

Saranagati



SARANAGATI
SRI RAMANASRAMAM

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Dev Gogoi by permission



Saranagati



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IN THIS
ISSUE

Dear Devotees,

November brought rains with cyclones and depressions developing in the Bay of Bengal causing a continuous downpour for two weeks. Chennai recorded more rainfall than any time since 1918 and flooding occurred in many areas. The nearby Sathanur Dam reached Full Reservoir Level and flood warnings were issued to people in the area. Tiruvannamalai's Sanmudram lake has water in it for the first time in years and many of the tirthams along the pradakshina path are filled to capacity. Apart from losses due to flooding, the precipitation comes as a great blessing after years of failed monsoons.

Among other things, this extended end-of-the-year issue of *Saranagati* highlights some of the many exciting events—even if in moist conditions—taking place at the Ashram and in Tiruvannamalai in recent weeks.

For videos, photos and further news of events, go to <http://www.sriramanamaharshi.org> or write to us at saranagathi@sriramanamaharshi.org. Also see our YouTube channel at: <https://www.youtube.com/c/sriramanasramam>.

In Sri Bhagavan,
The Editorial Team

<i>In the Kitchen with Bhagavan, pt. XI: Matrübhuteswara</i>	2
<i>Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi (§502): Moksha</i>	3
<i>Ashram Gardens: Honey Harvesting</i>	4
<i>Favourite Stories of Bhagavan: Matrübhuteswara</i>	5
<i>Wordwise: Moksha</i>	5
<i>Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Karthigai Deepam</i>	6
<i>Madhavi Ammal: Unpublished Reminiscences (pt. IV)</i>	7
<i>Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Hill Path Repairs</i>	8
<i>Events in Tiruvannamalai: Pavala Kunru Renovation</i>	9
<i>Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Kathakkali</i>	10
<i>Obituary: Admiral Tahiliani</i>	10
<i>In Memorium</i>	11

Calendar of Upcoming Events

24th December (Thurs) Full Moon Day
27th December (Sun) Bhagavan's 136th Jayanti
28th December (Mon) Swami Ramananda Day
31st December (Thurs) Lucy Ma Day
12th January (Tues) Ramaswami Pillai Day
14th January (Thurs) Sivaprakasam Pillai Day

15th January (Fri) Makara Sankranti
16th January (Sat) Mattu Pongal
17th January (Sun) Kaanum Ponga
23rd January (Sat) Punarvasu
23rd January (Sat) Full Moon
23rd January (Sat) Swami Niranjanananda Day





Bhagavan beneath a branch of the Ashram illupai tree in this photo from ca. 1925

In the Kitchen with Bhagavan Part XI: Matrubhuteswara and the Birth of Sri Ramanasramam

Mother's Moksha

Establishing a Samadhi for Mother was no casual undertaking. The filial piety of two devoted sons was augmented by the devotion of devotees who had been present to witness the miraculous changes in Mother Alagammal during the final hours of her life. Right before their eyes, Mother had attained the highest goal in religious life and they now saw it as an honour and duty to faithfully perform the rites befitting a jnani. Commenting on the final day when he had attended on her with such care, Bhagavan later said, "Innate tendencies, vasanas or subtle memories of past experiences leading to future possibilities, became active. Scene after scene rolled before her in the subtle consciousness as the outer sense had already gone; the soul was passing through a series of experiences that might possibly have required many more births but for the quickening process worked out by the special touch given on the occasion. The soul was at last disrobed of the subtle sheaths before it reached the final destination, the supreme peace, nirvana from which there is no return to ignorance."¹

¹ *Life Sketch*, p. 23.

So daily pujas for the one who had attained moksha began on the day of interment². For the 10th day puja, huge numbers appeared at Mother's Samadhi. Residents at Skandasramam came down the previous night and stayed at the Ganesh Temple alongside Palakothu. Meenakshi Ammal and Sri Bhagavan's sister, Alamelu Ammal prepared dosas in the Tiruchuli style. Devotees from Kumbakonam came with a variety of prasada. A big pandal was put up near Ganesh Temple and food was prepared under the supervision of Chatram Narayanaswami Iyer where some one thousand guests took prasada.³

