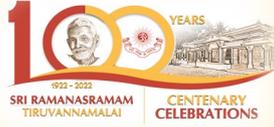


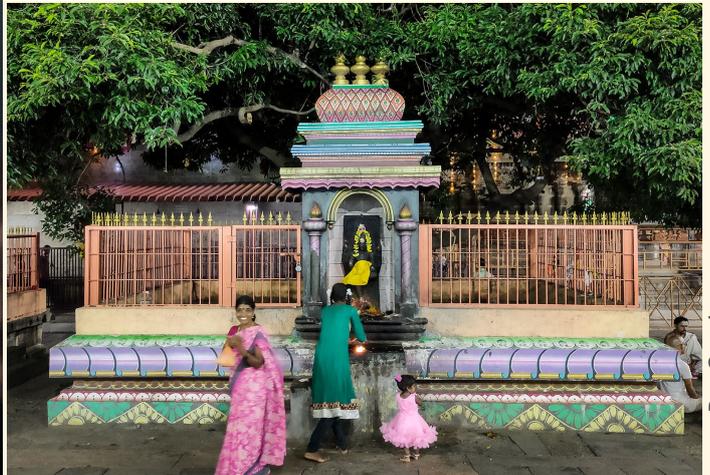
Saranagati



SARANAGATI
SRI RAMANASRAMAM



DECEMBER 2022
VOL. 16, NO.12



Dev Gogoi



Saranagati



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IN THIS
ISSUE

Dear Devotees,

As the month of December begins, the preliminary nine days of the Karthigai Deepam festival are underway. A stone blindly thrown in any direction is likely to land on a group of Vedacharyas chanting the Veda, including in Ramanasramam which is enjoying *ghanaparayana* beginning at 7 am each morning.

In this December issue we take a brief look at the origins of Deepam (p. 4) as well as a brief glimpse at the life story of Anandammal who used to climb the hill as a young girl and sit for hours together in meditation before Bhagavan (p. 2). As we approach the end of the year, we are sharing some excerpts of anecdotes sent by devotees on the life of Manianna who passed away in July of this year (p. 5).

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

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Saranagati

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Calendar of Ashram Events

5th Dec (Mon) Pradosham
6th Dec (Tues) Bharani Deepam, Maha Deepam
7th Dec (Wed) Full Moon
11th Dec (Sun) Punarvasu
16th Dec (Fri) Dhanur Masa Commences,
21st Dec (Wed) Pradosham
6th Jan (Fri) Full Moon, Natarajar Abhishekam

7th Jan (Sat) Sri Bhagavan's 143rd Jayanti
9th Jan (Sat) Swami Ramananda Day
12th Jan (Thu) Sivaprakasam Pillai Day
14th Jan (Sat) Bogi; Ramaswami Pillai Day
15th Jan (Sun) Makara Sankaranthi Pongal
16th Jan (Mon) Maattu Pongal
18th Jan (Wed) Giripradakshina of Lord Arunachala





IN PROFILE

Anandammal

Anandammal came to Bhagavan while he was up at Virupaksha Cave. From childhood she had a strong spiritual call and as a young girl used to climb up to Virupaksha Cave and sit in meditation before Bhagavan. At the time of her marriage, she tried to dissuade her parents from pushing her into marriage. But all such efforts proved fruitless. Even after marriage, she continued her regular excursions up to Virupaksha Cave each evening to sit in meditation with Bhagavan. Her in-laws did not approve and tried to get her to take up a more traditional family life saying, “Now you are a married woman and your duty

is to look after your husband and home. You should not go out every evening.” To this she had only one reply, “I told you that I was not interested in marriage. Why did you not listen to me then?”

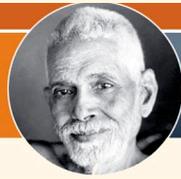
When a son was born to her, family members were thrilled, thinking that the new born child would bind her to family life. But the birth of her child did not interfere with her spiritual vocation and she left her son in the care of other family members and continued her daily climbs up the hill. When her husband passed away in the 1920s, Bhagavan was already established at Sri Ramanasramam and Anandammal began living in a small thatched hut in Ramanagar. Her brother took over the responsibility of caring for her son, eventually making him his son-in-law. Anandammal’s son and daughter-in-law worked as school teachers in Tiruvannamalai.

As Anandammal did not attach any importance to material possessions or physical needs, a kind hearted devotee named Dhanam took upon herself the responsibility of cooking for Anandammal and otherwise looking after her.

With little education, Anandammal was unable to read even though she was very interested in philosophical works and any writings on the teaching. A lady teacher from Madurai used to visit during school holidays and, as she had great respect and love for Anandammal, she would bring books on philosophical subjects from the library and read aloud to Anandammal. Even though this lady was a Tamil scholar, she sometimes had difficulty understanding passages in the books she read out to Anandammal. Whenever she found a passage too difficult to grasp, Anandammal would clear her doubts with concise explanations. The lady was very often surprised at Anandammal’s intuitive grasp of great advaitic truths, an excellent illustration of how spiritual *sadhana*, direct experience and intuitive wisdom surpass mere book knowledge.

Anandammal was judicious with her time and made a point of either studying the teaching through texts read out by others, or sit in meditation. She never allowed even a single moment to pass in idleness. If she could find someone to read to her, she would have works of Bhagavan and the *Ribhu Gita* or some other philosophical work on hand. Otherwise, she would





go for *giri pradakshinam* or sit calmly and meditate for hours in Bhagavan's presence.

Clad in an ochre sari, her shorn head and a necklace of *rudraksha* beads gave her the appearance of a *sannyasini* and of someone who had no interest in worldly matters. Even with regard to food, she had no likes or dislikes but ate only to keep the body functioning. When her caretaker, Dhanam, was to go away for a few days, she would always prepare enough rice to last for the duration and leave it in a pot for Anandammal who would eat a little of the rice whenever she felt the need.

One devotee who was close to Anandammal describes how intensely and uncompromisingly inclined to the life of *sadhana* she was. She writes:

Once, I got the idea that it would be nice to prepare some snacks and distribute them among the sadhus in the Ashram. Accordingly, I prepared some pakodas (savouries) and made several packages. I distributed the packets to all sadhus in the Ashram and went to Anandammal's hut with the last packet. When I reached her place, she beckoned me to come and sit beside her. When she noticed the packet in my hand, she asked, "What is it that you have brought?" I gave her the parcel and explained the background. She admonished me saying, "Why do you waste your time like this? Where did you get the idea that sadhus need such trifles as snacks and sweets? Don't you ever listen to what Bhagavan says? He has told us all repeatedly that the only thing to do is to be still. And yet, you engage yourself in such totally unnecessary activities. Dhanam has left me some rice in the pot in the corner. There is enough of it to keep me from starving till she returns. I have never felt the need for fancy food and I am sure that the sadhus also feel the same way. I am disappointed in you. You do not seem to realise what a great privilege it is to be allowed to live in Bhagavan's presence. You are so young; you will be able to enjoy this privilege for a long time yet. Do not waste this rare opportunity. Concentrate your energy in the search for the Self and do not fritter it away in such worthless activities."

Her strong words brought me to my senses. I realised how irresponsible I had been. I decided never to make such a mistake in future. Since then, I have not been tempted to do anything of that sort. Even if the impulse arose, I would be reminded of Anandammal's words, and this would keep me from succumbing to temptation.

