Poondyswami Passes
Category : May 1979
Published by Anonymous on May. 02, 1979

Poondyswami Passes

In November of 1969 sixty-five pilgrims traveling with Gurudeva through South India met a most remarkable man. We had attended puja that afternoon at the Palani Hills temple and were driving across the broad plains toward Madras. It was early evening when we came to a small village called Poondy, not far from Tiruvannamalai. We had come to meet a rare human being - known only as Poondyswami.

Months earlier, as we planned our India Odyssey, we had heard about Poondyswami. His story begins sometime around 1959 when villagers found a man, unknown to them, seated beside a river on the outskirts of Poondy. From day to day he sat, inwardly immersed in what was obviously a deep contemplative state and to all appearances oblivious to those who went in curiosity to see him, oblivious too of the rains and hot Indian sun to which he was constantly exposed. They began to care for him, to feed him each day. Not knowing who he was or where he was from, they christened him "Poondyswami," the swami of Poondy. That was to be the only name he was ever known by.

A few months passed and Poondyswami was carried into the village where it would be easier to care for him. He did not object. He did not thank his patrons. He seemed altogether indifferent to his external circumstances. He was the same if it rained, the same if the sun scorched the earth he sat upon. He never walked. He never even stood.

The villagers built a simple thatched shelter over Poondyswami. Years later, as their admiration grew and his inner state radiated its influence far beyond the village, they built a fine shrine there on the roadside where Poondyswami could live in some comfort. He was well cared for, loved and admired and marveled at. Wealth was offered to him, and distributed in his name to various charities. His advice was sought, sometimes to be answered in a knowing silence and sometimes directly. But Poondyswami did not allow all this adulation and the thousands of

people who came to be in his presence to distract him from his communion. He was the same when alone as when they were there with him, at peace with himself and the universe.

At our twilight meeting, we went to Poondyswami, offering him fruits and flowers. He was bedecked with garlands and besmeared with Holy Ash. He did not seem much aware of us although we were without doubt the largest group ever to come to him. We offered to his caretakers a contribution for his care and to his charities. One among us ventured a question, "Swamiji, why is it that you never move from this hut?" The answer was quiet, almost inaudible, and as he spoke it he looked not at his inquisitor but into space with a luminescent gaze that seemed to use to be that of a man looking directly into the face of Truth, "Mind" absorbed in God. Nowhere to go."

Last month Poondyswami died, and while we lament his passing for our own loss we rejoice is knowing that there has been little change for him. He had attained a truly remarkable state of consciousness which we can only begin to grasp, but his attainment makes our grasping of it all the more hopeful. To have met such a man once in a lifetime is beyond forgetting.

Article copyright Himalayan Academy.