

Saranagati



SARANAGATI
SRI RAMANASRAMAM

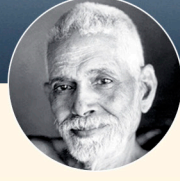
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D. Thiyagarajan



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ISSUE

Dear Devotees,

Unfortunately, last year's monsoon never materialised in Tiruvannamalai and Pali Tirtham remains dry as the Ashram is forced to truck in water each day.

On the 18th April, we celebrated Chitra purnima with large crowds of pilgrims visiting the Ashram.

As we prepare for Bhagavan's 69th Aradhana to take place on the 2nd May, the Ashram is still relatively quiet summer holidays soon upon us.

In this issue, we take a look at the experience of T.R.A. Narayana during his visit to the Ashram and have a unique angle on Bhagavan at a distance.

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

In Sri Bhagavan,
The Editorial Team

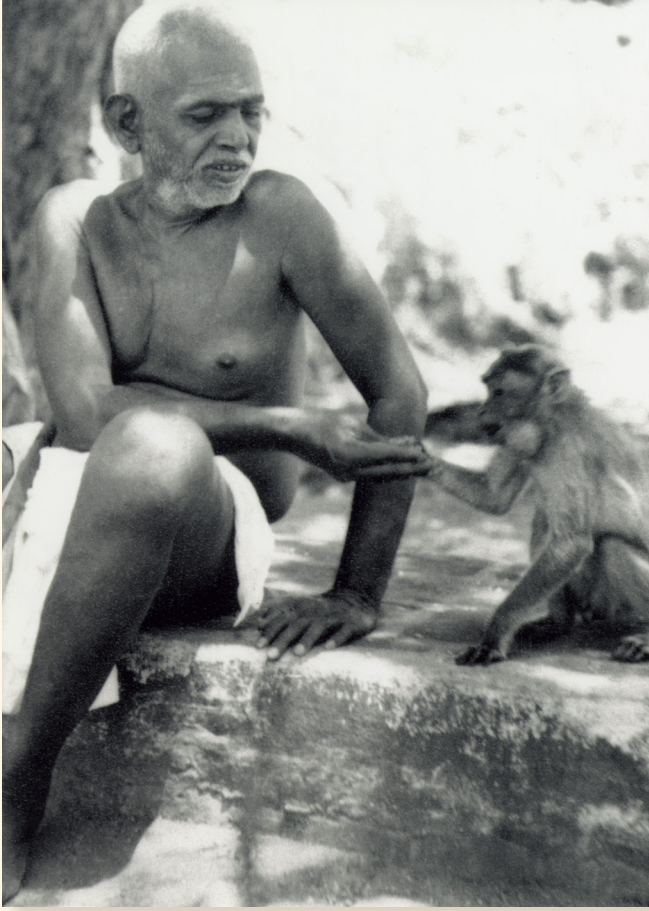
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Calendar of Upcoming Events

2nd May (Thurs) Sri Bhagavan's 69th Aradhana
10th May (Fri) Punarvasu
18th May (Sat) Full Moon
28th May (Tues) Maha Puja
6th June (Thurs) Punarvasu
16th June (Sun) Full Moon

3rd July (Weds) Punarvasu
13th July (Sat) Cow Lakshmi Day
16th July (Tues) Guru Poornima
31st July (Weds) Punarvasu
14th August (Weds) Full Moon
27th August (Tues) Punarvasu





The Groundnut Tea Party: Observing Bhagavan from a Distance

by T.R.A. Narayana

[The following account has been printed time and again but is worth looking at once more. How easy it is to take Bhagavan for granted and forget what a great treasure is in our midst and this especially for those living in Tiruvannamalai, in and around the Ashram. How easy it is to begin to take the blessings of the place for granted and forget the glory that shone each day for those devotees blessed to be in Bhagavan's physical presence. The following shares a unique glimpse of Bhagavan from a distance, a Bhagavan so ordinary as to be childlike, and in the same afternoon, so extraordinary as to defy description.]

The year was 1948. I was then in my thirty-ninth year. I lived in Madras with my wife and four children. I was the branch manager of a large British firm, and being in happy circumstances, I did not find the need for any religious practices or spiritual enquiries; I was content with enjoying the good things in life.

