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## Reminiscences of K. Krishnamurthy (Kittu)

*Recorded by Mangalam Kalyanaraman and translated by Suresh Natarajan*

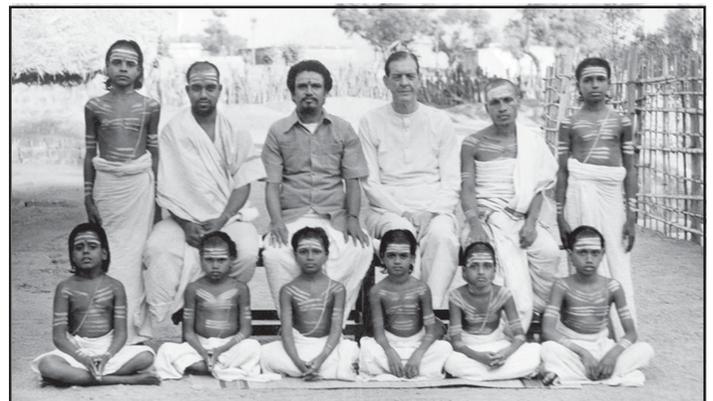
*Kittu joined the Veda Patasala at Ramanasramam in 1938 at the age of 11. He completed his studies and stayed on in the Ashram after Bhagavan's mahasamadhi to serve as the chief priest for 45 years. He endeared himself to all and diligently devoted his life to the worship at the shrines of the Ashram until his very last day on October 8<sup>th</sup>, 1995.*

**W**E always saw Bhagavan as divinity manifested (Bhagawat Swaroopam) and therefore we had fear inside while approaching him. But he always behaved very naturally with us.

Major Chadwick was always fond of us boys in the Veda Patasala and once during Deepawali festival he got six blankets in six different colors for each of us. Each one of us felt the color we picked was not as good as what the others had! Then we were told to take it to Bhagavan to get his blessings. We went one by one to Bhagavan with our new blankets and he looked at each of our blankets and said "Ah red color! Looks very good!" "Ah green color! Looks very good!" and so on. So each of us came back fully satisfied that our blanket color was the best!

Chinna Swami's administration of the Ashram was very strict towards the Veda Patasala. We were not allowed to go out, not even to go home for festivals like Deepawali, etc. The rules and regulations were enforced and entertainment like the cinema was out of the question. But we were boys and once in a while we would sneak off to go to a good movie running in town! So unbeknownst to Chinna Swami, after 9 p.m. when the Ashram gates were closed, we would avoid the front gate and jump out of the Ashram on the backside near the goshala (cow shed). We quietly walked by the Pandava Tirtham and a cremation ground in

the dark. Any fear in the night was overcome by our intense desire to go watch the movie. We'd then come back only by 2 a.m. and silently enter the Ashram again through the goshala side. Sometimes Bhagavan would come to the goshala side around 2 a.m. to answer nature's call. Seeing him, we'd be filled with fear that Bhagavan would see us coming back from the cinemas and try to hide ourselves. When he did he would simply nod his head, smile at us and go on his way. The next morning we would be unable to get up at 5 a.m. to recite Veda parayanam. Even when some devotees came and tried to wake us up, we couldn't get up and missed the chanting! This news would soon reach Chinna Swami and he would come to us to



Seated second from left, Kittu, then T. N. Venkataraman and Major Chadwick

demand to know why we missed the parayanam. We just sat there quietly, not opening our mouths! Some people would bring up the issue in front of Bhagavan and wonder why parayanam didn't happen. He would just smile and say, "Hmm... looks like the boys overslept," never letting on that he had seen us coming back at 2 a.m. Thus he was so kind and understanding toward our childish transgressions!

Talking of cinemas, once in order to make Bhagavan Himself see some devotional movies, Framji Dorabji got a projector from Madras and played movies such as Bhakta Meera, Karna (in Hindi), Tukaram etc. We also sat next to Bhagavan and enjoyed watching those movies. There is a particular sequence in a movie that I remember where the bad guy was played by a comedian Kali N. Ratnam who gets roughed up, beaten and his tuft of hair plucked away. He then sings hilariously:

*Arai Keera Tailam pottu arumaiyaa valarttha en kudumiya, mulai Keera pudungura maadhiri pudungittu pootaane.*

"The tuft of hair that I grew so lovingly with all kinds of herbal oils has been plucked away like one would pluck spinach leaves from the garden!"

