

# Saranagati



SARANAGATI  
SRI RAMANASRAMAM

JANUARY 2022  
VOL. 16, NO. 1



D. Thiyagarajan



## Saranagati



JANUARY 2022  
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IN THIS  
ISSUE

Dear Devotees,

In this its 16th year, *Saranagati* begins this Ashram centenary year with prayers for the well-being of devotees around the world during these unusual and most trying of times.

The Ashram was blessed to be able to open its doors for Bhagavan's 142nd Jayanti Celebration on 21st December (see p. 12) but the government is advising caution in respect of large gatherings, thus the Ashram continues with restricted opening hours as the Omicron variant is on the rise around the country.

This January 2022 issue commences with the first part of the life story of Mahalakshmi Suryanandan (known affectionately to all as Maggie-ma) who was peacefully absorbed into Arunachala Ramana on 17th December after a brief illness.

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

In Sri Bhagavan,  
*Saranagati*

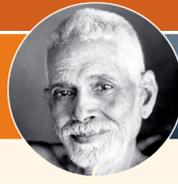
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## Calendar of Ashram Events

12th January (Wed) Sivaprakasam Pillai  
14th January (Fri) Pongal/Ramaswami Pillai  
17th Jan (Mon) Punarvasu/Full Moon/Chinnaswami Day  
12th February (Sat) Munagala Venkataramaiah Day  
14th February (Mon) Punarvasu  
15-16th February (Tue-Wed) Full Moon  
21st February (Mon) Sundaram Iyer Day

1st March (Tue) Mahasivaratri  
13th March (Sun) Punarvasu  
17th March (Thu) Full Moon  
18th March (Fri) Srividya Havan  
2nd April (Sat) Jagadish Swami Day  
9th April (Sat) Punarvasu  
14th April (Thu) Tamil New Year/Nirvana Room





## IN PROFILE

### Mahalakshmi Suryanandan

8 October 1925 - 17 December 2021

**M**ahalakshmi Suryanandan, whose life spanned the breadth of nearly a century, had a knack for telling stories and she had a lot of stories to tell. Her father, Professor K. Swaminathan, had made his mark on history and Maggie, as he affectionately called her, grew up in a household that was filled with excitement.

The professor's commitment to the Gandhian ideals imbibed in his youth were complemented by the teachings of Bhagavan Sri Ramana, and the professor

would eventually lead the whole family to Bhagavan in the early 1940s. Mahalakshmi recalls:

*In 1940 or 1941 when I was 14 years old, my father and I and the family came to see Bhagavan. We came in a bullock cart and saw Bhagavan standing in front of the illuppai tree which is almost 300 years old. We did Sashtanga Namaskaram to him. On raising my head, I was wonder struck to see a beautiful golden coloured devata standing before me. His way of standing, his feet, his eyes, were very bright and startling. He was standing erect supported by his walking stick firmly fixed to the ground just like a monarch. I never imagined seeing a person without dress. He was wearing only a kaupina.'*

It was unusual to find Bhagavan here as he rarely stood out under the tree. Maggie marvelled at the golden form clad only in a kaupina, shining in the morning light, standing there with his walking stick as if to welcome the youngsters. The family did prostrations before Bhagavan. Bhagavan was silent but gazed affectionately on each of them. Maggie mused to herself:

*Is he a human being or a god, wearing only his body for clothing? Surely this must be Rama himself!<sup>2</sup>*

On his return from Oxford, Maggie's father had become head of the English Department at Sri Meenakshi College in Chidambaram. He had heard about Bhagavan from one of his students, M.G. Shanmukham. He had also encountered Kavyakantha Ganapathi Muni when the satri came to give a lecture at the college. Others had written to Maggie's father about Bhagavan but the professor resisted it in preference to being 'socially relevant' during this turbulent period of the independence movement. A decade passed before he would act on the call. It was in 1939 that he came across *Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai*, the devotional work of the great Tamil devotee-poet, Muruganar. The professor exclaimed, 'Good heavens, the man who inspired this kind of poetry is Divine!' <sup>3</sup>

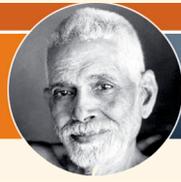
In early 1940 Maggie's father took up study with a renowned pandit in the *Brahma Sutras* and began to understand that there was more to life than what can be written down with a pen. During their interactions, the pandit spoke of Bhagavan: 'This is not mere theory. You go to Tiruvannamalai and see this man.'

