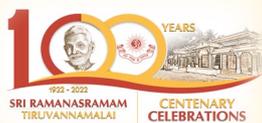


# Saranagati



SARANAGATI  
SRI RAMANASRAMAM

JUNE 2023  
VOL. 17, NO. 6



D. Thiagarajan



## Saranagati



JUNE 2023  
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IN THIS  
ISSUE



Dear Devotees,

The Ashram regrets to announce the demise of Sri Dorab Framji, age 92, who passed away on Tuesday night, 23rd May. We offer a brief tribute to his life starting on page 4.

Devotees edited, subtitled and uploaded two of the seven films that Bhagavan saw in the Ashram Dining Hall in 1946 with help from Dorab's father. For the story of Ashram Cinema and links to the uploaded films, see *Ramana Reflections: Bhagavan and Cinema*, pp. 11-14.

For videos, photos and other news of events, go to <<https://sriramanamaharshi.org>> or write to us at <[saranagati@gururamana.org](mailto:saranagati@gururamana.org)>.

In Sri Bhagavan,  
*Saranagati*

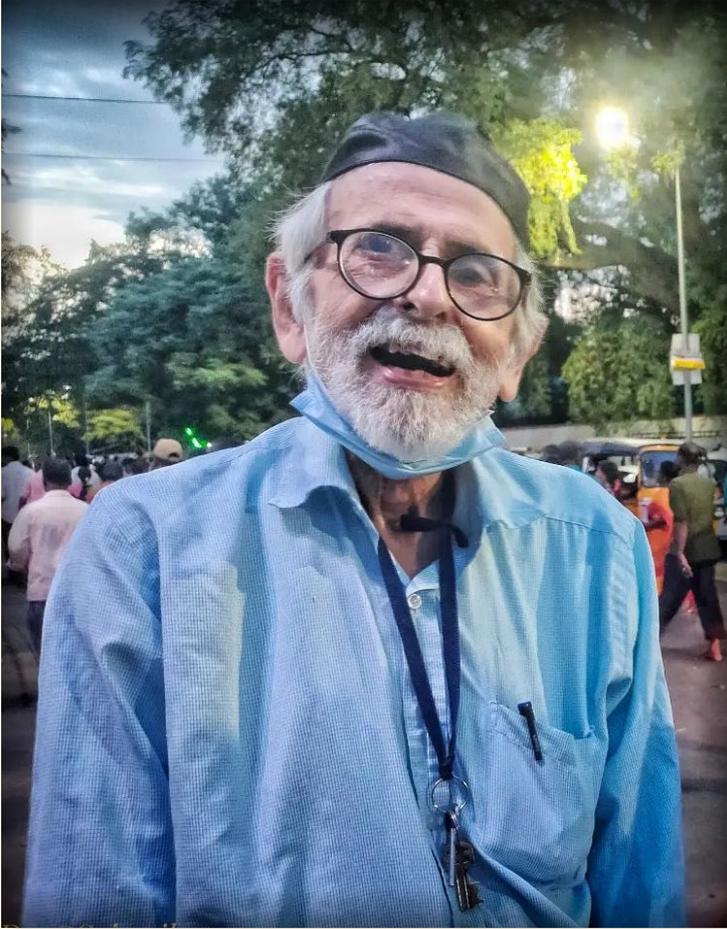
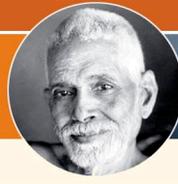
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## Calendar of Ashram Events

1st June (Thu) Pradosham  
3rd June (Sat) Full Moon  
12th June (Mon) Mahapuja  
15th June (Thu) Pradosham  
17th-18th June (Sat-Sun) Amavasya  
20th June (Tue) Punarvasu  
30th June (Fri) Cow Lakshmi Day

3rd July (Mon) Guru Purnima  
17th July (Mon) Punarvasu  
25th July (Tue) Kavayakuntha Day  
1st Aug (Tue) Full Moon  
7th Aug (Mon) Kunjuswami Day  
14th Aug (Mon) Punarvasu  
30th Aug (Wed) Full Moon





## IN PROFILE

### Sri Dorab Framji (1931-2023)

**D**orab Framji first met Bhagavan as a boy of twelve. It was in early July 1943 when he and his family came to the Ashram for the first time. His father, Framji Dorabji had a spiritual bent from early childhood and had always been keen to seek out saints.

Dorab's father heard of Sri Bhagavan from his brother, Dadiba, who had read a review of Paul Brunton's *A Search in Secret India* in *The Sunday Times*. He advised Framji to go and see Bhagavan. Framji took up the suggestion and in 1937, he and a party

of four made the journey from Mumbai to Sri Ramanasramam. The moment Dorab's father saw Bhagavan, he felt extraordinary veneration for him and was immediately convinced that here at last was the master whom he had been seeking his whole life. Though the distance from Bombay was great, Dorab's father could not stay away from Tiruvannamalai and made the journey each year.

In the early 1940s, Dorab's father found the opportunity to shift his business from Bombay to Madras and was thus enabled to make monthly visits to the Ashram. Now the whole family was near Tiruvannamalai and Dorab, along with his mother and sister, got to meet Bhagavan. In no time, the entire family were devotees and visited the Ashram frequently. They purchased a cottage near the Ashram and eventually came to regard Tiruvannamalai as their home.

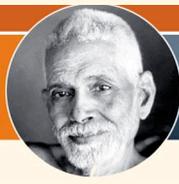
If the financial fortunes of Dorab's father had suffered in the final years at Bombay, when he shifted to Madras and to Bhagavan, everything turned around, and his business, which now included the newly established *Wellington Talkies* in Madras, began to prosper.

When Dorab and his family came for Bhagavan's darshan, they never spoke or asked Bhagavan questions but were content to sit quietly in the Master's presence. Whatever questions they might have had were invariably answered in the replies given to other devotees.

