

Ati Rudra Mahā Yajña – Highest form of worship of Lord Śiva



IN THE DIVINE PATH, THERE IS NO CHANCE OF FAILURE; IT IS THE PATH OF LOVE. – ATHARVA VEDA



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THE AMAZING ŚRĪM DREAM TEAM

Every Ati Rudra Mahā Yajña is a magnificent ocean of unconditional, pure love by which man bathes God in the form of *liṅgam*, and love by which God infuses and nourishes man, all creatures and all created. Each ARMY requires a renouncement, *tapas*. Each ARMY asks us to serve, pray, immerse into deep meditation and worship the Lord with the *abiṣekam*, *pūjā*, recite the Śrī Rudram, and throw the yields into the sacred fire. All this for the sake of welfare, peace and progress of all beings of all the worlds. Each ARMY makes the human heart open and become larger than the universe – and it does it with the help of the magnificent Vedas, high vibrations, strong energies, harmonious and accurate recitations of Vedic verses, tangible presence of God; with smoke and fire that purifies us at cellular and cosmic levels. And most of all, ARMY is doing it through service and love, through dear and good people who participate in the ARMY or are guests.

Still, the ARMY in Atlanta 2014 was different than any other. I do not know whether this is because for the first time in the history of mankind this *Yajña* has been held westernmost from India, on the American soil, or because for the first time women were reciting equally with men - worshipers and priests. Or perhaps because of the beautiful, fragile Śrī Rudram, which started to sprout just a few weeks before the start of the *Yajña*, despite all the tornadoes, despite the cold and the floods. From the first to the last day of this project, there was a small number of volunteers and too much work. Our beloved God could not give us a better gift: the day before the beginning the whole area was under thick mud, the hall had no walls, only the roof. At night, strong thunderbolts and a heavy rain. Devoted volunteers were working with fervor day and night, almost without sleep. In vain. What they built during the day, storms and floods destroyed during the night. In the morning, with the name of God on their lips, they started from the beginning. If that is not love for God, I do not know what is. If that is not unbreakable faith, I do not know what is. If anything in the world seemed impossible, it was that the ARMY in Atlanta would start right when it was announced, on May 1, 2014.

The 33-member European group arrived in Śrīm Centar on April 29th. A great and beautiful property, peaceful, silent. Birds tweeting, good old black dog, cool weather. And ... flooded, muddy *yajña śāla*. They asked us to recite the Vedas and sing bhajans in front of the "entrance of the hall". We were standing with our hands together, reciting the Vedas and looking at the mud sea under the roof. *Impossible, Yajña starts tomorrow! Here?* I thought it

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would delay the start at least for one day, because it was impossible to dry this mud overnight in a firm and dry base where people can walk. It was impossible to raise the walls, finish and decorate the stage, it was impossible to do all this until tomorrow morning under these conditions. The next day, on Zero day of the *Yajñā*, when the ritviks (*rtvij*) got *dīkṣā* when the *homakuṇḍas* had been decorated, when the lingam entered the *yajñā śāla* and priests performed the introductory rites, the sun was shining. In the hall we had a dry and nice floor. We had walls of blue nylon and a beautifully decorated altar, rich, colorful, joyful, as if we were in our beloved India. By God's will, impossible becomes so much more possible, something similar to what Bhagawan told Śrī Vinay Kumar when Śrī Kumar came to Him and asked for the ARMY to be held in Prashanthi Nilayam 2006: "You'll See What I Will Make Out Of It!"

And indeed He did. He performed a miracle, a transformation. Not just for the *Yajñā śāla*, in Śrīm center, at the Amma Śrī Karunamayi estate on the edge of Atlanta, but for each of us: He has dried up the mud of our bad attributes in the sun of His love and made our hearts firm enough for Śiva to dance on them. He made our bodies powerful enough to withstand the tapas and all efforts during the *Yajñā*. He made our souls soft enough and clean enough to serve, to sing bhajans, to be compassionate, to recite, to love and rejoice in Him. Oh, how much we rejoiced in Him... And even today, when ever I hear 'Atlanta', I do not think of Atlantis, neither of the city with rich history from the American South, nor of the center of Coca-Cola or CNN. Not even of the old Hollywood movie *Gone with the Wind*. I think only on one thing: "I love you, God. And I thank You for the Ati Rudra Mahā Yajñā in Atlanta."

