

Dharmatma Dr. Yegnasubramanian

I have been honored to represent the Senior Veda class. That honor distinctly belongs to Iyer Mama and Iyer mama only. I am an interloper who snuck into the senior class midstream. I first met Mani Mama in 1984 or 1985 when he came to Bell Labs on deputation from BARC. However, at that time I little did know about Mani Mama's many unique talents. In those days I was busy with my work and he was just settling down in the US and we never explored life outside of Bell Labs. Soon he moved to ERC and south Jersey which pretty much curtailed further interaction. In those I did not believe in anything that could not be expressed by an elegant equation!

Things changed in 1992 when the Bridgewater temple was inaugurated. During a casual visit to the temple, I heard Vishnu Sahasranama being chanted and it immediately drew my attention. I suppose it was a Vasana from my childhood! Soon there would be Veda classes there. Actually, there were two parallel sessions on Friday evenings – one was a large group and the other small. I joined the small group as the teacher to student ratio was favorable. I stayed in that group for a while before moving to Mani Mama's group. This group met on Friday evenings at the temple. However, the original Veda group was meeting in individual's homes since 1990. It was started by Mani Mama at the instigation of our universal PATi – Iyer Mama's mother.

In those early days Veda classes were held in Individual Student's homes on Sundays starting at 9:00 AM. The classes would go on till about 11:30 AM at which time, we would conclude by doing namaskArs to the elders and enjoy a sumptuous lunch! Eventually, the classes shifted permanently to Mani Mama's house in Lawrenceville. Thus Mani Mama and Raji Mami provided us with both food for thought and for the body. In the early days Mani Mama had initiated several students to PancAyatana puja at their homes and there were frequent Rudrabhisekams also in student's homes. The Rudrabhisekams were the practical counterpart to the theory sessions of Veda chanting. Mani mama was busy from Friday evening through Sunday evening conducting various classes for adults and children alike. His family sacrificed much for our benefit. I suspect he was driven all along with big goals such as preparing for Maharudras and Chandi homas. Looking back, one can clearly connect the dots to those early days.

The next step in our evolution was various classes on the scriptures and their meanings – Vishnu Sahasranama, Lalita Sahasranama, Durga Saptashati, Dakshinamurthi Stotra, Uddhava Geeta etc. We were stunned by the extent of his erudition. I often wondered where he found the time to learn so much in the midst of his academic and professional life. By now, he had knit his students and their families into a spiritual community that cheerfully accepted his leadership and was ready to do his bidding. We got to witness Mani Mama's organizational abilities blossom during the construction of the temple in Bridgewater. This was soon followed by mega events in Stroudsburg. I am yet to come across anyone who could harness the energy of volunteers into focused action without the slightest of disagreements as Mani mama could. I marveled at his skill in motivating people and more than once I have commented that he could have been a most successful CEO of a fortune 500 Company had he decided to take that path. This ability has been demonstrated over and over again at Stroudsburg, Morganville, Detroit, Houston, San Diego as well as all over India with Veda Sammelanas. He is just as adept at making a presentation to a zoning board as he is in motivating volunteers or inspiring donors to contribute heartily to a worthy cause. He has shown us to aim high with absolute faith in the divine guiding hand.

Most recently, his elucidation of Viveka Cudamani of Sri Adi Sankaracarya is itself a Cudamani among teachings. His scientific mind becomes quite apparent in his logical analysis and explanation of the intricacies inherent in Vedanta. These webinars are a tour-de-force of Tarka and Mimamsa. It is a surefire prophylactic against senility and Alzheimer's! If anyone is not currently attending these webinars I encourage them to sign up right away. One can always catch up on the earlier lessons using audio files on the web. As a scientist, he has achieved distinction in the area of reliability physics with numerous articles in refereed journals. If you want to know when and how your I-phone is going to fail, he the go to person!

All in all it has been a thrilling ride to have been associated with Mani Mama over the past quarter century and marvel, if not be inspired, by his devotion, vision, magnanimity and humanity. May he continue to be a beacon for us for a very long time and inspire generations of students.

Thank you and NamaskArams.