If devotees came to Anandammal to seek her advice concerning some obstacle or problem in their lives, very often Anandammal would reply:

Why do you waste your time on such unimportant things? What is the point in worrying? Life is like that. There will always be some problem or the other. But you should not let your mind dwell on such things. Forget everything and sit at Bhagavan's feet. He will take care of everything.

Societal hesitations about a woman living alone as a *sadhaka* did not cause her the least distress and she used to say with firm conviction:

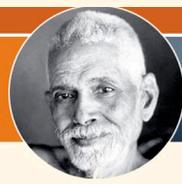
This Arunachala has a unique distinction. It is said that if a woman were to do penance here, her prayers are granted very soon. It was here that Goddess Uma became a part of the Lord. There are no temples for Rama's mother Kausalya or Krishna's mother Devaki. But the mother of our Bhagavan, Alagammal, has been granted this unique privilege. Is not the Mathrubhuteswara temple the greatest proof that women are held in very high esteem in Tiruvannamalai?

As Anandammal was in the habit of availing herself of any opportunity to hear the teaching, when Muruganar began giving classes on the verses and songs in Bhagavan's *Collected Works* in the aftermath of Bhagavan's Mahasamadhi, Anandammal often came to him to clear her doubts. On one occasion, Anandammal approached Muruganar and asked him, "Is it not true that saint Vamadeva attained supreme knowledge even while he was in his mother's womb?" As she was saying this, she collapsed on the floor. Her biographer describes what happened next:

I was standing nearby at that time. At first, I thought that Anandammal was just prostrating to Muruganar. But when, even after a long time she did not get up, I sensed that something was seriously wrong. When I lifted her up, I found that she was unconscious. My friend Padma and I tried to revive Anandammal by sprinkling water on her face. But our efforts were in vain. We sent word to Dhanam and she immediately rushed to the town to inform Anandammal's son. As soon as her son arrived, Anandammal was lifted on to a cart and taken to her son's house. Anandammal continued in the same state of unconsciousness throughout the day and breathed her last that night. She was a devotee par excellence, full of detachment, wisdom and spiritual experience. Even her last thoughts and words were on spiritual matters. The purpose of her life was fulfilled and this ripe soul reached Sri Bhagavan's lotus feet. Her son and her brother performed the last rites in the manner prescribed for the interment of a realised soul. ¹—

¹ See *Cherished Memories*, pp. 94-99 and 'Paramount Ramana', *The Mountain Path*, Jan 1986, p. 27.





Karthigai Deepam's Early Beginnings

The theme of Lord Siva in the form of light (*tejo linga*) originates from the time when Lord Siva stepped in to settle a dispute between Vishnu and Brahma. Manifesting as a giant column of fire, a voice from the flame challenged the two to find either the top or base of the pillar of light. Vishnu took the form of a boar and dug down into the earth in search of the base while Brahma, taking the form of a swan, flew high up towards the stars seeking its apex. But neither succeeded, and once humbled, both bowed before the Lord, begging forgiveness for their conceit. Meanwhile, as the light shone with overpowering splendour, Vishnu and Brahma entreated Mahadeva to moderate his brightness so that celestial and earthly beings might worship before Him and be delivered from the darkness of ignorance. The Lord heeded their request and allowed the column of flame to cool into the lingam of stone we see today.

The purificatory power of pilgrimage to this sacred lingam is so great, the Puranas tell us, that one need only see Arunachala from a distance to be assured of liberation in this lifetime. Lord Siva proclaims:

The moment you set eyes on It, your ignorance is destroyed! Its glory gives sight to the blind, the ability to walk to the lame, progeny to the childless and speech to the dumb. Arunachala confers all siddhis, cures all diseases, destroys all sins and grants all boons. Every year, during Karthigai, I shall appear on the summit of this Hill in the form of fire [...]. Those who see that fire and meditate upon it shall realise the great light within themselves.¹

Once, in response to Muruganar's request, Bhagavan elucidated the *tattva* of Karthigai Deepam. He wrote:

Getting rid of the I-am-the-body idea and merging the mind into the Heart to realize the Self as non-dual being and the light of all is the real significance of darshan of the beacon of light on Annamalai, the centre of the universe.²

Another insight into the origins of the Deepam Light came in a scene at the Ashram one Karthigai night while Tamil parayana was underway. Nagamma describes this vivid scene with Bhagavan at its centre:

His face appeared as though mirroring his Self-illumination, with his silence and profound thought reflected on it. The moon rose in the east and cast its light on him as though seeking its light from him. I sat there, facing east, with my back against the almond tree. If I looked north, I had the light of the Arunachala Hill; if I looked ahead I had the brilliant light of the moon; and if I looked to the right, I had the glowing light emanating from Bhagavan's face. What a sight it was, and how lucky I felt that I had the three-faced light around me that night. I felt an inexplicable bliss and involuntarily closed my eyes. On hearing the sound of the dinner bell, I opened my eyes. Bhagavan was looking steadily at me, and that look was more than I could stand; involuntarily I looked down. Bhagavan smiled and entered the dining room with devotees following behind him.³ —

1 *Arunachala Mahatmyam*.

2 *The Collected Works of Sri Ramana Maharshi*, p. 79.

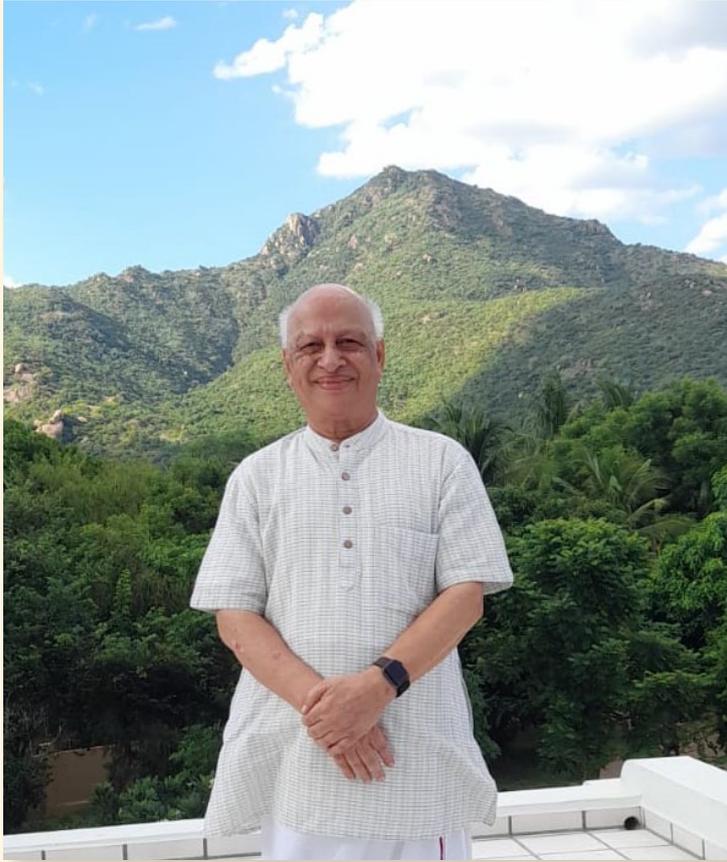
3 *Letters from Sri Ramanasramam*, 29th November 1947.

Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Annamalai Swami Day



On Wednesday, 9th Nov, devotees gathered to observe Annamalai Swami's departure on this day in 1995. *Aksaramanamalai* recitation was followed by *arathi* and the distribution of prasad. —





IN PROFILE

Remembering V.S. Mani

[It seems only fitting that we share some of the many vignettes and anecdotes of V.S. Mani that devotees, friends and family members sent us following Manianna's passing away this last July. We are sorry not to be able to include all the stories that came to us owing to space constraints, but we will explore ways to share them in full online in the near future.]