<sup>1</sup> Video interview.

<sup>2</sup> *Saranagati*, March 2013, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Saranagati*, February 2013, p. 2.





Professor K. Swaminathan made up his mind to make the journey but first he took permission from Sir P. S. Sivaswami Iyer<sup>4</sup>, the guardian and guide appointed by Prof. K. Swaminathan's late father, Krishnaswami Iyer. The permission was forthcoming but with the following proviso:

*You are a young man with many responsibilities. When I look down at the abyss from the edge of Dodabetta (the 8,000 ft. precipice in the Nilgiri Hills, near Ooty), in order not to become giddy and risk falling, I have four strong men hold me with a rope round my hip. Go to the Ashram. But don't go alone. When you go before Bhagavan, you will be swept off your feet and fall headlong into the abyss. So be bound by some attachment to people. Take some friends with you.*<sup>5</sup>

On September 29, 1940, Swaminathan took his wife and two students—K. Subrahmanyam and M. M. Ismail<sup>6</sup>—and travelled to Tiruvannamalai. When they came before Bhagavan, the professor experienced 'the most memorable event' of his life. His student K. Subrahmanyam described the darshan as follows:

*The mind was stilled before it could even feebly affirm its existence. In its place was Bhagavan's silence-awareness with only peace for its content. What we had hitherto called 'silence' had been very different: a respite from speech, perhaps to replenish the exhausted energy for the sake of speech yet to come, or a manner of inward chatter, a succession of jerky thoughts whose utterance was only inaudible to others...The moment vanished, but [our] being had been fertilised. Silence and seclusion could not fill [us] with dread thereafter. Nirvana, Sunyata were now terms to be received with reverent attention, not with frightened bewilderment.*<sup>7</sup>

Maggie's father wrote:

*So many things had compelled me to [come] and [now] all my problems were solved in five minutes. In his presence, I felt like a baby in his mother's lap. How to explain this?*<sup>8</sup>

4 P.S. Sivaswami Iyer (1864-1946), considered one of the greatest legal minds of S. India, served as Advocate-general of the Madras Presidency from 1907 to 1911 and as member of the executive council of the Governor of Madras.

5 *Saranagati*, February 2013, p. 3.

6 K. Subrahmanyam became professor of English at Loyola College and wrote for *The Mountain Path*. M. M. Ismail went on to become Chief Justice of the Madras High Court and acting Governor of Tamil Nadu.

7 *Saranagati*, February 2013, p. 3.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

Maggie's father began to see Bhagavan as a perfect Impersonality, 'like the sun in the sky or like unnoticed daylight in an inner chamber'. He adds:

*This impersonal Being would suddenly become a Person full of sattvic power, highly human, charming, mother-like, who could communicate with sharp precision his own Awareness-Bliss to others according to their needs and moods.*<sup>9</sup>

From that day onward, Swaminathan came regularly from Chennai to spend weekends and vacations with Bhagavan. He brought students, family members, colleagues, and indeed, anyone that could be persuaded to join him, among them, some notable figures like D. S. Sarma, Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, S. Duraiswami Iyer, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, Dilip Kumar Roy, O.P. Ramaswami Reddiar among others.

After Maggie and her family's first visit to Sri Ramanasramam in late 1940, the family came again in 1941. Maggie was fond of recounting this story because her father often narrated it with amusement regarding this, his 'formal introduction to Bhagavan'.

Maggie and the family entered the hall. A lady named Kalyani Rajagopal, sitting next to Mrs. Swaminathan, suddenly began pointing toward Mrs. KS, exclaiming, 'Oh Bhagavan, this is Visalam. We studied in school together from the 1st to the 4th standard. We are seeing each other only after all these years.' Bhagavan looked at Visalakshi while the childhood friend asked Visalakshi who her husband was. When Mrs. KS pointed to the professor, the lady added, 'And Bhagavan, this is her husband.'

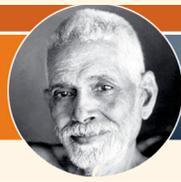
Maggie told how later that day when the family was in town, her father openly joked with the children and their mother:

*See, I have been introduced by so many people as being highly qualified, as having gone to Oxford and gotten a degree there, as a professor at a prestigious college, and so on, but when I am introduced to Bhagavan Ramana, I am announced merely as the husband of your mother, a lady who studied up to the fourth standard!*<sup>10</sup>

9 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

10 *Saranagati*, March 2013, p. 3.





