

Saranagati



OCTOBER 2012
VOL. 6, NO. 10

IN THIS
ISSUE

Dear Devotees,

September got underway with Bhagavan's Advent celebrations on Saturday the 1st, when some 600 devotees joined in the festivities. Rains in September helped make the mountain green again but, with the many fires this summer season, the Forest Department made the difficult decision to close the inner path and began dismantling route markers, forbidding its use for *girivalam*. Devotees are quietly hoping a better long-term solution will be found.

This October issue carries the concluding part of the life story of Dr. K. Subrahmanian, the founder of the Hyderabad Ramana Kendram. *Wordwise* this month looks at *pratyaksha* or direct perception. *Events at Sri Ramanasramam* includes the Morvi Guesthouse inauguration, Ashram building renovations, Muruganar's Samadhi Day and other events.

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

In Sri Bhagavan,
The Editorial Team

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Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi

Only One's Own Awareness is Direct Knowledge

M.: Objects perceived by the senses are spoken of as immediate knowledge (*pratyaksha*). Can anything be as direct as the Self, always experienced without the aid of the senses? Sense-perceptions can only be indirect knowledge, and not direct knowledge. Only one's own awareness is direct knowledge, as is the common experience of one and all. No aids are needed to know one's own Self, i.e., to be aware. Atma is *pratyaksha* (self-evident). Know it and be done with speculation. —*Talks §92, 274.*





Tracing the Footsteps of Bhagavan: The Life of Dr. K. Subrahmanian (part two)

Dr. K. Subrahmanian was a teacher, columnist, author and orator. He was a professor at the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages and founded the Sri Ramana Kendram, Hyderabad in 1979. He was the Kendram's guiding light for two decades until his death in January, 1998. The following is a continuation of his life story from last month.

During the celebrations of the Kumbhabhishekam of Mother's Shrine, the 21 year-old Subrahmanian was blessed to sit next to Bhagavan in the New Hall. At such close range, he could observe Bhagavan's every movement up close. When the puja flame came toward them, Bhagavan extended his graceful hands, closed his

eyes and touched the arati with such tender reverence that the youngster found himself deeply moved.

He witnessed other similar moments in Sri Bhagavan's presence and could not help but observe the kindness, courtesy and consideration Bhagavan showed to all people. Even on the mountain trails, he noticed, Bhagavan would step aside to let others pass. And in the hall during the night, when Bhagavan had to go out, Bhagavan would shine his flashlight on his stomach rather than directly down onto the floor in order to avoid disturbing others who were sleeping nearby. Subrahmanian saw in Bhagavan someone who was the embodiment of compassion and who treated all creatures with respect—the perfect model for one seeking to learn how to live one's life.

As Subrahmanian had now completed his studies and graduated with a degree, he contemplated his professional life. He recalled something his uncle,





Matrebhuteswara Temple Kumbhabhishikam, 1949

V.S. Srinivasa Iyer, had once asked Bhagavan during the British time: “Do you think India will gain its freedom?” Bhagavan said, “Why do you ask me? Am I an astrologer?” After some time, Bhagavan turned to Srinivasa Iyer and said, “Why do you worry? There’s a Supreme Power which carries the whole burden. Our job is to do our work and submit to it.”

Subrahmanian took this advice from Bhagavan as a dictum for life. Having completed a Bachelor of Arts (Hons.) from Madras Christian College, he joined the college in 1950 as lecturer in the Department of English. In the early months of the same year, he came to the Ashram regularly as he and other devotees worried about Bhagavan’s health. Bhagavan did not seem a bit concerned about his condition but remained ever the same—serene and blissful—as if the cancer belonged to somebody else. But Subrahmanian found himself weeping in Bhagavan’s presence, distraught over the Master’s gradual physical decline. The last time he saw Bhagavan was on 7th April, just one week before the Mahanirvana. When seven days later at Kodaikanal he heard the news of Bhagavan’s departure, he did not break down; instead he was surprised to discover an unexpected peace that persisted even as he reconciled himself to the reality that he would never see Bhagavan in the physical body again.

