

Saranagathi

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ISSUE

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Dear Devotees,

The Navaratri celebrations started on Wednesday, the 28th September. Laksharchana with Mahanyasa Rudrabhishekam and parayana of sacred works such as *Devi Mahatmyam* are being performed. On the first three of the nine nights, devotees were happy to attend Carnatic music concerts in the dining hall organized by Mr. Kandasamy of Trichy. This time of year is always a special blessing for devotees in the Ashram as Mother pours out her abundant grace.

This issue of *Saranagathi* carries the final part of the life story of Saroja Krishnan, as well as the experiences of Sri Ganpatram R. Trivedi in *How I came to Bhagavan*. Ashram reports include the status of the work in Tiruchuli Temple and functions in the Ashram.

For Navaratri Celebrations live streaming <http://www.sriramanamaharshi.org/videolive/livestreaming.html> and photos and videos <http://www.sriramanamaharshi.org/navaratri2011.html> or write us at saranagathi@sriramanamaharshi.org

In Sri Bhagavan
The Editorial Team



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Reality in Forty Verses

8. Under whatever name or form we worship It, It leads us to knowledge of the nameless, formless Absolute. Yet, to see one's true Self in the Absolute, to merge into It and be one with It, this is true knowledge of the truth.

Ulladu Narpadu by Sri Bhagavan





Women Devotees Series: Saroja Krishnan (final part)

Saroja Krishnan came from a large family of devotees going back to her grandfather, Dr. Narayana Iyer, who was instrumental in initiating and funding the construction of the Old Hall in the mid-1920s. Her uncle, Salem T.S. Rajagopal Iyer, once acted as Ashram librarian and attended on Bhagavan off and on for years. Sarojamma translated books into Tamil for the Ashram including Day by Day, Reminiscences, Moments Remembered and other works. She fell ill some months ago and passed away peacefully in June at the age of 90.

One day I was coming toward the hall and Ramanatha Brahmachari came running out saying excitedly, “Amma, Amma, Bhagavan struck me on the head, Bhagavan struck me on the head, just here, just here! Look!”, all the while pointing to the place on his head where Bhagavan had blessed him with his touch.

You have to understand that Ramanatha Brahmachari never spoke voluntarily. Only if you said something to him, then he might speak. But even then, when he spoke at all, he would usually just say “Andavane”. He was completely guileless and no matter what was said to him he would always take it in the best possible way. He was so gentle.

Later I was able to determine exactly what had happened. Evidently Ramanatha had had some experience of *sphurana* and after describing it to Bhagavan, asked him if he thought the experience was genuine. When Bhagavan said that it was, Ramanatha Brahmachari was so excited that he went on asking again and again if it could really be true. Bhagavan repeatedly replied in the affirmative. But Ramanatha, in his disbelief, persisted till finally, in jestful exasperation, Bhagavan rapped him on the forehead with his knuckle saying, “Amam!”. So Ramanatha Brahmachari came running out the hall, recounting his experience to the first person he saw, which, in this case, happened to be me. “Amma, Amma....”





So far as I know Bhagavan never did such things so it was indeed quite remarkable. But Ramanatha Brahmachari and Muruganar were the great devotees of Bhagavan and such things were not uncommon with them.

When I was in my teens, I used to sit in the hall and watch the happenings around me: who came into the hall, what they had to say, what Bhagavan did and to whom he directed his gaze. All these were matters of great interest to me. And I would feel elated and proud whenever Bhagavan's gaze fell on me.

One day I was seated near the second door between the windows idly watching, as usual, when Bhagavan's eyes turned to me and rested there. The usual first feeling of pride and elation fell away and my eyes were locked in his, unable to turn away. How does one describe the indescribable? Dark and wide, cool and bright, melting with mercy and kindness, those heavenly orbs seemed to expand and fill the room and all space, engulfing me and everything else. Time stood still. I can't say how long I gazed like this. Looking back, I understand that this was his *nayana diksha* (initiation by sight). This has the power to scorch all our vasanas and lead to freedom. I did not know anything of this then, but merely felt happy. Surely Bhagavan's look of grace never goes to waste. The seed was planted and would surely bear fruit someday. But when? That's the burning question. So I wait.



When I was young I used to ask Bhagavan to grant all kinds of paltry things that I deemed important at the time. It was like begging a farthing from a billionaire. Of course, the desired boon was granted each and every time, but perhaps only out of pity for my utter stupidity. I don't remember not getting the thing I wished for.

One hot summer day during this period Bhagavan was sitting in the pandal. In those days a summer shelter for the sake of coolness used to be erected between the eastern side window of Bhagavan's hall and the well. On this day only a few persons were present, so I took

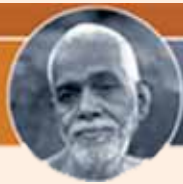
Maharshi's Gospel

Self-Enquiry

D: Does not the enquiry, 'Who am I?' turn out in the end an empty formula? Or, am I to put the question to myself endlessly, repeating it like some mantra?

