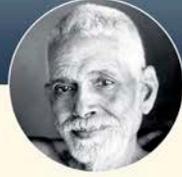


## Saranagati



APRIL 2013  
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IN THIS  
ISSUE

Dear Devotees,

This issue of *Saranagati* carries the fourth part of the life story of Prof. K. Swaminathan, who came to Bhagavan in 1940 and who would later found, each in its turn, two major Ramana Kendras, the Madras Ramana Kendra (1950) and Delhi Ramana Kendra (1960).

*Sri Ramanasramam Heritage Sites*, a column dedicated to Ashram locations associated with the genesis of the Ashram, this issue introduces the history of the Old Hall.

*Wordwise* this month looks at *samsara* and *Events at Sri Ramanasramam* features Mahasivratri on the 10th March followed by the 3-day Maharudram (12-14th March) and Sri Vidya Havan on the 15th March.

For further news and events, go to <http://www.sriramanamaharshi.org> or write to us at [saranagathi@sriramanamaharshi.org](mailto:saranagathi@sriramanamaharshi.org)

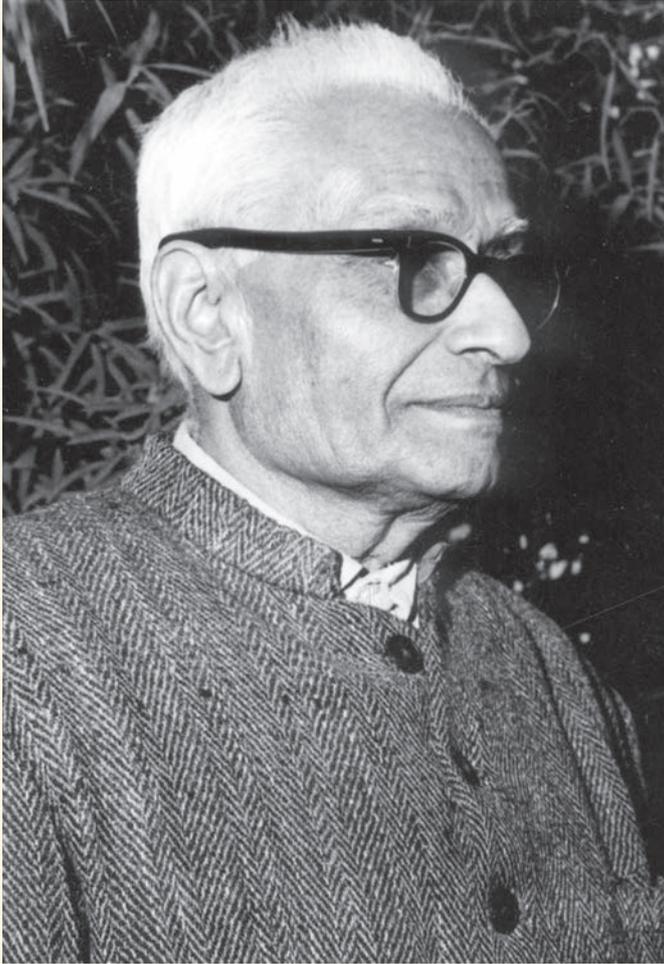
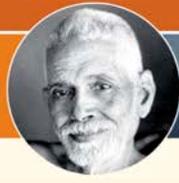
In Sri Bhagavan,  
The Editorial Team

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## Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi: Samsara

M.: Samsara is only in your mind. The world does not speak out, saying 'I am the world'. Otherwise, it must be ever there — not excluding your sleep. Since it is not in sleep, it is impermanent. The Self alone is permanent. On the disappearance of ignorance, the non-self ceases to exist.... So it is with the waking world also. Just as the dream-world, being only a part of yourself and not different from you, ceases to interest you, so also the present world would cease to interest you if you awake from this waking dream (*samsara*) and realise that it is a part of your Self, and not an objective reality. Because you think that you are apart from the objects around you, you desire a thing. But if you [understood] that the thing was only a thought-form, you would no longer desire it. —*Talks §251, §625*





## Coming to Bhagavan: The Life of Prof. K. Swaminathan (part four)

Prof. K Swaminathan left Presidency College in 1948 to accept a promotion as principal of the Government Mohamaden College. After five years, he retired from academics and took an associate editorship with *The Indian Express* in 1953. Now free from scholastic responsibilities, he devoted himself entirely to writing, translating and editing.

