

## Saranagathi

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ISSUE

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Dear Devotees,

In this issue of Saranagathi we continue our series on inspiring women devotees of Sri Bhagavan with an article about Akhilandammal also known as Desurammal. Col. A. N. S. Murthi's account of how he was drawn to the Maharshi has been extracted from *The Mountain Path* archives. This is followed by Reports from Sri Ramanasramam.

Some events to look forward to in March are Maha Sivaratri which falls on 2<sup>nd</sup> March and Sri Vidya Havan at Sri Ramanasramam on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2011.

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In Sri Bhagavan

The Editorial Team

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## Reality in Forty Verses

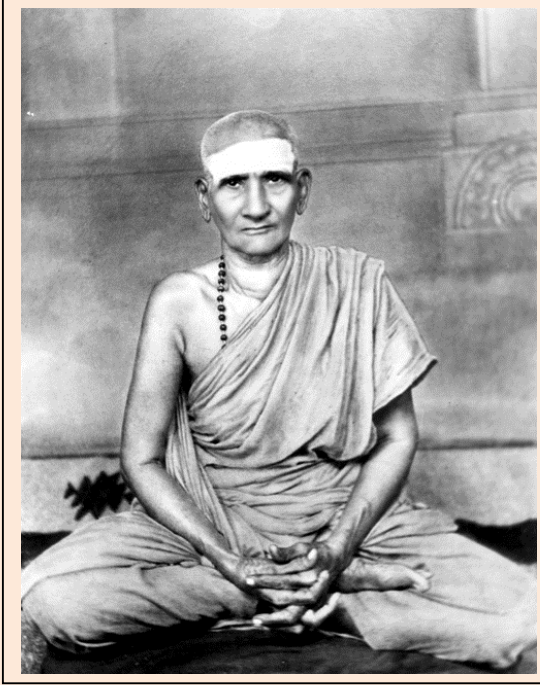
1. Since we perceive the world, we must concede a common Source, single, but with the power of seeming many. The picture of names and forms, the onlooker, the screen, the light that illumines, - all these are verily He.

Ulladu Narpadu by Sri Bhagavan (Verse 1)





## Desurammal



Akhilandammal was better known as Desurammal as she hailed from the village of Desur. Desurammal had first seen Bhagavan sitting in Samadhi at the Arunachaleswarar Temple in 1896, and the priest pouring milk into his mouth. Since the young Swami did not open his eyes, she went back unseen by him.

Seven years passed by. Not being able to stay away any more, Desurammal came back to Tiruvannamalai in 1903. She was a very devout person and had fed many sadhus including Seshadri Swami and Swami Vithoba of Polur. One day when she was plucking flowers at the foot of Arunachala she saw a group of people going toward the banyan tree cave, which is below Virupaksha cave. She asked, "Where are you all going?" and was told, "Oh,

there is an ascetic boy who does not talk, doesn't even move, but such peace, such grace is there."

Desurammal went toward the cave, and saw Bhagavan seated there. This is what she had to say about Bhagavan: "Even though he was unwashed and covered with dust, his body had a golden glow! On seeing this ascetic with his body frame so lean that it exposed his bones, my heart melted, and tears welled up within me. The young Lord then opened his eyes and graciously directed them toward me. Instantaneously, I surrendered myself totally, and took a vow to serve food to the jnani all my life."

Then Bhagavan moved to Virupaksha cave, and she served food to him there. Bhagavan rarely would eat alone. She brought food for the others as well, including Palani Swami and Perumal Swami. Earlier they would beg for food. After Desurammal came; there was no dearth of food at lunch for Bhagavan. She was so captivated by Bhagavan's presence that she came with food every day without fail.

Later, when Echammal and Mudaliar Paatti, started feeding Bhagavan as well, Desurammal went back to her village and started a Ramana centre in 1914. It was called Ramanananda Matalayam. Her devotion was so deep that she was always there, practicing Bhagavan's teachings and sharing her experience with others. Whenever any of the devotees of Bhagavan at Virupaksha cave fell sick, she would take them to Desur give them medical aid and nurse them with tender motherly care. When they were fully cured, she would escort them back to the Virupaksha cave.





Whenever Desurammal came to Arunachala, she would feed Bhagavan and his devotees, thus fulfilling her vow to feed Bhagavan all her life so long as she was in Arunachala. Bhagavan was very pleased with her. Her first observation about Bhagavan was that he was the only saint she had fed, who shared his food equally with others. The second thing she noticed was that the food was shared equally not only with all the people around him, but also with dogs, monkeys, and birds. She narrated a humorous incident about the monkey, Nondi. It was always given the seat next to Bhagavan. While she was serving the Master one day, Nondi snarled at her, and Bhagavan said, "Hey! She is one of us. She belongs to our clan, keep quiet!" The monkey then accepted her as one amongst them.