Bhagavan was Himself laughing so hard at this along with us! This is a wonderful fun memory that I still cherish.

Bhagavan was served food by Sama Thatha and before that, Ranga Rao and Ramamurty. After I had become somewhat old and experienced, I got the good fortune of serving Bhagavan. Normally everybody has to be fed first and then Bhagavan fed last. And Bhagavan must be fed only as much or as little as others. If he finds out that we have served him more than others, he'd give us a look that would terrify us. Even if we were very careful,

occasionally we'd slip up and make a mistake. He'd then say, "Oho, did you serve me like you did the others?" in a stern voice. One day I was serving lemon pickle for everyone, only serving one or two pieces on each plate. As I got close to Bhagavan, I heard Chinna Swami yell from inside the kitchen, "Bhagavan likes lemon pickle a lot, serve him an extra piece." Even though I knew I was not supposed to, emboldened by the voice of Chinna Swami, I served three pieces, instead of two, to Bhagavan. As soon as I served it, he gave me a stern look. I had no courage to face that look, so I just went back hurriedly. He said, "Oho, you have become a big man!" As I had never heard Bhagavan talk to me in such a manner before, I started crying. And I didn't feel like eating either. Bhagavan washed his hands and walked towards the goshala. I went behind him and without realizing, started sobbing uncontrollably. He asked me, "What happened?" I said, "By mistake I served more without knowing. Please forgive me." He said, "Hmm hmm...seri po (it's ok). Why cry for this?" Only then I felt some peace and courage. From then I knew that I should stop when he said enough and serve little when he said little. Because if I served more out of my desire to serve Bhagavan, I knew I'd be punished for that. I always cherished the great fortune of serving Bhagavan.

Once Bhagavan went for his usual walk to the mountain and without telling anyone he decided to walk up to Skandasramam. Since he didn't come back for a while and no one knew where he had gone, everyone started to get worried. Chinna Swami especially was very concerned and asked everyone to search for Bhagavan. Then news came that he had gone up to Skandasramam, so we took some food preparations and went up to

## Advent at Arunachala

**Y**OU, your family and friends are cordially invited to join us in celebrating the 123<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of Sri Ramana Maharshi's Advent at Arunachala. The program will include parayanams, bhajans, talks, followed by prasad (lunch).

**In Nova Scotia, Canada**

**Sunday 1 Sep. – 11:00 AM**

Arunachala Ashrama

1451 Clarence Road, Bridgetown,

Nova Scotia B0S 1C0 / Tel: 902-665-2090

**In California, San Francisco Bay Area**

**Saturday 7 Sep. – 11:00 AM**

40086 Paseo Padre Pkwy

Fremont, CA 94538

Tel: 510-656-2752

**In Queens, New York City**

**Saturday 7 Sep. – 11:00 AM**

Arunachala Ashrama

86-06 Edgerton Blvd., Jamaica Estates,

New York 11432 / Tel: 718-560-3196

Skandasramam. We all then had a good time up there eating with Bhagavan and then came back.

Later, as Bhagavan's health deteriorated, I had to take his food - porridge, rice or juice - to wherever he was. One day he couldn't even eat rice. He asked me if I had brought rasam and if I also had buttermilk. I said, "Yes." He took both, thoroughly mixed them and drank it. I asked Bhagavan why he was taking only this to eat. And he said, "Do you know how good this is? Try it!" and he gave me some and asked me how it was. I said it tasted very nice. He said, "See? This is enough!"

Once Mouna Swami wanted Bhagavan to have some pomegranate juice as he thought that it would be beneficial for his health. He wanted Bhagavan to drink it unmixed with water, which is the usual practice. So, omitting the water he prepared a glass full of thick juice made with a lot of pomegranates. He then gave it to me to serve Bhagavan. Normally when such juices were prepared, I was encouraged to serve a whole glass to Bhagavan without any fear! But when I would take it to Bhagavan, he would either not take it at all or take only a little, never beyond a certain limit. So when I went this time with the thick pomegranate juice, he asked me what it was. When I told him, he said, "You have brought me a large amount, haven't you? Take it back". Then I pleaded with him to take at least some. He graciously relented and asked me to get an empty glass, poured a quarter of the glass with the juice and asked me to fill the remaining three quarters of the glass with water. He stirred it thoroughly and then he drank it. He then said, "It's not good to drink more than this," and sent me back. They asked me why I didn't serve Bhagavan all the juice. After hearing my explanation, they reluctantly accepted my position as none dared to go near Bhagavan to serve him more! By Bhagavan's Grace, I got used to approaching Bhagavan with food and serving him to the extent possible and developed the courage to face his remonstrances. And I was able to do so till the very end.