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2014. – Jasna Radulović



THE AMAZING ŚRĪM DREAM TEAM, ATLANTA, GEORGIA, USA, 2014



„GOD gave you the time, space, cause, material, idea, skill, chance and fortune. Why should you feel as if you are the doer? GOD is the doer; you are but the instrument.“ – Śrī Sathya Sai Baba

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KOUSHIK'S STORY ABOUT ARMY IN ATLANTA (fragments)

The Lord had planned this event even before people had thought as to who is going to be the recipient of His grace. (...)

On April 28th, early in the morning, I just began writing *Om Śrī Sai Ram* and a message came from Swami to all ritwiks (*rtvij*): *"Even though all of you are selected for performing in this auspicious occasion, please do not let this get to your head, you are not the doer. If you disconnect from this you can receive all the positive vibrations at any time. Do not let your ego get in. Enjoy the scenery, embrace all the people, and spread My love with each and every one you meet. I am always with you, in you, above, behind and around you. Witness My grace on all of you. You are all My children..., love love, love and only love."*

I was to leave on the 29th to Atlanta in the afternoon and in the morning at 5:30am I got something in the mail mentioning that the flight had been cancelled due to the weather. In the Atlanta region, a tornado was expected and in the New Jersey area heavy rain and flooding. It was a test how badly did we want this and how intensely. We all scrambled for an airline that would allow us to travel for this auspicious occasion. The compassionate lord opened his arms and made way for me.

The airlines went out of their way in getting a direct flight available to get me there on time and without the lords it would have not be possible. One by one we were arriving at the airport Michigan, California, upstate New York, New Jersey, Seattle and our shuttle run by only volunteer/ritwik (*rtvij*) took us to the center where the function was going to be held and dropped us off as they needed all the help to get the event off the ground. The night before with heavy rains had damaged all the effort put into so we had to start all over. More trials and tribulations. Nevertheless, all the participants pooled together and pulled it off.

On April 30th, we were scheduled to have invocation with Veda chanting and inauguration of Ati Rudram Mahā Yagñam. The weather was not cooperating and we did not know how this function was going to happen. Still more flights were being cancelled due to the weather. Tornado warnings all throughout Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee and Mississippi.

We did not let our spirits down and chanted *Om namaḥ Śivāya* continuously and vigorously. We thoroughly enjoyed heart rendering *bhajans* sung by devotees from overseas.

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The compassionate lord heard our sincere prayers and cleared the path with good weather to go ahead with the program. Professor **Nanjunda Dixit**, the head priest, tied the sacred thread for me even though I was not a ritwik (*rtvij*). He said "the work that you are doing is higher than what I am doing. Continue the *sevā* and make sure you will be here for all the days." I am sure the sacred thread is what saved my life several times during the 12 days.

Thursday, May 1st, is the official start of the program. All ritwiks (*rtvij*) had received their *dīkṣā vastra* and were ready to start. I volunteered to give water to all the men. After completing that I went to the other side to help fill all of the plates with *homam* items and I was short of 6 plates. When I went to get a plate a lady, in front of everyone, began shouting at me and said "you have to ask for my permission to take things!!" She then went on and told another ritwik (*rtvij*), "Do not involve him. Do it yourself!" I could have said something but chose to just walk away. I came in front of her time and time again when I would volunteer to clean the hall after each evening program. I would stay until 1:30 am (01.30h) cleaning and someone or the other would be dropped off at the hotel.

