

Saranagati



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SPECIAL NAVARATRI EDITION
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Photos this page from John Maynard



Saranagati



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IN THIS
ISSUE

Dear Devotees,

The month of September began with Bhagavan's 118th Advent Celebrations and ended with the Navaratri celebrations still in progress. Morning recitations and nightly pujas filled the Mother's Shrine with exuberant joy and devotion in the days and nights following Yōgambika's procession on the 23rd. (see p. 8)

This October issue takes a look at the ancient history of Adi Annamalai Kovil and the discovery of a tunnel leading from it toward the centre of the Hill during renovation work that took place during the years that Bhagavan was living at Virupaksha Cave.

In the Frame with Bhagavan this month features archival listing GRO 73 from 1936.

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

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Calendar of Upcoming Events

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
6th November (Thurs) Full Moon
8th November (Sat) Mastan Swami Samadhi Day

9th November (Sun) Annamalaiswami Samadhi Day
12th November (Wed) Punarvasu Day
27th November (Thurs) Kartigai Festival Commences
5th December (Fri) Maha Deepam/Full Moon
9th December (Tues) Punarvasu Day
31st December (Wed) Lucyra Samadhi Day
6th January (Tues) Bhagavan's 135th Jayanti Day





Adi Annamalai Kovil: Ancient Temple of Arunachala

Adi Annamalai goes back to Arunachala's earliest beginnings when Brahma and Vishnu disputed¹. After the two were humbled before Mahadeva, Vishnu worshipped Him at the *swayambhu* linga of Arunachaleswar on the eastern side of the Hill while Brahma fashioned and consecrated a linga to the Lord on the western side. Established "to remove the unabating Karmas,"² this linga was that of Adi Annalamali Kovil and thus can be said to be among the three oldest of Annamalai, not counting Annamalai Himself, the other two being Arunagirinathar on the banks of Ayyankulam tank and the main temple of Arunachaleswara.

¹ *Adi* means 'ancient' or 'first'.

² In *Arunachala Puranam*, Brahma says to Sanaka, "To remove the unabating Karmas, I installed and worshipped a Linga of Lord Arunachala, who is called *Adi Annamalai*."

One story tells how Brahma fell into delusion, becoming enamoured of his daughter, Tilottama,³ and chasing after her. She took the form of a doe and he followed by taking the form of a male deer. She then took the form of a dove and he did likewise. Finally she flew to Arunachala and sought refuge at the feet of Mahadeva who took the form of a hunter to confront Brahma. This took place just south of Adi Annamalai Kovil where the Lord cured Brahma of his delusion. The temple there dedicated to the Lord as Hunter is known as Vedyappan Kovil⁴, a place where several *devatas* and *tirthas* can be found.

The Antiquity of Arunachala

Legends tell of the antiquity of Arunachala going back to the beginning of time, and modern geologists concur in this estimation to the extent that the stones of the 800-metre hill and the surrounding area are, geologically speaking,

³ At the behest of the Devas, Brahma created a celestial damsel to allure the asuras. He collected gems and 'all that was beautiful' from the three worlds and created, bit by bit, a woman of unparalleled beauty, naming her *Tilottama* (*tila* = 'bit' and *uttama* = 'highest').

⁴ Of recent, this temple is erroneously called Kannapar Kovil. Though a hunter, Kannapa never left his own place. (See *Periapuranam*)





Seventh Day of the Karthigai Deepam Festival, Tiruvannamalai 1880

very old indeed, dating to the *Archaen* Era approximately 2600 million years ago. It is from these stones that the temples of Adi Annamalai and Arunacheswara temples would later be carved, though most of the prominent exterior features of today's Adi Annamalai Kovil and Arunacheswara such as main gopurams and outer prakara walls were erected in more recent times.⁵

Early References

References to the region from Chengam to Tiruvannamalai appear in the Sangam literature at the beginning of the current millennium where, for example, Kartigai Deepam is alluded to; and in the *Perumpanatruppadai*, where the Lord of the area is called *Chevvarainatan* (*natan*, 'Lord' + *Chevvarai*, 'red hill'). The first known literary references to Holy Annamalai Himself appear quite later in the 6th and the 7th century songs of the *Thevaram* by Jnanasambhandar. Around

⁵ Adi Annamalai Kovil is by far the smaller of the two, its grounds occupying 3.5 acres compared with Arunachaleswar's 25 acres.

the same time, Appar visited and eulogized Arunachala as did Manickavachakar who sang *Ammanai* and his world-renowned *Tiruvembavai* while on the pradakshina path near Adi Annamalai Temple⁶.