Matrubhuteswara Tirtham

On this day it was decided that special pujas should continue for a full mandala or 48 days. So Chinnaswami and Ramanathan, son of Yoganathan, took *naivedya* to the samadhi each morning and returned to Skandasramam at noon after performing puja at the samadhi. Water required for daily abhishekam was collected from the tank at Palakothu. But during the construction of the Samadhi, when earth had been dug up and scooped out from a place just north of the burial site to provide for the raising of a platform around the Samadhi, a spring was discovered. It happened like this. The excavation left a small cavity in the ground, which, when a heavy rain came some days later, was filled with rainwater. After the rain, the usual hot dry summer weather returned but the water in the crevice did not dry up but remained at a constant level. When this was noticed by Chinnaswami and Ramanathan's son, they drained the water from the hole but found that the former water level was soon restored. They took a sample of the water up to Skandashramam to show Bhagavan. Bhagavan came down the hill, inspected the site, and asked them to dig a pit three feet wide and three feet deep. Once done, water began trickling in and the site revealed itself to be a spring. And though

² From the first day, 19th May 1922, until the present day nearly one hundred years later, not a single day has passed without puja being performed in Mother Alagammal's honour and memory.

³ *Living with the Master*, Kunjuswami, pp. 71-73.





twelve feet higher than the nearby Pali tirtham, it unceasingly bestowed sweet, crystalline water.⁴

Christened by some as 'Alagamma Tirtha' and others as 'Ramana Tirtha', the spring's discovery was commemorated by Ganapati Muni in a Sanskrit verse: "Here is the new Tirtha, remover of all blemishes, at the Samadhi of Mother Saundaryamba, like the stream of pollen from the twin lotus hands of Ramana Maharshi."

First Kitchen

After only a week of mandala pujas, Dandapani Swami and Chinna Swami decided to set up residence at Mother's Shrine to avoid the incessant climbs up to Skandasramam. Thus a palm leaf hut was constructed over the Samadhi and another nearby it to be used as a kitchen. Those at the Samadhi were supplied with food from Skandasramam. But as resources were short, Chinna Swami often had to go out on begging rounds to gain materials for the pujas and for meals for those living at the Samadhi. Even keeping the lamp near Mother's Samadhi was a problem and mostly oil had to be taken from Skandasramam. But soon it proved that there was not enough oil for both sites. One evening Chinna Swami and Dandapani Swami came to Skandasramam telling residents there, "Sri Bhagavan is here with you, so why not let us have the photo of Bhagavan?" So saying they took the photo and the lamp that adorned it. In this way, the problem of the oil shortage was resolved.

But food remained a problem. All food items donated to the Ashram were kept in safe storage with Vasudeva Sastri in town. Each day he sent the needed provisions

⁴ The Ashram Well has faithfully supplied water these near one hundred years since its discovery in 1922, used today for pujas in both shrines.

up to Skandasramam for meal preparation. When he saw that there was not enough food to feed both Skandasramam and the small burgeoning community at Mother's Samadhi, he sent a note to Ramanatha Brahmachari at Skandashramam, who was in charge of supplying the Samadhi residents: "Devotees give not to Vasudeva but to Vaasudeva". Since Vasudeva was the parent of Vaasudeva (actually, the father of Lord Krishna), this would have been Vasudeva Sastri's deft way of implying that donors wanted their offerings to go to Bhagavan and not to residents at Mother's Samadhi. Ramanatha Brahmachari showed the note to Bhagavan who replied, "How could there be Vaasudeva without Vasudeva?" In other words, how could there be the son (Vaasudeva) without the parent (Vasudeva)? How could there be Bhagavan Ramana without Mother Alagamma? When Vasudeva Sastri heard Bhagavan's reply, he had no further objections and rationed food supplies accordingly. Thus a kitchen was established and regular cooking began at Mother's Samadhi.

Residents from Skandasramam sometimes came down to have food with Chinna Swami and Dandapani Swami. Bhagavan made it a point to come down each day, either in the morning or in the evening. One day, Chinna Swami asked Kunju Swami to come down as he was preparing dosas the following day and wanted Kunju Swami to take some up for Bhagavan and others. Kunju Swami agreed and came down that evening. The next morning as he washed the dishes in the

⁵ The etymology of the name is interesting to note in this connection: vasu: 'dweller, indwelling'+deva: 'luminous, god', i.e. the God who dwells within all.

Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi: Moksha

M.: There can be no desire if there is no object. The state of no-desire is *moksha*. There is no duality in sleep and also no desire. Whereas there is duality in the waking state and desire also. Because of duality a desire arises for the acquisition of objects. That is the outgoing mind, which is the basis of duality and desire. If one knows that Bliss is none other than the Self, the mind becomes inward turned. If the Self is gained, all the desires are fulfilled. That is the *apta kamah atma kamah akamascha* (fulfilment of desire) of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. That is *moksha*.

