

Saranagati



SARANAGATI
SRI RAMANASRAMAM

OCTOBER 2021
VOL. 15, NO.10



Dev Gogoi



Saranagati



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IN THIS
ISSUE

Dear Devotees,

The Ashram continues to remain open for four days each week, Mon-Thurs, six hours per day, 8-11am and 2-5 pm. As case counts seem relatively stable owing to ongoing restrictions on public gatherings, the vaccination effort in India continues at an encouraging pace.

In this issue we look at the life of T.S. Nagarajan, Dr TNK's elder brother's son. Nagarajan was an exquisite example of one who managed to internalise and follow Bhagavan's teaching in the midst of the many demands made on him by a successful professional career and family life (see p. 3).

As we go to press, we lament to report the untimely demise of Sentilnatha Ghanapathigal in the early afternoon of 1st October. We will include an obituary and glimpse of his life in the upcoming November issue.

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

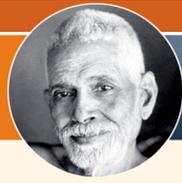
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Calendar of Ashram Events

7th October (Thurs) Navaratri Commences
14th October (Thurs) Saraswati Puja
15th October (Fri) Vijayadasami
19th October (Tues) Full Moon Begins
28th October (Thurs) Punarvasu
4th November (Thurs) Deepavali

19th November (Fri) Kartigai Deepam Day
24th November (Weds) Punarvasu
18th December (Sat) Full Moon
21st December (Tues) Bhagavan's Jayanti
17th January (Mon) Punarvasu/Full Moon
1st March (Tues) Mahashivaratri





IN PROFILE

T.S. Nagarajan

T.S. Nagarajan had a long association with Ramanasramam. Already as a boy of four, not yet in school, there was talk of Bhagavan in his family home. Bhagavan had found his way into TSN's world due to the influence of his paternal uncle, his father's younger brother, Dr T.N. Krishnaswami¹ who had recently come to Bhagavan. Dr TNK was very popular among children and TSN was no exception. This was owing to Dr TNK's friendly nature:

My uncle Kittan was a relaxed individual, kind and considerate, in fact a very likeable person who never lost his cool. He was

¹ The respected devotee who is credited with a large majority of the best photos ever taken of Sri Bhagavan.

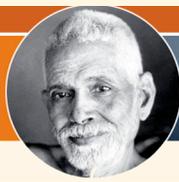
a many-splendoured personality, a very competent medical doctor and soon established a successful practice. In time, he became the leading G.P. in Mylapore with all the top citizens putting their trust in his medical advice. His visits to the house were always popular with me because I could sit on his motorcycle. I also liked to play with his stethoscope. I have every reason to remember his [formidable medical abilities] because he saved my life once when, as a boy of ten, my health was in grave danger owing to a kidney infection. My uncle Kittan had [also] acquired a reputation as a good photographer, more or less acknowledged as the official photographer at Ramanasramam. Armed with a Rolliflex camera, he would click away at the Ashram. Bhagavan enjoyed these sessions and graciously cooperated.

The youngster had heard stories about his uncle's trips to the Ashram but would have to wait several years before he got the chance to accompany him to Tiruvannamalai. It was only in his eleventh year, at the end of 1938, that the momentous opportunity arose. Dr TNK and others were going by train to Tiruvannamalai to attend Bhagavan's Jayanti. TSN recalls the experience with great fondness:

We were living in Purasawalkam, Madras. My father was busy building up a law practise. It was the Christmas holidays and Bhagavan's Jayanthi had already been announced [and would fall on the 6th of January]. With some difficulty I got myself included in Dr TNK's group. For me it was a great excursion. We travelled overnight by third class train in great comfort. An interesting uncle unknown to me travelled with us in the train and kept me regaled with stories of Bhagavan. However, upon arrival at Tiruvannamalai Railway Station, I found he had suddenly vanished. After the first darshan of Bhagavan we had a sumptuous breakfast and accompanied Bhagavan on his morning walk. Lo and behold, on the way beneath a cluster of trees, I saw this unnamed uncle in a crowd. He was standing with reverentially folded hands. Bhagavan spotted him, beamed with a smile and went out of his way to stop and spend a few minutes chatting with him. Then we all went on our way. I learned later that this uncle's spiritual name was Ramanapadananda, a very sincere devotee of Bhagavan, who was rendering a lot of help in the Ashram.

