

## Saranagati



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IN THIS  
ISSUE

Dear Devotees,

Among the advaitic works of the modern era, *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi* ranks pre-eminent among them and has been a foundational teaching text for devotees since its publication in 1955. This issue carries the story of the book's genesis, the life story of its compiler, Munagala S. Venkataramiah, and facsimiles of pages of the original handwritten manuscripts.

Glimpsing Bhagavan's teachings *wordwise* (i.e. through key terms used by Sri Bhagavan) is the focus of a new column called 'Wordwise'. This month's keyword is 'swarupa'. *Events at Sri Ramanasramam* this month includes Guru Purnima, discourses by Nochur Sri Venkataraman and Adiannamalai Kumbhabhishekam. *Introducing the Kendras* features Sri Ramanalayam, Cheyyar. For further news and 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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## Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi

### Swarupa Lies Beyond Mind, Time and Space

Perfection alone is. It is Infinite. [...] You are always the Self. You are not the mind. It is the mind which raises questions. [But] you are not the mind. You are beyond it. [...] The object to be witnessed and the witness finally merge and Absolute consciousness alone reigns supreme. It is not a state of *sunya* (blank) or ignorance. It is *swarupa* (the Real Self). Time and space are only concepts of the mind. But *swarupa* (the Real Self) lies beyond mind, time and space. —Talks §68





## Munagala Venkataramiah and the Making of Talks (part two)

After he lost his teaching position in 1932, Munagala S. Venkataramiah became a regular inmate of the Ashram. When devotees learned what had happened, Grant Duff, a family relation of the then Governor of Madras, stepped forward and offered to intercede on Munagala's behalf in order that the injustice done him might be set right. A petition was filed in Madras and was sure to have been decided in Venkataramiah's favour, assuring the reinstatement of his post, had it made it to the Governor's desk. But as it turned out, the Governor went on leave and the one appointed as acting Governor was none other than the man responsible for the unfair treatment in the first place. Needless to say the petition was dismissed and Venkataramiah's fate took another course.

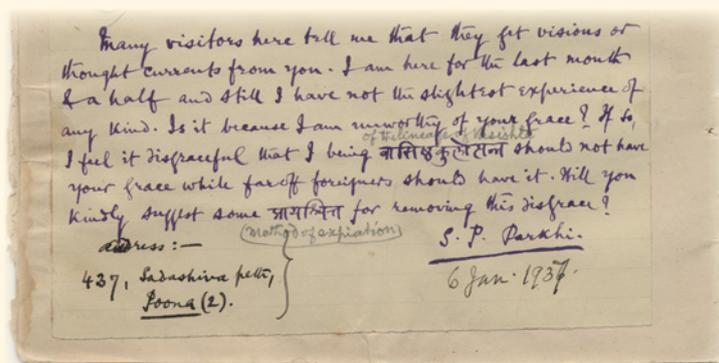
Though financially insolvent, Venkataramiah had the consolation of sitting at the feet of Bhagavan each

day. He also had the good fortune to take up Ashram work and answer letters sent by out-of-state devotees. Acquainted with Tamil, Telugu, English and Sanskrit, and having formal experience in translation, he was also called upon to serve as translator in the hall.

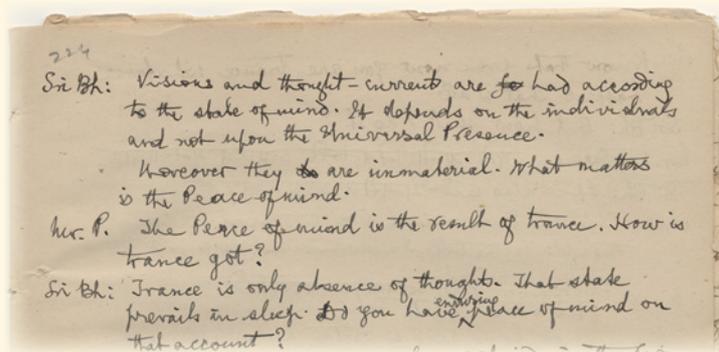
In January 1935, Venkataramiah began making entries in a notebook while sitting in Sri Bhagavan's presence. In time, the practice of committing to paper the interactions that took place between devotees and Sri Bhagavan became for him a fervid sadhana and he took great care to faithfully record all he heard.

