

Saranagati



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D. Thiyagarajan/M. Highburger



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IN THIS
ISSUE

Dear All,

As we go to press and as Sri Vidya Havan flames still smolder in the New Hall, the world's health experts and public policy makers seem to be breaking it gently that this pandemic could continue to harass us for a longer period. This comes even as governments around the world, including India, are preparing for a gradual relaxation of travel restrictions and stay-at-home orders.

Venkat S. Ramanan mentioned in his online Aradhana Day address (see p. 12) that Bhagavan's devotees can make use of the present circumstances to "wake up to the [real] purpose of human birth." Indeed, the lock down is revealing multiple drawbacks to modern living, not least of all, the toll it takes on the natural world and, perhaps too, on our general health and well-being.

In this issue we continue reading about Bhagavan and his devotees coping with their own quarantines more than one hundred years ago.

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

In Sri Bhagavan,
The Editorial Team

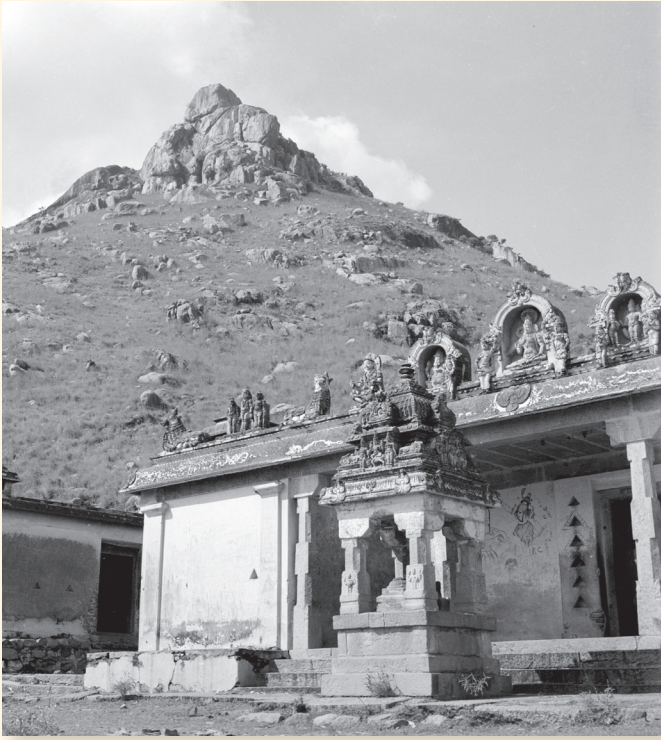
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Calendar of Events Celebrated at Home (for the time being)

1st May Sri Vidya Havan
6th May (Weds) Full Moon
16th May (Sat) Maha Puja
26th May (Tues) Punarvasu
5th June (Fri) Full Moon
23rd June (Tues) Punarvasu

2nd July (Thurs) Cow Lakshmi Day
5th July (Sun) Guru Purnima
20th July (Mon) Punarvasu
2nd-3rd August (Sun) Full Moon
16th August (Sun) Punarvasu
1st September (Tues) Advent





Bhagavan's Life in the Face of Public Health Crises (pt. II)

[We saw last month that the current COVID-19 public health crisis is not the first time devotees of Bhagavan have faced epidemics. Bhagavan was born in a century of cholera outbreaks that struck every second or third decade, each lasting fifteen or more years. In 1899, a cholera pandemic broke out and continued until 1923, causing eighty lakh deaths in India. As increased trade in the modern era involved ever-greater sea traffic, port cities became the hubs for contagion. The word quarantine comes from the 14th-century Venetian mitigation method to combat the bubonic plague, namely, compelling docking ships to remain in the city harbour for forty days (quarantena means 'forty') so that disembarking crewmen and passengers could demonstrate sound health.

