

## Impressions of 5<sup>th</sup> Gyan Shodh

Place: Kocherla Village, Guntur Dist, A.P.  
Dates: 17-18 February, 2015  
Mentor: Acharya Kosaraju Tirumala rao  
Participants: Chandu, Kranthi, Yashwant

Refreshing, enlightening and would be the best way to describe my experience of the gyan shodha at Kocherla. Though the ashram was devoid of lush greenery owing to the season, the discussions with Acharya Tirumala Rao made up for the gloom. It was sheer delight getting to know so much and realizing that there is much more to learn. The pinnacle of the 2 wonderful days was when Acharya garu referred to us as relatives to some of the village folk who had gathered. Need we ask for more?



Entrance of the Ashram

Our yatra started with Acharya accompanying us in the early dawn from the village to the ashram all along talking about the high school close to his ashram and how happy he was that kids are studying. Human beings absorb sunlight and it is the duty of every being to reflect that across the world so that ignorance is eliminated, he says. And that is only possible if every person reflects the light of education. Though it was pitch dark around we could smell the presence of plants as we entered his ashram. As we settled down for a cup of cow's milk, Acharya enquired about our purpose of visit and the moment we told him that we are here just to live with nature like he has been doing all these years, he was surprised. Everybody came to him asking him for advice, medications or seeking yoga but nobody came until now saying they would like to live like him. He said he was very happy to hear that and that's where we established the connection.

The next few hours we spent listening to how Acharya came to settle down at Kocherla rejecting a lucrative job prospect that came his way after retirement. He then went on speaking about how modern medicine has created more problems than it has solved and how there is a cure for everything in nature provided a person has the patience to apply it in his life. This and many other things we discussed sitting in the cow pen surrounded by 3 cows. Nandini was the mother cow and Siri and Saantha were the calves. Interestingly they named the last one Saantha as it was a very noiseless conception.



Nandini,the mother : Siri and Saantha



Cow Pen ( In the Background ) and Veeraiah (helper)

For lunch that day we were escorted to a caste fair happening in the next village. It was the day of Mahasivarathri and the “Kamma” people of the village paraded the lord in the streets of the village before bringing him back to his abode o the

outskirts of the village nestled cozily in the greenest of farms. Following that they have a “pankti bhojanam” where the all the villagers cook for themselves and that marks the end of celebration. After a good meal we headed back to the ashram. The ashram was surrounded by the Eastern Ghats on three sides and we went rock climbing in the evening. What a great feeling it is to conquer these heights. It was an exuberating feeling which overtook the exhaustion once we reached the summit. Tired from that we came back to the ashram and were fast asleep at peace with the nature around.

The next day began with the “yagam” that was performed as an everyday routine by Acharya and his family members. Acharya garu explained about the significance of performing yagam everyday and went on to say that the ingredients used to perform the yagam also help in the materialization of the clouds and rainfall. The strong scent of camphor and the sweet recital of mantras sure created a subliminal effect on our thoughts and were thoroughly refreshing. Acharya then put some of his thoughts on Arya Samaj and how it shaped his life also asking us to read some extracts from the book “ Satyarth Prakash” and explaining their meaning. It was a session of sharing knowledge for us.



One incident which stands out on the second day was when some of the villagers came to him for counsel as an elderly person expired in the house where a marriage was scheduled in the coming week. People were perplexed as the day of performing the rites coincided with the day of the marriage. Acharya explained to them the significance of death and how humans should look at it in a way that it is just a phase of existence instead of getting bogged down by unnecessary discussions about the dates and times of death. His statement that a person is to be evaluated by his deeds during his life time and not by the day of his death (He expired on Mahasivarathri and the people were of the opinion that though he was not a good man when alive, he was lucky that he died on an auspicious day and would travel directly to heaven) will continue to ring in my ears. Acharya argues “ If Mahasivarathri is going to cleanse a person of his karma, then why don’t we kill all people on the same day so that everybody goes to heaven”.

I never felt that coming back to Hyderabad, my home would be so uninteresting after a wonderful stay of just 2 days away from it. It was a very good Gyan Shodh and I recommend every person visit this place at least once for a life changing and rejuvenating experience.



Acharya showing us around



Interior of the Ashram

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14 March 2015