

## Saranagathi

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ISSUE

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Dear Devotees,

This December issue of *Saranagathi* carries the second part of Sampurnamma's account of her life with Bhagavan in the kitchen as well as the continuation of a retrospective on the life of Maurice Frydman. Included are a number of photos of the historical figures with whom Frydman had contact during the inspiring years of India's struggle for independence.

*Reports from Sri Ramanasramam* contains glimpses of the first days of Deepam 2011, a report on the status of the construction of the new Ashram Library and a brief account of Annamalai Swami Samadhi Day.

For further news of the ongoing 2011 Deepam Festival, go to <http://www.sriramanamaharshi.org/deepam2011.html>. For details on other news and events, go to <http://www.sriramanamaharshi.org> or write to us at [saranagathi@sriramanamaharshi.org](mailto:saranagathi@sriramanamaharshi.org)

In Sri Bhagavan,  
The Editorial Team



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## Reality in Forty Verses

10. There is no knowledge without ignorance; and without knowledge ignorance cannot be. To ask, 'Whose is this knowledge? Whose this ignorance?' and thus to know the Primal Self, this alone is knowledge.

*Reality in Forty Verses* by Sri Bhagavan





## Women Devotees Series: Sampurnamma (part two)

*(The following is adapted from Sampurnamma's published testimony in Ramana Smriti, the 1980 souvenir, and from a video interview taken a decade later. Both were reproduced in The Maharshi, Sep/Oct 1992, Vol.2 No.5 and again in Arunachala Ramana, Sri Ramanasramam, 2008.)*

In my coming and going to and from the Ashram, I sometimes had to walk in the dark along a jungle path skirting the hill and would feel afraid. Bhagavan noticed it once and said: "Why are you afraid? Am I not with you?" Bhagavan's brother, Chinnaswami, the manager of the Ashram, asked me when I came before dawn: "How could you come all alone? Were you not afraid?" Bhagavan rebuked him: "Why are you surprised? Was she alone? Was I not with her all the time?"

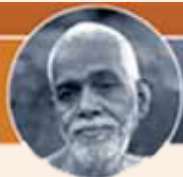
In the evenings before I left the Ashram for town to sleep, Bhagavan would ask me what was to be cooked the next day. Then, arriving at daybreak the next

morning, I would find everything ready—vegetables peeled and cut, lentils soaked, spices ground, coconut scraped. As soon as he saw me in the kitchen, he would give detailed instructions about what should be cooked and how. He would then sit in the Hall and return to the kitchen to see how things were going, taste the food now and then, and go back to the Hall, only to come again an hour or two later.

Bhagavan would allow nothing to go to waste. Even a grain of rice or mustard seed lying on the ground would be picked up, dusted carefully, taken to the kitchen and put in its proper tin. I asked him why he gave himself so much trouble for a grain of rice. He said: "Yes, this is my way. Everything is in my care and I let nothing go to waste. In these matters I am quite strict. If I were married, no woman could get on with me. She would run away!"

Once a feast was being prepared for his birthday. Devotees sent food ingredients in large quantities: rice, sugar, fruits, etc. Someone sent a huge load of brinjals and we ate them day after day. The stalks alone made a big heap which was lying in the corner. Bhagavan asked us to cook them as a curry. I





Bhagavan in front of the Ashram Dining Hall in the early 1940s

was stunned, for even cattle would refuse such useless stalks. Bhagavan insisted that the stalks were edible and that we should put them in a pot to boil them along with dry peas. After six hours of boiling they were as hard as ever. We were at a loss what to do, yet we did not dare question Bhagavan. But he always knew when he was needed in the kitchen and would leave

the Hall even in the middle of a discussion. A casual visitor would have thought that his mind was only on cooking. In reality his grace was on the cooks. As usual he did not fail us, but appeared in the kitchen. “How is the curry getting on?” he asked. “Is it a curry we are cooking? We are boiling steel nails!” I exclaimed, laughing. He stirred the stalks with the ladle and went away without saying anything. Soon after, we found them quite tender. The dish was simply delicious and everybody was asking for a second helping. Bhagavan challenged the diners to guess what vegetable they were eating. Everybody praised the curry and the cook, except Bhagavan. He swallowed the little he was served in one mouthful like medicine and refused a second helping. I was disappointed, for I had taken so much trouble to cook his stalks and he would not even taste them properly. It was strange to see Bhagavan so eager to cook and so unwilling to eat.

