

Saranagati



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IN THIS
ISSUE

Dear Devotees,

Earlier this month devotees at the Ashram, and indeed all over India, celebrated Deepavali with special pujas, the giving of gifts, fireworks and the lighting of oil lamps. Deepavali or Naraka Chaturdasi Snaanam, is the festival of lights commemorating the slaying of the demon Naraka by Sri Krishna.

This issue of *Saranagati* carries the conclusion of Narasimha Iyer's life story, the school teacher and Veda Patasala teacher who came to Bhagavan as a boy in 1928. *Wordwise* this month looks at the multi-valenced Sanskrit word, *vritti*, which Bhagavan used in various ways. *Events at Sri Ramanasramam* includes a photo collage of the Deepam celebrations, photos of visiting Vedic pundits as well as a glimpse of Nochur Sri Venkataraman's nine-day lecture series. *Introducing the Kendras* features one of the world's first kendra's, Ramana Kendra Delhi, founded in 1963.

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

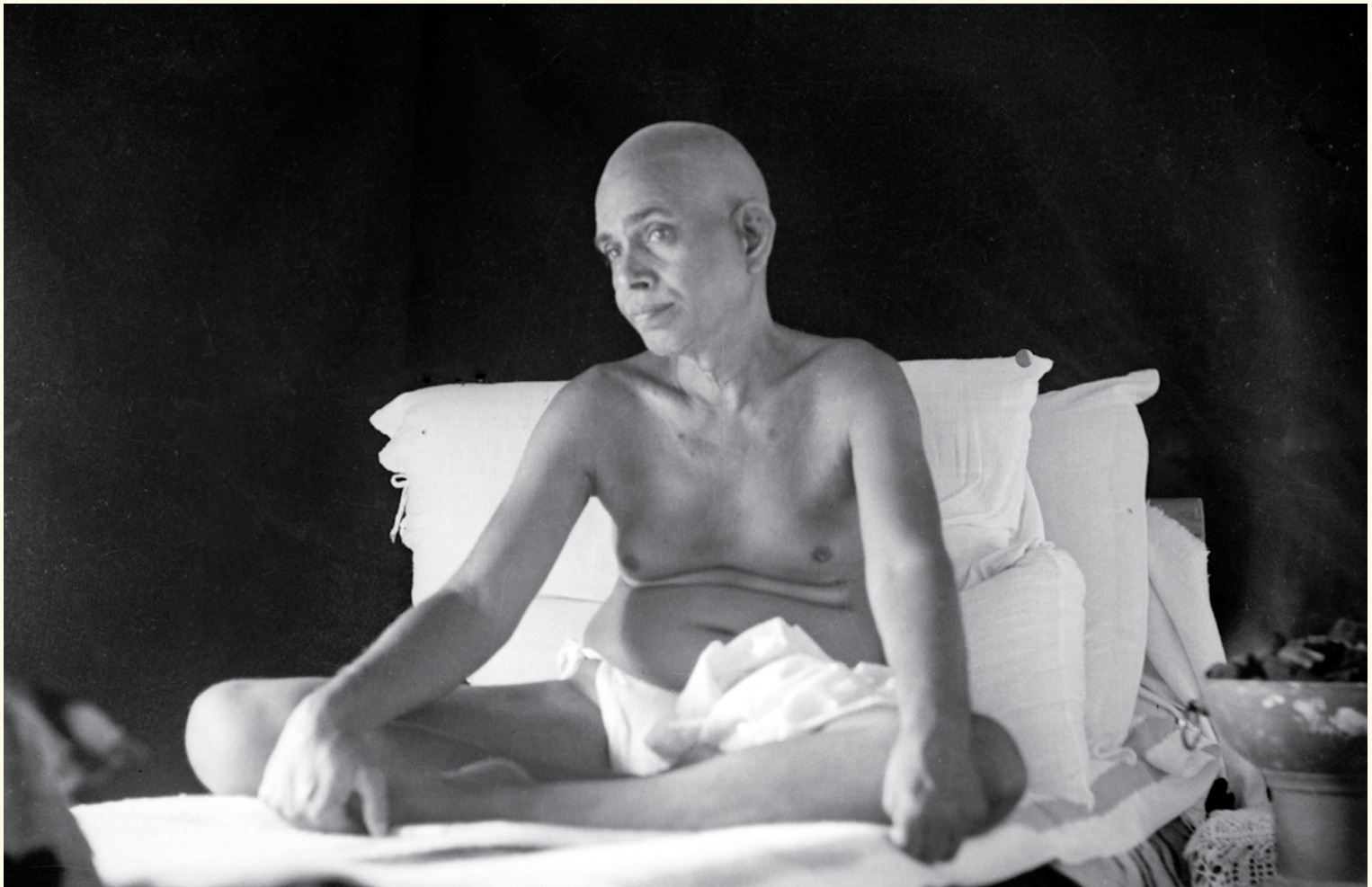
In Sri Bhagavan,
The Editorial Team

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Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi: Vritti vs. Satva

M.: *Vritti* is often mistaken for consciousness. It is only a phenomenon and operates in the region of *abhasa* (reflected consciousness). Knowledge lies beyond relative knowledge and ignorance. There are no subject and object in it. *Vritti* belongs to the rajasic mind. The sattvic mind is free from it. The sattvic is the witness of the rajasic. It is true consciousness. Still it is called satvic mind because the knowledge of being witness is the function of *abhasa* only. Mind is *abhasa*. Such knowledge implies mind. But [when] the mind is by itself inoperative, it is called sattvic mind. Such is the jivanmukta's state—*Talks §68*.





S. Narasimha Iyer: A Life with Sri Bhagavan (part two)

Those of us who were in Bhagavan's presence were like bees drunk with honey. One could not see Bhagavan and remain the same person, so penetrating were his eyes, like those of a tiger, lustrous like a hundred suns.

Those eyes invariably performed a strange surgery on the mind and no one could come away from an encounter with them and be left unchanged.

The Mother's Shrine

In the late 1930s work began on the Mother's Shrine. Palm tree wood trunks were needed to serve as scaffolding and a village about three miles from my

native place had a good palm tree grove in its lake bed. I knew the people there and so consulted the village elders. They agreed to our cutting some trees and Chinnaswami contacted the Tahsildar to get official permission. The trees were transported by Chettipattu Natesan's father's cart.

