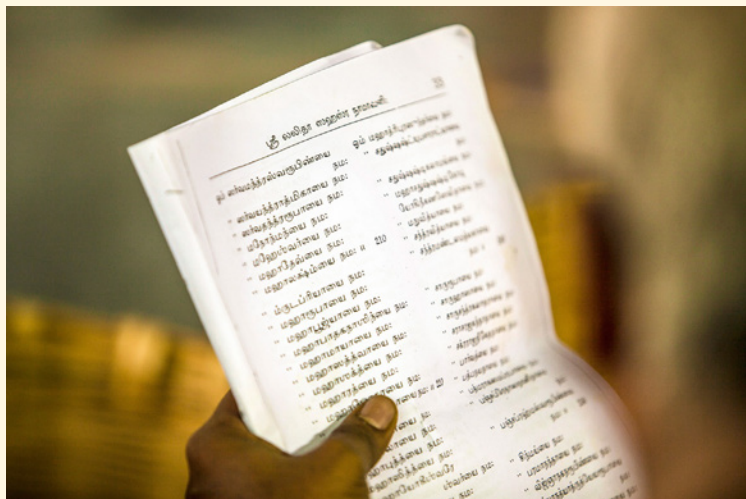


Saranagati



COVER
INSERT

SRI RAMANASRAMAM
JUNE 2014



Photos this page from V. Karthik and Suresh Menon



Saranagati



JUNE 2014
VOL. 8, NO. 6

IN THIS
ISSUE

Dear Devotees,

With the number of storms passing through the Ashram since 4th May, this year's *Agni Nakshatra* might well have been renamed *Vaayu Nakshatra* or *Varuna Nakshatra* (see p.8). Agni did, however, make his appearance, though not benignly, in a forest fire on the Hill the third week of May. Luckily the flames could be contained.

The current issue of *Saranagati* continues with the series on T.N. Venkataraman, who turned 100 this month. It also commences a new column which presents group photos from the Ashram archives. Briefly introducing figures that appeared together with Bhagavan, many of these images have never been published. *In the Frame with Bhagavan* this month features archival listing GRO 104 from August, 1938.

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

<i>The Life of T. N. Venkataraman 1914-2007 (part two)</i>	2
<i>Announcements: Ramananjali Awards 2014</i>	3
<i>Wordwise: Hiranyagarbha</i>	4
<i>Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Mahapuja</i>	5
<i>Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi: Hiranyagarbha (\$489)</i>	5
<i>From Periapuranam: Puhazh Chozha Naayanaar</i>	6
<i>Reality in Forty Verses (v. 34)</i>	6
<i>In the Frame with Bhagavan: Archival Listing GRO 104</i>	7
<i>Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Venkato Centenary</i>	8
<i>Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Summer Storms</i>	8

Calendar of Upcoming Events

1st June (Sun) Punarvasu
12th June (Thurs) Full Moon
28th June (Sat) Punarvasu
9th July (Wed) Cow Lakshmi Day
12th July (Sat) Guru Purnima
23rd July (Wed) H.C. Khanna Day

25th July (Fri) Kavya Kantha Ganapatti Muni Day
26th July (Sat) Punarvasu
7th August (Thurs) Kunjuswami Samadhi Day
10th August (Sun) Full Moon
22nd August (Fri) Punarvasu





The Life of T. N. Venkataraman: 1914-2007 (part two)

Solo Trips to See Bhagavan

Once on one of their regular visits to Tiruvannamalai, Venkatoo and his uncle Pichu Iyer slept on the veranda at a devotee's house in town. Early the next morning before sunrise, Venkatoo woke to the sound of Karuppan, the resident dog of Skandasramam, barking softly and nudging him. Karuppan ran a little distance away and stopped to look back with beckoning eyes. Leaving his uncle sleeping, Venkatoo got out of bed and followed the dog. Together they climbed the hill until they reached Skandasramam. Bhagavan was surprised

to see them and asked Kunjuswami to go down and inform his sister and brother-in-law that Venkatoo was safe at Skandasramam.