By the time of Bhagavan's birth in 1879, bubonic plague outbreaks appeared around the world. Transmitted by rat fleas, the bubonic plague bacteria (yersinia pestis) made its

way around the globe on merchant ships. By 1899, the plague had found its way into rural India, becoming more difficult to control. Mitigating spread meant evacuations, isolation camps, travel restrictions, large-scale disinfections and initiatives to reduce rodent populations. A semi-successful vaccine was at last tested by volunteers at Mumbai's Byculla jail in 1897 affording those inoculated with 50% protection. The epidemic that had begun in 1855 only ended in 1960.]

In Tiruvannamalai's bubonic plague epidemic of 1905, public health authorities implemented containment strategies and squelched the contagion after six months of evacuation. But the same epidemic would reassert itself and harass the township less than three years later. While the 1905 plague engendered a large-scale exodus from Tiruvannamalai, the outbreak of 1908 was slightly less severe. Dr. Narayana Iyer, the chief medical officer of Tiruvannamalai District, was tasked with overseeing the evacuation. As in the previous outbreak, he arranged for Bhagavan to shelter at Pachaiamman Kovil and along with him a larger group of resident devotees, among them, Ganapathi Muni.

As we saw in the last segment, Pachaiamman Kovil was a regular stop for Bhagavan on his Hill-roundings and he and devotees would halt here and prepare their food. Pachaiamman Kovil also served Bhagavan and devotees as the place for taking their oil baths. With a sacred tirtham of crystalline water, Bhagavan and devotees would bring oil and soap-nut powder from Virupaksha and complete their bath in the tirtham.

Readers may recall that it was during the return from one such oil bath with Palaniswami and Vasudeva Sastri that Bhagavan had his second death experience at tortoise rock. His vision was suddenly blinded by a 'curtain of bright light' and Vasudeva Sastri embraced him, weeping at seeing no respiration, the bluish tint of the skin and the sudden drop in body temperature, signs which, it seemed to him, could only mean one thing. After a few minutes, however, bodily functions resumed and Bhagavan stood up as normal and continued the walk to Virupaksha.

After the rains, especially on warm days, residents of Virupaksha Cave went to Pachaiamman Tirtham to swim. Devotees are familiar with swimming stories, not





least of all, Bhagavan and Nayana racing in Pandava Tirtham, with Bhagavan almost always victorious. At Pachaiaimman Tirtham devotees will remember the account Bhagavan gave of swimming with Nayana's son, Mahadevan, riding on his back.

Bhagavan had noticed unusual qualities in Kavya Kantha's son even when they first met years earlier and the boy of four prostrated before Bhagavan in *sashtanga* namaskaram. Years later when Mahadevan was about eight, Bhagavan asked if he remembered their earlier meeting. Mahadevan kept quiet. Just then, a devotee came along to see Bhagavan and asked Bhagavan if he remembered him to which Bhagavan replied in the negative. Mahadevan then answered Bhagavan's earlier question, acknowledging that he did not remember their earlier encounter.

Now at Pachaiaimman Kovil, Bhagavan appreciated the child's precocious bearing and simultaneously, the capacity for playfulness befitting a boy of eight:

One day I put Mahadevan on my back and began swimming in the tank opposite the Pachaiaimman shrine from one end to the other. When we were halfway across, Mahadevan began pressing down on me, greatly elated, shouting 'hai, hai!' as cart drivers do to their bullocks. I was tired and it seemed as though both of us would be drowned. I was of course very anxious that he should be saved from such a catastrophe. But I managed somehow to reach the other side.

Devotees will remember that it was from Pachaiaimman Kovil that Bhagavan once set off alone to seek the source of a large banyan leaf he found near Pachaiaimman Temple. Motivated by a sloka from the *Arunachala Mahatmyam* that spoke of Arunagiri Yogi in perpetual meditation beneath a banyan tree on the slopes of



The Pachaiaimman Kovil Group: Mahadevan seated to Bhagavan's right (and Vasudeva Sastri, standing second from left)

Arunachala, Bhagavan traced the direction from which the leaf had blown to see if the tree might be located. Bhagavan started climbing the slopes of the Hill and sure enough sighted a tree in the distance. Just then his leg inadvertently brushed against a bush that was home to a nest of hornets, and the infuriated creatures came out and began stinging Bhagavan's leg. Bhagavan chastised himself for his 'carelessness' and accepted their frenzied response, standing quietly by as the creatures took their revenge. Afterward, Bhagavan resumed his walk, but changed his direction and made way to Seven Springs, and from there, back to Virupaksha Cave. Bhagavan did not say anything to Palaniswami but the latter took notice and asked Bhagavan what happened. Palaniswami applied sesame oil and removed the stingers that were still lodged in the skin. But the swelling in Bhagavan's leg remained for two full days.

