



## ***FLIGHT OF THE FLAME***

**"ARUNACHALA JYOTHI" = "ARUNACHALA LIGHT" : the SOURCE of ALL EXISTENCE !**



**ARUNACHALA MAHATMYAM: "Oh! Column of Light ! ARUNACHALA!  
Lord Brahma as 'Swan' — went up searching for your 'Head' and  
Lord Vishnu — as 'Boar' — went down to find your 'Feet'."**

**"அடிமுடி காணா அண்ணாமலை"  
"Jyothi Sthamba"**

**(please see page 115 in Treasure Trove of Sri Bhagavan's Grace)**



## **Flight Of The Flame**

**"Arunachala Ramana, Formless Flame of Awareness that shines as the Inner Guru — in all beings starting from Lord Hari !**

**"Is it not You who manifested for the first time — aeons ago — as a Fiery, Infinite Pillar of Light? As the Outer Guru to the warring Gods, Lord Brahma and Lord Vishnu, in order to quell their rutting egos and humble their puffed up pride?**

**"Oh, Pillar of Light ! Too dazzling for human eyes! Is it in answer to the prayer of the Gods or out of Your Boundless Compassion that You took the Form of this Obscure, Rocky Hill, bearing the various names, 'Arunachala', 'Sonachala', 'Annamalai', 'Sonagiri'...?**

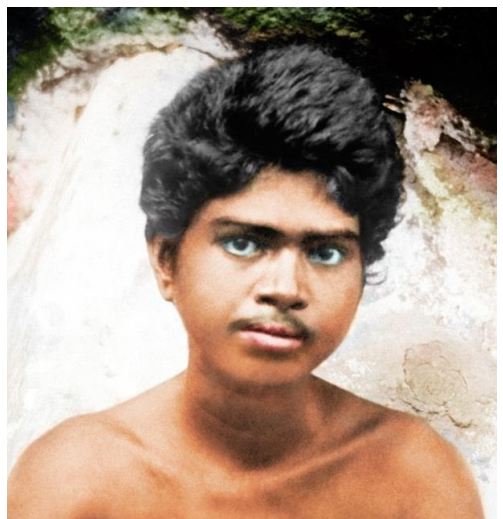
**"So that we, your children, realise our SELF and get Liberated from the cycle of births and deaths by approaching You, seeing You, worshipping You and thinking of You !**

**"Sacred Heart of the World! For too long did You remain a 'secret'. Enflaming the hearts of only those rare and ripe souls who sought Your Feet and sang Your Glory through the centuries.**

**"Now the time had come for Your Fragrant Light to spread across the World. So that Your children in their millions hear about You, come to You and experience You as the Stillness and Silent Awareness shining in their own Heart — as the Peace that passeth all understanding.**

**Yes, the time had come and the place for Your next manifestation as the Outer Guru had been chosen.**

**ARUNACHALA RAMANA IS BORN !"**



Midnight, 30th December, 1879, Tiruchuzhi, Tamil Nadu, South India.



Sundara Mandiram — The house in Tiruchuzhi — where Sri Bhagavan was born

Was there a better time than midnight for the Light that was to remove the darkness of ignorance from our lives to take human form?

Moreover, December 30th that year was *Ardhra Darshan*. The sacred day that the Infinite *Jyothi Linga* appeared — aeons ago — to destroy the egos of the warring Gods.

Tiruchuzhi, the village chosen for this momentous event was no less significant. It is where Lord Shiva pierced the Earth with His Trident to drain out all the flood waters of an earlier deluge.

And where once the primordial Element of Water had subsided, the Element of Fire was about to rise.

TRUTH wearing a human form, filled with Grace and with eyes raining Light.



"It's a boy, Azhagu!" This was the cry that rang out in the night from a small house on the street adjacent to and north of Tiruchuzhi's Bhuminatha temple.



*Sri Bhuminatha Temple at Tiruchuzhi*

The idol of Nataraja, the God whose Perpetual Dance of Energy creates, sustains and destroys all of creation, had just re-entered the temple at midnight, when the "baby" who was to be the Embodiment of Stillness and Silence was born.

"I saw a bright light!" This exclamation of the blind midwife who assisted Mother Alagammal was forgotten in the excitement of the birth of a healthy, baby boy.

Nobody connected what the midwife saw with what the mother had felt all through her pregnancy: A burning sensation in the womb that was so unbearable that a special cooling paste of neem leaves and other herbs had to be applied regularly on her stomach to ease the pain.



*Mother Alagammal*

The mother's face too, shone with an unearthly glow during this period. Could it have been otherwise? Was it not of the Infinite Pillar of Fiery Light that was in her womb as an Infinitesimal Seed?

The sprouted seed grew, for all appearances, into an ordinary boy.



Named Venkataraman, he was unusually kind. And more than willing to share what was His with others.

For instance, when He used to suckle from His mother's breast, which He did till he was four years old, He would often invite His friend Lakshmi to suckle from the other breast! Not at all surprising, considering how the milk of human kindness overflowed from Him towards all who sought His Grace in later years.



*Sundaram Iyer*

And as many boys are, Venkataraman was naughty too. Once, when He was about six years old, when His father, Sundaram Iyer, a respected Pleader in the local court, was not at home. He went into his office room and gleefully proceeded to make paper boats out of disposed case bundles of lawsuits. Was this not foretelling one of His 108 names of praise, "*Samsaararnava Taaraka*?" Meaning, 'the boatman ferrying souls across the ocean of birth and death?

On returning home, his father angrily exclaimed, "Where is that naughty fellow? Strip him and send him out of the house in a loin cloth and let him live off begged food!" Little did the father know his words were as significant as the actions of his son! That his son would one day wander the streets of Father Arunachala's temple town, wearing only a loin cloth and beg for food.



*Shrine of Lord Sri Bhuminathar*



*Shrine of Mother Sri Sahayavalli*

The boy took the rebuke to heart and disappeared. His family and the rest of the villagers searched high and low for Him. But their search was fruitless. Where was

little Venkataraman? Where had He run away to? Some hours later, when the priest went to do the *puja* at Mother Sri Sahayavalli's Shrine, he was both relieved and delighted to see a figure silently seated behind the idol — it was the child Venkataraman. Hurt by the words of His all too human father, the child had sought solace from the *Divine Mother*.



When Venkataraman was twelve, Sundaram Iyer died. This was perhaps the first time that the child contemplated on the mystery of death. Sitting by His father's corpse, He reflected, "Where has my father gone? Till yesterday, he was in this body. Now he is not, and this body has become a corpse. So, he is not this body."

Shortly after His father's demise, the family was split up. Venkataraman, who had been studying in Dindigul for a short time, went to live with His uncle, Subba Iyer, who had a house in the nearby city of Madurai.



View of Sri Meenakshi Temple from Ramana Mandiram  
— from the house of Subba Iyer

Though endowed with a stronger constitution than most of His school friends in His boyhood years, He was prone to abnormally deep sleep. Speaking of this in later years He said, "The boys didn't dare touch me when I was awake. But if they had any grudge against me, they would come when I was asleep, carry me wherever they liked, beat me, paint my face with charcoal and then put me back, and I would know nothing about it until they told me the next morning."

Was He immersed so deep in the Light of the Self that He did not know the punishment His friends meted out to his body? Was this a precursor to His later period in Paatala Lingam shrine when insects bit and fed on His body while he sat absorbed in the Self?



There was yet another facet of *Primordial Pillar of Fire* that manifested itself in young Venkataraman: The steady throbbing of its ancient name, '*Arunachala-Arunachala*,' at the very Core of His Being. Yes! As the concluding verse of *Sri Ramana Ashtotharam*, the 108 Names of his Praise says, "He was born with the constant remembrance of *Arunachala*..."

It was therefore an enthralling surprise when in Madurai, a relative came home one day and on being asked where he was coming from, replied, "*Arunachala!*" "*Arunachala!* Where is that?" Venkataraman asked in wonder. "Why, don't you know even this? It is Tiruvannamalai," replied the relative. A shiver of Ecstatic Light rippled through the boy. He had never even imagined that "*Arunachala*" was actually on Earth and that it was a place one could go to.

Referring to this, He would later write a verse beginning with the words, "From the age of innocence it had shone within my mind that *Arunachala* was something of Surpassing Grandeur."

Perhaps, it was this constant and enlightening remembrance that inspired Him to write later in the very first verse of *Sri Arunachala Akshara Manamalai*, "Thou dost root out the ego of those who always meditate on Thee in the Heart, O *Arunachala!*"

Around the same time, another significant event occurred. This time it was through the book Sekkizhaar's "*Periya Puranam*". It was given to the boy by His uncle who got it from a holy man living nearby. As Sri Bhagavan later recalled, "Coming across the book that thus happened to be in our house, I looked into it first out of curiosity and then, becoming interested, read the whole book. It made a great impression on me."



Page from *Periya Puranam* - book



The book was about the lives of Nayanmars, the Sixty-Three Saint-devotees of Lord Shiva, their bone-melting devotion, and Heart-stirring songs. It also described incidents of some of the Saints being drawn to *Arunachala* and their outpourings to the Divinity there. All of which added more fuel to the Fire of Devotion that was growing in young Venkataraman's Heart.

With this unexpected revelation that "*Arunachala*" was a place one could go to and become one with God, the stage was set for the Great Transforming Event in the boy's life. It would be a trial by fire. Literally !



***"Nin eri erithennai neer aakidumun nin arul mazhai pozhi, Arunachala."***  
**~ Aksharamanamalai, v. 55**



'Death Experience'  
– took place in this room

*The great, transforming event in His life is best described in Sri Bhagavan's own words:*

***"It was about six weeks before I left Madurai for good that the great change in my life took place. It was quite sudden. I was sitting alone in a room on the first floor of my uncle's house. I seldom had any sickness and on that day there was nothing wrong with my health, but a sudden and unmistakable fear of death overtook me. There was nothing in my state of health to account for it, and I did not try to account for it or to find out whether there was any reason for the fear. I just felt 'I am going to die,' and began thinking what***

***to do about it. It did not occur to me to consult a doctor or elders or friends; I felt that I had to solve the problem myself, there and then.***

***"The shock of the fear of death drove my mind inwards and I said to myself mentally, without actually framing the words. ' Now death has come; what does it mean? What is it that is Dying? This body dies'. And I at once dramatized the occurrence of death. I have with my limbs stretched out stiff as though Rigor-Mortis had set in and imitated a corpse so as to give greater reality to the enquiry. I held my breath and kept my lips tightly***

***closed so that no sound could escape so that neither the word 'I' nor any other word could be uttered. 'Well then,' I said to myself, 'this body is dead. It will be carried stiff to the burning ground, and there burnt and reduced to ashes. But with the death of this body am 'I' dead? Is the body 'I' ? It is silent and inert, but I feel the full force of my personality and even the voice of the 'I' within me, apart from it. So 'I' am a Spirit, a thing transcending the body. The material body dies, but the Spirit transcending it cannot be touched by death. I am therefore the deathless 'Spirit' ". All this was not dull thought; it flashed through me vividly as living Truth which I perceived directly, almost without thought process. 'I' was something very Real, the only Real thing about my present state, and all the conscious activity connected with my body was centered on that 'I'. From that moment onwards the 'I' or my 'Self' focused attention on Itself by a powerful fascination. Fear of death had vanished once and for all.***

***"Absorption in the Self continued unbroken from that time on! Other thoughts might come and go like the various notes of music, but the 'I' continued like the fundamental sruti-note that underlies and blends with all the other notes. Whether the body is engaged in talking, reading or anything else, I am still centered on 'I'. Previous to this crisis I had no clear perception of my 'Self' and was not consciously attracted to it. I felt no perceptible or direct interest in it, much less any inclination to dwell permanently in it."***

*~ Sri Bhagavan in "Self Realization" by B.V. Narasimha Swami*

There is perhaps no doubt that Venkataraman's body would have become a corpse. And in that timeless moment of intense tapas, it may have even self combusted. But, the downpour of Arunachala's Grace ensured that this did not happen. Instead, only His ego-sense was burnt to ashes, transforming the boy to a fully enlightened "JNANI".



Venkataraman's trial by fire had unforeseen consequences. As He recounted years later, "In the first place, I lost what little interest I had in my outer relationship with friends and relatives, and went through my studies mechanically. I would hold an open book in front of me to satisfy my relatives

that I was reading, when in reality my attention was far away from any such superficial matters. In my dealings with people I became meek and humble.

"Going to school, book in hand, I would be eagerly desiring and expecting that *God* would suddenly appear before me in the sky. What sort of progress could such a one make in his studies at school !"

*The change was not just in his studies or in relating with His friends and family.* "One of the features of my new state was my changed attitude to the Mother Meenakshi Temple. Formerly I used to go there very occasionally with friends to look at the images and put the sacred ash and vermillion on my forehead, and would return home almost unmoved. But after the "*Awakening*" I went there almost every evening.



