

Saranagathi



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In this Issue

Dear Sri Bhagavan Devotees,

Sri Bhagavan's 130th Jayanti was celebrated on 1st January, 2010 as usual in a grand manner. Though Sri Bhagavan has said that, "*You who wish to celebrate a birthday, inquire first who was born*", year after year it is an opportunity for us to show our gratitude to the Master, the embodiment of Truth itself, and receive His Grace.

On the same day Smt T.R. Kanakammal, an old devotee much loved by all, attained Sri Bhagavan's Lotus feet.

In this issue of Saranagathi we continue our attendant series with 'Hall' Krishnaswami. The extract from Maharshi's Gospel is followed by the article 'How I came to the Maharshi' from one of the earliest issues of the Mountain Path. January was a busy month at the Ashram and many of the events have been covered in the Reports from Sri Ramansramam.

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Please visit the Ashram website to view the video footage of Maattu Pongal celebrations at the Ashram. Also there is a new link to the Ashram's Tamil website which was launched recently.

Yours in Sri Bhagavan,

Editorial Team.

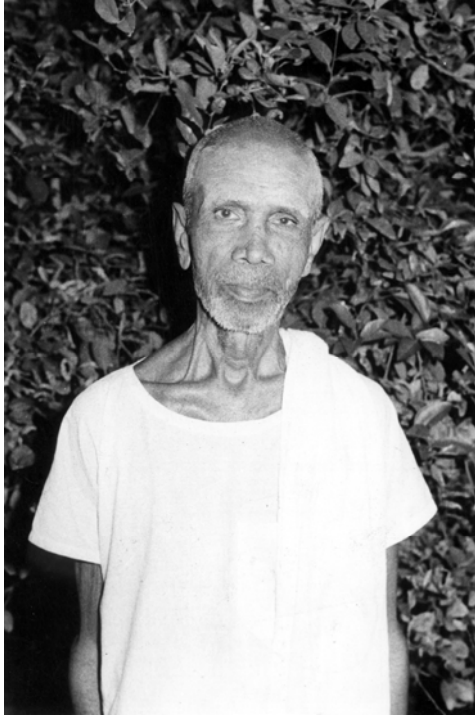
The Essence of Instruction

*Where this 'I' notion faded
Now there as I, as I, arises
The One, the very Self, The Infinite.*

— Upadesa Saram by Sri Bhagavan (Verse 20)

Krishnaswami

Krishnaswami was a native of Srirangam, Tamil Nadu. He came to Sri Ramana in 1936 and was his attendant till Sri Bhagavan's Mahanirvana.



His recollections extracted from the book, *'Arunachala's Ramana Boundless Ocean of Grace'*

My native town is Srirangam near Tiruchi, situated in Tamil Nadu. I came to Bhagavan in 1936. Till the end I was his attendant. First there was Madhava Swami with me. Later on Sathyanandha Swami, Salem Rajagopala Iyer, Venkatarathnam and others served as attendants to Bhagavan. As I was strict they called me "Hall Sarvadhikari." Bhagavan jocularly would remark, "You are very abrupt and speak sharply to others that's why people mistake you."

There was a lame puppy, which would wag its tail whenever Bhagavan went up the Hill. That puppy was fed with idlies. One day after having idlies the pup went and urinated in front of Sarvadhikari's

office. Sarvadhikari got wild and ordered that no more idlies should be given to the puppy. When Bhagavan asked why the puppy was not fed, I told him that as it urinated in front of Chinnaswamy's office I didn't feed it. Bhagavan got very angry with me and told me, "Before so many have come, ruled and gone, one day you too have to go." Immediately I went and reported to Chinnaswamy what Bhagavan had told and thus feeding of the puppy resumed. The same mongrel would come in front of Bhagavan with the mouth full of excreta. Bhagavan used to wipe her mouth clean with his own towel and say, "some great soul has come in this garb." He never gave me the towel for washing.

