

Saranagati



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IN THIS
ISSUE

Dear Devotees,

In this May issue, we conclude with our life story of T.K. Sundaresa Iyer whose memoirs bring alive for contemporary devotees countless blessed moments [in the Hall with Bhagavan](#).

Also in this issue, we look at Bhagavan's witness to the life of simplicity and what it might mean for current-day devotees overwhelmed by a world filled with complexity and the logic of quantity ([Ramana Reflections](#)).

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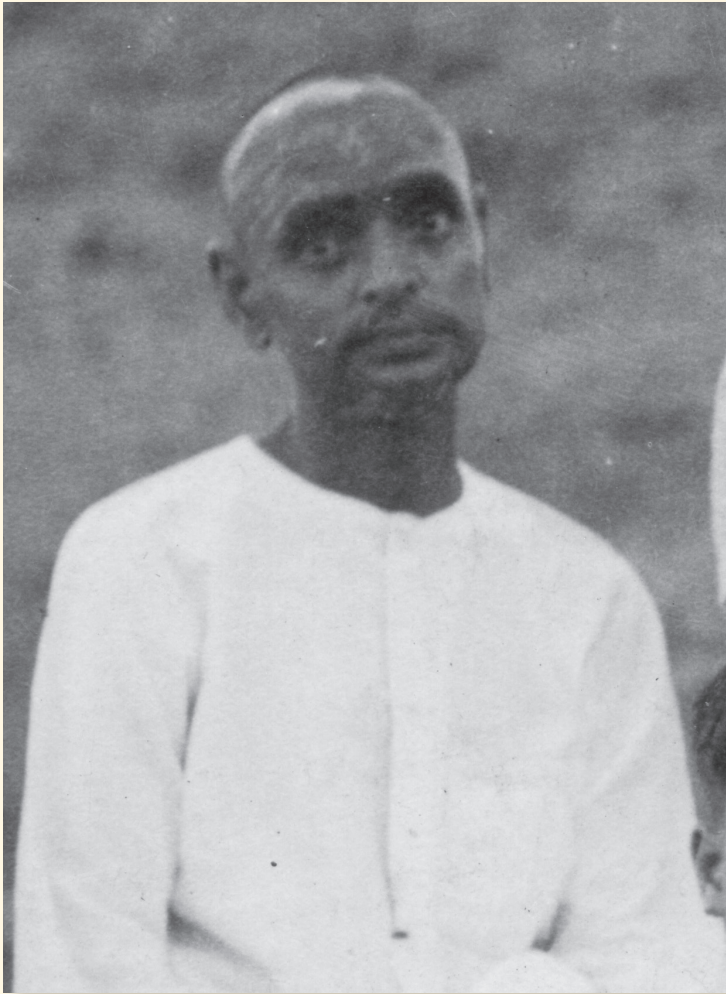
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Saranagati

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Calendar of Ashram Events

1st May (Wed) Natarajar Abhishekam
5th May (Sun) Pradosham
6th May (Mon) Sri Bhagavan's 74th Aradhana
13th May (Mon) Punarvasu
20th May (Mon) Pradosham
22nd May (Wed) Full Moon
31st May (Fri) Maha Puja

4th Jun (Tue) Pradosham
9th Jun (Sun) Punarvasu
18th Jun (Tue) Cow Lakshmi Annual Puja
19th Jun (Wed) Pradosham
21st Jun (Fri) Full Moon
3rd Jul (Wed) Pradosham
6th Jul (Sat) Punarvasu



IN PROFILE

T.K. Sundaresa Iyer (pt. IV)

Bhagavan, the Physician

THERE are numerous instances where someone who came to Bhagavan with a severe medical challenge, or some disruptive mental health condition was instantly healed in the Sage's presence. On other occasions, Bhagavan would send them for pradakshina despite their weakness. In each case, devotees reported a remarkable improvement. More remarkable still are instances of Bhagavan healing at a distance through

a good intention. If being party to such events was dumbfounding for some, for others it was just an aspect of life in Bhagavan's realm. Having a role to play in these moments where Bhagavan healed others augmented the sense of community and belonging and reinforced the personal connection they shared with Bhagavan. Tangible results took place on so many occasions that coincidence simply has to be ruled out. TKS reports the following case:

Sri Mahadeva Iyer, a devotee of Sri Bhagavan, was ailing in Madras from persistent hicoughs for nearly a month. His daughter wrote to Sri Bhagavan, appealing to him to bless her father and give relief to this distressing ailment. On receipt of the letter, the Maharshi asked me to write to Sri Mahadeva Iyer that a paste of jaggery and dried powdered ginger, if taken, would effect immediate cure of his trouble. Then turning to Madhavan, his personal attendant, Bhagavan said: "We had some ready-made paste of this medicine; can you find it?" Madhavan immediately produced it. Bhagavan took a dose of it himself and distributed an equal share to those around him. He looked at me and asked me to write to Mahadeva Iyer. I said in jest: "Why, Bhagavan, Mahadevan is already cured. Bhagavan has taken medicine for him!" And Bhagavan gave a broad laugh. I wrote to Sri Mahadeva Iyer from the Ashram office that evening, but the next day's post brought us a letter from his daughter saying that her father was relieved of his ailment at 1 pm the previous day. It was exactly the hour when Sri Maharshi took the jaggery paste.¹