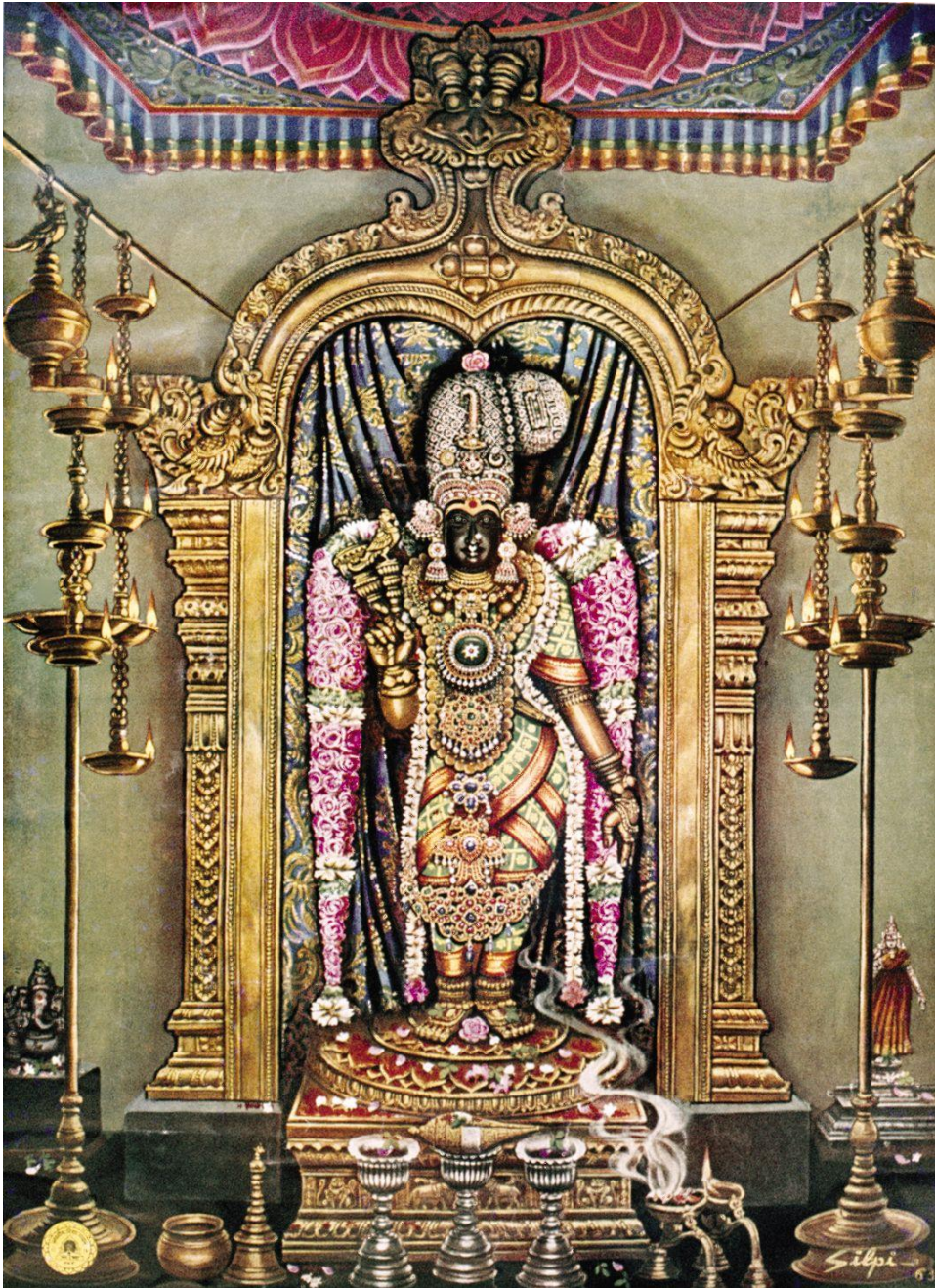
*Inside Sri Meenakshi Sundareswarar Temple - Madurai*

"I used to go alone and stand motionless for a long time before an image of Siva or Meenakshi or Nataraja and the Sixty-three Saints, and as I stood there, waves of emotion overwhelmed me."

Sri Bhagavan has told with characteristic simplicity how this "*Awareness*" began to awaken in him during his visits to the Mother Meenakshi Temple. He said: "At first, I thought it was some kind of force (*avesam*) but I decided it is a pleasant force, so let it stay."



"The Spirit had given up its hold on the body when it renounced the '*I-am-the-body*' idea and it was seeking some fresh anchorage; hence the frequent visits to the temple and the outpouring of the soul in tears. This was God's play with the Spirit. I would stand before *Iswara*, the Controller of the Universe and of the destinies of all, the *Omniscient* and *Omnipresent*, and pray for the descent of His Grace upon me so that my devotion might increase and become perpetual like that of the *Sixty-Three Saints*. More often I would not pray at all, but silently allow the deep within to flow on and into the deep beyond."



*Mother Meenakshi*



Speaking to his aunt who had looked after him in Madurai, Sri Bhagavan said: "It was the month before I left Madurai. It was not a headache but an inexpressible anguish which I suppressed at the time; there were, however, outward symptoms which I said were due to headache. I remember how anxious you grew on account of my headache. You used to rub some ointment on my forehead every day. My anguish continued until I left Madurai and reached this (*Arunachala*) place."

Was this caused by the Embers of the Fire that had burnt his individuality to ashes? Embers that longed to return to *Arunachala*, its Source? Indeed, Bhagavan himself said how the burning sensation in Him was quenched only when He ran away from Madurai and embraced the *Agni Lingam* in *Arunachaleswara Temple*.

***"Nee naan arapuli nidam kali mayama nindridu nilaiy arul Arunachala."***

*~ Aksharamanamalai, v. 56*

***("So that this idea of separation between 'You' and 'me' is totally erased, embrace me firmly and forever in the Bliss of the Self, Oh! Arunachala.")***



"Of what use is all this to such a one," scoffed his elder brother after six weeks of seeing Venkataraman sit often with eyes closed in front of his school books. Sri Bhagavan later recalled, "I had even stopped going out with friends to play games and preferred solitude. I would often sit alone and become absorbed in the Self, the Spirit, the Force or Current which constituted me."

The implication of His brother's words was therefore not lost on Venkataraman. It was obvious to Him that the time had come to leave His house and go to his Father's Home. And for Him, that meant the Holy Hill, "*Arunachala*".

As he got up with the resolve to run away from Madurai on the pretext of going to school, His brother added, "Take five rupees from the box downstairs and pay my college fees on the way." Thus, providing Venkataraman the funds needed for His journey. (And the proof for us of Lord Krishna's assurance to every spiritual aspirant: "***Ananyaaschintayanto maam, ye janaah paryupaasate, teshaam nityabhiyuktanaam, yogakshemam vahaamyaham***" ~ *Bhagavad Gita v. 22, Ch.9* ("***Those who meditate on Me and worship Me and no other, and who are ever dedicated to Me, their welfare rests on Me.***")

After consulting an old *Atlas* and surmising He would need only three rupees, the boy wrote and left a letter for His unsuspecting brother:

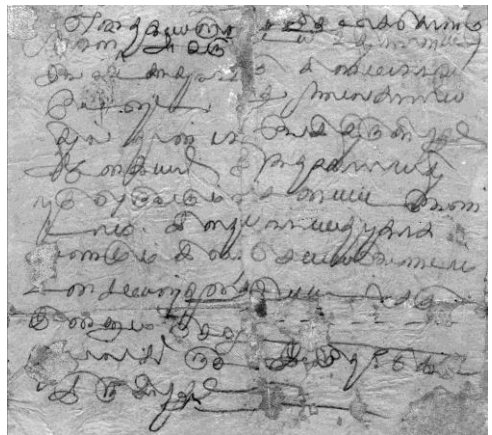
**"I have, in search of my Father, and in obedience to His Command, started from here. *This* is only embarking on a virtuous enterprise. Therefore, none need grieve over *this* affair. To trace this out, no money need be spent.**

**Your college fee has not yet been paid, Rupees two are enclosed herewith.**

**Thus \_\_\_\_\_"**

The letter that began with the personal "I" soon passed into the impersonal "*this*" — and finally, it was left unsigned. For, there was no entity left there to sign.

About not signing His name as is customary, Sri Bhagavan later remarked, "There was nothing deliberate or conscious about it. Simply that the ego did not rise up to sign it."



*The parting note...*

Ranga Iyer, a school friend, while visiting Sri Bhagavan years later in *Virupaksha Cave*, asked: "Why did you not tell at least me that you were leaving home?" Sri Bhagavan replied: "How could I? I myself did not know. When I left home, I was like a speck swept on by a tremendous flood. I knew not my body or the World, whether it was day or night."



It is rightly said that when we take one step towards the Lord, He takes nine steps towards us. In Venkataraman's case, his complete 'obedience' of his Father's Command meant that it was now the Father's responsibility to bring His son "Home". Consequently, Divine help continued to flow on His way to *Arunachala*. His journey into the great "unknown" took Him three days. And many were the strangers who helped Him:

## The Moulvi



The Railway map

Though Venkataraman arrived late at the station, the train was also late. He bought a ticket to Tindivanam thinking it was the nearest station to Tiruvannamalai.

After finding a seat, Venkataraman sank once more deep into the Bliss of *Samadhi*. But not before an aged *Moulvi* in his compartment informed him, by chance, of a newly opened Railway line to Tiruvannamalai via Villupuram Junction. A development that the young lad was unaware of. Was this not the Hand of God directing a man of God to guide His son on his way back to Him?

## The hotel owner

On reaching Villupuram at three in the morning, Venkataraman felt hungry. He went to a hotel where he was asked to wait until midday for His meal. Once again, the boy sank into *samadhi*. When after the meal, He offered two *annas*, from the little money He had, the hotel's proprietor, who had been



Villupuram Railway Station

watching the young lad with His fair complexion, long, jet black locks, golden earrings, a face beaming with intelligence, and with no luggage or possessions, sitting unruffled through the long hours from morning to midday absorbed in *samadhi*, refused to accept the payment. Perhaps, he felt that this was not a mere boy he had fed, but a Saint, or the "*Child of God*".



Athulyanatheswara Temple, Arayaninallur

Venkataraman started at once for the Railway Station where He bought a ticket to Mambalapattu, which was as far as His meagre funds permitted. Reaching the Station in the afternoon, got down and set out to walk the distance of about thirty miles to Tiruvannamalai.

After a long eleven-mile walk under a hot sun, he saw the temple of Arayaninallur on a large rock

ahead of him. Weary, almost exhausted, he sat down to rest outside the temple. In a little while the priest arrived to open the temple for the evening *puja*. Venkataraman entered and sat down in the cool and dark pillared hall.

## The Darshan of Light

***Soodhu seidennai chodiyaad ini un jyothi uru kaat Arunachala.***

~ *Aksharamanamalai*, v. 32

***("Do not test me anymore with your wiles, instead reveal Your Real Form as the Supreme Light.")***

Almost immediately, he beheld a brilliant light pervading the whole temple. Was it emanating from the image of God in the *sanctum sanctorum*? He went there to check but found that it was not from there. Neither was it any physical light. It disappeared, and he sat down again in meditation. He did not realize at the time that He was seated by the side of the statue of Saint Jnana Sambandha, one of the Sixty-three Saivite Saints who centuries ago had sat at the very same place and got a similar *Jyothi* Darshan of *Arunachala*.



*The Sanctorum where Sri Bhagavan had the 'Jyothi Darshan'*

Sri Bhagavan Himself said of this later: "Sambandha worshipped Atulyanatheswara in Arayaninallur. While he was seated there on a *mantapam*, God Arunachaleswara appeared to him first in the shape of a *Jyoti* and then in the shape of an old *brahmin*."

## The drummer

His meditation was soon disturbed by the temple priest calling out that it was time to lock up the temple as the *puja* was finished. Being hungry, He requested the priest for some food and was told there was nothing there but that He might get food in the temple in Kilur where they were going. Along with the priest and others, Venkataraman crossed the South Pennaiyar River which separates the two temples.





The Kilur Temple

Late in the evening when the *puja* ended at the temple in Kilur, Venkataraman asked again for food. It seemed at first that there would be nothing for Him. But the temple drummer who had been impressed by His appearance and devout manner, gave Him his share without a second thought. Venkataraman walked out of the temple into the lane outside, but fainted after just a few paces from sheer exhaustion. The food He carried lay scattered on the dirt road. Soon, a crowd gathered around him and began discussing the matter. While they were talking, Venkataraman awoke at the hubbub.

Not wanting to waste a grain of rice, especially since it was temple *prasada*, He picked up the each scattered grain and ate it. With relish and reverence.

### The *Bhagavathar* and his wife

Standing a little away the crowd and watching all this keenly, was a pious man, Muthukrishna Bhagavathar. He was deeply impressed by the extraordinary countenance of this young *Brahmin* lad. Brimming with compassion for his plight, he led the boy to his house located a few paces away, Venkataraman spent the night there. Next morning, August 31<sup>st</sup>, a Monday, was *Gokulashtami*, the birth anniversary of Lord Krishna. The good couple persuaded Venkataraman to stay until noon and fed Him a hearty meal. Emboldened, perhaps, by their compassion, He asked his hosts for a loan of four rupees in exchange for of His gold earrings set with rubies. Not only did they give Him this, He was also given a packet of sweetmeats that had been prepared for that day's special *puja* to Lord Krishna.



House of Muthukrishna Bhagavathar

Sri Bhagavan later recalled, "That good lady not only gave me a hearty meal, but also, with a loving heart, gave me a parcel of sweetmeats prepared as *naivedya* to the household God saying: My dear boy, keep this with you carefully and eat the sweetmeats on the way."

Finding that there was no train to Tiruvannamalai till next morning, he slept the night at the Station. It was the morning of the first of September — three days after leaving home — when Venkataraman arrived at Tiruvannamalai Railway Station and at Sacred Arunachala.



