TATTVA DARSANA

Quarterly

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July-September 2023 **Vol. 40, No. 3**

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"Make no mistake, without Hinduism, India has no future. Hinduism is the soil in to which India's roots are stuck and torn out of that she will inevitably wither as a tree torn out from its place. And if Hindus do not maintain Hinduism, who shall save it? If India's own children do not cling to her faith, who shall guard it. India alone can save India and India and Hinduism are one." – **Annie Besant**

Editorial

BHARAT, HINDU RASHTRA AND SANATANA DHARMA

“The name of our country has been Bharat since ages. Whatever may be the language, the name remains the same,” says Sri Mohan Bhagwat, Sarsanghchalak of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. “Our country is Bharat. We will have to stop using the word ‘India’ and start using ‘Bharat’ in all practical fields,” he stresses. He has also said, that all Bharatiyas are Hindus because ‘Hindu’represents all Indians. He says, “Hindusthan is a Hindu Rashtra and this is a fact. Ideologically, all Bharatiyas are Hindus and Hindus mean all Bharatiyas. All those who are in Bharat today are related to the Hindu culture, Hindu ancestors and the Hindu land.”

Dinner invites from Rashtrapati Bhavan sent to G-20 delegates in Delhi described the host as “President of Bharat”. Official function notes of Prime Minister Sri Narendra Modi’s visit to Indonesia described him as Prime Minister of Bharat. The possibility of Parliament to drop ‘India’ from the statue and go with Bharat alone has received a spontaneous welcome from all patriotic citizens of the country. The idea of “one nation, one election” has also received a hearty welcome from the people of Bharat. However, it has aroused fear in the minds of leaders of regional political parties who consider themselves as hereditary satraps of their respective regions that promotion of national integration will weaken their regional autonomy. The so-called secular parties also think that acceptance of the names Bharat and Hindusthan will not go well with their vote bank politics of luring the support of so called minorities. They are also afraid of the ideals of Hindu Rashtra and Sanatana Dharma which will go against their nefarious and disintegrating political games.

The Sanskrit word, *Rashtra*, is not a cultural term, but a political one meaning 'nation' or 'state'. The *Barhaspatya Samhita* says, "*Himalayaad aarabhya yaavad indu sarovaraparyantam tam deva nirmitam desham hindusthaanam prachakshate*"—that land created by God and stretching from the Himalayas up to the Indian Ocean is Hindusthan. It is also known as Bharatavarsha. The *Vishnupurana* says, "*Uttaram yat samudrascha himaadreschaiva dakshinam, varsham tad bhaaratam naama bhaaratee yatra santatih*"—that land which is

to the north of the ocean and south of the Himalayas is Bharata and the people of the land are Bharatiyas. Chanakya, who was instrumental in the building up of the mighty Maurya Empire by Chandragupta Maurya, declared:"*Prithivyaa samudra paryanataayaa eka raat"*—the entire land stretching up to the seas is one nation. The above statements do not refer to any cultural empire, but to one homogenous political entity called the Hindu Rashtra which has seen in ancient period emperors as the central figure of the nation and many kings and queens ruling various states or *rajyas* under the suzerainty of one emperor or other. So Bharatavarsha or Hindusthan, which is also now known as India, has been one nation or political entity right from the remote past when most of the people outside this land had not known what civilization was. The institution of pilgrimage since times immemorial, that every Hindu must undertake, at least once in his lifetime, a pilgrimage covering the whole landscape from the Himalayas to Kanyakumari has integrated the whole nation. The high priest of Badrinath is a Brahmin from the South whereas the principal trustee of the Rameshwaram temple at the southern tip of the land is the Maharaja of Nepal, even today.

Adoration and worship of the land of Bharatavarsha is the foundation of Hindu way of life. The Vedic Rishis in the *Bhoomi Sookta* of **Atharwana Veda** praise Mother Earth and sing, *"Maataa bhoomih, putroaham prithivyaah"*— This earth is our mother and we are all children of Mother Earth. In the **Yajurveda, 22-22**, there is a National prayer for the welfare of the whole nation. In the **Bhagavata Purana**, a whole chapter is devoted to sing the praise of Bharatamata. In the **Ramayana**, *Maryadapurushottama* Rama says, "Mother and Motherland are greater than heaven". He proclaimed, "*Ishwaakoonam iyam Bhoomi, sashaila vana kanana" – "*This is the land of Ishwakus (the clan of Emperor Dasaratha), including all the mountains, gardens and forests." Chanakya says. *"Swaraajyam, bhaujyam, paarameshthyam raajyam……prithivyaa samudra paryantaayaa eka raat" –* In spite of various kingdoms flourishing in the sub-continent, the entire land from Himalayas to the southern sea is one nation.

Hinduism or Hindutwa is not a religion like Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Sikhism, Jainism, Vaishnavism, Shaivism and Shaktism. It is a *dharma* or way of life evolved by the great sages and seers of this glorious nation that is known as Hindusthan or Bharatavarsha for the entire mankind for all times and it embraces politics, economics, culture, religion and every aspect of life. In the writings of Swami Vivekananda, we find the echo of the **Bhoomisookta**

and the **Bhagavata**: "If there is any land on this earth that can lay claim to be the blessed **Punya Bhoomi**, to be the land to which souls on this earth must come to account for **karma**, the land to which every soul that is wending its way Godward, must come to attain its last home, the land where humanity has attained its highest towards gentleness, towards generosity, towards purity, towards calmness, above all, the land of introspection and spirituality – It is India". **Hinduism being the name of Indian Nationalism, Swamiji was never ashamed to proclaim himself to be a Hindu.**

Bhaaratam - Bharat! What a glorious name it is!! It is not merely a name given to a stretch of land surrounded by the mighty Himalayas on the one side and the great seas around. *'Bharata'* is the name of an eternal, immortal nation whose people are engrossed (*rata*) in light (*bhaa*). Bharata is Light Divine, the Land of Wisdom. Long before the dawn of civilization in other parts of the world where primitive men still lived in their caves, the great sages and seers of Bharatavarsha addressed the whole of humanity: *'Shrinvantu sarve amritasya putraah'* – "Listen, Ye all, Children of Immortality!" According to the ancient *rishis*, to look upon man as a sinner is the greatest blasphemy. They considered human existence as the highest stage that a soul has reached in its evolution to seek its identity with the Divine of which it is just a spark. The rishis proclaimed that the ultimate goal of human evolution is divinization of man or Self-realization. They produced the Vedas, the revelations of the highest intuitive wisdom of mankind, which have now been accepted as the most scientific and rational expressions of the truth about the source of entire creation and the meaning and purpose of evolution. They envisaged a higher stage of evolution in the march of mankind and assured that every soul that reaches this human stage is bound to progress to the next stage sooner or later. They taught that each human being can evolve his own religion or pathway to god-realization and all these pathways are like different streams and rivers merging in one ocean. Therefore, in the remote period of history, the great preceptors of this sacred land sent messengers to different parts of the world with their command—*Krinvanto vishwam aaryam*—"Make the entire world noble".

Bharat, according to them, is the chosen land of the Gods and Goddesses to be the preceptor of humanity (*Loka Guru)* from age to age for the realization of human destiny. "*Etad desha prasootasya sakaashaat agrajanmanah, swam swam charitram siksheran prithivyaah sarva maanavaah*" – "Let all the people of the world sit at the feet of the great spiritual Masters of this land,

mould their character and learn the meaning and purpose of life" – cried out the great Rishis of this holy land of Bharatavarsha. . This was the message that they gave to those heroic souls who left the shores of this Bharatavarsha to distant lands and sowed the seeds of culture, civilization and religion in every continent. The Persians, the Egyptians, the Babylonians, the Greeks, the Assyrians, the Africans—why every section of mankind owe their religion to the great Hindus. Therefore, Swami Vivekananda, who addressed the Parliament of World Religions at Chicago in 1893, proclaimed in the august assembly that he stood there representing the "Mother of all religions". The whole world today looks towards India not only for its treasures in the field of Vedic Mathematics, Ayurveda, Yoga and Spiritual Sciences, Music and Dance, Sanskrit language and Sculpture and Painting, but also for its contribution to world peace and universal brotherhood. Adoration and worship of this sacred land as the *punyabhhomi*, *karmabhoomi* and *moksha bhoomi* is the bedrock of the Indian national existence even to this day. Since the Vedic Rishis proclaimed the truth that man is in the pinnacle of evolution marching towards Divinity, many civilizations have come and gone in various parts of the earth, yet, Bharatavarsha, that is India, is still the eternal land of the *rishis*, still young and blossoming as she has ever been and the children of the *rishis* chant even today the same old *mantra* invoking the name of this sacred land—"*jamboo dweepe, Bhaarata varshe, Bharata khande….*"

"Maataa bhoomih, putroaham prithivyaah"—"This earth is our mother and we are all children of Mother Earth"—sing the Vedic Rishis in the *Bhoomi Sookta* of **Atharwana Veda** in praise of Mother Earth. The Vedic *rishi* salutes the Mother Earth—"*Namo maatre prithivyai*"—Salutations to Mother Earth! (***Yajur Veda***, 9.22) To the Hindu, Mother Earth is the holy mother and the Sky is the father. The whole universe is his family and all beings in this universe are his kith and kin. His way of life, Hindutwa or Sanatana Dharma, is universal and eternal, and it encompasses all religions, which are various forms of worship of one Ultimate Reality. Therefore, a Hindu can never be a fanatic or fundamentalist, just as fire can never be cold or ice can never be hot. The Hindu got his name because his most ancient spiritual culture and civilization originated in this holy land of Bharat—the *Sapta Sindhu Bhoomi* as mentioned in the Vedas—which has been referred to as *Hapta Hindu*—in **Zend Avesta**. Greeks made Hind into Ind and we became Indians. Hindu is India and India is Hindu. Every Indian who reveres and respects the eternal values that have sprung up in Bharatavarsha is a Hindu and those that lack that patriotic sentiment can by no means claim the title of Indian.

In the **Yajurveda, 22-22**, there is a National prayer for the welfare of the whole nation. The Rig Vedic Rishi gave expression to his dream in the national prayer: "*Om aa brahman braahmano brahmavarchasee jaayataam. Aa raashtre raajanyah shoora ishadhyoatidhyaadheeh mahaaratho jaayataam. Dogdhree dhenurvodaanangvaanaashuh saptih purandharyoshaajishnuratheshtaah sabheyo yuvaasya yajamaanasya veero jaayataam. Nikaame nikaame nah parjanyo varshatu phalavatyo na oshadhayah pachyantaam yogakshemo nah kalpataam*"—"Let all the Brahmans, i.e. those who possess the highest intuitive wisdom, in this nation shine with the lustre of Brahmanical spirit, i.e., the spirit of acceptance of all beings as the manifestation of one and only Divinity. Let all the Kshatriyas, i.e. men of valour and strength of their shoulders turn out into protectors of this Holy land with mastery in the art of weapons and science of warfare; may the heroes be all great intrepid *Maharathi*s or warriors of the highest standard; let the cows yield good volume of milk (meaning let the wealth of the nation proliferate); may the bullocks and the horses in this country become strong and speedful (meaning let the transport and communication network in the country efficiently integrate the nation); may the women be of very dignified character, possessed with great virtues and charms and good mistresses of houses which they rule; let the householders turn out to be valiant in assemblies and on battle-fields; may they get good children who will also shine as great assembly-men; let the rains bless this land according to seasons and as much as we want; let the herbs and trees bear ample flowers and fruits; let the whole life of this our nation be full in acquisition and use of all things which make the life comfortable and joyful" (*Yajurveda*, *22-22*)

"When a man has begun to be ashamed of his ancestors, the end has come. Here am I, one of least of the Hindu race, yet proud of my race, proud of my ancestors. I am proud to call myself a Hindu, I am proud that I am one of your unworthy servants. I am proud that I am a countryman of yours, you the descendants of the most glorious Rishis the world ever saw", said Swami Vivekananda. Sir John Woodroffe, the renowned Western exponent of **Tantra**, referring to the children of the sacred **Bharatavarsha**, says: "They will gain power (**Shakti**) to uphold their race and will receive all their desires, if they serve their country in the belief that service (**seva**) of **Shri Bharata** is worship (**seva**) of the **Mahashakti**. **Shri Bhagavati**, who though appearing in one of Her forms as **Bharata Shakti**, is not merely a Devi of the Hindus, but their **name** for the one Mother of the World".

Eulogizing Bankim Chandra as "one among the Rishis of the later age"—the seer of the *mantra, 'Vande Mataram'*, which is creating a new India, Mahayogi Sri Aurobindo says: "It is not till the Motherland reveals herself to the eye of the mind as something more than a stretch of earth or a mass of individuals, it is not till she takes shape as a great Divine and Maternal Power in a form of beauty that can dominate the mind and seize the heart that these petty fears and hopes vanish in the all-embracing passion for the Mother and her service, and the patriotism that works miracles and saves a doomed nation is born. To some men it is given to have that vision and reveal it to others." And unambiguously Sri Aurobindo states what he means by *Sanatan*: "It is Hindu religion only because the Hindu nation has kept it, because in this Peninsula it grew up in the seclusion of the sea and the Himalayas, because in this sacred and ancient land it was given as a charge to the Aryan race to preserve through ages." In his famous **Uttarpara Speech**, Mahayogi Sri Aurobindo revealed a message that he received from Krishna Vasudeva whose vision he had while incarcerated in the Alipore Jail: " When you go forth, speak to your nation always this word, that it is for the *Sanatana Dharma* that they arise, it is for the world and not for themselves that they arise. I am giving them freedom for the service of the world. When therefore it is said that India shall rise, it is the *Sanatana Dharma* that shall rise. When it is said that India shall be great, it is the Sanatana Dharma that shall be great. When it is said that India shall expand and extend herself, it is the *Sanatana Dharma* that shall expand and extend itself over the world. It is for the Dharma and by the Dharma that India exists."