Sri Bhagavan's Experiences of Adi Annamalai

Centuries later, Bhagavan Ramana would pass the night at Adi Annamalai on his pradakshina rounds and later told of unusual experiences he and his devotees had during these excursions. Devaraja Mudaliar writes of Bhagavan who, when on giri pradakshina, got caught in the rain and stayed the night at Adi Annamalai Kovil. In the temple, he "heard the *Sama Veda* being chanted near the inner shrine" though there was no one to be seen. Mudaliar further tells of hill-roundings where Bhagavan "saw luminous bodies moving round with him at about a man's height from the ground."⁷

Siddhas & the Legend of Adi Annamalai's Tunnel

One time some Vedic pandits were doing pradakshina, chanting as they went. Suddenly they saw several leopards standing near the path. Frightened, they stopped and remained silent. Within a few minutes the animals withdrew into the forest and the pandits, recovering from the shock, resumed their pradakshina. Later when they reported it to Bhagavan, he told them that the leopards were *Siddha Purushas* who came eagerly to listen to their Vedic chanting. In all likelihood, Bhagavan said, the leopards would have returned to the forest disappointed.

On another occasion devotees on their circuit heard a chorus singing bhajans, but when they stopped and looked they could neither see anyone nor hear the music. When they continued, the music started afresh.⁸

⁶ A temple in Adi Annamalai is dedicated to Manickavachakar.

⁷ *My Recollections of Bhagavan* p. 71. See also *Day by Day*, p. 103.

⁸ *Arunachala Ramana, Ocean of Grace*, p. 91.

Reality in Forty Verses

37. 'During the search, duality; on attainment, unity' — this doctrine too is false. When eagerly he sought himself and later when he found himself, the tenth man in the story was the tenth man and none else.

