

The selection of songs here are the main sources giving details of how the mount Arunachala came into existence on this part of the earth & also the Deepam festival oriented first by Mother Parvati Herself.

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... Sri Jagadisa Sastri mentions Vidyaranya as saying that *Chit* can be Siva and Sakti at one and the same time, as well as separately. Sri Bhagavan quotes from *Arunachala Purana* that in essence both are one and the same *Chit*, and reads from this book with deep emotion. He goes into ecstasy on Gautama's praise of Siva. Though smiles light his face, tears pour out of his eyes, of which none has a suspicion till he wipes them and blows his nose. It is now 9-55: Sri Maharshi suddenly realises that he is late for his usual small walk of 10 minutes. "Oh, so late!" he remarks and takes to oiling his knees and hip joints.

SRI ARUNACHALA PURANAM

Introduction:

Sthala Puranam is a record of divine events, royal deeds and people's piety, all relating to a particular holy place. The story of Tiru vanna malai, finds mention in various *Puranas*. It is an act of Grace that Lord Siva appeared in Tiru vanna malai, as a column of light, to Brahma & Vishnu who claimed supremacy over one another.

A question arose between the Government & the Arunachala Temple in 1938, as to the ownership of the Arunachala Hill. The temple authorities approached Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi to depose before a tribunal in support of their claim. Bhagavan gathered references to Arunachala from five sources in Sanskrit and copied out in his own hand 2659 slokas. The sources are: *Skaanda Maha-puranam*, *Siva Rahasyam*, *Vidyeeswara Samhita & Vidya-saara Samhita* of Siva Maha-puranam, *The Kshetra Khaanda* of Skaanda Upa-puranam. The Tamil prose translation of Bhagavan's selection was later published by Sri Ramanasramam as 'Sri Arunachala Maahaatmiyam'.

The Tamil Arunachala Puranam by Saiva Ellappa Naavalar some 3 hundred years ago containing 649 verses is a free translation from Rudra Samhita & Linga Puranam. It excels the

original in many a place, especially where the poet revels in a description or a subtle point likely to be ignored by the reader of the Sanskrit original. In addition, its metre changes now and then, providing the atmosphere and rhythm which blend with the events the poet seeks to convey through words. In 13 chapters of this work the following are dealt in detail:

1. The glory of the holy place Tiru vanna malai; 2. The holy mount Arunachala; 3. Incarnation of Parvati Devi; 4 Parvati masks the eyes of the Lord; 5. Parvati becomes the left half of the Lord; 6. The story of Vajrangada Pandya; 7. Vallala Maharaja of Tiru vanna malai; 8. The holy tanks; 9. Pradakshina of the Holy Mountain; & Chapters 10 to 13 are the expiation of sin by the Sun, King Pradatta, the ashta vasus, Brahma, Vishnu, Chandra & Pulagadipa.

Once, the sage Maarkandeya, leading a group of *Rishis*, prayed to Nandikeswara to tell them about the ways to attain *Mukti*. In reply Nandi said that, shedding one's body in Benaras; taking birth in Tiru varur; a glimpse of the Dance of the Lord at Chidambaram; a visit to Vriddhaachalam; a pilgrimage to Kedarnath; Mallikarjunam & many other holy places all these lead one to *Mukti*. Then Maarkandeya queried Nandi as follows: 'Visiting these diverse places and offering worship and engaging in allied activities are quite a task even for the long-lived gods and *siddhas*. What then can poor man hope to gain in his brief life-span? So I request you to enlighten us about a place that has the power to grant Release not only for human beings, but also for trees, beasts and birds. And there are among men for whom bathing in rivers, *Pradakshina*, ritual worship are out of question'. Requested thus Nandikeswara, raised his palm in benediction.

The very remembrance of Arunachala in his Heart, prior to uttering that word, struck Nandi speechless. He sat still for long, with palms joined in prayer, hair standing on end, with tear-filled eyes, and in a trance. Then he sang forth the glory of Arunachala. Thus starts the Tamil narration of the Arunachala Puranam.

Now let us listen to the select Tamil songs & its gist in English. Whoever listens to Arunachala Puranam, which was read & explained many a time by Bhagavan Ramana Mahashi, their faith in the Lord would increase, leading to the realization of what Is; which is Mukti.

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Arunachala Puranam

Gist for Tamil song selection:

Prayers: (Songs: 1 to 15)

1. Veda-vyasa explained the glory of Arunachalam in Sanskrit. To render it in Tamil now, we seek the blessings of Vinayaka.
2. Remover of birth & death, The Lord of chidambaram, the dance of whom make the sun & earth to vibrate, and who wears the fragrant poetical garlands of Jnana sambanda, to that Lord let us pray.
3. Arunachalam is such a holy place to which the Sun, moon, Bairavas, Vidhyadaras, great tapasvins, Brahmas & Vishnus rush in a massive crowd, leaving no room for others to bow-down. The cry 'Hara-Hara' drowns the ocean's roar that is the rich holy Annamalai.
4. This place is richer than the celestial Amaravati & the home of Kubera.
5. Arunachalam is the divine home of the Lord, who kicked yama – the god of death; reduced to ash Kaama – the cupid; he adorned with the poison haala-hala, inaccessible even by Brahma the God of creation & the protector Vishnu.
6. The unique first One, who has neither friend nor enemy, who create & destroys the worlds, who is the crest of Vedanta, who is the knower of all – his holy feet let us worship.
7. We hold our thoughts on the One, who became the unique Mount – Arunachala, whom even Brahma & Vishnu, could not fathom.
8. We worship the holy feet of the One, who holds a deer in his hand, the Ganga in his locks, keeps the mother Parvati as half of himself.
9. We fix our thoughts on the mother Unnamulai- Apita-kuchamba, whose tresses are like the dark clouds, her two eyes pouring forth compassion, teeth shining like the crescent moon & dainty feet.