Boyhood Years

Living at the time in Kunrakudi where there were no school facilities, when Venkatoo reached school age, he was sent to school at Tirupattur not far from Kunrakudi. Pichu Iyer's brother, the manager of a local temple, took Venkatoo in and provided for him. Within two years, however, the man passed away and of necessity, young Venkatoo was shifted to another of Pichu Iyer's brothers who lived in Manamadurai. There he attended his third year of elementary school. Subsequently he moved into his birth home, the residence of Nagu Iyer, son of Bhagavan's paternal uncle Nelliappier, where he lived till the end of the sixth standard. After Nagu Iyer passed away, his uncle Vakil Sundaramier took him under his care for the following





three years where he remained until he had finished the 9th standard. This was his last year of his schooling.

Getting Married

Now 15 years old, Venkatoo's marriage was being arranged. His maternal uncle had plans to marry Venkatoo to his daughter Lakshmi. Meanwhile arrangements were being made for the third daughter of Pasalai Ramachandra Iyer, the maternal uncle of Sri Bhagavan. The girl, named Nagalakshmi, was Venkatoo's father's first cousin and known to him.

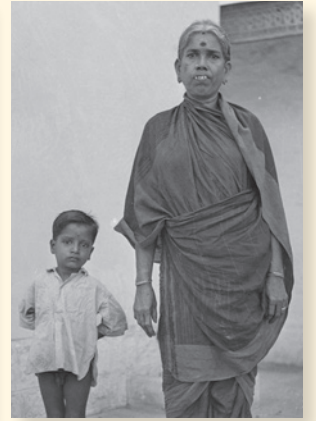
One day while traveling on his uncle's bus, he caught sight of Nagu sitting in the section reserved for ladies. When the lady sitting next to Nagu disembarked, Venkatoo went and sat beside her and raised the issue of her marriage: "I know the lad who is to marry you. He is in no way suitable for you. He is a bulky pumpkin of a fellow. Are you really going to marry him?" The girl froze at the boy's words and gave no reply. "Do one thing," Venkatoo continued, "when you reach home, go straight to your mother and raise a cry, refusing to marry that fellow."

Evidently having taken Venkatoo's words to heart, the young girl protested to her mother who recommended the marriage be stopped. Later when Venkatoo passed Nagu's house, the girl's father, Ramachandra Iyer, was sitting on the veranda and, catching sight of him, remonstrated him with harsh words saying, "Was it not you who interfered in my daughter's marriage?"

To be sure, it had been Venkatoo that sabotaged the wedding plans, the result being that 'the shadow of an abortive marriage attempt' had been unwittingly cast on Nagu and her family, in all likelihood impacting future marriage attempts. Venkatoo was pained at the



TNV as a young man



Athai w/ TNV's first son, Sundaram

thought of this. But a greater pain plagued his heart when, a few weeks later, new talks were initiated for a fresh alliance—and this one with every prospect of success. Venkatoo lost no time in declaring openly before his family that he should marry Nagu and no one else. Uncle Pichu was deeply sceptical, saying that the girl's father reviled them. As Venkatoo's father was a sannyasin, Nagu's father called Venkatoo's family a 'bunch of mendicants' and thus Venkatoo, far from being considered a viable marriage partner, would never likely gain her father's consent. But Venkatoo was steadfast in his resolve: "I won't eat till you bring about this alliance." As deliberations for her marriage were advancing, time was short. So Pichu rushed to Ramachandra Iyer. It is not known what transpired between the two but uncle Pichu worked wonders and managed to win Iyer over. Thus in 1929, in his fifteenth year, Venkatoo and Nagu were married.¹

¹ In later years when the children learned of all this from their mother, they regularly availed themselves of the opportunity to tease their father about his 'love marriage'.

Announcement: The Pradakshina Road and the Inner Path

The Tiruvannamalai municipality continues to make improvements to the hillround road with the widening of the road between the Ashram and the Bangalore road turn-off a few months back. Further widening is planned for other portions of the 14km hillround road for pilgrims' convenience, especially to meet space demands on full moon days. Since the cramped conditions of the traditional path are being addressed, the inner path is likely to remain closed for the foreseeable future in order to reduce the likelihood of fire and give greening initiatives a chance to thrive.