I was on a tour of small towns, with one of the Inspectors under me, Parthasarathi. It was a hot April day. As Parthasarathi and I were boarding the train at Villupuram to go to Tiruvannamalai, we noticed a young man of about twenty-five trying to enter the first class compartment by the next door. The man was so fat that he heaved his bulky body this way and that, while another man on the platform, obviously his servant, pushed him in through the door. He was also ashamed of the curious way the people on the platform, including Parthasarathi and myself, watched his predicament. He got in somehow and occupied the cubicle next to ours.

When the train had run for some minutes, the man came to our cabin, introduced himself as Ratilal Premchand Shah and started talking. Ratilal was a Saurashtra Vaishya, born and brought up in Gondal, the only son of his father, a rich merchant; he had been married six years before. Cursed with so much fat in his body from his tenth year, now at twenty-five, he was a huge mass of flesh and misery. How he wished to get rid of his fat and be a man.

In the last week of March, Ratilal had a vision while he was asleep at night. He saw an ascetic smiling and beckoning him. The smile and the beckoning persisted for a long time and stood clearly before Ratilal's mental eye when he awoke. He did not speak to any one about the vision.

Two days later his wife was reading a Gujarati magazine. Looking over her shoulders, he saw the picture of the ascetic he had seen in his vision. He came to know that the ascetic was Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi.

He at once went to his father and arranged for his journey to Tiruvannamalai with the trusted family servant. All he knew about Bhagavan was what that Gujarati article said. But he felt sure that his suffering





would end as soon as he reached Bhagavan; the smile and the beckoning of his vision of Bhagavan had given him that firm faith.

Parthasarathi had seen Bhagavan many times before and had also read a good deal about him. He and Ratilal talked about Bhagavan during the whole two-hour journey.

I was apparently reading an English novel, but heard their conversation with interest and attention.

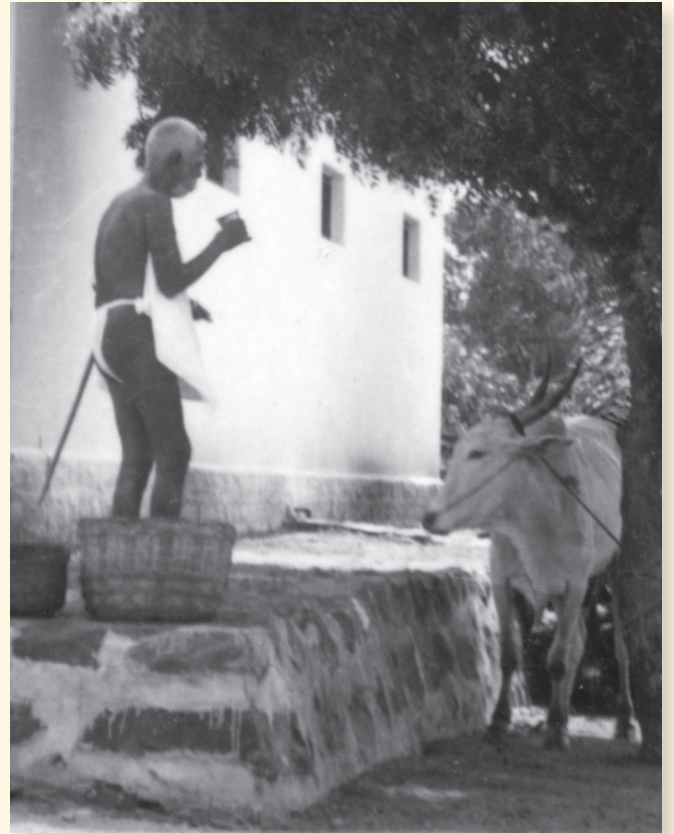
At Tiruvannamalai station, Ratilal was received by a local merchant with whom his father had arranged for his stay. Parthasarathi and I proceeded to the travellers' bungalow.

It was four when we had had our bath and tiffin. Parthasarathi knew that I was very business-like and would not waste a single minute. He said we could visit the market. He was very surprised at my reply:

"No, Parthasarathi! We shall go and have darshan of Maharshi first. Then, if time permits, we shall go to the temple. Let business wait!"

