

# Saranagathi



eNewsletter from [www.sriramanamaharshi.org](http://www.sriramanamaharshi.org)

## In this Issue

Dear Sri Bhagavan Devotees,

Sri Bhagavan liberated Mother Alagamma on 19th May 1922. [Maha Puja](#) which commemorates this holy day every year was observed at the Ashram on 6th June 2010. The [Samadhi Day of Cow Lakshmi](#), who was an example of complete surrender to the Master, was observed on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2010. You can view full reports of both these events at the Ashram website.

This issue of Saranagathi carries the concluding part of the article about Sri Venkatarathnam who lived with Sri Bhagavan from 1944 to 1950 and served Bhagavan in His final years. This is followed by Francis Allen's recollections in 'How I came to the Maharshi' which was first published in the October 1965 issue of The Mountain Path and finally 'Reports from Sri Ramanasramam'.

### CONTENTS

In this Issue	1
The Essence of Instruction	1
Sri Venkatarathnam (Concluding part)	2
How I came to the Maharshi	4
Maharshi's Gospel	5
Reports from Sri Ramanasramam	6

Please send your emails to us at  
[saranagathi@sriramanamaharshi.org](mailto:saranagathi@sriramanamaharshi.org)

In Sri Bhagavan,

The Editorial Team

## The Essence of Instruction

*Seeing oneself free of all attributes  
Is to see the Lord,  
For He shines ever as the pure Self.*

– Upadesa Saram by Sri Bhagavan (Verse 25)

## Venkatarathnam By Neal Rosner (Concluding part)

(Published in 'The Maharshi' newsletter Sep/Oct & Nov/Dec 2007)

*Sri Venkatarathnam lived with Bhagavan from 1944 to 1950. During the last year he served as one of His personal attendants. Neal Rosner came to Sri Ramanasramam from the USA in 1968, attached himself to Venkatarathnam and diligently served him until his passing in 1976. Neal's immersion into the spiritual heritage of India under the guidance of Venkatarathnam is elaborately described in his book, *On the Road to Freedom: A Pilgrimage in India*. Neal now resides in Amritanandamayi's Kerala Ashram and is known as Swami Paramatmananda. In the following article, details regarding the life of Venkatarathnam have been extracted from a 25-page essay written about Venkatarathnam by Neal Rosner. He presented this manuscript to us thirty years ago at Sri Ramanasramam. We have also utilized some material from the above-mentioned book.*



Neal Rosner and Venkatarathnam

### Hospitalization

When I came to Hyderabad to meet him, I found him in Osmania General Hospital with a fractured right hip. Riding as a passenger on a scooter he was struck by a taxi. When I asked him how he had such an accident he said, "What accident? Is birth an accident? Is there any such thing as an accident for a bhakta? It is the sweet will of the Lord, that is all."

The area around his hospital bed literally became an ashram, with photos of Sri Ramana and Arunachala,

observance of occasional festivals like Ramana Jayanti and Karthik Deepotsavam. There seemed to be a continuous stream of devotees from 9:00 a.m. till midnight, or later. Usually in the nights I expected that I could get some rest, but at that hour the attending physician, who was a bhakta, used to come and enjoy the satsang till midnight or 1.00 a.m.

At this time, his revered friend Avadhutendra Saraswati Swamiji, came to Hyderabad to see him, and visited him every day for some time. Sri Gangeswarananda Swami, a great blind Vedic scholar, also came to the hospital and Sri Venkatarathnam did pada puja to him from the bed itself and then presented him with new clothes, etc. A number of other saints also came. At the time of going into the operation room, Sri Venkatarathnam suddenly experienced such a high state of Divine ecstasy that he felt that the operation could be done without the usual anesthesia, as he was feeling completely devoid of identification with the body. Most of the people present mistook this ecstasy for either fear or insanity, but the real bhaktas recognized it as a very high state. After returning from the operation, the area around his bed was serene with the peace of Brahman radiating all round while bhajans went on for a long time. Afterwards Venkatarathnam used to say to the more worldly devotees, "See, you people say that I am a sadhu and that if I fall sick, who will look after me since everyone is so busy with his own family affairs and has no time to attend to a sick

sadhu. Well, who sent this Nealu [the name he called Neal Rosner] here? I did not write to him or call him to come here. God has sent him here to look after me. It is said that God Himself takes on the responsibility to look after those devotees who depend entirely on Him. Now you can see the truth of it."