Already in the early 1930s he gained notoriety as a writer for his Tamil opera *Kattai Vandil*<sup>1</sup>, a satirical piece parodying the politics of the day and performed to great critical acclaim before Tamil audiences throughout India.

<sup>1</sup> 'The Bullock Cart' (1934) based on Gilbert & Sullivan's *Gondiers*.

### Standardising Language Study

In the years following Independence, efforts were made to research the optimal manner for standardizing the teaching of languages in India and determining what scripts should be adopted. KS prepared a report called 'Roman Script for Official Hindi' which carried weight in the national debates on the subject and involved official research missions to East Europe. KS's findings led him to conclude that making use of the Roman script (rather than Nagari) as the medium of Hindi throughout the country would avoid the necessity of South Indian students having to learn three separate scripts.

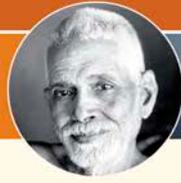
### The CWMG

During this same period KS produced two major translations in English, Vinoba Bhave's *Talks on the Geetha* and Rajaji's *Ramayana*, both of which were serialized in the *Indian Express*. Collaboration with these two eminent figures left an impression on the professor and, it would seem, on them as well: just a few years later in 1959 Vinoba Bhave<sup>2</sup> would approach Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru to recommend KS's name to head-up one of the most ambitious and comprehensive literary projects ever conceived, namely, collecting, collating, editing and publishing all the written works, recorded speeches, conversations and letters of Mahatma Gandhi. A colossal undertaking that would span three decades and comprise more than 40,000 pages in 99 large bound volumes, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (CWMG) was commissioned by Prime Minister Nehru in 1956 and supervised by an Advisory Board chaired by Morarji Desai. The project's first chief editor, Bharatan Kumarappa, died in the first year and the second editor, Jairamdas Daulatram, retired in 1959 to take up professional politics. Thus only three volumes had been completed.

Late in 1959, U.S. Mohan Rao<sup>3</sup> and colleagues from the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting

<sup>2</sup> Vinayak Narahari Bhave (1895-1982); nonviolence and human rights advocate and 'spiritual successor' to Gandhi.  
<sup>3</sup> Director of Publications Division in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Mohan Rao is said to have been pivotal in creating the Gandhi project and in having KS serve as chief editor.





arrived in Chennai to see Prof K. Swaminathan at 'Dharmalayam'. A puja to Bhagavan was underway in the family home and KS had no choice but to delay meeting with his esteemed guests, cordially requesting them to wait until the puja was over. After arati, KS offered apologies for the delay. When he heard the news from Delhi, he knew his life was about to change. Dr. B. V. Keskar, Minister of Information and Broadcasting, was formally inviting him to Delhi for an interview with the advisory board for the *Collected Works* for a position as the project's chief editor. During the interview Morarji Desai openly voiced his opposition telling KS directly that he was not fit for the job as he was not conversant in the relevant languages (Hindi and Gujarati), was not familiar with Gandhian scholarship and lived far away in South India. KS responded, "But I am well-read about the Alwars, the Tamil Vaishnavite Saint poets. Gandhiji belongs to the same category, does he not?"<sup>4</sup>

It is not clear how Desai was finally won over but KS got the job and soon enough he and his initially skeptical in-charge developed what was to be a lifelong friendship and collaboration.

### Two Maharajas

Once the matter was settled, Rajaji blessed the professor saying jovially, "The Gandhi project, alright; you will do it in a grand manner. But, alas, you are hugging Ramana Maharshi and suffering in a situation where you cannot give up. Will you be

4 S. Guhan had this to say on the subject: "KS was also fond of drawing attention to Gandhi's Tamil connection. 'Gandhi's greatest support in South Africa, not only in numbers but in solid moral strength,' he pointed out, 'came from the Tamil coolies—the Nagappans, Narayanaswamis and Valliammas.'" (*KS—A Tribute*, p. 23.)



