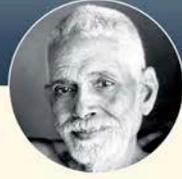


# Saranagati



SARANAGATI  
SRI RAMANASRAMAM

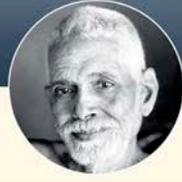
APRIL 2017  
VOL. 11, NO. 4



Dev Gogoi



## Saranagati



APRIL 2017  
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IN THIS  
ISSUE

Dear Devotees,

The change of season brings summer warmth and even dryer weather after a winter without precipitation. The Ashram is of necessity purchasing water that is brought in by truck each day as wells in the Ashram and indeed in all South India have almost completely dried up.

In this issue, we conclude the segment on *Customs and Rules* from the March issue. Photos on the insert page are from Dev Gogoi, and those on page 5 are from Dr. Carlos Lopez.

For videos, photos and further news of events, go to <http://www.sriramanamaharshi.org> or write to us at [saranagathi@sriramanamaharshi.org](mailto:saranagathi@sriramanamaharshi.org)

In Sri Bhagavan,  
The Editorial Team

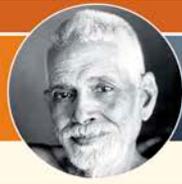
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## Calendar of Upcoming Events

2nd April (Sun) Jagadisha Swami Day  
4th April (Tues) Punarvasu Day  
5th April (Weds) Rama Navami  
10th April (Mon) Full Moon  
14th April (Fri) Tamil New Year/Nirvana Room Chanting  
17th April (Mon) Chadwick Day  
24th April (Mon) Bhagavan's 67th Aradhana Day

2nd May (Tues) Punarvasu Day  
10th May (Weds) Full Moon  
20th May (Sat) Mahapuja  
29th May (Mon) Punarvasu Day  
8th June (Thurs) Full Moon  
25th June (Sun) Punarvasu Day  
8th July (Sat) Full Moon





## Daily Life in the Dining Hall (part VI) Customs and Rules (cont)

As we saw in the last issue, Bhagavan sometimes brushed gently against the norms of tradition, not out of any intention to do so, but simply in the course of following the intuition of realized consciousness, ordinary protocol sometimes got overlooked.

One morning after a cyclone, an Ashram drumstick tree was uprooted and lay on the ground. Bhagavan came out of the hall, sat on the wet ground, and began plucking its leaves. Devotees joined in. Bhagavan said: "These leaves might otherwise be wasted, but they can be cooked and are very good for health."

It so happened that the Rajah of Ramnad, Shanmugha Rajeswara Sethupathi, was due to visit the Ashram that day. Bhagavan was aware of the planned visit. But when the awaited guest arrived, the Rajah found the darshan hall empty. The office staff did not know how to persuade Bhagavan to come to the Hall. Bhagavan simply carried on with his leaf-picking. The Rajah was thus compelled to come to him and was thrilled to see a *jnani* engrossed in 'activity'.

### Receiving the Poor

But if Bhagavan was a little unorthodox in receiving and hosting nobility, he was equally unorthodox in the care and concern he showed in hosting the poorest of the poor.

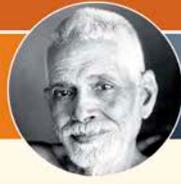
In 1946 on the third day of the Golden Jubilee festival when the new pandal was ready, Bhagavan moved into it and did not come back to the Old Hall even during the afternoon rest period. There were no dividers or partitions around his sofa but only a small rope. People would come in between 12 noon and 2 pm, squat on the floors with legs outstretched, talk in loud voices, lie down to rest, sometimes even snoring loudly. The attendants tried to drive them out but Bhagavan felt compassion for them and intervened, saying, "Poor people! They must have wandered about a good deal. They need rest. How can you drive them away? Let them remain."

