

Saranagati



SARANAGATI
SRI RAMANASRAMAM

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D. Thiyagarajan



Saranagati



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IN THIS
ISSUE

Dear Devotees,

The month of January brought the good cheer of Makara Sankranthi and Mattu Pongal. With the monsoon season concluded, sunny days have been punctuated by cool nights.

In this February issue we take up the life story of T.K. Sundaresa Iyer, the life-long devotee who came up the hill to see Bhagavan for the first time at the tender age of 11.

For videos, photos and other news of events, go to <<https://sriramanamaharshi.org>> or write to us at <saranagati@gururamana.org>. For the web version: <http://sriramana.org/saranagati/February_2023/> or <<https://saranagati.arunachala.org/issues/>>.

In Sri Bhagavan,
Saranagati

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Calendar of Ashram Events

7th Feb (Wed) Pradosham
21st Feb (Wed) Punarvasu/Pradosham
22nd Feb (Thu) Nataraja Abhishekam
24th Feb (Sat) Pournami
29th Feb (Thu) Sundaram Iyer Day
8th Mar (Fri) Mahasivaratri/Pradosham

15th Mar (Fri) Sri Vidya Havan
22nd Mar (Fri) Pradosham
24th Mar (Sun) Pournami
6th Apr (Sat) Pradosham
9th Apr (Tue) Telugu New Year
14th Apr (Sun) Tamil New Year/Nirvana Room Day



IN PROFILE

T. K. Sundaresa Iyer

AMONG devotees surrounding Sri Bhagavan, some stand out as exceptional. Exhibiting unparalleled faith, their lives seem to be interwoven with his divine presence. When we compare ourselves to them, we are struck by a profound sense of humility, wonder what has become of all that greatness, but nevertheless find ourselves inspired by the example of those blessed to be in Bhagavan's presence.

Any genuine search among the lives of those who lived and moved with Bhagavan will invariably

bring us to the life of T.K. Sundaresa Iyer. TKS, as he was familiarly known, had been born into an orthodox family and since his early youth, followed the traditional guidelines for religious life. Disciplines learned at a tender age set the stage for a life that would be lived in the presence of the Sage.

As it would turn out, when still a boy, TKS was persuaded by an elder cousin to join him on regular visits to Bhagavan who was then living up on the Hill. Thus, TKS made his climb up to Virupaksha Cave in the innocence of youth. Though still a child, his heart was ripe for spiritual growth and from the very first encounter, his interaction with the Sage was imbued with depth and meaning. Over time a bond in the unspoken language of souls was forged between them as the following pages demonstrate:

In 1908, when I was 12 years old, Bhagavan was still in Virupaksha Cave. My cousin, Krishnamurthy, used to go to Bhagavan every day and sing songs of devotion and worship before him. One day I asked him where he went each day. He told me: "The Lord of the Hill Himself is sitting there in human form. Why don't you come with me?"

I too climbed the hill and found Bhagavan sitting on a stone slab, with about ten devotees around him. Each would sing a song. Bhagavan turned to me and asked, "Well, won't you sing a song?" One of Sundaramurthy's songs¹ came to my mind and I sang it. Its meaning was: "No other support I have except Thy Holy Feet. By holding on to them, I shall win your grace. Great men sing your praise, Oh Lord. Grant that my tongue may repeat Thy Name even when my mind strays." "Yes, that is what must be done," said Bhagavan, and I took it to be his teaching. From then on Bhagavan linked me inseparably to himself. From that time on I went to him regularly never missing a day.²

Later recalling those initial impressions, he scribbled the following remarks in poetic prose:

Had you seen him in those days, you would hardly have taken him for a mere human being. His figure was a statue of burnished gold. He simply sat and sat, and rarely spoke. The words he spoke on any day could easily be counted. He was an enchanting personality, who shed a captivating lustre on all, and a life-giving current

¹ TKS later notes: *It was the famous Namasivayapadikam, commencing 'Matrupatrenakkinri', the gift of the great Saint Sri Sundaramurti Naayanaar.*

² *At the Feet of Bhagavan: Leaves from the Diary of T. K. Sundaresa Iyer, p. 3.*





flowed from him, charging all those nearby, while his sparkling eyes irrigated those around him with the nectar of his Being.³

Though young in years, TKS's discernment was remarkably mature, as if he had already begun to grapple with the profound questions that normally occupy adult seekers. He explored basic existential questions—the purpose of life and the path that leads to wholeness and happiness—with an acuity beyond his years. However, within a few years, doubts arose, just as they might with any adult coming to Bhagavan:

One day I wondered why I was visiting him at all. What was the use? There seemed to be no inner advancement. Going up the hill was meaningless toil. I decided to end my visits on the hill. For one hundred days exactly, I did not see Bhagavan. On the hundred and first day I could suffer no longer and ran to Skandasramam. Bhagavan saw me climbing, got up and came forward to meet me. When I fell at his feet, I could not restrain myself and burst out in tears. I clung to them and would not get up. Bhagavan pulled me up and asked: "It is over three months since I saw you. Where were you?" I told him how I thought that seeing him was of no use. "All right," he said, "maybe it is of no use, so what? You felt the loss, did you not?" Then I understood that we did not go to him for profit, but because away from him there was no life for us.⁴

Time passed and TKS maintained his regular visits to Bhagavan. In the meantime, the family found him a suitable spouse and he was married. He took up "a well-ordered family life as laid down in the scriptures", studied the Vedas, worshipped the ancestors and deities in the prescribed way, and "fed the five kinds of living beings." Additionally, he felt the urge to do something for the betterment of the broader humanity and went from village to village

³ "Sri Ramana Gives Rama-Darsan," *Call Divine*, vol. 8, pp. 216-217.

⁴ *At the Feet*, p. 4.

teaching the *Periya Puranam*, all the while continuing to visit Bhagavan on the Hill.

By 1916, Bhagavan was no longer living at Virupaksha but had shifted up to Skandasramam with its perennial water source. As word spread that a *jivanmuktha* was living on the Hill, pilgrims and seekers, devotees, and dignitaries from all over South India began to appear.

TKS tells of one orthodox Vaishnava from Kanchipuram⁵ who came and prostrated each morning and evening to Bhagavan. Though all praise for Bhagavan, the holy man openly worried how a *jivanmukta* like Bhagavan could attain the 'Abode of Vishnu' without any formal initiation into monastic life. Tradition holds that great souls in the role of teacher, guide, guru, and luminary should be in *kavi*. The Vaishnava said that his teacher had sent him because he was concerned for the welfare of the Maharshi. His teacher, he said, had been "commissioned by God in a dream" to give Bhagavan *sannyasa diksha*. Bhagavan did not respond to these remarks but when the Vaishnava raised the matter of the dream a second time, Bhagavan simply said:

Let the same Lord appear in my dream also and order me to accept the initiation, then I shall accept it.⁶

It so happened that around this time, an elderly Brahmin came up to Skandasramam with a bundle. After prostrating to Bhagavan, he laid his bundle and went out for a bath. When he did not return, all began

⁵ Or possibly Sri Ranganam. TKS could not remember which.

⁶ "The Deeksha Proposed to Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi," *Call Divine*, vol. 9, p. 571.

Spiritual Instructions: Chapter 2, §4

Remaining Still Inwardly is Intense Activity

Is the state of 'being still' a state involving effort or effortless?

It is not an effortless state of indolence. All mundane activities which are ordinarily called effort are performed with the aid of a portion of the mind and with frequent breaks. But the act of communion with the Self (*atma vyavahara*) or remaining still inwardly is intense activity which is performed with the entire mind and without break. Maya (delusion or ignorance) which cannot be destroyed by any other act is completely destroyed by this intense activity which is called 'silence' (*mouna*). —





Bhagavan, Ganapati Muni, Palaniswami, Ramanatha Brahmachari, and Gambhiram Seshayya at Virupaksha Cave, ca 1913

to wonder what had happened to him. Curious to know the contents of the bundle, Bhagavan had it untied and found a palm-leaf manuscript of the *Arunachala Purana* and thumbed through its pages where he found a verse on *sannyasa dbiksha*:

*To souls living within twenty-four miles of Arunachala, union with Me will be granted, even without any initiation, to remove impurity. Thus, have I decreed, and this is My bebest.*⁷

TKS describes the saintly Vaishnava's way of making sense of all of this:

*The very appearance at that time of the Arunachala Purana and the disappearance of the old Brahmin seemed to the Vaishnava to be equally mysterious. All felt that Lord Arunachaleswara Himself had presented the verse as an answer to the Vaishnava's inquiries. This pious devotee thus took leave of Bhagavan saying he would report the whole story to his teacher.*⁸

The question of Bhagavan taking initiation was thus resolved.

Ganapati Muni

TKS got to witness such events first-hand. On days he was not present, he would invariably hear about the goings-on of the previous day from those living on the Hill and he ever marvelled at the wonders surrounding life with Bhagavan.

