

Classic Poetry Series

Muruganar
- poems -

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Muruganar(1893 - 1973)

Muruganar is widely regarded as being one of the foremost devotees of Bhagavan. He was instrumental in getting Bhagavan to compose the verses that comprise Ulladu Narpadu and Upadesa Undiyar, two of Bhagavan's major philosophical poems, and he composed thousands of poems of his own that either praised Bhagavan, recorded his teachings or expressed gratitude to Bhagavan for having established him in the Self.

In his earlier life he was known as C.K. Subramania Iyer, although his parents called him Sambamurthi. Before coming to Bhagavan he was a well-respected Tamil scholar who served on a prestigious committee that was compiling the definitive Tamil dictionary. He also worked as a schoolteacher and private tutor.

It was a visit by Dandapani Swami, his father-in-law, that prompted him to go to Tiruvannamalai in September 1923. Dandapani Swami showed him Aksharamanamalai, Bhagavan's 108 verses in praise of Arunachala. Muruganar immediately recognised that Bhagavan was the Guru he had been actively seeking. He decided to pay a visit to Tiruvannamalai and see him. On the way there he composed eleven verses in the Arunachaleswara Temple. Most of the verses, addressed to Bhagavan as Siva, contained pleas for grace. Muruganar has described this first visit and the background that led up to it in two of his poetical compositions:

'Will I, an unworthy ignorant one, ever be accepted as a devotee by Lord Siva who, as the Divine Guru with the wealth of grace, showed clearly to the world the greatness of Manikkavachagar? And even if I get such a chance, will I be able to sing of the glories of his grace-showing feet in the same way as Tiruvachakam [Manikkavachagar's most famous poetical work]?'

Like many other thoughts that arose in my mind, this thought, a long time ago, appeared and disappeared, like a flash of lightning manifesting in the sky.

Then I heard from devotees who had redeemed themselves by taking as their support the grace of the one at Tiruvannamalai, who is the embodiment of true jnana, and who shines as the flame of true tapas. When they spoke of the greatness of his grace, they melted in joy. Hearing them, I was lost in admiration and unceasing joy...

The compassionate Supreme One, who is endowed with jnana, then decided in his heart to be my Lord and Master.

In the same way that wax melts on encountering fire, on seeing his feet, my mind dissolved and lost its form.

□

There was in me a thirst, an intense longing to subside [into the Self], that was prompted by the thought of the divine feet, which abound in grace. So, like one who, suffering from thirst, comes across a Ganges of cold water, on an auspicious day, a golden day for my thirst, I went [to Ramana Maharshi] with eleven verses that began 'Leaving Mount Kailas...' and met the excellent sage, the jnana Guru, the ocean of mauna, the bestower of jnana.

In the same way that wax melts on encountering fire, on seeing his feet, my mind dissolved and lost its form. Like the calf finding its mother, my heart melted and rejoiced in his feet. The hairs on my body stood on end. Devotion surged in me like an ocean that has seen the full moon. Through the grace of chitsakti [the power inherent in consciousness], my soul was in ecstasy.

With an unsteady and quivering voice, I read the eleven verses and placed them at his feet. At that very moment he graciously looked at me with his lotus eyes. From that day on, the praises given out by my impartial tongue belonged only to him.

From the way he bestowed his grace, becoming my Lord and Master, I was completely convinced that he was Siva himself. As my new 'owner', he made my 'I' and 'mine' his own.

Even if I get submerged in the miry mud [of this world], I will not forget the mighty nobility of the bountiful bestower of grace."

In September 1923 Bhagavan was still living in a small thatched hut that had been erected over his mother's samadhi. Muruganar felt unsure of the correct way of approaching Bhagavan, so he remained for some time outside the hut. Bhagavan solved the problem by coming outside and saying 'Enna?' ['What?']. In Tamil Nadu, this is a standard way of ascertaining what business a new visitor has.

In response to this query Muruganar began to sing the verses that had been composed by him in the temple, but emotion got the better of him. Tears welled up in his eyes and he was unable to proceed.

'Can't you read?' asked Bhagavan. 'Give it to me. I shall read it myself.'

Bhagavan then read out the poem. Up till this time Muruganar had been very particular about annotating his poems with a specific raga or melody, since it was traditional that particular metres or themes had be sung in a particular way. After this first encounter with Bhagavan, he was never able to sing his poems again.

Ramana Puranam

Lines 1-2

Long live the mantra 'Namo Ramanaya',
for the benefit [of all living beings].
Long live the fragrant lotus feet of the True One,
who releases us from [our ignorance]!

3-8

He it was who
as I suffered in the whirl [of birth and death]
forgetting the inescapable reality of the beginningless link
between the head [the jiva] and the foot [the Self],
inspired in me, wretched cur that I was,
the madness of devotion.
He removed the defect of the wandering ego-mind,
shaped me into a comely form
through the purification [of my consciousness],
kindled the flame [of jnana] for my salvation's sake,
made me perform the fire-sacrifice of jnana
through the observance of devout austerities,
bathed me in his blissful gaze [at the sacrifice's end]
and became my Lord and Master.

