

Saranagati



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IN THIS
ISSUE

Dear Devotees,

The north-east monsoon begun in mid-October and already Pali Thirtam is overflowing with the Ashram Well almost to capacity. In recent days, a cyclone hit the East coast, and rains have been continuous. Arunachala is green and thick with plants and trees following ARS' new tree-planting initiative, taking the help of volunteer students from nearby colleges.

This November issue carries part one of the life story of R. Narasimha Iyer, the school teacher and Veda Patsala teacher who came to Bhagavan as a boy in 1928. *Wordwise* this month looks at *sphurana*. *Events at Sri Ramanasramam* includes the Navaratri celebrations. *Introducing the Kendras*, features the Ramana Maharshi Foundation, UK.

For further news and events, go to <http://www.sriramanamaharshi.org> or write to us at saranagathi@sriramanamaharshi.org

In Sri Bhagavan,
The Editorial Team

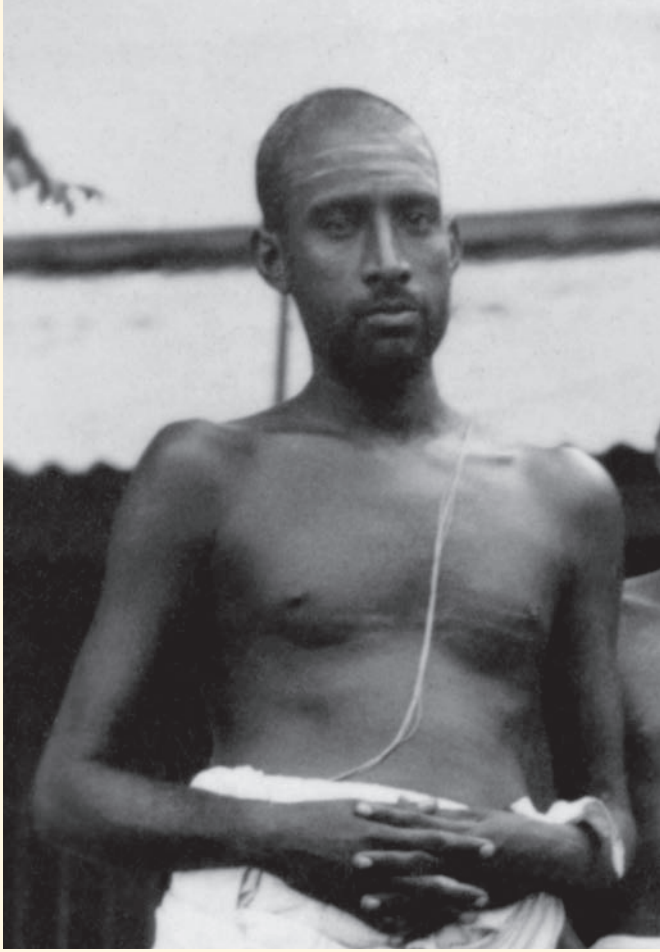
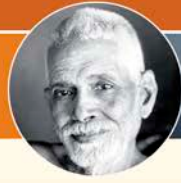
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Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi

Sphurana: Our True Nature

M.: 'I' is not known in sleep. On waking, the 'I' is associated with the body, the world and non-self in general. Such associated 'I' is *aham vritti*. When *aham* represents the Self only it is *aham sphurana*. This is natural to the jnani and is itself called jnana by jnanis, or bhakti by bhaktas. Though ever present, including in sleep, it is not perceived. It cannot be known in sleep all at once. It must first be realised in the waking state, for it is our true nature underlying all the three states.—*Talks §307*.





