

Saranagathi

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ISSUE

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Dear Devotees,

In the days approaching the celebration of Bhagavan's Advent, one can feel the mounting enthusiasm among devotees in the Ashram. Towards the end of August devotees gathered each morning to chant Muruganar's *Ramana Sannidhi Murai* which went all day and late into the evening for three consecutive days. On the 30th and 31st, prohits from Trichy, Coimbatore and Tiruvannamalai assembled in the Samadhi Hall and chanted ghanaparayana of the Krishna Yajur Veda. With the festival season already underway, this is the time of year when Bhagavan's grace can be felt in its fullness.

This issue of *Saranagathi* continues with the life story of Saroja Krishnan, who attained the feet of Bhagavan on the 30th June this year at the age of 90. This month's *How I came to Bhagavan* is the story of Sarojamma's sister-in-law, Hamsa Ramiah, who was Manavasi Ramaswami Iyer's granddaughter. September events include Kunjuswami Samadhi Day (the 7th) and Muruganar Samadhi Day (the 28th) plus updates on Ashram projects. For further details and other news, go to <http://www.sriramanamaharshi.org> or write us at saranagathi@sriramanamaharshi.org

In Sri Bhagavan
The Editorial Team



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Reality in Forty Verses

7. Although the mind and the world, which stands before us arise and subside together, it is through the mind that the world shines forth. That which is the perfection that shines without appearing or disappearing as the place where both the world and the mind appear and disappear, is verily the Real.

Ulladu Narpadu by Sri Bhagavan





Women Devotees Series: Saroja Krishnan (part two)

When my son Ramana was born in May 1943, my mother was living here in Tiruvannamalai and my mother-in-law, in Salem. So I was shifting back and forth between Salem and Tiruvannamalai. During these years I had time to be with Bhagavan. I used to come to the Ashram in the mornings and evenings and sit in the hall with Bhagavan. But I was not doing dhyana or anything as I had the baby with me. Rather I just sat watching Bhagavan and enjoying his presence. Bhagavan used to observe my son and would speak to him on occasion. Young Ramana took his first steps under Bhagavan's guidance. Bhagavan prompted him and the little one stood up and took his first steps in the direction of Bhagavan.

After a few years, we moved to Delhi and could only come during the summer holidays. One time when Ramana was six years old and we had come down from Delhi on summer vacation, he sat down in front of Bhagavan, crossed his legs in imitation and said proudly "Bhagavan, I too did tapas this morning on the mountain" (He had climbed up a little way and had sat there for a while). Bhagavan placed his forefinger on his nose in surprise and exclaimed with a smile, "He did tapas, it seems!" Feeling proud and encouraged, young Ramana stood up, recited some poem or essay learnt at school, with proper gestures. Bhagavan listened with rapt attention and obvious enjoyment.

The attention paid by Bhagavan to the talk of little children was no less than that paid to wise scholars. He was not acting to please the child any more than when listening to the learned ones. Weren't we all his children,





treated with equal scrupulous courtesy and kindness? He was a child at the time, listening in empathy.