Annie Besant, who came from the West and identified herself with Mother India, accepted the identity of Indian nationalism with the *Sanatana Dharma*. She says, "During the early life of a Nation, religion is an essential for the binding together of the individuals who make the nation. India was born, as it were, in the womb of Hinduism, and her body was for long shaped by that religion. Religion is a binding force, and India has had a longer binding together by religion than any other Nation in the world, as she is the oldest of the living Nations." She emphatically proclaimed, "After a study of some forty years and more of the great religions of the world, I find none so perfect, none so scientific, none so philosophic, and none so spiritual as the great religion known by the name of Hinduism. The more you know it, the more you will love it; the more you try to understand it, the more deeply you will value it. Make no mistake; without Hinduism, India has no future. Hinduism is the soil into which India's roots are struck, and torn of that she will inevitably wither,

as a tree torn out from its place. Many are the religions and many are the races flourishing in India, but none of them stretches back into the far dawn of her past, nor are they necessary for her endurance as a nation. Everyone might pass away as they came and India would still remain. But let Hinduism vanish and what is she? A geographical expression of the past, a dim memory of a perished glory, her literature, her art, her monuments, all have Hindudom written across them. And if Hindus do not maintain Hinduism, who shall save it? If India's own children do not cling to her faith, who shall guard it? India alone can save India, and India and Hinduism are one.

In the **Bunch of Thoughts**, Sri Guruji M.S. Golwalkar gives a clear definition of Dharma: "Our definition of *dharma* is twofold. The first is proper rehabilitation of man's mind; and the second is adjustment of various individuals for a harmonious corporate existence, i.e. a good social order to hold people together." Our rishis declared: "*Yatobhyudaya nishreyasa siddhih sa dharmah*" – That which contributes to the material well being as well as spiritual elevation of man is Dharma. They also said, *"Dhaaranaat dharmam ityaahuh, dharmo dhaarayati prajaah"* – "Dharma is the values of life adopted by men, and Dharma holds together the entire society." Sanatana Dharma is those set of eternal values of life adopted by men and those values are common for the entire mankind. Therefore Sanatana Dharma is also known as Manava Dharma.

In his Foreword to **" HINDU RASHTRA—Vedic Ideals in Modern Awakening"** by Sadhu Prof. V. Rangarajan, Sri Mohan Bhagwat has written: "It is a matter of pride for every Bharateeya that the "Matrubhoomi Bharat" is the only land in the present world that is home to the idea, actual practice and experience of oneness of all creation and consequently, the honest acceptance - not mere tolerance - of all diversity as, manifestation of the inherent unity. This truth, which is the fountainhead of absolute, unfading and permanent happiness of all and everything in creation, the balance which nourishes and sustains everything and everyone, was actually and literally seen and experienced by our ancient rishis. On this solid basis they identified the values of 'Dharma' and ensured its practice in mundane life, through many dynamic traditions transferable from generation to generation through the tradition of small practices called '*samskar*'. As selfless well-wishers and parts and parcels of this very universe, they took upon themselves and entrusted all future generations of Bharat with this holy responsibility, of preserving and teaching this ''Dharma" of truth, love, balance and selfless service to the

world. This and only this became the purpose and life force of existence of our holy nation that is designated by various names viz. Bharat, Hindusthan, Aryawarta, India, etc."

Sanatana Dharma is nothing but the eternal values of life set before mankind by the great seers of this land, to enable humanity to achieve its twin goal – *abhyudaya* – material welfare to live full and perfect life in this world – and *nishreyasa* – the final unity with the Divine, the source from which man emerges, towards which human life wends its way and into which it dissolves ultimately. These values are based on the spiritual and philosophical thoughts of the *Upanishad*s whose fundamental ideas are the divinity of man, the non-duality and spiritual character of the Ultimate Reality, the basic solidarity of all existence, realization as the goal of religion, and unity and harmony of all religious paths. These values are the cementing forces uniting man with nature, man with man, and man with the Divine.

Paying glowing tributes to Swami Dayananda, Sri Aurobindo says: "To be national is not to stand still. Rather to seize on a vital thing out of the past and throw it into the stream of modern life, is really the most powerful means of renovation and new creation. Dayananda's work brings back such a principle and spirit of the past to vivify a modern mould. And observe that in the work as in the life it is the past caught in the first jet of its virgin vigour, pure from its sources, near to its root principle and therefore to something eternal and always renewable."

Dayananda tirelessly worked for the restoration and resuscitation of the ancient Vedic Aryan Spirit. The Buddhistic and Vedantic speculative metaphysics could not save the independence of India.

The great Tamil poet-philosopher, Mahakavi C. Subramania Bharati, addressing the little kids of his Motherland, sang:
Chedamillaata Hindusthaanam ,Atai deivamenru kumbidadi paappaa
—"Oh little child, adore and worship the Undivided Hindustan—Akhanda Bharat—as your Goddess." To Bharati, Motherland is not a mere stretch of land:

"Neelakkadalotta kolattinal moonru nettirattal

Kalakkadalukkor palamittal annai karpadine"

-- 'She looks like the blue sea (for blue is the colour of the Divine Mother) and has three eyes (for she is Divine Consort of Shiva – the three eyed) She is the one who has constructed a bridge over the time'. Subramania Bharati presented a clear picture of Indian Nationalism: "Hindusthan is the land of the Hindus. This is the name of our homeland and her people. This vast concourse of people is also known as the 'Bharata Race'…"

To Bepin Chandra Pal too the Indian national movement was a spiritual movement: "The sages of India have declared of old that God and man are essentially one … *Nara* – man, is the image, the symbol, the body, the *vigraha* of Narayana, of the Lord, – this is the universal teaching of the *Vaishnava*. Every denomination, every sect, almost every school of thought, among the Hindus, has, in one shape or another, proclaimed this ancient truth from almost the very beginning of Hindu history. This has been the one universal feature of Hindu thought and Hindu race-consciousness. The new movement in India seeks to realize this ancient truth in the actual, social, economic, and civic life of the people of India, under the complex conditions of modern life. This ancient spiritual ideal of our own race forms the bedrock of that Indian nationalism which has been seeking such varied expressions through our economic, our social, and our political activities in recent years."

Bipin Chandra Pal speaks of a new Nationalism which **Bande Mataram** reveals. 'This nationalism is a religion and religion is not a part of life, but the whole of it.' The eternal problem of Nationalism, he says, is how to preserve, to develop, to perfect these elements in the Consciousness and Character of the Nation which constitutes its essential note and contribute to its specific functions in the universal life of humanity."

Lala Lajpatrai presents his conception of the Motherland in inspiring words when he speaks of the love of an Indian towards his country: "It is impossible for you to understand how passionately an Indian loves his country. He would rather starve in India than be a ruler of men in a foreign climate. For him, India is the land of Gods - the *Deva-Bhumi* of his forefathers. It is the land of knowledge, of faith, of beatitude - the *Gnana-Bhumi*, the *Dharma-Bhumi* and the *Punya-Bhumi* of the ancient Aryas. It is the land of the Vedas and of the heroes - the *Veda-Bhumi* and the *Vir-Bhumi* of his ancestors. Yes, to him, it is the land of lands, the only place where he wishes to live, and more so, where he wishes to die."

Sanatana Dharma is the name given to the eternal values of life that were evolved in the holy land of Bharatavarsha or Hindustan and therefore it came to be known as Hindu Dharma which is not a religion, but a man-making philosophy of life which is universal. No one knows the beginning of it, it has survived the onslaughts of time and will certainly continue into the distant future too and therefore it is *Sanatan* or eternal. Though it originated in the peninsula of Bharatakhanda in the remote past when civilizations had not dawned in other parts of the world, it spread its wings across the seas and mountains and gifted cultural and spiritual values to every segment of humanity imparting to them the meaning and purpose of human existence. Therefore it is *Maanava Dharma*—the way of life meant for the entire mankind. Its ultimate goal is to establish happiness, peace and harmony in the entire universe—*Lokaa samastaa sukhino bhavantu*—and therefore it is *Vishwa Dharma.*

In every Hindu home, we hear the ancient common universal prayer,

Yam shaivaah samupaasate shiva iti

brahmeti vedaantinah

Bauddhaa buddha iti pramaanapatavah

karteti naiyaayikaah

Arhannityatha jaina shaasanarataah

karmeti meemaamsakaah

Soyam vai vidadhaatu vaanchitaphalam

trailokya naatho harih

-- "May Hari, the ruler of the three worlds worshipped by the Shaivites as Shiva, by the Vedantins as Brahman, by the Buddhists as Buddha, by the Naiyayikas as the chief agent, by the Jainas as the liberated, by the ritualists as the principle of law, may he grant our prayers."

The controversy about Caste system and the Vedas which is going on even now is unfortunate and unwanted. The Vedas nowhere speaks about caste system. Manu emphatically declares, " *Janmanaa jaayate shoodrah,*

samskaarena dwijah"--that all human beings are born as Shudras—unrefined—and by *samskaara*—refinement, one becomes a *dwijah*—twice born, i.e., one among the Brahmanas, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas. The classification of the four *Varnas* are not based on birth. Krishna says very clearly in the Srimad Bhagavad Gita—"*Chaaturvarnyam mayaa srishtham, guna karma vibhaagashah*"—"I have created the four Varnas on the basis of quality and temparament". Vedavyasa was born in the womb of a fisherwoman, but he became the Guru of all Gurus and compiler of the Vedas by virtue of his inclination and actions. Satyakaama Jabaali was son of a woman who was serving many masters and therefore he did not know his father. But he became a Upanishadic seer. Narada was a son of a servant maid. Ravana, though born as the son of a Brahmana, descended to the level of Rakshasa whereas his brother Vibhishana is adored as an Alwar saint—a saint of the Vaishnava order.

The classification of the four Varnas mentioned in the *Purusha Sookta*, as rightly pointed out by Sri Guruji Golwalkar in the "Bunch of Thoughts", speaks about the *Raashthra Purusha*. The men in whom wisdom is predominant and who are inclined to spiritual life are the spokespersons of the *Jnaanabhoomi, Karmabhoomi, Mokshabhoomi Bharat.* Vasishtha, Viswamitra, Gautama and other rishis of highest enlightenment guided kings and emperors like Dasaratha and Janaka. Men in whom the emotion, prowess—strength of the shoulder--, patriotism and the qualities of a warrior are predominant, become the protectors of the nation and society. Men in whom entrepreneurial skill is predominant become Vaishyas or traders. The common run, whose interest and inclination to do casual work and eke out a living are Shudras. All the four Varnas are various limbs of the Rashtra Purusha. Nowhere it is said that one cannot move from one Varna to another. Karna, who was considered as a charioteers son and was not accepted as Kshatriya was appointed as King of Angadesha and elevated to the position of Kshatriya by Duryodhana. Vishwamitra, who was a Rajarishi, was elevated to the position of Brahma Rishi and was accepted by Vasishtha.

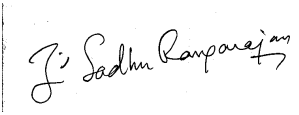
Those who are opposed to calling the country as Bharata and Hindu Rashtra today are descendants of the stooges of erstwhile Muslim rulers and European colonialists who invaded this land and kept the children of this land as slaves for centuries. They are ashamed to call themselves as descendants of the great rishis and spiritual preceptors of this land. Their efforts to wipe out the memories of our glorious past and our great ancestors from the minds of our

patriotic children of Bharatavarsha will not succeed. Time has come when they will be wiped out from our political field. Bharat will once again emerge as Hindu Rashtra honoured by all nations of the world who will recognize Sanatana Dharma as the religion of mankind.

During the periods of Muslim invasions, Moghul rule and European colonialism, the main target of attack was Hindu temples, mutts and spiritual centres and Hindu sadhus and sannyasins who dared to speak of patriotism and Bharatiya nationalism. The kings and rulers who accepted subjugation survived and the rest were annihilated in wars. Sadhus and sannyasins who gave up preaching patriotism and adoration of the Motherland survived and were confined to their mutts and sampradayas dared not to speak of Hindu Rashtra or Bharatiya Nationalism. Yet, even in those times of crisis Mother Bharat produced patriot kings and rulers like Rana Pratap, Chatrapati Shivaji, Guru Govind Singh, Jhansi Rani Lakshmibai, and Veerapandya Kattabomman, saintly personalities like Banda Bairagi, Samarth Ramdas, Sadguru Ramsingh Kuka, Vidyaranya, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Dayananda, Sister Nivedita, Swami Rama Tirtha, Brhmabandhav Upadhyaya and Subramania Siva. Seeing the pitiable condition of Hindu sadhus and sannyasins during the alien rule, Swami Rama Tirtha roared: “The Sadhus of India are a unique phenomenon peculiar to this country. As a green mantle gathers over standing water, so have the Sadhus collected over India, full fifty-two lakhs by this time. Some of them are indeed beautiful lotuses—the glory of the lake! But a vast majority are unhealthy scum.” In his last days, when he was in Rishikesh, being disgusted with the sight of denigration of the ochre robe by pseudo-sadhus, Swami Rama Tirtha removed his ochre cloth and threw into Ganges declaring that he was ashamed to wear it because it was much misused by unworthy people. However, he was highly optimistic that there would emerge in future India a class of dedicated patriot monks who will sacrifice their everything at the altar of the Motherland and in service of the society. He declared, “Let the water begin to flow, let there be marching life in the people, the scum will soon be carried off. The Sadhus are the natural outcome of the past dark ages of Indian History. But now a days the general spirit of reform, in as much as it is changing the feelings and tastes of the householders, is affecting the Sadhus also. There are springing up Sadhus who instead of remaining as suckers and parasites to the tree of Nationality, are anxious to make their body and mind humble manure for the tree, if nothing more.”

What our Motherland needs today is a class of patriotic monks and sadhus who will go into the society and preach nationalism and love of Motherland instead of promoting narrow sects and sampradayas, mutts and missions and desire for ashramas, groups of sectarian disciples and devotees and a cozy life under the patronage of politicians and political parties who promote sectarian vote banks to capture power. It is time that genuine sadhus, sannyasins, and spiritual leaders come out boldly and preach vigorous patriotism and nationalism and adoration and worship of Mother Bharat as the Supreme Goddess over and above all sectarian gods and deities. Those who do not come out with this mission must be condemned by Hindu society as useless scum. It is time for our Hindu spiritual and religious leaders to preach and practice the mantra "Vande Bharata Mataram!"

Vande Mataram! Bharat Mata ki jai! Sanatan Dharma ki jai!



Hindu religion is the only one of the world's great faiths dedicated to the idea that the Cosmos itself undergoes an immense, indeed an infinite, number of deaths and rebirths. It is the only religion in which the time scales correspond, to those of modern scientific cosmology. Its cycles run from our ordinary day and night to a day and night of Brahma, 8.64 billion years long. Longer than the age of the Earth or the Sun and about half the time since the Big Bang. And there are much longer time scales still.