Evacuees at Pachaiaimman Kovil

With the evacuation of 1908, those seeking Bhagavan's darshan, though significantly reduced in number owing to the government travel restrictions, now had to come to Pachaiaimman Kovil to find him.

G. Seshayya and others cooked for Bhagavan and his sadhus. Rangaswami Iyengar who had been one of the residents in the 1905 quarantine took it upon himself to see that the necessary provisions were made available and paid for them himself. Mudaliar Patti continued her daily food offerings to Bhagavan even though the outbreak had driven the inhabitants of Tiruvannamalai out of town.





Young Visitors

Manavasi Ramaswami Iyer, the Public Works Supervisor who made Tiruvannamalai his headquarters so he could be near Bhagavan, brought his two daughters to Pachaiaimman Kovil to see Bhagavan.

The girls liked to play with Bhagavan, pluck flowers from the nearby shrubs and give them to Bhagavan who would patiently string them into garlands. They would bring three or four large stones which they would christen as Rama, Seetha or Siva, Parvati etc. and bid Bhagavan bring water from the tank to perform abhisheka to the 'gods'. Bhagavan would garland the 'gods' and do puja to them with flowers. Once puja was over, the girls would offer pebbles as 'dakshina' to Bhagavan. Before the 'puja' Bhagavan would have finished the cooking and thus could do the *naivedya*, i.e. food offering to God, and give the girls and any others present portions as prasad.

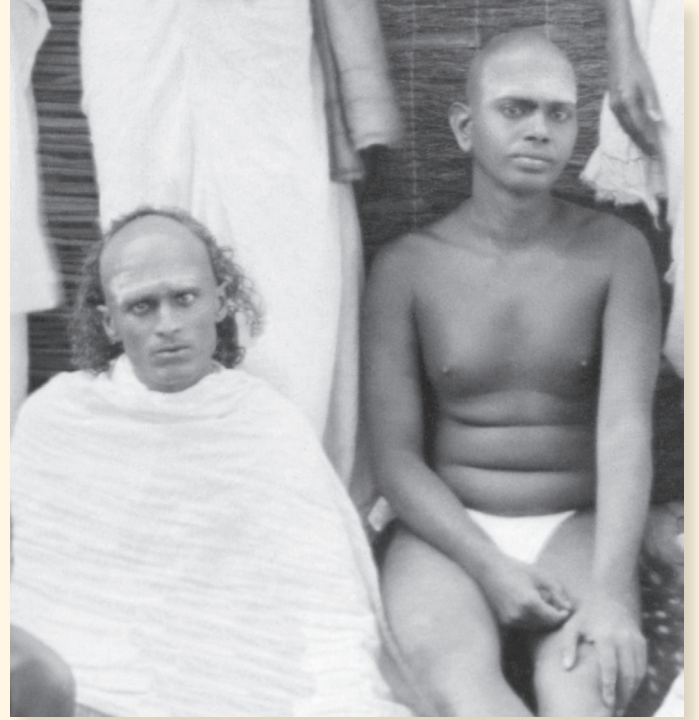
Ganapathi Muni

Ganapathi Muni was among those that joined Bhagavan at Pachaiaimman Kovil, having abandoned his retreat at Mango Tree Cave upon receiving the government orders. Readers may remember that Ganapathi Muni had encountered the young Brahamana Swami at Padmanabha Swami's ashram five years earlier though no words had been exchanged between them then. Six weeks prior to evacuation, the Muni returned to Tiruvannamalai for the Kartigai Deepam festival. On the eighth day of the festival, he climbed the Hill, entered Virupaksha and before the evening was out, had surrendered his life to Bhagavan. Upon learning from Palaniswami that the sage's name was Venkataraman, the poet duly abbreviated Venkataraman to 'Ramana' and said he should no longer be called Brahmanaswami but Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi. Thus on 17th November 1907, the young sage got the name by which the world would come to know him.¹