Maggie with her mother, father and two younger sisters, ca 1940

Turning to his wife, he added affectionately:

*You are so lucky. Poor me, I had no classmate to introduce me like that to Bhagavan! But it is right that I was introduced to Bhagavan only as your husband and not with a list of credentials.<sup>11</sup>*

For the children it was a delight to see how approachable Bhagavan was. Not only did he not neglect to include children in the conversation as is the norm with grown-ups when they assemble but he was attuned to their needs and made them feel like they belonged. This did not only apply to children. Bhagavan acknowledged the non-human creatures in his midst and Maggie keenly observed the affection he showed them. She says:

*Bhagavan was very affectionate to birds and animals. Once a peacock came and stood in front of Bhagavan. Bhagavan said to him, 'Oh! You have come alone! Bring him also'. The peacock looked up and down, went away to bring his peacock-friend. Once a monkey came before Bhagavan just like that. Bhagavan said to him, 'Oh! You had a fight with the other group of monkeys. Go and bring them also'. The monkey hummed and brought his so-called enemy, and both took plantains from Bhagavan's hand.<sup>12</sup>*

Young Maggie was amused to see how the animals favoured Bhagavan and felt at home in his presence:

*A squirrel used to come and play on his shoulders and hands and Bhagavan would give him peanuts. One by one all the squirrels roamed over his shoulders and took peanuts from him. Bhagavan would never get annoyed with their sitting on him but always gazed at them with a beneficent smile while we were afraid of even a fly or a mosquito sitting on us.<sup>13</sup>*

11 Ibid., p. 4.

12 Video interview.

13 Ibid.

## Ramana and Rama

From an early age, Maggie had a gift for singing and recalled the fright she felt at school when called into the teachers' room:

*They wanted me to see them after having my lunch. I became nervous and did not know why I alone should be called. Anyhow, I peeped in. The music teacher, Smt. Gnanambal saw me and said, 'Come in, Mahalakshmi, don't be afraid. These teachers have heard that you have a good voice and sing nicely, and they want to hear you sing'. Thank god, I managed a couple of songs taught by my teacher and then I was saved by the bell and I came running to the class greatly relieved.<sup>14</sup>*

Maggie's singing would lead her to compose songs and dedicate them to Bhagavan. She would go on to compose the melody for *Aksharamanamalai*, sung each day by devotees. As her father's father, Krishnaswami Iyer, had been a Sanskrit scholar and translated the 24,000 slokas of *Valmiki Ramayana* into Tamil, Maggie recalled hearing Ramayana Parayanam from an early age. Thus, Lord Rama had become her Ishta Devata. But upon meeting Bhagavan, she became convinced that Ramana was none other than Rama in human form and wrote a song accordingly. The gist of the text is:

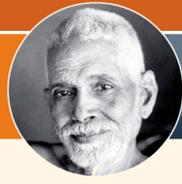
*In Kaliyuga Sri Ramana is the avatar of Rama: Sri Rama is the ornament of Surya Dynasty. Ramana is the Sun of knowledge. Were they not both born on the star Punarvasu? Sri Rama heeded his father's advice and left Ayodhya for Dandakaranya. Sri Ramana heeded the call of his father (Arunachala) and left Madurai for Annamalai. Sri Rama accepted his mother's commands. Sri Ramana freed his mother from repeated births. Sri Rama bestowed Moksha to the bird Jatayu. Sri Ramana liberated the crow. Both were surrounded by monkeys and squirrels. Rama enjoyed taking the fruit from Sabari. Ramana took delight in Keeraippatti's cooking. Rama wore bark and roamed in the forests of Dandakaranya. Ramana clad in a loin cloth, walked over the woods and slopes of Arunachala. At the touch of Rama's holy feet, Abahya was released from stone to the human form. At the time of Ramana's birth, a blind woman recovered her eyesight to behold the effulgent light. Sri Rama and Sri Ramana were the embodiment of dharma, born in this earth so that truth and peace will prevail!<sup>15</sup> —*

*(to be continued)*

14 *Random Memories*, pp. 8-9.

15 'Rama and Ramana', published in Maggie's second book, *Ramana, Glory be to You, Ramana Potri*.