Krishnaswami thought he could solve the problem by getting Bhagavan to resume sitting in the Old Hall. But Bhagavan was not keen on the idea. Krishnaswami asked him, "Who will tidy up the nuisance committed by their children?" Bhagavan said, "It should be all right if their mothers are asked to clean it up themselves and are requested to be careful thereafter."

The attendant countered saying, "Who is there to tell them all that? If it were the Congress, they would have women volunteers for looking after women visitors." Bhagavan turned and with a smile, glanced in the direction of Nagamma, saying, "There she is. We have a volunteer. Why do you say we have none?"

But Nagamma confessed her concern openly: "Will they care to listen to me?" Bhagavan said, "Why not? Outsiders will certainly carry out your instructions." Bhagavan continued, "Poor people! They come here only to see Swami". Nagamma agreed to the





assignment and carried it out with good cheer. She later commented: “Bhagavan wanted to give darshan to poor people during those ten days and sat there with kind solicitude for them. I therefore felt inspired to do whatever service I could on their behalf.”<sup>1</sup>

### Receiving an Unannounced Guest

Bhagavan knew how to make newcomers feel welcome but there was at least one occasion where he took the opportunity to jest with his newly arrived guest.

Once in the early days, a visitor arrived from a distant town and went about the Ashram asking everyone, “Where is Ramana?” When he learned that Bhagavan was in the kitchen, he ran off to find the kitchen. Once having come to the kitchen, he found four or five people standing there but could not tell which of them was the Maharshi. Finally, he directed his inquiry to the simplest-looking person among them, which happened to be Bhagavan himself, and asked in a whisper, “Where is Ramana?” The interlocutor promptly pointed to a big cooking pot and asserted with a smile, “There is Ramana!” As all joined in the laughter, the visitor was taken aback until Bhagavan explained: “The name RAMANA is carved on that vessel, not on this body.”<sup>2</sup>

### Receiving the Transportation Party

Bhagavan was likewise unorthodox in the way he received and looked after the needs of those who came with disagreeable, even hostile intentions. In the 1930s some scholarly devotees from Madras decided that Bhagavan belonged in Madras and should discontinue residing in such a small out-of-the-way place like Tiruvannamalai. They were well

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*, 24th May, 1949.

<sup>2</sup> *Mountain Path*, July 1984, p. 158; reprinted in *Ramana Jyothi Souvenir*, p. 52.

aware of his determination never to leave Arunachala so they made plans to overpower him and bring him by force. They communicated to Bhagavan the full details of their plan including the day appointed for his ‘transportation’. Bhagavan had shared what he knew with devotees who were horrified at the thought of not having Bhagavan with them any longer.

When the fated day arrived, Ashramites anxiously stood guard over Bhagavan, while the Master carried on as if it were a normal day. Bhagavan asked the kitchen to prepare food for the ‘looting party’. But the time fixed for their arrival came and passed. Finally, in the late evening, a very tired and dispirited group turned up and prostrated before Bhagavan. Bhagavan sent them to the kitchen for food. They followed his direction implicitly not saying a word. Soon enough it was revealed that they had been involved in a traffic accident that day and their bus overturned. Though miraculously none were injured, the shock of the event deeply affected them. On returning from the dining hall, they sat silently in front of Bhagavan for a long time. Though there was nervous anticipation in the minds of the Ashramites, the love and grace that Bhagavan evinced deflated the pride of the outlandish plotters and they departed in humility.

Thus a crisis had been averted and only an overflow of devotion to Bhagavan filled the hearts of all who were present. For their part the looters were overcome with gratitude and love for Bhagavan, feeling that it was only by his grace that their ordeal that day had not been more serious.<sup>3</sup> —

(to be continued)

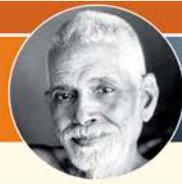
<sup>3</sup> *Purushottama Ramana: A Pictorial Presentation with Anecdotes from Bhagavan Ramana’s Life*, V. Ganesan, p. 30.

## Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi: Sravanam and Samadhi

M.: By *sravana*, knowledge dawns. That is the flame. By *manana*, such knowledge is not allowed to dissipate. Just as the flame is protected by a wind-screen, so thoughts are not allowed to overwhelm right knowledge. By *nididhyasana*, the flame is kept burning bright by trimming the wick. Whenever thoughts arise, the mind is turned inward to the light of true knowledge. When this becomes natural, it is *samadhi*. The enquiry “Who am I?” is *sravana*. The ascertainment of the true import of ‘I’ is *manana*. The practical application on each occasion is *nididhyasana*. Remaining as ‘I’ is *samadhi*.

— Talks §647





## Sri Vidya Havan

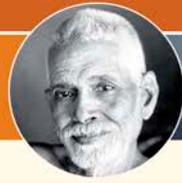
In the Sri Vidya tradition, Goddess Lalita Tripurasundari is supreme, the physical universe being her manifestation. She is worshipped through the two-dimensional Sri Chakra yantra and the three-dimensional Meru Chakra. Each year at the Ashram, the Sri Chakra and the Meru Chakra are rededicated in yagna called Sri Vidya Havan. *Vidya* is knowledge and *Sri* refers to the Goddess. And the havan is an elaborate worship of the Divine Mother as enjoined in the scriptures.

The Sri Chakra is a yantra formed by nine interlocking triangles, the four upward-pointing, which symbolise Siva (the masculine); and five downward-pointing, which symbolise Sakti (the feminine). The unique configuration of these nine triangles form forty-three smaller triangles, a matrix representing the

multiplicity of the universe with Siva-Sakti at its centre (*bindu*), the contact point between the physical world and its immaterial, transcendent source. In the Sri Chakra, the journey is from the outer *bhupura* to the central *bindu*, marking the seeker's trajectory on the spiritual path from the gross to the subtle, from the outer portions of the yantra to the formless divinity at its centre. The Meru is the Sri Chakra in three-dimensions with 43 energy centers, each presided over by a feminine deity. In the ceremony, priests offer oblations to the havan-fire concluding with *punahuti* symbolising total self-offering.

This year's havan took place on Friday, 17 March, commencing at 7 am with Navavarana Puja followed by homa. Final offering took place 2.30 pm followed by deeparadhana. Procession into the Mother's Shrine ensued and abhishekam was performed with final deeparadhana taking place around 3pm. —





## The Origins of Sri Chakra Puja at the Ashram

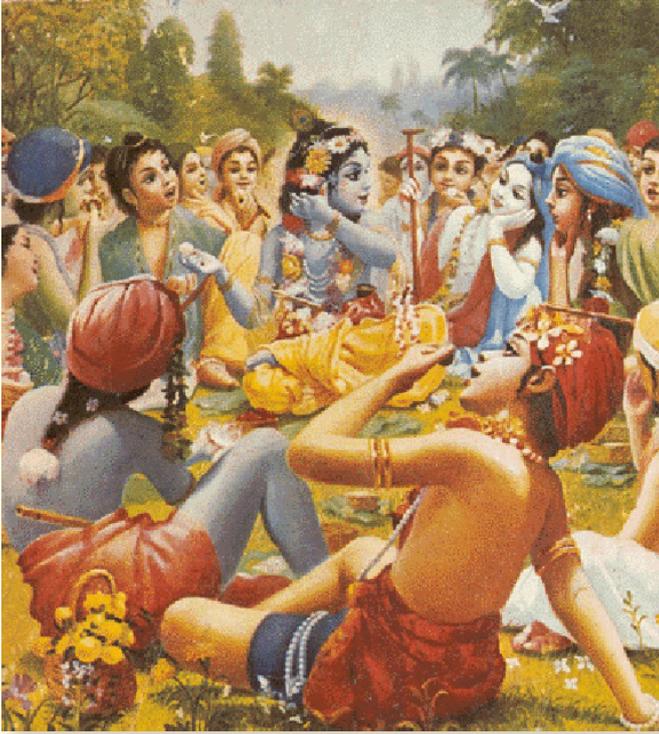
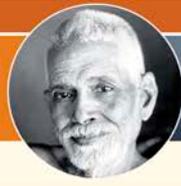
Devotees remember that at the time of the Mahakumbhabhishekam of Sri Matrubhuteswara in 1949, Bhagavan consecrated the Meru Chakra by his touch. At the time of the installation of the Meru, those present saw Bhagavan inside the inner shrine guiding Sri Vaidyanatha Stapathi in his work. At the conclusion Bhagavan placed his hands on the Meru Chakra as well as the Matrubhuteswara lingam. After Bhagavan's

