

# Saranagati



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INSERT

SRI RAMANASRAMAM  
AUGUST 2014



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## Saranagati



AUGUST 2014  
VOL. 8, NO. 8

IN THIS  
ISSUE

Dear Devotees,

In continuation of the life story of T.N. Venkataraman, we take up the difficult years following Bhagavan's Mahanirvana when TNV had to face multiple challenges almost single-handedly (*see p.2*)

*In the Frame with Bhagavan* this month features archival listing GRO 59 from 1st September, 1946 on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of Bhagavan's Advent to Tiruvannamalai (*see p.7*).

On the 22nd July, Swami Sarvalokananda of the Ramakrishna Math, Mumbai addressed devotees in the Ashram Library Auditorium (*mp3 available from Ashram website*). On the 23rd, devotees gathered for H.C. Khanna's Samadhi Day at his samadhi and on the 25th that of Ganapathi Muni in the New Hall.

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

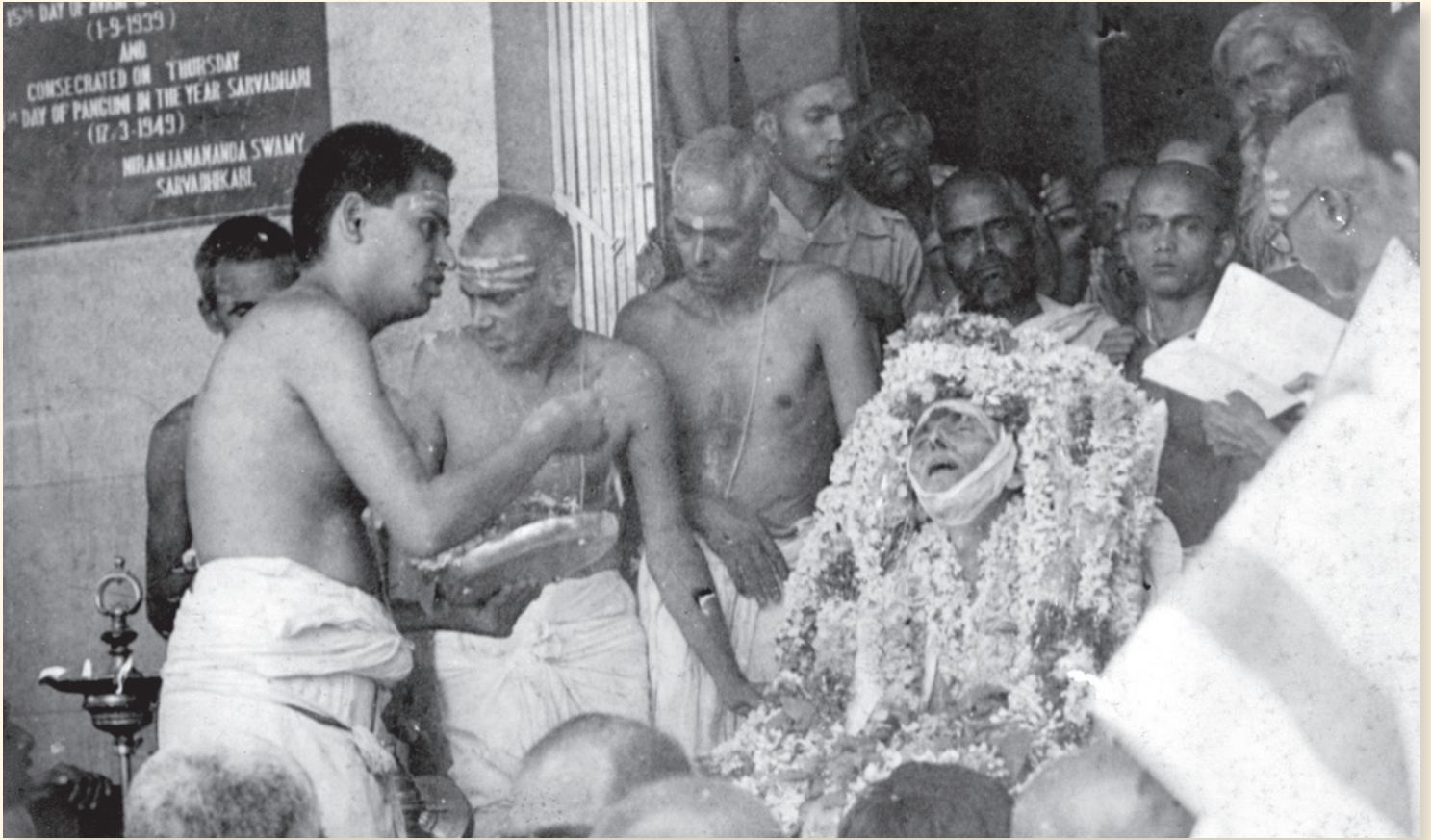
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## Calendar of Upcoming Events

