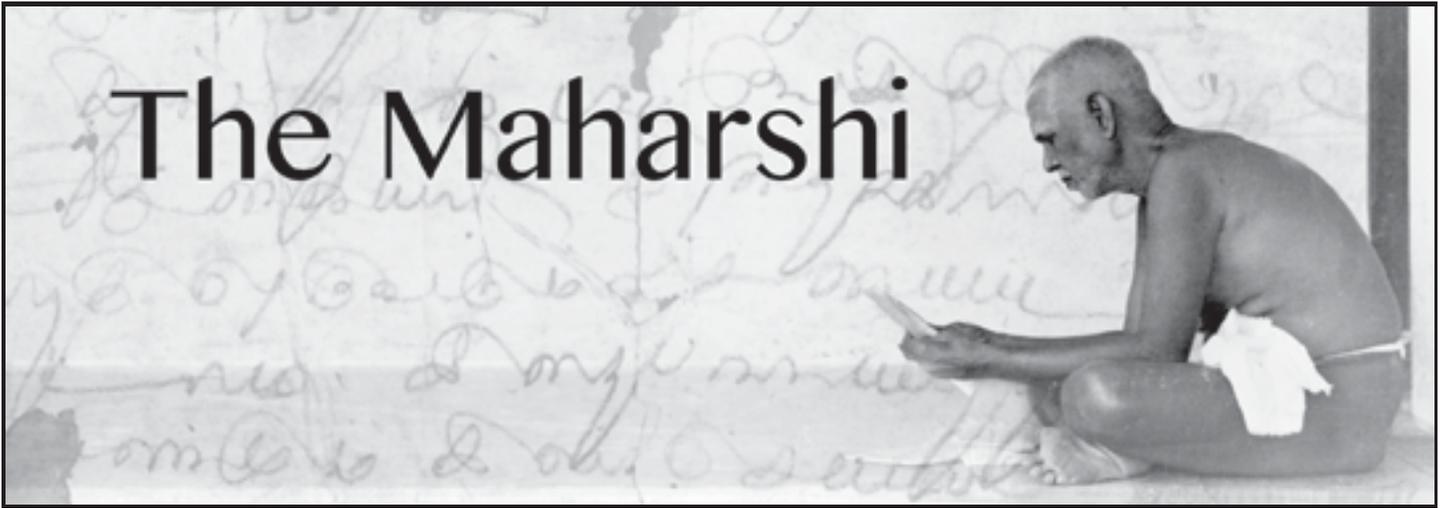


The Maharshi



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Muruganar's Literary Legacy

Sri Ramana Sannidhimurai was composed by Sri Muruganar as an outpouring of devotion that also embodies much of the teachings of his guru, Sri Ramana Maharshi.

Srimati T. R. Kanakammal had the great privilege of coming to stay with Sri Bhagavan in 1946 and until 1973 she also witnessed the one-pointed devotion that Sri Muruganar had for his guru. For many years after Bhagavan's Mahasamadhi she served Muruganar and was taught by him all the salient teachings of their Master, most of which were imbedded into Muruganar's poems.

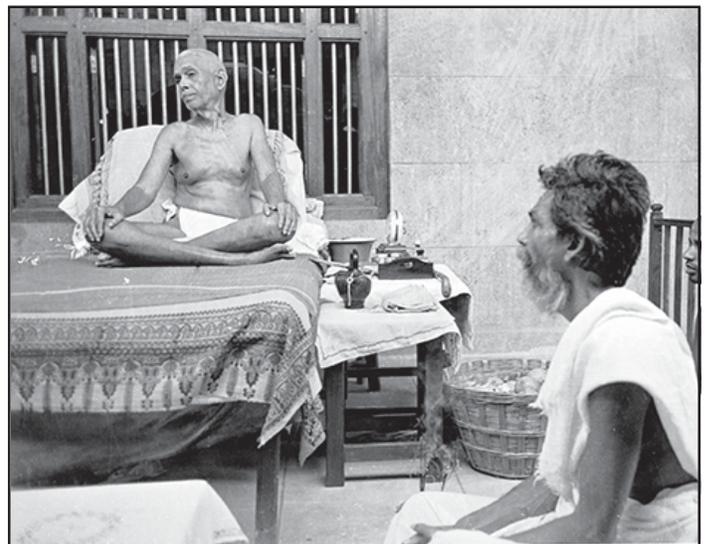
IN her book *Cherished Memories*, Srimati T. R. Kanakammal describes the extraordinary greatness of *Sri Ramana Sannidhimurai*:

Sri Ramana Sannidhimurai is a work of unparalleled beauty and immeasurable depth of meaning. *Sannidhimurai* is a Tamil word meaning 'listing one's grievances in the presence of God'. In other words, it is a form of poetry in which the devotee prays to the Almighty and begs for His indulgence. The same phrase can also be translated as 'A set of rules for the conduct of worship in the Divine Presence'.

The author of this work is Sri Muruganar, a highly learned Tamil scholar of eminence and a poet. More importantly, Muruganar was an ardent devotee of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. His was an absolute and unconditional surrender at the feet of Bhagavan, so much so that he could not even think of any other deity. *Sri Ramana Sannidhimurai* is in praise of Bhagavan. It captivated the hearts of Bhagavan's devotees to such an extent that they used to memorise long passages from the book and recite them in Bhagavan's presence.

In the olden days, *Saivite* saints used to compose

hymns on the presiding deities of every temple they visited. All these hymns were gathered together and compiled into what came to be called the *Panniru Tirumurai* (*Panniru* means twelve in Tamil). These hymns are all inspired poetry of the highest order. The sweetness of language and the beauty of expression are such that these songs have survived all these years,



Bhagavan Ramana and Muruganar

inspiring generation after generation of Lord Siva's devotees.

Apart from the *Panniru Tirumurai*, there are a number of individual *sannidhimurais*, sung by various poets through the ages. Even in modern times, the practice of composing *Sannidhimurai* continues. The *Tirupporur Sannidhimurai* was composed by Sri Chidambara Swami in recent times. When Muruganar composed the *Ramana Sannidhimurai*, therefore, he was only continuing a well-established tradition. The *Ramana Sannidhimurai*, however, has some unique characteristics that set it apart from all other *Sannidhimurais*. The songs in the *Panniru Tirumurai* were sung by several different poets, at several different temples, over a long period of time. The *Ramana Sannidhimurai* (except for the 12th Chapter) is the work of a single poet, with all the poems extolling the praises of a single deity. Moreover, Sri Muruganar has included some songs in verse-forms that are not found in the *Panniru Tirumurai*. The crowning glory of the *Ramana Sannidhimurai* is the chapter describing the extraordinary power of Bhagavan's "Glance of Grace" (*Kannokkam*). Bhagavan had the power to transport a devotee to a higher plane through a mere glance. Sri Muruganar tells us that a single glance from Bhagavan's eyes can grant liberation to a devotee and free him from the cycle of birth and death.

The story of how the *Ramana Sannidhimurai* came to be written is very interesting. Even before his first visit to Tiruvannamalai, Sri Muruganar had developed a very high regard for Bhagavan, hearing about him from his devotees and from reading Bhagavan's works. Every time he read the *Tiruvachakam* (a devotional song composed by the poet-saint Manickavachakar), Muruganar would be filled with the longing that, just as Manickavachakar had found a suitable guru, he too should have the good fortune to find a guru soon. It was in this state of mind that Muruganar came to Tiruvannamalai.

On reaching Tiruvannamalai, Muruganar went to the Arunachaleswara Temple to thank God for making his trip to Tiruvannamalai possible. While in the temple, he felt that he should take some suitable offering for Bhagavan. So he sat down in the temple hall and composed a decad of verses and took it with

him to Ramanasramam. These are the ten verses known as the *Desika Padikam*. (In Tamil and Sanskrit, the word *desika* means guru).

