

## Saranagathi

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ISSUE

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Dear Devotees,

The New Year in the Ashram begins with beautiful weather and Bhagavan's Jayanthi just a few days away. This January issue of *Saranagathi* carries the final part of Sampurnamma's account of her days with Bhagavan in the kitchen, as well as the continuation of the life-story of Maurice Frydman.

*Reports from Sri Ramanasramam* contains glimpses of the Deepam Festival 2011 and a report on the installation of the new Dakshinamurthy statue in the new library.

For further news of the 2011 Deepam Festival, go to <http://www.sriramanamaharshi.org/deepam2011.html>. For details on other 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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## Reality in Forty Verses

11. To know that which is foreign [to one's Self] without knowing the Self which is the knower of those things that are known — how can this be knowledge and not ignorance? Upon knowing the Self, which is the foundation both for knowledge and for its object [the world], knowledge and ignorance will indeed cease to exist.

*Reality in Forty Verses* by Sri Bhagavan





## Women Devotees Series: Sampurnamma

*(This final section is adapted from Sampurnamma's published testimony in Ramana Smriti, the 1980 souvenir; and from a video interview taken a decade later. Both were reproduced in The Maharshi, Sep/Oct 1992, Vol.2 No.5 and again in Arunachala Ramana, Sri Ramanasramam, 2008.)*

Once Subbalakshamma and I decided to walk around the Hill. We started very early, long before daybreak. We were quite afraid of the jungle. There were snakes and panthers—and evil-doers too. We soon saw a strange blue light in front of us. It was an uncanny sight. We thought it was a ghost. But it led us along the path and soon we felt safe with it. It left us at daybreak.

Another time we two were walking around the Hill early in the morning and chatting about our relatives. We noticed a man following at a distance. We had to pass through a stretch of lonely forest, so we stopped to let him pass. But he too stopped. When we walked, he also walked. We became alarmed and started praying: “Oh, Lord! Oh, Arunachala! Only you can help us, only you can save us!” The man

suddenly said: “Yes, Arunachala is our only refuge. Keep your mind on Him constantly. It is His light that fills all space. Always have Him in your mind.”

We wondered who he was. Was he sent by Bhagavan to remind us that it is not proper to talk of worldly matters when going around the Hill? Or was it Arunachala Himself in human guise? We looked back, but there was nobody on the path.

In so many ways Bhagavan made us feel that he was always with us, until the conviction grew and became a part of our nature. Those were the days when we lived on the threshold of a new world—a world of ecstasy and joy. We were not conscious of what we were eating, of what we were doing. Time just rolled on noiselessly, unfelt and unperceived. The heaviest task seemed a trifle. We knew no fatigue. At home, the least bit of work had seemed tiresome and made us grumble, while here we worked all day and were always ready for more.

Once Bhagavan came to the kitchen and saw the cooking done and everything cleared. He wondered how the day's work was over so soon. “No mere human hands were working here, Bhagavan. Good spirits helped us all the time,” I said. He laughed and said: “The greatest spirit, Arunachala, is here, towering over you. It is he who works, not you.”



Bhagavan entering the Dining Hall in the early 1940s





Once a little deer found her way to Bhagavan and would not leave him. She would go with him up the hill and gambol around him and Bhagavan would play with her for hours. About a year later she ran away into the jungle and hunters evidently pelted her with stones, for when she was found, she was severely wounded and her legs were broken<sup>1</sup>. She was brought to the Ashram. Bhagavan kept her near him, dressed her wounds and the vet set her broken bones. One midnight this little deer crept onto Bhagavan's lap, snuggled up to him—and died. The next day Bhagavan gave me the news. I said: "Some great soul came to you as a deer to gain liberation in your hands." Bhagavan said: "Yes, it must be so. When I was on the hill, a crow used to keep me company. He was a rishi in a crow's body. He would not eat from anybody's hand but mine."

