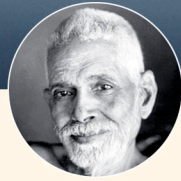


# Saranagati



SARANAGATI  
SRI RAMANASRAMAM

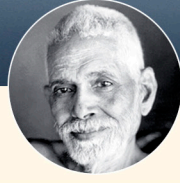
JUNE 2020  
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D. Thiyagarajan



## Saranagati



JUNE 2020  
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IN THIS  
ISSUE

Dear All,

As we go to press, Tiruvannamalai continues being designated as a 'red zone district' with restrictions still in place. Many businesses and shops have been allowed to reopen as quarantines and containment measures loosen. But Tamil Nadu has been hard hit in comparison with other states in India (see p. 11).

In this issue we conclude with the series on the life of Bhagavan in the face of public health crises and see how Arni Annamalaiswami and Ramanatha Brahmachari were directly affected by the plague epidemic (see p. 2).

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

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## Calendar of Events Celebrated at Home (for the time being)

5th June (Fri) Full Moon

14th June (Sun) Mahapuja

23rd June (Tues) Punarvasu

2nd July (Thurs) Cow Lakshmi Day

5th July (Sun) Guru Poomima

20th July (Mon) Punarvasu

2nd-3rd August (Sun) Full Moon

16th August (Sun) Punarvasu

1st September (Tues) Advent

2nd September (Wed) Full Moon

13th September (Sun) Punarvasu

13th October (Tues) Punarvasu

17th October (Sat) Navaratri Commences

25th October (Sun) Saraswati Puja





## Bhagavan's Life in the Face of Public Health Crises (pt. III)

In the last two segments of this series, we saw how the bubonic plague had impacted Tiruvannamalai in 1905 and again in 1908, and how citizens evacuated the township while Bhagavan and his sadhus shifted to Pachaiamman Kovil. A third outbreak occurred just twelve years later in the midst of a cholera epidemic that had spread throughout India. If that was not enough, the deadly 1918 flu pandemic caused by the H1N1 influenza virus had begun its migration across the subcontinent. Once arriving in India, the flu was identified as the 'Bombay Fever' since that appeared to be the place of its origin. But subsequently, it was concluded that the virus had made its way to India in the late spring of 1918 by troops returning from Europe to Mumbai by ship.

Earlier in 1918 as war raged in Europe, the warring powers did not want to adversely affect troop morale and so took great pains to censor news of the virus.

The epidemic was said to have spread from France to Spain only in November 1918, but since Spain was a neutral power, the Spanish government allowed the free dissemination of information about the disease. While the place of origin is not known with certainty,<sup>1</sup> it is clear the flu did not originate in Spain, as the name would suggest. And while the word 'flu' sounds innocuous, the pandemic was a perfect storm: a high transmission rate combined with a high fatality rate, in just three years the virus would result in the deaths of five to ten crores worldwide.

By the time of the 1918 Arunachala Temple Mahakumbhabhishikam, Tiruvannamalai had not yet been significantly affected. But in the course of the following two years, more than five percent of the population of India would perish under the pandemic's devastating influence.

Meanwhile Bhagavan and his brother, Swami Niranjanananda who had just received *sannyasa diksha* that year were living with their mother and other residents at Skandasramam. The inmates of the budding Ashram remained untouched by the virus. However, Palaniswami, who had fallen sick in 1916 just as Bhagavan moved up to Skandasramam, returned to Virupaksha to convalesce.

By 1918, there was nothing to suggest that any of the residents at Skandasramam were affected by epidemics. But at Virupaksha, Palaniswami grew steadily weaker, and finally, perhaps under the influence of the virus that had begun to make its way through India, died in Bhagavan's hands in June 1918.

The following year the bubonic plague outbreak began. While some at Skandasramam fled the area, Bhagavan and a handful of others decided to stay on at Skandasramam. This time around, the disease would make its way right into the heart of the community.

By late 1919 or early 1920 Kunju Swami came to Bhagavan for the first time. He mentioned that,

<sup>1</sup> The virologist John Oxford believed the hospital camp in Étaples, France was the origin of the Spanish flu and that the disease began to propagate in late 1916. The hospital treated thousands of victims of poison gas attacks, and other casualties of war, and 100,000 soldiers passed through the camp every day.





upon his arrival, “plague had driven away most of the inhabitants of the town and consequently visitors to Sri Bhagavan were few. I was, therefore, left alone with Sri Bhagavan.”

