

**JAGADGURU**  
**SRI ABHINAVA VIDYATHEERTHA**  
The Inspirational Life  
of an Extraordinary Sage of the 20th Century



The 35th Jagadguru Shankaracharya  
of Sri Sharada Peetham, Sringeri

CENTENARY YEAR  
2017

A unique sage of the 20th century, His Holiness Jagadguru Sri Abhinava Vidyatheertha lived an extraordinary life. After having renounced the world at the tender age of thirteen, he had a remarkable spiritual journey through the path of Yoga, culminating in realization and firm establishment in the Truth when he was just eighteen. As the 35th Jagadguru Shankaracharya of the Sringeri Sharada Peetham, South India, he brought about great good to multitudes across the country.

The illustrated stories in this book, of the lofty values he held dear, his fascinating spiritual journey, the tremendous power of his grace, his down-to-earth nature, his ever cheerful disposition, his capacity for friendliness with all manners of people, his multifaceted abilities, his travels and teachings, his enormous compassion for all beings, and many more, are sure to enthral and inspire child and adult alike.

This book, conceived of as a tribute to him in 2017, the year of his birth centenary, is verily a celebration of his exceptional life.

This book was first printed in four languages (English, Kannada, Tamil and Hindi) and has sold more than 45,000 copies. The digital editions in all four languages are being published in 2018, the 101st birth anniversary of His Holiness.

**First Digital Edition (English):** November 2018

**e-Book ISBN:** 978-93-5288-072-0



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**Published by:** Dr. Meenakshi Lakshmanan, Chennai

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## Jagadguru Sri Abhinava Vidyatheertha

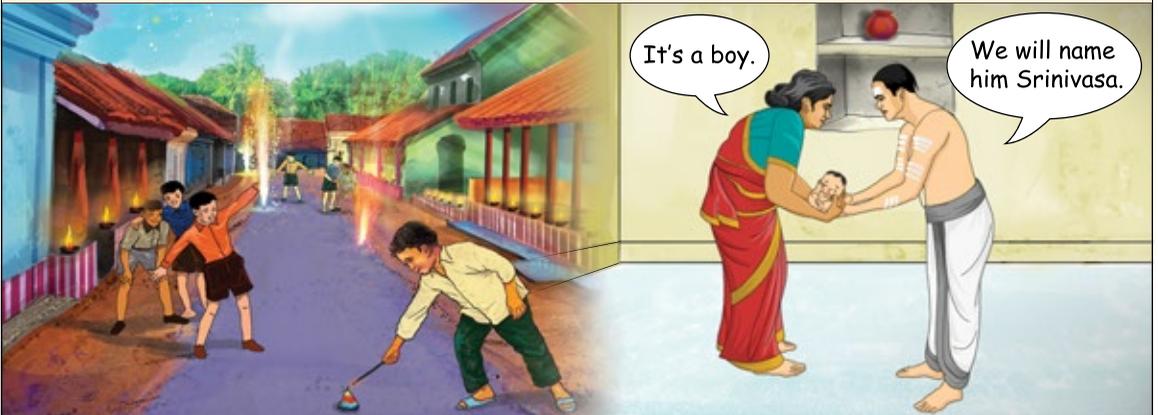


It was the early 1900s. A pious couple, Rama Shastri and Venkatalakshmi, lived in their modest home at Bengaluru\* with their little daughter, Seethalakshmi.

Venkatalakshmi was in the family way the second time. She regularly circumambulated the Ashwattha# tree.



On the morning of 13<sup>th</sup> November, 1917, when the entire country was agog with Deepavali celebrations, Venkatalakshmi gave birth to a bonny baby.



In time, Srinivasa started attending the local school.



Not only was he a bright student, he readily spared time for other students who approached him for help with their studies.

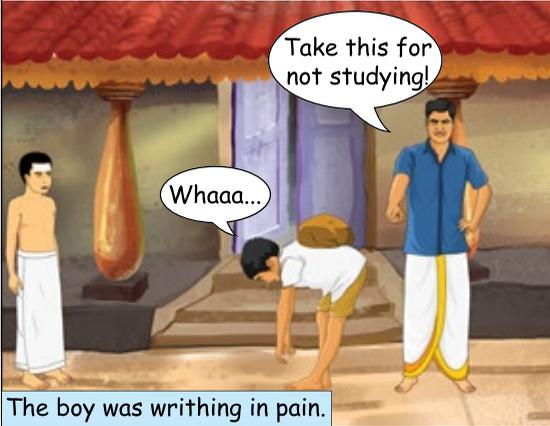
At home too, Srinivasa was a considerate and helpful child.



\*In Karnataka, India

#The sacred fig tree

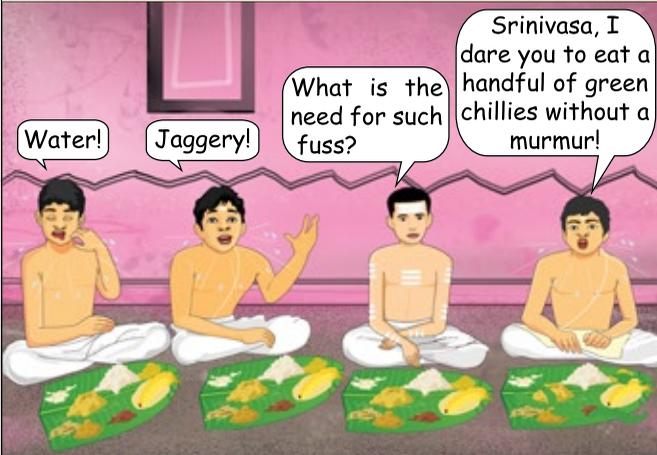
Once, Srinivasa heard piteous cries from outside a neighbouring house.



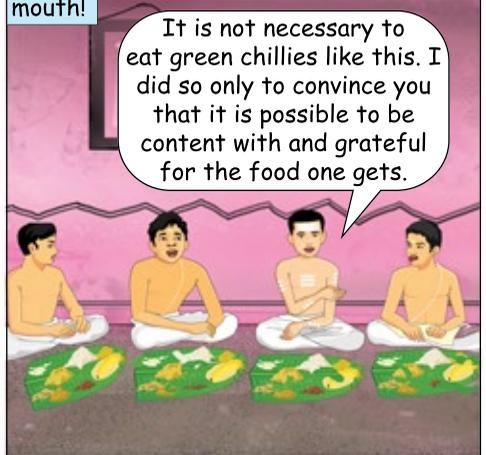
Srinivasa was always ready to put up with suffering for the sake of others.



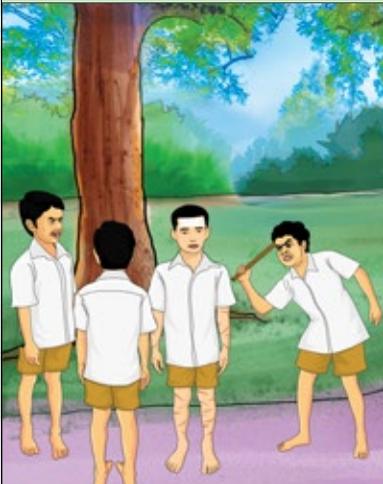
One day Srinivasa and his friends unintentionally consumed a very pungent dish served to them at a house.



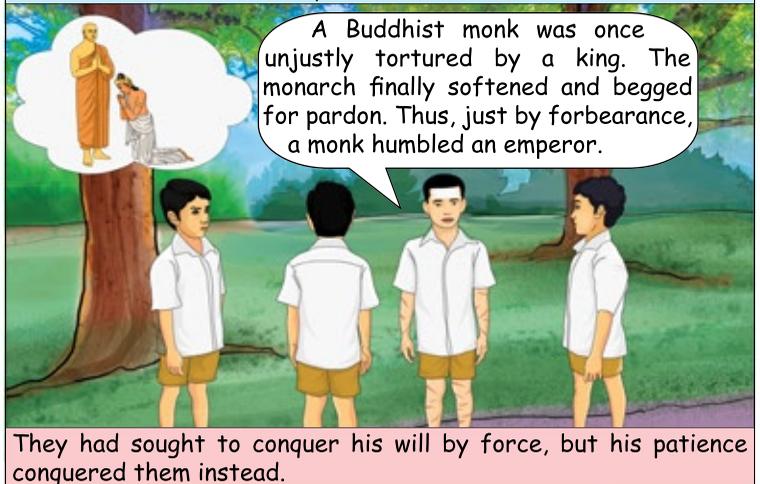
Srinivasa calmly took the challenge. One by one the chillies disappeared into his mouth!



Srinivasa was ever patient. One day, his friends decided to test the limits of his forbearance.



When the boys finally stopped the frenzied beating, they were aghast at the injury they had caused. However, even in that situation, Srinivasa had only kind words for them.



Once a boy was tearing out the wings of butterflies and throwing the hapless creatures to a dog.



Srinivasa quickly grasped his hands and twisted them.

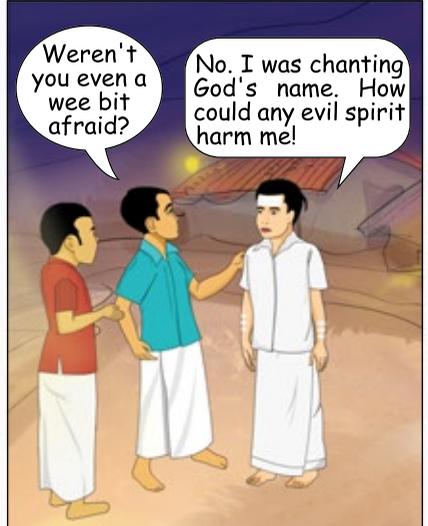


He was personally forbearing and also not given to hurting others. Yet, his courage and wisdom made him take steps appropriate to the circumstances, to prevent people from causing harm to others.

There was a pond nearby that no one would approach after sunset, as it was believed to be infested with ghosts. Even as a child, Srinivasa had no such fears.



On being challenged by his friends, he boldly ran to the tank on a new moon night, washed his hands and feet and returned.

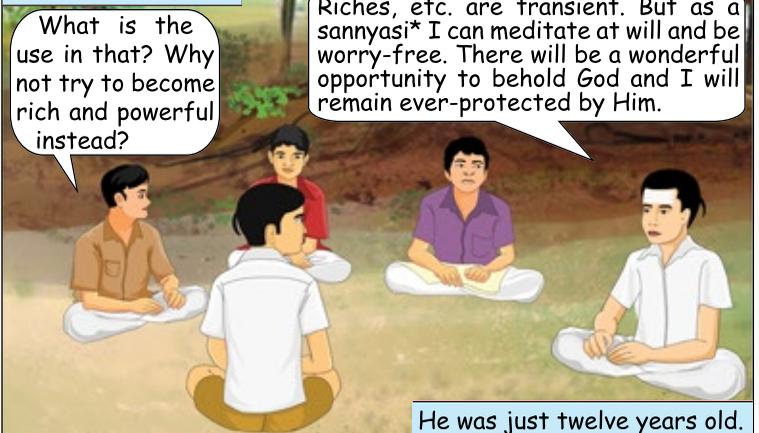


Such was Srinivasa's unshakeable faith in God even as a child.

He had a small crystal idol of Lord Ganesha, to which he unflinchingly offered simple, earnest worship every day.



He started to regularly express to his friends that he wished to renounce the world.



He was just twelve years old.

\*Renunciate

One day, mistakenly assuming that his son was not studying properly, Rama Shastri was about to punish him. While intervening, a tenant who was an astrologer, chanced to see the child's palm.



The astrologer introduced them to the agent of the Sringeri Math\*, who in turn arranged for Srinivasa's sacred thread ceremony at Sringeri<sup>#</sup>. It was May 1930.



The family then paid their respects to Jagadguru<sup>®</sup> Sri Chandrashekhara Bharathi, then pontiff of the Sringeri Sharada Peetham<sup>‡</sup>.



The wise answer of the twelve-year-old impressed the great sage.

With the permission of the Jagadguru, Srinivasa stayed back at Sringeri to study Sanskrit and the scriptures.



He kept up an orderly schedule and sincerely engaged himself in studies.

His lofty qualities such as deep devotion, firm dispassion, innate longing for renunciation, forbearance, compassion and intellectual brilliance made Srinivasa the Jagadguru's natural choice to succeed him to the great Peetham.



The thirteen-year-old celibate was initiated into Paramahansa Sannyasa\*\* on 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 1931. He was given a new name on that day by his Guru, and hence came to be known thereafter as His Holiness Jagadguru Sri Abhinava Vidyatheertha.

\*Religious institution

<sup>#</sup>A picturesque temple town nestled in the Western Ghats

<sup>®</sup>World-teacher

<sup>‡</sup>Located in Karnataka in South India, this is one of the four seats of knowledge established by Adi Shankaracharya

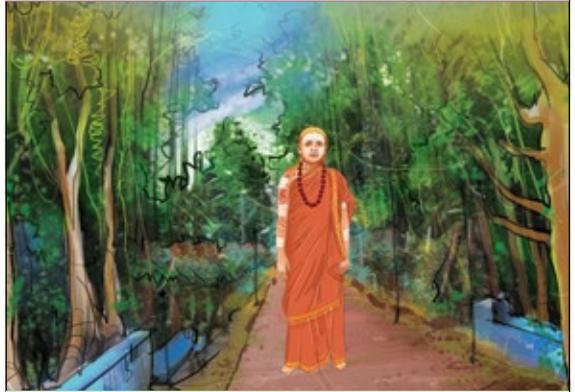
\*\*The highest order of renunciation in the Hindu tradition

His Holiness practiced severe austerity. While others struggled to cope with the very cold Sringeri winters, he would wear wet clothes and sleep on the bare floor at night.