10. Let us pray to Vinayaka, residing in the temple of Arunachala who received in tribute a herd of elephants,
11. We place upon our heads the feet of those, who worship Subramanya, riding upon the peacock, dwells at the gopuram of Arunai temple & also in the northern street of Arunai.
12. We worship the feet of Jnana Sambandar, Appar & Sundarar, the friend of our Lord Siva.
13. We worship the feet of Maanikka-vachakar, who traversed the ocean of karma.
14. We praise the holy feet of ieyar-pagai Nayanar, who gave his wife to the Lord, Kannappa who offered the food mixed with his saliva, Tiru nilakanda Naayanaar who cannot be known to those tainted by evil karma & ilyaan kudi maaran who rules me.
15. We worship Aiyadigal Kaadavarkon, Siru thondar who cooked his son for the Lord's feast, Tiru nitru chozhan, Chermaan perumaan & all other devotees.

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Tiru Nagaram- The holy place – Tiru vanna malai (71 to 74)

71. The stones in Arunachalam are all Sivalingas, hence it is Siva-lokam. The trees here are the celestial tree- Kalpa vruksham, Water here is the holy Ganga, food here is Amrutam- ambrosia. To walk here equals to pradakshina of the world, Words spoken here are the holy scripture, and to fall asleep here is samadhi, beyond the mind's delusion. Could there be any other place which is its equal?

72. It is hard to attain final liberation if one does not meditate upon the Paramatman Arunachala, though they may perform great Yagnyas, chant the 4 Vedas & even for yogis. The gods in heaven take birth as holy men in Arunachalam, meditate upon it, and attain that deathless state.

73. Those who dwell in Svarga loka, feasting on ambrosia, and those who severally stand guard over the svarga and the other worlds, desire to be born here. A birth in Arunachalam even as a mere worm, is a better choice.

74. In all other holy places the Lord Siva dwells like a gem set upon in silver, brass, copper or iron. But in Arunachalam, it is as if that same jewel is set upon a sheet of pure gold. Thus spoke Nandi, the embodiment of grace.

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'My Father! Most gracious Nandi! My mind is overcome with joy on hearing of Arunai's glory. Pray tell us, how in that place Lord Siva manifested in the form of fire, how later that fire became a mountain, and how Vishnu & Brahma suffered, seeking in vain, one the foot, the other the head of that mountain of fire, until the Lord afforded them his grace!' Thus requested by Markandeya, Nandi replied: (79 & 80)

'Were a man to entertain in his mind the thought of going to that holy place to commit a sin, the mere thought of that place would grant him liberation. For those who sweetly sing its praises, what reward is hard to win? (81)

Now I shall tell you how the Lord manifested as a vast flame, growing upward till it pierced the very heavens, and then, how He took the form of the Bhoga Lingam. (82)

At the time of the universe's dissolution, Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra, Mahesa, noble Sadasiva, Vindu, Natham and Sakti were drawn back in due order and remained latent within Para-sivam. He stood as the First Cause of the all transcending universal constituents. (83)

Then out of Para-sakti, evolving from Para-sivam through his will, appeared Pure Maya, whence, in due order, unfolded the supreme tattvas. Then appeared the five Deities, emerging according to the order of their involution. The son of Vishnu turned his mind to the work of creation. (84)

He created the seven prajapatis, Marichi, Angiras, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu and Atri. Dakshan was born from the big toe of his left foot, Bhrgu from his breast and the Lord of Dharma from his face. (85)

From Marichi, one of the sons which Brahma created, Kasyapa was born. Dakshan begat sixty female children. Of these, Kasyapa took thirteen in marriage. From the eldest of these, Aditi, the gods themselves sprang into being. (86)

Her younger sister Diti gave birth to the twin brothers Hiranya and Hiranyaksa. Of these two youths, Hiranya fathered four sons, one of whom was Prahlada. (87)

Prahlada fathered three children. Of the sons he created, Virocana fathered Mahabali, who in turn gave birth to. It is he who performed puja to Lord Siva and thus came to spend his days worshipped by Lord Brahma. (88)

Sambara, born of Danu, was the first of ten sons who together are known as the danavas. Simhika bore four children, the first of whom was fearsome Rahu. Her three younger sisters brought forth mighty demons. (89)

Kala gave birth to the six Kalakeyas. Vinata bore four children, including Garuda with his huge wings, and Aruna. Kadru, spawned all the race of serpents. (90)

Of Arittai, two daughters were born, the first of which was Ramba. Shining Ilai brought forth twice eight classes of gandharvas through the compassionate austerities of a certain sage. From Kapila, she of the wild rolling eyes and piercing gaze, ten children sprang. (91)