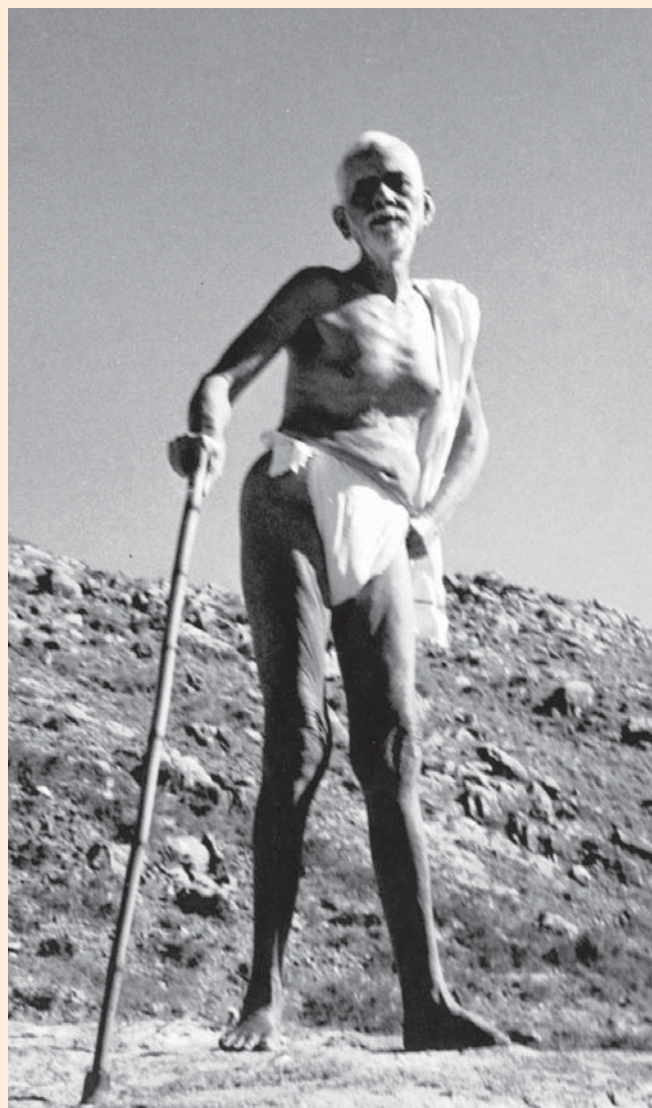
One day when Ramana was about 10 months old and we were coming to the Ashram I met Bhagavan on the steps near the old office. He stopped where I was standing and bent down towards Ramana. Just when Bhagavan came close, the two playfully knocked their heads together, and then a second time and then a third time; it was something to see, these two heads knocking together, one that contained all the wisdom of the universe and beyond, and the other, empty of any ideas whatsoever! I am convinced that it was this encounter that made my son so honest. Later when my son was about 20 years old he was put in charge of the company store. There had been a practice there of people coming and selling their cement sacks for about one rupee each which amounted to about 1 lakh over the course of a year, but my son felt that these sacks were the property of the company and that it was improper to accept the proceeds from someone else's property. Naturally the other employees were angry with my son for taking away from them a very reliable and steady source of income. But that is the way he was and never changed all his life—very pure and very honest. It cannot be said for sure but it is my opinion that it was because of those three knocks Bhagavan gave him when he was just a baby that made him so honest. When God comes and blesses us, there is bound to be a result.

One morning, my uncle Rajagopala Iyer came home in great haste, hurriedly took a two anna piece and ran back without saying anything. We were all much intrigued by this behaviour until he came home in the evening and explained the matter. It was an illuminating event.

Bhagavan was coming down the Hill after his morning stroll. Suddenly a dove fell at his feet. Bhagavan bent down and picked it up, cradling it in his arms and

gently soothing it by petting it on the back. Then he turned round to see how the bird had happened to fall down there. A young hunter was standing hesitantly a little distance away with a catapult in hand. Bhagavan remarked in a soft voice to Uncle Rajagopala Iyer and the attendant standing at Bhagavan's side, "This is the poor boy's food, but two annas would do to buy something to satisfy his hunger."

One word from Bhagavan and either of them would have run down and brought the money in a minute from the office. But did Bhagavan ever consider the Ashram as his own? In my uncle's eagerness to carry out Bhagavan's wish, he ran down to the office and,





without mentioning anything, borrowed two annas, went up and paid-off the boy-hunter, the latter going away happily. He immediately returned the money to the office, having run home to fetch it. To be the one to carry out the words of Bhagavan was his deepest desire.

