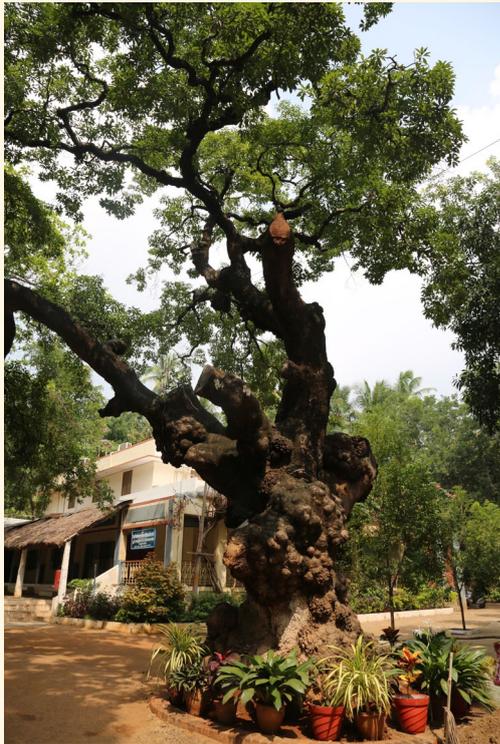
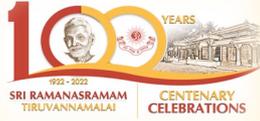


Saranagati



SARANAGATI
SRI RAMANASRAMAM

MARCH 2023
VOL. 17, NO.3



Photos from Chris James Dade



Saranagati



MARCH 2023
VOL. 17, NO.3

IN THIS
ISSUE



Dear devotees,

In this issue we conclude the life story of Sadhu Om who came to Bhagavan in 1946 and sang songs of devotion in his presence. Sri Muruganar, upon his passing in 1973, designated Sadhu Om as the executor of his literary estate, which meant that it fell to Sadhu Om to edit and prepare for publication Sri Muruganar's 14,000 verses.

Also in this issue is the continuation of a reflection on Bhagavan's surrender as it relates to what Bhagavan calls *chidakasa* and how Bhagavan's silence and stillness opens the door to a direct and transformative knowing and seeing.

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

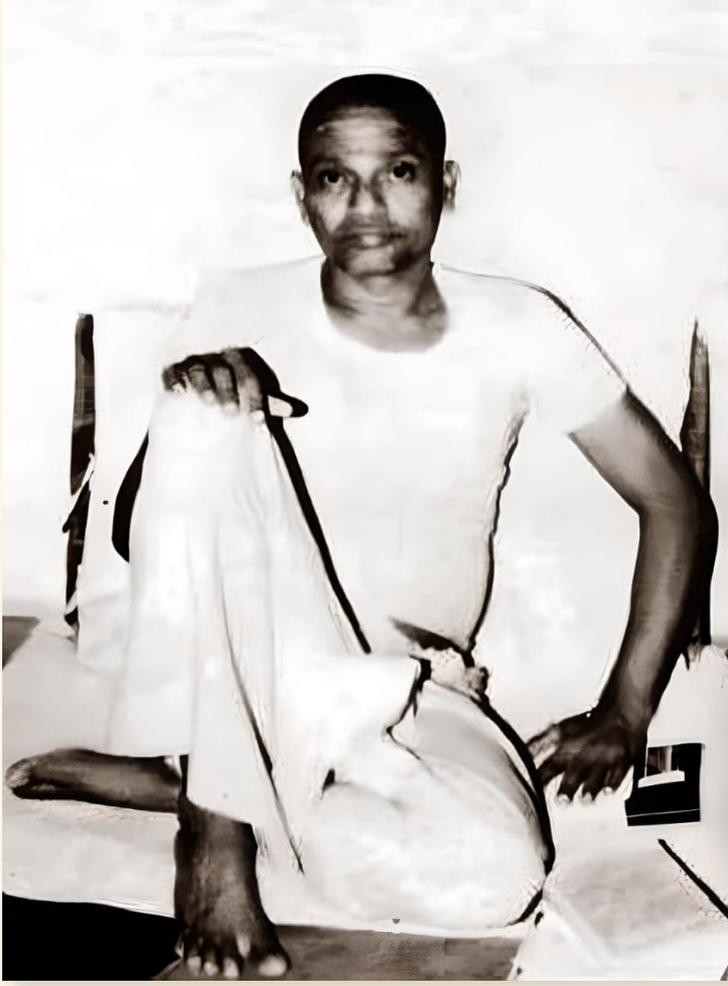
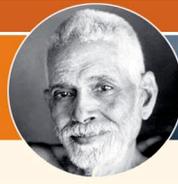
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Saranagati

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Calendar of Ashram Events

3rd Mar (Fri) Punarvasu	22nd Mar (Wed) Telugu New Year
4th Mar (Sat) Pradosham	30th Mar (Thu) Punarvasu
6th Mar (Mon) Full Moon	3rd April (Mon) Pradosham
12th Mar (Sun) Sundaram Iyer Day	14th April (Fri) Nirvana Room Chanting/New Year
17th Mar (Fri) Sri Vidya Havan	18th April (Tues) Bhagavan's 73rd Aradhana
19th Mar (Sun) Pradosham	26th April (Wed) Pradosham





IN PROFILE

Sri Sadhu Om (part II)

Sadhu Om continued his visits to Ramanasramam while residing in Janaki Nilayam in Tanjore. He was in the Ashram at the time of Bhagavan's illness and once referred to an account given from within the dispensary walls after one of Bhagavan's surgeries:

Even at the time of his fourth operation, which was a very major one, Bhagavan refused to be given a general anaesthesia. The operation took a long time, and because of the profuse bleeding, it was difficult for the doctors to dress the wound. Towards the end of the operation Bhagavan was talking to someone when the doctors informed him that the operation was over.