Bhagavan used to say with a laugh, "A person performs namaskaram to the Swami or an idol, and expects all his prayers fulfilled and boons granted. Who wants this namaskaram? Even before they prostrate physically, I prostrate to them mentally." Bhagavan would add, "Who wants all this namaskaram? Try to know who you are. That is the import of the namaskaram. I would not be taken in by all this gymnastics."

One day he told me "One could produce God through alchemy. But even if that God tells you something don't believe it. If I come in front of you don't believe it. The Seer is most important. YOU ARE! That's most important. Concentrate on the seer, not the seen. All that you see is false and the seer alone is true. All that you read, all knowledge you gather is useless, until you hold on to your Self. YOU ARE THE TRUTH, not what's being told to you, not what you see. What you read in books may be knowledge, but not the truth."

Sri Krishnaswami was over ninety years of age when he was absorbed at the Lotus Feet of the Master in the early hours of March 6, 1996. Sri Krishnaswami left the Ashram after the Maha

Nirvana of Sri Bhagavan and lived in Pala Kothu. Subsequently he returned to the Ashram and remained as a regular inmate till the last.

Maharshi's Gospel: The Teachings of Sri Ramana Maharshi

Silence and Solitude

Devotee: How then can we communicate our thoughts to one another?

Maharshi: That becomes necessary if the sense of duality exists...

Devotee: Why does not Bhagavan go about and preach the Truth to the people at large?

Maharshi: How do you know I am not doing it? Does preaching consist in mounting a platform and haranguing the people around? Preaching is simple communication of knowledge; it can really be done in silence only. What do you think of a man who listens to a sermon for an hour and goes away without having been impressed by it so as to change his life? Compare him with another, who sits in a holy presence and goes away after sometime with his outlook on life totally changed. Which is better, to preach loudly without effect or to sit silently sending out inner force?

Again, how does speech arise? There is abstract knowledge, whence arises the ego, which in turn gives rise to thought, and thought to the spoken word. So the word is the great-grandson of the original source. If the word can produce effect, judge for yourself, how much more powerful must be the preaching through silence! But people do not understand this simple, bare truth, the truth of their everyday, ever-present, eternal experience. This truth is that of the Self. Is there anyone unaware of the Self? But they do not like even to hear of this truth, whereas they are eager to know what lies beyond, about heaven, hell and reincarnation.

Because they love mystery and not the truth, religions cater to them so as eventually to bring them round to the Self. Whatever be the means adopted, you must at last return to the Self: so why not abide in the Self here and now? To be a spectator of, or to speculate about the other world, the Self is necessary; therefore, they are not different from the Self. Even the ignorant man when he sees the objects, sees only the Self.

How I came to the Maharshi By D. (Published in *The Mountain Path*, July 1964)

I first learnt of Sri Ramana Maharshi when I came across the book 'A Search in Secret India' by Paul Brunton in 1943 or 1944. It made a tremendous impression on me and I must have read it three or four times; but somehow it did not occur to me that I could go to Tiruvannamalai and meet Bhagavan in actual flesh and blood. Apparently I was not destined to; maybe because I was not mature enough. Next I remember hearing about his Mahasamadhi (leaving the body) in April 1950 when it was broadcast all over India. I felt very sorry that I had missed having his darshan.

One day in 1961 I happened to visit a friend who had a very pious and devout lady staying with him. There was a small gathering there, of people who had come to hear her talk on the spiritual life. I also stayed to listen. The words that stuck in my mind were: "Don't delay any longer. The time to begin your sadhana is here and now. It will be too late when you get old; either you will not have the energy or ill health will prevent it. Don't put it off on the excuse that you are still working professionally or in business or that you still have to arrange your daughters' marriages and get your sons fixed up in life before you can attend to anything else."

I returned home in a very thoughtful mood. Sadhana meant for me Bhagavan. Fortunately I had one or two books about him and his teaching written by some of his old and devoted followers. I read and reread them, and was completely overcome. The direct method of Self-enquiry as explained in them simply captivated me and would not leave me. I got all the books I could and went through them; and then the idea of visiting Sri Ramanasramam arose in me. An article that appeared in a weekly paper about the continued spiritual life there converted the idea into a firm decision. I arrived there for the first time at the end of 1961, just after Bhagavan's Jayanti (birth anniversary).