7th August (Thurs) Kunjuswami Samadhi Day  
10th August (Sun) Full Moon  
15th August (Fri) Independence Day  
22nd August (Fri) Punarvasu Day  
25th August (Mon) Muruganar's Samadhi Day  
29th August (Fri) Vinayakar Chathurthi  
1st September (Mon) Bhagavan's Advent

18th September (Wed) Punarvasu Day  
25th September (Thurs) Navaratri Begins  
3rd October (Fri) Vijaya Dasami  
7th October (Tues) Full Moon  
16th October (Thurs) Punarvasu Day  
22nd October (Wed) Viswanathaswami's Day  
23rd October (Thurs) Deepavali





## The Life of T. N. Venkataraman: 1914-2007 (part four)

### Bhagavan's Mahasamadhi

When Bhagavan left the body on 14th April 1950, none could imagine what challenges lay ahead for the Ashram. Even the day before Bhagavan's departure, amidst the thousands who came to have his final darshan, there were those planning the unthinkable: in hopes of establishing an Ashram of their own, they were planning to carry off Bhagavan's mortal remains and have them interred elsewhere. They even went so far as to make an appeal to the former premier of the Madras Presidency, O.P. Ramaswamy Reddiar, asking for his support. Reddiar, a longtime devotee of Bhagavan, chided them saying, "Look here, these are the last moments of life on earth of a great

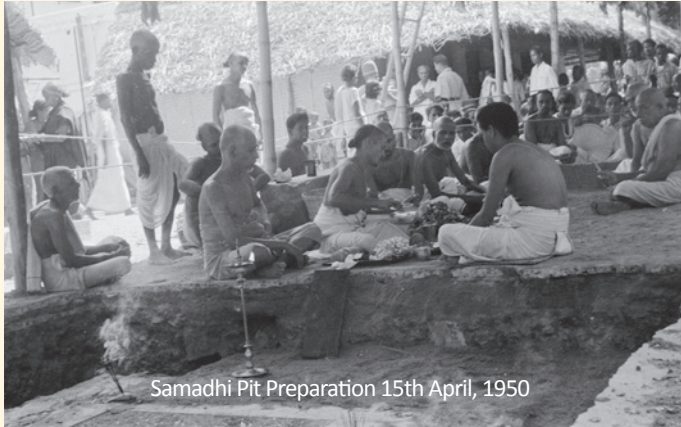
Being, the likes of whom comes once in thousands of years. Is this solemn moment the time for such ugly behaviour?" He then sent them away.

There were other devotees who felt that Sri Ramanasramam after Bhagavan could remain as it was but thought it would be better off if left in their care.

On the 14th April, TNV approached Congress leaders, the District Collector and the Superintendent of Police asking for help in preventing any untoward incidents. Police constables were posted with dozens of policemen mixed in the crowds. A lively debate among the inner circle of family, friends and devotees regarding the placement of Bhagavan's Samadhi ensued but, as it turned out, was soon enough resolved by a dream of K.K. Nambiar: the Samadhi pit, it seemed, was to be established between the Mother's Shrine and the Old Hall, which had been TNV's feeling all along.

Amidst the tension and grief, TNV was called on to perform the last rites. By 6.30 pm, after performing abhishekam over Bhagavan's body with milk, curd,





Samadhi Pit Preparation 15th April, 1950

coconut-water, rosewater and oils, Bhagavan's holy form was carried to the samadhi site. As all those gathered round stood in all solemnity and glimpsed for the last time the Master's earthly countenance, Bhagavan's body was lowered into the pit in the padmasana posture. It fell to TNV to position Bhagavan's face towards Arunachala. This done, bricks were laid atop the samadhi and the enclosure was sealed. Bhagavan, as ever, was now formless.

## The Ashram Under Siege

In the months that followed, various factions challenged the authority of the Ashram. Court cases were filed in Tiruvannamalai, Cheyyar, Chengam and Vellore in an attempt to wrest control of the Ashram from its rightful overseers. A fire broke out in a structure adjacent to the Old Hall, though, fortunately, no lasting harm

was done. Meanwhile, in their despondency over Bhagavan's physical departure, devotees sold off their property and left Tiruvannamalai, abandoning a small, financially-strained core of devotees to negotiate countless hurdles on their own.