When TKS turned 19, he began to reside permanently in Tiruvannamalai and thus never had to leave Bhagavan's presence for long. Three years

⁷ Ibid., p. 571

⁸ Ibid., p. 572.

later at the age of 22, he met one of Bhagavan's devotees who would make a huge impression on him:

*About 1920 Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni came to reside at Tiruvannamalai. Everyone used to address him as 'Nayana'. He was already a disciple of Bhagavan. He became the president of the Tiruvannamalai Town Congress Committee. From my early days I was in Tilak's movement and did not see much future in Mahatma Gandhi's programme. One day I said to Nayana: "I do not expect much from political activities; without God's grace no action will prosper. To ask for grace is our main task. People like you, who are blessed with grace in abundance, should use your spiritual powers for the uplift of the world and liberation of the country and not waste your time on speeches." He liked the idea and asked me to stay with him and pray to God for grace. He made me study the Vedas and taught me verses from the Rig-Veda.*⁹

By this time, the Muni¹⁰ enjoyed widespread repute and was known for his profound scholarship and poetic prowess (hence the title, Kavyakantha, meaning 'poetry in the throat'). After embarking on a pilgrimage at the age of 18, the Muni travelled extensively, undergoing *tapas* in various puranic *kshetras* during which time he came to Arunachala. In 1903 he met Bhagavan, known then as Brahmanaswami. The following year Ganapati Muni accepted a teaching position in Vellore, and in 1907, accepted Bhagavan as his Guru. It was the year after that, in 1908, that he declared the young Brahmanaswami as 'Ramana Maharshi'.

TKS began to undergo formal training in the Vedas under the Muni. And what better apprenticeship in becoming a Ramana devotee could he have hoped for:

*Sri Kavyakanta Ganapati Muni was at that time in Tiruvannamalai; his Vaidika Sabha Society was very active, and he gave a series of discourses on the Vedas. His magnetic personality and exposition of the greatness of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi so deeply impressed me that I decided to study the Vedas at his feet and was gladly accepted as a student. The Muni was then living in the Mango-Tree Cave below the Virupaksha Cave on the Hill. Eight years I studied the Scriptures under him; daily we visited the Maharshi together and enjoyed the benefit of His presence.*¹¹

TKS began to teach in a local school and thereby earned a living to support his family. He was later

⁹ *At the Feet*, p. 5.

¹⁰ Born in Kaluvarai, Vizianagaram, November 1878.

¹¹ *At the Feet*, p. 18.





made the General Secretary of Mahendra Societies which had by then been started all over India:

*Their object was to win freedom for our country by purely devotional means, like rituals, prayers, and personal and collective penance. We managed to register about ten thousand members. Nayana mainly stayed in the Mango Tree Cave on Arunachala and used to visit Bhagavan off and on. Nayana used to discuss shastras with him and get his doubts cleared. He was a mighty scholar, while Bhagavan was just literate, yet he would say: "Without Bhagavan's grace, the intricacies of the scriptures are beyond one's power of understanding. One word from him makes everything clear."*¹²

TKS tells how Nayana, when seeing someone sitting in front of Bhagavan meditating with his eyes closed, would scold the devotee, saying:

*When the Sun is shining in front of you, why do you need to close your eyes?*¹³

TKS comments:

*Those were happy days indeed, and I was blessed with many visions of deities and divinities.*¹⁴

Life with Bhagavan at Skandasramam offered innumerable insights into the nature of the Sage, and simply observing Bhagavan revealed the Master's mysterious ways. More than that, lessons in simple living could be gained, not least of all, in how to behave in circumstances that were out of the ordinary.

One day a huge black cobra appeared at Skandasramam. The resident peacock who was in the habit of following Bhagavan everywhere took it upon himself to protect his Master:

*The peacock attacked [the cobra] fiercely. The cobra spread its hood and the two natural enemies were poised for a fight to the death, when Bhagavan came quite near the cobra and said: "Why did you come here? That peacock will kill you. Better go away at once." The cobra immediately lowered its hood and slithered away.*¹⁵

Another noteworthy encounter with animals took place in the days of the plague in Tiruvannamalai when Bhagavan and sadhus were living at Pachaiamman Kovil. A newcomer arrived by train one hot afternoon to visit Bhagavan. When the question of his bath came up, he was directed by Bhagavan's devotees to

¹² Ibid., p. 5.

¹³ Ibid., p. 6.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 6.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 7.