Subrahmanian began writing for newspapers and already in his early twenties became the Kodaikanal correspondent to *The Indian Express*. In 1959, he

travelled to the U.K. on a British Council Scholarship to do a course at the University of London. During the early days of the stay, he found himself lonely, so far from home as he was. One day when acutely feeling the pang of loneliness, he walked into the University library and went to the new book release section. The first title he picked up was *The Saint and Other Stories* by Somerset Maugham. Upon opening the book, he found himself face-to-face with the smiling countenance of Sri Bhagavan. Thrilled at seeing the picture, he felt that Bhagavan was communicating with him directly, telling him that he would always be with him and that there was no longer any need to feel lonely.

In 1965, Subrahmanian traveled to the US on a Fulbright scholarship, taking his family with him. At Indiana University he worked on a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature while simultaneously seeking a Masters in Linguistics. He returned to India in 1969 and rejoined the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages in Hyderabad, first as lecturer and then as a tenured professor. In 1973, he set up the Department of Correspondence Courses and was appointed its head. Shortly after this, a regional centre of CIEFL was started in Shillong and Dr. Subrahmanian was transferred there to serve as its Director for the following three years.

As professor, Dr. Subrahmanian was called on to give lectures on a daily basis. But never once did he give a talk on Bhagavan. His father Krishnaswami Iyer had sometimes given talks on Bhagavan, but K. Subrahmanian felt ‘too small’ to speak on the master or his teachings. In 1979, however, Sri Ramanasramam management called on him to organise and celebrate Bhagavan’s Centenary



K. Subrahmanian’s uncle, V.S. Srinivasa Iyer

His father, Krishnaswami Iyer





Jayanthi in Hyderabad. When he held a meeting for local devotees to discuss how best to organize the centenary, it was suggested that Dr. Subrahmanian spearhead the formation of a Ramana Kendra in Hyderabad. From that day onward, weekly meetings commenced, and Dr. Subrahmanian found himself called on to speak about Bhagavan on a regular basis. Once the Kendram had taken root, Dr. Subrahmanian's desire to talk and write on other subjects disappeared altogether and between 1979 and 1998, all his talks revolved on one single subject—Sri Bhagavan and his teachings.

The glue and inspiration for the Kendram, Dr. K.S. was there every Sunday and often had additional satsangs at his house. Seeing Bhagavan as the incarnation of Dakshinamurthi, Dr. K.S. spoke in glowing terms of the penetrating power of Bhagavan's silence. His children affectionately teased their good-humoured father, telling him that he was the only person they knew who could give two-hour talks on silence.

Dr. K.S.'s sense of humor was renowned, but the sincerity of his devotion was even more remarkable. When he would go before an assembly to speak on Bhagavan, he was sometimes so choked with emotion that he would have to leave the podium without a further word. Kendram members came to depend on his presence at the meetings. On one occasion, when K.S. was unable to make it to the meeting, a senior devotee announced to the gathering, "Today's Satsang is like Ayodhya without Rama."

Dr. K.S. never took any title and sought as much as possible to remain out of the public view. He insisted that there be no hierarchy in the Kendram organisation and urged that leadership roles be rotated on a regular basis.

As years went by, Dr. K.S.'s writing efforts intensified. He worked as a columnist for *The Hindu*, taking charge of the weekly columns, *Between You and Me* and *Know Your English*. The latter was a forum for English language questions and was quite popular. *Between You and Me* served as a venue for citizen complaints. Because of the lofty reputation that Subrahmanian earned for the column, any complaint against public institutions published in *Between You and Me* was taken seriously by relevant authorities and was almost always dealt with to the plaintiff's satisfaction. *Selections from Know Your*

English was later published by Oxford University Press in two volumes.