211-12

Praise to the holy feet of the One
who inhabits all human forms,
who, everywhere and at all times
speaks through the mouths of all,
and causes the diverse movements
of their minds!

213-16

He is the peerless Primal One,
the supreme peace of mauna,
who, merging as the Heart within the Heart,
with no trace of the thought 'I',
remains merged with each being
through its 'I',
existing and shining forth

in all the beings of the world
as their own Self-nature.

217-20

When the 'I' thought does not arise,
and I unite [as pure being] with Him,
He remains merged with me
shining out as my very own fullness.
However, the very moment
I raise my head [thinking 'I'],
to perceive his ancient [form]
he sees my oddness, scorns me,
and conceals himself from me.

221-26

If I then bow down my head and die,
He flourishes within me,
shining his light as before.
Thus, the majesty of the Lord
will shine forth
only before the 'I' arises,
and after the 'I' subsides.
Who, then, will have the power
to tell of his greatness,
which can only be known
through the God-consciousness
in which the 'I' is absent,
and not through the awareness
in which the 'I' is experienced?

227-28

Worthless one that I am,
unfit to speak [of his glory],
I shall, by the exalted grace of that Great One,
expound the true nature of Siva-Ramana:

233-40

You concealed yourself within me,
like the oil within a sesame seed,
so that your presence within me
could not be clearly discerned.

Because of that veiling known as ignorance
the truth within my heart
was cloaked entirely in deep darkness,
and in this condition
the mind somehow turned outwards.
Through the power of multiplicity
which deludes and shows the world
as the five sense perceptions,
my mind, which knows them [objectively] as 'that',
became bewildered,
and deeming them [the sense perceptions]
to be profitable, sought them.

241-43

That seeking, evolving itself into desire,
became the seed that engendered
the never-ending succession of births,
bringing into existence the great and evil tree
that is the illusion of birth [and death].

244-47

In my forgetfulness, I became a bird in that tree,
my mind confused by good and evil actions.
Looking around on all sides, in my perplexity,
I repetitively devoured its sweet and bitter fruits in vain,
experiencing again and again
unceasing suffering and enjoyment.

248-54

In this state of disgust, wherein there was not a trace
of clarity within my mind,
the king, who is my very life,
through his grace that is the truth,
free of the feelings of rejoicing and aversion,
appeared as a unique sage
in the city of Arunai
to save me from death,
worthless cur that I was,
and through his compassionate gaze
he revealed to me his holy lotus feet,

infusing me with an abundant, unending flood
of the ambrosia of being-consciousness
so that my mind became still.

255-56

On account of the forgetfulness
arising out of the illusion of maha maya,
they think that they are the body,
their mental faculties subverted.

257-61

Taking the seven forms of birth,
according to their mental pre-dispositions,
they do not conceive an aversion for this body
which reeks of the foul odour
of the three impurities,
but deem it a thing of great worth,
desiring it intensely,
and, propounding fallacious arguments,
commit the error [of taking the body to be 'I'].

261-64

Though it deceives one
by displaying itself outwardly
with a skin of golden hue,
the body exudes filth from its nine orifices
since what is within it is worm-ridden filth.

265-74

Even for sinners who bathe in the foul sewer-water
that is the love of this body,
bewilderment will subside and be destroyed
through the all-pervading nature of mauna.
They will remain in a state of rapture,
bathing in the vast ocean of unsurpassable bliss
that is the surging flood of absolute perfection
as they stand in your Court, where,
to the sound of your voice, dispensing jnana,
and the clamour of songs of praise,
your standard is raised up
amidst the ceaseless rattle of victory drums.

There, evil and ignorant as I was,
and worse than a dog in my conduct,
you showed me a tenderness
more noble and all-embracing
than that of a mother [for her child],
and subjected me to your rule.

275-76

Destroying in me the [ideas of] 'I' and 'mine',
you yourself became for me that 'I', and that 'mine'!

277-80

You arose as the majesty of the luminous, supreme,
all-transcending consciousness,
so that the base part of my nature
shrank, out of shame, to the size of an atom!
Then, O Supreme Reality,
you revealed that even that tiny atom
was also false,
as you dwelt in the quintessential purity
of your own Self-nature!

281-82

Radiant Effulgence, that entirely dispels
the profitless, dark ignorance
of the beings of the earth,
who flounder bewildered upon the ocean
of the pairs of opposites -
prosperity and poverty and all the rest!

283-84

Glorious Light, which for jivas
who are caught up in the triad,
ends its delusive power
by revealing it to be a conjuring trick!
The components of the triad referred to here are knower, knowing and known.

285-86

Shining swarupa, remaining alone
as the supreme light of the Self

when [all else] subsides,
through the assertion: 'Not this', 'Not this',
so that not a trace of anything 'other' remains!

287-88

Unique Essence
that cannot be perceived objectively
through the false imaginings
of the flawed mind,
but can only be known
through the perfect consciousness
of Atma swarupa, mauna!