## Jurisdiction of Matrubhuteswarar

Already in Bhagavan's time, the Hindu Religious Endowment Board, a government institution designed to oversee and regulate Hindu shrines, temples and schools, made gestures toward obtaining legal jurisdiction over Matrubhuteswara Temple. When they approached Bhagavan with the idea, he simply asked them: "[But] is this like any other [Hindu] temple?" The representatives had no ready response and, perhaps noting the unique circumstances of the Ashram temple, left off with further inquiries. But now in Bhagavan's physical absence, the board made fresh appeals.

TNV, who had no formal training in law, had to learn legal process from scratch and fought tooth and nail in court year by year. But even with the formidable experience he gained in his countless days in court sifting through deeds, affidavits and case papers and nights sleeping on advocates' verandas, still, in these early years, the Ashram lost case after case. Finally, in 1956, with a big showdown in the lower court at Vellore, it seemed that all was indeed lost. Jurisdiction would fall into the hands of the government.

## Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi: Mauna

D.: What is *mouna*?

M.: That state which transcends speech and thought is *mouna*.

D.: How to achieve it?

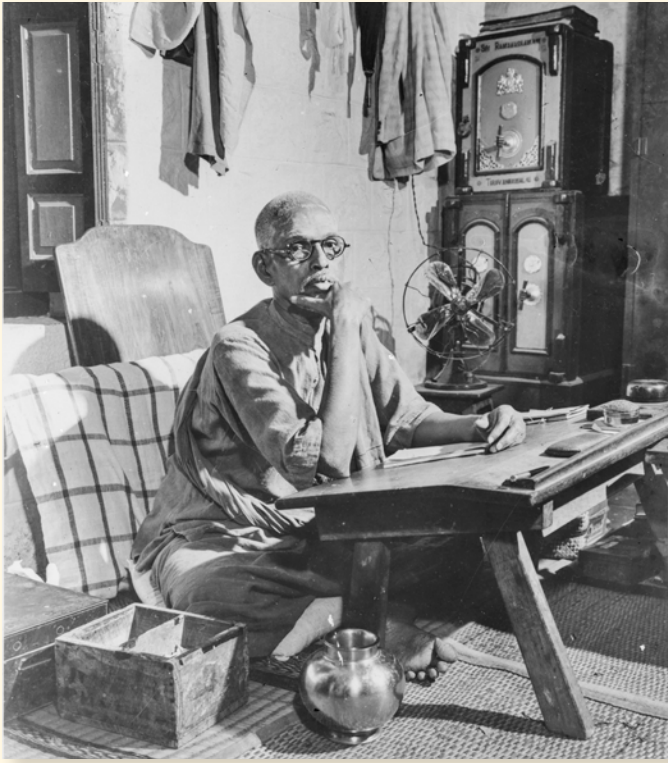
M.: Hold some concept firmly and trace it back. By such concentration silence results. When practice becomes natural it will end in silence. Meditation without mental activity is silence. Subjugation of the mind is meditation. Deep meditation is eternal speech.

D.: How will worldly transaction go on if one observes silence?

M.: When women walk with water pots on their heads and chat with their companions they remain very careful, their thoughts concentrated on the loads on their heads. Similarly when a sage engages in activities, these do not disturb him because his mind abides in Brahman.

— Talks §231





## Chinnaswami's Demise

Some years prior to this setback, Chinnaswami, already heart-broken at Sri Bhagavan's departure, suffered further disappointment in the face of the internal bickering among his closest supporters. They formed the 14-member Executive Committee, a panel which had been created as a support to him during this critical period. Heart disease forced him to take complete bed rest for six-months and finally, on 28th January, 1953 lying in his bed in the Ashram dispensary, he summoned Venkatoo and family as well as key staff members to his bedside and gave a parting blessing:

"I am leaving you with clean hands and heart. Not a single pie of the Ashram was used for my personal needs. All the property of the Ashram belongs to Bhagavan. It is to be safeguarded with due care. Put your heart and soul into his service and his grace is sure to follow. Righteousness and straightforwardness are the only real ornaments for us..."

On the evening of the following day which was purnima, Chinnaswami peacefully left the body.