'What! Is it over?', asked Bhagavan.

Someone then asked, 'Bhagavan, did you not feel any pain?'

*Bhagavan replied, 'Yes, there was pain, like a hundred chillies being ground into the wound, but even that pain is not apart from me.'*¹

On another occasion, talking about the cancer, Bhagavan said:

*The body itself is a disease. If another disease comes to this first disease, is it not good for us?*²

Sadhu Om watched as the dreaded day approached. He was in Ramanasramam on the evening of 14th April 1950:

*We were sitting in the Mathrubhuteswara veranda singing Aksharamanamalai, when all of a sudden, we saw a bright flash from the nirvana room where Bhagavan lay. We thought at first that it was a camera flash. But people in the open began shouting 'Jyoti! Jyoti in the sky!' because they saw a big light in the sky, which then slowly moved northwards and disappeared behind Arunachala.*³

At Janaki Nilayam, Sadhu Om took up the editorship of the monthly Tamil magazine *Arul* published by Janaki Matha's Ashram. Such work was his forte. During this time, Sadhu Om became closer to Janaki Matha and to her husband, Dr Ganapathi. Dr Ganapathi included Sadhu Om in private Sanskrit lessons in the family home when a pundit was brought in to instruct the doctor.⁴

In 1955, when Dr. Ganapathi passed away, Janaki Matha wanted to follow her husband in death according to the *sati* tradition. However, her efforts failed and she suffered further grief by not being able to follow her life companion in death, attributing her failure to insufficient worship of Devi.⁵

After Dr. Ganapathi's demise, *Arul* went out of publication. Sadhu Om moved out of Janaki Nilayam and stayed for a few weeks in the house of S. Chidambaram. He took up spinning cotton which he had done in his teen years and would occasionally do over the course of his life, both in keeping with the spirit of Gandhi's self-reliance movement and also to earn a little income.

¹ From an interview in *Arunachala Ramana* magazine, reproduced on David Godman's blog.

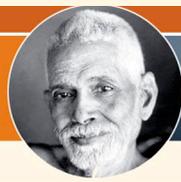
² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ From a private conversation with Michael James.

⁵ *The Life of Sri Sadhu Om Swamigal* by R.K. Shankar





In 1955 his longing to go to Ramanasramam fuelled ongoing composition of songs and poems on Bhagavan. Once, while writing a poem on Bhagavan, (*Sri Ramana Varubai*, a song consisting of 361 verses beseeching Bhagavan to come to him), he fell into a deep state of meditation wherein he saw the physical form of the Master standing before him. Bhagavan asked: 'Why do you call me to you? Why don't you come to me?' Sadhu Om asked in reply, 'What will I do for food?' Next, Sadhu Om saw in his mind's eye an empty dining hall with lots of banana leaves placed on the floor. Bhagavan then said, 'Why not serve yourself?'

Sadhu Om understood this to be an 'assurance from Bhagavan that he would provide for all his needs when he came to 'Tiruvannamalai'.⁶ Natarajan took the name 'Sadhu Om', he made the journey to Ramanasramam and upon entering the front gate, Venkato, the Ashram President, saw him and said, 'Oh, good you have come. We need someone to help in the bookstore.' Sadhu Om readily agreed and as part of his service there, would eventually take part in editing various works in Tamil for Ashram publication.

Sadhu Om's accommodation was arranged. Everything fell into place and now, with accommodation and volunteer service in the Ashram bookstall, Sadhu Om's life at Tiruvannamalai was off to a good start.

Later Sadhu Om was asked to help out in the Ashram Dispensary which was offering free medical service to the local poor. He took up work as a compounder,
6 From a private communication with Michael James.

assisting Doctor Siva Rao. While having no formal training in pharmaceuticals, Sadhu Om picked up the basics of preparing simple medicines at the Ashram dispensary administered according to the doctor's recommendations.

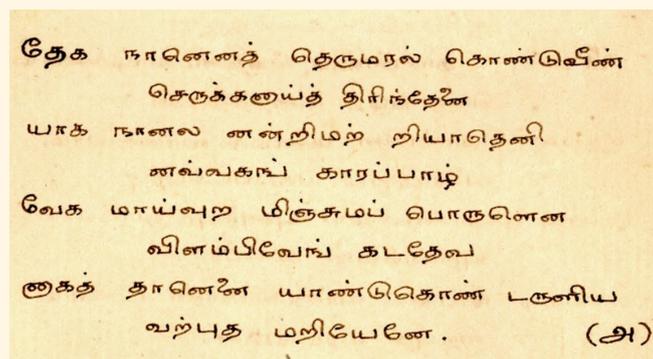
Sadhu Om stayed in the Ashram until 1961 when he shifted to the compound of C. P. Nathan (Pazhamalai Natha Pillai) in Ramana Nagar. C. P. Nathan and his family offered Sadhu Om the basic requisites for a sadhu which included housing and food. Sadhu Om could now dedicate himself more fully to compositions and shedding light on Bhagavan's teachings.