Angiras with the other prajapatis also brought forth gandharvas and enduring Atri, both sun and moon. Pulastya's sons were the arrogant rakshasas the gods and the kinnaras whilst Pulaha engendered first the kimpurusas and thereafter the beasts of the earth. (92)

The prajapati known as Dharma-deva brought forth the youths who are called the Vasus. The sage Bhrigu fathered Kavi and Saunaka. In addition to these he later brought forth fair Lakshmi. Of those youthful sons, it was Kavi who fathered the planet Venus. (93)

The Sun, whose goddess wife had fled in the form of a mare, took the form of a stallion, and pursuing her, infused his seed into her two nostrils, whereupon the two Asvins came forth in due order. Thereafter the myriad varieties of sentient and non-sentient beings came into being. (94)

Brahma, surveyed his work and became consumed with pride, "All this world is my own creation." He confronted Hari, intent on war with him. Reviling him, he began to speak: (95)

"It is I who made the seven upper and lower worlds, the seven clouds, seven oceans and seven principal mountains. Then, in order to create all living things according to their species, I brought forth out of my mind sons, the first of whom was great Marichi. (96)

The children of these sons of mine are the gods themselves with their priests, the moon and sun, the sons of Danu, the gandharvas, kimpurusas, and siddhas, the Chiefs of Siva's hosts, and with Indra at their head, the Guardians of the Eight Directions. (97)

O Hari! Now forget that you are the Supreme Being and that I am your son. Had I not created the world, how then you have been able to preserve it? How could a picture exist unless there is wall to paint it on? (98)

If you do not abandon your claim to be the guardian of all things, I will call into existence another to take on this work of preservation. Therefore submerge yourself in the ocean, before the hordes of my divine progeny come to dispatch you! (99)

When the sage Bhrigu cursed you, you entered upon a series of ten incarnations. Just look how my hands have been defiled in the creation of those very forms! (100)

Do not insult me by saying that I am the One who was born from your navel! Formerly, you sprang into being from a pillar. Are we to say that, that pillar was your father? When a bright red flame is kindled, it can consume the bamboo stem that gave it life, can you not see?" (101)

These words of Brahma entered Vishnu's ears, burning into him like a well-honed weapon, heated upon the fire. Smoke issued from his mouth as he smiled bitterly, paused briefly then rebutted him in the following manner: (102)

"You quite forget the manner in which you came to be. Perhaps you spoke these words like a child who believes that his father will be indulgent towards his misdeeds. However, this lack of respect is something I will not tolerate. (103)

When the raging Madhu and the elephant-like Kaitabha, held me in contempt, I killed them, even though they were my children. After committing such a heinous sin, can a son remain a son? For who would hesitate to cut out the canker in his own body? (104)

When Lord Siva, tore off one of your heads and cast it aside, were you not powerless to restore it. What kind of Supreme Being are you? Is this the kind of power that will enable you to call into being this world which rests upon the hooded serpent Adisheshan's head? (105)

Incarnating in the form of a fish, I recovered the entire corpus of the Vedas. Those wily sons of Danu, I defeated and put to death. Even so, I am loath to slay you, just as one who has nurtured a poisonous tree might be loath to cut it down. However, it would be no great task for me to do so." (106)

Angry words flew back and forth from one to the other, as they angrily smacked each other's shoulder with the flat of their hand. Rising up, they leapt down into the world of men, shrinking themselves down, then rising up tall again, shooting dense streams of fire and sparks from their narrowed eyes. (107)

Mountains were ground into dust. The cosmic shell exploded into fragments. The hot rays of the sun and the moon's cool beams, all were blotted out. Even the serpent Adisheshan

writhed in pain, unable to bear the weight upon his head. The unblinking gods themselves blinked, thinking that the end of a world age must be at hand. (108)

The stars in their constellations and the massed clouds fell from the sky like falling leaves, as the dust rose up and all the tormented worlds fell into total disorder. Bhagirathi and all the lesser rivers ran dry, and the Elephants of the Eight Directions shouted in terror. (109)

They tossed each other up in the air and fell down again, only to charge at each other once more, bending towards one another to exchange their barbed retorts. Now they traded blows and grabbed at each other's clothing, whirling hither and thither like a thousand storms. (110)
All creatures the crawled, hopped or walked took to the air and flew.

Trees of all the manifold species were snapped off and destroyed. Thick blackness enveloped everything. Mount Meru trembled, as the seven oceans turned to mud. (111)

The gods went in fear to Indra, but before they could explain what had happened, Indra himself recounted to them all the troubles he had himself endured, after which he asked them the reason for their visit, to which they replied in detail: (112)

“Brahma and Vishnu are waging a mighty battle. For our salvation we have no other recourse; we must go and pray to Lord Siva, the creator of us all.” (113)

On receiving the assent of their King, the Hosts of Heaven went to the supreme Lord, saying, “We beg you to end the suffering being wrought by the trickster Vishnu & Brahma. For who is there to help young children, if not their own mother? (114)

To escape the darkness of birth and death, we have sought refuge in you, so that we may realise the final truth, and seeking the shelter of your feet, may bathe in the boundless sea of your grace. (115)

You who bestow the grace of true knowledge to dispel the defiling ignorance of those unable to bear the burden of their maggot-ridden physical forms! To dispel this base impurity, which could not be removed even were we to bathe each day in an entire ocean of water, we have sought refuge in you. (116)

