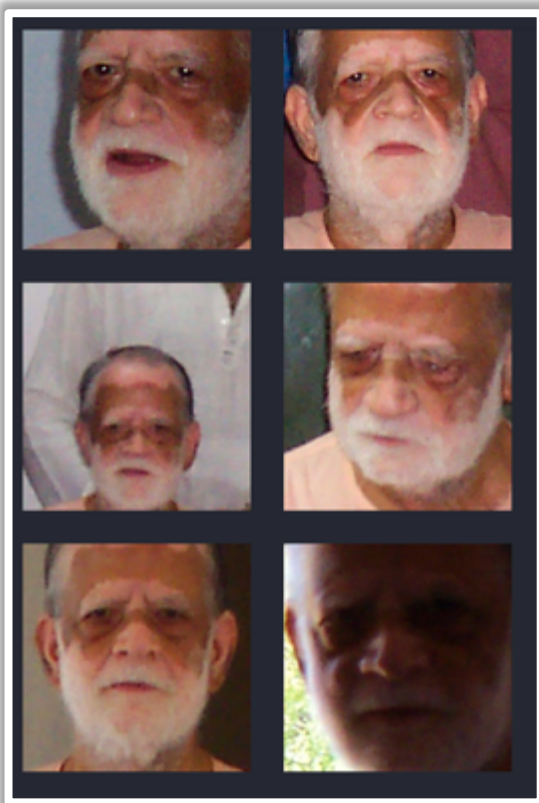
11. Every evening at 🕒 PM both your grandpa 🙏 & grandma 🙏 used to sing 🎤 from *Thirupugazh*, *Thevaram*, *Thiruvasagam*, *Kandhar Anubudhi*, *Kandhar Alangaram*, *Vel Virutham*, *Mayil Virutham* etc. This was followed by *swadhyaya* of a full page from either the *Ramayana* or the *Mahabharata*. This used to be the routine before every dinner every night.



*Paramaguru Swami Sivananda's home at birth*



*Obeisances, vajrasana & samskaras*



12. It was only through his untiring efforts & hard negotiations in native *Tirunelveli Thamizh* that the large-scale land acquisition & building construction 🏗️ for SSCCH was made possible.

13. Despite his repeated requests over many decades, *Swami Chidananda* had delayed *sanyas* for him, without offering any reason, until the demise of grandma 🙏. Only when he actually got *sanyas*, we recognised that the reason for the delay was only because of his *Guru's* compassion towards all beings, including our family.

14. In both his roles as the Treasurer of DLS *Bengaluru* as well as The Chief Administrator of SSCCH, he was very particular about accurate accounting 📊 going into every nitty-gritty & making sure of the entry & analysis of the finest details.

15. This was actually a reflection of his professional expertise too, having worked in the central government's Defence Accounts & in the Accountant General's office in *Karnataka*.

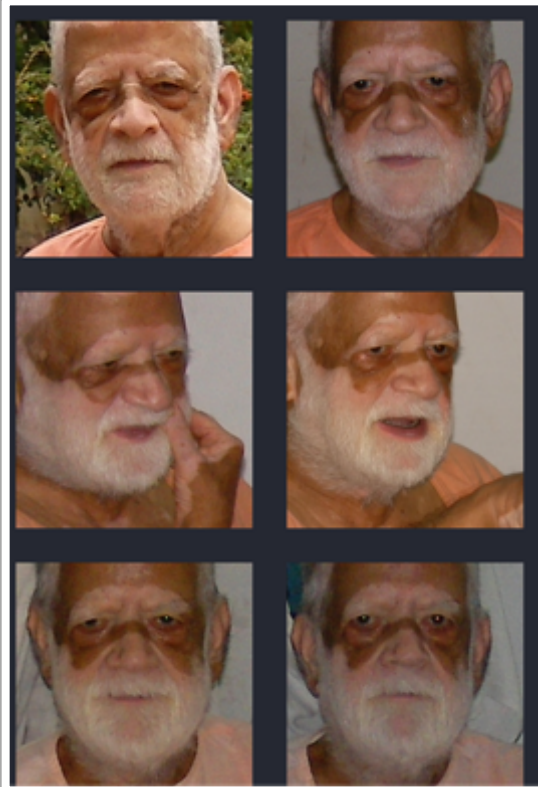
16. Reducing his & his family's expenditures to most basic needs, he donated a lot to temples & to conduct marriages of poor people.