TSN later heard how Ramanapadananda upon first meeting Bhagavan ten years earlier, found himself so overcome by a 'feeling of joy and devotion' that he burst into tears and was unable to stop them for a long time. Ramanapadananda subsequently resigned his post as a broker with a respected firm, the Bombay Co. in Madurai, and set off to travel about





the world distributing Bhagavan's books and photos and celebrating Bhagavan's Jayanti.

One can imagine the excitement of the 11-year-old being in the company of those who had come under Bhagavan's influence. He soon began to understand why his beloved uncle had been unable to avoid ceaselessly speaking about the Maharshi. Arriving for the first time in Tiruvannamalai was etched in his memory:

The next morning, travelling by jutka to the Ashram, we had a full and magnificent view of Arunachala, resplendent in the background. The atmosphere reminded me very much of a previous visit to Tirupati. In the meditation hall there was quite a crowd and Bhagavan occupied centre stage, reclining on his couch. I noticed his head was always shaking and was told that it was due to the hardships to his body in the underground cellar of the Tiruvannamalai temple. The whole place was bristling with activity, silently presided over by Bhagavan. Bhagavan always seemed to have a faraway look.

On another visit, while in the kitchen, young TSN sampled a dish freshly ground in the iddlie grinder given directly from Bhagavan's hand. He stood by observing his uncle intensely engaged in snapping photos and working his camera. It appeared to TSN that Bhagavan enjoyed these photo sessions and graciously cooperated:

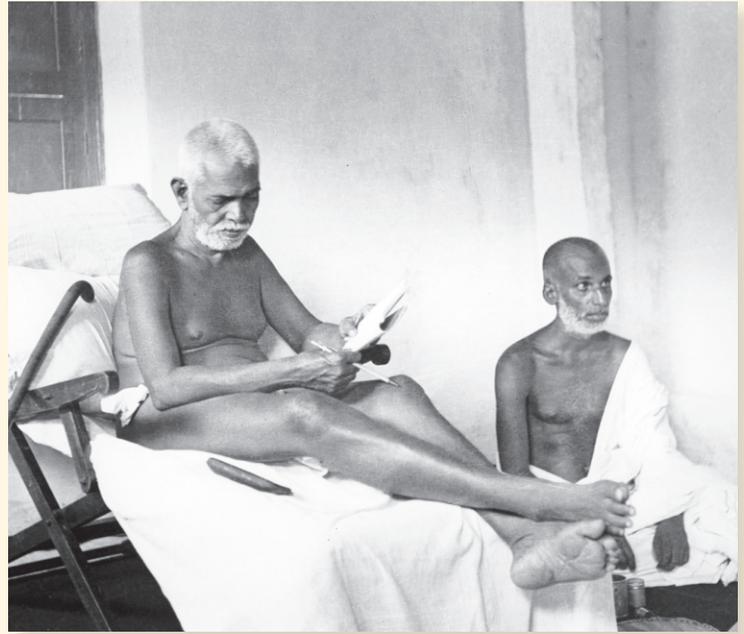
On one visit, my uncle brought with him an enlarged colour photo of Bhagavan in the padmasana pose and put it up. This is a popular photo next only to the Welling Bust. The portrait fascinated me. I would stare at it for hours, particularly at the tiger head. Its snarl and ferocious teeth had me transfixed.

The young TSN never tired of the opportunity to rub shoulders with Bhagavan's principal devotees:

Yogi Ramaiah, whom I met on my first visit to Sri Ramanasramam, was a remarkable person. Paul Brunton in his 'A Search in Secret India' describes Yogi Ramaiah as a 'graven Buddha' and mentions an episode accompanying Ramaiah to his cottage and encountering a cobra.