Once on Vaikuntha Ekadasi day, his health was not good and he was lying down in the Nirvana room. I took a light meal of juice, etc. for him in the morning. Krishnaswami Mudaliar and his wife came there at that time. They were at the entrance waiting to come inside when somebody told them that they could enter. Bhagavan noticed the commotion and asked what was going on. I found out that they wanted to give tirtham (holy water) for Vaikuntha Ekadasi to Bhagavan and so told that to Bhagavan. He jokingly said,

"Oho, they want to give moksha (liberation) to Bhagavan on Vaikuntha Ekadasi day by giving tirtham! You go and get that water and come." And he asked me to put that holy water directly into his mouth. Another day, similarly, he couldn't lift the juice himself, so he asked me to serve it directly into his mouth. So in this way I served him little by little, as much as he could handle.

When Bhagavan was well enough to eat in the dining hall he normally used to take his banana leaf plate away himself after eating. But once his health declined, the management thought Bhagavan should just leave his leaf plate instead of bothering to take it out with him. But they couldn't decide who should go tell this to Bhagavan. Everybody was afraid of approaching Bhagavan to make such a request as they knew he did not like any preferential treatment. At that time, Princess Prabhavati was visiting the Ashram and she offered to approach Bhagavan to make this request. Being of the royal family, she felt bold enough to approach Bhagavan with this request and thought he would accede to it. As soon as he finished eating, she approached Bhagavan and told him, "Please don't take the leaf plate yourself. We will clean it up after you get up." We all expected that he would say yes as she was royalty. Bhagavan instead looked straight at her and asked, "Who will take my leaf plate then?" She replied, "I will." Then he asked, "What about others' leaf plates then?" She boldly replied that she'd take away everyone else's leaf plates too. So she cleaned up the leaf plates of everyone that day. And from that day onward, Bhagavan did not take his leaf plate after eating. Also the leaf plate that Bhagavan ate from was considered holy and devotees vied to have the opportunity to eat their meal on it. So from then on there would be intense competition to eat from his used leaf plate! Chinna Swami would eat off that plate on some days and others on other days. Even I got the fortune of eating from that plate. [Bhagavan put a stop to this when it came to his attention.]

Once Mr. Bose and his daughter came to the Ashram. He wanted to film the Veda parayanam so they brought the movie camera where we were reciting. We kept looking at the camera and they said, "Don't look at the camera; look at Bhagavan." Bhagavan also said "Don't keep looking at the camera as they are shooting. You look here as you always do and continue with the parayanam." Then they got snacks and savories for us to eat. Again they were shooting as we were eating, so we kept looking at

the camera. And again Bhagavan said, laughingly, "Don't keep looking at the camera. Eat as you normally would."

Overall I had the good fortune of being with Bhagavan from a very young age, that is from 1938-50. During all those years, Bhagavan was attentive in witnessing all the pujas performed in the Ashram. Chinna Swami was keen about doing all the pujas properly. Right from Bhagavan's time he would have the food bell ring only after the pujas ended. Similarly, when we made nice decorations for the nine-day festival of Navaratri, we would be happy when Bhagavan came to see them. Earlier, drawing master Narayanaswami was doing the decorations. Then the tradition became that we boys would do it. When we finished all the work we would wait for Bhagavan to come and see it. When he was on his way to the goshala, we would humbly approach him. He'd ask what was the matter. We would say that the decorations had been completed. He'd endearingly then say, "So I have to come and see them? Okay!" Then he would kindly come and see all the decorations.

Similarly, after every puja and deepa aradhana, the plate with the vibhuti and kumkum and karpura aarti would be taken to Bhagavan's sannidhi and he would accept the prasada first. Even if the puja got delayed a few minutes, he'd wait patiently and accept the prasada.

Bhagavan was particularly fond of us boys of the Veda Patasala. He would graciously move with us as if he were one of us. This gave us immense pleasure and confidence.