mahasamadhi, when the Ashram suffered a number of setbacks including a court case and severe financial strain, devotees feared that the spiritual atmosphere Bhagavan had bequeathed to them would be lost. Major Chadwick who had personally witnessed Bhagavan's initiation in the inner-sanctum, felt that the neglect of the Meru Chakra Bhagavan had blessed may have been in part the source of the troubles the Ashram was then facing. So with permission of the Ashram Managing Committee, Chadwick set about soliciting funds to initiate the Sri Chakra Puja. In March, 1953, under Chadwick's stewardship, the Sri Chakra Puja commenced. —

## Announcements: Ashram YouTube Channel

Sri Ramanasramam has its own YouTube channel and is regularly posting videos of events including the recent Sri Vidya Havan. Please visit the channel at: <https://www.youtube.com/c/sriramanasramam>





## Stories from Sri Bhagavan: Krishna's Love of Kanji

*[It was 16th June, 1941 and there was considerable activity in the Ashram kitchen. The Ashram rules were relaxed and female assistants were working in the kitchen with the male workers since 3am. Sri Bhagavan peeked into the kitchen and made suggestions to staff. Preparations were in full swing to serve kanji and avial for breakfast. Kanji is gruel or rice-water that serves as a soup; avial is a concoction of curd and various vegetables like unripe bananas, carrots etc. Both enjoy unparalleled popularity in South Indian cuisines.]*

*As news of the special fare spread, devotees lined up to avail themselves of the special treat, picking up leaf bowls that were distributed for this purpose. With all the activity, the kitchen resembled a marriage hall. Sri Bhagavan demonstrated how the preparations could be consumed together. Unlike other days, on this day devotees could eat as much as they wanted. Sri Bhagavan exhorted them to skip coffee, and to enjoy these delicacies to their hearts' content. Only some of us could comply with this suggestion though, the*

*inveterate coffee addicts stuck to their habit. In any case, everyone feasted with great delight.*

*Sri Bhagavan turned towards me and said, "It seems that you arranged today's breakfast. You should gorge on these items like I did." I said that I had had my fill. Sri Bhagavan said, "Don't hesitate! You will digest it in no time and will be hungrier than usual." Saying this, he had porridge served to me two more times and egged me on. I happily obeyed. He appreciated my appetite and said 'Bravo! That's the spirit!' Such grace from Sri Bhagavan was for me unprecedented.*

*Before He returned from his walk on the mountain, I composed two poems and submitted them to Sri Bhagavan. Their gist was:*

*"People hate to drink kanji;  
but today by Bhagavan's Grace,  
I have drunk kanji with avial.  
What they call Amrita is nothing but this."*

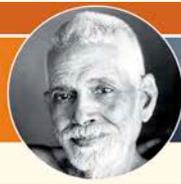
*"Formerly you shared cold rice and kanji  
with your cowherd friends.  
Did its taste equal this?  
Later you feasted on kanji in Vidura's house.  
Was its taste equal to this, O Lord?"*

*Sri Bhagavan was very pleased with these poems and read them out aloud, adding his comments for good effect. He then narrated the story of Sri Krishna rejecting the royal feast offered by Duryodhana in favour of the modest fare served by the devout Vidura.— from Sri Ramana Reminiscences by G.V. Subbaramayya, pp. 101-102]*

**O**n Dharmaraja's request, Sri Krishna went to Hastinapura as an emissary to achieve peace between the Pandavas and the Kauravas. Duryodhana invited Sri Krishna to be the royal guest. As a political ploy, Sri Krishna politely declined and instead opted to put up at his friend Vidura's home. Vidura was a great devotee, living in a simple hermitage in tranquil surroundings.

