

Saranagati



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IN THIS
ISSUE

Dear Devotees,

This issue of *Saranagati* carries the final chapter of the life story of Prof. K. Swaminathan. *In Profile* this month features Jagadish Swami who came as a youngster to Ramanasramam, met Bhagavan and later returned to take sannyasa and live in the various sites associated with Bhagavan.

Sri Ramanasramam Heritage Sites recounts the history of Bhagavan's Samadhi Shrine and *Wordwise* this month looks at Bhagavan's discussion of *vijnana*.

Introducing the Kendras highlights the Muruganar Mandiram of Ramanathapuram. *Events at Sri Ramanasramam* features the Aradhana celebrations on 14th April, observed in accordance with the Gregorian calendar. For further news and events, go to <http://www.sriramanamaharshi.org> or write to us at saranagathi@sriramanamaharshi.org

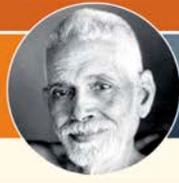
In Sri Bhagavan,
The Editorial Team

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Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi: Vijnanamaya Kosa

M.: As a rule *vijnanamaya kosa* prevails on waking. In deep sleep all thoughts disappear and the state of obscuration is one of bliss; there the prevailing body is the *Anandamaya*. These are sheaths and not the core, which is interior to all these. It lies beyond waking, dream and deep sleep. That is the Reality and consists of true bliss (*nijananda*). The common man is aware of himself only when modifications arise in the intellect (*vijnanamaya kosa*); these modifications are transient; they arise and set. Hence *vijnanamaya* (intellect) is called a kosa or sheath. When pure awareness is left over, it is itself Chit (Self) or the Supreme. —Talks §619, §624





Coming to Bhagavan: The Life of Prof. K. Swaminathan (part five)

When Morarji Desai was sworn in as Prime Minister, the political crisis of the Emergency period was once and for all resolved. Now with the CWMG project back on track, KS made up his mind to hand over the editorship to someone younger, finding that he was less energetic now that he was over the age of 80. When he approached his friend the new Prime Minister with his decision, the latter said, “What? You can’t run away from responsibility; I have agreed to shoulder the prime-ministership and run the government at this age; and remember, you’re one year younger than me!”¹

¹ KS: *A Tribute*, p. 124.

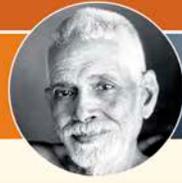
Final Years of CWMG

KS stayed on and carried out the editing work with great diligence. When the 89th and 90th volumes of the *Collected Works* were launched in 1980, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi who had been instrumental in the decision to release KS from his duties a few years earlier, stated publicly: “A major project has been completed. Only those who know how very difficult it is to edit historical documents will appreciate the magnitude of this work.... Above all, our thanks are due to Prof. Swaminathan who has worked with the dedication expected of a follower of Ramana Maharshi and Mahatma Gandhi.”²

More volumes would follow until, in 1985, after having been away for more than twenty-five years, KS returned to his native Tamil Nadu, his work having been completed. Back at home in Madras, KS took to a quieter life and used the opportunity to study the works of Bhagavan. But he found that

² KS: *A Tribute*, p. 24.





he could not resist passing his days doing the work he so loved, namely, translating, writing and editing. He set about translating the works of Muruganar, editing and writing articles for *The Mountain Path* and proofing Ashram books. He began submitting regular editorials to *The Indian Express*.

Though now in retirement, he continued to work on subsequent volumes to the CWMG series which consisted of material that had come to light only after the original 90 volumes were published.

By the time the project was completed, KS had become the 'most respected editor of the land' and accolades came from near and far.³ In March 1987, R. Venkataraman, one of KS's former students who was Gandhigram Rural University's Chancellor and by then had become the Vice-President of India⁴, conferred on him an honorary degree of Doctor of Philosophy. In 1989, the professor received an award from the Publishers and Booksellers' Association. Accepting the honour, KS summed up his literary contributions:

3 It has been pointed out by more than one of his biographers that in none of the original volumes did KS include his name or take any credit for his work, a testament to his profound humility. His name only appears in the final volume of the series, which consisted of indices and bibliographical notes, released only some months after his death in 1994.

