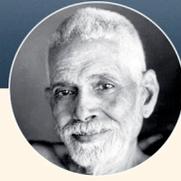


Saranagati



SARANAGATI
SRI RAMANASRAMAM

SEPTEMBER 2016
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IN THIS
ISSUE

Dear Devotees,

September begins with the auspicious Advent celebrations, the day of Sri Bhagavan's arrival to Tiruvannamalai in 1896 together with Muruganar Day Observances with odhuvars chanting at his samadhi. Special mahanyasa puja is performed on the morning of the 1st September.

The current issue takes a look at how G. Santhanam Iyengar came to Bhagavan at the age of 33 after the untimely demise of his beloved wife. His many direct encounters with Bhagavan won him over as a devotee and Iyengar returned again and again even in the years following Bhagavan's Mahanirvana, eventually settling at the Ashram.

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

1st September (Thurs) Advent and Muruganar Day
16th September (Fri) Full Moon
25th September (Sun) Punarvasu Day
1st October (Sat) Navaratri Festival Commences
10th October (Mon) Saraswati Puja
11th October (Tues) Vijayadasami Day
15th October (Sat) Full Moon

22nd October (Sat) Punarvasu Day
29th October (Sat) Deepavali
14th November (Mon) Full Moon
19th November (Mon) Punarvasu Day
12th December (Mon) Kartigai Deepam
12th December (Tues) Full Moon
16th December (Fri) Punarvasu Day





Coming to Bhagavan: G. Santhanam Iyengar

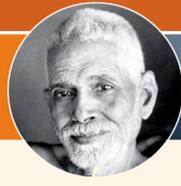
Until my thirty-second year I did not have any special inclination for spiritual pursuits. I was living with my wife in Tanjavur where I was a teacher. But suddenly my outlook on life changed. I distinctly remember even now the exact date on which it happened. It started with a vivid sense of the impermanence of all the things which I had valued

in life. I realised that God is the only unchanging Reality. I therefore began to adore Him and to pray to Him in the usual manner by reciting hymns of praise like the *Dakshinamurti Stotra* and *Subrahmanya Bhujanga Stotra* of Sankaracharya, the *Dhyana Sopana* of Vedanta Desika and *Mukundamala* of Kulasekhara. Sometimes tears flowed from my eyes while reciting them. Shortly after this my wife died. Although I was only thirty-three at that time I did not remarry. The worldly life had lost its charm for me. I continued my daily prayers. To the hymns of praise I added nama japa or the repetition of the name of Rama into which I was initiated by one Guha Das of Sengali.

Bhagavan said, "It is true that the work meant to be done by us will be done by us. But it is open to us to be free from the joys or pains, pleasant or unpleasant consequences of the work, by not identifying ourselves with the body or that which does the work. If you realise your true nature and know that it is not you that do any work, you will be unaffected by the consequences of whatever work the body may be engaged in according to destiny or past karma or divine plan, however you may call it. You are always free and there is no limitation of that freedom." (*Day by Day with Bhagavan*, 3-1-46).

I maintained a diary in which I used to note down the time spent by me daily in prayer, meditation, etc. I devoted on an average six hours a day for these practices. Although my hymns and prayers were addressed to several gods, Rama was the god for whom I had a natural liking and love. I used to sit before his picture and gaze at it intently. On such occasions I would see a halo of stars and bright lights around his face. Sometimes I saw him smile at me. About this time, I came across a book of Swami Ram Tirtha in which there was an article on the True Self. This appealed to me very strongly and I read it repeatedly. After about two years of this kind of sadhana I prayed to Rama one day before going to bed to vouchsafe His grace to me and to uplift me spiritually. I prostrated before his picture with extreme devotion. That night I had a dream in which I saw some thatched sheds, trees and





a hall in which a holy person was sitting in the middle of devotees. I heard a voice telling me to wake up and go immediately to see Sri Ramana Maharshi who was bestowing his grace on all. This dream made such a deep impression on me that I caught the next train to Tiruvannamalai and arrived there the following day. I had previously visited Tiruvannamalai on my way to Tirupati, but I had not then heard of the Maharshi or his Ashram and had therefore gone away after seeing the Arunachaleswara temple and Pavala Kunru. When, therefore, I reached the Ashram I was surprised to see the very same buildings and trees which I had seen in my dream.