When perusing the notebook's carefully annotated entries, one gets a feel for the passage of time, the numerous sincere seekers who came before Sri Bhagavan and the weightiness of what went on between them. Indeed these pages are the minutes of life-changing encounters between seekers deeply longing for a meaningful change in their lives—the recorder among them—and the Master, ever ready to dispense the requisite spiritual medicine.

On occasion non-native visitors wrote their questions down on paper in advance and presented them to Venkataramiah, either to be read aloud to

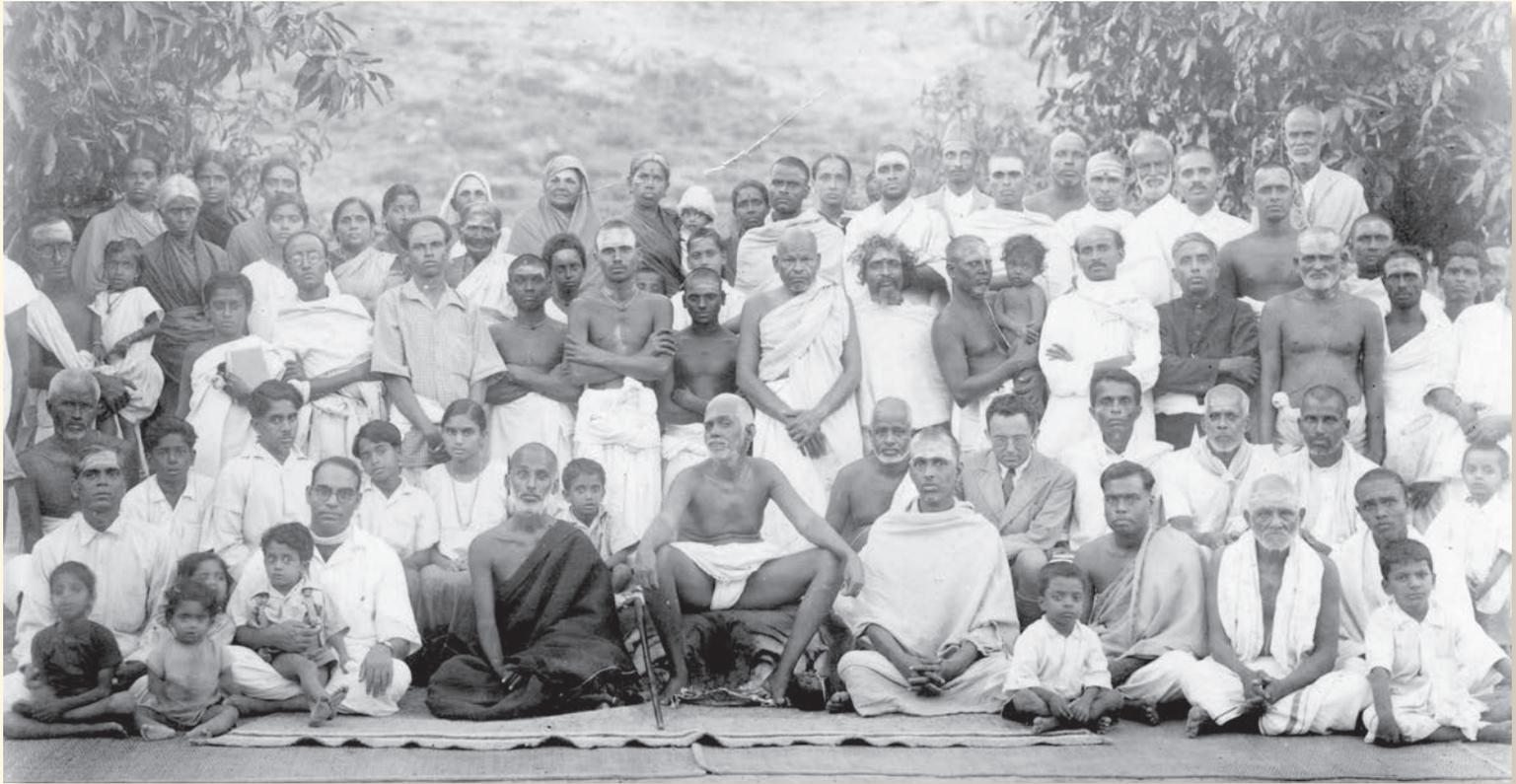
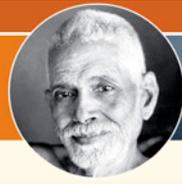


