

Saranagathi



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Dear Sri Bhagavan Devotees,

Happy Deepavali!

At Sri Ramanasramam, Deepavali celebrations began in all earnest on 17th October with the singing of '[Victory over Naraka](#)' at Sri Bhagavan's Samadhi at 5am.

The false belief that this hell-like house called body is me is Naraka himself. To destroy that false belief and let the self shine as Self, is Deepavali.

Sri Bhagavan

The Samadhi Day of Vishwanatha Swami was observed on 22nd October. Swamiji was the author of *Ramana Ashtottaram* (The 108 Names of Sri Bhagavan) which is chanted at Sri Bhagavan's Shrine every day during daily puja.

'Sundara Mandiram' at Tiruchuzhi, Sri Bhagavan's

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birth place, is being renovated. The inaugural 'Bhumi Puja' was performed on Monday, 14th September in the presence of Ramana devotees.

In this issue we carry an article on Kunju Swami, as part of the 'attendants series' and the concluding part of the piece, 'Sri Ramanasramam Archives'.

In Sri Bhagavan,

The Editorial Team.

The Essence of Instruction

*When unceasingly the mind
Scans its own form
There is nothing of the kind.
For everyone
This path direct is open*

– Upadesa Saram by Sri Bhagavan (Verse 17)

Kunju Swami

(Extracted from 'Face to Face with Sri Ramana Maharshi')

Kunju Swami served as one of the Maharshi's attendants from 1920 till 1932. In 1977, he wrote his reminiscences¹. His guru Kuppandi Swami told him about the greatness of the Maharshi, whom he had visited. Sometime in 1920, he left his home in Kerala with great eagerness to have Sri Ramana's darshan



As I sat in the railway station my mind was dwelling so intensely on my desire to see Bhagavan that hunger and thirst were forgotten. After waiting for more than 12 hours for the train to Tiruvannamalai, I was told that tickets were not being issued to the town; instead they issued a ticket to Katpadi, about 50 miles north of Tiruvannamalai. I reached Katpadi at 4am and waited for the train to Tiruvannamalai, which was to leave at 6.30am. When I went to the counter at 6am for getting the ticket, I was told that the train came early and had left at 5.30am. The next train was to leave at 6pm. This news disoriented me for some time.

I waited patiently and went to the ticket office at 5.30pm to be told that tickets were not being issued for Tiruvannamalai. I was bewildered because, yet again, no reason was given. While wondering what to do, an elderly gentleman called

out to me and after learning about my destination told me, "Due to an outbreak of plague, Tiruvannamalai has been quarantined. If you buy a ticket to Tirukoilur (a station further down the line) you can get down at Tiruvannamalai in the dark when the train stops there to deliver the mail."

As suggested, I asked for a ticket to Tirukoilur and handed over all the money I had. The ticket clerk counted it and told me that the ticket would cost a quarter rupee more than the amount I had. Extremely disappointed I wandered out of the booking office and stood on the edge of the platform. There I thought of Bhagavan and felt very sad that my sincere attempt to see him had apparently been frustrated.

A few minutes before the arrival of the train, I noticed at some distance from where I was standing, a glittering quarter rupee coin between the two rails. I ran, jumped down, took it and managed to purchase a ticket just as the train was entering the station.

When the train entered Tiruvannamalai station, I saw the person sitting opposite me disembarking in the dark. I too got down and followed him. It was Bhagavan's will that I had missed the morning train at Katpadi station. Had I taken that train, it would have been impossible to get off at Tiruvannamalai.

I followed my fellow passenger without knowing where he was going. He walked for some time, stopped at a *mandapam*, lay down and went to sleep. I joined him on the floor and immediately went to sleep, tired but very happy. Next morning, I

1. These were translated into English by Dr. K. Subrahmanian, and got printed by him for Sri Ramanasramam with the help of devotees of Sri Ramana Kendram, Hyderabad.

could not find the man who had guided me to the *mandapam*, but I could see Arunachala before me. I reached Bhagavan's abode, based on the instructions got before leaving home.

When I reached Skandasram, I felt a thrill on seeing Bhagavan. I told him in Malayalam all about my boyhood, how I had been doing *Japa* and giving spiritual discourses. Bhagavan listened to everything with a smile. In reply to my question as to what I should do to get over my confusion and gain clarity, Bhagavan said, "First know who you are. See from where thoughts arise. Turn you mind inwards and see in the Heart." (The point on the right side of the chest meant for focusing attention.)

As we sat silently, Bhagavan's gracious look was fixed on me. At that very moment all my confusions ceased and I experienced a peace and bliss I had never experienced before.

While we were together Bhagavan would often look at me; and as he did so, I became aware that his eyes had a strange brilliance and fascination in them. Whenever I looked into his eyes for any length of time, I saw bright effulgence. I was also filled with a strange peace and bliss. After each experience I would come back to my normal physical state with a shudder. This occurred on each of the eighteen days I stayed with Bhagavan. I was like someone intoxicated.