Dorab witnessed Bhagavan's compassion, even in very simple ways. During his first visit, he sat opposite Bhagavan at breakfast. Having lived all his life in Bombay, Dorab was not familiar with South Indian cuisine and had never eaten iddlis before. On tasting them, he found he was not very keen on them. Bhagavan took notice and quietly gave instructions to the kitchen. The following morning when the father and son came for breakfast, the child was astonished to see that his iddlis had been lavishly smeared with ghee and covered with jaggery, a modification that dramatically altered his opinion of them.

Around this same period, Dorab came out of the Dining Hall one day and just jumped for joy, throwing his handkerchief in the air. At the time, he didn't





know why he was so happy but later he understood that it was owing to being near Bhagavan.

Dorab used to eat very slowly when in Bhagavan's presence, because he observed that Bhagavan, ever courteous, would wait for him to finish his meal. This way he got to be with Bhagavan a little longer at mealtime. Bhagavan, of course, never let on that he was waiting but would occupy himself with one or another thing, looking here and there while cleaning his teeth with a toothpick.

During another meal in the Dining Hall, Bhagavan advised Dorab not to drink water before having his meals, advice the youngster would follow for the rest of his life.

As he came of age, he would sometimes visit the Ashram without his family. Bhagavan, ever solicitous for the welfare of devotees, would invariably inquire if the youngster was well and had everything that he needed.

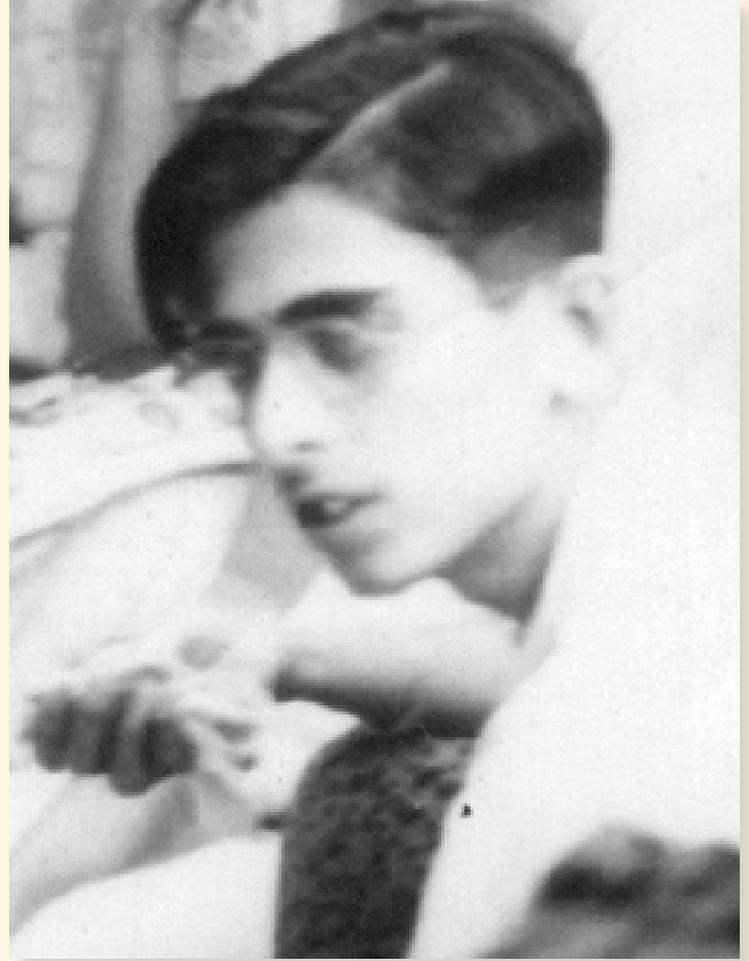
Once when Dorab was in his late teens and by this time had taken to reading poetry, he came to the Ashram to ask Bhagavan if he should give up his life in the world and come to stay permanently in Tiruvannamalai. He sat down before Bhagavan in the Hall and closed his eyes. Just then a line from Wordsworth's 'Skylark' came to mind:

*Type of the wise who soar, but never roam;  
True to the kindred  
points of Heaven and Home!*

Dorab knew that Bhagavan was telling him to give up the idea and thus he never opened his mouth. He later spoke about Bhagavan's darshan, how Bhagavan had 'compassion oozing out from his eyes'. Dorab could never forget how on full moon days when Bhagavan was cleanly shaven and would apply the three lines of vibhuti on his forehead, 'he looked like Lord Siva Himself!'

### **Bhagavan's Mahanirvana**

Dorab and his family were in Tiruvannamalai for the last fortnight of Bhagavan's earthly life. One day about a week before the Mahanirvana, Dorab's father joined the queue for the evening darshan. While he waited his turn, he silently chanted prayers from the *Zend Avesta*, the collection of Zoroastrian religious texts written in the Parsi scriptural language, Avesta, a sister language of Sanskrit. While he was facing East doing



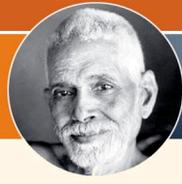
Dorab in the Jubilee Hall with Bhagavan, ca. 1949

his morning Sun prayer, Dorab came and told him they could now go and have Bhagavan's darshan.

Dorab's father continued reciting the prayer under his breath as he came before Bhagavan. He prostrated before Bhagavan three times, whilst silently continuing, 'We do homage to Thee, O Rising Sun.' Bhagavan eyed him steadily and then said with a serene smile, 'Framji, the Sun is *setting*'. Hearing these words, Dorab's father knew that the end was near.

Dorab later recalled how Bhagavan had repeatedly said that devotees must find the real Ramana within their hearts else they would be sorely disappointed when he left his body. Even those for whom this last admonition was taken to heart found the loss very difficult. It was only 'with the lamp of faith', Dorab once said, that devotees were able to find fulfilment after Bhagavan left the body.





