

Saranagati



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IN THIS
ISSUE

Dear Devotees,

This issue of *Saranagati* carries the first part of the life story of Prof. K. Swaminathan, who in 1960 was called upon by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to take up the task of collecting, collating, editing and publishing the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*. It was a project that would occupy him for the next 30 years and comprise a publication of colossal proportions: one hundred 500-page volumes of letters, speeches and writings of the saintly Father of the Nation.

Events at Sri Ramanasramam includes coverage of the 133rd Jayanti celebrations on the 29th December and the opening of Morvi Guesthouse. *Wordwise* this month looks at *dehatmabuddhi* or the prevalent idea that one is none other than one's body.

For further news and events, go to <http://www.sriramanamaharshi.org> or write to us at saranagathi@sriramanamaharshi.org

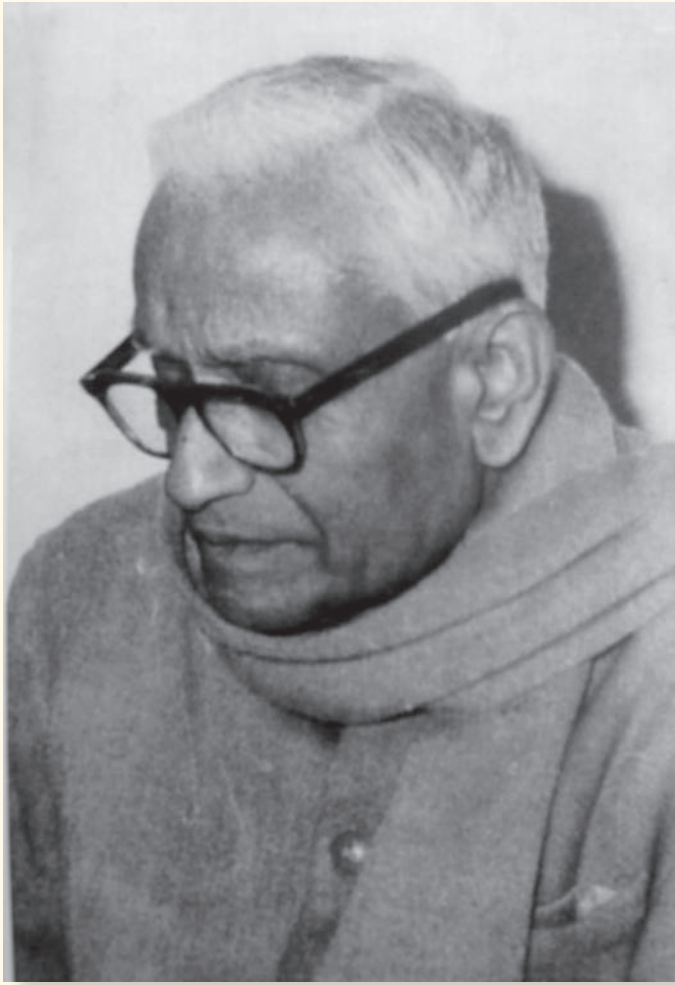
In Sri Bhagavan,
The Editorial Team

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Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi: Objectifying Consciousness

M.: There is the absolute Self from which a spark proceeds as [does a spark] from a fire. The spark is called the ego. In the case of an ignorant man, it identifies itself with an object simultaneously with its rise. It cannot remain independent of such association with objects. This association is *ajnana* or ignorance, whose destruction is the objective of our efforts. If its objectifying tendency is killed, it remains pure, and also merges into the source. The wrong identification with the body is *dehatmabuddhi* (the 'I-am-the-body' idea). This must go before good results follow.—*Talks §286*.





Coming to Bhagavan: The Life of Prof. K. Swaminathan

The life of Prof. K. Swaminathan spanned the breadth of nearly a century, a century fraught with global turmoil and cataclysm in the time of the British Raj in India, from the Industrial Revolution through two world wars up to Independence, and on, even up to the dawning of the internet age. The subcontinent had scarcely witnessed such colossal change in any one hundred-year period in the whole of its long and ancient history. KS was there to witness it and put it into words. But the writer was foremost a teacher and inspirer for those who knew him. He was also one ever willing to learn and grow, maturing his commitment to the Gandhian ideals imbibed in his youth to later discover the transcendental origins of those

ideals through the teachings of Bhagavan Sri Ramana. KS's was a life devoted to the printed word, to verse and to the great texts of two disparate civilizations. But his was a study that would lead him beyond what could be spoken of or written about to ultimately greet the penetrating gaze of One who had attained the Great Silence.