You are our only hope; show us your compassion.” Even as the gods told their story to the Lord, who bears a third eye upon his forehead, the Lord already knew what had happened. How could He fail to know, He who permeates all, as oil permeates a sesame seed? (117)

To dispel the fear of all the trembling gods and rishis, to put an end the conflict between holy Vishnu & Brahma, and to ensure that all the worlds in their established order, the Lord took the form of an invincible mountain of fire, set off to restrain the two. (118)

In the deepest hell the serpents who dwell there trailed about it like hanging shoots, whilst its thick roots plunged down far below. Growing upwards through the earth, it expanded all the realms of the gods. It traversed the uttermost limit of the vast ethereal region. (119)

Dispelling the enveloping sapphire-like darkness, it shone out like a bright beacon set on high, so that all the oceans glowed blood red, as if the immedemonble submarine fire at the world's end had spread abroad, and the seven great mountains resembled nothing so much as tiny red sparks which had showered down from its summit. (120)

Seeing this limitless fire, Vishnu & Brahma stood back in fear, unable to fathom. Is it possible for the physical eye to perceive our Lord? (121)

Seeing that bright effulgence they were troubled. Then both agreed that he who could reach the head or foot of this measureless apparition would be the greater of the two. "I shall know the foot of this mountain," cried Vishnu transforming himself into a boar. "And I shall traverse the heavens to find its summit," challenged Brahma, adopting the form of a swan and flying swiftly heavenward. (122)

The swan traversed a thousand leagues in a mere fraction of a second whilst in an instant Vishnu tunnelled down a thousand leagues into the earth. (123)

Burrowing down beyond the earth, Hari entered the nether worlds. Passing through the place of Bhogavati, he forged on, paying homage with hand and head to Haata-kesvara, whose supreme effulgence the gods adore. In former times Hari had measured the three worlds, but now, though he fathomed all seven lower worlds, he could not find its foot. (124)

Those long pointed tusks, like the waxing moon, became worn down. His enthusiasm for the task faltered, his hooves and finely honed teeth grew thinner and weaker. Then Hari turned to the Lord, setting aside his fatigue and exhaustion, returned through the seven nether worlds, emerging at last from an ocean of woes. (125)

Seeking out that holy place where the First One has risen up in the form of a column of flame to put an end to their struggle, he realised that Brahma too could never reach its upper limit, and remained there paying homage over and over to Lord Siva, the Distant One, so hard to reach for those who have no faith. (126)

Whilst all this was happening, Brahma, who had just now flown up in the form of a swan to seek that fiery mountain's head, traversed full one thousand leagues in the twinkling of an eye. (127)

Piercing even the universe's outer shell and leaving it far below, he rose on upward, travelling for a thousand years. Still there was no end to that column of fire. (128)

His feathers fell away and his energy began to fail. His woes increased and a sense of isolation grew. Brahma began to mull over certain things in his mind: (129)

"Will Vishnu reach the foot, and then return? Or will he give up his quest midway and come back, unable to reach it?" Thus did his anguished mood swing back and forth, as his thoughts ran away with him, like wax over a flame. (130)

"I did not realise that this could only be Lord Siva himself. By confronting Hari I have forfeited his friendship also. Now I am drowning in this ocean of sorrows. Is this due to my own stupidity, or the fruit of former misdeeds? (131)

Thus far have I travelled, still unable to discover its peak? Even if I were to lie about it, where is the proof? Then he noticed a screw-pine flower falling towards him. (132)

He hardly had time to think where it could have come from before it reached him, and he caught it in his hand. "Let me go at once," it said with a heartfelt sigh, since it was a faded flower which had fallen from the crown of our Sovereign Lord. (133)

Brahma asked "whence have you come, and on what errand?" "I have fallen from the flower-wreathed head of the Primal Lord, who is indemonstrable. (134)

"Since slipping from that head, I have been falling for forty thousand years and let me go." Then Brahma, dismissing any hope of seeing our Father, began to speak: (135)

"Dear companion! Be my friend and help me escape the torment of any further wandering. Other than you, there is no one whom I can trust with my life. I am no stranger, nor am I really a swan. (136)

My name is Brahma. I and Vishnu set our minds on revealing the extent of this wondrous object. Off he went burrowing into the earth, whilst I, for my sins, sought and failed to reach its holy summit. (137)

Well, why dwell any further upon the matter? Due to your auspicious arrival, what I was thinking about has come to pass. You must tell Vishnu that I reached summit of this pillar of light. (138)

Do not call this deceit and despise me. It is permissible to tell the greatest falsehoods in order to save the lives of those who suffer. These are not unworthy words which one should fear to speak. Those who prize their friends will agree even to drink poison for their sake. (139)

Screwpine flower, you who live upon the head of the Lord supreme, whose forehead bears a third eye! There is no need to give this any further thought," Brahma said, and the screwpine flower assented. Dropping swiftly down from the heavens, he came into the presence of Vishnu. (140)

"O Sridhara! hear the exploits which brought me here! Travelling a hundred thousand leagues in a mere instant, I perceived the head of the Primal Lord, and returned," he claimed, and the screwpine flower attested that it was so. (141)

Immediately, the mountain of fire exploded. The gods and demons fainted away at the sound. The elephants of the eight directions vomited blood. Then in the midst of that scene the Lord rose up, his radiant red form all covered in white ash, with a smile on his lips like the one He wore when He burned up the demons of thri-pura. (142)