At Bhagavan's instruction, Palaniswami gave the Muni the key to Mango Tree Cave where the latter took up residence in order to do sadhana. In proximity to the young master, the Muni soon found he was subject to "cascading spiritual experiences and floods of superhuman delight." Along with them, spiritual heat developed in his body² and Bhagavan regularly

¹ *Bhagavan and Nayana*, p. 7.

² *Ibid*, p. 8.



Bhagavan and Nayana at Virupaksha, 1913

needed to go to Mango Tree Cave to aid him in normalizing his condition. It was here that Ganapathi Muni began composing his *Uma Sabasram*. As the composition proceeded, a public recitation at the Apeetha Kuchamba shrine in the Big Temple had been arranged but the Muni's physical condition worsened and he contracted a large boil which left him unable to work at all. As the day of the event approached, a doctor, Punyakoti by name, appeared at Mango Tree Cave and told how the night before he had had a dream in which he was informed that someone was in need of his help. The dream directed him to Bhagavan Ramana, by which means he was able to find Ganapathi Muni at Mango Tree Cave. Once the doctor lanced and drained the boil, the poet was troubled no more. But the scheduled recitation was to take place the following day and people had already started arriving in Tiruvannamalai. With Bhagavan's help, the remaining three hundred verses were completed on 15th December, the final night.

It was only a few weeks after this event that the government gave orders for the evacuation. Ganapathi Muni continued to refine his newly completed thousand-verse poem once having settled in at Pachaiaimman Kovil, which in the years after the plague, would serve as venue for public recitation of the poem.





Now at Pachaiaimman, residents were blessed to be in Bhagavan's proximity around the clock. One early morning while Nayana and other disciples were sitting in front of Bhagavan who was in deep absorption, the Muni saw a bright shimmering light descend from the sky and touch Bhagavan's forehead six times.³ Though deeply absorbed, Bhagavan was aware of what was going on at the time. Ganapathi Muni suddenly had the insight that Bhagavan was none other than Lord Subrahmanya and later described his experience in his *Ramana Asthakam*.

The Tamarind Orchard

Readers may also recall the following story narrated by Bhagavan and retold by devotees many times over the decades. While well-known, it is nevertheless worth repeating in this context since it took place during the quarantine at Pachaiaimman Kovil. It involves a monkey tribe that lived in and around the Devi temple.

In those days, it seems, the grove of tamarind trees adjacent to Pachaiaimman Temple was annually contracted out by the municipality through public auction. The leaseholder in 1908 was a Muslim who lived nearby. As the grove was known to give a particularly rich yield of tamarind pods, the leaseholder was intent on protecting them from the monkeys who were fond of them. He used various methods to discourage the four-legged raiders, but in time, they became less and less intimidated by his stick-waving and loud shouts. An elderly craftsman in the town made him a forked stick with a robust elastic band and with it, the leaseholder was able to shoot various-sized stones into the branches overhead. While many began to retreat, one of the braver monkeys kept coming back. The leaseholder picked up a large stone and launched it with full force at the insistent one. To his horror, he made a direct hit to the head. The body tumbled from the treetop and landed with a loud thud at his feet. Shocked by what he had done, he ran away in panic as the monkeys shouted and screamed at full voice. Bhagavan came out to see what the commotion was. When he found the motionless figure on the ground, he poked it with a tree branch, looking for any sign of life. Bhagavan responded to their pain with consoling words: "Death is inevitable for everyone who is born. He at whose hands this monkey

³ B.V. Narasimha Swami, *Self-Realisation*, Chapter XV.



died will also meet with death one day. This is the law of nature. There's no need to grieve about it or be angry."