The next day he told somebody, “Sampurnamma was distressed that I did not eat her wonderful curry. Can she not see that everyone who eats is myself? And what does it matter who eats the food? It is the cooking that matters, not the cook or the eater. A thing done well, with love and devotion, is its own reward. What happens to it later matters little, for it is out of our hands.”

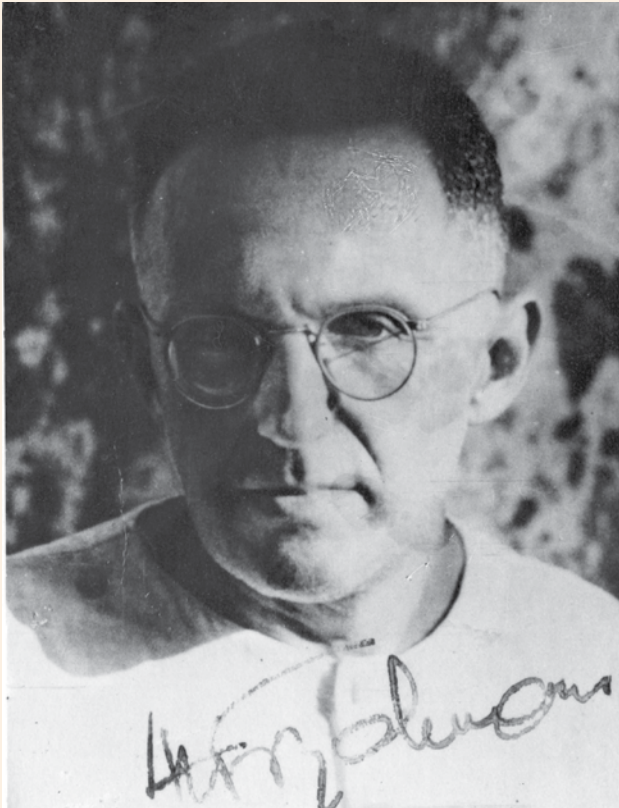
*(to be continued in the January issue)*

## Reports from Sri Ramanasramam: Deepam 2011 Flag-hoisting Ceremony



**D**wajarahnam, the flag-hoisting ceremony which officially starts the Deepam Festival, took place on the morning of the 29th November at the Big Temple before a jubilant crowd. Homas commenced in the Yagasala opposite Mother’s mantapam and the four Vedas were recited in the main shrine. Meanwhile, at Ramanasramam, special Vedic chanting commenced in the morning with Krishna Yajur Veda Ghanaparayana at 7.15 am, Rig Veda Ghanaparayana at 8.45 am and an afternoon group of Vedacharyas performing Sama Veda at 3 pm. In the evening, the panchamurthis were taken in procession through the Big Temple and then mounted on their respective vehicles for procession round the Four Streets. Deepam is now underway—and in full splendour—and devotees patiently await that exhilarating moment, when at 6 pm on the 8th December, the Temple priests light the great fire atop Holy Annamalai to the sound of devotees’ exultant cries: “Arohara! Arohara!”





## Maurice Frydman: A Retrospective (part two)<sup>1</sup>

In 1935, after Maurice Frydman had first met Bhagavan, K. Ramaswamy immediately noticed a change in him. For example, he started to dress more simply, began to share his food with his workers and ate his own food with little concern for taste. Frydman told Ramaswamy that it was all due to Bhagavan's influence and invited him to come with him on one of his weekend visits to Ramanasramam. Indeed Frydman began to encourage others to experience the marvel that was Bhagavan. As for Ramaswamy, having availed himself of Frydman's invitation, he became a lifelong devotee of Bhagavan.

Soon after returning from four years at Oxford, Prince Apa B. Pant first met Maurice Frydman at his

<sup>1</sup> The present account draws on various articles appearing in Call Divine and Mountain Path, relying heavily on Apa Pant's serialised biography of Maurice Frydman in the Aradhana/Jayanthi issues of the 1991 Mountain Path and Maurice Frydman's obituary in the April issue of 1976. Additional reading: Wikipedia's online entries for 'Maurice Frydman', 'Wanda Dynowska' and the 'Aundh Experiment', as well as Apa Pant's biography A Moment in Time and his account of his father's life in An Unusual Raja, both published by Orient Longman.