## RAMANA REFLECTIONS

### Tracing the Upward-Leading Path

In late 1963 Arthur Osborne was getting ready to inaugurate the Ashram's first journal and came up with the title, *The Mountain Path*. This archetypal image, a path up the proverbial mountain of life, speaks to the narrow, arduous, sometimes perilous trajectory that threatens to change everything and leave us no available means of return. It is the metaphorical path that denotes leaving behind the comforts of the world in favour of the happiness that comes from within, the

happiness that doesn't depend on what happens but that is innate, inherent, and ever available. It points to a journey in the footsteps of Bhagavan which leads out from the delusion of worldly life to the freedom of the Self that is Arunachala.

In the opening article of the quarterly's first issue, the then Chief Minister of Madras, M. Bhaktavatsalam, interprets this phrase:

*The 'Mountain' in the caption denotes 'Arunachala'; and the 'Path' is the Ramana-Path, i.e. the Path of Self-Enquiry. The Mountain Arunachala is the achala tattwa, upon which, as the screen, runs the entire panorama of manifestation. Seeing the pictures, forgetting the screen, he who sees is in delusion. With the realisation that the screen alone IS, comes the Peace of Being, born out of the understanding of Truth.*<sup>1</sup>

The word mountain is iconic and indicates that which is unchanging and eternal, the still point at the centre of the cosmos around which the phenomenal world revolves and has its being. The unchanging, unmoving *achala* is the domain where true happiness originates.

In the monastic traditions of India, mountain is sometimes used in the formal title of a monk (e.g. monastic orders that suffix a sannyassin's name with the word *Giri*). The same applies in ancient China where the names of great meditation masters were taken from the mountain on which they lived and appended with the word *shan* meaning 'mountain'. Such monikers suggest the monk has attained a state unaffected by the pull of *samsara*.

The second part of this title is 'path' which is likewise iconic, a simile for the spiritual search. Therefore, the path up the mountain is the journey of fulfilment.

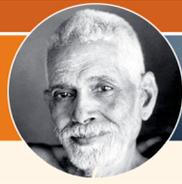
The path invites one and all—none are excluded. However, leaving behind the lanes and highways of the world means abandoning our attachments to the comforts of the sense realm. The one who is determined to scale the path up the mountain is sure to be rewarded, but not without a struggle. A proverb reads:

*Do you think you shall enter the garden of bliss without such trials that have come to those who have passed before you?*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Entitled 'The Mountain Path' from the January 1964 issue of *The Mountain Path*, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> *The Koran*.





While everyone is opting for the broad bustling boulevards of the world, the path up the mountain is lonesome. The world does not look further than the immediacy of sense experience while the interior path is absent of worldly consolations. But what does it mean to seek worldly consolations? And why would the most common response to human suffering be indulging precisely that which brings more suffering, namely, the hollowness of worldly pursuits?

Generations of seekers have misunderstood the phrase ‘worldly pursuits’, imagining it to refer to the activities of anyone living in the world with a family earning a living. But this is not what is intended. Worldliness refers to the organism’s habit of ever seeking to have our immediate experience be an enjoyable one—micro-second by micro-second—and avoiding every hint of unpleasantness, no matter how short-lived. At first, this may not sound so bad, but worldliness proves itself to be an attachment to pure sensation of the moment. It is related to addiction born of the sense of relief that, say, a lover of chocolate would feel when biting into a piece of chocolate. It is not that it is wrong to enjoy chocolate or any other food item, but are we making a refuge out of such experiences, going from one thing to the next interminably?

Worldliness begins with the desire to have each and every moment be easeful, imagining this to be a viable path to lasting happiness. Inquiring inwardly, by contrast, is born of the longing to see things as they are, truly and clearly, irrespective of the immediate sense response brought about by, for example, confronting the less flattering aspects of ourselves, viz., our mistakes, regrets, and conceits. Worldly pleasures allow us to cover these over and hide them from view. The path of enquiry, on

the other hand, exposes them and even compels us to look squarely at them.

If Bhagavan never placed emphasis on *sannyasa diksha*, it is because he knew that the crucial renunciation was overcoming the addiction to pleasant feeling states. The renunciation he was advocating was very subtle, albeit decisive. When we look honestly at the motivations of our thoughts, words and deeds, and when we enquire into the ultimate nature of the possessor of such motivations, we unravel the fool’s game of clinging to short-lived experiences, of investing in the fragile notion of a separate self.