Following Bhagavan's Mahanirvana, Dorab and the family continued to visit Tiruvannamalai. Dorab keenly missed Bhagavan's physical presence but for some period of time, there were not really many devotees around either. While in Tiruvannamalai during this period, he used to sit and meditate next to Bhagavan's samadhi under the open sky with the moon above and felt perceptibly and powerfully Bhagavan's presence even if everyone else seemed to have disappeared. In the years that followed, devotees slowly returned to Tiruvannamalai.

In 1965, Dorab came to the Ashram in his car. When he saw Ganesan, he asked him to get in, which the latter did. Dorab drove to Chennai. On the way, he queried, 'At the Ashram, when I asked you to get into the car, you did not ask where I was taking you.' Ganesan replied, 'Dorab, I know you will only take me to a place that will elevate me!'

He was happy with this reply and revealed, 'Yes, I am taking you to Vasant Vihar in Adyar for a talk by a great sage called, J. Krishnamurti.'

The very first sentence that Krishnamurti spoke was potent: 'If there is no truth within you, sir, take it for certain that there is no truth outside of you!'

Contemplating this single sentence, Ganesan felt that it conformed with Bhagavan's own teaching that I-AM is the truth.

### Satsangs at Dorab's House

The cinema, *Wellington Talkies* in Madras was a *de facto* Ramanasramam away from Ramanasramam and served as a layover for devotees visiting Chennai. The large residence on Mount Road not far from *Spencer's* with its spacious rooftop overlooking the city was a local landmark. Next door to the restaurant *Bubari's* and near the *Connemara Hotel* and *Higginbotham's* flagship bookstore just down the road, Western devotees stopped in on their way to and from India to enjoy the family's hospitality.

Devotees from Ramanasramam also found a welcome home with the Framjis during their visits to Chennai.

Dorab got to spend time with Muruganar over the years and moved freely with him. Some elders would

behave in an elderly way with him but Muruganar treated him like an equal, not as a spiritual authority whose every word was gospel. Muruganar also came to visit the Framjis in Chennai and in the poet's latter years stayed for extended periods while undergoing medical treatment.

When the family was in Tiruvannamalai, devotees gathered at the Framji residence to share reminiscences about Bhagavan.

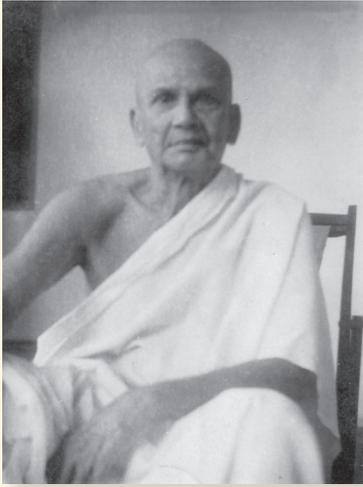
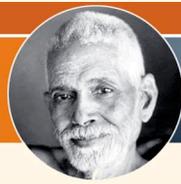
Dorab invited the staunch scholar devotee, Sadhu Natanananda, author of *Ramana Darshanam*, to set up residence within the family compound.

Sadhu Natanananda (born Natesa Mudaliar) had been a schoolmaster until he met Bhagavan in May 1918 at Skandasramam. He edited *Self-Enquiry* in the question-answer format and subsequently wrote *Upadesa Manjari* ('Bouquet of Spiritual Instructions') where he brought out Bhagavan's words heard by him at different times. *Sri Ramana Darsanam* describes aspects of truth and the qualities of a *jnani* in a narrative divided into ten scenes.

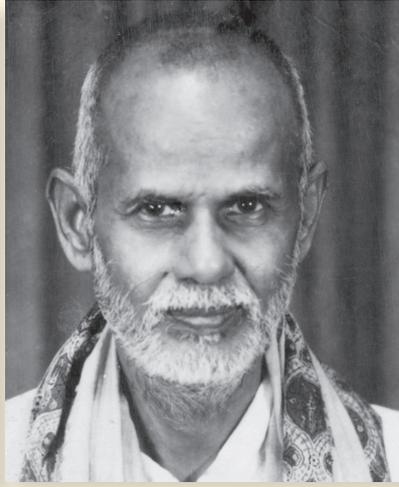
Dorab had been thrilled to learn that Sri Natanananda, about whom very little was then known, was still at Arunachala. Dorab traced him and was quite distressed to see such a great devotee living in a dreary thatched shed for refugees from war-ravaged Burma. He pleaded with the sadhu to shift to his house near the Ashram. Sri Natanananda who Dorab reverently referred to as 'Swamiji' at last agreed on the condition that it should be his only residence thenceforth. The promise was given and the author shifted to Dorab's house, elevating the regular satsangs with his innumerable memories and insights into the teaching.

Sri Muruganar, the legendary Tamil poet, Natananada, author and scholar, Lakshmana Sarma who had private lessons from Bhagavan on *Ulladu Narpadu*, and Sadhu Om, the gifted virtuoso in Tamil prosody and verse who in hundreds of poems and songs had praised Bhagavan and illumined his teachings, would all sit together and share memories of Bhagavan. Dorab loved to recall the gatherings of this quartet of great devotees at his home in the early 1960s.





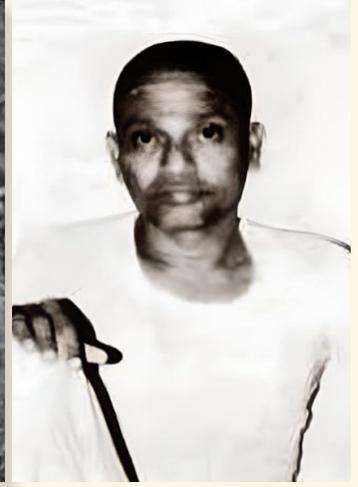
Sri Muruganar



Sri Lakshmana Sarma



Sadhu Natananada



Sadhu Om

## Muruganar's Last Days

In late August 1973, when Dorab and his father came to see the ailing Muruganar at his quarters in the Ashram, Muruganar appeared very frail. Dorab's father who was also advanced in years, walked into the room with the support of a cane. He approached Muruganar sitting up in bed and placed his hand on Muruganar's shoulder. Muruganar looked up and the two gazed at each other for a few minutes, as if they knew that this would be their last meeting. After this moving exchange, Framji simply turned and walked out just as silently as he had come in.