TKS comments:

Isn't this like the saying in Tamil: "The kurathi (gypsy) was delivered of the child, though it was the kurava (her husband) who took medicine on her behalf." Sri Bhagavan's sense of unity was so intense that he would never accept what was not shared with others. By first tasting the medicine that he was going to send to this Madras devotee he made it holy as a prasad. Bhagavan never encouraged any talk of 'miracles' but this did not prevent his devotees from experiencing what cannot be explained by normal physical science.²

The Burning Fire

TKS was blessed to be intimately involved with the goings-on in the hall, even if sometimes he felt he made mistakes in his interaction with Bhagavan. The following account involves Dr. Venkatarangam, an eye specialist from Madras. Chinnaswami remembered that Bhagavan's spectacles needed new lenses and

¹ *At the Feet of Bhagavan*, p. 50.

² *Ibid.*





so requested that they be brought from the Hall and given to the doctor. The doctor tested these lenses and compared them with his own. He thought his own spectacles would suit Bhagavan's eyes, so he sent them through me to Bhagavan, who put these spectacles on and found they suited him. However:

The doctor's lenses were both for distance and for reading, while Sri Bhagavan's were for reading only; and the latter was in fact what Bhagavan said he wanted. I left Bhagavan's spectacles with him and returned with the doctor's. Chinnaswami got the doctor to consent to leave his own spectacles and take Bhagavan's instead. I was sent again to Bhagavan to leave the doctor's glasses with him and bring his to the doctor. Now Bhagavan was not agreeable to this proposal. But, remembering how anxious Chinnaswami was to have Bhagavan's glasses replaced immediately, I pressed upon him to accept the doctor's and give his own to be taken by the doctor. I cannot now say how hot-headed I was to press this upon Bhagavan, knowing full well that he would not agree. Bhagavan looked at me and said: "Hoom, why do you press on me what I do not want? I do not want glasses for distance, I want them only for reading." So, I came back with the doctor's glasses and reported the refusal to Chinnaswami. This happened on the day before Jayanti; I was participating in birthday activities and was busily engaged in the preparations. But from the moment I returned from Bhagavan, a burning fire took hold of me, the discomfort of which cannot be described. I went on with my work but the fire kept burning me. Jayanti passed. The next morning the fire increased. It burned and burned and burned, till I could stand it no longer. Having taken delivery of certain articles intended for the celebrations, I was returning from the railway station. I handed over the articles to the stores clerk and ran into the hall like a madman in a frenzy. The hall was full of devotees and Bhagavan reposed in his ceaseless bliss. I fell prostrate and cried, "Oh, Bhagavan, forgive me! I erred. I should not have pressed those glasses on you. It burns me! I can bear it no longer. I tried to bear it for three days, but I can bear it no more. Not that you intended to punish me. My own action brought it on. If a pot falls on a rock and breaks, it is not the fault of the rock. If an audacious man does ill to the wise, it is not the wise who sends punishment, it is the man himself who earns it. So, Bhagavan, pray look at me, and let this burning heat go!" Thus, I cried before Bhagavan like this even though Bhagavan and the others in the hall tried to restrain me. Bhagavan looked at me and said, "What is all this? I was never in the least offended. Don't worry. Sit down and it will be all right." So I sat, a penitent creature, and wept like a child. In less than ten minutes, the burning heat vanished.³

³ Ibid., p. 47.

Prostrating Before Bhagavan

Prostrating before a revered public figure is not only a deeply significant act of respect and humility but a customary gesture in South India, symbolizing a person's willingness to subordinate his will before someone of higher spiritual status. It is not merely a physical act but a profound expression of reverence, devotion, and acknowledgment of the guru's authority and wisdom. But many a time, Westerners who came before Bhagavan and had no experience in such customs would simply wave their hands or do a simple standing bow. Such casualness was often perceived by devotees as a sign of disrespect. TKS was there at the time of Major Chadwick's arrival at the Ashram in 1935 and noticed that he had the habit of greeting Bhagavan with folded hands from a standing position before going to his usual seat in the back of the hall. TKS tells what happened:

This form of greeting was the subject of some discussion between Sri Narayana Iyer and Sri Annamalai Swami, who would find fault with Chadwick for not prostrating before Sri Bhagavan in the fashion usual with Indians to which Sri Chadwick's reply was that he was a Westerner, unaccustomed to the ways of Indians and could see no wrong in the method of greeting adopted by him. He further defended himself saying that what Sri Bhagavan wanted, as he himself used to say, was not the formal prostration of the body but from the heart.

In the ensuing discussion between these friends, they decided to place the matter before Sri Bhagavan, when it might be convenient and when only a few devotees would be present. Broaching the subject one such convenient evening, Bhagavan expounded on the value of prostrations and said in effect that every prostration at the feet of the jnani was so many nails driven in the coffin of the ego.