Typically we shy away from the mountain path because we want to avoid the poignancy that comes with enquiry, preferring the *modicum* of happiness that can be gained without delay, discomfort or exertion.

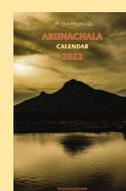
From a biological point of view, we might understand the inclination to worldly enjoyments as a disordered homeostatic mechanism. Micromanaging feeling states could be seen as the biological system’s effort at self-regulation. Compulsive thinking could be understood as a maladaptive mechanism for altering our moods and maintaining the internal biochemistry of the brain. If all systems of the physical organism, (even at a cellular level) follow in-built laws of *homeostasis*, and if physical matter at the gross level is subject to Newton’s Third Law, *the law of inertia*, then the inclination towards the stability of feeling states in the human psyche should be quite strong. Might our worldliness have its origins—rather innocently—in the laws of nature?

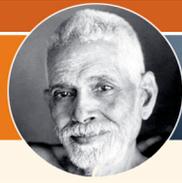
Even if this turns out to be the case, Bhagavan directs us to push back on such influences, after all, *we are not this body*. The body’s craving for sense comfort

## Announcement: Ashram Calendars



The Ashram’s 2022 calendars are now available in the Ashram book depot. Calendar link: <https://bookstore.sriramanamaharshi.org/product-category/calendar-2022/>





and its resistance to any form of discomfort is *natural*. But the Law of God is *supernatural* and beckons us up the mountain, rocky and rugged though it be. Bingeing on thought, media input and device use can bring momentary relief to unpleasant feeling states such as grief or distress, worry or anxiety, but such coping mechanisms are maladaptive. By contrast, the force that draws us up the mountain is not deterred by hardships of the body or the mind. It intuits that the *cure for one's pain is in the pain*.<sup>3</sup> It intuits the great rewards that lie further up the path.

As for the laws of nature, they are preserved. After all, Bhagavan's realisation is the ultimate *homeostasis* and the upward path leads nowhere else than to the Heart of Arunachala, whose very name means *homeostasis*.

### Not Knowing

The therapy for addiction to the sense realm and overcoming the pull toward worldly pursuits is climbing the mountain. Ascending the upward leading path just a means enquiring into the one who would have each and every experience be an agreeable one. Indeed, who is this internal psychopharmacologist seeking to improve his or her mood moment by moment? Is this the Self?

Enquiry compels us to look at the life of the mind and its impulses and motivations. Enquiry means listening and searching deeply within. It is the ultimate simplicity where former claims to knowledge are dispensed with. In its place comes the profound recognition that what one thought one knew is in fact largely misguided.

There's a story from Tang dynasty China where a pilgrim-monk who is at a very critical stage in his spiritual training meets Master Jizo. The master asks him, 'Where have you come from?' 'I am on pilgrimage,' replied the monk. 'What is the purpose of your pilgrimage?' asked the master.

With gentleness in his eyes born of long years of silence and meditation, the monk replies in all sincerity, 'I don't know.' The master looked upon the monk with great affection and said, 'Ah, not knowing is most intimate.' At that, the text tells us, the monk experienced enlightenment.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Rumi.

<sup>4</sup> Case 20 in *The Book of Serenity*.



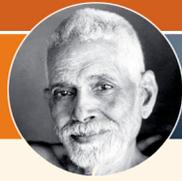
Robert Lynn

So what is this *not-knowing* the master speaks of? Well, it is a little like enquiry. In the language of the British anthropologist Victor Turner, enquiry is a *liminal* state. From the Latin *limen* meaning 'threshold', liminality is the quality of ambiguity that occurs between a previous way of structuring one's identity, worldview and social standing, and a new way, which is yet to be discovered. *Not-knowing is most intimate* because nothing is being clung to and thus the conditions for transformation are optimal. Liminal states brought about by *atma vichara* and surrender promote dissipation of conceptual grasping and a more fluid, malleable state wherein a new understanding of self and other emerges. By contrast, fixation on ideas and opinions or coveting information is the source of the veiling of the steady resonant flow within us.