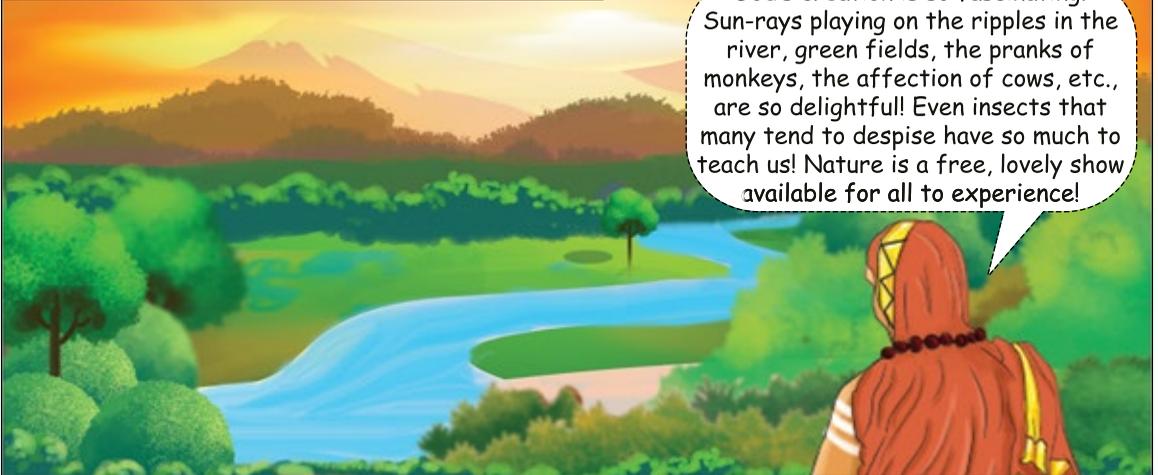
He would mix up all the items of food before eating so that he would not know the taste of any food item.

One night an army of ants invaded his room and left most of his back red and swollen. He did not so much as tell anyone about it.



He never complained or lamented about anything. On the contrary, he was ever cheerful.

From a very young age, he deeply cherished Nature.



God's creation is so fascinating! Sun-rays playing on the ripples in the river, green fields, the pranks of monkeys, the affection of cows, etc., are so delightful! Even insects that many tend to despise have so much to teach us! Nature is a free, lovely show available for all to experience!

He once spotted a wasp sealing a motionless grasshopper into a mud hole, leaving a tiny opening.



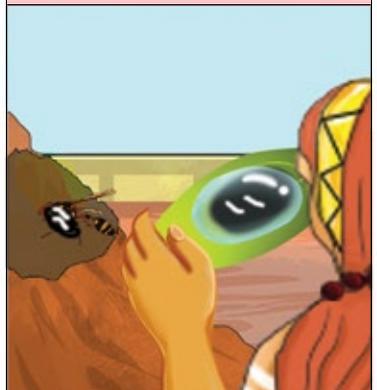
There must be larvae inside.

He wanted to study the inhabitants of the hole but had no magnifying glass.

He immediately improvised and created one. He put a drop of rain water in a hole poked into a leaf...



...and used it to study the inhabitants of the hole.



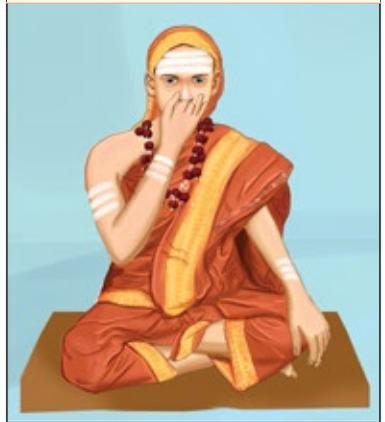
Such interest and ingenuity were the norm with him.

For seven nights from the night of taking Sannyasa, His Holiness had a series of dreams of Lord Shiva.

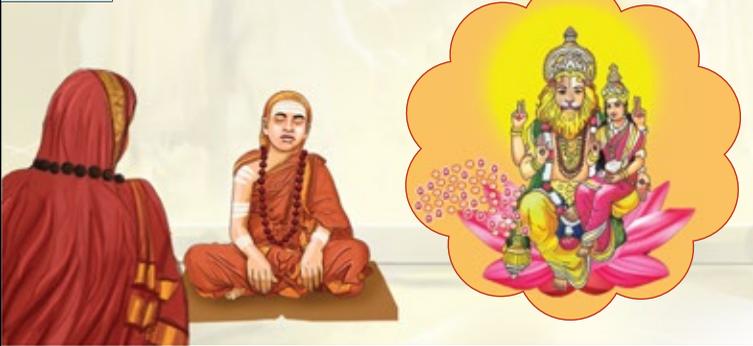


In the dreams, Shiva taught him Yoga by demonstrating various types of Pranayama, Yogasanas and Yogic Kriyas.

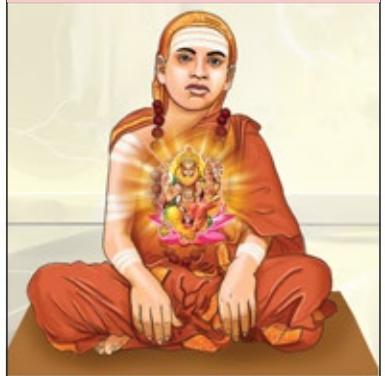
With his natural ability and diligent practice, he quickly mastered these Yogic practices.



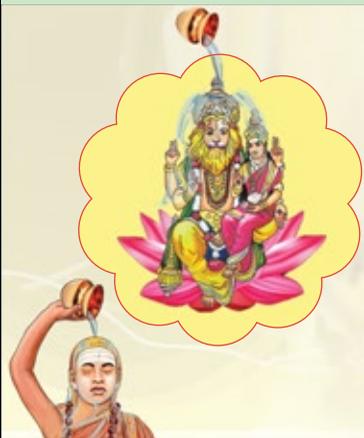
Some weeks later, when the Senior Jagadguru started initiating him into the Narasimha Mantra\*, His Holiness clearly visualized Lord Narasimha in his heart-lotus and mentally offered elaborate worship.



As he repeated the mantra, Narasimha clearly appeared and shone in his heart.



After this experience, he started offering all his thoughts, words and deeds to Narasimha.

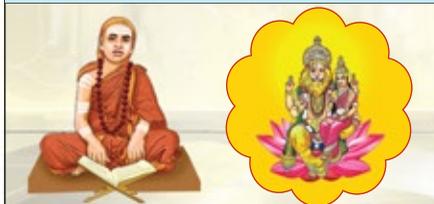


When he bathed, he felt he was doing abhisheka# to Narasimha...

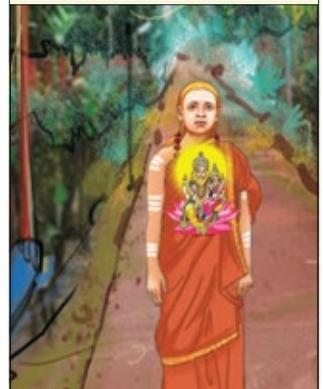
When he ate, he felt he was feeding Narasimha...



When he read he felt he was reading out to Narasimha who was listening from within...



When walking, he felt he was taking Narasimha who was within him, for a stroll...



This Karma Yoga became natural in just a few months.

\*Sacred syllables representing a divinity, which in this case was the Man-Lion form of Lord Vishnu

#Ceremonial bath offered to God

When His Holiness was sixteen years old, the Senior Jagadguru initiated him into the practice of deep meditation on divine forms.



From his very first session of meditation, his mind never wandered. He invariably lost awareness of his body and surroundings, and of the passage of time.



He could meditate with felicity on various forms of God.



He experimented with meditative techniques and became a past master at them.



He could adjust the luminosity of the imagined divine form as also the intensity and colour of the background lighting.

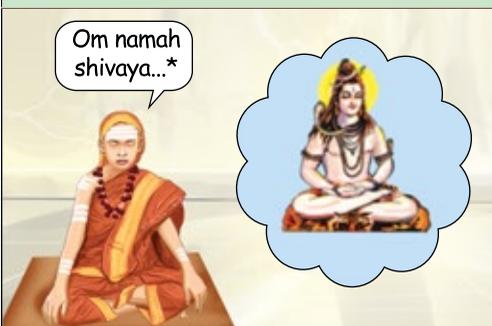
He could visualize the entire form with uniform clarity, though normally when part of an object is focussed upon, the rest of it would be less clear.



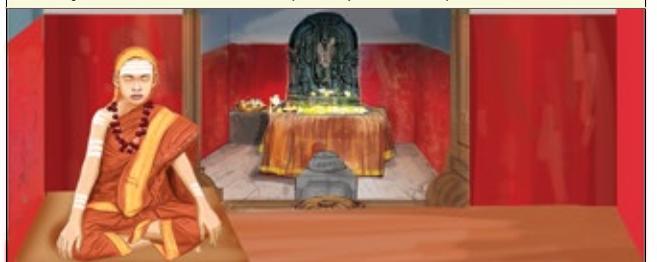
He could also zoom in to a part of the divine form such as the feet, while never forgetting that the part belonged to the specific divinity.



He could peg the intensity of concentration at a lower level if he wished to chant a mantra throughout.



His Holiness used to meditate thrice a day. In the evenings, he meditated at the Kalabhairava# temple atop an adjacent hill. About a year passed by in this manner.



One evening, he started to focus on the form of Goddess Balamba@.

\*Mantra on Lord Shiva that means, "Om. Obeisance to Shiva."

#A form of Lord Shiva

@Goddess Parvati in the form of a child

Suddenly his mind locked on to Her Feet. He had an extraordinary experience of seeing Her feet throbbing with life! He beheld the Goddess Herself and not just a visualized form!



This was his first experience of Savikalpa Samadhi\*.

He reached out and touched Her feet with his hands.

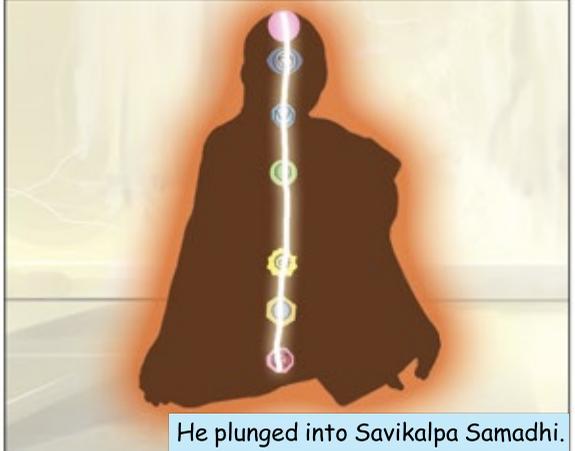


After this experience, he readily started attaining Savikalpa Samadhi on any divine form meditated upon.

After about one and a half hours in that state, he opened his eyes. He could then literally see Balamba in front of him within the temple!

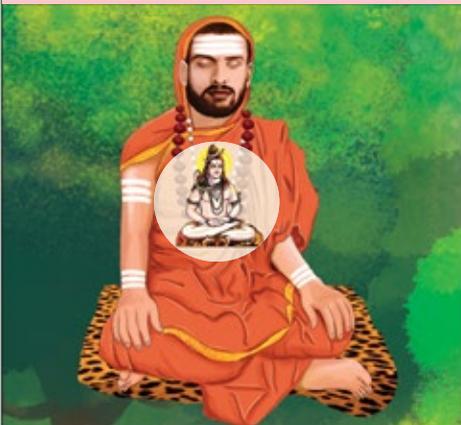


A few months later, he had an experience of Kundalini Yoga#.



He plunged into Savikalpa Samadhi.

One evening, he meditated on Lord Shiva as residing in his heart-lotus. He remained in Savikalpa Samadhi for about an hour and a half.

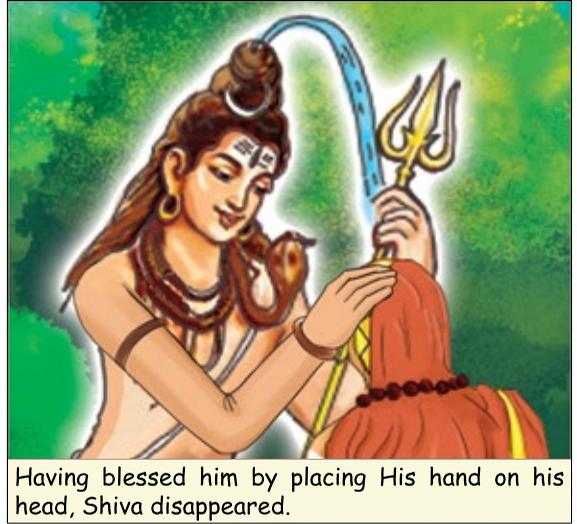
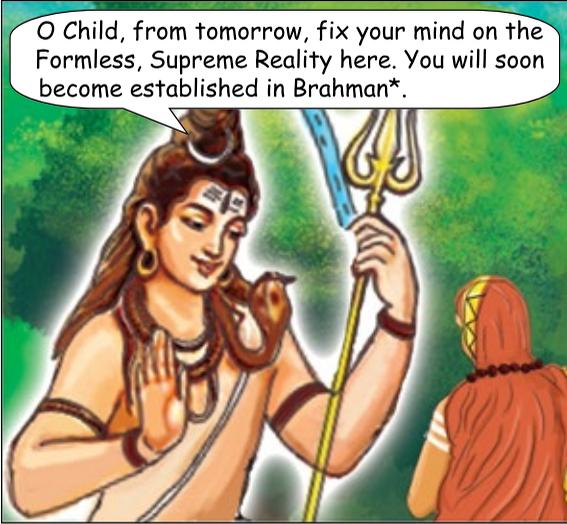


When he opened his eyes the Lord emerged from within and expanded. His Holiness then directly beheld Shiva in front of Him!