Everyone else in the Ashram was very strict with us. Doraiswamy Iyer would always yell at us. We were all terrified of Chinna Swami. But in spite of all that, due to Bhagavan's benevolence, we were all so happy. Thus we had a very blissful time serving Bhagavan and being in his presence all those years.

Later, after Bhagavan's Mahanirvana, I was able to do some service to Chinna Swami. He usually liked a little extra salt with his meals and he had much faith in me. So whenever I told him that the food was salted just as he liked it, he trusted me. He said I was always correct. He started calling me endearingly as "Kittappa" which is a name that stuck to me back then. I was able to serve him till his end in 1953, and now I have the blessings of taking care of his samadhi shrine too.

Then his son T. N. Venkataraman became the President and is called "Anna" (elder brother) by everyone. He was known as Venkitoo Anna by all and we also called him the same way. Back then his room was in the patasala itself. Thus we all had a very good association with Venkitoo Anna as well.



Kittu standing on right, as seen in the Bose film

## Sri Ramana Jayanti Retreat in Tampa

Sunday Afternoon, December 29th – Wednesday Noon, January 1st

THIS year's retreat will again have periods of meditation, chanting, readings, presentations, satsang and quiet time for reflection and relaxation, and will again take place at the Franciscan Center in Tampa, Florida. Additional programs will be held at the new Old Hall and the Hindu Temple, both located on Lynn Road in Tampa. A program to engage the children in spiritually-oriented activities is also scheduled. Participants are requested to arrive Sunday afternoon by 3 P.M. to attend the special Arunachala-Ramana puja at the Hindu Temple together with a program in the new Old Hall.

For more information and a registration form, please write or call Diana at:

**[dbatistajimenez@gmail.com](mailto:dbatistajimenez@gmail.com) / (561) 768-8968**

The Franciscan Center's accommodation capacity is limited to 65 guests. The final registration date is November 30th. Details related to the cost for lodging and food will be provided along with the registration form.

**The retreat will be held at:**

The Franciscan Center, 3010 N. Perry Avenue, Tampa, Florida 33603

Website: <http://www.franciscancentertampa.org/>



Old Hall replica, Tampa

## Sri Krishnaprem's Visit to Sri Ramana Maharshi, Part III

### by S. Chakravarti

*In this installment we follow Sri Krishnaprem after he leaves Sri Ramanasramam to continue on a South India tour in 1948. Devotees from the Ashram assisted him on this trip and Sri Ramana Maharshi was interested to know about all the events that followed.*

WHEN it was more or less settled that I was to accompany Gopalda (Sri Krishnaprem) on his southern trip, I was naturally elated at my rare good luck. But the other side of my mind was sunk in deep anxiety. While my heart was filled with unalloyed joy at the opportunity of being of some service to Gopalda, in the sense that I would be allowed to bear the expenses of this trip, my heart was also profoundly agitated over my lack of funds to accomplish this. I was so restless that I could not meditate. In truth, I could not sit quietly. At this crucial point, a sort of miracle occurred. My Gujarati friend, Jivarajani, who had been doing sadhana at Sri Ramanasramam for some years, noticed how upset I was and came to my succor. In reply to his enquiry I told him my predicament: I had insufficient hard cash with me, and although a monthly instalment came by Money Order from Calcutta, there was no time to get more. Jivarajani said he would lend the required amount, though, even he did not have enough in hand. He would have to get it from the bank and would send it to me through Balarama Reddy who was to meet us later at the Villupuram station. What a relief it was; I could breathe again.

We eventually left for the station, with Gopalda telling me that he would travel third class and that, in order to avoid his being pestered by curious members of the public, I should keep the windows closed on his side of the compartment when the train was to stop for any length of time at a station, and also to keep the door of any waiting room closed if we had to wait at a junction.

When we arrived at Pondicherry, Mantu Mama (Dilip Roy) joyfully received us at the station. Gopalda and Dilip were cracking jokes, and all appeared to be well. But when we reached Dilip's flat, we had to face one shock after another. Before allowing us to settle down, Dilip insisted on finding out what Gopalda thought of the Maharshi, and he started by saying that the Maharshi was regarded as a fully realized Mahatma of the jnana marga, namely, the path of knowledge. But Gopalda stopped him

short and said, "Dilip, I don't know how you found the Maharshi, but let me tell you that I found him nothing but Love with a capital L." Dilip looked very small and stammered out, "Well, Krishna Prem, if you say so I must accept it." Then he pointed at me and said, "My nephew also said that, but I couldn't believe it."

