

Saranagathi

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Dear Devotees,

Karthigai Deepam, the festival of lights was celebrated on 21st November 2010. Ashramites and other devotees assembled in front of Sri Bhagavan's Samadhi to witness the lighting of the Holy Beacon on top of Arunachala at 6 p.m. Simultaneously a large lamp was lit in the Ashram along with the chanting of Sri Bhagavan's Arunachala Akshara Manamalai. Please visit <http://www.sriramanamaharshi.org/karthigai festival2010.html> to view photographs and video footage of the event.

In this issue of Saranagathi we continue with the life story of Mother Azhagammal as part of our series on inspiring women devotees of Sri Bhagavan. This is followed by Reports from Sri Ramanasramam.

Please send your emails to

saranagathi@sriramanamaharshi.org

In Sri Bhagavan

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The Essence Of Instruction

All ego gone,
Living as That alone
Is penance good for growth,
Sings Ramana, the Self.

- Upadesa Saram by Sri Bhagavan (Verse 30)





Mother Azhagammal

(...Continued from last issue)



Sri Bhagavan's classmate Sab Jan later recalled, "Some Saturdays and Sundays he would go to Tiruchuzhi to be with his mother and kith and kin. I would also go there to see him. Mother Azhagammal would immediately, with all affection, tell Venkataraman of my arrival saying, 'Your dear Muslim friend has come.' She had a wonderful face beaming with nobility. Every time she gave me a very good reception and used to give me whatever eatables were prepared at home. If by chance I did not turn up for one weekend, she used to enquire about my absence and give Venkataraman the eatables saying: 'Give these to your Muslim friend'. I could never forget the maternal love of Azhagammal and her kindness to me, even though I was a Muslim."

"Suddenly Venkataraman disappeared and it was a shock to me that he did not even tell me about his running away from his home. His disappearance made his mother terribly sorrow-stricken."

When the sixteen year old Venkataraman left his uncle's house in Madurai in 1896 and his whereabouts were unknown the entire family was shaken. To Azhagammal especially it was a bolt from

the blue. The family tried its best to get a clue by enquiring of friends, neighbours and others.

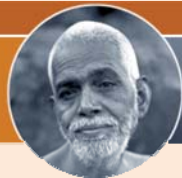
In May 1898, Sri Bhagavan's uncle Nelliappa Iyer reached Tiruvannamalai to investigate rumours that Venkataraman was a revered Swami now. Finding his way to the Mango orchard where Sri Bhagavan was staying at that time, he was unsuccessful in persuading Venkataraman to return home.

When Azhagammal learnt of this she decided she would herself go and bring back her beloved son. She told her first son Nagaswami to obtain leave for a week; but as that was not easy to get she waited for the Christmas holidays and then started for Tiruvannamalai in his company. When they reached the place and learnt that the Swami was at Pavazhakkunru, they climbed up and saw him lying on a rock. Azhagammal recognised her Venkataraman with true maternal instinct, despite his matted hair, dirt-laden body, overgrown nails and dirty loincloth. She bemoaned his condition, and requested him to go back; but the lad sat unmoved.

Azhagammal and Nagaswami day after day visited the boy, bringing him sweetmeats and their repeated entreaties to go back, but they were of no avail. One day, however, she used her sharpest weapon of attack. As she reproached Venkataraman for his indifference she suddenly burst into tears. The young Swami could bear it no longer; he got up at once and went away. Again on another day she sought him and pleaded hard. As the Swami sat still and stone-like, she approached the people who were there, mentioned her relationship, poured her tale of woe into their ears, and requested them to persuade the Swami to return home with her. Then one among them, Pachaiyappa Pillai, said to the Swami: "Your mother is weeping and praying. Why do you not answer her? Whether it is 'yes' or 'no,' why not give her a reply? Swami need not break his vow of silence. Here are pencil and paper. Swami may at least write out what he has to say."

Thus persuaded, the Swami took up the paper and pencil and wrote as follows in Tamil:





“The Ordainer controls the fate of souls in accordance with their past deeds, their prarabdha karma. Whatever is destined not to happen will not happen, try how hard you may. Whatever is destined to happen will happen, do what you may to stop it. This is certain. The best course, therefore, is for one to be silent (resigned).”