Once a white-throated eagle, considered holy in India, flew into the hall and sat on the top of a cupboard near Bhagavan. After a while it flew around him and disappeared. "He's a siddha who came to pay me a visit," said Bhagavan most seriously.

<sup>1</sup> The deer is Valli. It is said that a town butcher was delivered a wounded deer by hunters and, recognising her as Valli, took her to Bhagavan.

A dog used to sleep next to Bhagavan, and there were two sparrows living at his side in the hall. Even when people tried to drive them away they would come back. Once when he noticed that the dog had been chased away, he remarked: "Just because you are in the body of a human you think you are a human being, and because he is in the body of a dog, you think he's a dog. Why don't you think of him as a mahatma, and treat him as a great soul?"

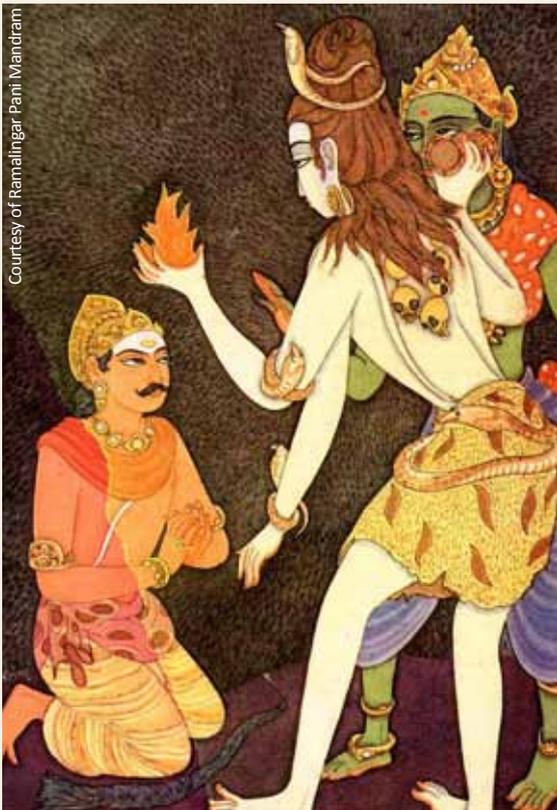
The respect Bhagavan showed animals and birds was striking. He treated them as equals. They were served food like respected visitors, and if they happened to die in the Ashram, they would be given a decent burial and a memorial stone. The tombs of the deer, the crow and the cow Lakshmi can still be seen in the Ashram near the back gate.

Who knows how many animal, human and divine beings in varying forms have visited this embodiment of the Almighty. We ordinary women knew only the bliss of his presence and could not tear ourselves away from the Beloved, so glorious he was. It has been sixty years, I think, since I came. The days I spent with Bhagavan are memorable days indeed. Somehow, in my old age, I am managing with Bhagavan in my heart and his name on my lips.

## The Naayanmars: Maanakkanjaara

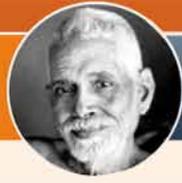
Once in the town of Kanjaaroo there was a nobleman known for his unceasing service to the Lord. Maanakkanjaaranaar, as he was called (the 'noble one of Kanjaaroo'), had but one daughter. She was the apple of his eye, and the time had come for her to marry. Noble elders came seeking her hand for the heir of their illustrious clan, the "Eyars". Maanakkanjaaranaar agreed to their plea, as befitting his lineage, and so the boy's father fixed an auspicious date for the wedding. Meanwhile the Lord put on the guise of a Kapaalika hermit — head clean-shaven and covered with ash, a sacred thread of hair, a pouch for holding ash, a shining wrist-band and the Vedas for his loin-cloth. When the Lord arrived at the scene of the wedding, the bride bowed to pay him obeisance. As she knelt, the hermit glimpsed her thick lustrous tresses and exclaimed, "These will serve for fashioning my sacred thread." Without any hesitation, the father sheared his beautiful daughter's hair and offered the lot to the hermit. The hermit immediately vanished but, in his place, the Lord gave darshan from the heavens, raining golden flowers over the earth. He then spoke to Maanakkanjaaranaar: "I did this to show the world the extent of your devotion." The bridegroom, having just arrived and beholding his bride-to-be with cropped hair, was amazed to hear what had transpired. But suddenly, by the Lord's grace, the locks of the maiden grew thick and long as before, and the wedding took place in all grandeur. (Maanakkanjaaranaar's Aradhana Day was the 21st December.)

