

Atithi Devo Bhava 100th Anniversary of Guru Pooja Festival in Tamil Nadu Village

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A century ago, the small hamlet of Subbulapuram, located at the Andipatti Taluk of Theni District in Southern Tamil Nadu, was graced by the Presence of a Master – Sadhguru Sri Brahma.

Sadhguru Sri Brahma was born as Kaliappan in Naduvapatti, Ramnad District, into a poor agricultural family. One night, as he fell asleep, he intuitively heard a voice calling him, “Come, come.” This was the moment he knew he should take sanyas and walk the spiritual path.

He did sadhana with great intensity, and at some point decided to meditate in a pit underground for a period of 10 days. He started this process in his native village. But within a few days, his sadhana was abruptly disrupted when residents pulled him out of the ground, fearing that he might die, and that they would be made responsible for it. So he set off wandering in search of a conducive place to complete the process.

When he came to the village of Subbulapuram, the residents invited him to stay, and provided him with a meal per day and shelter (adjacent to the then only Lord Vinayaka Temple). Recognizing their trust and devotion, Sadhguru Sri Brahma revealed his intention of doing sadhana underground. The villagers immediately agreed to set up the place and create the necessary conditions. As per his instructions, they dug a pit of 10–12 feet depth and placed a wooden plate on its bottom. The wooden plate, covered with tharpai, a unique grass used for rituals, served as his asan or seat. He sat down on it in padmasana, and the pit was closed with another wooden plate covered with sand. For 10 days, the



villagers diligently guarded the place and ensured not the slightest sound or sudden movement would disturb his penance.

On the 11th day, as previously instructed by Sadhguru Sri Brahma, they uncovered the pit and took him out, applied the essence of a particular leaf on his body and poured over 1000 buckets of water on him for resuscitation. He stayed on for some time, and it goes to say that out of his compassion, he performed many miracles for the local villagers.

When it was time to depart, he blessed the village and said that every year, from the day after amavasya in the month of July, for three days, they should perform Guru Pooja and

offer annadhanam (free food) to all the sadhus who would come to Subbulapuram. Sadhguru Sri Brahma told them to treat each sadhu as they would treat him. Those days, the village was very poor. There were neither high yield crops nor an irrigation system, only small farmers with lusty hearts, ready to abide by their Guru's will. Sadhguru Sri Brahma said to them, "Just do this – everything will come to you." And so it happened. The village grew and is now enjoying not only fertile land with rich crops but has also become a vibrant place to live. This is the oral tradition about the time Sadhguru Swamigal aka Sadhguru Shri Brahma spent in Subbulapuram.



This year's 100th anniversary of the Guru Pooja and annadhanam festival was carried out with grandeur. For three days, the robust people cooked and served all the sadhus and sanyasis who came with utmost love and devotion, as though they were serving their Guru. From the Isha Yoga Center, 24 brahmacharis, 22 residents and Isha Samskriti children had gone to participate in the event.

One of the residents said, “The villagers welcomed us with utmost warmth. As we got down from the bus till we reached the temple, we were chanting ‘AUM Shambho Shiva Shambho.’ We entered the temple, which could fit 20 people but had 100 people. It was very powerful and vibrant.”

The ‘ashramites’ then conducted the Guru Pooja and chanted ‘Nirvana Shatakam.’ Prasadam, vibhuthi and brochures were distributed to all. In the evening, Sadhguru Sri Brahma’s photo was carried in a procession across town, all the way from the temple where Sadhguru Sri Brahma used to stay to the samadhi of Krishna Swami, one of the disciples of Sadhguru Sri Brahma. Tribal dancers, followed by musicians, led the procession. Throughout, people of all ages, crossing caste barriers, joyfully danced together.

Followed by this was the annadhanam, served on banana leaves, as is tradition. Although the food was extremely spicy, one of the Isha Brahmacharis remarked, “It was very sweet because of the way it was being served.”



Another Isha Sanyasi shared, “One thing which struck me was, the people who are here now have only heard of Sadhguru Sri Brahma from their forefathers. They are the third or fourth generation. They had never been with him in his physical form, but their devotion is tremendous. In this village, they have some caste clashes amongst themselves, but once this Guru Pooja celebration comes, they put everything aside, and come together to make this event happen so beautifully. For three days, three times, approximately 800 people have to be fed. The villagers don’t look as though they have great

organizing skills. It can only happen out of their dedication and commitment. For them, it's not as though a long time ago, somebody came, meditated and went away. For them, Sadhguru Sri Brahma is not only a Guru, he's a god, so they're offering everything to their god. To every monk that comes there, they are offering a vastram (cloth), to some, they give rudraksh, and for a few, money for traveling. The total expenses would be around Rs. 3.5 lakhs each year. When we asked them how they are collecting the money, they say, 'We don't know all those things, we just start this and the money comes.' That's the trust they have. We wanted to donate some money for annadhanam, and within 10 minutes our Isha volunteers collected Rs. 8000. The person who received it was a 65-year-old man from the village. As we were leaving, another volunteer gave Rs. 3000, so two of our Swamis donated it to this man. He fell at their feet with tears in his eyes and said, 'Swami, we give to monks; we can't take this money from you. Did we make any mistake, is that why you're giving money?' That is the quality and innocence they have. 100 years they've maintained this feeling and quality. The priest of the temple falls at the feet of the monks, never before priests have done that. The energy of the place is like experiencing Sadhguru's Presence."

