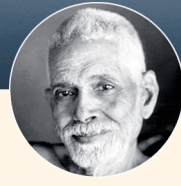


# Saranagati



COVER  
INSERT

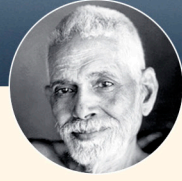
SRI RAMANASRAMAM  
FEBRUARY 2015



Photos this page from D. Thiagarajan



## Saranagati



FEBRUARY 2015  
VOL. 9, NO. 2

IN THIS  
ISSUE

Dear Devotees,

With Dhanurmasa pujas each morning up till mid-January and Bhagavan's Jayanti celebrations on the 6th, Sivaprakasam Pillai Day on the 12th, Ramaswamy Pillai Day on the 14th and Pongal celebrations the 15th, 16th, and 17th, the month of January was full and grace-filled.

This present issue of *Saranagati* commences a multi-part series called *In the Kitchen with Bhagavan* which traces the history of cooking and eating in the Ashram. We also introduce a new column called *Spiritual Stories* based on an initiative from devotees Lingeswara Rao (in Telugu) and Sri Hari Rao (in English) to further collect stories told or referred to by Sri Bhagavan. This month's is about Ahalya, wife of the great sage Gautama.

For videos, photos and further news of 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

<i>In the Kitchen with Bhagavan (part one)</i>	2
<i>Wordwise: Nididhyasana</i>	3
<i>Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi: Nididhyasana (\$52)</i>	4
<i>Spiritual Stories: Ahalya and Gautama</i>	5
<i>Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Bhagavan's 135th Jayanti</i>	6
<i>Introducing the Kendras: Jayanti Retreat Tampa, Florida</i>	7
<i>Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Nochur Sri Venkataraman</i>	8
<i>Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Swami Ramananda Day</i>	8
<i>Obituary: Puchaiappan</i>	8

## Calendar of Upcoming Events

2nd February (Mon) Punarvasu Day  
3rd February (Tues) Full Moon/Chinnaswami Aradhana Day  
6th February (Fri) Swami Rajeswarananda Day  
12th February (Thur) Munagala Venkataramiah Day  
17th February (Tues) Mahasivaratri  
1st March (Sun) Punarvasu Day  
5th March (Thurs) Full Moon Sri Chakra Puja  
10th March (Tues) Sundaram Iyer Day

20th March (Fri) Sri Vidya Havan  
21st March (Sat) Telugu New Year  
28th March (Sat) Sri Rama Navami/Punarvasu Day  
2nd April (Thur) Jagadish Swami Day  
3rd April (Fri) Full Moon Sri Chakra Puja  
14th April (Tues) Tamil New Year  
14th April (Tues) 65th Aradhana (Western Calendar)  
16th April (Thurs) Bhagavan's 65th Aradhana





## In the Kitchen with Bhagavan (part one)

*The present series traces the history of cooking in the Ashram. Offerings in the temple, bhiksha rounds in the streets of the town, food preparation on the Hill and cooking food for devotees at Sri Ramansramam are some of the themes to be taken up in upcoming issues. Anecdotes, testimonies and biographies of those blessed to share food with Sri Bhagavan or to serve with him in the Ashram kitchen will be included along with Bhagavan's kitchen and medicinal recipes, family cooking secrets and various food songs composed by Bhagavan.*

A family legend tells of a curse. Once long ago, a wandering ascetic begging alms turned up at the door of Sri Bhagavan's ancestral home in Tiruchuli. But not receiving the hospitality he felt he deserved, he cursed the family so that at least one male member in each generation

would be compelled to leave home and beg for food<sup>1</sup>. As it would turn out, Ramana's paternal grand-uncle would don the ochre robe, and with staff and *kamandalu*, take to wandering and live on alms for the rest of his life. Later Bhagavan's paternal uncle, Venkatesa Iyer, left Tiruchuli on a visit to Tiruparankunram but never returned. He was later reported seen in kavi dress at Chidambaram, clearing thorns from the outer court of the Nataraja temple, and finally, at Benares. Young Venkataraman's disappearance from Madurai in late August 1896 at the age of 16 was much the same. Without alerting his family in advance, he wrote a short note and slipped away from his uncle's house. But in full confidence that the Lord would provide for his sustenance from that day forward, the curse became a blessing.

### En Route

With Tiruvannamalai his destination, Venkataraman found Lord Arunachala's grace operating upon him right from the beginning. At every step, he encountered kind-hearted hospitality. At Villupuram when a hotel owner

<sup>1</sup> *Self-Realisation*, Chapter 2.





learned that the devout youngster had only two and half annas, he would not accept payment for the boy's meal.