The most elegant and sublime of these is a representation of the creation of the universe at the beginning of each cosmic cycle, a motif known as the cosmic dance of Lord Shiva. The god, called in this manifestation Nataraja, the Dance King. In the upper right hand is a drum whose sound is the sound of creation. In the upper left hand is a tongue of flame, a reminder that the universe, now newly created, with billions of years from now will be utterly destroyed.

A millennium before Europeans were wiling to divest themselves of the Biblical idea that the world was a few thousand years old, the Mayans were thinking of millions and the Hindus billions.

-- **Dr. Carl Sagan,** (1934-1996), Famous astrophysicist.

A PILIGRIMAGE TO THE PAST

Sadhu Prof. Dr. V. Rangarajan

Two devout souls from the Republic of South Africa, accompanied by a humble servant of the Divine Mother, went on a pilgrimage to some of the sacred shrines and pilgrim centres in Tamil Nadu of the Immortal Bharatavarsha.

The ancient structures in stones and granites, the hills and dales, the villages and the cities, all that they saw in the Sacred Soil, unveiled before them the sanctified memories of the past, the glories and the splendour of the places and the mythological tales and legends connected with them as well as their historical importance.

Here is the account of 'A PILGRIMAGE TO THE PAST'.

* * *

Parthasarathy - The Divine Charioteer of Arjuna, the mind-born, is the driver of the chariot of life. If we submit to His will, our journey will be through pleasant centres of pilgrimage to the ultimate goal -- The Eternal Liberation -- the Bliss Eternal. So we started our pilgrimage too from the temple town of Parthasarathy - from **Triplicane** - on the auspicious day of 12 January 1985, the day on which Swami Vivekananda was born. Indeed, Swami Vivekananda himself commenced his long journey to the West from Triplicane, for it was his ardent disciple Alasinga Perumal of Triplicane, who made arrangements for Swamiji's tour abroad. It was appropriate for us to start our pilgrimage from Triplicane on his birthday. It was also 'Shashti', the auspicious day of Lord Muruga, and the climax of our journey was carrying a Kavadi to His temple by sister Guna and tonsure of head by brother Meghanathan at Palani, exactly after six days. We

did not plan it deliberately, but by the Divine Grace of Mother Mayi it happened so.

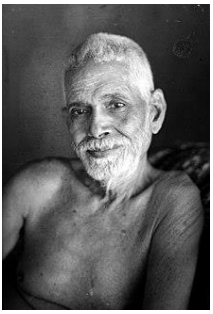
From Madras we drove straight to Tiruvannamalai, the Holiest of the holy places. There is a proverb in Tamil that one can attain salvation by birth at Tiruvarur, by death at Varanasi (Kasi), by worshipping at Chidambaram or by mere thinking of Tiruvannamalai. Tiruvannamalai temple dedicated to Siva is situated at the foot of the Arunachala Hill, 3000 ft. above sea-level. Aruna means the Sun - the ball of fire. There is nothing static in the sun. It is a mass of energy in motion. Achala is that which is immovable, static. But science tells us that the apparently inert matter is also energy - a combination of atoms which in turn is formed by the combination of electro-magnetic waves. The hill of Arunachala is geologically of igneous rock. Arunachala signifies the Siva-Sakti combination. Aruna represents Sakti, and Acala represents Siva, The dynamic (Sakti) and the static (Siva) aspects of Brahman are like two sides of a coin. Therefore the conception of *Ardhanareeswara*.

It is said that it was atop the Arunachala hill that Siva appeared as a big flame, on Krithigai day in the month of Karthigai and commanded Parvati to go round the hill. After she came round, He absorbed Her in the left half of His body and became Ardhannareeswara. The Deepam festival at Tiruvannamalai taking place on Krithigai day of Karthigai month reminds us of this great philosophical truth that the ultimate reality is a Consciousness - Force, and also the scientific truth that Matter and Energy are not different.

Legend is there that Vishnu and Brahma wanted to measure the extent of the light which appeared on **Arunachala Hill**. Vishnu took to the form of a bear (Varaha) and dug deep into the nether worlds and Brahma took the form of a swan and flew up above the Heaven, but both could not see the limits of the light. It means that even Gods cannot measure the limits of Supreme Consciousness for it is infinite. The Upanishads declare *"Poornamada Poornamidam, poornaad poornamudachyate; poornsaya a poornamaadaaya poornamevaavasishyate"* -- "That is infinite, this is infinite, the infinite comes from the infinite. Even after the infinite is

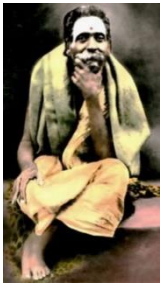
taken out of the infinite, what remains is infinite". The Brahman is not depleted by the manifestation of the Universe from out of it. It still remains the whole, for the manifestation is its Maya vilaasa -- the play of its Sakti.

The light that Arunachala shed is indeed the Light of Supreme wisdom that has emanated from the great sages and saints who have lived there. Sage Arunagirinatha, author of *'Tiruppugazh'*, lived here. Tradition is that once Arunagirinatha left his mortal body and took to the form of a parrot to fetch the parijatha flower. On return, when he could not find the human body, he remained in the temple tower as a parrot and from there sung his *'Kandar Anubhooti'*. The tower is even now known as Kiligopura.



At Tirivannamalai, we visited the ashram of one of the greatest sages of the present century, **Sri Ramana Maharishi**, who lived in a cave atop Arunachala, Paul Brunton, in his famous work, "A Search in Secret India", says about the Maharishi: "There is something in the man who holds my attention, as steel filings are held by a magnet. I cannot turn my gaze away from him."

The Linga in Tiruvannamalai temple is "Jyotir Linga'. The body is also called 'Linga'. When we delve deep into the recesses of our consciousness in the path shown by Ramana, the path of self-enquiry, asking ourselves the question "Who am I?", we will realise that our physical body and the world in which we live are but mere appearances, like the play of light on a silver screen. What a beautiful sight it was to see the sacred samadhis of his pet animals which had also attained to immortality by their mere association with the saint.

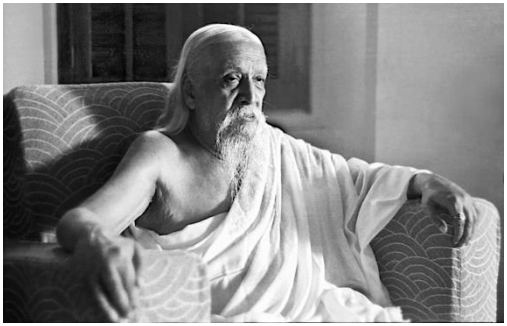


Yet another great saint who was a contemporary of Ramana was **Sri Seshadri Swamigal** whose samadhi is also very near to Sri Ramana's Ashram.

At Tiruvannamalai we had the good fortune of meeting one of the living saints of India, **Yogi Ramsuratkumar Maharaj**. A child of Mother Ganga, Ramsurat hailing from Benares, spent the best part of his youth in the company of Sri Ramana

Maharishi, Sri Aurobindo of Pondicherry and got initiation from Swami Ramdas of Kanhanghad. Later he wandered all over the length and breadth of India and finally settled down at Tiruvannamalai. Looking like a mad fakir with a palm leaf fan in his hand, Yogi Ramsuratkumar is a great mystic who knows past, present and future of all, and a personification of fatherly love and divine grace.

From Arunachala, the Mountain of Light, our journey took us to Vedapuri (Pondicherry), the shores of the Ocean of Wisdom. From the plane of Light we descended to the plane of Sound. The Vedic Hymns reverberated once again in the Vedapuri when **Mahayogi Shri Aurobindo** settled down here, after a stormy period of his revolutionary career in India's freedom struggle, and dived into the depths of the Vedic literature and produced voluminous works. He heralded the Descent of the Supramental Consciousness into the world. The sprawling campus of the Aurobindo Ashram is today the haven of spiritual seekers from every nook and corner of the world. What a Divine atmosphere we found around the samadhi of the great rishi of the modern times and what a blissful experience we had when we sat there in meditation. We had also the opportunity to meet one of the internationally renowned authorities on Veda and Tantra Sastra at Pondicherry, Sri Madhav P. Pandit. And we also enjoyed the hospitality and kindness of a devout soul, Sri C.S. Raju and his family.



Besides the spiritual significance of Pondicherry, it has a place in the history of Indian National movement. Being a French territory, it was the haven of patriots and revolutionaries who escaped from the clutches of British Imperialism. The Pondicherry trinities, Sri Aurobindo, Sri V.V.S. Iyer and Mahakavi Subramaina Bharati were the guiding lights of the renascent movement of Spiritual Nationalism in India.

After a nights' stay in Pondicherry we proceeded to **Chidambaram** which has been from very ancient times, the focal point of Tamil piety and adoration and the chosen home of saints and bards. The presiding deity of this temple is Lord

Nataraja -- the Dancing Lord -- symbolically representing the cosmic dance of creation and destruction. It is the dance of the atoms that create and destroy the macrocosm as well as the microcosm. The electro-magnetic or the energy waves arise out of the sound waves which in turn come from the thought waves, according to twentieth century nuclear physics. Therefore, the sanctom sanctorum of the Nataraja is the *Chit sabha*. Behind the idol representing the manifest universe is the *Chidakasa* or *Chidambara*, the vacant space. Sri Ramana says that in the centre of our heart there is *Akasa* – a *Daharakasa*. Through the process of self-enquiry, when we reach there, we realize our selves. *Lalita Sahasranaama* says that the Divine Mother is *'Daharaakasarupini'*. Therefore we find in the wall behind the idol, the representation of *Sri Chakra*, the symbol of Mahamaya -- the Supreme Consciousness-Force. Besides the sanctum sanctorum, the Chit Sabha, there are four other Sabhas -- the *Kanaka Sabha*, the *Deva Sabha*, the *Nritta sabha*, and the *Raja Sabha*. The Kanaka Sabha is the heart in which is concealed the Self. *"Hiranmayena patrena satyasyaapihitam mukham"* -- 'The face of truth is always covered by a Golden chalice'. The 'A priori' is always concealed behind the phenomena. And the phenomena is in the field of Gods, the Devas, holding various responsibilities in the realms of creation, sustenance and destruction, therefore the Deva Sabha. The Nritta Sabha is the universe in Time and Space with all its multifarious colourful scenes. There is an order and rythm in the dance of the universal phenomena. The keeper of the 'Rita', the order and rythm is the Raja - the Nataraja, and we are all in his Raja Sabha as subjects to Him. What a wonderful translation of a high philosophical conception in granite and mortar in the form of the temple of Nataraja. Apart from the main shrine of Nataraja, there are the other shrines of Govindaraja perumal, Subramania and Vinayaka. Truth is known by different names. The stationing of all these deities in one and the same place indicates that the Truth that we see in one and the same place manifests in different forms suited to the temperament of each individual seeker.

From Chidambaram we proceeded to **Sirkazhi**, where reigns the Govindaraja Perumal. Who is Govinda? Sri Sankara defines the word Govinda in four ways:

(1) He who knows or finds the earth, i.e., the one who has realized the substratum on which the world-play goes on.

ii) He who is the Lord of the cattle i.e. the Factor behind all animal passions, the Essence behind the living kingdom.

iii) He who confers speech i.e. the very power behind the sound phenomenon which enables every living being to convey knowledge.

iv) He who is known through the Vedas, i.e. the Supreme Reality indicated by the Sacred texts. In short, Govinda is the Essence, The Atman, which is the Truth behind the everchanging flux of things that constitutes the Universe.

From Sirkazhi, on our way to Swami Malai, we visited the famous temple of Lord Vaitheeswara at Vaitheeswaran Koil. The Lord Siva, in the form of the greatest healer, heals the physical and psychical illness of his devotees. Offering salt and pepper in the sacred tank here heals the sick miraculously.

From Vaitheeawaroon Koil we proceeded to **Swami Malai**, the sacred shrine of Lord Muruga, the spontaneous Effulgent Grace. Subramania *Su+Brahma+nya.*

Su - all that is suspicious and blessed; *Brahma* - the Supreme Reality; *nya* - that from which everything originates, by which everything is sustained and into

which everything resolves. Subramania is the grand product of *Siva-Sakti' aikya*. The first born is Vinayaka, the *pranava swaroopa*, or the form of Eternal sound. Then comes Shanmuga, the One Divine manifesting in and through six layers of man and nature. The organic as well as the inorganic has one source. Organic evolves from the inorganic. Carbon is both organic and inorganic. In an atom of carbon, if the units of proton happen to be five or below that number, that matter is inorganic. But if the units of proton be raised to six or above, it then becomes organic. Six units of proton is the deciding factor in the transformation. Shanmukha is the symbol of the insentient becoming sentient.

In the process of evolution, the evolute gains 'freshness' (*murugu*). The mud, when it becomes a pot, has a greater grandeur. Therefore, in Swamimalai, the temple of the son is one on the top, and of the father at the bottom. The conception that the son teaches the father means that the son is advanced than the father. The legend is that Siva posed ignorant of the word symbol "Om" and got enlightened about it from Kumara, his son at Swamimalái. Our Shastras proclaim: *"Putraat ichchet paraajaya, sishyaat ichchet paraajaya"* -- 'A father should aspire for defeat by his son; a teacher should aspire for defeat by his student'. If the son does not advance from the father, that proves the inefficiency of the father in bringing up his son. If the student does not advance from the master, that shows the inefficiency of the master. So, which father will not be delighted to be taught by his own son?

From the sacred shrine of the son, we proceeded to the Great Temple of the Father the **Brihadeeswara Temple**, Tanjore. Tanjore is known as the granary of South India. It is the rice bowl of Tamil Nadu. Not only in material prosperity, but also in spiritual and cultural excellences, Tanjore is very famous. The Saraswati Mahal Library which we visited as soon as we reached Tanjore is the store-house of the Wisdom of Ancient India. Raja Sherfoji, the famous among the Mahratta Rulers of Tanjore, immortalized his name by

his unique contribution in building up this library containing rare manuscripts of ancient India, covering vast fields of science, religion, culture, history and philosophy. The manuscripts also remind us about the touching stories of the authors of those immortal works. The palm-leaf manuscript of *'Leelaavati'*, the renowned astronomical work of Bhaskara II (AD 1114), recalls to our mind the heroic battle of the great astrologer against fate by trying to set the appropriate time for the marriage of his daughter so as to outwit fate which had destined her to widowhood immediately after the marriage. He did set the time, but the sand clock which he had invented to measure time failed him, as his little innocent daughter, out of curiosity, peeped into the pot of sand and her nose-ring fell into it partly blocking the hole at the bottom of the pot and thereby slowing down the flow of sand. Fate had its way.