After several days again I saw the shuttle bus stop and pick up at a resident. It happened to be the same woman from the other day. This time she was silent and did not say anything with her head kept down. A man came up to me and asked me "Are you a ritwik (*rtvij*)?" I clearly answered "No I am not." He then asked me if I was a chanter and again I answered "No". He finally asked me if I was a volunteer and I replied with "Yes I am." He shortly followed up with "Can you help out in the kitchen?". Now originally I had signed up for cleaning bathrooms, keeping shoes in an organized manner, followed by kitchen *sevā*. Keeping the bathrooms in order was already being taken care of. The shoes/slippers were placed outside. I was now left with kitchen duty. I thoroughly enjoyed working with the men and women, joking around, and sampling all the varieties of food as we had full reins of the provisions. After completing our duties, on occasion, we would peek into the *yajña śala* and hear the thunderous chanting of the Vedas.

I felt like going and sitting in front of the energized lingam, so after my duties I went and sat and slipped into a very deep meditative state. I had tears rolling down my cheeks with no control and fell on top of the *homakuṇḍam*. People who were not aware of my situation thought it was a medical problem and began running frantically to find a physician. They even went and told Karunanamayi and she said hold onto his feet. When Sekhar heard it was Koushik he told everyone "Stay away and do not disturb him. He is with Swami!!" I did not

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want anyone touching me, especially when I am in a trance, as it disturbs the energy. My presence was now known to all as to who I am and had full rein to move about without anyone questioning or stopping me.

The next day an American woman stopped by the kitchen and said, „I don't know who you are but you came in my dream with a clear box and inside there were a lot of snakes. Who are you?“ I casually replied “ŚIVA”.

On Tuesday, May 6th, at 5:30AM, I get a text from a friend saying that his friend's wife was going to be in surgery, she needed help, and to pray that she will be just fine. I could have replied O.K. but instead replied "Do not worry. I will be there in the surgical room with her holding her hand." *I told him to BELIEVE IN ME. The very next day I call him to follow up. He says she's doing fine and that as she was laying in the surgical room, just as he was told the day before, she felt someone holding her hand.*

I went to work in the kitchen and the energy in the ashram yajnam was very high in the morning. As I was working, I was carrying a large pot of hot boiling water when someone called out to me. I completely forgot I had something in my hands. The whole vat of scalding hot water fell on arm and hand. I was burned very badly. I applied what was available as an aid to alleviate the constant annoying pain.

To help me forget the pain I went to the *yajña śala* to meditate. I usually go for meditation only after I have completed the work in the kitchen but that day it was completed in the very beginning itself. I walked on the runway. I had no care of who was watching or observing me. What better way to properly enter as I saw only Swami sitting on the altar with both hands up blessing everyone.

I was in the first row under Swami's feet, followed by the priest, and then the ritwiks (*ṛtvij*). With a nod to the priest I sat and closed my eyes for hours. I have no idea as to what was going on around me. I had tears rolling down my face uncontrollably as I was in the deep meditative state of mind. The public was stunned that someone who had been burnt so badly throughout his entire arm has no feeling whatsoever. He must be so blessed that without even planning anything he can be with the Lord just like that. People wanted to touch me and get blessings. At some point even fruits and flowers were offered at my feet by Sekhar; the organizer of the event. People, still in amazement, kept saying "How blessed you are! Just with the thought of The Lord you melt in his arms." Many wanted to hear the experience but it was only for a few to hear as there was a message for them.

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Arun, along with Sekhar, were also participants from California. Arun's mother and a friend came after lunch to meet near the kitchen to hear some divine experiences. The following day when they were coming her friend slipped and sprained her knee. She remained in great spirit and did not panic. The ambulance was called for Arun's mother. "*Koushik we came to see you so you have to heal her with your energy!!*" I gave her my word that she will be O.K. and return back by 8 pm. When I saw Arun, I inquired the well-being of Sita aunty and he replied that she did in fact return by 8 pm as mentioned to him earlier.