It was about five when Parthasarathi and I entered the Asramam. Going round Bhagavan's Mother's samadhi, we came to the verandah by its side. About fifty people were sitting there, Ratilal, his host and his servant included. Bhagavan was not on his couch as usual. The visitors talked in whispers, trying to find out where he was.

After waiting for some ten minutes and finding that Bhagavan had not come to his seat, Parthasarathi suggested to me that we could meantime go around and see the gosala and other places. Finishing our inspection we were returning to the verandah by another side, when we heard a childish voice *chee, asatthe* ("Fie, You creature!"). We could see no children around, and, therefore, peeped to find out the source of the voice. We observed movement among the leaves of the brinjal, lady's-finger and other plants in the kitchen-garden near the verandah. Looking more intently, we saw a small goat, a little monkey and a squirrel and Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi! Bhagavan was sitting on his haunches with his legs folded up to his breast. The goat nestled between his knees; the monkey had its head resting on his right knee; the squirrel was perched on his left knee. Holding a packet of paper in his left



Bhagavan with Lakshmi at the gosala

palm, Bhagavan picked groundnuts from it with his right-hand fingers, one by one, and fed the goat, the monkey and the squirrel, and himself, by turns.

His remarks appeared to have been addressed to the monkey which had tried to snatch the nut he was going to place between the squirrel's lips.

As we watched, the four companions went on enjoying the eating. All four seemed to be equally happy; the way they looked at one another and kept close together was touching. The goat, the monkey, the squirrel, and Bhagavan, had obviously forgotten their differences in species. And we too, looking on, saw all the four only as good friends despite the differences in their forms.

No words could describe the feelings which passed through my being at the sight. The vision of the Transcendent appeared as a flash of lightning, and revealed to me the essence of being, awareness and bliss, *sat-chitananda*. The nuts were over. Bhagavan threw the paper away, and said: *Ponkoda!* ("Go away, you fellows!"), just as any old man speaking to his





grandchildren. The goat, the monkey and the squirrel left. Bhagavan made to get up. Parthasarathi and I hurried away, feeling guilty of trespassing into the Divine but not sorry.

Soon after Parthasarathi and I had resumed our seats in the verandah, Bhagavan came to his couch. I cannot say he looked at us. He stood facing us, his eyes fixed on something far above and beyond anything on earth. They were like screens which shut the material world off from the light which was burning behind them. Sparks of light shot out through the fibres of the screen at times, sparks which cooled the eyes on which they fell, pierced the gross coverings and lighted the wick inside them.

Bhagavan reclined on the pillows in the couch, supporting his head on his left palm. We all sat down to look at his face. We sat and sat, and looked and looked. No one spoke or made any noise. But the confrontation was not a dead silence; it was a very live experience in which the innermost being of each one of us communed with the Supreme Consciousness which was Bhagavan.

I was numb with the appalling realization that the Glory was the same that dwelt in the piece of silliness which a few minutes ago I had seen eating groundnuts in the intimate company of the goat, the monkey and

the squirrel. My mind kept recalling that scene; how the goat had snuggled to Bhagavan's breast in perfect confidence in his love for it; how the monkey had grinned in joy and how Bhagavan had returned the grin as both took the nut; how the squirrel had peered with its pin-head eyes into Bhagavan's dream-laden ones and scratched his nose tenderly with its tiny left paw.

The vision of the Supreme Spirit underlying and overlaying the sense perception was spiced with the lovely sight of the groundnut party in the kitchen garden.

Bhagavan got up from the couch. We got up. It seemed tacitly understood that we were to leave. We left. I felt a hitherto-unknown peace and joy inside me; the faces of the others also showed a similar condition. I saw Ratilal, his host and his servant get into their bullock cart at the Ashram gate. There was a new spring in Ratilal's movements. Bhagavan's promise in the lad's vision appeared to be starting a fulfilment.

Many things have happened since that day in my life. My material circumstances underwent changes for the worse, but my inner life has always been happy since that day for I very often got a vision of Bhagavan, particularly when I was depressed in spirits.

