

# Saranagati



SARANAGATI  
SRI RAMANASRAMAM

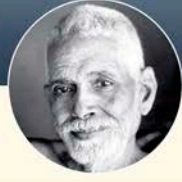
SEPTEMBER 2017  
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Courtesy of Dev Gogoi



## Saranagati



SEPTEMBER 2017  
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IN THIS  
ISSUE

Dear Devotees,

August brought a series of robust rainstorms that changed the complexion of Tiruvannamalai and indeed much of Tamil Nadu. After 21 months of drought, people are smiling and farmers are planting.

On the 7th August, Kunju Swami's Day was observed at his Samadhi just after the Sri Chakra Puja which was preponed owing to the lunar eclipse predicted for that evening. On the 14th August, Krishna Jayanthi was celebrated in the Mother's Shrine. India's Independence Day celebrations were observed the following morning on 15th August. On the 26th August devotees gathered for Muruganar's Day at this shrine following three days of recitation of his *Sarana Tiru* and *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai*.

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 (Fri) Bhagavan's Advent Day  
5th September (Tues) Full Moon  
15th September (Fri) Punarvasu Day  
21st September (Thur) Navaratri commences  
29th September (Fri) Saraswati Puja  
30th September (Sat) Vijayadasami Day

5th October (Thur) Full Moon  
13th October (Fri) Punarvasu Day  
18th October (Weds) Deepavali  
3rd November (Fri) Full Moon  
8th November (Weds) Mastan Swami Day  
9th November (Thur) Punarvasu/Annamalai Swami Day





## Daily Life in the Dining Hall (pt. X): Sri Ramana, Mother to Animals

### Introduction

Devotees often compared Bhagavan to a loving mother whose solicitude was apparent to anyone who spent any appreciable time in the Ashram. And this sympathy was as abundant in the case of the animals in his midst.

One may recall the story in *Srimad Bhagavatam* of King Rantideva who during a famine abstained from eating for a period of forty-eight days so as to be in solidarity with his starving subjects. When it came time to break his long fast, he saw a man stumbling towards him who spoke feebly and said, "I am hungry sir! I have nothing to eat." The king said, "Sir, please take a portion of my food." The man ate his fill, and happy again, left singing the king's praises. The ministers urged their Lord to sit for food before someone else happened along. But just as he did so, another came in tattered clothes. Before the ministers could intervene, the king once again got up and gave the man some of his food. After reviving

him and seeing him off, his ministers urged him to start to eat what little food remained. However, just as he made ready to begin his meal, a fellow appeared with several dogs and said, "Sir, I and my dogs are hungry". Without any hesitation, the king handed over the remaining portion of his food to the stranger and his dogs, saying, "I bow to Iswara who appears both in the form of dogs as well as in that of their keeper".

As King Rantideva was a kind-hearted benefactor to his subjects which included dogs, Bhagavan Ramana was a mother to every being including the animals who came before him. He effortlessly gave the needed care at any given moment and was tireless in his service. An old devotee once remarked, "While in Bhagavan's presence for so many years, we never saw him yawn even once." Bhagavan was indefatigable and seemed to have unlimited capacities for selfless service.

When it comes to animals in need, most people are happy to let nature take its course, and in those instances where they might feel genuine compassion for a distressed animal, the motivation to intervene on the creature's behalf is often not sufficient to galvanise the will and propel them into effective action. But Bhagavan's abounding love by contrast moved him to go to great efforts to free creatures from menacing circumstances.