Although it is said that Bhagavan's teachings are

crystal clear and do not require any explanations, I would nevertheless submit that for a new sadhaka (aspirant), especially a dunce like me, and one who has not sat at his lotus feet, books written by his old disciples are a great help in understanding his terse and incisive writings and sayings at least in the early stages.

Sri Ramanasramam today has a very calm and peaceful atmosphere and yet vibrant with power.

I have found it more conducive to meditation than any other place I know. The presence of Bhagavan is felt everywhere and more strongly than I can say. In fact I can fully endorse the poem by S. P. Mukherjee in the first issue of 'The Mountain Path' and should like to quote it here as saying what I want to say.

A BEACON STILL

We have not seen you, Bhagavan;
 We have not approached your lotus-feet
 Yet do we find
 The now and the then are the same for us,
 The body-presence, the presence in the heart,
 These are the same.
 One thing only do we know –
 Ramanashram is a beacon still.

I was delighted to find that one is at perfect liberty to do what one likes there and not do what one does not like. No compulsory ritual or discipline. There are certain rituals and pujas, but you are at liberty to attend them or not, as you please. In fact you are left alone to follow your own path. That does not mean that no one is helpful. On the contrary, I found that the inmates and devotees are always willing to help when help is needed; only they do not interfere when interference is not needed.

There is a mysterious power that draws you to the Ashram again and again. It is like a magnet. Each year now I come back for as much time as my work will allow.

Reports from Sri Ramanasramam

Lucy Ma Day

The death anniversary of Lucy Cornelsson (Lucy Ma) an ardent devotee of Bhagavan was observed at 10.00 a.m. on 31st December 2009. Her Samadhi was decorated with flowers offered to Bhagavan and Aksharamanamalai was recited in front of her Samadhi. After arati, prasadam was distributed.



Aradhana of Swami Ramanananda

The second Aradhana of Swami Ramanananda, former President of Sri Ramanasramam was observed at his Samadhi at the Ashram on 3rd January 2010. The ceremony was attended by a large number of Bhagavan's devotees. There were a special Bhiksha and Narayana Seva at the Ashram on that day.



Sivaprakasam Pillai Day

Sivaprakasam Pillai Day was observed on 12th January 2010 at 10.00 a.m in the New Hall. Selections from his compositions Ramana Deva Malai, Vinnappam and Ramana Padamalai were recited in front of his photograph placed there. This was followed by arati and distribution of Prasad.





Ramaswami Pillai Day

The Samadhi day of Ramaswami Pillai was observed on 14th January 2010 at his Samadhi in the Ashram. Aksharamanamalai was chanted by devotees, and after Puja, prasadam was distributed.



Maattu Pongal

Maattu Pongal, which literally means the Cow Pongal, falls on the day after the Pongal in the Tamil month of Thai. Pongal is primarily a festival of the Tamil people and is a celebration of the Sun God and rice harvest. Maattu Pongal is a day of Thanksgiving to the Cow which is an integral part of the life of the people and, as it is believed that all the gods reside in this gentle creature, it is worshipped on this day.

Maattu Pongal was celebrated in a grand manner this year at Sri Ramanasramam on January 15. First the Nandi at Sri Matrubhutesvara Temple was offered garlands made of sweetmeats, fruits etc, a song on the Nandi was sung and special puja was offered to it. Thereafter, devotees went to the Samadhi of Cow Lakshmi and puja was done to this dear daughter of Bhagavan.



The day's activities culminated in the Gopuja performed at the Ashram Gosala. Earlier in the day, the gosala was thoroughly cleaned and washed and the cows were given a bath, their horns were trimmed and painted in a bright colour and little bells were tied to them. Sacred ash and vermilion were applied on their foreheads and old ropes were replaced by new ones. A large number of devotees participated in the gopuja. After the Puja, the Ashram Cows were fed Pongal and fruits and prasadam was distributed to the devotees.