In time work began on what would prove a great feat, the construction of the Mother's Shrine, a project of more than ten years and one that could have only succeeded in Bhagavan's presence and by his grace.

Gifts to the Ashram

Bhagavan esteemed equality and everything that the Ashram received was shared with all alike. Even in the olden days, when sweets would come to the Ashram in meagre quantities, Bhagavan would see to it that a portion was given to everyone. If someone was not present, he would still expect that a portion be set aside





Early Ashram Front Gate



Early Ashram Narayana Seva



Mudaliar Patti at the Big Temple

for them and given to them later. One time when the attendant divided up a sweet, Bhagavan asked him to be sure to bring portions to those not present in the hall. When Bhagavan later saw the gosala in-charge, he said, “Hey, Veera, did you get your sweet yesterday?” When Veeran replied in the negative, Bhagavan inquired of the attendant, “Did you give portions of sweet to everyone yesterday?” “Yes, Bhagavan.” “Did you give it to Veeran?” The attendant fell silent.

Other Gifts

Other types of supplies came to the Ashram by the generosity of devotees. Mudaliar Patti regularly supplied Bhagavan with castor oil which Bhagavan would take every six months or so. Bhagavan would mix the castor oil with dried ginger and imbibe it at one stroke. But Bhagavan, keen that all gifts to the Ashram be shared equally, didn’t exclude sharing the castor oil and took

pains to make sure that Mudaliar Patti’s offering was made available to everyone. Now some devotees were not as keen about their share of castor oil as they were about a share of sweets, and sometimes they even tried to escape the castor oil treatment. But Bhagavan would notice it, “Oh, Ramachandra Iyer has not come!” or “Sama Thatha has not come!”, he would say, “Call them”. Eventually everyone would get their share of castor oil and together with Bhagavan happily gulp it down, usually in the early morning.

Later in the morning by about 10.30, Bhagavan would offer everyone pepper water and cheerfully ask, “How’s your stomach?” He would then add jokingly, “See, the vasanams have to go!”

Mahanirvana

In the spring of 1950, my brother informed me that Bhagavan’s condition was critical so I took a one-



Kumbhabhishekam of the Mother’s Shrine



Bhagavan’s Early Samadhi Shrine



Samadhi Hall’s First Stone, 1967





week leave from school in order to come to the Ashram and be near Bhagavan. Three days later Bhagavan left the body.