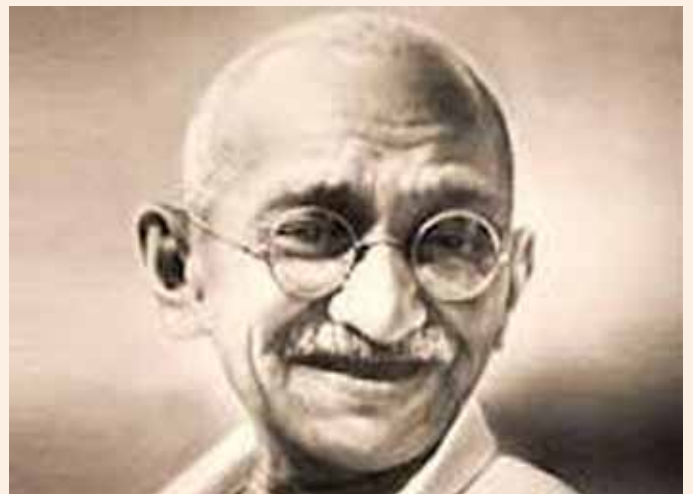
electrical plant in Bangalore. The two quickly became friends and Frydman took Pant to Tiruvannamalai for his first darshan of Bhagavan in what would prove to be a life-changing moment for Pant.

Later the prince made an appeal to Sir Mirza Ismail, the Dewan of Mysore, who had hired Frydman in Paris to manage his factory, asking if he would be willing to "loan" Maurice to him for six months to assist his father in working out a plan for the villagers of Aundh. Sir Mirza refused the request. But not long after this, Maurice turned up in Aundh anyway, with his 'clothes at the end of a stick', saying, "Sir Mirza cannot dictate to me. I am nobody's slave. I have left Mysore and come to stay with you permanently. Let's get to work!"

Appealing to the Gandhian sensibilities of Apa Pant's father, the raja of Aundh, Frydman asked: "Raja Saheb, why don't you go and make a declaration to Mahatma Gandhi that you are giving all your power to the people because it will help in the freedom struggle?"

As it turned out, it was the pen of Maurice Frydman that formalised these three men's ideas for a decentralised democracy in Aundh, a decision that, while winning favour neither with the British nor with the feudal rulers of nearby states who were content to maintain their imperial reign, received Gandhiji's imprimatur. Soon Maurice found himself sitting in a mud hut face to face with the Mahatma who lightheartedly addressed him saying: "So you have caught hold of the poor Raja of Aundh now and left the rich one in Mysore to his destiny?"

After returning from the meeting with Gandhiji, Frydman struck out on foot through the wilderness





H.H. Meherban Shrimant Raja Bhavan Rao Pant, Pratinidhi of Aundh (1868–1951)



Sir Mirza Muhammad Ismail (1883–1959)

of Aundh, visiting each of its 75 villages, and setting up a 'headquarters' without even as much as a straw hut. According to Apa Pant, Frydman relied on the scant shade of a single acacia tree to protect him from the sun in the extremely inhospitable climate of Western Maharashtra where temperatures sometimes reached 120° F. On winter nights when the thermometer plummeted to 20° F, Frydman relied on bamboo matting and coarsely-woven wool blankets for warmth. For the next three years in his capacity as both a *tapasvin* (ascetic monk) and acting Dewan of Aundh, Frydman implemented his decisions from this barren locale. At the outset, Frydman compelled the Raja to abolish capital punishment in the State and when the Swaraj Constitution of Aundh became law in 1939, Frydman set about establishing the first ever "Free Prison" in India. *Swatantrapur* or "City of the Free" was made up of the most 'dangerous' of Aundh's prison

convicts, who were allowed to bring their families with them during their parole. These "free" citizens dug a deep well and struck sweet water in the sandy soil of the otherwise waterless terrain. So extraordinary was the find that hundreds of villagers from distant villages came by foot in order to behold firsthand the miracle brought forth by this unusual foreigner in ochre robes. As it was, Swatantrapur would continue to survive long after Frydman had moved on to other projects.