In time C. P. Nathan's compound grew into a small community and began to resemble an Ashram. Sadhu Om assisted devotees who wanted to settle nearby. He helped in the construction of their houses and was energetic in every aspect of the work, namely, digging foundations, laying bricks, plastering walls. Meanwhile C. P. Nathan's wife and daughter-in-law, Radha began preparing food for visiting guests. Sadhu Om assisted them by offering ideas on developing their service.⁷

Now living in the midst of the family, he got to hear their history and once recounted an intriguing story about C. P. Nathan's son, Amritalingam. As an infant, the boy was found to have a liver tumour. His mother rushed him to see Bhagavan. She said anxiously, 'Bhagavan, the doctors say my child has a liver tumour that cannot be cured'. Bhagavan touched the baby's belly and remarked, 'Who said so? Nothing is found here?'

⁷ 'Sri Sadhu Om: A Brief Life History', *Sri Sadhu Om Birth Centenary Souvenir*, pp. 5-6.

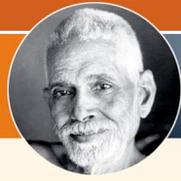
Bhagavan's Handwriting: Muruganar's 'Decad of Miracle' (v. 8)



Deha naan-enat teru-maral kondu-veen/Seruk-kanaait tirin-denai
Aaga naan-alan andri mattru yaa-denin/Avvagan-kaa-rap paazh
Vega maai-ura minju-meip porul ena/Vilambi Venkata devan
Aagat taan enai aandu-kondu aruliya/Arpudam ari-yene.

Proud I wandered being deluded by the thought that the body was "I". God Venkata said, "No, not that. Ask 'Who am I?', and when the fierce, proud ego dies, then what ever abides as Being, you are 'That.'" Saying this He made me his own Self. How did this miracle happen? —





After that, the tumour disappeared.

Sadhu Om told another story of a devotee of Lord Subrahmanya who came to Bhagavan in the aftermath of a health crisis:

*Bhagavan, I was in hospital and suffering from a critical disease. The doctors decided there was no hope. One night while I was wide awake, you came and sat by my bed and said a few words to me. The next day I began to recover, and now I am back to normal. It is all due to your grace.'*⁸

*Bhagavan smiled and said, 'Because of your devotion to Lord Subrahmanya, he came to save your life. But why did he appear in my form instead of his own? Because of this, you now attribute the miracle to me.'*⁸

Muruganar

During these years Sadhu Om got close to Muruganar, the two sharing an intense love for Tamil verse and prosody. Sadhu Om's biographer writes:

Muruganar used to write verses every day, mostly on a slate, and if more verses came to him and he would sometimes erase an earlier verse to write the new one. Knowing this, Sadhu Om always made a point of first copying whatever was written on the slate when he came to Muruganar each day, and he made sure that a supply of paper was always there for Muruganar to write on, but for some reason he preferred writing on his slate. If the slate was full, Sadhu Om would always ask him whether he had erased any verses. If he had, he could often remember them, and would then dictate them to

⁸ Interview.

*Sadhu Om, but sometimes he would have forgotten them, in which case they were lost forever. Towards the end it became difficult for Muruganar to write even on the slate, so he would either remember any verses that came to him and tell them to Sadhu Om later when he came, or if anyone else came in the meanwhile he would dictate to them. When he dictated to others, they would often write them wrongly, but Sadhu Om was adept at correcting any errors, and would then verify his corrected version with Muruganar.*⁹

Owing to Sadhu Om's profound knowledge of Tamil literature, familiarity with Muruganar's poetic style and a general grasp of Sri Bhagavan's teachings, Muruganar remarked:

*If Sadhu Om is not entrusted with full responsibility for preserving and editing all my unpublished verses, then it will be better to bundle all of them together and offer them into the Deepam Fire atop Arunachala or drown them into the Bay of Bengal.*¹⁰

When the third edition of *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai* and the second edition of *Guru Vachaka Kovai* were published by Sri Ramanasramam during the last years of Muruganar's life, they were edited and proofed by Sadhu Om.¹¹

⁹ From a correspondence with Michael James

¹⁰ 'Sri Sadhu Om: An Exemplary Devotee', *Sri Sadhu Om Birth Centenary Souvenir*, Michael James, p. 19 (originally published in *The Mountain Path*, July 1985).

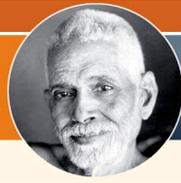
¹¹ Extracts from a talk given by Professor K. Swaminathan on May 5th at Ramana Kendra, New Delhi, reproduced in *The Mountain Path*, July 1985.



Events in Sri Ramanasramam: Full Moon at the Ashram

The *Arunachala Mahatmyam* emphasizes just how auspicious is the monthly full moon at Arunachala Hill and that circumambulating the Holy Hill on such nights brings untold blessings. Each full moon Ashram devotees feel even more palpably Sri Bhagavan's grace and that of Holy Arunachala. —





In August 1973, Muruganar passed away and having designated Sadhu Om as executor of his literary estate, he held the responsibility of editing and collating a vast literary corpus consisting of 14,000 verses. They were some of the finest verses of 20th century Tamil poetry and Sadhu Om's task was prodigious. In some cases, Sadhu Om had to transcribe verses that had been scribbled on scrap paper.