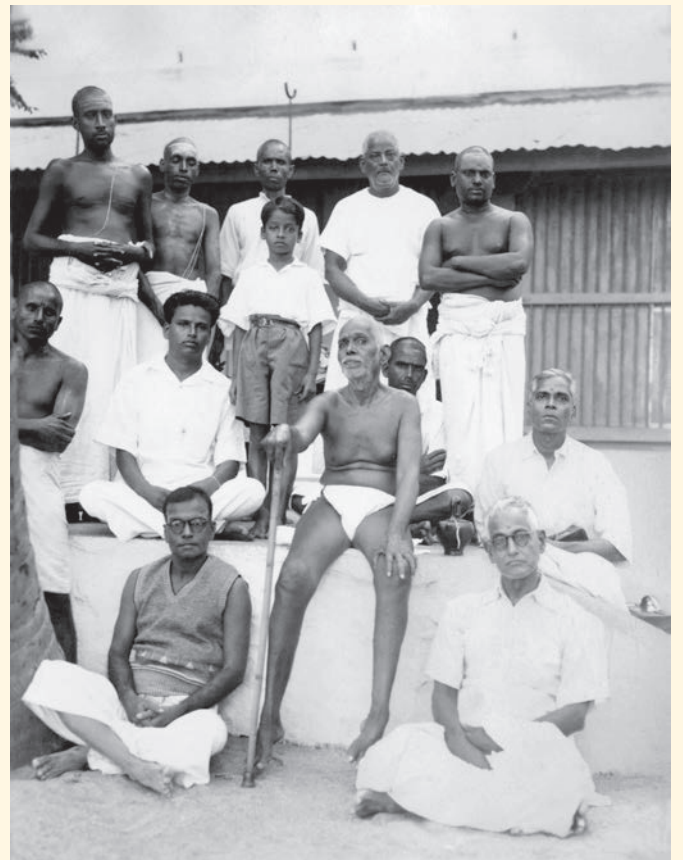
S. Narasimha Iyer: A Life with Sri Bhagavan (part one)

I came to Bhagavan in 1928 as a boy of 15. Gopal Rao was the manager of the Ashram then and the only buildings in the Ashram were Bhagavan's Old Hall, the Mother's Shrine and a small makeshift kitchen and dining area. All cooking materials like rice and dhal were brought from town and cooked immediately as there was no storeroom in which to keep things. The dining hall was very small and could accommodate only ten to fifteen people. Bhagavan would sit in the center and the Brahmins would sit on one side and everyone else on the other side as in those days orthodox Brahmins would not eat in public.

Ramakrishana Swami and Ranga Rao cooked the food after Gopal Rao gave up cooking. When Vasudeva Sastri came, Gopal Rao insisted on giving up his role as manager and turned the job over to Vasudevan. Finally it was decided that Chinnaswami should be manager but Chinnaswami didn't want to be the manager and resisted saying, "I have left everything and taken sannyasa, how can I be manager?" Finally the others took him to the Old Hall to meet Bhagavan and the issue was settled. So Chinnaswami became the secretary and eventually, Sarvadhikari. This was around 1930.

When I first came to the Ashram, I was in school but in the evenings I would do puja in the Mother's Shrine. I would wear fresh clothes brought by my brother, Nataraja Iyer, and would perform the archana.

In 1930 the person in charge of puja at the Ashram left because he had gotten an appointment as a Sanskrit pundit at a Vedic school. In his



Bhagavan with devotees at Skandasramam in 1945.
Narasimha Iyer is standing in the back row at top left.





Thatched hut over Mother's Samadhi (ca. 1923)



The Dining Hall foundation with Old Hall at rear



The Dining Hall construction (1937)

place Krishnamurthi (Kittu Maama) came to the Ashram to serve.

As aradhana of Bhagavan's mother was to be celebrated, it was only after Kittu's arrival that Chinaswami could prepare the invitations and have them printed. Ranga Rao and myself sent the invitations and aradhana was celebrated with great devotion.

Later, with the help of my brother, I was admitted as a teacher to a nearby school even though I had never even completed my elementary education. I then taught and served in the school during the week and came to the Ashram on weekends to perform pujas mornings and evenings. My wife and children used to come with me as did my brother, also a school teacher, and his children who all became devoted to Bhagavan. At the time there were cottages near Rajagopal's house where we would stay. All the family had Bhagavan's darshan, including my mother and father.

Bhagavan was a great magnet, and even when I was away teaching in government schools in distant parts of the district, I always came on weekends to perform my puja duties.