Around this time, Frydman met Umadevi, the Ramana devotee who appears in *Talks* (see *Talks* no.s 278 and 450). Born Wanda Dynowska in St. Petersburg of aristocratic Polish parentage, Umadevi was a writer, translator and social activist who had come to India a couple of years before Frydman. The two cooperatively established the Polish-Indian Library in Madras and took up the task of translating into Polish some fifty sacred texts (including the Bhagavad Gita, Mahabharata, Ramayana) as well as contemporary Indian poetry and literature from Sanskrit and other Indian languages. They also translated the great Polish poets into English and Indian languages.

It was during this period that Frydman and Umadevi successfully secured the release of a large number of Polish orphans who had been displaced by the Soviet annexation of Eastern Poland in 1939 and subsequently interned in Siberia. Through the efforts of these two expatriate Poles, thousands of Polish internees made their way from Siberia through Iran to India before being repatriated to Poland. (See *Day by Day*, 11-10-46, where Umadevi visits Bhagavan with 25 girls from the camp where 5,000 Polish refugees were stationed in Kolhapur State).

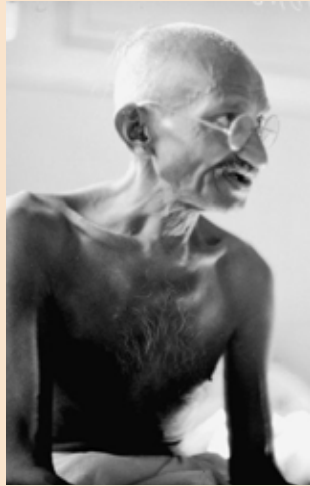
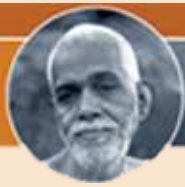
## Maharshi's Gospel

### The Heart is the Self

Maurice Frydman: Sri Bhagavan speaks of the heart as the seat of Consciousness and as identical with the Self. What does the heart exactly signify?

Bhagavan: The question about the heart arises because you are interested in seeking the source of consciousness. To all deep-thinking minds, the enquiry about the 'I' and its nature has an irresistible fascination. Call it by any name, God, Self, the heart or the seat of Consciousness, it is all the same. The point to be grasped is this, that Heart means the very core of one's being, the Centre, without which there is nothing whatsoever.





Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948)



Pandit Nehru (1889-1964) and H.H. The Dalai Lama



Wanda Dynowska (Umadevi) (1888-1971)



Apa Pant, diplomat, Prince of Aundh (1918-)

The translations done for the Polish-Indian library, having overtly religious themes, would have been illegal in communist Poland. Thus the books had to be smuggled into the country, a task that was accomplished chiefly through these Polish orphans and prisoners of war at the time of their repatriation in the mid to late 1940s. Frydman's letters were key in securing the release of his Polish compatriots, an exercise in statecraft that would later prove to be of great consequence for a much larger group of refugees—those fleeing Tibet.

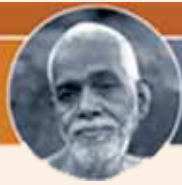
In 1959 with the Chinese invasion of Tibet, some 100,000 people began to pour into India, among them the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan clergy. Nehru did not know what to do for the refugees. Relations between India and China were at a breaking point and settling the refugees near the Indo-Tibetan border was out of the question given the number of spies in the area. Openly inviting the Tibetans to remain in India would further complicate the hostile Indo-Chinese relations. Seeing the plight of the homeless, penniless Tibetans, Frydman drafted a letter to Nehru and carried it to Delhi. He then sat in the Prime Minister's

office until the latter agreed to write appeals to various state governments for grants of land. With these letters Frydman travelled for two long years around the whole of India seeking suitable sites for the stateless Tibetans. In 1960, the Government of Mysore (now the State of Karnataka) granted 3,000 acres of land for the first of the Tibetan exile settlements. In time, Frydman and Umadevi would help establish four other sites, among them the Dalai Lama's home-in-exile at Dharmasala, where Umadevi helped to organize schools and a social infrastructure.