In his book, Brunton describes Yogi Ramaiah as 'impossible to approach' owing to his strict silence, a perfect yogi who inhabited a grotto under the shadow of some huge boulders. But though a yogi, TSN found Yogi Ramaiah very approachable and got to meet him several times:

Yogi Ramaiah was a frequent visitor to my uncle's house in Mylapore and quite often used to walk down to our house and



spend a long time chatting with us, especially my mother who was fluent in Telugu.

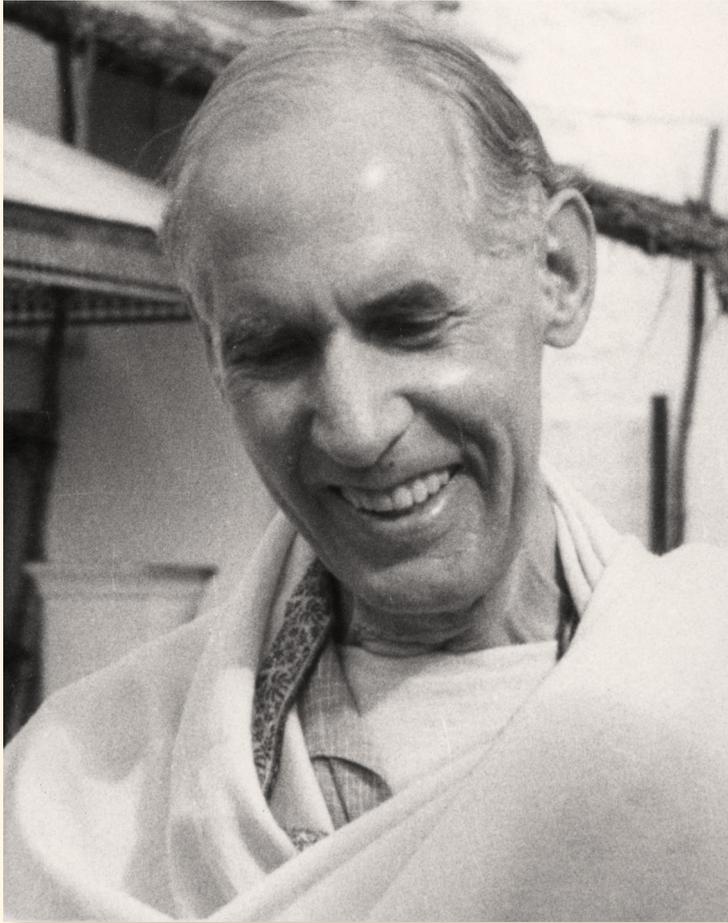
When TSN had his first darshan of Bhagavan, another boy was having his as well. This was A.S. Krishnamoorthy who would later marry TSN's sister. Krishnamoorthy hailed from and grew up in Tiruvannamalai:

As children we were always told that we should pray to God only for 'good sense' and 'good studies'. Krishnamoorthy went a step further. He closed his eyes tightly and prayed to Bhagavan that he should also help him with his weak subject which was mathematics. When he opened his eyes, he found Bhagavan gazing at him with amusement. Krishnamoorthy went on to do a master's in mathematics and taught the subject for a while to graduate and post graduate students. He then entered the Indian Audit and Accounts service and had an illustrious career. Mathematics remained his forte.

Nagarajan met the Arthur Osborne family at Malathi, Dr TNK's home in Mylapore. He was immediately impressed by Osborne's spiritual inclination and how he had given up everything to come to India:

Arthur Osborne was a frequent visitor to my uncle TNK's house [and I learned of his] thrilling experiences in faraway places like Tibet. During his spiritual search, he had heard of Bhagavan and his teachings and both he and his wife were drawn to Bhagavan. When the Second World War broke out Osborne was on a teaching assignment in Burma or Thailand. Seeing the approaching hostilities, he had the good sense to send his family away to India and they opted for Ramanasramam where his wife Lucy, his daughters Kitty and Frania, and his son Adam took





India Movement'. There was general unrest. Bhagavan took interest in the developments with his usual detachment. During all this, Mahatma Gandhi sent a strong contingent of Congress workers headed by Jammalal Bajaj and Rajendra Prasad to the Ashram for recuperation. Their visit drew great interest. When India was finally free, there was a joyous celebration all round, but the spectre of partition and communal violence was a great blot.