Normally, Bhagavan would only come to the Mother's Shrine on full moon days and take arati and vibuthi. During Navaratri, Laksharchana and Sri Chakra puja were performed regularly and I used to perform the archana. On full moon days Bhagavan would not go for meal until Sri Chakra puja was completed, so food was often served late on those days. Most evenings we would sing parayana. Kunjuswami, Natesan, Ramaswami

Pillai, Sunderesha Iyer and I and others used to sit and sing together.

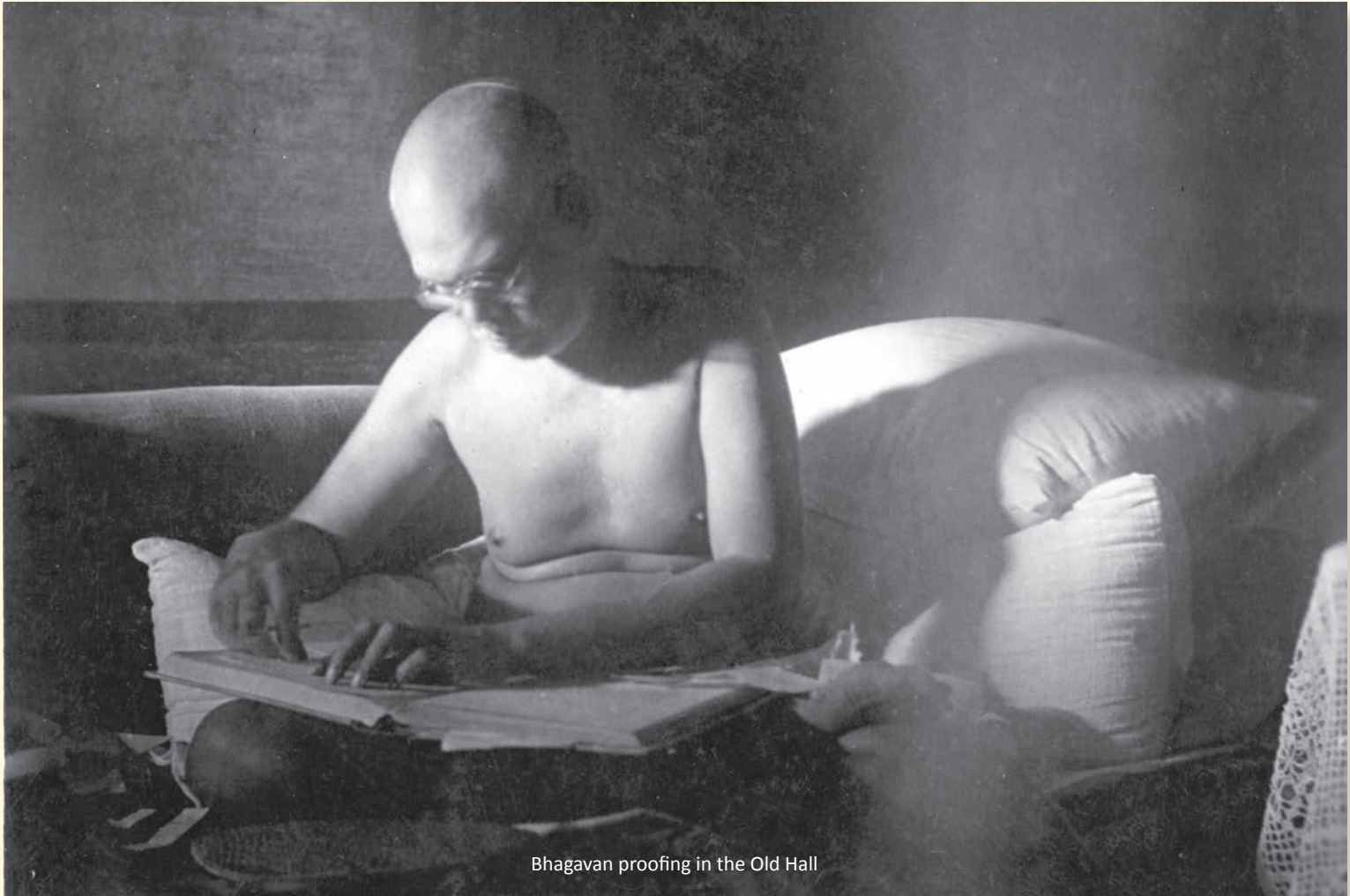
Chinnaswami gave me and my elder brother various tasks, either in the kitchen or at puja or other odd jobs like serving food, cleaning vessels etc. I would sometimes grind flour for idlies, taking turns with Bhagavan at the quern, and joined others in serving meals during Ashram functions like Bhagavan's Jayanti.