17. He regularly designed & hand fabricated beautiful bordered placards to welcome *Swami Chidananda* with simple, catchy & yet profoundly impactful sayings of *Swami Sivananda*.



These were displayed around the house so that hundreds of visitors could carry home practical messages for their entire lives.

18. For many years, every Monday, the *bhajans* conducted by him would be moved from home to a *Pillayar* temple. These weekly congregations used to be attended by amateur singers who later went on to become great professionals, such as



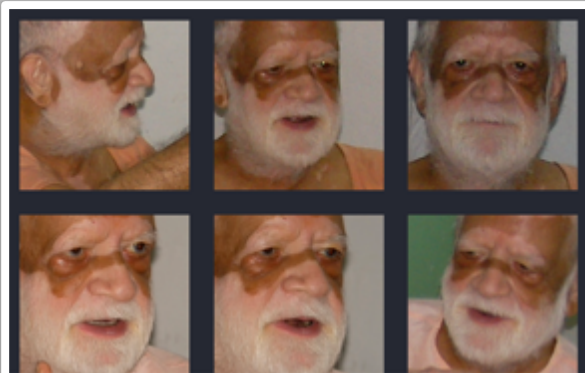
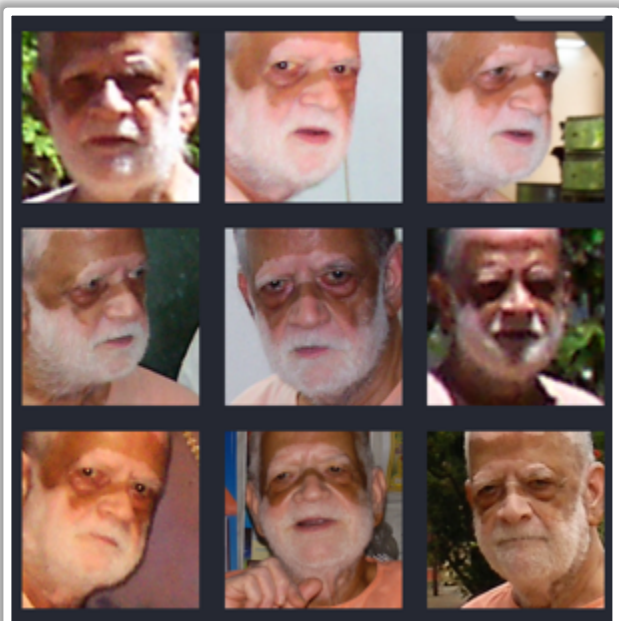
Bengaluru A. R. Ramani Ammal & even Thirumuruga Kirupanandha Variyar, in his younger days. The latter went on to become one of the major sustainers of *sanatana dharma* amidst overtly rationalistic *Dravidian* politics in *Thamizh Nadu* & known as the 64<sup>th</sup> *Nayanmar* (celebrated *Shiva* devotees).

19. Used a bicycle almost throughout his life though he could afford more expensive vehicles.

20. He considered the medical profession to be the most sacred & potentially service oriented, perhaps because his *paramaguru* was a doctor! Right from the time his daughters chose to pursue non-medical education, he was keen that at least both his sons-in-law should be doctors & was successful in realizing this dream.

21. He was delighted even more to find out that his grandson-in-law was, apart from being a doctor, an IAS officer specifically because he felt that the civil services provided one of the greatest opportunities to serve society at a massive scale with direct impact.


22. Receiving a call about his impending passing away, I (my mother) rushed from Bengaluru to Pattamadai (a 10-hour 600km drive with my cousin & son) to see him off. *Samadhi* was done in 🧘 *padmasana*, a sitting posture.



23. He used to organise the *Oorigaum Thai poosam yatra* to the temples of Muruga & Shiva built by your grandma's father *Devaraj* (divinely royal, true to his name) in a very grand manner taking with him hundreds of devotees every year & fully sponsoring their to-and-fro train travel, boarding & lodging for 3D2N. The fervour generated during this mind-boggling *yatra* cannot be described in words. It was an amazing experience for everyone.