By the late 1940s, Bhagavan became ill with cancer and despite top medical interventions, succumbed to the disease in April 1950. Following Bhagavan's Mahanirvana, the Ashram suffered a great crisis:

Soon afterward there was a general exodus from the Ashram of long-standing devotees and the general funds, always precarious, reached a new low. The Sarvadhikari was under great pressure. Added to all this was a minor revolt and vexatious litigation about succession. In a reply to a devotee who wrote to Chinmaswami about his wanting to visit the Ashram, he was told, 'You are as usual welcome always, but funds are so bad I cannot be sure I can offer you your usual coffee and breakfast'. All this took some time to sort out. In the meantime, the legal framework was finalized, and devotees close to the Ashram worked unitedly. My uncle was involved as were others like K.K. Nambiar, Prof. K. Swaminathan etc. who contributed with determination and devotion. Chinmaswami, the Sarvadhikari, passed away in 1953 and under the new legal constitution, T.N. Venkataraman, his son, became President of the Ashram Trust. It was an ideal choice. He had grown up under the shadow of Bhagavan and was already handling administration and legal matters.

TSN had begun his career and was now on the move and not often in Madras. When he returned to the Ashram in the late 1950s, he was stunned by what he saw:

The place looked desolate. Gone was the hurry and bustle. We entered Bhagavan's Samadhi area. It was a large, thatched hut with earthen floor but tranquil and dignified.

But then something unexpected took place:

As we sat there in the empty Ashram, we found that there was an overwhelming peace and silence. We sat down and the next thing we knew we were enveloped by a great peace. It was a precious and private moment. Later I related this experience to my uncle Dr TNK. Childlike he said, 'You know I too feel the same. There is a greater peace in the Ashram than I have ever known.' Did not Bhagavan say, 'Where can I go?.'

Following Chinmaswami's death, the responsibility of administration fell to his son T.N. Venkataraman:

Venkataraman on succeeding his father had to handle crises from the word 'go'. Quickly with the help of influential devotees, the

up residence near the Ashram. Very soon they became familiar figures. Kitty, Frania, and Adam romped around Bhagavan at will and Bhagavan enjoyed it. When the war spread to the Eastern theatre, Japan overran Burma and other countries in the East. But there was no news about Arthur. Mrs. Osborne was overwrought and miserable. As the family visited Madras from time to time and sometimes stayed at Dr TNK's house, we got to hear the latest. I remember little Kitty running round the house barefooted, sitting down to a Brahmin meal and expertly tackling the rasam with a 'Zuck'. It was during one of these visits that Lucy, through a BBC Broadcast, heard Arthur's voice and knew he was safe. Soon after the war, Arthur was released, came to Tiruvannamalai, and had Bhagavan's darshan. He took a job with The Indian Express as an editor. I have often seen the tall lanky figure clad in a dhoti and kurtha walking down Kutcheri Road after visiting my uncle.

Following the war when TSN was in his late teens, he applied himself to his studies and to preparing for his exams:

I was away from Madras but continued to get news about Bhagavan and the Ashram. The war years coincided with India's own struggle for freedom and the Congress launched the 'Quit





Tamil Nadu Government order was restored and the Ashram began to function again. All activities including the feeding of the poor and the puja at Mother's shrine and Bhagavan's Samadhi resumed and slowly the Ashram limped back to normality.

Though TSN steadfastly refused to make any reference in his personal account to his own accomplishments, TSN had meanwhile become one of India's top corporate leaders. He was Vice Chairman and Managing Director of Brooke Bond India, Ltd., and authored books on marketing. He was also known as the one who introduced instant coffee to India. He developed ready-made mixes for South Indian delicacies like Rasam and Bisi Bele Bath. As early as the 1960s, his talents were recognised by his colleagues and superiors, and he was promoted and named Director of the company. This meant shifting the family to Calcutta:

During this period my uncle TNK passed away in Madras. My last meeting with him was when I came down to Madras on one of my tours. I had heard that he was hospitalized because of a heart problem. I called on him at the Willington Nursing Home where he was recovering.