## Succession

Now completely alone, TNV was saddled with no less than thirty court cases and financial woes to boot. At the

time of Chinnaswami's demise, the Ashram was already in debt. The endless litigation that fell to TNV required repeated trips to lawyers and court rooms. To begin with, given the sad reality that Bhagavan and Chinnaswami were no longer present, TNV had to obtain a 'certificate of succession' in order to legally administer the Ashram. A case challenging the issue of a succession certificate had already been filed in September 1950 and was pending since then. Of necessity, owing to Chinnaswami's ill-health, TNV had already taken up the reins in this endeavour when on 3rd January 1953, just two weeks before Chinnaswami's demise, Bhagavan's sister, Alamelu, passed away. TNV was to perform the funeral rites and cremation knowing that a hearing with the Joint Commissioner had been scheduled for that day. Appeals to postpone the hearing were flatly refused. This meant that TNV had to race to the Commission immediately following the cremation of the remains of Athai, the only mother he ever knew, without even having time to change out of his wet clothes. Though having arrived in time for the hearing, alas, the Commission's decision went against the Ashram.

Finally in August 1954, on the strength of Bhagavan's Will, the court declared TNV's right to manage the Ashram. But the battle was far from won. A subsequent case petitioning the court to bring the Ashram under the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Act was filed and when the Vellore ruling came on 30th August 1956, it was decided against the Ashram.

## An Appeal to the Madras High Court

The only remaining course of action was an appeal to the Madras High Court. As it would turn out, by Bhagavan's grace, the presiding judge, Justice M. Ananthanarayanan, I.C.S., was a devotee of Bhagavan and suggested a simple, straightforward solution: make the Ashram a *Public Religious Trust*. As Matrubhuteswara was part of Ramanasramam and as it was supported by a community of devotees which included non-Hindus, it could not be brought under the control of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Act. By this means the Ashram was freed of jurisdiction under the Act and thus, had its sovereignty restored.

(to be continued)





## Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Gurupurnima

Gurupurnima was the day when the first guru (*adiguru*) taught his seven disciples, the Saptarishis, who then disseminated yogic knowledge around the world. Gurupurnima falls on the full moon day in the month of *Ashadh* (mid-June–mid-July) and marks the day when students and disciples honour their gurus or teachers (*gu* = darkness or ignorance; *ru*: remover). Also called *Vyasa Purnima* (because Vyasa began composing the *Brahma Sutras* on this day), sanyasis venerate their gurus with puja and begin the Chaturmas, the four-month respite from wandering during the rainy season. This year's Gurupurnima was observed at the Ashram on 12th July with Mahanyasa puja and offering new dhotis to resident and local sannyasins.

Wordwise: Mauna

मौन

*Mauna*: silence, taciturnity, silence of mind, the attitude of silence, the ascetic practice or observing a vow of silence.

*Mouna* is derived from 'Muni' (or 'Mouni') meaning 'ascetic' or 'saint', a word which also means 'seven' and whose plural form refers to the Saptarishis. Sankara tells us that when Bhadhva was teaching Bashkalin about Brahman, he fell silent. When the student did not understand, he said: "Mouna is the Self." (Commentary on the *Brahma Sutras*). Explaining a verse in *Aksharamanamalai*, Bhagavan said that "*mouna* is the highest form of *upadesa*". It signifies 'silence' as "master, disciple and practitioner" (*Talks* §445). Quoting Thayumanavar's verse on *mouna*, Sri Bhagavan said that it is "that state which spontaneously manifests after the annihilation of the ego" which, while "beyond light and darkness," is still called 'light' since "no other proper word [can] be found for it" (*Talks* §122).





## From Periapuranam: Ilayaankudimaara Naayanaar



Seeing the divine reflection in each of Lord Siva's devotees, Maaran of Ilayaankudi made it his duty to extend hospitality to devotees whenever possible. Unrelenting in this determination, he stopped at nothing to serve the needs of the pilgrims of Mahadeva. Even when the Lord decided to test him by slowly reducing his wealth till he had lost all he owned, Maaran remained steadfast and continued to feed devotees, even when it meant going into debt.

One late rainy night, the Lord disguised as an aged monk appeared at Maaran's door. Maaran with heavy heart quietly enquired of his faithful wife: 'Though we lack food for ourselves, still, we have to find a way to feed this noble guest.' She replied: 'It's too late to ask the neighbours for help but the paddy seeds sown yesterday should be floating in our field on account of the heavy rains. If you gather them, I can prepare some rice'. Maaran's heart quickened and he jumped up with enthusiasm and rushed out into the rainy darkness. Once reaching the field, he felt his way through the wet black-night in order to gather the paddy seeds, which were floating just as his wife had suggested they might. Meanwhile his wife harvested half-grown tender greens in the back garden. But now a more immediate problem presented itself: without fuel and with all possible fuel sources outdoors wet from the torrent, by what means would she be able to cook? Maaran wasted no time in cutting down a bamboo rafter from the roof of the house.