Supporting a Family

In 1931, all of 17, Venkatoo started working to support his family. First he was employed in the Kunrakudi Devasthanam and then, in 1932, he joined the Bank of Chettinad where he did accounting work for the next six years. In 1934, the couple had their first child and went to Tiruvannamalai to see Bhagavan and obtain his blessing. Venkatoo's Aunt Alamelu requested Bhagavan to name the boy. Just at that moment Bhagavan's gaze fell on Sundara Arya, an Ashramite entering the Hall, "See, our Sundara Arya is just coming to say that the child should be given the name Sundaram." Thus the name "Sundara Ramanan" was chosen by Bhagavan. When a second son was born two years later on Ganesa Chaturthi, Bhagavan said that his name had already been given and the boy got the name Ganesan. One by one all of Venkatoo's seven children were brought to the Ashram and given names by Bhagavan.

Coming to the Ashram

In 1938 just as Venkatoo's bank changed hands, he received a letter from Ramanasramam requesting him to come and stay in the Ashram. But Venkatoo who now had some 15 people depending on his income, wanted to know if the summons had the 'authorisation



Nagu, TNV, Athai and Pichu Iyer with children before the dining hall (early 1939), a year after the family came to the Ashram

of Bhagavan'. So he requested V. Narayanaswami to go and find out. When Bhagavan was reminded that Venkatoo had a large family, the latter said: "What of it? Let him bring them too!" And so the matter was decided. Venkatoo gave up his job and came with the entire family including Athai Alamelu and Uncle Pichu.

(to be continued)



Wordwise: Hiranyagarbha हिरण्यगर्भ



Hiranyagarbha: *hiranya* or 'gold' + *garbha* (*karuppai* in Tam) or 'seed', 'egg', 'womb', 'embryo' = 'golden germ' or 'cosmic womb'; the cosmic form of the self; creator of the subtle universe; universal consciousness; totality of minds.

Identical with Brahma, the supreme sheath, *hiranyagarbha* is said to be the primordial cause of the cosmos. The "One that arose in the beginning" is the origin of heaven and earth, "who gives us breath and strength and whose bidding all creatures must obey, even the gods". The Puranas say that after the great *pralaya*, (dissolution of the Universe), when there was nothing but darkness, *svayambhu* (self-created Being or Brahman) formed the primordial waters and put the seed of creation, *hiranyagarbha*, in it. He then entered the egg and emerged as Brahma the creator. *Chandogya Upanishad* says that *Hiranyagarbha* is self-created and contains within itself the seed-material for all of creation. Elsewhere it is said that he is *sutra-atman* or the 'thread-self' that precedes but permeates all creatures. In *Talks*, Bhagavan calls *hiranyagarbha* 'causal subtle Being' and says that for sadhaks, it is the place where the 'I thought disappears'. (*Talks* §579, §489)





Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Mahapuja

Mahapuja celebrations commenced on the evening of the 21st with the viewing of the new video called 'Venkatoo 100' in anticipation of the centenary celebrations on the 26th May. Early morning of the 22nd began with mahanyasa japa in the Mother's Shrine as flower festoons were hung. Live online streaming allowed devotees around the globe to view the celebrations, which culminated in Deeparadhana around 10.30am. That afternoon at the Granathalaya Auditorium, bhajans were sung by RMCL, Bangalore, led by Smt. Radha & Dr. Sarada offering prefatory comments for each song. Evening events centred on the video of the 1995 Sri Ramanasramam Mahakumbhabhishekam in the new library auditorium.

Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi: Hiranyagarbha

M.: Another group of visitors was asking the method of Realisation. In the course of a reply Sri Bhagavan said: "Holding the mind and investigating it is advised for a beginner. But what is mind after all? It is a projection of the Self. See for whom it appears and from where it rises. The 'I'-thought will be found to be the root-cause. Go deeper; the 'I'-thought disappears and there is an infinitely expanded 'I-consciousness'. That is otherwise called *Hiranyagarbha*. When it puts on limitations it appears as individuals."