Kunju Swami’s narrative about his coming to Bhagavan is worth recounting, especially given the timing and the fact that his arrival marked a permanent surrender at the feet of Bhagavan, lasting until his dying day in 1992.

Already as a boy, Kunju Swami had gotten reports about the Maharshi and longed to make the journey to Tiruvannamalai. He encouraged village friends like Ramakrishna Swami and others to go to Tiruvannamalai, even if he had not yet gone himself. Already since his childhood, he had followed and served sadhus, but now he knew, even if he had not yet seen him, that the Maharshi was his master. His story begins right in the middle of an epidemic:

*One fine morning in January, I set out for Tiruvannamalai without informing my family. Thinking that I would not return to my house, I prostrated to the house and my parents within and left my village. I thought someone might spot me if I went to Palghat station, so I went to a very small unimportant railway station called Kanjikodu and asked the booking clerk when the train to Tiruvannamalai would arrive. I was told that it would come in the evening. The train finally came at 6 pm. When I asked for a ticket to Tiruvannamalai, I was told that tickets were not issued to Tiruvannamalai from that station. I was given a ticket to Katpadi instead. I bought the ticket and got into the train. I reached Katpadi at 4 am the next morning. When I asked about the train to Tiruvannamalai, I was told it would leave at 6.30 am. But when I went to buy the ticket at 6 am, I was told that the train had already left at 5.30 am. I was puzzled. I did not know what to do. I learned that the next train was at 6 pm. I bought some fruit and ate them from time to time and drank water.*

That evening when Kunju Swami tried to buy a ticket, he was told no ticket would be issued to Tiruvannamalai. Though not given a reason why, a gentleman nearby informed him of the bubonic plague outbreak in Tiruvannamalai. He suggested that he buy a ticket to Tirukoilur and when the train stopped at Tiruvannamalai to deliver the mail, he could quietly slip off. But when he asked to purchase a ticket to Tirukoilur, he found that he was short of the fare by four annas.



Bhagavan with his mother, brother and group of visitors, ca. 1919

The train was arriving and he had no ticket. Just then, however, as he stood on the platform, he saw a glittering four anna coin caught between the rails. Precisely as the train steamed in, he rushed to the counter and purchased a ticket to Tirukoillur. The train reached Tiruvannamalai around 9 pm. There were no lights in the station. He was reluctant to violate quarantine restrictions and get off at the forbidden station. Suddenly the man seated next to him held his hand and said, “I am getting off at Tiruvannamalai. You must also get off,” and pulled him along. The two men slipped away into the night. Later on, Kunju Swami said:

*Had I not missed the morning train, I would not have been able to slip into Tiruvannamalai. Everything was perfect: I did not want to break the rules, but somebody held my hand and compelled me to get down. I followed him into town, to an open temple porch where we both fell asleep.*

When he reached Skandasramam the next day and saw Bhagavan, he was thrilled:

*At that time my friend, Ramakrishna Swami, Perumal Swami and Akbandananda prostrated before Bhagavan. I did likewise. Ramakrishna Swami was pleasantly surprised to see me. He said to Bhagavan, “He is from my village. He has been a sadhu from a very early age. It was he who sent me here.” Bhagavan nodded his head. Then Ramakrishna Swami said to me, “Please stay here. We will be back soon.”*

Kunju Swami did not know where they were going but just then he could hear wailing. He then learned that Annamalaiswami, Bhagavan’s attendant of the previous two years, had died of the plague that very





Skandasramam's main entrance

morning. Ramakrishna Swami and Perumal Swami were setting off to make arrangements for the burial. Meanwhile 'an old lady' was weeping in the adjoining small room:

*A voice said, "A gem of a fellow has been snatched away. What a tragedy!" Someone was sitting beside her. Turning towards them Bhagavan said pointing to me, "Why are you all so upset? Another son has come here to fill his place." I did not understand the significance of these words at the time. I came to know later that the old lady was Bhagavan's mother and the gentleman who was beside her was Niranjanananda Swami, Bhagavan's brother.*

Bhagavan was now alone and Kunju found the perfect conditions to talk with him. Because of long years with Palaniswami, Bhagavan was fluent in Malayalam and so Kunju spoke in his native tongue. As Bhagavan answered his many questions, and as the encounter that day had been beyond anything he dreamed of, Kunju found his mental agitation vanishing there and then and he attained a peace and joy that he had never known before. The auspiciousness of this first day was somehow linked to Annamalai who had died that very morning:

