

Saranagati



COVER
INSERT

SPECIAL KARTHIKAI DEEPAM ISSUE
DECEMBER 2014



Deepam Festival photos this issue from Dev Gogoi



Saranagati



DECEMBER 2014
VOL. 8, NO. 12

IN THIS
ISSUE

Dear Devotees,

The month of December begins in a very festive spirit. With the Karthikai Deepam Festival still underway, the streets seemed to be filled with processions and the sounds of sacred recitation, all in expectation of the great event, Mahadeepam, scheduled for the 5th of December.

This issue of *Saranagati* continues with the history of Mango Tree Cave, looking at the first dramatic weeks of Kavya Kantha Ganapati Muni's stay there during the Karthikai Deepam Festival of 1907.

In the Frame with Bhagavan this month features archival listing GRO 31b, taken in the 1920s. Karthikai Deepam Festival photos are by Dev Gogoi.

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

In Sri Bhagavan,
The Editorial Team

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Calendar of Upcoming Events

5th December (Fri) Maha Deepam/Full Moon
9th December (Tues) Punarvasu Day
31st December (Wed) Lucyra Day
4th January (Sun) Full Moon
6th January (Tues) Bhagavan's 135th Jayanti Day
7-13th January (Weds) Nochur Venkataraman Discourses

12th January (Mon) Sivaprakasam Pillai Day
14th January (Wed) Ramaswamy Pillai Day
15th January (Thurs) Chinnaswami Day
2nd February (Mon) Punarvasu Day
3rd February (Tues) Full Moon
17th February (Tues) Mahasivaratri





Mango Tree Cave (part two)

The evening of 17th November, 1907 was the eighth day Karthikai Deepam Festival and Ganapati Muni climbed the Hill to see Bhagavan. He fell prostrate before him and pleaded for his help, protesting that after endless mantra and undergoing every imaginable tapas, he had still not found lasting peace.

Brahmanaswami remained silent. He recognised the man before him as the great scholar who had explained the *Suklambaradharam vishnum* verse at Padmanabha Swami's ashram. As he sat observing the prostrate form before him, the following words of counsel began to flow forth from his lips:

"Find out wherefrom this 'I' springs forth and merge at its source; that is tapas. Find out wherefrom the sound of the mantra in japa rises up and merge there; that is tapas."

1 *Bhagavan and Nayana*, p. 6.

Elated at this upadesa, the Muni propped himself up, took a meditative posture and sat in stillness, registering the spiritual currents that flowed through his body, ecstasy born of this fresh encounter with the Swami. As waves of joy washed over him he understood that his long search was finally at an end, that he had found someone who could help him.

Later that evening he learned from the attendant that the Swami's name was Venkataraman. The Muni duly abbreviated Venkataraman to 'Ramana' and replaced Brahmanaswami with the epithet 'Maharshi' or *great Seer*. Thus on this day, the young sage got the name by which the whole world would come to know him².

The satri immediately penned five Sanskrit verses in praise of his newfound Master and handed them to the attendant³. Toward nightfall he asked Palaniswami whether there might be a suitable place nearby where he could be near the guru and thus take up the sadhana given him. Overhearing the inquiry, Bhagavan spoke up directly and told the satri that Mango Tree Cave was ideal for his purposes. Palaniswami fetched the key and the Muni went there forthwith. After he sanctified the space with a litany of prayers, he took up residence and made a special intention: feeling that Divine Mother had been responsible for leading him to his teacher, he set himself the task of composing a hymn of one thousand verses dedicated in Her honour. Obtaining Bhagavan's approval, the Muni set out certain regulations for the work: it was to be completed in twenty days' time (an average of fifty verses per day) and throughout, he would maintain a strict diet, taking only a light meal at noon and a cup of milk in the evening. He would keep silence as much as possible in order to better engage the sadhana Bhagavan had prescribed for him.

Ever since the memorable Karthikai Festival meeting, Ganapati Muni was "subject to cascading spiritual experiences and floods of superhuman delight."⁴

2 The next day (18th November), he wrote a letter to his disciples: "I have found my Master, my Guru. He is the Sage of Arunachala known as Brahmanaswami. He is no ordinary Swami. He is a great Seer. To me and to you all he is Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi. Let the whole world know him as such." (*Bhagavan and Nayana*, p. 7)

3 Unfortunately these verses were mislaid by Palaniswami.

4 *Bhagavan and Nayana*, p. 8.