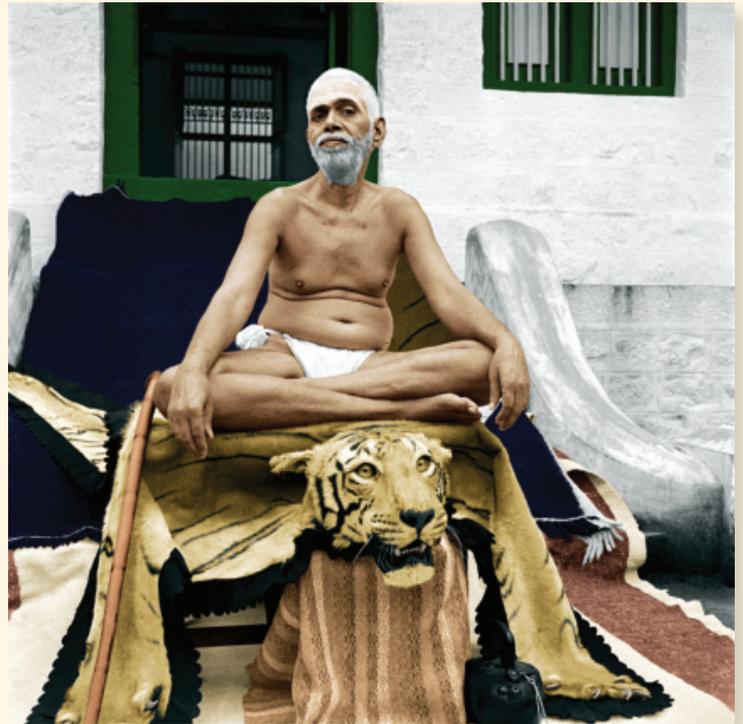
We are not a demonstrative gushing family, and our relationship has always been quiet and formal. I was therefore surprised when he suddenly asked, 'Have I given you one of my colour photos of Bhagavan?' I answered cynically, 'I don't think I am on your priority list.' Sure enough an enlargement was waiting for me to be collected on my next visit. It was my favourite, Bhagavan in the padmasana pose seated on the tiger skin. It is still with me and a prized possession.

A few weeks later I heard that the great uncle Kittan had passed away after a massive cardiac arrest. That was in the spring of 1975.

Soon TSN found himself in proximity with the Ashram. He wrote:

In 1978 my company's corporate office moved to Bangalore along with the Board of Directors. Bangalore has always been a second home for me. Suseela my wife hails from Bangalore and one of the senior civil servants in Bangalore has always called me 'son-in-law of the soil'. I was also moving towards retirement.

In 1979, Bhagavan's birth centenary was to be celebrated in the Ashram and V. Ganesan went around India to raise funds for the celebration. The Ashram hoped to produce a souvenir for the occasion. TSN volunteered to raise funds for its publication and to assist in its preparation. The only problem was there were not enough articles available to make a souvenir. But M.C. Subramanian



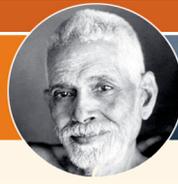
gave TSN several unpublished manuscripts of Maurice Frydman's English translations of Challam's interviews with the Ashram's widow cooks which were included in the souvenir and greatly contributed to its success.

During the 1980s, TSN came to the Ashram whenever he could and often brought his family along. TN Venkataraman, popularly known as Venkatoo, was the face of the community and always warmly welcomed them:

Venkataraman was a jovial and friendly person. On our visits he would be the first to greet us with a great guffaw. On one occasion I was forced to remain at the Ashram on my way to a Board meeting in Pondicherry. It was 1987. Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran had died and the whole of Tamil Nadu had come to a grinding halt. 'Serves you right', Venkatoo chuckled, 'You are always passing through quickly and running away again. Now [Bhagavan has] grounded you'. I was with my wife, daughter and two young grandchildren. It was a most enjoyable and peaceful stay. We still talk about it. Venkataraman took me to his house and showed how the Ashram's general position was improving. Later, quite appropriately, Venkatoo handed over the Presidentship to his son V.S. Ramanan and took sannyasa.

