

Saranagathi

IN THIS
ISSUE

CONTENTS

Dear Devotees,

In this issue of Saranagathi we have the concluding part of the life story of Mother Azhagammal. This was the first article in the series on inspiring women devotees of Sri Bhagavan. Sri D. S. Sastri'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.

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In Sri Bhagavan

The Editorial Team

In This Issue	1
Reality in Forty Verses	1
Mother Azhagammal (Concluding part)	2
Maharshi's Gospel	3
How I came to the Maharshi	4
- D. S. Sastri	
Reports from Sri Ramanasramam	5

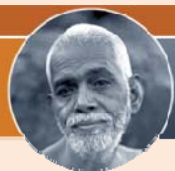
Reality in Forty Verses

Invocation

2. When those who are in dread of death seek refuge at the feet of the deathless,
birthless Lord Supreme, their Ego and Attachments die;
and they, now deathless, think no more of death.

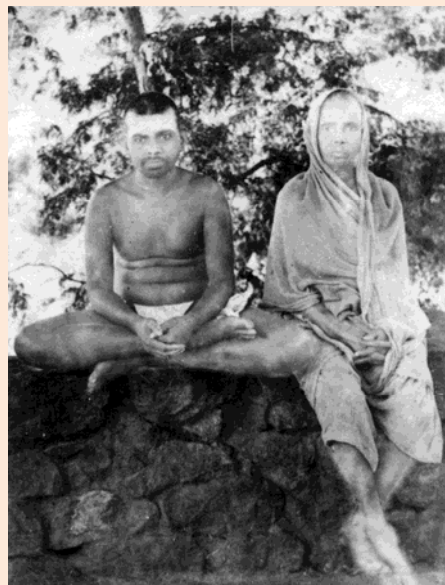
Ulladu Narpadu by Sri Bhagavan (Invocation Verse 2)





Mother Azhagammal

(Concluding part)



Potent as was the aid given by Sri Bhagavan, it was the saintliness of Azhagammal, her previous renunciation of pride and attachment that enabled her to benefit by it. He said later: "Yes, in her case it was a success; on a previous occasion I did the same for Palaniswami when the end was approaching, but it was a failure. He opened his eyes and passed away." He added, however, that it was not a complete failure in the case of Palaniswami, for although the ego was not reabsorbed in the Self, the manner of its going was such as to indicate a good rebirth.

Often when devotees suffered bereavement Sri Bhagavan reminded them that it is only the body that dies and only the I-am-the-body illusion that makes death seem a tragedy. Now, at the time of his own bereavement, he showed no grief whatever. The whole night he and the devotees sat up singing devotional songs. This indifference to his mother's physical death is the real commentary on his prayer at the time of her previous sickness.

The question arose of the disposal of the body.

There was the testimony of Bhagavan himself that she had been absorbed into the Self and not remained to be reborn to the illusion of ego, but some doubt was felt whether the body of a woman Saint should be given burial instead of being cremated. Then it was recalled that in 1917 this very point had formed part of a series of questions put to Sri Bhagavan by Ganapati Sastri and his party and that he had answered affirmatively. "Since *Jnana* (Knowledge) and *Mukti* (Deliverance) do not differ with the difference of sex, the body of a woman Saint also need not be burnt. Her body also is the abode of God."

In the case of her leaving the Ashram as in that of her joining it, none presumed to ask Sri Bhagavan himself for a decision, nor did he pronounce one. It seems not to have occurred to them that the answer had been given in his prayer of 1914: "Enfold my Mother in Thy Light and make her One with Thee! What need then for cremation?"

Sri Bhagavan stood silently looking on without participating. The body of the mother was interred at the foot of the hill at the southern point, between the Palitirtham Tank and the Dakshinamurti Mantapam (shrine). Relatives and friends arrived for the ceremony and large crowds came from the town. Sacred ashes, camphor, incense, were thrown into the pit around the body before it was filled up. A stone tomb was constructed and on it was installed a sacred lingam brought from Benares. Later a temple was raised on the spot, finally completed in 1949 and known as Matrubhuteswara Temple, the Temple of God Manifested as the Mother.

As the coming of the mother had marked an epoch in Ashram life, so also did her departure. Instead of being checked, the development increased. There were devotees who felt that, as *Shakti* or Creative Energy, her presence was more potent now than before. On one occasion Sri





Bhagavan said: "Where has she gone? She is here."