After four months he was discharged from the hospital and stayed at Malakpet with Sri V. Srinivasan, who was the Inspector General of Prisons at that time. He and his wife treated Sri Venkatarathnam with the fullest hospitality and affection for more than two months. For the rest of his life he was grateful to them for the love and concern which they had showered on him at that time. This was May 1970.

### **Pilgrimage to the Himalayas**

From Hyderabad we traveled north with Swami Avadhutendra Saraswati and eventually reached Nepal in August 1970. After Swamiji left us in Kathmandu, we flew to Pokhara and from there walked seventy miles into the Himalayas to Muktinath, the Abode of Muktinarayana. This place is sometimes called Salagrama Kshetra and is the 107th Dham on earth, Vaikuntha being the 108th. This walk was extremely difficult. We often got lost in the forests and were caught in darkness before we could reach the next village. Because I was a foreigner and lacked security clearance, government officials made me stop about ten miles before reaching Muktinath, a politically sensitive area at the time. Venkatarathnam and his sister proceeded alone. The way was very dangerous and windy and they even turned back once or twice thinking that they would get blown into the rushing river far below.

One night before reaching Muktinath, Sri Venkatarathnam suddenly got up and was loudly

repeating Vishnu Sahasranam at about 1 a.m. In the morning he told me that he had a vision of people with water pots on their heads, going from a river to a temple which had a big Chakra in front of it. He had woken to the loud sound "Narayana, Narayana" ringing in his ears, as if someone were shouting it in the room. It was then that he started doing the Vishnu Sahasranam. He said that usually when he gets within a certain distance of the destination, he will have a dream about the deity of that place and the name Siva or Narayana will be ringing in his ears. When they finally reached Muktinath, sure enough there was a big chakra in front of the temple as he had seen in the vision.

Proceeding to Durgapur, we accompanied his sister, her husband and daughter to Gaya, Kashi, and Prayaga, doing sraddha and puja in all the places. This took about three weeks. When we reached Jhansi we unexpectedly found Swamiji there, and spent about two weeks at Brahmacharaji's ashram. From that time till mid 1972 we were either at Arunachalam or travelling with Swamiji to various bhajans and Saptahas [day and night bhajan programs]

### **Muruganar**

In August 1973, Sri Muruganar, one of the intimate sishyas of the Maharshi, attained Siddhi in the Ashram. Venkatarathnam personally performed the 40-day puja at his samadhi and also the Mandalabhishekam. During all this time he suffered from chest pain and weakness but nevertheless finished his duty to a brother bhakta.

*(Concluded)*

*(Sri Venkatarathnam merged at the Feet of Sri Bhagavan on February 18<sup>th</sup> 1976, at his sister's place in Kavutaram in Andhra Pradesh.)*

## How I came to the Maharshi

By Francis Allen (Published in The Mountain Path, October 1965)



This is the story of how Bhagavan, whom I never met, came, I believe, into my life. During World War II, I was posted from England to Ceylon, where I became so interested in Theravada Buddhism that I determined to enter the Sangha. I was informed by monks there that they could not give me ordination without first obtaining my parents' consent.

After being demobilised in England I joined a small London group studying Theravada, another member of which was a lady who, it transpired, had been to Tiruvannamalai. I discovered this one day when I heard her telling a mutual friend how she had gone to Sri Ramanasramam with a personal problem. For the first time in my life I then heard the name Sri Ramana Maharshi. "Bhagavan," she explained, had merely smiled and indicated that she settle herself upon a mat in His hall. Whereupon, without words passing between them, the solution to her trouble had soon presented itself to her mind. This, she informed her London friend, was nothing unusual where Bhagavan was concerned.

