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Final Journey of Swami Shantananda Puri Maharaj

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Swami Shantananda Puri Maharaj is entombed in Panditha Pattu, a small quiet village about six kilometers from the ashram with a lovely view of Arunachala Hill. During interment devotees spontaneously sang Siva Puranam, Vedas and other sacred Bhajans. Swamiji's final few weeks were amazing display Ramana Maharshi's boundless grace. Bhagavan has said "Some Sakti draws people from all parts of the globe to this centre." Indeed that Sakti is not different from Ramana Maharshi Himself.

That great Sakti made Swamiji give up his abode in Himalayas many years ago and kept him here despite life-threatening medical issues. In the first week of April he

was diagnosed with Cellulitus and very soon it turned into Septicemia, a serious, life-threatening infection that gets worse very quickly. The entire body including intestines, kidneys, liver, hands, etc. was all infected badly. He could not talk due to severe mouth ulcers but would surprise devotees by speaking spontaneously on occasions. In such a state he completed the final proof reading of “Sadhanas from Guru Vachaka Kovai”!

He was admitted in the ICU of East Cost Hospital, Pondicherry. On 20th September, he insisted on visiting Ramana ashram, in spite of being in a critical condition after recovering from hepatic coma. The doctors declined permission but was he a person to give up so easily? He resorted to satyagraha until the doctors reluctantly released him.

The two days, 20th and 21st September were exceptionally memorable. He was full of joy and his love was overflowing. He was extremely cheerful throughout and made everyone around him happy. He did not sleep the entire night and was constantly checking the time to leave for Tiruvannamalai. The moment he entered the Ashram, he became ecstatic! He was in the stretcher and was very affectionately received by President and the entire ashram administration. The moment he came out, he said, “Bhagavan Ramana is my father, my mother, my Guru and my everything. Where else can I go?” All words will fail to describe the atmosphere that was created when Swamiji was in the shrine. One had to be there to experience this feeling! His devotees were very happy to see his wish of seeing Bhagavan was fulfilled to the fullest. Later same day he developed serious complications with bleeding and had to be rushed back to the hospital where he eventually shrugged off his mortal coil.

Swami Shantananda Puri has written over 30 books. Significantly “Sadhanas from Upadesa Saram” was released on the last day of his earthy sojourn. In the humorous spirit of Swamiji we may write an epitaph “Here lies a joyous Swamiji who converted ICU into I See You Eternally Arunachala!”

****Hari Om****