**My grand uncle Sri A. V. Srinivasan** (AVS) sent me one of the most endearing messages I've ever received & will treasure forever. His description could make me actually feel & live through the immense respect he has for his brother & my grandpa. Thanks to him for sending me such a detailed note at such a short notice. I'm indeed privileged to receive his abundant blessings as always.

He wrote under the title **“Rambling Thoughts About Swami Saravanabhavananda on his 10<sup>th</sup> Death Anniversary.”**

His note  reads “This is my humble tribute to your grandfather A. P. Venkatachalapathi (APV), who has become a *Karma Yogi* who has amazingly served the community by attaining his sainthood. I share here some rambling thoughts about our beloved *Guru* in our family.

Some Personal Facts I Know About Brother/Swami APV.....

Born in a small & humble family, APV, along with his elder brother *Vasudevan* (Sr APV) & eldest sister *Vedavalli* (3V's), has experienced a roller-coaster life in the early days. However, God has been merciful all along right from his younger days until he reached his sainthood.

Having graduated from the famous Presidency College in the erstwhile Madras, now *Chennai*, APV, has attained higher status through sheer hard work, which had got him to start his career in Defense Accounts, a Central Service enterprise.

After getting married to *Smt. Vallibai*, your grandma (4<sup>th</sup> ‘V’ in the family) APV, had a great family life, & both focused on family & spiritual life from their early days of marriage. Both your mother & *Jegee chitti* should be proud of their parents, who have become a rare-pair in our family, in terms of simplicity, spirituality, discipline, & kindness.

I admire APV for his calmness & his devotion to Lord *Muruga*. Having a *Vaishnavite* name, APV focused more on *Shaivism*, especially worshipping Lord *Muruga*, our *Thamizh Kadavul*. Perhaps he might have chosen to stick to one form & name so that concentration & love can be developed to a greater degree. When it comes to a personal deity, he chooses his *Muruga* as his “*Ishta*” deity. It does not mean he has ignored other Gods. In fact, he regularly visited many different temples. This is an excellent lesson for our younger generation.

Also, I like his polite voice & beautiful handwriting. Both speak volumes about his personality & spiritual sense. Not many in my family have such traits. I have personally witnessed these qualities many a times. I cannot forget when he, along with his brother, has joined with my brother while performing all the rituals during

the demise of my mother. Both APV brothers have such connectivity with our family.

APV's spiritual transformation on becoming a *Swami* is remarkable and made all the extended family members proud of him. *Swami* has visited our home in 2000 after the demise of my father & blessed all of us. I had re-established a good contact since then & used to exchange many communications through phone & email. Still, I treat him as a role model for all his personal qualities & religious practices.

I always remember his holy words when I asked some questions on spirituality when he paid his last visit to our home:

He said, 'God can come to us whenever we are, for God is our very Self. As our hearts are attuned to the divine presence, we will feel that presence in ourselves, in our children, in every moment. Serve God in the needs of your family. Chant his name throughout the day.'

I feel these are great words & APV led a life as per the teachings of the *Bhagavad Gita*, which describes many paths for attaining freedom from the cycle of birth & rebirth. Two of them are followed by a *Karma Sanyasi* & a *Karma Yogi*.

*Karma Sanyasi* is the one who renounces the worldly duties & engages only in the spiritual practices. On the other hand, *Karma Yogi*, practices uniting the mind to the God even while doing one's obligatory duties in the World.

I believe *Karma Yoga* is the best way to do that. That will give right balance between our personal, professional & spiritual life. Our *Swami* is the right example for these verses quoted in the *Gita*.

We all had the opportunity to meet *Swami* in 2006 at Jegee's home at Ashok Nagar & took his blessings. Fate had decided that it was our last meeting. I am unfortunate to miss his last journey at *Pattamadai*.

To sum up, I can say that APV's life was a message to all of us. His life in this Planet was indeed a combination of Beautiful, Balanced, Blessed, & Blissful. During this memorable event, let us all pray for the blessings of *Swami Saravanabhavananda*.

May his fame & holiness be long remembered.

Our *namaskarams* to the departed soul!

The success of sainthood is the success attained by struggle & suffering & achieved by faith; a success of honor, of clean hands & pure heart, of service to man & glory to God. – William Croswell Doane

The above quote is dedicated to Late *Swami Saravanabhavananda* of *Pattamadai* on his 10<sup>th</sup> Death Anniversary.

