

[Thiruchi Swami: Spiritual Power Of Bangalore](#)

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Thiruchi Swami: Spiritual Power Of Bangalore In 1928 Adinarayananswami and his young wife Ranganayaki encountered a stranger near the Devi temple in Kanyakumari, at the southern tip of India. Divining their desire for a child, the lady said, "You are the recipients of the grace of the Divine Mother in full measure. Proceed to the shrine of Lord Subramanya in Palani. By the grace of the Divine Mother and of Lord Subramanya, a glorious son will be born to you. He will be a teacher and benefactor for all mankind."

That son, born on March 20th, 1929, was named Palaniswami. A precocious child, he embraced the religious life when yet a teenager. In his 20s he was initiated in Nepal as Jagadguru Sri Sri Sri Shivarathnapuri Bhagawath now affectionately known by his devotees as Thiruchi Swami [see sidebar p. 26]. Thirty years ago he established Kailas Ashram in Bangalore, India, and is well known throughout South India as a spiritual leader and healer. But his influence, born of rare spiritual attainment, extends wider and deeper than simple fame. Since his early days, Swamiji has worked methodically toward the revival of Hinduism in his area. He's improved the temples by raising money for construction and renovation. But more importantly, and a reflection of his far-sightedness, his ashram's patasala school has graduated a steady stream of proficient priests since its founding in 1976. Some of the patasala boys have opted to become renunciates and have joined his or another ashram after their thorough religious training at Kailas Ashram, thus greatly improving the religious teaching and leadership of the area. Prominent among these swamis is Jagadguru Sri Sri Sri Balagangadharanatha Swami of Adi Chunchanagiri Mutt in Belur [see July, 1993 issue]; Swami Sivananda Bharati, head of Siddharudanatha Math; and Kumaraswamy, head of the Thiruchi Swami Math. The ashram has spawned a number of subsidiary spiritual centers staffed by Swamiji's monks, mostly in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. The immaculately clean, well-run Kailas Ashram and exemplary Sri Rajarajeswari Temple provide a divine setting for the hundreds and sometimes thousands of devotees who weekly visit Thiruchi Swami. Swamiji speaks many languages, including Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi and Hindi. A measure of his stature is that other ashrams and temples come to him to resolve problems and disputes among themselves. The

ashram's Sri Rajarajeswari temple was completed a few years ago; it now sets a high standard for puja performance--perhaps the finest in India. Work is underway now on an exquisite Sri Chakra temple made of polished black granite. Swami also oversees the carving in Bangalore of Iraivan Temple, a large granite temple destined for Hawaii. It will be the first Agamic temple completely built of stone ever to exist outside of India. In June Hinduism Today interviewed Thiruchi Swami to explore his thinking on current Hindu issues. Hinduism Today: Temple priests are sending their children into other professions, to be doctors or engineers. Should new priests be trained from non-Brahmin castes? Sri Thiruchi Swami: The questions implies that all priests are brahmins. It is not so. Many of the temples in India have non-brahmin priests; but they have become priests. They are treated like brahmins (Guna-karma-vibhagashaha). A priest is often born one. But in the changed conditions of today, he can be made one. But one becomes a priest only after he receives initiation (diksha), learns to perform puja, such as atmartha, without which he is not qualified to do parartha puja (in a temple). He studies the Agama texts, learns Sanskrit and the Vedic mantras and serves as an apprentice under competent priests. Candidates must have devotion, faith and inclination. Caste, then, is no consideration. A formal training program has become a necessity now, because family support for the priest's career is not there, the hereditarily transmitted skills are not available. A training program is on in this ashram. HT: How should Hindus react to the conversion attempts of Christians and Muslims? Thiruchi Swami: Hinduism is a matter of belief, conviction and way of life. It is not merely a matter of birth, external indications or group participation. It is essentially individualistic; each Hindu is free to have his own religious convictions, personal deities and approach to Godhead. Hinduism is tolerant and broadbased. No other religion is an anathema to it. It is a different story when political considerations are brought in. One may be Hindu and still adore Christianity or Islam. Thus conversion is no threat. Conversions are mostly due to economic reasons and due to several kinds of incentives and inducements. More importantly, few are aware of the greatness of Hinduism and fewer are the persons who can communicate this awareness. HT: What does Swami see as the state of Hinduism in the year 2050? Thiruchi Swami: We describe Hinduism as Sanatana Dharma, which means that it is perennial and everlasting. Hinduism which was reflected in the Vedas, has passed through these ten thousand years without any damage or detriment. It is almost intact in spite of invasions, attacks, revolutions and conflicts. It will therefore survive the present crisis also and continue forever, not only for another fifty years. HT: How can Hindu ashrams better serve devotees? Thiruchi Swami: Ashrams are meant to provide spiritual food for those who are hungry for it. They can justify their existence only if the troubled people who come there go back relieved of their trouble. It is only this that will evoke and sustain faith among the people. Ashrams must be centers where divine presence is experienced by those who come there, where instructions in scriptures and sadhana are imparted and where peace and tranquility are acquired by the harassed lay folk. HT: How can we preserve the Agamas? Thiruchi Swami: Agamas being essentially practical disciplines were in the past orally communicated through generations. The modern age has made such transmission difficult. Thus the bulk of the Agamas has been forgotten. The

professional priests know only those aspects of Agama which are employed in daily worship or occasional festivals. Worship can be effective only when performed in strict accordance with Agama. Thus, it is obligatory on the ashrams to preserve Agamas and impart them to the next generations. Address: Sri Kailas Ashram, Kenchanahalli, Bangalore 560-039, India.