The following night after his jyoti darshan in Araiyananallur Temple in Tirukoilur, the pious temple drummer of Kilur Temple offered him his share of prasad. And then the next day, at the house of one Muthukrishna Bhagavathar where Venkataraman pawned his gold earrings for needed train ticket fare, he was tenderly cared for by one of the ladies of the house. She fed him with a 'loving heart' and sent him on his way with a carefully prepared parcel of sweetmeats, *naivedya* offerings for Lord Krishna<sup>2</sup>.

### At Tiruvannamalai

Once having arrived at the Feet of Arunachala, however, concern for his bodily welfare departed and he surrendered himself completely to the Holy Hill. At Ayyankulam Tank, he dispensed with his remaining possessions, cutting and tearing from his clothes the material necessary to fashion a simple codpiece. He offered his remaining three and half rupees to the waters of the holy tank, determined never to touch money again. Likewise, recalling the sweet affection of the lady at Tirukoillur the day before, he gave away the remaining sweetmeats, now committed to a simple diet.

The following day at the Big Temple's Thousand-pillar Mantapam, Viruddachalam Mouni Swami, espied the new arrival and gestured to a friend to bring him some

<sup>2</sup> *Self-Realisation*, Chapter 8.



food. His companion brought pickle and some cold rice which was in a black tin "with a little salt strewn on top". Later recalling the simple fare, Bhagavan said: "That was the first *bhiksha* Arunachaleswara gave me. Actually there is not an iota of pleasure in what I eat now. All the meals and sweets are nothing compared to the food that day."<sup>3</sup>

### Residences

Brahmana Swami, as he came to be called, stayed variously at the Thousand-Pillar Hall, Patala Lingam, Gopura Subrahmanya Shrine and under the temple's Iluppai tree (*madhuca indica*). He then took up 'residence' at the Vazhai Thottam (plaintain grove). In the days and weeks that followed, as Lord Arunachala worked His power on him, the lad fell into protracted states of trance and all remaining preoccupation with food and sleep vanished. It thus fell to others to look after his physical needs.

<sup>3</sup> *Call Divine*, vol. 12, pp. 54-55; *Letters*, 30th December, 1945.

## Wordwise: Nididhyasana निदिध्यासन

*Nididhyasana*: *dhyai* is 'to contemplate'; *didhyasa* is *dhyatum iccha* or 'desire to meditate'; *ni* stands for *nitaram* meaning 'wholly', 'exceedingly', thus 'constant contemplation' or 'profound, continuous meditation'.

In Vedanta, the journey is said to be of three stages: *sravana*, hearing the teaching; *manana*, reflecting upon it; and *nididhyasana*, absorption beyond thought. Bhagavan tells us that *nididhyasana* eradicates *vasanas*. When asked which of the *asanas* is best? He replied: "Nididhyasana (one-pointedness of the mind) is the best." (*Talks* §557)





Each morning when devotees came to the temple for darshan, they passed the young sage absorbed in rapt attention on the Self and noticing his depleted form, began to bring him food offerings. As he was in a samadhi state, it was not clear how the offerings were to be administered. Finally, the concerned parties began thrusting food into the mouth of the motionless figure. On occasion when a 'meal' was to be given the following day, the donor discovered that so deep and sustained was his absorption, the offering of the previous day had remained overnight in his mouth, unswallowed.

### One Last Feast

As he became a familiar sight in the temple, one devotee used to stop on his way to have darshan in the inner sanctum and would sit in silence near the young swami. The man was well-known among the townsfolk and

people of consequence often visited his home. When officials came one day to visit him and arrangements were made for a feast, he decided he should bring the Brahmana Swami along to offer him bhiksha. He thus came to the Subramanya Shrine and found the lad in meditation. He said, 'Get up, get up, let us go home, have bhiksha and come back.' The young swami's gradual signs and gestures indicated unwillingness but the elder persisted: "Leave yoga and tapas for a while. Come, let us have food". So saying, he took the boy's arm linked into his own and led him to his house near the temple chariot. When they reached it, the man gave him the largest leaf and the honoured position in his home. Bhagavan later said, "In those days I never bathed. The body smelled and no one would come near me. In this town, so many people would come [to see me] but he alone realized, that though a young boy, there was in [him] a fullness."<sup>4</sup>

### Mother's Milk

The Mouna Swami used to bring prasada from the morning abhishekam at Uma's shrine. It was a mixture of milk, water, turmeric powder, sugar, plantains and other sundry items. When the temple priest heard of it, he was pained and ordered that thenceforth pure milk offered to Mother first should be collected and set aside in order that the young Brahmana Swami might be better nourished<sup>5</sup>. Thus began the life of a renunciate.