*Annamalai Swami, who was buried on the day of my arrival in Tiruvannamalai, had written a hundred songs in praise of Bhagavan. His brother and friends used to assemble and do abhisheka and puja at his samadhi and recite the verses before Bhagavan. They also used to partake of the bhiksha arranged on the day. This went on for a number of years. The interesting thing here is that I took a new birth on the day Annamalai Swami attained samadhi, as I had my first darshan of Bhagavan on that day. So every year at the time of taking bhiksha on that day, I used to think of it as a feast to celebrate my new birth.*

Kunju Swami learned that Perumal Swami daily prepared hot water for Bhagavan's bath, washed his towel and massaged his feet. But now, Perumal Swami had to travel somewhere just two days after Kunju's arrival and his absence would be keenly felt, especially given the fact that Annamalai Swami was no longer around to serve Bhagavan. Perumal thus asked the newcomer to do all the things he had been doing:

*He [evidently] thought I would do everything properly. If I had come two days later, I would have lost this golden opportunity. I realised then the significance of what Bhagavan had said*

## Events in Sri Ramanasramam: Chitra Pournima



This year's Chitra Pournami fell on 7th May. The full moon of the month of Chaitra (mid-April to mid-May) is dedicated to Chitragupta, who is believed to record our good and bad deeds. Thus, devotees ask Chitragupta to forgive their wrongful actions. Normally, this is Arunachala's most attended full moon apart from the Karthigai Deepam

full moon. But Chitra Pournami 2020 saw empty streets all the way around Arunachala's 14km pradakshina path. —





*upon my arrival. He had pointed to me and said to his mother, who was lamenting the death of Annamalai Swami that I had come in his place. I was deeply touched by the solicitude and graciousness of Bhagavan who made use of my services. I cannot forget the wonderful experience of being drawn to Tiruvannamalai by Bhagavan.*

## Ramanatha Brahmachari

But at the time of Kunju Swami's arrival, it was not just Annamalai Swami that had been stricken with the plague. Ramanatha Brahmachari had been infected as well and lay curled up in a corner in Skandasramam.

Readers may remember that Ramanatha Brahmachari, or Ramanatha Dikshitar, had come to Bhagavan as a young boy more than eight years earlier in 1912 while a student in the Arunachaleswarar Vedapatasala. One day he glimpsed Bhagavan at a distance, and from this first encounter, became a devotee of Bhagavan. From then on, he begged his meals in town so that he would not be endeared to the Vedapatasala and thus could spend every available moment outside his Veda classes with Bhagavan. He eventually joined the residents at Virupaksha Cave and began serving Bhagavan.

One story that survives from those early days takes place after Bhagavan's mother came to stay on the Hill. Ramanatha Brahmachari, the embodiment of service, was used to doing the chores in the community. Among them was washing the *karchatti* (stone-vessel) for Alagammal. But because of his devotion to her, he was intent on doing a thorough job. As a result, each day there would be an inevitable delay in getting

the vessel to her. Mother would call out: "Ramanatha! Ramanatha! Bring that *karchatti*." Ramanatha would reply: "Coming, coming!" and would carry on washing and scrubbing. Mother would thus call out to him many times and Ramanatha would answer obediently each time. One day, Bhagavan commented in jest on this recurring 'duet': "Amma won't stop singing this *pallavi* (refrain), and this fellow will not give up singing his part either!"

Loved by all, Ramanatha received various nicknames. Since he once wrote a long poem dedicated to Bhagavan with 'Andavane' repeated in the refrain, and since he also regularly addressed others by the same name, he was called 'Andavane'.

Later in the Palakotthu years, Kunju Swami dubbed him 'Sarvadhikari' since he was a creature of service who only lived to help others, sweeping and cleaning at Palakotthu and doing countless other chores non-stop. Bhagavan took to calling him *vadhyaar* or schoolmaster.

