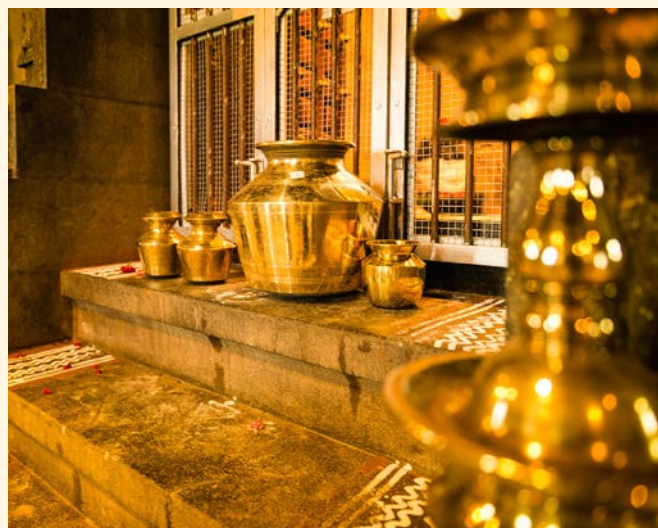


Saranagati



COVER
INSERT

SRI RAMANASRAMAM
JANUARY 2014



Saranagati



JANUARY 2014
VOL. 8, NO. 1

IN THIS
ISSUE

Dear Devotees,

2014 is the Aksharamanamalai Centenary Year. Special parayanas began with an all-day recitation on the 31st December and are being planned for 2014 to commemorate the composition of these verses by Bhagavan—written mostly while he was on the pradakshina path—in 1914 (see p. 5). In the third week of January, Nochur Sri Venkataraman has agreed to give a 7-day discourse on *Aksharamanamalai*.

Daily *dhanurmasa* (*margazhi*) pujas at the Ashram began early on the 16th December with verses of Manickavachakar's *Tiruvembavai*, Andal's *Tiruppavai* and Muruganar's *Ramana Tiruvembavai* followed by the *Vishnu Sahasranamam*. These pre-dawn pujas continue up till the 1st of Thai (14th January), the day of Pongal.

Swami Ramanananda's Aradhana Day was observed on 20th December and Lucy Ma's on 31st December. Photos in the cover insert (previous page) are from the six-man photographic team led by V. Karthik and Suresh Menon.

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

In Sri Bhagavan,
The Editorial Team

Cover Insert: January 2014 -

<i>Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi (§362): Jnana & Upasana</i>	1
<i>The Origins of Pradakshina (part two)</i>	2
<i>Calendar of Upcoming Events</i>	3
<i>Wordwise: Upasana</i>	4
<i>Aksharamanamalai Centennial: Looking Back to 1914</i>	5
<i>Announcements: Aksharamanamalai and the Ashram Website</i>	5
<i>Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Sri Bhagavan's 134th Jayanti</i>	6
<i>From Periapuranam: Chirappuli Nayanar</i>	7
<i>Reality in Forty Verses (v. 30)</i>	7
<i>Pradakshina: Anga-pradakshina</i>	8
<i>Announcements: RMCL's Global Online Contest</i>	8

Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi: Jnana and Upasana

M.: Some say that jnana and upasana are the two wings with which to fly to mukti. What is jnana? What is upasana? Jnana is ever present. That is the ultimate goal also. When an effort is made, the effort is called upasana; when it is effortless, it is jnana, which is the same as mukti.

— Talks §362





The Origins of Pradakshina (part two)

The First Pradakshinas of Arunachala

After the pillar of fire cooled into a simple mountain, Brahma and Vishnu covered their bodies in holy ash and performed the first pradakshina of Arunachala. Ashamed of their former pride, but now in a spirit of humility, they took up endless circumambulations, lasting, according to the Purana, fourteen thousand years¹.

Parvati came to do penance by going in pradakshina. Upon its completion, she merged into Lord Arunachala, becoming his left half (the western side of the Mountain beginning at Adiannamalai). In time, Indra and the thirty-three crore devas appeared and commenced their

¹ *Arunachala Purana* §164-5.

pradakshinas. Siddhas and saints in subtle form came and began perpetual circumambulations. It is said that for the benefit of humanity, even Lord Siva began regular pradakshinas around the Holy Hill.