Mahatma Gandhi and C. Rajagopalachari ('Rajaji')

able to serve both [maharajas], Gandhi and Ramana, in the Delhi *durbhar* (royal court)?"<sup>5</sup>

But KS took to editing the *Collected Works* with great enthusiasm, producing no less than four 500-page volumes in his first year. Each subsequent year saw the printing of additional volumes. In spite of the demands made on him, with some fifty scholars and linguists under his direction, KS attended to Bhagavan with equal care and devotion, writing articles on Bhagavan and in 1976, releasing his own book simply entitled, *Ramana Maharshi*, an important work that was eventually translated into other Indian

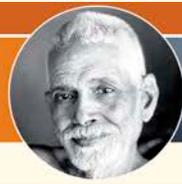
5 The issue would come up again years later when KS decided to resign the chief editorship and return to his native Tamil Nadu. KS had held weekly satsangs at his residence in Delhi and had long hoped for a permanent home for the Delhi Ramana Kendra. When Morarji Desai persisted in getting him to stay on, KS said, "But if I stay here, there has to be a place for Bhagavan." Desai agreed and indeed, it was Morarji Desai who helped in procuring the plot of land on which the flourishing Kendra would be permanently established. The inauguration for the Delhi Ramana Kendra in Lodi Institutional Complex took place on 1st September 1974.

## Reality in Forty Verses

22. Since it is insentient, this body does not say 'I'. And no one says: 'When I am asleep I do not exist'. After the 'I' arises, all else arises. When (one) investigates with a keen mind whence this 'I' arises, it will disappear.

— Sri Bhagavan





KS and Morarji Desai at Bhagavan's 99th Jayanti celebrations (1979)

languages and thus was distributed nationally.

In 1971 KS succeeded in winning a bid to have the first Ramana Maharshi commemorative postage stamp issued nationwide. A year later he was awarded the Padma Bushan for his work on the *Collected Works* and in 1980, he lobbied to have a

major arterial road in the Lodi Estate, New Delhi, renamed *Maharshi Ramana Marg*.<sup>6</sup>

### The Emergency Years

Before KS could complete his prodigious task and thus return home to Madras, various hurdles would have to be surmounted. Not least of all was the political crisis of the mid-1970s. Prior to the Emergency of 1975, the CWMG's senior advisor, Morarji Desai, who was also then serving as a Cabinet Minister, lost his cabinet seat and was placed under house arrest along with other opposition leaders. The powers-that-be found themselves in awkward circumstances concerning CWMG in consideration of the fact that Morarji Desai was a central figure in the project. They determined to dissolve the advisory board and sack Swaminathan.<sup>7</sup> So the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting sent the

<sup>6</sup> KS's two brothers, Dr. K. Venkataraman, director of the National Chemical Laboratory (Pune), and Dr. K.S. Sanjivi, founder of the Voluntary Health Institute (Madras), were also awarded the Padma Bushan, a rare occurrence within a single family. (See *KS—A Tribute*, p. 1).

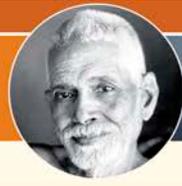
<sup>7</sup> KS's correspondence with Morarji Desai, sending him 'clandestine' books, (namely, a copy of *Ramana Maharshi*) and 'contact with the chairman of the anti-Emergency Indian Express group of papers', i.e. former boss, Ramnath Goenka, were the reasons cited for KS's intended removal.

## Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Maharudram and Yagnam



More than 60 young purohiths and pundits convened in the New Grantalaya Auditorium on the morning of 12th March to lead a three-day japam. Sponsored by devotees, the three-day event fit nicely between Sivratni on the night of 10-11th March and the Sri Vidya homa on Friday the 15th. The event culminated on the morning of the 14th with yagnam in the New Hall and a procession with the sacred kalasalas (pots of consecrated water) and abhishekam of Sri Ramaneswara Mahalingam and Matrubhuteswara. Sri Rudram consists of eleven chapters in praise of Lord Siva and is the centre portion of fourth kanda of the *Krishna Yajur Veda*.





