

Saranagathi



eNewsletter from www.sriramanamaharshi.org

In This Issue

Dear Devotee,

May Sri Bhagavan's Blessings be on all, to guide us in our 'inner quest' and towards the goal of 'self-realization', and thus a 'Happy 2009'. We hope one of the New Year Resolutions, is to recommit to the 'Ramana Way', to attain our 'Self'.

In this issue, we present an extract from S.S. Cohen's book *Guru Ramana* describing Deepam day at the Ashram in 1949, in the Holy presence of Sri Bhagavan. The spiritual significance of Deepam has been explained by Sri Bhagavan as follows:

*To make the intellect rid of the sense
'I am the body', and to introspect
By fixing it securely in the Heart,
And so perceive the true light of the SELF,
The one 'I-I', which is the ABSOLUTE.
This the significance of witnessing
The Beacon Light of Arunachala.*

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

In This Issue	1
The Essence of Instruction	1
Deepam Day	2
Ashram Gosala	3-4
Report from Sri Ramanasramam	5-6

This year too, [Karthigai Deepam](#) drew huge crowds. We continue our series on the different departments at the ashram with a write up about the 'Gosala' (cowshed), followed by reports on several recent happenings at Sri Ramanasramam.

New additions to the website this month: [Old Devotees' interview](#) and ['What are Ramana Satsangs?'](#)

We hope to hear from you, about your satsangs and experience of Him. Please send your emails to us at saranagathi@sriramanamaharshi.org.

Yours in Sri Bhagavan,

Editorial Team.

The Essence of Instruction

*Better than spells of meditation
Is one continuous current,
Steady as a stream,
Or downward flow of oil.*

– Upadesa Saram by Sri Bhagavan (Verse 7).

Deepam Day: 1949

*An extract from **Guru Ramana** by Sri S.S.Cohen*

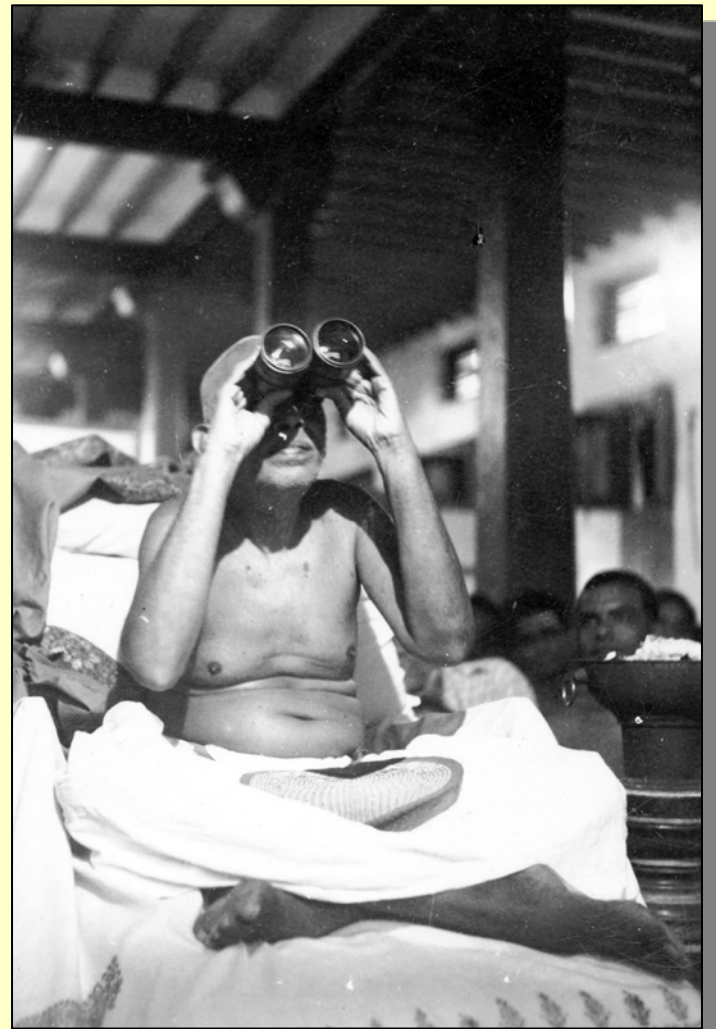
4th December, 1949.