Convinced now that the South Indian greeting was the right one, Chadwick from the next day onwards greeted Bhagavan with a full prostration, but from the rear corner of the hall, so that few people would notice the change in his mode of greeting. One day, however, when he entered the hall which was quite crowded, Chadwick was obliged to prostrate before Bhagavan in the only space available, which led to the door of the Old Hall, then just in front of the sofa on which Bhagavan was seated. Seeing this Western disciple adopt the Hindu form of greeting, Bhagavan jovially remarked: "Ha, ha, see what Chadwick is doing and pointing his hand towards Chadwick drew the attention of the devotees in the hall and also obliged Chadwick to prostrate at full length, almost signifying that that was the proper method of





greeting jnanis when meeting them for the first time of the day. From then onwards, Chadwick adopted this form of greeting which did not evoke any further remarks from Bhagavan, indicating that he approved the new form of greeting.⁴

Distant Landscapes

A couple from Peru had heard of the Maharshi and his greatness and had longed for years to meet him. They were very poor and took great pains to save the money for their passage to India. After years of saving, they were able to purchase deck-passage and sailed for several months, before at last reaching India. The couple told about all the privations they had undergone to come and see the Maharshi. TKS recounts the following interaction:

Bhagavan was all kindness to them. He heard their story with great concern, and then remarked: "You need not have taken all this trouble. You could well have thought of me from where you were, and so could have had all the consolation of a personal visit." Yet, the Maharshi did not want to disturb their pleasure in being in his immediate vicinity, and so he left it at that. Later in the evening, Bhagavan enquired about their day-to-day life in Peru. The couple began describing the landscape of the seacoast and the beach of their own town in Peru. Just then Bhagavan remarked: "Is not the beach of your town paved with marble slabs, and are not coconut palms planted in between? Are there not marble benches in rows facing the sea there and did you not often sit on the fifth of those with your wife?" This remark of Sri Maharshi created great astonishment in the couple. How could Bhagavan, who had never gone out of Tiruvannamalai, know so intimately such minute details about their own place? The Maharshi only smiled and remarked: "It does not matter how I can tell. Enough if you know that in the Self there is no Space or Time." This confirmed for this couple the Maharshi's original statement that they could well have thought of him even at their own home and so obtained his blessings.⁵

Bhagavan's Mahanirvana

In the spring of 1950, when Bhagavan's health had declined precipitously, TKS and other devotees began to prepare for the inevitable. But even though warned, the transition from a world with Bhagavan's physical presence to one without it was unthinkable. TKS reflects:

One of the Lord Buddha's last recorded sayings was, "All

⁴ *The Call Divine*, vol. 9, 1960, pp. 13-14.

⁵ *At the Feet of Bhagavan*, pp. 45-46.



Bhagavan and devotees, ca. 1934; TKS standing front row, second from the right

compounds must dissolve; herein there is no cause for sorrow."

That precious and beloved body, so long treasured in our hearts as Sri Bhagavan, was, as a physical vehicle, a compound and had to separate in time into its component elements, disappearing from those eyes which so long delighted in it with reverent affection. So too, Sri Krishna found it expedient that his Gopi devotees be made to enrich their love for him by withdrawing his outward form from their adoring eyes. Then he sent Uddhava to hint to them how they could now always be in his presence and find him ever dancing in their hearts. When the eyes of love have no longer to seek with yearning for the Beloved outside, the eye of the inner heart is turned within, and there realizes his living ecstatic presence. And so, it has been with us.

The inevitable happened on that April evening in 1950, and the dear body which had been so long the centre, the focus of our hearts' gaze ceased to delight our eyes. Can we say that he is dead? Bhagavan dead? The word could have no meaning. How can he who lives in all the universe ever taste of death? "You think I am going away? But where am I to go? I shall remain here with you!" That was his promise while he was preparing us for the seeming separation. And those of us who loved him here in Tiruvannamalai hold firmly to the faith which we feel confirmed by continual experience, that he has kept his promise, and is still to be contacted here in the Ashram as of old. Like Surdas darkening the physical sight so that he might see the Light within, he has dimmed our outer sight to his radiance only, so that the inner vision might be filled with his eternal Light. He has veiled the outer form we loved so well that its beauty might no longer draw our gaze away from the everlasting presence enthroned in our inmost Heart.





TKS discussing a letter with Bhagavan, ca. 1945

*Painful was that veiling to our human hearts. Yet in these days of seeming deprivation, happy indeed are we, if we be driven thereby inward, to see and love him there, shining as the Heart of all, the ineffable radiant Self, manifesting ever as the Self of our self, the very Being of our being, the ever-blessed Awareness of all Truth, the Stillness of omnipresent Bliss. At his tender feet, that trod the rough hill path for so long, our grateful love and undying memory we lay. May he accept these poor gifts of our hearts and pour his grace on all who wander in the darkness of the unknown tracts of primal ignorance.*⁶

Conclusion

In his later years, TKS sought to anthologise a life lived in the presence of Bhagavan and recalled an exchange with Bhagavan :

⁶ Ibid., pp. 63-64.

