

Saranagathi



eNewsletter from www.sriramanamaharshi.org

In this Issue

Dear Sri Bhagavan Devotees,

The August Issue carries two articles.

We continue with the 'attendant' series and focus on Sri Ramanasramam's efforts to preserve and maintain articles used by Sri Bhagavan, photos connected with Sri Bhagavan and Sri Ramanasramam, Sri Bhagavan's handwriting...etc in a scientific way and using latest modern technology. The Ashram Archives is trying to preserve the memory of Sri Bhagavan through this process, for posterity, to make us devotees visualize & imagine how a true 'jivanmukta' lived physically in 'our' world...with 100% transparency as an 'atiashrami'.

I hope you are all enjoying the 360 degree views of the Shrines of [Sri Bhagavan](#) and [Mother Alagammal](#).

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We are continuing to add [Old Devotees Interviews](#) and audio clips of [Sannidhi Murai](#). We welcome your feedback on how to improve the website further.

We hope to hear from you, about your [satsangs](#) and experiences of Him. Please email them to saranagathi@sriramanamaharshi.org

Yours in Sri Bhagavan,

The Editorial Team.

The Essence of Instruction

*Breath controlled and thought restrained,
The mind turned one-way inward
Fades and dies.*

— Upadesa Saram by Sri Bhagavan (Verse 14)

Perumalswami

*The following is a collection of anecdotes about Perumalswami who was one of Sri Bhagavan's attendants from the Virupaksha days. The article ends with an extract from former President of Sri Ramanasramam, T N Venkataraman's book, **In the Service of Sri Bhagavan** describing Perumalswami's final days.*

In 1916, an attempt was made by some drunken pandarams (sadhus) to take away the Sri Bhagavan from Tiruvannamalai. They came to Virupaksha Cave and solemnly informed the Swami, "We are sadhus from Podigai Hill, the sacred Hill in which the ancient Agastya Rishi is still doing his tapas, as he has done for thousands of years. He has ordered us to take you first to the Siddhas' conference at Srirangam and thence to Podigai, to give you regular diksha, (initiation) after extracting those salts from your body which prevent the attainment of higher powers."

The situation was evidently serious. The Swami, with his rule of equanimity maintained silence and awaited developments. Meanwhile, a strong and resourceful disciple of his, Perumalswami, hit upon a remedy. Accosting the newcomers, Perumalswami said, "We have received intimation of your visit and we have been commissioned to place your bodies in crucibles and place the crucibles over the fire. What do you say?" and he also told a fellow disciple Mastan, "Go and dig a deep pit for preparing the fire for those people." The visitors were dumbfounded and promptly retreated.

On another occasion, again when Pazhaniswami and Perumalswami had gone to town and when Sri Bhagavan was all alone, a few fierce-looking bairagis (wandering sadhus) came to Virupaksha Cave. Seeing Sri Bhagavan seated alone they told him, with vehemence, "We are coming straight from the Vindhya Hills. We had darshan of the great siddha there. He has commanded us to take you there. We are taking you along with us back to Vindhyas, as ordered by the great siddha."

Bhagavan as usual remained silent and unmoved but the bairagis, as was their wont, made much noise. Some woodcutters who witnessed this drama went down and told Perumalswami about the wild-looking bairagis. Perumalswami came and having assessed the situation he went back to the town, brought a big vessel and tins of oil, put them in front of the ruffians and started gathering fire-wood. The bairagis and Sri Bhagavan were astonished at the strange behaviour of Perumalswami. The former did not know who Perumalswami was. They enquired who he was and what he was up to. Perumalswami put the big vessel on the fire and said: "I belong to the next village. I had a vision last night of the great siddha of the Vindhyas. He commanded me 'Go to Virupaksha Cave. You will find some bairagis there. They are siddhas too, having great powers. Pour boiling oil on them and they will be alive and untouched by the oil.' To my great surprise when I came to this cave, as told by the siddha, you were all here. What a fool I was to doubt the holy words of the siddha. Immediately, I rushed to town and brought the vessel and the tins of oil. Would I not incur a curse if I disobey the siddha?" When Perumalswami went inside the cave to put his clothes there, the bairagis took to their heels! Bhagavan had a big laugh, and Perumalswami joined him.