new editor-to-be, the eminent polymath, K. K. Nair, to persuade Swaminathan to step down voluntarily. KS responded boldly: “You are afraid of the policeman, I am not. Tell your bosses that Swaminathan refuses to oblige them, come what may”. After the encounter, KS commented, “I am willing to quit but not at the dictates of a dictatorship.”<sup>8</sup>

It seemed certain that KS would be fired and in fact dismissal orders were drafted. But they would never be delivered. As fate would have it, historical events

<sup>8</sup> L. Su. Rengarajan, ‘Selling Diamonds’, *Aside*, 15-6-94, p. 43.

intervened. In the third week of March, 1977 the Congress Party lost the election and on 21st March KS’s close associate, Morarji Desai, was sworn in as Prime Minister.

*(to be continued)*

\* Freely adapted from the following sources: *Prof. K. Swaminathan (1896-1994): Tributes to Commemorate His Birth Centenary*; *KS Remembered: Prof. K. Swaminathan (1896-1994)*; *Ramana Maharshi*, the National Book Trust, New Delhi; *Ramana Postal Stamp release address, 14-4-71*; article in *The Indian Express*, 12-29-90; various articles in *The Mountain Path*; *The Resplendent Sun*, A.R. Natarajan, (RMCL); articles by L. Su. Rengarajan: ‘Selling Diamonds’, *Aside*, 15-6-94, and seminar speech at P.S. High School, 22-8-04; and recorded interviews with Prof. K. Swaminathan and family.

## Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Mahasivratri, 10th March



Lord Siva manifested as a column of fire to resolve a dispute between Vishnu and Brahma, who, once realising their foolishness, begged Lord Siva to cool his brightness and take the form of a mountain in order that all might worship and receive His blessing. This occurred on *chaturdasi* (the fourteenth day) of the dark fortnight in the month of *Masi* (mid-February to mid-March). Parvati named the night Mahasivaratri, (Great Night of Siva). Celebrations this year began with the lighting of 100,000 lamps at the Big Temple and the unveiling of giant sand paintings depicting themes from the Puranas. At the Ashram, devotees participated in pujas in Bhagavan’s Shrine throughout the night with pundits chanting Ekadasa Rudram from midnight until 2 am.





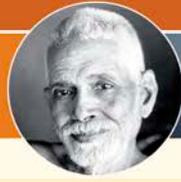
## Sri Ramanasramam Heritage Sites: The Old Hall (1926)

For the four first years at Sri Ramanasramam, Bhagavan lived in a thatched hut in front of Mother's Samadhi. He used to sit there night and day on a small elevated seat of cement. It was only in 1926 that Sri Bhagavan's Hall, (later known as the 'Old Hall'), was constructed. Dr. Narayana Iyer donated Rs. 1000 to finance the construction of what was originally intended to be as a kitchen and dining hall. Within a short time, however, it became clear that there was a more pressing need: to have a hall for Bhagavan and the many guests he was receiving on a daily basis. Under the supervision of Gopal Rao, the Old Hall became the Ashram's first proper building, made with brick and mud walls, and would serve as Bhagavan's sole dwelling for the next twenty-three years. An additional thatched structure was built in the area of the present-day Samadhi hall to function as a kitchen and dining hall.

In the early 1940s when the number of visitors continued to grow, the window on the northern side of the Hall was converted into a door. Devotees entered by the southern door, had darshan of Bhagavan and exited through the northern door. By the late 1940s, the Old Hall could no longer accommodate everyone and so during Vedaparayana, Bhagavan sat outside under a palm-leaf awning. In November 1947 Bhagavan began to spend more time in the thatched Jubilee Hall and two years later, when the temple over the Mother's Samadhi and the New Hall were completed, Bhagavan moved to the new site. After Bhagavan's fourth and final surgery in December 1949, Bhagavan returned neither to the New Hall nor the Old Hall but confined himself to a small room funded by Janaki Mataji (Nirvana Room) opposite the New Hall.

A few months after Bhagavan's Mahasamadhi, the Old Hall caught fire but fortunately suffered no serious damage. Decades later when termites had impregnated the walls and roof, causing leakage, structural engineers determined that the aging structure would have to be rebuilt. Great pains were taken to produce an exact replica of the original building, incorporating original fixtures and tiles. The renovated Old Hall was dedicated on the 5th December, 1986.