Meanwhile the dove lay still and dazed in Bhagavan's hands. It must have been seriously injured. It did not move even after Bhagavan came back to the hall. "A few drops of green grapes, squeezed on his head would cure him," Bhagavan said. Just moments later a devotee from out-of-station entered the hall carrying several bunches of green-grapes to give as an offering to Bhagavan. "Hey look, we are just talking about green grapes and here they are," exclaimed Bhagavan. A few

drops of grape juice were applied to the dove's head. In a short while the bird stirred, raised its head and looked around. After a few tentative steps, it fluttered its wings as if to show Bhagavan that it had recovered and then took to its wings and flew away.

Where, when and how did Bhagavan learn this treatment for birds and who was the vet that taught him? Of course the things that happened in Bhagavan's presence seemed so natural. But who ever heard of grape juice bringing an animal back from the grips of death? And how was it that grapes arrived just in that moment? I tell you, for us these things were like miracles! —

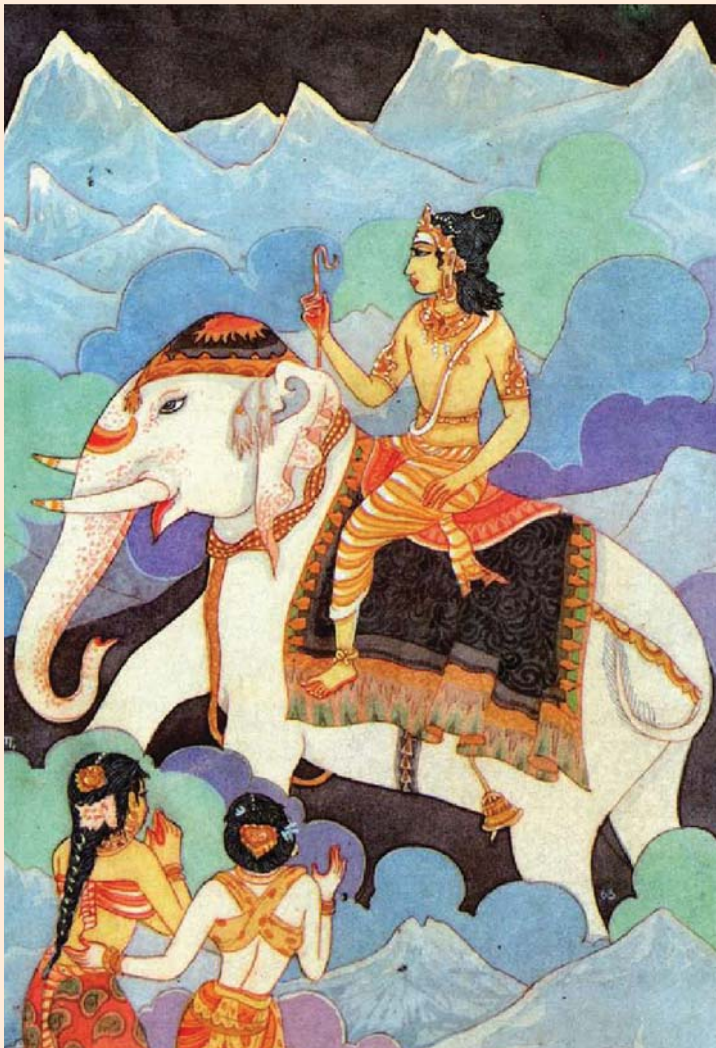


Illustration courtesy of Ramalingar Pani Mandram

The Naayanars

Periapuranam (also known as *Thiruthondar Puranam*) narrates the lives of the great Tamil saints, most notable among them, Saint Sundara. The story of Sundara is this: One day while plucking flowers for the Lord at Kailas, Sundara beheld Uma's lady-attendants, Aninditai and Kamalini. Instantly his heart went out to them. When he reported this to the Lord, the latter responded saying: "As you have bestowed your loving glances on these two maidens, all three of you will be born on the earth and taste the joys of love!" Thus begins Sundara's life and adventures on earth, among them, his marriage to Aninditai and Kamalini, (now Paravaiyaar and Sangaliaar). But while on earth, Sundara remains ever the devotee of the Lord and sings his songs of devotion at every opportunity, passing his days and nights in worship of the Lord at the holy kshetras. Though sometimes snared by the lures of earthly life, Sundara nevertheless remains faithful to the Lord and eventually is summoned back to Kailas. Riding heavenward on a white elephant, he stops in to see his close friend, the Chera ruler Cheraman Perumal. Once having reached the Lord's abode, Sundara bows low, exclaiming, "Oh, Lord, how indescribable is Thy compassion that has forgiven my lapses and brought me back to Thy service". In the end both Sundara and Cheraman Perumal are granted the grace of being in the Lord's service at Kailasa.

The 6th August was the aradhana day of Sundara and Cheraman Perumal. Of the other 63 saints, aradhana days this month are: 5th August: Kurumba; the 9th: Kailiyanar and Kotpuli; the 27th: Cherutunai; the 28th: Pugazhtunai and Ati bhakta; and the 29th: Ilayankudi maran.





How I Came to Bhagavan