When studying the Upanishads in my early days, I always visualised the divine abode in the Sun God and was performing the practices enjoined in certain texts. Even later, after settling at the abode of Maharshi, I continued this practice. It proved very hard to succeed in this process, and I had to undergo very trying experiences, so I referred the whole matter to Bhagavan. "So you want to go to the divine world?" asked he. "That is what I am trying to obtain; that is what the scriptures prescribe," I answered. "But where are you now?" the Master asked. I replied, "I am in Your presence." "Poor thing! You are here and now in the divine world, and you want to obtain it elsewhere! Know that to be the divine world where one is firmly established in the divine. Such a one is full (purna); he encompasses and transcends all that is manifest. He is the substratum of the screen on which the whole manifestation runs like the picture film. Whether moving pictures run or not, the screen is always there and is never affected by the action of the pictures. You are here and now in the divine world. You are like a thirsty man wanting to drink, while he is all the time standing neck-deep in the Ganga. Give up all efforts and surrender. Let the 'I', that wants the divine world die, and the divine in you will be realised here and now. For, it is already in you as the Self, not different from the divine, nameless and formless. It is already in you, and how are you to obtain that whichever remains obtained? The Self in you is surely not different from us?" Thus spoke Bhagavan.

"So, then, Bhagavan says that he is the Self in this, the field of this soul (jiva), that This is already established in Bhagavan as such, so this soul need do nothing but give up the sense of being a separate soul?" I asked, prostrating before Bhagavan. "Yes, yes," he replied. "That is what one must do to drop the ego-sense. If that is done the Self will be experienced as 'I-I' here and now, and at all times. There will be no going into the divine world or coming out of it. You will be as you really are. This is the practice and this is perfection, too."

Postscript

After fifty years of devotion to Bhagavan, TKS passed away at the age of 68 in Ramana Nagar at 6.10 am on Friday 5th February 1965. Although not of a great age, he had become very frail. For quite a while he remained permanently in the Ashram precincts, not even visiting his children. He passed away peacefully, conscious to the very end and was cremated with due rites in the presence of many Ramana bhaktas.⁷—

(series concluded)

⁷ *The Mountain Path*, April 1965, p. 136.





Events in Sri Ramanasramam: Nirvana Room Day



It had been a difficult string of days for devotees leading up to this moment on 14th April. They could not bear seeing Bhagavan suffer. When Suri Nagamma passed through the Nirvana Room queue two days prior, she strained to see Bhagavan's face which was not visible. As she complained, Bhagavan turned to look at her and his eyes seemed to communicate something like, "Oh, you want me to stay in this rotten body forever?" In her tears, out of compassion, she mumbled under her breath the prayer, "please go." She was not alone. Devotees passed along the word that they should not pray for Bhagavan's continuance in the body. If the reader will remember, Bhagavan had talked of weeping tears of bliss (*ananda bhashyam*) while on the pradakshina path in 1914 as he wrote verses in praise of Arunachala, so much so that the paper he was writing on was moistened. On 14th April 1950, when devotees spontaneously invoked the chanting of *Aksharamanamalai*, Bhagavan began to shed tears. On the evening of 14th April 2024, several hundred devotees gathered at the site and recited the same *Aksharamanamalai* that had been recited on that day in 1950. —

Events in Delhi: April 2024 Talk at the Indian Institute of Technology



The *Indian Institute of Technology*, Delhi (IIT Delhi) is one of the most prestigious universities in India. Last year Ashram President Dr. Venkat S. Ramanan was invited to give and talk and spoke on self-enquiry and Bhagavan's legacy to the world as the one ultimate reality expounded by Advaita Vedanta. The President was invited back this year and on Saturday 20th April, gave a talk called *Awakening The Self: Insights from Ramana Maharshi's Upadesa Sara*. Underscoring the significance of Self-surrender, *Upadesa Sara*, he said, 'serves as a map, guiding us

through self-inquiry to unveil the inherent treasure of the Self'. When 'we relinquish the ego, with its anxieties and desires, to the Self, this allows the mind to settle, and become quiescent — like a lake reflecting the clear sky.' —

Announcement: Daily Live Streaming

Ramanasramam is live streaming the Tamil Parayana and Vedaparayana each day, Mon-Sat, 8-10 am IST up till 15th June: <<https://youtube.com/@SriRamanasramam/live/>>. To access Ashram videos, go to: <<https://youtube.com/@SriRamanasramam/videos>>; To subscribe, go to: <https://youtube.com/@sriRamanasramam?sub_confirmation=1>.





Sri Bhagavan's Global Online 74th Aradhana Celebrations

Global Online Aradhana celebrations took place on Tamil New Year Day, Sunday 14th April starting at 5.45am EST and going on until 9.15pm that night. Participation was from various satsang groups in Canada, United Kingdom, France, Australia, and the USA (Washington DC, Ottawa, Ohio, Michigan, Houston, Austin, Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seattle, Tampa, and the Spanish Satsang). The event was sponsored by New

York Arunachala Ashrama. Speakers included Mohan Ramaswami, Michael James, Dr. Carlos Lopez and the chief guest, Brahmachari Soham Chaitanya, resident teacher of Chinmaya Mission, San Jose. The programme concluded with an address from Ramanasramam President, Dr. Venkat S. Ramanan. Programming took place on Zoom and video recordings were subsequently uploaded onto the Arunachala Ashrama YouTube channel. Copy the following URLs into your browser: <<https://youtube.com/live/w6pfUHvXndU?feature=share>> or <<https://www.youtube.com/@ArunachalaAshrama>> or click archive.arunachala.org/aradhana-2024. —