A few days later, the leaseholder fell ill with a high fever. When his condition worsened, the family worried. They heard that the Swami had said that the one who killed the monkey would also one day die and took it as curse. They decided to go and beg forgiveness. Bhagavan was there when they arrived, sitting quietly in his usual way:

"Swami, please forgive this intrusion. I'm the father of the man responsible for the monkey's death some days ago. Since then, my son has been ill, and we fear for his life. He keeps raving about having killed a monkey and repeatedly cries out for your forgiveness." Bhagavan listened quietly but did not answer. "See here, Swami, these are my son's children. We have all come to beg your forgiveness." Bhagavan remained silent.

The man's brother said, "Please, Swami, at least give us *vibhuti*. If we put sacred ash from your hands on his forehead, he will be spared. Swami, please be merciful. He's not a bad man. Show us your mercy and give us some holy ash. Nothing else can remove your curse."

With a look of bewilderment, Bhagavan broke his silence: "Curse? What curse? You're all quite mistaken. I didn't curse your brother, nor have I ever cursed anyone. When the monkeys came to me that day, I simply told them that whoever takes birth cannot escape death. This is the law of nature common to all beings. Moreover, I'm not in the habit of giving *vibhuti*. You've all left a sick man to come here. Go home and take him to a good doctor and get him treated."

The father replied: "We will not leave until we get some holy ash from Swami's blessed hands. Please, Swami,





have compassion for my ailing son. If you give us *vibhuti*, he will surely recover. His life is in your hands.”

In exasperation, Bhagavan finally said, “What can I do if you’re so insistent?” He then went to the kitchen fireplace and took a pinch of wood ash and handed it to them. On receiving it, their faces beamed with joy: “Thank you, Swami! Now everything will be alright.”

The family bowed before Bhagavan and took their leave. Upon returning home, they applied the ash to the brow of the ailing man who made a speedy recovery. After this ‘miracle’, the leaseholder found himself more tolerant of the monkeys whenever they came to

visit his grove. It is said that he secretly remained a devotee of Bhagavan for the rest of his days.⁴

End of the 1908 Evacuation

Thus lives were saved, and lives were lost in the spring of 1908. By the end of March, the authorities deemed the town safe from contagion and containment measures were lifted. As life normalised, the town’s citizens returned to their homes, and Bhagavan and the residents of Virupaksha Cave made their way back up the Hill.

(to be continued)

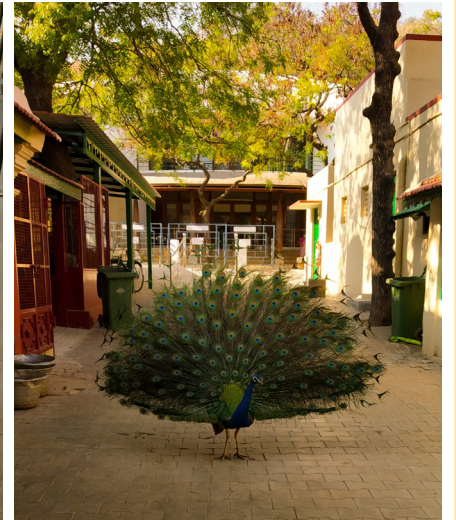
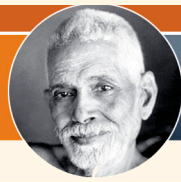
⁴ *Nondi and the Monkeys of Arunachala*, p. 21-28.



