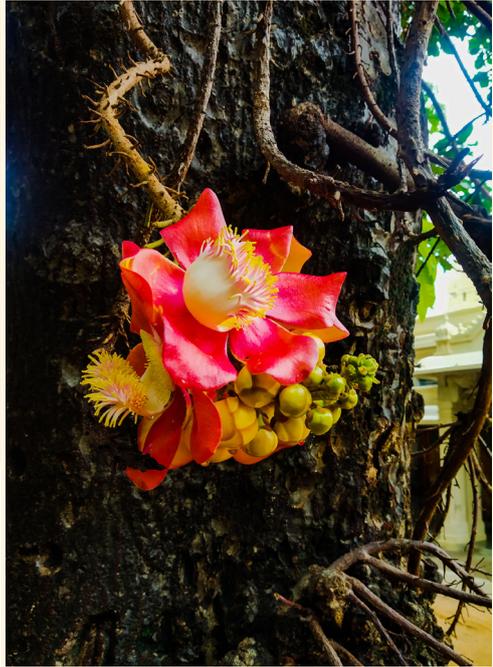


Saranagati



SARANAGATI
SRI RAMANASRAMAM

DECEMBER 2020
VOL. 14, NO. 12



Photos: D. Thiyagarajan and Aruna Ramanan



Saranagati



DECEMBER 2020
VOL. 14, NO.12

IN THIS
ISSUE

Dear Devotees,

This year's Karthigai Deepam festival was like no other. One could sense that something important was happening but as it was behind the scenes and low-key, it was hard to know. It's at times like these that local devotees can easily mark the changes the world has undergone since the lockdown began in March of this year.

In this issue of *Saranagati*, we look at the life of Vallimalai Swami who Bhagavan dubbed 'Thiruppugazh Murugan' because of the Swami's gift for singing the great poems of Saint Arunagirinathar.

In 'Lemon Seeds and the Mango Tree', we conclude the discussion of Bhagavan's message to his mother in 1898 from Pavala Kundru and what it means for devotees today.

For videos, photos and further news of events, go to <http://www.sriramanamaharshi.org> or write to us at saranagathi@sriramanamaharshi.org.

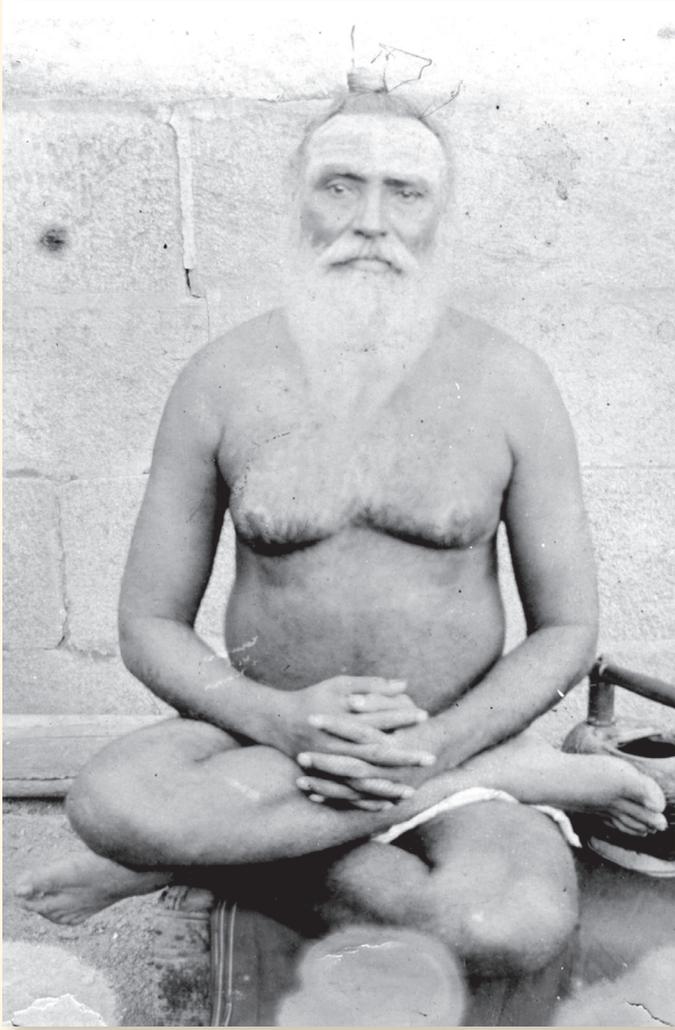
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Calendar of Events Celebrated at Home

4th December (Fri) Punarvasu	24th February (Weds) Punarvasu
29th December (Tues) Full Moon	26th February (Fri) Full Moon
31st December (Thurs) Bhagavan's Jayanti/Lucy Ma Day	11th March (Thurs) Mahasivaratri
15th January (Fri) Sankranti Pongal	13th April (Tues) Telugu New Year
27th January (Weds) Punarvasu/Chinnaswami Day	14th April (Weds) Tamil New Year
28th January (Thurs) Full Moon	14th April (Weds) Nirvana Room Day
2nd February (Tues) Sundaram Iyer Day	21st April (Weds) Sri Rama Navami