"Lotus-born Brahma! you have spoken out of sheer arrogance" said the Lord, and began to laugh, whereupon this world and all the worlds beyond trembled. The radiance of all the heavenly bodies faded. The eight directions were twisted from their stations, and vast forests of trees were blackened, scorched and burned. (143)

The gods were fearful, thinking, "Brahma has been destroyed!" and poured down a vast rain of flowers. But joy blossomed in the heart of Vishnu as the black stain of arrogance departed from lotus-born Brahma. (144)

Vishnu offered prayers and danced in joy, running hither and thither. Becoming a worthy devotee of the immedemonble First One, he pondered fora boon he might ask of the Lord. (145)

Seeing how the heart of Hari melted with devotion, the Lord graciously granted him many a boon. Then turning to Brahma, "All your temples and all worship of you will vanish from the earth," He commanded. (146)

“Screwpine flower, for joining Brahma in this deception, I shall never more touch you again.” Thus did He decree. Brahma, distraught on observing the depths of the Lord’s fury, fell at the Lord’s feet and offered prayers. (147)

O Lord! Since my soul has been grossly covered by ego, I wander helpless here. How am I, a mean wretch, of any significance? Fair One! Heaven’s infinite sphere! You who are the Four Vedas, and more than that, the Vedas’ ultimate import! Peerless First One! Let your anger against me cease! Let it cease! (148)

If the seven oceans, into which all the earth’s waters flow, were mixed together and heated up, would there be any other water to cool them down? If your anger remains at such a pitch, how will life here be able to survive? You who in former times drank the poison from the Milk Ocean, let your anger against me cease! Let it cease! (149)

Crescent Moon! Moon at the full! You who appear in female form! And again, as a man! Honeyed One! Fragrant blossom! Great Mountain! Divine grace! Munificent cloud! Melodious sound! These are among the myriad forms in which you manifest yourself. Is this just? Over and over again I beg you, let your anger cease! Let your anger cease! (150)

I am not the hunter Kama with his bow and flowery arrows which sting! I am not that raging elephant with curving tusks, its temples streaming with the juices of the rut! I am not that red hot fire, nor death-dealing Yama! Nor am I the three cities of the demons! Do not deem me worthy of your anger! (151)

The moment I conceived the idea of reaching your unknowable summit, I became a bird. Must I suffer further? Show your compassion to one who has been disgraced!” Then the Lord, who is like a warm fire to those who suffer in the cold, replied: (152)

“Brahma, be not afraid! You will be worshipped at Vedic sacrifices in Yagas, Yajnas & Homas. You may continue to ordain the seven worlds which are supported upon golden Mount Meru. (153)

“As I have granted you both boons in this holy place, may it flourish, to a distance of thirty miles all around, as the pure & sacred dwelling place of divine knowledge. This great column of flame shall become a mountain with the power to grant boons & final liberation. (154)

I ended the suffering of Indra and the other gods in their affliction; they turned their thoughts to me. Equally I shall abolish the suffering of birth and death for those who fix their thoughts on this holy place. This mountain is indestructible, even at the universe’s end. (155)

Those who perform arduous penance, shall be born in this holy place. Here a single offering will be increased in worth a thousand fold. Wickedness and sin will not prosper here.” (156)

Then the pillar of fire became a mountain. Brahma & Vishnu made obeisance to the Lord and said, “It is not possible even for the gods to approach and gaze upon its brilliance. Let it be a simple mountain, concealing within itself all those countless rays. (157)

The Lord made of it a mountain like all others. The two devotees said, “May you gracefully grant that each day a bright light be seen upon its summit.” The Lord replied: (158)

“In the month of Karttikai when the moon is in the constellation of Krittika star, I shall mount a bright beacon upon the summit. They who see that most excellent light will prosper, free of disease and hunger. The obstacles confronting kings and ascetics will be removed. We shall grant the boon of liberation to the kin of those who have gazed upon it, down to the twenty one generations. (159)

Since it is red in colour, Red Mountain – Arunagiri, will also be one of its names. Those who recite its name but once, will get the benefit of chanting the holy Namasivaya mantram thirty million times.” On hearing the pronouncement of the Lord, Brahma and Vishnu were filled with joy. Bowing down to Him, they began to speak: (160)

“O Lord! Except for the rains that fall from the sky, who will be able to bathe you with water? Apart from the starry constellations, Who will be able to garland you? Who will there be to show a bright lamp before you, other than the Sun with his rays? So we beseech you to manifest yourself in the form of a lingam at the foot of this mountain, that we may make perform puja to you.” (161)

“Then such shall I become. May you worship according to the precepts of the Kamika Agama,” said the Lord, withdrawing into the mountain. And so a Siva lingam manifested. Seeing this they bowed down in worship. Then they summoned the celestial architect, who saw to the construction of gopurams, halls, and great walls. (162)

He also dug three hundred and sixty holy tanks. In it flowed the heavenly river whose waters never fail, and in its groves grew the celestial trees of Svarga. Gods, dancing girls and rishis in unending succession took birth there. (163)

Brahma and Vishnu put on clothing of bark, matted their hair, covered their bodies in holy ash, put on rudraksha beads and performed Siva puja. Then they performed pradakshina of Annamalai, devotedly praising Him for fourteen thousand years, & then assumed their divine forms once more. (164)