The word spread so fast that the ladies came to the kitchen to drink coffee to Karunamayi. In the evening an announcement came that "No one, other than the kitchen staff, is allowed to be back there!" In an interview with the California group with Karunamayi she asked "Why did you go near the kitchen when everything is available in the dining hall?" The lady answered "We went to see Koushik as he has many divine experiences." (...)

That day, when I went to the *yagna śala* to sit, Amma Karunamayi was giving a speech: "Śiva is here amongst us, he does not want to see me but I have seen him and today he is in pant and shirt" Hearing that, I hit the floor with full force, fell on a harmonium, a mic stand, and had lacerated the body. Blood was coming out and yet again I felt nothing. Doctors wanted to treat the wound immediately but I did not want anyone to touch me. Eventually I came out of the trance. Arun pleaded "Koushik, for my sake, please see a physician who is here and is willing to help in covering the wound."

On Sunday, the last day, they were honoring all the priests', ritwiks (*ṛtvij*), and all of the volunteers. I came and sat at my usual spot and drifted off into deep meditation. I saw Swami standing in front of me and then on the altar. The garland started to fall from his picture, the *liṅgam* and flowers falling from all. I was in Kailāsa and could see the snow-capped mountains with the light hitting it just shimmering and glistening. What a beautiful sight! To be in the presence of the beloved Lord; thank You for showering your abundant grace on this soul. Swami graced the occasion. I Am There For All My Devotees.

I heard people giving me the title of a "LIVING SAINT, a *SIDDHAR*, and *SIDDHA dīkṣā vastra* to this physical body calling Koushik. Swami, am I even capable of receiving all these titles as I am merely your servant? Professor Nanjunda Dixit tied the *rakṣā* for me even though I was just volunteering. He said, "Your work is more important than chanting. Working tirelessly in the kitchen and feeding so many people." A friend said, "Koushik they are honoring all the kitchen staff. Go and get your award!" I told him the energy is too high I

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can hardly stand, but listening to his words I stumbled and fell on the Divine Mother's feet in a deep meditative state. All the water from the *abhiṣekam* and a handful of *rakṣā* (rice) on top of my head. The words "Nana, get up...nana, get up brought the function to the end."

Jai Sai Ram, Jai Karunamayi.

Thank you for everyone's unconditional love.

Sai Ram. Love All Serve All.

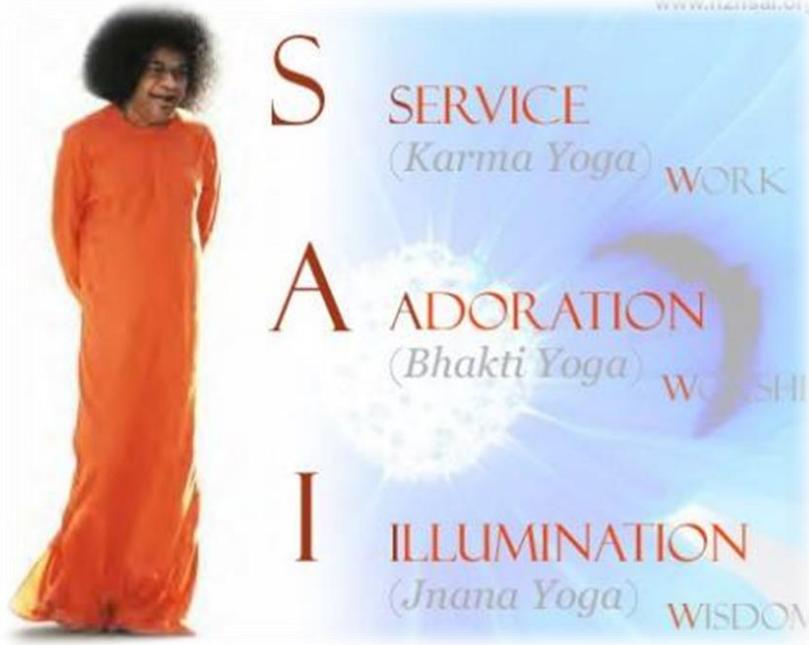
Koushik Venugopal



<http://divine-blessings.blogspot.com/2014/05/ati-rudram-maha-yagnam-forsyth-ga-may.html>

