

## Saranagathi

IN THIS  
ISSUE

CONTENTS

Dear Devotees,

In this issue of *Saranagathi* we continue our series on inspiring women devotees of Sri Bhagavan with part two of Shantammal's life story. Sri K. Natesan who passed away just a couple of years ago at the age of 95 shares his life with Bhagavan in this excerpt from the 1998 Mountain Path article *How I came to Bhagavan*.

Nochur Venkataraman started an eight-day discourse on the 26th June to packed audiences in the New Hall. *Athirudra Maha Yagna* organised by Ashram devotee Ayyappan filled Tiruvannamalai with Vedic pundits from all over South India for the eleven-day programme which culminated in a special abhishekam at Bhagavan's Samadhi and the Mother's Shrine on the 28th of June. For further details of these events click on the following link <http://www.sriramanamaharshi.org>

Please send your emails to  
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In Sri Bhagavan  
The Editorial Team



<i>Reality in Forty Verses</i> (v. 5)	1
<i>Shantammal</i> (part two)	2
<i>Reports from Sri Ramanasramam</i> (part one)	3
<i>Maharshi's Gospel</i> (The Jnani and the World )	4
<i>How I Came to Bhagavan</i> (K. Natesan)	5
<i>Reports from Sri Ramanasramam</i> (part two)	7

## Reality in Forty Verses

5. The body is made up of the five sheaths;  
in the term 'body' all the five are included.  
Without the body the world is not.  
Has one without the body ever seen the world?

UlladuNarpadu by Sri Bhagavan





## Shantammal (part two)



When Shantammal started cooking in the kitchen, Bhagavan used to come and help. He would winnow rice, shell nuts, grind seeds and stitch leaf plates. Shantammal and others in the kitchen felt blessed to serve each day in Bhagavan's presence, graced with the opportunity to hear his many reminiscences. Every task or problem they faced, she says, was made use of in teaching the art of total reliance on him.

Once, Shantammal tells us, the Maharaja of Mysore visited the Ashram. He asked for a private interview. Of course Bhagavan never allowed such a thing, she points out. Finally it was decided that the Maharaja be brought in when Bhagavan was having his bath. Trays of sweets and other costly presents were laid at Bhagavan's feet. For ten minutes the Maharaja just stood looking and then prostrated before Bhagavan. Tears flowing from his eyes made Bhagavan's feet

wet. He told Bhagavan, "They made me a Maharaja and bound me to a throne. For the sin of being born a king, I lost the chance of sitting at your feet and serving in your glorious presence. I do not hope to come again. Only these few minutes are mine. I pray for your grace".

Shantammal witnessed and narrated another interesting incident. One morning a European man came in a horse carriage to the Ashram and went straight to Bhagavan. He wrote something on a piece of paper and showed it to Bhagavan. Bhagavan did not answer, instead he gazed at the stranger. The stranger stared back at him. Then Bhagavan closed his eyes and the stranger closed his. Time passed and the whole atmosphere was silent and still. Lunch time came but Bhagavan did not open his eyes. Madhavaswami, the attendant, got Bhagavan's water pot and stood ready to lead him out of the hall but Bhagavan would not stir. None dared to go near, such was the intensity around Bhagavan, his face glowing with a strange light. Chinnaswami was talking loudly in the hopes of attracting Bhagavan's attention. Vessels were banged about, but all in vain. When the clock struck twelve Bhagavan opened his eyes. They were glowing very brightly. Madhavaswami took up the water jug; the European got into his carriage and went away. It was the last that was seen of him. Everybody was wonderstruck at the good fortune of this man who received such an initiation from Bhagavan.

Once while Shantammal was in the hall after lunch time and Bhagavan was sitting and reading the newspaper when Cow Lakshmi entered the hall. She was pregnant at that time and came near and started licking Bhagavan's newspaper. Bhagavan looked up and said, "Wait a little Lakshmi", but Lakshmi went on licking. Bhagavan laid his paper aside, put his hands behind Lakshmi's horns and put his head against hers. They remained like this for some time.





All watched the wonderful scene. After awhile Bhagavan turned to Shantammal and said, “Do you know what Lakshmi is doing? She is in samadhi”. Shantammal could see that tears were flowing from Lakshmi’s eyes, ever fixed on Bhagavan. After awhile Bhagavan asked, “Lakshmi, how do you feel now”? Lakshmi moved backward, reluctant to turn her tail towards Bhagavan, and went out of the hall.

When Shantammal cooked, Bhagavan would come to the kitchen to taste the food and see whether the seasoning was just right. Once he said, “The Maharajas employ special taste experts and pay them huge salaries. I wonder what will be my pay”. Shantammal replied, “I am a beggar Bhagavan, and all I can offer is my life”, to which Bhagavan nodded his head lovingly.

In the kitchen there were no proper jars for storing food-stuffs and everything was kept in tins and pots

which would leak and spill and render the floor slippery. When once Shantammal scrubbed the kitchen floor very thoroughly, Bhagavan congratulated her. But a little exasperated, she said, “What’s the use Bhagavan? People will come, spill oil, scatter flour and soon the kitchen will be the same again. We lack proper jars and containers”.