IN PROFILE

Vallimalai Swami

Bhagavan's devotees, including Muruganar, regularly referred to Bhagavan as an incarnation of Lord Subramanya. God of the 'Tamils', the six-faced son of Lord Siva, Lord Subramanya is said to be *agnibhu*, the 'form of Agni'. Known in Tamil Nadu as Lord Muruga, Lord Subramanya has His abode on hilltops in the Tamil land. For denizens of Tiruvannamalai, he had now come to the Tamil land in the form of a young ascetic living on Arunachala Hill. In the coming years, devotees would report having visions of Sri Ramana as Lord Muruga and readily surrender their life to

him. Lawyers even asked Bhagavan Ramana if he was Lord Subramanya when a court hearing was held in the Ashram in 1936. Others had dreams wherein Lord Subramanya appeared and directed them to make their way to Bhagavan. Bhagavan himself on at least two occasions reported dreaming of Lord Subramanya, the Gods of Pazhani and Tiruchendur temples.¹ Bhagavan regularly narrated the famed Tiruvannamalai story of Lord Subramanya appearing before the 15th-century Vijayanagar King, Deva Rayan, at the bidding of the saint, Arunagirinathar which took place at what is now the Lord Subramanya Shrine (Kambathu Ilayanar) in the Big Temple.

Nayana once asked Bhagavan at Virupaksha if he was correct in identifying Sri Ramana as Lord Subramanya in his Ramana Gita. Though Bhagavan heard the question he did not give a reply. That evening Nayana prayed silently to Bhagavan to respond to his query. When Nayana went to him the following day, Bhagavan said, "Ishwara Swami wrote a verse in praise of this Vinayaka image sitting in a niche in the Virupakshi Cave. At his request I wrote a verse on that Ganesa." Then Bhagavan explained the meaning of the *venba* to Nayana. In the verse, Bhagavan entreats Lord Ganesa to look after him, because he is his younger brother. Nayana saw this as a confirmation that the Maharshi was an avatar of Lord Muruga.²

After hearing these anecdotes and accounts, it is no surprise that those who were worshippers of Lord Subramanya might find their way to Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi. Some may have come to the Maharshi out of devotion to Lord Muruga but in Bhagavan, found both Ramana and the living Lord of their hearts. Among them was Vallimalai Swami, who would later make it his life mission to sing and spread Tiruppugazh, the famous devotional songs of Saint Arunagirinathar, all over India. After losing his first wife and three children, one after another, and then losing two more daughters, he suffered an acute abdominal condition. He went on pilgrimage to seek relief for his physical condition and the intense sense

¹ *Day by Day*, 19-3-45 morning.

² "A Long Life with the Maharshi", K. Natesan, *The Maharshi*, May/June 2009, p. 2.





of loss he suffered. The pilgrimage brought him to Tiruvannamalai where he climbed Arunachala up to Skandasramam and joined the devotees waiting to glimpse Bhagavan Ramana. When the Maharshi came out, Vallimalai Swami did not see Sri Ramana at all, but saw Palani Andavar, Lord Subramanya of Palani, who is also only ever clad in a loincloth:

I joined the other devotees who were waiting to have the darshan of the saint. After a while, the sage appeared from inside the Ashram. He was standing there in his characteristic loincloth with a danda in his hand. I saw him and he looked at me intently. Suddenly, I felt that the very Palani Andavar, whom I saw frequently at Palani in the form of stone, was now standing before me in real life. I felt an inexplicable wave of power passing through my entire physique. In a moment of extreme bliss, tears trickled down my face. Words failed me. However, I managed to gain my composure and expressed my humble obeisance to Maharshi.³

Early Life

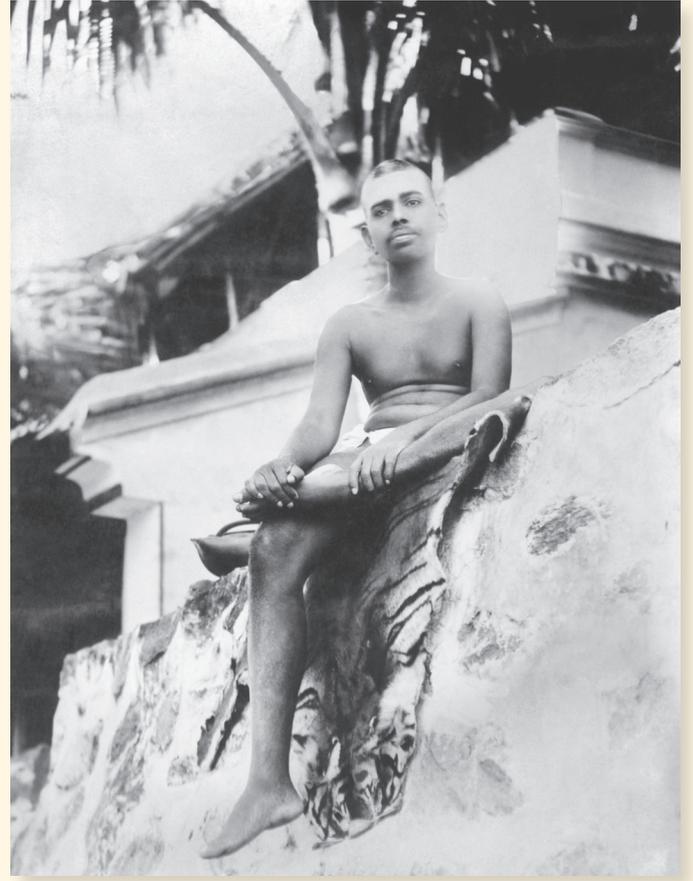
In late November, 1870 in Poonachi near Bhavani in Coimbatore District, Vallimalai Swami was born and named Ardhanari, the name of the Lord of Tiruchengode. His parents came from an orthodox Brahmin family, and his great-grandfather, Sri Ganapati Swamigal had not only a mastery of Vedas and sastras but also was reputed to be a highly evolved soul. Ardanari's father, Chidambara Josiar, was well-versed in the Vedas as well as in jyotisha and ayurveda.