Some five years ago, I was in a dilemma whether to continue working or retire. When Manianna got to know of it, he told me not to resign my work as editor of *Modern Astrology*. A year later, still unable to take the step, I called Manianna and asked him to check with Bhagavan by placing folded slips of paper with the words 'Give up' and 'Continue' written on

them in Bhagavan's shrine and pick one of them as coming from Bhagavan. Such a practice is traditionally approved of when one has to make difficult decisions but is usually assigned to a kid below 3 or 4 years to pick one slip of paper from many placed before a deity. I for one always respected Manianna as one who was guileless and very close to Bhagavan due to his complete and total involvement with the ashram. A few days later, I received a slip with 'Continue' written on it from Manianna. Things were very difficult those days but with Manianna also telling me not to resign (that was even before the slips ritual), and now Bhagavan's endorsements of Manianna, I gave up all thought of resigning and plodded on in my work.

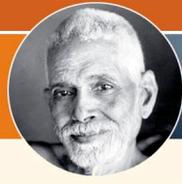
— Gayatri Devi Vasudev, editor of *Modern Astrology*

Many devotees recalled recently how Manianna gave them saplings or cuttings from Ashram trees for their centres, institutions or homes, always with a rider to take good care of the tree. He has also given a Vilvam sapling that has grown into a beautiful tree at Ambika and Kameshwar's home at Arunachala. Manianna had such a sharp memory that he would not only enquire about the people at home and office but also about the saplings and cuttings that he had given. He, of course, remembered practically every devotee by name. And I wouldn't be surprised if he remembered every Ashram cow by name and had a name for every tree and plant. He knew about all their qualities without a doubt. He introduced me to the quaint fragrance of a plant that grows right next to the Ashram office. "Some people don't like this fragrance", he told me, "But it is very unique." Ever since I have always enjoyed that slightly pungent fragrance. Manianna in his typical manner made out that his memory for plants and trees was no big deal. "When you have love for something or a deep interest in something it is not surprising that you remember everything about it," he said, which is of course very true. Yet how many of us have such great love for anything at all?

— Sarada Natarajan, editor of *The Ramana Way*

Once in 2017, I visited India from UK in June. It was blistering hot and Ganesanji had asked





me specifically to go up the Hill and sit there even if it was for a few minutes. I was going to walk up the Hill around mid-day. Manianna heard of my plan and asked me to come to the office. He presented me with a 'Vetti Hat' (made of thin fibrous fragrant roots) to protect me from the sun and heat. It was a most kind gesture and touched my heart.

— Meenal, UK

Talking with another devotee just recently, we both related how, whenever walking in front of Manianna's office even now, we instinctively look in to see if he is seated there at his simple desk. Consciously knowing that Mani is not there is not enough to override this instinct to receive his gracious look and friendly smile. I remember so well hearing his sonorous, "John!", stopping me in my tracks. I would spin around to see what surprise or request had smilingly just occurred to him. Each day I enjoy the greenery, the trees especially, that he planted and bequeathed to us in the ashram.

— John Maynard, Sri Ramanasramam

Manianna had a ready smile for young children stepping into the Ashram for the first time and a word or two for the accompanying devotees which put them at ease. He had an eye for all that mattered, be they pertaining to the shrine, the gosala, the dining hall or the flower gardens. His meticulous attention to the flora and the fauna in the Ashram was indeed striking. He had an eye for nurturing new plants, so much so that once his father, then President T.N. Venkataraman in a humorous vein said, "If I sit quietly at some place in the Ashram for very long, Mani will surely come along and plant something on my head."

— ASK and Aparamma, Tiruvannamalai

Icame to know Mani from the time he joined the Ashram. I remember him organizing the planting of trees and what to me, at that time, seemed a very novel idea, namely, using the wastewater for watering plants. Every tree in the ashram had Mani's special attention. Mani of course looked after the goshala too bringing in the best breed of cows. Sundaram once said to me

that Mani was very particular about the ashram: "He makes sure that not one stone is out of its place".

— Zarine Pegler, UK Foundation, London

In 1987, I was living at Pondichery on the shores of the Bay of Bengal among the fisherfolk. They ate crabs and fish. I ate rice and idlies. They called me thatha (grandpa) for at 55 I looked 75. One evening a friend and fellow admirer of J Krishnamurti, Susunaga Weeraperuma and his Swiss German wife, Claudia visited me. They were on their way to Sri Ramanasramam. As it would turn out, I would accompany them. When we were leaving after a few days' stay in Tiruvannamalai, I told Weeraperuma that I would leave Pondichery and settle down near Ramanasramam as soon as I could.

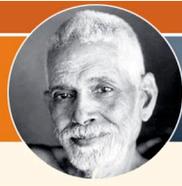
True to my plan, after several months I began looking for a room at an affordable rate near the Ashram. Ashram President T. N. Venkataraman's third son V. S. Mani, who was the Administrator of the Ashram, told me, "Why are you looking for a room outside? I shall give you a room inside the Ashram. You know many languages. Serve the Ashram by showing visitors around."

— K. V. Subramonyan, Sri Ramanasramam

Igrew up hearing about Mani-mama and his kindness and generosity from my father who spoke of him both as a friend, and as a protector of Bhagavan's devotees. By the time we met for the first time, when he, Ramani, and Ramanan visited my parent's house in the rural USA, I was a cautiously rebellious 14-year-old and I worried that I might accidentally make a bad impression on someone who I already held in high regard. I remember Mani-mama being warm and friendly, bending to tie Ramani's sneakers before we walked in the fields, explaining that it was their first-time wearing shoes like those. Still, it took me years to get over the fear that I wasn't proper enough which, as it turned out, didn't matter so much. Mani-mama was always kind, inquisitive, and quick to make small jokes to put me at ease.

Before I left Tiruvannamalai this last July, I came to tell Mani-mama that I was returning to the USA for a





couple of months. The news was a little unexpected and on my way to the office I saw and informed KVS-mama of it as well. KVS-mama came into the office while I was telling Mani-mama of my plans and referenced the news that I was going. Mani-mama immediately started jokingly scolding me saying, “What? I’m your father here! Why was he informed of your travel plans before I was?”

It’s amazing for me to think now of how shy and quiet I was with Mani-mama when we first met. Over the years his warmth, humour, perceptiveness, and care put me at ease and I loved how I could joke, play, and share so easily with him.

One of the last things Mani-mama said to me was that when I came back to Tiru, it was time for me to start wearing saris. I laughed, lightly protested, and tried to deflect (saris are beautiful but I still feel a little self-conscious wearing them) but he was firm. If you see me wearing a sari in the ashram in the future, you can be certain that it’s for his sake.

— Katy Blackman, USA

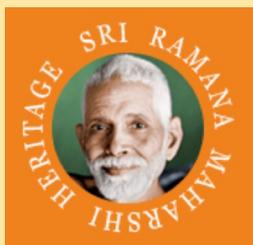
In January this year I requested Manianna to interview him for our ‘Ramananjali 40’. Manianna had been an ardent fan of Ramananjali songs along with Ramani Manni and I was very keen on interviewing him. When I posed my request to him, he started with the brusque, “I don’t give interviews, ma” yet added immediately with affection, “but I cannot say no to Sarada. Where do you want to have the shooting? At the Ashram? At my seat in the office?” “How about at home Anna?” I asked. “That would be perfect, ma,” he said, “Come at 4.30.” “Are Ambika, Kameshwar, Poorna and Viraj still in town?” he

enquired. “Yes Anna.” “Then they should come home too. All of you come at 4 pm so that you can have a cup of tea before the interview and they can leave after that.”