Late in his life, TSN shared about the teaching that had given him the fortitude and endurance to accommodate a vigorous professional life alongside a vital spiritual search:





[Though Sri T.S. Nagarajan was on the advisory board of several companies following retirement, his later life centred on spiritual matters. Sri Nagarajan passed away peacefully in Bengaluru on Friday, 14th May 2021 at the age of 94. Suseela, his wife of more than 70 years, passed away six days later. The couple is survived by their two daughters, Rupa and Rita].

agreed. His account was serialised in seven parts in *The Rama-na Way* under the title, 'My 80 Years' Motionless Journey with Bhagavan Ramana' (March-September 2016 issues). TSN dedicated the account to the memory of his uncle, Dr T.N. Krishnaswami, whose life story we featured in the previous three issues of *Saranagati*. The above narration draws principally from T.S. Nagarajan's account.

When devotees used to expostulate to Bhagavan Ramana about the evils of the world, the cruelty, injustice and crime, he had a stock answer: 'Where were all these thoughts when you were asleep? Did you feel them with equal intensity? Find out to whom these thoughts have occurred, and you will know the truth.' If the devotee persisted, he would lapse into a profound silence as much as to say, 'If you cannot comprehend my silence, you cannot understand my words either'.

It was not as if Bhagavan was uncaring or indifferent to human suffering or insensitive to such issues as poverty and disease. Nothing could be further from the truth. He was compassion personified. It was only that he lived in a different plane of consciousness which had a subjective approach and an objective adjustment. According to him, if we work for Self-realisation, social upliftment and care for others will become an automatic corollary. Moral values and spiritual transformation go together. ² —

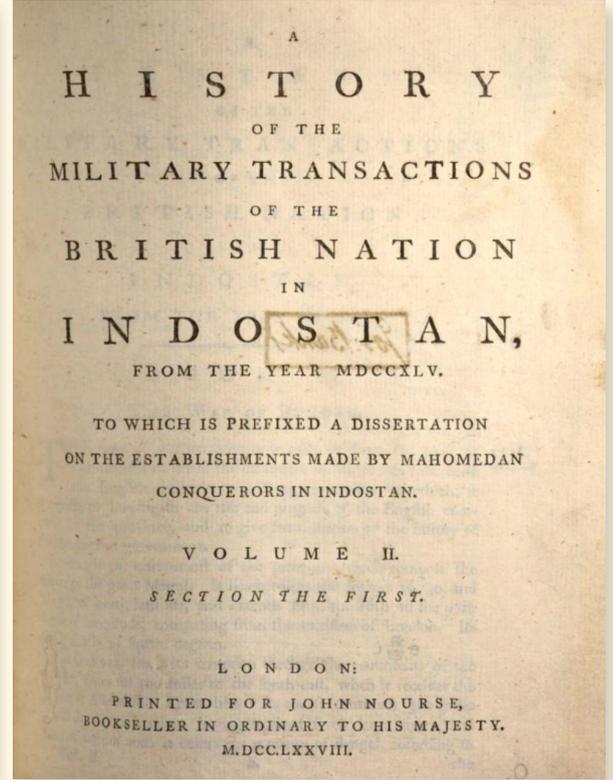
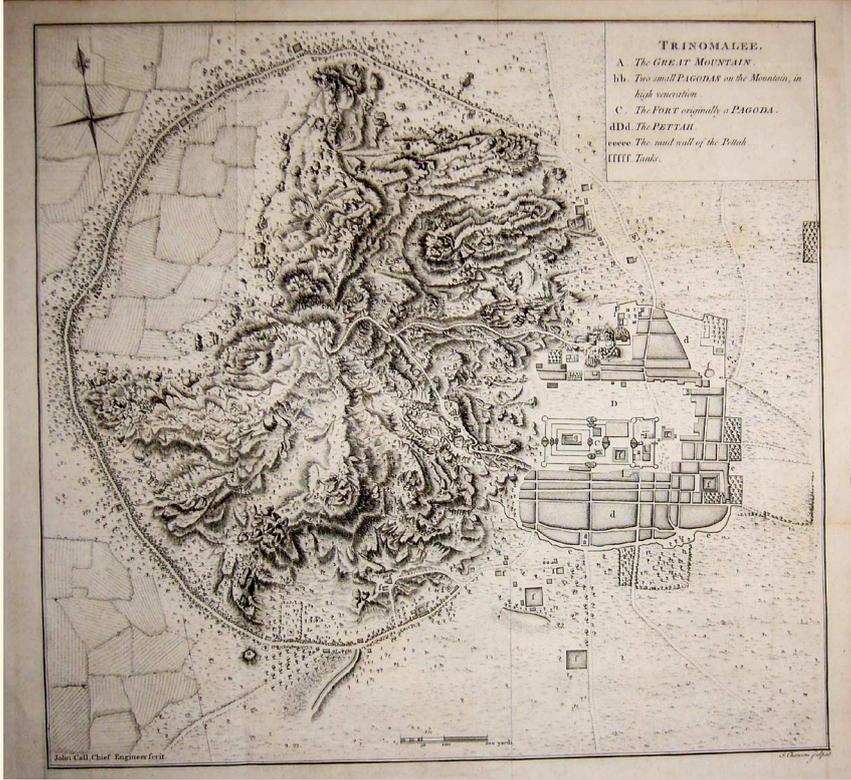
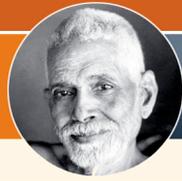
² When asked to write about his life, T.S. Nagarajan reluctantly

