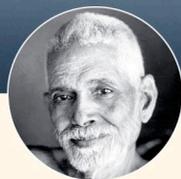
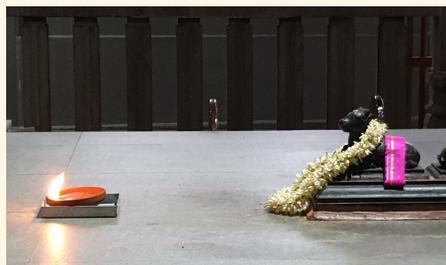


Saranagati



SARANAGATI
SRI RAMANASRAMAM

AUGUST 2022
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D. Thiyagarajan



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IN THIS
ISSUE

Dear Devotees,

Sri Ramanasramam is sad to announce the sudden demise of V.S. Mani, grandnephew of Sri Bhagavan. Manianna fell sick in early July but by the middle of the month had recovered and returned to the Ashram in good spirits on the 18th July. The following day he felt some 'heartburn' and that afternoon passed away from cardiac arrest at 4.30pm on 19th July (see Manianna's obituary starting on page 13).

In this issue we continue the life story of T.R. Kanakammal and hear more of her accounts in the Hall. We also witness through the eyes of Kanakammal and others in Bhagavan's midst the master's declining health and the adjustments devotees made to assist his well-being.

For videos, photos and further news of events, go to <https://sriramanamaharshi.org> or write to us at saranagathi@sriramanamaharshi.org.

In Sri Bhagavan,
Saranagati

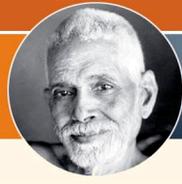
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Calendar of Ashram Events

7th Aug (Sun) Kunjuswami Day
9th Aug (Tue) Pradosham
11th Aug (Thu) Full Moon
24th Aug (Wed) Punarvasu/Pradosham
31st Aug (Wed) Ganesha Chaturthi
1st Sept (Thu) Sri Bhagavan's Advent Day
8th Sept (Thu) Pradosham

9th Sept (Fri) Full Moon/Natarajar Abhishekam
13th Sept (Tue) Samvatsara Abhishekam
18th Sept (Sun) Purattasi month Srichakra Puja
20th Sept (Tue) Punarvasu
23rd Sept (Fri) Pradosham
26th Sept (Mon) Navaratri Commences
2nd Oct (Sun) Saraswati Aavahanam





IN PROFILE

T.R. Kanakammal (Part V)

Kanakammal appreciated how things came naturally to Bhagavan, how he met every challenge with perfect ease. If a situation required correction, Bhagavan knew how to correct it without uttering a single word of correction. He would express his wish without making anyone feel that they had done anything wrong.

In the late 1940s as Bhagavan's physical frame became increasingly frail, some were concerned with protecting Bhagavan from well-intending devotees. For their part, devotees had gotten used to being able to see Bhagavan

at any time, free of restriction. But with Bhagavan's growing debility, the management decided to modify darshan timings out of concern for his health. Bhagavan knew nothing about these decisions:

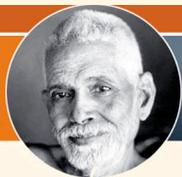
At first, devotees coming from outside had no idea that new rules had been made. Some of Bhagavan's devotees stayed nearby and visited the Ashram from time to time, not knowing anything about the new rules. Narayana Iyer was one of Bhagavan's regular visitors and used to come to the Ashram every Sunday. He would bring snacks for Bhagavan and his devotees. This was such a regular practice that once, when Shantammal was talking about preparing some snacks in the Ashram kitchen, Bhagavan said, 'Today is Sunday, and Narayana Iyer will bring snacks for all of us. There's no need for you to trouble yourself today.'

At about 1pm, Bhagavan saw Narayana Iyer coming towards the hall with a parcel of snacks in his hand. Bhagavan waited for him but he did not enter the hall. When Narayana Iyer was hurrying towards the hall, a devotee had stopped him and told him not to go in immediately but to wait until 2pm. So, Narayana Iyer went away.

Later when Narayana Iyer entered the hall, Bhagavan asked him, 'Did you not come here at 1pm? I saw you through the window and was expecting you any moment, but you did not come. Did you have to go somewhere else?' Narayana Iyer had no idea that Bhagavan was not supposed to know about the new arrangement. So, in all innocence, he said, 'Yes Bhagavan, the train arrived late today, and I reached the Ashram only at 1pm. When I was about to come inside, I was informed that Bhagavan rests in the afternoons and is not to be disturbed till 2pm. So I went away.' Bhagavan listened to him without any comment other than his customary, 'Oh, is that so?' Then Bhagavan sampled the omappodi, the crisp savoury snack that Iyer had brought. That night, after dinner, Narayana Iyer took leave of Bhagavan and returned to Arni.

The next day, Bhagavan came to the hall after lunch. Everything seemed quite normal, till about 12pm. It was a rather hot day, and everybody was puzzled when Bhagavan left the hall and went to sit on the platform outside. His attendants were at a loss. They did not know how to ask Bhagavan about his decision to leave the cool comfort of the hall. After a while, one of them approached Bhagavan and said, 'It is unbearably hot here and the hall is cooler. Would it not be more comfortable for Bhagavan to stay inside, at least till 2pm when the heat might moderate a little?' To this, Bhagavan replied, 'Oh, is the sun too hot for Bhagavan? You want your Bhagavan to avoid the heat and recline on his sofa inside the cool hall. What about those who come to see Bhagavan? Does not the same sun shine on them also? Do they not feel the heat? Unmindful of the heat, they come to see me. And what do you do? You send them away saying that Bhagavan should not





be disturbed till 2pm. All right. You have made the rule and I cannot do anything about it. But you have only decided to keep visitors from entering the hall, is it not? Or have you also made a rule that Bhagavan cannot leave the hall during this period?’

The attendants had no reply but were struck dumb. Though Bhagavan seemed displeased at this restriction upon the devotees, the devotees themselves started voluntarily regulating their visits, so that Bhagavan could have some rest during the hottest part of the day.¹

Recounting the Early Days

Devotees were all ears when Bhagavan narrated incidents from the early days. Kanakammal noted Bhagavan recounting the following:

Rangaswamy Iyengar, a Vaishnavite devotee had a peculiar desire. He wanted to see me wearing the Namam, the traditional mark a Vaishnavite puts on his forehead. He kept on repeating that it would be good to see Bhagavan wearing a Namam. After a while, I said to him, ‘Alright, I will do it to please you, but only on one condition. You must make Nayana wear a Namam first. If Nayana does it, I will follow suit.’

