

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF EARTH INDIA SIDDHA

# Breath

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## Sri Gowthama Maharishi Temple

Gowthama Maharishi's temple is located along the Girivalam path, opposite to Adimudi Siddhar's Jeevasamadhi, facing the holy hill of Arunachala.

In Arunachala Mahatmyam (part of Skanda Puranam), there is mention of Gowthama Maharishi's presence in Arunai. In Tiruvannamalai, at the temples of Kamatchiamman, Pacchaiyamman, and Pavala Kundru, we can see Gowthama Maharishi's statue and sannidhi for worship. This temple is separately for Gowthama Maharishi, which recently celebrated its Kumbhabhishekam.

There is a claim in a lineage account that Adimudi Siddhar helped with the maintenance of Gowthama Maharishi's Ashram.

As per legend, Lord Shiva guides Parvathi Devi from Kanchipuram to go to Arunachala and take Gowthama Maharishi's guidance and support with her penance. While guiding Devi in his hermitage in Tiruvannamalai, Gowthama Maharishi narrated to her the glory of Arunachala, its Theerthams, and the Girivalam. He taught her penance rituals to reunite with Lord Shiva. In this temple, we can see Devi Parvathi's statue next to Gowthama Maharishi's statue in the sactum sanctorum, to mark this divine connection between them.

While many parts of the temple have been renovated with cement and paint, its original stone structures are still preserved. The stone walls retain some of the original carvings, notably, a snake facing a circle with Nandi, depicted on the ceiling, and another carving of two fish facing each other, carved on the ceiling closer to the inner sanctum. Although we are unsure of their significance, these elements, along with the temple atmosphere, instilled a deep sense of connection and belonging.

[Click here](#) for location details



ENTRANCE TO THE TEMPLE



STONE CARVINGS ON THE CEILING



MEMBERS OF EIS AT THE TEMPLE

# Sai Baba: The Living Presence

Sai Baba of Shirdi emerged as a guiding force for the people of the late 19th century, advocating for unity and nurturing spiritual well-being for all. Hailing from the venerable Datta lineage, he is revered as an embodiment of Dattatreya himself. Sai Baba laid the foundation for an inclusive community, welcoming individuals from diverse castes, creeds, and religious backgrounds. His grace and guidance are open to all, whether it is regarding day to day matters or long term karmic burdens.

Sai's profound presence remains accessible to all across the globe. The anecdotes and stories during his lifetime have been documented in a book called "Sai Satcharitra", by his disciple. These stories are his teachings, which act as a timeless source of wisdom, offering solace and direction in times of uncertainty. Being one of the most approachable saints of our times, Sai Baba's legacy is a sanctuary for those grappling with the complexities of life, inviting them to find solace and enlightenment under the umbrella of his benevolent guidance and grace.



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# Girivalam with Bhairavi Amma



by Dr. Manikgantan

I once asked our Guru in Tiruvannamalai, "There are many spiritual persons here. How can I identify if they are genuine?". He replied, "There is an Amma in the Yogi Ramsuratkumar Ashram here. Go and pay her a visit"

He had not told me who she was. When I went inside the ashram, I could not identify her. So I asked a worker nearby, and he pointed and said, "That woman lying on the ground in the sun: that's her".

When I sat near her for a short while for the first time, I remembered Ramana Maharishi's words: *"Hold on to the one in whose presence your mind does not wander."* When I sat next to her, I recognised that stillness within.

From that day onwards, whenever I went for Girivalam on full moon days, I would get the opportunity to see Amma at the ashram.

In 2020, during the time of COVID, I had a chance to visit Tiruvannamalai with my friends and stay there. We spoke throughout the night and went to sleep only around 3 or 4 in the morning. When we started from Ramanasramam at around 6 AM to begin the Girivalam from Bangalore Road, the place was mostly deserted because of the pandemic. Only a few locals and some sadhus were moving about here and there. In that serene atmosphere, I felt as though I was walking in another world.

Two or three times, I got the chance to trail behind Amma during her Girivalam walk. On those occasions, she always walked alone. A few people would come and pay their respects as they passed. As I walked behind her, it felt as though I was following a divine procession.