*View of Arunachala*

***Varumbadi sollilayi vanden padiyala varundhidun thalaividhi,  
Arunachala."***

*~ Aksharamanamalai. v.96*

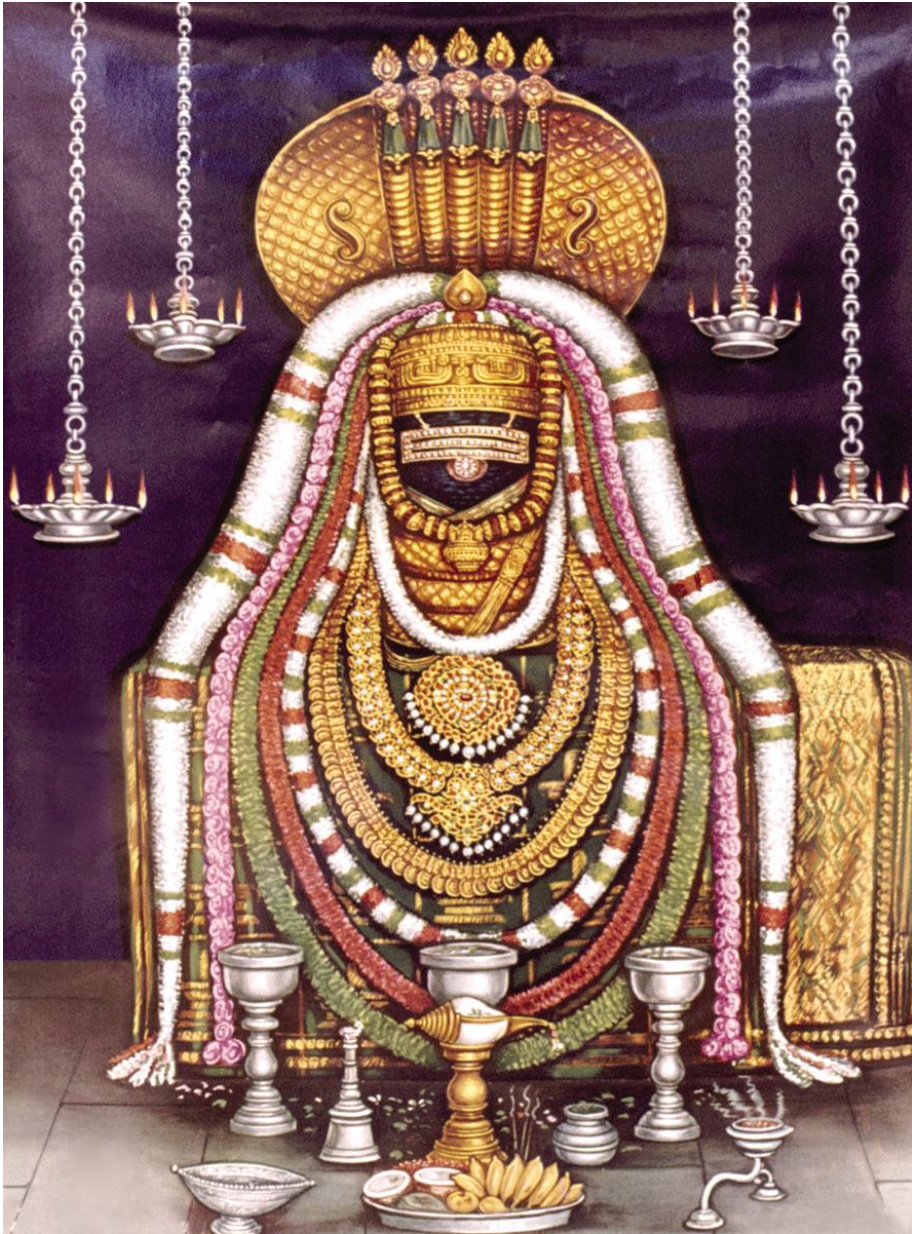
***("Did you not ask me to come? From now on, the burden of my sustenance  
and Union with You is Your burden, Oh! Arunachala.")***



*Sri Arunachaleswara Temple*

With His heart throbbing with joy, Venkataraman hastened straight to the Arunachaleswara temple. In a silent sign of welcome, the gates of the three high compound walls and all the other doors — even that of the inner shrine — were miraculously open for Him. He entered the inner shrine alone and stood overcome before His Father. As He embraced the *lingam* in utter ecstasy — the burning sensation which had begun at Madurai

vanished and merged with Arunachaleswara's *Lingam* of Light. The spark had become one from the Fire it came from. And in the Bliss of Union, Venkataraman's journey ended.



*Sri Arunachaleswara*

***"Un ishtam, yen ishtam."*** (***"As your will, so is my life."***) From that moment on, till the very end of His sojourn on earth, Sri Bhagavan was the epitome of a life surrendered to Divine Will.



So, when immediately upon leaving the temple, someone called out to ask whether He wanted His head shaved, He took it as the injunction of *Arunachala*, and consented. He was directed to Ayyankulam Tank where a number of barbers plied their trade. There, He had His thick, long locks completely shaved. Then, standing on the steps of the tank, He threw away the packet of sweets which he was still carrying. He also threw away His remaining money — a little over three rupees. From that day on, Venkataraman never handled money again.



Ayyankulam Tank

Finally, discarding His *sacred thread* and wearing only a loin cloth, thus unintentionally completing the acts of renunciation, He returned to the temple. Although there had been no rain for a very long time, the Fiery Father welcomed his Flame-like Son into His house with a downpour of rain, which though it seemed soaked Him from head to foot, revealed His glowing *jnana* all the more. And thus, the traditional bath enjoined by Hindu scriptures after shaving one's head, was taken care of by God for the fully surrendered boy-sage.



Mantapam in front of Temple

Speaking about His first night at *Arunachala*, Sri Bhagavan related: "It seems there had been no rains for a long time. But on that night, there was a heavy downpour. I was staying at the *mantapam* in front of the Big Temple. Only that morning for the first time I had discarded all my clothes except for a cod-piece (loin-cloth) and, due to the rains beating in and the cold winds blowing about, I found the cold unbearable; so, I ran from there and took shelter on the *thinnai* (veranda) of a house nearby. About

midnight, some inmates of the house came out opening the street door, and I ran into the Big Temple. For some days after that too it rained!"



'Thinnai' house

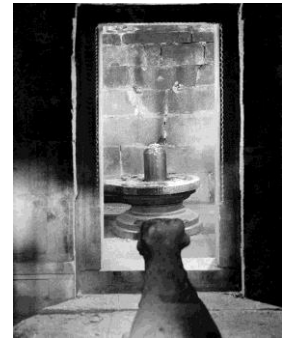




Inside the 'thousand pillared' mantapam

Entering the thousand pillared *mantapam*, He sat with his eyes closed, fully absorbed in deep *samadhi*. But, because of the persistent pranks of local urchins, who only saw Him as a boy like themselves, but strange and perhaps mad, He remained there only for a few weeks. Seshadriswami, a revered ascetic who had arrived at Tiruvannamalai a few years earlier, attempted to protect *Brahmana Swami*, as He was now known, but his efforts were not very successful. In fact, they had the opposite effect. So, *Brahmana Swami* sought refuge in the pitch

dark and cellar-like ***Pathala Lingam*** close to the Subramanya shrine. For about two months He stayed in the shrine absorbed in *samadhi*. Food, which had to be put into His mouth, often remained in His mouth, uneaten, as He remained immersed in the Effulgence of Bliss, barely conscious of His body, barely moving and so still, that to onlookers it appeared to be the most intense *tapas*. But it was not really *tapas* at all. He was ignoring the body as He simply had no need for it. Already a *jivanmukta* in unwavering Consciousness of Identity with the Self, He had no *karma* left to wipe out and no further Goal to attain.



*Pathala Lingam*



*Sri Seshadri Swami*

Later, under Seshadriswami's direction, *Brahmana Swami* was lifted up and brought out of the dark, dank and insect infested ***Pathala Lingam*** shrine by a couple of able-bodied men. They were aghast and awed seeing his state: the young Swami's body was not just skin and bones. It had bleeding wounds left by the Shrine's resident insects which had blissfully fed on him while He remained blissfully remained unaware of His body and their feasting! His body was so neglected that it might not have endured long and He might have effortlessly discarded it. And so, the story would have ended.



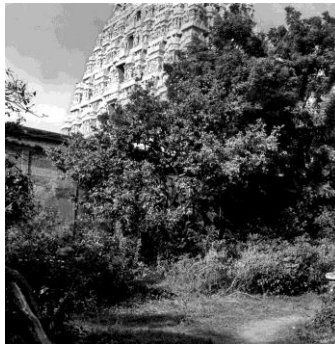
Yet, the story was just beginning; For, His life was to be a perfect example of an ancient *rishi* of *Upanishadic* lore. Living in the World, yet completely untouched by it. He had to live, that was the Father's will. And by His very presence and words, attract earnest souls from far and near. And guide them so profoundly

and so powerfully, that seekers would not cease to seek Him with the body's passing, but continue to flock in their thousands. And still find 'the Peace which passeth all understanding' at His Feet.

From the Subramanya Shrine He moved to the adjoining flower-garden and banana grove. During this time, He would sometimes also be found in the vehicle room where the large floats used for temple celebrations were stored. His body sometimes moved about even in this state, for on waking to the World He would find Himself under one of the chariots used to carry the temple's *utsava murtis* during festivals. But He had no recollection of how He got there. Within the temple precincts, by the side of the road which runs along the outside temple wall, He next sat under the shade of a large *iluppai* tree, or in the Mangai Pillayar Shrine which was nearby.



*Subramanya Shrine*



*Flower Garden*



*Banana Grove*



*'Chariot Room'*

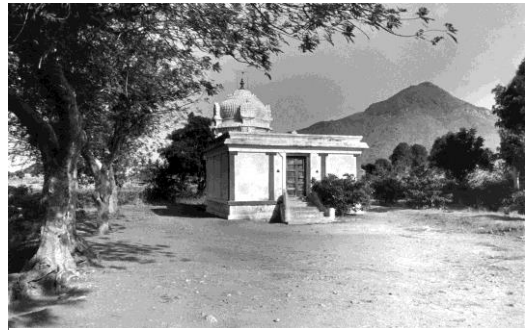


*Shade of iluppai tree*



*Mangai Pillayar Shrine*

*Brahmana Swami* was covered in grime as after that first welcoming shower of rain sent by Arunachala on his first day, he had not bothered to take a bath. Yet, the Light that He was absorbed in within, revealed Itself as a shining countenance that started attracting crowds of noisy pilgrims curious to see the young sage. To protect the young sage's solitude, He was moved to Gurumurtam by Uddandi Nayinar, the very first attendant of Bhagavan, less than a year and a half after his arrival at Tiruvannamalai.



Gurumurtam Temple



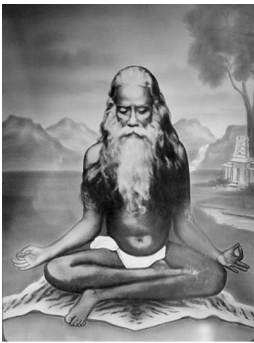
Palaniswami

It was here that Palaniswami, the attendant who took care of Sri Bhagavan for many of His early years in Tiruvannamalai, came to him. Before coming to Sri Bhagavan, Palaniswami was a devout worshipper of Vinayaka, living on a single meal daily. One Srinivasa Iyer, seeing him at his devotions to the image, advised him: "What is the use of spending your lifetime with the stone swami? There is a young swami deep in the meditation at Gurumurtam. He is steeped in austerities like the child Dhruva mentioned in the *Puranas*. If you go and serve him, and adhere to him, your life would serve its purpose."

Spurred on by his encouraging words, Palaniswami went to Gurumurtam. There he saw the Swami and at once realized he had discovered his saviour. Palaniswami attended constantly on the Swami, following Him like a shadow. Receiving bits of food-offerings, he would mix them up, offer a cupful at noon to the Swami, and return the rest to those who had made the offering as *prasad*.

***"While I was staying in Gurumurtam, Palaniswami was with me. He had a copy of the "Adhyatma Ramayanam". Every Malayali who knows how to read invariably reads that book. Even though he did not know how to read a portion of it, somehow, he managed, albeit with many mistakes. I was at the time observing silence, and so I merely listened. After we shifted to the mango grove, to help him in the daily reading I took the book and found it to be in Malayalam script. Easily learning to read and write the Malayalam script with the help of Palaniswami, I found that what was written in that book had already been experienced by myself."***

***~ Sri Bhagavan***



*Achyutadasa*

It was also in Gurumurtam that Achyutadasa, a famous poet and spiritual scholar who had many disciples, came to see Bhagavan. After he had sung some in front of Sri Bhagavan, the much older Achyutadasa fell prostrate at young Sri Bhagavan's feet, held them reverentially, and went instantly into a state of ecstasy. And when on seeing this, his disciples also wanted to touch Sri Bhagavan's feet, Achyutadasa stopped them saying, "This is a Huge Fire. None of you can get close to it."

Yes, the Flame that had come out from the Temple of the Fire Lingam was burning as brightly as ever!

\* \* \*

In May 1898, after a little more than a year at Gurumurtam, *Brahmana Swami* moved to a neighbouring mango orchard for about six months. Bhagavan later recalled, "I was in the mango grove next to Gurumurtam for some time. Under a mango tree they erected something overhead to prevent rain from falling on me. There was, however, not enough space under it even to stretch my legs fully while sleeping. So, I used to sit almost all the time like a bird in its nest. Opposite my shelter Palaniswami also had a small shed. In that huge garden, only the two of us used to stay."