After taking my bath I went to the hall and sat before Bhagavan. As I looked at him I saw around him a halo which was exactly like the one I used to see around Rama. During the two days of my stay I spent almost all my time sitting before him experiencing a strange peace and tranquillity. When I took leave of Bhagavan I implored him to bestow his grace upon me. He nodded his head in assent. Gradually it began to dawn upon me that it was Rama who had directed me to Bhagavan and that Rama and Ramana were one and the same. But when the person who had initiated me into nama japa came to know of my visit to Sri Ramanasramam he was displeased and warned

me that I would meet with some disaster. I, however, began to study books about Bhagavan and went to the Ashram regularly every year during the Jayanti and the Mahapuja, staying for two or three days. Once I came at the time of the Deepam Festival and stayed for seven days. On one of these days, when I was alone with Bhagavan, I narrated my story to him and had the supreme blessing of hearing from his lips that I had his grace and need not fear any disaster or obstacle to my sadhana.

I retired from service in 1956 when I attained the age of sixty, but continued to live at Tanjavur until 1960 when I received a call from the Ashram President to come and help him with the Ashram accounts in the absence of Chelliah who had suddenly fallen seriously ill and was not likely to resume his duties for a long time. I looked upon this as a call from Bhagavan and accordingly came and took charge of the Ashram accounts. I have since then been attending to this work more or less continuously and at the same time devoting as much time as possible to prayer, meditation and Self-enquiry as taught by Bhagavan. I also teach the boys of the Vedapatasala, English, Tamil and arithmetic for an hour daily. I wish and hope to spend my remaining days doing such service to Sri Bhagavan.

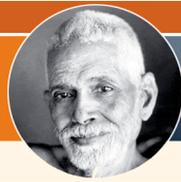
— *Mountain Path*, July 1973, pp. 155-56.

Wordwise: Sadhana साधन

Sadhana (from *sadh* meaning 'to bring about'; *sadhyai*: 'to fulfil') is 'a means to accomplish something' and usually denotes a variety of spiritual disciplines such as contemplation, asceticism, worship, repetition of a holy name, etc.

In *Talks*, Bhagavan gives a concise and thorough definition of the term in question. He says: "Sadhana amounts to the removal of [that which is an] obstacle to the realisation of abiding truth... Concentration is not thinking one thing. It is, on the other hand, putting off all thoughts which obstruct the vision of our true nature. Our efforts are only directed to lifting the veil of ignorance. [In the early stages] it appears difficult to quell thoughts. [But] in the regenerate state, it will be found more difficult to call in thoughts. For are there [really] things to think of? [Rather] there is only the Self." (*Talks* §398)





Favourite Stories of Bhagavan: Sukra and Sage Bhrgu

[When devotees were speaking with Bhagavan in the hall about the white peacock who was believed to be Bhagavan's attendant, Madhava, who had died recently in Kumbhakonam, a devotee asked, "If so, will the [peacock] know who [he] was in [his] last birth?"

Bhagavan answered, "How could he? No one knows about his previous birth. People forget, and that forgetfulness is good. In this one life alone, we are sometimes terribly worried over what happened in the past. Could we bear such worries if we knew all about our previous births? Knowing the facts of previous births means knowing one's own Self. If that is known, this birth and the previous births will be seen to be of the mind and its desires (sankalpa) only. See in how many different ways this creation has been described in the Vasistham. When Gadhi asked Krishna to show him his illusory bodies (maya swarupam), He showed him innumerable forms. The story of Lavana Maharaja

is also like that, and the story of Sukra is still more interesting. It is told that Sukra remained for a long time in samadhi. He took several births and at last was born as a brahmin leading an austere life on Mount Meru. In the meanwhile, without realizing it, his original body in samadhi had been overcome with insects. His father Bhrgu with the God of Death (Kala) in their human bodies (sthula sarira) went to him and told him all that had happened during his births and rebirths. Sukra then accompanied them both and saw his original body restored and, with the permission of the God of Death, entered it" (Letters, 21-11-47). The following is the complete tale that Bhagavan alluded to.]

The mountain Mandaragiri in the Puranic legends was used by Gods and demons to churn the ocean of milk in the pursuit of nectar. The mountain was also a hermitage and refuge for ascetics. The churning of the ocean of milk led to the creation of sweet nectar and terrible poison, the contrasting effects of which are still evident on the mountain. The poison instigates hatred for worldly life in the sages performing tapas. The nectar on the other hand, instils love for the state of Brahman, the pleasure of which equals that of consuming the very nectar!