Over the next thirteen years, Sadhu Om arranged, compiled, and edited this colossal literary corpus and presented it in nine volumes to be published in Tamil under the title, *Ramana Jnana Bodham*. (Only four volumes had been published by the end of Sadhu Om's life, though he had already done most of the work in editing the remaining five volumes).¹²

Other undertakings included preparing Muruganar's *Guru Vachaka Kovai*, authoring a commentary upon it, and rendering the verses into basic English to assist Prof. K. Swaminathan who was translating the work into English. Other works in Tamil such as *Sadbanai Saram*, *Sri Ramana Gitam* and Sadhu Om's commentaries on *Upadesa Undiyar* and *Guru Vachaka Kovai came one* by one.

¹² Ibid. Following Sadhu Om's demise, Prof. K. Swaminathan and Prof. K. Subramanian formed a committee including Michael James to finish the editing and have these remaining volumes published.

An additional work was born of Sadhu Om's prolific correspondence with Ramana devotees over a period of about seventeen years. These letters were retrieved from their recipients (by Dr. R Santanam) and painstakingly collated, transcribed and edited for publication in English and Tamil under the title, *The Path of Sri Ramana*.

Poetry and Songs

Meanwhile Sadhu Om's poetry was appreciated by devotees everywhere, not least of all by A. R Natarajan, his wife Sulochana Natarajan and the RMCL singing troupe *Ramananjali*. Associated with Sadhu Om from the 1970s, *Ramananjali* made extensive use of Sadhu Om's songs, performing them all over India and around the world. Sarada Natarajan writes:

*My mother sought Swami's permission as to whether the tunes that he had mentioned in his book could be changed. He expressed great joy that these compositions were being sung by so many singers and welcomed any change that was considered best. He told her that as many of them were composed based on a pre-existing song, it would indeed be wonderful if new tunes could be composed.*¹³

¹³ 'Ramana's Pied Piper: A Musical Journey with Sadhu Om Swami into Ramana', *Sri Sadhu Om Birth Centenary Souvenir*, Dr. Sarada Natarajan, p. 37.

Sri Bhagavan's Ayurvedic Recipes: Jiraga Vadagam

Jiraga Vadagam

jīragava ḍagamuṅkēḷ jīrakattir
sīrmiḷagu pādikāḷ kaḍukkā yīñji
kāriṇdu veḷivaḷaiyaḷ kallup pōḍu
kirāmbēlan tippiliya raikkā leṭṭum
pēriṅgu vīsamivai yelumic cattin
pizhi rasattir ḍriṅamūḷa vaitta raittuc
cēruṇḍai suṇḍaiyuru vulartti yuṇṇac
sirukuṇma majīṇamudaḷ sidaḷum pāḷē.

Jīragava ḍagamuṅ-kēḷ jīragattil
sīr-miḷagu pādi-kāl kaḍukkāy iñji

kāriṇdu veḷivaḷaiyaḷ kal uppōḍu
kirāmbu'ēlam tippili araikāl eṭṭum
pēriṅgu vīsam-ivai elumic-cattin
pizhi rasattil ḍiṅam-ūḷa vaitta araittuc
cēruṇḍai suṇḍaiyuru vulartti yuṇṇac
cīḷu-kunmam ajīṇamudaḷ sidaḷum pāḷē.

Ingredients: cumin seeds: 1 pt, pepper: 1/2 pt, ginger: 1/8 pt, black salt: 1/8 pt, saltpetre: 1/8 pt, sandevere glass salt: 1/8 pt, rock salt: 1/8 pt, clove: 1/8 pt, cardamon: 1/8 pt, rice pippali: 1/8 pt, asafoetida: 1/14 pt,
Preparation: Soak in lemon juice, grind well, allow to dry.
Benefits: 1/2 teaspoon daily for ulcer or indigestion.





As the years went by, the power of his poetic compositions on Bhagavan to inspire devotion came to be recognized and appreciated by devotees everywhere. Sadhu Om was humbled by the commendations he received from devotees. His biographer writes:

Sometimes, like a child rejoicing with wonder over a toy given to it by its mother, Sri Sadhu Om would innocently wonder at his poetry, feeling that it was not his own but something given to him by Sri Bhagavan. When people used to praise his poems and songs, he would sometimes say with childlike simplicity, "When I see these verses, I myself wonder whether I could really have composed them. Truly it can only be Bhagavan and not I who has given such verses."¹⁴

Professional singers testified that singing Sadhu Om's compositions captivated the singer and thrust them toward states of devotion:

Swami's songs keep capturing us and drawing us back into the Ramana Experience in varied ways, even as he says that Bhagavan captured him, Naan odi olindaalume vidamaattaa (He would not leave me even if I ran away and hid myself).¹⁵

Following the Master

Meanwhile Sadhu Om carefully conducted his spiritual life, making pradakshinas around the Holy Hill on a regular basis. He took to heart and remained ever cognisant that above and beyond what one may versify and sing about with devotion, one must live a life dedicated to Bhagavan in complete humility. His biographer writes:

A few years ago when a friend wanted to write and publish an article about Sri Sadhu Om, he objected humbly, explaining that he preferred to remain unknown to the world and pointing out v. 623 of Guru Vachaka Kovai, in which Sri Bhagavan says: "Because it brings one under the great evil of yielding to pramada (forgetfulness of Self), through which one is made to think that one is the worthless and mean body, while in fact one is the supreme Brahman, fame (or praise) is to be rejected with great contempt and is not at all to be aspired for by wise people."¹⁶

Sadhu Om avoided being the centre of attention and ever referred Bhagavan's devotees back to the Master himself. Once when someone wrote from Australia asking him to send a photograph of himself, he refused:

Sri Bhagavan being the Guru common to yourself and myself, His name and form alone are to be glorified and adored; my photo is therefore immaterial.