One example of this is a story T.K. Sundaresha Iyer once told. One day, upon concluding his bath, Bhagavan took up his towel from a small suspended bamboo pole, not knowing that a sparrow had built her nest there and had laid three or four eggs within it the night before. Thus, one of the eggs fell out and dropped to the ground. Bhagavan cried out to Madhavan, "Look, look what I have done today!" So saying, he picked up the cracked egg and exclaimed, "Oh, the poor mother will be sorrow-stricken, perhaps even angry with me for destroying her expected little one!" But then Bhagavan wondered out loud if the egg might be repaired. He took a piece of cloth, wetted it, wrapped it around the crack in the shell and put the egg back in its nest. Every few hours he would take it out and examine it. He kept saying, "Let the crack be healed! Cannot this be hatched even now? Let the little one come forth from this broken egg!" His concern for the welfare of the one inside the cracked eggshell continued day after day. About a week later, he took out the egg and





with great relief found that the crack had sealed itself. At length, beyond anyone's expectation, Bhagavan found one fine morning that the egg had hatched and the baby bird in the nest was alive and healthy.<sup>1</sup>

Another similar case concerns the baby squirrels that fell from their nest in the thatched-roof above Bhagavan's sofa. Not more than an inch in size, they were quite young and their eyes were not yet open. Red in colour their fresh flesh was ever so tender to the touch. The mother squirrel ignored them. Now what to do? How to feed and care for such tender creatures? The baby squirrels were in Bhagavan's palm. When looking at them Bhagavan's face glowed with love and affection. While there was doubt in the faces of those gathered around him, Bhagavan himself was happy and cheerful. He asked that cotton be brought and with it made a soft bed for them. Taking a bit of cotton, he squeezed it to form a tiny end. The end was so small that it looked like a sharp pin. He dipped it in milk and squeezed it into the tiny mouths. At regular intervals Bhagavan repeated this careful procedure. He tended them with great care and love until one day they began to run around like normal squirrels. They did not run away but only ran around their new 'Mother', and were of a gentle nature, far kinder than the mother squirrel that bore them!<sup>2</sup>

#### Making a Home in Bhagavan

Knowing that Bhagavan was a living sanctuary, other creatures wanted to build their homes near him. A mother sparrow repeatedly tried to build a nest over Bhagavan's sofa but Madhava Swami kept destroying the nest with a long stick. After several failed attempts, the sparrow flew to the top of the entrance doors of the

<sup>1</sup> *At the Feet of Bhagavan*, T.K. Sunderesa Iyer, pp. 32-35.

<sup>2</sup> *Moments Remembered* by V. Ganesan, p. 66.

hall, looked at Bhagavan, and repeatedly chirped at him. To the people in the hall it sounded like ordinary bird song but Bhagavan understood that it was making a complaint. He turned to Madhava Swami and asked, "Who has destroyed her nest? She is complaining to me about it." "I did," replied Madhava Swami. "If it builds its nest on any of the other beams there will be no problem. But there will always be trouble if it constructs a nest directly over Bhagavan's sofa. Grass will continually fall on Bhagavan's head." Bhagavan accepted this objection and arranged for two wooden boards to be nailed to the beams in a different corner of the hall. The sparrow was somehow persuaded to rebuild its nest on the new boards. In the absence of any further disturbances, the sparrow laid eggs and raised a family there. Later, when one of the baby sparrows fell out of the nest, Bhagavan gave it milk and then asked one of the devotees to put it back in its nest. The sparrow remained for a couple of months. When all her children had learned to fly, she took off one day and never returned.<sup>3</sup>

#### Taking Refuge in Bhagavan

In the early days, devotees slept in the hall with Bhagavan which served as the kitchen, the dining room and the darshan hall as well as the place where the Ashram dogs lived. Bhagavan knew some were not pleased by the presence of the dogs, so he made them sleep beneath his couch. At night upon returning with them out from a walk, he would say, "Get under the couch! The others will get angry if you try and sleep out in the open."<sup>4</sup>

#### The Saint in the Form of a Dog

Bhagavan made efforts to elevate the profile of the Ashram canines and made appeals to devotees to treat

<sup>3</sup> *Mountain Path*, Oct 2007, p. 80.

<sup>4</sup> *Ramana Periya Puranam*, p. 122.

## Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi: Siddhas

M. Siddhas are only pure light and can see others, whereas they themselves cannot be seen. For example, Prabhulinga, while touring in the North, came across Goraknath. The latter displayed his yogic powers e.g., when his arm was cut by a sword, the sword was blunted without inflicting injury on him. This is making the body proof against injury (*kayasiddhi*). Prabhulinga offered himself to be cut. When the sword was thrust, it passed through his body as if it was air and there was no injury to the body. Gorak was astonished and offered himself as the disciple of Prabhulinga.

— Talks § 334





them with the respect they deserved. One night a dog stood on a rock at the back of the Ashram and barked unceasingly. Bhagavan told someone to give it some food. The dog ate it and went away and was not seen again. Bhagavan explained that it was some Siddha who had taken dog-form to come to the Ashram for a meal. There were many such about he said, but they did not wish to make themselves known and so came in this disguised form.<sup>5</sup>

### Victory of the Little Pup

Once there was a pup that regularly insisted on sleeping in Bhagavan's lap. For Bhagavan's sake, a pillow was made from coconut twine and placed near Bhagavan's table where attendants tried to coax the pup to sleep. But the pup would invariably end up back in Bhagavan's lap. Attendants would place the little one on the coconut-twine pillow anew and again he would go back to Bhagavan. This became a regular routine. Finally, the little fellow got used to being allowed upon the table and would sit there majestically, as if to taunt devotees in the hall. In time, the routine turned to outright confrontation. Bhagavan defended the little one, "Why do you hurt him? What will happen if he sits here? Why such discrimination? It is pure illusion. You are treating him this way because he is in that skin. If you were born in the same skin imagine how you would feel? Let him enjoy his freedom." The pup, still sitting on the table near Bhagavan, appeared to understand his victory and sat gloating before his opponents.<sup>6</sup>

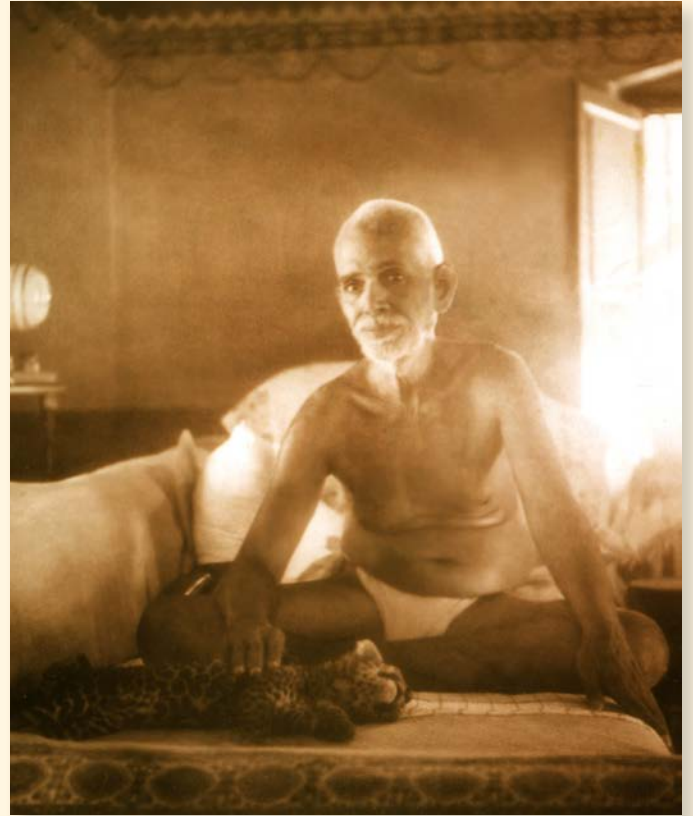
### Dog Table Manners

But dogs were capable of great refinement. There were four dogs in the Ashram who would not accept food unless it had been partaken of by Bhagavan first. One pandit was sceptical about the truth of this claim and wanted to test the dogs. Thus, he brought some food and laid it before them. They showed not the least interest in it and would not touch it. But when Bhagavan put a small morsel of the food into his mouth, they immediately fell upon it and devoured it all.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *A Sadhu's Reminiscences*, p. 86-87.