*Mango grove*



*Subba Iyer*

It was here that His relatives tracked Him down and brought up the question of his returning home. Subba Iyer, the uncle with whom Venkataraman had stayed in Madurai, had died and it now fell upon Subba Iyer's brother Nelliappa Iyer to investigate the rumour that Venkataraman was a revered Swami in Tiruvannamalai. Finding his way to the orchard, he was allowed to send a note, which read: "Nelliappa Iyer,



*Nelliappa Iyer*

Pleader of Manamadurai, wishes to see you." When he was finally allowed to enter, he was deeply disturbed to see his young nephew in the neglected state of an unwashed ascetic with matted hair. The Pleader must have pleaded like he



had never pleaded before in an all-out effort to convince Venkataraman to return home, But to no avail. The Swami was unmoved and was as silent and still as Arunachala. The holy mountain — “*Mouni aai kal pol...*” Nelliappa Iyer had to accept defeat and go away. The burden of reporting to Mother Alagammal the mixed news of her son was now His.

With the mango grove becoming unsuitable, Sri Bhagavan left one day for alms in the town and then wended his way to the Arunagirinathar Temple nearby. Before leaving the grove, He told Palaniswami that he should go his own way. This was a terrible blow to Palaniswami as devoted service to *Brahmana Swami* was his mode of worship.



Arunagirinathar Temple

He went out alone as he was told, but unintentionally, or perhaps, more likely by grace, he found his way to the same temple. He pleaded with the Swami that he could not live without Him and he was allowed to stay. After about a month at this temple, *Brahmana Swami* took up His abode in one of the *gopurams* (towers) of the Big Temple and in its *alari* (Oleander) garden. He stayed here only for a week before going to Pavalakkunru, one of the eastern spurs of Arunachala and staying in the temple there. Though He was already followed by devotees wherever He went, He remained as before, immersed in the Bliss of Being.



Pavalakkunru

It was here that Alagammal found her son. She recognized Venkataraman immediately, despite His wasted body and matted hair. And in this holy place where aeons ago Mother Parvathi did intense penance to reunite with Lord Siva, Mother Alagammal with all a mother's love, lamented His condition and beseeched Him to go back with her. But He sat unmoved, not answering, not even showing that He had heard. Day

after day she returned. Not to give her false hopes of what could not happen, He did not respond. Finally, she enlisted the sympathy of devotees who had gathered around, pouring out her grief to them and beseeching them to intervene. The Swami's famous reply to his mother was then given in a short note He wrote about the law of destiny :

***"The Ordainer controls the fate of souls in accordance with their prarabdha karma (past actions). Whatever is destined not to happen will not happen, try as you may. Whatever is destined to happen will happen, do what you may to prevent it. This is certain. The best course, therefore, is to remain silent."***

Not yet ready to understand the deep Wisdom of her son's first ever Teaching, but resigned in the face of His rock like determination, Mother Alagammal had no option but to accept her fate and leave.



***"Just as we identified ourselves with a body, so Lord Siva has chosen to identify Himself with the Hill. Arunachala is Pure Wisdom in the form of a Hill. It is out of compassion for those who seek Him that He has chosen to reveal Himself in the Form of a Hill visible to the eye. The seer will obtain guidance and solace by staying near the Hill."***

***~ Sri Bhagavan***

Shortly after Mother Alagammal left Pavalakkunru after seeing her son for the first time since He left home, *Brahmana Swami* started to stay on the Holy Hill itself. The son had now truly moved onto His father's Lap. The *Satguru Swami* Cave (now known as *Banyan Tree* Cave) on the south-eastern slopes of Arunachala was the first one He stayed in. From there He moved a little farther up to the *Guhai Namasivayar* Cave for another short period.



*Alamarathu Guhai – Banyan Tree*



*Guhai Namasivayar Temple*



Mango Tree Cave



Mulaippal Tirtham



Virupaksha Linga

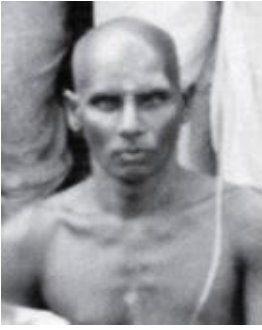
He finally came to *Virupaksha Cave* where He stayed for an eventful and fruitful seventeen years. Only in the summer months when water became scarce, did He move from *Virupaksha Cave* to *Mango Tree Cave* which adjoins the *Mulaippal Tirtham*, a tank yielding an unfailing supply of pure water. *Virupaksha Cave* resembles the shape of "OM", the Sacred *Pranava Mantra*, and was named after Saint *Virupaksha Deva*.

Kunju Swami, an old devotee and attendant of Sri Bhagavan, has recorded: "*Virupaksha Deva* was a Great *Jnani*. When his death was imminent the disciples were discussing amongst themselves what should be done in regard to burial, as the custom was not to bury anyone on the Hill. *Virupaksha Deva* himself said: "Let us wait for one more day". The next day, when the disciples came to the cave, they found a mound of *vibhuti* (sacred ash) in the shape of *Virupaksha Deva* in a seated position. The disciples made the *vibhuti* into a lump and left it there. It was only when Sri Bhagavan came that He Himself constructed a platform and the *vibhuti* was made into the shape of a Linga and installed on top."

While his predecessor's *jnana* took the form of a heap of *vibhuti*, Sri Bhagavan's total absorption in the Self radiated "Light". During his early years on the hill, Bhagavan remained silent. His radiance drew a group of devotees around Him and an Ashram came into being. Radiating the Bliss of the Self, His mere Presence or Glance was enough to transform lives, fill the devotees' hearts to the brim with spiritual fervour. It was out of compassion for such souls that the young Swami began writing down answers to questions put by them on small slips of paper.

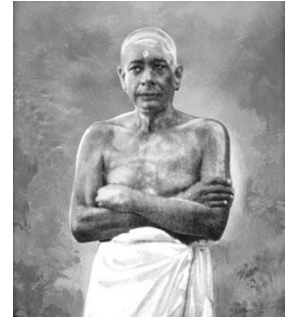


Virupaksha Cave



Gambhiram Seshayya

Among the earliest disciples who sought His help and guidance were Gambhiram Seshayya and Sivaprakasam Pillai. The manuscripts preserved by them with devout care, and later, printed as seminal works of Sri Bhagavan are "*Self Enquiry*" and "*Who am I?*"



Sivaprakasam Pillai

Just as the young Swami's Realization was spontaneous and perfect, so too were his teachings - simple, direct and profound. So much so, an old devotee, Viswanatha Swami, has even said: "All the teachings Bhagavan gave during His whole life are just a padded version of His original teaching recorded in the small book, *Who Am I?*"



It was then that a singular event took place which was perhaps instrumental in cajoling the young Swami into breaking His silence: There came to *Virupaksha Cave* a stranger. On being asked who he was, he answered he was from *Sathyamanagalam* and his name was *Venkataramaiah*. Nothing strange about that. But in the three days that he was there, he composed and sang four sublime hymns in praise of the young Swami. He sent a fifth hymn by post – the one that is, perhaps, the favourite of all Sri Bhagavan's devotees – *Ramana SatGuru*. It is particularly apt that this hymn came from 'Sathyamanagalam,' for no other hymn is more '*sathyam*' meaning 'true', and more '*mangalam*' meaning 'auspicious', to Sri Ramana devotees across the world to this day. After being sung and prophesied as the *Jagatguru* who has come to lead seekers to the Kingdom of *Jnana*, what choice did the young *Brahmana Swami* have other than the banner up by breaking His Silence and guiding the majority who needed both His Silence and His Words?



'Nayana'

Outstanding among the early devotees was *Kavyakanta (Vasishtha) Ganapati Muni* (Sastri), more familiarly known as "*Nayana*", famous as a great Sanskrit poet and scholar. For more than a decade he had been ardently carrying on spiritual *sadhana*, but without any satisfying results. At the end of his rope and in desperation, he came to *Virupaksha Cave* on hearing of the *Swami* who lived there. He was guided there by the Universal Mother, *Apeethakuchambal* Herself !



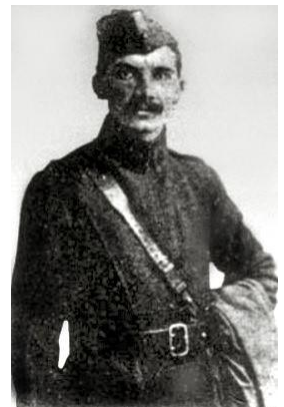
Prostrating before the *Swami* and clasping His feet with outstretched hands, in a voice quivering with emotion, *Kavyakanta* said: "All that has to be read I have read; even *Vedanta Sastras* I have fully understood; I have performed *japa* to my Heart's content; yet I have not up to this time understood what *tapas* is. Therefore, I have sought refuge at Your Feet. Pray enlighten me as to the nature of *tapas*."

**Sri Bhagavan answered: "If one watches from where the notion 'I' arises, the 'mind' is absorbed into "THAT"; that is *tapas*. When a mantra is repeated, if one watches the "Source" from which the mantra-sound is produced, the 'mind' is absorbed in "THAT"; that is *tapas*."**

It was not only *Brahmana Swami's* exposition on the nature of *tapas* that filled him with joy, but also the palpable Grace radiating from the *Swami*. Finding out from the *Swami's* attendant, Palaniswami, that His original name was 'Venkataraman', Nayana made it brief and beautiful as "Ramana" (the meaning of which is 'one who sports in the Self').

Since *Brahmana Swami* gave such a brilliant, simple and direct definition of the nature of *tapas*, Nayana called him "*Rishi*" ('Seer'). Then, realizing that this 'Rishi' was no ordinary 'Seer' but one who actually belonged to the realm of *Vedic Rishis*, like Vyasa, he qualified it by calling him "*Maha-rishi*" (Great Seer). Also, since the *Swami* possessed in perfection all the characteristics attributed to "Bhagavan" (Blessed Lord), Nayana declared that from that day onwards He must be known as ***Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi***.

It was through Ganapati Muni that F.H. Humphreys, an English Police Officer, was led to Sri Bhagavan and became his first Western devotee. Climbing the hill he sat before Sri Bhagavan at *Virupaksha Cave*, with his gaze fixed on the Maharshi's enchanting eyes, which as usual, did not change their expression of deep contemplation. After this first visit, he returned twice to the Maharshi, whom he now regarded as his 'Master'. During one of their conversations Sri Bhagavan told him: "I have given you this Teaching in the same words as the Masters gave it to their intimate *chelas* (disciples). From now onwards, let your whole thought in meditation be not on the '**act of seeing**', nor on '**what you see**', but immovable on '**That Which Sees**'." Humphrey's life was transformed. On returning to England he became a Christian monk.



F.H. Humphreys

It was also around the same period that a devotee named *Amritanatha Yatindra* composed a stanza in a certain metre, wrote it on a paper and placed it before Sri Bhagavan. The purport of the stanza was, "***In my Heart I yearn to know if Sri Bhagavan, Ramana, the unique Guru, is Hari (Lord Vishnu) or Siva or Dakshinamurthi, an ancient Rishi like Vararuchi or some other God.***" Sri Bhagavan did not immediately give a reply, but after a while He took up the paper and, in a sportive mood, wrote on the opposite side His reply in the form of another stanza in the same metre and left it where it lay before. The devotee came back and, on seeing the stanza composed by Sri Bhagavan, was delighted.

The reply was: "***'Arunachala Ramana' is the Paramatma who abides in the Heart of every living being, from Hari downward. It will be clear to you if you open the eye of Jnana and see the Truth.***"

Though given as a playful answer, this verse of Sri Bhagavan is extremely significant to all of us. For He practically admits that He and Arunachala are not two but the **Non-dual Self** that shines in our Heart!



While the Flame of Sri Bhagavan's Presence continued to attract seekers to Him, the sparks of His writings were now reaching those who could not come to Him. It was also during the *Virupaksha Cave* that He composed ***Arunachala Stuti Panchakam***, five hymns of bone melting devotion in praise of Father Arunachala.

There is an interesting story behind how ***Aksaharamanamalai***, the first and also the most popular of the Five Hymns, came to be written. A party of four would daily go to town to beg for their food. When leaving the Cave, they would blow a long blast on their conches. This was an announcement to the townspeople that Sri Bhagavan's party had left the Cave on their begging mission. The party would give another blast when they reached the foot of the Hill. A third call would be sounded at the entrance of the street. The residents of the street would be ready with their offerings and the party would march along the street singing *Annapoornaashtakam* composed by Adi Shankara for use by *sadhus* when they went begging. The food collected was ample for all who gathered near Sri Bhagavan, including the monkeys and other animals.

The devotees of Sri Bhagavan wanted their own song to sing on this mission. At first, Sri Bhagavan demurred. But His devotees kept pleading. And so it

happened one day, as Sri Bhagavan and His devotees were doing *giripradakshina*, words — like enriching streams of Light — came flowing to Sri Bhagavan. And thus, was born **Aksharamanamalai** (*The Marital Garland of Letters*) — which no doubt satiated the hunger of His alms-seeking devotees. Sri Bhagavan used to humorously remark: “**Marital Garland** fed us for many years ! ”

While almost all His works were written on the request of His devotees, there are two notable exceptions: The first was **Eleven Verses on Arunachala**. Devaraja Mudaliar has described how it happened: “Sri Bhagavan told me that one morning, when he was sitting on the veranda of *Virupaksha Cave*, the word “**Karunaiyaal**” (by Thy Grace) came to Him very insistently, but He took no special notice of them. The same thing happened the following morning. Then, Bhagavan composed the first stanza of **Eleven Verses on Arunachala**:

### ஸ்ரீ அருணாசல பதிகம்

1. கருணையா லென்னை யாண்டந் யெனக்குன் காட்சிதந் தருளினை யென்ற  
விருணலி யுலகி லெங்குழை பறத்தத்திவ் வுடல்விடி. லென் கதி யென்ற  
மருணைக் காணு தலகுமோ கமல மருணையுந் கருணை மன்னி  
யருணை சி ரந்தங் கருவியாய்ப் பெருகு மருணமா மலையெனு மன்பே.