Upon entering the Ashram, Muruganar was assailed by doubts. He felt that he was ignorant about the etiquette to be followed when meeting a great sage. As Muruganar stood hesitating at the entrance to the hall, Bhagavan himself came out of the hall and came towards the spot where Muruganar was standing. It was as if the guru had come to welcome his disciple!

The sight of Bhagavan took Muruganar's breath away. For a few minutes, he just stood there, drinking in Bhagavan's form with his eyes. Suddenly, he remembered the verses he had written. He took out the piece of paper and tried to read from it. But his eyes were flooded with tears and his voice was choked with emotion. He was incapable of reading anything. In the end, Bhagavan himself had to take the paper from Muruganar's hands and read the verses himself. So great was Bhagavan's compassion for his devotee that he took the trouble to read all the ten verses, standing at the entrance of the hall, while the author of those verses just stood and gazed at him!

Afterwards Muruganar would write poems once in a while and lay them at Bhagavan's feet. Upon reading one of these poems, Bhagavan significantly remarked with grace, "These lines are just like the verses in Manickavachakar's *Tiruvachakam*. Why don't you write some more verses like these? If you continue to compose verses in the same way, you can write another *Tiruvachakam*!" Hearing these words, Muruganar was overcome by emotion. He was so moved by Bhagavan's confidence in him that he broke down. Through his sobs he stammered, "Bhagavan, in your compassion, you have compared me to the great poet-saint. It is true that you are the Lord Siva Himself. But I am a worthless creature. I am not worthy of being compared to Manickavachakar. Where is the shining star and where is the firefly? I am not capable of emulating Manickavachakar on whom divine grace had descended in abundance."

Bhagavan listened to Muruganar but did not answer in words. His only response was a long deep look into Muruganar's eyes. This one glance was powerful enough to inspire in him the confidence to

start writing poetry of rare beauty. He started composing verses regularly. Coming to know of this, a devotee, N.R.Krishnamoorthy Iyer, said to him, “These poems are quite good and it would be a good idea to systematically compile them into a *sannidhimurai*.” Thus the *Ramana Sannidhimurai* started taking shape. Muruganar firmly believed that Bhagavan made use of him as an instrument for the creation of this work. Several stanzas in *Ramana Sannidhimurai* bring out this idea.

Bhagavan’s glance of grace had the power to uplift a person and impart spiritual knowledge. Through more than thirty verses titled *Thiruk Kannokkam* (Divine Glance), Muruganar describes the power of Bhagavan’s glance of grace, and ends each verse with a plea for the bestowal of this glance on the devotees.

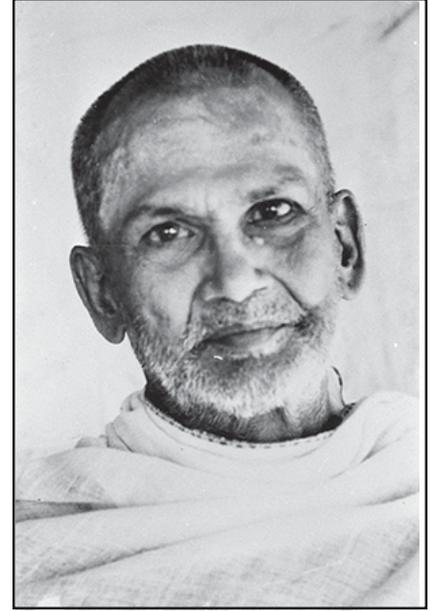
The Composition of Ramana Puranam

The *Ramana Sannidhimurai* of Muruganar has been modelled on the *Tiruvachakam* of Manickavachakar. The very first chapter in *Tiruvachakam* is a very beautiful one, titled *Siva Puranam*. But the first edition of the *Ramana Sannidhimurai* did not contain an equivalent chapter. Muruganar wanted to correct this inadequacy, and so he started composing that chapter. He had written some lines when he was suddenly assailed by doubts regarding the appropriate title for this particular chapter.