The manuscript of *'Bhaamati'* of Vachaspati Misra, which is a gloss on the commentary of Adi Sankara on '*Brahmasutra'*, tells us the story of the young bride who waited for twenty-five years, devotedly serving her husband all the time from the time of her marriage, while he had totally forgotten her and his *grihasta* status in his deep engrossment with the production of his immortal work. One night, when the wind blew off his oil lamp, interrupting his concentration in the work, he saw a beautiful maiden coming to light the lamp. He realised that she was his wife and he had cruelly denied her the pleasures of a conjugal life. In repentance he went to the other extreme of abandoning his work and spending the rest of his time in pleasant life with her. But the dutiful wife attempted to commit suicide so that she should not stand in the way of her husband's grandest achievement in life. The husband realized his folly, took up his work again and after successfully completing it, named it after his wife, *'Bhaamati'*, a unique name for a Vedantic work. Was it not surprising to see that treasures of knowledge could be found even on the pavements of Tanjore city? Did we not stumble upon a rare old book, *"Naankanda Naalvar"* by U Ve Swaminatha Iyer, on the bazaar pavement when we went out for shopping? January 13th was the Bhogi day on which people discard old and worn out things allowing room for the new ones coming in on Pongal. But we were marvelling at the beauty and grandeur of the old manuscripts, books and monuments on that day. Yes, the word *'purana'* is aptly applicable to them. Adi Sankaracharya defines *'purana'* as *"puran api navaiti Puranaha"* -- 'That which is new though it is old is purana'. Brajendranath Seal, while speaking about Mother India, says: "ever ageing but never old, that is India". So the thing that we saw in Tanjore were old yet new.

The sky-scraping Gopura of the Tanjore temple seemed to proclaim, when we visited the temple, "I am very old, yet very young and fresh; look, look at me!"

And the big Nandi which welcomed us as soon as we entered the temple precincts also asked us, "Am I old? Come on, click your camera".When the drumbeats in the temple started reverberating in the four corners, we forgot that we were in the 20th century. We saw before our mind's eye, the great **Raja Raja Chola** standing there by the side of a devout and dedicated sculptor absorbed in his work of chiselling stones. The sculptor orders his boy to bring him his spittoon, not knowing that it is the emperor and his consort who were standing by his side. And lo! the emperor lifts the spittoon and extends it to the sculptor who spits into it. And then, when the poor sculptor realized, to his utter bewilderment, what he had done, the king smiles and tells him that it is his privilege to be of humble service to such a great sculptor.

King Raja Raja Chola I (985-1013 AD) built the magnificent temple dedicated to Brihadeeswara (Siva) which is the supreme of its kind in the whole of South India. The temple with its huge tower over the sanctum, the shade of which never falls on the earth, its colossal Linga image and its monolithic Bull, stands as a supreme monument alike of the Great King's devotion to religion and his imperial, power. The central tower of the shrine rises to a height of about 192 feet and is built entirely of stone. It is pyramidal in form and rises in stately proportion. Raja Raja is said to have employed hundreds of elephants to carry huge boulders over an artificial mound sloping down to several miles, set up for the construction of the gopura. The sacred Bull (Nandi) in front of the shrine cut out of a single stone and measuring several feet in height, is a bold and magnificent piece of sculpture.

In the early morning of Pongal day (January 14), after our worship of the Brihadeeswara, we had the opportunity to go round the passage surrounding the sanctum sanctorum, containing excellent Chola murals similar to those in the Ajanta caves. The King Raja Raja with his guru, Karuvurar, who helped him in the construction of the temple, is among the best in the paintings. In the 1000th year of the coronation) of the great king (1985) the people of India

have richly honoured him, when on their behalf, our late Prime Minister, Smt. Indira Gandhi, installed in the temple a Panchaloha image of Raja Raja, gifted by the Jagadguru Shakaracharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham.

From Tanjore, on our way to Rameswaram, we passed through two important places, Pudukkottai and Panchalankurichi, connected with the heroic battle of **Veera Pandhya Kattabomman** who raised his sword against the mighty East India Company in India in 1799 A.D. The Britishers who were swallowing the princely states in India one after the other, had a tough time in dealing with this great hero and martyr. Kattabomman met Jackson, the officer of East India Company on the latter's invitation, at Ramalinga Vilas Palace, Ramnad. When the Englishman demanded on behalf of his Company, tribute from the Ruler of the Princely state, Panchalankurichi, Kattabomman thundered:

"The Heaven showers the rains,
Mother Earth grows the grains,
For a sovereign ruler of repute
Where's the question of paying tribute?
Not knowing where thou art,
If thou pokest thy nose without art,
Surely wilt thou lose thy respect
And perish without help to expect."

He also gave the Englishman, the first taste of the sharpness of his sword, when the Company forces tried to make him a captive. Later, a powerful British force under the commandership of Major Bannerman marched to Panchalankurichi Fort to capture the heroic lion. They could not capture him with their force. But the betrayal of jealous rulers, Ettappan of Ettayapuram and Tondaiman of Pudukkottai, helped the Britishers to capture the valiant hero.

What a great vigour surges within our veins when we breathe the air of Panchalankurichi. There is a legend that once a rabbit chased by a hound was fleeing for its life. But when it touched the soil of Panchalankurichi, it suddenly stopped, turned back and ferociously faced the hound which had to flee. It is said, that was why Kattabomman's ancestor selected that place for building his Fort. After the martyrdom of Kattabomman, though this fort was razed to the ground, it was rebuilt by his illustrious and valiant brother, Oomathurai, who continued the battle of freedom against the British and attained heroic martyrdom like his own brother.

From Mandapam, we travelled by train to reach Rameswaram Island. While passing through Pamban, we remembered the Great Saint, Kumara Gurudasa Swamigal, popularly known as Pamban Swamigal. The Swamigal spent his last days in Madras. Once he met with an accident and the doctors decided to amputate one of his legs which was badly injured. The Swami made his devotee sing his *"Shanmuga Kavacham"*, a hymn in praise of Lord Muruga, on the day previous to that on which the operation was to be performed. The next morning, the doctors in the Government. General Hospital, Madras, found to their utter amazement, the Swami walking on the corridors of the hospital ward. He was at once discharged without any treatment. The incident has been recorded in the hospital records, still available for verification by any Doubting Thomas.

Crossing the Pamban channel, we reached **Rameswaram**, a small island in the Bay of Bengal, deriving importance and sacredness from its traditional association with the presence and doings of Sri Rama, the hero and deity of the epic of Ramayana. There are two different versions of the legend regarding the construction of the Rameswaram temple by Sri Rama.

According to one version, Sri Rama reached this place with his monkey army and with their help, and the help of even little squirrels, he tried to bound the ocean (*Setu bandhana*). But every time he tried to erect the bridge, it was

destroyed by Ravana. Then Jambavan suggested to Rama to erect a Siva temple on the bridge, for Ravana, being a staunch devotee of Siva, would not destroy the bridge because of the Siva temple on it. Another version is that, after the victory over Ravana, Rama came here and set up the temple for Siva and worshipped the Lord to wash off the sin of having slain Ravana, a Brahmana, who was an authority on Samaveda and a staunch devotee of Siva.

It is said that Rama sent his faithful servant, Hanuman, to fetch the linga for the temple and fixed the date for the installation -- the tenth day of the bright fortnight of the month of Aani. But Hanuman could not return by the time. Therefore, Sita made a linga out of sand and installed it with due ceremony. By the time Hanuman also reached there and he was enraged, finding his labour going vain. He tried to pull out with his tail the linga made by Sita, but he failed to move it. Later, Rama, in order to pacify him, installed the Linga brought by him in the present temple, and ordered that it should be worshipped first before worshipping the Linga installed by Sita.

The Rameswaram temple is a large and magnificent one. Its enclosure measured 900 feet by 700 feet. It has three courts with Gopuras in the outer court in all the four directions. The Rajas of Ramnad, known as Sethupathis or Lords of Sethu or Rameswaram, were instrumental in adding to the original temple. There is also a temple for Vishnu, Setu Madhava, whose image is made in white marble. The most important part of the temple is the corridor with 4000 pillars.

The Nandi in the Ramalingeswara temple is made of lime and mortar and is 12 feet long and 9 feet high.

There are twenty-two teerthas in the temple. The part of the sea to the east of the temple is Agni teertha. Pilgrims commence their bath in this teertha and conclude it in the Kodi teertha within the temple. Taking bath in the teethas (wells) in the temple is considered more auspicious than the worship of the deity itself. The waters of the teethas have medicinal property and they cure not only physical ailments, but also purify the minds. Lord Krishna is said to have undergone the ceremonial bath in the 22 teerthas to absolve himself of the sin of killing his uncle Kamsa. Rama himself is said to have come, after his coronation, to take the ceremonial bath for complete purification. Panchapandavas and Balarama have also come to the pilgrim centre for bath in the teerthas.

Pilgrims bring water from the Ganges to worship in Rameswaram. Varanasi (Kasi) in the north and Rameswaram in the South are two great religious centres of the Hindus, and there is a strong belief that a pilgrimage to Kasi will be complete only when the Ganges water from there is brought to Rameswaram and *abhisheka* performed for the Ramalingam. Badrinath in the north, Puri in the east, Dwaraka in the west and Rameswaram in the south are called the four sacred spots - *chaturdhams* to be visited by every Hindu.

On the sands of Ganga Sagara, the Bay of Bengal, at Rameswaram, we offered oblations (*tarpana)* for the departed soul of Yugendra, the son of Smt. and Sri Moodley, on the auspicious day of Makara Sankranti, when the Sun moves from Dakshinayana to Uttarayana. We have read in the Mahabharatha that the Great Bhishmacharya was lying on the bed of arrows till the beginning of the Uttarayana Kalą, so that his soul, after casting off the body, can take to the path of Gods. Yugendra's soul was also waiting for this auspicious day to receive its tarpana. Is it a mere coincidence, miracle, or the Divine Will? All is Mother's play!

Around Rameswaram, there are a few important pilgrim spots. We visited Gandhamadhana Parvata, a mound 3 kms. west of the temple, supposed to have been visited by Rama. From there we had a very beautiful view of the island. We also visited Navapashanam or Devipatnam, 15 kms. away from Rameswaram, where we saw the Navagraha installed in the sea and worshipped by Sri Rama, before going to Lanka.

After our night stay in Rameswaram, on 15th morning, we proceeded to Mandapam by train, to continue our journey again by car, driving towards the sacred sea-shore shrine of Lord Muruga of Tiruchendur.

Of the Saivaite temples, the most renowned is the **Tiruchendur** temple, situated on the seashore at the far end of Tirunelveli District. This is the place of victory of Lord Muruga

over Soorapadman after a dix day's war. The most important festival here is 'Skanda Shashti' when devotees from far and wide congregate here for six days' stay and worship. The deity in war-robes is taken to the beach on all the six days and the war against Soorapadman is enacted there. On completion of Soora samhara, the marriage with Devayanai is also celebrated. Kumara guruparar, a dumb boy of five, became a celebrity with the blessings of the deity here and sung "*Kandar Kalivenba*" in praise of the Lord. Adi Shankara sung here his *Subramania Bhujanga*. (*Bhujanga* is a form of poetry, the rythm of which resembles the motion of a snake). In this temple there are images of Lord Venkateswara, Lord Ranganatha in reclining posture, with Sridevi, Bhoodevi, Neeladevi, and Gajalakshmi, and Brahma appearing on a lotus from his naval. The 101 lingas carved on a single block of granite is another important feature of the temple. The scene of Soora Samhara is depicted excellently on the wall of the outer prakara. Here, there is a sacred well called *'Naalikinaru'*, (Skanda pushkarini), one square foot in extent and seven feet deep, with very sweet water though it is situated very near the sea. It is said, Muruga created the well with his Vel to supply water to his thirsty troops after Soora samhara. *Tirumurugattupadai*, forming part of Tamil classic *'Pathupattu'*, sings the glory of this place. A Vaishnavite poet in his *"Pillai Tamil"* sings the glory of Tiruchendur Muruga. Arunagirinathar's *'Tiruppugazh'* also sings his glory. The central image of Subramania in this temple is that of a young and beautiful ascetic, rapt in contemplation and worship of Shiva.

Veera Pandiya Kattabomman was a great devotee of Tiruchendur Murugan. Every day he would take his meals only after the *Ucchikala Pooja*, (Afternoon worship) was over in the temple. In order to announce the completion of the pooja here, a number of bells in several mandapas constructed in between this temple and his Palace far away were rung.

There is a story that in 1648 A.D., the Dutch tried to carry away the *utsava* deity in this temple. A terrific storm broke and prevented their journey by sea. Getting panicky, they threw the idol into the sea. It was retrieved later by Vadamalayappa Pillaiyan, an agent of Naick rulers, who had a vision in his dream about the idol in the sea, and it was re-installed in 1653 A.D.

Every pious Hindu worships the Holy Motherland, Bharatavarsha, as the manifestation of the Supreme Mother.

"Ratnaakaraa dhoutapadaam
Himaalaya kireetineem
brahamaraaja rishi ratnaadyaam
vande Bhaarata maataram."

-- "I bow to Sri Bharatamata whose feet are constantly washed by the three great oceans, who wears the Great Himalayas as Her crown, and who is adorned with pearls like Brahmarishis and Rajarishis".

The sacred feet of the Mother -- 'the Land's End of India' -- where the continent and oceans meet, is Kanyakumari. In order to destroy the demons, Baka and Mukha, the Lord of Kasi, Viswanatha, created two goddesses out of his inseparable Shakti -- the one as Kali at Kalighat and the other, Kanyakumari at Cape Comorin -- and completely annihilated the asuras.

There is a legend that Goddess Parvathi stood on one foot on the last bit of rock on the southern tip of the land and performed *tapas* to get the hand of Siva. The original temple was situated on that rock and later it was shifted to the shore. Even now her footprint is preserved on the rock, known as Sripadasila, where a magnificent memorial for Swami Vivekananda, the patriot monk of India, has been created.

