

Saranagathi



eNewsletter from www.sriramanamaharshi.org

Purpose

By Publisher

Dear Devotees,

With Sri Bhagavan's Grace we are pleased to publish an eNewsletter from Sri Ramanasramam's website. The purpose is to bring together devotees of Sri Bhagavan from across the world.

Saranagathi, a monthly eNewsletter, is being developed to help devotees share their experiences, about satsangh, meetings and other events that are held within various centers of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi around the world.

It is proposed to have one feature article for each issue. The feature article would focus on events that happened during the years between 1879 and 1950 as captured in popular books like Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi, Letters from Sri Ramanasramam and others, which are available for download from the ashram website.

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Our earnest request, to all devotees, satsangh groups and centers is to share with us their events, stories and experiences. Please email them to saranagathi@sriramanamaharshi.org

Ever Truly In Sri Bhagavan,

President
Sri Ramanasramam.
Tiruvannamalai, India.

Who Am I?

*When the World which is what -is-seen has been removed,
there will be Realization of the Self which is the Seer.*

The nature of Awareness is Existence-Consciousness-Bliss.

- Sri Bhagavan.

Worship of the Cow

By Smt. Suri Nagamma

An Extract from 'Letters from Sri Ramanasramam'

16th January, 1946.

You know yesterday was the animal Festival of Cows (*Maattu Pongal*). On that day, all over the country, domestic animals are decorated and fed with Pongal. In the Ashram also yesterday morning, several varieties of sweetmeats were prepared and, with garlands made of those sweetmeats, *puja* to Nandi was performed by drawing ornamental lines with lime powder before the cowshed, by tying plantain trees around the pillars, by hanging garlands of green leaves, by bathing all the cows, by placing *tilakam* (vermilion marks) on their foreheads and garlands around their necks, and by feeding them with Pongal. Finally *puja* was performed to the chanting of *mantras* and the breaking of coconuts.

Lakshmi is the queen amongst the cows, is she not? You must see her grandeur! Her forehead was smeared with turmeric powder, and adorned with Kumkum. Around her neck and horns were hung garlands made of roses and several other flowers, as also those made of edibles, and sweets. Besides these, garlands made out of bananas, sugarcane pieces and coconut kernels, were put around her neck. Not satisfied with these, the person in charge of the animals brought from his own house another garland made out of some savoury preparation like murukku and placed it on the neck of Lakshmi. When Niranjananandaswami asked him what it was for, he replied with justifiable pride that that was his mamool (yearly custom) to do so. When I saw Lakshmi thus decorated like Kamadhenu, I was overjoyed and felt extremely happy.

Bhagavan, who went out at 9–45 a.m., came to the Gosala (cow-shed) at 10 a.m., to shower his children there. While he sat on a chair by the side

of Lakshmi, enjoying the sight of the beautiful decorations on her, the devotees gave arati with camphor, chanting Vedic hymns such as “Na Karmana” etc. Some devotees said that they would take a photo of Lakshmi. She was then led into the middle of the Gosala after asking the devotees who had gathered into a big group, to step aside. Lakshmi stood there, tossing her head in a graceful manner. Bhagavan also got up, came, and stood by the side of Lakshmi, patting her head and body with his left hand, and when he said, “Steady, please, be steady”, Lakshmi slowly closed her eyes and remained absolutely quiet as if she were in a samadhi (trance). Sri Ramana then placed his right hand on her back, and with his walking stick in his left, stood in a dignified manner by the side of Lakshmi, when the photographer took two or three photos. One must see that sight to appreciate its grandeur fully. Another photo was taken when Bhagavan was feeding her with his own hands fruits and sweetmeats. You can see the photos when you come here. I was reminded of Lord Krishna in Repalle when I saw the grand spectacle of Bhagavan standing in the midst of the cows in the Gosala. Not only this, in Brahma Vaivarta Purana it is stated that Krishna is the Paramatma, the Lord of the cow world, and that Radha is Prakriti. The theory in that Purana is that Radha and Madhava are Prakriti and Purusha—the inseparable pair. Standing with his body bent slightly to the left, and with his left hand on Lakshmi, and with the walking stick in his right hand, looking as if it was a flute, with a sparkling smile on the face like the foam on the waves of the ocean of ananda, with a compassionate look towards the group of devotees that had gathered along with the herd of cows, Sri Ramana, the embodiment of grace, it is no surprise if one were reminded of Lord Krishna Himself standing with crossed legs, resting on his toes and playing exquisitely on the flute.

Continued from Page 2

If that Krishna is Ramana, what are we to say of our Lakshmi who appears to have been completely oblivious of this world with her ears hanging down, with her eyes closed and enjoying transcendental bliss caused by the touch of Bhagavan's hands on her body? Shall I say that she is the embodiment of *Prakriti* in the shape of Radha? Otherwise, how could she understand human language?

It is no exaggeration to say that we, with human eyes, saw in that congregation what is beyond human sight; a world of cows, and its overlords,

Prakriti and Purusha. You would perhaps laugh at my foolish fantasies but take it from me, that sight was so lovely. Every year this worship of the cow is being performed, but this year Bhagavan gave us this blissful darshan by standing by the side of Lakshmi, because the devotees said that they would take a photo of Lakshmi. What a great day! I am writing to you, because I just could not contain my joy.

16th January, 2008.