Hamsa Ramiah



When we were children, in our youthful innocence we never thought of Bhagavan as a great jnani or someone in a high state but simply treated him as a member of the family. We used to play with him and sing songs in the hall with him and dance *kummi* around him and Bhagavan seemed to enjoy it very much.

My grandfather, Manavasi Ramaswami Iyer, was a strict man and when we were children, we were afraid of him. Bhagavan would be talking with us in the hall and upon seeing my grandfather enter the hall, in a jesting spirit, Bhagavan would have us all—himself included—keep very quiet and still and sit upright as good children should do.

Whenever my father came to the Ashram, Bhagavan would tell my mother to go and attend to 'Mappillai' ('son-in-law'). This was the affectionate nickname Bhagavan had given my father. My father was very familiar with Bhagavan and used to regularly approach him, reporting every detail of our household. Whenever he wanted to take leave of Bhagavan, he would wait for Bhagavan to look up and nod his acceptance.

We also used to cut vegetables in the kitchen with Bhagavan who would join us in singing *Aksharamanamalai*. He was

very meticulous in cutting vegetables and particular that nothing be wasted.

When I was 13 yrs old, Echammal proposed a marriage alliance to my mother and my grandfather. Gowri Ammal and Rajagopala Iyer, the relations of the boy in question, were present. Bhagavan gave his nod of approval for which Ramaswami Iyer immediately assented saying he was prepared to receive it as Bhagavan's gift. The marriage took place two years later and it seems that it was Bhagavan who fixed the wedding date. Only on the day of the wedding did we come to fully understand that this had all been the intervention of the Lord.

Immediately following the ceremony, I and my husband, still in our wedding clothes, came to pay our respects to Bhagavan. It so happened that as we entered the hall to do our namaskars, Bhagavan was just narrating an incident from the Purana about the holy wedding of Lord Siva and Goddess Meenakshi. On seeing us, Bhagavan singled us out and announced to the gathering, "See, here comes Meenakshi Sundareswarar". On hearing this from Bhagavan's lips, feelings of joy surged up within us; it came as if a blessing from the Lord of Lords.

In 1950, two days before Bhagavan's Nirvana, I came with my son who was about 6 weeks old. Chinnaswamigal asked me whether I had presented the child to Bhagavan. But I could not do so as Bhagavan was unable to lift his head due to his weak condition. But just then one Parsi gentleman quickly took the child, and from a slight distance lifted him up and presented him to Bhagavan. Bhagavan slowly lifted his head and with a compassionate smile gazed upon the child, showering on him his grace. Even at this stage when Bhagavan was unable to move, he saw the child; it was his *anugraham*.