— Talks §502





stream near Mother's Samadhi, he suddenly heard a voice: "Any food for *atithi* (a guest)?" Kunjuswami looked up and was thrilled to see Bhagavan standing with "a towel wrapped round his head, a shawl round his torso and a stick in his hand." He continues with the following account:

"It was a rare darshan. Chinnaswami and Dhandapaniswami came and were overjoyed to see Bhagavan there. They requested him to eat dosa but he refused at first. At their repeated requests, he agreed. He brushed his teeth with a neem twig which I gave him and washed his face in the stream. We had with us the usual goat's milk also. Bhagavan ate dosa and drank coffee. Looking at me, he said, 'Everyone comes over here because of the tasty food they get here,' and laughed heartily."⁶

Birth of Sri Ramanasramam

When one Sadaiappa Chettiar, a trustee of Draupadi Amman temple on a visit to the temple, heard that Bhagavan was at Mother's Samadhi, he brought everything needed for cooking and asked Bhagavan to accept his bhiksha. He implored Bhagavan on the grounds that due to old age, his elder sister and other

⁶ *Living with the Master*, Kunjuswami, p. 71.

relatives could not climb the Hill and this would be the ideal opportunity of having Bhagavan's darshan. Residents at Skandasramam came down to join the feast. When evening came, Bhagavan did not return to Skandasramam but stayed at Mother's Samadhi. The next day a similar situation emerged with devotees pleading with Bhagavan to accept their bhiksha. This continued for a string of days and Bhagavan was loathe to turn anyone down. Only Kunjuswami and Gopal Rao stayed behind to watch Skandasramam but after a week, they despaired of being away from Bhagavan any longer and so came down the Hill to join him. This meant that Skandasramam was left unprotected. When Chinnaswami asked why they had come, they said, "We could not stay away from Bhagavan." A few days later it was reported that the clock and a wooden plank used by Bhagavan had been stolen from Skandasramam. Bhagavan only said, "It is good. Nobody need go there to look after the place any more." Thus Bhagavan stayed on at Mother's Samadhi and never lived in Skandasramam again⁷.

(to be continued)

⁷ When asked about this later Bhagavan said, "It is not of my own accord that I remained here. Some power made me stay there." (For this section, see *Living with the Master*, Kunjuswami, pp. 71-73.)

Ashram Gardens: Honey Harvesting



Ashram bee hives offered up their produce in early November with the first honey-harvesting in two years. With overall health of Ashram gardens as the main focus of beekeeping at the Ashram, honey is only harvested when plentiful. At such times, it is offered at Bhagavan's shrine together with fruits which are served as prasada to devotees. —





Favourite Stories of Bhagavan: Matrubhuteswara—The Lord who Comes as Mother

[On the day before Mahapuja, Sri Bhagavan narrated the story of Matrubhuteswara, the presiding deity of

Mother's Temple at the Ashram and in the ancient temple of Trichy. In the Tamil language, the synonym for Matrubhuteswara is Tayumanavar, which means "Lord in the form of Mother". When Sri Bhagavan installed the lingam in Mother's Samadhi, Kavyakantha Ganapati Muni, in divine euphoria, gave the hallowed spot the name Matrubhuteswara. The story narrated by Bhagavan is summarised in Sri Ramanasmaranamrutam, p. 148.]

This incident occurred during the period of the epics. A lady devotee was undergoing the pangs of childbirth. There was no midwife to attend on her. The omniscient Lord, who resides in the hearts of all, appeared in the form of the devout woman's mother. He helped her in the safe delivery of the baby, and after ensuring that mother and baby were in good health, disappeared. Thenceforth, he came to be known as *Matrubhuteswara*.

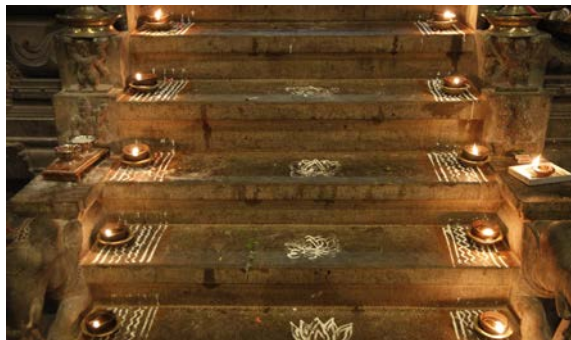
G.V. Subbaramiah made an apt comparison and declared, "When Mother Earth was going through the pangs of delivery in giving birth to Self-Enquiry, the Lord Himself assumed the form of the Mother and helped deliver the very manifestation of Self-Enquiry, Bhagavan Sri Ramana. It is therefore appropriate to worship the Lord as Matrubhuteswara."—