On another occasion, a sincere Ramana devotee from the US wrote asking Sadhu Om to "come to the West and guide" them. He replied:

Since He who has guided me to His home is the Father, Lord and inmost Self of one and all, does He not know how best to guide home earnest seekers, wherever they may be? Why then should an ego rise with the thought, 'I should guide these people?' If an 'I' were thus to rise, would not such a conceited action be casting shame upon the Grace on the non-dual Lord Ramana.¹⁷

Sadhu Om spoke plainly to those seeking Bhagavan and whenever someone asked if it was necessary to have a living Guru, he replied:

The Guru alone is living; we are all dead. If by the term 'living Guru' you mean a Guru whose body is living, then such a living Guru will one day become a dead Guru. What is the use of such a Guru who will not be living forever? But if you take Sri Bhagavan alone as your Guru, then you will have an ever-living Guru, because Sri Bhagavan is the ever-existing Self, shining in the hearts of all people.¹⁸

Conclusion

Sadhu Om lived out his life in Tiruvannamalai at the Feet of Arunachala. In 1985 when only 63 years old he died of a brain haemorrhage. On Thursday 14th March following *giri valam*, he took food and went to bed in keeping with his routine. During the night he experienced a neurological episode that left him unconscious and lingering on the brink of death for several days. His biographer writes:

On Sunday 17th March, it was clear that his breathing was slowly and gently subsiding, so all the friends and devotees who had gathered from far and near assembled around his bed and began to chant Sri Arunachala Aksharamanamalai. At 9.05 a.m., while we were all singing the final refrain "Arunachala Siva, Arunachala Siva", our beloved Swamiji peacefully breathed his last.¹⁹ —

(series concluded)

¹⁴ *Souvenir*, Michael James, p. 18.

¹⁵ *Souvenir*, Dr. Sarada Natarajan, p. 31.

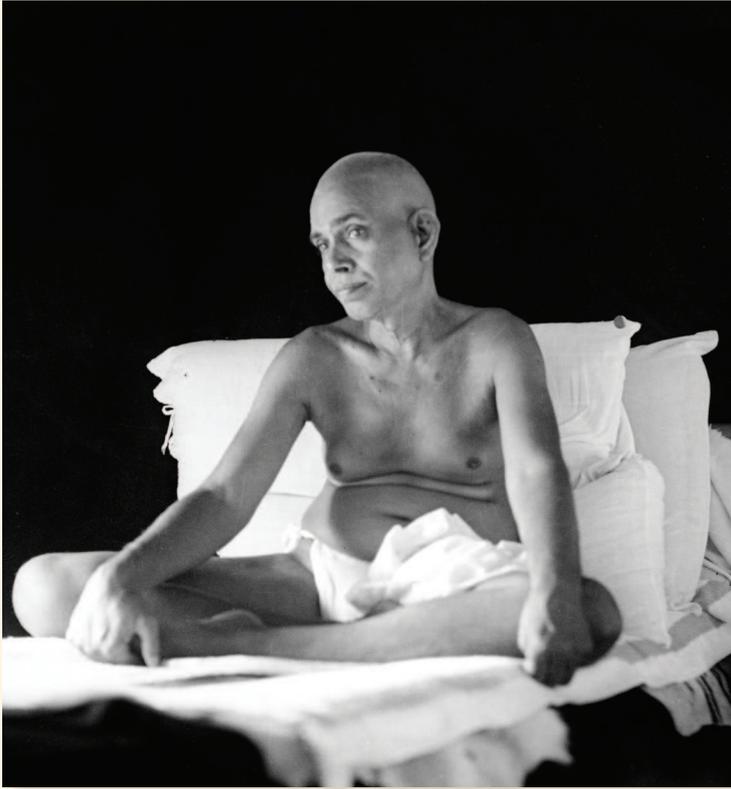
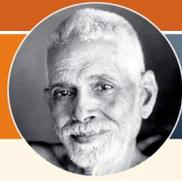
¹⁶ *Souvenir*, Michael James, p. 14.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 16-17.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 21.