Whether this bit of her son’s philosophy was sound or unsound, convincing or unconvincing, she had no option but to go away. The holidays were over, and Nagaswami had to go back to his office. “Is it for this,” sighed she, “that we came?” so with her first son she came down the Hill and left for Manamadurai with a heavy heart.

Shortly after Sri Bhagavan’s mother returned from her unsuccessful attempt to win him back to her in 1900, she lost her eldest son. Two years later the youngest son, Nagasundaram, still only a lad of seventeen, went to Tiruvannamalai for the first time to see his Swami brother. So overcome was he that he embraced him and wept aloud. Sri Bhagavan sat silent, unmoved. The mother came once for a brief visit on her return from a pilgrimage to Benares. In 1914 she went on a pilgrimage to Venkataramanaswami Shrine at Tirupati and again stayed at Tiruvannamalai on her way back. This time she fell ill there and suffered severely for several weeks with symptoms of typhoid. Sri Bhagavan tended her with great solicitude. The verses he composed during her sickness are the only instance known of any prayer of his to influence the course of events.

1. *Oh Lord! Hill of my refuge, who curest the ills of recurrent births, it is for Thee to cure my mother’s fever.*

2. *Oh God who slayest death! Reveal Thy feet in the Heart-Lotus of her who bore me to take refuge at Thy Lotus-Feet, and shield her from death. What is death if scrutinised?*

3. *Arunachala, Thou blazing fire of Knowledge! Enfold my mother in Thy Light and make her one with Thee. What need then for cremation?*

4. *Arunachala, Dispeller of illusion! Why dost Thou delay to dispel my mother’s delirium? Is there any but Thee to watch as a Mother over one who has sought refuge in Thee and to rescue from the tyranny of karma?*

Ostensibly a prayer for the mother to be saved from her fever, this was in reality a prayer to save her also from the vaster fever of illusion and gather her back into Oneness with the Self in Liberation from the delirium of life.

Needless to say, Azhagammal recovered. She returned to Manamadurai, but after this prayer circumstances conspired to draw her back from the life of the world to that of the Ashram.

The family house at Tiruchuzhi had been sold to meet debts and pay necessary expenses. Her brother-in-law, Nelliappa Iyer, had died, leaving the family in none too easy circumstances. In 1915 the wife of her youngest son, Nagasundaram, died, leaving a young son who was adopted by his aunt Alamelu, now married. Azhagammal began to feel that the only place left for her in her old age was with her Swami son. Early in 1916 she went to Tiruvannamalai.

At first she stayed for a few days with Echammal. Some of the devotees were against her staying with Sri Bhagavan, fearing that he might leave his abode in silent protest, as he had left home in 1896. However, there was a great difference, for now it was she who had renounced home, not he who was detained there. The majesty of Sri Bhagavan was so awe-inspiring that, despite his gracious manner, when a question like this arose as to what he would wish none presumed to





ask him directly. Even if any did he might sit unmoved, not replying, for he had no wishes. The wish for the mother's recovery expressed in his verses is something quite exceptional.

Soon after his mother came to stay with him, Sri Bhagavan moved from Virupaksha to Skandashram, a little higher up the hill and directly above Virupaksha. This is a much more spacious

cave and was constructed for him to occupy. Finding a damp patch of rock there he rightly guessed that there must be a concealed spring. This was released by digging and yielded a perennial flow of water, enough for all Ashram needs, even for a small garden that was made in front of the Cave. The mother began to prepare meals, and so began a new epoch in Ashram life.

(To be continued)

Maharshi's Gospel: The Teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi

Guru and His Grace

D: How can the silence of the Guru, who gives no initiation nor does any other tangible act, be more powerful than His word etc.? How is such silence better than the study of scriptures?

M: Silence is the most potent form of work. However vast and emphatic the scriptures may be, they fail in their effect. The Guru is quiet and Grace prevails in all. This silence is more vast and more emphatic than all scriptures put together.

D: But can the devotee obtain happiness?

M: The devotee surrenders himself to the Master and it means that there is no vestige of individuality retained by him. If the surrender is complete, all sense of self is lost, then there can be no misery or sorrow.

The eternal Being is nothing by happiness. That comes as a revelation.

