

## [Profiling a Hindu Poet](#)

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# Profiling a Hindu Poet

By profession, Sampath Bhoopalam is a broker. By love, he's a poet. Wielding his pen with kshatriya-like independence, he is determined to carve loose from the gigantic block of Vedic Sanskrit verse enough English translation and inspired prose to bring prayer back into English-speaking Hindu homes - especially here in America. No easy task, but preparation began a long time ago.

Born the eleventh child of twelve to an aristocratic and philanthropic family in Karnataka State, India, Sampath Bhoopalam found his guru early in life. "When I was in my teens, I happened to read an article by Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh. I was so impressed I wrote a letter to Swamiji.

Surprisingly, he replied to my letter and for some years we corresponded. He instructed me about sadhana. I took every word of his letters so seriously. I used to spend several hours a day studying religious books and practicing asanas, pranayama and meditation."

Sampath begged his parents to let him go and meet Swami Sivananda, but they refused his request, suspecting he would take sannyas and never return. "But my desire was so much to see Sivananda that he appeared in my bedroom for a few seconds a few weeks before his death. This experience changed my whole perception of life. I started seeing a world within this world that is more real than the physical world."

Sampath liked to study, so study he did - stockpiling, after 16 years of Indian and U.S. colleges and universities, a small arsenal of 6 degrees including: B.S. Agriculture, Bachelor of Law, M.S. Agriculture, Rashtra Bhasha Visharad, M.A. Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology and M.A. Food Technology.

When Sampath came to America in the 1970's pursuing post-graduate study at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, the author inside him began to stir. Despite hectic university schedules, 800 inspired poems and thousands of pages of prose bubbled forth on Taoism, Yoga, Vedanta, nature, stories, and other subjects.

When the fateful day came for Sampath to bid final farewell to the ivory towers of higher learning and to go to work (as they say), he opted for a brokerage job in Illinois. Where all those thousands of hours of study, hundreds of tiring exams, endless research papers, and amassed agronomic brain power will find final expression is unclear. A sharper vision for Sampath is writing poetry and helping fellow Hindus in America.

In 1986, a trustee from the Sri Venkateshwara Temple of Greater Chicago approached him requesting he compose a prayer in English for the temple opening. "That same night I had a dream of Lord Venkateshwara, and a poem prayer stood in front of my eyes when I was still in bed with my eyes closed. I just jumped out of the bed and wrote the words of the poem, which were still visible."

Soon afterward, he and a friend founded Himalaya Enterprises, Inc. to channel his own writings and other Hindu material into print. The first book off the press was Sampath's *The Holy Book of Neo-Vedic Prayers* in English.

Trustees from the Chicago Temple recently tried to get him to tackle the complex problem of religious apathy amongst their American-born youth. Unfortunately, he declined. "I had to take a rain check because I was busy with writing," he told *Hinduism Today*.

Though middle-aged, he has the healthy spunk of a college athlete and clearly some of the glacial wisdom of the Himalayan rishis. Offering non-textbook insight into our contemporary Hindu society, he shares, "Belief-oriented religion is not good. Moreover, too much belief causes mental indigestion. One must understand religion. One practices what one understands. [When] understanding soaks your entire personality, that is when you become a real Hindu."