The red and white chalks were placed beside Nayana’s dinner plate that evening by Rangaswamy Iyengar. When Nayana sat down to eat, he became involved in an engrossing dialogue with me. Without even being conscious of doing so, Nayana picked up the chalks and applied the Namam on his forehead. As soon as he did so, I too did the same. Shortly, Nayana noticed the Namam on my forehead and exclaimed, ‘What is this, Bhagavan! Since when did you start this practice?’ I replied, ‘I saw you wearing a Namam and felt that I too should have one.’ Nayana was totally

1 Cherished Memories, pp. 101-102.

taken aback. He said, ‘What, me?’ and looked into the mirror. When he saw himself in the mirror, he was stunned.’ Saying this, Bhagavan broke into laughter and we all joined him.²

Bhagavan, the Schoolboy

On another day, Kanakammal observed an elderly gentleman approaching Bhagavan in the Hall:

‘Swami, please clear my doubts.’ Bhagavan took one look at this person and started acting like a schoolboy who had not done his homework. Everyone was puzzled by Bhagavan’s imitation of a trembling schoolboy. Bhagavan laughed and explained the situation to us. He said, ‘Do you know who this gentleman is? It is only because I could not answer his questions that I ran away from Madurai. I thought I had escaped from him, but he has followed me all the way here and is asking questions again!’

The old gentleman was none other than the teacher who had taught Tamil while Bhagavan was in school. Presumably, Bhagavan dreaded being asked questions in class and here was the same person, once again bent upon posing questions. All of us, including Bhagavan’s former teacher, were very much amused.³

Another Bald Head

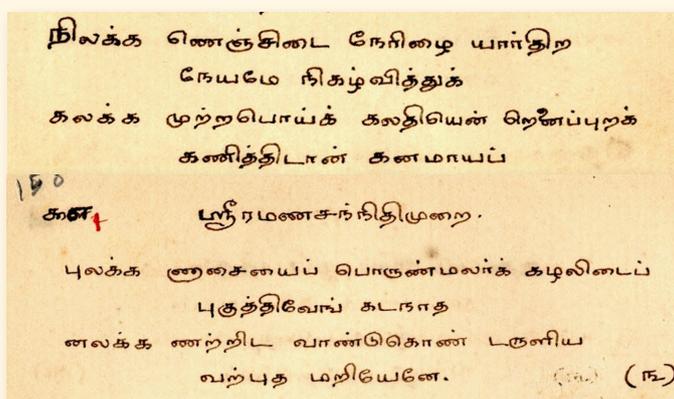
A lady devotee who used to live near the Ashram and used to come to see Bhagavan each day was forced by family circumstances to shift to a nearby town. Though having left Tiruvannamalai, she continued to visit the Ashram as frequently as she could. Kanakammal writes:

On one of her visits, she was accompanied by her four-year-

2 Ibid., p. 92.

3 Ibid., p. 91.

Bhagavan’s Handwriting: Ramana Sannidhi Murai’s ‘Decad of Miracle’, v.3



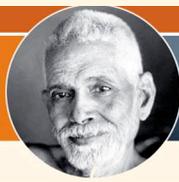
* “என்ன புண்ணியஞ் செய்தன” என்னும் தேவாரப்பண்.
திருவாசகம், அற்புதப்பத்தைத் தழுவி யது.

Nilakka nenji-dai ner-izhaiyaar-thira/Neyame nigazh-vitthu
Kalak-kam uttra-poik kaladhi-endru enaip-purak/Kanit-thidaan gana-maayap
Pulak-kan aasai-yaip porun-malark kazhalidaip/Puguthi Venkata naadhan
Alakkan attrida aandu-kondu aruliya/Arpudham ari-yene.

He never ignored me, despite being perturbed, wicked and showing fondness towards bejewelled women in this world. Lord Venkata, drove away the powerful illusion (maya) of sensual desires by fixing my attention to his profound lotus feet, thereby cleansed away the miseries and graciously ruled me. How did this miracle happen?

“Enna punniam seidhanai,” music melody (pann) of Thevaaram in the model of ‘Arpudhap Patthu’ of Thiru-vaachakam.





old son, a bright little bundle of mischief. He refused to sit in one place but kept running here and there. His sparkling eyes roved everywhere, taking in every small detail. He came close to Bhagavan's sofa and stood there for a few minutes, studying Bhagavan. It being a full moon day, Bhagavan had just had his head shaved that morning. The little boy had also just had his head shaven. Rubbing his hand over his own head, the child told Bhagavan, 'This is a bald head.' Then he pointed to Bhagavan and said, 'That is another bald head.' Bhagavan joined in the fun by pointing out a shaven-headed devotee and saying, 'See, there is another bald head.' At that moment, another devotee entered, and the child shouted, 'There is another one!'

As it is the common practice among sadhus to shave their heads on the full moon day, there was no shortage of bald heads in the Ashram that day. Bhagavan and the little boy had a grand time, gleefully pointing out bald heads to each other and chuckling merrily each time. Who but a truly great soul can play such games with a child without embarrassment or self-consciousness?⁴

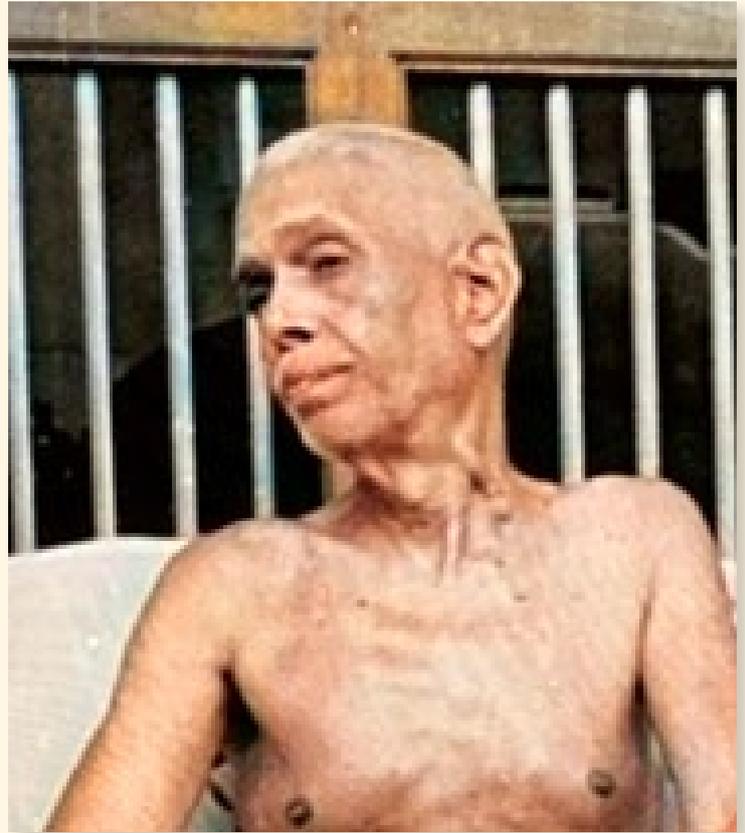
Cobras in the Night

At night, the attendants stayed in the Hall with Bhagavan. Invariably there were events worth recounting. One was concerning Bhagavan's attendant, Vaikunta Vasana whose name is one of the names for Lord Vishnu meaning 'one who resides in Vaikunta'. Kanakammal narrates:

One night, Vaikunta Vasana was lying in the hall next to Bhagavan. Suddenly, he saw a large cobra very close to his pillow. Speechless with terror, Vaikunta Vasana turned to Bhagavan and pointed out the snake to him. Bhagavan shouted like a happy little boy, 'Look, this is such a beautiful creature, Vaikunta Vasana. This is after all your mattress and has come in search of you!' Despite his fear, Vaikunta Vasana burst out laughing. (According to tradition, Lord Vishnu, the Lord of Vaikunta, reclines upon the great coiled serpent, Adishesha.)⁵

⁴ Ibid., pp. 112-113.

