

SHRI RAGHUNATHA AIYAR AS I KNEW HIM

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Shri A. Kuppuswami has done yeoman service to the cause of Sanskrit. He has also written a book on Sanskrit literature. His devotion to the Mahaswami of the Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham is total. Among the interests he has in common with Raghunatha Aiyar are love of Sanskrit and devotion to the Paramacharya. He touches upon these two aspects of N.R.'s life in this brief article.

My acquaintance with Shri Raghunatha Aiyar, the revered scholar, commenced during his darshans of the Great Centenarian Acharya of the Kanchi Sankaracharya Math, in the sixth decade of the present century. Aiyar's love of Sanskrit literature, his keen interest in the spread of this noble heritage of Bharat and his fondness for the Bhajana Sampradaya are well known. He served as President of the Sanskrit Education Society, Madras, (inaugurated by His Holiness the Jagadguru of Kanchi in 1960), for a number of years. It was during the last five or six years of his presidentship of the Society that I had the opportunity of knowing him intimately. It was at his suggestion that soon after conducting of the first State-level conference of scholars and lovers of Sanskrit at Tiruchirapalli in 1977, I was co-opted as Assistant Secretary of the Sanskrit Education Society by its then Secretary, the late T.V. Viswanatha Aiyar.

Towards the end of year 1981, the members of the Sanskrit Education Society took steps to honour Raghunatha Aiyar in a fitting manner. This humble self was deputed to meet His Holiness The Mahaswami of Kanchi, who was then in Maharashtra and take the directions of the Acharya about the manner of honouring the veteran writer-president of the Society. The instructions of His Holiness were duly carried out.

The Great Acharya of Kanchi performed the Paramaguru Aradhana and the Guru Aradhana of the year 1982 at Sri Mudgaleswara Temple at Sinduphal (in Maharashtra), on the 15th and 24th of February (1982), respectively. On the 25th of February, the function of honouring Raghunatha Aiyar was conducted in the local school at Sangli in the immediate presence of His Holiness. Shri Raghunatha Aiyar was

blessed with the title "Bhagavata Vidya Praveena" and honoured with a gold medal and a shawl. I heard later that Aiyar was unable to withstand the physical strain of the return journey to Bangalore, but because of the grace of the Acharya, he became all right some days later.

Aiyar's analytical approach and deep knowledge are reflected in his excellent articles. His firm faith in the tenets of our hoary religion, his reverence for our scriptures and above all, his ardent devotion to the Great Guru of Kanchi are well brought out in many of his writings.

His article entitled, "Beacon-light to the Millions", published in the issue of 'Bhavan's Journal' of 25th February, 1968, has been reproduced in the first volume of 'A Hundred Years of Light' (Birth Centenary Souvenir of the Great Acharya of Kanchi) — released on 7th May, 1993 at a special function at Kanchi by the Prime Minister of India, Shri P.V. Narasimha Rao. An article (in Tamil) under the title 'The Jagadguru', contributed by Aiyar in 1960 for the Acharya Jayanti Malar of Chandrasekharendra Bhakta Jana Sangham of Tiruchirapalli, has been republished in the third volume of 'A Hundred Years of Light', released on 27th September, 1993 at Kanchi. Readers who chance to read these two pieces will surely have a clear idea of Raghunatha Aiyar's faith in our scriptures and devotion to the Great Acharya. □

The Mylapore Samskrit College typifies the faith in Dharma based on Sastra that stands four-square to the storms and squalls of contemporary life. For the Sanatana Dharma is unique as a built-in system of cultural freedom and social security. The onslaught of the West, which seems to dismay some of our faineants, has not, let us remember, been the first of the forces from outside that have tested our integrity and national self-respect. Every age has its trimmers. But the masses of our people have always responded to the clarion call of the Sastra to prefer "Sreyas" (the good) to "Preyas" (the pleasant). Therein lies the Indianness of the Indian. (N.R.1957)