## From the *Periapuranam*: Kochengat Chozha Naayanaar

In the Chola country under the shade of a white jumbu tree, the Lord manifested as a lingam. A great white elephant, devoted to the Lord, came daily to worship the lingam and by drawing water into his trunk from the nearby Chandrateertha, performed regular abhishekam. Nearby a spider likewise devoted, noticed that leaves from the overhanging trees were falling on the lingam. As a way of protecting the lingam from any pollution, the spider spun a web over the lingam to protect it. The following morning when the elephant came to do abhishekam, he noticed the web, and duly washed it away during his abhishekam. When the spider returned, he lamented the dry leaves laying once again atop the lingam and discovered that his sheltering web had been destroyed. He immediately got to work and spun another where the former had been.

The next day when the elephant performed abhishekam, he invariably washed away the web. The spider observed what was happening and in his anger resolved to put an end to the matter once for all. Crawling up the elephant's trunk, he gave the offender a lethal bite. Within a matter of minutes, the immense creature lay prostrate on the ground and soon died of the poisonous sting. But the spider, caught in the elephant's trunk, also died. The elephant merged with the Lord but the spider was destined to take another birth.

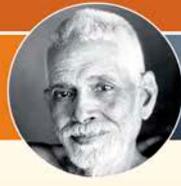
Meanwhile Suba Devan, the Chola king, and his wife Kamalavati, prayed for a son to Lord Nataraja at Chidambaram. The Lord ordained that the devoted spider be reborn as the king's son. When the day of delivery arrived, the court astrologers calculated that if delivery could be delayed by a mere 24 minutes, the boy would come to rule the world. The queen asked her attendants to suspend her upside down from the roof of her chambers. She then had them bind her fast with a tourniquet around her lower waist. She struggled hard to delay the birth. But when the auspicious moment arrived, she bid the servants release her and in short order a child carrying the soul of the spider was born. The youngster, having been compelled to remain in the womb such a long time, had red eyes and so was named 'Kochekannano' (the boy with red eyes). But overstrained by her exertions during the ordeal, the boy's mother fell faint and died.

When the boy reached the proper age, just as the prophecy had foretold, he was enthroned king and ruled long and gloriously. (*Kochengat Chozha Naayanaar's Aradhana Day this year was observed on the 11th March*).



Illustration courtesy of Ramalingar Pani Mandram





## Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Sri Vidya Homa



In March 1953, under Chadwick's stewardship, the Sri Chakra Puja commenced. A year later a commemorative anniversary rite—an elaborate day-long fire-ceremony—was performed. Since then the Sri Vidya Havan has been an annual Ashram event and usually takes place on a Friday in March. This year's Sri Vidya Homa took place on Friday the 15th March beginning at 8am with Kalasasthapana. From 12 noon until 3pm, Lalita Sahasranamam, Trisathi and other prayers were recited, ending with poornahuti and arati at 3pm. A procession to shift the consecrated kalasam into the Mother's Shrine was followed by abhishekam, alankaram and deepaaradhana at 4pm. The usual Friday Sri Chakra puja was performed in the Mother's Shrine the following morning.

## Wordwise: Samsara संसार

**S**am: 'altogether' + sarati: 'it flows', 'runs'; 'continuous flow', 'a passing through'; lit. 'he flows into himself'; [Mon. Will.]: 'to go about', 'to wander or walk through', 'to roam through', 'undergo transmigration', 'to cause to pass through a succession of states'; *samsar* means 'the world' in Hindi while *samsaram* means 'talk' in Malayalam.

The eternal cycle of birth and death, *samsara* is the ignorance of one's true self that leads to egoic mind and identification with the body and the world. Egoic actions born of desire sow the seeds for future births and are the root of the illusion known as maya. Bhagavan says that "mind is the cycle of births and deaths (*samsara*)". (Talks §31)

## Announcements: Sri Ramanasramam Website Translations

The Ashram appreciates the spontaneous response of devotees to our request for translators for our website. We now have translators for German, Russian, French, Polish and Hebrew. We are still looking for a Spanish translator.