Muruganar passed away two days later. On the day of his demise, devotees were gathered at his room in the Ashram. Amid the atmosphere of grief, Dorab intoned the chanting of *Aksharamanamalai* and all joined in, spirits gradually lifting.

Dorab's father passed away two years later in November 1975. As Dorab was very close to his mother, it was only after her death that he shifted permanently to Tiruvannamalai.

When Sadhu Natananada passed away in 1981, Dorab constructed a small samadhi for him in the compound of his cottage. He took care to preserve the sadhu's letters as a precious treasure and always wanted their content to be translated into English. He described Natanananda as a ripe jackfruit, rough on the exterior, but all sweetness within; Sri Muruganar as a coconut, nutritious on the inside but one must be able to crack the shell, i.e. the difficult Tamil verses, to access it; and Sadhu Om as a ripe plantain fruit.

## In Later Years

Dorab was one-pointed in his love and devotion to Bhagavan and made the effort to come to the Ashram no matter how difficult walking became for him. In *Margazhi* month (mid-December to mid-January), Dorab would come and listen to *Vishnusahasranama* each morning at 5 am. It was only in the last couple of years that he was unable to come. He once commented, 'The beauty of *sadhana* is that it makes the *sadbhak* soft and gentle, and the hard crust of the ego gets broken by virtue of the love that has entered the heart.'

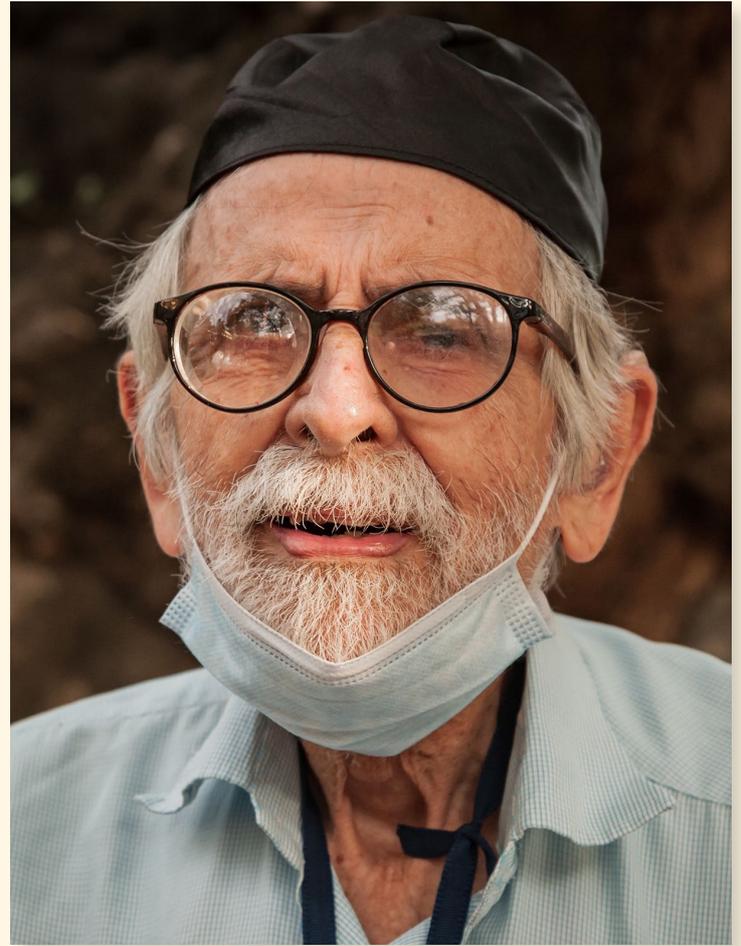
Though mostly a spiritual seeker, Dorab was excellent at business and managing finance. Over the course of his life, he gave family members astute financial advice.

He used to drive from Mumbai to Chennai when he was younger and in later years, enjoyed taking the train.

He was ever the gracious host and devotees that were invited to his house for tea and snacks experienced hospitality in full measure while also being regaled with stories from days gone by.

During the second COVID wave in Tiruvannamalai (Delta variant) in May 2021, Dorab fell sick and was hospitalised. His grand niece, Maneck who is a medical doctor flew down from Mumbai and looked after him in the hospital. The first day she 'thought he wouldn't make it. But he was cheerful and positive and pulled through in spite of the difficulties.' He had difficulty breathing and his recovery was slow. Before





COVID his memory had been excellent, she noted, and he could 'recite prose and verse by rote'. But after COVID, he lost a bit of his memory, even though he continued to be an avid reader.

When he was discharged, Maneck persuaded him to come to Mumbai with her so that the family could better care for him. When in Mumbai, Dorab said he felt Bhagavan's presence there and did not feel the urge to be in Tiruvannamalai. And yet, he could not stay away from the Ashram and wanted to be sure that he ended his life in Tamil Nadu, near his beloved Guru and the Holy Hill. Even though his family strongly advised against it, he returned. Once in Tiruvannamalai, Dorab who treasured his solitude, resumed his favourite pastimes, namely, sitting in meditation in his armchair on the veranda of his Ramana Nagar cottage and reading books from his extensive library collection.

In late April 2022 while walking through the Ashram gardens, Dorab suffered a fall and broke his hip. Hospitalized, devotees and family members came to visit him but were surprised to find him pacing the halls of the hospital with the use of his walker. All efforts to get him back into the sickbed were in vain. The Ashram management often marvelled, 'How Dorab crossed the busy road to come into the Ashram each day was a daily miracle!' But this was his way of life.

Dorab had always reasoned that the secret to long life is daily exercise. 'At this age' he said, 'if you lie in bed all the time, the muscles of the body will atrophy, and your life will be over in no time.'