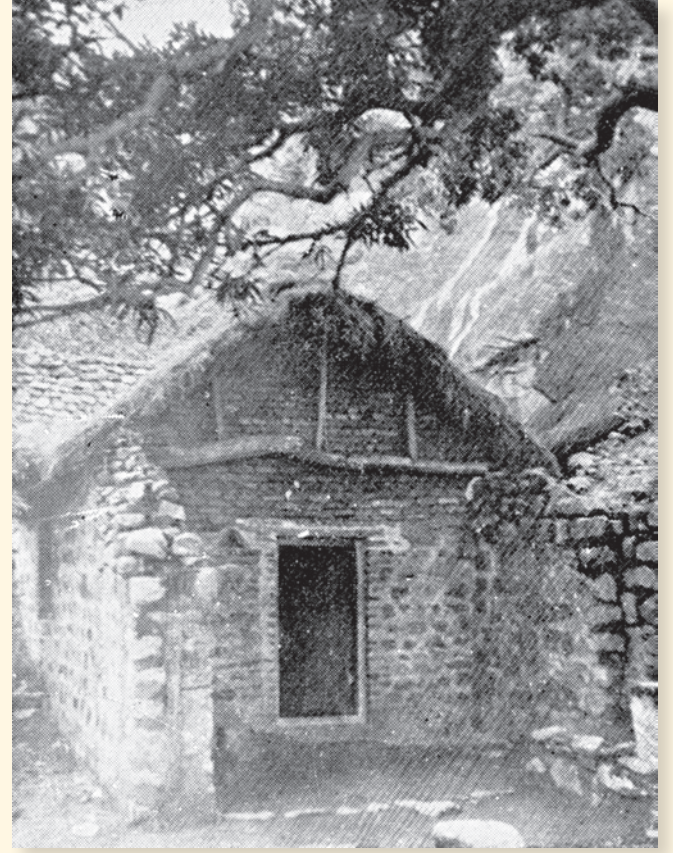




Along with them, spiritual heat⁵ developed in his body. Bhagavan regularly went to Mango Tree Cave and kept him company, attempting to normalize his condition. But before fifteen days were out, the poet contracted a boil, an ailment that proved so debilitating that he was unable to continue the writing work. However, one day following a string of days with little capacity to write, something quite out of the ordinary happened. A doctor from Chennai, one Punyakoti⁶, appeared at Mango Tree Cave. The night before he had had a dream in which he was informed that the Muni was in need of his help. It is not clear how or *if* he had ever even met Ganapati Muni. But in the dream he was directed to Tiruvannamalai where he climbed the Hill to find Bhagavan Ramana, by which means he was able to find the Muni at Mango Tree Cave. Once the doctor lanced and drained the boil, the poet was troubled no more and immediately resumed his work. But many days had elapsed and a public recitation of the hymn was scheduled to take place the very next morning at the Apeetha Kuchamba shrine

⁵ Kundalini proved an ongoing problem for Ganapati Muni while on the Hill. One day, when he suffered intense pain in his head, Bhagavan was just returning from giripradakshina and was taken to him at Mango Tree Cave. As soon as he arrived, Nayana took his hand and put it on his head. Bhagavan kept it there for some time and uttered: "Everything will be all right." On his way back, Bhagavan said: "He has turned to me to divulge his pain, but to whom can I turn?" *Mountain Path*, Oct 1979, p. 211.

⁶ Ibid., p. 8.



in the Big Temple. People had even already begun arriving, having received written invitations, while three hundred verses were yet to be written. Years later, Bhagavan recalled the exchange between him and the satri that evening:

"Nayana came to me and said, 'Three hundred slokas have to be written before daybreak. How can it be done?' 'Why

Wordwise: Vijnana विज्ञान

Vijnana (from *jnana*, 'knowledge' + *vi*, 'apart' = discernment); the act or faculty of discernment, comprehending, understanding, recognising; discrimination; intellect, consciousness, knowledge, cognition.

Since the prefix *vi* has different, even opposing meanings, *vijnana* is a polyvalent term and can indicate 'superior' vs. 'detailed' knowledge. Bhagavan says that *vijnana* is relative knowledge while *prajnana* is absolute knowledge. (*Talks* §481). He adds: "*Vijnanamaya kosa* (intellect) is only the sheath of 'I' and not the 'I' itself. The 'I-thought' is the *vijnanamaya kosa*". (*Talks* §277)





worry?’ I said. ‘It will be all right if we sit up after food’. ‘Then you must come’, he said.”