The following pages contain the personal story of Prof. K. Swaminathan, a story intimately tied to the birth of the nation, a story that goes back to the spring of 1915 when the lad from Pudukottai first met Mohandas Gandhi, who had just arrived in India to rally support for the plight of Indians in South Africa. These early meetings would shape the course of the life of this young Tamil student, not only in becoming an activist in the freedom struggle but in finding the Master who would transform him once and for all.

Early Life

The eldest son of four children, K. Swaminathan was born in 1896 to P. S. Krishnaswami Iyer and Dharmambal. His father was an engineer in the Public Works Department in Madras and worked on designs, eventually rising to Head Draughtsman and Technical Superintendent. P. S. Krishnaswami Iyer was considered a 'first class draughtsman and estimator' as well as a fine mathematician. When the director of the Public Works Department, J.A. Jones, retired, his report contained the following accolade



P. S. Krishnaswami Iyer and family, ca 1930. KS is at bottom, far right.





of KS's father: "As I am leaving Madras, I desire to place on record that all through my 30 years' service in India, I have never had a more conscientious, a more able, or a more energetic Assistant".

P. S. Krishnaswami Iyer left the Public Works Department in 1922 and worked for a while with a private sanitary engineering firm before retiring. In 1926 his wife died of complications from asthma at the age of 46 after which Krishnaswami Iyer took up translating Valmiki's *Ramayana* into Tamil, a project that he completed just prior to his death in 1935.

Meanwhile, KS and his sister and brothers were growing up and finding their place in the world. As a youth KS is said to have only been interested in books though not necessarily in his schoolwork. Whenever the youngster came into a little money, it immediately went for the purchase of books, and he passed his days reading. At the time the family was settled in the Purasawalkam area of Madras and KS attended the Lutheran Mission School, the same school the novelist R.K. Narayan would enter a few years afterward and later chronicle in his *My Days*.

Student Days and Early Career

In 1912, at the tender age of 16, KS entered the prestigious Presidency College where he studied for the following five years. Here he came under the influence of a number of great scholars, among them, Dr. U.V. Swaminatha Iyer, the *thatha* of Tamil, who in

bringing many long-forgotten works of classical Tamil literature to light through his 91 published books, is said to have almost single-handedly been responsible for winning a place for Tamil literature on the world stage. KS would later succeed Dr. Swaminatha Iyer at Presidency College and would be instrumental in getting a statue in his likeness erected on the campus grounds. He once praised the Tamil master: "No one anywhere in the world, at any time in history, has rendered to any language the kind of service that Dr U. V. Swaminatha Iyer has done for Tamil."¹

But as a student at Presidency College, KS focused his attention on English literature and would eventually stand first, winning a scholarship to Christ Church, Oxford. His mother, however, would not permit her son to go abroad, citing the dangers of maritime travel in the wartime years. Jurisprudence presented itself as a reasonable alternative and after two years of studying law (1917-19), the young KS apprenticed with a leading lawyer in the region, S. Srinivasa Iyengar. It was just prior to this that KS first met Gandhi. The

1 Uttamadhanapuram Venkatasubbaier Swaminatha Iyer (1855–1942) of Suriaymoolai near Kumbakonam brought to public attention major literary works in Tamil, having collected over 3,000 palm-leaf manuscripts. Swaminatha Iyer went knocking door-to-door at the homes of learned men in search of Sangam classics, editing and publishing them. Among other notable publications was his 1887 publication of *Cevaka Cintamani*.



Gandhi and his wife Kasturba (1915)



After Independence (1947)



U. V. Swaminatha Iyer, *thatha* of Tamil



KS and Visalakshi: wedding day, 1915





Christ Church, Oxford, ca. 1925



Presidency College, Madras, 1941

year was 1915 and Gandhi had just returned to India from South Africa.² He was visiting Madras with the purpose of soliciting Christian support for the Indian civil rights movement in South Africa. The nineteen-year old KS had been assigned the task of escorting Gandhi to various places in Madras — the Catholic Archbishop's residence, the Anglican Bishop's house next to St. George's Cathedral, etc. KS suggested they take a horse and buggy but Gandhi declined saying that it would cost two rupees whereas the tram would be only a few paise.

Later in 1920 while Gandhi was accepting recruits for the Non-Cooperation movement in India, KS was interviewed, hopeful of joining Gandhi. But Gandhi told him, "You may not join me now; I shall call you when I need you and [when] you are ready."