But now in early 1920 the youngster was stricken by plague and his fate hung in the balance. Presenting symptoms like fever, headache, aching joints, nausea, vomiting, swelling and oozing from the large boils in the glands beneath the underarms meant that death would usually set in within eight days. With scant treatment in those pre-antibiotic days, it would have been hard to see how Ramanatha could survive given the disease's fatality rate of about 90%. Under Bhagavan's care, however, Ramanatha held on. After most of the residents and visitors to Skandasramam

## Sri Muruganar's Irai Pani Nitral, §4

படத்தில் படரும் படம்போலப்  
படர்ந்தேன் அந்தப் படம்படரும்  
படத்திற்கு ஒப்பாப் படர்ச்சிஅறும்  
பரிசேது எனக்குப் பகர்கென்றேன்  
குடத்துத் தீபம் குலைவற்றுக்  
குலவு மாறுஅவ் இறைவன்அருள்  
நடத்தும் படிக்கே நடக்கென்றான்  
ஞான ரமண நாயகனே

Like a picture sprawling on a paper,  
Rootless I ramified  
And cried:  
'Tell me how to cut the surface!'  
Ramana, Master of Wisdom, said,  
'Like the flame in a pitcher,  
Burn in the grace of the Lord.  
Be still. Fulfill his will.'





Ramanatha Brahmachari at lower left side of the frame, ca. 1919

had left town for fear of the plague, those remaining—Perumal Swami, Rangaswami Iyengar, Akhandananda and Ramakrishna Swami—were naturally concerned about having a plague victim in their midst. Though the residents of Skandasramam were free to go at any time, they would not go anywhere without Bhagavan. But they feared that in nursing the young boy, Bhagavan would contract the disease himself. Without saying anything to Bhagavan, they secretly drafted a plan.

When the day came to go for pradakshina, they took everything with them that they might need. Bhagavan was unaware of their intentions but when they reached Pachaiamman Kovil and set up for cooking as usual, they began to hold forth on the prudence of taking refuge at the Pachaiamman Kovil as had been done in earlier plague outbreaks. They told Bhagavan that they had all the necessary provisions and could arrange to send meals to Ramanatha Brahmachari who could continue staying at Skandasramam. The suggestion was clear. They wanted to abandon the stricken lad for Bhagavan's and their own safety. While such a suggestion might sound heartless, from an epidemiological or public health point of view, it was not only reasonable but recommended. For centuries, case isolation had been an effective containment strategy in plague epidemics around the globe. But Bhagavan was steadfast:

*I see; we should stay here, leaving Ramanatha there alone! And you plan to send him food from here. What a wonderful idea! He came to me as a boy with complete faith. Is it proper*

*for me to stay here leaving him alone there? If you are afraid of the plague, you may all stay here. I will go and stay with him. When you bring food to him, you can bring some to me also.*

These were the words they feared hearing and they knew in advance they would not be staying at Pachaiamman Kovil without Bhagavan. So they all went back to Skandasramam and Bhagavan continued to look after Ramanatha. It was less than a week when the boy started to show signs of recovery. How could it be otherwise when the gracious attention of Bhagavan was focused on the young devotee?

### Conclusion

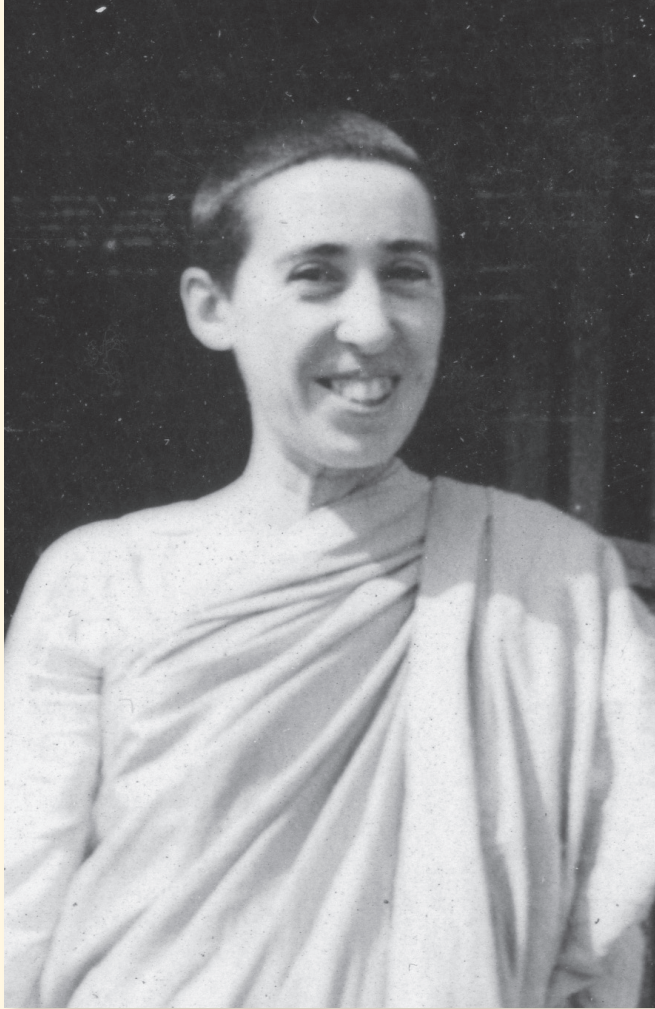
Broadly seen, the plague epidemic of 1920 caused disruptions in the lives of the citizens of Tiruvannamalai, not to mention the residents on the Hill. But Bhagavan was so symmetrical, balanced and at ease in all situations that what might otherwise be terrorising, in his presence was bearable. Whether it was epidemics, world wars or a major surgical procedure without general anaesthesia, Bhagavan's calm abiding shone through in all circumstances.