This is Deepam Day – the full moon of the month of Kartikai – most holy to Hindus in the South. The holy beacon will be lighted tonight on the top of Arunachala, the Hill of Fire, which symbolizes the light of the Spirit in all hearts and in the universe. Arunachala, another name of Shiva, enthralled Sri Maharshi fifty-three years ago, when he was a mere youth in his teens and made him substance of His substance and indistinguishable from His Essence. Arunachala, a mere hill of stones, remained for him the blissful Universal Self and the Living Guru, both in one. Every year, since the foundation of this Ashram, this day has been celebrated in it with illumination, prayers, reading of the Vedas, and devotional songs, followed by distribution of several kinds of prasadam.

Tonight Sri Maharshi sat in the north verandah of the darshan hall from where he could directly see the top of the hill. All around him hundreds of devotees squatted, some on the cement verandah, but the majority on the sandy ground. Not far from his sofa stood the large brass vessel, three-quarters filled with pure ghee, surmounted by a thick wick, ready to be lighted at the right moment as the Ashram beacon, making a sacred triangle with those of the hill and of the big Arunachaleswara temple.

But this jubilation is not without a sting. Will the health of Sri Maharshi favour us with another Deepam day and be with us in the flesh, or is this to be the last? As we see him seated fresh and bright as ever, gazing expectantly at the top of his beloved Arunachala, we cannot help being optimistic of his recovery. The body which is stricken by a most malignant disease, hacked on many occasions by the surgeon's knife, burnt by radium, and drugged by all sorts of powerful drugs, bears no trace of the agonizing ordeal in the brilliance of its eyes or in the joyful expressions of its face. What miracles are being performed in it! What are its mysteries!

Ten minutes before sunset, the time for lighting the deepam, Sri Niranjananda Swami came on the scene. With bare breast and fresh from his bath and the Shaiva marks prominently drawn on his arms, chest and forehead, he stood by the side of the ghee basin and received the ghee offerings brought mostly by the lady-devotees and poured them into the ghee vessel. A minute or two before six, the flame suddenly leapt up on the top of the hill and our Ashram flame immediately followed it, accompanied by the reading of "nakarmana", after which the series of chanting, singing, etc. began.



Sri Bhagavan closely following the lighting of the deepam on top of Arunachala

Ashram Gosala

The gosala (cowshed) primarily grew around Cow Lakshmi who came to Sri Bhagavan in 1926 (covered in July 08 issue of Saranagathi). This article proposes to cover the growth of the gosala since then and highlight the hard work and diligence of the team working there.