Manianna welcomed all of us warmly at Mangala Nivas. It brought memories of generations of hospitality that we have enjoyed there and from all the family members of TNV Mama. On every visit of ours to Tiruvannamalai, as breakfast, lunch and dinner would be only at the Ashram, Nagu Mami would insist on our going to their home one afternoon for coffee and snacks, all of which would be tasty. Sushila Manni, Azhagu Akka and Sarasa Akka regularly gift us home grown fruits and vegetables and many are the ‘teas’ which we have enjoyed with them. Lakshmi Akka would be overjoyed whenever I went to her place for lunch and heap many servings of love. Ganesan Anna would treat us to some of the most delicious mangoes as Appa and he worked on planning some major event like the birth centenary of Bhagavan or the world tour of Ramananjali. He would expertly peel and slice the mangoes himself. So, it was tea with Manianna that afternoon.

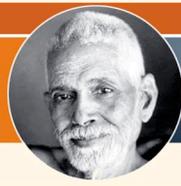
Each of us was served exactly what we wanted by Vasantha—tea, coffee, green tea, the last with pure honey made by those who, Manianna explained, are associated with the Ashram’s beekeeping unit. He looked at my somewhat blank expression and said, “Don’t you know we do beekeeping at the Ashram, ma? We are a totally organic Ashram in every sense of the term,” he added with great satisfaction. And there were snacks and finally we were given a bag of ‘hibiscus tea’ to carry home, made of hibiscus flowers from their garden, carefully dried by Vasantha.

Announcement: Sri Ramana Maharshi Heritage



Sri Ramana Maharshi Heritage (SRMH) is a newly created 501 (c) (3), registered non-profit in the United States. The organization’s purpose is to preserve Sri Ramana Maharshi’s heritage and to serve devotees who are drawn to the life and teachings of Bhagavan. The new entity’s objectives are aligned with those of Sri Ramanasramam in India. Devotees in the United States who wish to donate towards and participate in Sri Ramanasramam’s charitable initiatives in India can learn more by visiting the website: <https://www.srmh.org/> or by sending an email to: sriramanamaharshiheritage@gmail.com. —





Manianna told us about the various good qualities of hibiscus tea.

I got lost in Manianna's affection and descriptions and may have been meddling with my beaded bracelet for it suddenly broke and the pink pearl-like beads scattered all over the floor. Remembering his recent foot injury, I was worried that Manianna should not trip on any of them if by chance we missed finding it. Most of us were on our knees and all but one bead was found and put away safely. I had kept the beads away for getting the bracelet re-threaded and forgotten all about it when, a week after our return to Bangalore, I received a letter with that single bead carefully packed and enclosed. Manianna then sent me a message that Vasantha had found it when she swept the room the next day and so he was returning it to me and hoped I could get the bracelet properly restrung. What can one say of his loving care and his meticulous nature?

— Sarada Natarajan, editor of *The Ramana Way*

I interacted a good deal with Mani. There was not a single instance of disagreement or misunderstanding. We had the same Master, imbibed the same teaching and were on the same page in all matters. Bhagavan has graced all his devotees with the strength to face the vicissitudes and challenges of life. Mani had seen the Ashram pass through rough times and he had his own share of crises in his life but the staunch *karmayogi*, *grhasthasannyasi* that he was, he served the Ashram and devotees wholeheartedly and uninterruptedly. If as the Administrator he expected obedience from others, he himself was a model of implicit obedience.

— K. V. Subramonyan, Sri Ramanasramam

Manianna was an example of how one could act in a spirit of devotion and goodwill towards all who came to the ashram. His range of contacts was extraordinary and if one had a problem, he would think about it for a moment and invariably he would remember someone who could be of assistance. He was also a person whom one could rely on to be discreet. He was a keeper of secrets. His cheerful demeanour would give one confidence. Many would relate that one of their first acts on entering the ashram for a stay after months if not years away, would be to

see Manianna and tell him of the latest in their lives. His curiosity and goodwill were infectious.

— Chris Quilkey, editor of *The Mountain Path*

One of the things I learned from Manianna is the discipline he held himself to. He was very traditional in upholding the chain of command and always put himself under the authority of the President. Whether it was a tiny matter or a matter of utmost importance he was keen that the President be consulted first.

— Sundaresa Kannan, Sri Ramanasramam

Manianna seemed to have a personal relationship with virtually everyone and seemed to know all the family members as well. He would gently chide me for often going to the ashram alone without my wife and son. He was very thoughtful about adding to a devotee's experience at the ashram. For instance, he once introduced me to someone that I had never met before, telling me, "I think the two of you will get along well and maybe you can show him around". The gentleman in question was a doctor and a devotee of Swami Rama of the Himalayan Institute, and indeed, we had a wonderful time together, going for *giripradakshina* three or four times in the course of the week.

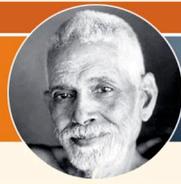
— Swaminathan Venkataraman, USA

Like me, many who have visited the Ashram know how spontaneously helpful Manianna was even to newcomers, like I was at that time. Manianna's smiling and cheerful presence was undoubtedly one of the highlights of ashram for us. First thing we used to do on entering the ashram was to go to his table in the office room and look for him. Manianna initiated the Ramana satsang group in Singapore and was very happy that it took roots.

— Lakshmi Jayachandran, Singapore

Manianna helped set up travel arrangements for interviews with early devotees for the documentary *The Sage of Arunachala* in 1989. He also closed the New Hall to visitors for two days in 1990 to allow Dennis and me to work undisturbed while making a mould of the statue of Bhagavan sculpted by Vaidyanatha Sthapati. Both *The Sage of Arunachala* and replicas of the





statues now installed in Arunachala Ashrama, NYC and Clarence, Nova Scotia, would not have been possible without Manianna's help. Additionally, when Mathy and Dr. Palanisamy Rathinasamy began plans to construct a replica of the Old Hall in Tampa Florida, it was Mani who supplied us with all the dimensions and images of architectural details of the Old Hall in Ramanasramam. From this, detailed drawings and schematics were developed to make the project a reality. An exact replica of the Old Hall now exists in Tampa because of Mani's indispensable attention to detail and generous assistance.

— Jim Hartel, USA

In late June of 2020 during the Covid lock downs, I got a message from Manianna concerning the upcoming *Saranagati* draft, asking me to come to his house. He wanted to clarify some of the language in the issue surrounding the text dealing with the recent transmission of the Office of Ashram President. He wanted to let it be known publicly that he and his brother Ganesan supported the installation of their nephew, Dr. Venkat S. Ramanan as Ashram President. He also wanted it to be stated that neither he nor Ganesan held any claims to Ashram administrative authority. He was keen that the *paraphrasing* of Bhagavan's Will that appeared in the text be replaced with the *exact* language of Bhagavan's Will in order to more adequately reflect and underscore the legality and propriety of the recent transfer of power according to Bhagavan's stated wishes. I was struck by the intensity of his resolve to take every step possible to protect his nephew and the Ashram in the future by leaving no room for doubt where things stood in respect of the ongoing administration of the Ashram.