*Sri Bhagavan's Handwriting in Tamil (1<sup>st</sup> verse of the Arunachala Pathigam)*

**“Now that by Thy Grace Thou hast claimed me, what will become of me unless Thou manifests Thyself to me, and I, yearning wistfully for Thee, and harassed by the darkness of the World, am lost? Oh Love, in the shape of Arunachala! Can the lotus blossom without sight of the Sun? Thou art the Sun of Suns; Thou causest Grace to well up in abundance and pour forth as a stream.”**

It is as if Arunachala, through Sri Bhagavan, has once again vouchsafed the Light of His Grace on all those who think of Him – **Smaranaat Arunachalam**.

The second notable instance where Sri Bhagavan composed verses without anyone asking Him to, was when Mother Alagammal fell seriously ill and it looked like it was the end. In 1914, Sri Bhagavan's Mother went on a pilgrimage to Tirupati and on her way back she visited Tiruvannamalai. She fell ill and suffered severely for several weeks. Sri Bhagavan tended her with great solicitude, composing a heart-rending prayer to Arunachala and prayed for her good health, thus:

***"Hill of my Refuge, who cures the ills of recurring births! Oh Lord! It is for Thee to cure my Mother's fever. Oh God who smitest Death itself! My sole Refuge! Vouchsafe Thy Grace unto my Mother and shield her from death. What is death if scrutinized? Arunachala! Thou Blazing Fire of Jnana! Deign to wrap my Mother in Thy Light and make her one with Thee. What need then for cremation? Arunachala, that chasest away illusion (maya)! Why delayest Thou to dispel my Mother's delirium! Besides Thee, is there anyone who with maternal solicitude can protect the suppliant soul and ward off the strokes of destiny?"***

This prayer not only cured the Mother of her bodily illness, but soon, as will be seen, also of the dreadful fever of Worldly attachments.



*Keerai patti would offer  
the food ...*

While the Swami took care of His Mother, a 'Grandmother' took care of His well-being. *Keerai Patti* (Greens Grandma) used to cook for Sri Bhagavan and other *sadhus* on the Hill. Sri Bhagavan Himself occasionally helped her cook her simple meals. Sri Bhagavan said fondly of her: "*Keerai Patti* lived in the *mantapam* here (Guhai Namasivaya Temple) and used to worship the images of Namasivaya and others, carved on the walls and pillars of the *mantapam*. She would get up in the morning, go out for a stroll on the small hill, proceed to where Skandashram is and come down to her place. By that time, she would have collected fuel and cow dung and bundled them up behind her back, and in her lap, she would have gathered a lot of edible green leaves of all sorts for cooking. In the same pot she would cook her rice, make her sauce, prepare any side dish such as the leaves she

had brought, each in turn, offer the food to the images on the walls or pillars, bring them to me and then go and have her own meal."

The Grace of the Swami brought peace to grief-stricken hearts too. A good example was the bereaved Echammal who came to the Swami in great sorrow after losing her near and dear ones. Simple people, children and even animals, too, were irresistibly drawn to Him. Young children from the town would climb the Hill to *Virupaksha Cave*, sit near Sri Bhagavan, play around Him, and go back feeling happy.



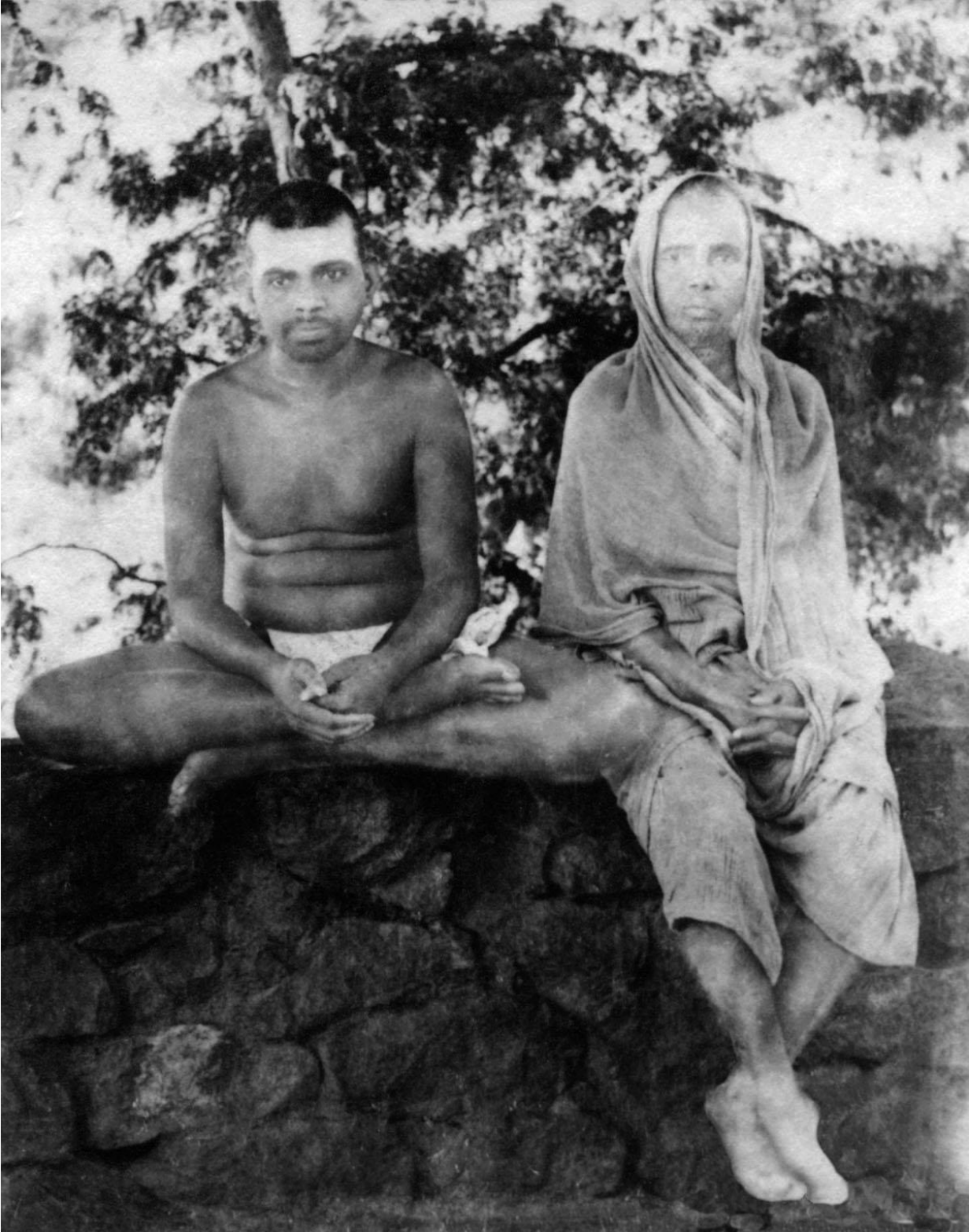
*Echammal*



And in those days, when the practice of untouchability was prevalent, His compassion transcended all barriers! Sri Bhagavan would recall with great empathy, "When I was in the *Virupaksha Cave*, we used to change over to *Mango Tree Cave* during summer as there was no water in the former. At the *Mango Tree Cave*, at midday, some women of the lowest caste would come there for water with heavy loads of grass on their heads and very tired. I knew they would be coming at that hour and I would be coming at that hour and I would wait there with water ready. What could they do? They were not permitted (by caste rules) to touch the water in the *Mulaippal Tirtham* and there was no water anywhere else. Poor people; they would start early in the morning after taking a little gruel, go up the Hill and secure a head-load of grass. As soon as they came to the Cave, they would throw down their bundles, bend down and say: 'Swami, Swami, first pour a vessel full of water down our spines.' I would stand on the veranda and when I poured water on them as desired, they would recover from their exhaustion, saying: 'Oh, how good this is!' Then, cupping their hands, they would drink water until their stomachs were full, wash their faces, take some rest in the shade of the trees and then depart. They alone could experience the happiness of it all. It is only when one experiences the oppressiveness of the heat that one knows the relief of the coolness of water."

Not just humans, but animals too found shelter in the coolness of His Grace. Squirrels and monkeys would come up to Him and eat out of His hands. Monkeys would even sit in *samadhi* in front of Sri Bhagavan under the large tree in front of *Virupaksha Cave*. Once, one of the monkeys started moving and was looking restless and Sri Bhagavan told him: "What kingdom do you have to conquer?" The monkey again became still.

Not long after her son's prayer to Arunachala saved her life, Mother Alagammal came to Him leaving life in the outside World for good. She first stayed down in the town. Being old and unable to climb the Hill daily, she soon wanted to stay in the Cave permanently, but was doubtful of getting permission. When Sri Bhagavan was asked, He remained silent. As for His disciples, they were vociferous in refusing permission. One day Mother got up in great anguish to leave the Cave. Deeply moved on seeing this, Sri Bhagavan also got up, and taking hold of her hand said: "Come. Let us go. If not here, we can stay somewhere else. Come." At this, His disciples fell at His feet and begged Him to stay: "Please do not go anywhere. Pray, do stay here itself along with Mother."



*Sri Bhagavan and His Mother Alagammal*

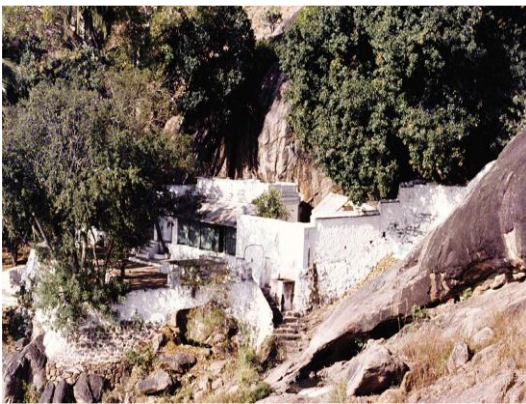
This incident was perhaps a pointer to what happened soon. In a few months, they all vacated *Virupaksha Cave* and moved up the hill to Skandashram. The son moved with all who depended on Him from Father Arunachala's lap to His Heart, ***Sri Sonachala hrdbhuta Skandashrama niketanaya namaha.***



A devotee, Kandaswami, was anxious to build a new Ashram for Sri Bhagavan. Inspecting the various places on the Hill and the forest, he selected a site of which Sri Bhagavan approved. Kandaswami then converted what was a thick forest of prickly pear on the Hill slope into a lovely hermitage filled with mango trees and coconut trees. In appreciation of Kandaswami's labours who had built this unaided by anyone else, Sri Bhagavan named the Ashram after him — "***SKANDASHRAM***". Thus Kanda, which is the Tamil name for Lord Skanda, was immortalised. It is approximately at the Centre of the Hill on its south-eastern slopes and is surrounded by a thicker and greener cluster of trees. It has a magnificent view of Sri Arunachaleswara Temple and is to this day filled with an atmosphere of palpable Peace.



Kandaswami standing to the right of Sri Bhagavan



View of Skandashram

Lauding Kandaswami's effort, Sri Bhagavan had this to say: "***You cannot imagine the state the site was in originally. Kandaswami worked with almost superhuman effort, achieving by his own hands what even four people together could not have done. He removed all the prickly pear, reduced stone and boulder to level-ground, created a garden and raised the Ashram. He got four coconut trees***

***for planting. To plant them properly Kandaswami dug huge square pits about ten feet deep. That will give you an idea of the amount of labour he put into the work he took in hand.***"

Sri Bhagavan stayed at '**Skandashram**' from 1916 to 1922, and it was during this period that many of His close devotees came to Him, remaining with Him till their end. These include his younger brother Niranjanananda Swami, Kunju Swami, Ramaswami Pillai, Sadhu Natanananda and others.



*Sri Bhagavan with Mother and devotees like Kunju Swami, Ramaswami Pillai, Niranjanananda Swami and others*

Those who climbed the Hill and came to the Maharshi's Abode were refreshed by the shady oasis on the rocky slopes and also by the *darshan* of Sri Bhagavan, which soothed and cleansed them like a cool, clear and gushing mountain stream.

But it was not only those who climbed up to '**Skandashram**' who could soak in His Grace: An old woman named Saubhagyathammal who lived at the foot of the Hill used to come to **Skandashram** every day for Sri Bhagavan's *darshan*. She would go back down and

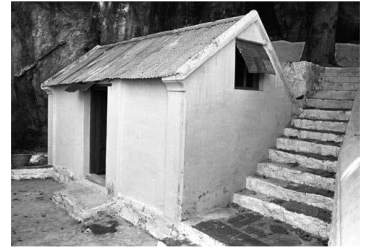


Skandashram – front view



eat only after seeing Sri Bhagavan. On one occasion when she did not come, Sri Bhagavan asked for the reason the next day. She replied that she had Sri Bhagavan's *darshan* when He sat on a rock, cleaning His teeth in the morning and being old and feeble, she would henceforth have His *darshan* in this manner. From that time onwards, Sri Bhagavan made it a practice to sit on that rock every morning, for about half an hour daily. Even in the winter or during the rainy season, He refused to discontinue this practice, though the devotees pleaded with Him. It was only sometime later that they found out how the warmth of Sri Bhagavan's Flame of Compassion extended far down to the foot of the Hill.