The Ashram Gardens: The Ashram Crepe Myrtle (*Lagerstroemia Thorelli*)



This crepe myrtle was introduced into the Ashram during Bhagavan's time by Sri Duraiswami Iyer who was working in Chennai in the Govt. Horticulture Department. He also introduced *Crotons* and other exotic trees like *Spathodia*. *Lagerstroemia* comprise about 50 species of deciduous and evergreen trees native to the Indian subcontinent and are named after Magnus von Lagerström, the director of the Swedish East India Company, who supplied Carl Linnaeus with plants for studying and typologizing. Crepe myrtles are quite small on average, about 4 m high, but some varieties can reach up to 100 ft in height. They are chiefly known for their colourful and long-lasting flowers, which typically occur in summer. The Ashram's crepe myrtle was originally planted in the 1940s just north of the Dining Hall, near to Arunachala but when the old Dining Hall was extended in 1997, those in charge of the construction were loath to cut it down. Even though more than fifty years old at that time, it was decided to make the effort to transplant it. Horticulturalists know that such an undertaking can be delicate as trees often succumb to the strain of transplantation. This tree survived and continues to thrive in its present location, near Cow Lakshmi's Samadhi. —





From the Ashram Archives: Cheever's Map of Arunachala from 1755

This archival image is a photographic reproduction of the original map by J. Cheever who surveyed Arunachala in the mid-18th century. The map was originally identified by Dr Perumal of the Tanore Saraswati Mahal library which he forwarded to us. The scan above originates from a German University archives.

Cheever's map was published in 1788 in Richard Orme's, *A History of Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan*, (in 6 volumes) for King George the III and appears between pages 194/195. Close inspection of the map reveals the letter 'b' at the top of the mountain which, according to Cheever's key, means there was a shrine on the summit at that time. We can speculate that this may have been a Murugan Shrine but no details about the shrine (referred to as 'Pagoda') are provided. Uncharacteristic of British cartographers of the time, Cheever seems to accept that Arunachala is no ordinary geological uplift and designates it as 'The Great Mountain'

Drawn manually, Cheever's map is strikingly similar to modern satellite images (see image right). It may be assumed that Cheever did his directional survey and

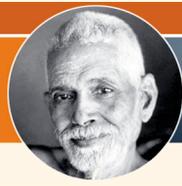


basic topography from the Hill's summit.

A curious omission is the *ashtalingas*. Since Cheever was a stickler for detail (as royal cartographers tended to be), we can assume that the *ashtalingas* were not housed in mantapams in 1755. Also not depicted, the mantapam to Mother in the Big Temple, which was erected later.