At the age of five, Ardhanari lost his father, the first of many misfortunes that struck the family. He was thus deprived of the traditional Vedic education his father had been intent on giving him. Athletic by nature and showing no interest in secular education, his uncle apprenticed him to the head cook in the palace of the Maharaja of Mysore where he excelled in the culinary arts.⁴

Already as a boy, Ardhanari was married twice, the first at age nine and the second at age 16. The second marriage occurred under unusual circumstances. The family had gone to attend the wedding of a relative. When just prior to the ceremony, the intended bridegroom suffered an attack of epilepsy, Ardhanari was prevailed upon to take the groom's place. Both

³ "Vallimalai Sri Sachidananda Swamigal", *Mountain Path*, July 2018.

⁴ *Life Sketch of Sri Vallimalai Tiruppugazh Swamigal*, p. 3-4.

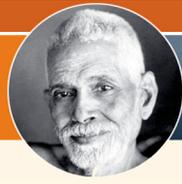


wives bore children and he managed to support his large family from the income he received from his service at the palace. But when he lost his first wife and all three of their children and not long afterward, the two daughters from his second wife, leaving only his second wife and their son, the grief was tremendous and he found it difficult to conduct a normal life.

Pilgrimage

In 1908, he resigned his job at the palace and went on pilgrimage with his wife and son. He went to Palani where he sought a cure for the stomach trouble he acquired in the aftermath of the family's disasters. While there he attended a festival and heard a *devadasi* sing with so much spiritual fervour that he went into ecstasy and had a glimpse of realization. "Why does this song create so much vibration in me?" He wanted to know more about it, its meaning and its author. When he found out it was *Thiruppugazh*, composed by Saint Arunagirinathar, he made up his mind to learn written Tamil in order to read and sing the songs of *Tiruppugazh*. He met an eight-year-old





boy named Mani who taught him written Tamil. He went to Coimbatore, where Sri Sankaracharya of Sringeri was camping and requested that he give him *sannyasa diksha*. But learning that he had a wife, son and mother dependant on him, the Sringeri Swamigal denied the request. Not long after this, Ardhanari and his wife went on pilgrimage to the South Indian temples that had been visited by Arunagirinathar. He soon came into contact with an erudite scholar, Sri Venkata Rayar, who knowing that Ardhanari was seeking a guru, advised him to go to Tiruvannamalai and meet Bhagavan Ramana. He visited Bhagavan on the Hill and met Seshadri Swamigal. He stayed in Tiruvannamalai for over two months and spent his time singing *Tiruppugazh* in front of Bhagavan. Bhagavan taught him *Thiruppugazh* and took the book from him in order to assist him in elocution, prosody and the metrics of Tamil poetry. A biographer writes:

*Bhagavan explained their deeper meaning to Ardhanari. His explanations covered the whole gamut of Arunagiri's works such as Thiruppugazh and Kandar Anubhuti. Bhagavan explained the importance of 'Summa Iru', referred to in Kandar Anubhuti, that is, the act of remaining quiet and still without allowing any thoughts to come in between. He cited many songs which underlined the need to go beyond the concept of body and mind and the need to find our true identity. Just as Bhagavan had mastered Kaivalya Navaneetham, Vedanta Chudamani and Yoga Vasishtam, which were brought by Palaniswamy during the Maharshi's early period at Gurumurtam, Ardhanari mastered Thiruppugazh which is evident from references he made to it on many occasions.*⁵

One day during this visit, Ardhanari was on the pradakshina path and happened to find Bhagavan also going round the Hill. He was thrilled to have Bhagavan join him in the *Thiruppugazh* chanting. Ardhanari who considered Ramana as the incarnation of Lord Muruga was beside himself with joy to have Lord Muruga Himself come as his co-singer.⁶

After taking Bhagavan's blessings, he set off on a long pilgrimage to North India. Before going north, he returned to his native Poonachi Pudur, transferred all his property into his wife's name and asked his son to come and take care of his mother. Once reaching

