

# Saranagati



SARANAGATI  
SRI RAMANASRAMAM

EXTENDED MAHAKUMBHABHISHEKAM EDITION  
MARCH 2017, VOL. 11, NO. 3



Courtesy of Dev Gogoi



## Saranagati



MARCH 2017  
VOL. 11, NO. 3

IN THIS  
ISSUE

Dear Devotees,

The month of February ended with Maha Rudram in the New Hall, two days of *rudrajapa* followed by an elaborate homa on the 27th (see p. 11).

The key event this month was the Big Temple Mahakumbhabhishekam on 6th Feb. This was the Temple's first renovation in 15 years. With 10 days of preliminary rites including 12 *yagasala* pujas, vast photo opportunities presented themselves. With such large-scale events, it seemed prudent to rely on devotees at various locations simultaneously. So, for the first time, our issue this month includes photos from multiple photographic sources: Dev Gogoi, Dr. Carlos Lopez, Markus Horlacher, among others, and a lion's share from the Ashram's own S. Gopalakrishnan and D. Thiyagarajan.

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

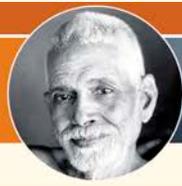
<i>Daily Life in the Dining Hall: Customs and Rules</i>	3
<i>Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi: Talks §63</i>	4
<i>Announcement: Telugu Facebook Page</i>	6
<i>Events in Tiruvannamalai: Daily Chanting by Ashram Devotees</i>	7
<i>Temple Mahakumbhabhishekam</i>	8
<i>Patalalinga Kumbhabhishekam</i>	10
<i>Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Mahasivaratri</i>	10
<i>Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Maha Rudram</i>	11
<i>Announcement: Ashram YouTube Channel</i>	11
<i>Obituary: Sri Subramanyan (Manalurpettai Sastrigal)</i>	12
<i>Announcement: Smt. Hamsa Ramaiah Video Interview</i>	12

## Calendar of Upcoming Events

8th March (Weds) Punarvasu Day  
12th March (Sun) Full Moon Day  
17th March (Fri) Sri Vidya Homa  
29th March (Tues) Telugu New Year  
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 (Tues) Full Moon Day  
20th May (Sat) Mahapuja





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

The template for conduct in the Ashram was Bhagavan himself. Decorum and customs to be followed hinged on imitating the guru who was the model and maxim for the community's life. There was no need for a formal set of regulations since Bhagavan did not depend on organised principles but initiated a way of living beyond ordinary standards, taking his cues from within. He demanded impeccability from inmates. Bhagavan was not a disciplinarian and yet, by virtue of being free of the I-am-the-body-consciousness, he was in a position to see through a devotee's action to the intention and motivation that underlay it. If by

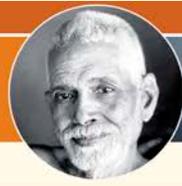
'discipline' one means conforming to the arbitrary dictates of an authority figure, then the word would have no place in respect to Bhagavan. But discipline under Bhagavan meant conforming to enlightened consciousness and enjoying all the benefits attendant on that. Of course, serving under Bhagavan was occasionally daunting as luminous insight of a *jnani* could never be tricked or fooled and thus devotees were no longer able to seek refuge in egoic stratagems. The burden of self-discovery that resulted from being in his presence was real medicine. Though uncomfortable as the process sometimes was, it resulted in the elimination of all that was false within oneself.

But the stated aim of daily life in the Ashram did not overtly focus on spiritual goals *per se* but was pragmatic and centred on the practical functioning of the community day by day. In responsibly stewarding the resources entrusted to the Ashram, devotees were continually deepened in their commitment to Bhagavan and to the Ashram. Bhagavan was intent that the Ashram be kept in order and each devotee was expected to carry out his or her duties with unrelenting care and attention. Ashram clocks were kept right to the minute, the floors, walkways, and buildings maintained at all times, the kitchen tidied up each day and visitors' needs tended to. Inmates were expected to treat one another as equals—Bhagavan included—and no special consideration was to be shown to the Master, who saw himself as one among others. This was amply demonstrated in the way he lived his life each day, sitting on the floor in the dining hall like the rest, eating with his hands from a plantain leaf along with everyone else, taking only what was shared equally with all and never allowing devotees to rise from their seats when he entered the dining hall.

