

Saranagathi



eNewsletter from www.sriramanamaharshi.org

In this Issue

Dear Sri Bhagavan Devotees,

The past month [Sri Bhagavan's Aradhana](#) was celebrated at the ashram. We hope you have been following the posting of reports of this and other events on the Ashram website.

In this issue, we carry the concluding part of the article on Sri Pazhaniswami continued from last month. Commemorating Sri Bhagavan's Aradhana we have an article by Prof. K. Swaminathan on how we still feel His presence at Sri Ramanasramam. This issue ends with 'Reports from Sri Ramanasramam'.

We would again like to draw attention to some new additions to the website like the [Old Devotees Interviews](#). We welcome your feedback on how to improve the website further.

CONTENTS

In this Issue	1
The Essence of Instruction	1
Sri Pazhaniswami (Concluding part)	2
Ramanasramam: Power of the Presence	4
Reports from Sri Ramanasramam	5

We hope to hear from you, about your [satsangs](#) and experiences of Him. Please email them to saranagathi@sriramanamaharshi.org

Yours in Sri Bhagavan,

The Editorial Team.

The Essence of Instruction

*Holding the breath controls the mind,
A bird caught in a net.
Breath-regulation helps
Absorption in the heart.*

– Upadesa Saram by Sri Bhagavan (Verse 11)

Sri Pazhaniswami

In the April issue of Saranagathi we published the first part of Sri Pazhaniswami's life story. The following is a continuation and the final part of the article. Sri Pazhaniswami was the first attendant, who was indeed the first devotee to attach himself permanently to Sri Bhagavan after He came to Tiruvannamalai. He remained with Sri Bhagavan till his death.

In 1905, one morning Bhagavan was coming down the Hill from the Virupaksha Cave and was going round the Hill, when it occurred to him that he should go up the Hill by a short cut between Panchamukham and Pachaiamman Temple. It was all a big forest. While he was feeling his way, a big banyan leaf drifted across his path. That one leaf was as big as the leaf they stitched together with several banyan leaves to eat food on. When he saw that leaf he was reminded of the sloka in the Arunachala Puranam, which described the banyan tree under which Arunagiri Yogi was living.

As soon as he was reminded of the sloka, he thought that the leaf must be from that banyan tree and so felt that he could see the tree if he went along the direction from which the leaf came. He started climbing up further and soon saw a tree on an elevated spot. As he was approaching, his thigh hit against a bush. On account of the disturbance, some hornets which were in the bush came out and began stinging him, thereupon he thought that he had committed an offence and that this was the punishment. So thinking, he stood still. The bees did not sting him at any place other than the leg that touched the bush. They stung him to their fullest satisfaction. After they left, he began walking. Curiously enough he forgot all about the banyan tree and wanted to reach the seven springs, but there were three big streams between, which were very deep. The thigh too, had swollen and was painful. He somehow crossed the three streams and reached seven springs. From there, he began to descend the Hill, reaching the cave of Jataswami by the evening. So far that day, he had eaten nothing whatsoever. There they gave him a tumbler full of milk which he drank,

and then took a little fruit. After some time he went to Virupaksha Cave and stayed there for the night. The leg got still more swollen. Jataswami and others did not notice, but Pazhaniswami saw it and said, "What is it?" Bhagavan told him all that had happened. Next day, he applied some sesame oil to it. When Pazhaniswami smeared the leg with oil, he found that in every place that the Swami was stung, there was a spike as strong as a wire nail. With great effort he took out each one of them and gave some treatment. The swelling subsided after two or three days.

Second Death Experience

Around 1915 or 1916, one morning the Maharshi, Pazhaniswami, Vasudeva Sastri and others left the Virupaksha Cave and proceeded to Pachaiamman Koil taking oil and soap-nut powder for an oil bath, as facilities for such a bath were ample at that place. The bath over, they started back, cutting across the Hill forming a path for themselves. The bath and the walk were already overstraining Bhagavan's nerves. The sun was fairly hot (about 10 a.m.) and the climbing was an additional strain. Pazhaniswami and Sastri had gone some steps in advance. While Bhagavan was near the tortoise rock (amai parai, the rock resembling a tortoise, situated south east of the mango tree cave), he began to feel faint and what followed is best given in Bhagavan's own words. "Suddenly the view of natural scenery in front of me disappeared and a bright white curtain was drawn across my line of vision and shut out the view of nature. I could distinctly see the gradual

process. At one stage I could see a part of the prospect of nature yet clear and the rest was covered by the advancing curtain. It was just like drawing on a slide across one's view in the stereoscope. I stopped walking, on experiencing this, lest I should fall. When it cleared, I walked on. When darkness and faintness came a second time, I leaned against a rock. And when it came a third time, I felt it safest to sit. So I sat near the rock. Then the bright white curtain had completely shut out my vision, my head was swimming, and my blood circulation and breathing stopped. The skin turned a livid blue. It was the regular deathlike hue and it got darker and darker. Vasudeva Sastri took me to be dead in fact, held me in his embrace and began to weep aloud and lament my death. His body was shivering. I could at that time distinctly feel his clasp and his shivering, hear his words of lamentation and understand their meaning. I also saw the discolouration of my skin and I felt the stoppage of my circulation and respiration, and the increased chillness of the extremities of my body. Yet my usual current of thought (dhyana) was continuing as usual, at that time also. I was not in the least afraid. Nor I felt any sadness at the condition of the body. I had closed my eyes as soon as I sat near the rock in my usual posture without even leaning against the rock. The body which had neither circulation nor respiration still maintained that position. This state continued for some ten or fifteen minutes. Then suddenly a shock passed through my body, circulation revived with tremendous force, as also respiration; and there was perspiration all over the body at every pore. The colour of life reappeared on the skin. I then opened my eyes, got up and said, 'Let us go.' Without further trouble we reached Virupaksha Cave. This was the only fit I had, in which both circulation and respiration stopped."