When his close friend, Ashram administrator, V. S. Mani passed away in July 2022, Dorab insisted on walking the whole way to the cremation ground with his walker, resisting numerous offers of a lift.

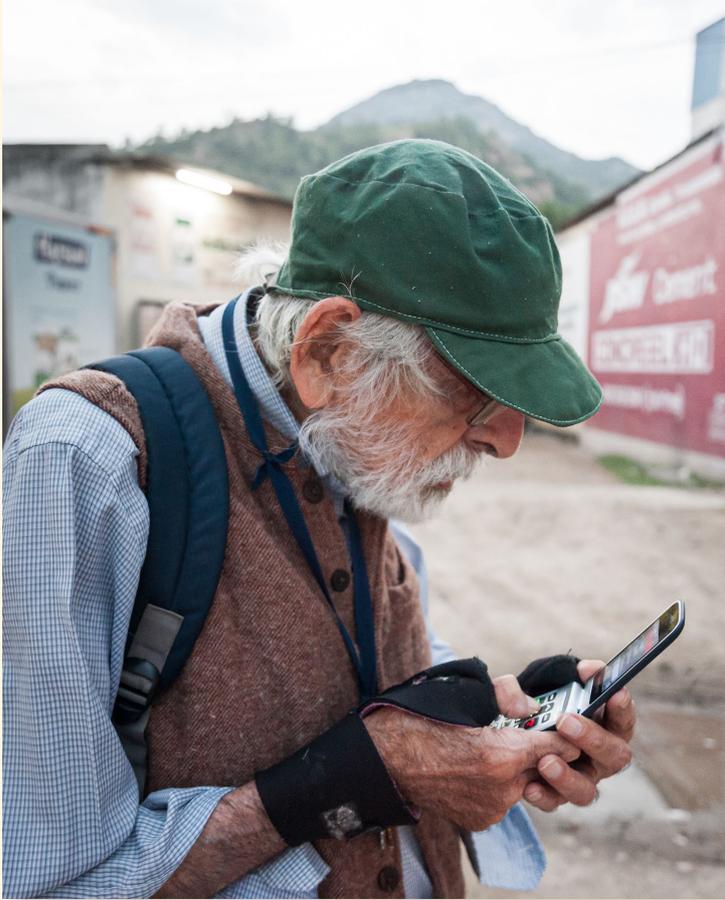
He would regularly come to collect his lunch from the Ashram, declining home delivery. Dorab was adamant in moving to and from the Ashram under his own power, a discipline he maintained right up till the end.

One devotee remarked how he loved having tea with Dorab in his 'old fashioned house with its wooden, wire-netted veranda which reminded him of the bungalows of Assam. He said, 'We were both a bit deaf. He'd shout at me, and I'd shout back and he'd say "Oh yes", or the other way round!'

Devotees recalled his solicitude with newcomers, offering them his assistance. Dr. Lakshmi on her first day in the dispensary in 2017 is one such example. Dorab walked straight in to meet her around 10 am, saying, 'I heard a young doctor from London has relocated to Bhagavan, and you see...you are blessed. It's all his call. We will meet whenever you want.' Later in subsequent email exchanges, he would regularly quote Bhagavan, 'Paying attention to attention is attention. Such attention paid to the Self leads to wisdom.'

In recent months, there was a change in Dorab's condition. In April this year, he complained of failing health. His left eyelid had begun to droop (*ptosis*) and drooped so badly that he was only in actuality using one eye. Worse still was the vertigo which caused him to bump into walls and suffer falls while moving around his house. He lost the keenness of sight in his good eye (from glaucoma), had a sinusitis condition, a heart rate in the low 30s, and dizziness because of





that. During spells when he felt like he was falling, he just repeated, 'Bhagavan, Bhagavan!' and that is how he coped. Without the least trace of self-pity, he accepted that 'one has to live out the time destined' but hastened to add 'I have no complaints. Bhagavan is very kind!'

In March this year, Dr. Venkat S. Ramanan, the Ashram president, went to visit Dorab in his house and sat with him for an extended period to discuss a life with Bhagavan. Dorab spoke of the eighty years since first meeting Bhagavan and told how Bhagavan would bring some change and growth in the devotee very rapidly and then the path might be 'a slow ripening process'. He warned that 'for years we will feel that we have made no progress' at all. But 'we are in Bhagavan's hands' would be the final message at parting from the door of his cottage.

One devotee recalls how Dorab came looking for her because he wanted something written by Muruganar (of which he had a hand written copy) to be translated into English. Fortunately Robert Butler was in Tiruvannamalai at the time and he made himself

available to do the work. The little booklet has now been published under the title, *The Disciplines that Are Essential in the Spiritual Aspirant*.

In recent months when once quoting Sufi verses from Hafiz, Rabia, Kabir, and others, he cited Rumi's 'Didn't I tell you,' alerting his listener to the *illusory nature of the world*. He also once mentioned reflectively, 'The finer the fuel, the brighter the flame; Christ may be born a thousand times in Bethlehem, but until he is born in our hearts, there's no meaning in it.'

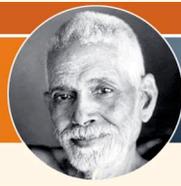
All who knew Dorab know how fiercely private he was. Those within his inner circle enjoyed the pithy pearls of wisdom that flowed freely from his insightful mind, unerringly on point, guided by an inner moral compass that had Bhagavan as its centre.

These precious insights were, of course, strictly embargoed: not for public consumption, and not to be repeated or shared with others. His wide-ranging observations on Bhagavan, sadhana, literature, politics, jokes, or the practical business of daily living arose spontaneously in his mind, and the lucky listener was assured of a fresh stream of satsang on every occasion. Such was his surrender to the flow of life that it felt sacrilegious to attempt memorizing or even making mental notes of what he said, however unique and striking they were.