Events in Sri Ramanasramam: Sri Vidya Havan

This year’s Sri Vidya Havan had been scheduled for 20th March but as the government moved towards a nationwide lock down, the havan was postponed. As the annual rite normally takes place after mid-March around the time of Vasantha Navaratri and as the season is now getting late, the Ashram leadership decided to conduct the ceremony in a truncated format in the New Hall on Friday, 1st May. Prohitis, pujaris and participants practised social distancing throughout the 4-hour homa. —





Events in Sri Ramanasramam: Narayana Seva for Ashram Animals

Devotees worry about the health and welfare of the Ashram's animal population in the absence of guests and visitors during the COVID-19 lock down. If in Bhagavan's time, animal devotees regularly received the same prasadam as his human devotees (sometimes to the chagrin of the latter), in the present pandemic that tradition is being maintained. In fact the Ashram animals are getting extra meals including Pali tirtham's fish population. Without devotees collecting milk from the Ashram pujas, the Pali Tirtham fish that normally wait

near the run-off spout for their morning milk prasadam from the Mother's Shrine abhishekam are experiencing a windfall with copious quantities of milk and curd each day. Leftover Narayana Seva curd-rice is nourishing Ashram monkeys and squirrels. And peacocks, including one white peacock, are getting daily rations of groundnuts while the Ashram cows are being cared for in the usual way by Ashram gosala staff. Even the black-faced mountain langurs are coming down the Hill more often to bask in the silence of the Ashram during lock down.—





IN PROFILE

Sujata Sen (part III)

On this first and very impressionable day, Sujata was dismayed to learn just as the evening session had begun that she and the other ladies were required to depart the Ashram and go into town for the night and reside in the lodging for women devotees. She did not want to go with them and when it was explained to her that it was a rule born out of concern for the safety of ladies in reaching their sleeping place before dark, Sujata responded by saying that she was not afraid of the dark. For their part, they could not yet have known that the woman before them had travelled

on foot over half the Tibetan plateau dressed as a boy, sleeping under open skies, in tents or in rustic stone shelters and huts. She was used to restrictions regarding her womanhood and one time when in need of shelter, stayed in the men's quarters with some of the Ramakrishna monks, passing as a man.

The Sarvadhikari was strict with her and put his foot down, so she departed as requested. But instead of going to town with the other ladies, she went up the Hill to find a crevice in the rocks where she might meditate through the night. Her two friends from Adyar tried to persuade her to go with them to town, but since she insisted on passing the night on the slopes of the Hill, they took leave without her.

When she found a place for her meditation, she discovered that she was unable to concentrate, feeling remorseful at having made such a bad showing in the hall. Her hopes of being accepted by the Master, it would seem, were dashed by virtue of her impudence and willfulness. She reflected on her behaviour and recalled the struggles of her medical career as a woman in a world of men. Here once again she felt she was being denied by virtue of gender, in this instance, denied access to her newfound guru. If her indignation upset her attempts at meditation at first, after a little while, she calmed down, and before long, experienced a vision of Arunachala, seeing a mountain of flame:

In its many caves, Siddhas or Realized beings in their pure and invulnerable bodies sat or moved unharmed in the flames. She was taken into the Hill, and seemed to enter its Fire, but felt no fear, no pain. She saw many worlds existing within the Hill, in this series of extraordinary revelations.

Later she confided what she had seen to Lucia Osborne who at the time, did not deem it as having any importance. But a few years later when someone else reported a similar experience, Mrs. Osborne asked the Maharshi about Sujata being "taken into the hill and finding a whole Universe there". Bhagavan replied, "Yes" and added, "The Hill is the Heart."

Meanwhile, as Sujata sat upon the Hill this first night, Bhagavan worried for her safety in view of the many wild animals on the Hill. Since she and S.S. Cohen had known each other from their theosophist





days at Adyar years earlier, Bhagavan asked Cohen to climb the Hill and find her and “persuade her to come down”. When Cohen and those accompanying him found Sujata, she was much changed in the aftermath of her Arunachala initiation experience and readily agreed to come down with them. She then set off for town as originally requested. However, when she entered the ladies guest house in her Buddhist robes and close-cropped hair, the woman in charge took her for a man and promptly ordered her off the premises. Some pleading ensued and following the explanation about what had just happened at the Ashram, Sujata was given a place to sleep.