The second blow came when Dilip was taking us round his enormous flat, built in the days of the French Raj, and was telling us what arrangements he had made for us. When he came to the bathroom and toilet, Gopalda remarked, "Sorry, but I just can't possibly use...." The water pipe for the bathroom first passed through the toilet with its commodes. So Gopalda would not use that water for bathing, much less for puja. Nor would he use the toilet. That was that! [Krishnaprem practiced orthodox Vaishnava traditions.]

Dilip's face fell, and he said, "I made all these arrangements especially for you." Gopalda again expressed his regrets but stuck to his guns. Now what? "Surely," said Gopalda, "you have ordinary service latrines for the servants?" So there were, but Dilip pointed out that they were at a long distance, right at the end of the compound. That was all right for Gopalda, and for the two or three days that we stayed with Dilip, Gopalda used those latrines. For his bath, there was a Municipal water tap on the road in front of the house, and Gopalda used that public tap for bathing and for puja.

Dilip had arranged for Gopalda to have a special darshan of the Mother. After offering his pranams, Gopalda asked her to bless him so that he could surrender to Sri Krishna. The Mother looked at him for a few seconds and then said, "But you *have* surrendered to Sri Krishna." "Not enough," replied Gopalda.

When Dilip took us over to the ashram he pointed out a building under construction which, when completed, would, if my memory serves me, house classes on comparative religion and sadhana. Dilip repeatedly asked Gopalda for his views, but Gopalda held his peace.

Eventually he replied, “Well, Dilip, I see no connection between comparative religion and sadhana.” Dilip did not expect such a rejoinder and said sorrowfully, “Krishna Prem how could you say such a thing?” Gopalda replied, “Since you pressed me for my opinion, I told you what it is.”

Dilip had arranged a large gathering where Gopalda would first speak and then entertain with Bengali kirtan songs. This would be held in Dilip’s old-fashioned, spacious flat whose carpeted hall could easily hold one hundred people. That evening, not only the hall, but also the upper landing and even the stairs were packed with people. Gopalda spoke just a few words saying that he knew nothing more than what the *Bhagavad Gita* says in Chapter 9, verse 34:

Fix your mind on Me; give yourself in love to Me;  
sacrifice to Me; prostrate yourself before Me; having  
thus united your whole self (to Me), with Me as your  
Goal, to Me shall you come.

Whenever Gopalda was called upon to speak, he usually quoted the first line of this verse. On this occasion, when Gopalda had finished speaking, Dilip started to sing. Even an unmusical person like me could sense that this was not the same Dilip who would himself weep and make others weep by his singing of devotional songs. I had had a similar reaction in the recent past when Dilip sang in Calcutta, but I was not prepared for what happened next. Dilip suddenly stopped singing and looked at Gopalda. But Gopalda bent his head and remained silent, and Dilip got up and left the hall. Everyone was stunned. Gopalda looked at me but said nothing.

After a few minutes Ranidi announced that Dilip asked to be forgiven. He was not well and there would be no more songs. (Ranidi was a distant relation of ours, wife of Sisir Maitra, Professor of Philosophy at Banaras Hindu University. She was a disciple of Sri Aurobindo and had renounced the world.) She then requested Gopalda to come with her as Dilip wanted to speak with him.

Gopalda returned after an hour or so and told me that Dilip was upset and crying because he said he no longer felt bhakti in himself when he sang. Gopalda had told him that this was not surprising because Dilip for a long time had been more interested in translating and singing songs in foreign languages than in his old way of singing devotional

songs from his heart. Dilip retorted that Sri Aurobindo himself appreciated Dilip’s new mode of singing and encouraged it. In that case, said Gopalda, he should continue to follow his Guru’s instructions in this as in all matters and should not ask for Gopalda’s advice.

During Gopalda’s stay at Dilip’s place, he never really had any time of his own. In the daytime there would always be lots of visitors and after dinner Dilip would corner him and would go on talking with him till the small hours of the morning. I tried to keep awake and to digest the topics of their conversation, but soon I would be snoring.

I shall now narrate another incident which played a very important part in Gopalda’s trip. A certain Gujarati young man, Asher Bhai, whom I had seen at Ramanashram, accosted me and implored me to arrange a private meeting with Gopalda. I explained why I could not help him, but he kept on coming and pleading. He said it was of the utmost importance that he should be allowed to convey to Gopalda a message or ‘direction’ he had received from a Mahatma. He also promised not to take up more than five minutes of Gopalda’s time.