5 V.S. Krishnan, "Vallimalai Sri Sachidananda Swamigal", *Mountain Path*, July 2018.

6 Ibid.



the north, he took sannyasa, got the name Swami Satchidananda and wandered about the Himalayas undertaking a 10-month retreat in solitude. He visited Haridwar, Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri and Amarnath. Afterward, he returned to Tiruvannamalai to meet Bhagavan. On seeing him, the Maharshi greeted him, "Good, you have come back."⁷ A devotee describes the scene:

*There were about ten devotees living with him, including his mother and younger brother. One of them was Vallimalai Murugan who, for a while every morning, sang the Tamil songs of the Tiruppugazh with great fervour. These well-known songs, the remarkable outpourings of the famous saint, Sri Arunagirinatha, are songs in praise of Subramaniam. When he sang, Bhagavan used to keep time by tapping with two small sticks on the two rings of an iron brazier of live coal that was kept in front of him. Fumes of incense spread out in rolls from the brazier, suffused with the subtle holy atmosphere of Bhagavan. While Bhagavan's hands were tapping at the brazier in this way, his unfathomable look of grace gave one a glimpse of the beyond in silence. It was an unforgettable experience.*⁸

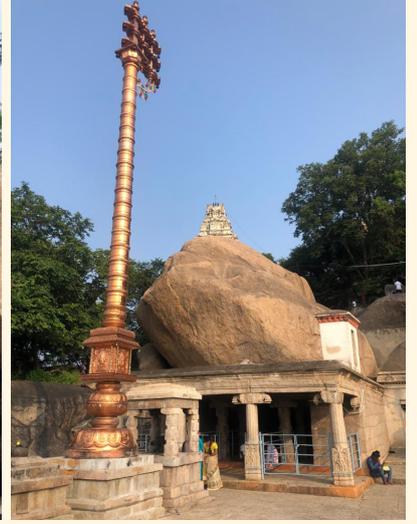
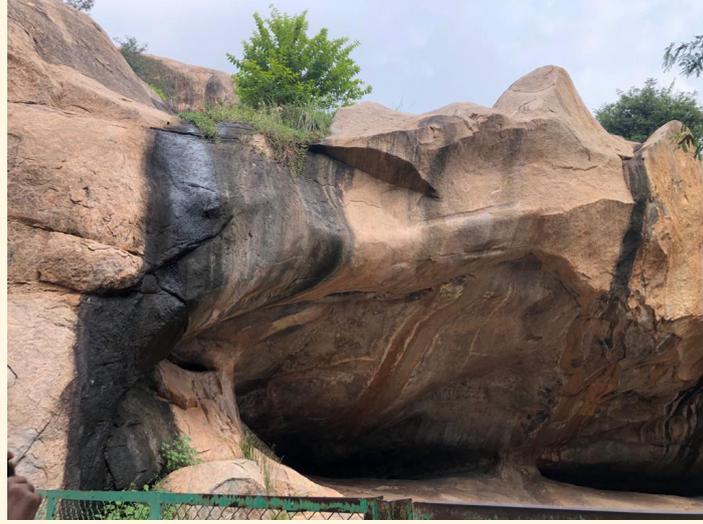
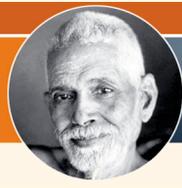
After staying ten days on the Hill with Bhagavan, one day, out of the blue, Bhagavan directed him to go down. Though puzzled, he obeyed the command but was unclear as to the meaning behind it. On his way down he got the answer when he met Seshadri Swami who instructed him to go to Vallimalai Hill, adopt *Tiruppugazh* as his mahamantra and relinquish all further need for external pujas.⁹

7 Ibid.

8 Viswanatha Swami, "At the Feet of Bhagavan", *Mountain Path*, Apr 1979.

9 R. Kalyanasundaram, "Vallimalai Tiruppugazh Swami", *Moun-*





Vallimalai Ashram

Vallimalai is a village in Vellore district, just 30 km. from Vellore, the famed abode of Valli and known for its Subramaniyar temple. Valli, the daughter of Lord Vishnu and Goddess Lakshmi was born from the drop of perspiration that fell from Lakshmi's brow on the grass at this place, and was later consumed by a female deer. Valli was born to the Deer. Valli is to Lord Muruga what Radha is to Lord Krishna. Thus, in June 1916, Swami Satchidanada settled at the Vallimalai Hill known as Parvatharayan Kundru where he undertook intensive tapas. He excavated the sand from a small naturally-formed cave on the hillock. Having removed

Mountain Path, January 1971, pp. 24-25.

the sand and earth, he discovered a cave which could accommodate about 200 people. This cave would prove useful for future Tiruppugazh recitations.¹⁰

Another time when he was to embark on a long pilgrimage to North India, he came to stay with Bhagavan. Before setting off, Vallimalai Swami made an appeal to Bhagavan's Mother, by seeking to activate her generosity with praise, for having given birth to a 'diamond of a son'. He then proceeded to ask her for one of the Ashram's large *kamandalus* for his pilgrimage, promising to bring water in it from the Holy Ganges and do abhishekam. She relented and gave him the desired item. As it would turn out, he was not able to return

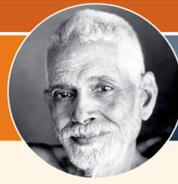
¹⁰ *Life Sketch*, p. 8.