— Sri Bhagavan

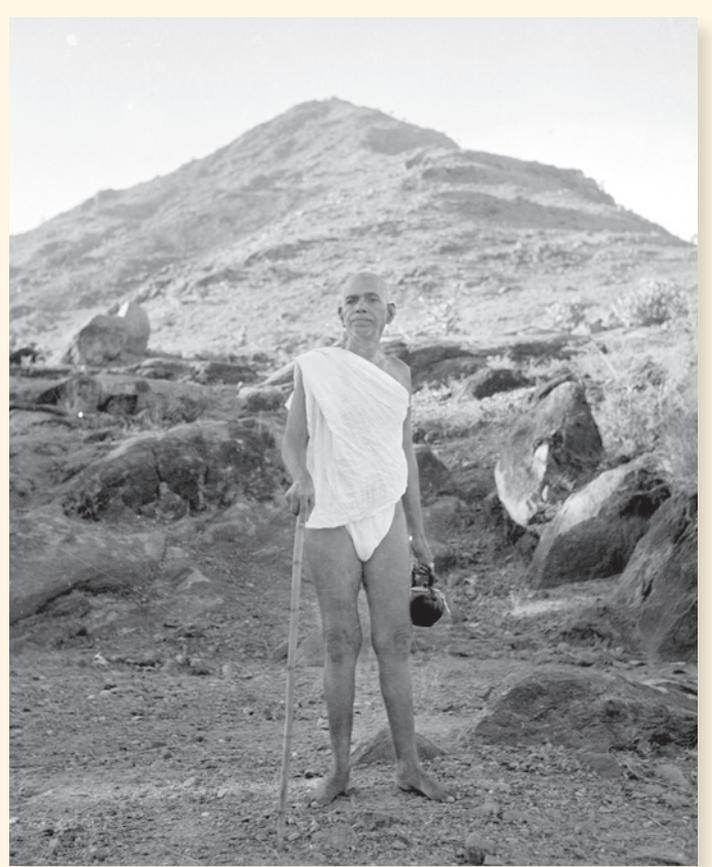




Bhagavan spoke of a tunnel that passed under the center of the Hill. He said it contained large caves that provided dwelling places for yogis and *siddha purushas*. The tunnel is believed to connect Adi Annamalai Temple, near its kitchen under the eastern wall, and Arunachaleswara in its second prakara. Bhagavan described Arunagiri as having a vast interior in which even “an army battalion” could stay and perform tapas.⁹ He had an intimation of all this in a vision. He says of the vision: “[I was on the Hill and] wandering about aimlessly when I found at one place a big cave. When I entered the cave, I saw a number of waterfalls, beautiful gardens with tanks, well-laid paths and fine lighting; everything there was most pleasing. As I went farther and farther I saw a *Siddha Purusha* seated like Dakshinamurthy under a tree on the banks of a tank. Around him, a number of *munis* were seated. They were asking something and he was replying to them. That place seemed very familiar to me. [Then] I opened my eyes. Later when I read *Arunachala Puranam* in Sanskrit, I found the following slokas wherein Lord Siva says: *Here I always abide as the Siddha and I am worshipped by devas. In the interior of my Heart is transcendental glory with all the luxuries of the World. My effulgent form in its mellowed appearance is known as the Aruna Hill. Meditating on this mighty Linga of mine one should do pradakshina slowly.*

“In these two slokas [the same] cave and [the same] *Siddha Purusha* have been described and so I was

⁹ *Ramana Leela*, p. 302.



surprised that what appeared to me in a trance was to be found in the book and so translated them into Tamil: *Though you are in the form of fire, you have kept away the fire and have taken the shape of a hill mainly to shower your blessings on the people. You are always living here in the form of a Siddha. The cave that appeared to me is in you with all the luxuries of the world.*¹⁰

¹⁰ *Letters*, 15th January, 1949.

Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi: Aham and ‘I am’

Everyone knows ‘I am.’ There is the confusion that the ‘I’ is the body. Because the ‘I’ arises from the Absolute and gives rise to buddhi (Intellect). In buddhi the ‘I’ looks the size and shape of the body, na medhaya means that Brahman cannot be apprehended by buddhi. Brahman > aham (‘I-I’) > buddhi (intellect). How can such buddhi crossing over aham discover Brahman? It is impossible. Just get over the false conception of the ‘I’ being the body. Discover to whom the thoughts arise. If the present ‘I’-ness vanishes, the discovery is complete. What remains over is the pure Self.

— Talks §54





Adi Annamalai Kovil Mahakumbhabhishekam, 9th February 1996

The Tunnel Discovered

During the Virupaksha Days, not long after Bhagavan's vision, extensive reparations of Adi Annamalai Kovil were in progress. One day temple authorities notified Bhagavan that they had uncovered a tunnel within the temple itself. Those who investigated the tunnel explored quite some distance inward and found that it travelled toward the centre of the hill. The next day when Bhagavan went for pradakshina, he stopped on the way and had a look. After seeing it, he wondered about what he had read in the Purana and how it appeared to be true, and that the tunnel may well be the way to the place he had seen in his vision. He later mused: "It is reported that *Siddha Purushas* come from the cave inside to the temple through that tunnel night after night and go back after worshipping Ishwara."¹¹

¹¹ *Letters*, 15th January, 1949.

Bhagavan did not tell anyone about all this but when temple authorities sought his counsel as to what should be done regarding the tunnel, he recommended that they not examine it further but seal it immediately.¹² It is not known what Bhagavan's reasons were but it is presumed that he felt that the inner reaches of the Holy Hill should not be trespassed by ordinary mortals, that the Hill's inner secrets, its innermost *sanctum sanctorum*, should remain pristine and unsullied. Temple authorities heeded Bhagavan's advice and duly sealed the tunnel, leaving devotees ever to marvel about what unfathomable mysteries lie hidden in the depths of Holy Annamalai.

Postscript

Following the sealing of the tunnel, further repairs were made to Adi Annamalai Kovil and, finally, after 15 years of work, Mahakumbhabhishekam of the temple was performed in 1918. Financed by a group of Chettiars, the renovation was in reality no less than a full reconstruction as original temple structures including prakara walls and gopuram, built by the legendary Pandya king, Vajrangada, had fallen into complete ruin. But following the Mahakumbhabhishekam of 1918, Adi Annamalai Kovil would have to wait nearly fifty years before Kumbhabhishekam was performed anew. Yet the 1967 Kumbhabhishekam, owing to lack of funds, involved no restoration work. So it was another twenty-five years when, in 1993, after three-quarters of a century of neglect, the temple was finally restored. The initiative was launched with the assistance of Bhagavan's devotees, most notably, Swami Ramananda, a devotee residing for more than four decades on the western side of the Hill, and involved two years of work until 9th February 1996 when Mahakumbhabhiskam was performed.