The next day, she returned to the Ashram feeling embarrassed by her stubbornness and was fearful of Bhagavan’s response. But when she came before Bhagavan, she found him as gracious as the day before. Further proof that all was well came when, later that day, someone asked to take a photo of the Maharshi along with the Ashram’s foreigners. A place was selected at the rear of the Ashram with the Hill behind them. Sujata did not rush to join those for the photo, still shy about being visible given the events of the previous night but when Bhagavan motioned to her to join them, she eagerly came along.

In this photograph, Major Chadwick, S.S. Cohen, Sujata and others are assembled around Bhagavan with the Holy Hill looming splendidly in the background.



New Beginnings

Following the incident of the first night, Sujata understood that her apprenticeship at the feet of the Master would require changes in her, not least of all, in respect to self-will and managing the multitude of thoughts that crowded the mind. She made up her mind to follow Bhagavan unquestioningly and hoped that one day he would accept her as his disciple, not knowing at that point that there really was no such initiation among Bhagavan’s devotees.

Sujata took up the practise of *atma-vichara* and made every effort to maintain vigilance throughout the waking day, devoting herself as much as possible to

Sri Muruganar’s Irai Pani Nitral, §3

வலுத்துப் போய வினையால்பல்
வகையாம் பிறப்பிற் சென்றுசென்றிங்கு
அலுத்துப் போனேன் அம்மானே
அடையு நெறியென் அறைகென்றேன்
சிலுத்தல் உவத்தல் செய்யாயாய்ச்
சிந்தை ஒன்றி இறைவன்அருள்
செலுத்தும் படிக்கே செல்கென்றான்
சேம ரமண சின்மயனே

Passing, passing through various births,
driven on and on by the force of deeds,
I cried: ‘Show me the way, my friend, my Master!
Show me the way to reach you!’
Said Ramana, the Lord of Wisdom and Welfare,
‘Be not angry, be not glad.
Gather your mind to oneness
And be guided by the grace of the Lord.’





meditation in the night and early morning.

Having set the determination to stay on long term at the Ashram, she found an ideally situated cottage opposite the Ashram in the Bose compound. Owned by Aravind Bose, a Bengali industrialist and his wife, the daughter of a German Admiral, Sujata not only

made a home in their midst but found in them willing support for her newfound Ashram life. Although her new dwelling lacked electricity and running water, it was nevertheless clean, quiet and, more importantly, proximate with Bhagavan and the Ashram.

(to be continued)



Events in Sri Ramanasramam: Sri Bhagavan's 70th Aradhana

This year's Aradhana celebration was unlike any in living memory. As readers well know, normally on this day, Bhagavan's Samadhi Hall is packed full of adoring devotees. But Sri Bhagavan's 70th Aradhana was celebrated before a near-empty hall this spring. A few Ramana family members came, but out of respect for the lock-down, only remained a short period of time before returning to their homes. Tiruvannamalai District Collector and District Magistrate, Thiru. K.S. Kandasamy, IAS, joined the sparsely attended celebration and graciously served at Narayana Seva afterward. —





Obituary: Sri S. V. Venkatesan and Smt. Malathi Venkatesan



Sri S. V. Venkatesan passed away from a cardiac arrest at the age of 80 on 24th March, 2020 in Chennai. He was predeceased by his wife and spiritual companion of 45 years, Malathi Venkatesan, who passed away on 2nd November, 2015. Born in Kolkata in 1939, Venkatesan was a brilliant student and gold medalist at Vivekananda College. Despite many hardships in early childhood, he had a highly successful career in finance at State Bank of India for 25 years and subsequently at Essar Group. S. V. V. and Malathi Venkatesan played a leading role in many charities and NGOs, including nearly three decades as trustees for the TamilNad Kidney Research (TANKER) Foundation serving underprivileged patients with kidney disease. They were both universally beloved