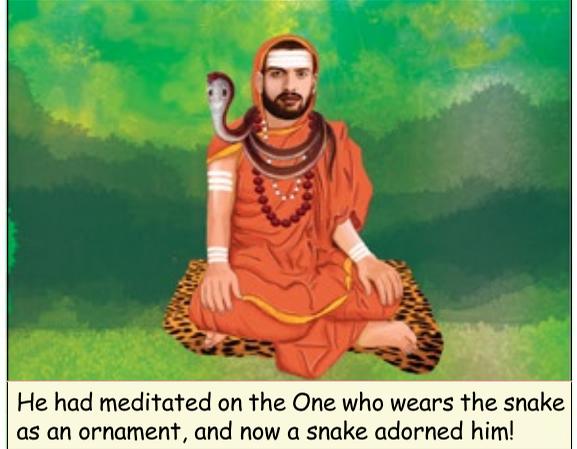
\*The object of meditation shines forth in this state, which is penultimate to the attainment of the acme of Yoga

#The Kundalini Shakti rises through the six Yogic Chakras and reaches the seventh Chakra on the crest



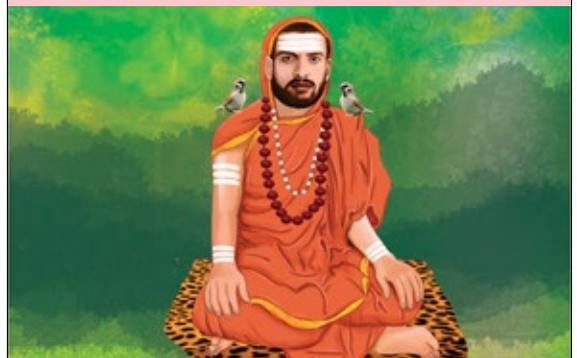
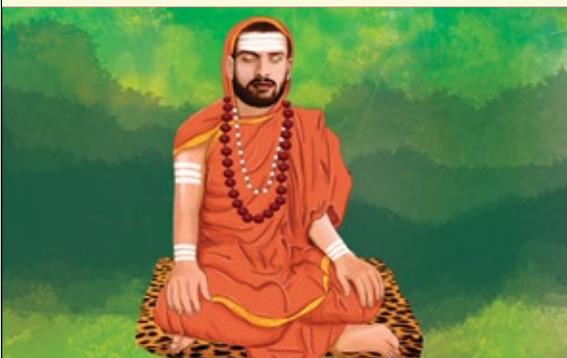
His Holiness felt like meditating again, and did so on Shiva as Dakshinamurthy, the primordial Teacher.

When he opened his eyes after about an hour, he found a big cobra loosely coiled around his neck!



The next evening, he commenced meditation on the Supreme as devoid of attributes. He attained Nirvikalpa Samadhi#, the acme of Yoga, in just five days!

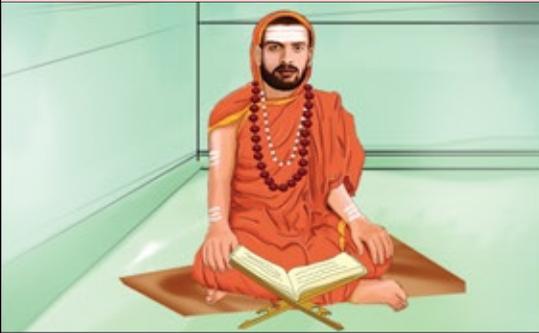
On the evening of the second day, he went into Nirvikalpa Samadhi twice in quick succession. When he opened his eyes, two birds were sitting on his shoulders.



Over the next two days, he repeatedly attained that highest state of Yoga.

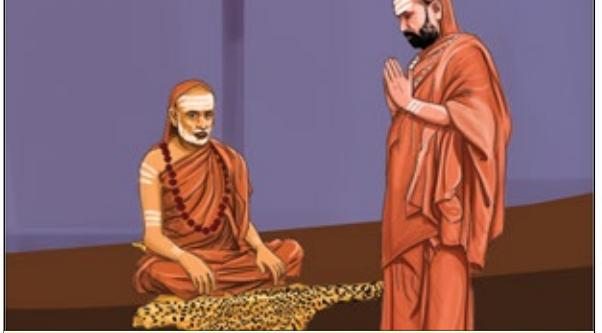
\*The Supreme non-dual Truth of the nature of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss  
 #State in which only the Supreme Truth shines forth devoid of any distinctions  
 ®A realized soul, one liberated even while alive

Though he had transcended the need to do anything, he carried out all his duties to perfection, for the good of the world.



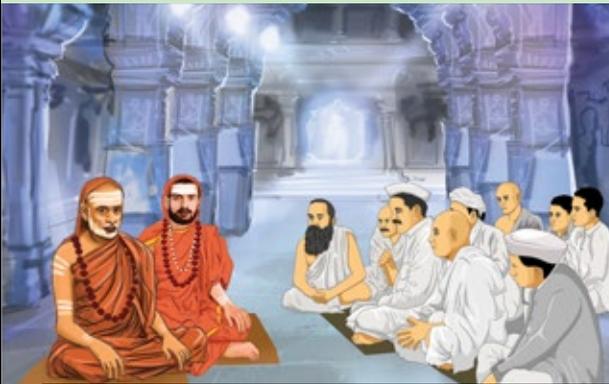
First, he studied diligently and mastered the scriptures, especially the Vedanta, Tarka and Yoga Shastras\*.

He served his Guru with supreme devotion, taking personal care of him especially when the latter was unwell.



For his part, the Senior Jagadguru had such great affection and regard for his disciple, that he even composed verses on him.

Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the President of India, came to Sringeri. The President met both the Jagadgurus at Goddess Sharadamba's# temple.



The President was all admiration for His Holiness.

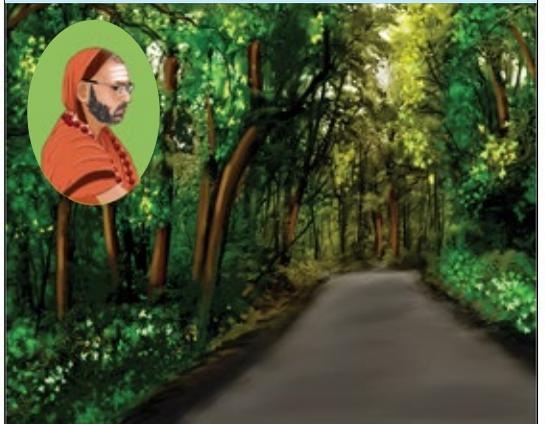
In September 1954, the Senior Jagadguru shed his mortal body, and His Holiness duly took over as the 35th pontiff of the Peetham.



He envisioned and then systematically carried to fruition, developmental work in a variety of spheres to benefit people and society at large.



Being a die-hard conservationist, he carried out the afforestation of several hills around Sringeri, thereby enriching the ecosystem of that part of the Western Ghats.



\*The Hindu scriptures that deal with philosophy, logic and Yoga respectively

#The Goddess of learning and the primary deity at Sringeri

He built and consecrated many a temple across India and revived temple worship in even remote villages.

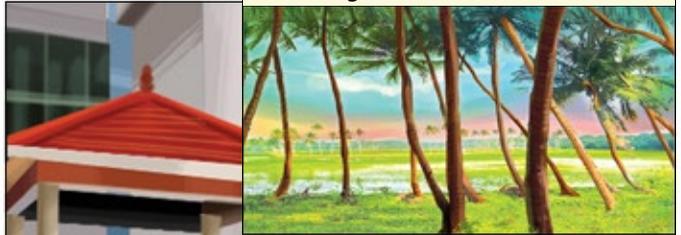


He built new guest houses at Sringeri for visiting pilgrims, as also kalyana mandapas\* and dharmashalas# in various places in the country.



Sringeri's first coconut groves came up due to his efforts. He also introduced several agricultural innovations.

He set up Pathashalas@ at various places to further Vedic learning. He always took personal interest in the well-being and studies of the students.



He started the first Girls' School at Sringeri and the Jnanodaya School at Bengaluru. He was patron of the Sree Sankara College, Kalady, and also set up libraries and research centres.

Earlier, there was no medical facility available for the people of Sringeri and the neighbouring rural areas. His Holiness set right this lacuna by establishing the multi-speciality Sharada Dhanvantari Charitable Hospital at Sringeri in the early 1980s.



Though Sringeri was a remote place, he procured state-of-the-art medical and research equipment for the hospital and appointed the best doctors to look after the various departments.



\*Marriage halls

#Charitable guest houses for pilgrims

@Schools for the traditional study of the Vedas and other Hindu scriptures

No wastage, big or small, was acceptable to him. Once when on a visit to a place, he noticed that water from an overhead tank was often overflowing and thus being wasted.



He had a coconut sapling planted at the spot to put the excess water to good use.



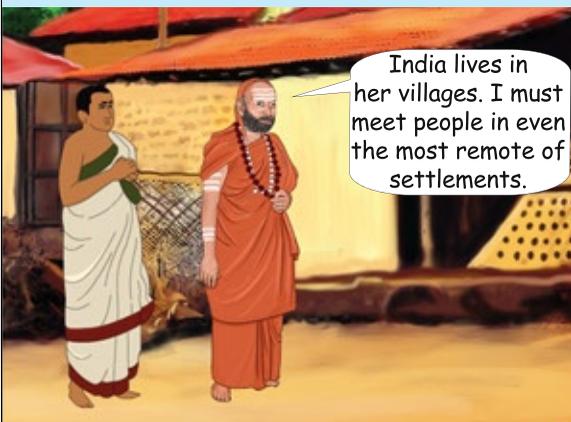
His Holiness toured India thrice over a period of three decades. From village to village he went, touching the lives of millions in myriads of ways.



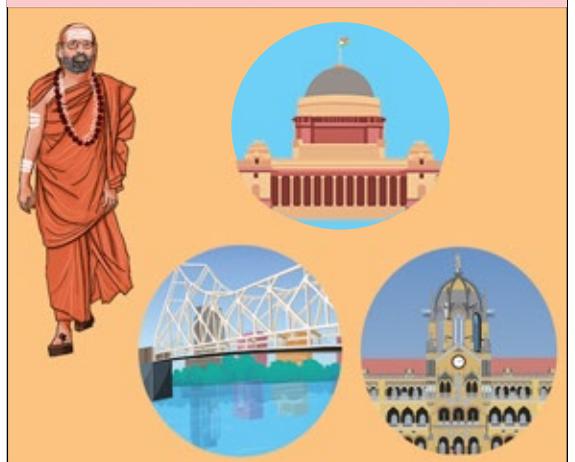
In some places he was accomodated in palaces...



...while in some others, his hosts could manage to provide only very meagre facilities. Such factors, however, never mattered to him.



He was the first Sringeri Jagadguru in over a hundred years to grace the cities of Chennai as also Hyderabad, and the first ever to visit Mumbai, Delhi and Kolkata.

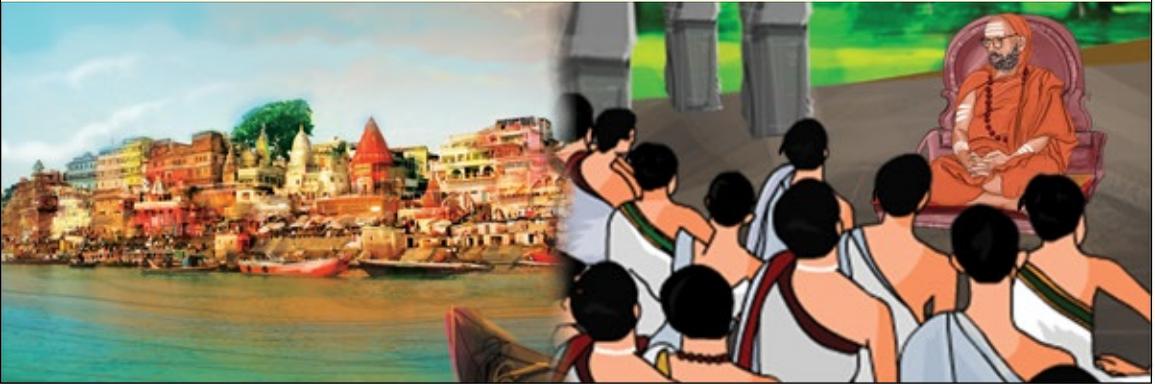


In 1967, he became the first Jagadguru Shankaracharya after Adi Shankaracharya to visit Nepal, and was welcomed with great respect and affection.

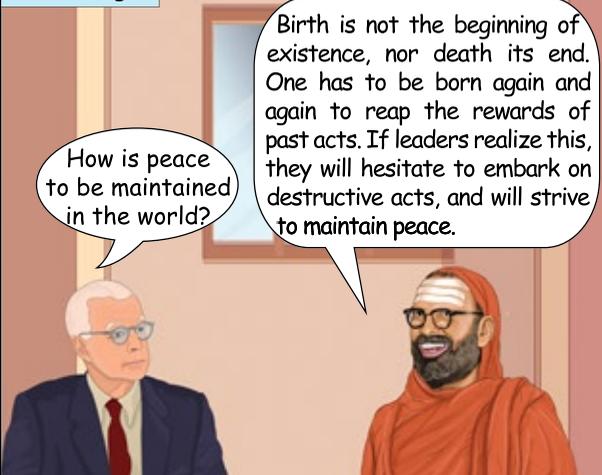


As a rare recognition, the Government of Nepal inscribed a large plaque in the precincts of the Pashupathinath Temple, to commemorate this landmark visit of His Holiness.