There was a rationing system in force in Tiruvannamalai in those days. Rice was limited to 6 oz. per head and wheat, 10 oz. My brother used to bring rice from the market to the Ashram. Once on errand for the Ashram, he was apprehended by police for purchasing quantities of rice beyond the allowable limit. Someone intervened and the rice found its way safely to the Ashram. But when Revenue officers wanted to raid the ration shop suspected of supplying excessive rice to the Ashram, someone managed to dissuade the relevant authorities from taking further action, recognising that the Ashram fed a number of people.

Ramanatha Brahmachari was an ardent devotee of Bhagavan and used to accompany Bhagavan everywhere. Even at the time when the plague was spreading in the town, he never left Bhagavan. Nor would Bhagavan abandon Ramanatha when the latter was stricken with the dreaded disease. By Bhagavan's grace, Ramanatha eventually made a full recovery.

Ramanathan was a staunch advocate of the Congress and, with Bhagavan's permission, participated in the salt Satyagraha and Independence Day function.





Bhagavan proofing in the Old Hall

But he always returned immediately so that he was available to attend on Bhagavan.

Ramanathan knew how to spin yarn and spun yarn on a spindle to give to Mastan who would weave Bhagavan's kopinam.

In 1942, Bhagavan broke his collar bone while attempting to save a squirrel from a dog that was chasing it. It was a Monday morning and I was leaving to go teach school when Ramakrishna Swami and Govinda Swami approached me and said that Bhagavan had fallen and broken his collar bone. They asked me to take him to the bone specialist in Vallevahe, the village where I was teaching at the time about 6 miles from here. The doctor there set the bone and applied paste made from oil, herbs and black gram which, once dried, served like a light cast, stabilizing the affected area and making it very

firm. He then put on some bandages. It was my good fortune to be the one to apply the paste to Bhagavan's broken collar bone each day for the coming weeks. Bhagavan used to affectionately joke about me and once as I was applying the herbs, he looked toward the others and said, "See, he's a big doctor!"

Once when Balarama Reddy was discussing a certain book, Bhagavan mentioned that the book could be found in the Baroda Oriental Library. At that very moment, the Baroda Rani herself appeared, having come on visit. We remarked with great surprise: "Just now we are talking about you, about writing to you to ask you for a book from your library. How strange that you should arrive at this precise moment." She just laughed and said, "Bhagavan knows everything!"

(to be continued)





Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Navaratri, The Nine Nights of Devi

On Mahalaya Amavasya, 15th October 2012, the Goddess Yogambika was taken out from the inner sanctum on procession around Bhagavan's Shrine and installed in the shrine at the head of the New Hall. The following day began the first of the nightly pujas. The alankaram on 1) THE FIRST NIGHT was Meenakshi, avatar of Parvati, consort of Lord Siva, considered the form of Goddess Mathangi; 2) THE SECOND NIGHT was Gaja Lakshmi seated on a lotus, flanked by two elephants anointing her in abhishekam with water from their trunks; 3) THE THIRD NIGHT, Linga Puja, depicted Parvati in worship of the linga of the Lord, like the day she fashioned a linga of sand at the waterside in Kanchipuram. Lord Siva's voice could be heard from above, "Let this linga made by you remain here for the welfare of all humankind"; 4) THE FOURTH NIGHT, Venuganam, "the song of the flute", hints at the fact that even Lord Krishna's power have their origins in Parashakti; 5) THE FIFTH NIGHT was Rishabha Vahanam, the great bull-devotee of Lord Siva, whose legs are the four Vedas; 6) THE SIXTH NIGHT, Sesa Sayanam, the "Lord who sleeps on Sesa", the serpent-king of the Nagas. Devi (Parashakti), who indwells Lord Vishnu, rests on the serpent, the archetypal symbol of wisdom and immortality; 7) THE SEVENTH NIGHT, Saraswati, goddess of knowledge, music, arts and science, the consort of Brahma by whose wisdom Brahma was able to create the universe; 8) THE EIGHTH NIGHT, Mahishasura Mardini, the "slayer of the buffalo-demon". Mahishasura was born to a father, Rambha, king of the asuras, and a water buffalo mother (Princess Shyamala, cursed to be a buffalo). Mahishasura invaded heaven and defeated Indra. Since he was invincible to all male forms, the devas created Durga, who possessed the combined strength of all the devas. Durga and her army fiercely fought the demon and his forces for nine days until she finally killed Mahishasura on *dasami shukla paksha*, the tenth day of the waxing moon.