Talks §317 (6th Jan, 1937): Visitor's question affixed in the notebook.



Talks §317: Venkataramiah's translation of Bhagavan's reply and dialogue that follows.





Bhagavan with devotees in the mid-1930s. Munagala Venkataramaiah is seated to Bhagavan's immediate left, next to Maurice Frydman.

Bhagavan or to be translated into Tamil and then read out to Bhagavan. Some pre-written questions have been pasted onto the pages of the notebook and beneath them, Munagala's transcription of Bhagavan's response and the conversation that followed.

The recorder retained key Sanskrit words and phrases and transcribed Sanskrit and Tamil slokas and verses in the original. In some cases, Bhagavan's responses were noted down word for word in Tamil providing present-day devotees with authentic samples of Bhagavan's spoken Tamil. This is significant when one considers the remarkable fact that, with the exception of a few brief passages in Devaraja Mudaliar's chronicles, the Ashram literary corpus contains next to no transcriptions of Bhagavan's spoken Tamil.

For the most part the transcriber translated conversations into English *extempore*, writing them down as they occurred. On other occasions, when silence prevailed in the hall, he would narrate the details of the moment, outline the scene and give

descriptions pertaining to the actions of those gathered as well as delineate features pertaining to their characters, appearance, state of mind, etc. His observations would invariably set the stage for the discussion to follow and his knack for illustration readily captured the stimulating atmosphere of the hall, giving the reader the flavour of what it would have been like to be in Sri Bhagavan's presence in those years.

A number of entries suggest that there were occasions when Venkataramaiah was, for whatever reason, unable to record immediately the goings-on in the hall but only later summarized them by recollection. In some cases when Bhagavan replied in Malayalam or a language unfamiliar to Venkataramaiah, the recorder would have to rely on subsequent summaries from native speakers. On other occasions, when dialogues took place outside the hall, such as on the Hill during Bhagavan's afternoon walk (e.g. *Talks* §225), Venkataramaiah would jot down a synopsis given by an attendant or another devotee who was present.





11-6-36 (10) A resident disciple  
~~has~~ desired an explanation of the term "blazing light"  
 used by P. B. in the last Chapter of "A Search in Secret India"  
 25/13

சென் பி: மகிஷாசுரமர்த்தியை வெல்லும் அனுபவிகுப்படுதில் படியான், அது  
 ன்வே ஶிவமயம் என்னை வேண்டியிருந்தது. அனாதில் உள்ள  
 பாசலன் கின் கண் அம் நாசலாகவின் னை. அதன் டா கா ர  
 வி டுது யாக து காண்கிறீது.

நிர்வாகம் பசுமாயினோ, அது கடுகும், வெளிச்சம்  
 கும் அப்பாலாயும், கிரண்களையும் அறிவிக்கும் அறிவாயும்  
 விடுகிறது. அது கடுகல்வ; வெளிச்சம் கின் னைவன்  
 சொல்ல வேண்டாமா? தன்மயம் விசுவயங்களை வெளிச்சம்  
 தன்னை விடுத்து வெளியேறுகின்றன. தன் இக்மாணவ அறிவதும்  
 ஏடுவெளிச்சம் என்னை சொல்லுகிறீ, என்னதப்ய?

Dated '11-6-36' but appearing (perhaps erroneously?) as 14th June, this entry contains S.S. Cohen's question in English with Bhagavan's Tamil response in *Talks* §200.