Niranjanananda Swami took up his residence at the foot of the hill near the samadhi in a thatched building that was raised there. Sri Bhagavan remained at Skandashram but almost every day he would come down the hillside to the samadhi, about half an hour's walk away. Then one day, about six

months later, he went out for a walk and, as he was walking, felt a powerful impulse to go down to the samadhi and remain there. When he did not return the devotees followed him there and thus was founded Sri Ramanashram. "It was not of my own volition that I moved from Skandashram," he said later, "something brought me here and I obeyed. It was not my decision but the Divine Will."

Maharshi's Gospel: The Teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi

Peace and Happiness

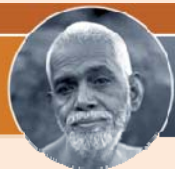
D: How can I get peace? I do not seem to obtain it through *vichara*.

M: Peace is your natural state. It is the mind that obstructs the natural state. Your *vichara* has been made only in the mind. Investigate what the mind is, and it will disappear. There is no such thing as mind apart from thought. Nevertheless, because of the emergence of thought, you surmise something from which it starts and term that the mind. When you probe to see what it is, you find there is really no such thing as mind. When the mind has thus vanished, you realize eternal peace.

D: Through poetry, music, *japa*, *bhajana*, the sight of beautiful landscapes, reading the lines of spiritual verses etc., one experiences sometimes a true sense of all-unity. Is that feeling of deep blissful quiet (wherein the personal self has no place) the same as the entering into the heart of which Bhagavan speaks? Will practice thereof lead to a deeper *Samadhi* and so ultimately to full vision of the Real?

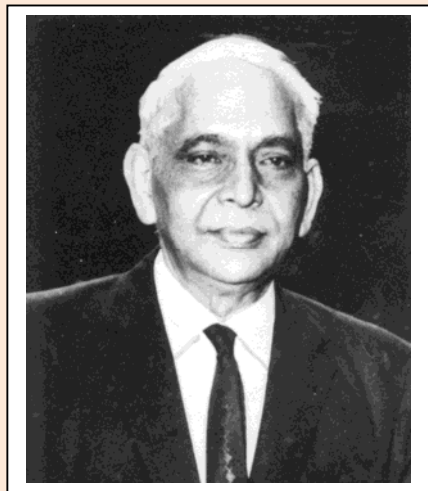
M: There is happiness when agreeable things are presented to the mind. It is the happiness inherent to the Self, and there is no other happiness. And it is not alien and afar. You are diving into the Self on those occasions which you consider pleasurable; that diving results in self-existent bliss. But the association of ideas is responsible for foisting that bliss on other things or occurrences while, in fact, that bliss is within you. On these occasions you are plunging into the Self, though unconsciously. If you do so consciously, with the conviction that comes of the experience that you are identical with the happiness which is verily the Self, the one Reality, you call it Realization. I want you to dive consciously into the Self, i.e., into the heart.





How I Came to the Maharshi

By D. S. Sastri (From *The Mountain Path*, Jan 1967)



I had my first darshan of Bhagavan in May, 1941. I happened to be in Madras at the time on my way from Cochin to Ahmedabad on transfer and was awaiting the arrival of my personal effects by train. As I was mentally worried over that transfer and was brooding over it, it occurred to me that I should go over to Tiruvannamalai to see the great Maharshi and obtain some solace from him. Some years before that, a friend of mine had asked me to accompany him to the Ashram but somehow I did not feel attracted. Earlier in my life, my experience of so called holy men had been unfortunate, so I developed a prejudice. Subsequently, I visited several temples in South India but could not find any solace. But when I suggested to my wife that we should visit the Ashram, she readily agreed and we started for Tiruvannamalai one fine morning.

By the time we reached the Ashram, it was past 11.30 am. All was quiet. The Ashramites had had lunch and were resting. An attendant at the guest house took us into the kitchen and we had our lunch there. We were told that we could have Bhagavan's darshan only at 2.30.

