

## Book Review: *Footsteps of Saint Ramalingam*

By M. G. Satchidananda

I was delighted to receive, unsolicited, by express post from Pondicherry, India twenty copies of a July 2014 publication *Footsteps of Saint Ramalingam*, written by B. Kamalakkannan, a long time scholar of Tamil Nadu's greatest 19<sup>th</sup> century Siddha. I have decided to publish this review of it because it reveals many little known facts about Ramalingam's life, prophecies, photographs and teachings, which the author has investigated in painstaking detail. And because it sheds light upon the teachings of Babaji's Kriya Yoga and the Yoga Siddhas.

After recounting the life of Ramalingam, in chapter 27, entitled "Appeal to have Deathless life," the author recounts how in December 27, 1873, lamenting that his disciples were not applying themselves to his teachings, less than two months before he disappeared in his room in Mettukuppan, on January 1, 1874, Ramalingam placed a lit oil lamp before his disciples, and informed them as follows:

1. "The shop was opened. But there was none to buy. So the shop was closed.
2. I am going to close the door of my room. You believe that God is now in the flame of the lamp. Therefore you worship the flame of the lamp without wasting your time. You do meditation before this flame of the lamp keeping in your mind what I have stated in the 28 Poems commencing with the word "*Ninainthu, Ninainthu*".
3. Now I am in this form of body. Hereafter I will enter into all living beings.
4. If you want to get the grace of god, you sit before the lamp because god is in the form of the lamp now.
5. Be kind to all living beings.
6. I will not be visible for two and a half *Kadigai* (1 kadigail = 60 years.  $2.5 \times 60 = 150$  years.  $1874 + 150 =$  the year 2024 A.D.)
7. I will be in this world as well as in the Universe. Afterwards when the Lord of great gracious Light comes, I will do miracles with this form of a human body.
8. When this door remains closed, if the Government authorities order to open it, the Lord would be looking into it."

The author also includes the first English translation of these "28 poems", cited above, beginning with:

"Oh people of the world, come here!

We shall deeply think of the mercy and love of the Supreme God.

We shall bow down and praise his glory with tears

He is our rightful Lord.

If we praise and worship him, we can get deathless life.

My words are neither falsehood nor exaggeration. I tell only truth

This is the time to enter into the narrow path and reach *the golden temple which is within our forehead.*”

In chapter 18 entitled “Root Cause of Enmity” the author presents facts and compelling arguments which explain why Ramalingam was persecuted in various ways by orthodox Saiva Siddhantans who condemned him for teaching that Siva was to be found within through meditation on the Supreme Grace Light, *Arutperun Jyoti*, and that through this the soul’s sins or fetters could be dissolved, and one could unite with the Lord. The orthodox Saiva Siddhantans, which dominate Tamil Nadu’s religious life, to this day continue to teach “pluralistic realism,” that God (*Pathi*), the soul (*Pasu*) and the world and sin (*Pasam*) are eternally separate, and claim that their religion does not encourage meditation as a means of salvation. The author argues that Ramalingam, with specific reference to the teachings of the Siddhas, including the *Tirumandiram*, taught that by doing meditation on “*paasam suzhumnai* or fire,” in the “narrow path,” of the *sushumna nadi*, one must raise awareness of the soul (*Pasu*) to that of the *Pathi* (Lord Siva) as “formless light.” (Note: This debate has been presented in detail in volume 5 of our publication, the *Tirumandiram*. It has also been elucidated in the new final chapter of *The Yoga of Tirumular: Essays on the Tirumandiram*, entitled “Monistic Theism in the Tirumandiram and Kashmir Shaivism,” now also available as an Ebook at [http://www.babajiskriyayoga.net/english/bookstore.htm#yoga\\_tirumular\\_monograph](http://www.babajiskriyayoga.net/english/bookstore.htm#yoga_tirumular_monograph)

In chapter 26, the author describes how Ramalingam was persecuted, including wide propaganda against his teachings, placing the dead before him (human and animal) demanding that he bring them back to life; spreading rumours that he kept gold bars in the building he established for poor feeding, inducing looters to break in; burning down his thatched hut, forcing him to move to a remote village; even attempts to poison him. A criminal lawsuit with charges of defamation was also brought against him by the leader of the orthodox Saiva Siddhantans’ Arumuga Naavalan in 1869. Judge Roberts, an Englishman, acquitted Ramalingam and other defendants, including the Chief priest and four other priests of the Chidambaram temple of all charges.