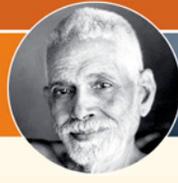
In the same year Venkataramiah began his recording, Maurice Frydman, the Polish engineer-inventor, translator and editor came to the Ashram and spent a good deal of time in the hall. He proved to be an engaging interlocutor and a number of his questions with Bhagavan's replies are included in *Talks* (e.g. §74, §115, §158, §179, §182...). In 1936, with Munagala Venkataramiah's permission, Frydman made use of his formidable editing skills, went through the notebooks and made selections from the available entries. These he edited and compiled into a small volume that was

to become a modern advaitic classic. *Maharshi's Gospel* was published three years later on the occasion of Bhagavan's 60th Jayanthi in 1939 and was immediately popular with devotees. Readers found their doubts and questions evaporate by Bhagavan's unique way of moving straight to the heart of the question in a way that dissolved the question altogether, sidestepping any extraneous conjecture. Bhagavan seemed to mirror the insights of the Upanishads simply by his presence but when pressed, he could speak to knotty philosophical problems and onerous spiritual vexations in plain

## Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Nochur Sri Venkataraman Discourses

Nochur Sri Venkataraman's discourses in the New Library Auditorium began the 13th July and were devoted to Bhagavan's *Ulladu Naarpadu*. The first six days (in Tamil) picked up from last year with v.22 and, covering one verse per day, reached v.26 by the 18th. The final day (in English) was devoted to Bhagavan's, *Atma-Vidya*, the poem for which Sri Muruganar had written a *pallavi* (refrain) reversing the traditional line, "Lo, Self-Knowledge is very difficult" and making it instead, "Lo, Self-Knowledge is very easy". Bhagavan then wrote five verses as per Muruganar's request.





terms, and in a manner that even the uninitiated could grasp. Alas, devotees would have to wait another fifteen years before the remaining entries would make it into print. But all in good time.

By Bhagavan's bountiful grace and Munagala's nimble hand, the notebook entries continued. Excepting some variation in sequencing, the handwritten notebooks reflect what we know today as *Talks* and nowhere is there any indication that entries were omitted, discarded or lost. However, time gaps appear—some a few days at a stretch and others for longer periods. The entry for June 12th, 1937 (*Talks* §426-27), for example, is followed by an entry dated December 15th (*Talks* §428), a full six months later. Was Venkataramiah away during these months or otherwise ill-disposed? There is no way of knowing for certain though in general, entries during the summer months were sparse, and thus would suggest that the recorder may have spent portions of the year elsewhere.

The journal logs continue until 1st April, 1939, when a final entry was made (*Talk* §653). Sometime

after this Venkataramiah handed the notebooks over to the Ashram for safekeeping and, as far as we know, made no further diary entries in the hall.

Not long after this, Devaraja Mudaliar settled in the Ashram and began his own chronicles which were serialized in *The Call Divine* and later published by the Ashram under the titles *My Recollections of Bhagavan Sri Ramana* (1960) and *Day by Day with Bhagavan* (1968). Suri Nagamma also began chronicling daily life at the Ashram in 1945 and published two volumes titled *Letters from Sri Ramanasramam* (1969) and later, a third volume, *Letters and Recollections from Sri Ramanasramam* (1979).

Venkataramiah left the Ashram in 1952 after Bhagavan's Mahanirvana but returned two years later. After recovering from a heart attack, he received sannyasa diksha and took the name Swami Ramanananda Saraswati. He then helped with compiling and editing the notebooks he had maintained twenty years earlier, the entirety of which were published in three volumes in 1955.

## Wordwise: Swarupa स्वरूप

*Swa* (Lat: *sui*, Fr. *soi*): 'own', 'self'; *rupa*: 'form', 'shape'.

*Swarupa*; (Tamil: *suya-uru*): nature, essence, true or essential form; Real Self, Self-nature; selfhood; identity; state or condition of being the same, inborn, innate, intrinsic; (*in philosophy*;) necessary or unconditioned state, true or original nature, self-created, self-formed, uncreated, natural, uncontrived; *Swarupajana*: knowledge of Brahman the Absolute; *Atmaswarupa*: true nature of the Self.