It is not known why the Mahatma was to wait 40 years before he 'called him' (posthumously, as it were, to be chief editor of the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*) but it has been speculated that it was due to KS's filial piety, his duty to his family and his recent marriage, which rendered him ill-prepared at that time to make the sacrifices that would be required of him during that turbulent period in history. Perhaps

² In 1894, the 25-year old Gandhi went to work as a lawyer for an Indian firm in Durban. After 21 years of organizing civil disobedience protests on behalf of the Indian population there, Gandhi left South Africa for India late in 1914.

Gandhi also perceived the unique qualities of the youth and deemed that he might serve the cause in an altogether different way, as in fact he would do.

On completing the apprenticeship with Srinivasa Iyengar, KS took up a legal practice under the auspices of his father-in-law, also named K. Swaminathan, who was a public prosecutor and an elected member of the Legislative Council. But KS's unlikely career as an advocate was cut short. Under the potent influence of his earlier encounters with Gandhi, KS began engaging himself in social service in the slums of Madras. He participated in a public agitation against the Maharajah led by an old family friend, S. Satyamurthi. When KS invited Satyamurthi to speak to the Bar Association of Madras, the British Government took offence and threatened to revoke his license to practice law if a formal written apology was not forthcoming. Just when KS had made the decision not to make an apology, a decision born of conviction in the spirit of the Gandhian movement, Raja Sir Annamalai Chettiar, friend and client of K. Swaminathan Senior, 'came to the rescue' and hired KS as a lecturer in the English department at Sri Meenakshi College³. As founder of the college, the Raja was eager to develop and expand the

³ Sri Meenakshi College, founded in 1920 in Chidambaram, later became Annamalai University.





curriculum, endeavouring, among other things, to create an English Honours programme. Thus he asked KS to go to Oxford to enhance his knowledge of English literature and, upon his return, oversee the newly instituted Honours programme. As the Raja was willing to finance the trip, KS found himself unable to resist the opportunity, an opportunity missed five years earlier but one that would enable him to immerse himself once again in the thing he loved most—English Literature.

At Oxford, KS encountered the great figures of 20th century English literature: C.S. Lewis, G.K. Chesterton and Bertrand Russell, among others. He sat for the ICS examination and after two years, earned a B.A. in English, returning to Madras in 1924. On his return, he rejoined Sri Meenakshi

College at Chidambaram as the Head of the English Department and proved himself not only skilful in scholarship but equally adept in administration. Here KS met T. K. Chidambaranatha Mudaliar of Tenkasi, one of the great patriarchs of the Tamil renaissance movement. It was an encounter that would not only open KS to the world of Tamil literature but, through the verses of Guhai Namasivaya, reveal to him the (inner) world of Holy Arunachala.*

(to be continued)

* Freely adapted from the following sources: Prof. K. Swaminathan (1896-1994): *Tributes To Commemorate His Birth Centenary; KS Remembered: Prof. K. Swaminathan (1896-1994)*; and by Prof. Swaminathan: *Ramana Maharshi*, published in 1975 by the National Book Trust, New Delhi; articles in *The Mountain Path* and *Call Divine*; *Sri Ramana, The Self Supreme* and *Five Hymns To Arunachala*, published by Sri Ramanasramam.

Reality in Forty Verses

20. To see God but not the Self that sees is only to see a projection of the mind. It is said that God is seen by him alone who sees the Self; but one who has lost the ego and seen the Self is none other than God.

— Sri Bhagavan

Wordwise: Dehatmabuddhi देहात्मबुद्धि

Deha: body; *atma*: self; *buddhi*: perception, general notion; *dehatmabuddhi*: body consciousness or I-am-the-body consciousness; non-Self identified as oneself; *dehatmabhava*: having the sense or feeling that the self is the body or that the body is the soul; *dehatmavada*: doctrine of materialism.

The objectifying tendency of the mind is to identify the Self with some object. The delusion extends even into sleep through dream, thus Bhagavan recommended *atma-vichara* even in sleep to eradicate the last vestiges of the illusion. Bhagavan says that “the ajnani thinks *dehaiva Atma* (my Self is the body), whereas the jnani knows [that] *all* is the Self” (*Talks* §383) “Samadhi means passing beyond *dehatma buddhi* (the I-am-the-body idea) and non-identification of the body with the Self” (*Talks* §391) “When the feeling ‘I am the body’ goes, delusive confusion and anxieties will end”. (*GVK* §866)





Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Bhagavan's 133rd Jayanti

Bhagavan's Jayanti Day celebrations, 29th December, 2012 began at 4am with "Mangala Isai" by Sri T. R. Pichandi & Party, followed by Dhanurmasa Puja and Vishnu Sahasranamam. Devotees then sang a special morning Tamil Parayana in Bhagavan's shrine while purohits chanted Mahanyasa Ekadasa Rudram in the Mother's Shrine. Puja to Sri Ramaneswara Mahalingam began around 10am culminating in Mangala Aarti (Deeparadhana) at 11am. The nights leading up to the Jayanti Day celebrations were accented by evening performances in the New Library auditorium, first with sitar concert by Ustad Hafiz Bale Khan on the 27th. The 28th hosted "Ramananjali" Ramana Music (RMCL) led by Smt. Sulochana Natarajan. On the afternoon of the 29th, "Telugu Bhajans" took to the stage with accompaniments by Ms. Chandrasekara, Bhajana Mandali (Amalapuram), and later in the evening, "Ramana Music" by Amritavarshini led by Smt. Sakkubai Srinivasan of Bangalore.





From the Periapuranam: Chandesura Naayanaar

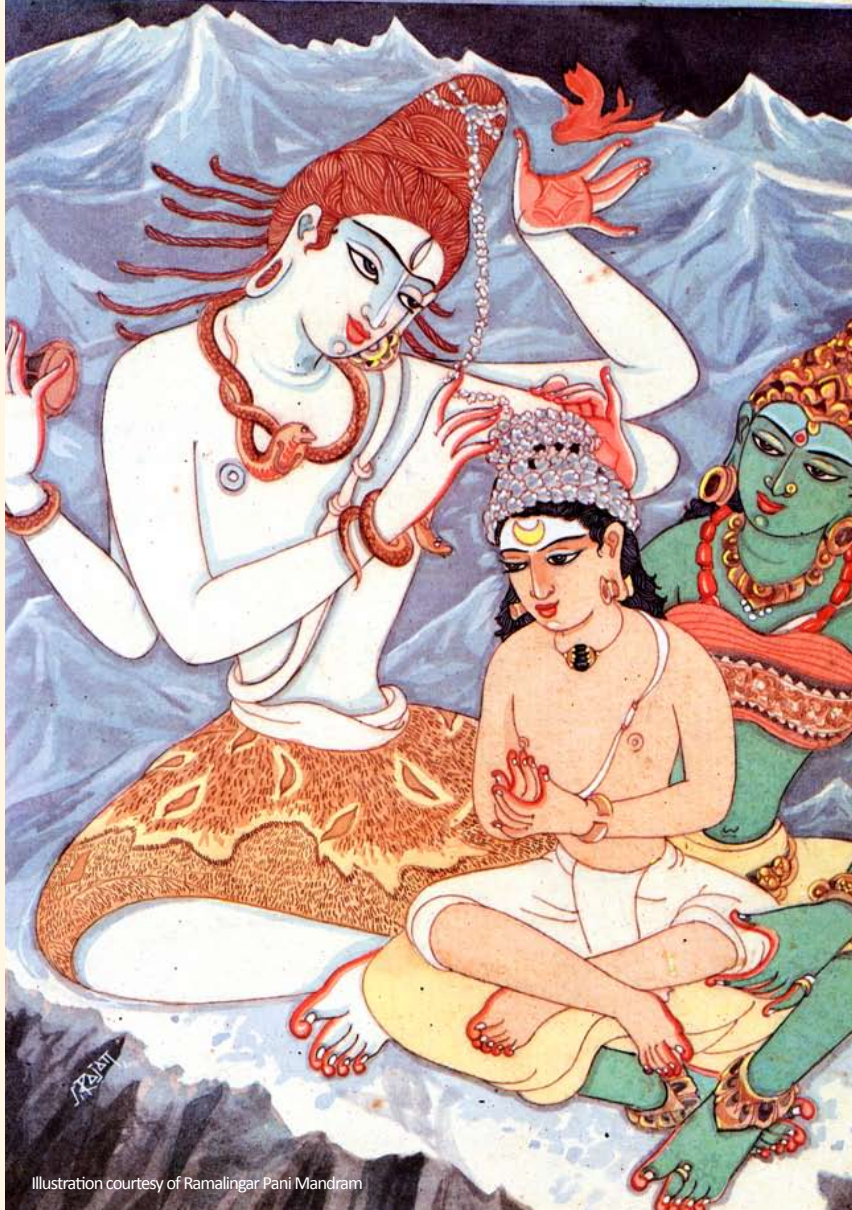


Illustration courtesy of Ramalingar Pani Mandram

When Vichaarasarman was five years old his mind was filled with the knowledge of the Vedas, the Vedaangas, and the Agamas, propagated by the Lord Himself. Teachers were amazed at his grasp of all learning and his affection for the Lord.