The History

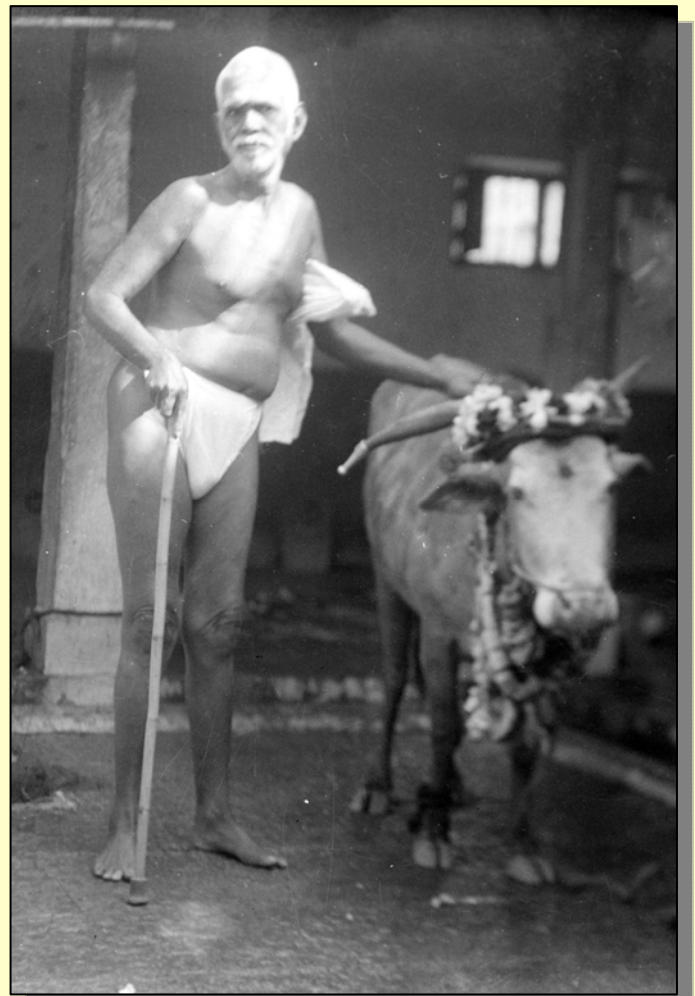
Sometime in 1926, four years after Bhagavan had come to live at the foot of the Holy Hill beside the Samadhi of the Mother, one Arunachala Pillai of Kannamangalam, near Gudiyatham, entered the Ashram with a cow and her young female calf and offered them to Bhagavan in token of his devotion. 'Why all this for us?' Bhagavan asked. Arunachalam Pillai replied saying, 'I have for a long time been thinking of presenting Bhagavan with a cow. I am now in a position to do so. I have brought it after a good deal of trouble on boat and rail. Please keep it, Swami.' Bhagavan said: 'You have done your duty in presenting it to us. Who is there to look after it? Please keep it with you on our behalf.' The owner of the cow replied, 'I will not take it away even if you cut my throat.' Hearing this Ramanatha Brahmachari was piqued and said with great zest that he himself would look after the cow and the calf. 'Alright. Hang it round your neck!' Bhagavan said.

Thereafter she remained one of the most prominent of the Ashram residents. Bhagavan has recounted a number of incidents in the life of Lakshmi testifying to her almost human intelligence, "After Mother came to stay with me, regular cooking and meals started, and after Lakshmi came, cattle and dairying became established. Subsequently for three or four years Lakshmi was presenting us with a calf every year on the Jayanti day. Altogether she had nine deliveries. After Lakshmi came here to stay, cows from different places were brought by devotees and left here. So the cattle shed grew in size. In the beginning they were tied up here and there under a thatched shed. When Salem Sundaram Chetty (Judge) came here, he decided to construct a gosala (cowshed) and fixed an auspicious time for the laying of the foundation stone. Half-an-hour before appointed time, when preparations were being made, Lakshmi broke loose from her tether and

came to me running as though to tell me that a house was being constructed for her and that I should be there. When I got up, she led me on to the spot. She did the same for her house-warming ceremony also. Somehow she used to understand everything. Very smart indeed!"

Today

These days the activities in the cowshed start as early as 2.30 a.m. There are about nine men looking after the cows, a supervisor and a milkman. The persons in charge of the Gosala take turns looking after the cows, washing them, cleaning the cowshed and the



Sri Bhagavan with Cow Lakshmi in the gosala

surroundings, feeding the cows and gathering green fodder from the fields. Early in the morning the four cowsheds are cleaned and the milching cows, the dry ones, the heifers and the calves are fed rice bran, oil cakes, cattle feed, etc. After they are fed the milking starts at about 5 a.m. and continues till 7.30 a.m. Partly manual milking and partly mechanized milking methods are employed. The cows are again fed at about 10 a.m. and a few cows are taken around the Ashram for grazing. Some of the men go for gathering the green fodder during this time and bring it to the cowshed. Evening milking starts around 3 p.m. and goes on till 5.30 p.m. after which the cows are tied in their respective pens for the night. There are separate pens for heifers, milching cows, calves, etc. The pens are always kept spic and span. The veterinarian from the local hospital visits regularly and as and when required.