As Muruganar had followed the model of *Tiruvachakam*, he should have given the same title for this chapter also. But he wanted to name it *Ramana Puranam* instead of *Siva Puranam* to signify that these songs were in praise of the living God, Sri Ramana. He also felt obliged to copy the original in every detail. Unable to come to a decision, Muruganar gathered up the papers of this unfinished chapter and laid the bundle at Bhagavan’s feet. He did not say anything to Bhagavan about the confusion in his mind and left the hall. It was evening by the time he returned to the hall again. As soon as Muruganar entered the hall, Bhagavan beckoned him close, gave him back the bundle of papers and said, “Have a look at the papers.” Immediately, Muruganar opened the bundle and started reading.

One glance was enough! Muruganar was speechless with surprise. He had not mentioned his confusion to Bhagavan, neither had he asked for Bhagavan’s advice.

But the Master had answered the disciple’s unspoken question in the most unmistakable manner. At the top of the page was the title *Ramana Puranam*. Not only that, Bhagavan had written *Ramana Puranam* on top of every single page! And moreover, he had added many more lines of poetry to Muruganar’s own composition¹.



When the second edition of *Ramana Sannidhimurai* was prepared for publication, Muruganar added the *Ramana Puranam*. While checking the proofs, Muruganar made a mark in the text and added a footnote saying that only a portion of this chapter had been his own work and that the rest of the lines beyond the mark had been composed by Sri Bhagavan himself.

After correcting the proofs, Muruganar handed over the copy to Bhagavan and requested him to check it. Bhagavan noticed the mark Muruganar had made, and read the footnote. At once, he turned to Muruganar and said, “So! Only this portion is Bhagavan’s, is it?” These words had a shattering effect on Muruganar. He fell at Bhagavan’s feet and sobbed, “Bhagavan! What a grave mistake I have made! Please forgive me. I have not done anything at all. It is all your work. Every single line of poetry owes its existence to your infinite grace.” The mark and the footnote were removed immediately. This incident is sufficient proof that the *Ramana Sannidhimurai* was composed only by the grace of Bhagavan Sri Ramana.

The *Upadesa Undhiar* adorns the central portion of the *Ramana Sannidhimurai*. The *Bhagavad Gita*, which is the essence of Sri Krishna’s teachings, is at

1. The present edition of *Ramana Sannidhimurai* contains 540 lines of *Ramana Puranam*.

the heart of the *Mahabharata*. Similarly, the *Upadesa Undhiar* (which was later translated into Sanskrit, Telugu and Malayalam by Bhagavan as *Upadesa Saram*), the essence of Bhagavan's teachings, forms the central portion of the *Ramana Sannidhimurai*. In this beautiful song, Bhagavan has condensed the lessons taught by all the *Upanishads* and set them

down in one comprehensive poem. Incidentally the *Upadesa Undhiar* is the only work composed in the form of a book by Bhagavan.

The *Ramana Sannidhimurai* has yet another distinction. Bhagavan has stated that it is equal to the *Tiruvachakam* in all respects. Bhagavan has given his endorsement in the form of a poem.

Remembering Graham Boyd

by Dennis Hartel

I first heard from Graham Boyd early in 1995. He had invested a great deal of time to digitally restore a series of photographs of Bhagavan and sent me these along with a letter. His daughter Candice was then working for a computer company and somehow he had gotten enthused to use her computer to see how he could improve the quality of Bhagavan's photographs. 'Quality' was the one word Graham was obsessed with, and ultimately this obsession proved to be of great value to Sri Ramanasramam and devotees over a period of 20 years.