— adapted from the *Periapuranam*



Courtesy of Ramaningar Pami Mandiram





## The Origins of Kartigai Deepam

**K**arthigai Deepam is the festival of lamps celebrated on the day when the moon is in the constellation Karthigai (Pleiades), on the day of or close to the day of full moon, and the sun is in Vrichika (Scorpio, during the Tamil month of Kartigai—mid-Nov to mid-Dec). Pleiades is a group of six stars seen as the six celestial nymphs who reared six children that later joined to become the six-faced Muruga or Karthikeya.

The theme of Lord Siva in the form of light (*tejo linga*) originates from ancient times when Vishnu and Brahma quarreled as to who was the greater. Lord Siva stepped in to settle the dispute, arranging a contest. Manifesting as a great column of fire, a voice from the flame challenged the two to find either the top or bottom of the pillar of light; the one who succeeded would be deemed superior. Vishnu took the form of a boar and dug down deep into the earth in search of the bottom while Brahma, taking the form of a swan, flew high up towards the stars seeking its apex. Long centuries passed until Vishnu, stopping deep in the earth to sit in meditation, humbled himself and began to realise that the luminous pillar was the very light of Awareness Itself and thus transcended the three worlds and the three times, its limits beyond any comprehension. Brahma flew beyond the stars and, as his pride grew, he devised a plan to deceive the Lord. Taking hold of a screw pine flower (*thazhambu*) that had dropped down from above, he presented it to the Lord, claiming to have retrieved it from the top of the column. But the Lord chastened Brahma for his deceit, decreeing that

no temples should ever be dedicated in his name. But Vishnu as well as Brahma had failed to discover the column's end, and the two, now humbled, bowed before the Lord, begging forgiveness for their conceit. Meanwhile, as the light shone with such splendour that all who beheld it were compelled to shield their eyes, Vishnu and Brahma entreated Mahadeva to lessen his brightness so that celestial and earthly beings might be able to worship him and thus be delivered from the darkness of delusion. The Lord heeded their request and allowed the column of flame to cool, becoming, in successive yugas, a lingam of diamond (in *treta* yuga), of gold (in *dvapara* yuga) and finally, a lingam of stone (in *kali* yuga), the 2,600 foot high hill we see today.

The purificatory power of pilgrimage to this sacred *sthal* is so great, the Puranas declare, that one need only see the Hill from a distance to be assured of liberation in this lifetime. Lord Siva proclaims, "The moment you set eyes on It, your ignorance is destroyed! Its glory gives sight to the blind, the ability to walk to the lame, progeny to the childless and speech to the dumb. Arunachala confers all siddhis, cures all diseases, destroys all sins and grants all boons. Every year, during Kartigai, I shall appear on the summit of this Hill in the form of fire [...]. Those who see that fire and meditate upon it, shall realise the great light within themselves."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The 'Arunachala Mahatmyam' in *Aruna of the Golden Fire*, Ramanasramam, 2011.





Bhagavan and devotees in the late 1930s. Maurice Frydman is seated second from Bhagavan's left.