⁵ Ibid., p. 94.

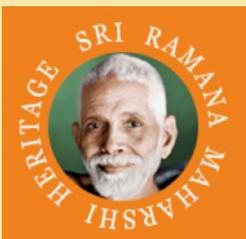


Dancing for the Trainer

When Bhagavan would go for his walks or to the dining hall, he invariably made use of a walking stick because his rheumatism and arthritis made it difficult for him to move about without any support. Kanakammal describes a humorous scene in the Hall:

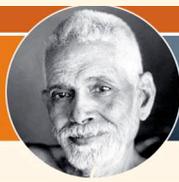
As he adhered to a strict daily routine, his attendants always knew exactly when he would be leaving the hall. So they would bring the walking stick and help Bhagavan out of the hall at the fixed hours. Once, when Bhagavan saw an attendant approaching the hall with the walking stick in his hand, he said to us with a twinkle in his

Announcement: Sri Ramana Maharshi Heritage



Sri Ramana Maharshi Heritage (SRMH) is a newly created 501 (c) (3), registered non-profit in the United States. The organization's purpose is to preserve Sri Ramana Maharshi's heritage and to serve devotees who are drawn to the life and teachings of Bhagavan. The new entity's objectives are aligned with those of Sri Ramanasramam in India. Devotees in the United States who wish to donate towards and participate in Sri Ramanasramam's charitable initiatives in India can learn more by visiting the website: <https://www.srmh.org/> or by sending an email to: sriramanamaharshiheritage@gmail.com. —





eyes, 'Look, here comes my walking stick. You have seen the monkey trainer teaching his monkeys to dance at the sight of the stick. This monkey must now start dancing, for the stick is here!' ⁶

Granting Mukthi

On another day, the attendant Venkataratnam was accompanying Bhagavan up the hill when something very out of the ordinary took place:

At one spot on the path from the Ashram to Skandasramam, there is a steep stretch with steps. While climbing down Bhagavan would often manoeuvre this inclined portion by bracing himself on a big rock, planting his stick firmly against the ledge and descending slowly. One day some devotees evidently asked a young boy to wait at this place and approach Bhagavan as he passed, taking hold of his feet. The youngster said to him, 'Bhagavan, if you do not grant me mukthi, I will not let go of your feet.' Apparently, the devotees were hiding themselves behind the nearby bushes. Bracing himself with his stick, Bhagavan said, 'Adei, it is you who are in a position to give mukthi because if you don't let go of my feet, I am going to fall and attain complete release in this very moment'. At these words the boy became frightened and took to his heels. Astonished by this strange happening Venkataratnam asked who the boy could be and what this unusual episode could mean. Bhagavan's ready reply was, 'Oh, it was all staged.' How could anyone ever succeed in hoodwinking Bhagavan? ⁷

⁶ Ibid., p. 91.

⁷ 'Encounters with Bhagavan', Part II, *The Mountain Path*, July 2006, p. 33.

Bhagavan's Mortal Frame

In the late 1940s, Bhagavan's rheumatism worsened, and he had great difficulty in walking. Bhagavan made light of his physical ailments and his limitations in walking and said, 'All of you have only two legs each. I am the only one who has three legs.'

Newly arrived devotees who came in the late 1940s couldn't help but notice the occasions when Bhagavan's head and body would shake. They assumed it was related to his age. But Kanakammal came to understand this was not the case and that such movements had been there since the early days on the Hill:

Bhagavan was rather unsteady on his feet, even in his younger days. His head and his body would shake, making it necessary for Bhagavan to use a cane to support himself. Once in the early years, when Kunjuswami happened to find himself alone with Bhagavan, he asked, 'Bhagavan, what causes your head and body to shake so much? Usually, such infirmities are seen only in the case of very old people. Why should Bhagavan be so afflicted at such a young age?' Bhagavan responded to this with a mischievous smile, saying, 'What do you think would happen if you left a huge elephant tied up in a small hut? Would not the elephant's every movement make the fragile hut tremble and shake? That is what is happening here as well.' With this seemingly simple remark, Bhagavan had acknowledged the fact that his body was no more than a frail frame enclosing an unimaginably great spirit. ⁸

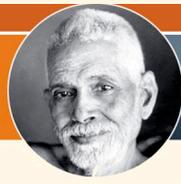
⁸ *Cherished Memories*, p. 183.

Events in Sri Ramanasramam: Guru Purnima



Guru Purnima is an annual celebration to express gratitude toward spiritual teachers and those who would bear witness to the highest goal in human life, namely, attaining the Divine. This Guru Purnima took place on Wednesday 13th July in Bhagavan's Samadhi Hall. Sannyasins were honoured with Bhagavan's prasada as pilgrims venerated the Supreme Guru with their full moon circuit of the Holy Hill. —





Bhagavan's Surgeries

As Sri Bhagavan's body aged, some devotees were surprised, imagining that somehow Bhagavan would be physically immortal and never suffer deterioration of the body. Of course, one can say that Bhagavan is immortal but not at the level of form.

Early in 1949, a small nodule appeared below the elbow of Bhagavan's left arm. In the beginning, it was not considered serious. But in February 1949, Bhagavan underwent surgery in the Ashram dispensary. Subsequent surgeries were performed and Bhagavan's health continued to decline. After Bhagavan's fourth and final surgery in December 1949, Bhagavan confined himself to a small room (the Nirvana Room) opposite the New Hall which had been funded and built by Janaki Mataji.