There is a local legend that Kanni Bhagavathy, the Goddess of Kanyakumari, wanted to obtain the hand of Lord Siva in the form of Trimurti (combination of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva) of the nearby Suchindram temple. But the bridegroom did not arrive at the appointed hour of marriage and so the bride got angry and cursed all rice-preparations made for the marriage to be turned into sand. That is why the sand of Kanyakumari is multicoloured and the deity is also eternally virgin.

Why is Mother Sakti worshipped here as a virgin? Sri Aurobindo, in his magnum opus, *'Savitri'* says:

"This world was not built with the random bricks of chance,
A Blind God is not destiny's architect,
A Conscious Power has drawn the plane of life."

The whole Universe is the manifestation of a Consciousness-Force.

The modern nuclear physics declares that Atoms are made up of proton, neutron and electron -- energy waves. The animate and inanimate beings in the world are all multifarious combinations of atoms. Modern scientists, after their experiments with telepathy, telekinesis and other such extra-ordinary faculties of mind, have come to recognize a new form of energy which they call as 'X' energy or 'psychotronic energy'. So everything, including our thoughts, is form of energy. Therefore, it is a Consciousness-Force which is the creatrix of the universe and Mahayogi Aurobindo calls it as Maha Shakti.

The land of Bharatavarsha is also a manifestation of The Maha Shakti. The fifty-one shakti peethas or temples dedicated to the Mother in the whole country from Kanyakumari to Kashmir Ksheer Bhavani are arranged in the very pattern of the Shakti peethas in a Sri Chakra, a symbolic representation of the Divine Mother. Kanyakumari is the *moolaadhara shakti,* the unharnessed energy, and therefore, she is worshipped here as a virgin Goddess. The multicoloured sand of Kanyakumari contains Thorium which generates Atomic Energy.

The temple of Bhagavathy situated on a spacious rectangular ground on the very fore-shore is walled off on all sides. The image of Kanni Bhagavathy facing east, is a fine piece of marvellous sculptural skill. The eastern gate of the temple remains always closed except five times in a year, for, there is a belief that the dazzling light of the diamond nose ring of Bhagavathy has blinded the vision of the mariners and led to shipwreck.

If the image of the Goddess of Kanyakumari is in the sanctum sanctorum of the Bhagavathi temple, the Living Goddess could be seen outside the temple, on the shore of the tri-seas. She is **Mother Mayamma**, mostly sitting on the sands on the southern side of the temple, on the pathway to the bathing ghats, always surrounded by forty or fifty dogs. The good old lady looks like a mad, beggar woman and very few who visit Kanyakumari ever come to see her. But there are blessed people who come in search of Her, even across the continent, and to Her devotee, She is everything. Her Grace is showered on every being -- whether a rich man, the highest ruler of the land, a beggar, a leper, stray cattle or a dog -- without any

discrimination. She never speaks, but Her graceful looks will speak volumes. Unbelievable and most mysterious are the ways in which she solves the spiritual as well as temporal problems of those who surrender to Her. In her we find the supreme example of a *'sthithaprajna'* of the Bhagavad Gita. None knows where from she came and when she came, but to many, she is the most beloved Mother Divine.

Our pilgrimage to Kanyakumari reached its consummation when we had Her Darshan in a house of a devotee on the northern side of the temple.

> *"Prithivyaam putraaste janani bahavah santi taralaah*
> *param teshaam madhye viralataraloham tava sutah*
> *madeeyoyam tyaagah samuchidamidam no tava sive*
> *kuputro jaayeta kvachidapikumaata na bhavati."*

-- "Oh Mother, in this world you have many children. I, far away from you, am also one among them. Please protect me and do not leave me. A bad son may be born but there can never be a wicked Mother" -- Sri Sankaracharya.

At Kanyakumari, we stayed in the Vivekanandapuram, a sprawling eighty-acre campus of Vivekananda Kendra, a service organisation founded by Sri Ekanath Ranade. Sri Ranade was the moving spirit behind the erection of a magnificent **Swami Vivekananda Rock Memorial** on the Sripada shila, 450 yards from the tapering end of the mainland. The Rock memorial consists of two prominent structures. One is the Vivekananda Mandapam which includes a beautiful dhyana mandapam or meditation hall and a sabha mandapam with an imposing life-size statue of the Swamiji in his wandering monk posture. The other is the Sripada mandapam in which the footprint of the Divine Mother is preserved in glass case. The

vision of the Swamiji in the sabha mandapam falls on the Sripada in the opposite structure, Sripada mandapam.

Swami Vivekananda, as a wandering monk, visited Kanyakumari. In his intense urge to see the rock, he plunged into the high seas and riding over the surging waves, swam that distance of about two and a half furlongs. Sitting on the rock, he meditated for three days. He received illumination and discovered his mission in life -- to re-enunciate to the world, the message of Sanatana Dharma. At Kanyakumari, the simple monk was transformed into a great master builder of the nation as well as a great world teacher.

There is a memorial for the Swami on the shore also. Besides, there are the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial and Shankaracharya Mandapa on the shore.

The sylvan surroundings of the Vivekanandapuram, the sunrise in the beach, the pictorial exhibition of Swami Vivekananda's life in the campus -- all these contributed to our experience of a sublime spiritual atmosphere in the Cape.

Mahatma Gandhi, who visited Kanyakumari, wrote on 15 January 1937: "I am writing this at the Cape, in front of the sea where three waters meet and furnishes a sight unequalled in the world, for this is the port of call for vessels; like the Goddess, the waters around are virgin ... This place is eminently suited for contemplation. I wish I were to stay here for ever."

Kanyakumari is the only place in India where one can see both sunrise and sunset. On the full-moon days both the sunset and moon rise can be seen at a time.

From the southern tip, we resumed our journey northward on 17th morning. We visited **Suchindram**, 13 kms. north of Kanyakumari. The very name indicated that it is the place where Indra got purified. The presiding deity there is Sthanumaalayan the combined form of the trinities Sthanu (Siva), Maal (Vishnu) and Ayan

(Brahma). There is an interesting legend about the manifestation of the Trimurthy (Trinity) here and Indra getting purified by worshipping Him.

The great sage, Atri, with his wife Anasuya, an embodiment of chastity, was living in this place which was earlier known as Gnaanaaranya. Once there was no rain in this place for a long time and birds and animals started suffering for want of water. The sage moved by the pitiable plight of the poor and dumb creatures performed penance to please the Trinity. The Trinity appeared before him and told him that the absence of rain was due to the fact that Indra, cursed by Sage Gautama for attempting to seduce the sages' wife, Ahalya, was hiding in the Himalayas. So the Sage Atri left for Himalayas to perform Tapas to get Indra absolved of his sin and bring rain to Gnaanaaranya. His devout wife, Anasuya, washed the feet of her husband and kept the water with her to protect her from all difficulties during the long absence of her husband. Sage Narada, who is noted for creating in all the three worlds, problems and confusions which, of course, ultimately ended in good things, came to Atri's place. Anasuya, with the help of the *paada tirtha*, the holy water, which she was preserving, entertained lavishly Naradamuni and his friends. Narada, very much pleased by her hospitality and all the more by her chastity, wanted to establish that in all the three worlds, Anasuya was the greatest women. On his way to the heavens, he collected some gram shaped iron pellets. He took them to the divine consorts of the three great Gods, Saraswati, Lakshmi and Parvati, requesting them to fry it for him. But they said, they could not do it. Then he told them that on the earth there was a powerful woman who could do it. He got the iron pellets fried for him by Anasuya. This created jealously in the hearts of the Goddesses who felt their pride wounded by this woman, on the earth. They decided to humiliate her by testing her chastity and commanded their husbands to go to her as mendicants and beg for alms, and at the same time they should put a condition to her that she should make her offering appearing before them in nakedness. The Gods obeyed their wives and appeared before Anasnya and begged as they were instructed by the Devis. **Anasuya** understood the situation by the power of her chastity. Unperturbed, she agreed to fulfil the wish of the Trinity. She took them inside and sprinkled the *paada tirtha* on them. Lo! the three Gods were converted into three little babies. Then she fed them in the way

they wanted.

The three goddesses in the heaven came to their wits end when they knew what had happened to their husbands. They rushed to Anasuya's abode repenting for their arrogant and foolish act and appealed to her to return their husbands. Anasuya placed the three babies before them, but they could not recognize them as the three babies looked alike. Later, Ansuya made the three children combine into one form.

Meanwhile, Narada informed Atri about the appearance of three babies in his asrama and caused him hasten back to Gnaanaaranya. Narada also informed Indra about the manifestation of the Trinity at Gnaanaaranya. Indra also rushed there and worshipped the Trinity and got himself cured of his curse and shone forth with a thousand eyes. It is believed that even now Indra comes every night to Suchindram and performs ratri pooja to the deity there. There is a custom in this temple that the same priest is not allowed to conduct services for two consecutive days. This is intended to prevent the nambudiri brahmin poojaris from noticing the changes in the garments of the deity and the position of utensils used for pooja on the previous night.

Indra is Mind. (Indriyas are the instruments of the mind). When the mind gets attracted to sense pleasures, it is cursed. It loses its power. Only when it concentrates on the source power behind the creation, sustenance and destruction of the Universe -- the trinity -- does it regain its vitality. Such a revitalized mind has thousand-fold capacity. It can penetrate all regions, into past, present and future. The thousand eyes symbolically represent the omnipresence of the siddha, who has perfect control over his mind.

In Suchindram temple, the musical pillars cut out of a single block of granite stone and the monolithic image of Anjaneya, 18 feet high, are very impressive. The gigantic image of Nandi is considered one of the biggest in India. The top, middle and base of the image in the sanctum sanctrum of this temple represent Siva, Vishnu and Brahma respectively.

On our way to Madurai, we halted for a few minutes in front of a life statue of Veera Pandya Kattabomman at the exact spot at **Kalayarkoil**. where he attained martyrdom. Even in his last moments, Kattabomman

exhibited supreme courage and bravery by stepping forward to put around his neck, with his own hands, the hang-man's noose that dangled from a strong bough of a tamarind tree. A fragrant flower that blossomed in the pleasure garden of Bharatamata was offered at her feet on the 16th of October, 1899.

The name of the small princely state, Ettayapuram, now in Tirunelveli District, was tarnished, when the ruler of the state, Ettappan, betrayed Veera Pandya Kattabomman and caused the latter's capture by the British. To wipe off the sin committed by the ruler and to restore the glory of that state, was born in that village on December 11, 1882, the most beloved son of Bharat Mata, Mahakavi C Subramania Bharati, who performed the nitya upasana of Bharata Mata with the flowers of his soul-stirring songs and instilled courage and spirit of patriotism in the hearts of Indians, especially the people of Tamil Nadu. "Late Subramania Bharati was a man on whose tongue the Goddess Saraswati can honestly be believed to have danced the dance of patriotism. If he had been born in any free country, why in a country of the world except India, that man would have been made the Poet-Laurate of the country, would have been given honours and titles by a government which knows how to respond to the feelings of the people and would have lived and died among the most honoured of the nation ... Subramania Bharati lived and died a patriot" - so said another equally great patriot of Tamil Nadu, Sri Satyamurthy, on the floor of Madras Legislative Council, in 1928, condemning the seizure of Bharati's songs by the British Government. Such was the power of his songs that even after his lifetime, the British Government had to continue its war against his works.

Subramania Bharati started composing poems at a very early age and even got the title 'Bharati' when he was just 11 years old. The death of his father, who was a court-poet of Ettayapuram, forced him to go to Benares to pursue his studies. He acquired a good knowledge of Sanskrit and Hindi, besides English and his own mother tongue, Tamil. After passing the entrance examination of Calcutta University he returned to Ettayapuram and served as a court poet to the Raja. But Bharati's temperament was not suited to the job of servitude in a court. He became a Tamil pandit in Setupati High School, Madurai. The call for the freedom of Motherland echoed in his heart. He gave up his job and joined

'*Swadesamitran*,' a patriotic daily of Madras. As the sub-editor of the journal, he wielded his pen, which was proved to be mightier than a sword, in the battle against tyranny and oppression under British Rule. He came in close contact with Lokamanya Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal, Lala Lajpat Rai, and other great patriots. He accepted Sister Nivedita as his Guru. When Madras became tense for him, he moved to Pondicherry, a French territory, to keep himself away from the clutches of the British Government. Here he came into close contact with Mahayogi Sri Aurobindo. This association stirred the spiritual urges in Bharati also and the Upanishads of the great Rishis took the form of poems of Bharati. Tired of a decade of life in Pondicherry, when Bharati returned to Madras Province, he was arrested by the British, but was later released due to the intervention of some influential people. The rest of his life, till his premature death on September 11, 1921, at the age of 39, he lived like a Vedantin.

We visited the memorial to this great poet-patriot of Tamil Nadu at Ettayapuram. While going around the memorial, a voice surged up from the bottom of our hearts: "If he had been born in a country of the world except India, he would have been the most honoured of the nation."

On 17th, the auspicious Ekadashi day, we reached **Madurai**, the beautiful city on the banks of river Vaigai, where once the Tamil Sangam flourished and Lord Siva himself, in the guise of a poet, participated in the meet of the greatest of Tamil poets. With a range of five hills dominating the background, Madurai city was the famed capital of the Pandyas and was also renowned as the "Athens of South India." In the early centuries of Christian era there were commercial and diplomatic relations between the Pandyas and the Roman Empire. *"Silappatikaram"*, the famous Tamil classic refers to Roman guards in the palace of the Pandya Monarch at Madurai. Megasthanes, Strabo, Pliny, Ptolemy, Marcopolo, Ibn

Batuta and many other foreign writers have written about the glory of the Pandya capital. Her trade extended as far as Asia Minor and the Mediterranean and her goods were sought after and prized by the subjects of Caesars. Madurai was also a centre of arts and culture.

