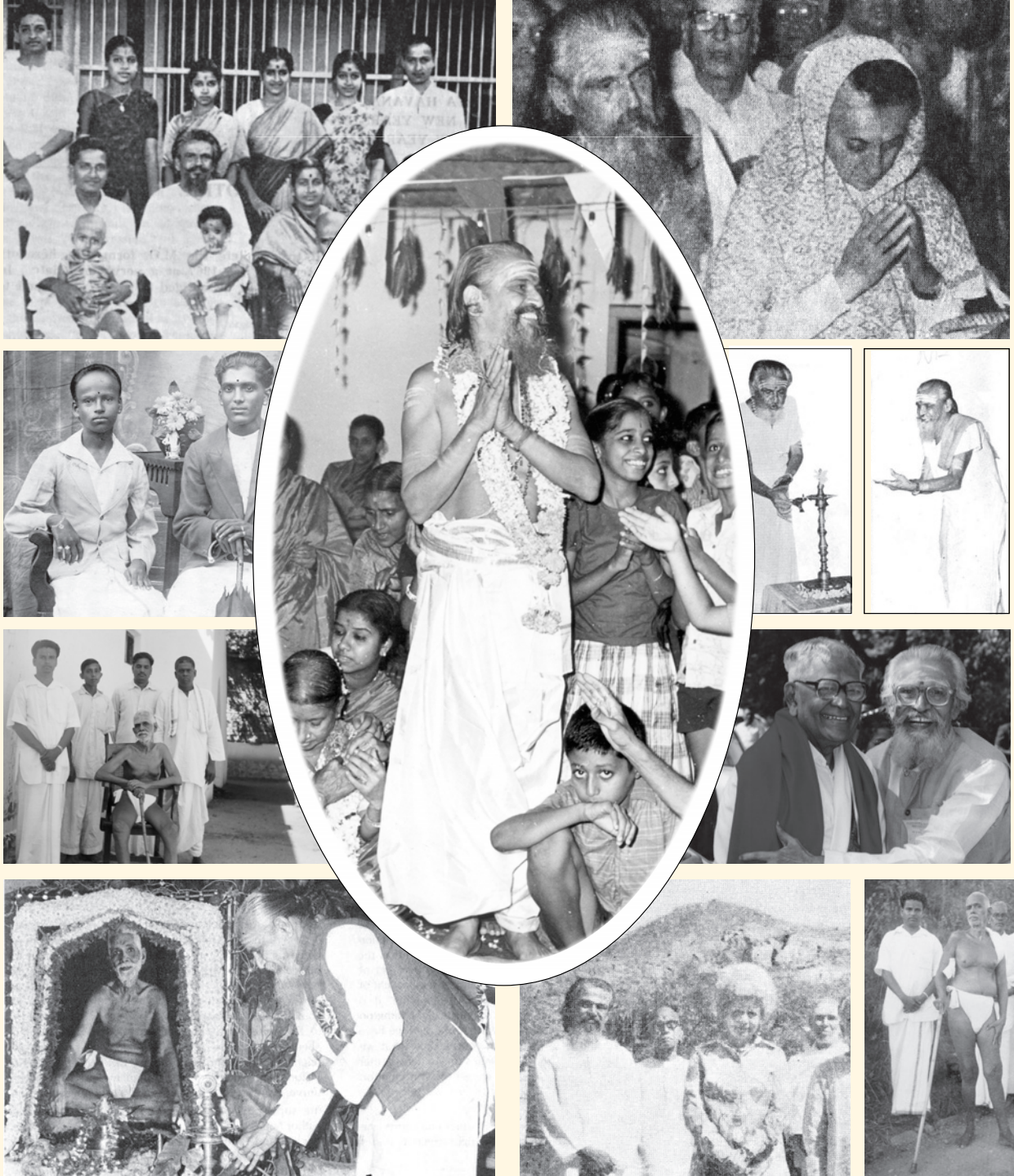


# Saranagati



COVER  
INSERT

2014: VENKATOO  
CENTENARY YEAR



## Saranagati



SEPTEMBER 2014  
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IN THIS  
ISSUE

Dear Devotees,

The month of August heralded the beginning of the festival season with Ganesh Chaturthi celebrations on the 29th just as preparations were getting underway to celebrate Bhagavan's Advent.

Kunjuswami's Samadhi Day was observed on Thursday, 7th August, followed by Independence Day on Friday the 15th and Krishna Jayanthi on Sunday the 17th.