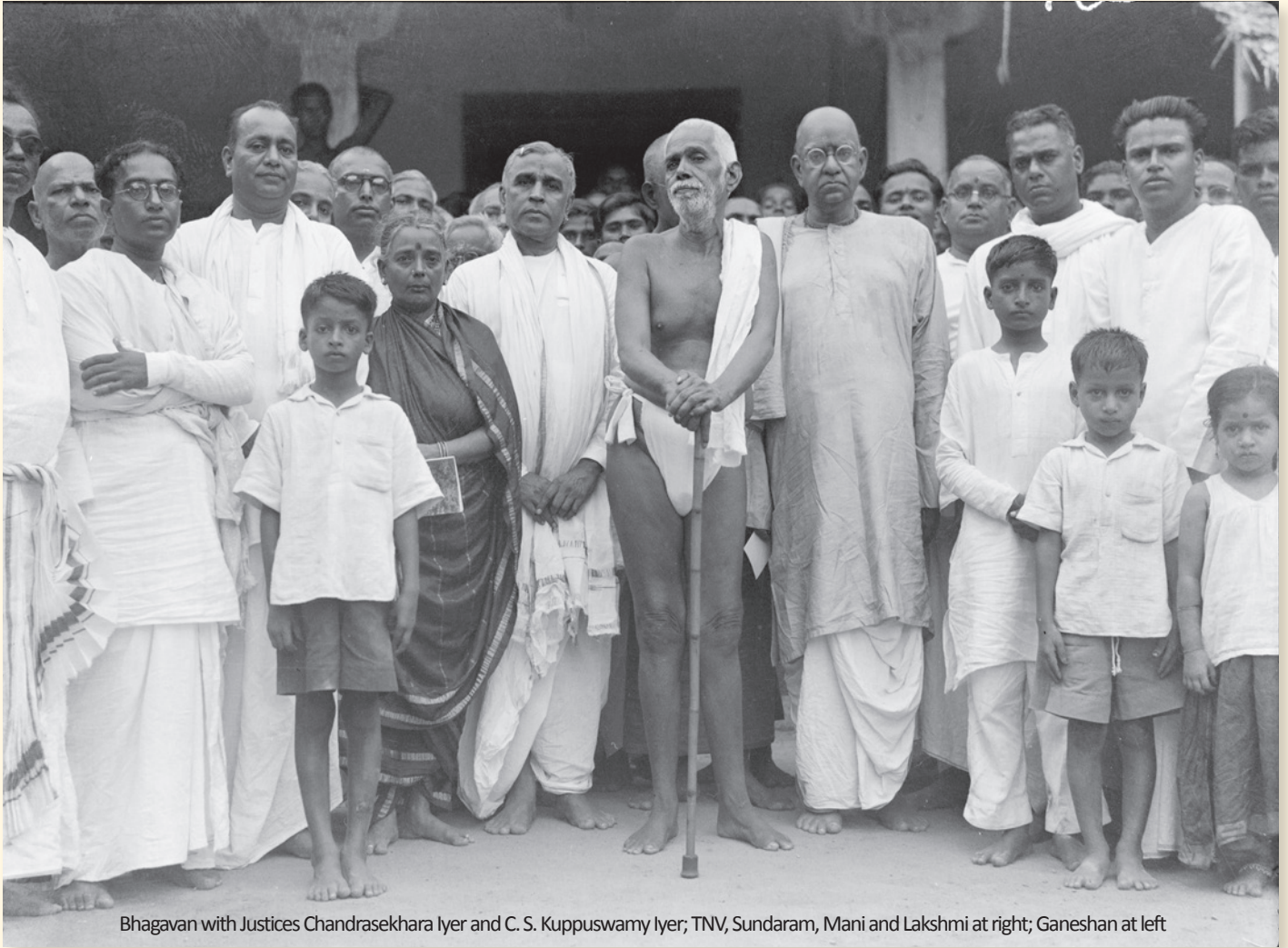
When everything was ready, the devotee went to the guest and gently waking him said, 'Oh, great and noble one, deign to partake of my humble fare'. Then a great flame rose up before their bewildered gaze and the Lord gave darshan from the heavens, mounted on his bull, along with his consort, proclaiming to the devotees: 'Beloved ones! You have offered adoration in a most acceptable way. Both of you, now come to my abode where you may continue your service in full glory. (Ilayaankudimaara Naayanaar's aradhana day falls on 25th August)

### Reality in Forty Verses

36. If we think we are the body, then to tell ourselves, 'No, I am That' (aham Brahmasmi), is helpful to abide as That. Yet since we ever abide as That, why should we always think, 'I am That?' Does one ever (need to) think to himself, 'I am a man'?