While the Muni was famed for his quick-witted repartee and his ability to improvise exquisite instantaneous Sanskrit verse, treating of any subject, still it is to be wondered how such a feat might be accomplished in a single night.

Bhagavan continues: “As desired, I went to Mango Tree Cave and sat down in a corner, keeping my eyes open all the while. Nayana sat down opposite me, [while Vasudeva Sastri, Narayana Ghanapathi and two other] disciples sat by his side to [take down the dictation]. Giving each of them a part of a sloka, he composed extempore and [without the least pause] finished all three hundred slokas by midnight.”⁷

After completing the verses that night, Bhagavan stood up and asked if what he, Bhagavan, had dictated had been taken down? When asked years later if this were true, Bhagavan said, “Yes, it was so. I felt that I had dictated those slokas.”⁸

Thus, it had been from Mango Tree Cave that Vasishtha Ganapati Muni, the renowned scholar said by men of letters to be a modern-day Kalidasa, composed with Bhagavan’s help, *Umasahasram*, the crown jewel of his vast poetic corpus, winning the lauds of pundits near and far.

It had also been from Mango Tree Cave that the name *Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi* began its journey from a little grotto on the slopes of Arunachala in the small town of Tiruvannamalai to reach the literate and the untutored alike all over South India and the world beyond.

(to be continued)

⁷ *Letters*, 30th April, 1948.

⁸ *Letters*, 30th April, 1948. Nayana is said to have revised the other slokas several times but never altered even one of the three hundred. He appended *Umasahasram* with the following words: “I was able to accomplish this great work on time only because of the Grace of my Guru, the great Soul, Ramana.” (*Bhagavan and Nayana*, p. 9).

Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi: Vijnana

M.: The word *vijnana* (clear knowledge) is used both to denote Realisation of the Self and knowing objects. The Self is wisdom. It functions in two ways. When associated with the ego, knowledge is objective (*vijnana*). When divested of ego and when the Universal Self is realised, it is also called *vijnana*. Therefore we say that the Self-Realised Sage knows by his mind, but his mind is pure. The pure mind is itself Brahman; therefore it follows that Brahman is not other than the mind of the sage. Therefore *vijnana* of whatever kind (of object or of the Self) depends on the Self being Pure Knowledge.

— Talks §204





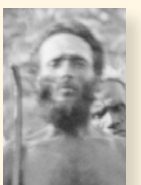
In the Frame with Bhagavan

Archival Listing GRO 31b (1920s) LEFT TO RIGHT: 1-4: Unidentified; 5. Bhagavan Ramana; 6. Kumaraguru; 7. Perumal Swami (with sandals); 8. Muruganar; 9. Dandapani Swami (with cane and waterpot); 10. Ramakrishna Swami; 11. Unidentified.



Dandapani Swami: A large imposing man, spent many years with Bhagavan on the Hill. When the residents of Skandasramam moved down to the present Ashram, he and his son administered it with the help of Chinna Swami. A profligate spender, he soon proved too lavish for the budding Ashram's limited finances and lost his management position. His greatest contribution, however, was in giving his son-in-law, the great Tamil poet Muruganar, copies of Bhagavan's *Arunachala Stuthi Panchakam* and *Who Am I?*, which brought the latter permanently to Bhagavan.

Kumaraguru (Naiswami): A doctor who had his first darshan of Bhagavan at Virupaksha Cave. Staying with his family in the town, whenever he came to Skandashram, he brought fruit and vegetables. He was a friend of animals and would bathe, feed and shower his affection upon the Ashram dogs like Sikappan, Karuppan, Kamala and Jackie.