For Bhagavan, there had never been any question of leaving Ramanatha Brahmachari alone to perish at Skandasramam. For Bhagavan, things happen according to their destiny, so why worry for what is already ordained to take place? A Roman proverb pertaining to the Three Sisters who control destiny, would seem to capture, if perhaps a little fiercely, the spirit of this approach: *The Fates lead those who will; those who won't, they drag.*

The kind of relaxation with life that we see in Bhagavan on ordinary days is in evidence on the day of Annamalai Swami's passing. It was second nature for Bhagavan to greet life's contingencies and uncertainties as reality. Having conquered the fear of death, he was free—immensely free—to do the appropriate thing according to the circumstances at hand. And this he did time and again, not least of all, on this pradakshina day, returning to Skandasramam in the midst of a plague epidemic to nurse young Ramanatha back to health. —

*(series concluded)*





## IN PROFILE

### Sujata Sen (part IV)

About three months into her stay, something took place that would have lasting impact on her new life in India. A visitor to the Ashram had heard that Suzanne was a physician and begged her to come to his village to see his wife who was so sick that she was unable to make the trip to the hospital in town. As none of the health care practitioners in town were disposed to come to the man's house, Suzanne agreed, not knowing how fateful this decision would turn out to be.

When they reached the village the following day, she was inundated by an expectant crowd of would-be patients, all who had gotten advanced word of her arrival.

The demand was so great that subsequent visits were needed. In course of the days that followed, Suzanne was disturbed to discover villagers suffering from easily treatable diseases. Others, however, had so long delayed treatment that they were no longer curable. One woman had been blinded when treated for cataracts by a local healer. Another, a young teenage mother, had received inadequate midwife care during her forty-eight hours in labour and as a result, her bladder had been ruptured. Suzanne saw so much medical neglect among those who lived just outside the town that she was unable to withhold her care and thus could no longer remain casually in the Ashram as a seeker.

Seeing people suffer in her midst, knowing that she had the wherewithal to be of service, made it impossible to avoid returning to them with her medical bag and medicines. She thus found herself in a dilemma. On the one hand, she wanted to do what she could to help those in need, and on the other, she too needed help, if of an altogether different sort. Conflicted by what the Theosophists had taught her in respect of altruistic service—that it was through service to others that one developed one's divine potential—Bhagavan had impressed upon her precisely the reverse, namely, that Self-realization was sought in order to be fit and able to render the service to others.

Suzanne found herself living a conundrum. She could not reject what Bhagavan said and yet, she was unable to neglect the untreated medical cases that had been brought to her attention. Little by little, the dilemma worked itself out as she alternated between time with Bhagavan and time visiting patients on the outskirts of town. If most devotees who came to see Bhagavan likewise divided their time between Bhagavan and looking after their families, then she might follow in their footsteps and do the same. Hence, for the next two-and-a-half years, she travelled to the outlying villages by bullock-cart bringing with her basic ingredients to compound medicines as needed. And just when the distance she needed to cover each day began to prove too great for the slow-moving bullock cart, this logistical hitch was also solved in an unexpected way. In the late thirties, when war broke out in Europe, her husband Ranjit wrote to