Bhagavan and Nayana in front of Skandasramam, ca 1918

have his bath in the tank in front of the temple. Not long after he had gone, Bhagavan suddenly went out toward the same tank:

*When Bhagavan came near the tank, he saw a leopard there coming to quench his thirst, unnoticed by the bathing newcomer. Bhagavan said quietly to the animal, "Go now, and come back later; otherwise, he will be frightened". At these words, the animal departed. Sri Bhagavan then went up to the bather, who had by then finished his bath, and said to him: "We should not come at this time of day; wild animals come because of the heat and quench their thirst." Bhagavan did not mention that a wild animal had actually just been there, lest the man get a fright.*¹⁶

One evening after 7 p.m., Bhagavan and sadhus were all coming down the Hill from Virupaksha Cave to go for pradakshina. Others had gone in advance and only Ganapati Muni was in the company of Bhagavan,

¹⁶ "In Both the Brute and the Man", *Call Divine*, vol 2, pp. 101-102.





Pachaiamman Kovil

slowly climbing down the steps. Suddenly Bhagavan stopped. The full moon was shining bright in the starry sky above. Pointing to the moon and the vast clear starry sky, Bhagavan said:

*Nayana! if the moon, and all the stars have their being in ME, and the sun himself goes round My hip with his satellites, who am I? Who am I?*¹⁷

The Muni immediately thought of the Great Person of the Vedas, as described in the *Rudram*, the *Purusba Sukta*, and the *Skambha Sukta* of the *Atharva Veda*, where He is verily all these, as well as That beyond; there is nothing that is not He.¹⁸ (Of course, we can imagine that Bhagavan was speaking of the Self which is himself and each one of us, too.)

In May 1922, mother Alagammal passed away and in December that year, Bhagavan came down the Hill where,

17 "Who Am I, Nayana?", *Call Divine*, vol. 2, pp.260-261.

18 Ibid., p. 260.

simply by virtue of his presence, Sri Ramanasramam was established. A grass hut was constructed over the samadhi, and Bhagavan took up residence at its foot. A small, elevated seat of cement was installed by one devotee who used to visit Bhagavan up on the Hill. Bhagavan used to sit on it day and night.

One Sivaratri Day after evening worship at the shrine was over and devotees had eaten their dinner, Bhagavan sat on his seat with the devotees at his feet. At 8 pm one of the Sadhus stood up, did pranam, and addressed the Maharshi:

Today is the Sivaratri Day; we should be highly blessed by Sri Bhagavan expounding to us the meaning of the Hymn to Dakshinamurti (stotra).

Bhagavan replied:

Yes, sit down.

TKS describes what happened next:

The Sadhu sat, and all eagerly looked at Sri Bhagavan and Sri Bhagavan looked at them. Sri Bhagavan sat and sat in his usual pose, no, poise. No words, no movement, and all was stillness! He sat still, and all sat still, waiting. The clock went on striking, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, one, two and three. Sri Bhagavan sat, and they sat. Stillness, calmness, motionlessness — not conscious of the body, of space or time. Thus, eight hours were passed in Peace, in Silence, in Being, as It is. Thus was the Divine Reality taught through the speech of Silence by Bhagavan Sri Ramana Dakshinamurthy. At the stroke of 4 a.m. Sri Bhagavan quietly said: "And now have you known the essence of the Dakshinamurti Hymn"? All the devotees stood and made pranam to the holy Form of the Guru in the ecstasy of their Being.¹⁹

In 1924 an unusual visitor came to meet Bhagavan in the palm-leaf shrine:

19 *At the Feet*, p. 32.

Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Sivaprakasham Pillai



On 12th January, devotees gathered in the New Hall to recite Sivaprakasham Pillai's works and venerate his photo image on his annual remembrance day. —





The Old Hall had still not yet come into existence and Bhagavan sat in the thatched shed of the early days in front of the Matrubbhuteswara Shrine. One day at about 10 am a certain princely person appeared before Bhagavan. We need not mention names, but it is enough to say that he was very pious and devoted to the worship of Siva, learned in Tamil and in the Scriptures. He had great love for saints. Having heard of Sri Bhagavan's greatness, he had long been eager to pay his respects to him, and now after several years of effort had come to him. In his royal robes, he stood in the presence of Bhagavan for over half an hour. Nobody spoke to him or asked him to be seated. It seemed that he found pleasure in standing before Bhagavan and stood motionless like a statue; Bhagavan was equally still, sitting like a statue. His glorious eyes were all the time on that devout personality, blessing him with his grace. Bhagavan and he remained without any movement; there was perfect stillness in the room. It was a wonderful sight to see the Ekarat (Emperor of Saints) himself giving and the princely beggar receiving at his hands. After the half hour, the prince prostrated before Bhagavan and left. The funny side of this incident is that a sadhu who accompanied the prince returned with a few hundred-rupee notes and placed them at Sri Bhagavan's feet saying that the prince gave the money to help the sadhus there. The Master remarked: "Look at this! A prince,



The Palm-Leaf Shrine over Mother's Samadhi, ca 1924

finding no peace or pleasure in his own environment, comes to beg of this pauper (kaupinadhari means 'wearing only a codpiece'), thinking that what is in us is the real thing that life needs, and you run after him to beg of that beggar! How clever of you!"²⁰ —

(to be continued)

²⁰"The Ekarat and the Princely Beggar", *Call Divine*, vol. 8, pp. 646-647.

Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Ram Mandir Day



On the morning of 22nd January 2024 while the Ram Mandir was consecrated in north India by Prime Minister Narendra Modi along with dignitaries, VIPs, athletes, and celebrities, Sri Ramanasramam marked the day with a special puja followed by a discourse in Tamil on the significance of the day by Brahmasri Tatvamasi Ganapadigal. —





Sri Bhagavan's 144th Jayanti Online Celebrations

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi Jayanthi Day celebrations on 21st January 2024 involved Satsang groups from New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Boston, Washington DC, Ohio, Detroit, Georgia, Tampa, Houston, Austin, San Francisco, Tennessee, Los Angeles, Seattle, Ottawa, Toronto, Michigan, Australia, UK, and France. Swami Yogatmananda Ji, President Of Vedanta Society, Providence, Rhode Island spoke in the morning and the celebrations culminated with Sri Ramanasramam President, Dr. Venkat S. Ramanan giving the keynote address at the online gathering's conclusion. For the full talk, see <<https://youtube.com/embed/t2ZZvzAgxoE>>; and for other online Jayanti events, see: <<https://youtube.com/embed/BDFi6lYjQbY>>. —



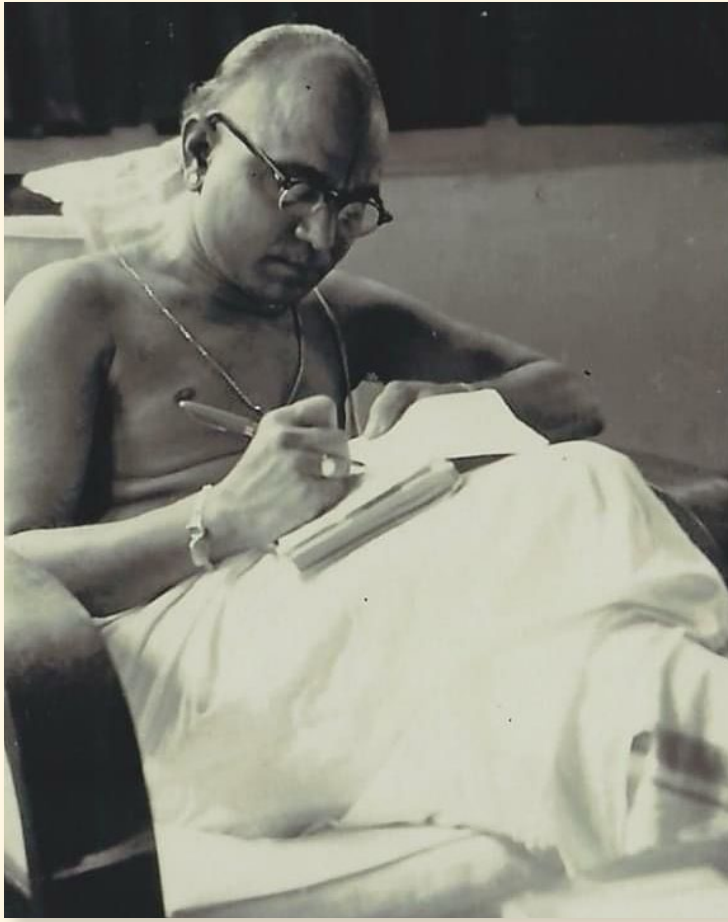
In Focus: Special Edition

For the newly released, *In Focus: Special Edition*, see: <<https://youtube.com/embed/IKxXh7T16Mg>>. For the February edition, see the following: <<https://youtube/amaVtPjBUA?si=kGaKPIxSzhSvXXXX>>. —

Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Pongal Celebrations

On 15th January, Makara Sankranti was celebrated at the Surya shrine in Matrubhuteswara. Mattu Pongal took place the next day with Nandi puja and Cow Lakshmi puja followed by an elaborate puja in the Ashram gosala and feeding the Ashram gosala cows sweet pongal, agathi keerai and bananas. A small rite to venerate the cows at the Samudram gosala, the old-age home for cows next to the Samudra, concluded the colourful day of events. —