This September issue concludes the life story of T.N. Venkataraman and is followed by a tribute written the day after Swamiji's passing by his great-grand-daughter, Sandhya Seetharaman (see *In Memorium*, p. 5).

*In the Frame with Bhagavan* this month features archival listing GRO 68 from 1st December, 1947, the last large group photo taken with Sri Bhagavan.

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 Upcoming Events

1st September (Mon) Bhagavan's Advent  
8th September (Mon) Full Moon  
18th September (Thurs) Punarvasu Day  
24th September (Wed) Navaratri Begins  
3rd October (Fri) Vijaya Dasami  
7th October (Tues) Full Moon  
16th October (Thurs) Punarvasu Day

22nd October (Wed) Viswanathaswami's Day  
23rd October (Thurs) Deepavali  
6th November (Thurs) Full Moon  
9th November (Sun) Annamalaiswami Samadhi Day  
12th November (Wed) Punarvasu Day  
27th November (Thurs) Kartigai Festival Commences  
5th December (Fri) Maha Deepam





The Life of T. N.  
Venkataraman: 1914-2007  
(part five)

In addition to the numerous legal struggles that beset the Ashram, TNV had to face formidable financial challenges. Now in Sri Bhagavan's physical absence, the support net that had maintained Sri Ramanasramam since its inception in 1922 suddenly fell away. Resident devotees moved away and the regular crowds of visitors dropped off, and with them, their financial contributions.

By 1953 the Ashram was in debt and the Veda Patasala had to close. Without students, Vedaparayana, which had been a regular part of Ashram life since the mid-1930s, came to an end.

As a means of reducing operating costs for the Ashram, someone suggested that TNV close the kitchen and open a canteen outside. The latter replied indignantly: "I will never allow it to happen. I can vividly remember

Sri Bhagavan citing an article in the newspaper which read: *There are two fires in Ramanasramam: one is Sri Bhagavan Himself and the other is the kitchen fire. They both will never cease to kindle the heart of any devotee visiting the Ashram!* And so, the fact that Bhagavan read this out loud means that he wanted the kitchen to be kept up and devotees served good food."

### Gathering Support

In this bold spirit TNV soldiered on but under great strain. Chadwick stepped in to solicit funds for the Vedic school. But this was far from sufficient to address the Ashram's many other financial worries.

A few years after this, Venkatoo had an insight. He began to recognise that the Ashram's deliverance would come from nowhere else than Bhagavan's devotees, its single greatest asset after Bhagavan himself. He took a bold decision and made up his mind to tour the country in order to reestablish contact with old devotees. The two-month trip doubled as a pilgrimage to holy sites and included visits to Calcutta, Gaya, Banaras, Gorakhpur, Lucknow, Delhi, Ahmedabad, Bombay, Poona, Kolhapur, Hubli and Bangalore. This marked a change in fortunes where TNV's prodigious social gifts were put to use and in the end proved providential. Subsequent trips helped him renew contact with Prof. K. Swaminathan, hard at work on *Mahatma Gandhi Collected Works* in Delhi, where TNV found not only wise counsel and moral support but a person of influence. A.R. Natarajan also proved to be an ally who eventually helped in raising funds for the publication of *The Mountain Path* (1964) and whose key placement in government helped secure needed income tax exemptions for the Ashram. At home, TNV turned to Maj. Chadwick, Dr. T.N. Krishnaswamy, K.K. Nambiar, Framji Dorabji, S.S. Cohen, Arthur Osborne and Balarama Reddiar, all who proved invaluable in their service and suggestions during these difficult years. In return each one received TNV's undivided loyalty.

By the mid-1960s things began to look up. With the Ashram having declared itself a Public Religious Trust in 1959, legal pressures eased and now, with two of TNV's sons having started to earn salaries, the family's financial burden was lightened.





TNV and purohits at the Samadhi Mantap construction

## Samadhi Mantapam

Since the time of Bhagavan's Mahanirvana, Venkatoos felt the need for a mantapam over Bhagavan's Samadhi in order to support daily Vedic worship. As important was establishing a gathering place where devotees could sit in Bhagavan's blessed presence. Foundation stones were laid by Anandamayi Ma in 1952 but work progressed slowly owing to paucity of funds. TNV had to content himself with a simple bamboo structure with improvements only gradually being introduced over the next decade.