Devotees were terrified by the prospects of a world without Bhagavan and made their appeals. Once when work on Bhagavan's stone likeness was going on just outside the New Hall, a lady devotee said in earnest, 'Bhagavan, you must not leave the body. You must continue to give us darshan.' Bhagavan smiled and said, 'Yes, yes, see there'— he pointed to the sculptor at work on the stone statue — 'they are chiselling a Bhagavan who will give you darshan forever.' Then Bhagavan turned to the others in the New Hall and said, 'Now people have become my gurus. I have been telling them to give up their I-am-the-body idea but instead they want me to cling to the body. I should

not leave this body in order that I am able to give darshan forever. To have darshan forever, she too must never die. Nor her children. They must have darshan forever. So, none of us shall ever die.'⁹

Bhagavan's sister made a similar appeal around this same time. Kanakammal writes:

It happened when Bhagavan was laid up in the Nirvana Room. Bhagavan's sister, Alamelu Ammal, very hesitantly went near Him and with tears in her eyes pleaded with Him: 'Bhagavan, once when you were in Virupaksha Cave, while trying to move a big rock from one place to another your hand was suddenly caught under it and when the hand was taken out one of the fingers was dislocated and found hanging down limp. Vasudeva Sastri, who noticed it, was alarmed, and started crying aloud. You silenced him saying: 'Why cry? Nothing has happened!' Then with the other hand you placed the drooping finger back in its place and lo! it regained its proper position. No trace of any mishap could be noticed. Likewise, why can't you now touch this painful sarcoma on your left shoulder arm with your 'golden' right hand, Bhagavan? It will become cured if you will do it. All our anxieties will be at an end. Just as you relieved the anguish of Vasudeva Sastri, please bless us now by turning your mind to the arm and curing it'. Bhagavan looked at His sister intently with love and sympathy. After some time, He replied: 'Yes, yes, I have a body; and that has a hand; the hand has a disease that defies any treatment, and I must apply my mind to it to make it disappear. But where is a 'mind' to do all this?'¹⁰ —

(to be continued)

⁹ R. Narayana Iyer, *The Mountain Path*, April 1969, p. 91.

¹⁰ 'Resplendent Ramana', *The Mountain Path*, October 1986, p. 256.

Sri Bhagavan's Ayurvedic Recipes: Pittahari

Pittahari

Añjupalam neyyadaṇi lañjupalañ sīragattūl
añjupalañ cīṇiyumiṭ ṭaḍuppēṭtri yadiṛpalamoṇ
driñjiyarait tēzhelumic campalaccā riṣaittirakku
viñjupittam tuñjumiru vēlaiyumuṭ kolkazhañjē.

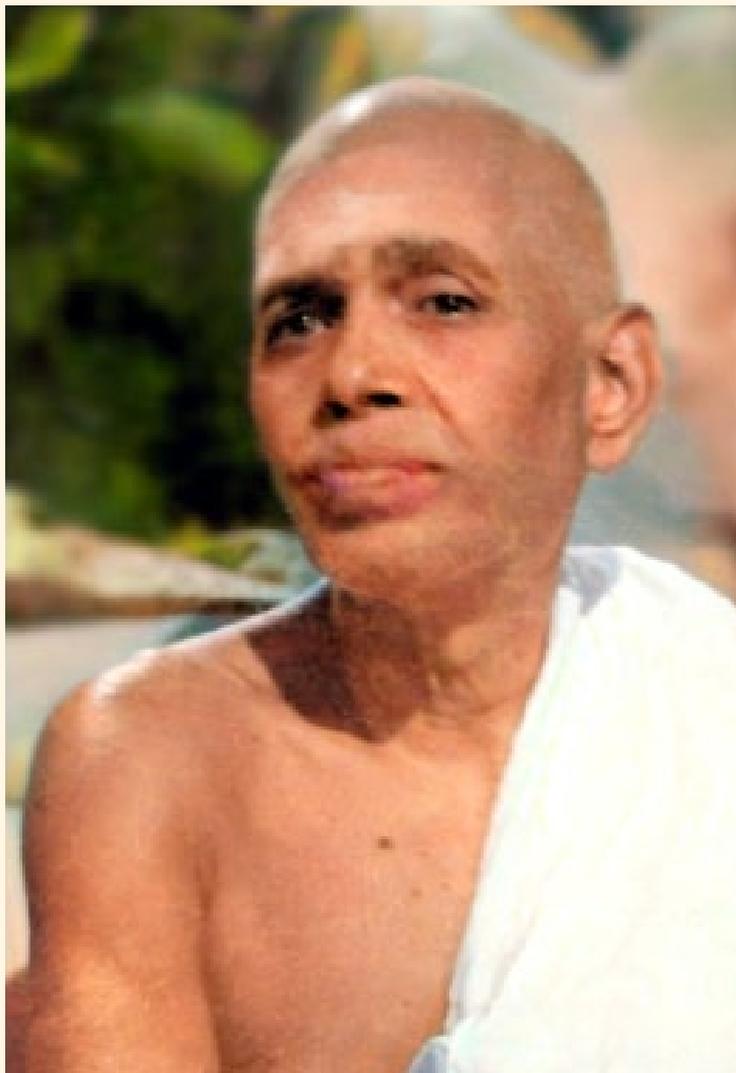
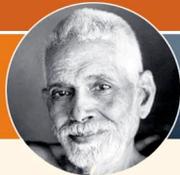
Añjupalam ney adaṇil añjupalam sīragattūl
añjupalam cīṇiyum iṭṭu aḍuppēṭtri adiṛpalamoṇdru
iñji'araittu ēzhu'elumic campazhaccāru isaittu'irakku
viñjupittam tuñjum iruvēlaiyumu uṭko!kazhañjē.

Ingredients: ghee — 5 pts; cumin powder — 5 pts; sugar — 5 pts; ginger — 1 pt.

Preparation: Grind the ginger well and mix all the ingredients. Heat the mixture. Mix the juice of seven lemons, heat further until sufficiently hot. Consume one teaspoon twice a day.

Benefits: Cures indigestion and excess bile caused by low liver energy. —





RAMANA REFLECTIONS

Bhagavan's Rest in Times of Restlessness

In the turbulent 1940s when war was raging in Europe, Bhagavan was quite at ease. He knew India would be impacted and that millions around the world would be losing their lives. It wasn't that he was complacent or uncaring, far from it, Bhagavan was the embodiment of compassion. But Bhagavan knew that these events would of necessity play themselves out. He never felt any inclination to worry unduly

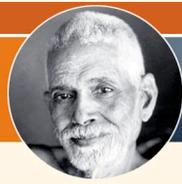
about the conditions of the world because, despite appearances, he knew that all was ultimately at rest in the Self, and no phenomenal occurrence could ever reach or taint that fundamental reality.

After the Covid pandemic lockdowns, we find war is once again escalating in Europe and with it, mounting global economic uncertainty. Covid continues its spread, even if in slightly weaker variants, nevertheless wreaking havoc on the lives of many of its victims and in some cases, ending lives of those who, though aged, were otherwise living vital and productive lives. If one feels a little uneasy, the future is indeed unclear. In digging down within our hearts which Bhagavan ever urges us to do, we uncover the root uncertainty that comes as a matter of course in every human birth, namely, *the certainty of death and the uncertainty of the time of death*. We do not like to accept the fact of inevitable loss and separation from those we love. We do not want to accept that our fortunes will surely change somewhere along the way.