Such visitors also know that it was impossible to cheat him. Dorab had a finely tuned sixth sense. One visitor, confident that he would be unobserved and undetected, casually switched on the voice recorder of his mobile phone when Dorab's back was turned. Dorab continued as if nothing had happened, and then, as the conversation resumed, he suddenly shot the question: 'Are you recording this?' 'No Dorab!' was the answer, as the guilty party casually switched off the offending app when the next unobserved moment presented itself, and deleted the file as well, unheard.

Dorab mellowed and relented in his last years, given an increasingly frail body that he kept ambulatory with superhuman perseverance. One visitor, admitted into the intimate space of his bedroom, which was strewn with a mass of papers and various objects, dared to take a few respectful if surreptitious snapshots. Detection was unavoidable.





‘Are you taking photographs?’ Dorab demanded. ‘Yes, Dorab,’ the visitor confessed. A pause. And then Dorab so kindly added, ‘OK. All right. What is there? You see, I used to be very strict. Now my life is an open book.’

It will not be betraying any confidences to mention that Dorab had begun writing his thoughts in a notebook in his spidery hand. A devotee from abroad, who had visited Dorab on multiple occasions earlier this year, was treated to select passages that Dorab read aloud to him. ‘Pearls of wisdom,’ said the visitor later. One day, perhaps, with the blessings of his family and heirs, Dorab’s writings will see the light of day.

One devotee recounted how when she and her husband were staying in the Ashram in January this year, Dorab came to the Ashram with homemade sandwiches, drinks, and other snacks for them to have on their journey, something he always did for them over the years before they took leave.

Just a week before the accident, two long-term devotees received a phone call from Dorab. Over the decades of their friendship, Dorab had made it a habit to stop by and visit them ever so often, and sometimes told stories from the olden days. In this recent conversation, however, he related how he was experiencing dizziness and couldn’t see or hear very well. Thus, instead of coming to their house, as was his custom, he asked them to come see him at home as he had some things he wanted to tell them, things he had never told them before. Unfortunately, this meeting never took place.

On Tuesday evening 23rd May, just ten days after his 92nd birthday, Dorab was struck by an auto rickshaw and suffered a head injury. This happened at around 6.45 pm near the Dakshinamurthi shrine in front of Ramanasramam. Someone informed an Ashram staff member who came to the scene and found Dorab on the ground. He called an ambulance, but when it was slow in coming, he made the decision to engage an auto rickshaw and rushed Dorab to the local GH. Dorab was lucid and alert en route, and even spoke. When it was determined that he had suffered a serious head injury, he was transferred to GH, Adukampaarai, Vellore, but, alas, too late. Dorab passed away at 12.10 am in the early morning of 24th May.



Numerous devotees have written to the Ashram expressing their sense of loss, each one offering heartfelt testimony about the wonderful interactions they had with Dorab over the years. Each spoke of his abiding faith in Bhagavan, his kindness toward devotees and the sincerity of his spiritual search.

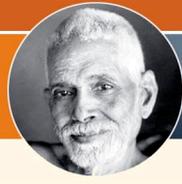
All are grateful that Dorab got to spend the final days of his life near Bhagavan. Dorab will be missed by family members and devotees alike, and by so many for whom he remained such a good friend until the very end.

Dorabji is survived by his nephew Darius and his two grand nieces, Rashna and Maneck. On the thirteenth day Dorab’s ashes were interred in his compound adjacent to the samadhi of Sadhu Natanananda. —

*[Editor’s note: The Ashram management has obtained permission from the Highway Dept. to construct two speed bumps across the road in front of the Ashram.]*

*Photos in this article printed by permission from Dev Gogoi.]*





## RAMANA REFLECTIONS

### Bhagavan and Cinema

Before the Golden Jubilee celebrations 1st September 1946 came a proposal that some cine films be shown in the Ashram. Mrs. Taleyarkhan had suggested a series of spiritual films on consecutive nights following the celebrations. Bhagavan accepted the proposal and Mrs. Taleyarkhan made the needed arrangements, utilising her contacts in the Madras cinema world to get a high-quality projector for the event. She also arranged with Bhagavan devotee, Framji Dorabji, the proprietor of *Wellington Talkies*, to provide reels of classical films on saints. Many devotees were thrilled by the proposal, having never seen a cinema show. *Sadhakas* and those with a more contemplative sensibility were concerned what such an event might mean for the life of

the community, seeing cinema or any outward enjoyment as potentially injurious to the spiritual undertaking and the perfume of silence that pervaded Bhagavan's Ashram. It may not at first be obvious what their concern was. The ancient Rishis had warned repeatedly about taking refuge in sense experience. Bhagavan had himself once said:

*Whatever is external is also transitory. Such phenomena may produce joy for the time being. But abiding peace, i.e., shanti, does not result.<sup>1</sup>*

For Bhagavan, this applied not only to sense objects but to the compulsion toward accumulating possessions and seeking comfort of the body or mind in objects of the world. Such comforts only give momentary satisfaction, Bhagavan says:

*If a man thinks that his happiness is due to external causes and his possessions, it is reasonable to conclude that his happiness must increase with the increase of possessions and diminish in proportion to their diminution. Therefore, if he is devoid of possessions, his happiness should be nil. What is the real experience of man? Does it conform to this view? In deep sleep the man is devoid of possessions, including his own body. Instead of being unhappy he is quite happy. Everyone desires to sleep soundly. The conclusion is that happiness is inherent in man and is not due to external causes. One must realise his Self in order to open the store of unalloyed happiness.<sup>2</sup>*

While these utterances which came in the hall only a few years earlier could be viewed as central to Bhagavan's teaching, Bhagavan also felt that he had to give room for devotees who were not so intent on *sadhana*, all the while doing his level best to nudge them along. His style was non-coercive even if he himself, the embodiment of virtue, testified to the possibilities that earnest *sadhana* can bring.