*(to be continued)*

<sup>4</sup> "The only home [he] entered in Tiruvannamalai to have a meal" was that of the grandfather of one of his later devotees, the lawyer, T.P. Ramachandra Iyer. (*Mountain Path*, April 1979, pp. 111-12.)  
<sup>5</sup> *Ramana Maharshi and the Path of Self-Knowledge*, p.29.

## Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi: Dhyana and Nididhyasana

D.: What is *dhyana*?

M.: The word *dhyana* usually signifies meditation on some object, whereas *nididhyasana* is used for enquiry into the Self. The triads persist until the Self is realised. *Dhyana* and *nididhyasana* are the same so far as the aspirant is concerned, because they involve the trinity and are synonymous with bhakti.

D.: How should *dhyana* be practised?

M.: *Dhyana* serves to concentrate the mind. The predominant idea keeps off all others. *Dhyana* varies according to the individual. It may be on an aspect of God, on a mantra, or on the Self, etc. — *Talks* §52





## Spiritual Stories: Ahalya and Gautama

*[Regarding the curses inflicted by Ahalya and Gautama on each other, Sri Bhagavan gave the following clarification: "The incident is referred to only in the shala purana of Tiruchuli. Ramayana does not mention it. Coming to know from Viswamitra, in the court of Janaka, that his mother had been rendered motionless and was lying like a stone because of his father's curse, but had been redeemed by the sacred touch of Sri Rama's foot, regained her past awareness and united with her husband, Sadananda was filled with joy.*

*"When queried whether Ahalya becoming a stone was a mental creation, Sri Bhagavan said, "What else can it be? It cannot be for the body. Only ordinary people presume that her body became a stone and Rama transformed the stone into the lady. The mind, forgetful of the true nature of Self, lies inert like a stone. Since she is an ascetic, she regained her true nature and sang in praise of Rama as the manifestation of the abiding Truth. When Sri Rama set foot in the hermitage of Gautama, the lotus, that is the mind of Ahalya, started to blossom." The following story is told by Sri Bhagavan. (Letters, 20-1-49)]*

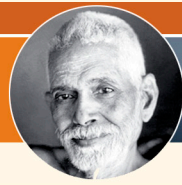
Ahalya, daughter of Brahma, was unsurpassed in beauty and Indra sought her hand. But her upcoming marriage favoured Gautama, the great ascetic. And yet, even after the ceremony, Indra did not give up.

Ahalya's chastity and service was famed and Gautama's new young wife ensured that her husband's austerities were never hindered in any way. The sage woke in the early hours and devoted himself to ritual and prayer. One day when he had gone out, Indra disguised himself as Gautama, entered the house and came upon Ahalya, who yielded unaware that the man was not her husband. When Gautama discovered the deception, he cursed Indra, causing him to bear the signs of womanhood all over his body. Thus he came to be known as the 'thousand-eyed one'. Gautama then turned his rage on his wife and with a curse, turned her to stone. Indignant, the latter said, "O you fool of a Muni! You've acted rashly. Do you not bear guilt in this? Should you not have protected me from such deceit?" But the spell had already taken effect. Ahalya then said, "At least tell me, how this spell may be broken?" Gautama, now calmer, said, "It can only be broken by the dust of Sri Rama's feet."

The sage attempted to take up his austerities, but found his mind lacked its usual stability and clarity. Recalling his wife's accusing words and his own rashness, he felt remorse. He knew the words of Ahalya—a chaste lady and daughter of Brahma—would have their effect. The only way out was to seek Lord Siva and behold his cosmic dance. For this he went to Chidambaram, but was told that such a vision could only take place in Tiruchuli. So the Muni with staff in hand, turned toward Tiruchuli. Already upon approach to the sacred town, his equanimity began to return. One Ardra day after performing long penance, Lord Siva as Nataraja granted him the vision of his cosmic dance.

Meanwhile Ahalya, sanctified by the touch of Lord Rama's sacred feet, regained her state of purity and was united with her husband. The sage prayed that he and his wife might be granted the boon of witnessing the *Kalyanotsavam* (marriage rites) of Parvati and Parameswara before commencing their life together again. When the Compassionate One heard the plea, it was granted. Their hearts happy again, the couple returned home at long last and resumed their life together. —



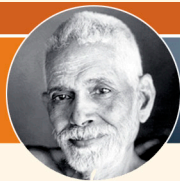


## Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Bhagavan's 135th Jayanti Celebrations

On Purnavasu Day in the Tamil month of Margazhi 135 years ago Bhagavan Sri Ramana was born in Thiruchuli. That night, Arudra darshan was underway in Bhuminatha Temple when the child first opened his eyes around 1am.