The holy Arunachalam became so desirable that even the Lord's affection for Mount Kailash faded away. Since here was a mountain of pure gold, of what value was a mountain of silver? The seven holy places with Kasi at their head, whose glory is widely praised, and the golden realm of the gods all lost their allure, just as the stars lose their radiance as the pure rays of the sun appear. (165)

Though it is hard indeed to tell of the qualities of a mountain whose measure even Brahma and Vishnu could not know, I have tried in a small way to describe it. Is there anything further I might need to speak of?' said Nandi. At that, the rishi Markandeya, feeling greatly honoured, bowed down in worship and said, 'May you show us your grace and recount to us the tale of how Uma appeared from the [Himalaya] mountain and merged with the left side of Lord Siva as his consort.' Whereupon Nandi began the details. (166)

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Hearing the glory of Arunachala from Gautama Rishi, Mother Parvati took leave to perform Tapas. She had a hut of palmyra leaves built on the eastern slopes of Arunachala, set the Seven Mothers to guard the rear, the Eight Bhairavas to guard the four directions and placed her two sons on guard at either side with Durga on watch within. (329)

Forming her hair into the matted locks of an ascetic and spreading them out; wearing strings of rudraksha beads, dressing in bark stripped from a tree; smearing her whole body with the holy ash, placing one toe upon a bright spike, heated upon the fire, and fixing her mind upon the holy feet of the Lord day and night, She who gave birth to the world performed great and arduous tapas. (330)

Seeing her arduous tapas, Saraswati covered her eyes and fainted. Lakshmi, who sits upon the lotus, fell to the ground weeping, suffering and mentally distressed. All living beings were deeply moved, their hearts melting. But what need is there to go over it again and again? If the mother feels pain, will not all the offspring in her womb feel pain too? (331)

In the season of early dew Mother Parvati remained immersed in the chilly tank with just her head above water. In the season of late dew She would seek out cold places. Even in the heavy rains She remained unmoved, enduring it as if She were a fish, performing the arduous tapas that was essential until She might attain the [left] side of her Beloved. One day Brahma, Vishnu, and the rest of the gods, approached the Mother with their woes. (332)

Respectfully she greeted them. They explained in detail how they had suffered by Mahisa- the demon. Parvati then said to Durga, "go and slay Mahisa with your sword to which Durga,

making obeisance, replied “That shall I do!” Having heard the reply of Mother Parvati, the gods took leave. (333)

Now I shall tell how the demon with the great buffalo head, was slain, and Parvati Devi gained the left side of the Supreme Lord- said Nandikeswara. (334)

* * *

The demon Mahisa dwells on the dark mountain was the most powerful & was like Death to Death himself. In the city of Alagai he plundered all the riches that were there, leaving Kubera in destitution. (335)

Grabbing the head and tail of the serpent Adi-shesha, he used it like a sling inlaid with beautiful jewels. Turning Agni out of his chariot, he gave it to his sons, grabbed Soma squeezing out the amrita and drinking it down.(336)

He would wander at large upon the white elephant Indra. At other times he would ride in the horses of the sun trotting on before him. Then he would mount the lion vehicle ridden by Niruti. Carrying a sword dripping with blood, he dealt out death to all life forms. (337)

Since his head was that of a buffalo it seemed that Yama, was wandering about on foot without his buffalo mount, fearful lest any soul evade him. How then might I adequately describe his violence and cruelty? (338)

During the time that this demon dwelt in Mahisa-puram – which had been created by the architect of the gods – receiving tributes from Brahma himself, a thousand armed warriors, went forth into the forests to hunt for elephant and other wild game. (339)

When those demons came and surrounded the grove where Parvati was performing tapas, the eight Bhairavas, slew them all. Messengers informed Mahisha the slaying of the hunting party, and of the tapas of the Mother Parvati. (340)

Mahisha belched out smoke in a bitter laugh; fiery sparks flew from both his eyes; the elephants of the eight directions hung their heads; the hosts of the gods trembled in fear. (341)

Soon Nikumban spoke up, “Could such feeble beings withstand the anger you have voiced? With the weapon I hold in my hand I shall slay them.” Speaking thus, he departed swiftly on his way. (342)

When that army accompanied by tall chariots and dark elephants rolled forward, it was as if the Western Ocean, rising in anger, were setting out to do battle with the Eastern Ocean. (343)

Mounted on a chariot drawn by a thousand horses Nikumban came on, heading for Uma’s grove, Espying them as they approached, Nok-kanangu and Thak-kanangu, bristling with weapons, confronted them in battle to halt their advance. (344)

The eight Bhairavas, let out a roar fit to crack the universal shell, destroyed in a trice that entire army, with the exception of Nikumban, and his charioteer. (345)

Observing the destruction, Nikumban rode to the attack, urging on his chariot so that it flew like a discus, and fired countless arrows into the face of Thak-kanangu. But the Maid of Heaven, brushing aside the hail of arrows sucked out Nikumban’s life. (346)

A river of blood flowed, The Bhairavas and the two anangus put on victory garlands. Meanwhile messengers rushed to the buffalo-headed Mahisha to report the slaughter. (347)

