

[The Synthesized Yoga of Bhajan](#)

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Music Healing with Swami Ganapathy Sachchidananda

To his followers - and pamphlet biographer - Swami Ganapathy Sachchidananda is an awesome avadhut: the highest caliber of liberated soul. For many years as a youth he pounded the roads around Mysore, India with the avadhut's wood staff, and gained a reputation for spiritual fire and song. Like many a saint, he worked a while in the world - as a post man, delivering messages. He quips to HINDUISM TODAY he is still delivering messages.

He has blended a unique amalgam of hatha yoga, kriya yoga and super bhajan into a world mission.

His bhajan music, powered by his bass voice and personal keyboarding on a piano synthesizer, is a kind of Hindu revival soul music. And thousands of devotees attest that this music from this smiling swami can repair bodily or mind ills. Ramana Kumar, a member of the swami's Celestial Message Troupe told

HINDUISM TODAY. "It is nothing but blessings to play with Swamiji, and the music concert is a very high standard. It has a multi-purpose effect on the devotees - heal them spiritually, uplift them and also physical ailments are cured." Later the swami tells us in an interview that he played a harmonium until a little Indian girl brought him a small Casio keyboard "that made funny sounds, but good sounds." Later a German man "who went crazy with my music, praising me, scolding me during the concert" was evidently cured of some mental instability and his friend gave Swamiji a professional synthesizer. The first chords he played must have put a cosmic smile on his face. And he did tell us he likes to use the digital samplers once in a while.

The large, cozy prayer hall is filling with people at Swami Ganapathy Sachchidananda's ashram at the nub of Chamundi Hill outside Mysore, India. Perched on the hill is the Devi Chamundi temple, visible from the ashram. Entering the ashram gate, one travels down a roadway surrounded by fields of vegetables and grains. Swami provides free food at the ashram from 40 acres of organically grown vegetables and rice. Through the main gate lies the prayer hall with a crowd capacity of several thousand. In one of the upper rooms is housed a mineral museum, gifts of gems, stones and other mineral artifacts given to the swami or those he picked up on his world tours. The swami is particularly proud of this exhibit. On the grounds there is a post office - his audio cassettes are very popular - and a publishing house called Bhakti Mala. There is an ayurvedic and allopathic clinic and a year-old herb garden laden with 200 species of ayurvedic remedies. Dormitories form the rest of the institution.

Swamiji, dressed in several tones of peach orange, is explaining about his connection with Lord Dattatreya. But he is also a deep devotee of the Mother. He considers his own mother as his guru, a psychic nurturing that he can't really intellectually explain - she died when he was nine years old. The first temple in his former ashram - outgrown by swelling crowds and greater service projects - was to Saraswati. The temple here is to Dattatreya, but it is the Navaratri festival that HINDUISM TODAY witnessed as guests of the swami. It is the highlight of the ashram for the 1991 season. The swami has been traveling abroad extensively, and is now home until July 1992.

Each of the eleven days of Navaratri the swami is engrossed in two four-hour long pujas, it is very intricately choreographed. On the stage is a fire pit for the homa. Next to it is a very old Siva Lingam that swami states is from the Dwapara Yuga (the yuga preceding the present Kali Yuga). Only the swami does this puja, while his monks assist, though on normal days the monks perform the daily rites. We are informed these monks are trained since childhood. During the puja each day superb musicians play, and later the swami and his Celestial Message Troupe turn the hall into an echoing mandapam with fantastic responsive bhajan.

Ramana Kumar is the swami's tabla player of fifteen years. "He asked me if I would play with him always and I told him I would be very happy to." He tells us that the swami does rehearse with his group when guest musicians are brought in, which is quite frequent. And that the swami feels out the audience to see who is ill. "Swamiji would go to them seat by seat, covering the whole auditorium in one round."

A retired high school master who taught the swami as a student and is now the swami's disciple says the young yogi wasn't very studious and came late to school. But if he was requested for spiritual satsang he was a magical person. "He dressed in saffron, sang and gave discourses on Ganapathy. Ganesha was his favorite God." The swami's name was Satyanarayana then.

Radha Krishnan came to the swami at the age of 10 and is now 39. He resigned his previous job as a lawyer and serves as the ashram's administrative secretary. He told the story of when he met the young swami. He "hit the ground with his staff and behold there was half a kilo of cashews materialized on the road, and grapes." The swami told Krishnan to grab it, keep it.

The stories of miracles swirl around the swami, but it his corona of love, of service that he tells devotees to grab, to keep.

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