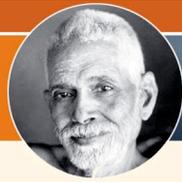
Bhagavan had more than once commented on 'how difficult Swamihood is' and in the case of Ashram cinema in the Golden Jubilee year of 1946 we have an example of the sorts of binds Bhagavan had to negotiate. Of course, Bhagavan being Bhagavan, he handled such situations with great facility, and all devotees would be happy in the end. But sometimes devotees would use Bhagavan's silent assent for a proposal to suggest that it had been Bhagavan who proposed it. The same trick was sometimes played on Chinna-swami in the Ashram office.

We moderns may not be able to appreciate how unusual the proposal was for the 1940s. In the early

<sup>1</sup> *Talks*, §393.

<sup>2</sup> *Talks*, §3.





twentieth century Hollywood and other film industries in Europe and North America were seen by many as a threat to traditional values and religious faith. With the prominence of talkies in Madras, Calcutta and Bombay in the 1930s, the same concerns arose among the orthodox of India. In general, the film industry was not favourably looked upon, especially not among the orthodox. For his part, Bhagavan reasoned that the world was changing, and was changing inexorably—had *already* changed. World War II brought a whole new era with it and people everywhere, shocked by the violence, were reeling. Bhagavan understood the value of spiritual discipline and knew what was profitably demanded of *sadhakas*. But Bhagavan also knew that everything had its time and that compassion and acceptance was the greatest gift he could offer.

If the technology and communications revolution was underway in India, it became apparent in Ramanasramam in 1946. Just a few months prior to the Ashram cinema of the Golden Jubilee celebrations, someone had written to the Ashram saying that they had seen a film of Bhagavan in Hollywood. Bhagavan remarked, 'We knew nothing about it. But apparently someone had come and filmed me when I was moving on the hill.'<sup>3</sup>

Around this time, Sarojini Hutheesing (related by marriage to Jawaharlal Nehru) had expressed the desire to have the daily life of Bhagavan filmed and shown to the world. K. K. Nambiar had come around

<sup>3</sup> *Day by Day*, 11-12-45.

the same time with his home movie camera and filmed Bhagavan and devotees in and around the Ashram.<sup>4</sup> It was the time and technology following the war that brought with it new ways of living.

The night following the Golden Jubilee celebration, Bhagavan and devotees saw the film *Nandanar* in Tamil. This was a first for Bhagavan who had never seen a film before. On the second night, the life of the Maharashtrian saint, *Tukaram* was shown in Marathi. On the third night, *Bhartruhari* in Hindi was shown. Devotees had the honour of sitting near Bhagavan and watching the stories of India's great saints unfold on the Dining Room wall. Framji's son, Dorab and his daughter, Soona were thrilled to see a film with Bhagavan. However, Nagamma, Muruganar and other devotees who objected to cine films being 'exhibited in a Rishi's Ashram', politely bowed out from attending. They reasoned that for Bhagavan, a Siddha Purush, 'there are no rules and regulations binding him'<sup>5</sup>. But for ordinary *sadhaks* like themselves, the new culture posed genuine dangers to the spiritual undertaking laid out by Bhagavan. Those in favour of the Dining Hall cinema made the following counter argument: 'If Bhagavan himself is witnessing the pictures, what objection could anyone really have?'

The divergent views are striking in many respects and underscore the changes that were underway in post-war India and around the world.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 27-11-45 Morning.

<sup>5</sup> *My Life at Ramanasramam*, Suri Nagamma, Chapter titled, 'Interesting Developments'.

## Announcement: Mahapuja, 12th June 2023

**Mother Alagammal - Maha Puja**  
12th June 2023

வினாயகரின் கீழே வினாயகரின் கீழே  
மனமாயிரா எங்கே வந்தே - அமெய்யான  
அன்பையும் நினைவு நாயகத்தின்மீது அமரமுள்ள  
வினாயகரின் கீழே - ச.க. வந்தே.

குருவாய்க்க மேலை, 995

The great ones, free from the mind's movements,  
Are truly happy, never leaving.  
The Mother's lap and playing there,  
Fed amply with milk of Bliss.

The Garland of Guru's Sayings, 995



**Sri Ramanasramam**  
Tiruvannamalai - 606 603 - Tamil Nadu  
email: ashram@sri-ramanasramam.org, www.sri-ramanasramam.org



அளினை அழகம்மாள் மறா புகை  
12-6-2023

**MAHA PUJA**  
of  
**Sri Matrubhuteswarar**

Will be observed at the shrine of  
Sri Matrubhuteswara situated  
within Sri Ramanasramam,  
on Monday the 12th June 2023.  
Devotees are invited to  
participate and  
receive the Blessings.

*Venkat S. Ramanam*  
Venkat S. Ramanam  
President  
Sri Ramanasramam

Sri Ramanasramam P.O.  
Tiruvannamalai - 606 603  
1st March 2023

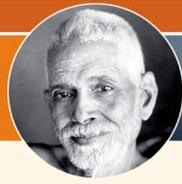
**ஸ்ரீ மாத்ருபூதேசுவரர்**  
**மறா புகை**

ஸ்ரீ ரமணசங்கீர்த்தனம் நிகழ்ச்சி  
அனுக்கொற்ற வினாயகரின் கீழே வினாயகரின்  
ஸ்ரீ மாத்ருபூதேசுவரர் மறா சந்திரமாத்ருபூதின்,  
நிகழும் கோபலிக்கு ஆண்டு  
வைகாசி 28 ஆம் நாள் 12-6-2023 திங்கள் கிழமை  
கிருஷ்ணபக் நவமி திதியன்று  
பகல்த் கிருண மரம் நிகழ உண்டி.  
பத்திகள் அணையும் கலந்து கொண்டு  
ஸ்ரீ மாத்ருபூதேசுவரர்  
அருணை பெற வேண்டுகிறோம்.