Events in Sri Ramanasramam: Tamil New Year Panchangam (Almanac) Reading



On the morning of 14th April, devotees celebrated the Tamil New Year and that afternoon, they marked the events of the upcoming year by reading the *panchangam* ('almanac') in Bhagavan's Shrine with the Ashram President, Dr. Venkat S. Ramanan in attendance. —





RAMANA REFLECTIONS

Simplicity and Self-Emptying in the Age of Quantity

DEVOTEES never tire of seeing images of Bhagavan Ramana clothed in a *kaupina*, in the repose of bliss on his sofa in the hall, free of every need, not demanding anything from anyone. Every detail of his physiognomy speaks of peace, speaks of one for whom the struggles that affect common folk have been laid to rest once for all. The composure, ease and simplicity of Bhagavan's face and body communicate a profound truth that is counter intuitive: *Perfection is*

*achieved, not when there is nothing more to add, but when there is nothing left to take away*¹. Indeed, Bhagavan's form reveals that his work has been done, and the signs of earthly incarnation which might otherwise be seen as imperfect, are perfect in this instance. If perfection is achieved not by adding anything new, but stripping away the excesses of the heart and mind, then why would we not take up this work as the singular goal of our lives?

No doubt, the impulse for accumulation has dominated us for a long time. Ours and the lives of our forbearers have been entangled with the tangible things of this world, which is not surprising when we consider that part and parcel of earthly existence is sustenance and nutriment, not least of all the air, food and water on which our lives depend. But when basic organism needs are extended beyond what is genuinely required, the impulse to *more* reflects a compensation for perceived needs that are not true needs. Here we find ourselves acting from distorted assumptions about what is important, overemphasizing the quantitative dimension wherein true satiation ever eludes us.

Bhagavan's *kaupina* is not just a symbol of renunciation but embodies the essence of his life and teaching. His *kaupina* would seem to be saying: *the only thing you need and indeed the only thing you possess in this world is what you are*.² We are not talking about the body and the elements of which it is composed, but rather, that which is housed within it. And yet, that which is within is somehow not completely disconnected from its earthly frame.

We imagine the king who loots his own royal treasury to gain possession of the crown jewels, not understanding that as the highest potentate in the land, the crown jewels, the royal treasury and indeed, the whole kingdom are his to do with as he pleases. But instead, he slips out of the royal palace in disguise under cover of darkness to hock the jewels in the black market for a few coins, thinking he has gained something thereby.

Beholding the bliss of Bhagavan's silent repose assures us simplicity is the direction we must follow. And yet, the customs and habits of the culture at large, not to mention

¹ Antoine de Saint-Exupéry.

² From the Camaldolese Benedictine monk, Fr. Bruno Barnhart, OSB.Cam. His remark reminds us of Bhagavan's comment in *Talks* §555: *One can live happily only if they know they require nothing wither to live.*





the karmic legacy of present and former individual births, inexorably pulls us in the opposite direction. If till now we have sought solace in the accumulation of possessions, experiences, knowledge, and social status, we recognise that filling the void *within* has nothing to do with anything that comes from *without*. We begin to see that the allure of accumulation lies in the fundamental assumption that *more is better*. We begin to grow weary of the desire for novelty, validation, self-improvement and the pursuit of *more* which we now suspect is leading us down the wrong road.

Only God Can Satisfy Our Longings

Tradition comes to our aid and helps us make the needed shift in understanding. Stories abound. One is the oft-told tale of King Kubera, the god-king of the Yakshas who is Lord of the world's treasures. The king was proud of his wealth and was pleased by the fact that all came to seek his blessing. One day, he decided he should host Lord Ganesa for dinner to impress him with his royal abundance. But Ganesa set himself the task of teaching the king a lesson.

When Ganesa sat for the lavish meal, the King found he was unable to satisfy the Elephant God's appetite. Kubera gave him food for a thousand guests, but Ganesa's hunger could not be appeased. King Kubera gave him all the food in the kingdom, and still the Elephant God appeared not to be satisfied. Now with the royal food stores completely bare, Ganesa began eating the plates and kitchenware. In desperation, the king rushed to Lord Siva. Mahadeva calmed him and said not to worry: "Just give him this

handful of roasted rice with love and humility, and all will be well."³

The king followed Mahadeva's advice and when Ganesa casually consumed the puffed rice, his hunger was at last gratified.

The moral of this tale is that *only God can satisfy our longings*. It is not a question of quantity, frequency or, in this case, any culinary arts. The capacity to bring fulfilment is a quality that comes hidden in the sanctification born of the divine touch. Only by this means does food become *prasad*. Ganesa is teaching the king a lesson about how the things of this earth are not satisfactory. When we make a boast about what we possess, our possessions become worldly, devoid of divine power. But when we offer to others those same possessions in a spirit of charity that is love, our gifts become sacred, imbued with the power of the divine, and satisfy every longing, both for the giver and the receiver. If the greatest wealth is learning to live content with little, as has been said, simplicity, humility and guilelessness are life's ultimate achievements.