Events in Sri Ramanasramam: New Year and Nirvana Room Observance



On the morning of 14th April, 2019, devotees celebrated the Tamil New Year with the reading of the *panchangam* ('almanac') in Bhagavan's Shrine in the early afternoon.

In addition to the principal observance of Sri Bhagavan's Brahma Nirvana which falls on 2nd May this year, the event is also observed according to the Gregorian calendar on the evening of 14th April each year when devotees gather at 8 p.m for silent sitting in front of the Nirvana room. Sri Chakra Puja is scheduled early in order for all to gather

at Bhagavan's Nirvana Room in devout remembrance of Bhagavan's earthly departure on 14th April, 1950, when the bright shooting star transited the sky overhead. Mrs. President Sushila Ramanan intones *Aksharamanamalai* around 8.15 which is timed to conclude at the moment of Bhagavan's Mahanirvana at 8.47. Afterward all rise and queue up to file past and pay their respects to Bhagavan at the entrance to the Nirvana room. —





In 1953, I was in Rajkot staying alone in a lodge. One day, while in the dining-hall, a man of about thirty accosted me, “Don’t you recognise me, Sir?”

“No, I’m sorry”, I replied, truthfully.

The man continued: “I am Ratilal of Gondal, Sir!

You remember the darshan of Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi, five years ago?”

I looked at the man again. He was thin and wiry, his face aglow with health and happiness. I shook his hands heartily. He spoke again: “Sir, Bhagavan fulfilled his promise wonderfully well. You see me. I am now managing our family business, my father

taking complete rest. I have a son two years old and expect my wife to give me another child in a month or two.”

My mind immediately went back to the goat, the monkey and the squirrel – and Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi. I could never think of Bhagavan alone!

So it has been all these years. The scene comes to my mind’s eye often. The kitchen garden with the four friends at the groundnut party. And, I thank Ratilal and Parthasarathi for guiding me to the Vision Beautiful! —

The Mountain Path, April 1975



Dev Gogoi

Your Best Shot: Banyan Walk

From a minute seed to a massive tree, too big to take in at a single glance, this magnificent sentience lies upon a straight-line avenue of fellow banyans at the rear of the Ashram, abutting the compound wall that runs along the foot of Arunachala. As subtle as that seed, the germ of service in action, born of devotion to the Sadguru and based on keen observation, these giant trees were planted by our very own Manavasi Ramaswami Iyer, who also composed the all-time hit song on Bhagavan *Saranagati*. It was Bhagavan’s regular routine (around the 1930s) to take a short, post-prandial walk to Pallakottu, the grove of old trees immediately to the west of Sri Ramanasramam. The unshaded walk under the scorching summer sun moved Manavasi to plant these banyans, to spare His Master much discomfort. Manavasi was a Public Works Department supervisor at the time, and he followed through by personally watering these plantings to ensure their survival. The thoroughness of his execution can be judged by the health and size of these banyans today. For those who walk in Bhagavan’s footsteps, all these years later, the cool shade is still abundantly present.

PS: The elegant samadhi shrine, comprising a carved granite mini-mandapam in the middle foreground, dates from that earlier time when a wide area at the southern foot of Arunachala was a burial ground. A farming family still performs their annual remembrance rituals here, and has expressed gratitude to the Ashram management for maintaining the site. —





Bhagavan's Favourite Stories: Garuda and the Sparrow

[Bhagavan observed, ““people who do good work and have a mind to choose self-enquiry never give up their work, although they feel it to be a burden. As in the case of the sparrow, help comes from somewhere, just as Garuda came to the help of the bird. By God's grace, help comes of its own accord.” My Life at Sri Ramanasramam, Suri Nagamma.]

A sparrow concerned for the safety of her egg flew with the egg in her beak in search of a safe haven. Flying over the ocean, she inadvertently dropped it into the expanse of water below. Determined to recover it,

even if this meant draining the ocean. She dived down, sucked up as much water as her tiny beak could carry and spewed it out onto the beach. She went on repeating the process in her determined bid to drain the entire ocean.