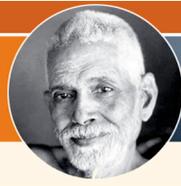
Lord Vishnu took the form of a tortoise to support the mountain during the churning of the ocean. On its slopes sits a banyan tree, the large branches of which provide comforting shade.

Sage Bhrgu was immersed in penance inside one of the nearby hermitages. In a trance, the sage was completely oblivious to body consciousness. His son Sukra, resplendent with the brightness of the moon, was serving his father. However, he oscillated between the real and the unreal and was impacted by the forces of ego and attachment from time to time.

The mind of a *jnani* is absorbed in the Self, and does not maintain an identity of its own. A forcibly repressed mind on the other hand, recoils and rises like a submerged balloon that cannot stay under the water.

Sukra felt the effect of recoil. While meditating, he saw a beautiful lady in his mental canvas. He was greatly attracted to her physical charms and wanted to seek her. Through his mental powers, he found out that she was a celestial beauty and reached heaven.





Indra extended all courtesy in welcoming Sukra. Sukra was able to meet the lady whom he had pursued all the way there. The celestial beauty offered herself to the son of the sage. In the shade of the wish-fulfilling tree the couple enjoyed each other for eight cycles of eons. Sukra, though not satiated, recovered his senses before all the powers he had accumulated by his penances withered away. And so, he returned to earth.

He lost his identity though. His soul, juxtaposed with the rays of the moon, dropped as dew on a paddy field. He found himself in the virility of a brahmin belonging to the Kingdom of Dasarna, who partook of the rice grown in those fields. The wife of the brahmin conceived him and he was born as their son. He started his ascetic activities from his boyhood and acquired certain spiritual powers. Since his goal was not the acquisition of knowledge, he could not overcome the attractions of the world. He took a series of births and finally was born as the son of a sage in the vicinity of the sacred Ganges.

Meanwhile, the lifeless body of Sukra continued lying on the Mandaragiri mountain. No force dared destroy his body due to the power of Bhrigu's presence. Eventually, when Bhrigu opened his eyes, he was enraged to see that the body of his son had become an abode for insects. Without enquiring into the cause for this, he prepared to curse Lord Yama in a fit of rage.

Then, Yama made His appearance in front of Bhrigu. Taking a form made of the five elements with six faces and six arms full of various types of weapons and accompanied by His large retinue, he addressed Bhrigu placatingly: "Oh powerful sage! We, who carry out the orders of Parameswara, cannot but admire the power of your penance. Why do you need to waste your power through vindictiveness? Please listen to me. Not even the fire of the holocaust can approach me. Will your



childish blabber of a curse scare me? There is no count of the creators, sustainers and destroyers of eons after eons whom I just crunch and swallow. Nothing can escape the fatal crunch of my teeth. Neither the atoms nor the mighty galaxies. This however is the command of Maheswara and is not my desire. The order of Parama Siva is ruthless, inviolable and enduring."

"It is only my affection for you that brought me here. The affection for sages and ascetics is overpowering for all Gods. They overlook certain weaknesses and blemishes of the tapasvin. Now pay attention. You have acquired power and a number of virtues but have failed to acquire true knowledge. Till you acquire that there will always be someone superior to you. When you acquire it though, you will have no individuality, no

Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi: Sadhana

D.: Bliss is the outcome of practice (*sadhana*). What is that practice?

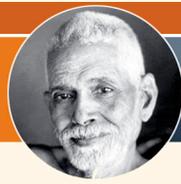
M.: *Sadhana* is enquiry [into] whom these doubts arise.

D.: Guidance is necessary to show me the way.

M.: Go within and find the route. You cannot find it from without; nor should you seek it externally.

— Talks §290





identity. In your ego-less state, you will see no 'other'. You will grieve for none. You will be angry with none. There is only one entity, the Atman. That is the only destination for all who wear the body. It alone is the supreme goal. That is 'I'. Achieve the state of equanimity by knowing 'That'. As for your son, he was delusional and was infatuated with the celestial damsel, Viswachi. This led to him indulging himself with her without even knowing her name. So, he lost all the powers that he had acquired due to his penance. He was born as the son of a brahmin in the kingdom of Dasarna, as the king of Kosala, as a hunter in the forest, as a swan in the Ganges, as the king of the kingdom of Pundra from the solar dynasty, as the royal preceptor of the Salva Kings, as the leader of Vidyadharas, as the son of ascetics, as the king of a tributary of the Sowveera kingdom, as a head of Saiva order, as a bamboo bush in the woods, as a deer, as a python and finally as the son of a sage in the sacred vicinity of the Ganges. He is now called Vamadeva and is abiding in the Self after conquering his senses". So expounded the God of Death.