— Michael Highburger, Sri Ramanasramam

When I joined the Ashram as cashier in 2008, Manianna warmly welcomed me, saying "Welcome to Ramanasramam!" Working in the office alongside him, whenever he would introduce me to a devotee, he would always introduce me as his 'colleague', treating me as an equal without distinction of age, experience or position. The other aspect of Manianna I observed was that in his position, he had to be firm and yet kind. He had to decline many



requests but would do it in such a way that the person on the receiving end would not feel dejected, but might even feel happy to have got a negative response. It was a unique quality that allowed him to foster harmony and execute his duties with compassion.

— Cashier Subramanian, Sri Ramanasramam

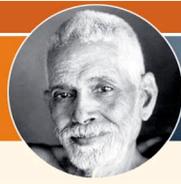
Dedication was Mani's middle name. Surrender to Bhagavan, dedication to the Ashram and love for and service to the devotees. His devotion to Bhagavan was quiet, seen more in his life and action than in his words.

— K. V. Subramonyan, Sri Ramanasramam

Once in 1992 an old devotee was stealthily carrying breakfast from her house for an inmate of the Ashram who was staying up at Skandashramam. Not wanting it to be known what she was doing and especially wanting to avoid Manianna, she passed by the front gate and entered the Ashram at the Korangu Thottam gate. However, upon entering, lo and behold! Manianna was just there at the gate. He enquired, "Why are you entering through this gate, and what is that in your hand?"

On another occasion, an inmate of the Ashram was asked to get two or three cardboard boxes to pack





household articles. As the house owner was to hand over his house for the inmate, it was insisted to get the cardboard boxes from the Ashram's packing room. Though hesitant, the inmate was ready to slip into the packing room to 'borrow' four packing boxes, but lo & behold! Manianna arrived at the scene and inquired of him, "What, Sir, are you doing in the packing room?"

There are many similar instances revealing Manianna's intuition. He had a sharp eye for any activity that might not be fully above board. This keen feature of his discerning eye and his managing style brought discipline to the Ashram.

— V. Raghav

Manianna and Ramani came to our home. During their visit, both took a keen interest and looked around the house. Manianna enquired about many details and was pleased with the house. Then he wanted to look at the garden and made special enquiries about the different plants we had. At one point, he asked me, "Have you planted any *magadam*?" He added, "*magadam* is an auspicious plant that is put around temples." I answered, "Yes, we have" and I showed him a tiny plant very near to him. He was happy. Later I told Manianna we wanted a *manoranjitam* plant, he immediately called the Ashram gardener, Dandapani and asked him to give the same. Another time, I wanted Dandapani to come and have a look at our garden and advise us, and he readily agreed. Manianna's visit to our house, his enquiries and his offers of help proves how genuinely he cared for the welfare of devotees.

— Madhurananda, Tiruvannamalai

Manianna had some reservations when the idea of a new dining hall was suggested simply because it meant chopping down a beautiful flowering tree gifted by a devotee from abroad. He relented to the proposal only when it was decided that the tree could be transplanted. Several old like-minded devotees stood near him throughout the delicate process of transplanting the revered tree, all with bated breath and prayers to Bhagavan.

— ASK and Aparnamma, Tiruvannamalai

A friend reflected on a carpenter and a welder who worked intermittently for the ashram. When the

carpenter's wife was pregnant, Mani-mama would give him money for his pregnant wife even though the carpenter wasn't then doing any work for the ashram. The carpenter also recalls an occasion when Mani-mama passed by in an auto-rickshaw just when he was walking with his pregnant wife. Mama insisted on them taking the auto while he got out and walked to the ashram. The welder recounted a time when as a boy he and some friends would throw stones at the almond tree in the Ashram in order to knock down the fruit to eat. Once finishing their snack, they would spit the remainder back onto the ground. The Ashram guard seeing this subsequently refused to let them in saying that they didn't know how to behave properly. Mani-mama came to the defense of the boys and said that such behavior is natural to boys this age and that they should not be prevented from entering the Ashram for that reason.

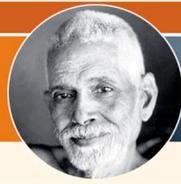
— Swaminathan Venkataraman, USA

I was very pleased and honoured when Manianna and his wife Ramani, on a tour of Europe, made a short stay in Paris. I was able to spend the three days with them driving them around the city, showing them the most important sites, taking them to Versailles and welcoming them to my house. Sometimes he would jokingly remember my adventurous driving through the streets of Paris. The last words I heard him say a short time ago were through a mutual friend on the telephone, "Tell her to come to Arunachala as soon as possible".

— Eleonore Nees, France

Mani was a man of few words and his love and surrender to Sri Bhagavan was hidden. In earlier years, I used to see him only one time in the morning when he would walk from the mother's temple and go around the Samadhi. Then throughout the day he was busy doing the work assigned to him by Sri Bhagavan. Once I asked him, "Devotees talk about seeing Bhagavan in their dreams or having visions of him. You grew up as a child in front of him, do you see him?" He smiled and after a long pause said, "I don't have such visions, and if I have seen him, it is his feet and legs up to the knees." That reminded me of Laxman in the *Ramayana*. When asked by Sri





Rama to identify some ornaments of Sita that were recovered after her abduction, Laxman replies that the only ornament he could identify is her anklets, since he had never gazed at her above the feet.

— Geeta Bhatt, USA

Mani once came to London with his wife, Ramani, to stay with Chris and Zarine Pegler en route to visit various friends in other parts of the world. He and Ramani with myself and my wife Diana all set off to spend the morning in Kew Gardens which turned out to be a delightful occasion. It was a sunny morning and we boarded a miniature train at one point to be taken on a tour of all the main features of those extensive gardens. Mani was amused when we stopped for the driver to feed some peacocks! “Driver happy. Birds happy!” he remarked. At another point when we were inside the vast tropical glasshouse, he was intrigued to find some trees and plants which were native to Tamil Nadu. He was intrigued by the names of Western guests in the Ashram. One was that of Barry Domegan, a prominent member of the UK Foundation. When they met and Barry introduced himself, Mani asked him to repeat his name, to which Barry replied, “Domegan, as in ‘Tommy Gun!’” The next morning when Barry and I were queuing up to go into the dining hall for breakfast Mani came up to us with a big smile and said, “Good morning Mr. Top Gun!”

Another name which intrigued him was that of my friend Margriet Van Den Dool. He once asked her if that was her real name, to which she replied with a mild if playfully indulgent irritation, “Yes, it is!” I in

turn mentioned an Indian name which intrigued me. ‘Shivaramakrishna’. “Ah”, said Mani, “That’s because his parents thought the best thing they could give him was fully comprehensive insurance!”