Meanwhile, the divine sage Narada happened to be travelling by and observing the little sparrow's struggle and asked what could be wrong. The sparrow explained what had happened. On hearing her words, the sage laughed and commented, “Naïve creature! Is it possible for you to drain the entire ocean?” The sparrow responded, “I am not bothered about possible or not possible. I will do all I can. The rest is in God's hands.” Struck by her unwavering determination, the sage went straight to Vaikuntha where he recounted the episode to Garuda, the vehicle of Lord Vishnu. He added, “She belongs to your own species. This creature is after your own heart. In her pursuit, she is willing to put her life on the line.”

Hearing the story, Garuda was moved to compassion and immediately flew down to earth and, just as Narada had told him, found the little bird hard at work. Putting the tiny bundle of determination on his back, he flew up above the sea and flapped his great wings over the water. At once, the depths of the ocean began to part, until at last, at the very bottom of the expanse lay the little egg, unharmed. The sparrow flew off from Garuda's back and swept down toward the ocean floor now exposed, where she picked up her treasure. She expressed her unspeakable gratitude and her benefactor flew off to Vaikuntha. The sparrow then found a safe dry place where she could build a nest and patiently wait for her egg to hatch. —

Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai: Desika Padigam §3

கூன் மதி அணிந்த குடிலமும் மறைத்துக்
குள நயனத்தையும் மறைத்து
மான் மழு அணிந்த மலர்க் கரம் முதலா
யாவையும் மறைத்தனை எனினும்
மான் முதலோரை அளித்த பைஞ்ஞீல
மிடற்றினை மறைப்பதும் வழக்கோ
தென் மடை திறந்த கொன்றையும் மறைத்த
தேசிக ரமண மா தேவே.

Guru Ramana, Siva, you have concealed
Your matted hair, the crescent moon, the eye
In the forehead, the palms up bearing, the deer
and the fire,
And the laburnum flowers with honey flowing.
But is it fair to conceal the sapphire throat
containing the blue poison also,
Which saved all creatures, human and
others? —



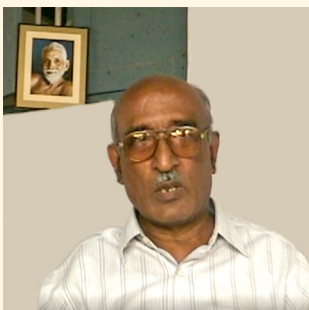


Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Pali Thirtham Cleaning



With Pali Thirtham now dry for lack of rain, the Ashram is using the occasion to clean the tank. Workers endure the hot summer sun to dig out thousands of pounds of sludge from the tank floor, the residue of prolific algae growth in recent years, all of which can be put to good use as fertiliser for Ashram gardens. In the process of dredging, the tank is deepened and made more voluminous to hold needed water when the rains at last do come.

Obituary: Ashram Auditor Ramanan



K.V. Ramanan, who was Absorbed in Bhagavan at the age of 85 on 24th April 2019, was fortunate to be born with fervent devotion to Bhagavan in his genes. His grandfather N.S. Ranganatha Iyer, playmate of young Ramana at Madurai and his father Professor N.R. Krishnamurti Iyer lived and had their being in Bhagavan. Ranganatha Iyer helped Ashram in the 1940's in acquiring the house Bhagavan was born in at Tiruchuzhi (Sundara Mandiram) and the house at Madurai (Ramana Mandiram) and took good care of the Ramana Mandiram at Madurai till his last days. K.V. Ramanan's father, N.R. Krishnamurti Iyer, brilliant man of science, knew the uniqueness of Bhagavan's timeless teaching. K.V.

Ramanan started visiting Bhagavan from his age of five. When he came as a lad of 16 for darsan, he prayed that he should ever be close to Bhagavan and Bhagavan nodded his head. Later KVR did settle down at Tiruvannamalai and served the Ashram as its internal auditor for many decades. His son Ranganathan, fourth generation devotee, serves the Ashram as its internal auditor with the same meticulous attention to details and thoroughness as his father. Though K. V. Ramanan had to shift to Chennai a few years back for medical treatment, he regularly visited the Ramanalayam at Chromepet, Chennai, regardless of the long distance and his frail health.