Once Sri Bhagavan reminisced, "When I came down the Hill to reside here, Perumalswami used to bring something to eat from the town early in the afternoons. One day, he wrote a verse on a piece of paper and brought it to me. When I asked him if he himself had written it he said, "Yes." On

reading it I found it really good. At that time Muruganar used to look after all the writing work and so I asked him to copy the verse in a note book. Four days later Perumalswami brought another verse. When everyone praised it he was overjoyed and so began bringing one fresh verse every four days. If he ever delayed I used to ask him, "Have you not written again?" He would answer "No", and then bring another verse after a few days. We received nine such verses. When he brought the tenth verse I felt that I had seen such verses somewhere else and so asked Muruganar to bring a copy of the book *Tiruvarut Pa*, I opened it and saw the verses in the 'Rama Pathikam' except that wherever the word 'Rama' occurred, the word 'Ramana' was substituted and a few changes were made here and there. I showed the whole thing to Muruganar. He thereupon stopped copying and mentioned it to all the people in the hall who laughed. Poor chap! Perumalswami sat in a corner humiliated. What else could he do? When people come here they feel like writing or singing something. Poets write something of their own; others just copy the writings of someone else and substitute Ramana for Rama. What is wrong in it? The words Rama and Ramana are one and the same."

Perumalswami, who had formerly been a devoted worshipper of Sri Bhagavan later developed a bitter enmity towards the Sarvadhikari and the Ashram.

The following is an extract from, *In the Service of Sri Bhagavan* by T.N. Venkataraman:

Perumalswami filed a case in 1936 in the Munsif Court of Tiruvannamalai challenging the Power of Attorney registered in 1933, in the name of Niranjanananda Swamy on behalf of the Maharshi nominating the Swamy as the Sarvadhikari of the Ashram. Perumalswami's case was that as Ramana Maharshi had renounced everything he had no right to property and hence he had no legal right to

transfer such a right to anybody. He also insisted that the Court should ask Ramana Maharshi to be present at the Court and personally depose from the witness box. The Munsif Court agreed. Devotees were all in dismay. By the efforts of Grant Duff, the prominent Britisher, also a devotee of Sri Bhagavan, Lord Erskine, the then Governor of Madras Province ordered that a Commissioner be appointed to visit the Ashram and record the evidence of Ramana Maharshi at the Ashram itself.

Bhagavan was examined at the Ashram by the Commission. When asked to which Ashramam he belonged Bhagavan answered that He belonged to Atiasramam (beyond the four stages). When asked if an atiasrami can own property, He said that there is no restriction for them. They may or may not own property and convey the same to others. All depended on their prarabdha. Based on the Commission's report, the Judgement delivered in 1937 went in favour of the Ashram.

Perumalswami who fell seriously ill towards the end of 1945 was evicted from the premises of Durga Temple. Already very ill and now suddenly finding himself roofless, he felt helpless and finally found shelter in a hut within the premises of Sri Seshadri Ashram, adjoining Sri Ramanasramam. I told Bhagavan about his pitiable condition and started supplying food, medicine etc., everyday from the Ashram without the knowledge of the Sarvadhikari.

Perumalswami's health improved to some extent. During that period of time, one day Bhagavan told me, "Poor Perumalswami! Though he now bothers us by involving us in court cases, we should not forget the good work done by him in the past. Once at Skandashram when I was down with severe dysentery it was he who looked after me with great care." I was stunned by Bhagavan's limitless magnanimity. Perumalswami's health deteriorated and he passed away by the end of April, 1950.

Sri Ramanasramam Archives

The Archives team is a set of earnest devotees, who have dedicated their lives to the arduous task of preserving the Masters' memory for posterity. John Maynard, a key member of this team writes the following piece.



Sri Ramanasramam Archives

Sequestered away in a quiet corner of the ashram grounds, surrounded and shaded by tall Bengal almond trees and green shrubbery, lies a quiet and unobtrusive bungalow. So peaceful is it that many devotees, though coming here for years do not even know of its existence. This cloistered building houses the Ramanasramam Archives. The Chennai architects who designed it based their design upon a typical rural Tamil home, complete with an unencumbered interior courtyard with spacious rooms branching off its airy interior. Tiled roofs and a surrounding garden with tall trees protecting the building set off this small jewel. Despite its humble exterior however this building is, in reality, a state-of-the-art archival facility, housing a large variety of Sri Bhagavan Ramana's works and articles of daily use.

Founded in 2002 in part with funds from a devotee, and opened in 2004, the archive brings together and stores all of the disparate objects left to us from Sri Ramana's lifetime; including many hundreds of black and white photographs and negatives, articles gifted to and used by Sri Bhagavan, manuscripts with original writings and corrections in Sri Ramana's handwriting, as well as a complete collection of all the books published by the ashram and by other publishers, including rare first editions. These had

previously been stored in cupboards, in the library, and even lost altogether in the go-downs around the ashram, suffering from the vicissitudes of the Indian climate. This rare and unique collection is now housed under one roof, in a temperature and humidity controlled environment.