Maharshi added, to correct some wrong accounts that had obtained currency about the incident, "I

did not bring on the fit purposely, nor did I wish to see what this body would look like at death. Nor did I say that I will not leave this body without warning others. It was one of those fits that I used to get occasionally. Only in this instance it assumed a very serious aspect."

Pazhaniswami's release

When Bhagavan went up to Skandasramam in 1915, Pazhaniswami chose to continue at the Virupaksha Cave itself for solitude. Then Bhagavan used to visit him off and on and found him growing weaker. When he fell ill and was unable to move out, Bhagavan began to visit him daily and help him in whatever way he could.

One day i.e. on 11th June 1918 (corresponding to the Tamil year Kalayukthi, month of Vaikasi 29th, Tuesday) Bhagavan saw a peacock flying up from the Virupaksha Cave to Skandasramam in great excitement and it struck him that Pazhaniswami should be in a critical condition. At once Bhagavan went down to the Cave and found his intuition correct. Pazhaniswami was in the throes of death gasping for breath. Bhagavan sat near him with his right hand on his chest. Pazhaniswami's breath became soft and Bhagavan took off his hand when he felt a quivering within Pazhaniswami's chest. This, Bhagavan has said is the sign of life becoming extinct in the body. But when Bhagavan took off his hand, that very moment, Pazhaniswami's eyes opened. "I thought he would subside at the heart, but he escaped," Bhagavan remarked, adding, "That is said to be the sign of one going to higher states of spiritual experience, though not immediate merger at the Heart."

Ramanasramam: Power of the Presence

The following is an extract from Professor K. Swaminathan's book 'Ramana Maharshi'.

In the light of the Maharshi's teaching on the unity and intemporality of Being, his physical survival or death was, strictly speaking, unimportant. But few even among Advaitins by conviction are beyond the pull of affection and desire. Devotees, wanting him to continue in the body and be available, became very concerned after the onset of his last illness in February 1949, when a cancerous growth appeared on the left elbow and began to spread upward. He wanted to let nature take its course, but was prevailed upon to undergo a series of operations. The doctors knew that the pain which lasted for many months must have been excruciating and they and many others were left wondering how anyone could bear it with such detachment and also why such suffering should come to one so good. Some thought that the compassion which owned the sins of so many had to be paid for, but few wished that the end should come and bring relief. Through this prolonged and painful dissolution of the body, he re-enacted publicly the drama of July 1896 and taught his devotees that, as his flesh shared with them the common lot of mortality, their awareness could share with him the bliss of transcendent being. To those who were distraught by the thought of parting, the Maharshi would say: "I am not going away. Where could I go? I am here". Birth and death are for the body, while for I-as-Awareness, which contains and transcends time and space, there is no coming and going, no meeting or parting.

The end came on 14th April 1950. A French press photographer, M. Cartier-brassen, standing before his cottage near the Ashram, saw a shooting-star, vividly luminous, coming from the south and moving slowly northward across the sky and disappearing behind the peak of Arunachala. He looked at his watch; it was 8.47pm. This was the very moment when the Maharshi breathed his last. The appearance

of the bright meteor in the sky was observed by many people all over South India and was widely reported in the papers. Some devotees in Madras and elsewhere, seeing it, guessed its import and set out by car to be present at the interment at Tiruvannamalai.

Noting that many visitors to Ramanasramam still feel the power of Sri Ramana's presence at the spot where he lived so long and his remains lie buried, Chadwick remarks: "Surely this is only natural. Is it not the tradition amongst all great religions of the world, with no exception? Muslims revere the graves of saints, while the Buddhists go on long pilgrimages to pay reverence to some relic. People do not take all this trouble unless they feel there is a very good reason".

The power of the presence is felt, too, by many who have never seen the Sage during his life-time but are drawn by his name or his pictures, of which there are hundreds. As he often said, the true guru is present everywhere because he is none other than the Self in awareness. And he claimed nothing special or supernatural for himself beyond happy awareness of the being which is at the heart of every person.



Sri Bhagavan's Maha Nirvana Day

The Maha Nirvana of Sri Bhagavan was celebrated on 14th April. Devotees will recollect that Sri Bhagavan attained Mahasamadhi in 1950 on the same day at 8.47pm.

Sri Bhagavan's Aksharamanamalai was chanted by a large number of devotees before the Nirvana room this year between 8.10pm and 8.45pm.

This chanting movingly re-enacted the scene of the very same day in 1950. Over 100 devotees participated in this very moving and thrilling event.



Major Chadwick Day

The death anniversary of Major A.W.Chadwick an ardent devotee of Bhagavan was observed at 10.00 a.m. on 17th April 2009. His Samadhi was decorated with flowers and *Aksharamanamalai* was recited in front of his Samadhi. After arati, prasadam was distributed.