Graham had first sent all his restored photos to Ramanasramam with a similar letter, but received no response. Obviously the letter and photos had not reached the right person. He was discouraged, searched the internet and found Arunachala Ashrama, Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi Center in New York. Again another letter and package of restored photos were sent. This time it met with an appreciative recipient and a correspondence and friendship ensued, one which decidedly changed the direction of Graham's life.

In 1995, Graham was invited to spend the summer in our Nova Scotia Ashram to work on the restoration of Bhagavan's photographs. He accepted and ventured out of his British home and traveled across the Atlantic to the "wilds of Canada." Graham had not traveled out of Britain before and he had never met another devotee of Sri Ramana Maharshi. When he arrived, he said he did not know how to act or what to say. Everything was different and strange in this totally unfamiliar, natural and simplistic rural setting of the Ashram.

Graham was sincere and he weathered the isolation and ruggedness of the place with humor. He was a

strict vegetarian, but would only eat canned food. At the time he believed that vegetarianism was a certain way to liberation, to moksha, and that had been the major aspect of his sadhana till then. I walked Graham down the road to all the cows feeding on the grass in the field next to the Ashram and said, "Prostrate here, for all the cows in this field are liberated souls eating only vegetarian food." I believe he got my point.

Graham was also averse to meditation. His was the path of service. Though we make meditation an integral part of the life in Arunachala Ashrama, he was unable to participate. I suggested to him, "Why not try and meditate for some time each day. It will help you." He had a matter of fact reply which was typical with Graham but surprised me. "Meditate? Oh, I tried that. It doesn't work."

"Of course, Graham, it doesn't work; you have to work *at it*," I said.

That year Graham restored many photos and also produced digitally-colored photos of Bhagavan which were excellent. He was a perfectionist in everything he did. I believe he was the first to take up the task of digital restoration of Ashram photos. There was only one actual color photo of Bhagavan ever available, whereas all the other color prints we see of him were hand colored and reproduced. Graham took up the digital coloring of some popular photos of Bhagavan and whatever Graham did, he did it to the best of his ability in the way he conceived it best done. He would rarely compromise on quality or materials used to restore and print the photos. In Order to settle on the colors to be used, Graham would do extensive research on each item in the photo to determine the correct color. He was quite successful in this endeavor.

Graham again visited Nova Scotia in 1996. While on this visit we printed thousands of his restored photos for distribution. Somehow he lasted another summer in this remote Ashram, surrounded by fields, forest and hills. His obsession with the avoidance of insects was most entertaining to us country folk. Not for him, though. But he did enjoy being the entertainer and our rustic, uncultured, country ways provided him with a storehouse of material.

As a result of his visits here, meeting devotees and living with them, he gained the confidence to visit Sri Ramanasramam in India. We felt that he would definitely be of far greater service there than here. We wrote to the Ashram, introduced him to the President and suggested they use him for the archival restoration of photos.

They agreed. So in the winter months of late 1996 and early 1997 Graham made his first visit to Bhagavan's abode where he continued his work of photo restoration in right earnest. Gradually Graham's winter visits were extended to six months or more, and ultimately he settled there permanently. His proficiency in electronics, construction, organization, etc., was appreciated and gradually he took on a greater number of roles in the development of the Ashram's computer room, archives and publications.

Graham hosted and developed Sri Ramanasramam's first website at the address of "ramana-maharshi.org". He took this responsibility seriously, knowing full well that the digital age had arrived and through this medium Sri Ramana Maharshi's life and teachings would be broadcast to the world. On this website he developed many different ways of introducing Ramanasramam and Bhagavan to seekers. Moved by the suffering of the people in the Tiruvannamalai area, he was sincerely involved in helping genuine charities and people in need. He personally helped many of those in need and through the website supported several charities.