The reader will remember countless moments in the Hall, where offerings were distributed by the Sage. Whether fresh fruit, raisins, dates, or puffed rice, after having first received Bhagavan's touch and having been tasted by him, would be distributed to those seated in the hall.⁴

On one occasion, Dr. Anantanarayana Rao brought guava fruit from his garden and presented it to Bhagavan. Bhagavan asked for a knife and plate and

³ *In the Kitchen with Bhagavan*, unpublished manuscript, pp. 207-209.

⁴ *Guru Ramana*, S.S. Cohen, p. 13.

Spiritual Instructions: Chapter 4, §15

Neither Bondage Nor Liberation

Is there any authority for saying that there is neither bondage nor liberation? If it is experienced, how is it experienced?

Bondage and liberation are mere linguistic terms. They have no reality of their own. Therefore, they cannot function of their own accord. It is necessary to accept the existence of some basic thing for which they are modifications. If one enquires, 'for whom is there bondage and liberation?' it will be seen, 'they are for me'. If one enquires, 'who am I?', one will see that there is no such thing as the 'I'. It will then be as clear as an *amalaka* fruit in one's hand that what remains is one's real being. As this truth is naturally and clearly experienced by those who leave aside verbal discussions and enquire into themselves directly, there is no doubt that all realized persons uniformly see neither bondage nor liberation so far as the Self is concerned. —





began to prepare the fruit while all in the hall looked on. He cut the fruit into small pieces so that there would be enough to go around. He then sprinkled a little chili powder on top of each slice and took a piece for himself before passing the plate around. While only the most meagre portion of fruit was given, even that small amount gave great satisfaction coming as it did from the golden hands of Bhagavan.

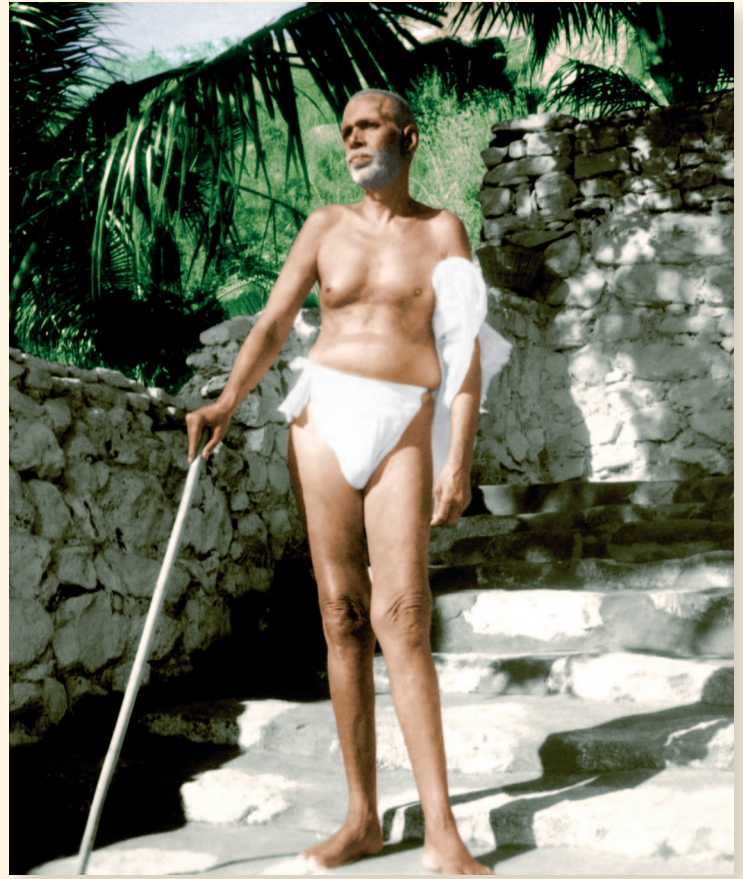
Very often it would happen that offerings were brought and placed before Bhagavan, and he was simply expected to consume them right then and there as confirmation that the gift had been approved of and received, thereby assuring the donour that he or she had earned some *punya*. On one occasion, Bhagavan objected:

*Will swamitvam, the role of a Swami, be utterly lost unless I eat whenever asked to do so? Why all this, instead of looking to the purpose for which you have come?*⁵

Here we have an example of Bhagavan teaching his devotees along the same lines as Lord Ganesa in teaching King Kubera, namely, that having gifts to offer is not necessarily a sign of one's purity or spiritual abundance, nor is offering them necessarily an indication of one's generosity. In fact, rather than necessarily being a selfless act, the motivation behind offerings in Bhagavan's Hall could on occasion be born of a desire to be special in the guru's eyes, to win a place in his heart, or to make an impression on others. The dinner invitation of King Kubera was born of the desire to impress Lord Ganesa with his opulence. But if the true wealth of a man is not measured by what he *has*, but rather by what he *does with what he has*, in Bhagvan's *upadesa*, the richest man is not the one who has the most, but the one who *needs the least*.