### The Ashram Daily Round

The Ashram routine was rhythmic and punctual. At eleven o'clock the Ashram lunch bell rang and everyone stood up and left the darshan hall. The seating arrangement in the dining hall afforded no special distinction to senior devotees and each came and sat at the next available place. Leaf plates (hand-stitched *porasu* leaves) were laid out in rows on the red-tiled dining hall floor. A partition extending three-quarters





of the width of the hall divided it into two equal parts, the one of which was occupied by brahmins keen to follow orthodox rules which meant eating only with brahmins, and the other, a mix of non-brahmins and brahmins. In this way, all needs were met. Bhagavan sat mid-way along the wall in full view of both sections.

When the Sarvadhikari indicated that serving was over, he would prostrate before Bhagavan who would cast a cursory glance around the hall and nod his head to commence the meal.<sup>1</sup>

### Guidelines for Doing Ashram Service

Working and doing service in the Ashram was spiritual training. The extent to which Bhagavan demanded obedience from the Ashram staff was indicative not so much of a concern for efficiency or economy but of bringing about the humility and surrender requisite for a vital spiritual life. His insistence on obedience was a means of curing them of their egoistic tendencies. Even if staff members knew better ways of doing a task, they were better off following Bhagavan's instructions because results were not the first priority, but rather, renunciation of the one's personal will was the measure of progress.<sup>2</sup>

When Bhagavan saw someone remiss in their duty, he would compassionately give them another chance. He would say *all things are good, there is no evil in anything*. "If your teeth perchance bite the tongue, will you on that account pull out the teeth?"<sup>3</sup>

Sampurnamma once remarked, "As long as we followed his instructions, everything would go well

1 *Silent Power*; Reminiscences of P.T. Muthuswami p. 60.

2 *Ramana Smrti*, "Bhagavan's Cooking", Sundaram, p. 160.

3 *Sri Ramana Maharshi: A Life Sketch*, trans. Sri M. N. De; original Bengali: Dr. Purnima Sircar, p. 6.

with our cooking. But the moment we began to act [independently], we would be in trouble. Even then, if we sought his help, he would taste our brew and tell us what to do and what to add to make it better. We thus came to know fully that in dealing with him, our only duty was to obey. This training became part of our lives. By daily practice we learned to have our minds always focussed on Bhagavan. Whenever we were afraid, anxious or in pain, we had only to think of him and we could feel his helping hand."<sup>4</sup>

### Finding Free Time

The Ashram did not have the finances to employ a large staff which meant there was never a shortage of work. This was especially true in the kitchen. Kitchen staff generally worked right through till the evening meal had been served and the dining hall and kitchen cleaned. This left the kitchen staff only a little free time in the evening as they had to get to bed at a decent hour in order to wake up in time for morning breakfast preparations.

Sitting in meditation in Bhagavan's hall during the work period was not an option for them and meant that they rarely got to sit with devotees for Bhagavan's darshan. If they sometimes sneaked into the hall and 'hid themselves behind the backs of other devotees', Bhagavan would invariably notice it and give them a look which seemed to say, "Better go to your work. Don't ask for trouble."<sup>5</sup>

Once when Subbalakshmi Ammal complained to Bhagavan that the kitchen work took up all her time, leaving none for meditation, Bhagavan said: "If

4 *Ramana Smrti*, "Bhagavan in the Kitchen", pp. 132-134.

5 *Ramana Smrti*, "Bhagavan's Cooking", p. 160.

## Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi: Bearing the Weight of the Temple Tower

M.: It is the Higher Power which does everything and the man is only a tool. If he accepts that position he is free from troubles; otherwise he courts them. Take for instance, the figure in a gopuram (temple tower), where the figure is made to appear to bear the burden of the tower on its shoulders. Its posture and look are a picture of great strain while bearing the very heavy burden of the tower. But think. The tower is built on the earth and it rests on its foundations. The figure (like Atlas bearing the earth) is a part of the tower, but is made to look as if it bore the tower. Is it not funny? So is the man who takes on himself the sense of doing.