Establishing the Pradakshina Path

Kalpas passed until one day, in the time of the Pandya dynasty, there lived a just ruler named King Vajrangada. Once while hunting in his dominions, he happened upon a musk civet-cat in a forest at the foot of Arunachala. When the cat fled around the Hill, the king mounted his steed and gave chase. He rode all the way around the Hill and just when he had made a complete circuit, he found himself thrown from the saddle. His horse, however, carried on the pursuit. Suddenly, the king beheld a great light in the sky, and below it, two animals leaving their earthly bodies and rising heavenward. From above, two celestial beings called down to the king: "O Sovereign, do not grieve the loss of your horse and





the civet-cat. Know that we have been transformed by the grace of Lord Arunachala.”

“Who are you?” the king asked. One of them said, “O King, in our previous lives we were *vidyadharas* known as Kaladhara and Kantisali but because of a curse, we were born on earth in animal form.

“It happened long ago when in a forest on Mount Meru, we inadvertently incurred the wrath of Durvasa by carelessly trampling his grounds and picking flowers from his garden. He put a curse on us, we two unwitting intruders. Immediately we both fell at his feet and begged, ‘O Sage! Kindly forgive us for trespassing your lands and plucking flowers. Please do not curse us!’

“Hearing our plea, the Sage took pity upon us but said with genuine regret that he had no power to remove the curse. He said the spell was fixed but he told us how it could be lifted. He told us that Lord Siva had once declared that the one who circumambulates Sona Hill would become like Him, Lord of the entire universe. The Sage added that only by circumambulation of Arunachala Hill could the spell be broken.

“Indeed, the curse took effect as promised and Kantisali, who had heedlessly trampled Durvasa’s plants was born a horse in Kambhoja and became your mount. I, Kaladhara, captivated by the fragrance of the Sage’s flowers, became a musk civet-cat² inhabiting the environs of the Mountain. However, once in our new incarnation, neither of us were able to recall the Sage’s exhortation. Today, however, by your desire to come here and hunt, we have unwittingly followed the Sage’s advice and the curse has been lifted.

² While civet-cats are related to the skunk, some species are known to emit sweet scents.



“You are a noble soul but you were not blessed today because you only circumambulated the Holy Hill upon a conveyance, that is, mounted on your horse, whereas we went by our own power on foot.

“We truly thank you for your assistance. But now, as we are eager to return to our former home, we bid thee farewell, good king! May Arunachala bless you!”

The king folded his hands and made obeisance to the two celestials but then added: “Kaladhara and Kantisali, you have both been released from your curse. But what about those of us still wandering aimlessly in this earthly exile? Is that not also a curse?”

The two replied, “Good king, listen carefully to what we have to say. Make your mind pure. Control it and surrender it to Lord Siva. Circumambulate Holy Aruna Hill on foot and worship Him. Utilise your treasury to increase Arunachaleswar Temple, construct towers for it and make level the path around the Hill as a service

Calendar of Upcoming Events

12th January (Sun) Siva Prakasam Pillai Aradhana Day
14th January (Tue) Pongal
15th January (Wed) Mattu Pongal/Full Moon
16th January (Thu) Punarvasu

20th-26th Jan 7-day discourse: Nochur Sri Venkataraman
12th February (Wed) Punarvasu
14th February (Fri) Full Moon
27th February (Thu) Mahasivratri





to the Lord's devotees. If you do this, your desire will be fulfilled." After uttering these words the two departed.

Thereupon, King Vajrangada made up his mind not to return to his kingdom. Instead, he erected a humble dwelling near Gautama's ashram at the foot of the Hill. This simple abode was visited by advisers, ministers and the commander-in-chief of the army consisting of elephants, cavalry, chariots and infantry as well as friends, relatives and servants, all who came to plead the beneficent king's return. But the latter was firm in

his resolve and surrendered his office. He crowned his son, Ratnangada, as king of the realm. He renounced his wealth, utilising it to dig holy tanks around the Hill, build the temple gopurams and lay the foundations for the eight-mile giripradakshina path. He cleared brush, briars and thorns, removed sharp stones, leveled the ground and, with stone markers, formally established the way following the course trod by countless gods, saints and siddhas. His work was so perfect that devotees could even perform *anga-pradakshina* unimpeded. He made use of the newly cleared footway himself, going round the Hill twice daily, repeating the Lord's name as he went. Little by little he became immersed in the Ocean of Lord Siva's Bliss until, one day, Mahadeva Himself appeared before him. Vajrangada fell at His feet and the Lord spoke:

"Fear not, child! You are blessed. You may not remember it but in your previous birth, you were Indra. Yet as lord over devaloka, you fell victim to the temptation of pride and forgot Me. I thus bid you be born on earth as Vajrangada to gain humility and obtain my grace. Therefore you took birth in this most sacred of holy places. By that grace your delusion has now disappeared. You will hereafter investigate the truth and by so doing, will never be separated from Me again but like waves of the ocean, you will become my very Self.³

(to be continued)

³ For the full account of Vajrangada, see *Glory of Annamachala*, pp. 146-153.

Wordwise: Upasana उपासना

Upasana: (*upa*: 'near'; *asana*: 'to sit'); to sit by the side of, sit near at hand (in order to honour, worship or wait upon); to approach respectfully; to serve, revere, respect, acknowledge, do homage, to be devoted to, to esteem, to regard, to pay attention to, to wait for.

Upasana is a prescribed method for approaching God. Bhagavan says, "Upasana helps [in] concentration of [the] mind. [After upasana,] the mind is free from other thoughts and is full of the meditated form. The mind becomes [That]. [One may then ask], who is the worshipper? The answer is 'I', i.e. the Self. So the Self is gained ultimately."





Aksharamanamalai Centennial: Looking Back to 1914

In the days at Virupaksha Cave, Bhagavan's resident-devotees used to descend the Hill each day to beg alms in the town. When leaving the cave, they would blow their conches to announce the commencement of their *bhiksha* rounds. They would give a second blast when they reached the foot of the hill and blow yet a third time when arriving in the municipality where town residents would be waiting ready with their food offerings.

Other sadhus in town, in an effort to improve their chances of receiving alms, often tried to give the impression that they too were connected with Bhagavan Ramana. Bhagavan's devotees requested him to compose a song which they could sing while begging alms, both as a way of benefiting their patrons with the beauty and wisdom of Bhagavan's verse and a way of identifying themselves as his followers. Initially Bhagavan refused, saying there were already numerous Saivite hymns, many of which were being

neglected. But they continued to press him until one day in 1914, when setting off for pradakshina, he took pencil and paper with him.

Bhagavan said that *The Marital Garland of Letters*¹ was composed "partly at Virupakshi Cave and partly on my walks round the Hill." It soon became the signature hymn of Bhagavan's devotees. Bhagavan once humourously remarked, "*The Marital Garland of Letters* fed us for many years."

That Bhagavan chose to title this hymn 'Marital Garland' is noteworthy. *Malai* is Tamil for 'garland' but this garland is a *wedding garland*, the garland that unites bride and bridegroom in holy matrimony. Bridal themes crop up in various places where it is seen that the jiva has been 'seduced' by Lord Arunachala and implores her Beloved 'to embrace' her (see v. 9). Marriage is the only fitting resolution for this unquenchable longing. Or stated in spiritual terms, to conquer the ego once for all, the jiva must be united and completely absorbed in the Self.

¹ As the poem of 108 couplets came to be called. Its couplets are arranged *acrostically*, that is to say, the letters appearing first in each couplet form the sequence of the Tamil alphabet (*akshari*).

The Ashram Website and the Aksharamanamalai Centenary Year

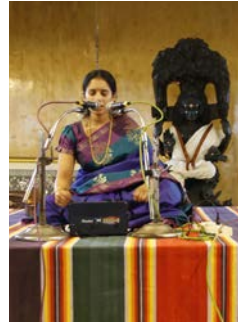
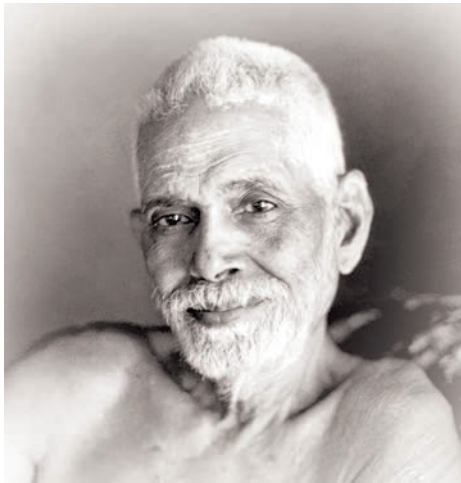