I made up my mind there and then to break my return journey to Ceylon at Tiruvannamalai. Unfortunately, although my father had agreed to my ordination as a Buddhist monk, my mother withheld her permission, fearing it was merely a passing impulse on my part. I had returned to a good job in London, and she was reluctant see me disappear, perhaps for ever, into a far away monastic life.

Months passed, until one evening I returned home from a particularly trying day at the office feeling tired and looking, I dare say, dejected. My mother greeted me with the words: "I can see you are as keen as ever to go back to Ceylon. You have my permission, if you think it will make you happy."

That day was April 14th, 1950. The very day that, miles and miles away from London, Bhagavan left the body. It was not until I arrived in Bombay that I discovered this; and imagining that Bhagavan was no more, I went on to Colombo ...

It was another few years before I met Ethel Merston who suggested I should read Arthur Osborne's book Ramana Maharshi. After that, with the assistance of Ronald Rosa, I arrived at Sri Ramanasramam.

What, I wonder, would Bhagavan have advised me if I had visited Him en route to the Buddhist monastery? Had He warned me of what was going to come of it, I should have found it impossible to believe. At that time I had set my heart on embracing the monastic life, and any dissuasion would not have deterred me, yet would have filled me with foreboding uneasiness. No; I imagine that, simply smiling, Bhagavan would have left me to go ahead and work out in my own way what was a particularly complicated part of my destiny.

## Maharshi's Gospel: The Teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi

### Mind Control

D: How can the rebellious mind be made calm and tranquil?

M: Either see its source so that it may disappear, or surrender yourself so that it may be struck down.

Self-surrender is the same as Self-knowledge, and either of them necessarily implies self control. The ego submits only when it recognizes the Higher Power.

D: How can I escape from *samsara* which seems to be the real cause for making the mind restless? Is not renunciation an effective means to realize tranquility of mind?

M: *Samsara* is only in your mind. The world does not speak out saying, 'Here I am, the world'. If it did so, it would be ever there, making its presence felt by you even in your sleep. Since, however, it is not there in sleep, it is impermanent. Being impermanent, it lacks substance. Having no reality apart from the Self it is easily subdued by the Self. The Self alone is permanent. Renunciation is the non-identification of the Self with the not-Self. When the ignorance which identifies the Self with not-Self is removed, not-Self ceases to exist, and that is true renunciation.

D: Can we not perform actions without attachment even in the absence of such renunciation?

M: An *atma jnani* alone can be a good *karma yogi*.

D: Does Bhagavan condemn *dvaita* Pilosophy?

M: *Dvaita* can subsist only when you identify the Self with the not-Self. *Advaita* is non-identification.

## Reports from Sri Ramanasramam

### Maha Puja

On 6th June 2010, the Aradhana (Samadhi Day) of Mother Azhagammal or Maha Puja was performed on a grand scale at Sri Ramanasramam. The previous evening, i.e., on 5th June 2010, a Bharatanatyam feature was performed by Kumari Vaishnavi Poorna, D/o Dr. Ambika Kameshwar.

On Maha Puja day (6-6-2010) Mahanyasa commenced at 6 a.m. followed by Ekadasa Rudra japa. This was followed by an elaborate abhishekam and arati.

That evening 'Aduve Talam - Arunachalam' Music Dance feature was performed by Dr. Sarada, Smt. V. Radha and Students of RMCL, Bangalore in the New Hall.

On 8th June 2010 - 'Sarveshwara Ramana' - Audio/Visual presentation was presented by Smt. Sulochala Natarajan, RMCL, Bangalore in Bhagavan's Shrine.



### Cow Lakshmi Day

On 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2010 devotees gathered around Cow Lakshmi's samadhi at Sri Ramanasramam to observe the Death Anniversary of Sri Bhagavan's dear child and foremost of devotees whose 'mukti' was confirmed by Him. The priests conducted a solemn puja, during which the song composed by Manavasi Ramaswami Iyer about Lakshmi and a song specially composed for the occasion were sung. Both songs highlighted the unique place of Lakshmi among Bhagavan's countless devotees. After arati, prasadam was distributed among those present.