Dr. Subrahmanian rendered the *Mahabharatha* into simple English for children and in 1977 joined the editorial board of the *Mountain Path*. His contributions to the journal were eventually compiled and brought out in book form under the title, *The Uniqueness of Sri Bhagavan*. He translated Kunjswami's *Reminiscences of Sri Bhagavan* into English and founded and edited *Sri Ramana Jyoti*, the bilingual monthly (in English and Telugu) exclusively devoted to Sri Bhagavan. Perhaps his most cherished writings, though, were his personal letters and post-cards to devotees in their times of trouble. These communications invariably carried apposite quotations from Bhagavan and prasad from Ramanasramam. Dr. K.S. always kept with him his address book containing devotees' contact information including those who lived out-of-state. His communiques were seen by devotees like messages from Bhagavan himself and, mysteriously, were always somehow germane to the problems facing the recipient. And when he was not writing to the sick and the infirm, he would go and visit them in person and encouraged other Kendram members to do the same.

On 5 January, 1998, Dr. Subrahmanian became sick himself having suffered a stroke. Admitted to the local hospital, doctors were not optimistic and within two days, he slipped into a diabetic coma. Family members and Kendram supporters kept vigil day and night. One day when the patient's sacred thread got entangled with the medical adhesive, his sister tried to remove the tape and failing to do so, used a pair of scissors to cut the thread. At that moment, Mrs. K.S.



Dr. K. Subrahmanian with Sri Ramanasramam President T.N. Venkataraman and the Hyderabad Ramana Kendra in the Samadhi Hall

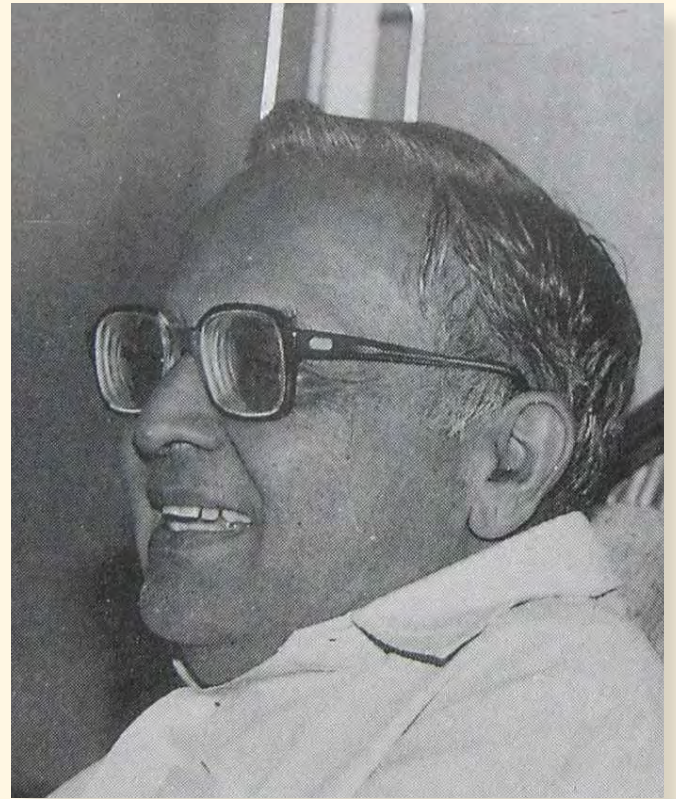




felt that her husband had taken sanyasa and would no longer be bound to her on earth. When kumkum and vibhuti were applied to his forehead, a bilva leaf fell from the packet and landed on his chest. Subhashini Subrahmanian saw this as a sign that her husband's end was near. A few days later on the 11th January, 1998, Dr. Subrahmanian was absorbed in Arunachala Ramana; family members and Kendram friends recalled his oft-repeated reflection about Bhagavan:

Everything happens according to Bhagavan's will. All that we can do is carry out what we have to do to the best of our abilities and accept whatever happens as Bhagavan's will. This attitude gives one tremendous detachment together with the strength to do one's duty. When one has such an attitude, one learns to accept one's weaknesses and strengths. No one can be good, except through Bhagavan's will. Never bargain with God. He knows better than [we] what is good for [us].

Freely adapted from: Dr. K. Subrahmanian (1928-1998), *A Tribute*. Hyderabad Ramana Kendram, 1999; *Face to Face with Bhagavan*, 2009, pp. 65-68; *Moments Remembered*, 1989, pp. 79-81; *Mountain Path*, Advent 2004, pp. 79-92; and *The Maharshi*, Nov/Dec 1999, Vol. 9 No.6. pp.1-2.



Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Muruganar Samadhi Day Celebrations, 13-15 Sept.



The three-day function this year included chanting of Muruganar's Ramana Sannidhi Murai and Manickavachagar's Tiruvachakam in the New Hall. Concerts in the New Library Auditorium featured Sadgurunatha Oduvar accompanied by Chennai Navin Yuvraj on violin and Chennai Upendra on the Mridangam. Muruganar attained Samadhi on new moon day in the Tamil month of Avani.

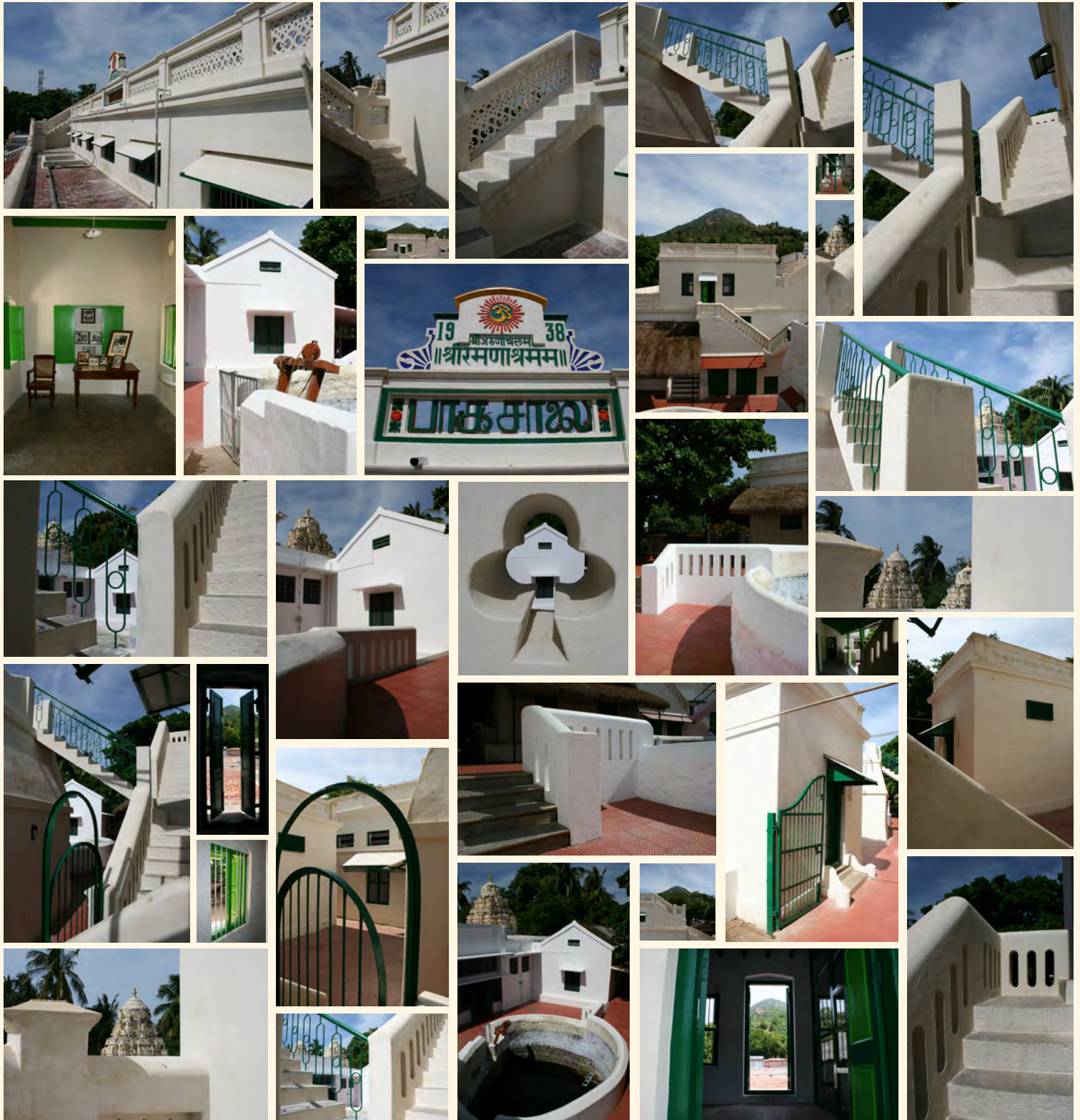
Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Morvi Guesthouse Preliminary Inauguration