Śrī Gunaranjan, an IIT and IIM alumni, said, "Any student of science will know that in any equation of nature L.H.S or Left Hand Side is equal to R.H.S or Right Hand Side. For us, L.H.S. is Love, Humility and Service. And R.H.S is Royal Highway to Swami. Let us cultivate these three aspects. Let us build the royal highway to our Mother Sai."

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Dearest Lord!

If the mountains of ice (himālaya) became the pot, all the waters (of Sindhu) be the ink, kalpataru (wish fulfilling tree) the pen, Mother Earth is to be the paper, and Mother himālaya herself starts documenting since eternity, even then it is not possible to describe YOUR grace and glory in its entirety!!!

HE worked through every one of us through the sādhanā of 121 days. The doer, deed, and the done...Śata koṭi praṇāms¹ to HIM in evvery sādhanā! Śata koṭi praṇāms to HIM the officiator in the form of Śrī Dixit-ji and all the ācāryas for boundless patience, love, and compassion!!

HE was the sacrifice and love that poured through every devotee and their family members... Śata koṭi praṇāms to HIM in every bhakta as a child, wife, husband, mother, father, brother, and sister that sacrificed for sake of world peace!

HE was the hundreds of hands and legs and the bodies that worked through rain or shine, drove hundreds of miles to remove the nails, staples, painted, landscaped, cleaned, built, drove, decorated, cooked, served, and what not... Śata koṭi praṇāms to HIM in every single

¹ Śata koṭi praṇāms – a zillion prostrations

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servant and volunteer of HIS from the smallest child, the blue birds, a black dog, 6-ft snake, to the eldest uncle and aunty for unconditional service!

HE was the inspiration for devotees that gathered from 18 different countries with just love for GOD and for world peace... Śata koṭi praṇāms to every pure heart and soul that joined the cause of a Yajñam for world peace without any expectation, including a prasādam!

HE was the negativity too that tests the waters and ensures the focus. Śata koṭi praṇāms to HIM in the negative for light is so beautiful only when there is that bit of darkness!

Bhagawan! Where the words fail to express and thoughts cease to prevail, we experience your love. You are our being and spirit. May we continue to experience Your Love and Presence through opportunities such as this that are not bound by any barriers of caste, creed, religion, gender, organizations, identifications, and ONLY out of pure love just for YOU to LOVE ALL SERVE ALL!!!!

May all the beings in all the worlds have happiness and peace!

Sekhar Boddupalli



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GURU AND HIS DISCIPLE



Once there was a *guru* who wanted to train his two disciples by giving them a practical task, "Take 100 Rps each of you," he said "and use it to fill up your rooms with whatever you are able to purchase. In five days' time I will return to inspect your work."

When he returned and visited the room of the first disciple, he saw it had been filled up with rags. That disciple had thought that by hook or by crook he had to, somehow or other, fill up the room, and since rags were the cheapest items to purchase, he had chosen them. The *guru* was duly shocked.

When the *guru* came to inspect the second room, he saw that it had been filled up - not only once, but twice and his disciple returned 80 Rps back to him and said, "Guru Maharaja, I only needed 20 Rps to fill the room twice."

He had lit a ghee lamp in the middle of room, along with an incense stick. Light and fragrance were spreading everywhere, from top to bottom, from left to right, from the front to the rear.

The delighted *guru* said, "You have truly understood. Life is very much like an empty room. It should be filled with the light of knowledge and the fragrance of service, and not with the discarded filthy things of this world." – *Sacinandana Swami*

<http://www.sacinandanaswami.com/en/s1a181/wisdom-stories/the-light-of-life.html>

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