— Talks §489

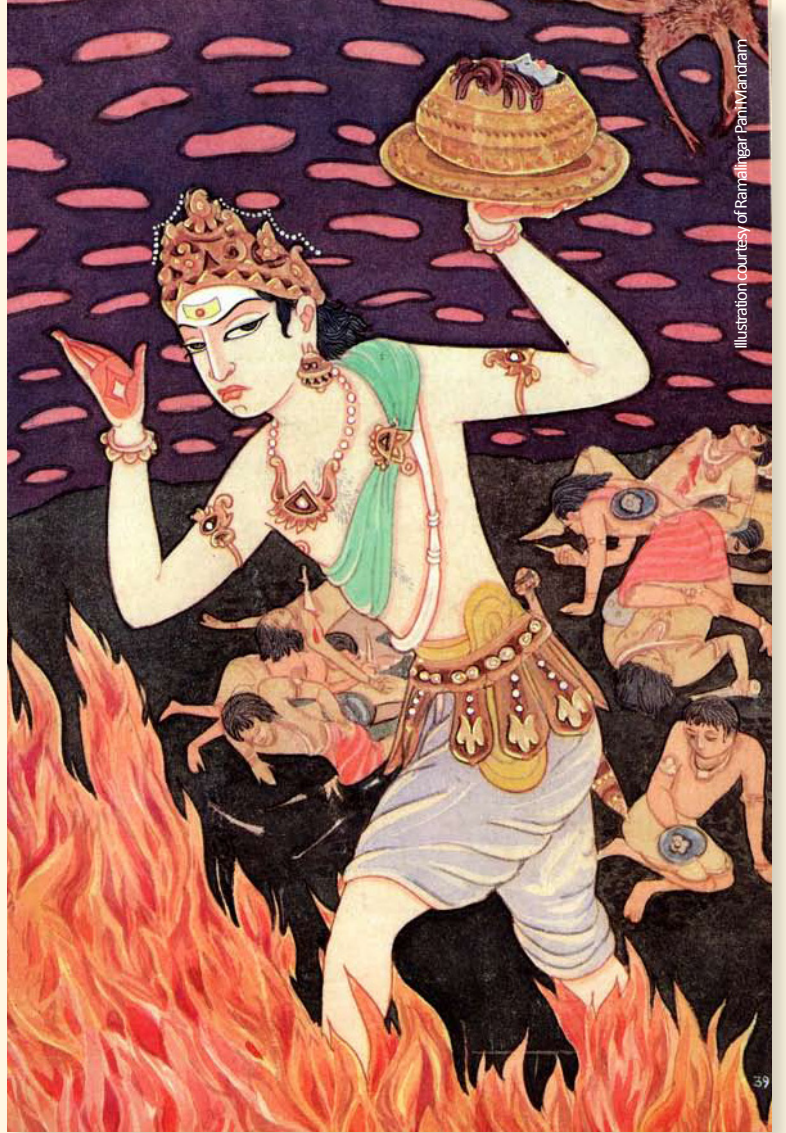




From Periapuranam: Puhazh Chozha Naayanaar

King Puhazh Chozhan was famed for his Kuprightness before the Lord and for his service to devotees. Once when his royal elephant defiled flower offerings that were to be made before the Lord's temple, the king pleaded (unsuccessfully) with Eripattar to sacrifice him in recompense for the folly of his beast.

Years later, when his chief minister reported the disobedience of a chieftain, Athikan, the monarch directed a march supported by cavalry and elephants. As negotiations failed in the face of the chieftain's stubborn non-cooperation, fighting was commenced and a fierce battle raged for days on end. Eventually the Chozha army made headway, surrounded the rebel city and reduced its battlements. After hostilities had ceased, the king embraced his general and rewarded him while the latter presented the plundered spoils. Among them were the severed heads of defeated warriors. The Chozha ruler bemoaned the sight of one of them with matted tresses and vibhuthi on its forehead, telltale signs of a devotee of Mahadeva. With tears streaming down his eyes, he said, 'What a sad end to a great triumph. My life and sovereignty cannot continue in the face of such sacrilege'. He then turned to his ministers and said, 'Pray, invest my son with the crown and aid him to fulfil the sacred task of ceaseless service to the Lord'. Brushing aside the protests of his adoring ministers, the king ordered that a sacrificial fire be lit. He bathed himself, put on fresh dress and smeared his body with sacred ash. Bearing on a golden platter the severed head with matted tresses and chanting the five sacred syllables, he circumambulated the blazing fire-pit and then, with solemn resolve, boldly leapt into the flames. All standing near marveled at his devotion. Flowers rained down from above as the beloved ruler was taken up to the Abode of the Lord. (*Puhazh Chozha Naayanaar's aradhana day falls on the 21st July*)



Reality in Forty Verses

34. The natural and true Reality for ever resides in the Heart of all. Not to realize It there and remain within It but to quarrel, 'It is', 'It is not', 'It has form', 'It has not form', 'It is one', 'It is two', 'It is neither' — this is the mischief of maya.