I have no words to describe what we experienced that fateful day. I was standing outside the Nirvana Room chanting verses when I suddenly noticed a bright flash in the Nirvana Room. For a moment I ignored it, assuming it was a camera flash. But my amazement knew no bounds when this bright flash slowly trailed upwards across the sky and disappeared beyond the Hill. That was just the very moment Bhagavan left the body. I recalled that in the *Mahabharata*, a phenomenon akin to this takes place when a seer of highest self-realisation left his mortal remains.

On the night of Bhagavan's Mahanirvana there was a lot of discussion between T.N. Krishnaswamy, O.P. Ramaswamy Reddiar and other senior devotees about the location of the samadhi. Only after midnight was a decision taken. After deciding on the present location, they started digging the pit. Vaidyanatha Stapathi did the job of digging a pit in a triangular shape and filling it with all the necessary materials such as salt, sand, and camphor. My brother and I were present and were blessed to be able to assist in lowering the body at the time of interment.

Subsequent Years

In the years subsequent to my retirement, I had the good fortune to be stationed at the Nirvana Room in order to welcome visitors. Personal articles used by Bhagavan were kept there and just seeing them would take one's mind to Bhagavan's simple and endearing way of life. The whole universe was at his feet, and yet, he made use only of a loincloth, a cane, a kamandalu and a small towel. Through a prolonged and painful illness Bhagavan bore the cross of devotees' burdens. One need only spend a few moments in the Nirvana Room to discover how replete it is with Bhagavan's dynamic presence. Blessed indeed are those who can sit in silence in front of the Nirvana Room and absorb the soothing balm of Bhagavan's grace pouring forth from those eyes that look out so magnetically from the photograph installed there.



Bhagavan Today

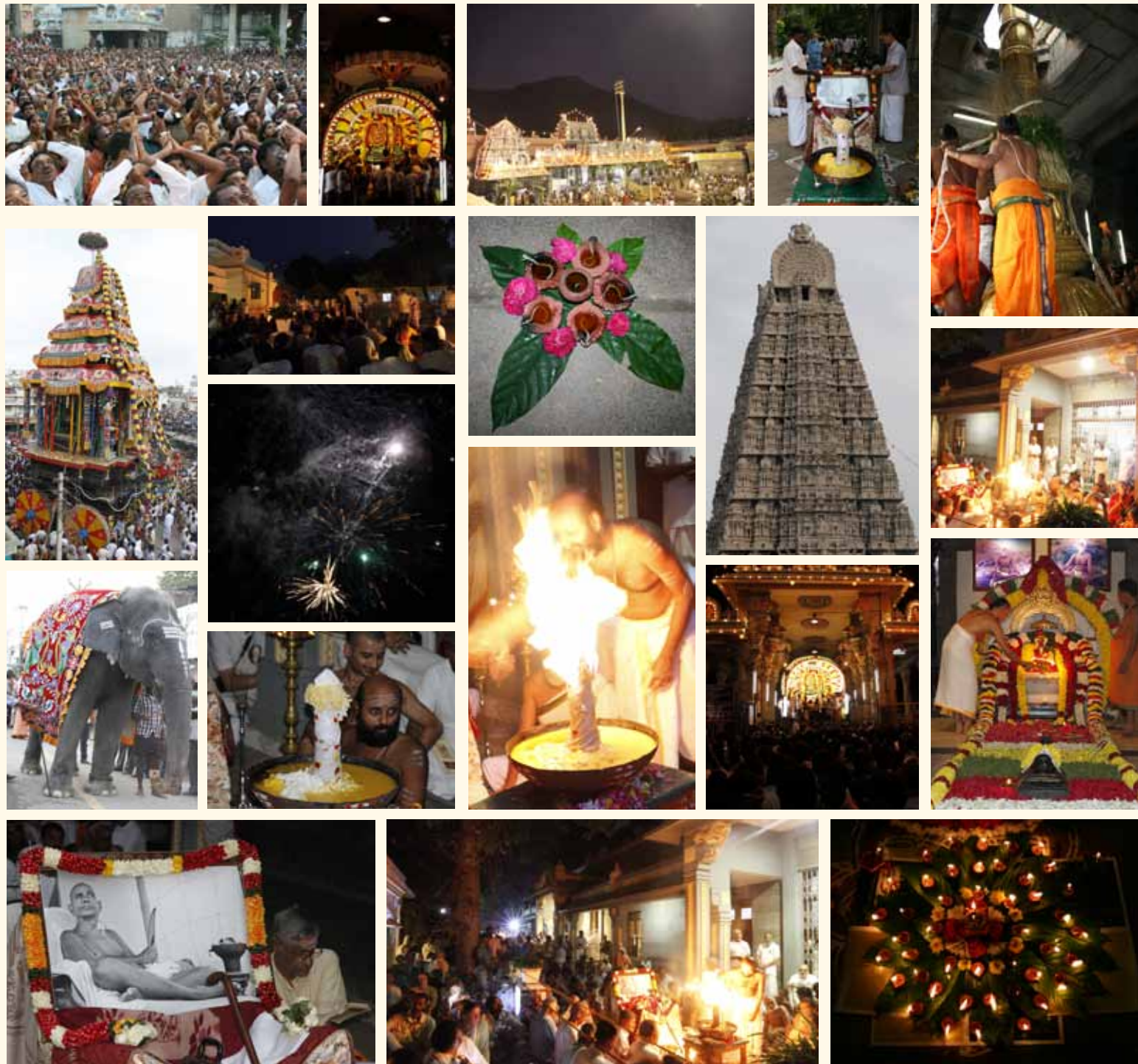
Sri Bhagavan's presence is as powerful now as it was when he was in the body. Since the Mahanirvana, there has been no change. Without his grace, how could all this continue? Bhagavan is alive. Not in the body, but in the experience of his grace.