By July 1964, however, the central mantapam of the shrine with its polished black granite pillars was in place. Family members of the master temple architect, Sri Vaidyanatha Stapathi who built the Mother's Shrine, executed the work with equal devotion and dedication. Two years later, in August 1966, the vimanam over Bhagavan's Samadhi and a second granite exterior around it was inaugurated. The following year, in June 1967, Kumbhabhishkam was performed, commemorating the completion of the mantapam and vimanam, and rededicating the shrine. Yet work on the final stage, that of the original vision of a large hall, still remained.

When funds were graciously donated by devotees in 1969, work was taken up and on 3rd May 1970, coinciding with the 20th Anniversary of Bhagavan's Brahma Nirvana, the Samadhi Hall was inaugurated.

## At Long Last

Now with most legal worries behind him, with the Ashram in much better economic circumstances and with the dream of a big hall at last fulfilled, for the first time since Chinnaswami's demise, Venkatoos could rest easy. By the

time of his *Shashthiabdapurti* celebrations in May 1974 (for which the Souvenir *Venkatoo 60* was released), the 'little Sarvadhikari' had found his stride and come into his own, earning the respect of all. Among his accomplishments was the fact that he had managed to educate his children all the while tending the many demands of the Ashram: stabilising its income, protecting it from encroachment by hostile outside forces and getting it to function again as an ashram with visitors returning year by year.

## Expanding the Ashram

Ever on the lookout for avenues for expanding the Ashram, TNV encouraged devotees to donate their Ramana Nagar property to the Ashram when they were planning to move away permanently. In this way, Ramanasramam gained needed land for its continued growth.

When funds were available, Venkatoos poured them into construction, ever improving the Ashram. By the mid-1970s the *Ramana Centenary Library* opened alongside numerous cottages and rooms in Morvi compound. Later, rooms were constructed in Korangu Totham.

## Functions

Meanwhile Venkatoos continued his ongoing service to devotees. In 1974, he traveled to New Delhi to present sacred relics of Sri Bhagavan at the inaugural function of the New Delhi Ramana Kendra Building. In November 1979, he supervised the Ashram Kumbhabhishkam, marking Sri Bhagavan's Birth Centenary. The following spring he hosted Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi, who came to participate in Bhagavan's 30th Aradhana Day and unveil Bhagavan's statue in the Samadhi Hall. Years later Sri R. Venkataraman, President of India, visited the Ashram and TNV greeted the dignitary as an 'old friend' as RV had been coming to the Ashram since 1937.

## Sannyasa Diksha

Having lost Nagu, his wife and companion of 55 years, in March 1984, and following his *Satabhishkam* (80th birthday) ten years later in May 1994, Venkatoos made his way to New Delhi one summer, not telling family and friends what he was up to. By this time his eldest son had returned and was shouldering the responsibility of Ashram management. But the latter did not know it till his father telephoned one day that August from Rishikesh, making the formal request as per tradition, that his son, V.S. Ramanan, grant consent for him to take sannyas. Once given, Swami Chidananda,





Sannyasa Diksha with Swami Chidananda in Rishikesh, August 1994

President of the Divine Life Society, Sivanandashram, Rishikesh, gave the Ramanasramam President *sannyasa diksha* (August 12, 1994) and TNV thenceforth became known as Swami Ramanananda Saraswati.

Swami Ramanananda or ‘Swamiji,’ returned to Ramanasramam on 19th August and took up residence in Rm A-19. But now as his new station as a renunciate precluded involvement in administrative affairs, he resigned as President, leaving Ashram leadership in the capable hands of his eldest son who was duly installed as the Ashram President.

### Later Years

Thus began a new chapter in Swamiji’s life. During these years, one could see him in ochre robes with his long white hair tied in a knot, sitting at the rear of Bhagavan’s Shrine and greeting devotees by individual name as they

passed by on their pradakshina rounds, his phenomenal memory never having failed him. Or one might hear him welcoming devotees from his chair at the entrance to the Mother’s shrine with his raspy but sonorous signature greeting, ‘Arunachalam! Arunachalam!’

While it is often the case with elderly people, especially those who have reached an advanced age, that friends and family have all but forgotten the achievements of their younger years, Swamiji was keen that this should not happen in his case. He was ever ready to tell anyone willing to listen about the trials and tribulations of a by-gone era, of former battles hard-won that had made the Ashram what it is today, and thus dispel any casual imaginings that things had always been so peaceful.