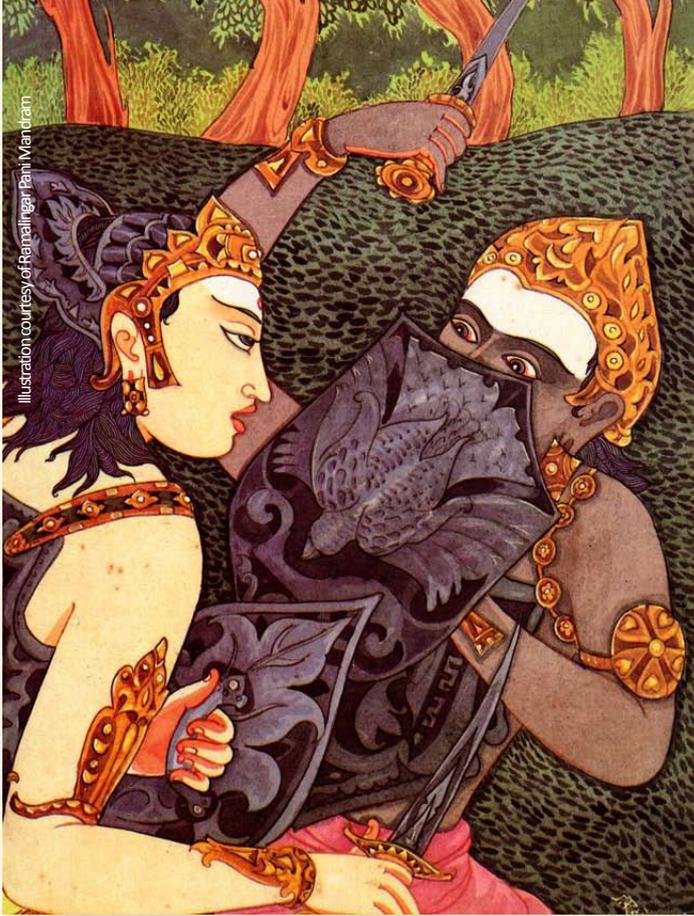
The year 2011 saw another renovation effort and Mahakumbhabhishekam of Adi Annamalai Kovil was performed on 15th July, 2012. Today the temple shines in full glory, enjoying daily visits from devotees and on poornima days, seeing tens of thousands of pilgrims. —

¹² Kunjuswami's *Reminiscences*, p. 26.





From Periapuranam: Yenaadhi Naayanaar



Yenaadhi was captain of the Eazhas tribe in the fortified city of Ainanoor. His service to devotees wearing the sacred ash magnified his reputation as a devotee of the Lord and a man of dharma, but his skill in swordsmanship caused him to be thronged by students, arousing the jealousy of Athisooran, another teacher of swordsmanship in the region.

One day the adversary came with his men to challenge Yenaadhi, who hearing the taunts, emerged like a young lion from its den as his students and kinsmen gathered round. Combat could not be averted but within a few hours, Athisooran had retreated in defeat.

Athisooran strategized his next offensive. Deciding that he could only win by deceit, the following day, for the first time in his life, he smeared white bhasma (ash)—the signature of Siva devotees—on his forehead. Concealing his face with a metal shield, he challenged Yenaadhi to one-on-one combat. Once accepted, the two set about to fight each other. But just when Yenaadhi gained the upper hand, Athisooran let down his shield to reveal his bhasma-smeared forehead. Yenaadhi stood transfixed, admonishing himself for having almost killed a devotee of the Lord. Though he suspected affectation on the part of his adversary, he dared not fight him further as the sacred white ash should be honoured at all costs. The villain took advantage of the opportunity and plunged his sword deep into the heart of Yenaadhi. As the saint lay dying, the