<sup>6</sup> *125th Jayanti Souvenir*, p. 56.

<sup>7</sup> *Talks*, §119.



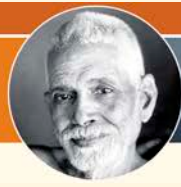
### Baby Cheetahs

Once a devotee who was raising two baby cheetahs at home brought them to Bhagavan. Ever playful and at ease they not only moved freely amongst the people in the hall but got on to the sofa with Bhagavan's welcome and slept soundly there. For two hours from about 1-3 pm, Bhagavan confined himself to one end of the sofa allowing the cubs on the other. Before Bhagavan went up the hill at his usual time, photos were taken with the cheetah cubs on the sofa and on the table. Later they were published in *The Sunday Times*. The wonder of it was seeing cheetah cubs lay down happily on the sofa, overpowered by sleep at the touch of Bhagavan's hands. While they were there, the squirrels came and ate nuts and the sparrows came and ate broken rice as usual.

There are stories related in the Puranas and other great scriptures of a visionary time when animals and birds keep company without enmity and suggest that such scenes only occur in the presence of a rishi. Here is an instance of the very scene timelessly alluded to, appearing quite naturally in Bhagavan's Darshan Hall.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> *125th Jayanti Souvenir*, p. 24.





### Restoring Order

One day two peacocks walked into Bhagavan's presence, one white and the other multi-coloured. Catching Bhagavan's silent wish, the attendant put out a handful of grain for each of the 'visitors'. The coloured peacock began to peck away at his 'prasada' while the white one, without touching his share, stood watching the other feeding himself with relish. Suddenly the white one flew at the other and drove him away from his food. The one attacked looked up helplessly at Bhagavan; one could easily feel the silent appeal in the bird's attitude. Bhagavan smiled and spoke to the mischief-maker as a loving mother would to her mischievous little son, "Come here! You have your share so why do you trouble him?" The white peacock took a few dignified steps towards Bhagavan and gazed up at him with shining eyes. Bhagavan extending his hand said softly, "Yes. Eat your share. Let him alone. Go! Go!" Obediently, the white peacock retraced his steps to his share of food, while the other which had all this time stood at a distance, came back to his share of the grain. It seemed as if a tensely coiled spring had been gently released. Nobody spoke. Silence had become more silent. Everyone, including the peacocks, understood.<sup>9</sup>

### Lakshmi in Samadhi

One afternoon late in her pregnancy, Lakshmi came to the hall. Bhagavan was reading the newspaper. She stood near him and started licking the paper. Finally, when his mild protests went unheeded, Bhagavan laid aside the paper and put his hands behind Lakshmi's horns, resting his head against hers. Remaining like this for some time, Lakshmi became motionless. Bhagavan looked up at Shantamma sitting nearby and spoke in a soft voice. "Do you know what Lakshmi is doing?" The devotee shook her head while Lakshmi remained completely still as if in deep, gentle bliss. "She's in samadhi!" After a few minutes, Bhagavan changed his position. Then he said, "Lakshmi, how do you feel now?" Lakshmi moved backwards, making her way reverently out of the hall, as if not wanting to turn her tail toward Bhagavan.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *Mountain Path*, Jayanthi 2008, p. 86.

<sup>10</sup> *The Life of Cow Lakshmi*, p. 22.