— Alasdair Black, UK Foundation, London

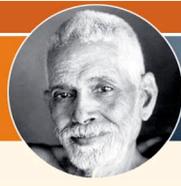
During their trip to Europe, it was suggested that Manianna and Ramani stay with me. I was teaching some classes at an American University in Geneva in those days, but the time they were coming was vacation and I was free. Manianna and Ramani Manni were to stay several days at my apartment in a picturesque village at 900 meters in the foothills of the Jura with a view of Lac Lemman and the Mount Blanc, the highest mountain in Europe. Unfortunately, when I took them on a boat trip across the Lac Lemman to the French side, Ramani slipped and fell, injuring her back. By Sri Bhagavan’s grace, one of the best private clinics in Europe was close to my apartment where she was fully examined. They fitted her with a brace, told her that she had to stay put for some days, wear the brace, and then they would examine her again as Manianna had told them that they were planning a heavy schedule of travels. Thankfully surgery was not needed. Both the orthopaedic surgeon and the doctor who did one of the scans told me in private that the pain must be very great, and neither one of them could understand how she could be so cheerful, and give no hint of the pain she was feeling. Both she and Manianna were cheerful and enthusiastic despite all that had happened. It was an illustration of total surrender to Sri Bhagavan. I could see how the doctors were impressed by the calm,

Obituary: Sri Sundaramoorthy, aka ‘Electrical Sundaram’



Born on 28th July 1952, Sri Sundaramoorthy, aka ‘Electrical Sundaram’, came to the Ashram as a young boy to do electrical work with his owner in the early 1980s. Later, he took over the entire electrification and plumbing work and faithfully served in the Ashram for more than three decades. After coming to work in the morning, he could be seen quietly circumambulating Bhagavan’s Samadhi or sitting quietly in meditation in Bhagavan’s Old Hall. Soft spoken and mild mannered, he was loved by all who knew him and worked with him. Sundaram retired five years ago due to failing health and convalesced at home with his family. After a long illness Sundaram passed away on 13th November at the age of 70. He is survived by his wife, two daughters and his son, Senthil, who continues to serve the Ashram as an electrician. —





friendly demeanour they both maintained, and so was I. Later the orthopaedic surgeon wanted to see Ramani Manni at his office in Geneva facing the lake. During that consultation Manianna struck up a friendly conversation with him and in reply to his questions, Manianna told him they had come from Sri Ramanasramam in South India. He even presented the surgeon with some stationery from Shantimalai that he was carrying. When we were getting ready to leave, the doctor insisted on making that visit complimentary. Despite the fact that some people were encouraging Manianna to get treatment somewhere else, he assured me that both he and Ramani Manni felt good with the orthopaedic surgeon, the clinic and being in my apartment so they stayed with me for ten days. It was really a blessing and a teaching for me. First of all, as with most people in the West, apart from the very wealthy ones, I didn't have servants. I didn't even have a housekeeper, and that didn't faze either one of them. Manianna and I would cut vegetables and then Ramani Manni would give instructions on how to prepare them or would cook them herself while sitting on a stool in the kitchen. One day while I was running the washing machine in the laundry room, Manianna came in and washed out a few of Ramani Manni's *sahvars* and *dupattas* by hand because he was afraid the colour might run in the machine. He insisted on doing it himself, and seemed to thoroughly enjoy it. At any rate they both made me feel so comfortable that I tended to forget who they were. But didn't Bhagavan also have that simplicity and humility, treating common village folks the same and perhaps even with more care than visiting VIPs and learned pundits!

— Marye Tonnaire, France

In 2002, Prof. Yanagida (the past president of Nippon Ramana Kendra) invited Mani-san to Japan. The professor asked me to host them during their seven-day stay in Japan following their tour of Europe and America.

Ramana devotees were eager to receive them and in Osaka, they received a warm welcome. We took them to Kyoto for two days where one elderly lady devotee invited them to stay in her traditional Japanese home. The courtesies and gestures that passed between this elderly lady and Mani-san were so beautiful if not somewhat amusing. She regularly greeted Manianna

and Ramani-san with the traditional Japanese standing bow. Mani-san imitated her perfectly. Each time they saw each other, there was this sacred exchange of traditional Japanese bows, and we all laughed joyously.

Japanese houses generally have deep soaking bathtubs which can accommodate more than one person. Also it should be mentioned that bathing in Japan is often done communally at the local public bath. Since Ramani-san had just injured her back while in Switzerland, she was in pain and had difficulty moving about, I thought it best they bathe together. Then Mani-san would be in a position to take care of her in her fragile condition. But after suggesting this, I thought to myself, "Wait a minute, they are Brahmins. You can never do anything like that in India. Oh, my gosh!" But they never showed any hesitation or resistance to my suggestion and were very pleased to participate in this innocent Japanese custom of bathing together.

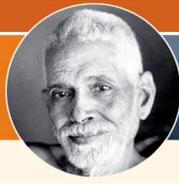
— Shunya Sakiyama, Sri Ramanasramam

Every evening, I would see Mani and Ramani go home together, and would feel a sense of delight at their mutual joy in each other's company. He had great respect for all of us as frequent visitors, kept an eagle eye on each one of us, enquired about our families, and worked hard to keep the ashram free of scandal and commerce. He kept his doubts and fears to himself. If he had ideological differences with pilgrims, he asserted his benevolence in a more inclusive way, hiding his personal resentment against our assertion of cultural heterogeneity. What he felt about these differences was never communicated by gaze or sleight of hand. Mani regularly made it a point to introduce strangers to one another, bringing in some connecting history or shared interest.

— Dr. Susan Visvanathan, Retd Professor, JNU

Manianna was genuinely concerned for the safety, welfare and well-being of devotees. An example to illustrate this is how one early morning in December 1987, when a devotee-family having booked a car to leave for Bangalore were preparing to take leave, Manianna, appeared in the wee hours to intercept them with the news that the Chief Minister, M.G. Ramachandran, had passed away in the night. Mani was nervous that there





might be mischief along the road and thus advised them to travel together with another group of devotees going that day to Bangalore. This is just one of the many demonstrations of his solicitude for devotees.

— ASK and Aparnamma, Tiruvannamalai

Manianna always attended the morning and evening puja. One day I glanced over to where he was usually sitting. This particular morning, he was still standing because his stool hadn't arrived in the aftermath of his foot injury. In that moment I saw an elderly man bringing the stool for him. I could see in the man's face and the way he was approaching Manianna how his heart was so overjoyed to be able to serve Manianna and be the one who could bring comfort to him to sit down. For some reason to view this moment touched my own heart deeply and I felt I needed to share this with Manianna. So, after the *arathi* I went to his office and told him my observation and how I felt so touched to see the reverence this man felt for Manianna. I loved his response when he said that he himself feels very touched by the love and care he receives from the devotees. I find it so beautiful and precious that he knew how much he was truly loved.

— Gabriele Sames, Tiruvannamalai

I met Mani-mama at Ramanasramam in 2017 and had the good fortune of spending time with him. My relatives, Sriram Panchu, his mother Meenakshi Mami and Mahalakshmi Mami (Prof. Swaminathan's daughter) all provided kind introductions to Mani Mama who looked after me and my group of visitors with such care, kindness and impeccable hospitality. Though I hail from Chennai, I am currently residing in Canada as a Buddhist monk in a monastery called *Tisarana*. My teacher and preceptor, Ajahn Viradhammo had the pleasure of meeting Mani Mama and we were all so inspired by Bhagavan's teachings that we decided to make the pilgrimage to Tiruvannamalai. That was in 2017 when we had the good fortune of meeting Mani Mama. It is not difficult to imagine the vacuum Mani Mama's passing would've left, both in the family as well as in the ashram. What else can we say to console ourselves but that he lived so well and died so peacefully, that both his life as well as his passing inspire

emulation? I remember his calm voice and measured response when I called him to express my condolences on his wife's passing. His *titishka* and *uparati* were inspiring, to say the least. Our entire community here came together and offered funeral chanting on the evening of the 20th of July. We shared merits and dedications that his destination be a peaceful one, ultimately leading to final egress from *samsara*. We sincerely hope that his life of service and dedication to a cause he certainly considered greater than himself, be a beacon of hope and inspiration for others.