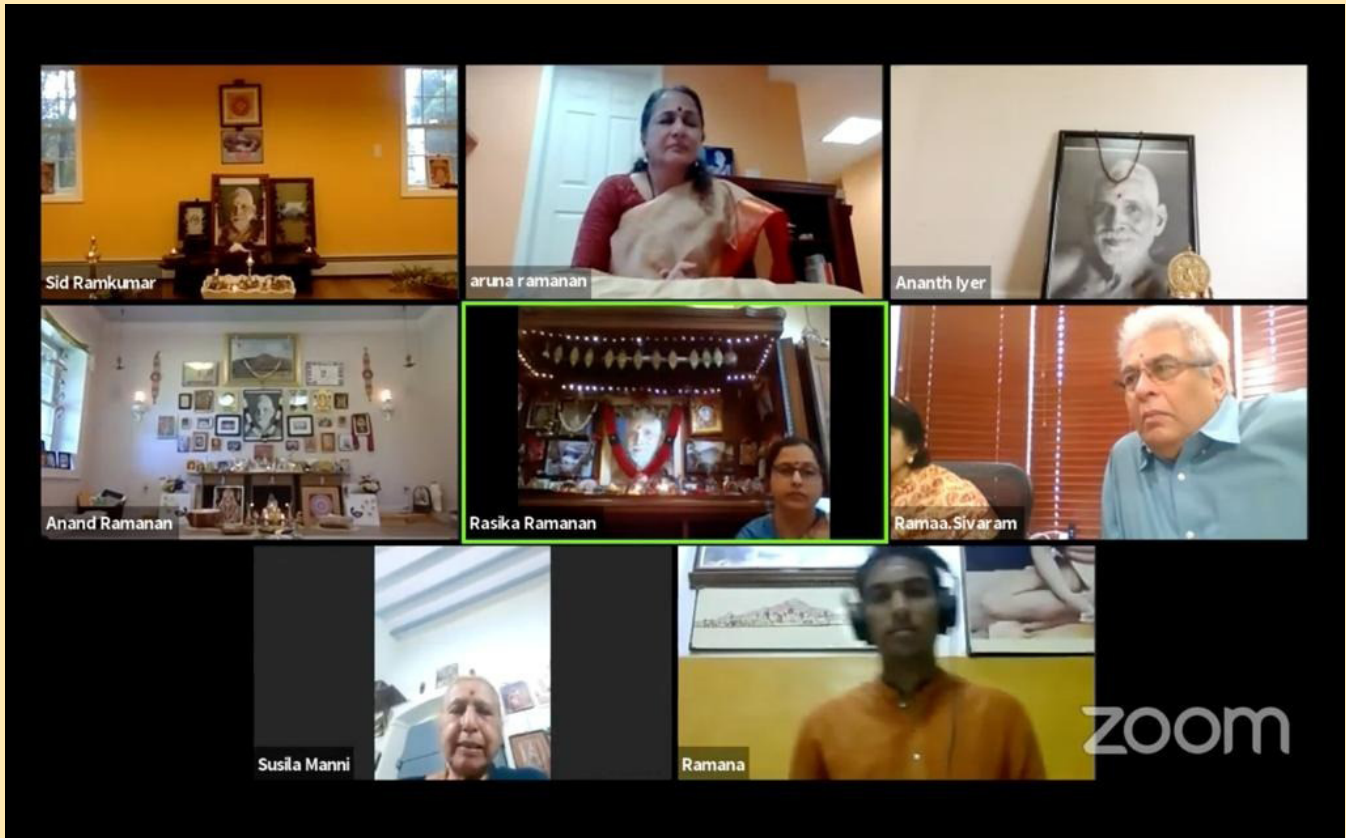
her from France to tell her that he had been posted to the Middle East and would no longer be using the car he had purchased. He thus had it shipped to her. Within a short time, she had a reliable vehicle to make her rounds as needed, and still find time to spend with Bhagavan.

As time passed, demand for her treatment in Tiruvannamalai grew as well and thus she set up a

clinic in Big Street. She named it 'Matangi Dispensary' after the goddess Matangi who was said to preside over the life-force. With the demands of the dispensary visitors and patients in outlying villages, she honoured her call to serve those in need, but all the while worked very hard in order to make time to continue her work with Bhagavan. —

(to be continued)

## Annual Saranagati Programme, Farmington, CT, USA



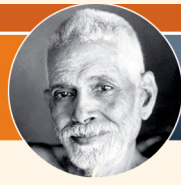
This year's annual Saranagati programme was a virtual satsang hosted by Ramana devotees of Connecticut, USA. The theme of the 23rd May programme was Surrender/Summa Iru and was celebrated on Zoom and YouTube stream platforms enabling participants across geographic boundaries and time zones to participate. Chanting included *Aksharamanamalai*, *Ramana Satguru*,

*Upadesa Saram* and *Arunachala Pancharatnam*. Talks were offered by Mr. Michael James from Scotland and Dr. Sarada Natarajan from Bangalore.