D: How can I obtain Grace?

M: Grace is the Self. That also is not to be acquired; you only need to know that it exists.

The sun is brightness only. It does not see darkness. Yet you speak of darkness fleeing on the sun's approach. So also the devotee's ignorance, like the phantom of darkness, vanishes at the look of the Guru. You are surrounded by sunlight; yet if you want to see the sun, you must turn in its direction and look at it. So also Grace is found by the proper approach you make, though it is here and now.





Reports from Sri Ramanasramam

Deepavali Celebrations at Sri Ramanasramam



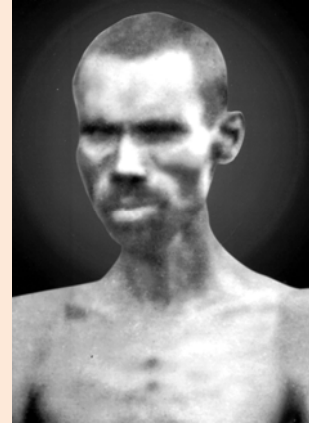


Mastan Swami's Samadhi Day at Matam

Mastan Swami's Samadhi Day was observed on Monday the 8th of November 2010 at his Samadhi at Matam, a village near Desur, about 65 kms from Tiruvannamalai.

Around 10 a.m. abhishekam was performed to the Sivalinga installed on Mastan Swami's Samadhi. The Shrine was decorated with flower garlands. After the puja, prasadam was distributed to the devotees who were present in large numbers.

Mastan was, in the words of Bhagavan himself, a very ripe soul when he came to Him at Virupaksha Cave. A mere look from Bhagavan induced the samadhi state in him. He would often come for Bhagavan's darsan with Desurammal, another great devotee, all the way from Desur and, as he approached Virupaksha Cave where Bhagavan stayed, he would stand transfixed in *samadhi* for hours.



New Building for Ramana Granthalaya (Ramana Library)

A Bhumi Puja was performed on the Ashram campus at 9 a.m. on Friday, the 19th of November 2010, on a spot to the north of the Ashram Dining Hall, chosen for the construction of a new Ramana Granthalaya housing around 30,000 volumes. Bhumi Puja (Worship of Earth) is done to inaugurate a site for the construction of a building.

Pundits chanted the exquisitely beautiful and resonant Bhusuktam from Rig Veda which hails the Earth as Medini, Vasaundhara, Mahi, Vishnupatni (Consort of Lord Vishnu), Lakshmi Priyasakhi (dear friend of Goddess Lakshmi), and so on.

May Bhagavan Ramana and Goddess Earth bless the new Granthalaya project.





Sri Arunachaleswarar Giripradakshinam

Immediately after the Deepam festival Sri Arunachaleswarar, the presiding deity of Sri Arunachaleswarar Temple at Tiruvannamalai goes round the Arunachala Hill. The Lord is accompanied by His consort and escorted by the deity from Adi Annamalai.

As usual the procession, passed Sri Ramanasramam this year on 23rd of November around 12.30 p.m, the Ashram President offered the Lord a garland, dhoti, coconuts, fruits on behalf of all devotees and arati was performed.



Vijnana Ramaneeyam – Palakad Kendram

Swami Sureshananda, the founder of Sri Vijnana Ramaneeyam visited Tiruvannamalai many times in the 1940s and received the abundant grace of Sadguru Ramana. In 1949 when the Swamiji read out his Malayalam version of Sri Ramana Chatvarimsat, Bhagavan asked him to translate the vandana sloka to complete the translation.

Vijnana Ramaneeyam is merged with Sri Ramanasramam and the fellow devotees carry on the activities reflecting the teachings of Bhagavan Ramana as desired by Swami Sureshananda.

Recently a thorough renovation of Sri Vijnana Ramaneeyam was carried out and the same was inaugurated by Sri V.S.Ramanan the Ashram President on 25th November 2010 with homa, chanting, satsang and feeding of poor and devotees.



Publisher: V.S. Ramanan Founding Editor: Ravi Ramanan
 Editorial Team: Ranjani Ramanan, L.Sivasubramanian and D.Thiyagarajan
 Email: saranagathi@sriramanamaharshi.org