In addition to His Flame of *Jnana*, kitchen fires too started burning in '*Skandashram*'. The spirit of an ancient hermitage with the Maharshi at its centre began taking shape with Mother Alagammal starting to cook for Sri Bhagavan and His devotees.



*Mother's kitchen*

***"Though I remonstrated with My mother, she slowly started cooking - first a vegetable, then soup and so on. She used to wander all over the Hill, gathering something or other and saying: He likes this vegetable and that fruit. She took no notice of my remonstrations.***

**Once, while she was coming to the jungle at this side, her saree got caught in a thorny bush. It was only then that this path was cleared of all bushes and the like. She said she would not leave me and go anywhere else. If she went anywhere, she was afraid that she might die there. She was particular that she should die in my arms. She used to say: '*Even if you were to throw away my dead body in these thorny bushes I would not mind, but I must end this life in your arms*' "**

**~ Sri Bhagavan**

Sri Bhagavan watched and guided His Mother and weaned her from the World. She adjusted herself to the hard life of the Ashram and never thought of going elsewhere. Later on, she was joined by her younger son, who renounced the World to serve Sri Bhagavan, taking the name of '*Niranjanananda Swami*'.

In 1922, Mother's health broke down. On May 19<sup>th</sup>, *Bahula Navami* Day, it became obvious that her end was near. After His usual morning walk, Sri Bhagavan entered Mother's room and waited on her the whole day, even taking His afternoon meal in the room. At about sunset, the evening meal was prepared and Sri Bhagavan asked the others to eat, though He Himself did not. In the evening, the devotees sat beside Mother in three separate groups, simultaneously chanting the *Vedas*, singing *Aksharamanamalai* and invoking the Name of Sri Rama.



Mother's room

On the day of Mother's absorption, Sri Bhagavan sat for ten to twelve hours by her side while she was still alive, and during the last hour He sat still with His left hand on her head and His right hand over her spiritual Heart on the right side of her chest. He explained: "Innate tendencies (*vasanas*) and the subtle memory of past experiences leading to future possibilities became very active. Scene after scene rolled before her in the subtle consciousness, the outer senses having already gone. The soul was passing through a series of experiences, thus avoiding the need for rebirth and

so effecting union with Supreme Spirit. The *prana* was absorbed in the Heart and the soul was at last disrobed of the subtle sheaths before it reached the Final Destination, the Supreme Peace of Liberation, from which there is no return to ignorance."

At eight o'clock that night, she was finally released from her body. Sri Bhagavan, His face radiant, immediately stood up, that too, quite cheerfully. To the astonishment of His devotees He said, "**Now let us eat; come along, there is no pollution.**" (Death-pollution normally requires a bath before one can eat. However, through Sri Bhagavan's aid, His Mother had attained Complete Liberation before her death. There is no pollution on the death of a Liberated One, a *Jnani*. That is why Sri Bhagavan announced that no ritual bath was needed, for no pollution had been incurred.)

He also suggested that instead of sleeping, they should recite the complete *Tiruvachakam* of Saint Manikkavachakar. Sri Bhagavan, Arunachala Swami and Kunju Swami, each recited two verses at a time throughout the night. Never before or after was this done.

Describing Mother's absorption Sri Bhagavan recalled: ***"After Mother breathed her last, her body glowed with a divine resplendence; immediately after the body was bathed, that effulgence subsided. It was our intention to give her Samadhi secretly and in private, in the night that she expired. By five in the morning, we brought her remains to Palakothu (at the Foot of the Hill below its southern slopes), but even by that time, people of the town had gathered there in a vast crowd."***



*Path leading from Skandashram to the foot of the Hill*



*Early picture of Mother's Samadhi*

Niranjanananda Swami erected a thatched hut over the Samadhi of his Mother, which was named "Matrubhuteswara" (God in the Form of Mother) by Ganapati Muni. The next Jayanti of Sri Bhagavan was proposed to be celebrated there, because of the lack of water at 'Skandashram'. A week prior to his Jayanti, Sri Bhagavan came to visit the shrine as usual on His daily walk and then stayed on. Later on, He said: ***"It was not out of my own volition that I moved from 'Skandashram'; something brought me here and I obeyed. It was not my decision but the Divine Will."***

Sri Bhagavan's Jayanti, on the 3rd of January 1923, was thus celebrated at Mother's Shrine. This was the beginning of ***"Sri Ramanasramam"*** on the southern side of Arunachala, near the roadside shrine of *Dakshinamurti*. Years later, in 1980, when the devotees gathered in tribute and jubilation to celebrate the Birth Centenary of Sri Bhagavan, it also fell on the 3rd of January.



From the Heart of Father Arunachala, the Son had now come to reside at his Feet. The fragrance of His *Jnana* would soon reach all corners of the World, attracting seekers not like flitting butterflies, but like "moths to a flame" !





*Sri Bhagavan standing near the thatched 'Samadhi' of His Mother (1922)*

When the devotees followed Sri Bhagavan down to the Mother's *Samadhi* at the foot of the Hill in December 1922, there was only a thatched shed for their Ashram. Through the ensuing years their numbers grew, donations came in and regular Ashram premises were erected: The Hall

where Sri Bhagavan sat, the office and bookshop, the dispensary, the guest-room for male visitors, and a couple of small bungalows for guests who made a longer stay. To the west of the Ashram, *sadhus* made a colony at "*Palakothu*", living in huts among the trees. With the advent of the Cow Lakshmi, a *Goshala* (cowshed) was built, along with a large Kitchen to cater to visitors. The feeding of people, particularly the poor and beggars, and proper maintenance of cows, were very dear to the Heart of Sri Bhagavan. All this building and planning required an Ashram management, of which Sri Bhagavan's brother, *Niranjanananda Swami*, became the ***Sarvadhikari*** (Manager).



*The tank at Palakothu*



*Sri Bhagavan sitting outside the Old Hall near the Well*



*Sri Ramanasramam Office and Book Depot*

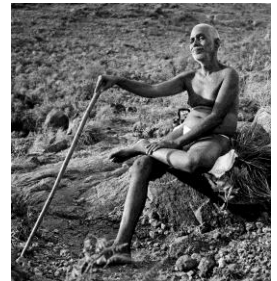


*View of Ashram buildings*

Sri Bhagavan remained an impartial observer of all this activity, accepting this growing family with utter compassion and love.

His Light drew seekers to Him from across the World in many ways: Some came after hearing about Him, some after seeing Him in a vision, a dream or a photograph, and still more after reading about Him and His Teachings. But no matter how His Light drew them, when they came, they were each transformed by the Pure Radiance of His Presence and His daily life.

His manner of life was of the most normal. It was no attitude of superiority on Sri Bhagavan's part that bent people's knees before him, for no one could have been more simple or natural; it was the spontaneous reaction of people to the Divine. The mere sight of Him walking across the Ashram grounds was enough to grip the Heart.



Always practicing equality, Sri Bhagavan never allowed any preference to be shown to Him. In the Dining Hall He was adamant in this regard. Even when some special medicine or tonic was given to Him, He wanted to share it with everybody. **"If it is good for me then it must be good for the rest,"** He would say, and have it distributed to all present.

Dogs, cows, cats, squirrels, monkeys and even birds, all were treated on the same footing as human beings. In fact, a new visitor was likely to be misled by His reference to *"boys"*. None of the animals were treated as less than human - never referred to as *"it."* Nor would He allow any of the Ashram inmates to treat the animals rudely. **"We do not know what souls may be tenanting those bodies and for finishing what portion of their unfinished *Karma*, they seek our company"**. He often said.





*...she would daily come to me and place her head at my feet...*

The most prominent of these animal companions was Cow Lakshmi, the cow. (Lakshmi was believed by many old devotees to be the incarnation of *Keerai Paati*, the 'Greens Grandma', who used to feed Sri Bhagavan when He was in *Virupaksha Cave*.)

**"Even as a calf Lakshmi behaved in an extraordinary way; she would daily come to me and place her head at my feet. Years later, on the day the foundation was laid for the *Goshala* (cowshed), she was so jubilant that she came and took me for the function. Again, on the day of *Grihapravesam* (house-warming ceremony), she came straight to me at the time appointed and took me to the *Goshala*. In so many ways and on so many occasions, she behaved in such a sensible and extremely intelligent way that one cannot but regard her as an extraordinary Cow. What are we to say about it?"**

**~ Sri Bhagavan**

Lakshmi's mother was presented to the Ashram some years earlier; and Lakshmi on her part, gave a number of calves to the Ashram. In fact, during a period of four years she gave birth to a calf punctually on the day of Sri Bhagavan's *Jayanti*.

Almost every day she would find some opportunity to meet Sri Bhagavan, and well understood what was spoken to her or in her presence. She moved with unmistakable dignity and self-possession, and would not be trifled with nor have anything to do with a person who ill-treated her.

She passed away quietly on June 18, 1948. Sri Bhagavan was by her side almost till her end. She was given an honourable burial in a place opposite to Sri Bhagavan's Hall. Sri Bhagavan Himself wrote her epitaph which is engraved on a slab above the life-like statue of "Cow Lakshmi" over her grave.

Suri Nagamma recounts: **"After serving Sri Bhagavan for 22 years Cow Lakshmi lay in the *Goshala* in the throes of death. Sri Bhagavan sat on the hay by her side, lifted her head, and placing His left hand on the head, He began pressing with the right hand her throat right down to the heart. After about a quarter of an hour he said, 'What do you say, mother? Do you want me to stay here, but what to do? All people could be around you as in the case of my Mother. Even so, why? Shall I go?' Lakshmi remained calm, devoid of the bonds of this World and of the pains of her body as though she were in *Samadhi*. Sri Bhagavan sat there, unwilling to move and with a**

**Heart full of Compassion. I was overwhelmed at the sight and exclaimed involuntarily, 'Oh! Mother Alagamma had the greatest luck, so has Cow Lakshmi now.'**

"Sri Bhagavan then left, and returned ten minutes later saying: 'Is it all over?' Lifting Cow Lakshmi's face in both hands as though she were a little child, He said: '**Oh Lakshmi!**', then to us, controlling His tears: '**Because of her our family (the Ashram) has grown to this extent.**'"



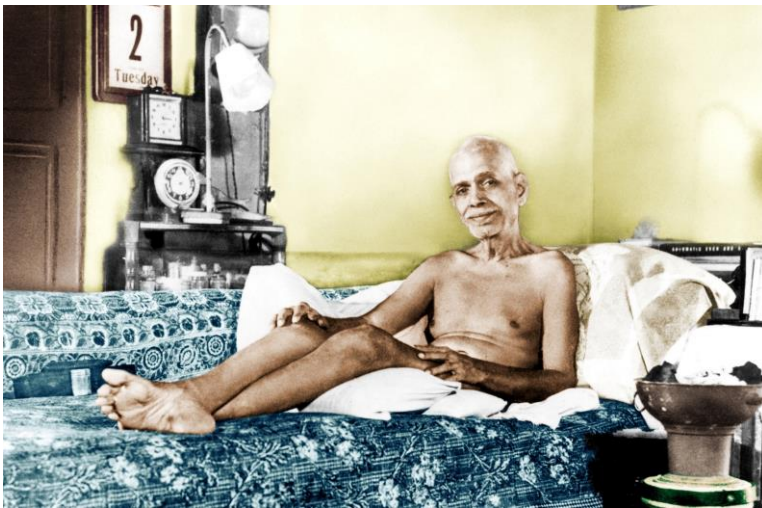
*Cow Lakshmi Samadhi*

Later, Sri Bhagavan wrote an epitaph in Tamil verse on Cow Lakshmi which can now be seen engraved on a stone slab at her *Samadhi*: **"It is here recorded that Lakshmi the Cow was Liberated under the star Visakha, on Friday the twelfth day of the bright half of Jyeshtha, in the year Sarvadhari."**

But it was not only for a cow, considered a sacred animal in India, that Sri Bhagavan had a *samadhi* built. Adjacent to Cow Lakshmi's *Samadhi* are the *samadhis* for a Crow, Valli, the deer, and Jackie, the dog. Standing testimonies to the sublime sense of equality that Sri Bhagavan had towards all living beings. Like the rays of the Sun which fall equally on everything on Earth. **Om Samadrshe Namaha...**



*View of the Samadhis of the 'Deer',  
the 'Crow' and the 'Dog'*



*Sri Bhagavan in the Old Hall*

Year after year the little Hall where He sat remained the centre of attraction for the devotees, and was the focus of all those, the World over, who could not be physically present. The Dynamic Silence vibrant with his Grace, the Divine Love that shone in His eyes and, when necessary, the potent words of Sri

Bhagavan enfolded all who were ready and open to receive the Gift of His Presence and Liberating Proximity. His was no ordinary Presence, for one cannot count the lives, which were completely transformed by a moment's Glance, or a solitary Word. Sri Bhagavan was like a Fathomless Ocean of Grace, overflowing with Compassion for the devotees who came in ever-increasing numbers for his *darshan*.

Paradoxically, He was also like the fire in burning the *vasanas* that impede the progress of seekers and cooking them till they became 'food' fit enough to be consumed by God. He was like the ever-risen Sun too, when it came to clearing the veils from their eyes and showing them the Direct Path from the 'head' to the "Heart". And for those in distress, He was like the refreshing Light of the Moon that cooled and calmed their fevered, furrowed brow.