Ten days later Shantammal saw the attendants opening wooden boxes which contained six beautiful jars. “You wanted jars, now you have them”, Bhagavan told her. Evidently some railway station master had addressed them in the name of the Ashram for no ostensible reason. Such mysterious coincidences were a regular occurrence both at the Ashram and in the homes of devotees, she said.

(to be continued...)

## Report’s from Sri Ramanasramam (part one)

### Nochur Venkataraman Discourse

Sri Nochur Venkataraman, the much loved and admired young speaker on Bhagavatam, Adi Sankara and Sri Bhagavan began eight days of discourses at the Ashram on Bhagavan’s *Ulladu Naarpadu* in continuation of last year’s talks. Starting 26th June (up to 2nd July), the afternoon lectures were given in Tamil. But for the benefit of non-Tamilians, an additional lecture in English was scheduled for Sunday, the 3rd. This week’s discourses were available ‘live’ on the web for devotees residing outside of Tiruvannamalai.

Beginning with *UN v. 14*, Nochur talked on the interesting multivalent Tamil word, *tanmai* (which is first-person for ‘I’ or ‘ego’ but also means ‘one’s [true] ‘nature’). He explained how the final ending of *tanmai* (the ‘ego’) is finding our true nature. He talked equally at length and in depth on time, space and causation, and the body, world and the Self and pointed out, as taught by Sri Bhagavan, that the absence of the Self-Knowledge is the only misery.

Nochur’s talks are backed by a meditative study of existing commentaries and years of sustained application of the teaching in his daily life.





## Maharshi's Gospel

### The Jnani and the World

D: If the *jnani* and the *ajnani* perceive the world in like manner, where is the difference between them?

M: Seeing the world, the *jnani* sees the Self which is the substratum of all that is seen; the *ajnani*, whether he sees the world or not, is ignorant of his true Being, the Self.

Take the instance of moving pictures on the screen in the cinema-show. What is there in front of you before the play begins? Merely the screen. On that screen you see the entire show, and for all appearances, the pictures are real. But go and try to take hold of them. What do you take hold of? Merely the screen on which the pictures appeared so real. After the play, when the pictures disappear, what remains? The screen!

So with the Self. That alone exists; the pictures come and go. If you hold on to the Self, you will not be deceived by the appearance of the pictures. Nor does it matter at all if the pictures appear or disappear.





## How I Came to Bhagavan

by K. Natesan

—*The Mountain Path*, June 1998



I was born into an orthodox Brahmin family on November 26, 1913 in the village of Mondakurathur, near Polur, North Arcot District. That was also the birthplace of the Maharshi's renowned devotee, Echammal, who was related to me on my mother's side. My father, Brahmasri Krishna Ganapati, was a Vedic scholar who taught *Krishna Yajur Veda* for thirty years in the local Vedapatasala. I had my first darshan of Bhagavan Maharshi at Skandashram in 1921 when I was eight years old. Sri Vasudeva Sastry, one of the earliest devotees of Bhagavan, took me to see him. He was then my Sanskrit teacher at the Patasala of the Arunachaleshwara Temple. Later in 1923, when Bhagavan came down to the present ashram, I used to visit often and sit before him. At that time I was studying in the Municipal High School where Sri T.K. Sundaresa Iyer was a teacher. After

completing high school in 1930, I waited for two years before joining an engineering college in Madras. During those two intervening years I was at the ashram almost every day, along with T.K.Sundaresa Iyer. I used to spend time there even at odd hours of the day or night. In 1936, after earning a diploma in civil engineering in Madras, I worked for six months under Sri K.K. Nambiar. He was already a staunch devotee of Bhagavan and had the good fortune of being posted as the District Board Engineer in Tiruvannamalai. By Bhagavan's grace, I was almost constantly at the ashram between 1935 and 1945, though I was employed on and off in various places. I often quit jobs to come to Sri Ramanasramam and be near Maharshi. My attachment to Bhagavan was such that I could not remain employed continuously until, by Bhagavan's grace, Sri K.K. Nambiar, who was then the Chief Engineer of the Madras Corporation in 1945, got me employed. That ended the rolling-stone phase of my life and I retained this job until my retirement in January, 1969. Throughout these years I would never miss an opportunity to come to be with Bhagavan.

Between 1935 and 1945 I left for holy places without informing anyone. Eventually I would end up at Ramanasramam. Once on my return Bhagavan asked me about the places I visited. I replied that I had been to Tiruttani, Tirupati, and Padaiveedu (Renukamba Kshetram). Then the Maharshi pointedly asked me what was in my mind at the time. I gave a spontaneous answer in the form of the following verse from Ramana Gita: "Lord, not on Swamimalai, nor on Tiruttani Hill, nor on top of Venkatachala (Tirupati) do you now dwell. In reality you are in Arunachala!" The Maharshi smiled.

