



DR SHOBHA RAJU

HUMANNESS Way to change!

When we were at Tirupati, Sri Y. Srinivasa Rao garu a great literary scholar, suddenly came to our house for the first time. (Those were still the days, when people used to just knock your door without prior intimation. Moreover, we didn't have a phone also.) After greeting him, I was looking for his purpose of visit.

Placing the empty tumbler on the teapoy after drinking water and wiping his face with hanky, he asked, "Nanna gaaru unnaaraa mma? (Is your father there?)" I said, "yes" and brought my father.

After exchange of formal pleasantries, Sri Srinivasa Rao garu said, "I was in trance, when this girl was singing in Rama temple the other day. What a divine melody it was! ...", he went on. I heard all those praises from him, in the temple itself, after the concert.

Next day of my concert, he visited Annamacharya Kalamandiram, met our boss, late Sri Arka Somayajulu. I went inside to get a cup of coffee ready for him. After Sri Srinivasa Rao garu left, Sri Arka Somayajulu said, "Very good.

You brought great name to our department (HDRS - Hindu Dhama Rakshna Samstha, TTD. Now it's called DPP - Dharma Prachara Parishat) Srinivasa Rao garu told me about your concert at Rama temple, last evening. Vardhataam... abhivardhataam! (I learnt these Sanskrit words from him, which I employ to bless our students).

"Oh he came to meet my father and express the same appreciation", I thought.

But after a minute of silence, he said to my father, "Raju garu! I have come to speak to you an important matter. Hope, you and this girl would understand it rightly. The other day, this girl sang one song at Ramulavari temple. I think, it's better if she doesn't sing that in future. After the concert, I asked for her book and went through the lyric there itself to be sure of my understanding of the song. It is "Pachi Shrigaram" (Intense romance). It may not be decent to sing in the public. I know your family. I am just suggesting to you lest someone else should point a finger at her. Please think it over and take your

own decision".

My father seconded him.

The song I sang was this :

"రసికుడా! తిరుపతి రఘువీరా

కొసరుగాడు నాలోని కూరిములు గానీ"

In this song, Seeta directly talks to Rama as follows :

"O connoisseur, warrior of Raghu dynasty, located in Tirupati (a very popular sacred place in India)! It's not a challenge, but my love to you.

These are not bows like the one you broke. (Rama broke the bow of Lord Shiva in the court of King Janaka thus met the challenge victoriously and fulfilled the condition to marry Seeta). These are the bows of my shining eye-brows...."

The song goes on this way wherein the otherwise shy and innocent Seeta inspires Rama for courtship putting her physical attributes of beauty on edge compared to Rama's great deeds of valor and spirituality.

I sang this song in a concert at Rama's temple of Tirupati in 1978, when I was Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam's exclusive artiste for the propagation of Annamacharya San-

keertanas.

I requested Srinivasa Rao garu to permit me to voice my thoughts, for which he was kind to agree.

“Sir! This is a “Shringara Sankeertana” (romantic-devotional song) composed by none other than the first Saint-Composer of South India, Annamayya.

Here, Seeta stands for the individual self (Jeevatma) longing to join Rama, the Supreme Self (Paramatma). The longing of the soul to join the Consciousness is expressed in the romantic feeling.

Annamayya dedicated all his merits, riches & life to sing Venkateswara and illustrate His Infinite Form and His Presence in every atom of the universe, - through his songs. Every seeker's purpose of life should be to realize this Truth. But negative passions bother the seeker so much. It is not easy to conquer them. The easy path is to divert them to God. When we offer the negative passions to God with utmost surrender and love, they become beautiful jewels. He dedicated the “Shringara bhavam” (romantic feelings) also to God. Then “Shringaram” becomes “Divya Shringaram” (Divine Romance) This is the unique path Annamayya has shown. Even if the emotion in the song is enjoyed with minimum “Sanskarabalam” (strength of good attitude), the song is enjoyed sacredly.

While singing, I have only Seeta & Rama in my heart and at a higher level, there is just an abstract of light. I find it difficult to express in words, - the divine status I experience while singing.

Annamayya shunned all the mundane motivations in singing. He refused to sing even one song on king though he requested, not caring for his position in the royal

court. He spent all his life in the service of The Lord. Why would he sing wrong things?

He has seen God in everything. Adopted even the folk-lores and applied that to Divinity and sang in such a decent way that one tends to nod his head in appreciation, unless one is thoroughly bothered by jealousy.

Of course, Annamayya was not an exception to be bothered by jealous people. He appealed to God

“నరసింహా! రామకృష్ణా!

సమో శ్రీ వేంకటేశా!

సరుగ నా శత్రుల సంహరింపవే.

.....

యిల్లదే శ్రీ వేంకటేశా ఈ నీ మీది పాటలు

జల్లన దూషించు శత్రుల సంహరింపవే”

“Narasimha! Ramakrishna!

Venkatesha! My salutations!

ANNAMAYYA SHUNNED ALL THE MUNDANE MOTIVATIONS IN SINGING. HE REFUSED TO SING EVEN ONE SONG ON KING THOUGH HE REQUESTED, NOT CARING FOR HIS POSITION IN THE ROYAL COURT.

Kill my enemies immediately.

Slain them who belittle these songs on You!” Annamayya dedicated even his anger on his enemies to God.

What can such a dedicated person to The Almighty expect from the world sir? He didn't write any books on kings nor he dedicated any to them. Had he done that, he could have been very acclaimed poet by now. Why would he need a small Shobha Raju to popularize His Sankeertanas? His songs were engraved on copper plates and treasured in Tirumala temple by his son and grand son. If they are not sacred, would those worthy son and grand son of Annamayya, treasure them in the sacred premises of Tirumala temple?

Those were the divine singers who renounced worldly gains and dedicated themselves for the spread of philosophy.

I just wanted to convey these thoughts sir. I promised The Lord of Seven Hills that I would popularize His Songs all over the world. Bless me to keep up my word to Him and pardon me if you think I am wrong”.

Sri Srinivasa Rao garu was wiping his tears....sat for a while in a silence. I touched his feet and he blessed, “May your wish be fulfilled. May God's Grace be on you”.

Just observe his character friends. He didn't advise me in the temple after my concert. He didn't advise me when he came to Annamacharya Kalamandiram to meet our boss nor he told him. He made an effort to come to our house and didn't tell me directly. He asked for my father and gave the suggestion to him. And see the polite way he expressed his point of view on the song. Everywhere he only appreciated the talent. A well-meaning person's way to correct.

Later, Sri Srinivasa Rao garu participated in literary seminar at Tirupati and spoke about “The spiritual insights in the romantic songs of Annamayya”.

Sensitivity in dealing with fellow humans, humility to accept what is right and flexibility to change on knowing good or bad are the three qualities in that noble man, which made me to remember him to this day, more than his scholarship.

Let's cultivate those characters when we try to bring about a change... HONESTLY!

(Author is a well-known musician, Devotional singer, writer and composer.) 