Acts of generosity in the hall were mostly pure. But sometimes devotees were motivated by feelings of insufficiency. The pursuit of *more*—whether more possessions, experiences, knowledge, or demonstrations of generosity in the Hall—hinged on deep insecurities. Bhagavan was not bent on shaming their gestures of kindness but only sought to awaken in them the capacity for a deeper way of serving him. If they were free of clinging to the things of this world, they stood a chance at becoming more like him.

⁵ *Face to Face with Bhagavan Sri Ramana*, p. 335.



Bhagavan and the Qualitative

Once, just prior to Bhagavan's Golden Jubilee celebrations in 1946, Bhagavan was shown the new *pandal* erected for the occasion. He commented, 'Just fancy, they insist on erecting this for me when all I need is the shade of a tree to sit under.'⁶

As plans for the event were being laid, devotees pressed him about his wishes for the upcoming celebrations. Bhagavan, in a moment of frustration, said something to the effect, 'If you really want to know what I want, it is that all of you would sit quietly and look within to know the Self. That is how I would like you to celebrate the Golden Jubilee. But you are not going to do that, are you, so why ask me?'

Here we are reminded of comments Bhagavan made in the Old Hall just a few years earlier:

*Your own Self-Realization is the greatest service you can render the world.*⁷

⁶ *Saranagati*, February 2021, 'Ramana Reflections: The Lever and the Fulcrum', p. 7.

⁷ Mouni Sadhu quoting Bhagavan, in *Arunachala's Ramana: Ocean*





Part of their confusion was knowing who or what a good devotee is. This is not surprising when we consider how amid the wall of light that loomed so magnificent in their presence, they were unable to fathom what benefit they could ever be. Bhagavan comments:

Your duty is to be, and not to be this or that. 'I am that I am' sums up the whole truth. The method is summed up in the words 'Be still'.⁸

Self-Emptying Through Inquiry and Surrender

If devotees were doing the best they could, their intentions were surely good. Bhagavan only wanted to elevate their aspirations and nudge them toward something more essential. If his was the principle of *less is more*, they operated under the assumption that *more is better*. The *more* they gave to Bhagavan through outward gestures of selflessness and would-be self-sacrifice, the better. If they valued Bhagavan's simplicity, they sometimes set for themselves standards that were ill-contrived, all in the hope of appearing as more in his sight. Their best efforts sometimes led to their dissatisfaction and, as we have just seen, to the Sage's admonishment.

Bhagavan seemed to be saying that while outward forms of devotion have a place, they should not be a substitute for putting the teaching to work in our lives. The greatest—and perhaps, the only true—devotion to Bhagavan is following in his footsteps, endeavouring to become ever more like him.

If emptying the heart of self-will and worldly concerns is the substance of Bhagavan's surrender, and if, as Bhagavan says, *surrender is giving oneself up to the original cause of one's being*, the Master is calling us to make our hearts simple in order that there be room for his grace.

⁸ *of Grace*, vol. 8, p. 206.

⁸ *Talks* §363.



A poet once said, *to become full, let yourself be empty*.⁹ Self-emptying is the means for coming free of worldly intentions occupying the heart. The field of battle where the struggle for everlasting freedom and happiness will be decided can only be found within and nowhere else, Bhagavan tells us:

*Happiness is your nature. It is not wrong to desire it. What is wrong is seeking it outside when it is inside.*¹⁰

Bhagavan says elsewhere:

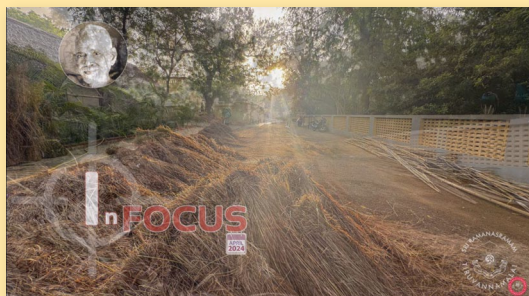
*If a man thinks that his happiness is due to external causes and his possessions, it is reasonable to conclude that his happiness must increase with the increase of possessions and diminish in proportion to their diminution. Therefore, if he is devoid of possessions, his happiness should be nil. ... But happiness is inherent in man and is not due to external causes. One must realise his Self to open the store of unalloyed happiness.*¹¹ —

(to be continued)

⁹ Lao Tzu, the *Tao-Te-Ching*.

¹⁰ *Call Divine*, vol. 12, p. 513.

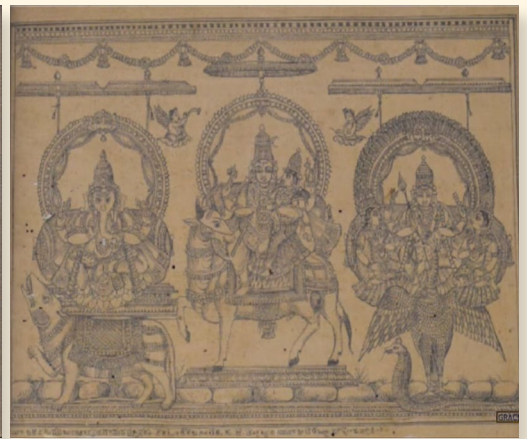
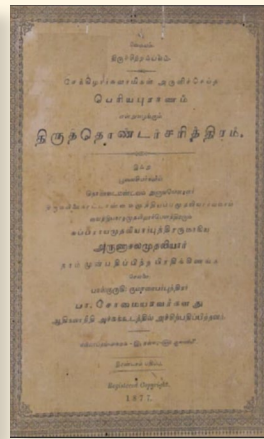
¹¹ *Talks* §3.