### **Rambling Thoughts About *Swami Saravanabhavananda* (Continued)**

In my opinion, your *Thatha* APV had an excellent 'Home Life' before he was transformed into *Swami Saravanabhavananda*. As a trailer, he had shown his spiritual leadership in his home. He had a pleasure & passion in choosing an option on how to live his life after his retirement. His best life-balance plan had worked nicely for him to enter into a spiritual leadership role at the right time. He took life as a journey & not a destination. Such great souls never die.

He was a responsible husband & dad. Also, he was a role model for many members of his family circle. Of course, the grace of Lord *Muruga* was showering on him all the time. His spirit of humility has taken him to the pinnacle of success in every part of his life. More than his length of life, his depth of life must be admired.

Having said that, I close my observations about your *Thatha* & confirm all my views shared here have no iota of exaggeration. It is my humble tribute to my Big Brother, who will be remembered & missed forever.

As a small tribute, I have attached a “**Picture-Thought**” about *Swami* on his 10<sup>th</sup> Death Anniversary. This content you can use in the proposed booklet as well as share it with your family members. I am sure you all will love it. You can add the photo as the file is editable.

Let us all pray for the blessings of ***Swami Saravanabhavananda***!

Your affectionate *Chinna Thatha*”



**Ten years have passed, since YOU left,  
YOU have left us precious memories, your love is still our guide,  
Though we cannot see You, You are always at our side.**

**In life we loved YOU dearly,  
In death we love YOU dearly  
In our hearts, YOU hold a place,  
No one can replace.**

**Dear & Near Ones**

Having covered the views of my elders (maternal aunt, mother & granduncle), who interacted over a long duration with *Swamiji* mostly in his pre-*sanyas* days, I next present one of the most unique testimonials ever possible from my sweet li'l sister, *Sowmya*, a second-generation super-specialist in anaesthesia, who had the blessings, privilege & honour to serve not only our beloved grandpa *Swamiji* for a substantial period of time, but also to serve those whom *Swamiji* himself so lovingly served, in the spirit of *dasa-dasoham* & currently a dedicated frontline warrior in humanity's war with SARS-CoV-2. May she remain blessed forever!

**Dr. Sowmya Shanmugam, Chennai:**

I still remember how *thatha* used to prepare free booklet for poor people. His draft was so good that didn't need any editing.

He taught many poor kids free *yoga* & I was fortunate enough to demonstrate *yoga* for a week for them.

Before he took over SSCCH *Pattamadai*, it was running in a financial mess but soon after he arrived, he audited, strategized a well thought out plan, implemented it effectively & made it sustainable both in the short & long run, with or without him. That's a true leader who lives through his works way beyond his mortal coil. Recognizing the importance of involvement in one's work, he provided many well-being measures & increments for the staff there, motivating them to contribute their best for themselves & 'their own' hospital.

Even during his last days, he was never a burden for anyone. He used to do all his daily chores by himself. I still remember that vividly.

His wish was to leave his soul from the holy land of *Pattamadai*. So even after disconnecting him from the ventilator in *Tirunelveli*, he left us only after reaching *Pattamadai*... great soul.

Many nearby villages were ready to offer the required land for his *samadhi*. In fact, they argued with each other vehemently to get the custody of his body.

Every day, he used to visit the hospital for rounds & counsel the in-patients.

He organized many medical camps.

He also arranged for many specialist surgeons from the *Tirunelveli* hospital to come to remote *Pattamadai* & perform complicated surgeries, whenever required.

Since I was studying & working in *Madurai*, I was fortunate to visit him often during his last days. I rushed in as soon as I got a call from *Pattamadai* that he was sick

& hence on July 2<sup>nd</sup> 2010, he was admitted to the *Tirunelveli* hospital. I've connected many patients on ventilator but seeing *Swamiji* on ventilator was very depressing and emotional.

But was fortunate enough to talk to him when he was conscious & made mom to say prayers over the phone. Informed all his former family members, close relatives & other acquaintances that he is sick.