On the occasion of my wedding on July 5, 1942, T.N. Venkataraman, who later on became the President of Sri Ramanasramam, came straight to Vellore from





Karaikudi to attend the ceremony. The train passed through and stopped at the Tiruvannamalai station, but T.N.Venkataraman, along with his eight year old son, stayed on the train and came straight to the venue of the function. When Chinnaswamy heard about it he began to scold his son and criticized him for going to Vellore to attend the wedding. Bhagavan overheard this from the Old Hall and said, "Why is he shouting? Ambi (T.N.V.) has gone to attend his friend's marriage. There is nothing wrong in this."

There was Veda Parayana every evening at the hall in the presence of Bhagavan (in addition to the parayana in the morning). He would be mostly indrawn at that time. After this — from 7 to 7:30 p.m. — recitations of the Maharshi's works in Tamil, Telugu, Sanskrit, and Malayalam would take place. Devotees like Ramaswamy Pillai, Kunjuswamy, T.K. Sundaresa Iyer and some others used to take part in it. In the earlier days I was also participating. During Tamil Parayanam I noticed Bhagavan appeared quite unconcerned with things around him, though he remained fully attentive to the recitation. He wouldn't hesitate to correct our pronunciation of the verses, as he was particular about obeying all the rules of prosody. Once I recited incorrectly the last verse of Arunachala Pancharatnam and Bhagavan pointed it out to me, demonstrating how

it should be pronounced. He was satisfied only when I repeated it to him correctly.

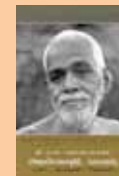
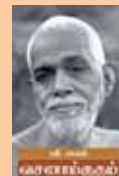
I realize that I do not have the power to describe in writing what the Maharshi is, or what he has done by living in our midst. Let all those who aspire for liberation and eternal happiness turn to him for guidance and grace, and then, I am sure, his unique mission to mankind will be known in the hearts of seekers. To try to introduce Sri Ramana Maharshi to the world at large is just like trying to introduce the sun to the solar system. The Masters who appeared on earth before the advent of Sri Maharshi have shown several paths to get a vision of God. But the Maharshi, by his unique, direct method of self-enquiry, 'Who am I?', has shown that realization of the Self alone is God-realization. And it is he that shines forth as the Self. Today the whole world has come to realize the greatness of the Maharshi on account of his direct path to the Self.

Once the whole world was attracted to Gautama Buddha by his tremendous soul force and at another time the world was drawn by the pure, selfless life of Jesus Christ. At present the life and teachings of the Maharshi have spread widely to all the corners of the world as the Supreme Light of Advaita Brahman. It is my belief that the Maharshi is now the Universal Master.

## Online Books

<http://www.sriramanamaharshi.org/bookstallsales>

Contains English and Tamil books published by Sri Ramanasramam. Also photographs, audio and video. Currently Sri Ramanasramam bookstore ships books to Indian addresses only. We accept payments in Indian Rupees via Credit Cards or Net Banking. For shipment outside of India please visit our International Store at <http://www.arunachala.org/bookstore>





## Report's from Sri Ramanasramam (part two)

### Athirudra Maha Yagnam

On June 18th, as an offering to Sri Bhagavan, *Athirudra Maha Yagnam* commenced in Tiruvannamalai at the foot of Holy Arunachala in the Oyaa Madam (in Tiruvudal St.). More than 160 *purohiths* and pundits from *patasalas* all over Tamil Nadu and Karnataka convened on the evening of the 17th to lead the eleven-day *japam* beginning the following morning. When it was discovered that the ideal and auspicious day for the event was only ten days away, a venue was immediately established and Vedic scholars were summoned from all over South India. Selections from the *Krishna Yajur Veda* as well as the *Sama Veda*, *Rig Veda*, *Athurvana Veda*, *Shukla Yajur Veda* as well as



centre portion of fourth *kanda* of the *Krishna Yajur Veda*. Athirudram consists in the minimum repetition of Sri Rudram by 121 priests, eleven times per day for eleven days totaling 14,641 recitations. *Tejosthala* Tiruvannamalai is especially auspicious for hosting such an event, because, among other things, the seventh section of the Rudram contains the phrase *Arunaya cha*, referring to none other than Arunachala, the Holy Mountain-linga of Lord Rudra said to be extant since the dawn of time. But in Tiruvannamalai at the feet of Holy Annamalai, where else to conclude such an auspicious event but on the linga of lingas that crowns Bhagavan's Samadhi.

Chandi parayanas such as *Devi Mahatmyam* were chanted each day concurrently with Sri Rudram which echoed throughout the hall and the surrounding neighbourhood. The sacrificial *yagasala* fire burned continuously for the entire eleven days of the programme. On the concluding day, Tuesday the 28th, the morning's activities began earlier than usual in order that the final *japam* could be completed in time to enter Sri Ramanasramam in procession with the 136 sacred kalasas (pots of consecrated water) and there perform concluding rites for the benefit of all Sri Bhagavan's devotees: abhishekam of Sri Ramaneswara Mahalingam and Matrubhuteswara. Sri Rudram consists of eleven chapters in praise of Lord Siva and is the