The *Devi Bhagavata* mentions Madurai as one of the principal Shakthi peethas. The presiding deities of the city are Meenakshi and Sundereswara. There is a legend that Malayadhwaja, the ruler of Pandya kingdom, and his wife Kanchanamala, prayed to Lord Siva to bless them with a child and performed a *yaga*. Siva caused his consort, Parvati, to come out of the fire in the form of a little girl. Her beautiful eyes resembled a fish and she was named as Meenakshi. On the death of the king, she succeeded to the throne. She was wooed by several suitors, but She vowed that she would marry none but him who could out-match her and prove himself her master. She said that she would marry him who defeated her in fair combat at any one of the eight direction or quarters. So her suitors entered the lists to combat with Meenakshi, resplendent with beauty and armed with bow and arrow. The first seven combatants were defeated by her, but the eighth, Lord Siva Himself, disguised as Sundareswara, defeated Meenakshi at the eighth point of the compass, i.e. north-east. Goddess Meenakshi became his prize and Siva in turn became the ruler of the Pandyas, assuming the name Sundarapandya. The Divine marriage of Meenakshi and Sundareswara has become the theme of generations of sculptors and painters. Brahma performing the marriage rites and Vishnu, brother of Parvati, laying the bride's hand upon that of the bridegroom and pouring water upon it as a gesture of *Kannikaa daanam*, declaring the queen to be Siva's consort, is beautifully painted or sculpted by many a devout, dedicated and talented artists. The above sacred legend is also commemorated every year in the leading festival of Madurai temple, known as the Chittirai festival, falling in April and May. The crowning of Meenakshi, Her numerous victories, Her meeting with Lord Siva, and Her marriage are the themes of the festival which culminates on the eleventh day with the car festival in the morning and welcoming of Lord Alagar (Vishnu) of Alagar Koil in the evening on the banks of River Vaigai. On the twelfth day is the climax of the festival which synchronizes with Chitra Paurnami.

From the Puranic sources we learn that Madurai was originally known as Kadambavanam where there was a linga under a Kadamba tree (Nauche), supposed to have been worshipped by Indra. The Pandya king, Kulasekara, cleaned the forest around the temple and founded the city. A small part of the

Kadamba tree still exists in the northern *praakaara* of the shrine of Somasundara. Goddess Meenakshi is also known as *"Kadambavana Vaasini"*. Lord Siva sprinkled '*amrita*' (nectar) at the time of founding the city and hence it came to be known as Madurai. In the square shaped city, five main streets run parallel to the walls of the temple in the centre. The first four streets are named after Tamil months Aadi, Maasi, Chittarai and Aavani and the last one is known as Veli Veethi.

The *stahalapurana* or the mythological history of Madurai is the famous *'Tiruvilayadal Purana'* by Paramjothi Munivar of 16th century, listing sixty-four divine dramas of Lord Siva. On one occasion, it is said, Lord Siva transformed all the foxes in a nearby forest into horses to save his devotee, Manikavasagar, from a Pandyan king. On another occasion, He helped an old woman selling rice-cakes (puttu), appearing as a labourer and carrying sand on her behalf. After the decline of the Pandayas, the Naik rulers came into power and made Madhurai their capital. Among them the most famous was Tirumala Naik who ruled between 1623 and 1659 A.D. He added to the beauty of Madurai by constructing several magnificent buildings including the Tirumalai Naicken Mahal, a masterpiece of archaeological splendour. The gracious palace is built in Indo-Saracenic style and is famous for the stucco work on its domes and arches and for the Swarga Vilasam (Celestial Pavilion) constructed with brick and mortar without the support of a single rafter or girder. Even today the living memories of the glorious past are brought back to our mind by the 'light and sound show' performed every night in this palace. We too had an opportunity to witness the show. It was at the request of Tirumala Naik that the great saint-poet, Kumaraguruparar, composed *"Meenakshi Ammai Pillai Tamil"*, a set of verses in praise of Meenakshi. It is said that the Goddess Herself appeared in the guise of a little girl, took a pearl necklace from the king's neck, and presented it to the poet.

The Madurai temple is a fine example of Dravidian art. The Pandyas, Naiks and the Vijayanagar chieftains have all played a role in building up the temple as the most beautiful one in South India. There are 12 gopurams to the temple, the largest and best being the one of the southern doorway, rising to nearly 200 feet in height. The thousand pillar mandapa in this temple is another marvellous edifice and Fergusson calls it "the wonder of the temple". The pillars are so arranged that from whichever angle one views, they appear in straight line. At the northern entrance in Aadi veethi, there are five musical pillars, each consisting of 22 small pillars, carved out of a single stone, which

produce tones when tapped. The original building of the temple during the Pandyas was destroyed by the Muslim troops of Malik Gaffur who invaded Madurai in 1310 A.D. The whole structure was rebuilt by the Naiks in the 17th Century. Madurai is famous for its festivals.

We visited some beautiful temples around Madurai. Twelve miles to the north-east of Madurai is the well-known temple of Soundararaja Perumal, known as 'Alagar', and a favourite deity of the Kallars. Tirumalai Naik built a town, Alagapuri, here, and had his favourite palace. The **Alagar temple** abounds in beautiful carvings and figures. We saw in the Vasantha Mantapam of this temple, fine frescoes illustrative of the story of Ramayana. The temple is perpetually guarded by a local Tamil deity, Karuppanna swami, to whom are dedicated the two massive wooden doors of the shrine.

Alagar temple is in the bottom of Alagar Hill on the top of which is another temple for Muruga who is also known as *'Azhagan'* the handsome, the concept expressed herein being that of the Eternal, Ever-fresh, Ever-young, Never-aging Never-decaying aspect of the Supreme. This pilgrim centre is known as '*Pazhamuthir solai*,' – 'the garden in which the fruit fell'.

The legend is that the **Great Grandma of Tamil, Avvai**, came to this place once on her itinerary. She was a little conceited by her own brilliant genius,

quick wit and shrewd sense, before which all had to bow down. But she was taught a little humility by Lord Himself. When she reached this place, she saw a shepherd boy sitting on a Jambu tree. She commanded the boy to give her a fruit. The lad asked her: 'Grandma, do you want a hot fruit or a cold fruit?'

She was a little bit perplexed at the question. However, she didn't show off her ignorance and promptly replied. "Give me a hot fruit." The boy threw a fruit on the ground with some force. Some sand got stuck up to the fallen ripe fruit. She started blowing off the sand. Then the boy sarcastically asked: "Grandma, is it too hot?" Avvai felt humiliated and she cried in anguish: "Oh Lord! Why do you cause this humiliation to me from a shepherd boy?" Immediately the boy got down and stood before her. He was none other than Lord Muruga. She felt consoled that after all she was humiliated only by the Lord. In order to assure the world that still she was the wisest, the Lord elicited answers to some questions which the grandma gave out with pleasure. The questions and answers are as follows:

"What is hard"?

"Poverty is hard, poverty in young age is harder. Harder still is incurable disease. Exceedingly hard is faithless woman, and the hardest is to take food from her."

"What is sweet?"

"Solitude is sweet. Sweeter is worship of the Lord. Still sweeter is the company of Godly men and sweetest is moving with them always, in the waking hours and in the dreams."

"What is great?"

"The world is big and Brahma, its creator, is bigger. He was born out of the naval of Visnu. Vishnu sleeps on the milky ocean. The oceans are all just one sip for Agastya Rishi. He, in turn, was born out of a pot. The pot is a piece of clay from the earth which is carried by Adisesha. The serpent is a ring on the little finger of Parvathi who is merged in Siva. Siva is contained in the hearts of devotees. The greatness of the devotees is indeed indescribable."

"What is rare?"

"Rare is human birth and rarer is birth without any deformity. Even after such birth, it is rare for one to be interested in culture and wisdom. Even if one has such an interest, it is rare to find one performing penance and doing charity. If one does penance and charity, then certainly the gates of Heaven will be thrown open to one."

Lord Muruga was pleased with her replies. He blessed her and disappeared.

A little above the Muruga temple in the hill is the temple of Mother Rakkayi. There is a beautiful fountain there and it is believed that all incurable diseases get cured if one takes a bath there. It is a beautiful sight to see monkeys sitting in array on the footsteps of this hill temple to receive alms from the pilgrims.

After a night's stay in Madurai, on 18th morning we visited Thiruparamkundram, five miles south-west of Madurai. The shrine here is dedicated to Lord Subramanya, who after vanquishing in a battle, the dreadful demons, Soora and Padma, obtained as his prize the hand of Daivayanai, duaghter of Indra. This place is also associated with the great Tamil poet, Nakkirar. It is said that a demon in this hill confined in a cave 999 men and was waiting for the 1000th man to make up the number for a huge human sacrifice. When Nakkirar got caught by the demon as the 1000th man, the poet sung the famous hymn in praise of Lord Muruga, "*Tirumurugaattruppadai*" invoking the aid of the Lord who killed the demon and set free all the thousand men. There is a shrine at the top of the hill dedicated to Kasi Viswanatha who is said to have been brought here to please Nakkirar. A carved image standing with pious reverence before the Linga in this shrine is pointed out to be that of the sage, Nakkirar.

From Tirupparamkundram, we proceeded to **Palani**. On our way, we visited the Samadhi of Mouna Swami of Kasavanampatti, near Dindugal. There are several siddhas even today who are unknown to the outside world. But a snake knows the foot of another anake. When the Swami was about to attain Mahasamadhi, the Divine Mother Mayi of Kanyakumari premonitorily knew that,

and rushed to Kasavanampatti to reach there exactly at the time of the event. We offered poojas at the Siva temple under construction in the place of Swamiji's samadhi. It was indeed Her Grace that enabled us to make the unscheduled visit to the samadhi.

Was it a mere coincidence or the will Divine that the day of visit to Palani happened to be the day of Jyeshta (Kettai) Nakshatra, the birth star of Yugendra, on whose behalf Sri Meghanathan performed tonsure and Sister Guna carried Kavadi to Palani Andavan? Intense thought in the subconscious mind works miracles, manipulating time and space, even keeping the persons involved, in total oblivion of the things that happen around them.

Chudakarana or Mundana or tonsure is one of the 16 samskaras performed during the life of an individual. The Choodakarana or tonsure is done when one is a child of three. It is a ceremony in which the sin inherited by birth is cast off. Hair grows even when the foetus is growing in the womb of the mother. Therefore the parting of hair symbolically represents the casting away of inherited Karma. In the course of our day-to-day life, because of our ignorance, we are bound to accumulate sins. But, when we visit sacred shrines and thirthas, we cast off those sins. This casting is also done symbolically by undergoing tonsure. It is removing the load of karma from our head. Carrying 'Kavadi' to Lord Muruga on hilltop is an age-old tradition. Pal Kavadi (Milk cradle), Pushpa Kavadi (Flower cradle), Chandana Kavadi (Sandal-paste cradle) and so many other cradles are carried by the devotees and offered at the feet of the Lord. This symbolizes carrying all our good karmas and offering them at His feet. For ultimate liberation, we must give up all bad as well as good karmas. Even good karmas will keep us entangled in the cycle of birth and death, for we must reap the fruits of all our actions. There is an interesting legend behind the carrying of Kavadi. Soorapadman's guru, Idumban and his wife Idumbi performed tapas in Kailas. At that time, Agastya Muni came there. Lord Siva asked Agastya to go to the South and perform tapas. But Agastya complained that there was no mount equal to Kailas in the South. The Lord then summoned Idumba and asked him and his wife to carry two hills -- Siva Hill and Shakti Hill -- tied to the two ends of His Yogadanda, to the South. Idumba and Idumbi reached the South with these hills. On the way they rested at Varahagiri, placing the hills on the ground. After taking food and rest, when Idumba tried to resume the journey, he found, to his utter surprise, that he could not lift again the hills. A boy was looking at the helpless couple, smiling sarcastically. Idumba got offended and tried to attack

him. The boy simply laughed and Idumba got reduced to ashes. Idumbi realized that the boy was none other than Lord Muruga and sought *maangalya bhagya* (life of husband) from Him. Muruga was pleased with her devotion and granted her a boon that those who come to His temple will first offer worship to Idumba and then only to Him. Since then, the custom of carrying Kavadi to Lord Muruga came into vogue. The two hills constitute the sacred pilgrim centre of Palani or Sivagiri.

How is that Lord Muruga came to be settled in Palani and how it got the name? There is an interesting legend:

Sage Narada once brought a sacred fruit to the presence of the Divine Parents of the world - Siva and Parvati. Both Ganesha and Muruga claimed it. A competition was arranged, and it was decided that the successful one will get it. The suggestion was that both should come round the Universe. Lord Muruga at once started on his peacock vehicle and flew around the Universe. Meanwhile Lord Ganesha mounted on his mouse vehicle and came round the Divine Parents and won the prize. Lord Muruga who returned after his flight around the Universe found that his elder brother had already got the fruit. He became angry and renouncing everything came and settled at Sivagiri as a recluse -- *Aandi*. The Divine parents, in order to appease him, appeared before him and told him that He Himself was the fruit -- *"Pazham Nee"* -- "Thou Art That" --*'Tat tvam asi'*.

To attain the fruit of Ultimate Truth, one need not probe into the macrocosm. The scientist, the man of intellect, probes into the whole Universe to arrive at the Ultimate Truth. He discovered the truth that everything is made up of invisible atoms, that atoms are but electro-magnetic waves of energy, and that the sound energy is the root for these waves. Now he has stumbled upon the truth that the sound waves arise out of Thought waves – the Chit Shakti. The great sages and seers of the land did their experiments in their world within, for they had the intuitive realization that, what is in the Macrocosm is in the microcosm. Therefore, they turned within and in their own self they found the origin of the whole Universe. Ganesa, the power of discrimination within us, immediately identifies the macrocosm with the microcosom and circumambulating the microcosm, attains the same result as that of circumambulating the macrocosm. The conscious principle within is the same as manifest universe. The intellect, which, riding on thoughts, comes round the Universe, probing into the mystery of creation, is itself the manifestation of

the conscious principle. Thought searches for thought. Seeker ultimately realizes that he himself is the sought. Thus, he becomes the Gnana Pandita, the embodiment of the Highest Wisdom.

Palani, situated on a picturesque hill, nearly 500 feet high and forming part of Kodaikanal range of the Western Ghats, is 120 kms. from Madurai. In Tamil literature it is referred to as 'Tiru Avinankudi by Nakkirar and 'Pothini' by Mamulanar. There are 697 steps to reach the top of the hill. The presiding deity of temple wearing a *kaupeenam* (loin cloth) and holding a *dandha* or staff in his hand, is known as Dandayuthapani. The image in the sanctum sanctorum of the temple was originally made with an amalgam of Navapashana, a compound of nine poisonous medicines under the expert guidance of the Great Siddhar, Bhogar. Hence, the Abhisheka materials like milk, honey, panchamrita etc. poured on the image had medicinal effects. Recently, the Hindu Religious Endowment Board of Tamil Nadu State has stopped the abishekha to the original idol since the idol has got emaciated because of constant abhishekas. Usually, the abhishekas are performed throughout the day. An expert committee is examining proposals to preserve the original idol free from corrosion.