'Maattu Pongal' at Sri Ramanasramam

Pongal Festival (Makara Sankranti), which is a festival of the people especially farmers of Tamil Nadu, was celebrated at the Ashram on 15th January. It is a day of thanks giving to the Sun God. The next day is 'Maattu Pongal'. 'Maattu Pongal' means, Pongal festival dedicated to cows and bulls. So at our ashram too the cows, bulls and calves were the centre of attraction and the objects of special affection and adoration on this sacred day. The whole Gosala (cowshed) was given a thorough wash. The cows and bulls were given a bath, their horns were painted, vermilion applied to the foreheads and garlands put round their necks. The Ashram priest offered puja to the cows and prasada was distributed to those present.

Earlier a special puja was offered at the Samadhi of Cow Lakshmi and the Nandi (sacred bull) at the Matrubhuteswara Temple.

To see video and more pictures, click on link below.

<http://sriramanamaharshi.org/mattupongal.html>



Puja Cow at Ashram Gosala.



Decorated Matrubhuteshwara Nandi.



Puja at Gosala.

Sri Bhagavan's Jayanti was celebrated at Sri Ramanasramam and other centers around the world on 25th Dec, 2007.

Below is an article about the significance of celebrating Bhagavan's Jayanti.

Celebrating the Birthday

By Jean Dunn.

An Extract from 'Ramana Smrti - Sri Ramana Maharshi Birth Centenary Offering (1980).

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi was requested by Vasudeva Sastri in 1912 to allow his birthday to be celebrated by his devotees. Bhagavan refused to be drawn into our illusion and, as do all his actions and words, his reply on this occasion serves as a guide to bring us out of illusion into reality:

You who wish to celebrate the birthday, seek first whence was your birth. One's true birthday is when one enters that which transcends birth and death - the Eternal Being.

At least on one's birthday one should mourn one's entry into this world (samsara). To glory in it and celebrate it is like delighting in and decorating a corpse. To seek one's self and merge in the Self - that is wisdom.

Sri Bhagavan had no reasons of his own for anything he did. All was for our benefit. By 'our' I mean all of us who have been drawn to him all those who in the future will be drawn to him. What was he teaching us by this verse? What does it mean, "Seek first whence was your birth"? Aren't we all aware of who our parents are and the date of our birth? Yes, but that is the date of the birth of a body and the parents are the bodies from which this body is born. Are we the body? If so we will surely die. What did Bhagavan do when, as a youngster of sixteen, he was faced with the overwhelming certainty of immediate death? By a deep enquiry he discovered that he was not the body, that he was never born and would never die. That was his true birthday, when he "entered that which transcends birth and death - the Eternal Being". He was reborn as the spirit Immortal. Ignorance had vanished and he knew his true

identity - the Eternal Being. The illusion that he was a body in time and space died. We can only imagine that state, but because of Bhagavan, we know that it is possible for us also to attain. In truth, as he tells us, there is nothing to attain, only question the illusion and it will disappear.

"To seek one's self and merge in the Self, that is Wisdom". How to seek one's self? Bhagavan has told us repeatedly to enquire, in every situation, whatever happens, "to whom is this happening?" "Who am I?", to keep our attention focused on this "I". Gradually our mind will lose interest in the magic show of the world and our own self will grow stronger. We have so many concepts about everything - our self, the world, God, and even the Absolute. These concepts we have gathered from others and made our own, thereby imprisoning ourselves. No one else binds us, we bind our self with bonds of illusion. The mind tends to be satisfied with words. If we can name a thing, we think we know it; we fail to seek the meaning of words. Bhagavan was uncompromising in his insistence that we need only remove illusion; no effort is needed for realization because it is already there. By persistent enquiry, ignorance will vanish. This is wisdom. We have great joy and good cause for celebration in the birth of Sri Ramana Maharshi, the great sage whose presence will guide us out of our ignorance to wisdom. Although the body has died, the truth which is Bhagavan, our own Self, lives eternally.

Sri Swami Ramanananda

1914 – 2007

It is with great sadness that we convey the news of Sri Swami Ramanananda's passing away. He was Sri Bhagavan's nephew i.e. Sri Niranjanandaswami's son and served the ashram from 1938 till his retirement in 1994 as President of Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvannamalai.

His devotion and faith in Sri Bhagavan was complete. One of his oft-repeated phrases was, "A 60-foot circle of Bhagavan's protective grace is around me always!" Swamiji was a fearless warrior and underwent testing times to make the ashram a fully functioning organization, after Sri Bhagavan's mahanirvana. A true karma yogi, Swamiji served the ashram in many capacities. As he would say he was "an all rounder", overseeing activities as diverse as construction of ashram guesthouses, boundary wall and other buildings, resolving legal matters that the ashram has faced, managing the ashram finances and even deciding the daily kitchen menu! His attention to detail and diligence in carrying out any task was something to be emulated.

Every letter to the ashram had to be stamped with the date of receipt and the reply mailed the same day as "this was the way Sri Bhagavan did it". One of his lesser known skills, was his ability to act out

accurately the way Sri Bhagavan would talk and interact with devotees on given occasions, something which brought tears of joy to the onlooker's eyes.

One will for sure miss Swamiji's smiling face, his sense of humor and kindness towards one and all who visited the ashram. Sri Bhagavan has taken unto Himself his child, one whose very birth was due to His blessing, to fulfill Mother Alagamma's prayer that the family lineage may continue.

On 26th December, one day after participating in Sri Bhagavan's Jayanti function, Swamiji passed away peacefully at 8.30pm.



eLibrary Updates

Please visit the following links which have been recently added to the eLibrary

- ♦ Sri Vidya Homam Pictures <http://sriramanamaharshi.org/srividya.html>
- ♦ Swami Ramanananda's Aradhana <http://sriramanamaharshi.org/swamiramanananda.html>

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