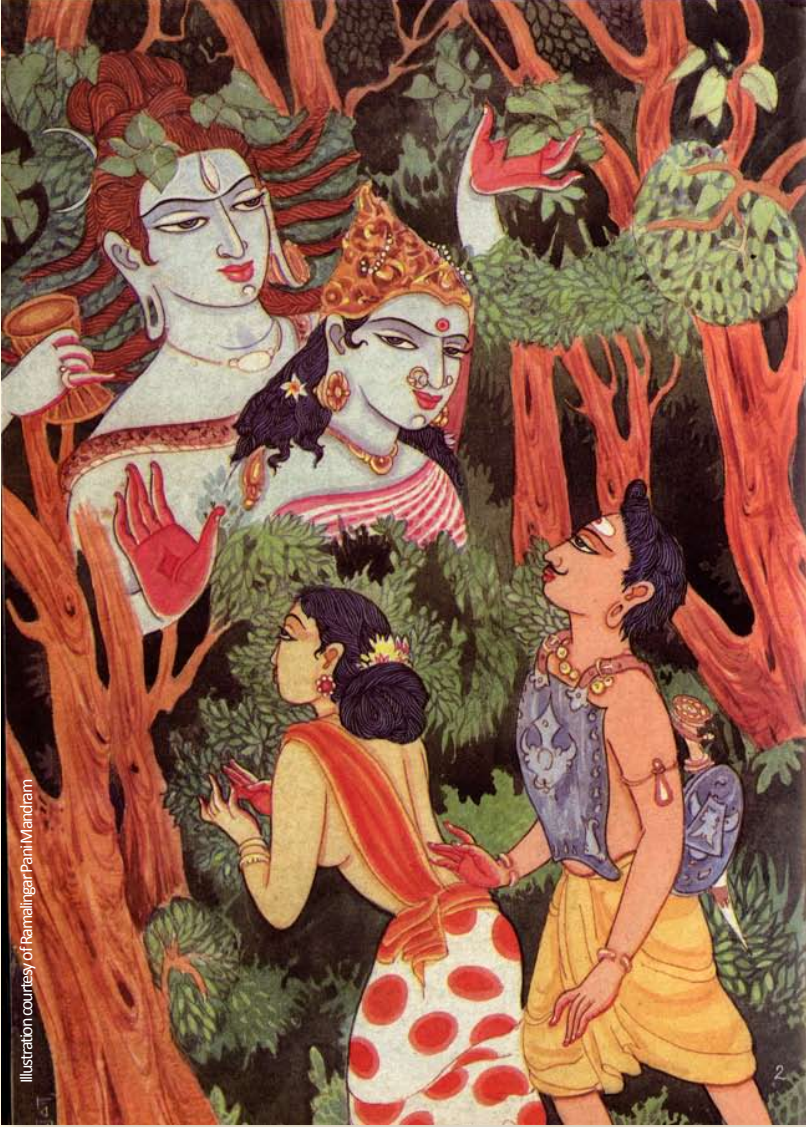


If you have information regarding the identities of those unnamed in the above photo, please write the editor at ashram@sriramanamaharshi.org.





From Periapuranam: Iyarpahai Naayanaar



Iyarpahai was known for his hospitality and never denied the needs of any devotee. He had a keen eye for the faithful and always served them unfailingly. One day he received an unusual visitor in the garb of a Brahmin priest. When the guest said that he had heard that the saint never turned down the requests of devotees, the saint humbly assented. The priest said that he had an unusual requirement and wanted assurance in advance that it would be granted him. 'Whatever I have is the possession of my Lord's devotees'. The priest then boldly uttered the following: 'I have come for your beloved wife'. Iyarpahai stood transfixed, speechless. When he stepped into the next room to consult with his wife both were in shock at hearing such words uttered in their chaste home. But as they pondered the matter, their discerning minds told them that something divine was at work and that this was no ordinary Brahmin. The two thus agreed to the priest's demands and the latter asked them to accompany him to the edge of the town. While going, the man's in-laws, having heard about the indignity being done their family, approached and threatened violence. When the saint drew his sword to defend the priest, the crowd dissipated. The saint then bid a tearful farewell to his life's companion and moved away as if to depart but just as he was going, the Brahmin's form dissolved and in its place Mahadeva, majestic and glorious, rose up together with his consort, Uma. The two

devotees bowed in prostration. As the Lord mounted his Bull to depart, He commended their gesture of self-sacrifice and bade his devotees to come to dwell with him at Kailasa. (*Iyarpahai Naayanaar's aradhana day falls on the 11th January, 2015*)

Reality in Forty Verses

39. Thoughts of bondage and freedom last only as long as one imagines 'I am bound'. When one inquires of oneself, 'Who am I, the bound one?', the Self, Eternal and ever free, (reveals itself and) remains. The thought of bondage goes and with it goes the thought of freedom too.