I asked him to wait as Gopalda was busy with some visitors and then took the first opportunity to apprise Gopalda of this curious request, and I asked him to see Asher Bhai for just a minute or two. I brought him in, and he fell at Gopalda’s feet. He said he had come for Sri Aurobindo’s darshan and was sleeping on the verandah of an acquaintance’s house. The night before, an unknown Mahatma appeared in his dreams and pressed upon him the importance of serving the European Mahatma at present visiting the ashram, and that he would thereby earn great merit. Gopalda replied that he did not see how he could help because he was not in need of any assistance from anyone, but he offered him his blessings. Asher Bhai was adamant and asked Gopalda for permission to accompany us on our trip south so that he could serve Gopalda. He hurried to say that he would meet all his own expenses and that he would not impose himself in any way. Gopalda then said he could accompany us if he so wished, and Asher Bhai said he would keep contact with me to ascertain our program. Gopalda was puzzled but attached no great importance to all this.

Now we come to the great day....

(To be continued)

## Letters and Comments

*If you don't mind, could I ask a question? I have heard from a lot of seekers that there is a need for a physical guru. With Ramana's followers I don't see that as a requirement but am confused as to how that could be. Could you please explain? —Seeker from Arizona*

This a common question for seekers who are attracted by the simplicity and directness of the Maharshi's teachings, decide to practice them yet feel the need for a physical guru to guide them. When seekers ask: "Since the Maharshi has attained mahasamadhi, merged forever in the eternal Brahman, how can he help us now?" We often point out that in this country pious religious folk worship and look upon their guru or god one who had lived over 2000 years ago as the Christ.

Similarly, those who practice his teachings and look upon Bhagavan Ramana as their guru receive confirmation from him in the same manner he gave to his disciples when he occupied a physical form. It soon becomes evident that it is not we who have chosen him as our guru, it is he who has chosen us. So, how do we know that he has chosen us?

A devotee will know. It may be by simply looking at his photo and into his eyes; or he or she may pray to him and feel a definite response which defies anything like coincidence; one may receive confirmation in dream or divine vision. One may be meditating on him or his teachings, in his Ashram or in one's home, and all of a sudden feel lifted into a divine realm of peace and happiness. There are so many ways in which one knows. But when it does happen, there will be no doubt.

— Editor

## Ramana Satsangs in the USA and Canada

Regular satsangs with recitations, songs, readings and meditation are conducted in or near large cities. Some of them are weekly. If you would like to attend any of these, please contact the individuals below for more information.

**AL, Birmingham** — Sai Kand (205-441-6859 / kandsai@yahoo.com)

**CA, Los Angeles** — Natarajan & Indira Venkatesan (310-473-9441 / nvenky30@yahoo.com)

**CA, San Diego** — Manna Semby (646-342-4585 / mannamoksha@gmail.com)

**CA, San Francisco Area** — Karthik & Sunita (510-656-2752 / sunita\_parasuraman@yahoo.com)

**Canada, Ottawa** — Anantha Padmanabhan (613-733-8250 / madhupaddy@rogers.com)

**Canada, Toronto** — Thiru (416-876-1942 / thirusivasamy@hotmail.com)

**Canada, Vancouver** — Akash (778-321-4499 / eternalshiva@hotmail.com)

**Canada, Victoria** — Saibish (250-818-2875 / saibish@gmail.com)

**CT, Hartford Area** — Aruna & Ram (860-284-0078 / rsankaran2000@yahoo.com)

**FL, Ft. Lauderdale** — David & Janet Rubinson (954-600-1967 / arunahill@gmail.com)

**FL, Palm Coast** — Shriram & Rekha (904-347-3434 / ssmarathemd@gmail.com)

**FL, Tampa** — Rohit (813-766-0145 / rohitvaidya@yahoo.com)

**FL, West Palm Beach** — Diana (561-768-8968 / dbatistajimenez@gmail.com)

**GA, Atlanta Area** — Mangalam Kalyanam (678-546-0378 / smoothcutter@hotmail.com)

**IL, Chicago Area** — Jean-Luc & Rita (719-480-3530 / blueskyvalley@mac.com)

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