Just prior to Bhagavan’s 125th Jayanthi celebration in December 2004, Ashram President V. S. Ramanan and A. R. Natarajan presented Swamiji with the *Naveena Arjuna* (‘Modern Arjuna Award’) in honour of Swamiji’s long years of service to the Ashram. When a photo and write-up on him appeared in the ‘Ashram Bulletin’ of the Aradhana 2005 issue of the *Mountain Path*, this was brought to his attention. For the next several days Swamiji could be seen sitting in the windows at the rear of the Bhagavan’s Shrine, keen to have those who passed by glimpse these pages of the *Mountain Path*.

On most days Swamiji received old friends and devotees at his Ashram room. All—including children, grand-children and great grand-children—came and

## Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi: Manas

D.: A *sannyasi* asked: It is said that the Self is beyond the mind and yet the realisation is with the mind. *Mano na manute, Manasa na matam, and Manasaivedamaptavyam* (“The mind cannot think it. It cannot be thought of by the mind and the mind alone can realise it”). How are these contradictions to be reconciled?

M.: Atman is realised with *mruta manas* (dead mind), i.e., mind devoid of thoughts and turned inward. Then the mind sees its own source and becomes That. It is not as the subject perceiving an object. When the room is dark a lamp is necessary to illumine and eyes to cognise objects. But when the sun is risen there is no need of a lamp, and the objects are seen; and to see the sun no lamp is necessary, it is enough that you turn your eyes towards the self-luminous sun. Similarly with the mind. To see the objects the reflected light of the mind is necessary. To see the Heart, it is enough that the mind is turned towards it. Then the mind loses itself and the Heart shines forth.

— Talks §99





Swamiji receiving the *Naveena Arjuna Award*, 27th December 2004

knocked at his door which was ever open to warmly receive them. Whatever conversation took place it was sure to be enlivened if the subject turned to old times. At such moments Swamiji could draw from his treasure trove of memories and recollections of the glory days in Ramanasramam, referring, as needed, to the abundant photos of devotees, family and friends that adorned the walls of his Ashram room.

One resident devotee regularly came to read aloud to him from *Talks, Letters, Day by Day* and other chronicles of Bhagavan's life, all of which were now translated into Tamil. Swamiji had never read these books but often knew their content from firsthand experience

or by word-of-mouth from the devotees who had been present. Swamiji was eager and enthusiastic to supplement these anecdotes with details or related stories, in some cases correcting the printed history.

### Final Days

But even in his 90s, the spark of Swamiji's energetic spirit never dampened and he remained bright and cheerful right up till the end.

On Bhagavan's 128th Jayanti which fell on the 25th December 2007, Swamiji now in his 94th year attended the celebrations and seemed to be in good form. But the following day, he didn't feel well and stayed indoors. That evening about 8.15 he lost consciousness and within a short time, was effortlessly absorbed into the Holy Feet of Bhagavan.

Devotees from Chennai, Bangalore and Madurai who had departed after Jayanthi got the news and immediately returned to the Ashram. In the hours leading up to the interment, each noticed how peaceful his countenance was. Swamiji's body was placed in front of the Samadhi Hall just near the place where Bhagavan's photo sits at Kartigai Deepam. Following abhishekam, the body was taken to a site prepared next to Chinnaswami's samadhi, where, like that of Bhagavan 57 years earlier, priests lowered it into the pit in a position facing Holy Arunachala. —

## In Memoriam: A Tribute to Swami Ramanandacharya: Sandhya Seetharaman

The once small sleepy town of Arunachala/Was shaken by the presence of Bhagavan Ramana./Long before the light left his body,/The Maharshi, the Supreme Realised soul/ Had chosen the One, who had his eyes set on a goal./To expand the legacy of Ramana was not a task so simple,/It involved a colossal struggle/A fight in court against various allegations,/A tussle with crumbling finances,/All this and more, he endured with great conviction./During such times,/He would walk miles in the hot sun;/And go without food quite often./The undying support of devotees and family/ Boosted his confidence and strengthened his resolve/To revive and restore Ramana's glory./The tree had taken roots./It flourished rapidly./The foliage spread far and wide/People flocked to Ramanashramam/And towards self-realization, took a stride./Now, when he took a glance at the Ashram, he experienced pride,/He felt joy, he felt peace, he felt satisfied./He looked at the towering Arunachala,/And surrendered to the Lord./He merged with the Almighty, Bhagavan Ramana./And thus ended the life and saga of Swami Ramanandacharya. — *Mumbai 27 December 2007*