Wordwise: Moksha मोक्ष

Moksha (from the root *muc* as in *mucyate*: 'release', 'liberate') means liberation. It is spiritual freedom (from the samsaric world of phenomenal existence and the cycle of births and deaths) achieved through action, sadhana, religious rites, worship or divine grace, bringing an end to ignorance and the sense of a separate self, dissolving vasanams and impurities of the mind.

Scholars tell us that moksha (or mukti) appears quite late in the *shastra* (i.e. the middle Upanishadic period around 2500 years ago, e.g. *Svetasvatara*, *Maitri*, *Kathaka Upanishad*), and was not originally one of the *Purusharthas*, the original three being *dharma*, *artha*, *kama*. Bhagavan in answering questions about *moksha*, gave the following practical pointer: "People think that *moksha* is somewhere yonder and should be sought outside. They are wrong. *Moksha* is only knowing the Self within yourself. Concentrate and you will get it". (*Talks* §31).

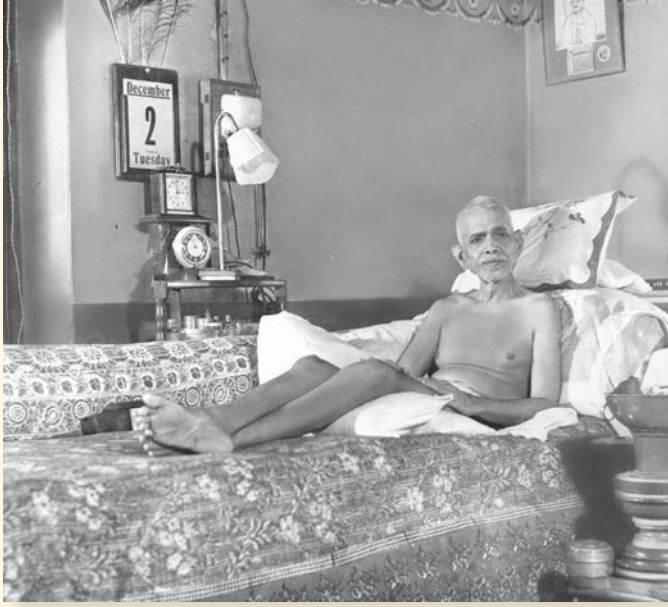




Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Karthigai Deepam 25 November

After 15 days of continuous rain, Karthigai Deepam was celebrated in dry warm weather under a clear blue sky, by the grace of Bhagavan, you could feel. You could feel the charge in the air, prayers echoing from every corner, the firelight and makeshift diya-lit altars at every available place on this, Arunachala's day of glory!





K.K. Madhavi Ammal's Unpublished Reminiscences (pt. IV)

One day a European in the Hall asked, “Bhagavan is beyond the world and yet is just sitting on this sofa. Why not go round the world and awaken the masses with speeches?”

Bhagavan sat quietly for some time. Then he said, “How do you know that I am not doing it?”

I thought that was a very interesting reply because from the age of sixteen, Bhagavan has only been living on or at the foot of this mountain and in the ashram, never having gone anywhere nor given any speeches.

After some time Bhagavan looked at him and said, “What happened when you came from England? You wanted to go to Tiruvannamalai and see the Rishi. Did that thought not come out of silence? You told others that you were going to Tiruvannamalai. You boarded a ship and came to Ramanasramam. Isn't it?”

“Like that, all actions have three parts—silence, word and deed. From silence, word and deed arose. The root cause for this is mind. Silence is the grandfather and word and deed are son and grandson, respectively. The greatness of son and grandson will be seen more in the grandfather.

A jnani sits in silence and does everything. If a great man comes to give a speech, people rush to see him. The great personality stands on a raised platform and gives a speech. Hearing it, people are inspired and decide to follow what he says. And they may follow it for a few days. But slowly as obstacles arise, they give it up. The one who gave the speech also forgets about it and begins giving different speeches. Now what about the silent person? He stays in the same state and sees everything, does everything. There is nothing he need change or transform. Silence is the grandfather of speech, the real, unchanging speech.”

When Bhagavan finished speaking he fell silent and the entire hall was enveloped in a penetrating silence. The Englishman sat still and quiet.