**B**hagavan says that abiding in the Self means the dropping away of subject, object and false identification with the body, the root and source of all suffering. *Swarupa* is the pristine original state that need not, and indeed *cannot*, be gained anew but needs be merely uncovered and revealed in its perfect purity once the illusion of a separate self, maintained through continual thoughts in the mind, is let go of once for all. World (object) and mind (subject) are equally unreal, so the goal is neither refuge in the world of objects (body) nor identification with a solopistic subject (mind). Bhagavan explains: "Subject, object and perception form the triad (*triputi*). There is a reality beyond these three. These appear and disappear, whereas the truth is eternal.[...] If there is unity, there will also be duality. The numeral one gives rise to other numbers. Truth is neither one nor two. It is as It is." (*Talks* §376, §146) "Atmaswarupa—the source of all beings—is not different from the indivisible consciousness, [having desisted from splitting] itself into 'I' and 'this'." (*Padamalai*)





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 Mr. Sridhar asked: What is कौशल in योग: कर्मसुकौशलम्? <sup>"Yoga is skill in action"</sup>  
 How is that gained? <sup>skill</sup>  
 Sri Bh: All actions without <sup>skill</sup> कौशल & <sup>equanimity</sup> समत्व. Do not think that you are the doer. Dedicate the work to God. That is the way to gain it. <sup>equanimity</sup>  
 Mr S. योग: समत्व योग उच्यते. What is that समत्व? <sup>equanimity</sup>  
 Sri Bh: It is unity in diversity. The universe is now <sup>equanimity</sup>

This sample from Talks §319 (7th January, 1937) with Venkataramiah's translations of Sanskrit terms and phrases scribbled in pencil above the Devanagari.

Eventually the diarist went to Calcutta, met Sri Sankaracharya Krishnabodhasramji of Badrinath and had his sannyasa sanctioned. In 1959 he returned to the Ashram—not to leave Tiruvannamalai again—and continued his translation work which eventually yielded a number of Ashram publications, i.e. *Tripura Rahasya*, *Advaita Bodha Deepika*, *Kaivalya Navaneeta* and *Arunachala Mahatmyam*, among others.

In retrospect, when one considers the spiritual and literary sway of *Talks*, one can be thankful that Venkataramiah lost his teaching post and was compelled to take refuge in Bhagavan in that 'distressing period of his life'. What may have at the time looked like ill-luck turned out to be a great boon, both for Munagala

Venkataramiah, who would be graced to sit at the Master's feet and imbibe his words and silence on a daily basis, but also for countless devotees who over the decades would have the opportunity to encounter Bhagvan's teaching in its purest form, made accessible and free of superfluity, faithfully pointing the reader toward the goal in such a way as few publications then or since would be able to do. By virtue of one man's diligence in the hall 75 years ago, we find in *Talks* the direct path set forth in clear, straightforward language, a message that promises nothing less than transforming the lives of all who would partake of it. —

(Munagala S. Venkataramiah was absorbed into Bhagavan in Tiruvannamalai in February, 1963.)

## Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Guru Purnima



Guru Purnima or Vyasa Purnima, the full moon day in the Tamil month of Ani (mid-June and mid-July), is dedicated to Guru Veda Vyasa who edited the Vedas. The four Vedas (Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva), were divisions made by Veda Vyasa into groupings of related topics (vyasa = to 'edit' or 'divide'). Guru Veda Vyasa wrote the Puranas including the *Mahabharata* and *Srimad Bhagavatam*. Venerated by Vedacharyas and students of the Vedas, Veda Vyasa is worshipped on this day when he was born to sage Parashara and the fisherman's daughter, Satyavati. (It is also said that this is the day he commenced writing the *Brahma Sutras*, the Vedantic aphorisms.)

On Guru Purnima, homage is paid to the guru all over India and sannyasins begin *chaturmasya*, the annual four-month respite from itinerant life during the rainy months in which they practice solitude. Guru Purnima at Ramanasramam was celebrated the 3rd July with *mahanyasa puja* and paying tribute to sannyasins with special prasad.