— Talks §63





you identify yourself with the body, you are bound to dualities. Work would appear difficult. Even if we free ourselves from work, will the mind cease to wander? It does not let us even sleep in peace.”<sup>6</sup>

Kunju Swami once got a similar answer. He describes a scene in the kitchen: “Sri Bhagavan used to go into the kitchen by 4 am and start cutting vegetables. One or two of us would join and help. Sometimes the amount of vegetables used to startle us. Bhagavan managed to cut much more quickly than the rest of us. At such times, we would look up at the clock in our impatience to finish the job in order that we might go and have a nap. Bhagavan would sense our impatience and say: ‘Why do you look at the clock?’ We tried to bluff Bhagavan saying, ‘If only we could complete the work before five, we could meditate for an hour.’ Bhagavan would mildly retort: ‘The allotted work has to be completed in time. Other thoughts are obstacles, not the amount of work. Doing the allotted work in time is itself meditation. Go ahead and do the job with full attention’.”<sup>7</sup>

At night, after dinner, once visitors had left, inmates would gather around Bhagavan and have him all to themselves, like ‘a big family at the end of the day’s work’. It was a brief time of intimacy when Bhagavan would enquire about each of them and give them instructions for the following day.<sup>8</sup>

#### **Ashram Service and Rules for Eating in the Ashram**

So, while the Ashram staff had endless demands made on their time, they were blessed every step of the way. It was their willingness to give untiringly in service to the Ashram that was the portal into the Master’s heart. Not all who came along, however, were willing to make such a sacrifice.

Once a mendicant swami who sometimes came to the Ashram for food went to Bhagavan and complained that he had been refused a meal. He seemed to feel that he was entitled to food and evidently imagined he shared a status equal to Bhagavan’s. He further assumed that Bhagavan only sat on his couch each day. Bhagavan sensed that the fellow was only interested in

<sup>6</sup> *125 Years of Grace*, p. 36.

<sup>7</sup> *Moments Remembered*, pp.107-108.

<sup>8</sup> *Ramana Smrti*, p. 160.



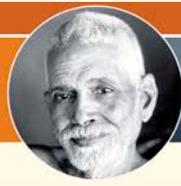
eating and not willing to lift a finger on behalf of the Ashram. So he played a prank on him and talked of the strict management who compelled Bhagavan himself to work each day—looking into daily correspondence, answering visitors’ questions, binding books, cutting vegetables and so on—before giving him any food. On hearing that real work might be required of him if he wanted a meal, the fellow quietly slipped away.<sup>9</sup>

#### **Bending Tradition: Rules Pertaining to Leftover Food**

Bhagavan’s etiquette and prescriptions did not always conform to social conventions and sometimes the challenge for Ashram inmates in following his edicts lay precisely in the fact that they overturned long-established customs. One example of this is Bhagavan’s decree that leftovers be used for the following day’s breakfast *sambar*. By tradition, food cooked the day before is polluted and cannot be used. But Bhagavan

<sup>9</sup> *Mountain Path*, October 1982, B. Kuppuswami, p. 259.





acknowledged the wisdom in such injunctions and yet, argued that there was an injunction that ranked even higher than this one, and that was the prohibition against wasting food. As we have seen in previous issues, since all food was Bhagavan's *prasadam*, the very form of the Lord, it could in no wise be discarded. Over the generations, people had resolved this dilemma by giving their leftover food to the poor. But Bhagavan keenly felt that this was unfair: The poor who embodied the Atman in equal measure should not be treated as dumping grounds. Rather, Bhagavan insisted, they should be fed first. The ideal solution, of course, is cooking just the right amount so that all could be adequately fed and no food would be leftover. But the law of probability guaranteed that this would not always be the case.

Each morning Bhagavan would come into the kitchen to see if there was food leftover from the night before. He would dilute it and add additional ingredients. Sundaram describes the scene:

“When the ladies found Bhagavan there brewing the morning sambar from the previous day's leftovers, they would be deeply distressed, but would not, of course, dare to question Bhagavan. Their distress was real and deep for they were risking loss of orthodoxy. On the other hand, Bhagavan's instructions were clear—no waste of food in the Ashram, and the same food for all. It was a tug-of-war between the wisdom of the guru and the mental habits of his followers. The ladies tried to be in the kitchen very early, but he was always there first, cooking the sambar.”<sup>10</sup>

One day Bhagavan's sambar was taken to a devotee's house, but when it was discovered that it was 'leftover' sambar, a special ceremony was ordered to purify the house. On hearing about it, Bhagavan told the ladies: “Call the purifiers and get your kitchen purified. I

<sup>10</sup> *Mountain Path*, October 1986, “With Me in Kitchen”, p. 247.

shall never more enter your kitchen.”

Thus, Sundaram comments: “The women, for the sake of their orthodox customs, lost Bhagavan's constant presence, company and guidance, a real tragedy. Each devotee in the Ashram believed that Bhagavan was God Incarnate who came to bless them and put their feet firmly on the path to liberation. Yet when God Himself went against their religious customs, they would rather cling to their customs than to God.”<sup>11</sup>

In fairness to these women, one can understand their apprehension given the difficulty of maintaining cooked food overnight in a warm climate without refrigeration. But what they failed to grasp is how things don't proceed in an ordinary way in Bhagavan's presence and leftovers in his care would not spoil or lose their taste and thus. In such safekeeping, no pollution could accrue, especially considering that most pollution is arises with the *vrittis* of the mind.