— Sri Bhagavan





Karthikai Deepam Festival 2014

Karthikai Deepam Festival 2014 got underway with the flag-raising ceremony at the Main Shrine of the Big Temple, Wednesday morning, 26th November (see cover insert). Some 8,000 gathered for the event under a cool, colourful morning sky, when, at 6 am the temple processional deities made their way out of the Main Shrine and stood near the flagpole. Festivities were initiated with the hoisting of the Temple flag to the accompaniment of cannon blasts at 6.30am. Later that morning, crowds gathered in the Four Streets to have



Karthikai Deepam day falls on or very near the full-moon day in the month of Karttigai (mid-November to mid-December) when the moon is in conjunction with Krittika nakshatra. The constellation Krittika (Pleiades) consists of six stars in the shape of a pendant and are thought to be the six celestial nymphs who reared six babies at Sravana Tirtham and later joined together to form Arumugam, the six-faced Muruga or 'Karthikeya'.

darshan of the Lord when the festival's first procession around the temple started at 10.30am. Led by Sita the Temple elephant with Lord Ganesa in her wake and followed by Subramanya, Swami, Mother and Chandrakesari bringing up the rear, nadaswaram companies, drums, tambourines, trumpets and conches sounded as the deities made their way around the Four Streets, stopping every few paces for arati.



The Karthikai Mahadeepam flame which will be lit this year at sundown Friday, the 5th of December, commemorates Lord Siva's appearance as a pillar of fire in order to settle a dispute between Brahma and Vishnu which threatened the welfare of all creation. The Arunachala Purana declares, "Every year, during Kartigai, I shall appear on the summit of this Hill in the form of fire [...]. Those who see that fire and meditate upon it shall realise the great light within themselves."





Karthikai Deepam Festival 2014 (cont.)



Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Karthikai Deepam Festival Vedaparayana



Deepam Festival opening day saw a record 60 Ghanapaatins on the samadhi in Bhagavan's Shrine. Other Vedic groups commenced chanting programs at the main temple. Shukla Veda, Rig Veda, and Sama Veda groups performed in Bhagavan's Shrine during the course of the ten days leading up to Karthikai Mahadeepam.





Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Annabhishekam

Annabhishekam celebrates the harvest and the abundance of rice it brings. It is usually performed on the full moon day in the Tamil month of Aipassi (Oct-Nov). At Bhagavan's Shrine on Thursday evening the 6th of November, the lingam was completely covered in cooked rice and adorned with other food items, all which were later served as prasadam. In Mother's Shrine, following the Lalithasahasranamam at the Sri Chakra Puja, rice from Annabhishekam of the Yoni lingam was taken in procession to Pali Thirtham and offered there.



Ashram Gardens: The Thaazham Tree



Devotees know the *thaazhampoo* (screw-pine flower) from the story of Arunachala where Brahma, unlike his rival, remained ambitious in his search and, continuing his flight upward into the heavens in the form of a swan, found a *thaazham* flower falling from the fiery column's uppermost heights. He persuaded the flower to join him in testifying before the Lord that he had taken her from the lingam's apex. When Mahadeva heard their story, he cursed them both for their deceit and deemed that Brahma would no longer have temples built in his name and that the *thaazham* flower would no longer be offered at Siva pujas. However, acknowledging that the flower had no motive of her own, the Lord allowed that she might be offered once per year on the linga of the Lord at Mahasivaratri. And thus *thaazhampoo* still had a future, if only in this small role she would play in future pujas.

Four years back, a *thaazham* tree (L. *pandanus*) was planted in the Ashram gardens. Just the day after this month's Sivaratri (Friday, the 21st Nov), the tree gave its 'first fruit' in the form of a large blossom (40cm long). Relevant parties agreed that the flower should be offered at Sri Ramana Linga that evening to the accompaniment of Ramanastotram recitation. The *thaazham* tree can be found within the Ashram compound just above Pali Thirtham.

Announcements: Upcoming Feature Articles

Upcoming feature articles for *Saranagati* 2015 include, *In the Kitchen with Bhagavan*, a series tracing the history of cooking in the Ashram, both of the early days on the Hill as well as the years at Sri Ramansramam from 1922 up to the present. Replete with Bhagavan's medicinal recipes and his songs pertaining to food, family secrets and recipes of the present Ashram kitchen will be published for the first time.