Introducing the Kendras: Ramana Maharshi Foundation, UK



Inaugural meeting of the RMF UK, August 1990, in London with Ganesan seated on the floor at centre.

The RMF UK was inaugurated by Sri Ganesan, then editor of *The Mountain Path*, at a meeting on the 12th August 1990 at the Bharata Vidya Bhavan in West Kensington. There are now only three remaining founder-members who were present at that meeting, Alan Jacobs (our President), Alasdair Black (Chair) and Rhoda Tata. Rhoda, whose father was a devotee, lived close to the Ashram before the war and cherishes vivid memories of Bhagavan. She is our living link with him.

Since the inaugural meeting in August 1990, we have met for Satsangs on the second Saturday of each month without a break. These Satsangs are held at a Quaker Meeting House in Hampstead, London NW3. Although the Satsangs are not in any way connected with or influenced by Quakerism, devotion to Bhagavan sits very well with that religion since silence is centrally important for both of us.

Each of our main Satsangs, which has a particular theme, begins at 2 pm and is in two halves. The first half commences with an introductory mantra, usually led by Rhoda Tata, followed by a brief introduction to the afternoon's theme (e.g. 'Devotion' or 'The Practice of Self-enquiry'). This is followed

by an hour's silent meditation punctuated by 3 five-minute readings on the theme. Then, at about 3.30 pm, we break for tea which lasts for about an hour. After that we have an hour's discussion on matters arising out of the theme or on general questions, or on anything else relevant to the teachings. About 25 or 30 people attend our main Satsangs, most of whom are 'regulars' but there are also usually one or two newcomers.

Apart from our monthly Satsangs, we also meet for shorter Satsangs in the same meeting house in Hampstead on the last Saturday of each month. The emphasis at these additional Satsangs is on devotion, and includes chanting. Some of us also meet for meditation on Thursday evenings at a venue in Bronsdbury, London NW6. Others also meet one evening every two weeks to study the core teachings.

We acquired charitable status in 1992 and, apart from our President and Chair, there are six other members of a committee to coordinate the activities of the Foundation. There is, in addition, a newsletter, published three times a year in March, July and November, which is sent to about 60 members, one or two of whom are in continental Europe.

Reality in Forty Verses

18. To those who do not know and to those who do, the world is real. But to those who do not know, Reality is bounded by the world; while to those who know, Reality shines formless as the ground of the world. Such is the difference between them.

— *Reality in Forty Verses* by Sri Bhagavan





From the Periapuranam: Tirumoola Naayanaar



Illustration courtesy of Ramalingar Pani Mandram

At Kailasam there was a great siddha named Moolanatha, an adept in *parakaya pravesam*, the siddhi by which one may enter another's body. One day he set out southward to visit the great shrines of the Lord and to meet his old friend, Sage Agastya, then residing at the Podiya Hills. When he reached Aaduthurai, he noticed a herd of cows in mourning on a woodland. He wondered what could have happened and went to have a closer look. He found that the cowherd, Moolan by name, lay stone-dead on the ground, with the cows gathered round him weeping. At once the yogi realised it was his duty to relieve their suffering and so, after safely securing his own body in a secluded wood, entered the body of the cowherd. When the cowherd stood up, the cows were beside themselves with joy and licked his body and pressed him close. With all grief relieved and now fully contented, they resumed their grazing.