One full-moon day, when Desurammal came to Skandashram, there was a sadhu who told Desurammal, "Today is a very sacred day - a full-moon day. Bhagavan will be getting shaved. When a jnani, a realized person, shaves his head on a full-moon day, he radiates enormous power. Hence, today, you should ask for initiation from Bhagavan."

Bhagavan rarely gave initiation, but prompted by this sadhu, she prostrated before him. He asked her, "What do you want, Desurammal?" "Bhagavan, today is a sacred day, and you are the greatest sage." Then she repeated whatever the sadhu had said. "You have to initiate me with some mantra." Bhagavan said "Oh! You want a mantra," became serious, sat down, and said in Tamil, "Unnai vidadhu iru" which means, "remain without leaving the Self." Then he looked at her and transfixed her with silent grace for nearly an hour and thus transmitted

to her the inner knowledge of how to remain without giving up the experience of the Self.

After Bhagavan came down the hill to stay near Mother's Samadhi, Desurammal started bringing food every day. One day Bhagavan told her, "Desurammal, there is enough food here." Beseechingly she said, "Bhagavan, I want to feed you."

Bhagavan replied, "Bring your food ingredients and leave them in the kitchen. They will cook and we will all share." She agreed, and whenever she came, she would bring some rice or dhal and leave it in the kitchen.

Shortly before Bhagavan's Mahasamadhi, Desurammal, more than ninety years old and very frail wanted to have darsan; of her Master and came to the Ashram. Nobody recognized her. Bhagavan was in the small room now called the Nirvana Room. She was not allowed to enter the Nirvana Room. Fortunately, Kunju Swami recognized her and told Bhagavan, who exclaimed, "Desurammal! Bring her here, bring her inside." When she went in, she wept seeing Bhagavan's physical condition and Bhagavan said, "Why do you feel sorry for this mortal body? I am always your shelter."

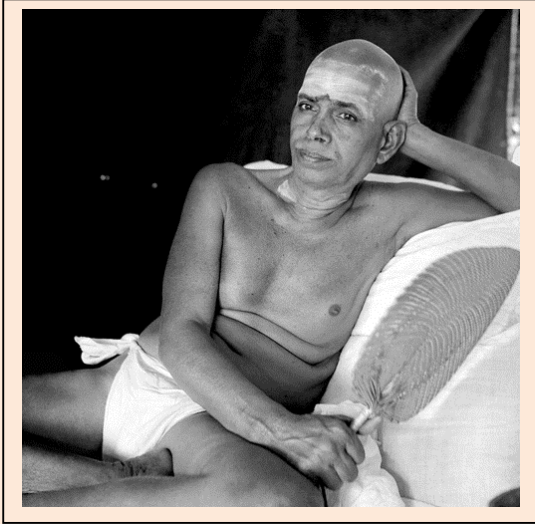
These words of assurance were given not only to Desurammal but for all devotees who, like Desurammal, are pure in heart, filled with devotion and look upon Bhagavan as father, mother, God and all.





## How I Came to Adore the Maharshi

By Col. A. N. S. Murthi *(The Mountain Path, April 1967)*



I had known him in my boyhood days. Whenever I stayed with my mother in her home-town, Tiruvannamalai, I used to climb up the sacred hill and go to the 'first cave' where he then stayed. Though I then did not understand his greatness, I came to look upon him as someone much superior to the other swamijis who abound in and around the town. My mother used to say that this "Brahmana Sami", as he was then called, was unique in that he had attained Self-realisation when he was a teenage boy and that when he sat in the underground cave of the Thousand Pillared Temple, thousands of ants used to climb over his body and bite him, but he was unmindful of all such bodily afflictions. She also used to tell me that her brother, my maternal uncle, was instrumental in removing the boy-saint from there to a safer place - the cave where I first saw him and over which there was a superstructure of brick and mortar. He had, by then, become quite famous in the town. People would say how tears used to roll down his

cheeks whenever bhajan parties on festival days went to his cave and sang the immortal Thevaram-songs, particularly the hymns of Manickavasagar.