On January 6th, 2015, devotees came in large numbers in the morning and heard Nadaswaram music upon their arrival in Bhagavan's freshly decorated Shrine. They chanted Bhagavan's verses and participated in Mahanyasa puja when at 10.30am final arati took place. Devotees who could not be present that day had the opportunity to view the day's events by live-streaming from the Ashram: <http://gururamana.net>





## Introducing the Kendras: 2015 Jayanti Retreat in Tampa, Florida

On January 2-4, 2015, over fifty devotees from Canada, England, and the U.S. came together for Bhagavan's 135th Jayanthi Retreat at the Franciscan Center in Tampa, Florida. With its simple, quiet beauty and peace-soaked air, the facility reminded one of Sri Ramanasramam.

Each day the program started at 6am with Veda-parayana and ended at 9pm with *Aksharamanamalai*, *Ramana Satguru*, *Upadesa Saram* and *Arunachala Pancharatnam*, parayanam and meditation. In between, the days were spent on readings about the glory of the Satguru, and on listening to talks by invited speakers, Mr. Louis Buss from the U.K. and Dr. Shanta Ramachandran (Prof. K. Swaminathan's daughter). Mr. Buss talked about his research into how Major Chadwick came to Bhagavan. Shantamma reminisced about Bhagavan's stillness, his dispassion and natural calmness when the dressing over his tumor was changed, and about his divinity in human form.

On the evening of the first day, devotees travelled to a Hindu temple to attend a thrilling and sublime puja. Including two temple priests, eleven Ritviks chanted Rudram while the priests performed Abhishekam to the Shiva Lingam and to a rock from the slopes of Arunachala. The unveiling of the decorated Lingam brought joy to the hearts of the devotees. On the evening of the second day, all sat on the banks of the Hillsborough River and chanted bhajans under the silvery light of a nearly full moon.

More than a commemorative event, this retreat was a joyous occasion to celebrate Bhagavan's living, guiding Presence, which was tangibly felt by all. Viswanatha Swami called it "*Ramana lahari*, the blissful atmosphere of Ramana". Like the aroma of a fragrant flower, it pervaded the facility and filled the hearts of devotees.

This wonderful experience, where one was able to rejoice in the glory of the Master and celebrate the practice of His universal teaching would not have







been possible without the untiring efforts of Mr. Rohit Vaidya and his fellow devotees from Tampa and Fort Lauderdale, and the support of Arunachala Ashrama, New York. Mr. Vaidya concluded the

retreat with the thought that the host devotees were the string and the guest devotees were the flowers for a garland for Bhagavan on His Jayanthi. All by His Grace! Sri Ramanarpanamastu! —

## Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Nochur Sri Venkataraman Discourses



Nochur Sri Venkataraman's seven discourses in English commenced the day after Jayanti on the 7th January. Continuing from the series last year on Bhagavan's *Aksharamanamalai*, the talks picked up from v. 9 and averaged a verse per day, reaching v. 17. Webcast through <http://gururamana.net>, daily attendance grew over the course of the week as word got round. If it be Bhagavan's will, devotees may reasonably hope for a continuation of this engaging series in coming years as no fewer than 91 verses remain. *[On a solemn note, in light of the sudden loss of his mother last week, may devotees hold Nochur and his family in their hearts during this time of bereavement. —Editor]*

## Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Swami Ramanananda Day



Swami Ramanananda's Samadhi Day was observed with abhishekam, singing and arati at his Shrine on the 8th January with devotees in attendance. This year marks the 7th year since his passing away in late December, 2007.

## Obituary: Pachaiappan



Pachaiappan from Chettipattu came to Bhagavan in 1941 at the age of 16. His father, Krishna Konar, served for years at Skandasramam and was one of the pallbearers for Bhagavan's mother that fateful May morning in 1922. As a young boy in the Ashram, Pachaiappan recalled Cow Lakshmi lifting her head and calling out to Bhagavan as he walked by. Once when Bhagavan stopped to stroke Lakshmi affectionately, he squatted and eased out a few drops of milk from her full udder into his *kamandalu*. In 1947 while working high up on a ladder in the Mother's Shrine, Pachaiappan took a bad fall and suffered permanent hearing loss. But such catastrophes never dulled his joyful spirit. When the temple construction was completed in 1949, he returned to his native village and was married the year following Sri Bhagavan's Mahanirvana. Later, he returned to serve permanently in the Ashram, first at Mangala Nivas (President's compound), then at Morvi Guest House and finally in Kurangu Thotam. Former Ashram President, T.N. Venkataraman, and his wife Nagu were fond of pointing out Pachaiappan's sincerity. On December 23rd after a period of illness, Pachaiappan quietly passed away in his room in Kurangu Thotam. He is survived by two daughters and his son, Mohan, who serves in the Ashram bookstall. —