The Ramanasramam archive is staffed by volunteer devotees who each take responsibility for particular areas. Outside expertise is freely given by highly skilled devotees and friends of the ashram; Dr P. Perumal, chief conservator of the Saraswati Mahal Palm Leaf Library in Thanjavur; Dr K. K. Gupta, curator in the National Museum in Delhi; Dr K. Gopalakrishnan, T. C. E. consultants, Chennai; and the architect, Mrs Krithika Subrahmanian of Chennai, as well as by Sri V. Karthik who has freely given enormous amounts of time and energy on the photographic side, setting up a lab in Chennai for large prints etc.



Sri M.G. Balu and Deepak in the Archives office

Sri Ramani, a volunteer has served the ashram and cared for the manuscripts and other objects for fifteen years, collected most of the articles previously being kept in the library. He has a

vast knowledge of all the archive objects and manuscripts, and has been guided by Dr Perumal on a regular basis. Ramani was responsible for the original layout of the archive as well current overall responsibility for the original manuscripts and books and the archive in general. Sri M.G. Balu is the ashram engineer working alongside Sri Ramani, and ensures that the all-important air-conditioning and de-humidification functions to standard. In the photo section John Maynard and Patricia Pinkernell work at preservation and restoration, framing, cataloguing, as well as providing photo materials for the Mountain Path magazine. The work of scanning of all of the main photos of Sri Ramana was performed by Graham Boyd and Sri A R. Chandramoulie. Every article on display within the anterior rooms as well as the Mahasamadhi Room and the archive has been individually photographed and catalogued.



Sri Ramani and Smt. Patricia look at Sri Bhagavan's handwriting

A tour of the archive is always verbally arranged through Sri V.S. Ramanan and Sri V. Subramanian (V.S. Mani) in the ashram offices. A typical tour would take you through the main interior courtyard with Sri Ramani, where objects used by Sri Ramana are on view. Sri Ramani knows many of the tales behind the materials and will respond to the depth of interest of the visitor. For some it is only a trip to the museum, for others simply viewing the articles belonging to

Sri Ramana brings on shivers of devotion and tears. Sri Ramani responds to this deeper level of devotion and it brings forth these stories.



Sri Ramani

A favourite is the tale about the small carved elephant book ends which used to be situated on top of the revolving bookcase always by Sri Bhagavan's side in the Old Hall. This was given to Sri Bhagavan by a lady devotee who asked him to use it himself and not to send it off to the office, the fate of most gifts! This simple request He took to heart. This elegant mahogany book stand can be seen in many of the photos. Many years later this same devotee



The elephant book ends

was queuing for the last darshan of Sri Ramana as He lay sick and in pain in the body, in the small Mahasamadhi Room. As she approached her dying master He noticed her and despite His bodily pain He slowly and tenderly raised His arm and pointed to the carved elephant book stand still by His side, as if to say, "See, look! It is still here with me!" This piece is still with us. Wherever possible Sri Ramana has added small photographs of Sri Ramana using those objects displayed. A tour may end with a viewing of a DVD on Sri Bhagavan's life in the archive auditorium.



Archives Video Auditorium and photo section offices



Archives - Main Courtyard

Following are three direct quotations from books regarding particular objects on view in the main area:

'By now Bose too was back at the ashram and was busy overseeing the preparation of a 'Yogasana' in black granite to be used by Bhagavan, when the hall was completed. It was to be a gift by him to the ashram. The idea then struck me that I should provide the necessary cushions- a mattress and backrest suitable for the 'Yogasana'. Immediately on my return to Madras I contacted the TVS people and requested them to arrange for preparing the cushion in their upholstery department. When they were completed I arranged to carry them to Tiruvannamalai. The cushions were made with plush cloth (smooth and shiny like velvet) and they had particularly asked me not to bend the mattress or attempt to roll them up for transporting to Tiruvannamalai. I had therefore to carry them on the roof of my car. On arrival at the ashram, when I went and sat before Bhagavan, he mentioned to me that it looked as if I had carried it on my head, though he had no occasion to see the way I carried on the car. "Thalayil vechukondu varunna mathiriyundu" was what he said. It gave me a pleasant thrill.'

The Guiding Presence of Sri Ramana - K. K. Nambiar - pp 49-50, 1997 reprint - pub. Sri Ramanasramam



Furniture Room off main courtyard showing 'Yogasana' sofa mattress etc

To be continued in the next issue