The milk from the Gosala cows is only used for Ashram purposes and is supplemented by procuring milk from outside during events like Jayanti, Aradhana, Deepam, etc. The average daily yield of milk is about 200 litres and there are at present 120 cows including stud bulls, heifers, calves, milching cows, etc.

Interview with Sri V.S. Mani

“When a small cow-shed was proposed to be constructed to house cow Lakshmi, Bhagavan advised to build a larger cow-shed saying that he expected the Gosala to flourish and prosper. How prophetic! Now we have more than 110 cows & calves in addition to a 2 bullocks. So much so, we are self-sufficient in dairy products like milk, curd/buttermilk and ghee. It is heartening to see cows of traditional good Indian breeds like Gir, Tarparkar and Sindhi doing well and holding their head high alongside the cross-breeds. There are separate pens for suckling calves and heifers. It is ensured that balanced feed is given and service of a veterinary doctor is available when required. Cow dung from the Gosala is the main input for the two Gobar gas (bio gas) plants producing methane gas as fuel for our kitchen. During ‘Maatu Pongal’, which is celebrated in January, the Gosala wears a festival look with the cows gaily decorated with turmeric,

kumkum, flowers and their horns freshly painted. It is the firm conviction of devotees that the Ashram grew and prospered only after the Gosala was established.”



Gosala Staff



Milking the Cow



Tarparkar Cows

Giripradakshina of Annamalaiyar

Sri Arunachaleswarar, the main deity of the Arunachaleswarar temple in Tiruvannamalai, goes around the Hill (Giripradakshina) twice a year viz., the day after Karthigai Deepam and on the second day of the Tamil month Thai which falls on January 16/17th.

This year on December 13th Sri Arunachaleswarar (Somaskandar) was taken around the Hill accompanied by Apeethakuchambal Amman, the Arunachaleswarar and Amman from Adi Annamalai and Durgai Amman. The procession passed in front of the Ashram at around 12.30 p.m. and devotees eagerly received the Lord. Dhotis, sarees and garlands were offered to all the deities and aratis were performed.



Sama Veda & Krishna Yajur Veda Ghana Parayanam

As in the previous years this year also Sama Veda and Yajur Ghana were chanted at Sri Bhagavan's Shrine. Ghana Parayanam commenced on 2nd of December and lasted till 11th December while Sama Veda commenced on 3rd December and went on till 10th December. Ghana Parayanam (chanting) was between 7 and 8 a.m. and Sama Veda Parayanam was between 3 and 4 p.m. Devotees gathered at the auditorium and listened to the chanting of the Vedas.



'Annadhanam' on Deepam Day

Apart from the usual feeding of sadhus at 10.30 a.m., this deepam day, hundreds of devotees going round the Hill were also fed with rice and *sambar*. Usually only about 200/300 sadhus are fed. But on this day the number of people exceeded 600.



Visit of Shri Gangadharendra Saraswati Swamiji

Sri Jagadguru Shankaracharya Srimad Gangadharendra Saraswati Swamigal of Shri Sonda Swarnavalli Mahasamasthan (Sirsi), Karnataka visited the Ashram on 26th December 2008. He arrived at 8.30 p.m. with his entourage and was received with poorna kumbham by the Ashram President. After pooja at the Vedapatasala he paid his respects at the Shrines of Matrubhuteswara and Bhagavan. He spent a few minutes in the Old Hall and left at 11.30 p.m. Sri Swamiji mentioned that he had visited the Ashram about ten years ago and kindly enquired of Sri Swami Ramanananda.