In chapter 28, entitled “Teachings and Prophecy,” the author relates some of Ramalingam’s prophecy, as related by one disciple at a meeting of the Theosophical Society in Madras in 1881:

1. “That though the Hindu people listened not to him, none gave ear to his councils, yet the esoteric meaning of the Vedas and other sacred books of the East would be revealed by the custodians of the secret, the Mahatmas to foreigners, who would receive it with joy;
2. That the eating of animals would be gradually relinquished;

3. That the distinction between races and castes would eventually cease, and the principle of Universal Brotherhood be established in India;
4. That what men call “God” is, in fact the principle of universal love – which produces and sustains perfect harmony and equilibrium throughout all nature.
5. That men, once they have ascertained the divine power latent in them, would acquire such wonderful powers as to be able to change the ordinary operations of the law of gravity, etc.”

Often lamenting that so few persons who could appreciate his teachings about *Pathi, Pasu* and *Pasam*, as described above, the need for meditation, and the principles of universal love, benevolence and charity, he repeatedly exclaimed with bitterness: “You are not fit to become members of this Society of Universal Brotherhood. The real members of this brotherhood are living far away towards the north of India. You do not listen to me. You do not follow the principles of my teachings... Yet the time is not far off when persons from Russia, America and other foreign lands will come to India and preach to you this same doctrine of Universal Brotherhood.”

A few years after making these prophecies, Madame Blavatsky (of Russia) and Colonel Olcott of New York, established the Theosophical Society in Adyar, Madras, and honored Ramalingam as their vanguard and trailblazer. Their successor, Dr. Annie Besant, of America, raised the “world teacher,” J. Krishnamurti. V.T. Neelakantan, the author of the books in *The Voice of Babaji: Trilogy on Kriya Yoga*, was Annie Besant’s secretary during the 1930’s, and later became Krishnamurti’s writing mentor. Dr. T.N. Mahalingam, who sponsored the printing of our ten volume edition of the *Tirumandiram*, in 2010, and his father have been the Presidents of the Board of Trustees of the organization founded by Ramalingam, in Vadulur, Tamil Nadu, and have maintained its Temple of Wisdom (*Sathya Gnana Sabai*), and poor feeding facilities (*Dharma Saalai*) for more than eighty years.

Yogi Ramaiah, my teacher, was a great devotee of Ramalingam. Much of the teachings that he gave to me were based upon Ramalingam’s teachings. Like the Siddhas before them, these included warnings not to become stuck in the “half way houses” of organized religion. Whenever I visit Ramalingam’s Temple of Wisdom however, I am dismayed at how difficult it remains for his followers to propagate Ramalingam’s teachings. While Ramalingam’s songs of praise to the Lord as Divine Grace Light (*Arutperun Jyoti*) are sung by millions of school children in Tamil speaking parts of the world, the practice of meditation on this same Light is adhered to regularly by relatively few. I do not believe that the solution lies in any new organization. I do believe that anyone and everyone must, however, give priority to putting into daily practice the spiritual teachings of Siddhas like Ramalingam and Babaji. The author’s book will I believe help to encourage more persons to dedicate themselves to these. I highly recommend this book to everyone who seeks to apply themselves to the highest teachings of the Yoga Siddhas. Copies may be ordered from our Canadian ashram at [info@babajiskriyayoga.net](mailto:info@babajiskriyayoga.net) for US\$5 each plus postage or from our Bangalore ashram for Rs. 100 plus postage.