Devotees have testified that chanting Aksharamanamalai aids in accessing Bhagavan's spiritual blessing. For those not familiar with Tamil prosody or the chanting of Aksharamanamalai, the Ashram website (www.sriramanamaharshi.org) provides free downloads of the original text and its English translation and commentary, as well as audio recordings of its recitation. (Also see "Learn to Chant Aksharamanamalai" on the website). While Aksharamanamalai has been translated to Telugu, Kannada, Hindi and Gujarati, it will soon be made available through the website in these and various other languages. Volunteers interested in translating it to their own language may write to the Ashram.





Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Sri Bhagavan's 134th Jayanti



Bhagavan's 134th Jayanti celebrations began at 4am on the 19th December with "Mangala Isai" by Sri T. R. Pichandi followed by Dhanurmasa Puja and Vishnu Sahasranamam. Devotees sang Manikkavachakar's *Tiruvembavai*, Andal's *Tiruppavai* and Muruganar's *Ramana Tiruvembavai* followed by Bhagavan's works while in the Mother's Shrine, purohiths chanted Mahanyasa Ekadasa Rudram. Puja to Sri Ramaneswara Mahalingam began around 10am culminating in Mangala Aarti at 11am.

Each evening of the Jayanti celebrations was accented with performances in the New Library Auditorium which featured "Ramana Music" by 'Malgudi' Subha (Tues), "Carnatic and Ramana Music" by Smt. Vidya Kausik (Weds), "Ramana Music" by Amritavarshini and Smt. Sakubai Srinivasan (Thurs afternoon) and Ramananjali RMCL led by Smt. Sulochana Natarajan (Thurs eve).





From *Periapuranam*: Chirappuli Nayanar

On the banks of the Kaveri at Thiruvakoor dwelt the Andhanar Brahmins, a clan known for their devotion to the Lord. Among them was one who outshone the rest. With long years' experience in performing yagnas and a vast knowledge of the Vedas, Chirappuli excelled by his selfless service to Sivabhaktas. He reasoned that if the linga represents the Lord in 'immovable form' (*sthanu*), then his devotees were the 'Lord in motion' (*jangama*). It was this latter form of the Divine on which Chirappuliyaar chose to concentrate his devotion. He thus passed his days serving delectable meals to devotees while silently reciting the Rudram within. After meals he made gifts of clothing and by such selfless giving, came to be seen by all as a loving father.

The flowers with which he worshipped devotees reached the Lord's Feet at Kailasa. As the heaps of offered flowers mounted, those responsible for storing them complained, "O Lord, please fulfill the desire of your devotee so that he might be pacified and give us rest."

When Parvati noticed the Lord's perplexity as to how to bless Chirappuliyaar, she suggested visiting him directly. Thus appearing before the devotee, Lord Siva said: "Your devotion has pleased me. Tell me how I might bless you in return". Chirappuliyaar replied: "If I be worthy, give me only the wherewithal to ceaselessly worship your form". The Lord divined that the saint was fully ripe and granted his devotee that which was unattainable even to yogis—supreme liberation. (*Chirappuli Nayanar's aradhana fell on the 5th December*)