Ramana Balachandran and Aditi Iyer sang live from Tiruvannamalai, as did Mrs. President, Smt. Suseela Ramanan, singing *Saranagati*, followed by Aarti. —

[For video: <http://youtu.be/1wA0i9hTDBo>]





## Obituary: Sri R. Anjaneyalu



At the old Ramanasramam Post Office, June 2019

Sri Anjaneyalu came to Bhagavan on 14th May 1967 at the age of 23 as a mason when the eminent civil engineer Sri K. Padmanabhan asked him to put the finishing touches on the mantapam work over Bhagavan's Samadhi and the corridor around the samadhi. Anjaneyalu recalled his second night in the Ashram, accommodated in the small room above the Dining Hall, where he had a vivid dream of a snake crawling up his body. He woke in a fright: "I did not see any snake but saw a long serpentine blaze of light going from the top of my head into the darkness beyond. I sat upright, shivering uncontrollably, with palms intertwined between my folded legs." Till then he had not considered himself a spiritual man but from that day onwards, he got up early each morning. This was but the first of a series of unusual events that occurred during his time at the Ashram. When an audience hall for the samadhi was planned (1969-70), he came to the Ashram to oversee the work. During this stay, he had a nightmare but Bhagavan came to his rescue in the dream, saying, "Do not fear. I shall take care." This promise held in the coming years, and ten years later when his five-year-old daughter was declared unsalvageable in her battle with cerebral meningitis, mother and father prayed to Bhagavan and the girl survived, doctors calling it a miracle.

Anjaneyalu himself called on Bhagavan during various health crises, two of which involved major surgeries. As his faith deepened over time, he was engaged by the Ashram to carry out numerous constructions and renovations and became a permanent inmate, in charge of improvements to the physical plant.

Notable constructions include the Ashram Library and guest cottages in Morvi Compound and extension to the Veda Patasala. The complete reconstruction of the Old Hall in May 1986 was meticulously carried out by Anjaneyalu under the guidance of Sri K Padmanabhan and the renovated Hall reopened on 5th December 1986.

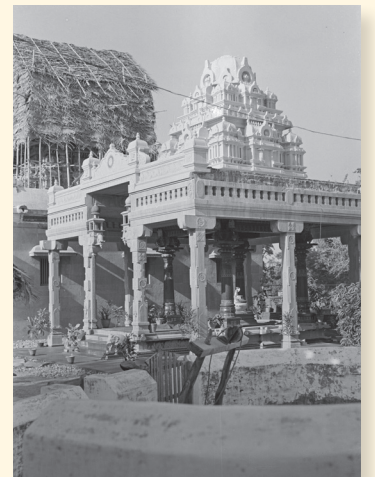
Subsequently Anjaneyalu supervised the renovation of Sri Ramana Mandiram, Madurai, where Bhagavan had his death experience and Sri Sundara Mandiram, Tiruchuzhi, where Bhagavan was born. In 2004 he constructed the Muruganar Mandiram on the site of Muruganar's family home in Ramanathapuram, near Rameswaram.

Two major renovations sponsored by Ashram and carried out by Anjaneyalu within Tiruvannamalai, at sites hallowed by Bhagavan, are the massive Thousand-Pillared Mantap in Arunachaleswarar Temple in 2002 and Pavazha Kunru Shrine in 2004. Logistics of these major works had to be systematically planned.

Renovation of the Arakandanallur Temple, Tirukoilur in 2003, relaying of the weathering course of the large mantapam roof of Bhuminatha Temple, Tiruchuzhi and overseeing of the renovation of the ancient Adi Kamakshi Temple in Tiruvannamalai in 2007 were his other notable contributions.