M. Self-enquiry is certainly not an empty formula; it is more than the repetition of any mantra. If the enquiry, 'Who am I?' were a mere mental questioning, it would not be of much value. The very purpose of Self-enquiry is to focus the entire mind at its source. It is not, therefore, a case of one 'I' searching for another 'I'. Much less is Self-enquiry an empty formula, for it involves an intense activity of the entire mind to keep it steadily poised in pure Self-awareness.





this opportunity to ask Bhagavan something that I had wanted to ask him for a long time. The truth is, it was a little devious of me. You see, I knew that Bhagavan made no distinction between men and women, that women had the possibility of meditation, samadhi and liberation as much as men. I knew how Bhagavan felt about this. But my mother-in-law, on the other hand, forbade me to do any *dhyana* saying that women should not do mediation. I did not want to disobey my mother-in-law but if Bhagavan were to give his seal of approval then it might make a difference with regard to her feelings about it. So I went and stood near him and said in a low voice, “Is it true that women should not practise meditation?” Bhagavan, who was sitting calmly, leaning on the cushion, suddenly lurched up and sat bolt upright and said in a loud voice, “Who said so?” It sounded like a roar and I was startled. Trembling, I murmured something and returned to my place. When Bhagavan said, “Who said so”, and with such firmness, it was as if he had set his seal of approval on the charter of women’s spirituality. And now I felt relieved because I had my own seal of approval.

* * *

My uncle Rajagopala Iyer is an outstanding example of how Bhagavan’s grace continued to guide his devotees even after he had shed his body. My uncle was a very persuasive talker. He could talk you into doing things even against your will; such was the

power of his words. He played a significant role in the shaping and writing of Bhagavan’s will and his is one of the witnessing signatures. My uncle’s surrender to Bhagavan was total. Vexed at his incessant talking and its effects, his wife, Thangammal, and others, would remonstrate. But he would declare, “I fear no one. I shall stop talking only when my Bhagavan bids me.”

And it so happened that toward the end of his life, Chithappa (uncle) had a vivid dream one night. In the dream, Bhagavan struck him with his stick saying “Keep quiet!” From that time onwards until his death, he preserved silence, showing no interest in anything, completely detached. I did not meet him then but I heard the momentous news from devotees coming from Bangalore where Rajagopala Iyer was living with his youngest son, Ramanan.

Mahalakshamma of Bangalore referred to it as a miracle, and indeed it was; his grand-daughter Ramani confirmed the news. In order to redeem his ardent devotee, Bhagavan had bound his incessantly wagging tongue and stilled the ever roaming mind.

* * *

Many incidents in my life can simply be called coincidences. But I consider all of them Bhagavan’s leela and grace. Finally, by his grace, Bhagavan returned me to the shelter of those beloved feet that he bade me clasp so long ago.



Reports from Sri Ramanasramam

On the 18th September, Sri Gopal Krishna Gandhi—former Governor of W. Bengal, grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, grandson of Rajaji and Ramana devotee—was at the Ashram to launch the recent *Revolutionary Gandhi*, Ashramite KVS’ translation of Pannalal Dasgupta’s *Gandhi Gabeshana* (Earthcare Books, Kolkata, 2011). During his talk, Ashram President V. S. Ramanan hailed Gandhi as a man that practised truth at every moment of his life. KVS spoke about the salient features and unique aspects of the new book. Speaking last, Sri Gandhi said that Pannalal Babu seemed to have been an extraordinary man, though it is sad that he should have been in jail in independent India, and yet, otherwise, such a book may never have been written, translated and launched from Sri Ramanasramam.





How I Came to Bhagavan

Sri Ganpatram R. Trivedi, Rajahmundry

I am known as a bit of a talkative fellow in my friendly circle. But till now, it has been a mystery and a wonder that I could not open my mouth before Bhagavan all the times I visited the Ashram.

My enthusiasm for 'public life' in my twenties had brought me into contact with many 'big' personalities with whom I always conversed freely and frankly. But at no time and before no one did I feel so 'small' and dumb-founded as I did when sitting before Sri Bhagavan.

There are certain things in life the 'why' of which one cannot always explain. So in my case also, it may be that I am not able to offer any explanation as to how I came to be attracted to Bhagavan. It has been my privilege to have come in personal contact with many saints and spiritual luminaries of our time and

my personal intimacy with some of them was more than normal. But it was the decree of the Divine that Ramana was to be my last resort.