Many were the books that were written during His twenty-eight years in the present Sri Ramanasramam. Paramount among them being Sri Bhagavan's *Upadesa Saram* and *Ulladhu Narpadhu*, two seminal works that along with *Naan Yaar*, form of what is considered as His *Prasthanas Thraya*, the three Laser Beams of His Teachings.





B.V. Narasimha Swami

Books inspired by Sri Bhagavan include, **Self-Realisation** by B.V. Narasimha Swami, *Guru Vachaka Kovai*, *Ramana Sannidhi Murai* and *Ramana Padamalai* by Muruganar, *Day by Day with Bhagavan* by Devaraja Mudaliar, *Letters from Ramanasramam* by Suri Nagamma, *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi* by Munagala Venkataramiah

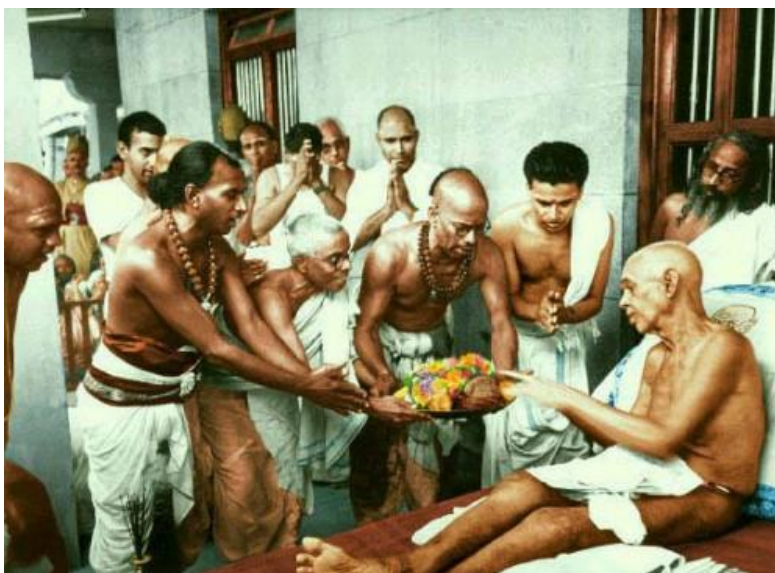


Paul Brunton

and *Sat Darshana Bhashyam* by Kapali Shastri, to name a few. Each one a Spark from His Anvil and each quite capable of igniting the fiery thirst in readers for Enlightenment.

Until the frailty of age set in, there were no set hours for approaching Sri Bhagavan. He was accessible at all times, day and night. He would not have the Hall doors and windows closed lest any who needed Him might be shut out. Often, He would talk to a group of devotees far into the night.

During the last years, the Old Hall was becoming too small even on ordinary days, and it became more usual to sit outside under a palm-leaf roof. In 1939 work had started on a Temple over the Mother's *Samadhi*, and this was completed in 1949, together with a New Hall for Sri Bhagavan and the devotees to sit in. Sri Bhagavan attended every event in connection with the dedication of the Temple, placing His hands in blessing on the various objects that were to be enclosed in the Shrine. At night, when no one was about, He used to walk around the construction site, thus consecrating it.





At the end of 1948, a small growth, the size of a peanut, was noticed on Sri Bhagavan's left elbow. It gradually grew in size and became painful when touched. By February 1949, it had grown into a tumour, the size of a small lemon. The doctor in charge of the Ashram Dispensary removed it surgically, and the wound healed in about ten days. At the time of the consecration - *Maha Kumbabhishekam* - of the Matrubhuteswara Temple erected over the *Samadhi* of His Mother in March, Sri Bhagavan looked all right except for a little sagging of the skin at the elbow. Soon after this, however, the tumour returned above the operated part. Eminent surgeons from Madras came and examined it and, suspecting it to be malignant, they again removed it surgically on March 27. Soon after this they treated the spot with radium. An examination of the affected tissue confirmed that the growth was indeed a malignant sarcoma.

The Form that held the most Benign and yet Blazing Sun of *Jnana* that the World had known in many centuries had started to set. And even as the Flame continued to increase in Brilliance, the Lamp that had borne it all these years, was showing signs of fading.

Excruciatingly painful, especially in its later stages, and fatal, a fresh growth appeared while the earlier wound was still healing. The doctors suggested amputating the arm above the affected part in the hope of saving Sri Bhagavan's Precious Life. Sri Bhagavan smiled and replied, *"There is no need for alarm. The body is itself a disease. Let it have its natural end. Why mutilate it? Simple dressing of the affected part is enough."*

At this time, a village physician (*vaidhyar*) of some repute was allowed to try herbal treatment, but it had no success. There was further aggravation and sepsis set in. A medical board discussed the matter and decided upon a third operation in the hope of saving Sri Bhagavan's Life. Sri Bhagavan was persuaded to agree to this. This third operation, on August 7th, was a major operation carefully organized and carried out by a team of doctors and surgeons. A week later it was followed by radium treatment to destroy the affected tissues.

The wound was gradually healing and Sri Bhagavan's general health showed a slight improvement for about three months, so that hope revived in all hearts. But, then again, to the dismay of all, at the end of November the tumour re-appeared, higher up on the arm. This necessitated a fourth operation on December 19th. After this the doctors were definite that if the tumour appeared again, nothing more could be done except administer palliatives.



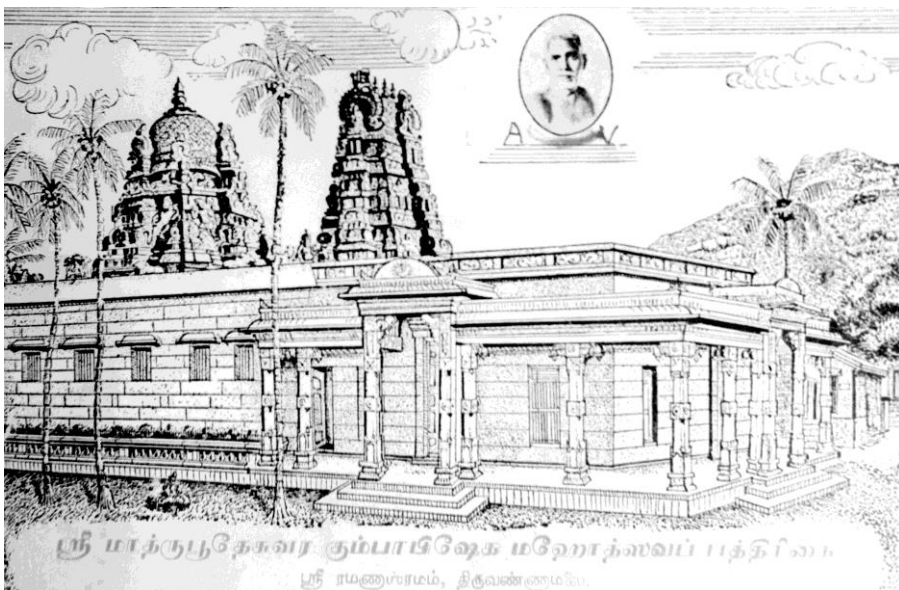
Stone carvers – working on Mothers's Shrine – behind the Goshala in the 1940s



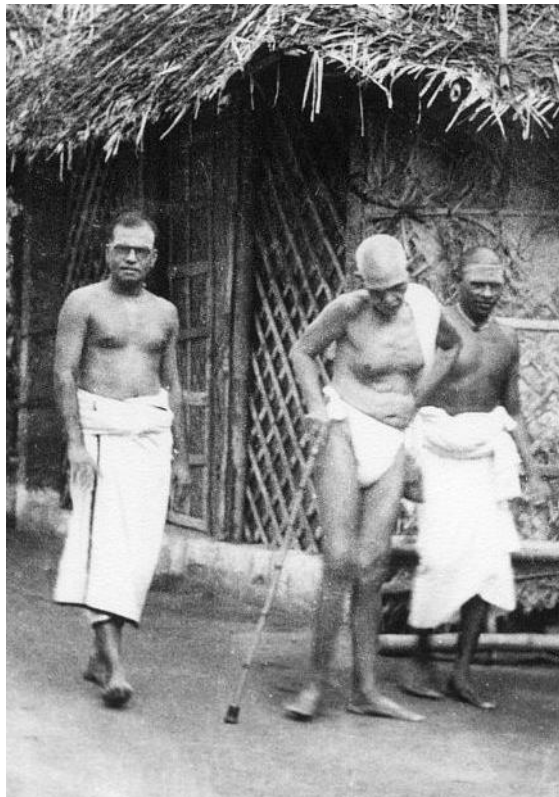
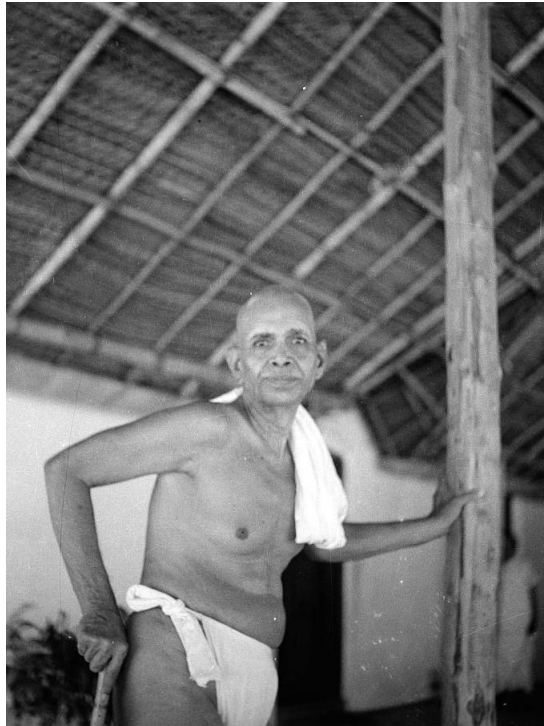
Maha Kumbabhishekam - of the Matrubhuteswara Temple(1949)



Sri Bhagavan inside the Mathrubhuteswara Shrine



Sri Matrubhuteswara Temple



At this stage, homeopathy was tried for a few weeks but it could not arrest the disease. Another tumour appeared adjoining the left armpit and grew rapidly. Two Ayurvedic physicians of repute now tried their treatment but without success. The whole of the left upper arm had become one terrific swelling.

Owing to constant oozing of blood through the open wound and the tumour, Sri Bhagavan's system had turned anaemic. The poison of the disease had now spread, affecting the whole body. It was the last phase of sarcoma and the end was near.

Throughout this long time of pain and sickness Sri Bhagavan was quite unconcerned. He had no personal inclination for any kind of treatment. Whenever a course of treatment was decided upon by the Ashram, He abided by it - more to please the devotees than to get cured. He had often said, "***It is for us to witness all that happens,***" and His behaviour was a perfect illustration of this. In December 1949, when the devotees were at a loss what treatment to try next, one of them approached Sri Bhagavan and asked Him what must be done next. He replied with a smile, "***Have I ever asked for any treatment? It is you who wanted this and that for me, so it is you who must decide. If I were asked, I should always say, as I have said from the beginning, that no treatment is necessary. Let things take their course.***"

All the doctors who attended upon Sri Bhagavan were struck by His superhuman indifference to pain and His absolute unconcern even during and after operations. He took everything lightly and retained His sense of humour throughout. His casual remarks often made the doctors and attendants laugh despite their anxiety.

A few hours after the serious operation of August, although He had been advised not to move out for some days, Sri Bhagavan decided to give *darshan* to the many devotees who were waiting anxiously outside the Ashram Dispensary. He was as serene as ever and even smiled from time to time. At noon next day, as soon as the doctors had left, He returned to the Hall where He always sat, saying that He should not occupy the Dispensary to the inconvenience of patients who needed to go there for treatment.

Doctors and others who saw Sri Bhagavan even after the fourth operation were amazed at His tranquil expression and gracious smile. There was no sign of suffering in His face.

The seventy-first birthday of Bhagavan Sri Ramana was celebrated in His Presence on January 5th, 1950. Sri Bhagavan sat up for hours in the morning and evening amid His devotees who had thronged for what many feared would be His last. He read through many hymns newly composed by devotees and heard them being sung. The elephant of the Temple of Arunachala came and stood there for a while after bowing down to Sri Bhagavan and then took leave of Him by touching His feet with its trunk. A Rani who had come from North India to pay her respects took a motion picture of the scene. The atmosphere was full of joy and the festivities ended with the prostration of the devotees to their Master after the *Vedic* chants.

Prayers and chanting of hymns for Sri Bhagavan's recovery went on for months at the Ashram and outside. Once, when Sri Bhagavan was asked about their efficacy, He replied with a smile, "***It is certainly desirable to be engaged in good activities; let them continue.***"

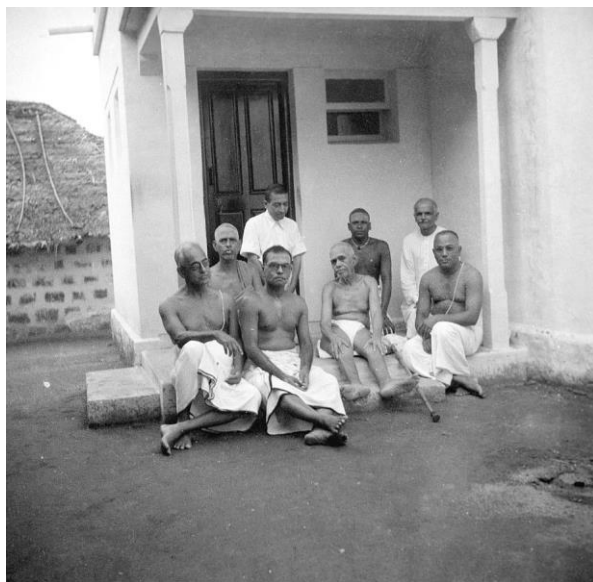
When the devotees prayed to Sri Bhagavan Himself to set His health right by His own Potent Will, He replied, "***Everything will come right in due course.***" And then He added, "***Who is there to 'will' this?***" He could not will or desire anything, having lost the sense of separate individuality in the Universal Consciousness.