Sage Bhrigu visualized the entire scenario with his divine stature. He realised the truth of all that Yama had said and sought his pardon. "Oh Lord, You are the compassionate one who is aware of the past, present and future. The real knower of Brahman is the one who understands that your act of destruction is but the manifestation of your overpowering grace. People like me who possess half-knowledge and are consumed by ego, only advocate the illusory world. In attempting to curse

you, I have exhibited audacity to the extreme, and for this I am willing to accept any punishment that you deem fit".

The Lord of time tenderly took Bhrigu into his fold and escorted him to the banks of the Ganges. They saw Bhrigu's son who went by the name of Vasudeva and who dazzled with the splendour of the knowledge of Brahman. Bhrigu was overjoyed. By the grace of Yama, Vasudeva opened his eyes and offered his respects to both of them, recapitulated all his previous births and wondered how he had fallen victim to such delusion. The three then returned to Mandara mountain. Looking at his former body, Sukra addressed his father, "This is the body filled with flesh and blood, bones and filth that you were attached to, calling it your son. You made such a fuss about it. It is the deluded mind that caused all this attachment. How sacred and auspicious is the state that is devoid of the mind."

Then, Yama instructed Vasudeva, "My son! You are now purified. Embody yourself in your former body and become the preceptor of the asuras." Thus blessing him, the Lord disappeared.

The venerable sage Bhrigu sanctified the body of Sukra by sprinkling it with some sacred water from the pot. Vasudeva re-entered his former body and rose as Sukra again. He touched his father's feet in all devotion even as Bhrigu kissed his head and embraced him.

Both of them achieved salvation in their lifetimes and discharged their duties as ordained by the Lord, duly exemplifying the saying that the body is an instrument for the service of fellow beings. —

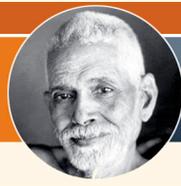
Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Expanded Ashram Parayanam



The recitation of sacred texts at Sri Ramanasramam goes back to the early days at Skandasramam where Bhagavan joined devotees in regular chanting of the Ribhu Gita, an ancient advaitic text taken from the Siva Rahasya, as well as other classical advaitic texts. He esteemed the hymns of the legendary Tamil poets, such as Sundarar, Appar, Jnanasambandar and Manikkavachakar, whose *Tiruvachakam*, for example, was recited by devotees throughout the night on the occasion of

the mahasamadhi of Bhagavan's mother in May, 1922. Realising the spiritual benefit of the study and repetition of Bhagavan's poetical works, devotees started regular recitation (*parayana*). Kunjuswami, a long-time devotee and attendant





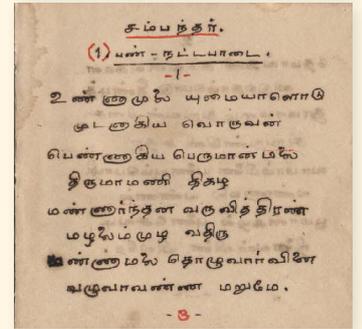
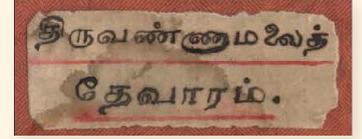
Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Expanded Ashram Parayanam (cont.)

of Bhagavan, said that when he first came to Sri Bhagavan in 1920, Bhagavan's mother was in the habit of reciting devotional songs each morning between 4 - 5 am. When she completed her recitation, other devotees would chant *Aksharamanamalai*, *Appalap Paattu* and *Sri Dakshinamurti Stotram* among others. In the course of time, Bhagavan composed new works which were incorporated into the daily chanting repertoire. By the late 1940s the parayana cycle had grown to fifteen days and consisted of more than thirty works. The fifteen-day cycle can be divided into four main categories: 1. Original works of Bhagavan in Tamil, Telugu, Sanskrit and Malayalam; 2. Works translated by Bhagavan from Sanskrit into Tamil and Malayalam; 3. Verses selected by Bhagavan from ancient Tamil and Sanskrit texts; and 4. Works in praise of Sri Bhagavan by devotees.