The Morvi Guesthouse 'model room' was inaugurated on the 7th September with special puja attended by Ashram President, V.S. Ramanan, and his son, Anand Ramanan, visiting this week from the US. Construction work continues on the large compound and when completed, promises 60 new rooms for devotees and guests. The old library building will be converted into rooms for guests with a large dormitory on the top floor. Work crews are labouring at a vigorous pace in hopes of keeping to the timetable for an opening day ceremony in early November.





Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Ashram Renovations



The Ashram has recently gotten a face-lift. Central Ashram buildings such as the Old Dispensary and the Dining Hall have been renovated and cosmetic improvements have been made to the Old Hall, the Samadhi Hall, the Nirvana Room, the Ashram Well, Bhagavan's bathroom and the Samadhis of Muruganar, Kunjuswami, Viswanathaswami, etc. Solar panels were installed above the Samadhi Hall to bring sun-powered lighting to the hall. A surveillance system was also installed to enhance security efforts. Special care was taken in all cases to maintain and preserve the original architectural and aesthetic character of the renovated buildings.





From the *Periapuranam*: Athipattha Nayanar

On the eastern seashore, in the famed city of Nagapattinam, lived a fisherman named Athipattha. One day watching a priest offering consecrated rice to the fish in the Kamalalaya Sripuram tank, Athipattha leapt forward and caught hold of one of them. The Brahmin shouted at him and Athipattha instantly released it. The priest commended the fisherman: "Since you obeyed my word, you shall receive Tyagesvara's grace" and so saying, gave Athipattha vibhuti. Athipattha returned home to find himself changed: from that day forward, he resolved that each day he would return to the sea the first or best fish in his net as an offering to the Lord.

Over time he proved unyielding in this determination. Even on days when he caught little, he offered the first fish to the Lord by safely returning it to the sea. On some days Athipattha caught only one fish the entire day but he always kept his oath. Finally the Lord tested him with a very long period of catching only one fish per day, which he thus surrendered but soon his family was on the verge of starvation. The Lord then devised the supreme test. He arranged an unusual catch, so large that Athipattha and his fellow fishermen had difficulty bringing it ashore. But when the nets were unfurled, it was discovered that the largest was a fish of a bright glittering golden hue. Fellow fishermen protested bitterly when Athipattha set about to release the golden fish. Finally it was agreed that he could do so if the remainder of the windfall catch were given to them. Athipattha agreed and joyfully saluted the Lord as he safely returned the golden fish to the water. But as the fish disappeared into the depths, to the wonderment of all, the Lord appeared before them and turning to Athipattha, granted him the unending wealth of liberation. (*Athipattha's Aradhana Day this year was the 13th September.*)



Courtesy of Ramalingar Pani Mandram

Wordwise: *Pratyaksha* प्रत्यक्ष

Pratyaksha (prati: 'against', 'opposite' + akshi: 'eye'): that which is evident, present before the eyes, visible, perceptible, clear, distinct, direct, immediate; *pratyaksha anubhava*: direct experience.

Bhagavan says that "the seer alone is *pratyaksha*. All other perceptions are only secondary knowledge." Sense data and all phenomena are mediated through the senses and thus unreliable. One cannot know for sure of the existence of the world or anything external. But the existence of that which sees is certain. So seeing is not seeing just with the physical eyes but inner seeing, Consciousness, which gives light to the world and is its source. Bhagavan adds, "Consciousness alone does not vary. It is the Self. There is no moment when the Self as Consciousness does not exist; nor can the seer remain apart from Consciousness. So, *pratyaksha* does not mean seeing, but BE-ing. 'To BE' is to realise." (*Talks §469,450*)

Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Abundance in the Sri Ramanasramam Farm



A steady year-round supply of fresh produce—vegetables, fruits, drumsticks, nellikai, yams and groundnuts—from the Ashram farm is a great used in the kitchen. For variety, there are four exotic trees as well—olive trees from Italy, sweet tamarind from Thailand and the unique Beggar's Bowl tree (*crecidentia cuteje*)—all cultivated organically without recourse to chemical pesticides.