Two days later, as soon as we heard the news, we rushed to the Ashram. But we never felt at any time that Bhagavan was no more. Even in later years when I had to leave Tiruvannamalai to go and live with my second son, I never felt that Bhagavan was not here. He is always present in our hearts and his grace is always available. —





Report's from Sri Ramanasramam



Dispensary Inauguration 1942

Old Dispensary Renovation

Health services started in the Ashram in 1929 led by Dr. Krishnamurthi Iyer. But for more than ten years medical procedures were conducted in makeshift facilities, until the early 1940s, when construction began on a proper Ashram dispensary. Inaugurated in 1942, the old Ashram Dispensary is one of the Ashram's earliest buildings. Built in the Madras terrace style with lime-mortar finish and segmental-arched windows, it harks back to a simpler time. However, it is not only its period architecture that merits its designation as a heritage site but also its historical value: this is where Bhagavan was treated in the last years of his life and where he underwent surgery in March 1949 by an eminent medical team from Chennai.

In 2010 investigation revealed that the building required immediate repairs. Due to the ravages of time, numerous wooden rafters were badly damaged as were portions of the lime-plaster exterior and window frames. With the help of Ashram devotee, Dr. Perumal, architectural conservationists working in the Tanjavur area were contacted to carry out the work. Shakti Murugan, the project-in-charge, is an architect by training and has dedicated his career to renovating historical buildings. Among his priorities is taking measures to extend and protect the life of vintage buildings far into the future. Concerning the Ashram Dispensary, since the building's underlying structure seems to be intact, renovation will focus on replicating damaged portions of the lime-plaster façade, securing the overall exterior against the elements, replacing damaged woodwork and, with the help of archival photos, restoring the building to its original condition. The project is being carried out by six temple masons and three carpenters. Projected time frame: 4-6 months.

Maharshi's Gospel

Self-Realisation

D: How is the Guru found?

M: God, who is immanent, in His grace takes pity on the loving devotee and manifests Himself according to the devotee's development. The devotee thinks that He is a man and expects a relationship as between two physical bodies. But the Guru, who is God or the Self incarnate, works from within, helps the man to see the error of his ways and guides him in the right path until he realises the Self within.





Report's from Sri Ramanasramam (cont.)

Muruganar Samadhi Day

The Samadhi Day of Bhagavan's great devotee, the Tamil poet Muruganar, was observed on Sunday, the 28th August, 2011. Chanting began at 6am with Muruganar's *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai* led by Sri Ramanan and devotees from Ramana Sacchidananda Sabha (Choolaimedu), Chennai. Complete chanting of the 1,852 verses of *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai* continued from the aradhana day celebration up till the 30th August in the New Hall with wide participation. Thanks to the late T. R. Kanakammal who formed a trust and arranged funding, these elaborate celebrations on Muruganar's Samadhi Days are sure to be an annual event.



Bhuminatha Temple Repairs

In recent months it came to the attention of Ramanasramam that the mantapam at the main entrance of Bhuminatha Temple in Bhagavan's birth place, Tiruchuli, was in disrepair. The mantapam was subject to severe leaking during the rainy season due to damaged roofing tiles. A team of 20 masons and workers under the direction of Sri Anjaneyalu and including local labourers convened at the site to carry out the task of re-tiling the 22,000 sq. ft. mantapam roof. With Ashram logistical support and the requisite funding from Ashram devotees, the project is on target for completion by the middle of September.

Kunjuswami Samadhi Day

The Aradhana Day of Sri Kunjuswami was observed at Swamiji's Samadhi on Sunday the 7th August 2011. Bhagavan's *Upadesa Saram*, *Bhagavad Gita Saram* and *Saddarshanam* in Malayalam were recited. At 10 am Bhagavan's *Aksharamanamalai* was recited by a large number of devotees including those who came from Palghat, followed by puja. Kunjuswami came to Bhagavan from Palghat as a young man in 1920 when Bhagavan was still up at Skandasramam and spent the remainder of his life in Bhagavan's service at the Ashram until attaining Bhagavan's feet in 1992.