### The Crow

In the early days of the Ashram when the spring was yet to be fully excavated, devotees had placed a dried tree stump on the ground at its centre in order to support themselves when gathering water. Once they discovered a crow sitting on top of this stump. On the third day of its vigil just as Bhagavan returned to the hall from his usual walk, Kunju Swami told him about it. Bhagavan got up from the couch and walked outside. Going close to the crow, Bhagavan enquired, "What's the matter?" The crow slowly opened its eyes. Bhagavan asked the attendant to bring his kamandalu, and holding the crow in one hand he poured a few nectar-drops of water into its beak. Just then, verily in Bhagavan's hands, the crow breathed his last. Sri Bhagavan arranged and supervised the construction of a small samadhi and when someone remarked that the crow must have been a great soul waiting for Bhagavan's touch, he replied "Yes! It appears so."<sup>11</sup>

### Madhava's Dance

When a white peacock was presented by the Maharani of Baroda, it became the darling of Sri Bhagavan. All the way from Baroda he had travelled in a saloon with an attendant. Though very young he was wonderfully active and intelligent. He had his cage just beside Bhagavan's couch and was watched by Bhagavan day and night. He would get up on Bhagavan's bookrack and gently peck at the books with his beak as if he wanted to read them. He would daily visit the work of temple-construction that was then going on in the Ashram. So Bhagavan designated him 'the building-supervisor'. Occasionally he would enter the dining-hall and walk between the rows of people seated at meals, and so he earned the title Assistant Sarvadhikari! One noon Subbalakshamma observed that the white peacock who was being so much fondled by Bhagavan might be Madhavaswami, the attendant who had recently died in Kumbakonam. Ever afterwards Sri Bhagavan used to address him as 'Madhava'.

Once when GVS composed eight Telugu verses on the white peacock in *mayura vrittam*, the 'peacock

<sup>11</sup> *125th Jayanti Souvenir*, p. 72.





meter', he presented them to Bhagavan at the Jubilee pandal. Bhagavan appeared to be pleased by them and handed them to Srimati Lalita Venkataraman. He suggested she sing them accompanied by her vina. Within half an hour she brought her vina and got ready to sing. At that moment, the white peacock was nowhere to be seen. Bhagavan said, "But the

hero must be present to hear his praises sung! Where are you, Madhava? Come!"

At once the white peacock flew down from the roof of the pandal. When Lalita Venkataraman began to sing, the great white bird spread his plumage and danced. Bhagavan sat and watched with beaming eyes. When the piece concluded, the peacock walked over to the vina and pecked at the strings with its beak. Bhagavan turned to Lalita Venkataraman and said, "Madhava wants you to repeat the song." So, she sang once more and the peacock danced again! Truly a sight for the gods!<sup>12</sup>

### Last Rites to Jatayu

Once, when Pranavananda entered the presence of Bhagavan, Bhagavan told him that he had just performed the last rites to a crow. "What is there great in it?" Pranavananda asked. The pin-drop silence in the hall was deafening and all were aghast at the remark which seemed a rebuff. But Pranavananda continued with tears in his eyes, "Didn't you perform the last rites to that great bird Jatayu in your previous incarnation as Sri Rama?" Bhagavan smiled and devotees breathed a sigh of relief.<sup>13</sup> —

*(to be continued)*

<sup>12</sup> *Sri Ramana Reminiscences*, GVS, pp. 169-170.

<sup>13</sup> *125th Jayanti Souvenir*, p. 128.

## Events in Sri Ramanasramam: Ganesh Chaturthi

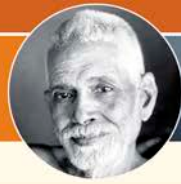


Ganapati (Ganesh or Vinayaka) is the elephant-headed deity said to be "the seer among the seers" and "the lord of invocation" (*Rigveda*). Another hymn says that "nothing nearby or afar is performed without Him".

Ganesh Chaturthi falls on the fourth *tithi* of the bright half of the month of Bhadrapada (mid-August to mid-September). Chanting the Vedas and

the Ganapati Upanishad is recommended as is fasting. Sweets called modaka, a favourite of the 'God of Good Beginnings' are distributed as prasad. On the 25th August, the Ashram celebrated a special puja dedicated to Ganesh. A special Vinayaka puja was performed in the Ashram Vedapatasala as well. —





## Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Rain At Last!