IN RETROSPECT

Embar Vijayaraghavachariar and the Harikatha of Sri Ramana

IN 1985, in an *All-India Radio* interview, Embar Vijayaraghavachariar shared an experience from 1944 when, following the request of Sri Ramana Satchidananda Sabha, he met Bhagavan Ramana to seek his permission to perform a Harikatha on Bhagavan's life. Sri Embar was then living in Mannargudi and came to Tiruvannamalai with his younger brother. Bhagavan's response was, 'Why now?' to which Embar replied, "When Rama was alive, Kusa and Lava sang the

Ramayana. I would be happy if I could also do 'Ramana Vijayam' when Bhagavan is still here in this world, and hope that Bhagavan can listen to it one day."

Bhagavan then gave his permission. In the following months, Sri Embar performed the Harikatha many times in India and abroad, including in the Arunachaleswara temple.

For those unfamiliar with this ancient musical storytelling tradition, Harikatha is an art form traceable to *Ramayana* times when Kusa and Lava sang the story of Lord Rama in the Ashwamedha Maha Mandapam in the presence of Lord Rama Himself. The first Harikatha singer, it seems, was Narada.

Early exponents of Harikatha were known as Keerthankars. The Maharashtrian Kings of Thanjavur brought Harikatha to Tamil Nadu where it was developed into a major art form by doyens like Thanjavur Krishna Bhagavathar, Mannargudi Chidambara Bhagavathar and Embar Vijayaraghavachariar. Carnatic music was woven into the form to tell stories of the Alwars and Nayanmars.

The musical form having once been performed in the presence of Lord Rama, now made the headlines and the story of Embar's performance of a Harikatha on Bhagavan's life appeared in *Day by Day*:

*A devotee brought and gave to Bhagavan a cutting from The Bombay Chronicle in which an account was given of how Ramana Jayanti was celebrated this year at Matunga, Bombay, by the Ramana Satchidananda Sangha and how one Vijayaraghava Bhagavatar of Mannargudi and his party performed an excellent Kalakshepam on Bhagavan and his life and teachings. The cutting was read out in the hall for the benefit of all. It said that a Harikatha was held on Ramana. Bhagavan said, "Harikatha on Ramana is a misnomer. Kalakshepam would have been more appropriate."*¹

In his comment, Bhagavan differentiates Kalakshepam from Harikatha. Often termed Katha Kalakshepam, meaning 'passing time with stories', specialists inform us that Kalakshepam denotes the act of narrating, reiterating, or deliberating holy scriptures, doctrines, or mystical writings in a solo narrative format. Kalakshepam involves singing ancient stories and acting out their characters' roles. It constitutes a formalized religious

¹ *Day by Day*, 30-12-1945.





discourse sung to the accompaniment of string and percussion instruments. Harikatha is a composite art form composed of storytelling, poetry, music, drama, dance, and philosophy. It consists of a lead musical storyteller who collaborates with a co-singer, a violinist, a mridangam player, and cymbals, in what has been called ‘solo performance theatre’. Both Kalakshepam and Harikatha involve the oral transmission of sacred knowledge, typically in a group setting, where the performer guides participants in the recitation of Puranic texts, helping the listener to assimilate the wisdom and moral teachings contained within them.²

Born to Embar Srirangachariar and Pundareeka Ammal in Chidambaram, Embar Vijayaraghavachariar descends from a family of Embars,³ the first being the cousin of Sri Bhagavad Ramanuja—the acharya who popularized the tenets of Vaishnavism. Embar Vijayaraghavachariar had the unique privilege of being the first person to perform Harikatha on the life of Seshadri Swamigal and then in 1945, that of Sri Ramana, both of whom his father had been associated with.

Born in the lineage of Ramanuja, Embar Vijayaraghavachariar was known for popularizing the stories of Saivaite saints. His performance of

² <<https://www.thehindu.com/society/history-and-culture/harikatha-storytelling-through-mime-and-music/article>>.