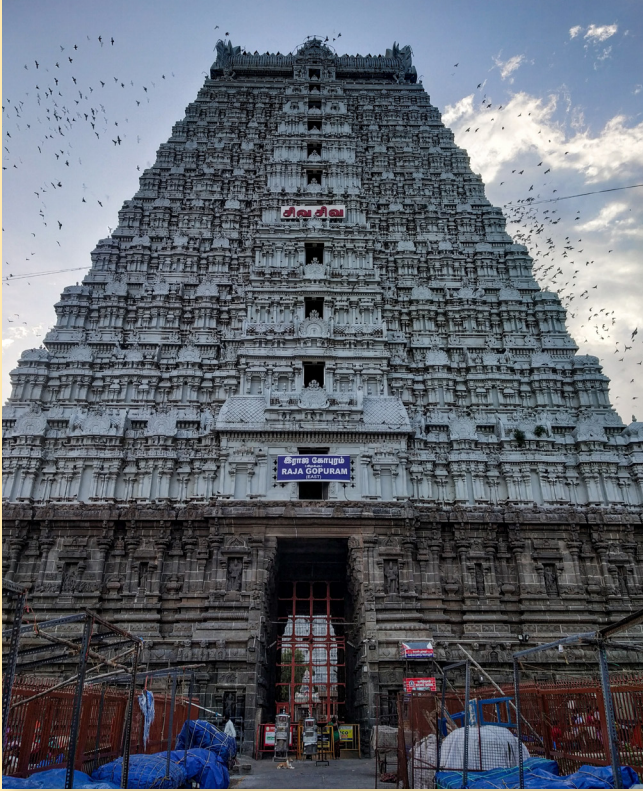
These and other smaller works were carried out economically with dedication and efficiency. Having climbed the ranks in the construction industry and endowed with natural talent, Anjaneyalu executed his work with precision and care. He was humble enough to say "It is all Bhagavan's grace". He took keen interest in the welfare of his workers and their families, and they responded with loyalty in the workplace.

After a long life of service to Bhagavan, Anjaneyalu, aged 75, merged at the Feet of Bhagavan on 14th May, the very same day he had come to Bhagavan to work on the Samadhi mantapam 53 years earlier. He is survived by his devout wife Kanthamma, son Sekhar and daughter Ramani. —





## Events in Tiruvannamalai: Local Coronavirus Conditions



Devotees have asked about COVID 19 conditions in Tiruvannamalai. In general, it should be mentioned that containment initiatives are still underway around the nation and reported cases of COVID 19 in India are approaching 2 lakhs while the Tamil Nadu state government is reporting 18,545 cases as of 26th May, the second highest in the nation. All 37 districts of Tamil Nadu are affected, with Chennai district having more than half the active cases. The near ten-fold increase in case-count over the last 30 days may in part be due to the extensive testing carried out at the 70 Covid-19 testing facilities around the state. As of 26th May, 4,31,739 tests have been conducted in Tamil Nadu.

If the case count in Tamil Nadu is among the highest in India, its case fatality rate is among the lowest, and an astonishing 88% of confirmed patients are

asymptomatic. Whether this indicates a less lethal strain of the virus in Tamil Nadu or a natural resistance among Tamilians is not clear. More likely, the low fatality rate is an indication of more extensive, effective or accurate testing in Tamil Nadu which would bring the reported case count closer to actual case count than in other states, giving a lower fatality percentage rate.

The state government just implemented a two-week lock down extension as case counts continue to rise. In view of the stress that continued lockdowns place on the general population, financial support is being provided to ration-cardholders along with rice, dhal and oil. Registered street vendors, autorickshaw drivers, migrant labourers and construction workers are being granted similar provisions, and a one-month rent freeze for students and workers, including migrant labourers, is in place. Currently, the government operates 311 relief camps and shelters for migrant workers.

The state's 37 districts fall into three categories: 1) hotspots or *red zones* which have a doubling case rate of four days or less; *orange zones* or districts without any new cases in the last 14 days; and *green zones* or non-infected districts. Tiruvannamalai is zoned *red*. A red zone district can move to green zone status when it reports no new cases for 28 days. The situation remains fluid and the state government is forestalling any decisions on relaxing lock down restrictions until the first week of July. On 31st May, however, 54 new cases were reported in Tiruvannamalai which means the green or orange designation eludes the city for the time being.

Hopes that the Ashram might reopen in the near future would seem to be dashed, given the current data. Devotees will have to continue being patient as local health care professionals and district and state authorities carry out the demanding work of contact tracing and case isolation. —

*Take care of yourself. Let the world take care of itself. See yourself [as yourself]. If you are the body, there is the gross world also. If you are spirit, all is spirit alone. ~ Talks §363*