I visited Ramanasramam twice in February and December 1940. I would sit before Bhagavan in the old hall, watching the routine, but I wonder, I never asked any questions nor exchanged any conversation with Bhagavan, who, I knew, was casting compassionate and graceful looks on me now and then. Now I think he must have made me a captive by his glance of grace, or as my friend, Sri Chhaganlal Yogi, put it, 'prey in his jaws', never to be abandoned; for ever since that time I have been an object of his grace in abundant measure.

For long years after that I could not go to Sri Ramanasramam. But when I heard about Bhagavan's illness I was yearning to see him.

I prayed to Bhagavan with all my heart to enable me to see him early. It was a Friday and a function at Madras was to begin the next day. I proceeded to Madras the same day and took part in the celebrations but my mind was at Ramanasramam all along. After the three-day





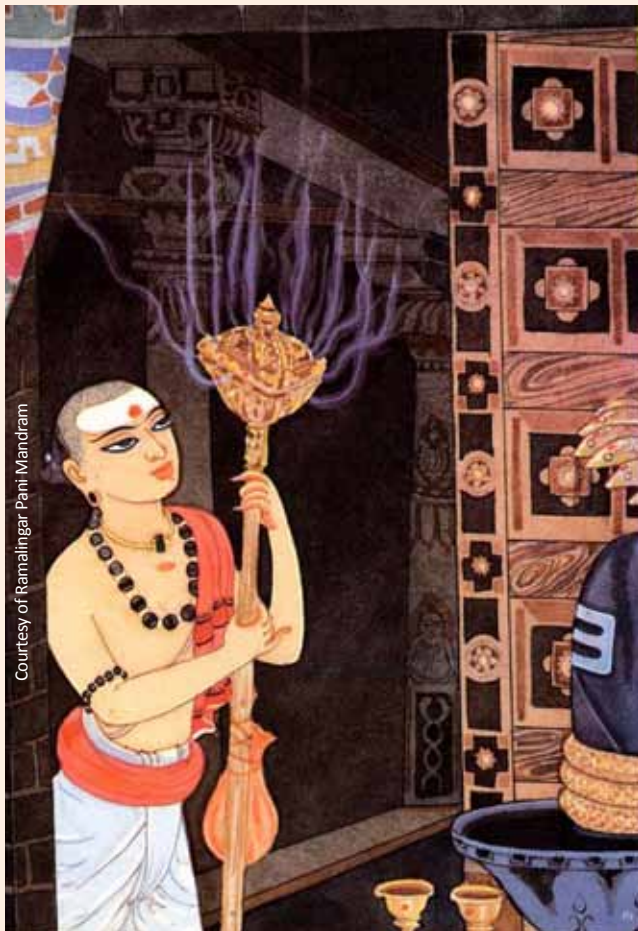
celebration, I immediately started for Tiruvannamalai. And indeed soon enough I found myself face to face with the Master. Immediately I had the intuition that Bhagavan would cast off the mortal coil before long and that this would probably be my last visit to Bhagavan. Like a dwarf trying to drink deep the infinite, I spent every available minute in his benign presence.

While taking leave after a stay of three days, I was taken by the Sarvadhikari inside the room where Bhagavan was resting during the period of physical ailment. I prostrated before the master and with wet eyes begged leave of him. He looked at me with eyes full of compassion and spoke to me for the first time and for the last time in my life. He spoke only one word. In Telegu, he said, "Sari" (meaning 'well' or 'alright'). And so I withdrew.

I went to the Ashram after Bhagavan's Mahasamadhi but on each visit I found that although Bhagavan was no more with us in the physical form, the same calm

and peace, and Bhagavan's charging consciousness, still pervaded every inch of space in and around the Ashram. Bhagavan never claimed to perform any miracles nor do such things form a part of his line of sadhana. But miracles do take place and are almost inseparable from the lives of realised souls; for in their cases such miracles are spontaneous and a part of Divine Will. Had they not been too personal I would have mentioned several instances when his grace did me immense good.

To most people who are physical-minded the Ashram might at first sight appear to be "without Bhagavan", but a real devotee of Bhagavan in no time feels that the consciousness and grace of Sri Bhagavan are still at work as much as ever before. We must only open out ourselves before him and try to become fit and deserving objects of his grace. His message and teachings are immortal and will live on from Eternity to Eternity.