RAMANA REFLECTIONS

Wisdom of the Ether Resonance and the Harmonics of Being (part II)

In the last issue we took up Bhagavan's remarks about *chidakasa* and endeavoured to decipher their meaning. In recalling Bhagavan's words, *the whole universe is only mental*¹, we wondered how such a statement should be understood. As an illustration, we made use of an image from the *Atharva Veda* concerning a cosmic net of jewels distributed in every direction throughout the cosmos, each jewel reflecting the light of every other. We then considered how *connectivity over distance* is identifiable in the observable universe through scientific disciplines such as astrophysics

¹ *Talks*, §451.

and quantum mechanics. If Bhagavan's *chidakasa* is a descriptor for the Self as a resonant field of knowing—containing all things and excluding nothing—we considered Bhagavan's surrender as the portal to the direct beholding of it. We have no direct access to the world, it could be said, because the world comes to us mediated through the senses. And yet, Bhagavan tells us the cosmic ether, *chidakasa*, is Pure Consciousness, free of any separation. Collapsing the distinction between heaven and earth, mind and matter, the transcendent and the immanent in a non-dual vision of the universe, he painted the picture of a seamless cosmic reality that is both inner and outer. What Bhagavan calls *bhootakasa* and *manakasa* are subsumed under *chidakasa*, a continuous uniform underlying pattern of connectivity extending throughout the created and divine order. If Bhagavan's surrender is the means for accessing it, then we are bound to ask—*what is surrender?*

Traditional Surrender

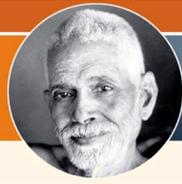
By tradition, surrender has always meant giving over everything to God, i.e. accepting everything that is favourable for cultivating devotion to God. Surrender (*saranagati*) is intended to help us cultivate a humble attitude of non-attachment.

In the *Ramayana*, Valmiki asks Narada if there is 'even one righteous man still left in the world'. Rama is just that man, and his righteousness is demonstrated from the very beginning of the story in his going forth from the palace in utter and willing submission to a decree of his father wanting to oblige the youngster's foster mother.

The five-year-old Druva is likewise the embodiment of *saranagati*, suffering patiently at the hands of his envious foster mother, Suruchi. If *saranagati* means 'taking refuge' (*agat*=the one who takes; *sara*=refuge), it is not just a question of giving oneself over to God but giving oneself over to whatever conditions obtain in any given situation no matter how unjust. Bhagavan takes surrender a step further: surrender (*prapatti*) and dispassion (*vairagya*) demand not only putting oneself in God's care, but relinquishing *every want or preference and every last trace of resistance as well as anything that looks like personal will*.

Bhagavan's self-surrender means letting go of worldly consolations and taking refuge in the inner resources of the heart. Bhagavan's self-surrender is *suffering what comes*





*our way*² i.e., giving oneself over to circumstances just as they appear without demanding they be otherwise. For Bhagavan surrender is much more than a recipe for healthy living: In allowing ourselves to *suffer what comes our way*, the bondage that has oppressed us our entire life (or for countless lives) begins to loosen, and we are increasingly enabled to distinguish between the real and the unreal, seeing ever more clearly until the *wisdom of the ether* gradually begins to reveal itself. How does this work?

Surrender is composure and harmonisation. Non-surrender is reactivity and egoic entrenchment. If we want to be free of delusion and ignorance, we must gain access to clear seeing. Here we approach our non-resistance non-judgmentally inquiring into what we are reacting against. Such inquiry helps us see that ego is just the name we give to the 'one' reacting. But ego is reactivity itself. By seeing ego as reactivity, we begin to work carefully and patiently with each episode of reactivity in its various forms. We learn to make friends with what we are reacting against, trusting that every unwholesome mental state has a fitting response and available remedy.

Surrender means letting go of anything that doesn't lead to Bhagavan. If surrender sounds like a passive state, it is actually quite dynamic and energetic. In being confronted with *vasanas* and defilements, we go after them in the meditation setting, first identifying them, then looking for their hidden underlying motivations and causes in order to discover their intrinsic nature. We do not treat them as enemies but as crying babies longing for the touch of the mother. Because we are accustomed to life in a sense world in this era of hyper-consumerism where everything is there to grant provisional satisfaction, this work is tricky, not least of all, owing to the lack of presence of mind and the habit of looking for relief outside ourselves.

Surrender begins in overcoming longings for what we do not *have* and moderating resistance to

² 'Encounters with Bhagavan', Part II, T. R. Kanakammal, *The Mountain Path*, July 2006, pp. 31-32.

what we do not *want*. This involves looking for the unappealing aspects inherent in what *we are longing for* and the beautiful aspects inherent in *what we are resisting*. Through attention and exertion, we teach ourselves to regulate the mind, seeing that each particle of clutter is a link in the burgeoning chain of sequential thinking. Ruminative thought and conceptual proliferation are the root and source of the obstructions to stillness.

Penetrating the Veils

The meditation traditions speak of 'swift wisdom' (*javanaprajna*) born of deep stillness which emerges naturally to divulge the 'secrets of the world'. If this sounds otherworldly or magical, it is quite ordinary, and is available to every devotee willing to put forth sustained effort. In stilling the mind, obstructions fall away. As meditative stillness grows, a world of pristine purity begins to present itself allowing us to see things free of the distorting influences of our neurotic mind.

What are these distorting influences? Bhagavan calls them *avarana* ('coverings' or 'obstructions'). *Avarana* are *veils of ignorance* which confuse and distort perception. Born of karmic impurities, they arise in the mind as non-surrender and include disadvantageous mental states such as anger, resistance, vexation, blame, grasping, attachment, desire, hatred, fear, anxiety, doubt, restlessness, clinging, just to name a few. Their strength appears formidable, but in fact the veils are only orphans of the psyche born of karmic debris.