*Venkat S. Ramanam*  
ஸ்ரீ ரமணசீரம்  
திருவண்ணாமலை 606 603  
1.3.2023

ஸ்ரீ ரமணசீரம்  
ஸ்ரீ ரமணசீரம்  
ஸ்ரீ ரமணசீரம்





A second round of viewings was scheduled for early November, starting on the 1st of the month. Framji was requested to bring a number of films, four of which were viewed over five nights: the Tamil films, *Harischandra* and *Bhakta Pundarika*, and the Hindi film, *Karna* and finally, *Mira Bai*. Following each viewing, Bhagavan would enthusiastically read about the saint depicted, and in some instances, would read out sections from the original accounts that had been left out in the film version. He was moved by the stories of these great saints and on the morning following the final film night, he read out from *Pulavar Puranam* ('Story of the Poets'). Devaraj Mudaliar comments:

*When Bhagavan came to the stanza in which it is said that the poet Sivakavi fell repenting at Subramanya's feet and said, 'I would not care for you. Still, such was your grace that you of your own accord appeared before me, set me right and took me into your grace. How can I thank you for your mercy?' Choked with emotion, Bhagavan could hardly contain his tears.'*<sup>6</sup>

On the following night, local boys wanted to join the cinema but were denied entry and thus, took out their frustration by throwing stones on the roof of the Dining Hall. Bhagavan seems to have taken this as a sign that cinema at Ramanasramam should not be an ongoing practice. After discussions with Muruganar the following day in the hall, it was decided that the remaining reels, nearly a dozen in all, would have to be returned to Madras unseen.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> *Day by Day*, 6-11-46.

<sup>7</sup> *My Life at Ramanasramam*, 'Interesting Developments'.

All this took place in 1946. But unknown to those gathered in the Dining Hall for the Ashram Cinema, elsewhere that year a major cinema event indirectly involving Bhagavan was taking place.

Devotees may recall how the English novelist, W. Somerset Maugham had visited Ramanasramam in 1938. During his visit, he interviewed Bhagavan and Major Chadwick. In 1944, the author's bestseller, *The Razor's Edge* was published. The book was a success and in 1946 was made into a Hollywood blockbuster film starring Tyrone Power. But here is what none attending the Golden Jubilee celebrations could have known: the protagonist in *The Razor's Edge*, Larry Darrell who, according to the story, journeyed to India on a spiritual quest, was modelled in part on the Ashram's own Major Chadwick. More significantly, Larry's guru in the story, 'Ganesha', was modelled on Bhagavan Sri Ramana.

If Maugham was overrated, he was nevertheless right about the timing for a character like Larry Darrell who, dissatisfied with Western materialism, had turned his back on the world, gave up his formidable career opportunities to come to India to seek a more meaningful life. While Maugham had confessed to Chadwick how impressed he had been with Sri Ramana, he fell short in depicting Bhagavan's greatness in Ganesha. Maugham was not a spiritual man and had not spent enough time at Sri Ramanasramam to learn anything of Bhagavan's teaching but instead merely

## Sri Bhagavan's Ayurvedic Recipes: Kadukali Sukkindu Nirmor

### Kadukali Sukkindu Nirmor

Ēlañ sukkup pelumic cairacam  
nāluñ cērnda nalla nīrmōr  
kōla vāṇōr kōṇuk kēṇuñ  
cāla varidāc cāṭtra lāmē.

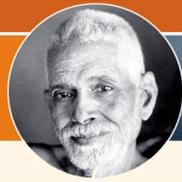
Ēlam sukku-uppu elumiccai rasam  
nālum sērnda nalla nīrmōr

kōla vāṇōr kōṇuk kēṇuñ  
cāla varidāc cāṭtra lāmē.

*Ingredients:* Buttermilk mixed with cardomom, ginger, lemon-juice and a little salt is said to be of rare relish even to Indra.

*Benefits:* Reduces body heat, cools the stomach and aids digestion.





jotted down rudimentary observations. In recounting Larry's darshan with Ganesha, the former could not speak convincingly, nor with any real understanding, simply because his creator—Maugham—had not conducted a genuine spiritual search himself and had no idea who Sri Ramana Maharshi really was.<sup>8</sup>

Devotees seeing this film will be greatly disappointed with its portrayal of Bhagavan. Nevertheless, the film enjoyed wide appeal in the West and though a commercial venture, helped ignite spiritual longing and the quest for meaning among a generation of seekers in the aftermath of a long, cruel war.

As for 1946, we can say that it was the year that the South Indian film industry made its way to Bhagavan Sri Ramana, namely, in the form of several classical films shown in the Ashram Dining Hall. That same year Bhagavan made it to Hollywood, however imperfectly, in the blockbuster film, *The Razor's Edge*. —

*Editor's note:* Ramana devotees prepared the films Bhagavan saw in 1946, editing them, translating the text, and uploading them for devotees' use. For those interested in the films Bhagavan viewed on 2nd and 3rd September 1946, click the following (for Android, copy URL): *Nandanar*.

<sup>8</sup> The section adapted from *Mountain Path*, July 2018, pp. 93-97.



*The Razor's Edge* cast Tyrone Power as Larry Darrell (based on Chadwick) and Cecil Humphreys as Ganesha (based on Bhagavan Sri Ramana)

pt. 1: <<https://youtube.com/embed/qKlIkWhn7qw>>,  
pt. 2: <<https://youtube.com/embed/664psNuVXMk>>;  
*Sant Tukaram*.

pt. 1: <<https://youtube.com/embed/UBR0u4tvjXs>>;  
pt. 2: <<https://youtube.com/embed/VAXfjmEVORU>>.  
For those interested in *The Razor's Edge* (1946 version), see:  
[https://youtube.com/embed/m\\_m4YKnWjdg](https://youtube.com/embed/m_m4YKnWjdg)

## Events in Sri Ramanasramam: Alagammal's Mahanirvana Day Chanting



Late in the evening of 19th May 1922 after Mother breathed her last, Bhagavan asked devotees to recite the *Tiruvachakam*. A Tamil tradition says that *Tiruvachakam* should be chanted following the death of a loved one. On the morning of 19th May 2023, one hundred and one years since mother merged at the Feet of Bhagavan, devotees gathered in the New Hall and chanted the *Tiruvachakam*. The recitation began about 7.30 am and was completed at 3 pm. —