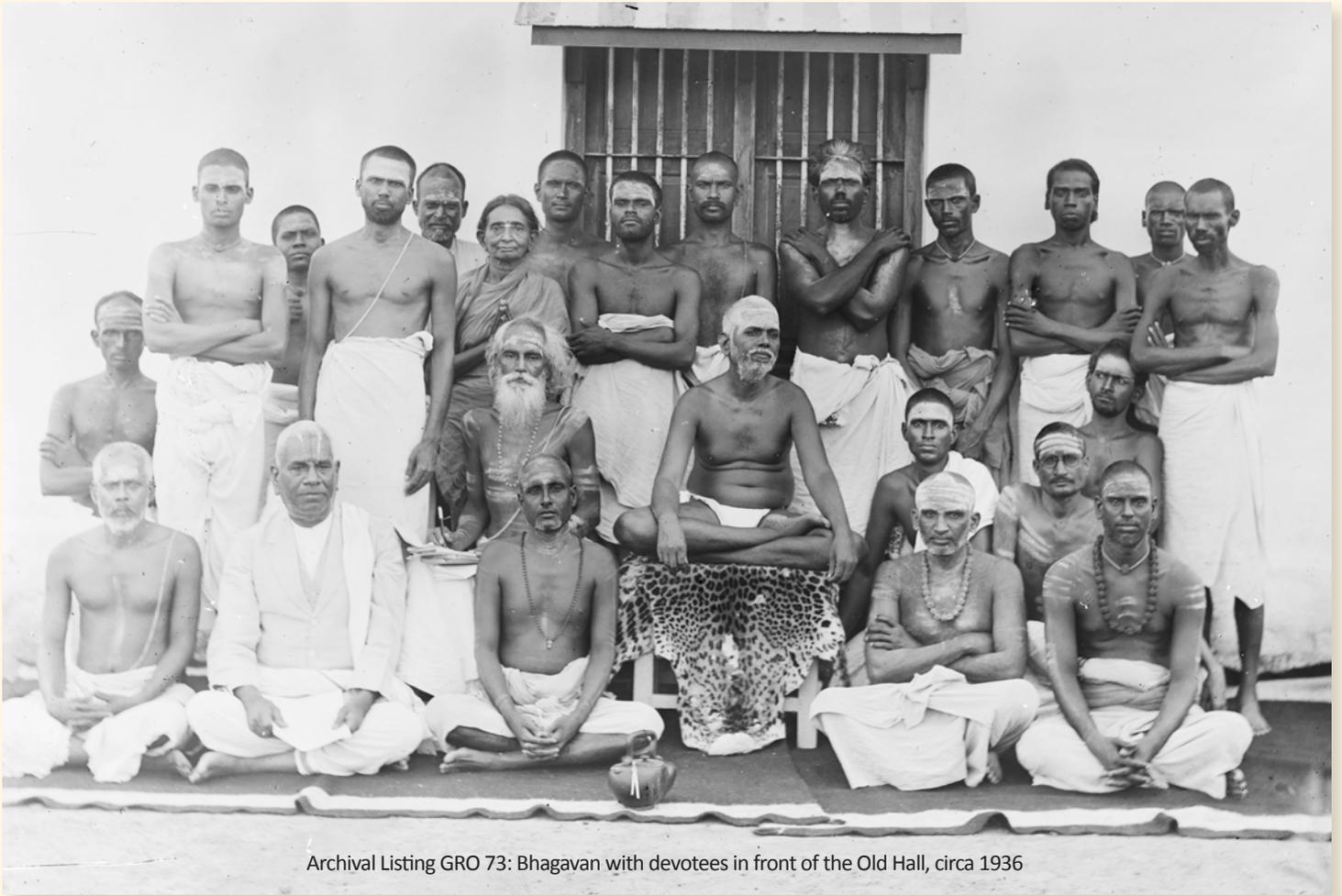
Lord recognised his glory, gave him darshan and removed the last traces of bondage. He then bid the saint to come and dwell with Him at Kailaas forever. (*Yenaadhi Naayanaar's aradhana day falls on the 2nd October*)

Wordwise: Aham अहम्

Aham: the 'I', ego, self-consciousness; subject (vs. *idam*: object); first person singular, 'I am' as in the mahavakya, *Aham Brahmasmi* ("I am brahman"); pure inner Self (Samkhya). *Aham* is cognate with proto-Indo-European *egom*, giving rise to Dutch *ik*, Ger *ich*, Swed *jag*, Nor/Dan *jeg*, Gk/Lat *ego* and Old Eng, *ic*, whose later-elided consonant left the 1st pers. sing. pronoun, 'I'. (OED) *Ahamkara*: ('I' + 'maker'): I-former, I-doing; the principle of individuation, creator of the sense of a separate entity, source of pride, egoism.