4 Just four months later, RK became President of India.



R. Venkataraman, devotee of Bhagavan and later, eighth President of India

"I am no original or creative writer. I am content to popularise and propagate and do not aspire to 'create'. I have walked with humble pride in the shadow of giants.... They also serve who only spread the light."⁵

Writing on Bhagavan

KS continued to 'spread the light' and devoted himself to writing about Bhagavan. KS's pen had been tempered and seasoned by a long life of service, by long years of training in poetry, by Gandhian activism and not least of all by his devotion to Bhagavan Sri Ramana, which lent his literary efforts force and

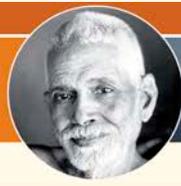
5 *KS: A Tribute*, p. 29.

Events at Sri Ramanasramam: 14th April, 2013



The first day of the Tamil New Year was celebrated with a special Mahanyasa puja in the morning and the reading of the panchangam in the afternoon. Sri Bhagavan's Mahanirvana was observed (according to the Gregorian calendar) in the evening when devotees gathered to sing *Arunachala Aksharamanamalai* at 8pm, timed to conclude at the moment of Bhagavan's Mahanirvana at 8.47. Afterward all arose and filed past the Nirvana room to pay their respects to Sri Bhagavan.





beauty. He found himself humbled by the memory of Bhagavan to whose Tamil Nadu he had at long last returned. KS's vision matured and he seemed to understand what Bhagavan had been saying those many years earlier. In a poetic moment, he writes:

“Not only when the moon shines brightly and the nightingales divinely sing, not only in the hushed presence of a mighty Seer, but all the time and everywhere, we should know and feel that the ‘unplumbed, salty, estranging sea’ of samsara is a mere surface phenomena and that we mortal millions are not so many separate, floating islands, but ‘parts of a single continent’, all rooted in the solid and life-sustaining Ground of Being.”⁶

⁶ *The Indian Express*, Sat Dec 29, 1990.

As a way of making sense of his generation and Bhagavan's place in it, KS sought to situate Bhagavan's life and teaching in the context of (world) history and in reference to the great Upanishadic legacy, ancient India's gift to humanity, of which Bhagavan's was modernity's brightest shining light:

“The essence of the Indic revelation, the open secret taught in whispers by our sages, is that moksha is not something to be attained at some distant time and place, but a sort of sunlight and starlight, a present awareness of oneness, wholeness and egoless freedom, which is our sahaja nature and is only waiting to be luminously enjoyed in waking life, even as egoless oneness is welcomed and enjoyed in the darkness of deep sleep... In the Maharshi, then, we have an

Reality in Forty Verses

24. The body, which is matter, says not 'I'. Eternal awareness neither arises (nor disappears). Between the two, bound by the body, arises the thought of 'I'. This is the knot of matter and awareness. This is bondage. This is jiva, the subtle body or ego. This is samsara. This is the mind.

— Sri Bhagavan

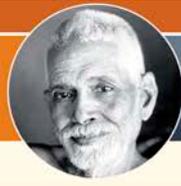
Wordwise: *Vijnana*

विज्ञान

Vijnana: *vi* 'apart' + *jna* 'to know'; knowledge, wisdom; discrimination, intelligence, understanding, cognition; intellect, consciousness; stream of consciousness. It can also mean: 'worldly knowledge' or knowledge derived from worldly experience as the prefix *vi* can be used to negate or to intensify. Thus, *vi+jnana* can mean 'worldly knowledge' or 'special or great knowledge', i.e. 'the highest knowledge' or 'knowledge of Brahman'.

Bhagavan says, “The word *vijnana* (clear knowledge) is used both to denote the Realisation of the Self and knowing objects. The Self is wisdom. It functions in two ways. When associated with the ego, knowledge is objective (*vijnana*). When divested of the ego, it is also called *vijnana*. The word raises a mental concept. Therefore we say that the Self-Realised Sage knows by his mind, but his mind is pure. Again we say that the vibrating mind is impure and the placid mind is pure. The pure mind is itself Brahman; therefore it follows that Brahman is not other than the mind of the sage. (*Talks* §204)





actual, historical, recent, much exposed and highly photogenic Sage, whose writings and recorded sayings provide, in the words of Wei Wu Wei, the most precious 'cross-reference and confirmation' of the utterances of the old Vedantic and Buddhist Masters."⁷

KS had no doubts about the impact Bhagavan would have and found in him the consummation of every human aspiration whether social, historical or personal.