Some have said we do not really know ourselves until we go through a crisis. Now we are getting to see ourselves in what is shaping up to be a crisis. How will we respond when we are on a beleaguered ship at sea on the Atlantic Ocean in a violent storm? Where will we place our hopes when all avenues of escape are cut off, when as far as the eye can see it is just rain, clouds, lightning, and the billows of an angry buffeting sea? In such a situation we may chance to spy a small duck or waterfowl riding out the storm in perfect ease and are amazed by his resilience and yet do not know how to imitate him.

The Covid pandemic helped us to wake up to the reality that is already part and parcel of earthly existence. If restlessness preponderates and with it, stress and worry, if experts point out that teen suicide is at an all-time high, or that depression and anxiety are occurring in epidemic proportions around the world, these facts will not surprise us. Their causes are numerous. If we look back at the stresses and ultimate collapse of previous civilisations in history, we worry what the current signs might be telling us about the fate of our own. In the midst of it all, our unsettledness pervades, and we grope for the insight that would grant relief and assist us in making sense of our fragility. If we find ourselves leaning ahead of each passing moment with





the unconscious wish to dodge it and get to the next moment, this would be understandable. If we ramp up the urge to flee increasingly uncomfortable conditions, pining for another ‘world’, it is because this one appears too demanding.

But now, where and how does this predicament and related sets of concerns intersect with the life and teaching of Sri Bhagavan?

Among the accounts Kanakammal gave during her lifetime, she describes a scene from the hall where Bhagavan counsels a gentleman who is facing troubles in his life. Bhagavan asks him to respond to his difficulties by seeking ‘the help of the Divine or simply surrendering to Him’. The man protests that such is not possible for him. Bhagavan then says, ‘In that case, do one thing. Pray to Him to help you surrender.’

This sounds straightforward enough, but then Bhagavan adds the following:

‘If you cannot do even that, then *simply suffer what comes your way!*¹

This concluding statement of Bhagavan’s is very powerful. At first glance it may look as though Bhagavan is making a casual, if even harsh, remark but on closer examination, we see he is giving us a potent teaching. When Bhagavan says ‘suffer what comes your way’, he means allowing ourselves to be present to conditions without trying to get them to be otherwise. This would have been challenging enough in Bhagavan’s presence, but now eighty years later in a world that appears to be

¹ ‘Encounters with Bhagavan’, Part II, *The Mountain Path*, July 2006, pp. 31-32.

in freefall with the velocity that only a digitally saturated age can offer, we find this simple practice nearly out of reach. Why? Because inadvertently we find ourselves in a world gripped by restlessness. But then, what is restlessness?

Restlessness, if observed at close range, is the longing to get from the present juncture in thought or feeling to a new juncture in thought or feeling. It is dissatisfaction with the current set of circumstances and the desire to replace them with something better. Restlessness has the element of expectation about what will come next, eager that the next set of internal conditions and outward events will be an improvement over the current ones.

Restlessness, it might be said, is caused by flitting attention—the wilful diverting of attention as a means of deflecting negative experiences in the form of thoughts, feelings, images, or memories. If anxiety is intimately bound up with the urge to come free of some unpleasant internal experience, each new effort to wiggle free of the discomfort is tainted by the original fear, resulting in a chain of reactive escape. This is the mechanism at work in restlessness.

Bhagavan tells us that *whatever comes to us in time will pass away in time*. In other words, whatever we seek at any given moment as a remedy for our distress cannot be a permanent solution. In restlessness, we seek to evade the discomfort of the previous few moments, but are driven to repeat the exercise endlessly, like a dog chasing its tail. If samsara as traditionally understood pertains to the cycle of endless wandering through multiple

Events in Sri Ramanasramam: Kavya Kantha Ganapathi Muni Day



of *Ramana Gita* followed by *arathi* followed by the distribution of prasadam. —

On Monday 25th July devotees gathered in the New Hall for Kavya Kantha Ganapathi Muni Day and chanted *Sadarsanam* as well as three chapters



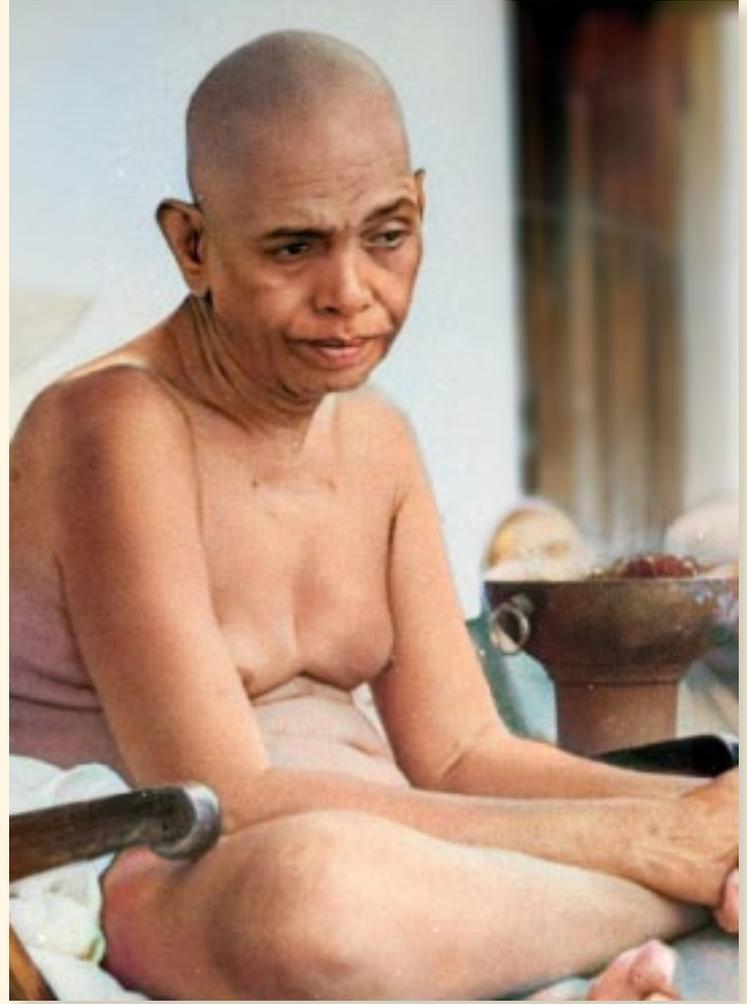


births (*samsara* means ‘wandering’ or ‘to keep moving’), restlessness is a sort of micro-samsara wherein *successive states of mundane existence* take place on a minute time scale—one new mind-generated world after another in rapid succession. This is plain to see in the meditation context when the mind is still but may not be evident at the gross level of consciousness in daily life. The digital era prompts us to take samsara to the next level by ‘incarnating’ moment by moment, ever seeking a new ‘existence’ in the subsequent digitally driven preoccupation. High-speed ‘samsara’ is the compulsion to flee an experience—the previous sensation, feeling or condition—in order to take shelter in the next sense experience. Of course, Bhagavan’s path has no interest in strategies that involve acquiring something new as a means to spiritual freedom. Whatever new comes to us can only benefit us in the short run but can never help us in the journey to fulfilment. True happiness cannot come to us in time, no matter how rapid the rate of turnover:

*When there is contact of a desirable sort or memory thereof, and when there is freedom from undesirable contacts or memory thereof, we call this happiness. But such happiness is relative and is better called pleasure. The fact is, people want absolute and permanent happiness. This does not reside in objects, but in the Absolute. It is Peace free from pain and pleasure. It is a neutral state.*²

The habit of trying to create new conditions is almost always unconscious. It is so ordinary because it has become normalised, even culturally sanctioned, and thus, is not necessarily perceived as something that needs remedial care. We neither recognise that we are seeking relief, nor even that there is anything out of the ordinary going on. In other words, restlessness has become *a way of life*. Our restlessness has become fully assimilated and standardized as a feature of our lives in the modern world. But Bhagavan asks us to see the maladaptive dimensions of restlessness. He wants us to encounter directly the conditions life presents us with at any given moment and engage them consciously. If restlessness is future-oriented, if it has a utopian element, then it is always looking for the next thing that is going to improve us and our circumstances. Genuine self-improvement, by contrast, is not born of acquiring anything new but in having nothing left to get rid of. It is self-emptying. As has been said, *all you have is*

² Talks §28.



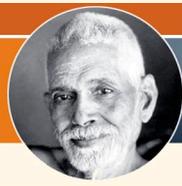
*what you are,*³ and it might be added, all you *need* is what you are. All else is extraneous and burdensome.

Of course, there is subtlety here that needs teasing out. There is something beautiful in striving for greatness and moving out of one’s fragility in the direction of confidence and wholeness. Arguably, the life of faith and the spiritual journey is just such an endeavour. But the confusion comes in respect of what we are trying to improve. Often, we are just indulging longings that need to be let go of.

There’s a Chinese proverb, *the family treasure does not come in through the front gate*. In other words, the Self does not come to us from without in time and any asset or benefit that comes to us from without in time, no matter how satisfying in the moment, cannot ultimately fulfil us. Acquisitions, whether possessions, knowledge, ideas, or the next experience, cannot ultimately save

³ From a talk by Bruno Barnhart, OSB.CAM.





us. If what comes to us in time leaves us in time, as Bhagavan tells us, then we need not put our trust in it. For Bhagavan, freedom can only be found within and *must needs already be there*. Hence, we see the futility of restless grasping after future possibilities or any other mind-based solution to our difficulties:

*The mind is by nature restless. Begin liberating it from its restlessness; give it peace; make it free from distractions; train it to look inward; make this a habit. This is done by ignoring the external world and removing the obstacles to peace of mind... Peace is the absence of disturbance. The disturbance is due to the arising of thoughts in the individual, who is only the ego rising up from Pure Consciousness. To bring about peace means to be free from thoughts and to abide as Pure Consciousness. If one remains at peace oneself, there is only peace all around.*⁴

Restlessness and Sorrow

If we find ourselves experiencing restlessness, it's a clue to look for something we're not accepting, something in the heart that is being resisted and turned away from. Restlessness is never the root cause but merely a symptom of something deeper.

Suppose in grieving the loss of someone close to us, restlessness arises to shield us from the sorrow. (This is restlessness's root function). But as it would turn out, the restlessness is more disruptive and painful than the sorrow itself. As soon as we embrace the sorrow, our restlessness drops away. In being present to the root sorrow we find it is not so dreadful after all and need not be run from. The impulse to run away from the sorrow is what causes our sorrow to be prolonged. In neglecting the core condition, we inadvertently cause it to continue which seems to confirm the unconscious fear that it

⁴ Talks, §26, 453.

would become permanent and would never depart if we were to let it run its course. The opposite is the case. In facing the core condition, it along with our restless mind and attendant fears resolve themselves on their own:

*[It is] the mind that obstructs innate peace. Our investigation is only in the mind. Investigate the mind and it will disappear. There is no entity called 'mind'. Because of the emergence of thoughts, we surmise something whence they originate which we term mind. When we probe to see what it is, there is nothing [there]. After it has vanished, [only] peace remains.*⁵

Reframing

Restlessness could be seen as originating from a distorted frame of reference. If we expand the frame, we overcome the contraction that leads to restlessness. Let us take an example from science. Consider the following: we live our entire lives on a 7800-mile-wide piece of rock rotating on its axis at 1000 mph, orbiting its sun at 67,000 mph, moving together with its solar system around the galactic centre at 500,000 mph, all of which is being hurled through intergalactic space at a velocity of 1.33 million mph, destination unknown. This is just a fact of nature. Whether or not we find it comforting, at least it gives needed perspective in countering the constriction involved in restlessness. But here's the thing, Bhagavan offers an even more comprehensive frame: *All the Earth, including the stormy seas and the storms of the heart, as well as all of intergalactic space and all the known cosmos with its 100 billion galaxies, is contained within the Self; and the Self, Bhagavan tells us, is what we are.*

From this vantage point, every worry seems trivial. In the overall scheme of things, how consequential can our restlessness ever be?

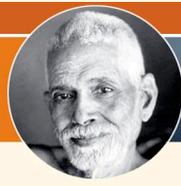
⁵ Talks §238.



Announcement: Sri Ramanasramam's Centenary Year (1st September 2022- 28th December 2023)

Sri Ramanasramam's Centenary celebrations called, *Ramanasramam: The Next One Hundred Years*, are set to begin on 1st Sept 2022 and will continue over a 16-month period until Jayanti, 28th Dec 2023. It is recorded in one place that Bhagavan came down the Hill to stay permanently 'about one week' before Jayanti which fell that year on 3rd January 1923. If so, this means the Ashram would have been established with Bhagavan's arrival around the 28th of Dec 1922. Ashram President Dr. Venkat S. Ramanam invites devotees to send their suggestions for this Centenary Year to him directly at <posrm@gururamana.org>. —





Conclusion

Bhagavan's rest and the catharsis born of surrender originates in turning toward our skeletons in the closet and making friends with internal unrest. But what keeps us from surrender? It is running after the next thing in thought or deed. On the other hand, when we allow ourselves to experiment with *not* running, we find that no inner discomfort is too much for us if we are willing to be present to it when it appears. We learn that by bringing our inner discomforts into the light of awareness, either through self-examination, *vichara*, or by communicating them to others, we overcome the tendency to fall into restlessness. When we lean on trusted devotees by virtue of a shared faith in Bhagavan, we discover—perhaps to our surprise—that they will stand with us. A German proverb goes, *Geteilter Schmerz ist halber Schmerz, geteilte Freude ist doppelte Freude*. ('Shared pain is half-pain. Shared joy is double joy'). When we share our uneasiness openly, we avoid reacting unconsciously and our burden is lightened.