### Listening and Wondering

Enquiry fosters insight and curiosity. Not-knowing is the ground of unitive wisdom, silent and amorphous. At the heart of every religious teaching, it has been said, is paradox because that is what is required to free us from the tyranny of conceptual thinking. Truth does not come in clear, logically graspable terms. Enquiry is the simultaneous acceptance of paradox and the renunciation of the false security that comes with received knowledge which is really just borrowed knowledge, i.e. having names and labels for things





without necessarily knowing them in any intimate way. If *it is the province of knowledge to speak and know, it is the privilege of wisdom to listen and wonder.*<sup>5</sup> Received knowledge is basically worldly knowledge—data and information lacking the quality of an intimate relationship with the knower. Enquiry, on the other hand, is investigating first-hand and knowing in a direct way. When we search for the one who is climbing the mountain, we cannot find them; when we look deeply within the climber, the whole universe appears. Who or what is this climber?

The great blunder of us modern climbers is turning away from the mystery of not-knowing in favour of certainty born of content knowledge—the written or spoken word—and inferences born of rumination. We are keen to acquire new knowledge, calling it wisdom; we are keen to move about along the shiny new avenues of the world, calling it the path; we are keen to accumulate new experiences, calling it life. We would like it if the path were clearly lighted and straightforward, but, alas, it is not like that and when we turn our backs on the wonderment that enquiry engenders, preferring instead tenets or doctrines that can be memorised and recited (in lieu of practising them), we lose our way devastatingly and find ourselves willy-nilly at the bottom of the mountain again.

The German poet Rilke once celebrated finding the true path which turned out to be counter to all he had until then assumed: *You darkness from whom I am born, I love you more!*

What is the darkness the poet is speaking of?

It is the obscurity of spiritual wisdom, the indistinctness of intuition which is quite different from tangible content knowledge. Sadly, most of us live our lives without ever accessing this hidden cache

5 Oliver Wendell Holmes.

of knowledge born of intuition. Tradition talks of *bhavanamaya jnana*,<sup>6</sup> the knowledge that comes through the cultivation of contemplation. Bhagavan calls it *aparoksha jnana*, the knowledge of direct experience.

But what is direct experience an experience of? It is seeing within and accessing hitherto unknown realms within the Heart.

Direct experience sounds magical, even miraculous, and we imagine that this mystical knowing is somehow the province and prerogative of saints and sages. But Bhagavan repeatedly endeavours to talk us out of this mistaken view. He tells us that accessing our intuition is very ordinary and simple. He tells us that intuitive wisdom is the natural endowment of all seekers irrespective of their vocation or station in life. How tragic that most sadhakas live out their spiritual call in a career of investigation that never gets beyond overt learning (*sravana*) or mental reflection (*manana*), never reaches the treasure house of innate wisdom born of intuition and deep enquiry in the meditation setting (*nididhyasana*)<sup>7</sup>. This is why Bhagavan was so persistent in advocating enquiry and expressed disappointment that devotees were in the habit of dallying in the domain of worldly knowing even if their devotion was genuine.<sup>8</sup>

But if intuition is ordinary and available, then what's the hitch?

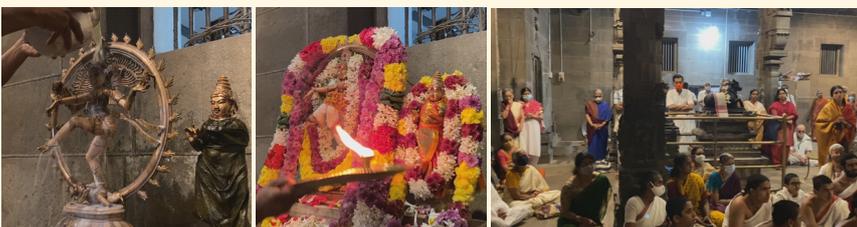
The hitch is silencing the mind, exercising the patience and care that is required to overcome the lifelong

6 See, for example, *Sri Tatraloka*, v13.

7 See *Talks* §294 where Bhagavan says, *Meditation on forms or concrete objects is said to be dhyana, whereas the enquiry into the Self is vichara or nididhyasana.*

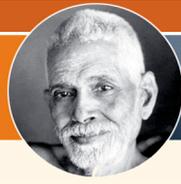
8 We recall here the conversation from *Talks* when Bhagavan was asked about the measure of progress in the spiritual life to which he responded, *The absence of thoughts in the mind is the measure of progress in the spiritual life.* (*Talks* §618).

## Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Arudra Darsanam



On 20th December, the day before Bhagavan's 142nd Jayanti, Arudra Darsanam or Tiruvadira was celebrated with Nataraja puja in the early morning hours. The annual Arudra Darsanam takes place in the month of Makaram during Tiruvadira (Arudra) nakshatra. —





Robert Lynn

## Perfect Prayer

In true enquiry, the mind cannot think; in enquiry, we are *not*. What we imagine ourselves to be is merely the thought content of the mind, whereas in fact we are the Container, vast and formless. Only in enquiry, can we access the pure space beneath thought, a place (epistemologically) prior to all conceptualisation, the ground of true intelligence. It is here that we find true *homeostasis*. Bhagavan tells us:

*When there are thoughts, that is distraction: when there are no thoughts, that is meditation...The fruit of Self-enquiry is the realization that the Self is all there is and that there is nothing else. For those who follow this method no other sadhana is necessary.*<sup>10</sup>

In enquiry, we become pure receptivity. If practised rightly, enquiry is not just prayer but *perfect prayer*, prayer of the highest order, the entry point into the resonant field we share with Bhagavan. The operative word here is ‘prayer’ because enquiry engaged in only mentally as a formal teaching is of little use. It is in embodying it that its power unfolds and divulges itself as pure contemplation.

In a perfect world, we would focus entirely on this path, for in enquiry, compassion becomes a living reality. The first duty of the seeker is to listen. In contemplative listening, all friction in the medium of the human collective drops away. What is the source of the friction in the human field? It is our fixation on the narcissistic impulses of a disquieted mind. When we penetrate our disquietude, when we override it and tame it by a simple act of enquiry, all is set right. True knowing thus comes to us in faint whispers, softly and gently, and the upward-leading Ramana-path is discovered to be a path of honest, caring, and persistent investigation. —

*(to be continued)*

*If useless things do not clutter your mind, no season will be too much for you.*  
10 See *Talks* §68 and the book’s Foreword.

habit of giving ourselves over to involuntary sequential thinking (conceptual proliferation). The challenge is in being able to doggedly come back to contemplative enquiry over and again in the face of repeated failure.

The Darkness Rilke revels in is the Silence that Bhagavan extols, i.e. the inner Silence of the Heart that is perfectly still. In this simple state, new worlds spring up and we discover new ways of knowing far beyond any book knowledge or knowledge gained by thinking, reflection or reasoning. Inner stillness is key in tracing the upward-leading path.

There’s a story from the 8th century when Joshu asks his guru, Nansen, ‘What is the Way?’ Nansen replies, ‘Ordinary unobstructed seeing is the Way,’ ‘How shall I seek it?’ the disciple queried. ‘If you try to seek it, you go away from it.’ ‘But how can I know the Way unless I try to find it?’ persisted Joshu. Nansen said, ‘The Way is not a matter of knowing or not knowing. Knowing is delusion. When you have reached the true Way beyond doubt, you will find it as vast and boundless as outer space. How can it be talked about on the level of right and wrong?’<sup>9</sup>

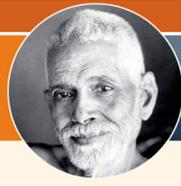
<sup>9</sup> Case 19 of *The Mumonkan*. The verse to this case is beautiful and reads: *Spring flowers, the autumn moon, summer breezes, and winter snow;*

## Jayanti Aksharamanamalai Discourses



The annual discourses on *Aksaramanamalai* by Nochur Sri Venkataraman in English took place before a very small audience of about 25 devotees in the Grantalaya Auditorium. The seven-days of discourses were recorded and live-streamed and are available for free downloading on the Ashram’s YouTube channel: <<https://www.youtube.com/c/SriRamanasramam>>. —





## Sri Ramana, the Good Cook: Bhagavan's Ayurvedic Recipes

If *agni* is the link between heaven and earth, the pathway and vehicle that leads from the mundane to the Divine, cooking is regarded as a holy act. Like *yagna*, cooking is sacrificial, transforming raw material into prasada and making indigestible items suitable as life-giving nourishment. The very same *agni* in human consciousness transforms mundane knowledge into mystical insights that lead to liberation. The true cook (*paachaka*) is the guru, the one who removes (*ru*) our darkness (*gu*) and leads us to the light of knowledge. Thus, the cook, like the *agnibotri* mediates two worlds.