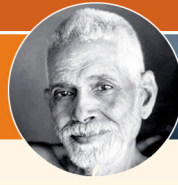
and respected, deeply spiritual, and long-time devotees of Bhagavan, frequently visiting Ramanasramam. Malathi was a graduate of Queen Mary's College, Chennai, and champion volunteer at numerous NGOs, known for her tremendous grit, bold determination and visionary leadership. She bravely battled kidney disease for over two decades while serving underprivileged patients through her role as a trustee of TANKER and the MOHAN Foundation. Malathi was awarded the 2015 "Shanmukhananda Ruby Jubilee Health Care Award" in Mumbai by Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, mere months before both she and Dr. Kalam passed away. Venkatesan's brilliant intellect and earthly achievements were exceeded only by his simplicity, humility and joyful good-naturedness. Venkatesan and Malathi were wonderfully inspiring parents, grandparents, mentors and human beings. Both are irreplaceable and will be deeply missed in India and abroad. They are survived by daughter Aparna Venkatesan, son-in-law John Rueppel, grandsons Narayan and Kailash, and many grieving friends and family members. —

Events in Sri Ramanasramam: Sri Bhagavan's 70th Aradhana: Nirvana Room

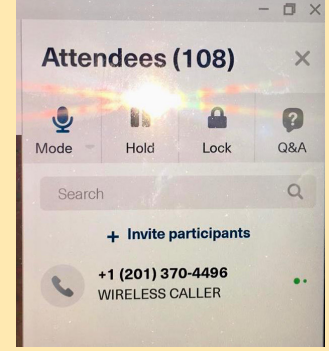
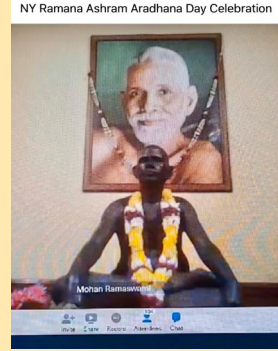


On 14th April 2020, the skeleton crew of inmates remaining at Sri Ramanasramam celebrated the Tamil New Year. That afternoon Sri Chakra Puja was preponed in order to conclude in time for the fifteen or twenty inmates to gather at Bhagavan's Nirvana Room to memorialise the day. As per tradition, at 8.47pm when *Aksharamanamalai* was over, devotees prostrated in veneration at the Nirvana Room entrance. —





From the Kendras: Arunachala Ashrama Online Aradhana



In keeping with social distancing guidelines, Arunachala Ashrama, New York, is closed to the public. But on Monday, 20th April 2020 at 6:25 pm, 108 devotees in the the greater New York Metropolitan area and other areas around the country ‘gathered’ online to celebrate Bhagavan’s 70th Aradhana.

Hosted by Arunachala Ashrama, the program began with *Aksharamanamalai* led by Aruna Ramkumar, followed by a welcome address and reading from Mohan Ramaswami, the newly elected president of Arunachala Ashrama, emphasizing the relevance Bhagavan’s teaching’s during these pandemic times. Bhajans

were presented variously by Aparna Subramaniam, Varsha Subramaniam, Lavanya Hari and Sangeetha Swaminathan. Sri Ramanasramam President V. S. Ramanan’s son, Venkat S. Ramanan of the Washington DC Satsang, gave a succinct but impactful talk on Bhagavan’s teachings on inquiry and surrender and how both methods eventually are one and the same.

The program continued with bhajans by Nithya Ramanan, Gayathri Govindan, Leena Gurunathan, Prashant Visveswaran and Asha Unni with Veda Chanting led by Peter Fell and Martin Wolff. The programme concluded with Aarati at the Ashram. —

Events in Sri Ramanasramam: Ramana Pada Pancha Ratnam



The day following Bhagavan’s 70th Aradhana, Ashram inmates gathered in the hall with appropriate social distancing to keep the tradition of the annual group recitation of *Ramana Pada Pancha Ratnam* with selected verses of Siva Prakasham Pillai set to the five ghana ragas of Thyagaraja, with musical arrangement by Smt. Sulochana Natarajan. Since RMCL singers were not able to be present, devotees read the verses. —

It is the Higher Power which does everything, and the man is only a tool. If he accepts that position, he is free from troubles; otherwise, he courts them. ~ Talks §63