In Vedanta, *ahamkara* is the source of the egoic delusion, while *aham* is supreme I - awareness, *atma*, the pure Self. Bhagavan points out that *aham* begins and ends with the first and last letters, respectively, of the Sanskrit alphabet, and is thus 'all-inclusive'. He also says: "Brahman abides as Aham in everyone. Find out the 'I'. 'I' and 'this' appear together now. But 'this' is contained in the 'I', they are not apart. 'This' has to merge into and become one with 'I'. The 'I' that [results] is the true 'I'. (*Talks* §266, §626)





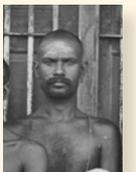
Archival Listing GRO 73: Bhagavan with devotees in front of the Old Hall, circa 1936

In the Frame with Bhagavan



Muruganar: great poet/scholar whose Tamil poetry is said to be matched only by that of classical Sangam masters. For the first five years of his life, he did not speak a word but after his matriculation, he earned the respect of the local royal family whose association led to his inclusion in a committee to create a Tamil lexicon. Muruganar's father-in-law Dhandapani Swami gave him Bhagavan's *Arunachala Stuti Panchakam* and *Who Am I* prompting him to make his way to Tiruvannamalai (21st of September, 1923) where his life would be forever changed.

Polur Ranga Rao: set up an Ashram at Polur. A tireless worker knowledgeable in Ayurveda and an efficient cook, when the Ashram kitchen and dining hall was built in 1938, he was entrusted with its management. As an early riser, it was usually he who reached the kitchen first after Bhagavan each morning.



Ramakrishna Swami: personally asked by Bhagavan to become his attendant. In speaking of his dedication in service, Bhagavan said, "He spent a lot of time outside the Ashram on Ashram business. He never came to parayana nor did he ever listen to the teachings in the hall."

Mastan: a weaver from Desur, who, though a Muslim by birth, dressed and followed the life of a begging sadhu even before he came to Bhagavan. As he thought of himself as a 'devotee of devotees', he was wont to serve Bhagavan's devotees with tenacious loyalty. Of him Bhagavan said: 'When he first came, he was already ripe. None else was so ripe.'





Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Navaratri

Navaratri pays homage to Yogambika, Mother Goddess Durga, who has been revered since pre-Vedic times. She is praised in the "Devi Sukta" of the Rigveda where she proclaims, "I am Everything". It was to her that Lord Krishna made appeal for an outcome favourable to the Pandavas long before the Kurukshetra War was fought.

On Navaratri, women follow the tradition of wearing nine colours in the course of the celebrations and daily venerate young girls and ladies of the community, worshipping them as Devi Herself. This year at the Ashram, alankaram (decoration) themes of the 'nine nights' began with Goddess Meenakshi, and would be followed by Gaja Lakshmi, Tapas, Linga Puja, Rishabha Vahanam, Sesa Sayanam, Venuganam, Saraswati and lastly Mahishasura Mardini, culminating on the tenth day with Vijayadasami which celebrates the victory over the buffalo-demon. Saraswati Pujas took place in the bookstall, library and dispensary on the afternoon the ninth day while the festival's first three evenings concluded with Carnatic music programmes in the Library Auditorium. Garba/dandiya dances were conducted in the Granathalaya Auditorium each afternoon.





Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Sri Ramanasramam Pictorial Postal Cancellation

In the 1930s a mischievous devotee set up a hut in the flower garden of Durga Ambal Temple imagining that his was the true *Ramana Ashram*. He even went so far as to insist that Sri Ramanasramam post and packages be handed over to him. When Pannalal, the Chief Secretary of the then United Provinces in the North India, heard about it during a visit to the Ashram, he raised the issue with the Post Master General at Madras, paving the way for the establishment of a post office for Sri Ramanasramam in 1937. These many decades since, Sri Ramanasramam Post Office continues faithfully to serve devotees-residents in Ramana Nagar.

By tradition the India Post honours great souls, historical personages and heritage sites with commemorative Permanent Pictorial Cancellation (PPC), the postal marking applied to a postage stamp to prevent its re-use (which usually includes date, post office location and bars to cover the stamp). These stamp impressions are collected by philatelists the world over.

On Bhagavan's 118th Advent Day (September 1st), Mervin Alexander, the Post Master General-Chennai, and other postal officials came to the Ashram to release the *Permanent Pictorial Cancellation*, replete with the Ashram logo and the letters 'Sri Ramanasramam' in Devanagari and Roman scripts.



Ashram Heritage Sites: Dining Hall Veranda Restoration



The veranda portion of the Ashram dining hall got an overhaul. Damaged rafters and roof tiles were replaced and repainted. T-bricks were laid on the walkway in front of the dining hall extending up to the new library building. The heavy concrete water tanks above the veranda were moved and replaced by new lightweight stainless steel tanks.



“Learn to chant Aksharamanamalai” is a new android app available here <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.ramana.learnchantaaksharamanamalai>. Now iphone app is also available for “Voice of Arunachala” here <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/voice-of-arunachala/id908681555?ls=1&mt=8>