## From Periapuranam: Pugazh Thunai Naayanaar

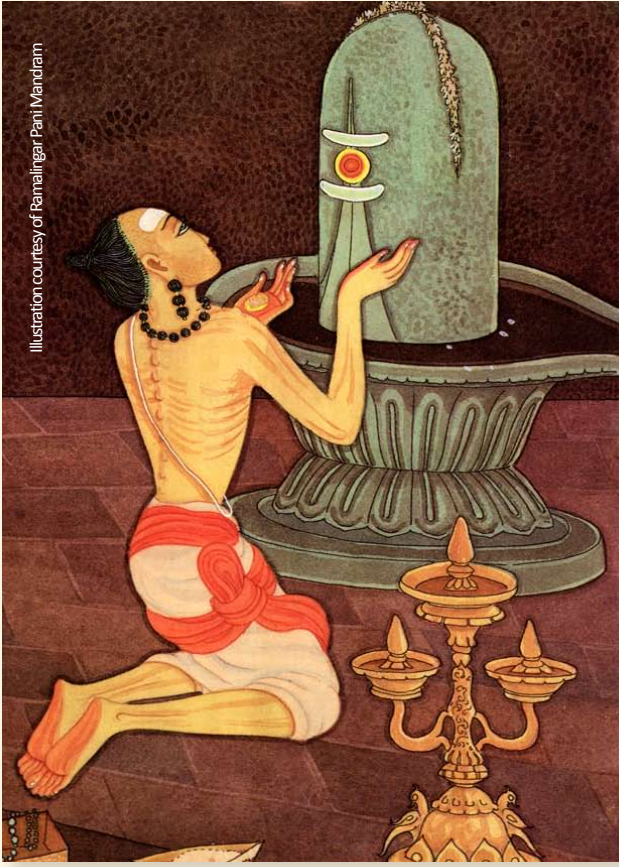


Illustration courtesy of Ramalingar Panti Mandiram

Pugazh Thunaiyaar was diligent in his worship. Each day he collected hundreds of pots of water, perfumed them with cardamom, cloves, rose water and sandal, chanted the prescribed litany of prayers and bathed the lingam of the Lord during abhishekam. Next he offered freshly picked flowers and vilva leaves concluding with arati in great reverence. The Lord took notice of the sincerity of his devotee and decided to test him. Warm months without rain and hot summer winds dried up the nearby rivers, tanks and wells while Thunaiyaar's wealth dissipated. Unable to procure even food for himself, the devotee became weak, sacrificing his remaining strength to make distant journeys in order to collect just a single vessel of water for abhishekam.

One day, dizzy from long walking, he arrived at the Lord's shrine with the water-pot on his head. As he climbed up over the lingam, he tripped and the kalasa fell, but miraculously spilt over the lingam itself. Utterly spent, Thunaiyaar fell unconscious to the ground. As if in a dream, he heard the Lord say, 'So long as there is famine in the land, I will place a gold coin here for you each day!' Thinking he was delirious, he doubted the words. But when he raised his head, to his great surprise he glimpsed something shiny at the pedestal of the shrine. It was a bright golden coin. Even just the sight of it gave him strength, after all, it was not merely gold but prasad from the Lord. From that day on, Thunaiyaar made long trips to neighboring regions to obtain food and supplies to support his devotions.

When the land became prosperous again, Thunaiyaar, unattached to everything apart from his service to Mahadeva, did not even notice that the gold coin was no longer offered each day but performed his abhishekams with untiring devotion. In due course, he reached the feet of the Lord. (*Pugazh Thunai Naayanaar's aradhana day fell on the 24th August*)

Wordwise: Manas

मनस्

*Manas* (Skt *man*= 'mind', 'to think'): intellect, intelligence, understanding, the faculty of cognition or perception by which thoughts and sense objects enter (Mon. Will.); Gk *menos* and L *mens* ('mind') derive from *manas* as does Skt *manana* ('reflection', 'meditation'), *mantra* ('sacred prayer'), *maneesha* ('intelligence') and Gk *mania*, ('madness' or 'infirmity of the mind').

Belonging to the body as director of its organs, *manas* does not have the enduring aspect of *atman* but dies with the body. It is associated with *vayu*, thus movement, and, from the point of view of sadhana and the samadhi of the jnani, with agitation. Bhagavan quotes the Gita (VI, 26.): "Whenever the turbulent mind wavers, then and there pull it back and bring it under control." (*Talks* §376) Elsewhere in reflecting on *suddha manas* or purified mind, Bhagavan says, "The jivanmukti state is compared to the reflection of a spotless mirror [...]. Similarly, the jnani's reflected Bliss represents [the only] true Bliss. The sastras are not needed for an inward-turned mind. They are meant for the rest." (*Talks* §513).