## From the Periapuranam: Cheraman Perumal

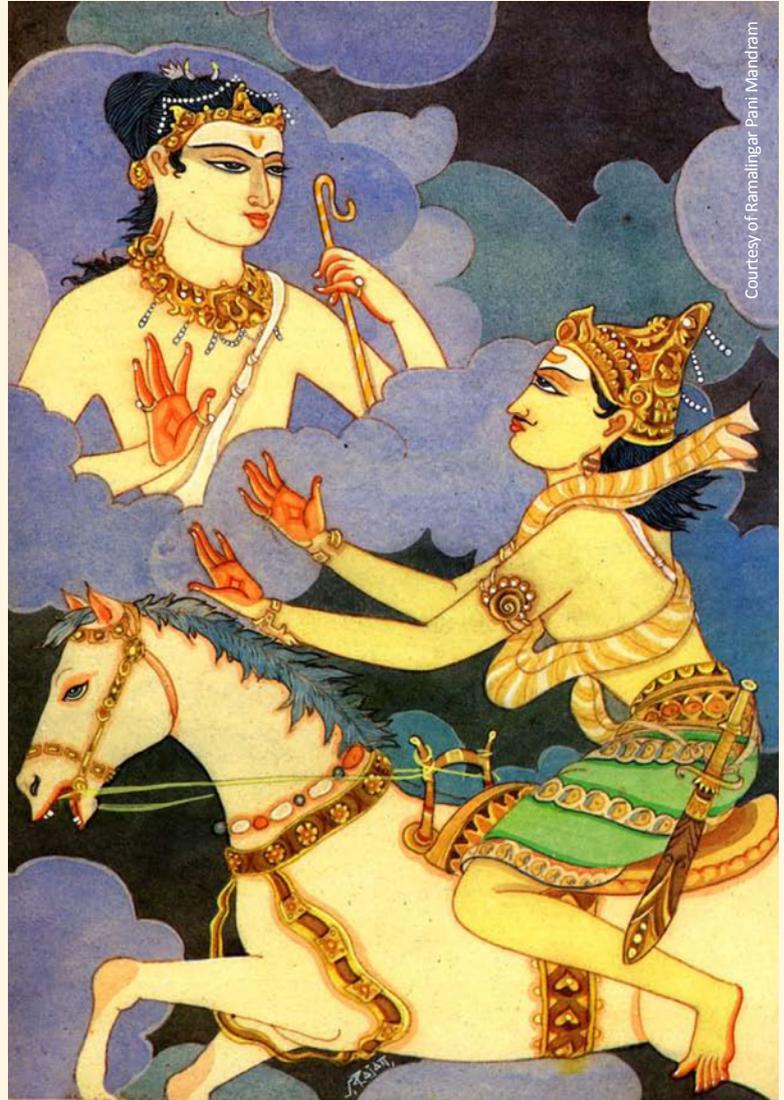
Cheraman Perumal had great devotion for the Lord and already as a child, developed a high degree of detachment. When he came of age, he no longer wanted to be king but renounced the world in order to devote himself to the Lord. At his request a close friend assumed the throne in his stead but in time, the friend also grew weary of worldly life and he himself renounced. Ministers sought out Cheraman to persuade him to assume the throne once again. Though reluctant to interrupt his daily worship, Cheraman bowed to divine will and returned after receiving the Lord's blessing.

One day seeing a launderer smeared with white sand and mud, Cheraman saw in the man the Lord Himself, smeared in sacred ash, and so dismounted his elephant and fell at the washerman's feet, despite the latter's protests.

Cheraman's enthusiastic devotion won him favour in the sight of the Lord who sent the following message: "Oh king who honours great poets and rules his subjects with love! Glory to you! I am very pleased with your devotion and charity."