Treating Bhagavan's Legs

Once when Bhagavan was suffering from swelling and pain in the knees, I went to the ashram with my brother K.K. Nambiar from Madras and Yogi Ramaiah. Yogi and Nambiar went to check Bhagavan's knees but Bhagavan refused any help, saying “No need. Everything is fine.” But Yogi did not give up so easily. When Bhagavan went up the Hill, he took Nambiar and made another attempt to have a look at Bhagavan's knees. But again Bhagavan desisted.

One morning after breakfast when all had gotten up and gone, I asked in a low voice, “O Bhagavan, why should you not let them inspect your painful knee?”

“What's wrong with the leg? The pain will go the way it came. No need to worry about it. Yogi is unnecessarily troubling Nambiar. Why all that?”

I said quietly, “O Bhagavan! I wish to see Nambiar treat Bhagavan's legs with massage.”

Bhagavan finally relented. The moment I got the permission, I brought Nambiar. At seeing Nambiar's approach, Bhagavan stretched out his legs and said, “Ammal is recommending, so please have a look.” Nambiar then did the needful.

Family Crisis

Some years later my life was interrupted by a near-tragedy in the family. It was in October 1945 when my eldest son,





who was in the army in Assam, had an accident on his motorbike. Not only had he sustained fractures on the left side of the chest but the grave concern was that he lay in the hospital unconscious. Before having received the news, each night I had a recurring dream. The dream consisted in Bhagavan staying at our house where I was taking care of him and he was continually blessing me. This went on for four days while, unknown to me, my son lay unconscious in a hospital. I thought the repeated dream boded some wonderful event but then I got the letter informing me of the accident. With the news already four days old, I was very apprehensive. Finally, one night at about 1.00 am, worried about his condition and not able to sleep, I lay half-awake thinking of Bhagavan. Suddenly I saw a huge bright sun in the sky and yet another sun in the west. As there cannot be two suns, I thought one must be the full moon. These two were brilliantly shining and filling me and the room with their light. When my breath stopped, I thought it must mean that I was at life's end but not long after that, I woke up and breathed normally again. The reality of my son's condition dawned on me and in the same instant I knew that Bhagavan had saved him. Indeed, by Bhagavan's grace, my son awoke from his coma and made a complete recovery.

Another Dream

It was not infrequent that Bhagavan appeared to me in dreams. Though their meaning was not always apparent, they were nevertheless significant. One dream that stands

out began with my going to the Ashram to see Bhagavan. He was lying down in a special room. I tried my best to enter the room but could not. So I requested Chinnaswami to give me permission to enter. "The doctor has instructed not to allow people inside. Why don't you sit outside and meditate?" So I sat outside but just then saw Bhagavan coming out of the room with an attendant. I waited to greet him upon his return. Bhagavan was walking very slowly. I prostrated on the ground when he was still far away. From there he looked at me and smiled. In the same moment a small golden child appeared and came running to me and climbed up and hung onto my neck.

I picked up the child and sang a lullaby written by Brahmananda Sivayogi. I then did pradakshina of the room where Bhagavan was sitting. Bhagavan's attendant looked out through the window and told me "Bhagavan is calling you". Quickly, I went inside where Bhagavan was reclined. He turned towards me and said something to the attendant. The attendant took a flower from the top of the shelf and Bhagavan gave it to me. I took that flower with full devotion and started massaging the arm which was afflicted with cancer.

Once entering the hall, I completely forgot about the child and worriedly asked Bhagavan, "Where is the child which was in my hand? Is this Bhagavan's maya?" Bhagavan smiled and said "It is not maya. I came as a child as I wanted to hear that song."

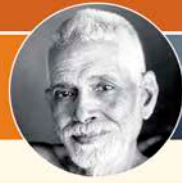
(to be continued)

Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Hill Path Repairs



Repairs to the Hill path continue with drainage-bunting, path-leveling and the adding of new steps where erosion has caused unevenness. Arunachala's stone, high in iron content is particularly hard and heavy, and devotees who stop to observe the work will appreciate how much labour goes into these simple repairs.