Muslims also worship Him as Palani Andavar at the rear side of the temple. Besides being a pilgrim centre, Palani is a centre of arts and science. The Devasthanam maintains a number of educational and service institutions including a college for teaching Nadaswaram and a Siddha Vaidysala.

On our way from Palani to Tiruchirapalli we saw in the villages, groups of heroic young men with their 'Jallikkattu' bulls. During the Pongal season, Jallikkattu is the popular past time in the villages. Sturdy bulls, on whose horns coins, clothes and other valuables will be tied, will be driven into the open grounds to run wildly. Those heroic young men, who bring the bulls under control, not only win the presents tied to the horn of the bulls, but also the hearts of village blondes who choose their life-partners on the occasion of Jallikattu.

In the last lap of our itinerary, we reached Tiruchirapally, of which a part known as Uraiyur was the famous capital of the Cholas. We reached on 18th January in the evening. We visited the shrine of Lord Ranganatha at Srirangam, the island town on the Cauvery and forming part of Tiruchirapalli.

The temple has an all-India reputation and sanctity. The legend connected with the origin of the temple takes us to the days of Ramayana.

Pleased by the penance of Lord Brahma, Lord Vishnu appeared in the Ranga Vimanam (a celestial chariot) which emerged from the Milky Ocean. Brahma presented it to Ikshwaku, the ruler of Ayodhya. Sri Rama, who came in the same solar dynasty, presented the Ranga Vimanam with the deity, Lord Ranganatha in it, to Vibhishana who visited Ayodhya. While Vibhishana was carrying the Ranga Vimanam to Lanka, he reached the banks of Cauveri, where he wanted to perform poojas. As there was a condition that he should not place the idol on the ground for any reason, he was in the lookout of somebody to help him. But the Ranga Vimanam was destined to be installed there and a temple to be built by the Chola King, Dharma Varma, at that place. Lord Ganesha took to the form of a boy, approached Vibhishana and offering help, took the idol into his hand and, while Vibhishana was doing his poojas, placed it on the ground and ran away, and hid himself on the top of the nearby Tiruchirapally Fort. Vibhishana, on return from the pooja, found the Vimanam firmly established on the ground and unable to remove it, felt immense pain and agony in his heart. Thereupon, Ranganatha appeared before him and promised that he would always recline there on his Adisesha, facing the south and thus blessing Vibhishana and Lanka for ever. The temple built there by Dharma Varma was submerged in a flood, and later at the place, where the Vimanam lay buried in the sand, trees grew and converted the area into a forest. A King, Killivalava, who came in the dynastry of Dharma Varma, guided by a parrot, discovered the place where the Vimanam was buried and there he rebuilt the temple of Lord Ranganatha.

To speak from the architectural point of view, the Srirangam temple is unique in India with seven *prakaras* or walls around the sanctum sanctorum and with as many as 21 gopuras and several mandapas and small shrines spread over an area of 155 acres. The fourth prakara or wall is supposed to have been built in the 7th century A.D. by Tirumangayazhwar who used to waylay travellers and rob them of their wealth for this purpose. It is said that the Lord Himself appeared before him in the form of a traveller and pleased with his devotion, conferred blessings on him.

During the 14th century, this temple faced the onslaughts of Muslim invaders like Malik Gafur and Mohammed Bin Tuglak. The idols of the temple and costly jewels were taken to Tirupathi and preserved there. Only after the rise

of the Vijayanagar Empire, when the temple came under their protection, they were brought back. It was in the 15th and 16th centuries that the temple took its present shape.

The Thousand-pillared Hall of the temple has exquisite carvings. While it was being constructed by a king, he was attacked and killed by enemies and hence there are only 953 pillars there. The horse pavilion is another noteworthy hall. The fabulous collection of jewels of the temple is believed to have once included the Orloff diamond, later mounted on the sceptre of the Tzar of Russia and said to have been stolen from Srirangam by a European soldier in the 18th century.

This, then, is the glory and splendour of the **Sri Ranganatha Temple at Srigangam** which is the foremost of the eight *swayam vyakta kshetras* (the abodes where the Lord revealed Himself without any efforts by men). From Badrinath to Kanyakumari there are 108 *Divya Desas* sanctified by the presence of Lord Vishnu, and Srirangam is the foremost among them. Kulasekhara, the Chera King, who is considered to be one of the Azhwars, has sung the praise of Lord Ranganatha in his *Mukunda Mala.* Sri Ramanuja in his *Gadya Traya* and Venkatanatha in his *Paadukaa Sahasra*, adores the Lord. Andal, the renowned daughter of Periyaazhwar who sang the Tiruppaavai; Cherakulavalli, the daughter of a Chera King; Kanakavalli, daughter of Nanda Chola; and daughter of the Moghul Badsha of Delhi: all these damsels fell in love with Him and attained salvation in this temple.

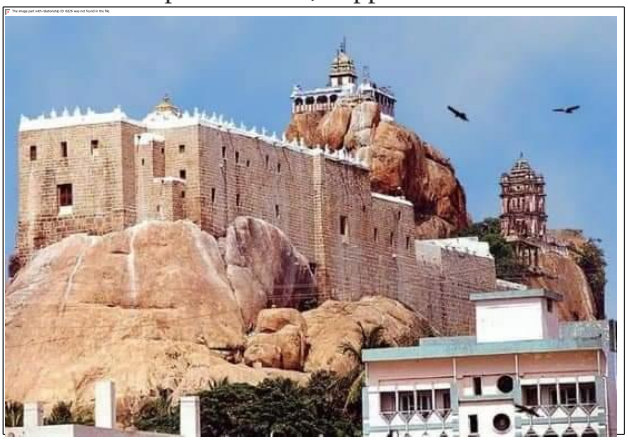
During the period from the 7th to the 13th century A.D., when Vaishnavism was in the zenith of its glory, Srirangam was its nerve centre. Sri Ramanuja made it his centre of activities and he even evolved the code of worship and administration in the temple of Lord Ranganatha. Kamban inaugurated his famous Ramayana in this sacred temple. No wonder that this temple is considered to be the supreme abode, Bhuloka Vaikuntham of Maha Vishnu, and hence the observance of the Ekadasi Vrata on Vaikuntha Ekadasi day (in

the month of Margaseersha) at this place takes the form of a grand festival in which millions participate.

There is a Dhanwantari Sanniddhi in Sri Rangam temple, situated on the way to the temple of the Mother from that of Lord Ranganatha. Lord Dhanwantari is Maha Vishnu himself, who appeared as the great preceptor of Ayurveda, the Science of Health. The tulasi leaves offered at His shrine cures incurable diseases, and in front of the experiences of the devotees of Dhanwantari, rationalism stands dumb founded. Human reason has a limit, but implicit faith in the Divine Power can materialize Spiritual Grace. The Science of Ayurveda had great preceptors who followed Dhanwantari. Charaka, the renowned physician and Sushruta, the surgeon par excellent, are among them. Ayurveda, the science of Health, is even today, the best system of medicine, though, due to historic reasons, the finest physicians in that line are rare today. It is a link between science and spirituality. The Pancha Mahabhoota theory of Ayurveda is rooted in the philosophic genius of Samkyha and Yoga philosophers.

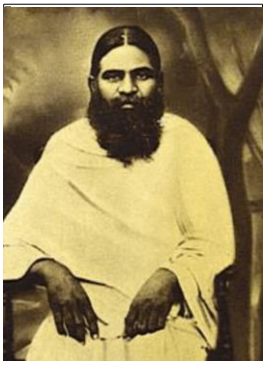
The most celebrated royal name in the history of Sriirangam is Jatavarman Sundara Pandya I (1251 A.D. to 1271), one of the most brilliant and victorious of the Pandyan Kings of Madurai. He is said to have expended 18 lakhs of gold-pieces for covering the temple with gold plated metal sheets and another 18 lakhs for other purposes and thus acquired the name, “one who covered the temple of Srirangam with Gold".

On 19th January morning we visited the temple of Lord Ganesha at **Tiruchirapally Fort**. The idol at the top of the fort, supposed to be Ganesha who ran away from the banks of Cauvery after playing mischief with Vibhishana, has a depression on its face caused by a strong hit by Vibhishana who chased Ganesha while He was running, not knowing who He was. The temple of Vinayaka on the Rock Fort is set in magnificent



surroundings and attracts a constant stream of devotees and worshippers all the year around.

Tiruchirapally is known as Dakshina Kailas and as the place where the three-headed demon, Trisirasu, worshipped Lord Siva and obtained boons from Him. In the Roack Fort, there is a renowned shrine dedicated to Lord Siva, known under the local name *'Taayumaanavar'* – "One who became a mother". The legend connected with it presents the Lord of Destruction as the most merciful one. A pious lady, advanced in pregnancy, had to cross the river Kaveri, which she could not do, as it was in floods at that time. Stranded on the bank and helpless, she prayed to Lord Siva. The merciful Lord appeared before her in the guise of a mid-wife and attended on her like a kind mother. Therefore, He came to be known as Taayumaanavar. It is said that the Chola capital at Urayur was destroyed because a Chola King neglected the shrine of Taayumaanavar.

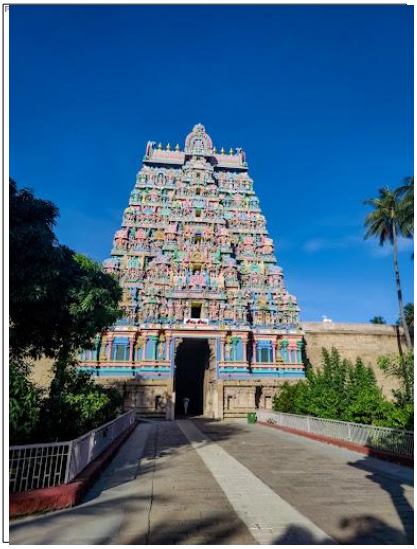


From Tiruchirappally, on our way to Tiruvaanaikoil, another sacred shrine of Lord Siva, we again passed through Srirangam where we called on Dr V. V. S. Krishnamurthy, son of the great patriot-revolutionary of Tamil Nadu, **Varaganeri Venkata Subba Iyer**, popularly known as V.V.S. Iyer. Iyer went to London to become a barrister, but he came into contact with the renowned and fiery revolutionary, Veer Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, who was then in India House, London. Iyer and Savarkar were instrumental in immortalizing Madan Lal Dhingra, the hero-martyr, who shot dead Lord Curzon Willie, responsible for many inhuman atrocities perpetrated against freedom fighters at home. After escaping from London, Iyer visited Paris and then came to India and joined Sri Aurobindo who was then in exile in the French territory of Pondicherry. In later days, Iyer came under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi and was responsible for building up the Bharadwaj Ashram at Cheranmadevi near Tirunelveli. During his prison life he made a very significant contribution to Tamil literature by producing his magnum opus 'A study of Kamba Ramayana'. He died at an early age of 44 while making an unsuccessful effort to save his daughter who was accidently swept away in the Kalyani Theertha falls of River Tamraparani.

On the morning of 19th, when the Moola Nakshatra dawned, following the Jyeshtha, the nakshatra of Yugendra, we reached the sanctum sanctorum of Jyeshtha Devi in the Jambukeswara temple to perform archana to the Mother of Dissolution, to confer everlasting bliss to the one whom she drew back into Herself. What a wonderful culmination of a pilgrimage!

Tiruvaanaikkaa or the 'grove or forest of elephants,' three miles north of Trichy and one mile east of Srirangam, located on the northern bank of Cauveri is renowned as Jambukeswaram. It is one of *'Panchabhoota sthala'* (five element shrines) and enshrines the Appu Linga (which is always immersed in water). We had seen the Fire aspect in Tiruvannamalai and the Ether aspect in Chidambaram, and now we had reached the shrine where the Water aspect was represented in the Linga, in the *garbha griha* of the temple below ground level and always surrounded by water.

There is a legend connected with this temple. A penitent saint here swallowed a jamboo fruit with its seed after offering it to God Siva as Nivedana. The seed sprouted and became a tree in the very body of the saint. At the request of the saint, Siva took his place as linga under the tree. Hence the Lord came to be known as Jambunatha or Jambulingam. It is said two Sivaganas, born, because of a curse, as a spider and an elephant, used to worship at this temple. The spider wove a web to prevent dry leaves falling on the image and the elephant used to bring water in its trunk to perform abhisheka to the image. But these two failed to understand that worship of Siva was their common motive and mistook each other's intention. In their mutual fight, the spider got into the trunk of the elephant and the elephant dashing its trunk on the ground killed the spider and also fell dead. How disastrous is the blind faith and mutual recrimination among devotees of the Lord. The spider, born again as Ko-chen-Kannan, Chola King, built the temple with five *prakaras*. It is said, Siva came as a Siddha and erected a



prakara (the fifth and the outermost) giving to the labourers, his Vibhuti as wages. Hence the *prakara* is known as *Vibhuti* or *Tiruneerittan madhil*.

The worship of Goddess Akilaandeswari in the temple is held to be of peculiar potency. The Mother was worshipped by Adi Sankara himself who decorated the image of the Goddess with two earrings or *tatankas* bearing chakras. In this temple, Ambika is called Akhilaandanaayagi, who by worshipping Siva, had *jnaanopadesa*. In order to remind us of this fact, even today, in the midday the priest of the Mother's temple comes in a woman's attire and performs pooja to the Lord.

Wandering through different cities and pilgrim centres in search of peace and solation, we ultimately reached the feet of the Great Mother of Samayapuram. All the manifestations ultimately return to Mother Prakriti -- Maya or Avyakta -- the creatrix of the variety. Worship of all Gods ultimately lead one to Consciousness-Force -- the Mahashakti. Therefore, it was in the fitness of things that our pilgrimage was rounded off with the visit to the Maha Maya's temple.