⁷ *Ibid.*

Final Years

In his latter years, KS occupied himself with the second edition of Vinoba's *Talks on the Gita*, which he had translated in the 1950s. He continued to host regular meetings of the Ramana Bhakta Sabha.

When he had reached his mid-nineties, he said he was paying a 'stiff price for longevity'⁸ in that he had outlived most of his friends and had to suffer the pain of seeing so many of his contemporaries depart this world.

KS enjoyed good health and a lucid and productive life right up until the end. At the age of 97, with no struggle whatever, "after having had a sip of coconut water", KS breathed his last.⁹ Family and friends gathered round and chanted 'Arunachala Siva, Arunachala Siva' as this servant of Bhagavan, this servant of the nation, merged with Ramana Arunachala at 12 noon on the 19th May, 1994. —

⁸ *KS: A Tribute*, p. 29.

⁹ *KS: A Tribute*, p. 30.

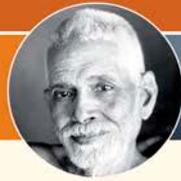
* Freely adapted from the following sources: *Prof. K. Swaminathan (1896-1994): Tributes to Commemorate His Birth Centenary*; *KS Remembered: Prof. K. Swaminathan (1896-1994)*; *The Self Supreme*; *Five Hymns to Arunachala*, Sri Ramanasramam; *Ramana Maharshi*, the National Book Trust, New Delhi; *Ramana Postal Stamp release address, 14-4-71*; article in *The Indian Express*, 12-29-90; various articles in *The Mountain Path*; *The Resplendent Sun*, A.R. Natarajan, (RMCL); articles by La. Su. Rengarajan: 'Selling Diamonds', *Aside*, 15-6-94, and seminar speech at P.S. High School, 22-8-04; and recorded interviews with Prof. K. Swaminathan and family.

Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Major Chadwick Samadhi Day, 17th April

On 1, November 1935 Bhagavan welcomed Chadwick with a smile and talked to him till it was time for lunch. Speaking of him, Bhagavan once said: "Chadwick was with us before, he was one of us. He had some desire to be born in the West and that he has now fulfilled."

On 17th April 2013, devotees assembled near his Samadhi, decorated with colourful garlands, and chanted *Aksharamanamaalai*, concluding with arati.





Bhagavan's Samadhi Mantapam, ca. 1967

Sri Ramanasramam Heritage Sites: The Samadhi Shrine (1950-70)

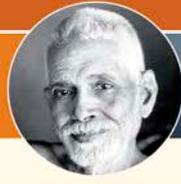
The placement of Bhagavan's Samadhi was established in a dream K. K. Nambiar had at the time of Bhagavan's Mahanirvana. Chinnaswami at first thought that the Samadhi might be situated behind the black granite couch in the New Hall so that the lingas at the Samadhis of Sri Bhagavan and Bhagavan's mother could be viewed simultaneously at right angles from the vantage point of the New Hall. According to tradition, Bhagavan's body would have to sit facing eastward but devotees were clear that Bhagavan should face the Mountain. Vaidyanatha Stapathi, the architect of the Matrubhuteswara Temple, and K.K. Nambiar took measurements to determine a location exactly mid-way between the Old Hall and the newly completed temple. After digging a burial pit (10½ft x 10½ft x 7ft deep with a 4½ x 4½ ft inner chamber) and performing the appropriate rites, Bhagavan's body was taken in procession around the Mother's Shrine and, amidst a great outpouring of emotion, lowered into the pit facing Arunachala in the full Lotus posture. The pit was then filled-in with camphor, vibhuti, salt and bilva leaves, and finally sealed. In the years that followed, there was a sense of urgency to build a mantapam over the Samadhi, both for daily Vedic worship as well as for devotees' meditation.

The construction of the shrine, mantapam and eventually the front hall, took place in successive stages with foundation stones laid by Sri Anandamayi Ma in 1952. First a provisional bamboo structure with a palm-leaf roof was erected over the samadhi. Then in July 1964 the central structure of the shrine with its polished black granite pillars was in place. In August 1966 the Gopuram above the Samadhi and a second granite exterior around the Samadhi were constructed and inaugurated with kumbhabhishekam taking place in June, 1967. In 1969, a final effort was made, namely, to construct a large hall that would enclose the entire space. Work proceeded right up to 1970 when, on the 3rd May, coinciding with the 20th Anniversary of Bhagavan's Brahma Nirvana, the Samadhi Hall was inaugurated.