Courtesy of Ramalingar Pani Mandram

The Naayanars

In the famed town of Kadavoor lived a devotee named Kalaya. Day by day his heart melted with love for the Lord and he occupied himself with offering fragrant incense (kunkuliya doopam) to the Lord. But the Lord in His grace made his devotee suffer from want while the latter engaged himself all the more in devotion. Slowly, however, Kalaya had to dispose of all his possessions and he and his family often had to starve for days at a time. Once when the pain of hunger became too great, his loving wife gave him her Thali—the auspicious golden symbol of marriage—and bade him sell it in order to procure rice. Without any qualm, he hastened on this errand. But on the way he met a man carrying a load of incense, resin fit for the Lord's service. Forgetting his task to find food, with a joyous heart he exchanged the gold ornament for the large consignment of incense and made his way to the temple. There he engaged himself in singing the Lord's praises and offering incense. In the meantime, seeing his devotion, the Lord had Kubera, the God of wealth, flooded the devotee's house with grain and rice as his family slept. But his wife, roused by the Lord in a dream, saw the profusion of food and at once set about cooking. Meanwhile, the Lord spoke to his devotee still at worship in the temple: 'Get thee home, and appease thy great hunger with the feast that awaits you there!' (*The 6th September is Kunkuliya Kalaya Naayanaar's aradhana day.*)





Reports from Sri Ramanasramam (cont.)

Navaratri Today and in Former Times

On Tuesday, the 27th September, Yogambika was taken in procession around the Temple and installed in the Mantapam in Mother's Shrine. The following evening, the 28th, women devotees sang Mother's praises as the first of the 'nine-nights' of Navaratri was celebrated in honour of Goddess Meenakshi. Gajalakshmi, Linga Puja, Venuganam, Rishibha Vahanam, and Sesa Sayanam each in their turn would colour the themes of successive nights. Tuesday the 4th October is Saraswati puja—worship of the goddess of learning and music. This day traditionally includes worship of books, where, in former times, books would be placed near Bhagavan as he sat on his sofa. Nowadays books are placed beneath a photo of Sri Bhagavan in Ashram Bookstall for the afternoon event.



The Navaratri festival generally begins on the new moon between mid-September and mid-October. Though celebrated in a grand manner everywhere in India, Navaratri has special significance for Tiruvannamalai: it is here that Parvati took the form of Durga and fought a nine-day battle against the buffalo-demon Mahisha. Her victory is commemorated on Vijaya Dasami (6th October, this year), the final day of the festival. For this reason Navaratri in many parts of India is called 'Durga Puja'. After Vijaya Dasami, Yogambika is ceremonially returned to her abode in the inner sanctum and the women devotees dance with joyful clapping and singing the circle dance around Nandi in the Mother's Shrine.

One Navaratri at Saraswati puja during Bhagavan's time, books were arranged on the stool beside Bhagavan as he sat on his sofa. Muruganar entered the hall and, upon seeing the pile of books with flowers strewn over them, was quite amused. He could not understand the need for any symbols of divinity when God Himself was seated in the hall. That's why worship of books in Bhagavan's presence struck him as superfluous. He wrote in *Ramana Purana*, "All ancient texts and their expositions put together can be no more than a preface to the Book of your Powerful Silence!" Where, he thought, is the need to worship a pile of books in the very presence of the Repository of all Knowledge — Bhagavan Sri Ramana!





Reports from Sri Ramanasramam (cont.)



Bhuminatha Temple Inner Prakara

Bhuminatha Temple Renovation

Once when his father scolded him, young Bhagavan took shelter in the shrine of Mother Sahayavalli behind her icon in the Bhuminatha Temple. In the ancient past, over the course of incalculable centuries, others too took refuge in Sahayavalli and sought the Lord's blessings at Bhuminatha Temple, not least among them, Lord Vishnu, Bhumidevi, Indra, Brahma, Surya, Gouthama, Nandi, Kanva Rishi and Cheraman Perumal Nayanar. Even to the present day, Mother Sahayavalli continues to look after her devotees.

In August this year, at the behest of the Bhuminatha Temple authorities, a team of Ashram workers commenced a forty-day repair project on the Temple mantapam. But counter to expectation they met with various obstacles, not least of all, the burning hot September sun. More significant was the shortage of food they faced on a daily basis when political unrest developed in nearby villages. While Tiruchuli itself was not the site of any conflict, clashes intensified in neighbouring villages and looting began; there were unfortunately even a number of fatalities. Police declared a curfew and though Tiruchuli remained peaceful, the village was also compelled to comply. So all shops were forced closed. Meanwhile Ashram workers carried on in their work. But when it came time to take food, none was available, and all appeals were met with negative responses. Finally, even the modest request for just a little rice gruel was also denied them. Just on the day when the situation became critical and it looked as if work could not continue, the unexpected grace of Mother Sahayavalli came to their aid: The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister's Annadanam scheme for visiting pilgrims of temples—announced a full decade earlier—was miraculously to take effect on that very day at Tiruchuli Temple. Within an hour food was served and Temple authorities saw to it that Ashram workers were given priority. What a contrast: from no food to receiving a full sumptuous meal. In the days that followed, the temple management saw to it that Ashram workers were properly fed. The renovation was satisfactorily completed on schedule on the 20th of September.