Samayapuram means a place where eternal peace and tranquillity is attained. The pilgrim centre of Samayapuram is situated about three miles north of Srirangam. The presiding deity there, Maha Mari Amman, is considered to be the sister of Lord Ranganatha and till recent period, the temple here, was under the control of Sriranganatha Swamy Devasthanam, Srirangam. The deity here is very powerful, and it attracts thousands of pilgrims every day from all parts of India.

"Mother is the name for God in the lips and hearts of little children," says Thackeray. There is a Jewish proverb, "God could not be everywhere and therefore he made mothers". Sir John Woodroffe, the Britisher who became a great Shaakta, says, "God is worshipped as the Great Mother because, in this aspect, God is active, and produces, nourishes and maintains all." Paraashakti, the Goddess of Nature was worshipped in ancient times in various countries under various names like Isis, Mari and Durga. Mahakavi Bharati says, "God the father is the ideal. God the Mother is the actual." The cult of Mother worship is as old as the Vedas. The Rig Veda Samhita identifies Her with *Vaak* (speech). Today, Science tells us that the primordial energy which manifests in the form of the world is the Sound Energy converted into electro-magnetic waves, proton, neutron and electron forming the atom.

The very land of Bharatha Varsha with its Shakti peethas from Kashmir Ksheer Bhavani to Kanyakumari, is the worshipful Mother of the Shaktas. Mother-worship unites religions and cultures. She is the Tara of Tibetan Buddhism and Padmavati and Saraswati of Jainism. The Babylonian word Ummu or Umma, the Acadian Ummi and the Dravidian Amma for the mother are only different variations of Uma, the Simhavaahini Durga, the daughter of Himavan. A Cretan deity depicted on a signet-ring, as flanked by two lions and standing on the top of a hill, the Greek Mother Goddess guarded by the Lords of the forests, and the Mother Goddess of Asia Minor who had beasts kneeling at Her feet, are all different representations of Mother Durga. E. A. Payne identifies Madonna with the Divine Mother. Even the Arabs worship her as al-Lat and al-Uzza. Payne admits that there are traces of Mother worship in Old Testament. In the case of Virgin Mary, the Sinless Mother, we see the clear representation of Kanyakumari. The name Mari or Mari Amma is the source of the name Mary. Mother Mari is the Divine Mother worshipped as Maha Shakti, Maha Lakshmi and Maha Saraswati during the nine days of Navaratri. "Do you aspire after Divine Grace? Then propitiate the Mother, the Primal Divine Energy (Shakti). Yes, she is Mahamaya Herself. She it is who has deluded the whole world, and is confusing up the triple device of creation, maintenance and dissolution," says Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. Therefore, our pilgrimage ultimately concluded with our visit to Mari Amman temple of Samayapuram. From there we drove straight to Madras. On Sunday, 20th January 1985, we performed Homa to Durga offering ourselves at Her altar:

> "Mother Durga! From age to age, in life after life, we come down to the human body, do thy work and return to the Home of Delight. Now too

we are born, dedicated to thy work. Listen 0 Mother, descend upon earth, come to our help."

VANDE MATARAM!

INDIA, THE MOTHER OF US ALL

“It is true that even across the Himalayan barrier India has sent to us such questionable gifts as grammar and logic, philosophy and fables, hypnotism and chess, and above all our numerals and our decimal system. But these are not the essence of her spirit; they are trifles compared to what we may learn from her in the future.

Perhaps in return for conquest, arrogance and spoliation, India will teach us the tolerance and gentleness of the mature mind, the quiet content of the unacquisitive soul, the calm of the understanding spirit, and a unifying, a pacifying love for all living things.

India was the motherland of our race, and Sanskrit the mother of Europe's languages: she was the mother of our philosophy; mother, through the Arabs, of much of our mathematics; mother, through the Buddha, of the ideals embodied in Christianity; mother, through the village community, of self-government and democracy. Mother India is in many ways the mother of us all. Nothing should more deeply shame the modern student than the recency and inadequacy of his acquaintance with India....This is the India that patient scholarship is now opening up like a new intellectual continent to that Western mind which only yesterday thought civilization an exclusive Western thing.

‘As flowing rivers disappear in the sea, losing their name and form, thus a wise man, freed from name and form, goes to the divine person who is beyond all.’ Such a theory of life and death will not please Western man, whose religion is as permeated with individualism as are his political and economic institutions. But it has satisfied the philosophical Hindu mind with astonishing continuity.

Even in Europe and America, this wistful theosophy has won millions upon millions of followers, from lonely women and tired men to Schopenhauer and Emerson.”

--**Will Durant** (1885-1981), American historian.

NEWS AND NOTES

Yugadi Celebration

Swayamsevaks of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh celebrated Yugadi in Sri Bharatamata Mandir, Krishnarajapuram, on Wednesday, March 22, 2023. Special havan and pooja to Bharatamata was performed by Sadhu Rangarajan.

Ramanavami Celebration

Ramanavami was celebrated under the auspices of Yogi Ramsuratkumar Youth Association in Sri Bharatamata Mandir on Thursday, March 30, 2023, with Ramanama Japa Yagna. Mothers conducted bhajans and distributed prasad to all participants.

Family Get-together of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh

A family get-together of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh families was held at Prestige Tranquility, Bommanahally, Bangalore, on Sunday, March 16, 2023. Several families of Swayamsevaks in the area attended the function and conducted bhajan. Sadhu Rangarajan addressed the gathering and spoke about the importance of adoration and worship of Sri Bharatamata everyday in every home and imparting the lessons of patriotism and nationalism to the children, besides training them in the chanting of Vande Mataram and Pratasmaran every morning. There was a grand feast after the function.

Akshaya Triteeya in Sri Bharatamata Mandir

Akshaya Triteeya, the day auspicious for the worship of Sri Bharatamata, was celebrated as usual in the Sri Bharatamata Mandir, Krishnarajapuram, on Sunday, April 23, 2023, with special abhisheka, alankara, pooja and havan to Sri Bharatamata. The mothers and sisters lit ovens in front of the Mandir and prepared Pongala. They chanted Sri Lalitha Sahasranama and

conducted bhajans. Sadhu Rangarajan spoke about the importance of worship of Sri Bharatamata on Akshaya Triteeya. Sri Manoj, Working President of Samanvaya, Bangalore, was the Guest of Honour on the occasion.

Samanvaya Meeting on 'Kerala Story'

Samanvaya, organization of Malayalis in Bangalore, organized a meeting of the members in Sri Guruji Golwalkar Hall of Sri Bharatamata Gurukula Ashram on Sunday, May 7, 2023, to discuss about 'Kerala Story', the film which exposed the atrocities on Hindu women by Love Jihadis. Sri Sreeja of Mahila Morcha of Bharatiya Janata Party in Kerala addressed the gathering. Sadhu Rangarajan spoke about the need for unity and vigilance on the part of Hindu society to protect the lives and honour of Hindu women.

Teachers' Orientation Programme

Sadhu Rangarajan addressed a Teachers' Orientation Programme held at Jaigopal Garodia Rashtrotthana Vidya Kendra, Ramamoorthy Nagar, Bangalore, in which several teachers from various schools in the city participated on Saturday, May 20, 2023. He spoke on the importance of teaching the children the worship and adoration of the Motherland every day at home and in the school. He said, the definition of the word Hindu in the *Bhaarhaspatya Samhita* is, "*Aasindhu sindhuparyeta yasya bhaaratabhoomikaa, pitrubhoo punyabhooschaiva savai hinduriti smritah"*— "All those who adore and worship the land of Bharatavarsha, stretching from River Sindh in the Himalayas up to the Sindhu Sagara or Indian Ocean in the south, as the land of forefathers and a holy land are Hindus". The day Hindu society lost sight of the importance of adoration and worship of Motherland as greater than the worship of umpteen number of Gods and Goddesses, our Motherland fell as a slave to aggressors from outside. Sadhuji spoke about the role of Rishi Bankim Chandra, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Rama Tirtha, Swami Dayananda, Sister Nivedita, Sri Aurobindo and Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose in arousing once again the fiery patriotic spirit of the people leading to Bharat's Independence.

Aksharabhyasa and Vidyarambha in RVK Banasankari

Aksharabhyasa and Vidyarambha of newly admitted children in Rashtrottana Vidya Kendra School in Banasankari, Bangalore, took place in a grand ceremony on Sunday, May 28, 2023. About 400 people including the parents

of the children, students and teachers of the Vidyalaya attended the progrmme which started with elaborate homa, and Saraswati and Sri Bharatamata Pooja. Sadhu Rangarajan was the chief guest of honour on the occasion. He participated in the Poornahuti of homa and poojas and initiated children in Aksharabhyasa. Addressing the gathering, he said Vidya or education is that which elevates a human being to higher realms of consciousness and self-realization – *Yaa vidyaa saa vimuktaye.* He pointed out Bharatavarsha is the loka guru, the preceptor of entire humanity. He stressed that the children must be imparted the knowledge of adoration and worship of the Motherland above all gods and goddesses.

Sri Vasanthkumar, Principal, and Sri G.K. Shenoy, Secretary, of the school received the Sadhu. Srii Madhav Hebbar, Member of Rashtrottana Parishad also addressed the gathering.

Hindu Samrajyotsav in Kithaganur

The Hindusamrajyotsav was held under the auspices of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh in the New Baldwin School Grounds at Kithaganur on Sunday, June 4, 2023. Sri Manjunath, Pracharak of RSS, Krishnarajapuram Baag, addressed the gathering and spoke about the founding of Hindu Rashtra by Chatrapati Shivaji and celebration of the anniversary of the day in the Sangh Shakas since the founding of the Sangh by Dr. K.B.Hedgewar. Sadhu Rangarajan spoke about the concept of Rashtra in the Vedas and said Bharat has been one nation since times immemorial and the loss of patriotism and ideal of holy land on the part of some Hindu kings led to the invasion of the land by aliens. Samartha Ramdas instilled the ideal of Hindu Pad Padshahi in Sbivaji and enabled him to destroy the alien Mugal rule. In the modern period, Rishi Bankim Chandra Chatterjee gave the mantra of *Vande mataram* and enabled the people to throw out the European aggressors and achieve independence of Bharatavarsha.

Samanvaya's Swatch Bharat Abhiyan in Sri Bharatamata Madir

The families of Samanvaya members in Krishnarajapuram Baagh in Bangalore organised a Swatch Bharat Abhiyan campaign in and around the premises of Sri Bharatamata Mandir in Kithaganur on Sunday, July 4, 2023. The volunteers including women and children cleaned and rearranged the Guruji Golwalkar Hall and Yogi Ramsuratkumar Indilogical Research Centre Library in the Mandir. They celebrated Hindu Samrajyotsav in the Mandir and participated in pooja to Sri Bharatamata. Sadhu Rangarajan spoke about the

significance of Hindu Samrajyotsav. Later the Bhagavad Gita Class for children was inaugurateed in the Guruji Golwalkar Hall by Sadhu. Copies of the book *Hindu Rashtra* by the Sadhu were distributed free to all participants.

Clarion Call to Sadhus and Sants

Addressing a Sant Sammelan organized by Vishwa Hindu Parishad in Ethiraja Jeer Mutt, Malleswaram, Bangalore, on Sunday August 13, 2023, Sadhu Prof. Dr.V. Rangarajan gave a clarion call to Sadhus and Sannyasins to come out of the confines of mutts and missions and serve the entire Hindu society. At least two months in an year they must visit the poor and downtrodden people in

villages and slums in citys and towns, who are targeted by Christian Padris and Muslim Jihadis who are converting them to alien religions. He said, the goal of Dharma Rakshana and protecting the cows is possible only when sadhus and sants renounce their attachments to their narrow sampradayas, mutts and missions and work for the entire HIndu society. He recalled how Prabhudatt Brahmachari travelled to every nook and corner of the country to spread the message of cow protection, Sri Jayendra Saraswati of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham visited fishermen colony in Meenakshipuram to bring back Hindu fishermen converted to Christianity, and Udipi Pejawar Mutt head Sri Vishwesha Tirtha visited slums in Kolar to prevent conversion of the poor to alien religions.

Sadhu also urged the setting up of shrines of Sri Bharata Mata in every temple, mutt and mission to promote the feeloing of patriotism and unity among Hindus and instil pride in their hearts that they are all children of Mother Bharat. He said, Bharatamata Mandir in Bangalore was set up to worship Bharatabhavani as envisaged by Mahayogi Sri Aurobindo and was consecrated by H.H. Vishwesa Tirtha of Pejawar Mutt in the presence of Sri H.V. Seshadri, former Saha Sarkaryavah of R.S.S.

Ethiraja Ramanuja Jeer of Melkote presided over the Sant Sammelan which was attended by sixteen Acharyas of different sampradayas and mutts and workers of Vishwa Hindu Parishad.

Independence Day Celebrations

Independence day was celebrated in Sri Bharatamata Mandir, Krishnarajapuram, Bangalore, with flag hoisting on Sunday, August 13, and special homa and poojas on Tuesday, August 15, 2023.

Sadhu Rangarajan hoisted the national flag in the Srinivasanagar layout also and addressed the residents calling upon them to adore and worship Bharatamata and strive for the goal of elevating Her once again to the status of Loka Guru to guide the entire humanity for world peace and integral humanism.

RSS Raksha Bandhan Celebration

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh of Kithaganur, Krishnarajapuram, held the Raksha Bandhan Celebrations in Bharatamata Mandir, Srinivasanagar, on Saturday, August 26, 2023. Swayamsevaks and Sevikas including a number of children attended the function. Sadhu Rangarajan tied Raksha to Bhagava Dwaja. The message of Raksha Bandhan was read out and the participants tied Raksha to each other's hand. After Sangh prarthana, the pooja and arati to Sri Bharatamata also took place.

SPORWA General Body Meeting

The annual General Body meeting of Srinivasanagar and Padmavatinagar Owners and Residents Welfare Association was held at Sri Guruji Golwalkar Hall of Sri Bharatamata Mandir on Sunday, August 27, 2023, to elect the office bearers for 2023-24. Sri M.S. Navin presided over the meeting. Sadhu Rangarajan in his benedictory talk expressed his happiness that the residents were gathering in Sri Bharatamata Mandir and were all living as one family, as children of Sri Bharatamata. He called upon them, especially the youth and students, to make the best use of Yogi Ramsuratrkumar Indological Research Centre library in the Mandir, which had more than ten thousand books, fifty thousand back issues of journals and a million press clippings collected in the last fifty years.