Back home, the meditative state experienced in Bhagavan's presence steadily declined. I slowly became my old restless self. While I was dwelling on my disappointment, my friend Ramakrishna Swami, who also had been to Bhagavan, came to my place and revealed that his experience had been the same as mine. Feeling that it would be pointless to stay at home, we both decided to take

refuge in Bhagavan and reached Tiruvannamalai. To help us out of our problem that it was a sin to eat at the Guru's place without performing any service in return, both of us were assigned the responsibility to serve Bhagavan and his ashram. One day when I asked Bhagavan why the experiences I had felt in his presence did not continue after my return, he referred to verses 83 to 93 of the first section of *Kaivalya Navaneeta*. He then summarized the verses and said, "The experience of the Self can occur in the presence of the guru, but it may not last. The disciple has to continue to study, think and practice until the distinction between knower, known and knowing no longer exists."

In the early days of my stay at Skandasram, I found that I could get all my doubts cleared merely by listening to the answers to questions put by other devotees. Moreover, by listening to the answers I was able to learn many new aspects of Bhagavan's teachings.

On several occasions Bhagavan's body would disappear in a flash and disperse into its component atoms. A little later a smoke-like form would appear and the atoms would come together in a form that resembled particles of dust. Finally, the body would reappear in its normal form².

Bhagavan wrote the *Upadesa Saaram* in four different languages. The Telugu and Sanskrit versions are in couplets, the Tamil in three-line stanzas and the Malayalam in four-line verses. When I took the Malayalam verses to a well-known Malayalam professor for his opinion, he marveled at the purity of diction achieved by a writer whose mother tongue was not Malayalam.

(To be continued)

2. David Godman says that when he spoke to Kunju Swami about this phenomenon, the latter conceded that he had never personally seen Bhagavan enter that state, but added that the story was a matter of common knowledge when he was staying at Skandasram. (Refer Godman's book *The Power Of The Presence*, part-2, p. 17.)

Sri Ramanasramam Archives

This is the concluding part of the article about the Archives team, which is dedicated to the arduous task of preserving the Master's memory for posterity. John Maynard, a key member of this team, writes the following piece.

Some other articles on show or stored in the Ramanasramam Archive



Carved Coconut Kamandhelu - (Nirvana Room)



Niranjanananda Swami Office display



Sri Ramana's Torch (Nirvana Room)



Old Hall radio - mentioned in 'Talks'

In Conclusion

After a visit many visitors have commented on how much they like the archive; a beautiful building, a good atmosphere, a fine design; these are some of the comments. Many more devotees have also contributed much time, money and energy to make the place what it is, both within the building and the garden. It has been said by some professionals that it is one of the most advanced archival centres in India.

Personnel from the Nithyananda/Muktananda ashram in Ganeshpuri, Maharashtra; The Chinmaya Mission and the Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry have sent specialists and taken away drawings, photographs and plans of how Ramanasramam Archive is designed and the modus operandi in a hope to recreate some similar facilities within their foundations or ashrams. It is said that imitation is

the highest form of flattery! It has been commented by no less a personage than Dr K.K.Gupta that nowhere in India has such a wonderful monument been erected.

Yet others make a statement that Sri Ramana would not have wanted an archive at all; after all He always said that He was not the body. Thus to preserve these articles is completely against His teachings! In writing this piece on the archive I have had to consider these two diverging angles more thoroughly.

In some way these two opposing rivers of thought are a microcosm of what follows after any founder of a new religion comes to the Earth. One stream flows away into the exoteric doctrine and follows the form, the image, the body and the words; another stream breaks away and forms the esoteric stream, engaging in the meanings behind the teachings. This may be seen throughout history; for instance Islam and Sufism; Judaism and Hassidism, Theravada and Zen Buddhism. It is inevitable that this occurs, so each of the above statements about the archive is true in their own way.

A memory arises for me personally in writing this small piece– with the above in mind – it has been often described how Sri Bhagavan was not apparently in favour of something, but that it eventually went ahead, and somehow found His blessings, as well as the material wherewithal, to succeed. Taking one of the most major building projects ever undertaken by the ashram in His lifetime, the Sri Mathrubuteswara Temple, it is written that He was not in favour of this at all; yet He used to visit the project by night, wander around the foundations and bless the building as it arose from the ground and finally sanctified its opening. Though the archive is not a temple in strict terms, and built long after His Mahasamadhi, though no pooja is done here, it still holds His presence very powerfully.

It is rare, very rare, that such a one as Sri Bhagavan walks this Earth, and rarer still that such a thing should happen in recent history. It is also rare that the few possessions of an Avatar, let alone the belongings of a Jnani such as He, are displayed and made available for devotees and the public to see and feel.

An Appeal

Nearly one hundred interviews with old devotees and friends who knew Sri Ramana Maharshi have been conducted in the last ten to twelve years using Hi-8 Digital PAL video tapes through an analog camera. This camera is non-functional and now obsolete, being replaced by Mini DVs and Digital video. These tapes cannot be converted onto DVDs for want of such a camera to replay them. We appeal to any devotees or friends in possession of such an older style analog camera to either loan such, or donate one to the Archive for this work. Please contact the ashram through our website – www.sriramanamaharshi.org or by e-mail – ashram@sriramanamaharshi.org

Also, anyone having articles used by or given to Sri Ramana or original photographic prints or negatives in their possession might consider donating these to the Archive where they will be put on view for all to see, and carefully maintained. If you have such artifacts please again contact the ashram or the archive.