From 1928 to 1950 I never asked Bhagavan a single question. Nor did I ever make any request for the welfare of my family. Why would I? Bhagavan knows best, after all, he is Bhagavan! He knows everything.

He reached my heart, satisfied my heart and knows my heart better than I do. I understand now what was meant when Manikkavasagar once addressed the Lord saying: "You know what I need... If I have need of anything, it is only by your will and good pleasure."

(S. Narasimha Iyer retired from the patasala at the age of 90. On the 18th September, 2011, at the age of 98, he passed away peacefully at his home in Sadhu Om's compound.)





Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Kartikai Deepam 2012

Kartikai Deepam 2012 came off with great fervour. The multitudes at the Temple and around the Four Streets grew night after night in the run-up to Kartigai Deepam. At the culminating moment at 6pm Tuesday the 27th, an estimated two million people were in Tiruvannamalai to be part of this great event. On the same evening devotees gathered at the Ashram to await the lighting of the flame atop the Holy Hill and the Akhanda Jyoti cauldron in front of the Samadhi Hall. All joined to sing Bhagavan's *Arunachala Stuti Panchakam* and *Ramana Sat Guru*. On successive evenings, devotees gathered in front of the Samadhi Hall at sunset to witness the lighting of the flame atop the Hill and to recite *Aksharamanamalai*.





Introducing the Kendras: Ramana Kendra Delhi



Ramana Kendra Delhi meeting in early 2012

To propagate the teachings of Sri Ramana, several centres have come up both in India and abroad. In Delhi in 1960, like-minded friends got together to recapitulate and share the experiences of their association with Bhagavan at Sri Ramanasramam, little realizing that this meeting would gather momentum and grow into a dynamic centre for sadhana, study and service dedicated to the Maharshi's philosophy. Thanks to the initiative of these ardent devotees, Ramana Kendra, Delhi, came into being and was registered as a society on 28th March, 1963.

The Kendra's shrine and adjacent complex at 8 Institutional Area, Lodi Road, was inaugurated on 1st September,

1974. The shrine is built in the shape of Arunachala Hill and provides an ideal atmosphere for spiritual study and sadhana. Throughout the day, men and women from all walks of life visit the shrine for silent meditation. It has a good auditorium and library where Ramana literature in English, Hindi, Tamil & Telugu are available to the devotees. Bhagavan's Jayanti, Aradhana, Advent and Kartikai Deepam Day are celebrated with great fervor.

(For further details, please contact the Secretary by phone: +91 11 24626997; or by email at: directpath@rediffmail.com; The Ramana Kendra Delhi Facebook Page can be found at: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Ramana-Kendra-Delhi>)

Reality in Forty Verses

19. The debate, 'Is it free will or fate that prevails?' is only for those who do not know the root of either. Those who have known the Self, the common source of free-will and fate, have passed beyond both and will not return to them.