Bhagavan's rest means giving up the standard defences and letting go of mechanisms designed to protect us from the discomfort within. Indeed, nothing can heal our trouble more readily than being present to it, or as

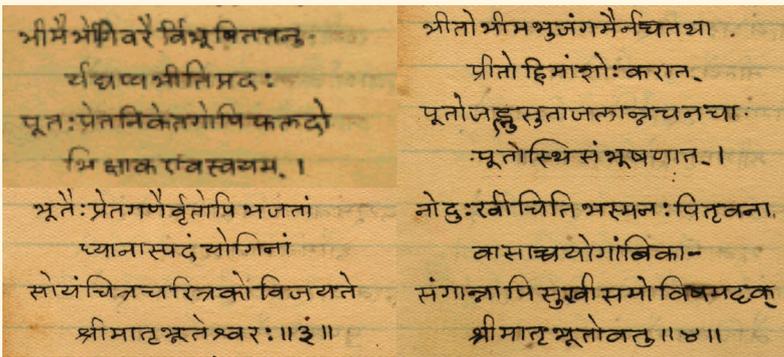
Bhagavan says, *suffering what comes our way*. Each time we muster the courage to greet a moment of discomfort, we learn to let go a little, and Bhagavan's surrender begins to take root in us. When we are able to avoid being force-marched into complete identification with our mental states, our enquiry practice is transformed and begins to look like surrender. Here the usual worries of the mind drop away and even if some of the tug-of-war between being caught up in uncomfortable mental states and being detached from them continues, we incrementally gain ground through ongoing efforts.

In time we find that our surrender becomes a way of life and we learn to greet the tempests of the heart non-reactively. In time, we see that the only demon that can ever really harm us is the one we run from. In time by carefully observing the little duck caught in the waves of the stormy Atlantic as it heaves to and fro, we discover who *we are* by what *he does*. Amid the torrent and uproar of the stormy seas, amid the commotion and tumult within and without, amid the chaos surrounding him on all sides, what does this little five-pound waterfowl do, we ask?

He sits down in it. ⁶ —

⁶ Donald Babcock, Professor of Philosophy, 'The Little Duck'.

Matrubhutesvara 100: Jagadisha Sastri's Matrubhutesvara Ashtakam (verses 3-4)



3. Bheemair bhogivarair vibhushita tanur yadyapya-bheeti prada:

Poota: preta nicketagopi phalado bikshaaka eva swayam
Bhootair preta gaNair vrtopi bhajataam dhyanaaspadam
yoginaam

Soyam chitracharitrako vijayate Sri Matrubhuteswaraha.

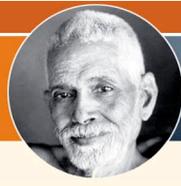
3. Though adorned with poisonous snakes, He, the giver of protection; though dweller in burial grounds, He who is perfect purity; though being a monk, He is the bestower of the fruit of karma on devotees who are yogis—that

upasana Murthy Sri Matrubhutesvarar along with Sri Bhagavan Ramana shines with wonder.

4. Bheeto bheemabhujangamair Na cha tathaapreeto himamsho: karaath/Pooto jahnu sutajalaan Na cha nachaa pootosti sambhooshanaat
No dukhee chidhibhasmana: pitruvana vaasaachha yogaambikaa/Sangaanaapi sukhee samo vishama drk sree Maatrubhuto'vatu.

4. He who is not afraid of dangerous snakes (adorning his body), who is not delighted because of the crescent moon (on his head), who needs no purification with the waters of the Ganga, who is neither defiled by his garland of heads, who is neither sorrowed by his cremation-ground home nor by smearing ashes gathered there, who is neither enticed by the embrace of His consort, Yogamba, but who is of equal vision, the one with the third eye—let that Matrubhuteswara save us! —





Obituary: Sri V. Subramanian (1939-2022)



Of the seven children of Bhagavan's nephew, T.N. Venkataraman and his wife Nagalakshmi, Sri V. Subramanian was the first to be born in Tiruvannamalai. On 8th February 1939, V. Subramanian became the third of three boys just as the family had settled into a rented house near the temple belonging to one of the *gurukkals* (Santhanam of Arunachleswarar). Subramanian's father, TNV, had taken up service in the Ashram and according to custom, the new-born child was brought before Bhagavan who had given names for the boy's two elder brothers. Ganesan had been born on Ganesha Chaturthi and named accordingly, thus Bhagavan remarked, 'Ganesha's younger brother should be named Subramanian'. In no time, everyone in the family began calling him, 'Mani'.

Mani and his brothers were blessed to spend their boyhood in the Ashram in the presence of Sri Bhagavan. While going from their house in town to the Ashram, they often went via Virupaksha Cave and Skandasramam and sometimes spent nights with their grandfather, Niranjanananda Swami. They slept in his office opposite the Old Hall near the well, invariably roused early the next morning by the sound of the Vedas. Their playground was next to the

Veda Patasala where Bhagavan used to pass by on his way to and from the *gosala*.

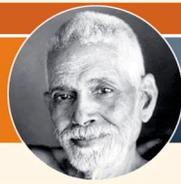
Once when Mani was about nine years old, his fourth standard teacher wrote a one-act play depicting Bhagavan's teaching which the children performed in Bhagavan's presence. The performance concluded with a line spoken by the young Mani with his fist firmly placed at the centre of his chest in a gesture of bold conviction, 'I will strive and work hard for this noble cause till my last breath.' A prophetic declaration for a young boy. Bhagavan turned his gaze to the child and smiled. He then turned to the devotees and family members and remarked, *Mani maniyaaga pesaraane* ('Mani [gem] is talking like a gem [mani]').

V.S. Mani studied engineering and was posted to ACC-Vickers Babcock Ltd., Mumbai, where he eventually served as deputy general manager. In 1969, he was married to Ramani who had been fortunate to have Bhagavan's darshan in her girlhood. Making annual visits to the Ashram, the couple set up house in Mumbai and played host to numerous Ashram inmates. In 1984, Manianna lost his mother, and the family in Tiruvannamalai felt deeply the pinch of her absence. Even though still having the responsibility of raising two young children, he took a voluntary retirement and came to settle permanently in Tiruvannamalai in 1985. If his active career in recent years had been visited by health issues, once settling in Tiruvannamalai and serving Bhagavan at the Ashram, his health normalised completely. Already trained and experienced in management, Manianna proved invaluable as an administrator and worked hard to assist his father and brother. Seven years later, his eldest brother, V.S. Ramanan, returned to the Ashram to join his brothers in assisting their father.

