

## Karunamayee Maa

- *By N. Arpana*

Since my childhood, I have been coming to Tiruvannamalai with Souris Ma. After Souris Ma's nirvana, I began to feel very lonely. I felt there was nothing in my life. I felt I did not want this life anymore. In 2011, I had gone to Ramanasramam wondering if I would meet any sage or saint.



I met a foreign lady in Bhagawan's Samadhi Hall who told me about Swami Shantananda Ji. I went to meet Swamiji the following evening. The first impression I got about Swamiji was his simplicity. I did not know that day that Swamiji was going to enter my life. In November 2011, I went back to Ramanasramam. I went to have Swamiji's Darshan again. Swamiji was about to leave for Vasishtha Guha in two days. I came back to Madanapalle.

After a few days since my return, I had a dream. In it, I saw Souris Ma giving her Asana (throne) to Swamiji. I soon forgot about the dream.

In 2012 on Guru Purnima day, I suddenly landed up in Sri Ramanasramam. I went the same day to meet Swamiji. Swamiji lovingly gave me a copy of Ribhu Gita with the words "Soubhagyavati". I told Swamiji in surprise, "I am not married." Swamiji then sweetly explained to me the meaning of Soubhagyavati, and said, "You have come here and doesn't that make you Soubhagyavati? The fact that you have come here is the greatest fortune (bhagyam). Even after that, I did not understand that Swamiji had already entered my life. He became my Guru even without my realizing it.

In August 2012, I went to Tiruvannamalai having planned to stay there for two months. When I went to have Swamiji's Darshan, I realized that Swamiji had indeed entered my life. I also realized that my life is not in my hands. I felt that Swamiji started a new chapter in my life. Swamiji changed my name from Aparna to Arpana. I had a rebirth in this birth after having come to Swamiji. I extended my two months' stay to five months. Swamiji would tell people again and again, "She has come from nowhere all of a sudden and has attached herself to me." Having met Swamiji, my search came to an end. My thirst was quenched. Swamiji's Grace is such that I cannot employ words to describe my gratitude. His Love for all

is such that even a mother cannot give her child. When we compare a mother's love to His, we see how immense and boundless Swamiji's Love is.

Swamiji's teachings are so simple and easy to understand and practise. Whoever comes to Swamiji has his or her wishes fulfilled. Swamiji is none other than the Divine Mother. He is the embodiment of Divine Love. When my aunt's health was fragile, Swamiji told me to go to Madanapalle to see my aunt. I did not have any heart to leave Guruji and go to Madanapalle. I always wanted to stay with Swamiji. Swamiji lovingly made me see that even Adi Shankaracharya had gone to see his mother just before she left her body. Swamiji, the omniscient One, sent me to Madanapalle. After the final rites of my aunt, I came back to Swamiji. Swamiji always gives me a morsel or two from his share of food.

When Swamiji had oedema, the doctor had advised Swamiji to wear a bandage on his feet. I was given a rare chance to tie the bandage for Swamiji every day. This was my chance to hold His Lotus Feet for a while every day. I felt in reality that I was holding the beautiful Feet of the Divine Mother. When Sri Rama placed his feet on the rock, Ahalya was set free. I do not want what Swamiji did to me when he allowed me to touch His Feet every day during that period. Swamiji did not initiate me formally but he has more than accepted me as his disciple, devotee and child. Without a Guru, life is empty. I offer my million pranams at the Lotus Feet of Swamiji, my eternal Guru. I pray for His Grace, Love and Mercy to be on me always.

**\*\*Hari Om\*\***