When I first went to see him I was still a boy of six or seven, more intent on play than on pondering the imponderable. So, I loved to see him swim in the Mulaipal Tirtham - one of my resorts with other boys during the holidays. As though to attract his attention or show my prowess, I used to dive into this 'Milk Pond' from a nearby crag. He said not a word of admonition, though such a dive in that dangerously shallow pond with a bed of rock could have meant sure death. We boys knew no fear and, perhaps, he didn't want, as many elders do, to instill fear in us which becomes a cause of many ills in later life. Is that not why Sri Krishna, in telling Arjuna the virtues mankind must develop put fearlessness before everything else? Or maybe he was unconcerned, in the bliss of his beatitude or solitude. Or maybe he knew that no harm would occur to me. Or maybe if anything had happened his all pervading benevolence would have protected me and therefore, he seemed unconcerned.

Yet another occasion I remember was when I saw him speak of some monkeys sitting very near him as though they were human beings - beings like men and my playmates. He would refer to one as the 'leader' and eulogise his qualities of head and heart while the monkey would grin and make faces at us as though he was not pleased with our manner of receiving the Swamiji's remarks. It was amazing to see the Swamiji offer food in his hand and this grimacing monkey, male or female, come and take it from his hand as from a





parent's. How well behaved they were with him, although the next moment they hopped off and went away bouncing over the rocks for their usual, wild, care-free life!

It was many years later when I saw him again but still on the hill. I was then studying at college, and suddenly one day I felt drawn to him. I took a train from Vellore and went to him. There was another Sadhu with him - a devotee sworn to stay with and serve him. Swamiji's golden skin seemed to shine more than ever before, and I could feel his benign eyes cool and soothe my body which had become hot in the midday summer sun as I climbed up to his abode; he had left two caves lower down to escape the increasing flow of curious visitors. The few banana and coconut trees near where we sat wafted a heavenly breeze. I wondered whether I too

should not renounce, like him, while still in my teens and join him but I said not a word to him about it. And yet he replied: "However high the kite may fly, it must come down to earth". I took this as a direct answer to my thoughts. After partaking of the fruit he gave and prostrating for his blessings, I took the train and went back to college musing that there was no escape from my studies, which I had never liked, and to which particularly that year I gave not much time, not caring for the examinations. But when the results came out, to my surprise I found myself successful. Though I attributed my success to the Swamiji's blessings, I somehow soon forgot all about him perhaps in the flush of success and in the attractions of the metropolis, Madras where I went for further college studies.

(...To be continued)

## Maharshi's Gospel: The Teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi

### Self-Enquiry

**D:** Why should Self-enquiry alone be considered the direct means to *jnana*?

**M:** Because every kind of *sadhana* except that of *atma vichara* presupposes the retention of the mind as the instrument for carrying on the *sadhana*, and without the mind it cannot be practiced. The ego may take different and subtler forms at the different stages of one's practice, but is itself never destroyed.

When Janaka exclaimed, "Now I have discovered the thief who has been ruining me all along. He shall be dealt with summarily", the King was really referring to the ego or the mind.





## Reports from Sri Ramanasramam

### Sri Maha Rudram

Sri Maha Rudram chanting was done at the New Hall of the Ashram by the students of the Vedapatasalas of the Ashram and the ones at Coimbatore and Manakkal, accompanied by the Principals Sri Senthilnatha Ghanapatigal, Sri Jambhunatha Ghanapatigal and Sri Viswanatha Bhat, respectively, on Sunday, the 20th and Monday the 21st February 2011.

Rudra, an important Vedic god, is Lord Siva Himself who, again, is the very Brahman. Sri Rudram, a hymn of very great import, beauty and power hails Rudra as Lord of the universe, a great God, the Conqueror of Death, the Eternal Siva, the golden-armed God and, indeed, as a God who manifests in every form, animate and inanimate. This wonderful hymn from the Yajur-Veda inspires both the chanters and the listeners, especially if its profound mystical meaning is understood.

On Monday the 21st February, A Homam (oblation in sacred fire) was performed, followed by Vasordhaaraa Deepaaraadhanaa marking the conclusion of Sri Maha Rudram. Then there was an abhishekam at Sri Bhagavan's Shrine with the kalasa (pot) installed for the Maha Rudram, followed by Deepaaraadhanaa.



### Sundaram Iyer Day

The 120th Anniversary of Sri Sundaram Iyer, Bhagavan's Father, was observed at the Mother's Temple at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, 22nd February. Puja was done to his photo, mantras were chanted and a song extolling his greatness was sung.

He and Alagammal, Bhagavan's Mother, kept an open house for pilgrims passing through Tiruchuli on their way to Rameswaram. Bhagavan once referred to his Father as a *gambhira vyakti* - 'majestic personality'.