## Maurice Frydman: A Retrospective (part three)

**M**aurice Frydman reached Ramanasramam just six months after arriving in India. This first visit of three days began with his coming before Bhagavan in the hall, his hat in hand and his shoes on, not having yet learned the local customs. He was eager to learn from Bhagavan and asked why there should be illusion if the individual soul is identical with the Supreme. A devotee recounts the details of the conversation:

Bhagavan gave him the usual answer and then began to chew betel leaves. In the meantime, Mr. Frydman was ruminating and, with dramatic gestures, wanted to know why the ego should not be cut down at one stroke and destroyed so as to gain Supreme Bliss. The Maharshi stopped chewing his betel leaves long enough to smile and then broke out into laughter and asked the questioner to hold out his ego so that

the Maharshi could strike it down. Everyone in the Hall laughed including Mr. Frydman, and at the conclusion of the laughter, Mr. Frydman addressed the Maharshi and said, "Yes, now I understand."<sup>1</sup>

Though somewhat shy by nature, Frydman mustered the courage to speak up in the hall and even from the first days, a congenial familiarity developed between he and Bhagavan. A devotee narrates the following humorous anecdote:

Once Maurice Frydman appeared in the Hall with a huge glass of fruit juice and offered it to Bhagavan. Bhagavan said: "There's not enough." Thinking that Bhagavan wanted more juice for himself, Frydman said, "Please drink this and I will get you more." "Good, will you give everyone in the hall a big glass of juice just like this?" Frydman responded, "They don't need it." "Neither do I," came Bhagavan's response. Frydman persisted, "But, you're so pale!" Bhagavan replied, "You are much paler than I, so you must drink it yourself!"

<sup>1</sup> *Mountain Path*, April 1981, p. 69.





## Maharshi's Gospel

### Self-Enquiry

Maurice Frydman: Why should Self-enquiry alone be considered the direct means to jnana?

Bhagavan: Because every kind of sadhana except that of atma-vichara (self-enquiry) presupposes the retention of the mind as the instrument for carrying on the sadhana, and without the mind it cannot be practised. The ego may take different and subtler forms at the different stages of one's practice, but is itself never destroyed. When Janaka exclaimed, "Now I have discovered the thief who has been ruining me all along. He shall be dealt with summarily!", the king was really referring to the ego or the mind.

Everybody laughed. The pale-faced Frydman took the words of the Master literally, went to a corner and drank the full glass of juice all by himself!"<sup>2</sup>

It was during the years of residence at the Ashram that Frydman began recording Bhagavan's responses to devotees' inquiries. These exchanges would eventually form the content of *Maharshi's Gospel* and parts of *Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi*. Frydman was one of Bhagavan's favourite interlocutors and it is said that when once someone commented to Bhagavan on the brilliance of his questions in the hall, Bhagavan replied that Frydman did not pose his questions for his own benefit but for the sake of others. Such was Bhagavan's estimation of Frydman's selfless service.

<sup>2</sup> *Mountain Path*, 'Kinder Far than One's Own Mother—Ramana', V. Ganesan, January 1985, p. 32.

Meeting Bhagavan engendered in Frydman the determination to change his life and to take up the spiritual path in all seriousness. He begged Bhagavan to give him *sannyasa diksha* but Bhagavan, in his customary way, refused the request: "I have no ochre robes for you, Sir, and you do not need any!"<sup>3</sup> But Frydman, missed the profound wisdom in Bhagavan's words and carried through with his decision, taking *sannyas* from Swami Ramdas in the late 1930s. When he subsequently met Gandhiji, the latter began calling him Bharatananda ('Bliss of India'), an acknowledgement of Frydman's love for his adopted country in a time of struggle. But as the manager of a large manufacturing firm, Frydman had

<sup>3</sup> *Mountain Path*, 'Maurice Frydman', Apa Pant, Aradhana 1991, p. 35.