Lord Varuna did deliver in the end. Early in the pre-dawn hours of 13th August a fierce thunderstorm descended on the Ashram and the downpour started about 2.40 am. People reported about 14 inches of water inside the Samadhi Hall by 4 am, the second flood of Bhagavan's Shrine in seven days. Water barrelling down the Hill could not discharge fast enough and pooled in a couple of places, namely, at the rear of the Ashram near the Mountain Path office where, on Seshadri Ashram's side of the wall separating the two Ashrams, accumulated water forced down about 50 to 60 feet of the 7-foot high retaining wall there. Presumably this discharge was the source of the large volume of water that pooled at the Archives gate, eventually resulting in its failure. Thankfully, no one was hurt. While construction crews had extra work in the days that followed none complained about the damage but expressed gratitude for the needed precipitation. Lighter rains continue and the Ashram Well is completely full and overflowing as is Pali Tirtham. Tiruvannamalai's Samudram lake is almost full. The Ashram no longer needs to purchase its water. —

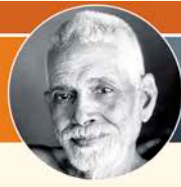
## Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Pandava Tirtham



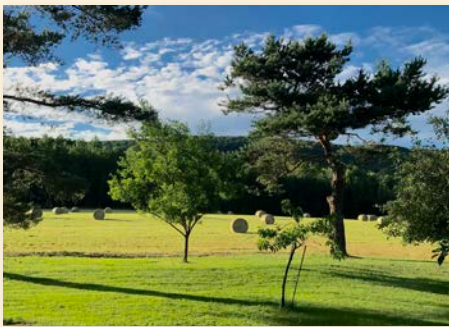
The Ashram renovation work at Pandava Tirtham was divinely timed. Just as the two months of repairs were completed on Pandava and Bhima Tirthas, heavy rains began to fall and immediately filled the two ancient tanks. Local children revelled in water sports in the tanks' clean fresh supply of rain water. —







## Ramana Kendras Around the World: Arunachala Ashram, Nova Scotia



Arunachala Ashrama, Nova Scotia is located in the Annapolis Valley about 90 miles from Halifax. Summer's bright sunny weather draws devotees from Halifax, other parts of Canada and from the US. All get up at 4:00am each morning and listen to morning Vedic chanting before sitting with hot coffee and hearing readings from one of Bhagavan's books under the guidance of Sri Dennis Hartel. One devotee wrote of the pastoral beauty of the Ashram's environs: "Miles of field, tall grasses waving with the wind like waves on the ocean beneath tender curving hills." Advent Day celebrations are scheduled for the 2nd September with seventy devotees expected to attend. —

## Obituary: Dr. A. S. Venugopal Rao



Dr. A. S. Venugopal Rao, professor and poet was drawn into the net of Bhagavan's Grace during the Birth Centenary Celebrations in 1980 when many scholars and men of letters participated in the International Seminar conducted at Bangalore. Subsequently, he spoke at practically every annual National Seminar of RMCL in his pure and pleasing Kannada, though sometimes in English as well. Being a lecturer by profession, he communicated in a simple manner a clear understanding of Bhagavan's teachings that sprang from his own unwavering practise. He became a resident of Arunachala for a few years and wrote in one of his poems 'At last you have captured me who was ever fleeing. You did not hunt me getting astride a horse, wielding bow and arrow. But how amazing was your hunt and now you hold me captive.' His numerous poems in chaste and lilting Kannada have poetic depth and the intensity of spiritual seeking combined with overflowing devotion. When another play of destiny forced him from his hometown to Hassan, it became only yet another opportunity for him to serve Bhagavan. He started the Ramana Satsang there and the many who benefitted from it were loathe to let him return to Shimoga when that became necessary due to his physical frailty. His translation of *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi* into Kannada won a prestigious award for Kannada translations and went into several editions. Dr. A. S. Venugopal Rao, was absorbed at the Master's feet on 30th December 2016. —