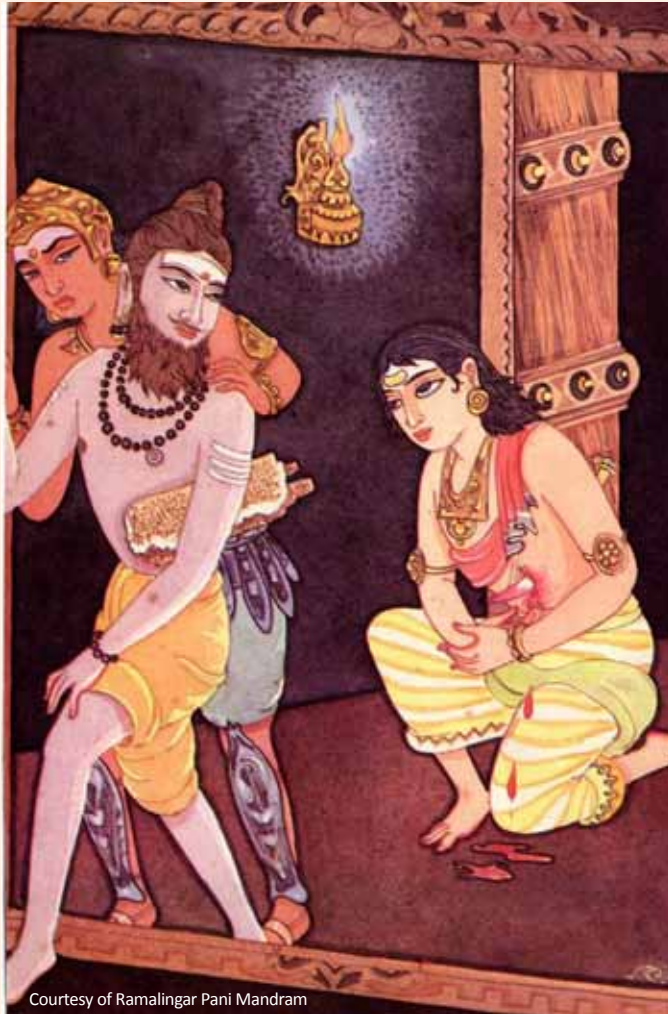
The historical significance of these efforts can hardly be overstated, given, on the one hand, Beijing's intolerance of religious life in Tibet during the decades that followed, and, on the other, the democratic liberties—such as freedom of speech—that life in India afforded the exiled Tibetan clerics and scholars in both voicing the concerns of a displaced people as well as disseminating Tibetan cultural and religious thought for the benefit of posterity, a cultural legacy that might have otherwise been lost to the outside world.

*(to be continued in the January issue)*





## The Naayanmars: Meypporul



Courtesy of Ramalingar Pani Mandram

The envious ruler Mutthanaathan often attacked the noble King Malaad of Tirukkovillur, a great devotee of Siva, but was always repulsed. One day, however, he resolved to conquer his foe by trickery. Knowing the king's love for scripture, Mutthanaathan smeared himself with sacred ash and dressed in the garb of one versed in the scriptures. But the satchel he carried in his right hand concealed a sharp dagger.

Reaching Tirukovillur palace, a perfect devotee in appearance, the guards welcomed him. The chief attendant of the inmost chamber—Dattan—was suspicious and stopped the intruder. But when the king saw his visitor he said, "May it please thee to tell me the purpose of this blessed visit?" The disguised enemy said, "I have come to instruct you in a scripture not found elsewhere on this earth." The king responded, "Could there be anything more precious to me? Pray, bless me by instructing me in this unique scripture!"

Now seated on a platform, the 'holy man' stealthily took out his dagger and when the disciple-king inclined his head to better hear, the rogue lurched forth and wrought the deed for which he had come. The stabbed saint feebly sighed. Dattan, hearing the commotion, broke in and raised his sword to cut down the villain but the bleeding king intervened, whispering loudly, "No Dattan! He is one of us. His holy disguise speaks of the Truth Supreme (*meypporul*). Let no harm come to him."

The servant now supported his dying master and listened as the latter conveyed his final wish: "Just ensure that this devotee of our Lord returns home safely." Dattan, ever faithful to his master's word, escorted the villain along the highway, preventing the enraged citizens from attacking him. Delivering the murderer to the boundary of his own domain, the guard rushed back to the dying saint, who had kept alive by force of will just to hear news of the man. "Sire, I have left the falsely-garbed victor safe in his place." The saint, with a benign countenance exclaimed, "Sir, who else but you could have done me this great service?"

