

Sri Swami Vidyananda Giri

Sri Swami Vidyananda Giri was known as Siva Sankara Davey prior to his initiation into Sannyasa. Born to a pious Gujarati Brahmin couple, Sri Balakrishna Davey and Smt. Janaki Bai at Thanjavur, he had his school education there. He was married to Smt. Gangu Bai when he was 19.

As Siva Sankara Davey, he used to visit Tiruvannamalai often and had *darsan* of Sri Seshadri Swamigal and Bhagawan Sri Ramana Maharishi. A landlord with a few rice mills, he had a deep charitable disposition. He was very much drawn to *Kanchi Paramacharya*, Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati Mahaswami and attended the Vedanta classes conducted by Him.

He heard about Sadguru Sri Gnanananda at Mylapore Kapaleeswarar temple. Once, while returning from Thanjavur to Chennai, when the train stopped at Villupuram, he got down by impulse, proceeded to Tirukovilur and after *darsan* of Sri Ragothama at His *Moola Brindavana*, sought refuge at the lotus feet of Sadguru Sri Gnanananda. Swami welcomed him with great love. On Sankara Jayanti day in 1964, He gave him *Sannyasa Diksha* with *upadesa* of *Mahavakya*. Knowing his proficiency in Vedanta, Gurudev gave him the Diksha Nama, "Vidyananda Giri."

Sadguru Gnanananda made arrangements for Sri Swami Vidyananda Giri to conduct Vedanta classes for other Sannyasins. He blessed him by being present at some classes.

Sri Swami Vidyananda Giri undertook *padayatra* from Thapovanam visiting various *Kshetras*. He often used to stay at Sri Vaishnavi shrine at Tirumullaivoyil, near Chennai. He came back to Thapovanam and resumed his Vedanta classes.

Sri Swami Vidyananda Giri accompanied by Swami Nityananda Giri and Swami Poornananda Giri toured North India visiting Varanasai, Pasupatinath, Rishikesh and other Kshetras.

Sri Swami Vidyananda Giri, who was a great devotee of Sri Sadasiva Brahmendra, stayed at Nerur for four months during *chaturmasya* and conducted Vedanta classes. His classes on Sri Sadasiva Brhamendral's "*Atma Vidya Vilasa*", a Vedanta manual were recorded and brought out as a book.

Sannyasa diksha was given by him to Swamis Atmananda Giri, Nityananda Giri, Sankarananda Giri, Poornananda Giri, Satyananda Giri, Sivananda Giri and Gnanasambanda Giri.

In 1986, on *Chitra Poornima* day, He constituted a Charitable Trust, Sri Gnanananda Niketan, exclusively dedicated to the service of the Vedantic tradition, providing for Sannyasins, Brahmacharis and spiritual seekers all facilities for their permanent stay, study and meditation on Vedanta.

In 1989, he proceeded to Vyasa Thapovanam near Wadakkancheri. He later stayed for sometime at Chennai and subsequently he retired to an ashram, Santi Nilayam in Swaminathapuram near Erode established by his devotee, Sri Mayilsamy Gownder. He attained Mahasamadhi on 10-5-1995, the Aradhana day of Sri Sadasiva Brahmendra. His body was brought to Thapovanam and interred in a traditional manner.