When he went on his maiden visit to Varanasi in 1967, he expounded on the scriptures to an audience of scholars celebrated as the most learned in the land. The scholars, to whom he was a stranger when he arrived, were left spellbound at his deep erudition and sheer intellectual brilliance.



The U.S. Ambassador to India, Mr. Elsworth Bunker, came to meet His Holiness in 1960 and asked him several questions regarding the problems of the modern age.

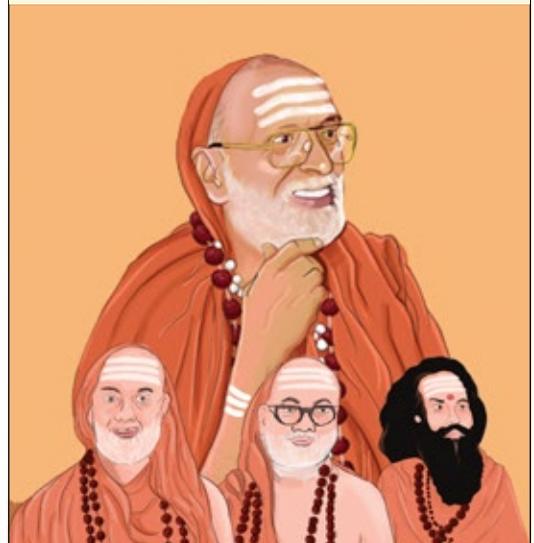


How is peace to be maintained in the world?

Birth is not the beginning of existence, nor death its end. One has to be born again and again to reap the rewards of past acts. If leaders realize this, they will hesitate to embark on destructive acts, and will strive to maintain peace.

Mr. Bunker left feeling not only blessed but also deeply impressed by His Holiness's practical solutions that hit straight at the root of problems.

His Holiness organized a historic summit meeting of the Jagadgurus of the four Amnaya Peethams\*, the first since the time of Adi Shankaracharya. The Jagadgurus released a joint message for world peace.



\*The four seats of learning established by Adi Shankaracharya in the four corners of India

Heads of Government, ministers, kings and various other dignitaries held His Holiness in the highest respect and sought his blessings on several occasions.



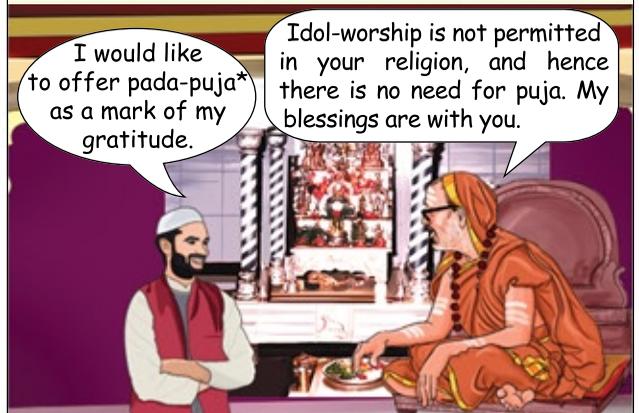
Economic status, caste, creed, religion and the like did not matter to His Holiness. People flocked to see him wherever he went. They sought his advice and blessings to tide over their difficulties, and also shared their joys with him.



Once, a Muslim gentleman who was longing for progeny came to seek his blessings. Before the man could even say anything...



Soon the man was blessed with a son. He went back to Sringeri and joyously gave the news to His Holiness.



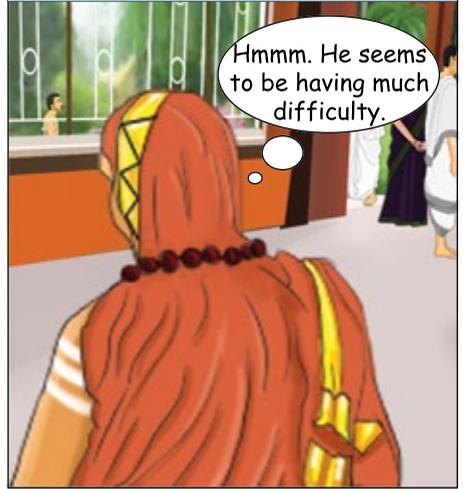
His Holiness always held that people should sincerely adhere to the tenets of their own religion.

\*Worship that can be offered by devotees to the sacred sandals of the Guru or Goddess Sharadamba

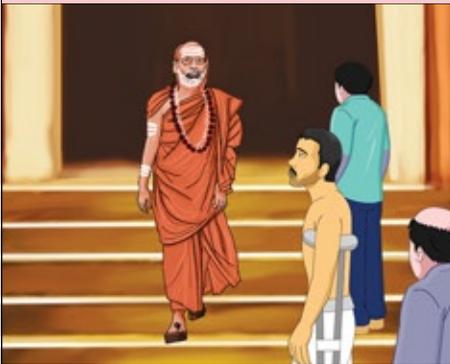
Once, a lame man was coming for darshan\* amidst the teeming crowd. The man was trying hard but was unable to keep abreast with the others.



His Holiness spotted him from afar.

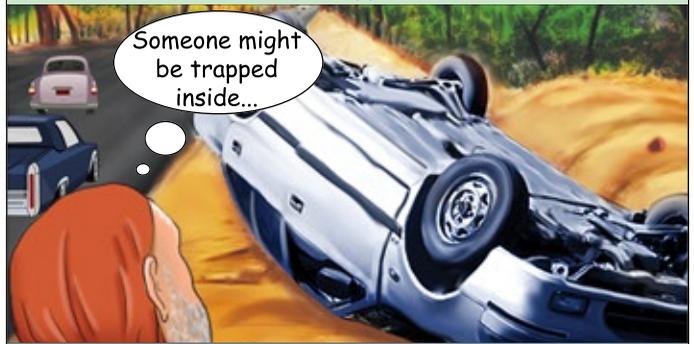


He got up immediately, rushed down the stairs to the man, made tender enquiries and blessed him.



Disabled people always merited his special attention.

On a highway, he once saw a partially overturned car. Many motorists were passing by without even a second look. He asked for his vehicle to be stopped, and rushed to the car.

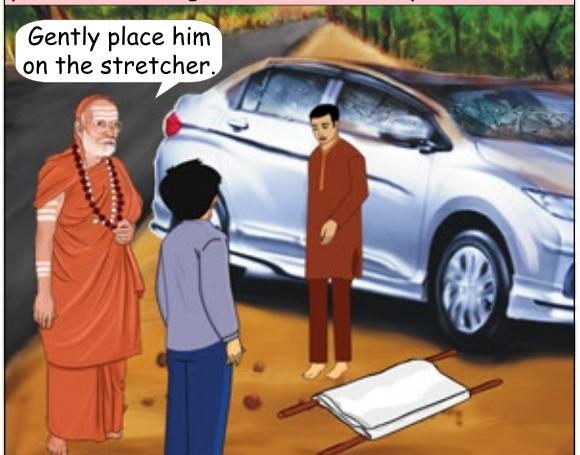


He found an accident victim inside, unconscious but alive. He immediately sent a Math vehicle to bring an ambulance from the nearest town.

He discerned that the car needed to be set upright in order to extricate the man, and that it could be done without harming him. He laboured, along with the others, to do the needful.



Cautious inspection revealed to him that the man could be safely extricated without waiting for paramedics. He got him out carefully.



\*Seeing or the occasion of seeing a holy person or the image of a deity

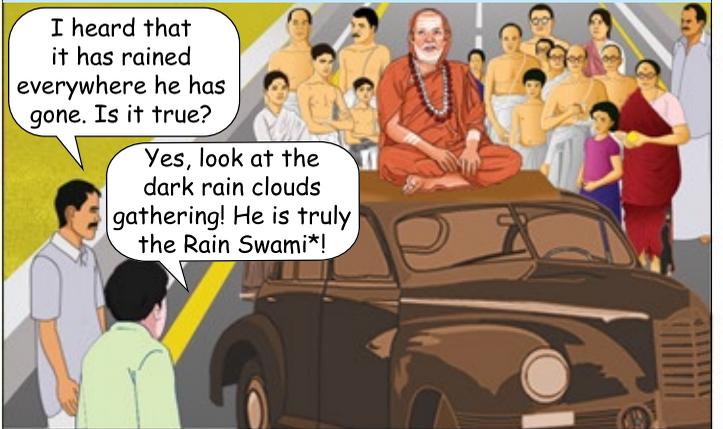
He then sent the man in a spacious vehicle in the direction from which the ambulance was expected.



The doctor tells me it was a sage who saved my life!

The swift yet careful actions of His Holiness ensured that the accident victim got medical aid at the earliest. The man survived and recovered.

An area was reeling under prolonged drought. His Holiness extensively toured the region at that time, and people noticed a pattern...



I heard that it has rained everywhere he has gone. Is it true?

Yes, look at the dark rain clouds gathering! He is truly the Rain Swami\*!

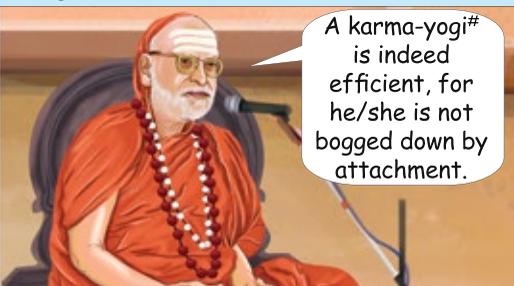
Once at Bengaluru, a function had been organized in a large open space in the Math complex. Much to the chagrin of the officials and the large crowd that had congregated, dark rain clouds gathered and very heavy showers were imminent. Many people in the crowd noticed His Holiness looking up at the sky with folded hands. In moments...



Hey look! The clouds are rapidly marching away!

Wow! What we have been hearing about him as the "Rain Swami" is really true!

Traditional, scripture-based spiritual practice was earlier considered to be only for the spiritually evolved. But through discourses that he delivered by the thousands, His Holiness brought it within reach of the common man.



A karma-yogi<sup>#</sup> is indeed efficient, for he/she is not bogged down by attachment.

Fluent in Kannada, Telugu, Tamil and Hindi, he could directly communicate with every audience across the country.

It was the early 1970s and His Holiness was set to deliver a benedictory discourse at a venue...

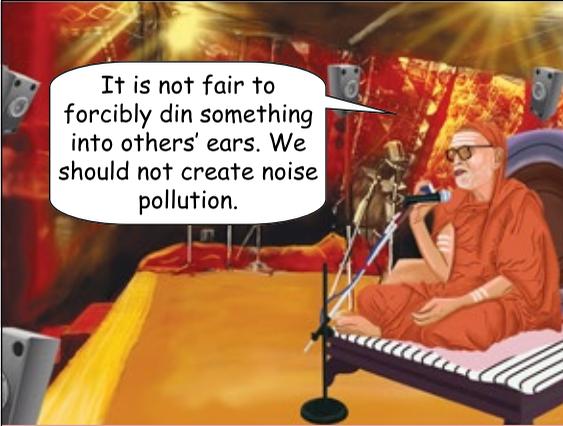


Hmmm. They have set up loudspeakers by the road too.

Observing that the loudspeakers outside were easy to decouple, he asked the organizers to disconnect them.

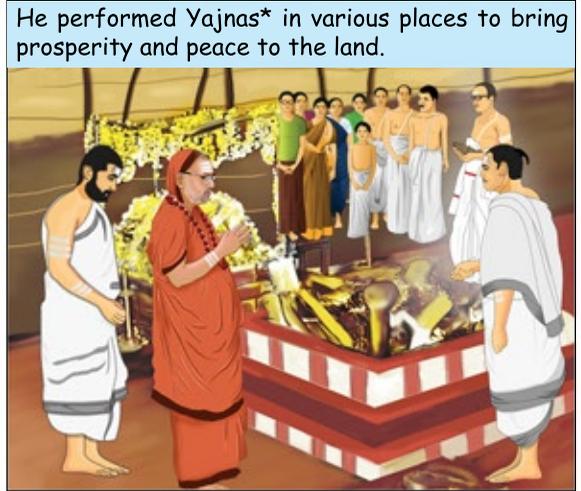
\*Saint who can control rain

#A practitioner of karma-yoga, a spiritual practice in which one acts without attachment and for the sake of God



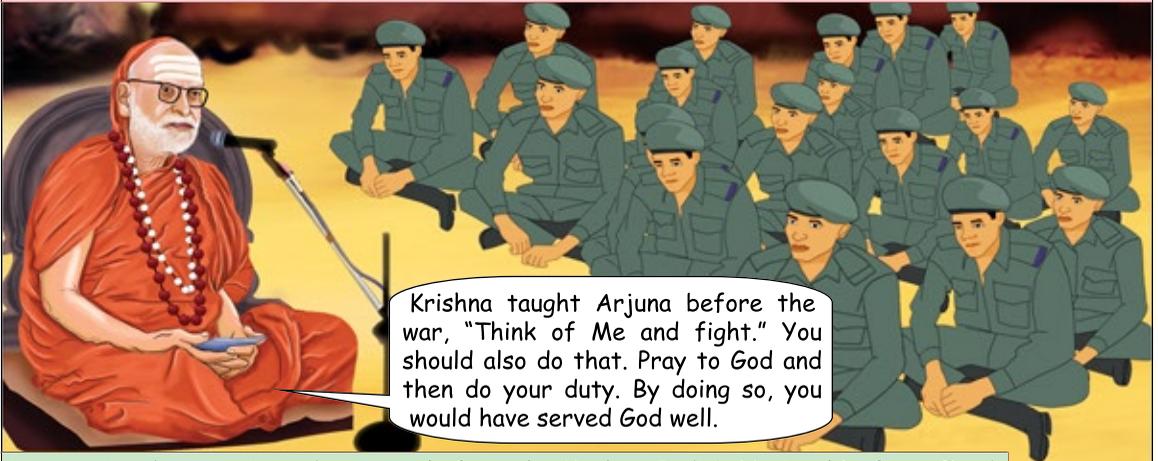
It is not fair to forcibly din something into others' ears. We should not create noise pollution.