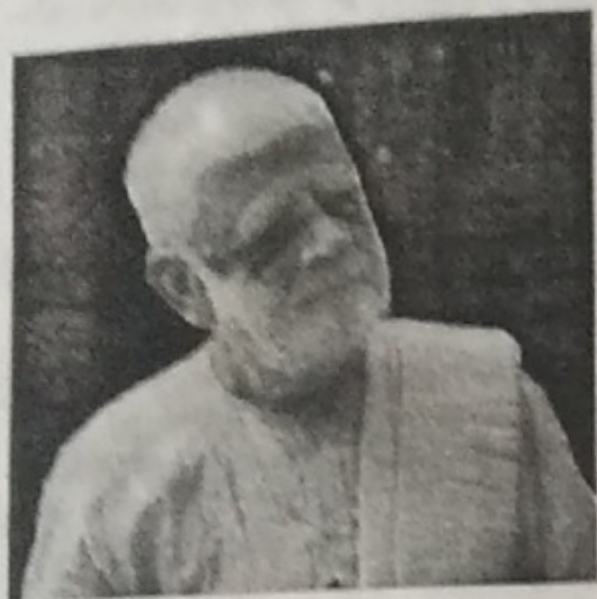
Next day, on 4<sup>th</sup> July morning, he was unconscious and got a call from *Rishikesh* president that he will visit *Swamiji* for prayers that evening. But he was sick. So, explained to him that *Swamiji's* last wish was to depart his soul only in *Pattamadai*, so it would be better to shift him as early as possible to *Pattamadai* hospital. And he agreed.

After making arrangements, we shifted him in an ambulance. His saturation was 40% on ventilator. Usually patients will succumb within 10 minutes if we disconnect. But his soul waited for half an hour, i.e., till we reached *Pattamadai*. And there I asked everyone to chant *thrayambakam mantram* & then He departed. He was placed in sitting posture immediately (because after some time *rigor mortis* would set in & it would not be possible to change the posture), as is the custom for *swamis* of his order.

**Priya Vijayakumar:**

Hi *Dinesh*, I recollect my father's association with your grandfather as a close friend & colleague at AG's office. As you know, when I had my marriage alliance, my father consulted your grandfather to get a background verification which ultimately was good. My father then used to tell the greatness of your grandfather as a modest, pious & knowledgeable person. After marriage, I was invited to your grandfather's house for a feast which we relished along with the spiritual atmosphere created by his talk about *Swami Chinmayananda Saraswati* & his *Guru Swami Sivananda Saraswati* with the portraits decorating the walls of the hall. We also sat for a small intellectual game which he organised to entertain us. Your grandmother also was very well known to my mother from their younger days & I thank & remember for her wholehearted hospitality. Your Grandpa also gave me spiritual booklets & books as well. These are my few fond memories of the noble person who brought you up with all care & affection... so well, that you represent his goodness & spiritual supremacy. Long live the memories of the great person!

## IN MEMORIAM



With a great sense of loss and profound sorrow we report the final departure of Sri Swami Saravanabhavanandaji Maharaj at 12 noon on 4th July, 2010 who moved on to the higher realms of existence leaving his mortal coil behind. The poignant scene during the funeral procession and condolence meetings on the 4th and 5th July, 2010 was the final testimony to the greatness of the man.

Born in Ooty, Tamilnadu on 17th June 1923, he was called A.P. Venkatachalapathy. He had strong spiritual inclinations even as a small child. He divided his time between playing with the idol of Lord Rama, singing hymns and teaching poor children. He went to Pachayappa School and later joined Loyola College, Chennai for higher education. An evolved soul that he was, he could empathise with everyone. He frequently distributed eatables and books among school children besides feeding beggars around his school.

He joined the Office of the Accountant General, Bangalore as an Accountant and went on to serve there till his retirement at the age of 55 years.

He joined the Divine Life Society in 1956 and received Mantra Diksha from Sri Gurudev in the year 1959. He also had the privilege to do Pada

Puja to Sri Gurudev. He distinguished himself as a great Karma Yogi by constantly doing excellent service for the cause of the Divine Life Society while at Bangalore and later at Pattamadai. He was also a great devotee of Lord Muruga and devoted considerable time to the worship of Lord Muruga.

He had a small Kutir built in his house at Bangalore for H.H. Sri Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj and whenever Pujya Swamiji visited Bangalore, he stayed in the house of Sri Venkatachalapathy. He took Sannyasa in the year 1994. Pujya Sri Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj requested him to serve at the Swami Sivananda Centenary Hospital at Pattamadai.