Upon hearing this, Mahisa turned to Kayidavan and said, “If the word gets about that her cohorts have slaughtered our great army, Brahma, Vishnu and Siva would stop their tribute to me.” He mounted a chariot harnessed to a thousand elephants. (348)

Twelve other demons, each possessing the strength of eleven crores of elephants, mounted their chariots and followed Mahisha.(349)

A sea of demons, thousands in number & variety, came on. (350)

There came amidst the din of pipes and drums with ghouls and black crows dancing about in expectation of a feast & they drew near to Parvati’s grove. (351)

Observing the approach of the murderous demon, the rishis were afraid, and came to Uma in great distress begging for sanctuary. Uma, eradicating their fears, turned to Durga and said, “Take up your sword and slay him!” (352)

Durga mounted on a lion, the vanguard of the army marched out, with Arunai-nayaki to the fore, and Kali and Tun-tumi to the rear. The Bhairavas on their dog vehicle, and the rest of the Seven Mothers, riding on their respective vehicles accompanied Durga. (353)

Advancing, they slew in an instant half of Mahisa's army, using stone pestles, trees, whole mountains, boulders, an assortment of weapons and even their bare hands. But the leaders of powerful Mahisa's army and Mahisa himself, like a great mountain, returned to the attack and drove Durga's entire army from the field. In despair Durga cried out, "Uma!" (354 & 55)

As soon as She cried out, "Uma, our help and support!" sixty four crores of yoginis rose into the heavens with a thunderous roar and destroyed Mahisa's army with a hail of fire and thunderbolts. (356)

Arani slew Aru-sikan and Varani slew Kaan-than as he attacked; Kaarani killed Karan and Narani took the life of Nara-kan. (357)

Trident-wielding Chaamundi slew Mindan, and Varahi slew Chandan; Maheswari destroyed Mathu, and Lakshmi took the precious life of Nilan. (358)

Tuntumi wielded her club, taking the head of Sonida-vunan off. Aruna-chalai, whose hand displays the conch, attacked and slew Agni-kannan. (359)

Kayida-van and Pugai-kannan met their deaths, slain in battle by Sundari. Durga sighted Mahisa, and went to confront him in battle. (360)

Attacked by Mahisa, the Seven Mothers used their weapons to ward off his missiles. Then Durga rode to the attack, mounted on her lion, and, taking the conch in her hand, gave a blast that shook mount Meru. (361)

Even as the sound of her conch rang out across the battlefield, all the demons fell into a stupor. The two remaining combatants, Durga and Mahisa poured down upon each other a rain of arrows. (362)

But for every arrow that Durga fired, there was an arrow of Mahisa's to smash it asunder. Then Durga unleashed two fearsome arrows, like the jaws of the crescent moon, to embed themselves in Mahisa's head.(363)

Those two arrows unleashed a surging flood of hot red blood, which poured down like molten copper; they were arrows, but their curving shape made them look like horns growing out of his head. (364)

Mahisa snapped victorious Durga's bow in two, and She embedded the bow in his forehead, along with the arrows she had fired. A flame like the fire leapt up from the brow of Mahisa, firer of a multitude of powerful arrows. (365)

Would Durga easily tolerate the destruction of her deadly bow? No! In a transport of rising fury She launched a fiery discus, and sent the severed head of that sinner tumbling to the ground. (366)

In spite of being chopped to pieces by Durga's discus, Mahisa did not perish. Through the enduring power of his previous tapas, he appeared as a powerful elephant, and returned to the attack. (367)

Durga's lion mount leapt onto the elephant's head, scooping out its brain and eating it. But Mahisa was still strong and, taking up his club, launched it once more. The Queen of the demon hordes countered it with her sharp spear. (368)

When that poison-oozing spear landed, death came to the elephant headed One, defeated in the furious battle; he crumbled to nothing like a tree hollowed out by a million beetles. (369)

But he returned once more to the attack in the form of a horse headed demon. (370)

Next Mahisa assumed the form of fire, then of water; he assumed the form of Brahma & Vishnu, all out of the power of illusion. (371)

Realising that he was using his power of illusion to torment her, Durga meditated on the holy feet of Uma firmly in her heart. No sooner had She done so, a voice was heard, speaking from the heaven: (372)

"You must strike off Mahisa's head, when he is in his natural form. Then, when you trample on it with your immaculate feet, his evil power of delusion will be destroyed." (373)

After battling with Mahisa in countless illusory forms, Durga despatched them all with her trident. The wicked demon, assumed once more the form of a buffalo, took up arms, She cut off his head, toppling it to the ground, and trampled on it with her feet. (374)

Was it an achievement that maya should be dispelled by those matchless feet, when the mere thought of Her holy feet is enough to eradicate, not only maya, but ego & Karma too? (375)

The gods poured down a rain of blossoms; buffalo-headed Mahisa attained the true state of liberation, and at his ruddy throat a shining lingam was seen. (376)

Durga saw that symbol of the Lord at his throat, and grasped it in her hand. (377)

Taking it with her, She went to Mother Parvati, making obeisance at her and gave Her the Lord. Out of his love for Her, the Lord remained firmly stuck to her hand. (378)

When mother Parvati saw this, and asked in surprise, “Why does Siva-lingam cling thus to my hand?” Then Gautama, replied with due respect. (379)