This was at a time when the problem of noise pollution was largely overlooked in India.



He performed Yajnas\* in various places to bring prosperity and peace to the land.

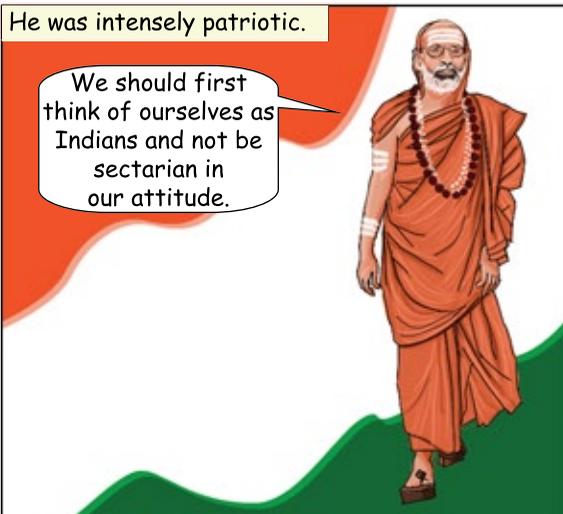
During his tours across India, he was invited to address India's armed forces on several occasions.



Krishna taught Arjuna before the war, "Think of Me and fight." You should also do that. Pray to God and then do your duty. By doing so, you would have served God well.

At war time, he contributed generously from the Math to India's National Defence Fund.

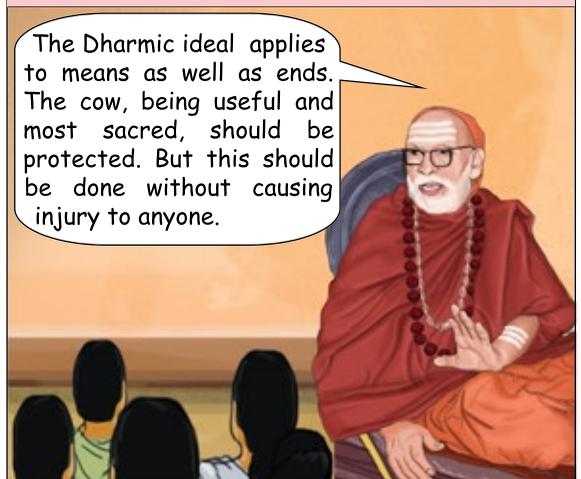
He was intensely patriotic.



We should first think of ourselves as Indians and not be sectarian in our attitude.

He used to be moved to tears while reading stories of India's freedom-fighters and martyrs.

He was a staunch adherent of Ahimsa and abhorred violence. When the agitation against cow slaughter took a violent turn in the country...



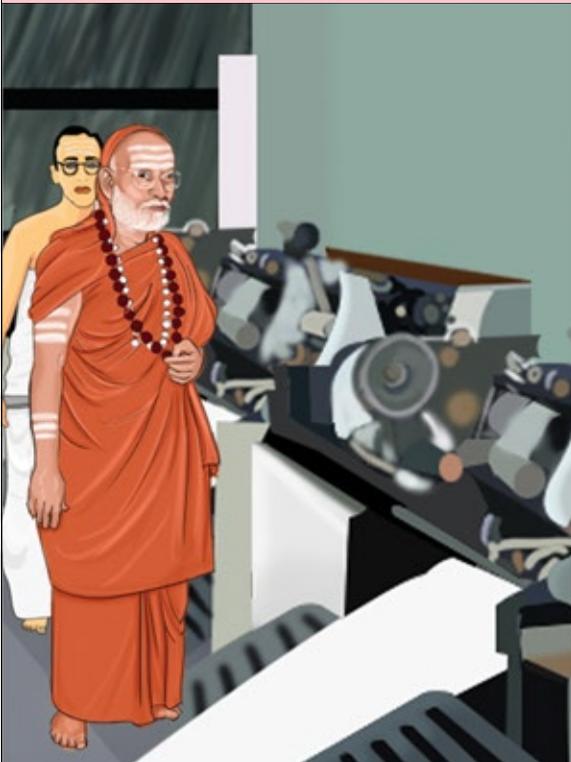
The Dharmic ideal applies to means as well as ends. The cow, being useful and most sacred, should be protected. But this should be done without causing injury to anyone.

\*Sacrifices

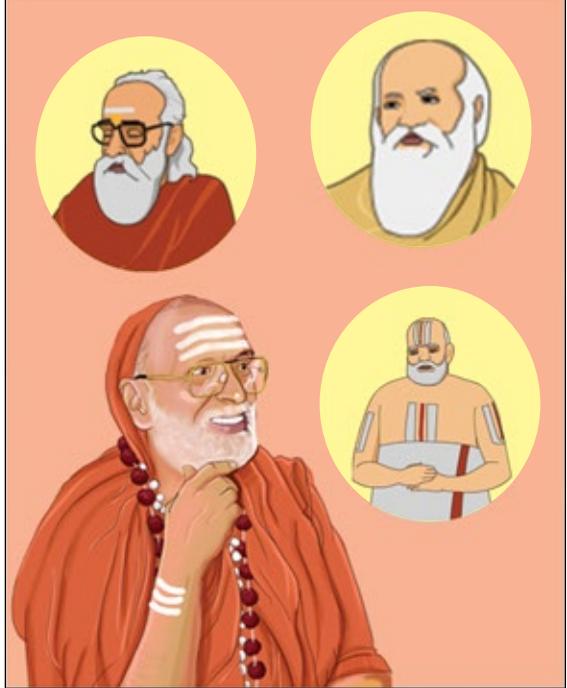
He was never one to just preach. He practiced to a tee. He maintained a *Goshala*\* at Sringeri with almost a hundred cows that he looked after with tender care.



He evinced deep interest not only in traditional branches of learning but also in a wide variety of subjects such as agriculture, horticulture, engineering, photography and electronics.



Heads of diverse religious organizations had great regard and affection for His Holiness and sought his advice and blessings on many occasions.



A true liberal, he appreciated people for who they were and did not expect them to toe his line. His universal affection drew many to him.



G. D. Naidu, the genius inventor and avowed non-believer, held His Holiness in the highest respect and even named his technical training institute and a hall he built, after him.

\*Cow pen

Full of life, he grabbed every opportunity to do something he loved - swimming. No river or ocean was given a miss by this expert swimmer!

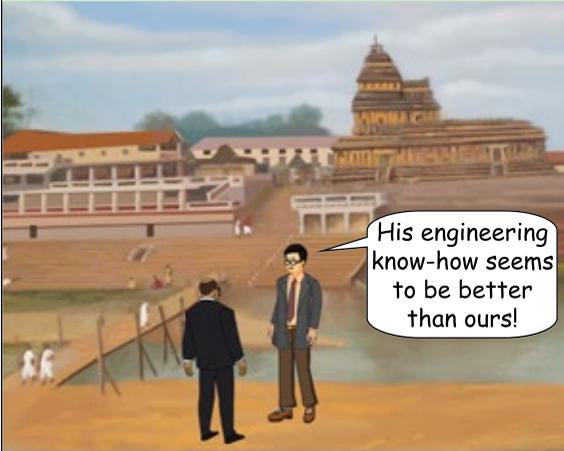


He was thorough with every task he undertook. He had plans to build a bridge across River Tunga at Sringeri, and invited a multinational construction company for discussions.

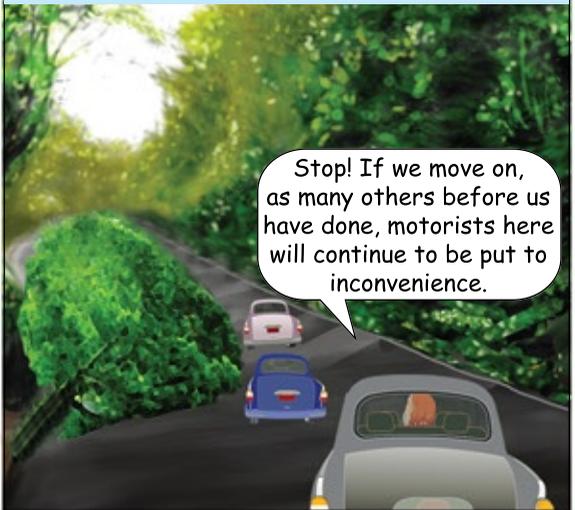


While pulling out an album he had prepared with photos and specifications of major bridges of the world, he discussed what would be the ideal design for a bridge at Sringeri.

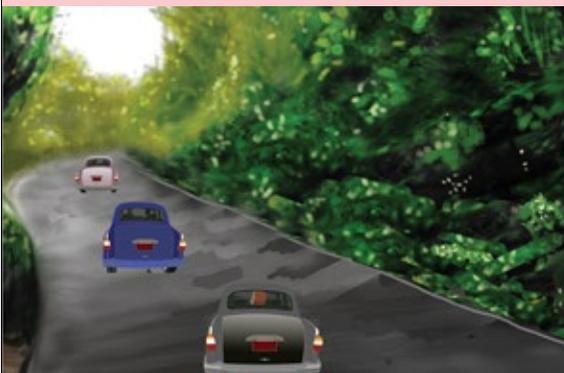
His knowledge pleasantly surprised the high-level delegation. In fact, as the officials left...



His Holiness's sense of responsible citizenship came to the fore many a time. Once a tree had fallen across the road and commuters had to veer around it. As his car crossed the place...



Directed and also assisted by him, the Math staff soon cleared up the obstruction.



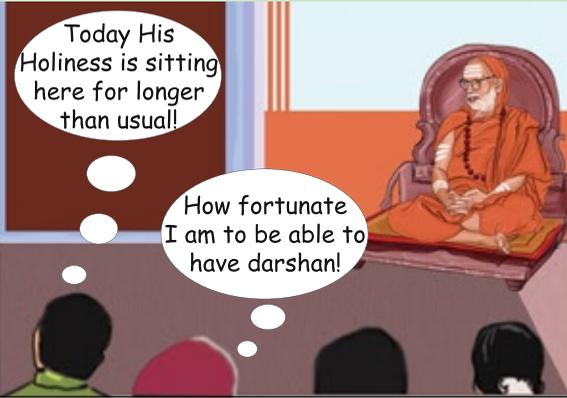
He resumed his journey only after having removed the public inconvenience.

His Holiness never hesitated to make personal adjustments just for others' convenience. Once an old lady from North India came to Sringeri.



She had saved up for a long time to make the trip and had come all the way solely for his darshan. She was to stay only for two days.

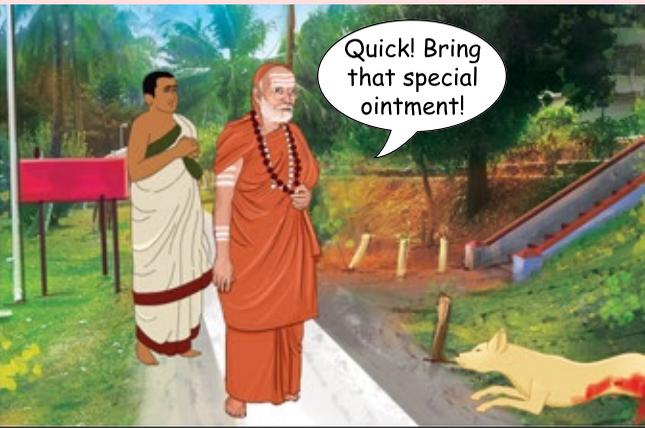
Out of compassion for the devotee, he made alterations to his hectic schedule to give public darshan for longer durations so that she could derive maximum benefit.



His Holiness's compassion extended to all beings. A devotee once brought a rare herbal preparation that he had found to be remarkably effective in healing open wounds.



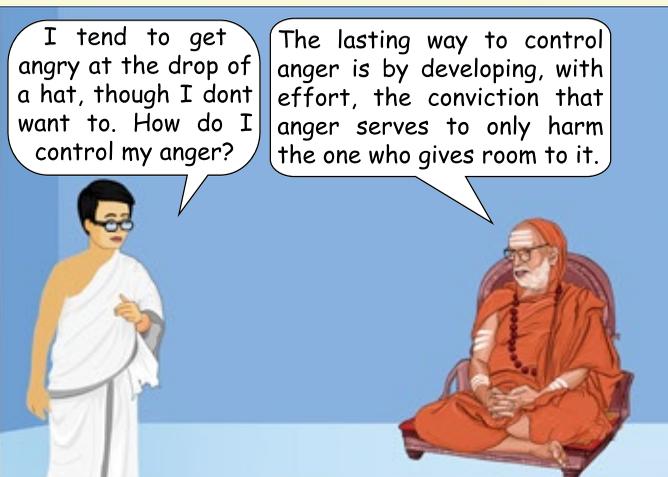
A few days later, His Holiness came across a stray dog lying by the wayside, whimpering in pain. The dog was very badly injured. Without a moment's hesitation...



He made sure the wound was cleaned and the application of the ointment was kept up for a few days. The wound healed rather fast and the dog returned to normalcy very soon.