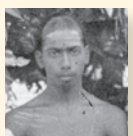
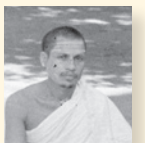
## In the Frame with Bhagavan

(The last group photo, Archival Listing GRO 68 was shot on 1st December, 1947. Sri Bhagavan insisted that Venkatoo and the children join. Sitting, left to right: 1. Krishna Ganapatigal; 2. Natesa Iyer; 3. M. Venkatarama Iyer; 4. Niranjananda Swami; 5. Bhagavan; 6. TNV; 7. young V.S. Ramanan; 8. young V. Ganesan. (First row standing, left to right): 1. Krishnamurti; 2. A. Sivarama Reddiar; 3. Ramanan (young boy); 4. N.R. Kalyanasundaram Iyer; 5. S. Nataraja Iyer; 6. T.S. Rajagopala Iyer; 7. T.K. Sundaresa Iyer; 8. Sadhu; 9. Swami Satyananda (attendant); 10. Venkataratnam (attendant); 11. Maj. Chadwick; 12. A. Sitarama Iyer; 13. Dr. K. Shiva Rao; 14. T.G. Swaminatha Iyer; 15. Sama Thatha (kitchen staff); 16. young V. Subramanian (Mani); 17. Raman (attendant to Chadwick); 18. Pisharody (dispensary compounder); 19. P.S. Vaikuntavasar (attendant); 20. Sadhu. Standing, second row left to right: 1. Sadhu; 2. Raja Iyer (Postmaster); 3. Dwadasantham; 4. Chellam Iyer; 5. Apichi; 6. Kittu; 7. Ramakrishna Swami (attendant); 8. Kumaraswamy (in charge of Ashram stores); 9. Ramaswami Pillai; 10. K.R. Ramanatha Iyer (Calcutta funder); 11. Rangaswami (Gounder Pollachi); 12. Bhagavatar; 13. S. Kuppuswami Iyer (Tirupani who supervised Matrubhuteswara construction); 14. Malai Ramaswamy (caretaker at Skandasramam))



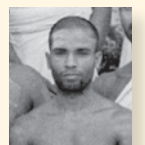
**T.K. Sundaresa Iyer:** a great devotee-scholar with knowledge of English, Sanskrit and Tamil, came to Bhagavan as a boy in 1908, acted as interpreter to English-speaking visitors and replied to Ashram correspondence. His *At the Feet of Bhagavan* includes the story of the cracked egg and ably captures the spirit of life in the Ashram with Bhagavan.

**Krishna Ghanapaatigal:** Ramanasramam's first Veda patasala teacher, came and went from town with his students to chant in Bhagavan's presence, who, it is said, would sit bolt upright each time they began. When facilities were established in the Ashram in the 1930s, he served as Vedic teacher in the Ashram till 1980.



**Apichi:** came as a Veda patasala student in 1942 and stayed in the Ashram up till Bhagavan's Mahanirvana. In 1950, he became headmaster of a school until Chadwick reopened the Veda Patasala and initiated Sri Chakra puja in 1953. Apichi came to serve as priest and went on to succeed Kittu Mama as Ashram head priest.

**Satyananda Swami:** Bhagavan's last attendant was blessed to serve Bhagavan in the Nirvana Room and was among the last to hear Bhagavan speak. After Sri Bhagavan left the body, he took care of the Nirvana Room and budding library. He lived out his days in Palakottu until his death in 1989.







## Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Pratistha Dina-Samvatsara Abhishekam



The first anniversary of the Mahakumbhabhishekam of Sri Ramaneswara and Matrubhuteswara Shrines was observed with Thoma on Punarvasu Day, Friday the 22nd August, in the New Hall. Sankalpa and Mahanyasa japa began around 5.30am followed by homa at 8am. Purnahuti at 10am was followed by procession and abhishekam in Mother's and Bhagavan's Shrines.

## Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Muruganar Samadhi Day and Mutrodal



Following Muruganar's Aradhana Day celebrations on the 25th August, odhuvars from Madurai, Tanjavore and Ramanathapuram chanted *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai* at Sri Muruganar's Shrine for three days (26th-28th August).



“Learn to chant Aksharamanamalai” is a new adroid app available here: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.ramana.learn-to-chant-aksharamanamalai> Now iphone app is also available for “Voice of Arunachala” here <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/voice-of-arunachala/id908681555?ls=1&mt=8>