Sri Bhagavan kept to His normal daily routine until it became physically impossible for Him. He took His morning bath an hour before Sunrise, sat up for *darshan* at fixed hours, in the morning and evening, went through the Ashram correspondence and supervised the printing of the Ashram publications, often making suggestions. Everything received His attention despite His ill-health.

More than a year before His *Maha Nirvana*, Sri Bhagavan quoted and rendered into Tamil verse a *sloka* from *Srimad Bhagavatam* (*Skandha XI, ch.13, S1.36*): "***Let the body, the result of fructifying karma, rest or move about, live or die. The Sage who has Realised the Self is not aware of it, just as one in drunken stupor is not aware of his clothing.***"

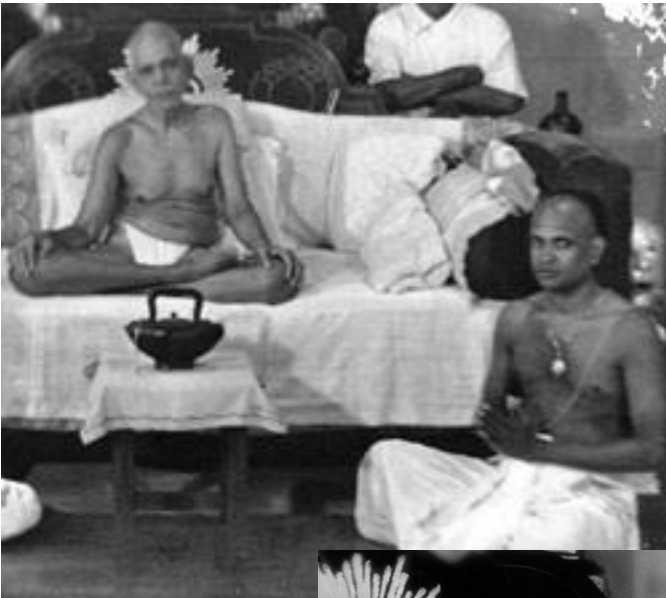
Late in 1949, Sri Bhagavan picked up and expounded a verse from *Yoga Vasishtam*: "***The Jnani who has found Himself as formless Pure Awareness is unaffected though His body be cleft with a sword. Sugar candy does not lose its sweetness though broken or crushed.***"





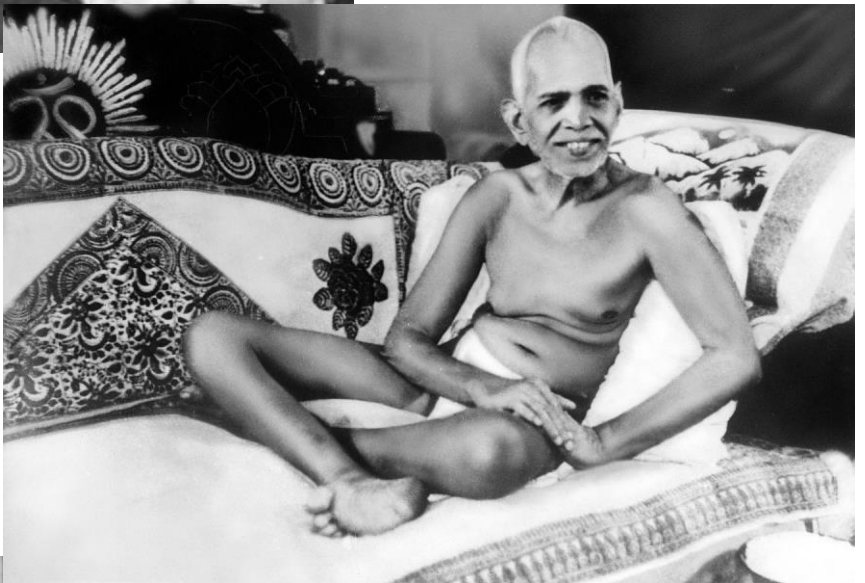
Clockwise from above:

1. Sri Bhagavan during the inauguration of the Ashram Dispensary building in 1942
2. Sri Bhagavan sitting outside the newly constructed bathroom – along with the Doctors
3. Sri Bhagavan – in His daily routine ( T.P.Ramachandra Iyer and Sathyananda Swami)
4. Devotees waiting in queue to have 'darshan' of Sri Bhagavan



*... with Vaidhyanaatha Stapati*

***Sri Bhagavan in the New Hall....***



*... with Sivananda Swami and T.P.Ramachandra  
lyer*

On one occasion, during the last months, Sri Bhagavan said to an anxious attendant, ***"When we have finished a meal do we keep the leaf-plate on which we have eaten it?"*** On another occasion, He told him that the *Jnani* rejoices to be relieved of the body by death as a servant rejoices to lay down his burden at the place of delivery.

With a look of compassion He consoled a devotee, saying, ***"They take this body for Sri Bhagavan and attribute suffering to Him. What a pity! They are despondent that Sri Bhagavan is going to leave them and go away; where can He go, I Am here !"***

Even during the last days, when Sri Bhagavan was unable to leave His room, He continued to give *darshan* to the hundreds of devotees, morning and evening, reclining on His Bed within, majestic like Bhishma on his bed of arrows. Sri Bhagavan would not consent to have the *darshan* cancelled even on days when His condition was critical - it went on right up to the last evening.

The news of the rapid decline in Sri Bhagavan's physical condition spread and hundreds of devotees came to Arunachala to have the last *darshan*. In the queue that filed past his room, there were men and women, rich and poor, learned and simple, from all parts of India and from abroad, all united in their devotion to this Divine Personification.

On Wednesday evening, two days before the *Maha Nirvana*, Sri Bhagavan gave a peculiar look of Grace to devotees who passed before Him in the queue. It struck some of them that this might be His parting look, and it turned out to be so, for during the next two days Sri Bhagavan had not the physical strength to turn about and look at the devotees. But, whether His eyes were open or closed, His 'mind' was always clear and He spoke to the attendants when necessary.

On Thursday morning, when a doctor brought Sri Bhagavan some medicine to relieve congestion in the lungs, Sri Bhagavan told him that it was not necessary and that everything would come right within two days. That night, Sri Bhagavan told His attendants to retire for sleep or meditation and leave Him alone.

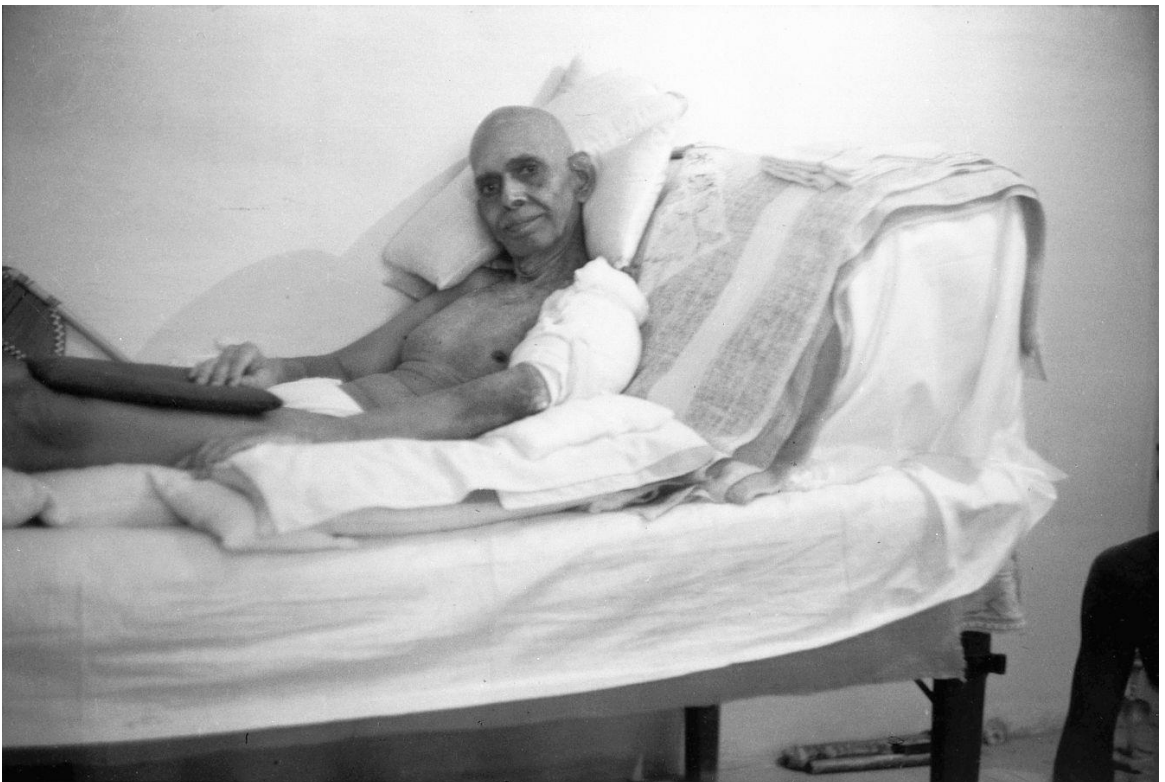
On 14th April, 1950, Friday morning, Sri Bhagavan said ***"Thanks!"*** to Sivananda Swami, an attendant who had just finished massaging His body. The attendant, who did not know English, blinked with surprise. Sri Bhagavan, smilingly explained to him the meaning of the English term. It is probable that, when

about to leave the physical plane, Sri Bhagavan intended thus to express "**His Thanks**" to all who had served Him.

That evening, there was a vast gathering of devotees and all had *darshan* of Sri Bhagavan. Many stayed at the Ashram after *darshan*, as Sri Bhagavan's condition was critical. At about Sunset, Sri Bhagavan asked His attendants to raise Him to a sitting position. They raised Him up as comfortably as they could, one of them gently supporting His head. One of the doctors began to give Him oxygen but Sri Bhagavan motioned them to stop it with a wave of His right hand.

There were ten or twelve persons, doctors and attendants, in the small room. Two of them were fanning Sri Bhagavan. Hundreds of devotees were anxiously waiting just outside. A group of devotees seated on the Temple ramp opposite the little room began chanting *Aksharamanamalai* with devotional fervour interspersing the chorus '**Arunachala Siva**' after every verse. Sri Bhagavan's eyes opened a little and flashed for a moment. From their outer edges tears of ecstasy rolled down.

The last breaths followed one another softly, smoothly and then, with no premonition, no shock, breathing stopped.



*Sri Bhagavan - Ten days before Brahma Nirvana*

The famous French photographer, M. Cartier-Bresson, who was standing before his cottage in Ramana Nagar near the Ashram, saw a shooting-star, vividly luminous, coming from the south, moving slowly northward across the sky and disappearing behind the peak of Arunachala. He looked at his watch; it was 8.47 p.m.

This was the very moment when the Maharshi breathed His last. The appearance of the bright meteor in the sky was observed by many people all over India and was widely reported in the papers. Some devotees in Madras and elsewhere, seeing it, guessed its import and set out by car to be present at the interment at Tiruvannamalai.

***Sri Bhagavan had receded into His Reality, the Heart of the Universe.*** The extraordinary peace of that hour overwhelmed everyone in His Presence, felt more now than ever before. It was the ***Transcendent Glory of Sri Bhagavan***, the ***Luminous Self***, that prevailed.

The ***Flight of the Flame*** that started just over seventy-one years ago on the night of *Ardhra Darshan*, when Shiva appeared as the Infinite Pillar of Light, the ***Flame*** that lit up the inner and outer lives of all those that approached it, that ***Flame*** had gone back to the ***Source***.

Now, the ***Flame*** shines in all of us, including you, dear reader, even as you are reading it, It shines in us as our ***Heart***, our ***Centre***, as ***Being-Awareness-Bliss***. If we but turn towards it, dive into it, surrender to it, the ***Flame*** by its ***Light of Grace*** will lift us to its own state of ***Arunachala Ramana-Anandam***.

***“Once a man has surrendered his life Here, he belongs Here. Wherever he may go, he shall return. For him this is the Door to Liberation.”***

***~ Sri Bhagavan***





“ ஐக்கியம் ஆக்கிக்கொள் அருணாசலா — ஸ்ரீ பகவான் ”  
“Absorb (Me) into Yourself, Oh! Arunachala! — Sri Bhagavan”

“அண்ணாமலைக்கு அரோஹரா ”  
“Obeisances to Arunachala”







**SRI BHAGAVAN :** "We all came from and will have to return to our 'SOURCE' = 'PURE LIGHT' !  
Every human being is seeking the 'INNER LIGHT', waiting to be absorbed, merged in the Source :  
*'Arunachala Jyothi' !*" (Talks)





**"RAMANA Jyothi" merged in the "ARUNACHALA Jyothi" — in the form of a Meteor —  
on the night of April 14, 1950 !**