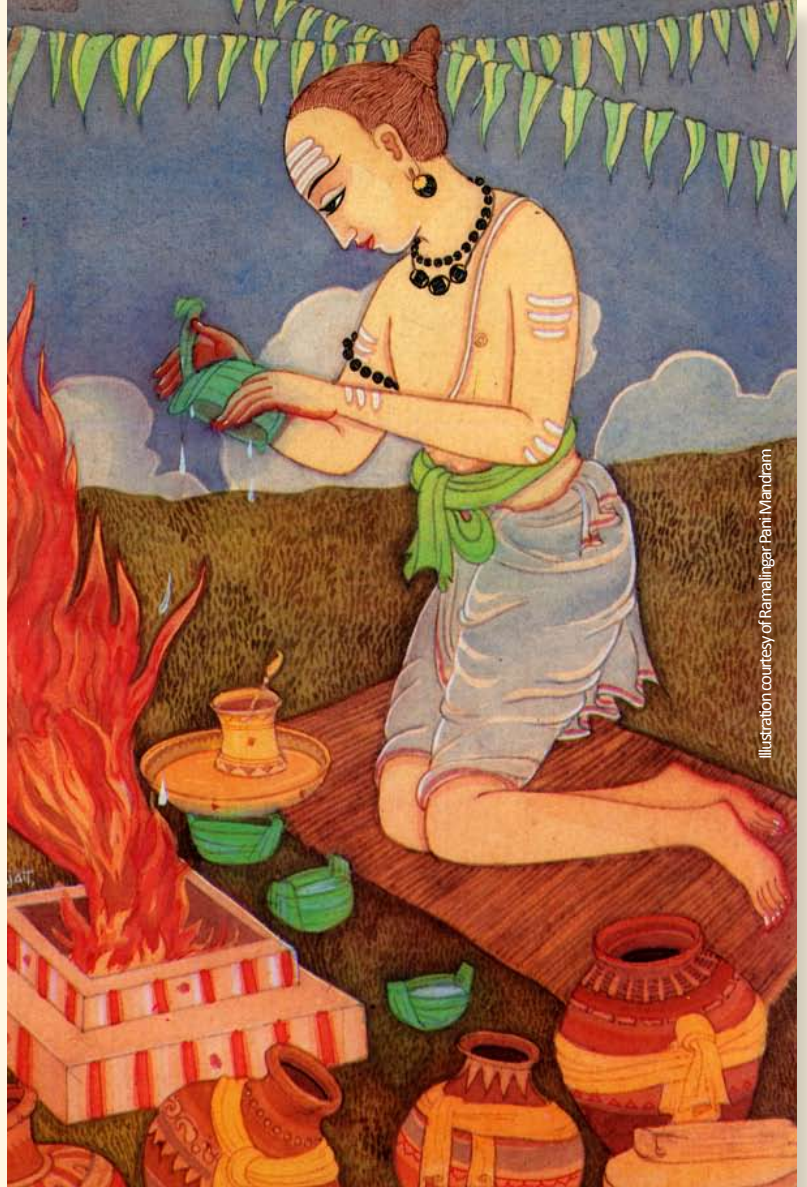


Illustration courtesy of Ramalingar Pani Mandram

Reality in Forty Verses

30. When the mind turns inward seeking 'Who am I?' and merges in the Heart, then the 'I' bows its head in shame and the one 'I' appears as Itself. Though it appears as 'I-I', it is not the ego. It is reality, perfection, the substance of the Self.

— Sri Bhagavan





Pradakshina: Anga-pradakshina



Anga-pradakshina is a Sanskrit word meaning 'rolling prostration' (*angam* 'body'; *pradakshana*, 'rightfacing' or 'in a clockwise fashion'). A variant of traditional *giri valam*, this form of pradakshina involves lying prostrate on the ground with arms outstretched above the head in the direction of Arunachala and rolling clockwise. The *Skanda Mahapurana* states that "those who circumambulate Arunachala in full body prostration (*anga-pradakshina*) live in this world without any worry and their body turns into Vajram. They will attain the celestial world at the end of this earthly life." ('Poorva Baagam', Chapter 9:52) Similarly, the *Arunachala Mahatmyam* says, "the body of one who performs *anga-pradakshina* around Arunachala becomes divine and immune to injury" (*Glory of Arunachala*, p. 58). Bhagavan said that 'the ego should go around the Self and merge in it'. Losing identification with the body is almost a requirement for performing *anga-pradakshina*, demanding as it is. Some even believe that a special grace is required for completing it. Automobile traffic in the modern era presents added challenges.

Announcements: RMCL's Global Online Contest and Fest

Ramana Maharshi Centre For Learning, Bengaluru
Presents

Ramananjali Awards - 2014

A Global Online Contest & Fest

Language

- Visit: events.ramanacentre.com
- ↓ Register now
- ↓ Enroll your talent with language
- ↓ Make Payment
- ↓ Download our songs
- ↓ Make video of your presentation
- Upload video and publicize

Talent

Prizes
More than 500
worth 5 lacs

Upload Open Till - 5th Feb 2014

Age
1-101