Reciting these verses each evening at 6:30 became a regular practice though in the decades since Bhagavan's Mahanirvana the fifteen-day cycle was reduced to a weekly cycle focused on Bhagavan's poetical works.

In order to recover some of the content of the earlier cycle, about nine years ago, Sanskrit Parayanam was introduced on Sunday mornings (9.30 am) with works such as *Mukta Trayam*, Nayana's *Satdarshan* (with Supplement), *Bhagavad Gita Saram* (the 42 verses selected by Sri Bhagavan), selections from the *Arunachala Mahatmayam* and Adi Shankara's *Dakshinamurti Stotram*. Just one year back, Sunday evening parayana (6.30 pm) was introduced, alternating bi-weekly with *Vivekachudamani* in Sanskrit and Tamil plus *Upadesa Saram*, *Gita Saram* and *Ekatma Panchakam* in Malayalam on the one Sunday and the second Sunday with *Satdarshan* (with Supplement) and *Ekatma Panchakam* in Malayalam.

Just last month, a Saturday morning parayanam (9.30 am) was introduced, focusing on the Tiruvannamalai and Tiruchuli *Thevarams* by the Saints Jnanasambandar, Appar and Sundaramurti including one verse by Manikkavachakar. It is hoped to include these chanting texts in future editions of the parayana publications.



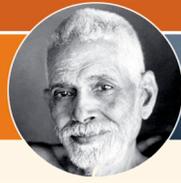
Tiruvannamalai Thevaram in Bhagavan's Handwriting

Events in Tiruvannamalai: Sri Arunachaleswarar Temple Renovation 2016



Renovation is underway at Sri Arunachaleswarar Temple where the thousand-pillar hall, temple gopurams, stonework, deities, paintings and ceremonial utensils are being refurbished and will culminate in Mahakumbhabhishekam (rededication ceremony). The rededication is scheduled for February 2017, (though exact dates have not yet been determined). The last Mahakumbhabhishekam at the Big Temple took place in June 2002, when hundreds of Sivacharyas and purohitis performed homas at dozens of agni kundams in the yagasala. Prior to 2002, Kumbhabhishekams of Arunachaleswara Temple took place in 1976, 1944 and 1918.





Events in Tiruvannamalai: Pavalakunru Mahakumbhabhishekam



Pavalakunru sits atop a small spur on the eastern face of Arunachala. It is at the foot of this hillock that Goddess Parvati is said to have performed penance under the guidance of Rishi Gautama and there that Lord Siva appeared to her, pleased by her tapas and prayer. Sri Bhagavan stayed at Pavalakunru from September 1898 for about six months during which time his mother paid him her first visit following his advent to Arunachala.

This ancient temple has been thoroughly renovated and restored under Ashram supervision and support. Devotees are invited to attend Mahakumbhabhishekam ceremonies in the month of October (exact dates to be announced soon).

Obituary: Smt. Sulochana Natarajan



Sulochana Natarajan (Music director, Ramana Maharshi Centre for Learning, Bangalore) was born in a family whose life breath was karnatic classical music. She was blessed to see Bhagavan on a visit to Sri Ramanasramam in May 1949 as a girl of 13 years and was initiated into Ramana Music by Manavasi Ramaswami Iyer in 1956, who insisted on teaching her. Caught young in the net of Bhagavan's grace, she flowered into an ardent, dedicated devotee and her whole life was an uninterrupted saga of service to her guru. Equipped with excellent musical acumen and training, she was encouraged by her husband A.R. Natarajan, the dynamic Founder-President of RMCL, Bangalore, and passionate devotee of Bhagavan. Sulochana Amma was also ably assisted by her talented and dedicated daughters. She contributed substantially to the growth of the Centre as a

hub for Ramana music, dance and devotion, notating over one thousand songs on Bhagavan, most of them by Muruganar, and publishing countless cassettes, CDs, videos and books as well as training boys and girls in Ramana music and ballets. Sulochana Amma was absorbed in Bhagavan Ramana around 8.15 pm on Tuesday, 23rd August 2016 at Bangalore at the age of 79. She was one of those devotees who lived, moved and had their being in Bhagavan Ramana.

Ramana Satsang on WhatsApp

Join Ramana satsang on WhatsApp and stay connected. Members will receive notification of important events, ashram photos and inspirational quotes from Sri Ramanasramam. If interested add 9442221896 to mobile contacts and send "RAMANA" as WhatsApp message to that number.