*Ajnana has two aspects: avarana (veiling) and vikshepa (multiplicity). Of these, avarana denotes the veil hiding the Truth. If the veil, i.e., avarana is lifted, the Truth is perceived.*³

While Bhagavan doesn't elaborate on the nature of the veils and their causes, time spent on the meditation cushion points to their non-solidity and over time one begins to see that they are not fixed or permanent entities, are not destined to remain forever nor do they constitute a separate self.

³ *Talks*, §519; see also *Talks*, §579.

Announcement: Daily Live Streaming

Ramanasramam is live streaming the Tamil Parayana and Vedaparayana each day, Mon-Sat, 5-6.45 pm IST. To access Ashram videos, go to: <<https://youtube.com/@SriRamanasramam/videos>>
To subscribe, go to: <https://youtube.com/@sriramanasramam?sub_confirmation=1>





Meditative stillness causes the veils to miraculously drop away, at least temporarily. No reactivity, resistance or negative mental state can rear its ugly head when the mind is perfectly still. Veil-free moments allow us to process, heal and assimilate karmic residues born of past actions. They also grant a glimpse of the cosmic ether, inspiring us to further efforts. Here we see the power of Bhagavan's teaching. As meditative stillness is not permanent, the veils are sure to return. But the clear seeing that emerges in their absence, even if short-lived, leaves an indelible impression.

The hitch in all this, of course, is quietening the mind. A devotee may lament that his or her karma does not allow for the quietening of the mind. But a quiet mind—the Silence Bhagavan speaks of—is one's own natural condition. Bhagavan tells us that nothing and no one can prevent the determined devotee from bringing it about as it is our birthright. Developing the capacity to make the mind perfectly still and empty of rumination is doable. It is not easy because it entails undoing years (or perhaps lifetimes) of habits and compulsions. Successfully going up against any addiction, while always challenging, is nevertheless possible so long as our determination is strong enough. In time we discover that the veils do not arise of necessity nor is their apparent fixity vouchsafed by some deterministic arrangement. Their impact diminishes in the course of repeated moments of clarity. When we find ourselves back in the usual state of mental agitation, the world takes on its familiar flawed appearance. But during moments of stillness free of the veils, the world looks whole and complete. Bhagavan says:

*If you consider yourself the body, the world appears to be external. But when you are the Self, the world appears as Brahman.*⁴

Clear Seeing

Momentary freedom from the veils allows us to see how non-surrender is fundamentally discontinuous with the harmonic flow of Being. Meditative stillness unmasks the veils and lays bare the unitive contours of the cosmos, hinting at our non-ego nature. Each instance of surrender provides an opportunity to see our true nature as the reflected light of Bhagavan's mirror. We begin to understand the impersonal nature of non-surrender and are no longer agonized by it, like the wave when once

⁴ *Talks*, §272.



understanding its ocean-nature is no longer agonized by buffeting winds. Resuming daily activities, the veils reassert their power, causing the former clarity to appear dreamlike. The veils appear so solid that we give them a name—call them 'I' or 'ego'—but Bhagavan tells us they are not anything enduring nor even a thing at all but are mere fragments of a non-integrated psyche. Though our meditation breakthroughs become less salient and fade away over time, we soldier on in a stepwise progression through recurring cycles of clarity and opaqueness, wisdom and confusion, insight and dullness according to alternating periods of meditation versus daily activities in the world. In the midst of it all, we trust that our *vasanas* and defilements will gradually diminish:

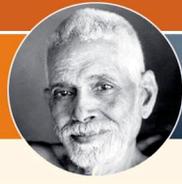
*Jnana, once revealed, takes time to steady itself. The Self is certainly within the [range of the] direct experience of everyone, but not as one imagines it to be. It is only as it is. This experience is samadhi. The Self remains veiled by vasanas and reveals itself when there are no vasanas. Owing to the fluctuation of the vasanas, jnana takes time to steady itself. Unsteady jnana is not enough to check rebirths. Jnana cannot remain unshaken side by side with vasanas.*⁵

Samadhi here means absolute stillness, what Bhagavan calls *the unbroken Silence of the Self*.⁶ Such a state, even if only momentary, affords a peek at the resonant field of knowing (*jnana*) that comprises all of reality. Looking deep into Indra's Net, we behold its jewels with eyes of investigation in a spirit of relinquishment. Here self-enquiry and surrender converge, working in tandem like two wings of a dove. Bhagavan tells us:

⁵ *Talks*, §141.

⁶ *Parayana*, p. 124.





*Jnana Marga and Bhakti Marga (prapatti) are one and the same. Self-surrender leads to realisation just as enquiry does. Complete self-surrender means that you have no further thought of 'I'. Then all your predispositions (samskaras) are washed away, and you are free.*⁷

Stabilising the busy thinking mind is the cure for non-surrender. It opens the door to a lively energetic knowing wherein the universe speaks to us through *direct seeing*. If unobstructed seeing initiates the dovetailing of disparate strands of the psyche, it is no accident that sages of old were referred to as 'seers'. Indeed, direct seeing is the source and origin of any integrated spiritual knowledge. And yet, direct seeing is very simple. When the mind's eye can operate free of distorting influences, seeing one thing truly means seeing everything as it is, i.e. seeing directly that the universal continuum, inward and outward, is even, smooth, seamless and uniform. Direct seeing is simply glimpsing the common patterning that undergirds our world and our hearts. It is recognized in an instant during extended periods of meditative stillness. Here we come to understand that the *swift wisdom* of the ancients is simply born of extended periods of meditative stillness.