— Sri Bhagavan

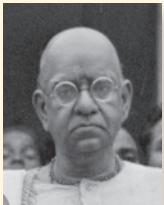




Bhagavan with Justices Chandrasekhara Iyer and C. S. Kuppuswamy Iyer; T.N.V. Sundaram, Mani and Lakshmi at right; Ganeshan at left

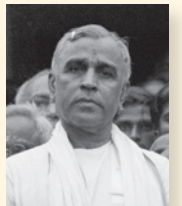
## In the Frame with Bhagavan

(Archival listing GRO 59 was taken on 1st September, 1946, the day of the Golden Jubilee Celebrations. The all-day programme at the Ashram was chaired by Justice Kuppuswamy and the afternoon proceedings included talks by speakers in various languages, among them, Prof. T. K. Doraiswamy Iyer, Dr. T.M.P. Mahadevan, M.S. Chellam Iyer, O.P. Ramaswami Reddiar, and Swami Rajeswarananda.



Sri C. S. Kuppuswamy Iyer, Judge of the Madras High Court, was acting chairman for the celebrations this day. After his opening address in English, an essay written by Sir S. Radhakrishnan was read out by Sri T. K. Doraiswamy Iyer.

Justice N. Chandrasekhara Aiyar (b.1888) Supreme Court of India (September, 1950 - 53; 1955 - 56), who edited and published *Valmiki Ramayana*, gave a talk in Telugu this day and submitted an article for the *Golden Jubilee Souvenir* called 'Sage of Arunachala'.



Dr. T. M. P. Mahadevan (b. 1911) was dean of the philosophy department at Madras University. As scholar, writer, professor and orator, he was invited by the UNESCO and various academic institutions around the world to speak on Indian philosophy. He was one of the few devotees ever invited to give a discourse in the Old Hall in Bhagavan's presence. Surprisingly, when later in life he referred to his years sitting at the feet of Bhagavan, he admitted that he had never once asked Bhagavan a question.



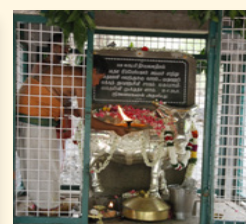


## In the Frame with Bhagavan (cont.)



*Sivasailam Anantharamakrishnan* (b. 1905) was an industrialist who after joining the Simpsons group of companies as a secretary, climbed the ranks to become its first Indian director in 1938. By virtue of his efficient management of labour unions and the resultant growth of the automobile industry in Chennai, he came to be known as the "Henry Ford of South India." Responsible for the rapid expansion of the Amalgamations group, he took it over in 1945, becoming its official chairman in 1953 until his death in 1964.

## Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Cow Lakshmi Samadhi Day

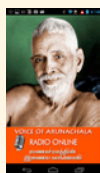


Cow Lakshmi attained liberation in the arms of her master, Bhagavan Sri Ramana, on 18th June 1948. The day of her samadhi was commemorated according to traditional reckoning (by *tithi*) on 9th July at her shrine with hymns and puja.

## Ramanasramam Gardens: The Clearing Nut Tree



The water-purifying seeds of the Ashram's Clearing Nut Tree (San: *Katakah*; Tam: *Thethankottai*; Lat: *Strychnos potatorum*), just at the entrance to Ashram Room K-28A, were once used by sadhu-devotees of Sri Bhagavan living at Palakotthu to purify water from Palakotthu thirtham. During the rainy season when the thirtham's water became muddy, slices of the tree's nut had the action of settling floating particulates. When the seed was rubbed round the inside of unglazed clay pots, stored water stayed fresh. (Scientists say the action is due to albumen in the seed). Devotees also used the seed to treat chronic diarrhea, adding powdered seed or paste to butter-milk or milk to drink daily for one week. (The seed can also be used to treat diabetes). This famed tree appears in *Yoga Vashishta Sara*, (v1.5) as well as in *Atma Bodham* (v5): "The jiva is mixed up with ignorance. By constant practice of knowledge, the jiva becomes pure, because knowledge disappears (along with ignorance), as the cleansing nut with the impurities in the water."



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