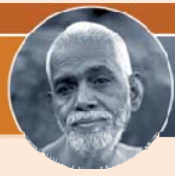
Having nothing particular to do, I strayed into the

bookstall, told the attendant the purpose of our visit and sat there reading one of the books for sale. At that time, there was no room behind the bookstall; instead, there was a window opposite the main door. A little before 2.30 while returning from the bathroom at the eastern end of the Ashram, Bhagavan stopped at the window to talk to someone who happened to be there. The bookstall attendant pointed him out to me. A thrill went through my whole body. What a difference from the Swamis and the holy men I had seen before! That lustrous body, those shining eyes, that beautiful smile, that gentle speech and halting gait - all took me completely by surprise. I got up and slowly went into the hall. Bhagavan was there seated on the couch looking tenderly at all the devotees there.

On entering the hall, the ego in me did not permit my prostrating before him. Instead, I just folded my hands by way of namaskar and sat down watching critically all that was happening. People were coming and going; and not a word was spoken. Everybody appeared happy and contented. The prevailing serene atmosphere was infectious. I sat motionless. I had nothing to ask. I was lost in wonder and admiration at the peace and silence. The thought uppermost in my mind was: if people could be happy thus with a minimum of food and clothing, why not I? Why these worldly possessions and the struggles incidental thereto? Why grieve about official worries and domestic calamities?

At 4.45, Bhagavan left the hall as usual and came back later for Vedaparayana which was arranged in the open space adjacent to the hall. The chanting of the vedic hymns began in those idyllic surroundings with Arunachala on one side and the flower garden on the other and with Bhagavan, wearing only a loin cloth, sitting in the midst of the devotees. I felt as if I was in another world altogether. It was only when the chanting was over





and devotees began leaving that I realized I was in this mundane world.

Raja, the Post-master, told me that ladies were not allowed to stay overnight in the Ashram and that I should seek an abode elsewhere. At my request, he fixed up for the night a house under construction in the compound of 'Mahasthan'. After an early evening meal, my wife went to the house for rest while I stayed on in the Ashram for supper at 7.30 with Bhagavan in the dining hall. After supper, I was reluctant to leave the Ashram as I wanted to have more of Bhagavan. On enquiry, someone told me that Bhagavan might sit out for a while that night as it was very sultry. I therefore stayed on. Bhagavan came back after a short walk and sat on an easy chair in the open space between the hall and the well. A few devotees sat around him. One of them asked Bhagavan about an incident in Yoga Vasishtha.

Instead of just explaining it, Bhagavan began narrating the whole story at length. The pleasant way he spoke, the simple language he used and the dignified manner in which he related the story captivated our hearts and kept us all spellbound. At the end of it, the devotees told me that I was particularly lucky because Bhagavan rarely spoke much or for such a long time. I felt extremely happy and gratified.

That night my wife and I compared notes. We were fully agreed that we had reached our haven and found our real Guru. The mental satisfaction we could not get by our visits to temples or to other holy men, we had got in abundance in the Ashram. We therefore stayed on for some more days.

Thus began our attachment to Bhagavan and the Ashram.

Reports from Sri Ramanasramam

Sivaprakasam Pillai Day

Sivaprakasam Pillai Day was observed on 12th January 2011 at 10.00 a.m in the New Hall. His compositions Sri Ramana Padamalai, Sri Ramana Satguru Malai, Sri Ramana Devamalai and Sri Ramana Vachana Saram were recited in front of his photograph placed there. This was followed by arati and distribution of prasada.

When news of Pillai's passing away was conveyed to Bhagavan, he said "Sivaprakasam Pillai has become Siva Prakasam (Splendour of Siva)". When some time after this, his unpublished poems were brought by his student to Sri Bhagavan he picked out Sri Ramana Vachana Saram and said "This one alone will do!"





Ramaswami Pillai Day

The Samadhi day of Ramaswami Pillai was observed on 14th January 2011 at his Samadhi in the Ashram. Aksharamanamalai was chanted by devotees, and after puja prasad was distributed.

It was the strong dauntless Pillai who single-handedly cleared the rough thorny path leading from the Ashram to Skandasramam to enable Bhagavan to walk without difficulty. He was 100 when he was absorbed in His Master.



Chinnaswamigal (Sri Niranjanananda Swami) Aradhana

The 58th Aradahana of Swami Niranjanananda was observed on 19th January at his Samadhi in front of the Mother's Temple. During the Abhishekam and puja, a number of songs on the Swami were sung by devotees. After the puja, prasad was distributed among the large number of devotees present.

Swamiji, known as Chinna Swami, was known for his undivided devotion to Bhagavan, flaming integrity and tireless service. Bhagavan was, to him, his god, not a brother.