Sri Muruganar's Irai Pani Nitral, §10 ("Steadfastness in Service" from Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai)

வருந்தி மலர்த்தாள் வழிபட்ட
வாத லூராக்கு அறமுரைப்பான்
குருந்த மரத்தின் குளிர்நீழல்
குலவி இருந்த குருமணியே
பொருந்த விளங்கும் ஆன்மாநு
பூதி எனக்குப் புகல்என்றேன்
இருந்த படிக்கே இருவென்றான்
எந்தை ரமண இறையோனே

I cried:
'Best of Masters! You who shone
In the kurunda tree's cool shade
To teach your devotee of Vadavur,
Full and clearly lay bare to me
The secret of Self-knowledge.'
Said Ramana, my Father and King,
'Be as you are, your Self!'





to Tiruvannamalai for many years but eventually did fulfil his promise, even though there were other visits in between. In 1937 he came to Ramanasramam and performed abhishekam over the lingam of Mother's Shrine with Ganges water he had brought in the *kamandalu* Mother had given him nearly twenty years earlier.¹¹

Another Visit to Bhagavan

Once in December 1925, a party of vakils from Salem accompanied Vallimalai to see Bhagavan. The Maharshi heard him sing some of the *Tiruppugazh*, explaining in great detail with devotion and great compassion the meaning to the whole group. Bhagavan dubbed him 'Tiruppugazh Murugan'. Maharshi who had patiently sat and taught Vallimalai Swami the meaning of *Tiruppugazh*, now saw how the latter was able to teach *Tiruppugazh* even to experts and enthusiasts.¹²

The propagation of *Tiruppugazh* became the Swami's mission in life and he did this so successfully that *Tiruppugazh* recitation began to be established all over Tamil Nadu. He arranged the *Tiruppugazh*'s songs in a suitable sequence and inspired his listeners so dramatically that *Tiruppugazh* recitation was adopted at the important shrines of Lord Muruga.

Living on Valli Hill, Vallimalai Swami had a vision of Goddess Valli who enthralled him with her song from *Tiruppugazh*. Devotees of Lord Subramanya were drawn to Vallimalai Swami in large numbers

¹¹ *Letters from Sri Ramanasramam*, 14th Feb, 1949.

¹² *Mountain Path*, December 1998, p. 187.



and on festival days, thousands would come.¹³ His formidable spiritual gifts were recognised by all. His moving devotion to the Lord brought tears to the eyes of onlookers and caused of all in earshot of him to swoon under the sway of such inspired singing and devotion. He once spoke of the path of devotion:

Where the heart predominates over the intellect, men prefer at

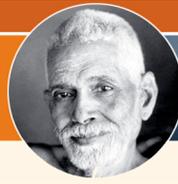
¹³ R. Kalyanasundaram, "Vallimalai Tiruppugazh Swami", *Mountain Path*, January 1971, pp. 24-25.

Events in Sri Ramanasramam: Skanda Shashti



Skanda Shashti or Kumara Shashti is the festival dedicated to Lord Kartikeya, and falls on the 6th tithi of Karthigai month. The festival at the Lord Subramanya Temple in Tiruchendur lasts six days and on the final day, commemorates Sura Samhaa, or the killing of the demon Surapadmaby Lord Skanda. This year Skanda Shashti fell on 20th November and marks the beginning of the Karthigai Deepam festival. In the Ashram, the event was celebrated with a small puja gathering at the Subramanya Shrine in the Mother's Temple. —





*the start the path of bhakti, similarly the man whose intellect predominates over the heart prefers the path of jnana, and the one in whom neither predominates prefers the path of karma. The distinction among the paths is only apparent at the start: in the end all the paths coalesce.*¹⁴

Vallimalai Swami showed similarities to Bhagavan. His devotees used to bring him extravagant gifts which he would immediately pass on to beggars or those in need. When given large sums of money, he would spend it all feeding the devotees and he took special delight in feeding the poor. He did not differentiate between people rich and poor, nor between caste or creed. He began to make use of his spiritual gifts to help others.¹⁵