— Amarasiri Bhikkhu, Canada

When I first met Mani, he was crawling! He could actually walk, but not very confidently! Since those far-off days he has been a constant presence in the ashram, in Tiruvannamalai, or as a friend. He cared deeply about the ashram and the well-being of those who lived and worked in it. When he gave up his job, he came to be in the ashram full-time. He could be seen at his desk almost every day and knew by name almost everyone who came his way. His circle of friends and acquaintances was enormous. Anyone who needed help could go to him and he would know someone who could oblige. He genuinely cared about people and wanted to help them. At heart he was a kind and caring person. Even to animals! I once watched as he supervised the careful relocation of a poisonous insect from the office steps to a hole in the ground. He would not allow it to be killed.

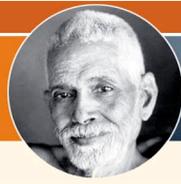
— Kitty Osborne, Tiruvannamalai

Manianna loved to serve the Ashram. He did not believe in sitting back. He had told my mother, "Mami, one cannot stop working and serving Bhagavan. This we do just as we brush our teeth or comb our hair or have a bath every day."

This revealed to me that for Manianna, service to Bhagavan was second nature, something very natural. In his own presence Bhagavan had made Manianna declare this purpose of life even as a young boy. Enacting a play written by a school teacher in front of Bhagavan, Manianna proclaimed, "I will serve Bhagavan's devotees till my last breath".

Bhagavan had given a gentle smile of acknowledgement which remained imprinted in Manianna's heart. His





daughter Shanti shared how her father had returned to his desk at the Ashram only the previous day before his passing. He had been asked how his day went and answered, “It was complete, absolutely fulfilling.” “Who would use the word ‘fulfilling’ for a normal day at office?” wondered Shanti. But what Manianna was referring to was not just that day. It was every moment. It was his whole life. Even in the interview Manianna said repeatedly, “No regrets, ma. We have had a good time, ma.”

— Sarada Natarajan, editor of *The Ramana Way*

When my parents visited me in the U.S., they loved to see the redwoods. It was a pilgrimage, and we would go and spend an afternoon with these giants. During the weekdays, the forest is almost deserted and many a time, we would find ourselves quite alone. We would sit and meditate, do *parayanam*, take a walk and return. They loved being in the presence of these ancient trees that are thousands of years old. It was always the highlight of the trip. During their first visit to the US, we visited New York and stayed at the ashram. Dennis was a gracious host. Along with Dennis, we drove up to Niagara. En route, we spent the night with Jim, Dennis’ brother, and Fran (Jim’s wife) at their home in Franklin, and then stayed with Professor Ram Desai in Buffalo. While my parents proceeded to Toronto to meet with the Shastris, I stayed back with Dennis at his parents’ house in Tonawanda. Everyone we met and spent time with treated us like a member of their family. While the gatherings were simple, the heart connections ran deep. Appa seemed to naturally make this deep heart connection with devotees from all over the world and from all walks of life. When they visited me in California, there was so much warmth and happiness that they shared with the devotees. During the last three trips to California, we always spent a weekend with Joan and Matthew Greenblatt. The meetings were so joyful. They would often reminisce about the early days of Arunachala Ashrama and the Nova Scotia Ashrama and share stories about old devotees.

— Ramanan Subramanian, USA

Manianna was once visiting Ramanan in the Bay Area. The three of us went to a regular Saturday Ramana Satsang at Sunita and Karthik’s house that day. Towards

the end of the evening Satsang, Sunita asked Manianna if he wanted to say something. Manianna politely declined with a gracious *namaste* gesture, and a bright smile. Immediately afterwards I felt—and had the feeling that all who were there shared this—that Manianna was indeed ‘communicating’ with us, but by means of the higher eloquence of Silence in Bhagavan’s Presence.

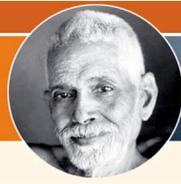
— Dr. Carlos Lopez

Manianna used to like to walk in the surrounding Marea looking at the lake and mountains. He even visited the village church that was close to my house on his own saying that it was very peaceful. Once I had gone outside in the early evening. The sun was setting and the white snow of the Mount Blanc and the neighboring mountains had captured a reflection of the setting sun and had taken on an otherworldly, rosy hue. I immediately ran back to find Manianna, and we decided to bring Ramani Mani outside with us to marvel at the site. The three of us relished the incredible beauty of the moment in complete silence, and that will be engraved in my memory forever. While they were staying at my flat, needless to say they got many phone calls from relatives and friends. But we always found time to chant the Tamil *parayana* and have meditation together each day.

— Marye Tonnaire, France

When I think of Mani Maama, what immediately comes to my mind is, “karma yogi”. Maama was the perfect karma yogi, dedicating his entire life to serving the Ashram and Bhagavan’s devotees all over the world. He loved every inch of the Ashram, especially the trees, plants and all the wonderful animals and birds that make Sri Ramanasramam so special — like Panchavati of the Ramayana. Devotees of Bhagavan in the Bay Area were fortunate to get to know Mani Maama personally, since his son, Ramanan lives here. Every time Maama and Maami visited Ramanan, they would attend our weekly satsangs. I know they truly enjoyed these evenings with the devotee community in the Bay Area. At the satsangs, Maama would always sit at the back, unassuming and humble. Whenever he met devotees from the Bay Area at the Ashram, he





would connect them with me, requesting me to add them to our mailing list. Many have joined our group through an introduction from Mani Maama. He was a great connector of devotees, whether we were visiting Madurai, Tiruchuzhi or Bali, he was ready with his Rolodex, quickly bringing devotees together.

— Sunita Parasuraman, USA

A memory I cherish is of one of my departures from the Ashram. I was sitting in the Mother's temple in the early morning, when Manianna came in on his morning round. He saw me and came to me, and crouched before me. He asked, "when do you leave?" "This afternoon" I said. He was silent for a moment, then he said "Keep coming, Neelam". I was touched to tears.

— Neelam, Shimla

It was early in the year 1988. There was an aspiration to reforest Arunachala — then still predominantly brown and barren of trees — shared by a handful of devotees. The *Annamalai Reforestation Society* would be formally registered as an NGO just a few months later. It was a seemingly hopeless endeavour. It goes without saying that Manianna's keen interest and enthusiastic encouragement in the project also translated into invaluable support in very practical ways. For many years, the area around the back gate of the ashram was a plant nursery and staging ground for ARS tree planting operations on the hill during the rainy months. Within the ashram premises, Manianna loved his trees, affectionately calling them his "silent and undemanding friends". He visited all of them regularly on his afternoon rounds, and the ashram is today a veritable botanical garden as a result of his quiet passion. By way of living memory, one need only look up to Arunachala and see, by Bhagavan's grace, a mountain that is green.

— Dev Gogoi

Some years ago, Manianna and I had gone up the hill a few times together in connection with the banyan tree planting in 2017. So far as I can remember, we never went up as far as Skandasramam. But a few months after Manianna's sudden departure in July, I had a vivid dream of he and I standing outside Skandasramam under the open sky. As we talked, I was overwhelmed by the vividness

of his presence, how clear and bright he was, how much light he shone, and yet, it was not greater than what he showed during his lifetime but I had not fully appreciated it before. He began to list off mistakes he said he had made in the course of his life. He said there were 'three sets of five mistakes' he had committed. When I heard the contents of his confession, I began to weep. Though his testimony was genuine, I knew deep down that he was not guilty of these mistakes. Rather, they were my own faults, though he may not have known this. I woke from the dream stunned and bewildered because in his delicate and tender way, he had shown me where I was falling short in my life currently. He had shown me this without pointing any fingers, presenting these shortcomings as though they were his own. I recalled how Manianna had the most delicate and non-insistent way of pointing out our short-comings. I felt this was all Bhagavan who had shown me something through this loyal devotee who came to me in sleep to give me the clues I was missing in respect of how I was conducting my life.