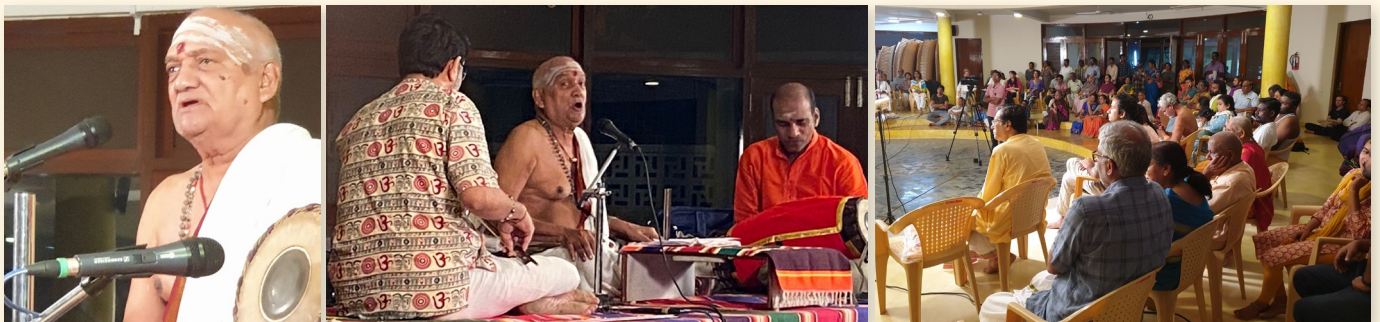
³ Embar’s grandfather was the illustrious Embar Varadachariar who learnt *sastra* from his uncle Mahamahopadhyaya Nadadur Sadagopachariar. His father, Chidambaram Srirangachariar was also an eminent Harikatha exponent.



Periyapuraanam and *Nandan Charitram*, experts tell us, remains unsurpassed even to the present day.⁴ —

⁴ Taken from a write-up by Hema Valapet which draws from ‘Harikatha in the Four States of South India’, *The Music Academy Journal* (2011), vol. 82 and *Embar Vijayaraghavachariar*, a biography by the late Embar Vasudevan.

Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Sri Ramana Vijayam



On 26th December 2023 as part of the centenary celebrations of Sri Ramanasramam, Thanjavur Sri N. Srinivasan accompanied by Madurai M. Vijay Ganesh on violin and K. Madheshwaran on mridangam, performed the Harikatha, *Sri Ramana Vijayam* based on Sri Embar’s original *Nirupanam*. —





Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Arunachaleswarar at Pandava Kovil



In 2017, Sri Ramanasramam renovated Pandava Tirtham. In 2022, Sri Ramanasramam renovated the temple which was rededicated 18 months ago. After 64 years, Pandava temple is fully functioning and this year, during the annual Pongal hill-rounding, Lord Arunachaleswarar came to Pandava Kovil. Ashram President Dr. Venkat S. Ramanan was on hand along with Ashram devotees to receive the procession on early morning of the 17th of January. —

Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Arunachaleswarar Pradakshina



On 17th January, the third day of Pongal celebrations, Lord Arunachaleswarar came to Sri Ramanasramam on His annual Pongal circumambulation of the Holy Hill. Devotees gathered to have darshan of the Lord. —

Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Kalaimamani Sri Sikkil Gucharan



On Saturday evening, 20th January, Kalaimamani Sri Sikkil Gucharan Srinivasan performed accompanied on violin by Sri Sayee Rakshith, on keyboard by Sri Ravi G, and on percussion, Sri Sarvesh Karthick. —





Obituary: Sri Griddaluri Krishna Murthy



Born 13th July 1936 to Griddaluri Sri Satyanarayana Rao and Smt. Venkata Subbamma, Sri Griddaluri Krishna Murthy (affectionately known as Krishna Mama) received the name Krishna Murthy directly from Bhagavan in March 1936. Growing up in a family deeply devoted to Bhagavan, he was blessed to have Bhagavan's darshan as a boy and centred his life on spiritual development. At an early age, he lost his father who breathed his last in Sri Bhagavan's presence in 1939. The boy came under the care of Sri Griddaluri Sambasiva Rao, the reputed lawyer of Nellore and respected devotee who, on behalf of Sri Bhagavan, had signed his will in 1938. Sambasiva Rao assumed the responsibility of bringing up Krishna Mama, his two elder sisters, Rukmini and Bala Saraswathi, and his younger sister, Varalakshmi.

Krishna Mama performed both the final rites for Sri Koduri Venkata Ratnam Garu (known as Ramanasrayee) who served as Bhagavan's personal attendant for nearly a decade and the yearly ceremony (*abdikam*) which he maintained from 1976 until the end of his life (2023). Krishna Mama believed in the adage, "Service to Bhagavan's devotees is service to Bhagavan."