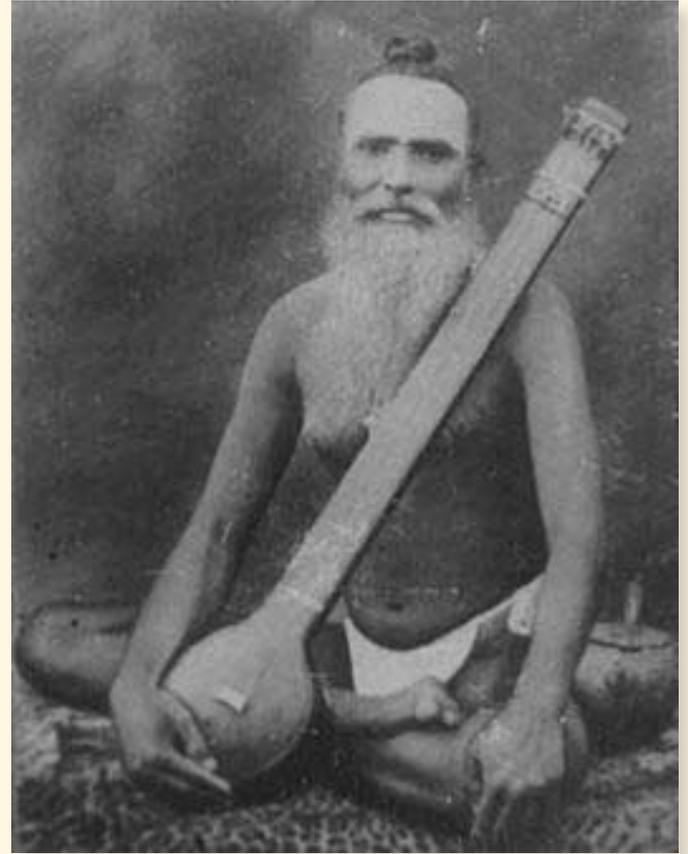
Conclusion

On 14th April, 1950, Vallimalai Swami and a disciple were leaving Madras to Tiruvannamalai by night train, having heard the news of Bhagavan's failing health. At about 8.45 p.m. when Sri Ramana attained mahanimirvana, Vallimalai Swami was crossing the railway line. Exactly at this moment a carriage which was loosely shunted was speedily coming on the rails, and had almost hit him. At that moment someone seemed to extricate Vallimalai Swami from the calamity. But the mysterious rescuer disappeared just as quickly.

Later that year, on 15th November, the fifth day of the Skanda Shashti festival, Vallimalai Swami was performing on Sri Valli Sanmargam when suddenly he could not proceed further and withdrew. After a few hours, he revived and said that he had the darsan of Lord Muruga. On 22nd November, he attained

¹⁴"Life of Saint Arunagirinathar", *Mountain Path*, April 1971, p. 94.

¹⁵Life Sketch, pp. 12-13.



samadhi at about 8.15 am. His body was interred and enshrined at Vallimalai in the cave which he had prepared for his samadhi.

Just two days before Vallimalai Swami attained mahasamadhi several persons observed a meteor in the sky moving eastwards. Sri Ramana Bhagavan and Vallimalai Swamigal attained mahasamadhi in the same year, 1950, in the same tithi, *trayodasi*, seven months apart.¹⁶ —

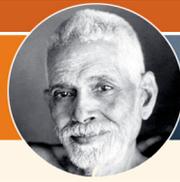
¹⁶ Ibid., p. 14.

Events in Sri Ramanasramam: Deepavali



On Saturday, 14th November, a handful of staff members gathered early morning for the Deepavali celebrations. This festival of lights had a distinct poignancy this year in view of conditions around the globe. Deepavali marks the day when Narakasura is slain and evil is banished from the world. —





Events in Sri Ramanasramam: Karthigai Deepam Celebrations

The Karthigai festival began at Arunachala Temple on Skanda Shashti, 20th November with the traditional flag-hoisting. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions, there were no processions around the Four Streets, but procession was carried out inside the fifth praakaara of the temple. On November 29th, Bharani Deepam was lit at 4 am in the main shrine and at 6 pm, the Maha Deepam was lit on top of the Hill. The public was not allowed inside and no one but temple staff was allowed to climb the Hill. On the other days of the ten-day festival, tickets were available online at the temple website for 5,000 people. Girivalam was not allowed and was strictly controlled by police. The streets were eerily empty. Neither were special buses made available for people to come to Tiruvannamalai for the festival and the police stopped outside vehicles trying to enter the township. Finally, Arunachaleswara Swami and Apeetakuchambika *utsavas* will not be taken in procession around Arunachala Hill as is the custom on the second day after Maha Deepam. In Ramanasramam, a small gathering of staff members assembled in front of the Samadhi Hall to celebrate the event. —



The Pradakshina Path on Kartigai Deepam Day





RAMANA REFLECTIONS

Lemon Seeds and the Mango Tree (Part II)

In the previous issue we looked at the question of whether prarabdha karma results in a deterministic scheme for our lives and showed how Bhagavan, rather than being a fatalist or strict determinist, argues that karmic bondage is not of necessity ever-lasting. To be sure, by definition prarabdha is determined insofar as it must be experienced. But the experiencing of it is the release of it. And this process we are 'free' to participate in.