In Bhagavan's life, we discover the cumulative impact of long periods of meditative stillness when we recall a scene from the days at the Mango Grove. Palaniswami had been given access to the Tamil library of a deceased Swami. As Palaniswami's native tongue was Malayalam,

⁷ *Talks*, §31.

he struggled to read these Tamil texts. Bhagavan felt called to assist him even though he had not read anything since setting aside his schoolbooks in Madurai two years earlier. The young sage found himself reading works of Vedanta and advaitic philosophy for the first time and could comprehend them with great ease. Even though he had never read the *Yoga Vasishtam*, *Kaivalya Navanitam* and *Ribhu Gita* or even merely heard their titles before, their content was utterly familiar to him. In them he discovered 'exact descriptions of his own state' and knew first-hand the spiritual stages they outlined.⁸ Later, after only a single first reading of the *Dakshinamurthy Stotra*, he gave an expert discourse on its otherwise gnarly philosophical nuances. Where did this sudden masterful command of doctrine come from?

We recall not so many years earlier that his elder brother teased him about his lack of familiarity with spiritual language. It was in 1893 when Vivekananda returned by ship from the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago and Bhagavan had mispronounced the Swamiji's name. This showed that Bhagavan did not have any real acquaintance with spiritual matters. Yet just six years later in the aftermath of long months of intensive meditation, we find he had become the master of masters with the highest degree of philosophical insight, his mind clear and bright like a perfect mirror faithfully reflecting all that appeared before it:

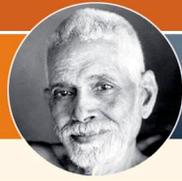
⁸ *In the Kitchen with Bhagavan* (unpublished manuscript), p. 33.



Events in Sri Ramanasramam: Mahasivaratri

The 'Great Night of Siva' celebrates the Lord as pure light relieving the world of darkness. Mahasivaratri was celebrated at the Ashram on Krishna Paksha Chaturdasi, the 18th of February, with *jagaran*, the traditional all-night vigil sustained by puja, recitation and meditation. The first *kala* puja was followed by the lighting of the ceremonial bonfire (of cow dung) at the Ashram gosala generating the upcoming year's supply of sacred ash. —





the texture of a stone, the wisps in a cloud or the lines in the face of a child, the underlying character of the created realm announces itself in full.

Wisdom of the ether is knowledge born of true seeing, but its most salient feature and prized reward is *peace*. Glimpsing the fractal relatedness of all things occasions a gradual diminution of the agitating influences of the veils. As they recede, clear seeing is augmented, eliciting further wisdom, thereby bringing further peace, which in turn allows for deeper stillness and creates the conditions for further receding of the veils. If, as has been said, letting go a little brings a little peace and letting go a lot brings a lot of peace, then *letting go completely brings complete peace*.¹¹ This is Bhagavan's surrender.

In this connection, we recall a scene in the Hall. A Maharani tells Bhagavan, 'I have all that I want, but I do not have peace of mind. Something prevents it. Probably my destiny'. There was silence for a while. Then Bhagavan spoke in his usual sweet manner:

'There is no destiny. [Just] surrender, and all will be well. Throw all the responsibility on God and do not bear the burden yourself. What can destiny do to you then?' The Maharani replied, *'Surrender is impossible.'* To which Bhagavan said, *'Yes, complete surrender is impossible in the beginning [but] partial surrender is certainly possible for all [and] in course of time, will lead to complete surrender. Without surrender there [can be] no peace of mind'...* [Elsewhere he adds:] *'Your peace will [become] deeper and more prolonged with continued practice and will [ultimately] lead to the goal.'*¹² —

(to be continued)

11 Luang Por Chah.

12 *Gems*, p. 24; also in *Talks*, §244; the final phrase from *Talks*, §73.

*The jivanmukti state is compared to the reflection of a spotless mirror in another similar mirror. What will be found in such a reflection? Pure Akasa...Reaching the source of the 'I-thought' [means] destruction of the ego and is the attainment of the goal, is prapatti (surrender), is jnana.*⁹

If the quintessential feature of meditative stillness is absence of the veils, Bhagavan's surrender is the path that leads to it, granting access to a vast field of knowing. Surrender in its purest form is free of self-reference. As our investigation matures, it points us toward compassion and dispassion, namely, knowing how to care for what needs caring for and how to let go of what needs letting go of.

The Upanishads say no matter how you cut sandalwood, *each piece is it*. Bhagavan says no matter how you fashion an ornament of pure gold (or whether you melt it down), *it is still gold*.¹⁰ Likewise, when we behold the natural order veil-free, say, the patterning on a leaf,

9 *Talks*, §513, §129.

10 *Talks*, §32.



Events in Sri Ramanasramam: Discourses for Telugu Devotees



From 3-5th February, discourses on "Sri Ramana Tattva Bhodha" were given by Dr. Garikipati Narasimha Rao in Telugu at the Granthalaya Auditorium in celebration of Sri Ramanasramam's Centenary Year. On the morning of the 26th February a discourse on "Bhagavan Ramanula Vaibhavam" was given by Brahmasri Dr. Chaganti Koteswara Rao. All the events were well-attended and prasad for all attendees was served afterward. —