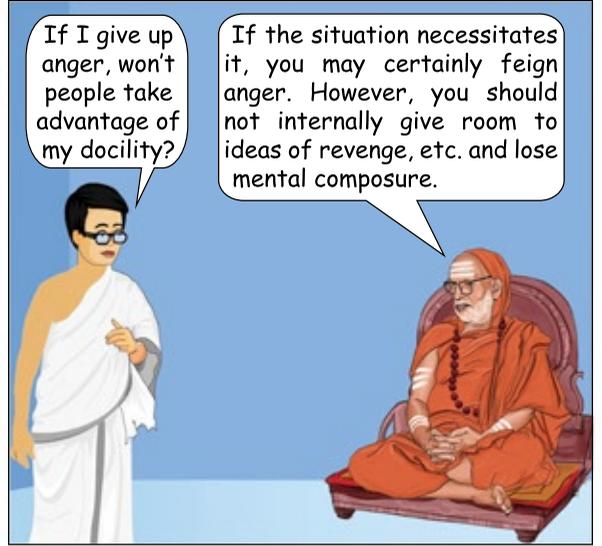
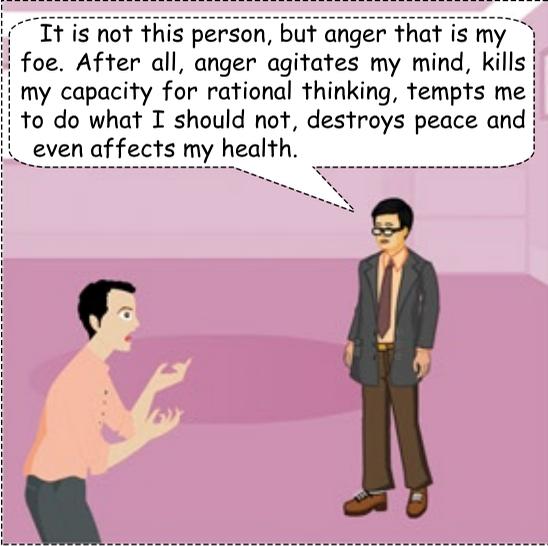


A devotee once came to His Holiness with a question, and an interesting conversation ensued.



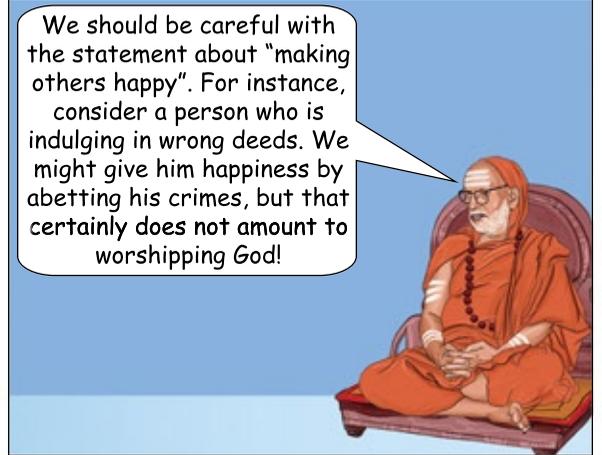
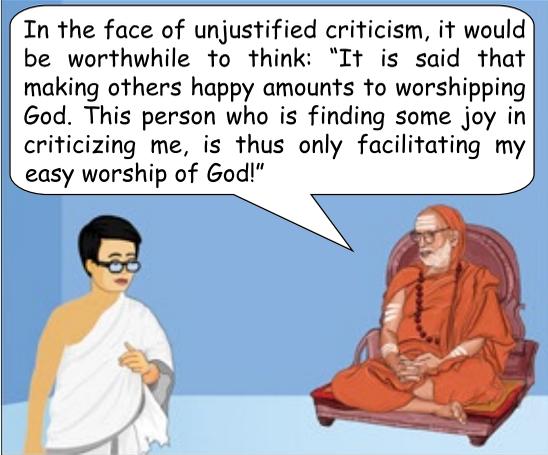
"For example, suppose that someone is chiding you, and your anger gets kindled. You could then think..."





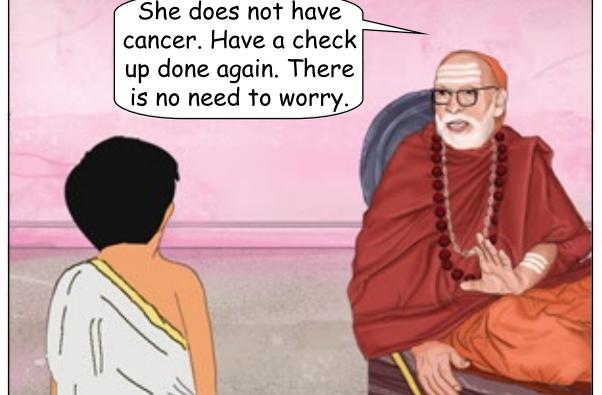
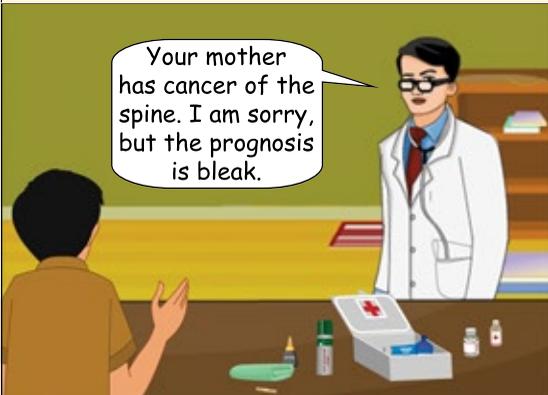
His Holiness then shared an invaluable spiritual tip about dealing with people.

He then remarked with his characteristic pragmatism and sense of humour...



Numerous were the instances in which His Holiness's grace was sufficient for people to overcome even major problems. A devotee's mother was taken ill and after clinical tests...

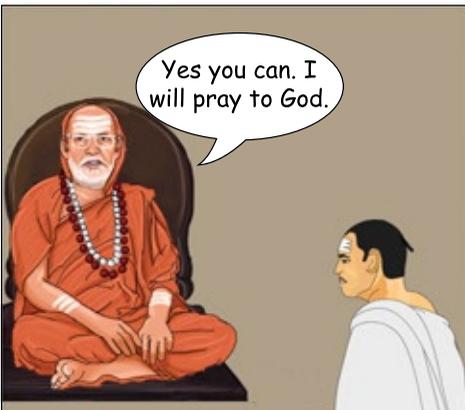
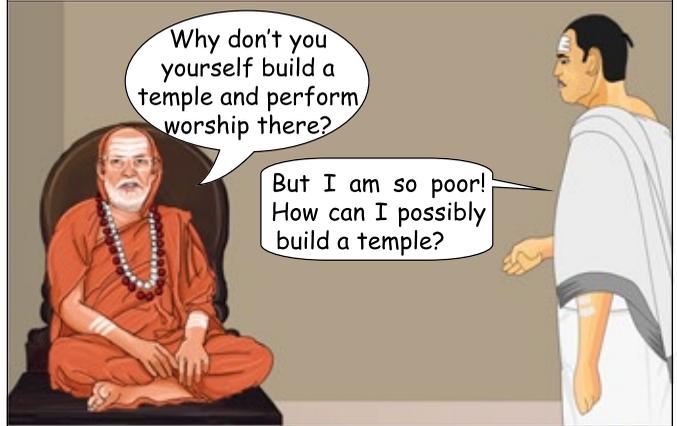
At his wits' end, the devotee rushed to His Holiness who was camping in a nearby town, and apprised him of the matter.



The devotee had all clinical tests conducted again. To his joy and the doctor's utter surprise...

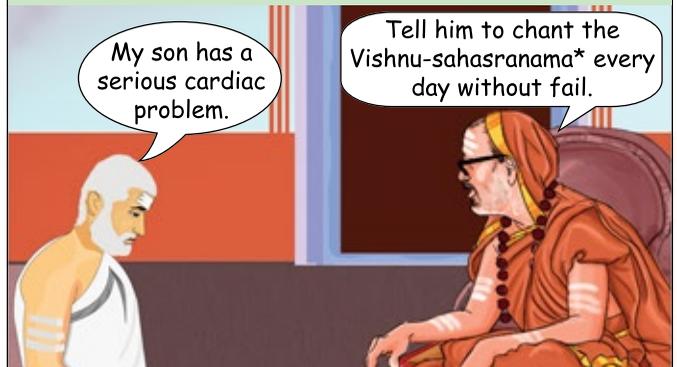


A priest at a temple had to suddenly quit his job and was unable to find another one. Consequently his financial position became grave. He went to His Holiness and presented his problems.



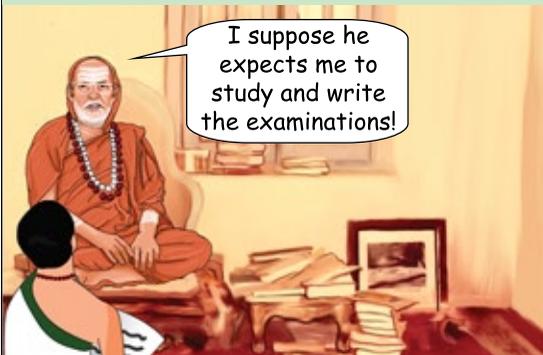
With His Holiness's grace acting as a catalyst, voluntary contributions poured in from unexpected quarters. And much to the priest's amazement, the temple became a reality very soon.

There were several other occasions in which His Holiness chose to prescribe simple expiatory rites or mantras for people to tide over difficulties. One day a distraught devotee came to him.

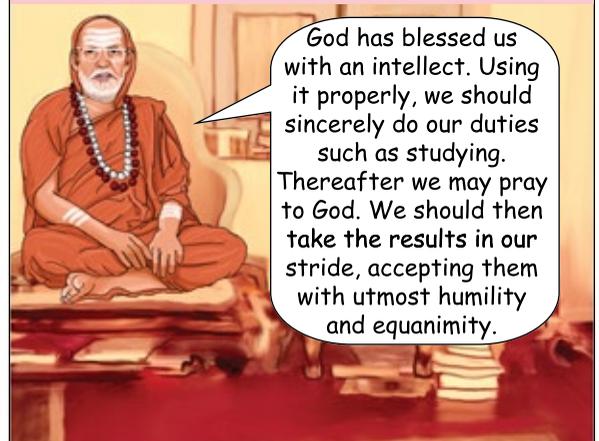


The lad sincerely followed the instruction. To the surprise of his doctors, his condition gradually improved.

A young devotee once wrote to His Holiness seeking blessings for his examinations, for which he had not prepared. His Holiness first responded jocularly...



He then went on to explain the proper attitude...



\*The sacred thousand names of Lord Vishnu

His Holiness never missed his religious duties, regardless of his state of health or busy schedule.



People thronged to see him performing puja\* every evening. On an occasion, beautiful roses of various colours were kept for worship.



As usual, His Holiness offered the flowers one by one.

By the time he completed the offering, roses of a certain hue had neatly settled into a lovely garland for the Lord!



On witnessing such fine aesthetics and divine manner of performing worship, the crowd spontaneously erupted into applause though it was not the norm to do so.

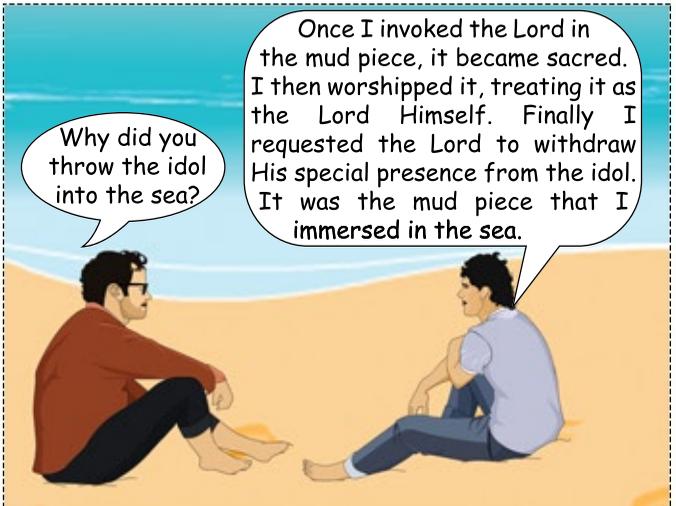
Once, when the naivedya# items were duly brought by the attendant during the puja...



He waited for the food to adequately cool before making the offering. Such was the devout way in which he performed the worship.

His Holiness once narrated an interesting parable to drive home the significance of idol worship.

Once, a person purchased a mud idol of Lord Ganesha and began worshipping it. After devout worship, he promptly immersed the idol in the sea. A friend of his was perplexed.

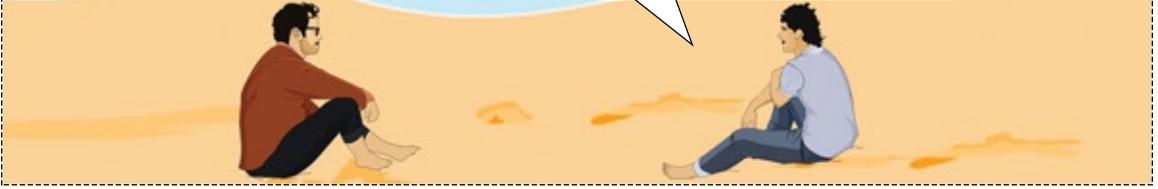


\*Worship

#Offering of food items made to divinities

Ha! How is it possible for a mere piece of mud to undergo such transformations and how can you possibly effect them?

Well, we make an ordinary man a minister, vest in him special authority, and then make him ordinary again. Likewise, a devotee's requests are sufficient for the Lord to sanctify even a mere mud idol and later withdraw Himself from it.



Why do you make offerings during the worship when the idol does not accept any of them?

When a picture can represent even a mortal, why can't an idol represent God? A devotee sees in the idol not mud but the living presence of God. He makes offerings to God with great affection, and treats them as accepted by God.



Wherever there is a drop in pressure, air rushes in. Likewise, God who is everywhere, specially occupies idols where He is worshipped. Though He does not require anything from us, whatever we offer with devotion, He accepts.