One day, while walking along with the other Vedic students, he saw an angry cowherd strike one of the cows. The tender-hearted boy intervened and drove away the cowherd, proclaiming the cow as "the most glorious of all beings, in whom abide the holy tirthas and whose panchagavya (milk, curd, ghee, urine and dung) become worthy for worship of the Lord. I will hereafter undertake this service. You, cowherd, may give it up once for all!"

Thus it came to pass with the consent of the owners that Vichaarasarman began to tend the cows of the town, safeguarding them from all harm. He led them along good paths and let them repose in the shade when they needed rest. At sundown when it was time for milking, he took them to their respective owners and their yield proved greater than ever before. All exclaimed: "This Brahmachari has made our cows glorious indeed!"

The cows of their own accord began pouring forth milk on the ground before Vichaarasarman simply out of maternal affection. Seeing this, Vichaarasarman decided that the milk should not be wasted but rather be used for abhishekam. So he fashioned a sand image of the Lord on the river bank. Next he let the cows pour their milk into clay pots with which he anointed the Lord's image. The Lord lovingly accepted this offering. Notwithstanding the plentiful milk the cows gave for worship in the morning, they still gave a full supply to their owners in the evening.

One day, someone complained to the town elders of the apparent waste of milk. They sent for the boy's father, who upon hearing the complaint, said, "I hold myself fully responsible". That night the boy's father went to bed without making any enquiry of his son, whom he intended to surprise the next morning. The following morning the unknowing celibate set out as usual to fashion the image of the Lord with river sand, and then with due rites, began to bathe the Lord with milk. The Lord now wished to disclose to the world the full glory of this devotee. Not realising the Lord's grace, the Vedic father grew angry at the apparent waste of milk by his son and rushed towards the boy and beat him mercilessly. But the child, absorbed in his devotion, was unconscious of the beating and continued his worship. The enraged father then maliciously kicked over the pot of milk collected for the Lord. When the milk spilt out onto the ground, the child seized a stick, which by the Lord's will became in that moment an axe, and hurled it at the offending foot. His father soon lay prostrate on the sand with foot cut asunder. Meanwhile, the youngster resumed his worship and the Lord manifested Himself before them. The youngster fell down in adoration at the gracious feet of the Lord who spoke in a mighty voice: "For My sake, you challenged even your own father." At the touch of the Lord, the little boy's 'maya' body rose up in Saivic splendor and he appeared in a halo of light. The father too, by the grace of his devoted son, was cleansed of his offence and along with his kin, attained Siva Loka. (Chandesura Naayanaar's Aradhana Day is 31st January)





Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Opening of Morvi Guesthouse



After nearly two years of construction, Morvi Guesthouse is all but completed and numerous rooms were opened for guest use on the 26th December, just in time to host the many devotees eager to attend Bhagavan's Jayanti celebrations. Fifty-nine rooms in the two-story compound are now in operation which enables more than one hundred additional guests to stay in the Ashram. Guests were pleased to find their rooms equipped with hot water and large windows opening onto the garden. Additional rooms in the old library building will be completed shortly as work continues.

Obituary: Sethu Ramaswamy 1924-2012



Sethu Ramaswamy grew up in Sri Lanka, where her father, Narayana Iyer, served as Secretary in the imperial government. She returned to India around 1940 after her marriage and went for Bhagavan's darshan before leaving for war-torn Delhi which was soon to witness the partition riots. The young bride wept copiously before Bhagavan, seeking his blessings for overcoming what would be their most difficult years—war, rationing and unemployment. When her husband came back one night after yet another futile search for a job to support his young wife and children, he had a dream: Bhagavan Ramana gently stroked his head and gave him a mantropadesha—a dream initiation. This mantra he chanted till his last days.

In more recent years Sethu Ramaswamy was able to come to the Ashram to have Bhagavan's darshan and took the opportunity to visit her nephew, Captain Narayanan, who was serving in the Ashram. In 2010 she published the *Ramana Ashtottara Shatha Namavali*, Ramana's life in blank verse with 108 names. She received her M.A. degree in history at the age of 80 and authored her autobiography, *Bride at 10, Mother at 15*, published by Roli Books International in 2003. Her last years saw an outpouring of poetry on Arunachala Ramana. Till 30th Nov 2012 she wrote Bhagavan's namah, 'Om Namo Bhagawate Sri Ramanaya', in her long register. But there was no entry for 1st Dec 2012 — Sethu, 'the bridge', had merged in Ramana Mahasamudra, the vast Ramana Ocean.