It should be stated royal maps of the time were not commissioned out of cultural interest, but military interest, and this item would have been viewed as having strategic value during the colonial period. —





Stories as Told by Bhagavan: Obstacles

[A devotee asked Bhagavan, "Is it not true that the path to knowledge is fraught with obstacles?" Sri Bhagavan, reclining on his sofa, sat up and said: "Yes, that is so. In the Vasudeva Mananam and in other books, it is stated that one has to gain conceptual realization (paroksha jnana) with the help of a Guru by the act of hearing (sravana) and musing (manana), and then gain knowledge of intuitive experience (aparoksha) by spiritual practice, and by consequent complete maturity of the mind. It is stated in the Vicharasagara: 'Intuitive experience (aparoksha) is always present; the only obstacle is conceptual knowledge (paroksha)'. Spiritual practice (sadbana) is required to remove the obstacle; there is no question of attaining intuitive experience. It is all the same — hearing and the like are necessary whether it is to know the intuitive, or to remove the obstacles. Those who are able to overcome the three-faced obstacles, i.e. the obstacles of the past, future and present (bhuta, bhavishyat and vartamana), are likened to the naked light in a windless place, or to the ocean in a waveless state; both are true. When one feels the Self within one's body, it is like the naked light in a windless place; when one feels that the Self is all-pervading, it is like the waveless ocean." Letters, 28 September, 1947]

A Brahmin had a wife and several children. He also owned a water buffalo. He would milk the

buffalo and feed his family from the money obtained from the sale of the milk, curd and other products. The animal, sumptuously fed by him, yielded plenty of milk. The Brahmin was comfortably well off and contented.

In the course of time, however, due to illness, he lost his wife and children one by one and was left all alone. With no remaining family, he showered all his affection on the buffalo, and it became the centre of his life. Eventually, the buffalo died, too. By then he had had enough of worldly life and thus became a *sanyasi*. He joined the hermitage of a Guru to immerse himself in meditation and other spiritual pursuits.

The Guru called him after a while and made enquiries about his progress. The Brahmin shared his background and confessed that the buffalo, which had been the centre of his affections earlier, had now become the centre of his meditation. Being a practical person, the master concluded that the Brahmin was suffering from an obstacle of the past.

He told the disciple in a phlegmatic tone, "Dear! The eternal Brahman is called *asti-bhati-priyam*. *Asti* is what is. *Bhati* is that which appears and shines. *Priyam* is what is dear to us. Since the buffalo is dear to you, it too is *Priyam* and nothing but Brahman. The buffalo also has a form and name. All that you need to do now is to do away with all forms and names. What remains then is Brahman. Meditate accordingly."

The disciple followed the instruction and attained self-realization. —





Events in Sri Ramanasramam: Expansion of the Ashram Clinical Lab

When the new Ashram Dispensary was inaugurated in April 2010, it was not then known when or how the upstairs portion of the facility would be utilised but Bhagavan plans in advance. Over the years, the spacious upstairs became the site for the establishment of a dental clinic, acupuncture treatment area and a clinical lab.

On 16th September this year, the Ashram Dispensary's clinical lab was expanded and the Ashram President inaugurated a significant upgrade in its capacity.

The introduction of a Random Access Analyzer, the BioSystems A15 auto analyser allows for detailed metabolic panels including calcium, uric acid amongst liver function, renal function etc. The analyser also performs the HbA1C which measures glucose control over past 120 days as well as lipid panel.

The upgrade will aid the dispensary staff in making

thorough and timely diagnoses and will also aid in conducting medical camps as the machine can run 150 tests per hour.

As some of the area's poor come long distances for treatment and, in some cases, need to pay an autorickshaw fare which they can ill-afford, the new equipment allows that tests be performed on the spot and the results given within a half an hour. This improves a physician's ability to treat patients on their initial visit. Such investigations are performed free of cost.

The team of doctors at Sri Ramanasramam Dispensary practice evidence-based medicine with cost effective treatment. Lab technicians, physical therapists, volunteer devotees and pharmacists are blessed to be able to serve the community in this modern facility, and they do so with compassion and commitment. —