“In former times fifty rishis with Agastya at their head went to visit Varamuni, but he, convinced of the greatness of his own tapas, was disrespectful towards them. Those rishis, whose tapas was as precious as gold, turned to him angrily and said, ‘For your sin of thus disrespecting us, your next birth will be a buffalo, despised by all.’ (380)

Hearing this Varamuni was greatly afraid. Rising up he made obeisance to them, saying, ‘May you be gracious and pardon my error!’ to which they replied, ‘During your lifetime as the buffalo-headed demon, Mahisa, Uma will be performing tapas & She will in an instant remove this curse.’ (381)

Varamuni was born in the clan of demons, and became a king. One day, he entered a forest. Rushing hither and thither he became exhausted & when he chanced upon a rishi by the name of Mannatan, Mahisa swallowed down Mannatan along with the lingam he carried in his hand. Subsequently, that lingam remained stuck in his throat. Any one that wears a Siva-lingam becomes the very form of the Lord. Accordingly a karmic debt is incurred in the killing of Mahisha. If you bathe in the nine holy waters, that debt will be discharged,” concluded Gautama. (382 & 83)

But, a voice was heard from the heavens, saying, “All those nine waters of rare potency will come to this place; make sure by your actions that they do so!” At this Parvati turned to Durga, and said, “May you pierce the earth with the sword in your hand, and bring forth the rivers!” Durga bowed to Parvati, then drove her sword into the ground. (384)

When She drew the sword out of the ground, the nine holy rivers, sprang forth. For a month Parvati bathed in those waters, so that her sin was dispelled. That emblem of Lord Siva, which had clung stubbornly to Her, fell from her hand. (385)

The emblem of Siva, which is with and without form, was installed on the western side of the tank with due puja. Mother Parvati bestowed the title Papa-vinasaka maha-linga murti and blessed the tank as Khadga Tirtham. Then She made her way to the temple to worship Lord Arunachala. (386)

Bathing in the tank of Brahma, smearing with holy white ash, joining her palms above her head, and worshipping in the manner prescribed by Gautama, who walked close at her side, She entered the temple inside Rejoicing with melting heart and weeping and sighing deeply. Praising the Lord, She performed pradakshina of his shrine, giving voice to her request. (387)

On the holy day in the month of Karttikai, as prescribed by the Saiva Agamas, praises were offered to the Lord, at which time a blaze sprang up on the summit of the mountain. The Lord arose as a bright effulgence, said, "Fair maid, you shall perform pradakshina of this excellent mountain." (388)

With the Vedas thundering out praises like the roar of the ocean, and with the sound of kettle drums, trumpets, cymbals, mallari, turiya, tuntumi and drums filling the wide skies, Parvati, joining her lotus-like hands together above her head, began to walk. (389)

Damsels, Rambha and Urvasi performed dances; mountain nymphs strewed swathes of flowers at her feet. Maidens from the nether realms with smiles held out jewelled lamps in their extended arms. (390)

Lakshmi, Pulomaja, and Saraswati removed thorns and pebbles from her path; the Maiden Earth reached out her hand to support her; celestial maidens and the wives of great rishis made for her a path, sprinkling the perfume of many flowers. (391)

Mother Parvati turned to face the Mountain of Fire, offering worship and praises. Passing the southern quarter and then the south west quarter of Niruti, She came to the western quarter. There the Lord vouchsafed to her the vision of Himself, mounted upon a young bull, then disappeared from sight. (392)

Then She passed the western quarter, the north western quarter of Lord Vayu. Approaching the northern quarter and worshipping with love, She came joyfully to the eastern quarter. (393)

All the four directions were filled with the sound of the conches, with Narada's lute, and with the rattle of celestial drums. The gods themselves poured down a rain of nectar-drenched blossoms. (394)

The Lord, with a twisted sacred thread shining on his breast, as if it were a measuring line to mark off the half of his body that was to be given to Her who gave birth to the world, the Great One, the unborn and undying Source, whom none of the Vedas can fathom, appeared

mounted upon the bull, blissfully bestowing his grace. Parvati, bowed at his feet and worshipped Him. Then did the Lord who has renounced all addressed Her in the following manner: (395 & 396)

“Manifesting as female and male, we have thus divided the beings of this world. I became the lingam, and you the pedestal. What you think of as ‘I’ and ‘You’ are not in reality two. Coexisting like the tree and its inner core, We dwell as one. (397)

You gave up your body entirely for Us and took birth on the Himalaya mountain. It is only just that We should confer upon you one half of Our own body. May you dwell as the left half of Ourselves!” Thus in grace did He embrace Her with his fair arms, as merging together, they became one. (398)

On one side were ruddy locks, stacked one upon the other, and on the other, a lady’s curls; on one side was a garland of kondrai flower, and on the other, a fragrant flower garland; on one side was a sharp-pronged trident, and on the other, a blooming water lily; on one side was a sturdy warrior’s ankle ring, and on the other, a delicate lady’s anklet. (399)

One side was green in colour; the other was of a coral hue; on one side was a girdled breast, and on the other, a fine bare chest; one hand formed the varada mudra, and the other the abhaya mudra, which removes all fear. Observing their loving union, the gods bowed down in worship. (400)

Those who read this noble history or hear it read will be like the rishi Agastya. They will flourish in the world with their offspring and all their clan. Free of the fetters of this worldly bond, they will attain to the deathless state of liberation. (401)