Sri Swamiji did Seva at the hospital from 1994 onwards in various capacities—as a Trustee, Finance Controller, Managing Trustee and Chief Administrator. While rendering service at the hospital, Sri Swamiji also worked tirelessly towards furtherance of Sri Gurudev's mission of dissemination of spiritual knowledge by publishing the Tamil magazine "Pattamadai Kural" (Voice of Pattamadai) and also conducting spiritual retreats for the benefit of the village folk in and around the Pattamadai village. Swamiji was also responsible for setting up a few branches in the area. His own contribution towards these branches in financial terms was substantial and he used to take personal interest in the hospital as well as these branches. Swamiji's pleasing nature and loving care extended by him to everyone made him a guide and mentor of the distressed souls. On his entering the Mahasamadhi, the entire hospital staff and the devotees in the nearby villages felt a vacuum as could be seen from the serene homage paid to him during his last journey and the subsequent condolence meetings.

Although Sri Swamiji has left his mortal coil, his memory will remain ever green in the minds of the poor, rural folk whom he very affectionately served, and also the hospital staff.

May his soul rest at the feet of Worshipful Gurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj!

Hari Om Tat Sat. Jai Gurudev.

**Sri Shekar Viswanathan, Rtd. Dy. Commissioner of Police (DCP), Bengaluru:**

I always remember pre-sanyas Swamiji's witty talks especially the 'Idly riddle!' He used to ask us to answer the riddle 'vatta vattamaana li, vaal-illatha li, thattil irukkum li, thala-thalakkum li, adhu enna li?' We used to blink & then, he would answer, "IDLI!"

When I used to go to *Palani Nivas, Ekambaram maama* used to send a Cadbury's chocolate to Jegee through me. I would keep it in my shirt pocket. When I reach there, he used to surprise me that he will be able to tell what I have brought for Jegee & tell it's a Cadbury's! In those days, I used to wonder how he knew that!

He was so happy when I became a cop. After our marriage, he hosted a lunch for Chandrika & me. Jegee had prepared that. It had plenty of vegetables side dishes like a buffet. Always, we remember his love & smiling face.

**Smt. Chandrika Shekar, Sr. Sahaj Marg instructor, Bengaluru:**

Thanku sooò much, about Swamiji dinku just one thing... he's laughing *Buddha*... just one smile it's so infectious & makes everyone happy n smile... with his riddles... was special... bless us all, Swamiji 🙏🙏

**Dr. Deepa Kelkar, Thiruvananthapuram:**

*Dinks*, honestly, I don't have any great memories of *thatha* during my childhood. Just have a few good memories from the later stages of my life. He would take good care whenever *Raj* & I would visit him during our medical college days. He would welcome us with a smiling face & even if we got back late, he would be sweet to us & always made sure we were comfortable there. I called him few times from *Munnar* when *Dheboo* was a baby. He really felt very happy to listen about *Dheboo* & he said baby's talks, referred to as '*mazhalai*' in *Thamizh*, will be more melodious than any musical instruments & that we should thoroughly enjoy it. That always stayed in my mind.

**Dr. Rathan U. Kelkar IAS, Thiruvananthapuram:**

Visited him in SSCCH, *Pattamadai* during summer of 2004 after my marriage. He was very happy to see me, took extremely wonderful care & also packed tasty food for our return journey. And the whole experience there was pleasant.

**Sri Dilip Harur Sampath, Founder-CEO, iMindYourBusiness:**

One most important takeaway from *thatha* is BE GOOD DO GOOD. 🙏

**Dr. Sankya Shanmugam:**

1. I can add on to what Sowmya & *amma* have said: *Swamiji* was a simpleton. What I want to learn from him, apart from all of the above-mentioned aspects, is that he hardly kept a few things for himself, for example, four sets of ochre robes & just a pair of long worn-out slippers!
2. If anything new was donated to him, he never kept it for himself, he immediately disposed it off to a much more needy person.
3. He had timely meals, eating sparsely but ensuring healthy *sattvic* food. Even if someone brought to him any snacks for personal use, he used to distribute them then & there to all those who were present, as *prasad*. 😊

**Smt. Sivasankari Bhavanishankar:**

Our prayers & *pranams*.