The saint then had a vision of the Lord dancing in the golden hall of Thillai and, his earthly duties completed, attained the Lord's Feet.

(*Meypporul Naayanaar's Aradhana Day is 20th November.*)

## Reports from Sri Ramanasramam: New Library Construction



When Bhagavan moved to the New Hall in 1949, the small Ashram library was temporarily shifted to the Old Hall. By May 1981 when the *Ramana Centenary Library* was dedicated in the south-west corner of the Morvi compound, the collection of Ashram books had grown to 10,000. All were shifted to the new site and carefully catalogued. By 2003 the Ashram library was at full capacity with 30,000 volumes, having outgrown the aging facility at Morvi. Various plans were proposed for a new *Ramana Granthalaya*, but a final decision was taken only recently. Early this year, construction of a new library began behind the Ashram Dining Hall. The old building at Morvi, owing to its structural instability, is slotted for demolition, making way for sorely-needed guest house accommodation. The new Morvi Guest House is scheduled for completion next summer, and the new library in the spring of 2012. On 8th January, 2012, a preliminary inaugural puja will be performed at the new library.



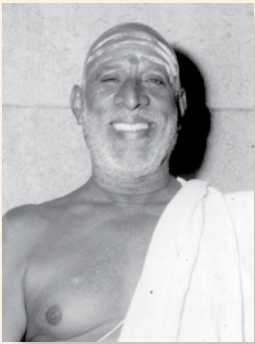


## Reports from Sri Ramanasramam: Annamalai Swami Samadhi Day



Annamalai Swami (1906-1995) came to the Ashram in 1928 and remained in the area till his death at 89. On opening a copy of Bhagavan's *Upadesa Undiyar*, the young Annamalai Swami was so taken by the book's photo of Bhagavan that he left home and made his way to Ramanasramam. Convinced that Bhagavan was his Guru, he sought permission to stay and offer service, first as Bhagavan's personal attendant, and then as the supervisor of Ashram building projects including the kitchen/dining hall, gosala, store, dispensary and the retaining wall at the rear of the Ashram compound. In 1938 Annamalai Swami moved to Palakottu, the sadhu settlement adjacent to the Ashram, where he remained until his Samadhi in 1995. The Ashram celebrated his Samadhi day this year on 11th November.

## Obituaries



Narasimha Iyer passed away on 18th September, 2011 at the age of 99. Narasimha Iyer was in contact with Bhagavan from the age of 15. Later in life he became a school teacher, visiting the ashram on weekends. After his retirement, he settled in Ramana Nagar and was in the service of the Ashram Veda Patasala till his 90th year. After retiring, he continued to tutor young students on an informal basis. Narasimha Iyer, gentle and contented by nature, was blessed with good health and attended to his own needs until the end of his life.

Mahesh Chandra, affectionately known as 'Chandru', was absorbed in Arunachala on 30th September, 2011, in Bangalore, after a protracted battle with prostate cancer. He was the son of K. Ramaswamy, who first came to Bhagavan in 1936-37 at Maurice Frydman's prompting, and remained an ardent devotee throughout his life. Chandru first came to the Ashram in 1966 and met Viswanatha Swami. The two regularly circumambulated the Hill and Chandru attentively absorbed the numerous anecdotes of Bhagavan's life narrated by the Swami. Chandru last visited the Ashram in January 2011 for one month; he was already quite ill. Soon after returning to Bangalore, his condition worsened and he was confined to bed. During the final weeks of his life, he derived his strength from his surrender to Bhagavan. Till the end, without a trace of fear or regret, he retained his customary good cheer, chanting 'Arunachala' and 'Ramana' during his waking hours.



Vajra Gogoi (born J. Diane Turner) passed away on Tuesday, 15th November at CMC hospital, Vellore, having sustained head injuries in a traffic accident four days earlier. Born in 1943, Vajra lived most of her early life in Toronto where she did social work in a women's shelter. In September 1990, she came to India and a year later met Dev Gogoi in Tiruvannamalai whom she would marry in 1993. Known for her great cooking, she settled with her husband in their house ('Dakshina') on the banks of the *Samudran* lake. In recent years Vajra managed the *Agasthya Ganapati Library*, a free community resource which, under her care, grew to over 20,000 volumes.