Sadhus would bow to her, some shopkeepers would greet her with reverence, and some parents would place their babies at her feet to receive her blessings. At certain shops, she would stop. At others, she would walk right in, accept and eat the food offered by them. Some shopkeepers would regularly wish and pray that Amma would enter their shops.

Nowadays, whenever Amma is seen on the Girivalam path, she is followed by a small crowd of people. On some days, I am unable to see her on the path. On those days, I go to the place where she stays, stand and take her *darshan* before returning.

Last week, after speaking with friends until around 12:30 at night, I woke up at about 4 in the morning and went for Girivalam from Ramanasramam. I sat for a while at the Isaniyar *sannidhi* (shrine). Feeling that I might not get to see Amma that day, I crossed the signal near the bus stand. To my surprise noticed her walking with three other people.

I remember thinking then, "I simply thought of her heartfully, and she has appeared before me"

I followed her, until Ramanasramam, where I took her leave. As I entered the ashram, the aradhana had ended, blessing me with the opportunity of getting the *darshan* of Bhagavan's deepam. Carrying that feeling with me, as I went to take my two-wheeler, a sadhu nearby blessed me and said, "Alright, go now."

That day, I felt as though my Girivalam had been completed in its fullness. I remained awake the entire day without any tiredness and finally reached my home in Chennai around 1 in the morning.

# Karthigai Deepam

## LIGHT OF THE INNER FIRE

From ancient times, the worship of *Jyoti* (Divine Light) has been one of the most important forms of worship in the Tamil tradition. In the Siddha lineage, it is said:

*"What exists in the macrocosm exists in the microcosm; what exists in the microcosm exists in the macrocosm."*

Our ancestors, who understood this truth from the very beginning, established systems of *Jyoti* worship for us. In this tradition, the festival of Karthigai Deepam is celebrated grandly for three days, with the entire town glowing in light.

These three days are:

Periya Karthigai  
Naattu Karthigai  
Kollai Karthigai

### Periya Karthigai

Lighting the lamp on hilltops is called Periya Karthigai. For example, the flame lit atop the Arunachala hill in Tiruvannamalai.

### Naattu Karthigai

Lighting lamps in water bodies and temples is called Naattu Karthigai. This is a practice followed by the general public.

### Kollai Karthigai

Lighting lamps in farmland and fields is called Kollai Karthigai. This takes place on the third day. On this day, people light the "*Sokkappanai*" (a ceremonial bonfire made of palm materials).

These three days were symbolically designed in this way, to remind us of our own cycle of birth and death. Let us see how.

After witnessing the Great Flame lit on the mountain with a heart full of devotion, we return home and light lamps there in the same spirit. This can be compared to the relationship between the macrocosm and the microcosm.

The second day's worship carried out at water bodies reminds us that we once lived in the waters of our mother's womb before being born into this world. Similarly, the ritual of lighting the *Sokkappanai* on the third day can be associated with the burning of the funeral pyre.

Our ancestors observed that during the *Karthigai* month (mid November – mid December), there is a greater occurrence of storms and natural disturbances. In order to alleviate their impact, they established the practice of deepam worship during this cold season. Even the word "*Kaar Kaalam*" (winter) it contains the word "*kaar*", indicating the month of *Karthigai*.

The *Sokkappanai* is a ritual performed during the 'Thirukarthigai Deepam' festival in Shiva temples, Vishnu temples, and Murugan temples. In this ritual, a structure made of palm trunks and palm leaves is set on fire before the deity. It is done in remembrance of the moment when Lord Shiva appeared as a form of light (*Jyoti*) to Brahma and Vishnu, and also to attract and destroy insects.

Through these festivals of light, our ancestors ensured that we do not get trapped in unnecessary thoughts accumulating in our minds. To free ourselves from such darkness, they placed many celebrations in this period, such as Deepavali, Karthigai Deepam, Navarathri, Dussehra, Murugan worship, and Ayyappa worship. By following these practices, they showed us a path to emerge from the darkness of ignorance that exists within us.



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-Sai Baba

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