On the website Graham also wrote his own first impressions of Tiruvannamalai – the town, the people, the traffic, the animals, snakes, insects, etc. He would get a bit carried away at times and some of the descriptions were, true to his nature, tragically bizarre and negative. After reading his impressions, I sent him an email and thanked him. Why? It was the experience of many devotees who had been visiting the Ashram for decades



Graham in Nova Scotia, 1995

that the place was becoming increasingly crowded with all types of people. In a humorous way, I thought his graphic list of mishaps and accidents might serve to slow the tide of congestion in the Ashram. Of course, as Bhagavan willed, that did not happen.

Graham had a caustic, blunt way about him. Whatever he thought was inadequate for the job he would not hesitate to unload his criticism on the object or even the person responsible. He did this to such an extent that I eventually said to him, "It appears to me that you are not happy unless you have something to complain about!" And it was true! That was his nature. But no matter how much he criticized or ridiculed a person the beauty of it was that one never felt offended. There was no malice in his behavior, just a relentless obsession to do everything as perfectly as possible. He felt that everything connected with Bhagavan's legacy – his teachings, his archival artifacts, photos, publications, website and the whole Ashram – should be restored, preserved and maintained at the very highest possible level of quality, whatever the cost. That is how he expressed his devotion to his Master, and many devotees appreciated this, I included.

On Thursday, 16th June, after several months of enduring an aggressive cancer, at the place he called his home, Arunachala, Graham Boyd was absorbed into the lotus feet of Arunachala-Ramana. Graham will always be remembered for the service he had performed with a determined and uncompromising dedication.

Letters and Comments

Qualified Teacher

Is it necessary for one to learn from a qualified teacher to start Self-enquiry, or can one start on one's own by following the instructions in Who Am I? and Self-Enquiry? Are there teachers around NY or NJ? Thanks.

If one makes a sincere effort to practice the teachings to the best of one's understanding, guidance, when needed, will be provided from the same source of inspiration that first opened your mind and heart to the possibility of a greater experience of Reality.

So, in short, it is of paramount importance to make an effort to practice the teachings now with dedication and devotion in accordance with the light that has been given. No effort ever goes in vain.

– Editor

Heart Location

Please forgive me for taking the liberty to write you for help again. As of now I have a question about the location of the heart. I know the Master said in Spiritual Instruction that "Between the two nipples, below the chest and above the abdomen, there are six organs of different colors. One of them resembling the bud of a water lily and situated two digits to the right is the heart." But I still cannot locate its correct position. In an attachment please find two diagrams of the chest. I have marked my guess on the heart's location in one of the diagrams. The other one is unmarked. If my understanding is wrong, could you point out the correct position in the unmarked diagram for me? I appreciate your help.

The way to locate the heart has been pointed out by Sri Ramana. He said the Heart is from where the 'I-thought' springs, its moola or source. So the way to experience it and find its location is to seek the source

of the 'I-awareness'. The Maharshi recommended that we focus our attention on finding the source of the 'I-consciousness' rather than trying to locate the spiritual heart within the body. If we seek the source of the 'I' the heart will manifest on its own. It is the seat of the 'I', the Self, and the Self of all.

– Editor

Strength to Meditate

Lately I have noticed a weakening of both the desire and the strength to meditate which is bothering me a lot. Old vasanas are rearing their heads again and it is getting more and more difficult to keep the mind off distractions. Moments of peace are fewer and far between. Sometimes it becomes very depressing. What is to be done at such times?

– American Devotee

About the lack of enthusiasm for meditation occurring from time to time, don't be alarmed by this because it is only natural that it should happen. It is part of the process. Sadhana is like a spiral, going around and around, dipping and then coming up, dipping again, then coming up, but always gradually coming up. Whether we see or not, we are progressing.

Bhagavan said that sadhana is like stirring a small pond with a stick. Everything that has settled to the bottom of that pond is put into motion and rises to the surface. And unless it rises how can we remove it? So don't be discouraged if old vasanas rise up. That, again, is part of the process.