In Focus: April Edition

For the April edition, copy the following: <https://youtu.be/icz1SpyuGSY?si=pvrnbnkPFaXpWpAyM>.





Nambi Yaandaar Nambi

An Introductory Video to Periya Puranam

Online Periya Puranam Chanting

The *Periya Puranam* is a compilation of the lives of the sixty-three Saivite saints, known as *Nayanmars*. A popular Tamil prose version of the *Puranam* was published by Arunachala Mudaliar in 1877 and was read by Bhagavan when he was at his uncle's house in Madurai just a few months before his death-experience. After the experience, the young sage regularly visited the Madurai Meenakshi Temple where he stood in front of the 63 Saints and shed tears. Even after coming to Arunachala, on occasion during talks with devotees, Bhagavan would quote

from the Tamil *Periya Puranam* as well as its Sanskrit version which goes under the title of *Siva Bhakta Vilasam* (published by the Ashram in English and Telugu translations). Synopses of the *Periya Puranam* were serialized in *Saranagati* from 2011-2013.

In 2023 a succinct poetic version of the *Periya Puranam* published by Kesava Mudaliar in 1865 came to light. Recently a devotee from Chennai rendered the verses into metre for singing. Ramanasramam devotees prepared these songs with short video clips of the temples associated with the saints and uploaded them as videos. Copy this URL to your browser:

<<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLS7MCISsH0oc2k3fKuS2tuqsNbpa6dpra>>. —

Events at Sri Ramanasramam: 'Major Chadwick Day



On 17th April the Ashram President Dr. Venkat S. Ramanan gathered with devotees at Major Chadwick's Samadhi to sing *Aksharamanamalai* followed by puja and the distribution of *prasad*. —





Events at Sri Ramanasramam Maha Rudram Celebrations

Dozens of young purohits and pundits convened in the Grantalaya Auditorium on the morning of the 25th April to lead a three-day *rudrajapam*. Maha Rudram culminated on the morning of the 27th April with an elaborate *homam* and procession through the Ashram with the sacred *kalasas*. Abhishekam of Sri Ramaneswara Mahalingam and Matrubbhuteswara then took place around 10.30 am. Rudram consists of *namakam* (the repetition of *namah* indicating surrender to the Lord) and *chamakam* (repeating *cha-me*, ‘and for me’). The eleven chapters of Sri Rudram form the fourth *kanda*, and are the centrepiece, of the *Krishna Yajur Veda*. —



Nitya Ramanan

Announcement: Summer Schedule

As we go to press, thirty districts in Tamil Nadu are under a ‘yellow alert’ and temperatures are expected to cross 105 F, or just under 41 degrees C. Due to the heat this summer, the Ashram management has taken the decision to move the evening Tamil Parayana to mornings starting at 9.15 am IST, just following morning puja in Bhagavan’s Shrine to make it easier for devotees to attend. Live streaming will take place between 8-10 am Mon-Sat. —





Best Shot: Four O'clock Tea in the Ashram Dining Hall



Dev Gogoi

The Old Dining Hall and Kitchen, inaugurated in September 1938, still continues to function as the beating heart of Sri Ramanasramam, daily serving Bhagavan's *prasad* to his devotees without break right till the present day. This heritage building, constructed in Bhagavan's immediate vicinity and under his direct gaze, is suffused by his grace and radiates the vibration of his presence for the sustenance of his devotees. For ashram

inmates and guests, the afternoon tea time is not only a welcome pick-me-up but also a play of sunlight and shadow, not without its small miracles:

*Tea at four o'clock,
His presence, a heart of light,
Sips in sacred space.*

Obituary: Smt. Rumyana Grancharova



Born in Sofia, Bulgaria, 6th January 1951, Rumyana came to Bhagavan in 1997. In the early years, she travelled back and forth each year, spending increasingly longer periods at the Ashram, doing voluntary service in the Ashram kitchen e.g. cutting vegetables, or in the Ashram library. Once about 25 years ago, she brought a pot plant from Europe which was placed in the Ashram office garden. Over time, the plant grew beyond the limits of its pot and rooted in the earth itself. Now it is a tall tree outside the office. This was around the same time that she got permission from her husband and children to stay permanently at Arunachala and the Ashram Management accepted her as an inmate. She was avid in going for daily pradakshina in the early mornings but was struck by a motorcycle or some other vehicle on a couple of occasions. Owing to permanent injury from one of these collisions and subsequent age-related decline in health, she was compelled to return to Bulgaria in 2016 where she lived out her remaining

years. She passed away on 28th February after a long illness. She is survived by her husband and two sons and will be remembered among devotees for her childlike innocence and deep love for Bhagavan. —