— Michael Highburger, Sri Ramanasramam

In 2009 I fell gravely ill. As no local treatment seemed to be of any use, my fate was uncertain. I refused further treatment and entrusted myself to Bhagavan's care. But Manianna sent for a specialist and insisted that I get properly treated. By this intervention, my health was restored. I am ever grateful for his resolute kindness.

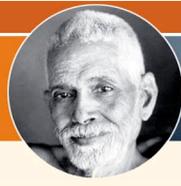
— Shrinivasa Murthi, Sri Ramanasramam

I lost my father this year, so I am with the personal loss of a father and at the same time the Truth of the absorption in Arunachala Siva. I am grieving the loss of Manianna, as I know his spirit has returned to the totality of Bhagavan. I know we are not the body and at the same time we miss the beloved people we care about.

— Latha Morgan, USA

I was blessed to have one of the very last interactions with Manianna in his earthly walk. It happened in a WhatsApp voice message and concerned two pending Ashram projects. The first was the fixture of non-reflective glass on both the Old Hall image of Bhagavan and on the glass door of Bhagavan's Nirvana room which he was keenly following up with





Dr. Perumal, the Tanjavor Archive consultant. Even though he didn't see the completion physically as per his wish, through voice message, he was happy to learn that they had come out well. The second related to the new cloth curtain used at puja time in the Mother's shrine. The temple priest had suggested that the centre design be the Sri Chakra *yantra* design. Manianna was not in favour of the holy Sri Chakra being depicted in cloth on a curtain and instead suggested a *kalasam* design, like the ones used during Mahanyasam with green leaves and coconut in the middle. After his departure, I thought to myself, 'Oh! What a way to end one's earthly journey, namely, dedicated to serving Sri Bhagavan till the very end with these holy symbols in mind.

— Sundaresa Kannan, Sri Ramanasramam

I last saw Manianna on Saturday, 25th June. He had just come out of the small gate on the rear side of samadhi hall and going towards Korangu Thottam. I was going to Old Hall from Korangu Thottam side. When I looked at him from a distance, I saw him beaming with a smile. It was not just his warm welcoming smile, known to devotees. I thought he looked unusually happy.

— Madhurananda, Tiruvannamalai

In the 27 or 28 years I knew Manianna, he always maintained a radiant distance from devotees. He was visible, never oppressive or autocratic, but clear headed and very cool in temperament. I think he received the love of thousands of us without embarrassment or repudiation. The fealty of the workers, dozens of them, who spent their meagre earnings on extravagant flower garlands for his wake, is the epitaph for a man who dedicated his life to the competent and peaceful running of the Ashram by the powers vested in him.

— Dr. Susan Visvanathan, Retd Professor, JNU

I live just a couple of doors down from Mangala Nivas and so rushed to the house the moment Vasantha,

the housekeeper, called me saying Anna had fallen down unconscious. I found Manianna's body and face terribly swollen. The moment I saw him, I could palpably feel that he was with Bhagavan. I sat with his head in my lap, his face radiant. Bhagavan's presence was tremendous, immense. What more do we want? At that moment, I did not even cry, blessed as we were in this current of Sri Ramana Divine.

— Saraswati Akka

Under Manianna's vigilant surveillance, one is bound to perform well especially on critical issues, though one of his most favorite dictums being "agree to disagree". One's efficiency is bound to increase in a manifold manner, in the bargain.

— Sivadas Krishnan, Ramanasramam Administration

As recounted by many devotees, Chittappa was a kind, thoughtful, resourceful, and very practical man. For the past 37 years, his constant, gentle presence provided a rocklike foundation and stability for the Ashram. My father sometimes pointed out Chittappa's capacities, for example, he was once very impressed by an incident where Chittappa came up with a solution that had stumped everyone else. In the office, they were trying to come up with a caption for an article for two photos of Bhagavan, one which was the famous 21-year-old Bhagavan. Chittappa just walked in and gave the words on the spot which were accepted and ultimately published in the article: "The Sage of ageless wisdom over different ages".

Chittappa was a man of few words but full of action. We kids had a good time with our uncle when he used to read us books. I personally, learned a lot of cricket from him.

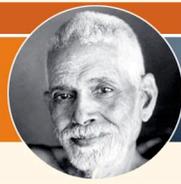
Chittappa had fond memories of his own childhood growing up in the Ashram under Sri Bhagavan's watchful gaze which shaped the destiny of his life. His transition to Ashram service of 37 years in 1985 is itself an amazing story of Bhagavan's grace. What sometimes

Announcement: Ashram YouTube Channel

To access Ashram videos, go to: <<https://www.youtube.com/c/SriRamanasramam/videos>>

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appears as a devastating personal event in one's life over time turns out to be the most joyful life-changing experience, proof of the guru's grace.

Around 1983, Mani Chitappa developed recurring episodes of colitis which, going to several doctors, appeared to be untreatable. Thus, he transitioned from the life of a corporate executive in Bombay to Ashram life in Tiruvannamalai with a young family. Needless to say, within a few months, the colitis which had seemed life-threatening at one stage, was totally cured. Mani Chitappa used this rebirth in Bhagavan to serve the Ashram with renewed vigour on a daily basis.

Devotees have told stories of his personal touch and how they were helped by Chitappa in their personal problems within the Ashram and away from the Ashram. Following his departure, I received letters and emails every day where even in the final week of his life, devotees told how he was in touch by phone or through WhatsApp, sending encouraging messages.

His was a constant presence in the Ashram. We will all miss Mani Chitappa's physical guidance along with that of Appa. One devotee commented, "Chitappa has merged in Bhagavan's feet a very contented man, a proud father and an even prouder grandfather".

— Dr. Venkat S. Ramanan, Sri Ramanasramam President

A day before he left the body, he had gone to the Ashram and spent the morning there. He hadn't been to the ashram a few days prior to that. During our daily telephone conversation, he shared that his visit to the ashram that morning was extremely heart-warming and satisfying. He told me, *Ramanan, romba*



triptiyaa irundadu. ("Ramanan, it was very fulfilling".) I could feel it in his voice, it was full of love and compassion. —

— Ramanan Subramanian, USA

The ever-green *magadam* plant that Manianna wished me to have in our garden has grown into a big tree and produces beautiful flowers in summer with a divine fragrance. This last summer, I thought I should tell him how tall it has grown but unfortunately that day never came. However, the tree with its divine fragrance, Manianna's kindness and the last beaming smile on that day in Korangu Thottam remain etched in my memory.

— Madhurananda, Tiruvannamalai

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Announcement: Sri Ramanasramam's Centenary Year (September 2022 - December 2023)

Sri Ramanasramam's Centenary celebrations called, *Ramanasramam: The Next One Hundred Years*, which began 1st Sept 2022 and will continue over a 16-month period until Jayanti, 28th Dec 2023. It is recorded in one place that Bhagavan came down the Hill to stay permanently 'about one week' before Jayanti which fell that year on 3rd January 1923. If so, this means the Ashram would have been established with Bhagavan's arrival around the 28th of Dec 1922. Ashram President Dr. Venkat S. Ramanan invites devotees to send their suggestions for this Centenary Year to him directly at <posrm@gururamana.org>. —