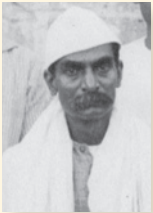
— Sri Bhagavan



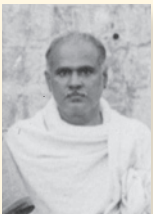


Bhagavan near the Dining Hall with Rajendra Prasad and Jamnalal Bajaj on August 18, 1938; Niranjanananda Swami and Yogi Ramaiah are seated in front; TNV, who had just come to live permanently at the Ashram, is standing at the rear next to Shankarlal Banker

In the Frame with Bhagavan

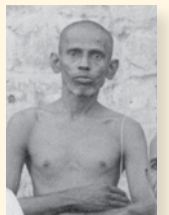


Bapu Rajendra Prasad, Jamnalal Bajaj and Shankarlal Banker were sent to Bhagavan by Gandhiji in order to take rest in the face of the many challenges endured by the Congress in those pre-Independence years. Rajendra Prasad had recently spent several years in a British jail after the Salt March of 1931. A professor of law with three doctorates, Prasad was elected Congress President in 1936 and went on to become the first President of the Republic in 1950 (till 1962). *Seth Jamnalal Bajaj* was from a poor Marwari family (Sikar) and founded the Bajaj Group of companies in 1926. Like a son to Mahatma Gandhi, he was named president of *Gandhi Seva Sangha* in the early 1930s. *Shankarlal Banker* was co-editor with Gandhi of *Young India* for which both were arrested. Just as Bhagavan was reading out the letter from Gandhi's secretaries announcing their arrival, the group entered the hall. Bajaj asked most of the questions. For Bhagavan's replies, see *Talks* §502.



Sri M. S. Kamath, a Konkani Saraswat Brahmin of Mangalore, was a devotee of Bhagavan and the chief editor of the *Sunday Times*. At the time of his death just a few weeks after this photo was taken, the Ashram wrote a letter to the family dated September 18, 1938: "His profound devotion to Sri Bhagavan and selfless service to the Ashram are universally admired. Such was his eagerness for service that the Ashram had only to say the word and the needful was done to perfection." (*Sri Ramana Reminiscences*, p. 28, G.V. Subbaramayya)

Ramanadasa Sadananda (Seshagiri Iyer) was a teacher in P.S. High School, Mylapore and had first visited Sri Bhagavan in October 1915 at Virupaksha and Skandasramam. His father had been brought back from the throes of death in the family home by a vision of Bhagavan Ramana who told him, "Don't fear, you are saved." Ramanadasa Sadananda authored *Sri Ramana Dasakam* in Tamil and numerous songs on Bhagavan.





Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Venkato Centenary Celebrations



Celebrations began in the Mother's Shrine with Mahanyasa Japam at 5.30am. Rudram continued at Venkato's Shrine at 8am as family members and devotees gathered to sing songs. Swamiji's great-grand-daughter, Aryamba, narrated remembrances of 'Swamiji Tatha', who always gave her threptin biscuits when she came knocking at his door as a youngster. Sulochana Natarajan recalled her memories of TNV and his friendship with A.R. Natarajan. After first arati, Ramananjali and TNV's family sang a new song by KVS on the life of Swamiji followed by Alagu and others who sang a hymn of her father-in-law, Narayana Iyer. After puja, mango, coconut and bauhinia saplings were planted to mark the occasion.

Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Summer Storms



As *agni nakshatra* got underway on 4th May, rainclouds rolled into the Ashram. The following three weeks brought regular showers punctuated by sunny days. On 23rd evening, however, the trend climaxed as atmospheric pressure differences mounted with oncoming thunderheads. Chilly high-speed winds roared down the face of the Hill, buffeting the Ashram as evening Vedaparayana was in progress. Crashing trees could be heard in the distance when at 5.30, the main branch of one of the two *badam* trees near the Old Hall snapped and fell onto the veranda roof. Meanwhile the very large *gulmohar* (*agni konnai*) tree next to Chadwick's cottage was toppled and landed atop the Major's sturdy dwelling, resting like a large aircraft after a forced landing. Another *gulmohar* tree was lost near the back gate as was the *punghai* tree at the rear of Morvi cottage. Trees around the city suffered similar fates with power lines down in various places. Gratefully Ashram buildings were unharmed. Ashram tree-planting is already underway (see previous text).