At sunset the cows turned homeward and Tirumoola followed in their wake. Moolan's wife, having become anxious about her husband's whereabouts, drew near to take his hand but he withdrew, saying that he could have nothing to do with her. He passed his days beneath the temple peepal tree and his nights in a nearby Math. She spent her nights tossing and turning until one morning, she sought the aid of relatives. They went and visited Tirumoola, but upon returning to her, said: "He's not mad or afflicted in any way. He's now a yogi of indescribable glory. You will have to accept that he cannot be brought back to household life." Meanwhile the saint went to the wood in search of his old body only to discover that the Lord had taken it. The Lord had other plans for him: he was to remain and serve the Lord in this land. The yogi resumed his samadhi beneath the peepal tree, emerging ever so often to compose a single verse in Tamil—one per year—over the next 3,000 years until he reached the feet of the Lord. These 3,000 verses make up the *Tirumantram*. (*Tirumoola's Aradhana Day this year was the 29th Oct*)

Wordwise: *Sphurana* स्फुरण

Sphurana: flashing, shining, glittering, sparkling, expansion, vibration, coruscation, pulsation, breaking forth, quivering, trembling, twinkling; the root 'sphur' is cognate with the English 'spring', 'sprout', 'sparkle', 'spore'; the Latin, 'splendere', the German, 'spriesen' and Italian 'spuntare'.

Bagavan said, "*Sphurana* means 'throbbing', 'springing on the memory', 'flashing across the mind'. Thus both sound and light may be implied in the word *sphurana*. Everything has come from light and sound." And in another place: "'I' is the Self; (*Aham idam*) 'I am this' or 'I and that' is the ego. *Sphurana* is there always. The ego is transitory. When the 'I' is kept up as 'I' alone it is the Self; when it flies at a tangent and says 'this', it is the ego." (*Day by Day, 24 March 1945; Talks §363.*)





Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Udumbu



Udumbu in the Samadhi Hall and the Mother's Shrine

The Ashram was recently visited by a 34-inch wild monitor lizard (*udumbu* in Tamil, *varanus* in Latin). The primeval-looking creature took up residence for a time in the Ashram garden and could be seen on occasion around the Ashram. Monitors are known to feed on small rodents and insects and thus it is assumed that this one's regular excursions into the Mother's Shrine and Samadhi Hall were for the purpose of hunting the rats and mice that have been such a nuisance there in recent years. Monitors are related to Komodo dragons and are often subterranean while some species can live in water. In captivity, they have been observed to possess unique personalities and exhibit a high degree of intelligence, having the capacity to count. *Udumbu*, or monitor lizards figure in the Puranas, and historically served as allies in battle. Known for their climbing abilities, they were employed in besieging enemy fortresses, trained to scale fortress walls in order to string leader twine from the tops so that climbing ropes could be hoisted and fitted. Though distantly related to snakes and thus daunting at first sight, Tamil monitor lizards are neither poisonous nor aggressive in any way but are quite docile by nature. An endangered species, they are protected under the Protected Species Act.

Announcements: Ramanasramam in the Internet World



A recent visitor to Sri Ramansramam mentioned to the office staff that while browsing the ashram website he found a "Donate" button in the menu. In reply to the visitor's query we wish to inform all devotees that if they see a "Donate" button, they are mistaking a private website on Sri Ramana Maharshi for the official website of the ashram. The address of the official website is <http://www.sriramanamaharshi.org>. There are many websites on Sri Ramana Maharshi which solicit online donations. The official website never solicits donations from visitors. We request visitors to discriminate between the official website of the ashram and third-party websites. Please note that the ashram has not authorized any private website to solicit donations on its behalf.

The new Facebook address of the official page of Sri Ramanasramam is www.facebook.com/SriRamanaMaharshi. The response of visitors to "the presence of Sri Ramanasramam" in the Facebook Page has been very encouraging. We will continue to document important events and special observances at the ashram for the convenience of devotees. A devotee who could not visit the ashram for an important function felt sad about not gathering at the feet of Bhagavan. Bhagavan told him "Bhagavan's feet are wherever you are!" The benevolent power of the presence of a great Jnani can now be felt by everyone visiting the Facebook page.