Bhagavan's Samadhi Shrine in successive stages





From the *Periapuranam*: Dhandi Adigal Naayanaar

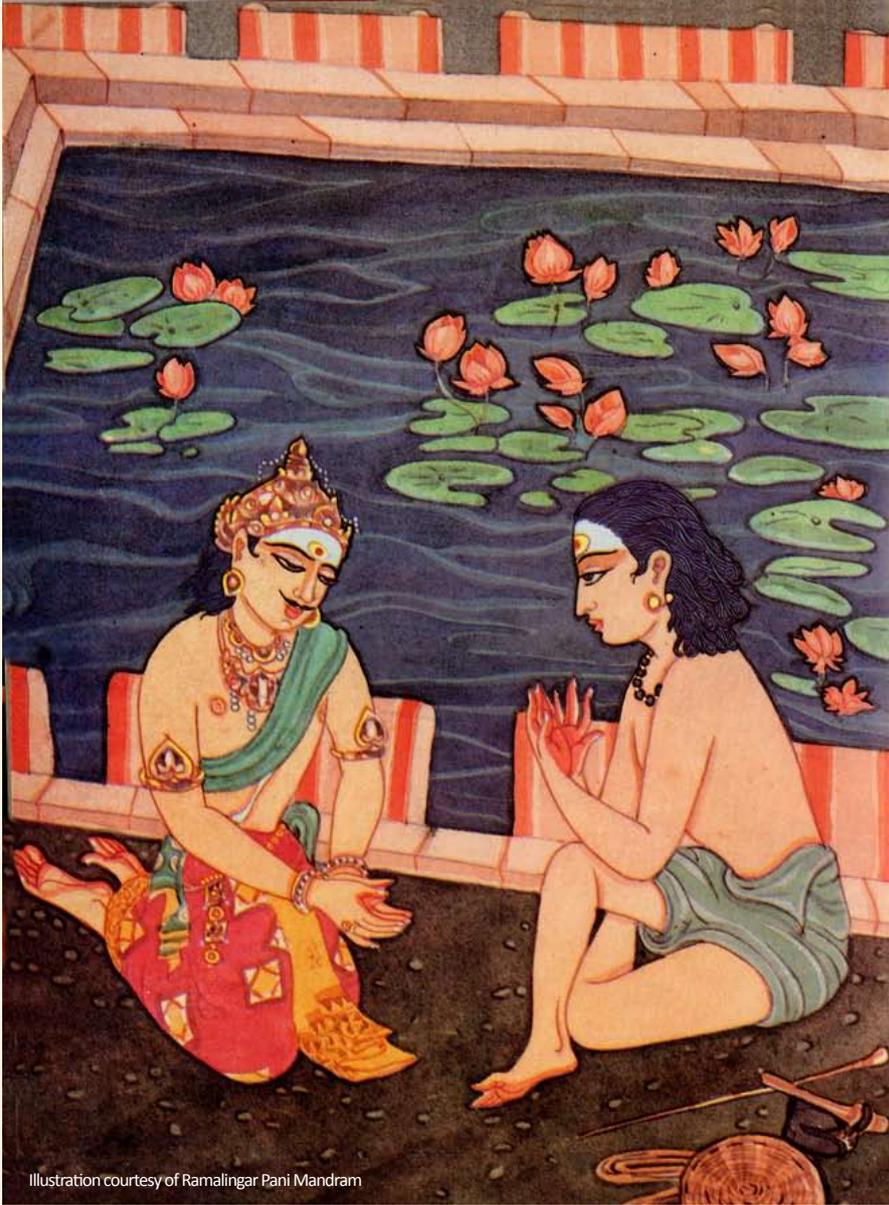


Illustration courtesy of Ramalingar Pani Mandram

Dhandi Adigal of Thiruvaaroor, blind from birth, lived in Kamalalayam and was a devotee of Siva. One day sorrowing over his blindness, Dhandi was consoled by a pundit: "Eyes enable us to see forms and aid us in worldly affairs. But great munis close their eyes to experience the ancient light of Brahman. For you, there is no need to close the eyes". The pundit continued: "Listen, there is a sacred tank by the Tyageswara shrine. If you can excavate the tank with the Panchakshari on your lips, you shall cross the ocean of repeated births." Saying this, the pundit initiated Dhandi in the Panchakshari mantra.