#### Rules Pertaining to Women

On other occasions, Bhagavan deviated from tradition for the sake of protecting and defending the downtrodden. It was not that he was rebellious or had a grievance with established customs but rather, as one who saw reality clearly, he was able to discern when social practice and pollution rituals had outlived their original intention and had become hurtful and obsolete.

By tradition, women during their menstrual cycle were seen as polluted. On such occasions, they were neither allowed to stay in the Ashram nor to come to the Ashram kitchen for meals. Bhagavan challenged the established order by decreeing that from then on, women in menses would be allowed to stay in the Ashram and the kitchen was obliged in such instances to see to it that food reached them in their quarters.<sup>12</sup>

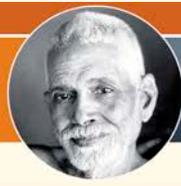
<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, p. 247.

<sup>12</sup> *Sri Ramana Maharshi: A Life Sketch*, pp. 5-6.

### Announcement: Telugu Facebook Page

For the benefit of Telugu speaking devotees, Sri Ramanasramam has introduced a Facebook Page in Telugu. Here you will find information about important activities of Ramanasramam and the life and teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi in Telugu. Please support us by visiting and 'liking': <https://www.facebook.com/pg/SriRamanaTelugu>





### Rules Pertaining to Bathing and Pollution

By tradition, the central means of contravening pollution is bathing which can mitigate almost any defilement. According to custom, one should have a bath before going out in the morning, a rule Bhagavan adhered to stringently. Bathing was required especially before going to the temple, engaging in sadhana or entering the presence of the guru. The rule of bathing was incontrovertible following a funeral where pollution was seen to be extensive.

One day, however, Bhagavan amazed his listeners when just before lunchtime arriving in the hall were two Brahmins known to earn their livelihood by the socially shunned profession of bearing the dead to the cremation grounds. A heated argument between them had taken place en route to the Ashram about the propriety of coming to the Ashram for a meal without having first bathed, the one arguing that they were transgressing a sacred custom, and the other dismissing it in view of their acute hunger. The former inquired of Bhagavan:

“Swami, I have been insisting on the customary bath before we sit for our meal. Is that not but just and proper?” Bhagavan responded in a soft tone, ‘No one can say you are unjust.’ The other, greatly agitated, burst forth: ‘The pangs of hunger are so intense that our entrails are being devoured. Is it wrong to eat when hunger is so gnawing?’ Bhagavan

quietly replied, ‘Who says it is wrong? Not at all.’ Shocked, looking at one another, they asked in one voice, ‘But then who is wrong?’ Bhagavan answered: ‘Don’t think you alone are pall-bearers. All of us are carrying these lifeless corpses. This body is a veritable corpse. Everybody carries it saying ‘I, I’. Whoever has the ‘I-am-the-body-feeling’ is but a pall-bearer. As long as one has not gone beyond this, one remains as impure and polluted as a pall-bearer. The pollution of bearing this dead body cannot be washed away by a dip in any holy tank. Bathing in the holy waters of the Atman alone can remove it.’

“The two, though initially feeling vindicated, were now startled and stared at each other. In an instant, the entire complexion of the issue stood transformed.

“It was not just them but everyone without exception was equally polluted. All people shared their fate. The burden of their sense of social inferiority was eased by Bhagavan’s words and they felt lifted up. The felicity with which *atma bodha*—the eternal truth—was transmitted to them and others in the hall, and the *sama drishti* of Bhagavan that knew no distinction between regular devotees and stray visitors, however socially unsavoury their vocation, left those seated in the hall astounded.”<sup>13</sup> —

(to be continued)

13 *Mountain Path*, Aradhana 2007, pp. 36-37, “The Unexpected Feast”, T. R. Kanakammal.