To *Swamiji* 🙏, on his anniversary.

My fond remembrance of him is that when I was a kid, he used to call me *Kutty Jayalalitha*.

He would say “*Vallibai*, come here, see, *Kutty Jayalalitha* has come, see she is also dressed just like her” & he would then comment on my haircut & the way I would speak too.

And it's so surprising that many years later, our grandson *Aditya*, when he was just 2 or 3 years old & was visiting *Chennai* along with his parents, he used to see the hoardings of *Jayalalitha* & say “see *ammama* 😊”

Apart from this, I remember how *Swamiji* used to do dedicated service when *Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj's* stayed in their house.

He would be strict about visitors & also tensed that everything should be ok.

Also, whenever we would visit them, he used to do *pooja* at the shrine & say *Parvathy Pathaye Namoh Namah* & smile at mom, as it's her name too!

We also recall how, when we visited *Pattamadai*, he was doing dedicated service & seemed at peace & happy to do what he had always wanted to do. 🙏

**Sri V. K. Shanmugavel:**

*Chinayna* is what we used to address him as...he was the person that our whole family looked up to, for all the moral supports he gave us, when we missed our Dad...the words of courage which he shared with us are still fresh in my ears. But he was always a very witty person...he will crack a joke & won't even give a smile... all of us will laugh out loud... yes, he was someone whom we could always look for nice times... & that cycle which he used to ride... unforgettable... 🙏🙏 the simplicity I mean... hats off 🙏🙏

**Smt. Usha Mahesh:**

My Salutations to *Swami Saravanabhavananda*. He was my mother's *guru* who, my mother used to say, taught her all about prayers, meditation, & the principles of life. He used to accompany us on all our *Pazhani* trips, singing bhajans & we used to sing along with him. Also, he used to be very witty, & kept cracking some jokes. Whenever *Swami Chidananda Maharaj* visited his house, we have seen him serving *Swamiji* with so much respect, & we had the opportunity of meeting *Swamiji* & taking part in the events like *bhajans* & discourses. I've heard he did so much service in the hospital at *Pattamadai*. My mother had accompanied your mother & *Dilip* for his last rituals, & *amma* told me how much he was respected there. My Salutations to him.

**Smt. Nandini Anand:**

I remember whenever *Swami Chidananda* used to come, we used to come to *Swamiji Thatha's* house to serve the other swamis who used to accompany *Swami Chidananda* & to take their blessings.

*Swamiji Thatha* was a very great person. He used to sing so well during the *bhajans*. Had a melodious voice. Very devoted.

Soft spoken at the same time firm in taking decisions.

Gone are those days. Life now has become so monotonous. Everyone is so busy. Our childhood was the best.

Rare to find people like *Swamiji Thatha*. 🙏🙏🙏

You were *Swamiji's* favourite.

And it is because of his blessings that all of you are in good position and contributing a lot to humanity. We are all proud of you, Sowmya, Sankya, Deepa & Dilip. All precious gems.

*Swamiji Thatha* was associated with the Divine Life Society & was very dedicated. My dad may have pictures. My dad may share a lot of information about *Swamiji* because they were both associated with the activities of the Divine Life Society.

I remember *Swamiji Thatha* used to crack jokes also. But don't remember the jokes!

**Smt. Malini Nagraj:**

We remember visiting *Thatha's* house when we were small during *Swamiji's* visit.

He used to do lot of *bhajans* & we learnt lot of prayers from him.

He used to sometimes joke with us but at the same time be strict when *Swamiji* used to stay in his place.

He was a very great person who used to love to serve people.

**Sri A. G. Shanmugam:**

*Sudha* & I were the happy & lucky lot to meet him last & have his blessings. You had mentioned about my *yoga guru*, he's the one!

**Sudha Shamugam:**

*Mama thaatha* is our MENTOR. He has left us with plenty of memories, which both of us have treasured! For certain, he still participates in all our activities, thoughts & decisions we make. We recollect all his timely advises which have left an indelible imprint in our memories.

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**Folks, thanks for bearing with my long article & large number of testimonials today in honour of my beloved grandpa's 10<sup>th</sup> *mahasamadhi* day. Pardon my excessive usage of emojis as I'm still in a grandchild's mood!!!**

***AUM Saravanabhavaya namaha!***