## Reports from Sri Ramanasramam: Dakshinamurthy Installation



A seven foot high black granite stone statue of the south-facing Lord Dakshinamurthy was installed on the 5th December in the Rotunda of the new library. The statue is situated at the rear of the main floor in a direct line of sight with the front gate of the Ashram. Dakshinamurthy is the Divine Teacher who is said to have expounded the Supreme Truth to the four sons of Brahma through his penetrating silence. Devotees have long revered Bhagavan as, among other things, an incarnation of Sri Dakshinamurthy. The stone murthi was crafted by stapathis in Mahabalipuram under the supervision of Sri Mathu Stapathi.





difficulties winning over his superiors to his newly acquired renunciate status. This conflict of interest became more palpable when Frydman started his begging rounds in the evenings, often to the very households of his own employees. Apa Pant writes:

When it was reported to Sir Mirza Ismail that his brilliant engineer-director had shaved his head and taken sannyas, went to work in saffron robes, begged for his daily bread and gave away all his wages (Rs. 3,000 per month) to the poor and needy, the Grand Vizier was furious. He sent for “that Mr. Frydman” to remind him that he was hired as an engineer, not as a sannyasi and forbade him henceforth to wear ochre robes. Maurice offered his resignation on the spot, saying that how and what he ate or wore was a personal matter, and that he must be free to follow his own way of life so long as he satisfied those concerned with the quality of his work as engineer and manager. A compromise was finally reached; Maurice would have to wear European or Mysore dress only when VIPs visited the factory.<sup>4</sup>

In time, Frydman began to reassess the outward aspect of sannyas and the attachments that can form around such an identity. Perhaps recalling Bhagavan’s earlier refusal to give him robes, Frydman decided to resume normal dress, maintaining inwardly the spirit

<sup>4</sup> *The Mountain Path*, Aradhana, 1991, p. 32.



of monastic renunciation and selfless service while outwardly blending in with the crowd. But from this time onward Frydman refused to accept his monthly salary even though the management insisted on holding the unretrieved funds in earnest for him till a later date. When Frydman left the factory for good, he still refused to accept the accumulated back-pay, which was by then considerable, and had the money divided up and distributed among workers at the factory.

*(to be continued in the February issue)*

## Reports from Sri Ramanasramam: Vedaparayana at Sri Ramanasramam



Krishna Yajur Veda Ghanaparayana at Bhagavan’s Shrine



Rig Veda Ghanaparayana



Sama Veda

Every day for the ten days of the Deepam festival, devotees at the Ashram had the opportunity to listen to the second Paadam of the Krishna Yajur Veda in ghanam mode performed by an unprecedented twenty-two ghanapatis from Trichy, Coimbatore, Chennai and Tiruvannamalai. Ghanaparayanam is the most advanced of the Vedic chanting modes and few pundits are versed with its knotty sequences, where each word of the Veda is vocalised thirteen times in a specified order (1-2-2-1-1-2-3-3-2-1-1-2-3, etc.). The programme, organized by the Ashram Veda Patasala acharya, Sri Senthil Natha Ganapaatigal, the Ghanapaatis, also included Rig Veda Ghanaparayana and Sama Veda performed each day in Bhagavan’s Shrine by visiting pundits.





## Reports from Sri Ramanasramam: Kartigai Deepam Celebrations



Devotees gathered at the Ashram on the evening of the 8th December to await the lighting of the Deepam flame atop the Holy Hill and the *Akhanda Jyoti* cauldron in front of the Samadhi Hall. All joined to sing Bhagavan's *Aksharamanamalai* followed by *Nava Mani Malai*, *Padikam*, *Ashtakam*, *Arunachala Pancha Ratnam* and *Ramana Sat Guru*. Devotees gathered in front of the Samadhi Hall each evening to witness the lighting of the flame atop the Hill and to recite *Aksharamanamalai*, on all subsequent eleven days when the Deepam is kept going.

## Reports from Sri Ramanasramam: Kartigai Deepam Celebrations (cont.)



The multitude at the Temple and around the Four Streets grew night after night in the run-up to Kartigai Deepam. On the final night, 8th December, an estimated two and half million people arrived to participate in the lighting of the flame and circumambulate the Hill. On full-moon day, Saturday, 10th December, Arunachalaswami left the temple very early for pradakshina, reaching the Ashram at sunrise. The full circumambulation would normally last the entire day up till midnight but owing to the *grahanam* (lunar eclipse) starting at 6.15pm, the schedule was preponed and the pace quickened.