Bhagavan's surrender is not resignation to our karmic legacy, so to say, but a willing participation in freeing ourselves from limiting beliefs surrounding

samskaric afflictions. Rather than seeing ourselves as caught in strictly deterministic scenarios seeded long ago, Bhagavan enjoins us to take part in freeing ourselves of the past. Chittasuddhi begins in purifying the mind of such bestowals. Efforts to avoid facing one's lemon seeds of the past only forestalls healing negative currents in the heart and mind. Grasping at worldly consolations such as sense pleasures or worldly status relegates us to a never-ending cycle of seeking refuge where no lasting peace can be found. Bhagavan comments:

*There is no karma without a karta (doer). On seeking for the doer, he disappears. Where is karma then? Prarabdha concerns only the out-turned, not the in-turned mind. One who seeks his real Self will not be afraid of any obstacle... [Therefore,] find the root of karma and cut it off.*¹

Bhagavan's surrender hinges on giving up the effort to paper over our painful karmic inheritance. The first inquiry is into the nature of the 'I', the egoic self which is designed to insulate us, at least temporarily, from our negative karma. Opting out of samsara, by contrast, is an act of moral freedom and not subject to deterministic causes, Bhagavan would argue. We are not destined to indulge the world of the senses nor continually run away from what is true. We perpetuate our painful karma by keeping it at arm's length, hidden in the subtle layers of consciousness. In following Bhagavan's admonition to practice self-attention, however, we allow hidden samskaras and negative karmic afflictions to be experienced in advance. Thus, karma is not interminable but has an end. Bhagavan says:

*Karmas carry the seeds of their own destruction within themselves.*²

The Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung who indirectly came under Bhagavan's influence in the early 1940s assessed the condition this way:

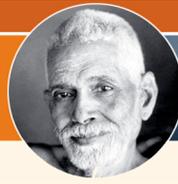
Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate.

Making the unconscious conscious is contemporary language for allowing vasanas and samskaras to be known and worked with. We are free either to

¹ Talks §628, §488; *Spiritual Instructions* §21.

² Talks §11.





continue to suppress these psychic orphans of the past or bring them into the light of awareness and make them whole. Their multiplication is born of denial and the refusal to face frontally the legacy of the past. If indulging the senses and obsessive thinking are compounding factors in the accumulated karmic nexus, mental purification begins by bringing karmic defilements into conscious awareness. When we inquire into the doer, we discover that it is born of a maladaptive effort to stave off and defend against the painful effects of karma bringing the unintended result of perpetuating our unease:

Pain or pleasure is the result of past karma...One must suffer or enjoy them patiently without being carried away by them...He who is indifferent to pain or pleasure can alone be happy.³

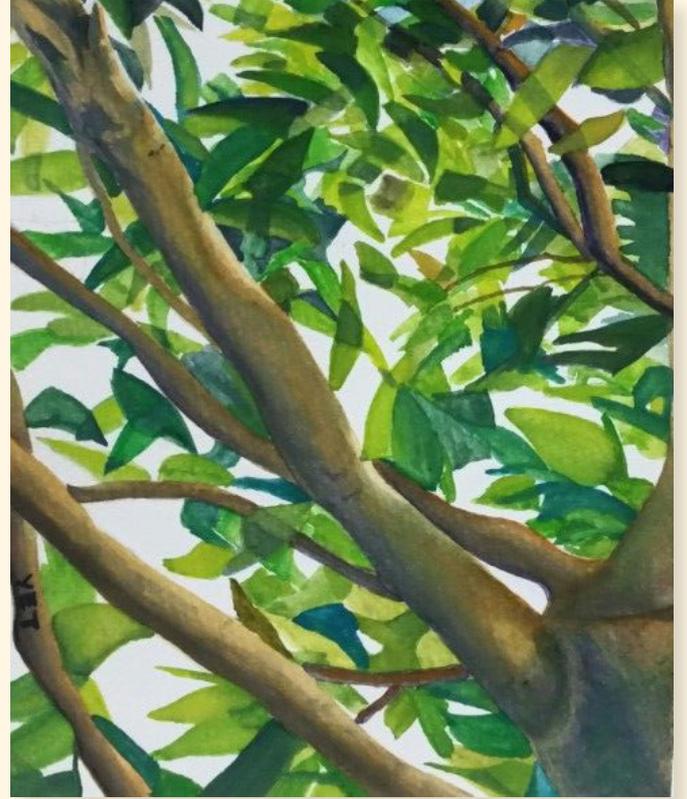
Karmic retribution is not, as is often assumed, divine punishment for past misdeeds, but rather the deeds themselves are the cause of the trouble. The law of karma boils down to causation where inherent in each and every past action is the cause and origin of an equal and opposite reaction. If it is true that we meet our destiny on the very road we take to avoid it, Bhagavan says that vichara is the ultimate face to face encounter with it, a game-changer. Bhagavan continues:

The person soaked in the "I-am-the-body" idea is the greatest sinner; the experience of "I-am-the-Self" is the highest virtue. Even a moment's dhyana to that effect is enough to destroy all sanchita karma. It works like the sun before whom darkness is dispelled. If one remains always in dhyana, can any sin, however heinous, survive [it]?⁴

Of course, karmic afflictions, vasanas and samskaras are born not only of the actions of this and former births but also involve the actions of our ancestors. In jyotisha veda, ancestral karmic debt, called *pitru dosha*, is very often reflected in the horoscope and can manifest in the form of samskaras. Pitru dosha maps on to what in modern psychology is called *transgenerational wounding*, where psychological imprinting involves traumatic memories from our biological parents and grandparents. Samskaric imprinting would thus consist of six other people's samskaras (that of two parents and four grandparents), besides the subject him or herself.

³ Talks §546.

⁴ Talks §536.