Krishna Mama was a central figure in his large extended family comprised of sisters, brothers, nephews and nieces and the devotees of Sri Bhagavan. He was a beacon of light and guided those around him by example. He practised and preached, "Whatever you eat and drink, offer it to your *ishta devata*," and satsangs with him left participants with renewed faith in Bhagavan. In 1969, Krishna Mama underwent a turning point when he experienced a profound inner awakening (*antarmukham*) at Ramanasramam, further deepening his commitment to the Ramana path.

Krishna Mama found spiritual enrichment through companionship with devotees who had known Sri Bhagavan, among them, Swami Ramanananda, Sampooramma, Suri Nagamma, Kanakamma, Dwarakanath Reddy, Mahipatram Dave, Dr. KS, Balaram Reddy, Shiva Mohanlal, Bhimavaram Raju, and Sivananda Murthy. Krishna Mama's journey culminated in attaining *Ramanaikyam* at the age of 87 during meditation on 16th December 2023 at 8:01 am. —

Sri Ramanasramam Calendar 2024



SRI RAMANASRAMAM SPECIAL DAYS 2024

Festival/Function	English Date	
Pongal	15-01-2024	Monday
Chinnaswamigal Aradhana	25-01-2024	Thursday
Sundaram Iyer Day	29-02-2024	Thursday

Maha Sivaratri	08-03-2024	Friday
Sri Vidya Havan	15-03-2024	Friday
Telugu New Year	09-04-2024	Tuesday
Tamil New Year	14-04-2024	Sunday
Sri Rama Navami	17-04-2024	Wednesday
Bhagavan's 74th Aradhana	06-05-2024	Monday
Maha Puja	31-05-2024	Friday
Cow Lakshmi Day	18-06-2024	Tuesday
Guru Poomima	21-07-2024	Sunday
Bhagavan's Advent Day	01-09-2024	Sunday
Navaratri Festival commences	03-10-2024	Thursday
Saraswati Puja	12-10-2024	Saturday
Vijayadasami	12-10-2024	Saturday
Deepavali	31-10-2024	Thursday
Karthigai Festival commences	04-12-2024	Wednesday
Deepam	13-12-2024	Friday
Bhagavan's 145 Jayanti	17-12-2024	Tuesday





Best Shot: Mattu Pongal Cricket



Dev Gogoi

Spot the ball (hint at the end of this text). Tiruvannamalai has enjoyed the longest spell ever of fine weather, for this time of year, perfect for an informal game of cricket. The space between the heritage *Gentlemen's Guestroom* and the *Veda Patasala* presents an ideal pitch, with a set of iridescent green plastic wickets, sans bails, at the *Cowshed* end, and the *Kitchen/Dining Hall* at the bowler's end. Both students and priests get to fit in a few overs into a full daily schedule, a delightful contrast to the devotional atmosphere that pervades the premises. The smack of the bat striking the ball, and spontaneous cries from the players,

lends an air of excitement to a game that is infinitely adaptable to available equipment and circumstance. —

[Hint: look towards short mid-on, between the non-striking batsman and bowler, the shrubbery and the thatch roof].

Obituary: Smt. Margo Martin

Born in Texas on 27th October 1938, Margo moved to New York City where she studied art at *The Cooper Union*. She also studied acting, worked as a model and did promotional writing for scientific publications. She later taught graphic arts at *Pratt Institute* as an adjunct professor.

Margo came to Bhagavan in the early 1970s in the aftermath of an advaitic experience for which she had no words. When she read Bhagavan, however, she began to understand her experience. Discovering Bhagavan proved to be the balm for the difficulties of her youth which left her struggling with periodic insomnia and bouts of depression. Under Bhagavan's care, however, these afflictions reduced over time, and compassion and wisdom flowered as her meditation practice deepened.

In September 1973, she joined the evening practice of meditation at Arunachala Ashrama on 6th Street. Immediately she was taken by the devotees she met there, not least of all Arunachala Bhakta Bhagavata and Dennis Hartel. Subsequently, she took up residence in Arunachala Ashram where she lived for many years.

In 1979, she made her first pilgrimage to India to visit Sri Ramanasramam. Her enthusiasm for Bhagavan's realm was so great that she and a devotee travelling with her went for *giri valam* every day. It was only when Kunju Swami mentioned that she need not go around the Hill every day that she scaled back to a more modest once-every-second-day circumambulation. Her last visit to Ramanasramam took place in 2019 just before Covid.

Margo died peacefully in the early morning hours of 17 January following a battle with colon cancer. She leaves behind a large group of friends and fellow devotees who have cherished her friendship over the decades. She is survived by her loving daughter, Annie Troutman, her niece Jennifer Martin Spera, and her nephew Joel Martin. —