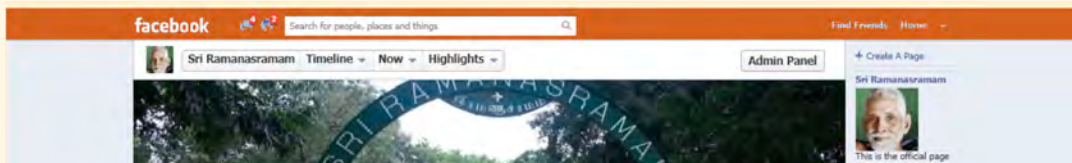




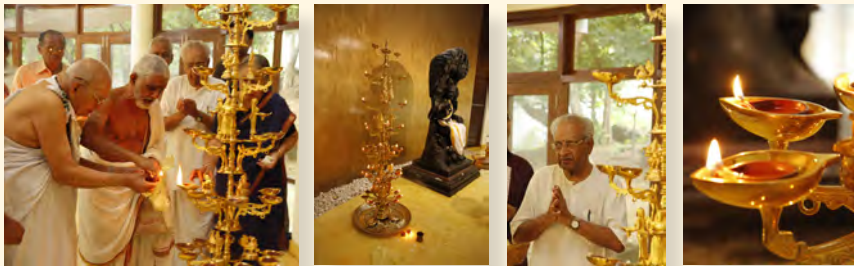
Ramanasramam in the Internet World: E-books



iPAD owners can download a free app known as "Sri Ramana Maharshi" which will enable them to buy or download free Bhagavan books. For those using Kindle we offer digital books in Mobi format via www.amazon.com. Encouraged by high demand for digital books from many continents, the Ashram is working on making more such titles available.



Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Lamp Lighting, September 8th



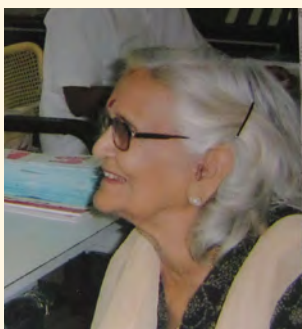
Swami Vishwananda gifted a seven-foot brass lamp to adorn the Dakshinamurthy statue in the library auditorium. Fashioned after a lamp in Padmanabha Temple, Tiruvananthapuram (Kerala), the lamp's intricate design includes icons of Lord Ganesh, Hamsa and attendants of the Divine Mother. The multi-tiered stand contains 49 lamps in all.

Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Archival Annex Inauguration, 28 September

An annex to the Ashram Archives building was recently constructed above the Mountain Path office and will serve as a backup storage site for archival material, including digital copies of photograph negatives and old manuscripts, in the unlikely event of a fire in the main archives building. The small facility was inaugurated on the morning of the 28th of September with puja and distribution of prasada.



Obituary: Kamala Sharma



Kamala Sharma was forever absorbed into Arunachala on 21st June. Born in 1921 to a rural "Zaminder" family in the mountains of Himachal and having lost her parents in her teens, Kamala was set on the spiritual quest from a young age. After marrying a young officer in the Royal Indian Air Force (who would later become Air Marshal), Bhagavan appeared to her in a dream. Having no idea who he was, the dream-image nevertheless stayed with her. In 1950, Aravind Bose (of Bose compound) prevailed on her to take him to Tiruvannamalai. Once there, she discovered who it was that had come in her dream. Since then, she and her husband have been annual visitors and last year they celebrated their 69th wedding anniversary in the Ashram. Always intent on carrying a Sri Ramanasramam shoulder bag, it was decided that her mortal remains be consigned to the Holy Ganges in the cloth bag that bore her guru's name.