The important point is to realize that the purpose of life is to know the Self and that is the reason we live and breathe on this earth. Whether we see the results of our efforts or not, we should not be concerned. We should simply continue on the path laid out before us until the end. And about the end, we must forget about it. The end is now, in the present. It is in the 'doing'. Doing is our only duty and purpose in life. Grace will come.

– Editor

"Dhyana comes only step by step with the gradual weakening of the vasanas by the Grace of the Master."

– Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi

Advent at Arunachala

You, your family and friends are cordially invited to join us in celebrating the
120th Anniversary of Sri Ramana Maharshi's Advent at Arunachala.
 The programs will include parayanams, bhajans, talks and puja, followed by prasad (lunch).

In Nova Scotia, Canada
Sunday 4 September — 11:00 AM
 Arunachala Ashrama
 1451 Clarence Road, Bridgetown,
 Nova Scotia BOS IC0 / Tel: 902-665-2090

In Queens, New York City
Saturday 10 September — 11:00 AM
 Arunachala Ashrama
 86-06 Edgerton Blvd., Jamaica Estates,
 New York 11432 / Tel: 718-560-3196

In California, San Francisco Bay Area
Saturday 24 September — 11:00 AM
 40086 Paseo Padre Pkwy, Fremont, CA 94538
 Tel: 510-656-2752

Ramana Satsangs in the USA and Canada

Regular satsangs with recitations, songs, readings and meditation are conducted in or near large cities. Some of them are weekly. If you would like to attend any of these, please contact the individuals below for more information.

Atlanta Area — Mangalam Kalyanam (678-546-0378 / smoothcutter@hotmail.com)
Ann Arbor, MI — Nirupama & Ramesh (574-514-4766 / neeru_2@hotmail.com)
Birmingham, AL — Sai Kand (205-441-6859 / kandsai@yahoo.com)
Boston, MA — David & Anna (617-928-1487 / annaklegon@gmail.com)
Canada, Ottawa — Anantha Padmanabhan (613-733-8250 / madhupaddy@rogers.com)
Canada, Toronto — Thiru (416-876-1942 / thirusivasamy@hotmail.com)
Canada, Vancouver — Akash (778-321-4499 / eternalshiva@hotmail.com)
Canada, Victoria — Saibish (250-818-2875 / saibish@gmail.com)
Chicago Area — Jean-Luc & Rita (719-480-3530 / blueskyvalley@mac.com)
Connecticut Area — Aruna & Ram (860-284-0078 / rsankaran2000@yahoo.com)
Chapel, Hill, NC — Ranjani Ramanan (919-338-2551 / ranjani1@yahoo.com)
Dublin, Ohio — Abilash & Madhavi (614-789-9058 / mungamuru@hotmail.com)
Florida, Ft. Lauderdale Area — David & Janet Rubinson (954-600-1967 / arunahill@gmail.com)
Florida, Tampa — Rohit (813-766-0145 / rohitvaidya@yahoo.com)
Florida, Palm Coast — Shriram & Rekha (904-347-3434 / ssmarathemd@gmail.com)
Houston, TX — Kumar Saran (832-435-3761 / saran01@earthlink.net)
Los Angeles, CA — Natarajan & Indira Venkatesan (310-473-9441 / nvenky30@yahoo.com)
New Jersey, West Windsor — Gurunath & Leena (609-273-6216 / gsnetravali@hotmail.com)
Puerto Rico — Rosa & Scott Mathewson (787-531-5295 / rosilinm@hotmail.com)
San Francisco Area — Karthik & Sunita (510-656-2752 / sunita_parasuraman@yahoo.com)
San Francisco Area — Subadra & TKS (925-373-6909 / subadra2001@yahoo.com)
Seattle, WA area — Sunil Bala (425-996-4144 / sunil.n.bala@gmail.com)
Washington, D.C. Area — Uma & Santosh (301-528-5526 / uma_santosh@hotmail.com)