Events in Tiruvannamalai: Pavala Kunru Renovation

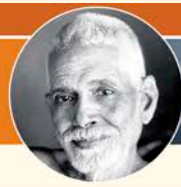
It was at Pavala Kunru where mother Parvati did her penance and was absorbed into Arunachaleswarar and where Gautama Rishi and Bhagavan Ramana once resided for shorter or longer periods. The 'coral rock' temple on top of Pavala Kunru hill is now set for renovation. Commencement ceremonies took place on the morning of 2nd November with a special homa and the transfer of power from the shrines of Pavalagiriswarar, Muttambika and other deities into their fig-wood plaque likenesses (in a ceremony called *kalakrishna*). After puja, the first ceremonial chiseling of temple walls officially commenced the work to be undertaken by Mathu Stapathi, grand-son of Vaidyanatha Stapathi who built Mother's Shrine (1939-49).

Arunachaleswarar Temple authorities who were on site to receive Ashram representatives and to authorise the Ashram's supervision of Pavala Kunru's repairs, took the opportunity to announce scheduled dates for upcoming Kumbhabhishekams: Pavala Kunru's Mahakumbhabhishekam is scheduled to take place in February 2016 followed by Arunachaleswarar Mahakumbhabhishekam in March 2016. —

Announcements: Ashram YouTube Channel

Sri Ramanasramam has its own YouTube channel and is regularly posting videos of events including the recent Karthigai Deepam celebrations for free download. Please visit the channel at: <https://www.youtube.com/user/SriRamanaDevotee>





Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Kathakali



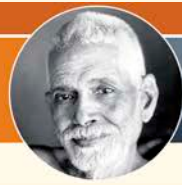
On Sunday 22nd November during the Karthigai Festival, devotees had the opportunity to enjoy a Kathakali dance troupe from Kerala in the library auditorium. The performance's theme from the Mahabharata was set to the music of a small percussion orchestra with detailed gestures, highly articulated movements, brightly coloured costumes and the text of Sanskritised Malayalam. Kathakali originates in 17th-century Kerala though antecedent dance forms date back more than 1500 years.

Obituary: Admiral R.H. Tahiliani



Admiral R.H. Tahiliani (85) was absorbed in Arunachala on 14 October 2015 from New Delhi. He leaves behind his wife Smt. Meera and sons Tarun, Aney and daughters Urvashi Tandon and Gayatri. Soft-spoken, affectionate and courteous to one and all, ever a welcome presence at the Ashram, Admiral Tahiliani started visiting Ramanasramam after he read Paul Brunton's *A Search in Secret India*. He and Smt. Meera, perfectly matched in their devotion to Ramana, continued visiting the Ashram for decades. Not long after his retirement as Chief of the Naval Staff of India, Sri Tahiliani was appointed Governor of Sikkim, a position he held for four and a half years and for which he was loved and admired by one and all. Frugal like an ascetic, he would help anyone in need. He evinced maturity and a sense of responsibility even as a teenager. After his father passed away, the young lad of 17, as the eldest of eight children, took a job in the Royal Indian Navy to educate his brothers and support the family. Very soon, his talent was discovered and he excelled among the elite of aviation as a test pilot and was the first to land on the deck of an aircraft carrier, a feat which paved the way for carrier-based aviation in the Indian Navy. Responsible, resolute and upright, gentle but firm, friendly to all though rather shy and, above all unswerving in his devotion to Bhagavan, the Admiral has now gone home to the lap of his Father Ramana, whose name he kept muttering till his last days.





In Memorium

On the first day of the present decade, 1st January, 2010, Skt. T.R. Kanakammal was absorbed into Arunachala on Bhagavan's 130th Jayanthi at Bhagavan's Shrine during *kalasa abhishekam*. Eight months later, *Saranagati's* founding editor Ravi Ramanan, second son of Ashram President VS Ramanan, merged at the feet of Bhagavan in the prime of life with dozens of friends and family members at his bedside. A number of beloved devotees have left us since then. Above are pictured some of the many kind faces that will lamentably not be seen in the Ashram again, though they live ever in our memory.

[From L to R: Ravi Ramanan, T. R. Kanakammal, Swami Shantananda Puri, Saroja Krishnan, M. S. Chandrasekhar, Vasant Kothari, P. R. Suryanandan, Prof. K.V. Narayanan, Vennelakanti Sriramulu, N. Ramasubramanyan ('Ramamani'), Patrick Roberts, Ramachandra Chettiar, Mahesh Chandra ('Chandru'), Pachaiappan, P.V. Somasundaram ('Somu Mama'), Murugayya Pankajakshi Ammal, Kamala Sharma, Rolf Skarnitzl, Rhoda Tata, Narasimha Iyer Swami, Dr. R. Ravindran, Vajra Gogoi, M.R. Venkataraman, Balu Mama.]