An interesting episode transpired when a certain young lawyer happened to visit Sringeri. He went up to a disciple there.

On seeing His Holiness, the lawyer abruptly prostrated and remained so for quite some time. Finally...

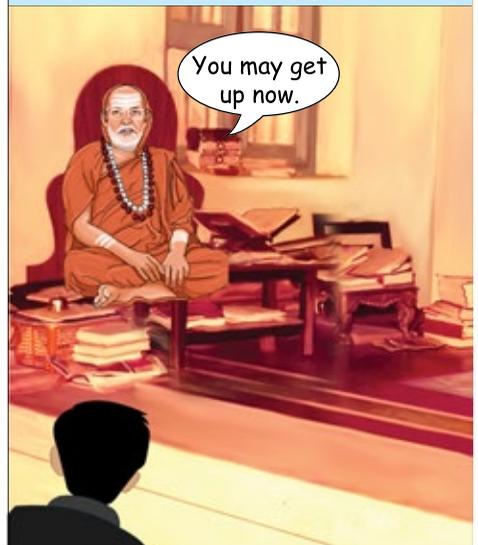
I came here for sightseeing. I am an atheist but am curious to see what the head of this Math is like. Can I see him? However, I will not prostrate before him.

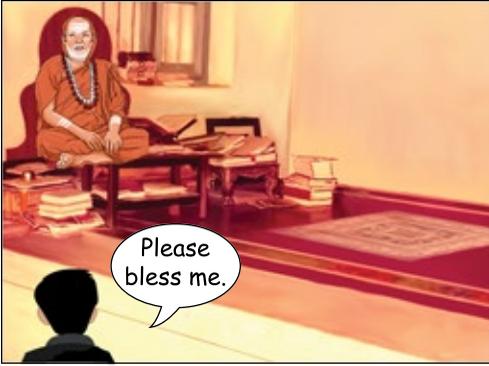
His Holiness will be giving darshan in a few minutes. Anybody can go in. You can decide for yourself whether you want to go or not.



Soon the door was opened and the lawyer followed a group of devotees into the room.

You may get up now.





After coming out, the lawyer spotted the disciple he had conversed with earlier.

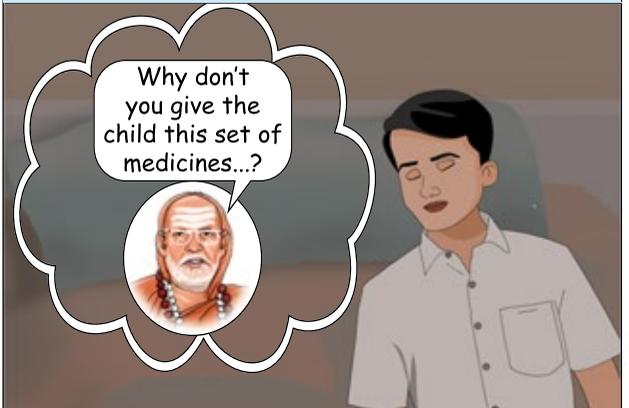


Not only people who came to him, but sometimes even strangers became recipients of His Holiness's grace. Once, a child was brought in a critical condition to a much sought-after doctor.



When the parents pleaded, however, the doctor suggested that they admit the child in the hospital nearby.

That night the doctor had a dream in which a monk unknown to him appeared...

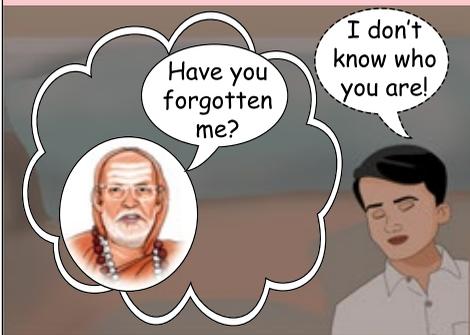


When the doctor woke up, he felt that the combination of medicines suggested in the dream may indeed help the child. He proceeded to the hospital and administered the drugs.

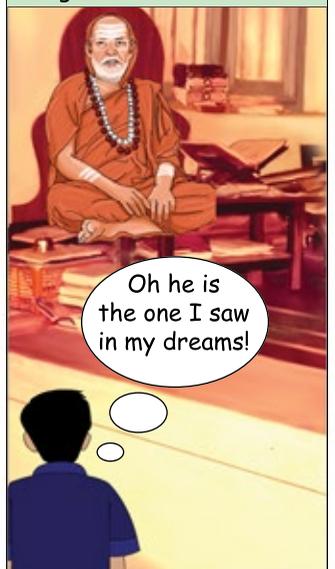
To his joy, the child began to recover and was soon discharged from hospital.



A few days later, the monk came again in the doctor's dream...



The doctor proceeded to Sringeri. And there...



His Holiness accorded very high priority to spiritual aspirants. Once a devout foreigner came to Sringeri, hoping to get some clarifications in Vedanta.

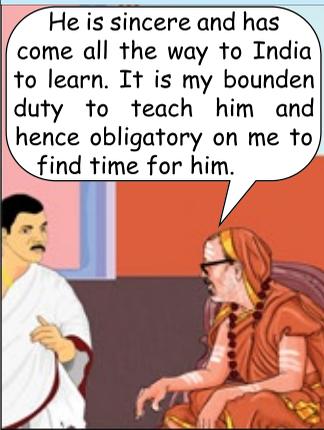


Preparations were on for the Shishya Sweekara\* ceremony and it was next to impossible for His Holiness to spare time for him. However, he did.



With an interpreter for help, His Holiness cleared every one of the foreigner's doubts.

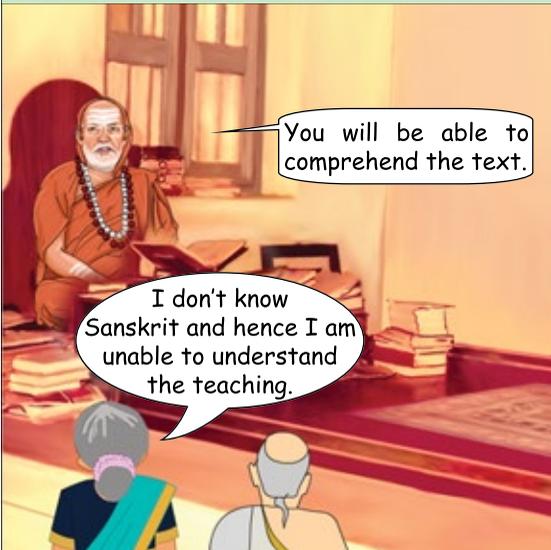
On being asked about his sparing so much time, His Holiness said...



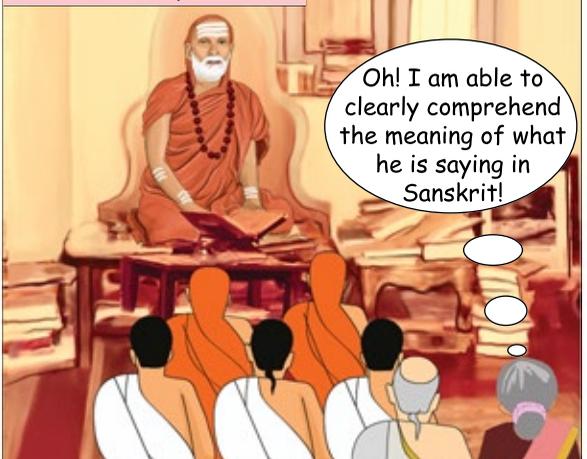
His Holiness used to teach Vedanta to select students. The classes were conducted in a traditional manner, with His Holiness teaching only in Sanskrit. Once he permitted an elderly couple to attend the classes.



After the first day's class the old lady expressed her predicament to His Holiness...



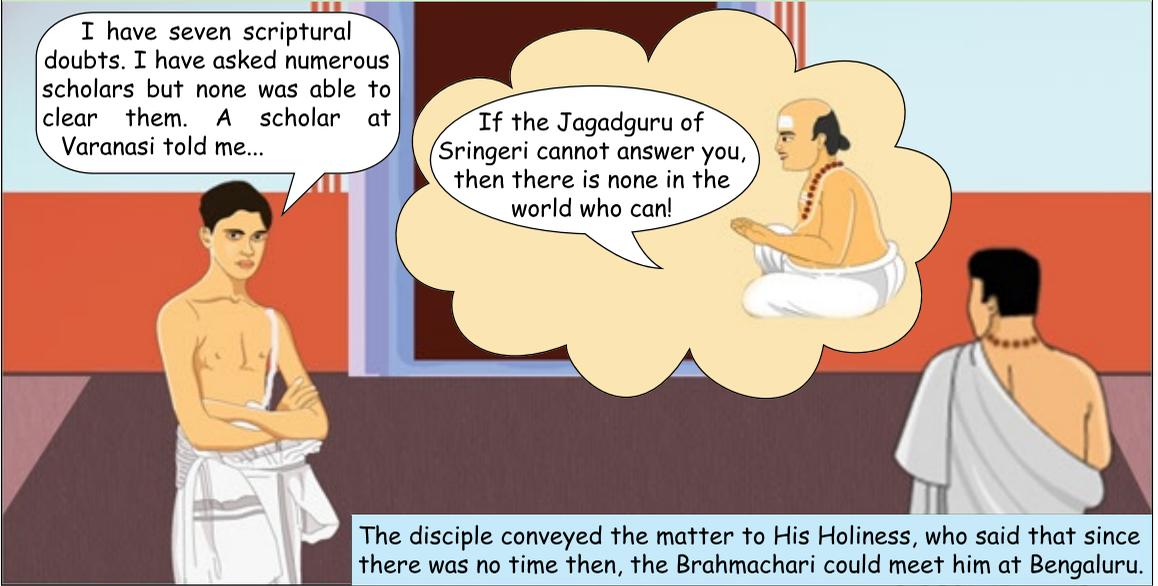
In the next day's class...



Such was the potency of his words, that she was able to understand the classes from then on. Not just that, the import of what had been taught in the first class too, became clear to her automatically.

\*Ceremony in which His Holiness would initiate his chosen disciple and anoint him successor designate to the Peetham

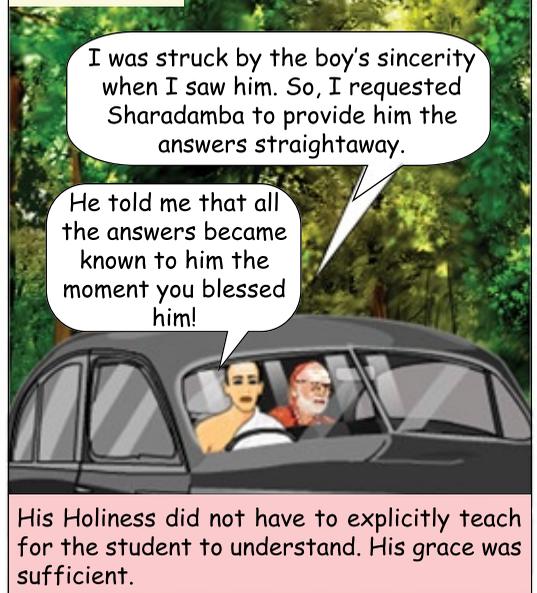
His Holiness was once scheduled to leave Sringeri for Bengaluru, when a Brahmachari\* from Rishikesh# arrived. He spoke to a disciple of His Holiness.



Shortly, His Holiness stepped out to commence his journey. On spotting the Brahmachari...



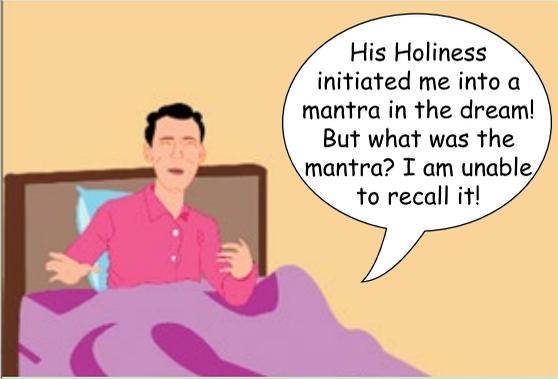
In the car...



\*Celibate

#A place of pilgrimage situated on the banks of River Ganga in North India

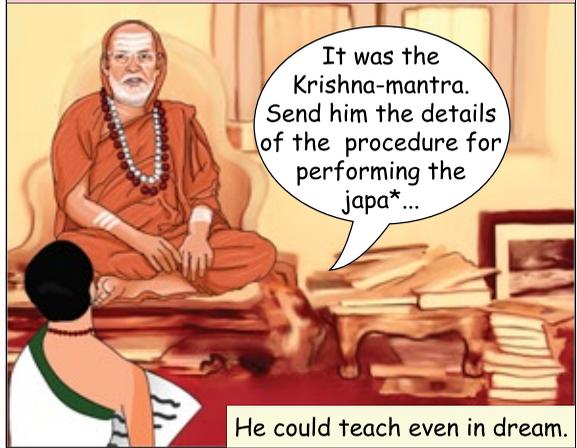
A young devotee once had a dream of His Holiness. On waking up...



His Holiness initiated me into a mantra in the dream! But what was the mantra? I am unable to recall it!

The boy wrote to His Holiness describing the dream and seeking his guidance regarding the mantra.

On receiving the letter, His Holiness gave instructions for an official reply from the Math to be sent to the boy...



It was the Krishna-mantra. Send him the details of the procedure for performing the japa\*...