If as a child Mani had valiantly dedicated his life to Bhagavan, he now had the opportunity to live out this dedication by serving Bhagavan's devotees. Besides managerial adeptness, he demonstrated social graces, a keen sense of diplomacy and a deep respect and tireless solicitude for devotees. He always made it a point to see that guests felt welcome and went the extra mile to maintain contact with them when they were away, or when aged and, for health reasons, were unable to come to the Ashram. When devotees left this world, he stood by them by making sure that the *moksha deepam* lamp in their honour had been lit at Bhagavan's samadhi. He oversaw more than one hundred obituaries of deceased devotees for Ashram publications as it was his firm conviction that the living should remember and honour the memory of those who had dedicated their lives to Bhagavan. Though Manianna took his service in the Ashram seriously, he carried it out with light-heartedness and ease, bearing hardship with poise and perseverance.

In general, V.S. Mani supported any initiative if he felt it had Bhagavan's blessing. In such cases, he would spare no effort to support it. Take for example Arunachala Ashrama's documentary film, *The Sage of Arunachala* in the late 1980s. Devotees working on the project said it would never have been completed without Manianna's invaluable and endless support.





In Bhagavan's sister's arms, 1939



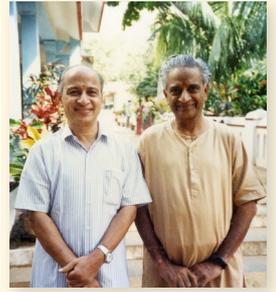
With his two brothers, 1941



With the family and Bhagavan, 1945



Wedding Day, 1969



With Sundaranna, 1995

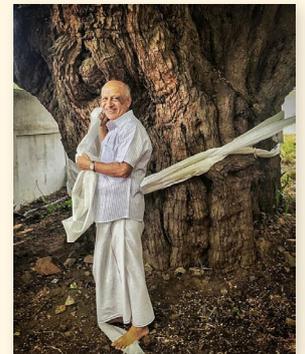
In 2001, Mani was instrumental in establishing the Archives for the protection and preservation of Bhagavan's photographic negatives, manuscripts, linen and other items. He oversaw projects such as the construction of the Korunga Thottam guest houses, renovations of the Old Hall, Bhagavan's birth house in Tiruchuzhi, the Ramana Mandiram in Madurai and other historical sites. He served on *The Mountain Path* editorial board and helped expand the Ashram gosala, introducing select Indian breeds such as Gir, Tarparkar and Kangeyam. He oversaw eco-friendly flora and fauna projects which included beekeeping, micro and macro water-harvesting, an organic farm, and the Ashram gardens embellished with more than 150 varieties of trees, plants and herbs, which provided habitat for the increasing bird population, among them, the Ashram peacocks. He oversaw the planting of 300 banyan trees on the Hill and was a key support for ARS in transforming a formerly barren Hill to the green one we see today.

In February 2019, Manianna celebrated his 80th birthday (*Satabhisehka*) at the Ashram Veda Patasala and the same month, his 50th wedding anniversary. In May that year, however, he lost his beloved wife of fifty years.

On Monday 18th July this year, following a brief illness, Manianna returned to the Ashram after a two-week absence. He was in good spirits and beamed with joy as he greeted well-wishers. Many commented how happy he looked that morning in the office though he was still regaining his strength. The next morning, on 19th July 2022, however, he complained of mild chest pain ('heartburn') but didn't give it much consideration. That afternoon, just after taking a call while working at his desk at home in the room where his mother had lived, he collapsed. Within minutes, around 4.30 pm, Manianna left this world to merge at the Feet of Bhagavan.

Manianna will be missed by family members, friends and the countless devotees whom he served over four decades. He is survived by his son Ramanan, daughter Shanti, son-in-law Bharath and two grandchildren, Dhruv and Diya. Sri Manianna's life was a shining example of generosity, simplicity and hospitality. If he was energetic and creative, he was also selfless in the care he showed people of all walks of life. Ever gracious, he left an indelible mark on the lives of devotees everywhere and will be sorely missed by all. —

[Editor's note: Devotees around the world continue to share their reminiscences on Manianna's life and it is our hope to tell a fuller length story of his life in an upcoming issue of *Saranagati* under the title, *In Profile: V.S. Mani.*]



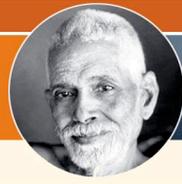
Placing silk kathas around the Ashram's tamarind tree, 2016

Events in Sri Ramanasramam: H.C. Khanna Day



On 23rd July, devotees gathered at H.C. Khanna's Samadhi to observe the anniversary of his passing in 1984. H.C. Khanna's grandson, Anil, and his wife Sabby came from Mumbai to participate after a three-year absence owing to the pandemic. All gathered recited Bhagavan's *Aksharamanamalai* followed by arathi. Some lingered with family members afterward and were regaled with stories from days gone by. —





Events at Arunachala Ashrama, New York: A Tribute to V.S. Mani (1939-2022)



Memorial Service for Shri Mani Anna (Grandnephew of the Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi)

Devotees around the world joined Arunachala Ashrama, NY, on Sunday 31st July to celebrate the life of Sri V.S. Mani in the aftermath of his earthly departure on 19th July. Manianna's niece Aruna Ramanan and her husband Ramkumar began the online event with the chanting of *Aksharamanamalai*, followed by Mohan Ramaswami who gave a brief talk. Numerous devotees made offerings either in the form of sharing their memories of Manianna's life or reciting or singing appropriate texts. The three-hour programme concluded with a talk from Sri Ramanasramam President, Dr. Venkat S. Ramanan on his Chitappa's boundless service to the Ashram. Manianna's son, Ramanan Subramanian concluded by speaking on his father's loyalty to devotees and reminisced about earlier times visiting with Bhagavan's devotees in North America. For an audio recording of the three-hour event, please go to <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LCDIXWzIKJM>>. —

Events in Sri Ramanasramam: Cow Lakshmi Puja



On 10th July devotees gathered for Cow Lakshmi Puja at her samadhi, near Bhagavan's Samadhi Hall. Songs in honour of Cow Lakshmi written by Manavasi Ramaswamy Iyer and KVS were sung by Sushila Manni and RMCL, Bangalore, led by Drs. Sarada Natarajan and Ambika Kameswar. —

Ashram Gardens: The Persian Lilac



The name Persian lilac is commonly used for two different woody plants. The Persian lilac is a hybrid, thought to originate from a cross of *Syringa plus laciniata* and *S. afghanica*. More compact than common lilacs, it grows up to 4–8 feet (1.2–2.4 m) and spreads about 5–10 feet (1.5–3.0 m). Persian lilacs prefer warmer winter climates. The Ashram Persian lilac is found at the far eastern side of the Ashram behind *The Mountain Path* office and was recently in bloom. —