Meanwhile, the Lord bade Cheruman's close companion, Sundara, to return to Kailas. The latter mounted a great white elephant and rode heavenward but not without remembering to visit his trusted friend. Upon seeing Sundara and hearing of his quest, Cheraman mounted his horse and whispered the *panchaakshaara* into his ear, whereby the horse rose up and circled Sundara's white elephant to ride ahead of Sundara toward Kailas. When Sundara was received by Lord Siva, he said: "Lord, Cheraman Perumal stands at the gate to attain Thy glorious feet!" The Lord graciously said: "So be it!" Cheraman entered and sang his 'Thiru Ulaa'. Pleased, the Lord spoke to Cheraman thus: 'You and Aalaala Sundara will abide here as the twin commanders of the Hosts'! And so it was. That day Cheraman and Sundara entered the Lord's service at Kailas.

(Cheraman Perumal's and Sundara's Aradhana Day this year fell on the 26th July.)



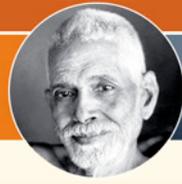
Courtesy of Raimalingar Peri Mandram

## Reality in Forty Verses

17. To those who do not know the Self and to those who do, the body is the 'I'. But to those who do not know the Self, the 'I' is bounded by the body, while to those who though within the body know the Self, the 'I' shines boundless. Such is the difference between them.

— Reality in Forty Verses by Sri Bhagavan





## Adiannamalai Kovil Mahakumbhabhishekam, 15th July, 2012



Kumbhabhishekam is said to be indispensable for the vital maintenance of any Hindu temple, reigniting the mystical power of the temple deity. *Kumbha* or 'pot' refers to the *kalasa* that serve to hold the consecrated water for abhishekam while the 'pots' that crown the temple towers (*gopuram*) and the *vimanam* aloft the temple deities are also called *kalasa*; *abhishekam* is the ceremonial washing of the temple's deities, *vimanam* and *gopuram* with water consecrated during the days of offerings and homas made in the *yagasala*. A ceremonial rope of natural fibers connected to the *yogasala* altar conducts the spiritual power of the *yagnas* into the *sanctum sanctorum* where the deity's power is recharged. Long months, and in many cases, several years are needed for temple renovation and preparation for Mahakumbhabhishekam. After nearly two years of reconditioning, in fits and starts, Adiannamalai Temple's makeover was finally completed in early July of this year. On the 10th of July, 2012, preliminary pujas commenced. On the evening of the 12th, the first *kala puja* took place in the *yagasala* starting at 5pm with dozens of *purohitas* tending 39 *havan* fires and *Vedacharyas* reciting the four Vedas. *Yagasala* pujas continued morning and evening for three days until 9.30am Sunday morning, 15th July, when Mahakumbhabhishekam was performed with great jubilation.

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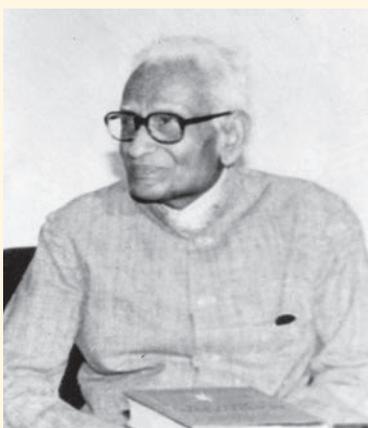
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## Introducing the Kendras: Sri Ramanalayam, Cheyyar



Professor K. Swaminathan was a father figure who conducted Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi Satsang at New Delhi. His inimitable presence and the many talks he gave in English on Bhagavan's teachings led to the growth of the organization in Lodhi Road, New Dehli 3. Having been influenced and blessed by the professor, an admirer, upon his retirement from service in 1985, started a satsang at Vellore. Adopting the same format as the Delhi Ramana Kendra, "Sri Ramanalayam" was born and has been functioning ever since. Recently, upon relocating to Cheyyar, a Taluk town of Tiruvannamalai, a similar satsang was started. Sri Ramanalayam, Cheyyar is situated in no. 21/5 Ramakannu St., Cheyyar Tiruvattipuram 604 407 (M.R. Srinivasan tel: 9487630603). Programmes on Punarvasu Days are as follows: 5.30pm—*Nithya Vazhipadu*; 6pm—meditation; 6.15—Thoughts on Ramana; 6.30—devotional songs; 7pm—*Aksharamanamalai*.