— Reality in Forty Verses by Sri Bhagavan





From the *Periapuranam*: Kanampulla Naayanaar

Once on the southern bank of Vellaar, in the famed city of Pullirukkuveloor, an affluent man of noble character realised that the Lord's feet were the only worthwhile things in the world and made up his mind to utilise his wealth in worship of the Lord. He made it his daily duty to keep lit the lamp in the Lord's shrine. Lord Siva, wanting to demonstrate the devotion of his devotee to others, withdrew his devotee's wealth and caused him to live by very meagre means. This did not dissuade the bhakta in any way and his holy service continued in spite of the economic burdens he faced. Soon he was compelled to sell his household possessions, and with the money, purchase ghee to refill the lamps each day. In time he became very poor and when he had sold everything, he went to Chidambaram to continue his worship there. When he used up the last of his funds, he began earning a living by physical labour rather than begging from others. He cut grass and sold the bundles in the market. With pure ghee bought from the proceeds, he kept the lamp burning at the shrine.

One day he found no purchasers for his grass bundles, so he used the grass itself for lighting the lamp. When this proved inadequate he had nothing left to offer but the long locks of his head, which he offered just as they were, unshaved! In so doing, he unwittingly burnt away all the effects of past karma. Lest the devotee immolate himself, the Lord appeared and took him to Sivaloka.

(*Kanampulla Nayanar's aradhana day is kruththikai nakshatra, the month of Karththikai, i.e. Kartigai Deepam Day, which fell this year on 27th November*)



Illustration courtesy of Ramalingar Pahi Mandiram

Wordwise: *Vritti*

वृत्ति

Thought-wave, mental mode, modification or activity of the mind; attitude, state, condition; mode of action; fluctuation, undulation, movement; the root *vr* means to 'turn', 'revolve', 'move', 'roll' which gives the Latin '*vert*', '*vertere*', '*vorticosis*' and the English '*vertex*' (an eddy of water, wind, or flame); '*vortex*', '*vertigo*'; '*whirl*', '*whirlpool*', '*whirlwind*'.

Vritti has the sense of 'rolling motion' like the waves on the surface of the ocean. While waves themselves are not the ocean, they are one of the modes or actions of the ocean. Similarly Bhagavan says *vritti* is a mode of the mind, the I-thought, the 'associated "I"' (*aham vritti*) linked to the body; it is the first thought which gives rise to all other thoughts. Often mistaken for consciousness itself, Bhagavan says, *vritti* is actually only 'reflected consciousness' and belongs to rajasic mind. (*Talks* §68) It gives the mind its impressions, forms, images and thoughts. When the mind is controlled, i.e., becomes sattvic, *vrittis* are calmed and subside.





Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Vedaparayana and Discourses



For each of the ten days of the Deepam festival, devotees at the Ashram had the opportunity to hear the fourth kanda of the Krishna Yajur Veda in ghanam mode performed by twenty-two ghanapatis from Trichy, Coimbatore, Chennai and Tiruvannamalai. Ghanaparayanam is the most elevated and advanced of the Vedic chanting modes and few pundits are versed with its knotty sequences. (Each word of the Veda is vocalised thirteen times in a specified order: 1-2-2-1-1-2-3-3-2-1-1-2-3, etc.). The programme, organized by the Ashram Veda Patasala acharya, Sri Senthil Natha Ganapaatigal, also included talks by Nochur Sri Venkataraman and chanting programmes of Rig Veda Ghanaparayana and Sama Veda. Given space limitations and the many demands on Bhagavan's Samadhi Shrine during Deepam, some of the programmes took place at the nearby Sankara Math.

Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Sri Arunachaleswarar at the Ashram



Sri Arunachaleswarar goes for girivalam only twice per year, once at Pongal and the other, just after Kartikai Deepam. On Thursday, 29th November, Arunachalaswami left the temple in the early morning and reached the Ashram at 9am. Ashram President V. S. Ramanan and Ashram devotees gathered at the front gate for darshan, as the Lord stopped for the traditional 'mandahappadi'.



Announcements: Bhagavan's 133rd Jayanti

Sri Ramanasramam President V. S. Ramanan invites all devotees to the Ashram on 29th December, 2012 for the 133rd Jayanti Celebrations of Sri Bhagavan. On this most blessed day of the year, devotees near and far come and gather in Bhagavan's presence.

