They Are Always with Us
Category : March 1994
Published by Anonymous on Mar. 02, 1994

Publisher's Desk: They Are Always with Us

Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami

In the past few months Hinduism Today has reported on the beautiful lives and the blessed departures of more than the usual number of spiritual leaders. These have included my long-time friends, Swami Vishnu-devananda, Swami Brahmananda Saraswati and Swami Chidananda Sarasvati. Now again, on page one our Madras journalist reports on the extraordinary Mahasamadhi rites for the beloved head of Kamakoti Peedam, Sri Chandrasekharendra, a venerable 99-year-old soul whose light illumined the path for countless seekers. On page 23 there is a eulogy to Swami Satchidananda, 62, of the Divine Life Society in Trinidad, who had his release in December. On page 28 we honor the magnificent life of master yogi Swami Gitananda, 87, the "Lion of Pondicherry." We do not and must not mourn their death. No grieving for the great ones, just joy that we shared their spirit and their wisdom. We must be happy for their new life and rejoice with them as they focus their spiritual power through their chosen devotees. They did not die. They once worked eight hours a day, now it is 24. No more foot-pilgrimages, no more air tickets to buy. Now they can travel at the speed of light to be here and there and everywhere. These souls never quit their job. They fulfilled their dharma, sustained their divine mission, met the challenges that came, without failing, without cringing, without

even complaining. That is much of what set them apart from others who did falter, who did let difficulties wear them down, who did not see their spiritual aspirations to the very end. Not these souls. In the face of character assassination, emotional distress, they never quit their job. They endured, stood strong and saw the vision through to the very end. And that is an example for all to follow. These were what we might call spiritual pros. How will we replace them? They were trained in the old way, when families were families, tightly bonded together, when heads of families reigned supreme, when gurus were tough and did not have to temper their demands for perfection due to anti-cult cultists. There was no feeling in those days that you just worship the peedam and not necessarily the person sitting on it. They worshiped the person sitting there as the embodiment of the Divinity. In those days things were so intact that the Brahmins could actually chant the Vedas from one end to the other. The community's discipline of the personages who never marry, who live the austere life, was strict and unfailing. There was a time if the sannyasin gave up his own kavi robes, he would never be accepted by or employed in the community. Exile was his reward. As these preceptors pass, are we loosing all of this great stability and training? Who is to replace them? The Divine has its own ways and works them mysteriously. To whom the power will come in the various countries of the world where Hinduism exists today is yet to be known. Obviously, it is based on their sincerity, on years of sadhana and tapas, on the maturity of their soul and, most importantly, their willingness to serve selflessly without even a thought of personal reward. This question yet remains unanswered. My first encounter with His Holiness Chandrasekharendra was in Andhra Pradesh. I drove there with the late Professor T.M.P. Mahadevan, who had recently completed a beautiful biography of the Sankaracharya. It was a pleasure to present the swami

with my own little book, called The Self God. He was passing a small village, giving darshan, as was his discipline. We arrived late in the evening as it was getting dark. It was like the Self meeting its Self. The second meeting with this great soul was in Tamil Nadu in 1990. I received a telegram from the Kamakoti Peetham, right from him, saying he noticed his mutt was not on our itinerary, and we should come to see him. We journeyed there to find all three Sankaracharyas. The eldest, reclining after blessing long lines of devotees, granted a beautiful darshan, lifting his arms toward me in a silent exclamatory gesture. He instructed Jayendra and his junior to give us all the time needed. We explained to them our project of building in India a hand-carved stone temple called Iraivan, to be erected in Hawaii. Holding the architect's blueprints, all three blessed the Iraivan temple for it to come up soon. Continuing to reminisce, we first met Swami Gitananda in Canada in the early 1960s. Later he visited our ashram and small temple on Sacramento Street in San Francisco, where Swami Bhaktivedanta danced to Krishna a few years later. We met again at our ashram in Nevada, where he came to stay for a few days before leaving for India. In Bangalore, in 1972 Swamiji arranged a great reception when we arrived on a pilgrimage with 72 devotees. He also graciously received our group of pilgrims at his garden-like Pondicherry ashram in 1981, and then again in 1990 we spent the night at his city center after the disastrous attack by rogues which injured but never harmed him. Treat your swamis and leaders kindly. Keep them lifted up by your worship and inspired by your voicing your gratitude and by being responsive. Honor them without fail, for the day will come when they will not be with you, will not be able to guide and counsel you, not be there to be an example to you. Be grateful for their presence in your life. Every day.