Studies on mice in recent decades have identified the mechanism at work, namely, DNA methylation, where traumatic experiences of ancestors can be detected in the gene expression of their offspring. In one study, mice were conditioned to fear a strong scent (acetophenone) by accompanying its use with an electric shock. The children and grandchildren of these mice exhibited fear responses to the scent even though they had never received an electric shock. Similar experiments were made with cows enclosed in electric fences. After contact with electric fences, the cows would no longer go near them. But later, when placed in conventional enclosures such as wooden fences, they still would not go near the fences. But here's the thing, their offspring conceived in the post-electric fence period and never having experienced an electric fence, would also not go near fences, wooden or otherwise.

Another study performed on mouse offspring involved separating mouse pups from their mothers for three hours per day during their first two weeks of life. The stress of maternal separation caused measurable gene expression changes, i.e. DNA methylation, that could be traced for three generations. Offspring who had





suffered no maternal separation exhibited behaviours similar to what we call depression in humans.⁵

Such studies help psychologists understand how trauma is passed on to future generations even where no major trauma is directly experienced. It had previously been assumed that the multi-generationality of childhood woundedness was transmitted through socialisation. But epigenetic inheritance⁶ offers a clearer picture. Through epigenetic inheritance, we can carry the epigenetic ‘memory’ of our parents’ and grandparents’ traumas without any conscious awareness of those original events. Negative mind states may be created by association with some past painful experience in our ancestral line.

These are some of the mechanisms described in modern science that cause accumulations of samskaras. Individual conditioning is thus thought to be the sum of these impressions and can influence us in unwholesome ways. Healing such conditioning comes about through what Bhagavan calls an *in-turned mind*, namely, an inquiring mind brought about by vichara practice and the surrender that leads to disidentification with the doer. In short, we probe into the triggers that cause reactivity and maladaptive defenses such as strong egoic identification. By contrast, when we are harmonised with the interior life of the heart and mind, the light of awareness and the warmth of compassionate attention eases the burden of karmic afflictions and allows for the assimilation

⁵ *It Didn't Start with You*, Mark Wolynn, p. 13.

⁶ Epigenetics is the study of heritable phenotype changes that do not involve alterations in the DNA sequence.

of what would otherwise be unpleasant psychic and samskaric material. If our lives had previously been unbearable, they were made so by wilful dissociation from our afflictions and the attempt to disown the past. Giving up this resistance, Bhagavan says, is the key to getting to the root of karmic affliction:

*The jnani's vasanas simply exhaust themselves by activities ending in enjoyment. He remains actionless. He is not aware of the body being apart from the Self. How can there be liberation or bondage for him? He is beyond both, [and] is [no longer] bound by karma...In the same manner a wise householder discharges without attachment the various household duties which fall to his lot according to his past karma, like a tool in the hands of another.*⁷

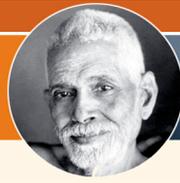
Conclusion

As stated in the first segment, devotees sometimes read Bhagavan's message to his mother and interpret it to mean that their karma is fixed and unalterable. But this is only true if we are pitted against our karmic afflictions and seek to suppress them. If *karma carries the seeds of its own destruction*, as Bhagavan tells us, its resolution comes about by our willingness to work cooperatively with it, bring it into the light of awareness and heal it through self-attention and surrender. If it has been said that *what you resist, persists*, what you face squarely with compassionate attention gets resolved once and for all. Thus, the way out is *through*, says Bhagavan, and this option is available to anyone irrespective of the gravity of their prarabdhi burden.

One cannot get lost on a road that is straight, goes the saying. Every aspect of our daily lives is part and parcel of the whole. Robbing by night and practicing meditation by day doesn't work. But Ramana-dharma, the cleanest and straightest of all possible roads, reveals its character in, among other things, the impeccability of Bhagavan's daily life. For us it begins in cleaning up the mess, not least of all, the intentions and motivations that underlie our thoughts, words and deeds. This worthy enterprise leads to the ultimate purification, Bhagavan tells us, namely, release from delusions, conceits and the skewed perceptions that have so long plagued us and prevented us from entering the straight path to Bhagavan. —

⁷ *Talks* §383; *Spiritual Instructions* §23.





Kartigai Festival Lamps in Bhagavan's Samadhi Hall on Mahadeepam Night

Obituary: Smt. Sreeja Jayan



Born in Kerala on 22nd October 1971, Sreeja completed her B.Com degree in Trivandrum, Kerala and served as a Traffic Coordinator. She took a posting with Team Y&R Advertising in Dubai in 2005. In 2013, she and the family got the call to come to Ramanasramam and in 2014, following their 5th visit, they made the decision to settle near Sri Ramanasramam permanently. That year Sreeja and her husband resigned their jobs after their daughter successfully completed her exams.

Six months ago Sreeja's health began to fail and just before 6 am on 26th October 2020, she climbed out of the sickbed with the help of her husband saying she needed to go. She pranammed to the place where Arunachala stood and said "Arunachala is calling. I need to go, I need to go". There and then she breathed her last and merged at the Feet of Holy Arunachala. Sreeja is survived by her husband, Jayan, and their daughter, Lekshmi. —