Krishna asked for his favourite—*kanji*. An indulgent Vidura wasted no time in preparing it. When he served it, Krishna made a bowl with His tender lotus palms and asked Vidura to pour the kanji into it. As





Vidura waited on his friend, Krishna drank the gruel to his heart's content. It is said that the four-armed Lord was so fond of the gruel that he used his other two hands as extra protection to the bowl, lest even a drop of it spill.

Beside himself with the ecstasy of devotion and delighted at the opportunity to serve Krishna personally, Vidura inadvertently offered the Lord a banana peel instead of the fruit. But the Lord

consumed it with relish, as if it were the most delectable treat, unable to reject an offering made with pure love. The compassion and grace He showed His devotees superseded all other concerns. —

*[After narrating this tale, Sri Bhagavan continued: "In Kerala, kanji is the staple food for all, from the emperor to the common labourer. The wealthy may add a few spices but the food is the same. This is why Malayalis are called the 'kanji-drinkers'".]*

## Wordwise: Sravana

श्रवण

*Sravana*, (from the root *sru* = 'hearing' or 'the ear'): 'the act of hearing', 'study', 'that which is heard' or *sruti*; (also 'glory', 'flowing', 'oozing'). *Sravana* is understanding gained by listening to the guru, or hearing or studying sacred texts, i.e. *srutis* or shastra, *smritis* or the philosophical teachings, histories and the Puranas. In Vedanta, *jnana* comes by three steps: the first is *sravana*, i.e. hearing the truth; the second, *manana*, reflecting on it; and the third, *nididhyasana*, meditating on the fact that you are *that very truth*. Bhagavan adds that while *sravana* is the stage of hearing the truth, "for making it unshakable, one has to practice reflection (*manana*) and one-pointedness (*nididhyasana*). These two processes scorch the seeds of *vasanas* so that they are rendered ineffective. Some extraordinary persons get *drdha jnana* (unshakable knowledge) even on hearing the truth just once (*sakrtsravana matrena*). Because they are *krtopasakah* (advanced seekers), whereas the *akrtopasakah* (raw seekers) take longer to gain unshakable knowledge. People ask: "How did ignorance (*avidya*) arise at all? " We have to say to them: "Ignorance never arose. It has no real being. That which is, is only *vidya* (knowledge)." (*Talks §289*)

## Obituary: Sri A.S. Natarajan



Sri A.S. Natarajan was born in 1923 in Nemmara, Palakkad and did his B Tech Honours in Chemical Technology from Jadavpur University, Kolkata. He worked in senior positions in companies like *Nocil*, *Standard Alkalies*, *Birla Cements* and underwent special training at *BASF*, Germany. His spiritually-inclined father lived the life of a renunciant and Natarajan came in contact with Bhagavan through Ramanadas Dr. R. Padmanabhan of Palakkad and became member of the Prem Sang, Palghat. After the sudden demise of his wife in 1993, Natarajan came to Sri Ramanasramam for good and volunteered as librarian. For more than 10 years, rain or shine, at 2am, he would go around holy Arunachala, have darshan at Arunachaleshwara temple and return to the Ashram to meditate at Bhagavan's Nirvana room. When his health deteriorated, he was confined to his room, listening to CDs of Ashram parayanas and Nochur Sri Venkataraman's talks on Bhagavan. His end was very peaceful. Following breakfast on 14th, February 2017, he merged quietly at the Feet of Sri Bhagavan. —