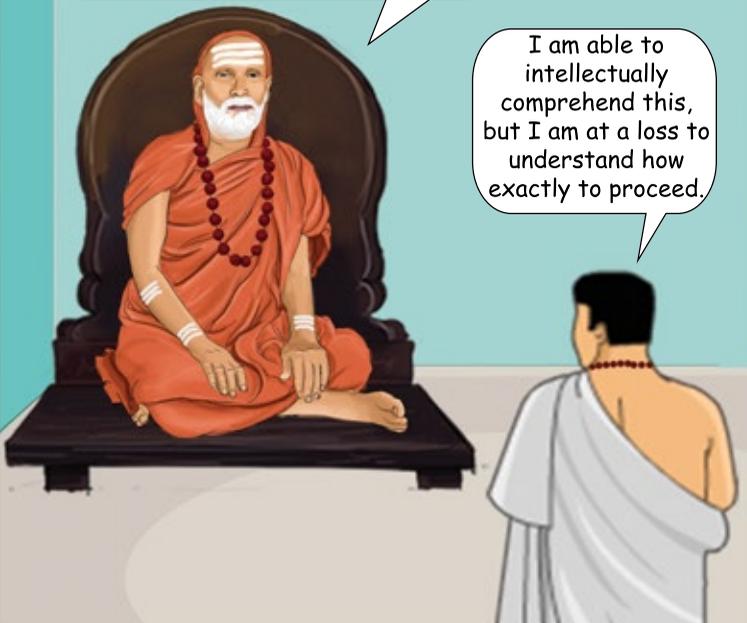
He could teach even in dream.

His Holiness was such a repository of spiritual power that he could confer Nirvikalpa Samadhi and Jivanmukti# at will, though he chose to do so only in extremely rare cases.

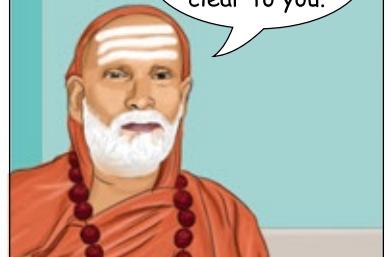
Once a young disciple came to see His Holiness about a year after being initiated into a mantra by him. In the intervening period, the boy, who had no prior knowledge of meditation, had been experiencing blissful sessions of meditation everyday.

You are now ready for meditation on the Supreme as devoid of attributes. When you sit for meditation, dissociate yourself with the body, senses and thoughts. Then realize yourself to be of the nature of perfect bliss.

I am able to intellectually comprehend this, but I am at a loss to understand how exactly to proceed.



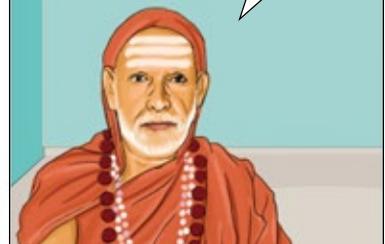
Try it. Everything will be clear to you.



The disciple did as he was told, and straightaway went into Nirvikalpa Samadhi.

Some months later...

May your state of knowledge become steady from now on.



The words bore fruit instantly and the disciple became a Jivanmukta.

\*Chanting of mantras

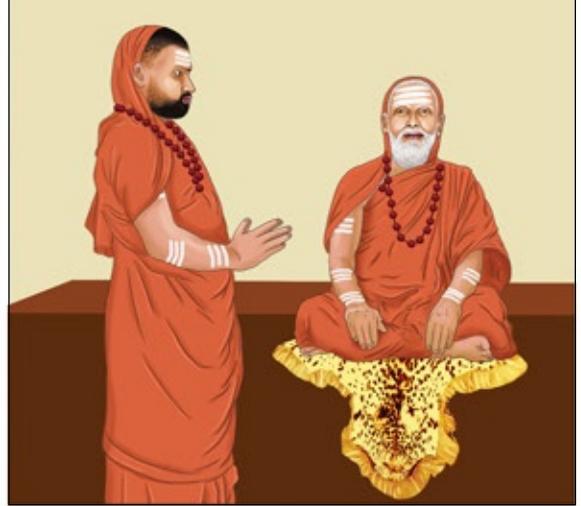
#The state of being liberated even while alive

His Holiness chose Sitarama Anjaneyulu, a brilliant young boy established in Brahmacharya\* and devoted to God, as his successor to the Peetham.



Conferring Paramahansa Sannyasa on him on 11<sup>th</sup> November, 1974, His Holiness gave him the name, "Sri Bharathi Theertha".

The young Jagadguru practiced great austerity and learnt the scriptures from His Holiness. He accompanied his Guru on many of his tours and was greatly devoted to him.



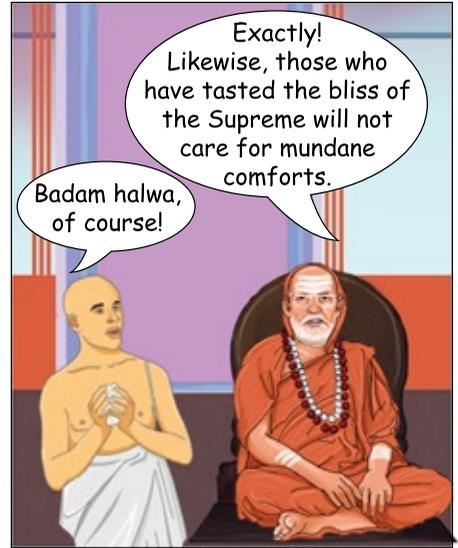
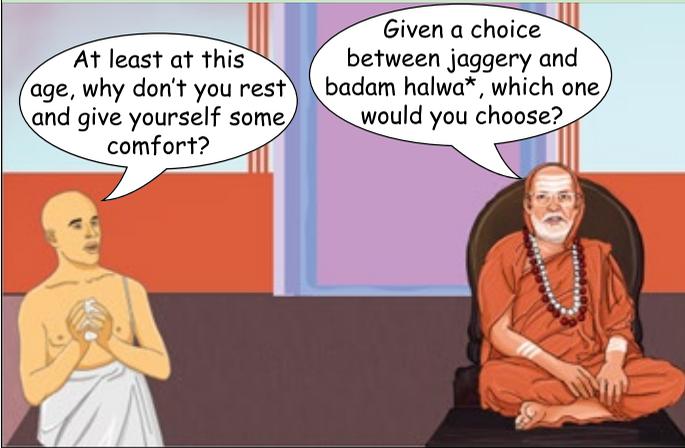
He has, over the years, carried on his Guru's work of upholding and spreading Sanatana Dharma throughout India, in order to secure the true and lasting well-being of her people.



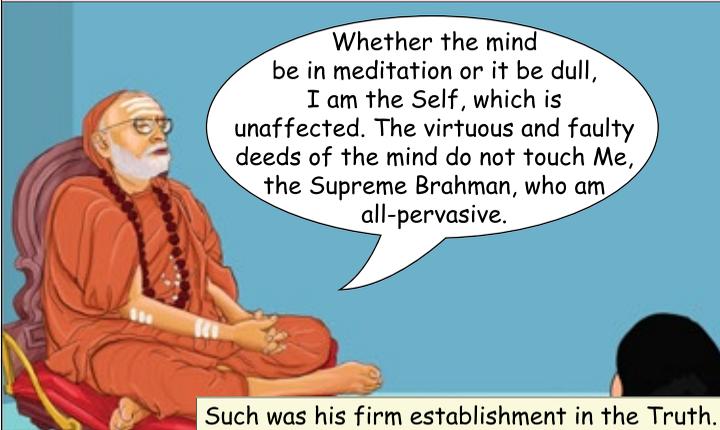
Known for his mastery of the scriptures and endowed with the noblest of qualities, he is revered by saints, scholars, heads of state and ordinary people alike. This cherished, foremost disciple of His Holiness proved to be a worthy successor to his glorious Guru.

\*Celibacy

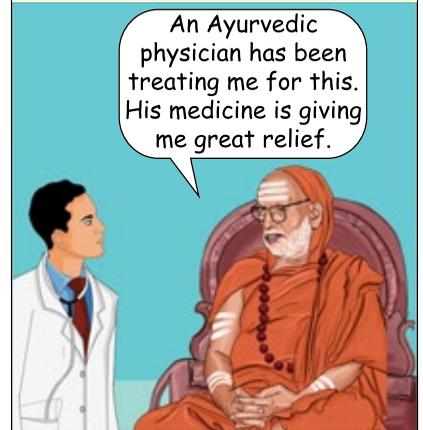
Once, on observing how His Holiness toiled every day from early morning to late at night even at an advanced age, a devotee couldn't help asking him...



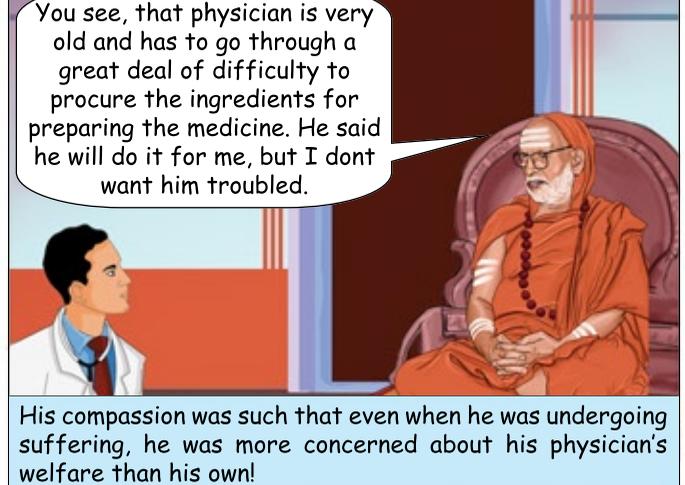
In 1982, His Holiness suffered severe anginal pain. Heavily medicated, he slipped into a semi-conscious state. Though hardly aware of his surroundings, he began lisping a Sanskrit verse...



On an occasion, His Holiness told his doctor of a breathing problem that had developed.



A few months later...



\*A sweetmeat made of almonds

His Holiness's ill-health took a turn for the worse in September 1989. The attendant lying outside his room woke up in the middle of the night.



He entered the room noiselessly. He found His Holiness awake and in much pain, and softly chanting the Lord's name. On seeing the attendant...

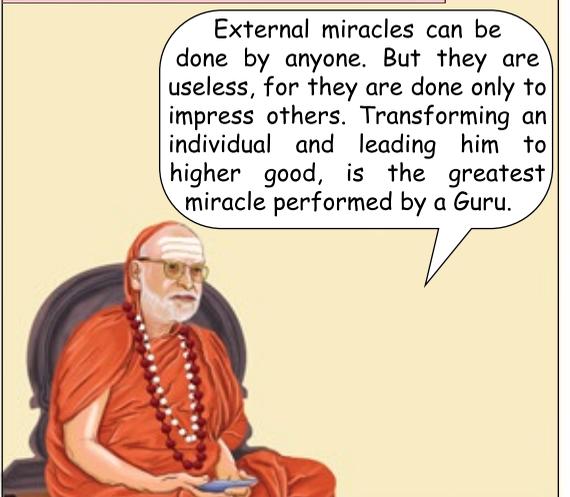


Even in pain, he was only concerned about others' comfort. As for himself, he just let the body run its course.

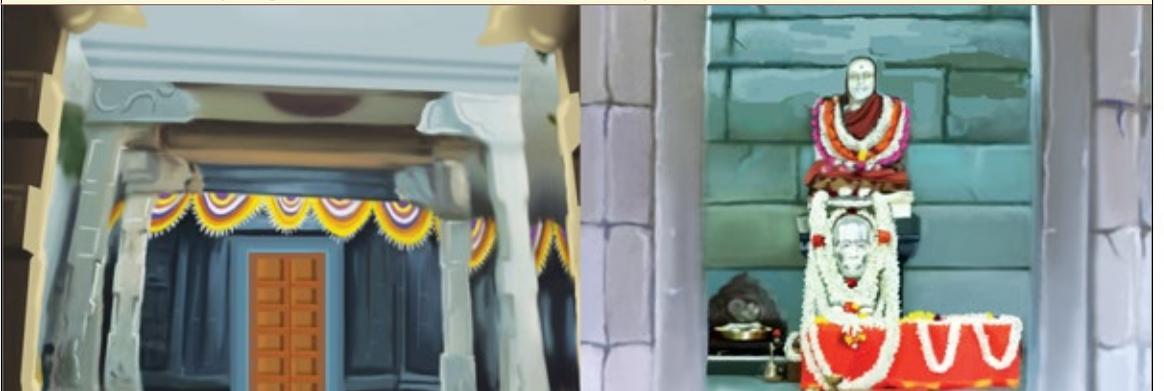
On 21<sup>st</sup> September, 1989, at the age of 71, His Holiness decided that it was time to shed his mortal body.



His Holiness had once told a devotee...



This extraordinary sage, who had performed the greatest miracle innumerable times, had lived a life that was at once awe-inspiring and instructive for all of humanity.



Though he is no longer physically present, he continues to grace in abundance, those who even think of him with devotion.

## Teachings

God's compassion is limitless and so He will accept us, all our faults and limitations notwithstanding, if we offer ourselves to Him.

We should think, "Just as I do not wish to suffer, so too let there be no suffering for another."

Charity apart from bringing about happiness in others, greatly conduces to the spiritual well-being of the donor.

One should speak the truth. Further, one's words should be pleasant and beneficial to others.

When we have been given the capacity to help others, it is but proper that we should do so.

While different objects constitute the wealth of the common folk, lack of possessions is the wealth of the wise.

If we remain unruffled even in the face of provocation, then we become noble persons.

If a bad tendency impels you towards danger, you must overcome it by your own effort.

Everything has got God for its essence.

In this world, neither censure nor praise has any value.

The Lord's mercy extends to all.

Doing what is beneficial to others is the nature of noble sages.

We should dedicate everything to God and be without any worry.

We should always keep thinking of God.

We should appreciate good qualities in others and not assume or search for faults.