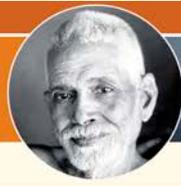
## Events in Tiruvannamalai: Daily Chanting at the Temple by Ashram Devotees



Ashram devotees gathered at the Big Temple in or near the Mahakumbhabhishekam Yagasala pandal twice each day to recite *Annamalai Thevaram*, *Tiruvachakkam* and Bhagavan’s *Aksharamanamalai* during the ten days leading up to Mahakumbhabhishekam on the 6th of February. On the 4th February, the newly-produced Ashram audio CD

recording of *Arunachala Puranam* with singers Prabakaran and J. Jayaraman was released in the Temple Yagasala.—





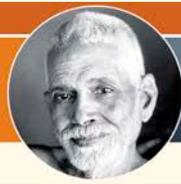
## Arunachaleswarar Mahakumbhabhishekam

The *vastushilpa shastram* tells us that a temple should be regarded as a living organism, the very form of God, and that the maintenance of its divine power is assured only by regular renovation, consecration and rededication in what is known as *jeernoddharana kumbhabhishekam*. *Kumbha* refers to the crown of the temple situated atop the gopuram; *abhishekam* is ritual anointing or washing. Regular cleaning and ritual bathing is part and parcel of the daily life of the temple but repairs involving extensive work, specialised equipment and craftsmen may only be done at times set aside for such activities. When kumbhabhishekam is forthcoming, temple

priests hand over the temple to *shapatis* (temple architects) who set about making repairs which include resealing the deities and lingams to their bases under which lie sacred yantras containing *bijaksharamantra* inscriptions. This process is called *ashtabandhanam* ('eight' + 'binding') and refers to the special paste of eight herbs (mixed with beeswax, limestone powder, tree resins, ochre dye and butter), applied to the base of the icon or lingam in order to make it impermeable to liquid. *Swarnabandhanam* is a seal of gold, more durable and long-lasting, said in the agamas to be valid for up to one hundred years.

The cycles of renovation are not firmly fixed but generally take place every twelve years. And yet owing to the great costs, this twelve-year cycle cannot always be maintained. Once repairs have been completed, an





auspicious time is selected and the gopuram *kumbha* is bathed with the waters of the kalashas that have been consecrated and sanctified in the *yagasala* pujas leading up to the big event.

### History of Mahakumbhabhishekam at the Big Temple

Over the last hundred or so years, the Big Temple has undergone several Mahakumbhabhishekams. In the late 19th century when the temple was in disrepair, the Nattukottai Nagarathar took up renovation and Mahakumbhabhishekam was performed on 12th June, 1903. Forty years later, Ashtabandana Kumbhabhishekam was performed on 4th June, 1944,

and again, on 4th April, 1976. The most recent renovation included Ashtabandhana and Swarnabandhana and was performed on 27th June, 2002.

### Arunachaleswarar Mahakumbhabhishekam in 2017

After several years of repairs which included gilding the temple flagpole and major structural repairs to Raja Gopuram, Mahakumbhabhishekam 2017 took place on 6th February. Young priests on the hilltop initiated the rite at 9.14am followed by *purohits* atop the Annamalaiyar Shrine, Apeetakuchambal and Temple gopurams. Mahabhishekam was performed immediately afterward at the principal shrines. —



Pei Gopuram Under Renovation



Top of Pei Gopuram Interior



Gilding the Flagpole

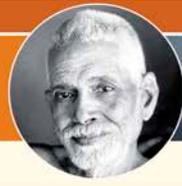


Temple staff nearing the summit



6th Feb, 9am at the Summit





## Events in Tiruvannamalai: Patalalinga Kumbhabhishekam



Patalalingam where Bhagavan sat in Samadhi for weeks after his advent to Arunachala in 1896 was in utter ruins by the 1940s and was not even reconstructed in the renovations for the June 1944 Temple Kumbhabhishekam. Only on 14th May

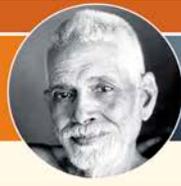
1949, with support of Mrs. Feroz Taleyarkan, a staunch devotee of Bhagavan, was the Shrine restored and inaugurated by C. Rajagopalachari, then Governor-General of India. In 2017, Parivara Yagasala puja took place in the early morning hours of Thursday, February 2nd with Parivara Devatas Kumbhabhishekam at 9.45 am (for the temple's minor deities and vimanam) including Patala Lingam where Ashram President V.S. Ramanan, Sushilamma and Bhagavan's devotees were in attendance. —

## Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Mahasivaratri



Mahasivaratri is the favourite night of Lord Siva and takes place on the 14th tithi of the dark half of the lunar cycle during the Tamil month that falls between mid-February and mid-March. Each year on this night after the first kala puja at sundown in Bhagavan's Hall, the Ashram priests go in procession with the flame from Bhagavan's hall to the gosala. There a large fire is ignited. The material to burn is made up principally of dried cow dung formed in the shape of balls and nested within a large heap of dried rice husks. The husks are lit with pieces of camphor. Once lit the fire burns and smoulders for one week until all the empty rice husks are exhausted leaving the cooked balls which have now been transformed into vibhuti. Vibhuti is the sacred ash used for the coming year in all the Ashram pujas to be distributed as prasad. How beautiful this ancient rite that closes the circle and proves what Bhagavan always said about the created realm that nothing is to be wasted. In this case, the cow is seen as the embodiment of the 33 crore deities and every aspect of her is divinity itself. So the ash of her dung is among the most coveted items in the sacramental life of the community. —





## Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Maha Rudram and Yagna

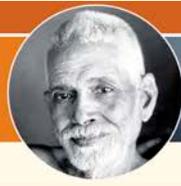


More than seventy young *purohits* and *pundits* convened in the New Hall on the morning of the 26th February to lead a two-day *rudrajapam*. On the heels of *Mahasivratri* the night of 24th February, the *Maha Rudram* culminated on the morning of the 27th with an elaborate *homam* and procession through the Ashram with the sacred *kalasas*. *Abhishekam* of *Sri Ramaneswara Mahalingam* and *Matrubhuteswara* then took place around 10.30am. *Rudram* consists of *namakam* (the repetition of *namah* indicating surrender to the Lord) and *chamakam* (repeating *cha-me*, 'and for me'). *Sri Rudram* consists of eleven chapters and is the central portion of the fourth *kanda* of the *Krishna Yajur Veda*.—

### Announcements: Ashram YouTube Channel

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





Annamalaiyar Vimanam iconography on Mahakumbhabhishekam Day, 6th February, 2017

## Obituary: Sri Subramanyan (Manalurpettai Sastrigal)



Sri Subramanyan, lovingly referred to as Manalurpettai Sastrigal, attained the Lotus Feet of Arunachala Ramana on 11th January, 2017 at the age of 88. He had the good fortune of having darshan of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, Seshadri Swamigal, Swami Gnanananda and Yogi Ram Surat Kumar. Subramanya Sastri was the son of Sundara Ganapatigal, the Vedic Scholar who visited Bhagavan at Virupaksha Cave. Subramanyan Sastri's father was instrumental in starting the Ashram Vedic school and was blessed to recite the Vedas in Bhagavan's presence. Associated with two Vedapatasalas, he arranged to have one of his student-teachers bring young students to the Ashram from town and chant for the Maharshi each day, eventually leading to the establishment of the Ashram Vedapatasala in 1935. Two days before his death in 1942, he sent a message to Bhagavan saying that he was leaving this world and was entrusting his family into Bhagavan's care. Bhagavan nodded his assent. Subramanyan thus grew up in an environment soaked in Bhagavan

and in the Vedas. Bhagavan sometimes had Subramanya Sastri chant *Dakshinamurthy Stotram* and other stotras. Because of his regular refusal to accept payment for the chanting he did at the Ashram, during T.N. Venkataraman's 60th birthday celebration in 1974, he was presented with a copy of *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai* ("Homage to the Presence of Sri Ramana"), the poetic work of Sri Muruganar which Sastri began reciting regularly. During Bhagavan's birth centenary celebrations in 1980, he made a *sankalpa* to chant it 100 times and did so in Bhagavan's Sannidhi over the course of about three months. It is said that he chanted the work at least 1000 times over the course of his life. It is also said that he chanted Bhagavan's Aksharamanamalai 100,000 times and even incorporated it into the homas he performed in private homes.

A Gandhian, after retirement he never wore a shirt or sandals again. The intensity of this selfless devotee was expressed during the Ashram's Mahakumbhabhishekam in August 2013. Subramanya Sastri donated his entire life's savings accrued over 41 years of service as a school teacher at Manalurpettai to finance the *Swarnabandhanam*, the seal of pure gold at the seat of the Ramaneswara Mahalingam. Sastri is survived by his wife, three sons and two daughters. — [Editor's note: a video interview with Sastri (in Tamil with English subtitles) where he tells of his life with Bhgavan is being edited for the Ashram website.]

## Hamsa Ramaiah Video Interview

In the February issue of *Saranagati* we read about the life of Smt. Hamsa Ramaiah who passed away peacefully in January at the age of 92. For those who would like to see and hear her tell her life experience with Bhagavan (in Tamil with English subtitles), please visit the channel at: <https://www.youtube.com/c/sriramanasramam>