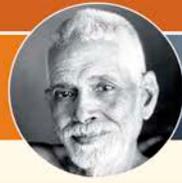
Using a suspended rope as a guide, the blind man moved about the tank excavating the mud while faithfully chanting his mantra. He toiled for three long years until, one day, a group of agitators known for their atheism passed by and taunted him saying, "O poor one! Why should you toil like this for no reason?" Dhandi replied, "Siva is pleased by selfless service. There is nothing impossible for the Lord." The unbelievers mocked him, "O yes! And he can restore your sight, can't he?" Pained at this abuse of the Lord, Dhandi retorted: "If it pleases the Lord that I see you become blind, He will certainly fulfil it." In retaliation, the heathen broke the rope and threw the blind man's tools into the water. Unable to find them, Dhandi came before the Lord that night, "O Lord does it befit You to behold such slander made against You and Your devotees?"

Moved by his devotee's tears, the compassionate Lord appeared to the local king in a dream: "My

devotee Dhandi has been mistreated by the atheists. Summon them tomorrow and punish them." The king woke in wonderment. At dawn, he rushed to the temple, found the blind man and fell at his feet. He then issued orders that the troublemakers be summoned. When the skeptics appeared at the king's court the next day, the judges interrogated them. But the group denied all charges. The king said, "If what you say is true, let your testimony be repeated in the presence of the Lord. Each one of you shall take a dip in the sacred tank of Tyageswara temple, then you shall speak before the Lord, pledging your eyesight as a surety on your words. If your words be true then your eyesight shall be preserved but if not, you will lose it". The skeptics doubtful of any Divinity whatsoever had no fear of Tyageswara which they took to be a mere piece of stone. So they willingly accepted the challenge and plunged into the tank. When they came and stood facing the Lord, they saw that Dhandi's eyesight had been restored. But even then they took no pains to amend their testimony and, placing their hands on their eyes, they swore against the charges of the king. When they removed their hands from their eyes, they found that they could see no more. The scoffers cried in horror as they were driven from the temple. The king worshipped Dhandi whose chants of Panchakshari resounded in all quarters.

Dhandi spent the remainder of his days in loving service to the Lord and, as predicted, attained complete union with Him. (*Dhandi Adigal Naayanaar's Aradhana Day this year was observed on the 7th April.*)





In Profile: Jagadish Swami



The small shrine behind Chadwick's cottage is the samadhi of Jagadish Swami who lived in the Ashram up till his death in 1986. In the 1940s at the age of 16, Jagadish came to Sri Bhagavan from Bombay along with his family. His father, Ishwarbhai Damania, helped in the acquisition of Bhagavan's birth house in Tiruchuzhi. When the Mother's Shrine was completed, it was Ishwarbhai Damania who supplied the materials needed for its electrification and, being himself an electrical engineer, he personally supervised the work. Three years after Bhagavan's Mahanirvana, Jagadish Swami went on pilgrimage and once at Arunachala, felt the strong urge to renounce everything and take up life as a sadhu. When his parents objected, Swami Ramdas of Khanagad, a close family friend, intervened and permission was forthcoming. Jagadish Swami shaved his head and began to wear a koupina. He then began living variously in the places where Bhagavan stayed: Arunachala temple, Patala lingam, Gurumurtam, Pavalakkunru, Virupaksha Cave, Skandashram, etc. When he came to the Ashram, he learnt Tamil and studied all the original works of Bhagavan in Tamil. He later took up a vow of mauna.



Jagadish Swami's Samadhi Day was marked by the placing of a garland at his Samadhi on the 2nd April.

Introducing the Kendras: Muruganar Mandiram, Ramanathapuram



In April 2004 a shrine dedicated to Bhagavan was built on the site of Muruganar's family home near Rameswaram in his native Ramanathapuram. A library of Muruganar's writings and letters was established in the upper level portion of the installation. In April of this, the centre's ninth year, local devotees gathered for the chanting of Muruganar's *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai* on the 17-18th, followed by recitation of Manikkavasakar's *Tiruvachakam* on the 19th.

Announcement: The New Ashram Website

We moved the ashram website www.sriramanamaharshi.org to a new host with a Virtual Private Server. The website now offers contents in French. We hope to add German, Hebrew, Spanish, Polish and other languages soon. We thank devotees for their enthusiastic response to our need for translators.