Bhagavan is one such mediator. The knowledge-fire within him rekindled hopes that samsaric delusion could be overcome. Was this not what Nayana meant in his *Chatvarimsat* when he dubbed Bhagavan the 'good cook'?

*Oh! Lord of ascetics, You are like a cook in the services of God.  
You demolish the egos of human animals, cook them and hand  
them over to the Supreme Siva as food.*

Though these Nayana's verses are allegorical, the truth cannot be doubted: Bhagavan is the embodiment of the jnani's fire. Did he not endeavour to cook off seekers' defilements and lead them to truth? Has not the 'good cook' proven to be the fullness of compassion, gentle and tender like a loving mother?

But the Good Cook is also the Great Physician and provided recipes for our well-being. Over the coming issues we present medicinal verse-recipes

from Bhagavan. Not without substantial effort were these verses broken up for Tamil readers keen to have a closer look at Bhagavan's classical Tamil.

### Saraswatha Churnam

*Cukkati madhuramin duppoḍu tippili  
takkadicī rakamumañ jaḷmara mañjaḷō  
ḍokkōṭ ṭamumvacam bōmamip poḍineyi  
ṇakkuvār viḍiyaṇā nāmaka ṇaḍikkumē.*

*Cukku atimadhuram induppoḍu tippili  
takkadi cīrakamum mañjaḷ mara-mañjaḷōḍu  
okkōshṭamum vacambu ōmam ippoḍi neyil  
ṇakkuvār viḍiyal-ṇā nāmagal ṇaḍikkumē.*

*Ingredients* required: dry ginger, licorice, rock salt, the long pepper, cumin seeds, turmeric, barberry, *Acorus calamus*, *Saussurea costus*, bishop's weed. — All these should be taken in equal measure.

*Preparation:* All the above ingredients should be thoroughly grounded, made into a fine powder, and mixed together. Take a teaspoon of ghee (clarified butter) and a half teaspoon of the powdered mixture and mix thoroughly.

*Instructions:* In the early morning, on an empty stomach, apply this on your tongue. (Please consult an ayurvedic physician on dosage.)

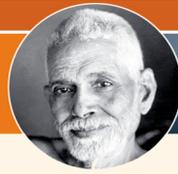
*Benefits:* Soothes nerves, restores calmness to the mind, gives good sleep, acts on tissues, restores vitality. —

## Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Ayurveda Camp



Sri Ramanasramam Dispensary conducted a free Ayurvedic camp on 26th Sunday, December 2021 morning 8 am to 11 am and 12 noon to 2.30 pm. Those who wished to attend the camp registered their names in the dispensary from 8 am to 11 am. —





## Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Bhagavan's 142nd Jayanti Celebrations

On Punarvasu Day in the Tamil month of Margazhi 142 years ago Bhagavan Sri Ramana was born in Thiruchuzhi. That night, Arudra darsanam was underway in Bhuminatha Temple when the child first opened his eyes around 1am. On 21st December 2021, devotees came in large numbers for the first large-scale gathering since Covid lock downs began in March of last year. The day started at 3.45 am with Nadaswaram music in Bhagavan's freshly decorated Shrine. Devotees chanted verses on Bhagavan by Muruganar as well as *Satyamangalam Venkataramanaiyar* and *Aksharamanamalai* and participated in Mahanyasa puja when at 10.30 am, the final arati took place. Devotees who could not be present had the opportunity to view the celebrations by live streaming or download the footage from the Ashram's YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/c/SriRamanasramam>. —

## Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Dhanurmasa Pujas



Dhanurmasa or Margazhi is the auspicious month (mid-Dec to mid-Jan) dedicated to religious activities, when weddings and worldly activities are put on hold. The Gods are said to wake up early this month which is "Brahma Muhurta". At the Ashram, daily pujas began at 4.30 am on 16th December with verses of Manickavachakar's *Tiruvempavai*, Andal's *Tiruppavai* and Muruganar's *Ramana Tiruvempavai* followed by *Vishnu Sabasranamam*. These pre-dawn pujas continue up till 14th January, the day of Pongal. —

## Events at Sri Ramanasramam: Swami Ramanananda Day



The day following Jayanti, devotees gathered at the shrine of Swami Ramanananda to observe his samadhi day. This year his samadhi fell on the day after Jayanti just as it did in 2007. —