289-91

You are the unmoving reality, the Atma jnana
that rises to bestow an excellence [of clarity]
on the deluding distortions that mask the jiva,
which are merely reflections
upon the mirror of the shaking mind.
Such is your nature!

292-94

You hold maya, which creates the illusion
that this nature does not exist,
totally under your control
such that the awareness of those
who have obtained your grace
does not stir even slightly.

295-96

To those who are deluded
you are non-existent,
not accessible to their faculties
even in the minutest degree.
But to the gaze of the jnani
you are perceived everywhere
as the absolute fullness.

297-98

To those who love you, you are the near one,

to those who do not, you are the far one.
Am I worthy to know
and speak of your noble nature?

299-302

When even the Four Vedas and the Agamas,
rising up arrogantly [to describe your nature],
fell silent, their presumption quelled,
it is indeed an occasion for great mirth
that I should speak of
your glory and distinction, your actions,
the nobility of your attributes,
your name and your fame.

303-04

Wish-fulfilling tree of heaven,
who grants your grace with tender love
to all those who adore you,
and sing your praises,
be they dwellers in the lower worlds,
upon earth or in the celestial realms!

305-06

Even if the most insignificant of your devotees
come to possess a desire,
you enable them to be enthroned
in the royal assembly
of the king of the gods.

307-10

However many births were possible,
I have experienced them all and grown weary.
Even if my mind could take birth
in the lofty position of being one of the gods,
beginning with Indra himself,
I would no longer consent to the suffering
and weary lamentation [of birth].

311-14

Even the blackest of crows,

when it alights upon beautiful golden Mount Meru,
is transformed into the form of pure gold.
In just the same way, even those jivas
who are entirely without distinction will,
upon joining the presence of divine consciousness,
one's own reality, attain by its glorious majesty
the sublime form of the Self and shine.

315-16

[Therefore], my Lord and Master,
may you bestow upon me that mauna,
whose form is the expanse of true jnana,
imprinting that truth upon my heart
so that I no longer perceive myself
as a form of flesh and blood.

317-20

Youthful mauna Guru, you who,
shining as the divine manifestation of God,
at the head of the lineage of Gurus,
reveal the supreme truth,
the unique speech of [mauna]
that is the mind's source,
which is the mother of all language
but which, unlike the spoken word,
neither appears nor disappears.

321-24

All the ancient treatises on jnana
are merely an introductory preface,
enunciated by the learned,
to your book of mauna,
which confers true knowledge.
Are they not therefore alien to true understanding,
those who, even though they have studied all the others,
have lost their connection to that [book of] mauna?

325-30

If a child does something naughty,
it is only fitting that the mother

should tolerate and pardon that misdeed.
Likewise, if there is any misdeed on my part,
done either knowingly or unknowingly,
may you overlook it, thinking it nothing,
and give me your joyful approval.
For the world knows that such is the conduct we display,
one towards the other, that I engage in misdeeds
against your holy feet, and you pardon them.

331-34

You whose holy feet drive out
the black ignorance of maya!
You who are [like] a great cloud,
pouring down the rain of bliss
that is your grace!
You who are the flood of bliss
in the great river of true jnana,
quenching the scorching flames,
so that they flare up no more
from the three kinds of distress
that sorely torment us!

335-38

Ambrosia, delicious to consume!
Great Light, transcending speech!
Mother, you who are an ocean of compassion,
imbued with love's refreshing sweetness!
Bridegroom, whose feet are like gold,
you who united with my consciousness
within the heart, so that I,
mere dog that I am,
devoid of even one good quality,
might [truly] see!

339-42

Youthful One! Beauteous One!
Lord of jnana, who destroyed
the power of the ego,
which arises through the association
with the filthy body,

so that I was infused
with the clarity of consciousness
that is the luminous nature,
without divisions, of Sivam,
which no one can describe!

523-26

For those who, thinking without thought,
'Whence does the "I" arise? '
so that 'I' is destroyed within the Heart,
wherein the 'I' does not arise,
have died to the five senses [and the mind]
and dwell steadfastly in the Heart,
their minds become Sivam,
the sanctum sanctorum.

527-28

Yours are the holy feet of Sivam,
the true, the divine,
which you clearly revealed to me
through the power of consciousness [chit sakti]
as I was whirling, through fear, in confusion
amongst imaginary appearances.

529-30

Our Lord! Know that, through all the seven births,
your feet of pure gold,
which are truly worthy to behold,
are the one refuge for us, your devotees!

531-36

'[Infinite] Eye, you who are the luminous space of supreme love,
a single dropp from whose surging ocean
can bring peace to the beings of many diverse worlds! '
For those who declare in this way
and perform true austerities
by focusing their minds, meditating, singing praises,
and offering fulsome daily worship,

their minds become completely clear,
freed from the doubts that beset them
in their powerful delusion,
and through this, the world of liberation
will be nearer to them than this physical world.

Muruganar